

CAMERACRAFT

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Photograph by Rachael Talibart



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No words in this magazine have been generated by AI – as far as I know! I do not believe that anyone who has written words I have quoted or printed has used AI. However, if they had I would have no way of knowing other than some kind of gut feeling, or a false confidence that “of course I can detect AI”.

It's very clear from daily interactions on *Facebook*, fuelled by the overwhelming use of AI bots to generate posts on all kinds of subjects which the user's history tells them will attract more views, that the majority of people though intelligent enough to use a phone or computer can't tell a blatant AI photograph or illustration.

Every day historical events, museum exhibits, nature, technology, real places and real people who did or do exist, are being represented by computer generated simulacra. It's common for just one or two readers to call this out while dozens swallow it.

Of course, in Gary Friedman's article we see imaging AI at work. It may be based on his work but as he explains it goes far beyond that, and does it convincingly.

The giant AI repositories which have 'scraped' words and images from every available web page and digitally published work do not seem to access things like page-turn PDF based magazines, or downloads. As things stand, I do not think they are hacking into the passwords needed to access the scanned archives of national libraries and universities. They may encounter a document but if that document is in itself password protected I don't think its content can be scraped.

Do they make virtual screen shots of download-protected images?

Again, I'm doubtful but not certain. If an image can be viewed on my screen – which many download protected web galleries can be – then the screen shot is something I can make. I do this regularly when asking featured photographers to send me un-watermarked high resolution files. I will make a screen shot and produce a layout I can send to the contributing photographer. The functions I use to do this could easily be used by AI databases, which also have the tools to find all identical or similar pictures elsewhere on internet.

So how do you protect your images (or words) if you need someone to see them?

The simplest answer lies in the Adobe Acrobat Portable Document Format. Whenever a .PDF file is saved – whether it is a single photograph or a slideshow, a letter or a book or magazine – all the programs I know which allow this also enable Password Protection.

The .PDF can be sent to a photographer's customer, an editor, a family member or anyone and its password given by email, text or even a phone call. They will open it on their own device and those images, words, or scans will never have been on any web server. They will only have existed on private devices.

I'm sure that there will be comparable password-protected formats for sound files, video files, spreadsheets and any kind of digital data but for straightforward words and pictures, the .PDF is the answer and it's an option when doing 'Save As' from *Photoshop*.

As for knowing whether words are AI produced, I begin to wonder when I read some press releases and product brochures. As of now, I have the delusion that I could detect this. But the Dunning-Kruger effect – thinking you know loads, in ignorance of the fact that you know nowt – is not limited to politicians and their property lawyers or letting agents! When it comes to AI, I don't know what I don't know and as a result anything I say is just as unreliable as an AI-generated illusion...

– David Kilpatrick

Email: editor@iconpublications.com

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Cameracraft has been published in print six times a year from March/April 2018 to date, after dropping the f2 from its title, added after merging the original *Cameracraft* (2012-2015) with f2. The magazine is now published as a high resolution PDF edition for subscribers and on magazine platforms, with a low resolution page-turn version available free on the website. A limited run of printed copies is also made, and subscribers are authorised to order digital printed copies (see inside front cover). Through previous titles *Freelance Photographer*, *Photon* and *PHOTOpro* it is the latest in a line of photographic magazines published from Kelso by David Kilpatrick since 1989.

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BACK ISSUES: because Maxwell Place is up for sale, most back issues have now been disposed of as they occupied a room. In future, though it takes more time than can be found now, a downloadable archive will be put on the website and print-on-demand copies enabled. .

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<https://www.cameracraft.online>

Back issues and searchable archive of free-to-read articles from many of Icon's specialist photographic titles.

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Fast superzoom now goes down to 25mm

THE TAMRON 25-200mm f2.8-5.6 Di III VXD G2 (Model A075) is the successor to the 28-200mm f2.8-5.6 Di III RXD upgraded to a "G2" model. As the originator of modern all-in-one zoom lenses, Tamron celebrates its 75th anniversary with this new cutting-edge lens.

The new G2 model maintains its compact size while expanding the wide end from 28mm to 25mm, with the same fast f2.8 aperture, and preserving the 200mm telephoto range. It offers improved image quality and a faster, more precise VXD linear motor autofocus mechanism. With a maximum magnification ratio of 1:1.9 at the 25mm wide end, the Tamron 25-200mm also provides half life-size macro shooting.

It's already on sale at £729. Portrait example by Kazua Seki.

<https://www.tamron.co.uk>



Free London photo show – book now



WITH THE Photography and Video Show (as it is now named) returning to the NEC Birmingham in March, and the Guild of Photographers small awards event trade show at the beginning of February in Stoke-on-Trent, the first photo show and convention of 2026 is the Societies' annual London date in mid-January.

As last year, the convention and show are hosted by the **Novotel London West Conference Centre**, a major venue in Hammersmith. The centre is three minutes' walking distance from Hammersmith Station

connecting with three main tube lines: Piccadilly, with direct connection to Heathrow airport within 40 mins, District, and Hammersmith & City. It is a 20-minute tube journey to Central London. The convention includes a paid programme and events for the Societies of Photographers membership, but also for all photographers – **Cameracraft's code CC10** gives a 10% saving. The full convention is from January 14th-17th, the free trade show from 15th-17th only requires registration at the website <https://thesocieties.net/convention>

Canon think light with RF 85mm f1.4

THE CANON RF 85mm f1.4L VCM is an L-series hybrid prime lens for both video shooting and still photography, which reinforces the lightweight ethos of the R system. Compared to the Canon EF 85mm f/1.4L IS USM, it offers better performance, handling and portability while compared to the f1.2 RF design, it's literally half the weight and its size can be judged by the 67mm filter thread.

It shares the same design, weight distribution and colour balance (important for matching takes in video work) as the rest of the Canon hybrid lineup. Smooth VCM focusing, a de-clickable third stop stepped aperture ring and minimal focus breathing add to its movie-making pedigree.

It has an 11-blade circular aperture, a custom button and control ring. The L-series construction offers an oil-repellent fluorine coating and weather seals to protect against dust and moisture.



(Voice Coil Motor) AF technology ensures controlled video focus pulls, with minimal focus breathing for a natural look.

It's on sale now at £1,679.

<https://www.canon.co.uk>

Smallrig gains top industry distributor



TRANSCONTINENTA UK LTD has been appointed distributor of the SmallRig brand for the UK and Ireland. SmallRig, founded in 2013, have developed many products widely used in fields including live broadcast, vlogging, promo videos, weddings, commercials, documentaries and Hollywood film. They hold 415 patents covering over 900 products sold worldwide.

The company is known for its dedicated cages to fit specific camera models and protect from knocks, scratches and damage. These also

provide a framework for mounting other accessories.

Their range of tripods is made for quick set-up and one-step height adjustment, ideal for creative framing when travelling, shooting on location and in challenging conditions.

Their high-capacity V-Mount and V-Mount mini batteries provide extended shooting times, with battery plates and adapters for a wide range of cameras and accessories, and power distribution hubs to run multiple items from one battery.

<https://www.transcontinenta.co.uk>



TOM HILL

"It's such a fine line between stupid, and uh... clever..."

Tom Hill ARPS is a semi-retired photographer/copywriter living in the Scottish borders

Fans of the seminal 1984 movie, *Spinal Tap* directed by Rob Reiner, will be familiar with that quote by David St Hubbins and Nigel Tufnel. For me, that film contains arguably the best repository of amusing throwaway lines in cinema. But there is a serious message there.

That same concept could well be applied to the contemporary medium of photography and televisual output generally. Much content has become almost entirely ephemeral, and to those of us of a certain age, deeply irritating. I can't watch cinema adverts anymore without wanting to throw a half-empty can of beer at the screen. Not wishing to receive an ASBO in my early 60s, I tend to resist the urge.

As a case in point, one only has to look at the disastrous Jaguar Land Rover advertising campaign in May 2025, where several absurd looking buffoons in pink inflatable clothing sat around fibreglass rocks in a cheap faux Mars-scape. Again, coming back to *Spinal Tap*, it was about as impactful as the 18" high Stonehenge stage set up (if you know, you know...). No vehicles, logos or any automotive references appeared anywhere in the ads!

I can only conclude that the producers and directors of those short JLR sequences had either consumed a considerable quantity of recreational drugs or simply lost the plot entirely. Perhaps they were too busy sipping oat-milk lattes in glass partitioned offices discussing why driving a Jaguar is de rigueur for gender-fluid millennials.

Or something.

Fake it until you make it

But I digress. The point I'm making is that photography allows so many liberties nowadays, with generative AI and post-production digital enhancement, that it's becoming increasingly difficult to see photographs of things that actually happened, as opposed to constructed reality. Which begs the question 'what's the point?'. Almost anything you see online these days probably has at least a 50% chance of simply being faked. And many of those fakes are so clever, that stupid people believe them without question.

However, one of the few genres of photography that seems to remain unsullied by such 'advancements' is good old fashioned rock'n'roll stage imagery.

It's true that social media is crammed with nonsensical clickbait such as Taylor Swift and Bruce Springsteen supposedly sharing a concert stage (which never happened); but in general terms, there's very little to be gained by enhancing stage photography with post-production any further than tweaking exposure, contrast range and saturation. And as you'll see below, you can cheat a bit with lighting.

This is the world that I inhabit, that of photographing and reviewing up-and-coming bands, and often surprisingly good tribute acts, at my local arts centre venue. Since semi-retiring from 40 years of full-time work in and around the imaging industry, I've settled into a quiet existence nowadays of snapping local and some nationally-known outfits in and around the Scottish Borders.

Local vocal

The great thing about intimate local venues in small towns is their fiercely loyal following. It's much like non-league football clubs such as Fleetwood FC or Grimsby Town, EFL League Two teams, which command perhaps the most enthusiastic fan clubs. For many of the supporters of such outfits, not attending a game is simple apostasy.

Likewise, many people attend Mac Arts in Galashiels, my town – (www.macarts.scot) often to support such events as 'open mic' nights and 'incubator' acts. Even when the Scottish weather is biting cold, the rain almost horizontal from the latest storm, punters still trudge to that old refurbished church, buy a can of beer from the Mac Arts bar and cheer on the acts.

The less well-known performers are usually very good, but they also have nationally recognised outfits appearing. For example, Nick Heyward, China Crisis, and The Buzzcocks are booked for this coming winter. Irrespective of who's appearing, sometimes the point is to turn up, spend some money and keep the place open. It's a solid community thing which is not to be underestimated.

According to *The Scotsman* newspaper, in an article on 25th September 2025, Mac Arts was awarded 2nd best independent music venue in Scotland. The article



Highly rated local band Glider playing on stage at Mac Arts.



Uninspiring venue? A different view worked, right, for Rachel Parga.

stated: "It is a great venue run by a highly efficient team of passionate music lovers. From fledgling bands to global touring acts, MacArts embraces them all."

I'm proud to be one of their 'unofficial' photographers and social media supporters. And there is a simple pleasure in photographing a band not 20 feet in front of you, whose members are usually very grateful for the images that I send them, and the venue, completely FOC.

Mac Arts has great lighting, although a couple of times I've had to liaise with the stage manager to tone down the cold LED output, sometimes primarily blue / cyan, which played havoc with the white balance on my Canon DSLR. On that occasion, my image of an Oasis tribute band (*bottom of page 7*) was rescued by posterising in post production. I think the technique only worked because it was an Oasis cover act. Maybe it wouldn't have been an appropriate strategy for the local choral society.

Generally speaking, the atmosphere and physical size of small venues make for great photographic opportunities. Also, unlike at large concert halls, I no longer have to put up with self-important people dressed in tracksuits and lanyards, holding two-way radios and a smoulderingly bad attitude.

Tom's top tips

So here are a few lessons I've learned about this sort of photography:

- The trick is sometimes about what you DO NOT show. For example, look at the two images top of page, of singer/songwriter/covers artiste Rachel Parga, who was playing in a British Legion venue near

Blackpool in 2019. The place was the most basic 'clubhouse' you could ever imagine, making the stage in *Phoenix Nights* look like the Albert Hall.

Simply shooting Rachel contre-jour, with the camera set to Auto (or A for Amateur, as I call it) against the set of three little lights behind her head completely removed the harsh basic reality. The venue could have been Wembley or Madison Square Garden. No AI, just selective camera placement and basic photographic principles.

- Then there are the drummers. You know, those people who are known to 'hang about with musicians' (sorry!). Always try to get a decent shot of those powerhouses, usually sitting at the rear of the stage, people so often overlooked but essential to the success of any band.

- Also, try to get a wide shot of at least three people at once, like the guys from the band Glider (*page 5*). For promo-pic purposes, acts like to have a shot with everyone included. That's often very tricky, sometimes only possible if they all line up at the front to take a bow after the encore. So don't put the camera back in its bag too early.

- Don't be afraid of 'Dutch angles'. I've been criticised for this in the past but people tend to like them. I know people don't usually stand playing a guitar at 45 degrees to the perpendicular, but that's rock'n'roll for you.

- Look out for frizzy hair! There's little more impressive than an artiste lit with a coloured light right behind their head and that halo hair effect adding to the magic. If you position yourself just right, you might even get a bit of creative flair into the bargain.



- Always try to hold off pressing the shutter release until the subject has their face unobscured by a microphone. Lightning-fast reactions are required sometimes to capture great facial expressions and/or people leaping about the stage, like the lead singer and saxophonist pictured here (The Springsteen Sessions) – two people clearly enjoying their work, and it shows.

- When photographing musicians for flyers or album covers, don't be afraid to take them completely out of context. Here are two photos, taken 35 years apart of two guitarists, Niko Nikolov, Clapton cover genius, fill-flashed to the max on a sunny patio of a Tenerife hotel. Then there's Robert Draper, now a classical composer and retired solicitor, posing for me as a student

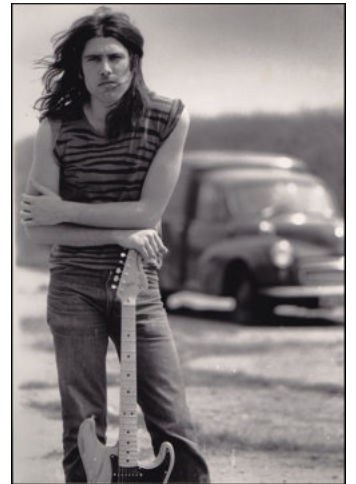




photographer, in a dismal East Midlands field somewhere with a 1960s post office van in the background.

• Lastly, there are the 'album cover' band pictures, with band members sitting around some industrial concrete faceless demolition site or whatever. Seen here the Red Monroes, an outfit from Derby. Such images might be a bit hackneyed but always still appreciated by anyone who's ever seen a U2 cover.

So there you have it, a few tips on trying to become a legend in your own lunchtime, right on your back door. Give it a try. You never know, your camera might suddenly start going up to 11!



Top, fill flash and a Tenerife hotel patio made a quick promo portrait of guitarist Niko Nikolov.



Above, 1960s black and white of a young Robert Draper – now a classical composer.

Left: Fleetwood Bac, with a great Stevie Nicks tribute band lead singer.

Dutch angles and big hair with stage backlight, above. The LED blues, below, posterised for an Oasis cover act shot – stage light colour may need this.



A fusion of Arts and Eras in Photo Dalkeith



Top – John Kitchen plays square piano rather than harpsichord, with Magnus Walker (tenor), Caroline Taylor (soprano) and the thundering bass of Brian Bannatyne-Scott. Above, Robin Gillanders (left) and Peter France (right) talk about Rousseau, his music and his garden. Left, Dalkeith Palace is now an arts venue thanks to the Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust. Below, informal print and book sales in the pop-up café, and the scale of the formal exhibition which featured seventeen photographers (and a major camera club) through many of the palace's rooms, dating back to 1711.



Art, musical, literary, film and photographic festivals often start as small events created by the enthusiasm and connections of a few individuals. The Rencontres d'Arles grew from a seed planted long ago by Lucien Clergue; Derby's Format Festival was founded little over a decade ago by Louise Fedotov-Clements. Others start from an idea within a photographic society or co-operative. All rely in the end on having access to exhibition and meeting space, with civic or academic support.

Photo Dalkeith started last year with the benefit of input from Edinburgh's Studies in Photography organisation, Midlothian Camera Club and most notably the partnership of The Buccleuch Living Heritage Trust. While the Duke of Buccleuch has Bowhill near Selkirk as his seat and home, Dalkeith Palace has been made the centre of a parkland estate open to the public, and a venue for events.

Walter Dalkeith, the Duke's eldest son and Earl of Dalkeith, is an accomplished fine art photographer – and so this festival has earned a place and a patron. His black and white documenting of life and landscape on Scott lands formed a fascinating part of the 2025 festival exhibitions which ran through all of September.

The final audience event on October 4th was a recital of 'The Music of the Enlightenment' with operettas for harpsichord and three voices written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and – taking a libretto poke as well as a musical one – by Mozart at the age of just twelve. This chamber performance was introduced by Oxford Professor of French Emeritus Peter France, and photographer Robin Gillanders whose prints hung on the walls of the room. Robin had been drawn to make monochrome studies of Rousseau's garden at Ermenonville near Paris, inspired by the musings the philosopher wrote during walks through the garden in the final years of his life. The large prints matched the scale of the palace ballroom, with quotes associated with each walk beside them.

For information on Photo Dalkeith 2026, see Dalkeith Country Park Events – <https://www.dalkeithcountrypark.co.uk/events/> – sign up to the Arts & Exhibitions notifications.

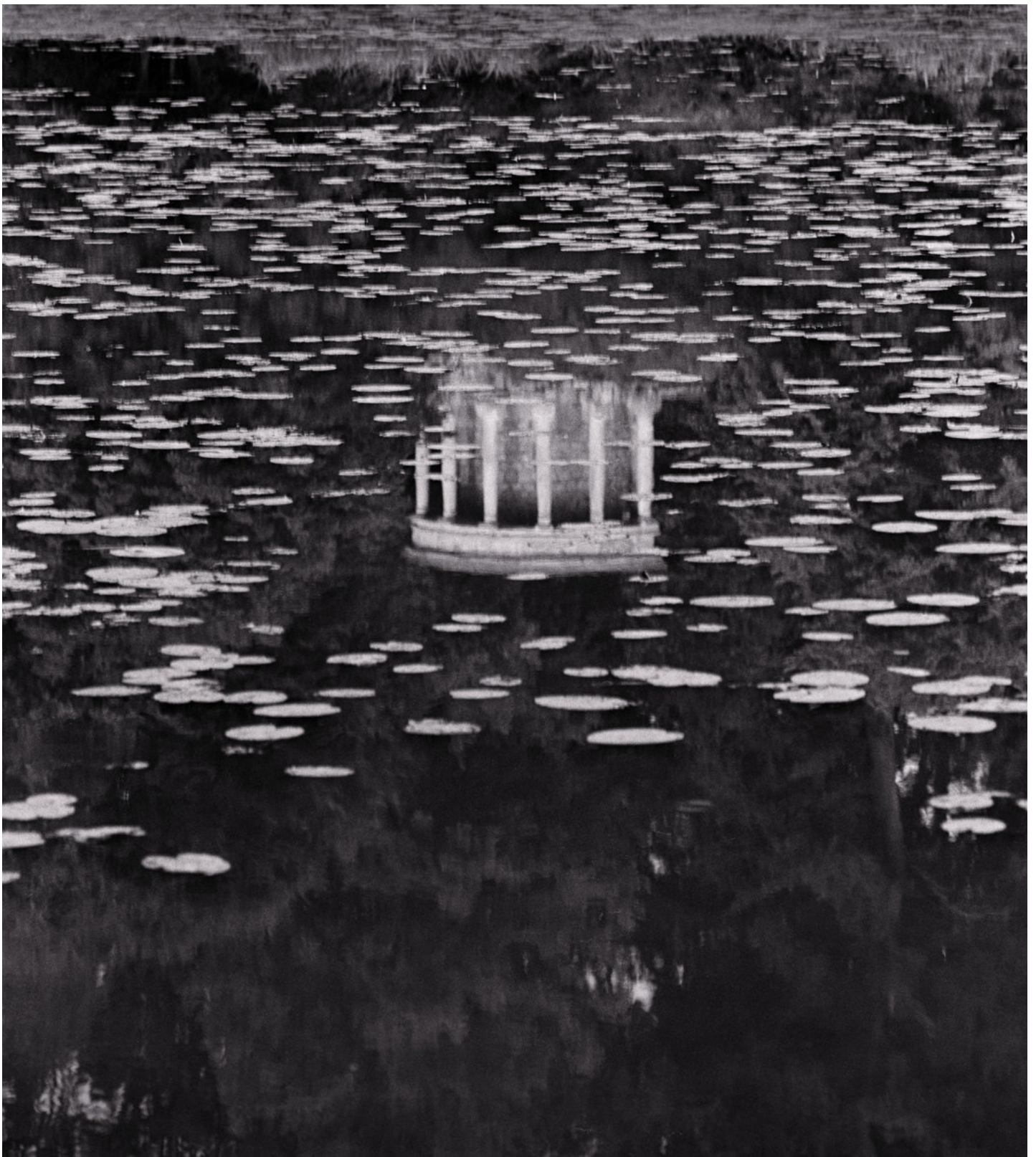




Second Walk

"A TEPID LANGOUR saps all my faculties, the vital spirit is gradually dying down within me, my soul no longer flies up without effort from its decaying prison of flesh...

...finding no food left on earth for my soul... I seek all its nourishment within myself."



Fourth Walk

"IN ALL ETHICAL questions I have always found it best to be guided by the voice of conscience rather than the light of reason.

My moral instinct has never deceived me".



Ninth Walk

“I HAVE SEEN few if any happy people,
but I have seen many who were
contented, and of all the sights that
have come my way this is the one that
has left me most contented myself.

It is only when I am alone that I am
my own master, at all other times I am
the plaything of all who surround me”

COASTAL DREAMS

Photography, for me, never began with ambition. It began as survival. As a way of finding stillness when life felt anything but still. Coastal Dreams is not only a body of work, it is the trace of a personal journey, a record of how the coast became my teacher, my therapy, and my companion.

Finding my way

There was a time when just leaving the house felt overwhelming. I often carried the weight of thoughts I couldn't escape from, depression and anxieties that pressed down hard.

It was easy to stay still — but not the kind of stillness that heals. It was the stillness of being stuck.

I discovered that what helped me most was giving myself a goal, a reason to step outside. The camera became that reason. It was an anchor, something to hold on to



Nigel Thomas has self-published a book to coincide with an exhibition of just twelve selected images. It's as much a book to read as the look at even though the photographs dominate it – and there are far more than twelve.

when the rest of life felt uncertain. And so, on days when I might otherwise have retreated, I picked up my kit and made my way to the coast.

The coastline is never the same twice. Sometimes it welcomes you with wide skies and glistening light. Other times it confronts you with winds that cut through you and grey seas that churn endlessly. At first, I wanted control. I wanted calm seas, perfect skies, golden light. But the coast quickly taught me otherwise. It gives you what it gives. No more, no less.

Slowing down

That acceptance was the first lesson. The second came through the discipline of long exposure photography. To work with exposures of 30 seconds, a minute, sometimes longer, you can't rush. You set up the tripod carefully. You study the movement in the tide and clouds.



You wait for the light to shift. You calculate the exposure, then you wait again.

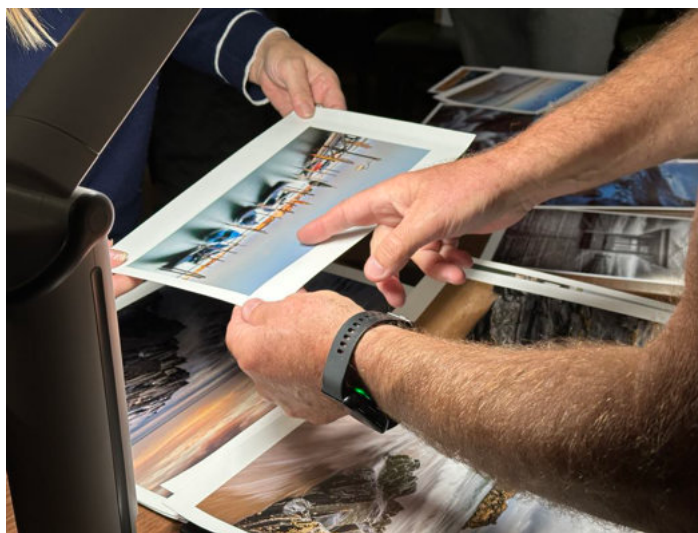
Those minutes waiting while the shutter stayed open became moments of meditation. At first, I filled them with fidgeting, with checking my phone, with impatience. But over time, I began to settle into them. I began to listen — to the gulls overhead, to the crash and hiss of waves retreating across pebbles, to the quiet rhythm of my own breathing.

Slowing down became more than part of my photography. It became part of me.

Failures and lessons

Not every trip produced great results. In fact, most didn't. Rain streaked the lens. The wind shook the tripod. Sometimes, after hours of effort, I would come home with nothing I considered worth keeping, or sharing.

But even those days gave me something. They gave me time outside. They gave me perspective. They gave me the reminder that not



Checking inkjet prints, top – Nigel is a Permajet ambassador. Above, checking the first copy off the press.

everything in life needs to be productive to be worthwhile. Nature is under no obligation to meet our expectations, and neither, perhaps, are we.

I began to see failure not as defeat, but as part of the process. Just as the tide advances and retreats, so too did my attempts behind the camera. Each retreat was only temporary. The sea would always return, and so would I.

From Escape to Expression

At first, my trips to the coast were simply escape. They were about leaving behind the noise in my head, the pressures of daily life. But slowly, they became more than that.

I realised I was no longer just recording what the coastline looked like. I was expressing what it felt like. My long exposure images softened the waves into mist, stretched the skies into brushstrokes, and reduced the landscape to its essence. These weren't literal views. They were emotional ones, translations of the quiet I was finding within myself.







Top left – ‘Silent Signal’. Bottom left – ‘Tide of Memory’, both featured in the book and exhibition.
 Above – ‘Sentinels at Sunset’, from the book and exhibition, as are the previous two pages showing ‘Dawn Divide’ (left) and ‘Return to Light’ (right).
 Above – one of Nigel’s images not featured, as he continues to produce new work.



That shift, from escape to expression, marked a turning point. Photography was no longer just therapy. It was becoming art.

Coastal dreams

Looking back, the title *Coastal Dreams* almost named itself. Every time I looked at the images, I saw something dreamlike in them — the soft, blurred water, the timeless patience of the rocks, the skies that seemed to float. But it was more than an aesthetic. It was a reflection of how I felt by the sea, on the coast. It was like I had stepped into another state of being, one where time moved differently, where thoughts slowed, where peace became possible.

Dreams are not about control. They flow. They surprise. They sometimes unsettle, sometimes soothe. The coast is the same. And so the project found its name, and with it, its identity.

Seven years of becoming

This was not a quick project. It took years, not in a linear, planned way, but in a slow unfolding.

Seven years of returning to the same coastlines, sometimes with hope, sometimes with doubt. Seven years of experimenting with exposures, filters, compositions. Seven years of learning to see differently. And, most importantly, seven years of internal change.

During that time, I learned to let go of the idea of perfection. To accept instead the beauty of what is. The images became less about the technical and more about the meaningful. Less about showing a place, more about showing a way of being in that place.

Acceptance and gratitude

What the coast gave me most of all was acceptance. Acceptance that some days would yield nothing. Acceptance that storms would roll in and plans would wash away. Acceptance that failure is part of the rhythm, just as much as success.

And from that acceptance grew gratitude. Gratitude for the days when the light did align, when the sea stilled into glass, when the camera captured exactly what I felt. But also gratitude for the days when nothing worked, because even then, I had stood at the edge of the world and breathed the fresh air.



The exhibition

All of this came together earlier this year when *Coastal Dreams* became an exhibition at The World of Le Fook Art Gallery. 60 mounted prints with the signature, 12 framed with pride and accomplishment. To see these images, chosen carefully from seven years of work, displayed together on the walls was overwhelming.

They weren't just prints to me, they were milestones, each one holding the memory of a day, a struggle, a breakthrough, or a lesson. Seeing others engage with them, pause in front of them, reflect on them. That was one of the most humbling experiences of my life.

The choice to print on Permajet Photo Art Silk 290 was deliberate. That paper had become a favourite and has an almost magical quality. It holds detail so well, the special gentle textured finish is just perfect for my work, mainly long exposure coastal landscapes. When the ink hits the paper, it really comes to life with the silk finish catching the light giving the prints a presence that feels both physical and dreamlike. It was the perfect match for the vision of *Coastal Dreams*.

The book

And now, the book. *Coastal Dreams* in book form feels like both a conclusion and a beginning.

A conclusion, because it gathers together the journey, the lessons, the images, and the words into one tangible object. A beginning, because it allows me to share that journey with others in a way that is lasting and portable.

The book includes many images created over those seven years, alongside reflections on what they mean to me, and what I learned along the way. The final section is reserved for the twelve images that were framed centre pieces of the exhibition. The distilled essence of the project, the culmination of everything the coast has taught me.

Holding the finished book in my hands was an emotional moment. It is more than paper and ink, words and photos. It is the embodiment of patience, persistence, therapy, and growth.

Learning and becoming

When I reflect on what *Coastal Dreams* has truly been about, it comes down to this, a journey of learning, becoming, enduring, and patience.

I have learned that nature is the greatest teacher if we are willing to listen.

I have become someone more accepting, more present, more at peace.

I have endured the days of doubt, failure, and emptiness, and

discovered that they too have value. And I have cultivated patience, the kind that waits not just for the shutter to close, but for life itself to unfold at its own pace.

Gratitude above all

Finally, I cannot tell this story without speaking of gratitude. Gratitude to Steve and The World of Le Fook Art Gallery for displaying the exhibition. Gratitude to everyone who has supported me along the way. And above all, gratitude to my family.

To our sons, our daughters-in-law, and our grandchildren — you are my joy. And to Coralie, my wife, my best friend, my soulmate, my everything, your love and support are the foundation of all of this. Without you, there would be no *Coastal Dreams*.

Closing reflection

The coast doesn't fix everything. But it teaches. It teaches patience, humility, and presence. And behind my camera, I found a way to meet life as it is, not as I wished it would be.

Coastal Dreams is my story, but I hope it becomes more than that. I hope it is an invitation, to pause, to breathe, to slow down, and to find gratitude in whatever the tide brings.

— Nigel Thomas
Landscape Photographer
Mental Health Advocate
Print Educator
Author



Facebook — nigelthomasphotos

Instagram — nigelthomas17

Coastal Dreams

A4 Hardcover £30 plus P&P
Ebook — digital download £10

If anyone would like to purchase either version please email Nigel
nigetom@btinternet.com

Nigel had his book printed by Mixam, the print-on-demand company we use for Cameracraft. We have received an ordered copy and can confirm that it's up to the standards of commercial art photographic books.

How to order a printed copy of this magazine

UK – www.mixam.co.uk

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From £10 plus postage

If you download your PDF file from a link provided to you by Icon Publications Ltd, the file will have sufficient resolution to print a top quality copy of *Cameracraft* should you want to have this.

It's very important to pick exactly the right specification.

For example, just changing the paper weight in the UK – whether to lighter or heavier paper – bumps the cost up well above a basic (which has increased from £8 in May to £10). Selecting the wrong size or binding, or number of pages, or requiring rapid delivery will also increase the cost or introduce problems.

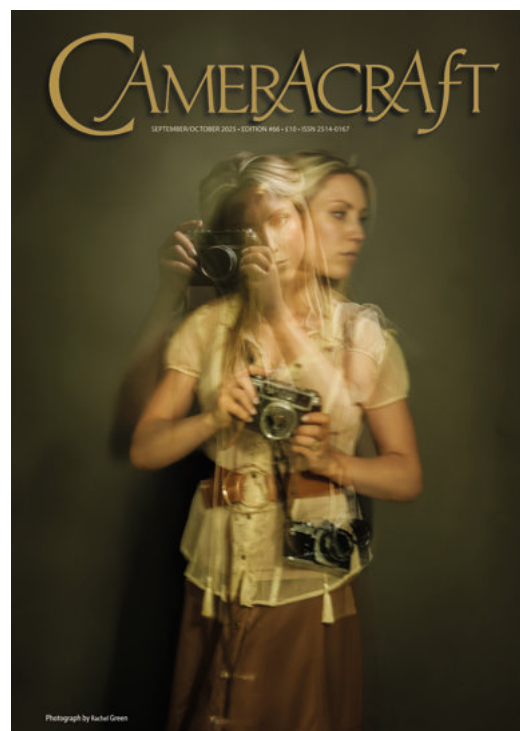
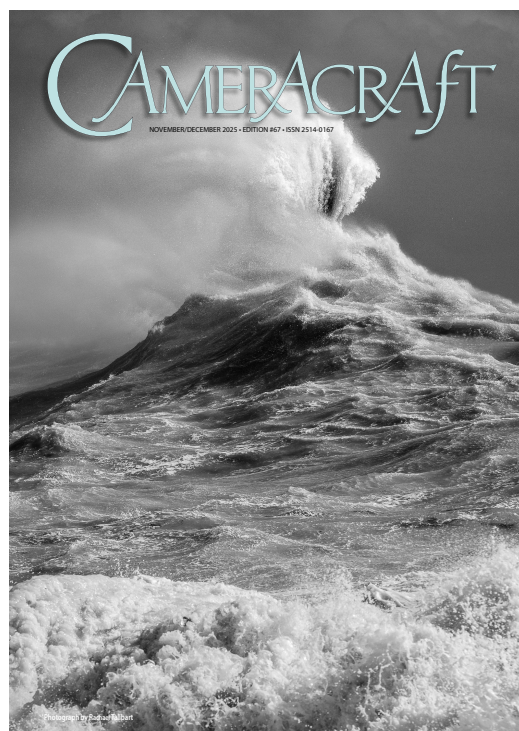
For *Cameracraft*, the correct choices are Magazine printing, Colour, Portrait orientation, A4 size, 130gsm Silk paper, stapled, 48 pages, no additional cover. The screen shot (right) shows this set up. It was made on April 29th and would, if a copy had been ordered then, have had a May 7th delivery date. The quality of print is identical to earlier printed editions.

Simply go to the UK or USA Mixam website, upload your high res digital PDF download and get a printed copy at any time.

If you use the links on this page there's a 20% margin on the basic cost, which also applies to the annuals below, and helps fund the magazine.

Go buy the book!

By far the best way to have printed copies of *Cameracraft* is to take all six issues from a year and make them into a book. We've done this for **2024** and now for **2023** as the combined file is tricky to assemble – it's necessary to find a day or two to get into the old documents and convert them as needed. We hope to add earlier 'annuals' the same way in future.



To order this edition, <https://bit.ly/3JwsgKk> To order Sept/Oct, <https://bit.ly/46cTpKU>

To order July/August 2025 click <https://bit.ly/40yYObQ>; for May/June, <https://bit.ly/45QQyG8>

To order the 2024 volume – <https://bit.ly/46kN3th> For 2023 volume – <https://bit.ly/4mBKdW7>



You can order copies using our **PrintLink** directly from Mixam UK., for around £35 plus post.

This is a perfect-bound gloss laminated paperback (cover above). We first had one of these made – at much greater expense in the early days of digital print on demand – for the *Cameracraft* first series issues, 2012-2015. It takes up a fraction of the bookshelf space used for binders and for our archives all the past editions will be reprinted in this form.

BEYOND THE NINTH WAVE

There's an ancient legend from the celtic shores of Ireland about the druids of the Tuatha Dé Danaan turning away the Milesian invaders by tricking them into taking their boats 'beyond the ninth wave' to wait before landing. That wave which never forms was the boundary of the otherworld, a barrier they could not cross and thus never return from.

Rachael Talibart has built a worldwide following with powerful compositions contrasting pure elemental force with the deep calm of ocean and shore

Rachael Talibart photographs waves far beyond the ninth, and in her successful photo art book 'Sirens' invoked entities from the pantheons and legends of the sea-

lands of Greek islands and Norse fjords alike. Each study in 'Sirens' is titled accordingly, and examples like *Poseidon Rising* on this page have now sold out as limited edition

fine art pigment-ink prints. Her gallery work commands figures over £5,000 though collectors who step in early can acquire even large prints – typically 140cm – for less, and small editions coexist. Even her photographic books, which she originally doubted could sell out of a first print run of a thousand, now exchange hands for several hundred pounds.



With years of long voyage sailing on the high seas behind her, former lawyer Rachael lives on the English south-east coast where she does find many subjects. There are dramatic conditions to be found on open water seen from piers if not from on deck. Her use of motion-freezing high shutter speeds sets her apart from most seascape photographers today. Mountain ranges, black lava shores and sharp volcanic rocks not yet polished by the sea are also in her sights – as are humble shells stranded by the tide on familiar shores, or the patterns made when weaving water flow creates ‘ropes of sand’.

It was the dramatic studies from ‘Sirens’ that caught your editor’s attention after hearing the Irish singer and storyteller Tommy Sands recount the story of the Ninth Wave. It was just the usual

Facing page: ‘Poseidon Rising’.

Right: ‘Maelstrom’.

Below: ‘Melusine’.





coincidence which pulls magazine content together.

However the dramatic and often dark waves with their frozen grimaces and violence proved just an introduction to Rachael's exceptional portfolios and career. There's little point in filling a page here with all the publications, exhibitions and awards she has achieved mostly in the last ten years. You can visit her website rachaeltalibart.com and study the images we show here along with many more, and accompanying information. She's been a

prolific writer and podcaster as her bibliography confirms.

Rachael is in great demand as a workshop leader, whether on-line or out in the real world where she finds her subjects. Clearly it is rarely practical to demonstrate or lead a group in the kind of conditions she found for 'Sirens' but she's just as at home beach-combing for subjects as climbing vertiginous peaks, venturing into ice tunnels or braving the kind of storms where you are told not to go near the shore or harbour. She's on the workshop leader

team for Ocean Capture, who run workshops in a more vacation-friendly environment, the French Côte d'Azur – oceancapture.com – and her own on location and in the classroom in the south-east of England.

She has won many awards, including Black and White Photographer of the Year, and has been shortlisted in the Sony World Photography Awards. However, it's her record of repeated features in two magazines which home in on interests – *Outdoor Photography*

and *Black and White Photography* – which sets her apart. She's also been seen in the mainstream press from the *Daily Mail* to *The Guardian* and her credits include a double-page spread in the *Sunday Times Magazine*.

Her first book, *Sirens*, was published in 2018 and despite the disrupted market which arrived shortly afterwards from Covid-19 it sold out. This edition was a typical high-end 64 page retail edition 295 x 240mm by Triplekite Books.

Such was the popularity of





Rachael's monochromatic approach can be pure, as with 'Dali' (top left) and the two images on this page. It can also use the subtle hues seen in seawater – 'Makara'; bottom left, is a remarkable corkscrew of spume but the greenish glow makes it. 'Loki-1' above needs no explanation! The dark sea of the print on the left earned this the tile of 'Nyx'.

Sirens that Rachael worked with her chosen gallery to create larger format fine art editions, with photographs from 2016 to 2023 in a large format (330 x 430mm) on heavy art paper. Special Gallery Edition copies do still remain for £350 from Taylor-Jones & Son, the gallery in Deal. These have a print on the cover and a slip-case, while Collector's Edition copies at £500 include an A3 fine art print and come in a handmade clamshell box. This is a high value market! See taylorjonesandson.co.uk

She has also worked with Kozy Books, first on a substantial small format book *The Coast*, and in 2020 on *Tides and Tempests*, which featured 120



Two prints from the portfolio 'Sea Changes', above. 'Blue Wash', left, and 'Hydra', right.



The portfolio 'After Earth' uses strong black and white compositions and often desolate locations to convey a sense of a terrain without (or after the end of) human presence. Alongside scenes of only rock, sand, sky and water she includes two glimpses of wrecks (Relic IV, above left, is one). Most of the print are pure nature, like 'The Lost World', above right.

Her series 'Ghost in the Shell' shows wave and tide flow round beached shells, most with longer exposures and an art-table framing with her camera parallel to the beach. As the 'Sea Changes' studies the framing excludes distractions and presents nature as its own art. In other portfolios, Rachael uses intentional camera movement and long tripod exposures. These techniques are not merely used to demonstrate the technique itself, as we see from many photographers, but are used in service to her pre-visualisation.







Ethereal colour in two from the portfolio series 'Sanctum'. 'Dawn, Rosamol' (left) and 'White Cliffs' above. All images ©Rachael Tabilbart.

images in a 160-page volume. Both are sold out and out of print, an unusual outcome which reflects her reputation in markets including the USA.

Exhibitions matter in the world of higher value art photography, and Rachael's first small solo show was in Weybridge in 2015. She had immersed herself in camerawork after attending a Venice workshop with Michael Levin not long before this exhibition. Her City solicitor career was in the past and she had raised her children while putting herself through two English Literature degrees. She rediscovered photography, originally one of her many

interests before digital arrived, from a module just introduced by the Open University. Levin, a Canadian photographer, explained the value of art gallery representation and working for the fine art market and Rachael grasped how this approach can open up a rewarding path of development. That workshop was organised by Jonathan Chritchley FRGS of Ocean Capture, who agreed to mentor her through the process of finding her niche and beginning to earn from photography. Fifteen months after deciding to make this her life, work and future, her investment in time and money started to bring returns.

As for technique, Rachael has long had a firm grasp of how to choose shutter speed in particular and to expose for the conditions. Photographing dramatic waves calls for a technique not unlike sports action – including using continuous sequence at whatever rate the camera can capture. That's because the elusive shapes of those waves change in a split second. When the weather is forecast to be promising for whatever approach she wants to take, she heads for locations she knows. Sometimes one spot, in stormy weather, will yield several final images from a sequence. For the more contemplative work the

result may be just a single frame, with the emphasis on waiting for the light and best conditions.

While Chritchley's focus on black and white has certainly influenced her, Rachael uses the subtle hints of colour present in the naturally monochromatic hues of the sea and has developed distinct post-processing and grading styles which can be seen in her different portfolios and books.

There's much that photographers can learn from her success as well as her creative output.

– DK

See: www.rachaeltalibart.com





MISTS AND MYSTERIES

Enrico Fossati captures the spirits of wild woodlands in Europe as they change through the seasons

Theming the portrayal of his chosen mountain locations, Enrico Fossati draws parallels between the wilds of Italy, France, Switzerland or Portugal... and Tolkien's Middle Earth.

Woods of oak and beech and sycamore, shrouded in cloud, become Fangorn or Lothlorian, and occasionally Mirkwood. The moss-clad twisted forms of old trees take on personalities thanks to

viewpoints which make their limbs seem human – they bend and beckon, and often tower over the camera's ground level position. Strong wide-angle perspectives emphasise the drama. They can be











*The forest images have titles – above, 'Sabbath' but below simply 'Forest'.
The impressive tree shown on page 27 and upper right he calls the 'King'
of his woodlands.*



like the view of a child lost in a dark fairy tale, and the silhouetted forms in the fog of the cloud forest could be from illustrations to such tales by Arthur Rackham

Enrico knows his locations, as the summer shot on the right shows when compared to the autumn version which faces the opening of this article. He's returned to almost the exact lens position.

In his web portfolios, all seasons are represented but we've preferred to show more autumnal and winter examples. The low sun striking between branches below could be found in the early morning light as the mist is driven away, but equally well in the winter months. The clouds creating the mist in these woods don't appear the dull grey you may find in lowland fog conditions – there's bright sun lighting them from above in many images, and Enrico aims into the light which boosts the aerial perspective.

However, it's his videos and tutorials – not to mention workshops in the French Alps – which reveal just how complex some of Fossati's post-production is. Some images are relatively straight, but others rely on blending two or more captures with wide-ranging



All photographs © Enrico Fossati



adjustments, a taste of which you can see in the screen shot from his tutorials promotion above. The landscapes don't just echo fantasy film and illustration, they are often fantasy in themselves.

Enrico works with a Sony A7RIV and an interesting lens bag – G Master 12-24 f2.8, FE 24-105mm f4 G OSS, G Master FE 100-400 mm plus Voigtlander 10mm f5.6 Hyper Wide Heliar and TT Artisan 11mm f2.8 Fisheye. e uses polarising and ND filters, a DJI Mavic 5 Mini drone, Gitzo tripods and to the latest Adobe software adds DxO Nik Collection, Topaz Detail, Boris FX, and Tony Kuyper TK9 Panel.

See his website for the tutorials, workshops and full portfolios – <https://www.enricofossati.it/>



Smartphone photo reportage

The 'big camera' was not be used when Gary Friedman went to Uganda to document the work of medics seeking solutions to the problem of high newborn and infant infection rates

This is the story of what I believe is Nobel-prize-worthy work.

I first met Dr Steve Schiff in person at one of my photography seminars. Earlier he had congratulated me on my photojournalism work in Vietnam back in 2018, a country he knows well through his work. After Day 1 of the seminar, over dinner he told me stories of his work, the enormity of the challenges, and the small but measurable impact he's been able to make so far. After that I knew that this was a compelling story that needed to be told. So far I've made two trips to Uganda (one in 2024, the second in 2025) to document his work, both as a photojournalist and a writer, and bring the story home.

Dr Schiff, a professor of Neurosurgery, Vice Chair for Global Health in Neurosurgery, and Professor of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health at Yale University, has been working in Uganda for the past 20 years, searching for



Above, mother with newborns in a village. Below left, Dr Schiff with a mother whose baby has spina bifida causing hydrocephalus – and the mother sitting for a portrait with her child.

the source of infections that have been plaguing newborns in the Jinja region. These infections can lead to Hydrocephalus (water on the brain) and a malformations of the spine. Two years ago the source was finally identified – a bacterium called *Paenibacillus thiaminolyticus* that

was once thought harmless, although it's possible that this strain could be as deadly as anthrax.

Now the challenge is to figure out how the bacterium is making its way to the newborns. Is it through the soil? The water? Could it be passed on through the mother?

Could it be the thousands-of-years-old tradition of placing cow dung on the open umbilical cord?

And so a multi-pronged approach was designed:

1. An army of 750 Village Health Team workers was assembled to venture into the remote villages, talk to the new mothers and gather data. They will also double as medical ambassadors, since these villages often rely on traditional healers (sometimes referred to as Witch Doctors).

2. Venture out into the remote areas of Jinja to take environmental samples (soil/water/animal dung)

3. Create a large database-backed Geographical Information System to help them see trends in the mountains of data.

All of this required extensive bureaucratic approval from the King of Busoga, the Ugandan government, and the US government. Then there were cultural barriers like lack of access to even basic vitamin supplements like folic acid that are



known to benefit pregnancies, and the witch doctors that have been known to make ailments worse.

As of this writing, the soil specimens are in cold storage, waiting to be flown to a lab at Yale for analysis. Nothing happens quickly in Uganda.

I've written an article going into much more detail about the history, the political and cultural barriers, and some of the successes his team has had so far. But this is a photography magazine and not a medical news journal, so if you'd like the full story about the project, his team and his exploits, I refer you to this Friedman Archives blog post which tells the full story nicely:

<https://tinyurl.com/FriedmanArchives>

"What about Idi Amin?"

When I would tell people I was heading to Uganda for this assignment I received an almost universal response from friends and relatives: "Is Idi Amin still in charge?" (He was overthrown in 1979.) That's how little we know about Uganda. Regretfully very little has changed in the country since that time. They are still very poor with few natural resources, no irrigation other than rain, and continue to grapple with basic problems like food rotting in the distribution pipeline, and a high rate of teenage pregnancies. Despite this lack of progress, I found the spirit of the people there to be positive. Even in the poorest areas of the remote villages, I didn't see any of the PSSAC (Poor, Sad, Starving African Children) that *National Geographic* was famous for publishing during their heyday.

And so that's what I captured. And I put together an old-fashioned slide show/YouTube video to give you a balanced feel for what I saw and felt during my 2 visits:

<https://tinyurl.com/4jbkubxs>

Smart shooting

"Gee, those are great pictures. What kind of camera do you have?"

I was told upon my arrival that everyone there got intimidated by my big cameras and so I had to leave all of my gear at the hotel. Instead I used my smartphone exclusively – a Samsung Galaxy S23 Ultra, which has a 35mm equivalent optical zoom range of between 13mm and 200mm and delivers 12



MP images. The 12MP resolution didn't concern me – after all, I've had images published by my 6MP Konica Minolta camera back in the day, and besides, modern smartphones handle wide dynamic range scenes better than the big cameras do, without requiring shooting RAW and post-processing. This was especially important since so many of the images had dark faces and bright skies in the background. The phone handled them all perfectly on its own. The phone was also used to interview the key players in this story, and then automatically

Top, with premature baby, in a neonatal ward. Above, Dr Carmit Cohen sampling mud and dung walls for pathogens. Left, samples ready to go away for analysis.

transcribe the interview (a HUGE time saver!).

But the biggest problem I always have in assignments like this is trying to tell the story in one shot, without any staging or directing. I also had to balance being an invisible observer with also being respectful. I asked for permission before I photographed anyone, in keeping with my "Candid is Rude!" philosophy. And I would always show the pictures I just took to both break the ice and bring a smile to their faces (a huge benefit of digital cameras). Did I succeed in the "story in one shot" goal? The answer is I'm not sure. I'm never happy with my own work after the fact; I have to put the work down for a year and revisit it with fresh eyes. But I do think that between the article, the sum of all the photos and the video, I have successfully captured what it was like and let you feel like you were there.

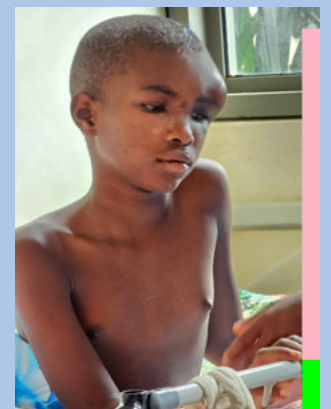
Selling the article

I'm currently in the process of trying to sell it to mainstream news outlets – something I've never done before. So far I've gathered a list of publications and editors (including *National Geographic*, since this kind of story is right up their alley) and have been sending cold feature article pitches to them for the past week. No positive response yet, but I know the odds are low.

Degrees of truth? An idea to consider

It's been said that every photograph is a lie – the direction you point the camera, or even the lens you choose, lies a little because of the things you're NOT shooting. And I try to be aware of my own biases when doing reporting like this, mindful of all the criticism classic *National Geographic* has received recently from all the woke folks. Could there be a way to mitigate this, even a little bit?

So here's an idea: Every published photo can have a vertical bar on its left side, giving the viewer an idea of how typical this scene was in the opinion of the photographer. Does every village look this neat? Are there beggars like this in EVERY city, or just this one? If I pointed the camera in the other direction, would you still be seeing the same thing? The taller the bar, the more this picture accurately represents the area. True, you're still relying on the biases of the photographer, but at least it's an attempt to paint a more accurate picture.



My idea – the green bar on the right shows that this photo taken in a hospital is not necessarily representative of what you'll see in this area.



If you follow Gary Friedman's regular blog posts, you will have seen this fascinating story of how AI – which we are all using now thanks to Adobe, Google, Apple and every other major player – allowed him to synthesize a royal portrait in the style of a profile study he made during this previous visit to Africa leading a photo safari. The pictures above show Gary's minimal but effective 'big' camera kit – Sony RX10 MkIII, two dedicated flashguns and a wireless trigger, and a lenspen. The high-speed shutter daylight flash sync allowed him to create the rim-lit profile portrait, right. In Uganda, the protocols of a celebration of the 11th anniversary of William Wilberforce Kadhumbula Gabula Nadiope IV, who is the reigning Kyabazinga (King) of Busoga, meant all Gary could do was take a quick smartphone portrait in busy surroundings and poor lighting. From this he was able to generate the framed image below. The full story is on his blog.



With no 'big' camera kit, Gary was just able to get this phone snap of the King of Busoga – but AI came to the rescue for the result on the right.

A virtual royal portrait

There are four constitutional monarchies in Uganda, and the one Dr. Schiff is currently working in is within the kingdom of Busoga. The two of them have been working together closely because the king is concerned about the abnormally high infection rates and wants to help Dr. Schiff prevent them from happening.

I met the king during our last day there; it was during the 11th anniversary celebration of the King's coronation. I brought two wireless flashes with me and a real camera in hopes that I would be able to create a dramatically-lit portrait that was suitable for, well, a king.

I succeeded, but not the way you think. I document all of that (including video of me dancing and the energy of the anniversary celebration in general) in this OTHER blog post:

<https://tinyurl.com/2zuu3zhs>



iPhone turns 17 – the Max Pro

It's as hard to imagine a world without iPhones in 2025 as it is to imagine a world without television in the 1970s. Yes, other brands of flat, pocketable, always-online screen are available, but before the iPhone launched in 2007 the definition of 'smartphone' covered a vast array of solutions, from strange brick-like thick angled screens with magnetic keyboards, to the standard flip-phone but with a web browser. Of sorts.

Even Google's first phone, the G1, hedged its bets by concealing a keyboard behind a slide-up screen, and allowed navigation with a little trackball. Apple, however, did away with almost everything beyond the screen. A few years later, from Motorola to Samsung, HTC to Huawei, the mobile phone had gone from being a brick to being a coaster.

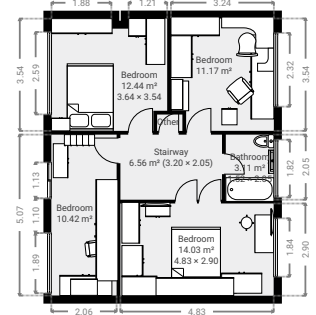
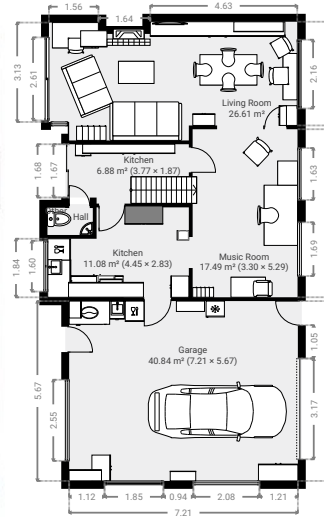
It's a coaster that has got smarter, more entwined and entrenched in our lives every year. The processing power on offer in a **2025 iPhone 17 Pro Max** is astonishing for a device intended to send messages, check directions, and take quick pictures. Equipped with a six-core A19 processor and 12GB RAM, Geekbench scores of 3592 single-core and 9116 multi-core can be compared with range-topping Apple Mac systems. Genuinely. The single core performance is not far off a Mac Studio M3, though the multi-core naturally lags behind as the desktop computer has many more cores. Next to Intel-era systems, the iPhone 17 Pro Max is almost twice as fast as the last 10-core iMacs for single core tasks, and marginally faster for multi-core.

Moving away from the processor, and looking at the whole package, the range-topping iPhone now sports three 48MP cameras, behind (equivalent focal length to) 13mm $f1.78$, 24mm $f2.2$ and 100mm $f2.8$ lenses. The latter is a periscope, tetraprism design. In addition to this three-camera bundle, there is a LIDAR sensor and a 23mm $f1.9$ front-facing camera which has been upgraded to 18MP.

The LIDAR sensor is primarily



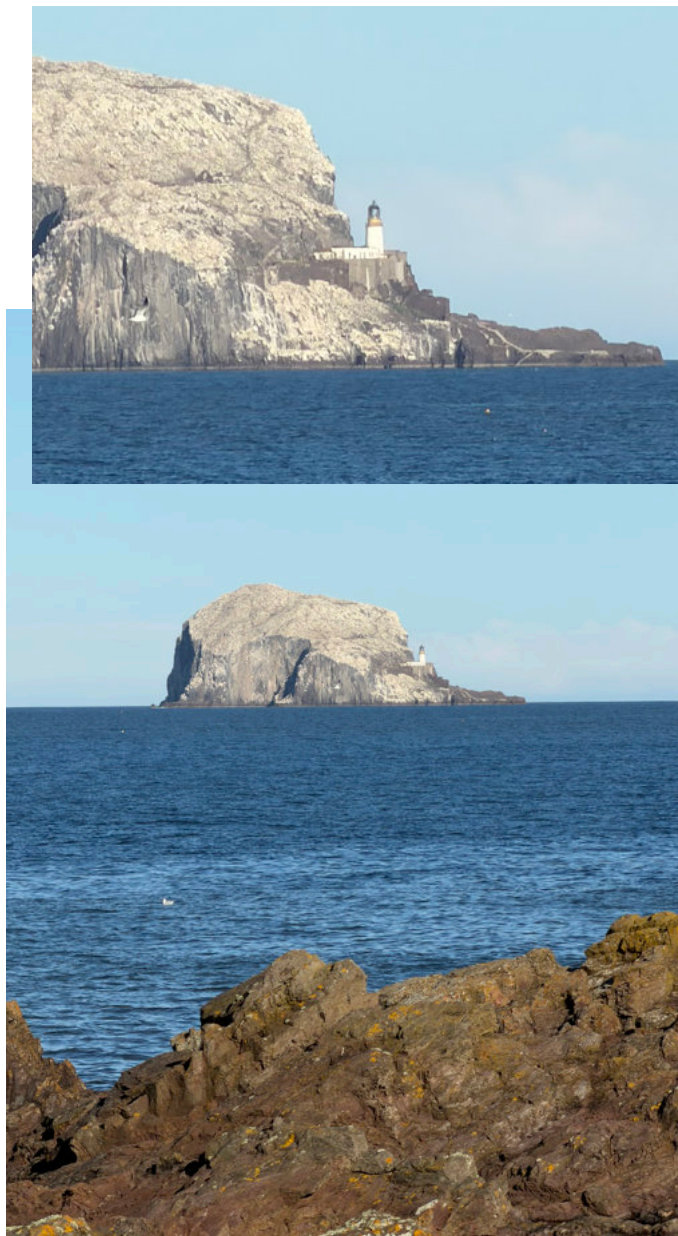
At the 200mm setting, the image is 35 megapixels. Full shot of the Bass Rock from North Berwick, below, and a 300dpi clip. The view matched a 200mm on full frame. Photo: Ailsa Burn-Murdoch.



MagicPlan app on recent iPhones and iPads with LIDAR capability can do this – rapid, accurate house plans with furniture



The new iPhone 17 Air is not equipped with the same photographic powers – but it's the slimmest one ever at 5.6mm



used to assist focus and create stacked-focus, forced depth-of-field effects for portrait mode – but it's also useful for scanning 3D objects. Part of Apple's tablet and smartphone line-up for several years, even five-year old iPad Pros can impress by scanning and rendering a floorplan in minutes using this sensor.

Interacting with the phone is dominated by the screen – 6.9 inches of sophisticated, scratch and impact-resistant multi-touch sensing laminate with 2868 × 1320 of real estate – 460dpi, refreshed at up to 120Hz in full-gamut HDR colour. It's capable of delivering brightness equivalent to EV17, or dropping back to a night mode with 1Hz refresh in case you want to see the time at a glance.

All of this, powered by a 3.8V battery that in real terms, consumes as much energy to power the phone for 12 hours as a 60W domestic lightbulb consumes in 15 minutes. The power management alone would have taxed an early desktop computer.

So it's not really a surprise to find that the price of a new full spec 2TB iPhone 17 Pro Max is £1,999 (256GB Pro from £1,099).

– Richard Kilpatrick



www.apple.com/uk/iphone-17-pro

Sigma's 20-200mm all-in-one

Last issue I looked at Sony's 2015 24-240mm. Now try a 2025 20-200mm!

In the same month the two big Japanese independent lens brands, Sigma and Tamron, announced full frame superzooms with ground-breaking specifications.

Tamron followed up their successful 28-200mm $f2.8-5.6$ Di III RXD with a new model spanning from 25mm to 200mm, offering twice the image scale at closest focus and retaining their 67mm standard filter thread. That reduction of 3mm at the wide end is significant and most will think it's not much different from 24mm.

Sigma broke entirely new ground with a 20-200mm $f3.5-6.3$ DG weighing a little less (540g against 575g), also achieving 1:2 scale in its 28-85mm zone, taking 72mm filters. The most important aspect of this lens is the 20mm end.

If I'm carrying a 24-105mm or the much heavier and bulkier ten year old Sony 24-240mm, that 24mm end is simply not wide enough. I used to say this about 28mm, that you always seem to need 24mm. Well, when you have 24mm you seem to need 20mm – many like to carry something wider like a 16-35mm.

However, a month of using the 20-200mm has persuaded me that 20mm is in practice an ideal wide end. It's never extreme in perspective or shape distortion but wide enough in a room to show three walls and if you can get right into a corner, even all four.

I carried my Laowa 10mm which is so extreme most shots need cropping, but very rarely needed it. When the Sigma was on its way back, the Viltrox 14mm $f4$ was coming to me and that, for its size and weight and more acceptable angle of view, makes a perfect pairing with the 20-200mm. Before the test lens had gone back I had bought a 20-200mm. I had no doubts about this, and the sale of other lenses covered the costs of both.



I had already been shooting with the old 24-240mm since December 2024, with no problems. The Sigma 20-200mm quickly proved to be a much better experience for most still shooting, though lacking the smoothness of optical stabilisation for movies, where it also struggled a bit in very low light using AF. For stills no such problems arose – aperture range is exactly the same, and even quickly grabbed shots of moving subjects were nailed.

The big win proves to be the weight reduction. An extra 240g combined with the much slimmer barrel and more even weight distribution from body to front rim removed any question

about which lens I preferred to use. It also fits my various kit bags better, a slightly smaller lens hood not crowding out the space or making the lens hard to lift out from the padded dividers. Added to this was better overall optical performance, with great sharpness even wide open at the long end even though the 20mm performance benefited from stopping down to $f8$.

I sold my Sony 2070mm $f4$ G – lovely lens, and better at 20mm as you would expect for a £1,250 retail price. But bulkier in my bag because of its barrel and lens hood diameters, even if lighter at 488g. What the 20-70mm misses of course is that range from 70mm to 200mm.



The difference in size and weight is game-changing – old Sony 24-240mm on the right. Bottom right photo, with 20-70mm.



The Sigma's flare resistance is remarkable. For a complex lens with 18 elements in 14 groups it showed almost no general or localised flare. Aiming directly with the sun at different positions in the frame seemed to prove it's immune – just a tiny reflection could be induced, small enough to remove instantly with *Photoshop* or ACR (thank you for this AI, despite the cost!





Carrying a 20-200mm means you can capture a huge range of subjects quickly and easily. I've chosen to show these as BW because they suited it. At 200mm above, a view west of receding hills towards Linhope from Edlingham Crags in Northumberland is insanely detailed at f8 (ISO 100). The wires on fences, twigs on trees, birds in the air 1km away, are perfectly crisp to the limit of 60MP resolution. The famous spiral staircase (one of two) in the National Trust preserved remains of Seaton Delaval needed 20mm at f8 and ISO 5000 – the custodians ask photographers NOT to lie on the floor or put a camera there for remote triggering. You'd just get away with a 24mm by crouching right down, but 20mm enables a shot without contortion.





Even at mid-range focal lengths (here, 107mm) distortion needs profile correction. From the left – uncorrected, using downloadable profile from Sigma, and finally using this profile with +130 Distortion. The official Adobe profile is now updated for Lightroom and Camera Raw, with (oddly) different profiles for Sigma L mount or Sony.

The lens proved to have one drawback – at 200mm, with its limited aperture, focusing in low light on difficult subjects like a Persian cat with snowball-like fur simply did not work at all. Generally, outdoor shots in most light focused positively at any focal length. At the wide end, no doubt aided by $f3.5$, night scenes and interiors made for equally quick and reliable AF. It's not a substitute for having a 70-200mm $f2.8$ and even an $f4$ for wedding or portrait shots, indoor events, theatre, gigs, sports and so on. It is coded by Sigma with a C for Contemporary range, another way of saying Consumer rather than professional in features.

For the landscape photographer, this is one single lens which can be your sole companion. I checked the 72mm filter compatibility at 20mm with various filters including a K&F

slim polariser with no vignetting problems at 20mm.

The vignetting referred to here is actual cut-off corners. Contrary to popular myth, filter holders and lens hoods which do not cut into the corners of the frame can not cause any vignetting of the optical kind, the darkening outside the central zone. It must be said that the 20-200mm does suffer from very strong optical vignetting anyway, even when closed down a bit at longer focal lengths. The profile gives partial correction only and it's not easy to get an evenly illuminated field. In this respect, even if you use $f11$ it's never going to produce the same 200mm picture as Sigma's 70-200mm $f2.8$ used at $f11$. If you need to do a crop towards one corner, that corner may be darker and some grad work in post-production will be needed. The Adobe profile is ineffective and

the adjustment range even at its extremes does not change the vignetting.

Below, an uncropped version of the shot top right. The optical vignetting is also not balanced – this is at 96mm, and the in-body based stabilisation has shifted the centring of the sensor on the lens circle of illumination. It's simply something you need to be aware of.

Focusing range

If a lens is going to be an all-in-one solution the close focusing and reproduction scale matter. While the distortions of a zoom like this make it a poor choice for actual copying, you may want to fill the frame with a postcard or old family photo of of a similar size.

The 20-200mm will do much more than this. Unlike Tamron's new 25-200mm which has extremely close focusing at the

wide end, this lens has a balanced close focus with the specifications quoting 1:2, half life size, as the maximum magnification. What the specs don't tell you is what focal length to set the lens at to achieve this. The closest focusing is 16.5cm and this is actually shorter than the lens extends to when set to 200mm. At 135mm to 200mm, the repro ratio is roughly 1:3.6, covering a horizontal field of 100mm. At a guessed 100mm setting, I managed 80mm or a ratio of 1:2.2. Dropped down to marked 85mm, this improved sharply to 65mm which is actually better than Sigma's claim, at 1:1.8. This holds good at 50mm, 35mm, and 28mm. However, zoom out the final step to 20mm and suddenly the closest focusable distance shifts to 220mm. An intermediate unmarked setting, guess at 24mm, results in 90mm.

Since the lens in repeated tests focused to a distance allowing better than 1:2 when set to focal lengths between 28mm to 85mm, Sigma should update their published specifications to say 1:1.8. For the best lens to subject clearance of around 60mm from filter rim to focus plane set the lens to 85mm.

Conclusion

This lens has replaced Sony's 20-70mm and older 24-240mm in my daily outfit. Need more be said?

– David Kilpatrick

<https://www.sigmauk.com>



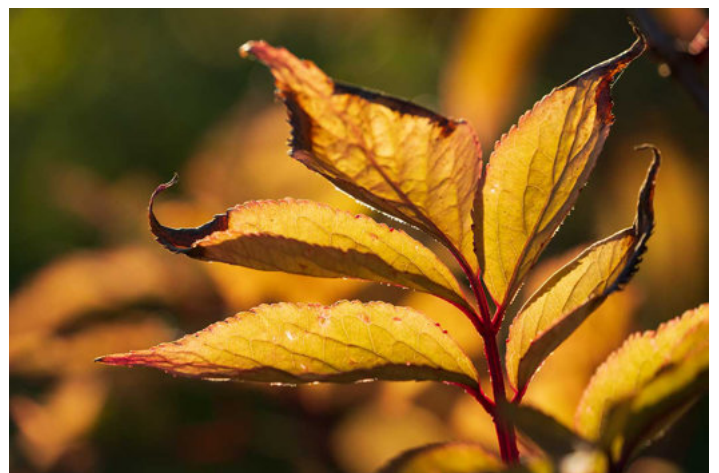
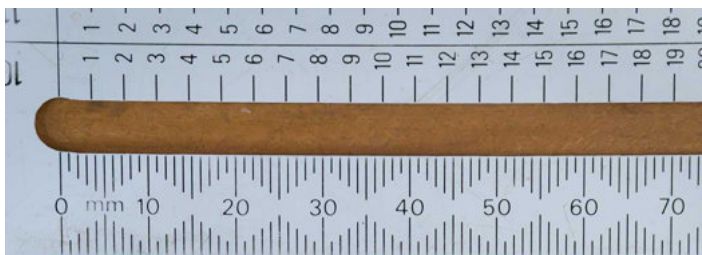
20mm 'distortion map' created by reducing scale of profile-corrected full image in Adobe Camera Raw.



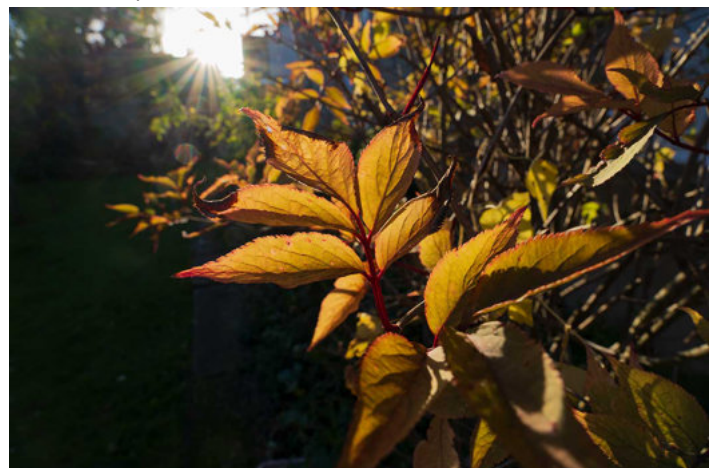
With Adobe profile applied, vignetting at 96mm and $f9$ is pronounced. Sensor based stabilisation often shifts the capture frame off centre from the lens axis, resulting in a slightly asymmetrical corner darkening.



A crop to 7000 pixels wide from the A7RV frames is still a large file, and at 96mm, 1/1600s, f9, and ISO 640 the sharpness is the horses is perfect. Even the faces in the grandstand, though slightly out of focus, are recognisable. However, the f6.3 maximum aperture rules out isolating the horses by differential focus.



Close focusing – left, at desk level, a copy of a 7 x 8cm (sixth plate) daguerreotype only works with the camera and lighting just right (it's a mirror!). At 146mm, f6.3, with Adobe Profile distortion correction. Above and below, closest possible focus at 200mm (f9) and 20mm (f13).



LENSES

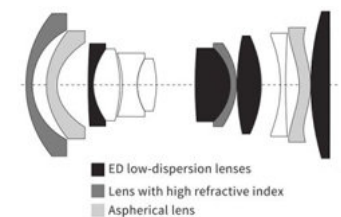
Viltrox 14mm f4 full frame true wide-angle

Sometimes a lens comes on the market which is an essential because it costs very little and fills a gap which no other lens, any any cost, covers. The **Viltrox 14mm f4 STM ASPH ED IF** at £190-199 including VAT is one. Viltrox UK stock sold out within days of release.

The closest any existing lens comes could be the Canon 15mm f4 RF STM true full frame wide angle, which at around £320 full retail is already superb value. But it's 16mm not 14mm is a bigger loss of angular coverage than it seems, and this lens only fits the RF mount. Viltrox's lens comes in Sony FE, Nikon Z and Panasonic/Leica/Sigma L mount – not, of course, RF as the restrictions Canon imposes on third party lenses rule that out.

Canon's lens is smaller though the Viltrox is already one of their 'Air' series of lightweight, compact lenses which have no frills – just AF, reliant on body control if focus-by-wire MF is wanted. There are no buttons. It has a USB update port which from experience with Viltrox's flaky firmware updating process you are advised never to touch. The Canon takes very unexpected 43mm filters, increasing the risk of cut-off unless you can find the world's slimmest – the Viltrox takes a sensible 58mm, and comes with a minimal but functional bayonet petal lens hood. It weighs only 170g.

The remaining specs of the Viltrox 14mm are much as you would expect. It uses an STM AF mechanism which is effectively silent and with such a minimal travel, instant. It focuses down to 13cm and on Sony the Eye and



Lens front element and optical diagram, above. The Viltrox is plainly but well packaged with a pouch, firmly fitting hood and lens caps. Below, an example of where 20mm or 28mm won't work even if you move further away – you can't step back from the sky! If you want a sky like this, you need the wider angle. The penalty is converging verticals.

Face AF functions work. The depth of field means that depending on focus target you get large zones of subject and focus recognition.

It has a more advanced optical design than you would expect for the cost, 12 elements in 9 groups with two aspherical, four ED and two high refractive index. The 112.5° diagonal field of view hits a sweet spot where a camera placed in the corner of a room just covers the 90° formed by the corner with a really small amount of two walls at the extremes of a horizontal frame.

Where this lens really scores is that it uses an innovative design, including a rear group which features an aspherical element



The Viltrox 14mm is well balanced with plenty of right hand grip clearance. It is styled much like Sony FE lenses – the 35mm f1.8 seen here.





Using the perspective of the 14mm. All three shots are stopped down to f16 to get depth of field combined with good sharpness (f22 is slightly softer overall).



which would once have been impossible to mass produce. It is free from the smearing or peripheral colour shading which affect older designs of non-retrofocus super-wide. For the price, the use of high refractive index, low dispersion and aspherical glass is unexpected. The rear glass surface is large, not recessed, and perfectly flat. It needs to be kept free of dust and the rear lens cap should be used to protect it when off the camera.

The design has allowed a 58mm filter thread and detachable lens hood so a filter or a system holder adaptor can be used. Quick tests with step up rings showed that

there's no leeway – you need the very thinnest 58mm filter ruling out anything thick or stacked. Magnetic filter system may allow at more than two filters like a grad and ND. But the SRB/Lee type 85mm system can be used – see page 44. A 14mm wide angle rarely demands a polariser, and at such a low cost price putting a 'clear protector' on is hardly needed. But with K&F's midrange polariser at well under £20, I've popped one in the kit regardless. This lens is not weather sealed.

Alternatives exist. There is a 7Artisans manual focus, non-EXIF enabled 15mm f4 which claims zero distortion, excellent rendering



14mm full frame versus 7.5mm on MicroFourThirds: Laowa 7.5mm (15mm equivalent) view overlaid by the Viltrox 14mm view. The MFT lens has more vertical coverage and the full framer a wider horizontal angle.

for astronomy sky field shots, and can use 77mm filters. TTArtisan offer a 14mm $f2.8$, again all manual, which comes with a 77mm filter adaptor. Laowa's interesting 15mm $f4.5$ 0.5X Macro is another manual focusing full frame wide, but with AE control, EXIF data and auto focus magnification and uses 62mm filters. Both these alternatives are about 50% more expensive, both are much larger and heavier and lack AF. Voigtländer's 15mm $f4.5$ Super Wide-Heliar III is a higher priced EXIF coupled manual focus design but only focuses down to 30cm and the non-removable lens hood means a filter adaptor is needed for anything except 58mm screw-in.

The 13cm close focus of the Viltrox means AF down to under 60mm from the front of the lens. With very close focus, background defocused details have a slight directional look but with well shaped blur discs whether wide open or stopped down by the 7-blade circular aperture. AF behaves unpredictably, losing confirmation if you move too close, but Centre Focus AF on the Sony A7RV seemed to let the lens focus closer than its stated range. Trying different centre, zone and wide area modes as well as spot focus sizes and AF-S versus AF-A or AF-C may help find the best setting for different conditions.

Assuming you get perfect locked-on focus, the level of detail at $f4$ is as good as you could ever expect and holds to $f11$ with improvements into the corners. These are, as usual, affected by the built-in lens profile which gives a good rectilinear finder view correcting distortion and vignetting but slightly lowering resolution and increasing noise at the extremes of the field of view. The distortion is slight barrel centrally changing to slight pincushion at the corners, and should soon get an Adobe LCP for top quality processing of raw files. Using simple barrel distortion correction manually falls short. But it's so close to being zero that unless you photograph a window frame it will not matter, and a small barrel correction handles most architectural shots like the museum interior opposite. There can be a hint of very fine purple

fringe on high contrast sharp edges which the default Adobe Remove CA control deals with. Adobe has added Viltrox profiles with every LR/ACR update.

Finally, the lens coating seems efficient and sunstars are clean, any ghosts or strings of flare are tightly contained and easy to retouch. Extreme sun in shot will yield a faint linear ray, running downwards in a horizontal composition, but aligned to the aperture blade star not the pixel grid. My guess is that a mechanical component produces this. There is no general flare and shooting interiors with large bright windows will not disappoint.

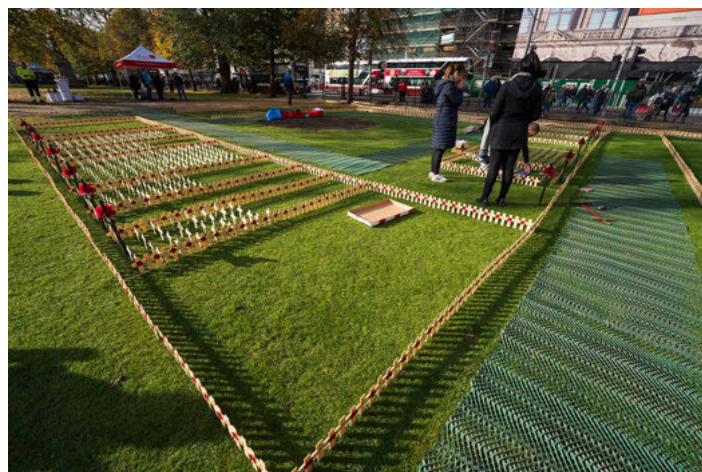
I have been a long-term early adopter of extreme wide angles, starting with acquiring the first 17mm in 1974 and using cameras like the Brooks Veriwide, Hasselblad SWC, Contax G with 16mm then on to Tamron's 14mm and Sigma's 12-24mm on 35mm film. In the mirrorless era I bought first the 12mm Voigtländer and then on the day of its launch ordered their 10mm. Laowa's 10mm $f2.8$ got the same reception. Extreme wides don't get daily use, but when I don't have one I miss valuable shots. The gap between a 17-28mm and the 10mm was simply too much and for some time I have been hoping for an AF/AE filter friendly pocketable lens circa 14mm. For my OM-System kit I have the Laowa 7.5mm $f2$, which is a near-equivalent with excellent fast magnified manual focus.

In the meantime smartphones have evolved with 13mm view lenses, driven by the vlogging demand rather than 0.5X wide angle preference. We become ever more used to views around that 110-115° angle, and if you can't match an iPhone when creating stock, editorial, commercial, real estate or just general images you are 'out of the frame' as much as your subjects will be.

Now that gap is filled, at a compact cost and size. This lens in Sony, Nikon, and L-mount will be a big seller. Why would anyone not already invested in something which does this job not have one?

– David Kilpatrick

<https://amzn.to/4nl4IGm>
<https://www.viltrox.co.uk>



These shots taken in Edinburgh during a walk with the lens show the lens's versatility. At the top, during the setting-up of a Poppy Day memorial walk-through next to the Scott Monument, and then a reverse perspective using close focus, camera on the ground, and $f16$. Above, shopping centre entrance close to with dramatic converging verticals; left, how cropping a square composition from the full frame allowed architectural correction. Right, main hall of the National Museum of Scotland in Chambers Street (admission free, excellent café). Second floor view allows a level camera aided by finder grid lines.



FILTERS

Extreme wide angles and filter issues

Filters used to be made using two layers of glass balsam-cemented with a gelatine colour foil, or a polarising sheet, between them. The glass was surprisingly thick and pre-WWII the filter fitting on lenses was often a small diameter like 27.5mm or 37mm. There were no very wide angle lenses.

From the 1950s on, 'dyed in the mass' optical glass was improved and camera companies also making colour measurement instruments – notably Minolta with their own glass production not relying on German sources or Hoya – introduced very accurate filters with very thin glass and correspondingly slim mounts. These worked well with even the widest angle lenses.

The thin glass also maintained sharpness out to the corners, where thick glass or sandwiched types could degrade it.

Then, in the 1970s, along came the first filter systems and thin dipped or dyed optical resin (CR39 acrylic) filters both in screw-in mounts (Tiffen, Cromofilter) and rectangular sizes such as 3"/75mm wide (Cokin A), 84mm (Cokin P) or 4"/100mm (Chromatek, Ambico, Sailwind and later Formatt Hi-Tech and Lee Filters in the UK).

Some of the best such filters remained made of glass, and filter holders need thick slots to accept these compared to 2mm to 2.3mm thick acrylics.

I use the SRB Elite square filter system, a British engineered metal and plastic holder in 84mm P size. SRB manufactures it and sell directly. While large and medium format cameras and lenses may need a 100mm or 150mm holder and filters, my Sony full frame kit has never had lenses with larger than a 77mm filter thread. The P system is ideal.

I like to be able to use a graduated neutral density in a system holder, and the SRB Elite holder adds a clever rotating polariser stage behind the filter



Top, the SRB Elite holder with polariser in place, and one older-type thinner filter slot. The slots are easily removed or added, middle. Bottom, the front metal plate filed for better corner clearance, and SRB's filter kit pouch.

slots, which has an external finger wheel to turn the filter. For high neutral density such as 1000X or 16 stops, I prefer a screw-in filter with its total guarantee of perfect light sealing, and use other filters in the slots. You can get SRB filters which fit the polariser stage thread or add an ND before fitting the holder, if you want pol+grad. You can also get a sealing shield to prevent light leak if using an 84mm square glass ND. There's also a very useful soft deep 'lens cap' which pops on to the front of the adaptor ring with the holder removed.

The original SRB P filter holder has slightly thinner self-gripping plastic slots for sliding grads. The new Elite has 5mm overall thickness for each slot stage, where the original had 3.9mm. The Elite Lite holder has no

polariser stage, so a slightly thinner rear plate – 3.85mm against 7mm. It comes with a screwdriver and replacement short screws allowing the two 5mm slots (widest angle specified as 22mm lens) to be reduced to a single one to allow use with lenses down to 14mm, with a caveat that lens design may affect this.

I wanted to modify the Elite holder to work with the Sony 20-70mm and after this with the Sigma 20-200mm and hopefully the 14mm Viltrox. I dug out my original SRB P holder with the 3.9mm slot components, filed down the intruding corners of the metal front sheet (and blackened the bright edge left by this). Initially I reduced it to a single slot as seen top. To my surprise, adding a second 3.9mm slot stage still gave no cut off with either the 20-200mm Sigma

or the 14mm. The same rotating polariser holder with two 5mm slots and an unmodified front plate cuts into the view of both lenses. SRB say the Lite is good for 14mm with one filter slot removed, presumably based on 5mm thick filter slot stages. Perhaps SRB should offer the old 3.9mm thick stages as a spare to allow two slots to clear the angle – they are very good at offering all the parts at modest cost.

My minimal travel/walkaround kit is now just the 20-200mm and 14mm lenses reviewed in this issue. I have a K&F Concept Nano-X 72mm polariser which is more convenient than a P size filter holder. Despite the quality of the glass and the smoothness of rotation, it binds badly in the thread regardless of lens and the design makes it next to impossible to unscrew.

I bought a K&F 58mm Nano-20 (lower cost series) with an apparently identical slim mount to use on the 14mm, and it does not bind the same way, but it does hard-vignette the corners of the frame (see top centre and right on facing page). At £13 this K&F filter looks identical to the Calumet one from WEX at £51 but that's probably a match for a better K&F grade.

I have a good Minolta 72mm wide-angle circular polariser, but it has no markings at all on the rim to help set its rotation. The K&F polarisers lack an index mark or scale, but the K of the brand lettering sets the 0° and 90° orientations perfectly. Any polariser should have some sort of index marking, and the SRB 85mm system polariser has four index markers at 90° intervals. They would be easier to see through slotted in filters if filled with white... but that might create reflections.

– David Kilpatrick

See: <https://www.kentfaith.co.uk>
<https://www.srb-photographic.co.uk>



No filter, 14mm Viltrox



Polariser rotated to maximum



Polariser rotated to 90° from maximum

Double trouble with a K&F polariser – itself in a very slim mount – used on the Viltrox 14mm. The left hand image uses no filter, but one month after the autumn equinox just after mid-day the sky is intense as a result of Rayleigh scattering, an effect in the atmosphere responsible for blue colour of the sky. The middle shot with very dark sky shows the extreme darkening produced when using a polariser on a lens with this extreme angle of view. The polarisation band is at 90° to the sun, with no polarisation in the sky when the sun is behind the camera or directly into the lens. In this image the darker left hand side is due to the angle of the sun coming slightly from the right. By rotating the filter to reduce the polarisation, the sky in the right hand example is lightened. The effect depends on latitude and time of day – at the equator at noon, polarisation forms an even graduation from the horizon. The pictures using the filter show the cutoff at f7.1. The town hall faces south-west, 13:30hrs October 22nd. The shot aiming upwards shows a south-east building frontage with the 112° lens angle making the top of the shot almost directly overhead. You can see the graduation of the band of polarisation clearly with the filter rotated to emphasise it.

As a rule extreme wide angle lenses rarely need a polariser to darken skies, but its use to counteract the natural darkening can be valuable. When reflections of bright sky appear on wet or oily surfaces or still water, a polariser will either cut or boost them. Maximum polarisation happens on water with the light source at 53° incident and the camera at 53° reflected. Either side of 53°, the level of reflection and the effect of a polariser gradually fall off. With lenses covering an angle of over 80° vertically, the affected zone will be similarly narrow to the gradation shown in the sky. For glass/air rather than water/air the angle is 56°, for oil/air a degree or two more. Polarising filters are often best used with standard to long focus lenses.



Far left, a shot with polariser rotated to cut reflections from the river and darken the sky – left, with the polariser at 90° to enhance the reflections, the sky is also lightened, to the point of reversing the effect of clouds. The exposure has been exactly matched for the castle stonework. Note the change in grass and trees. Below, on the opposite side the bridge, a fisher with dogs and a ghillie in waders. The polariser was difficult to set, but gave more shadow detail – it was still necessary to filter down the highlights and exposure from the top left.



CAMERACRAFT

REARVIEW

Pure Gold – our selected images for the return of a Rearview gallery are all recent Gold awards from the monthly judgings of the Guild of Photographers. The Guild has just announced a brand new competition for print makers – those who want their photography judged in its printed form and not as digital files. “The **UK Photography Print Awards (UKPPA)** will celebrate the skill, creativity, and dedication of photographers who believe that true impact lives on paper, not pixels”, they say. “Open to all photographers, and covering seven genres, this landmark event will combine prestige with accessibility – uniting professionals, enthusiasts and emerging talent in one inspiring showcase of print excellence. It will culminate in a Live Judging day at the PhotoHubs event in Stoke-on-Trent on Friday 6th February 2026, with the winners announced at the Guild’s & UKPPA Awards Night Gala Dinner the following night. Visit ukphotographyprintawards.co.uk and join the UKPPA Facebook group to keep abreast of all the latest announcements.”

See photoguild.co.uk for details of membership and the monthly awards.



By Ryan Hutton



By **Jo Tressider**



By **Laurie Campbell**

CAMERACRAFT REARVIEW



Cristina Pascu-Tulbure created this wonderfully detailed multi shot vertical panorama of Chester Cathedral achieving Guild Image of the Month in addition to the accolade of a Gold in their monthly judging.