



Close-Up

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Creative Abstractions
Santa's List
Member Profile: Penny Coddling
Shooting Christmas Lights at Night
Photoshop Blend Modes - What you
Need to Know
Setting up a Shoot
Beginners' Corner: A Time to Focus
... and more



"Andrew" by Don Zwicker

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Victoria Camera Club

Close-Up is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club,
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 Mailing address: PO Box 46035, RPO Quadra, Victoria, BC, V8T 5G7.
 Deadline for submissions for the January 2017 issue is Nov. 30th 2016.
 Editor, Richard James, e-mail to editor@victoriacameraclub.ca
 for submissions or to advertise in *Close-Up*.



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

Events

We hold a number of events including:

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

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

Membership

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

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

For additional information: please contact:

Membership: membership@victoriacameraclub.ca
Workshops: workshops@victoriacameraclub.ca
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The Victoria Camera Club is a member club of the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria (CACGV), Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA), and the Photographic Society of America (PSA).



Calendar

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

December 8th: Christmas Party

January 5th 2017: Competition Night

The November competition results will be presented. The theme for January is "Foul Weather." The deadline for submission is January 5th.

January 12th 2017: Presentation Night

Professional photographer Chris Harris introduces us to the wilderness area of the Cariboo-Chilcotin plateau that stretches from Tweedsmuir Park to the Fraser River. Through stories and pictures, he will show us the variety of biogeoclimatic zones of BC's central interior.

January 19th 2017: Members Night

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

Workshop and Field Trip Highlights

Creative camera techniques (workshop and field session)

Christmas at Craigdarroch Castle

Cover image: "Andrew" by Don Zwicker. This month's cover image was inspired by the unexpected sound of the bagpipes drifting through a dense rain forest while I was walking my dog. The lonely haunting quality of the bagpipes led my imagination to images from a time long past when a young piper might have been on his way to join comrades fighting the good fight, battling injustice for "the cause".... what ever that might have been.

Shot in the Highlands, overlooking Thetis Lake in Victoria, the piper is Andrew Wilkowski, now stationed in Halifax N.S. He supplied his own kilt and kit; his bagpipes were a family heirloom handed down to him by his mother. Some of the other accessories, the sword and tam, were on loan from Brent Fletcher, owner of The Command Post Militaria and Antiques, a downtown Victoria military memorabilia store. Fellow VCC member Sharon Glynn assisted in the location scouting and with the photo shoot itself. (See the article on page 24.)

President's Message

December provides a brief hiatus from the hurly-burly of our ongoing club activities. A time to reflect on how our year has been going so far and an opportunity to look ahead to the New Year peeking just over the horizon. Each of you has your own expectations, needs and desires. Has the VCC been meeting, rising above or falling below those thresholds?

From my perspective, things have gelled quite well during the fall session. All of our main programs have delivered full schedules which have been generally positively received. Yes, there have been a few glitches along the way. Our volunteers will continue to address operational issues as they arise. Most impressive to me though has been the way in which members from across the spectrum, including some who are very new to the club, have offered both leadership and support to make it all happen. It continues to be a reality that the club thrives as long as members embrace that degree of participation. It is equally true that each of us gains much, on a personal level, through our full engagement with our fellow members.

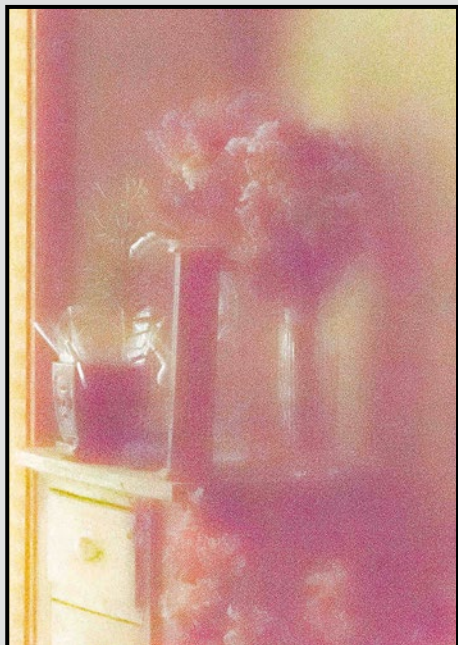
One area that we all may want to reflect upon is that of the future of prints in our competitions. The number of entries has dropped this year at the advanced level and has been low at the novice and intermediate level. Does this reflect larger trends in society which favour quick digital access over more permanent "slow" approaches? Do cost, convenience, knowledge or skills come into play? As suggested at a recent meeting, could specific workshops, mentoring or other approaches help to overcome some of the obstacles? Another barrier, which may also play a part in limited participation in novice level competitions in general, hinges upon a member's degree of confidence. This brings to mind my own experience with the whole process. My first print entries, in 1998, were 8"x10" in size from a 1.3 mega-pixel digicam. Daunting, and I didn't do too well with those. But I did receive valuable feedback and gradually upped my game. Placements may be nice but the real payoff is in receiving feedback and the impetus to reach for your own goals!

My best wishes go out to you and yours, whatever your particular form of worship or celebration during these weeks surrounding the winter solstice. A familiar "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!" to all. To those who enrich our community from diverse faiths and cultures, I'd be pleased if you would interpret these sentiments in terms more directly meaningful and personal.

Garry Schaefer, President.

by Phil McOrmond

Sure, my new camera can shoot at 1.6 million ISO, or 1,640,000 if you want to split hairs, and frankly I wouldn't want to use that. A short comment on the shot below would be: "It is really crummy," to the point of not being exactly sure just what we are looking at. (I know only because I took the picture).

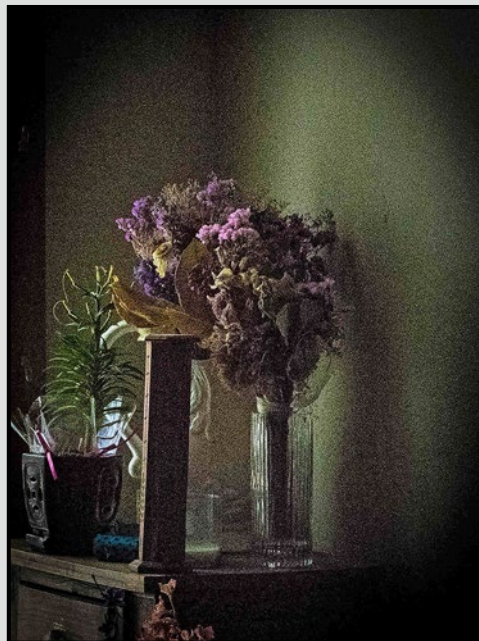


Let's face it, that is a pretty poor image and I don't think it matters if your monitor is calibrated or not. In case you cannot identify it, this is an image of a bunch of flowers on a small table. There is natural light coming from the left side as we look at the picture. I don't think Photo-Shop's noise reduction, sharpening or colour correction would help much, if at all.

Just so you know, the camera is pretty good at a more reasonable ISO. Say 51,000.

To my eye, the second image is actually not too bad and is rather artistic, (although I admittedly have very low standards so that may not count). Those of you with a more artistic bent may choose to find something in this to give it merit. The noise is pretty obvious, but for this type of scene, it is tolerable.

Obviously I did not get this camera for the extreme ISO capability but rather for a decently high ISO (say 6400) and a good frame rate (10 fps). It enables me to take school pictures of children as they run about performing dance and musical theatre under crummy inadequate stage lighting. In my experience with this type of rapid ac-



tivity, I require at least 1/250 to 1/400 sec. shutter speeds and an aperture of at least f4 to f5.6. Anything less and either motion blur or focus becomes an issue. Ironically, manual exposure seems to work best as I will meter and set the camera according to the current light conditions, then leave it that way until the scene changes.

I made a commitment to try and come up with some sort of artistic effort at high ISO. Below are a triptych of shots at 40,000, 400,000, and 1.6 M ISO which have been heavily manipulated in Lightroom. Try to figure out which image was shot at which ISO.

And that is all I have to say about that!



by Rick Shapka

The reasons for making photographs are as varied as each member's interests for belonging to this club. As one's appreciation of the craft, and personal knowledge of the art of photography evolve, so do one's own images. Whether formally trained in photography or not, personal interest should influence your style of making pictures. Make images which truly interest you.



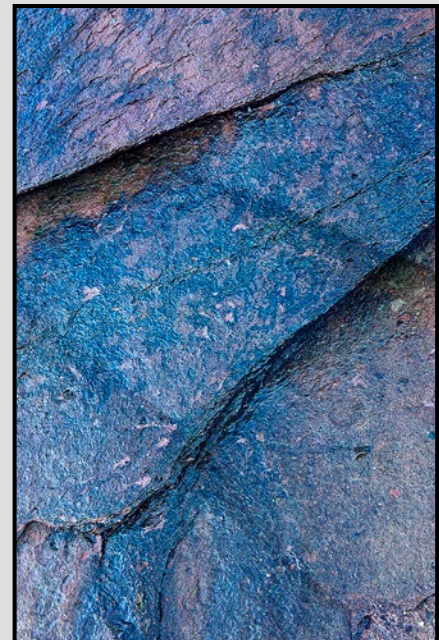
"Trestle Motion"

For some time now in my pursuit of an interesting photograph, many images that I make are abstract, or tend to be nonrepresentational. Images where lines, shapes, forms or colour are more important to me than the subject. It is an attempt to create some visual ambiguity. Most of these images are not for competition. While they are of significant personal interest, these pictures are unlikely to impress a judge who is looking for a centre of interest, sharpness, or expects the image to tell a story. My objective, where practical, is to make an image in camera rather than spend a great deal of time with it at the computer. However, my basic workflow does include Photoshop layer adjustments, similar to what might have been done in a traditional darkroom.

Often I come across a subject that I feel could be better seen by representing it as something else. Sometimes, I find a subject that I do not think can be documented sufficiently realistically to make a compelling image. That leads me to think about how I might show the object in some other way to make it more interesting and visually compelling.

The first image is "Trestle Motion." My challenge was to photograph the rebuilt Kinsol Trestle in some meaningful way. It is a long, high, curving structure. Rather than include the complete trestle, I decided to focus on a small portion of it. This is an "in-camera" multiple exposure, with emphasis on a section that included part of the running gear of a locomotive. My camera multiple exposure count is set at 9 shots; auto gain is "On;" the camera is rotated slightly for 3 shots, then brought back to the starting point twice, for three more shots each time, for a total of 9. The camera brings the shots together. The resulting image becomes unrecognizable as the trestle, even though its bones are clearly visible.

"Azure Leached Arkose" was made at a compelling rock formation at St. Martins, NB. The rock was wet after a rainstorm, which supersaturated the colours. It is carefully composed, making certain the surface fractures appear left to right, with some apparent upward direction. I wanted to convey depth in the final picture, because of some imagined "faces" in the wet rock. To bring these faces out, I created a duplicate layer in Photoshop, then flipped it vertically, changed the blend mode to soft light, and reduced the opacity of the duplicated layer. The faces in the rock that I originally imagined re-appeared with this additional layer.



"Azure Leached Arkose"

"The Painter Tree" was made on the Kingston Peninsula, NB. It was a glorious spring morning with the apple tree in blossom, and yellow wild flowers growing beside the rock and tree trunk. I wanted to introduce some apparent wind blowing through the white blossoms. I did

this by taking a hand held multiple exposure. My natural movement, while hand holding the camera, was sufficient to generate the breezy motion that I wanted. The vibrant greens, whites and yellows were saturated because of some residual moisture from an early morning shower.



"The Painter Tree"

The fourth image, "Ice," was made at a frozen puddle in my backyard. I saw repetition of lines, as well as an imaginary face and perhaps an ovoid in the ice. In the end, it is a composite of two different images; the frozen puddle and some muted colours from a soft focus flower image. Although the colour temperature of ice tends to be blue, I wanted some warmer colour to appear below the ice surface. I did this by moving the coloured layer beneath the ice pattern, changing the blend mode to dissolve, and then using a filter from the plug in, NIK/Google Color Efex Pro4. So much for staying away from the computer!



"Ice"

I have taken photography workshops with some creative master photographers, who have influenced my own picture making. Many of these photographers have written articles, published books and completed teaching vid-

eos, which include ideas about creative imagery. Those who come to mind immediately are Freeman Patterson (of course), Eddie Soloway and Tony Sweet. Although I recommend taking workshops, their books can be useful for creative stimulation through those long winter nights.

Discussions with, and learning from these photographers brings me back to why I choose to make some pictures that are abstract, or nonrepresentational. Because of these instructors, my appreciation of photography has evolved. Now I think about it as more of a journey that stretches me to think laterally. To get to any final destination (or completed image), I try to plan a route with many stops along the way. I take time to experiment, to inject a feeling into the pictures. Often, the shortest route to a destination does not prove to be the most satisfying one.

Composition is critical for my abstract images. I try to make an interesting composition no matter the subject matter; always being mindful of my choices in the viewfinder. "Ice" is a good example, where I made certain the colour layer was composed with the bands of colour running in the same direction as the ice lines.

Some guidelines I use for my picture making:

1. When out for any walk, look for lines, geometric shapes and the texture of objects.
2. What direction is the light coming from relative to the subject; where do the shadows fall; is the quality of light soft or harsh in contrast?
3. What colours draw my attention to a scene? How will this colour contrast affect the mood to be created?
4. Does the shape of a subject influence the way it should be photographed? Will competing shapes provide a balance to the image? Make pictures at different angles to alter the shapes.
5. Think about showing an idea, rather than an object.
6. Photograph during, or just after the rain; objects become more vibrant and saturated in colour.
7. Crop the image in camera, not at the computer.

Becoming skilled as a photographer takes time; learning the camera, studying interesting pictures and art, and making many pictures, including many that will fail. Becoming creatively "competent" takes nerve and curiosity. A desire to see and do something differently. Taking pictures every day has become a good way for me to learn to see better. Studying well-known photographs helps me to understand why an image works. Taking challenging workshops with experienced leaders, always improves my picture making.



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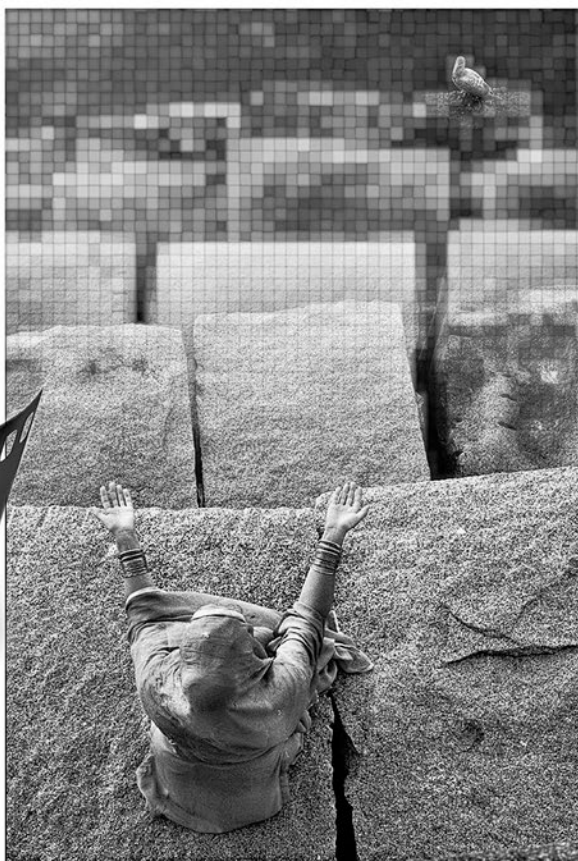


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by The Chief Elf

Well, Santa's elves have been hard at work again this year. Although earthquakes in Japan have damaged chip foundries, causing a shortage of cameras and dearth of new models, the elves have come up with a goodie list of gifts idea for yourself, or any photographically inclined family members.

You may have noticed that cameras have been getting smaller and lighter. There have been several developments in camera carrying systems that have followed this trend.

For you hand-held photographers there are new and lighter camera clips and strap systems. Cotton Carrier and Peak Design, amongst others, have clip systems to attach a camera to your belt or backpack shoulder strap. They also have wraparound hand straps to hold your hand to the camera hand-grip. If you don't find these are secure enough, then the Cotton Carrier Harness system should work for you.

Camera bags and backpacks are evolving all the time, from the "full kit" bag capable of carrying long lenses and multiple bodies down to smaller hip or shoulder bags that are just right for smaller camera systems with a single body and a couple of medium-size lenses.

Users of smaller camera users, may find a miniature tripod useful. Several manufacturers produce these including the Rollei (PhotoPro) M5 which is available separately or bundled with the CT 5A full-size tripod, and of course the venerable Gorilla Pods with their flexible legs that can be wrapped around a support.

And if you insist on shooting with your smartphone or tablet, a collapsible Selfi-Stick would likely fit inside your Christmas stocking.

If you are a Canon shooter and into real paper books, one of our advertisers has copies of "*EF Lens Work III*," Canon's book on their entire lens range including technical details and usage.

If you shoot with speedlights, do you have any light modifiers? There is a wide range of adaptors available that clip on to a speedlight to diffuse, concentrate, or simply colour your light.

If you have to use the pop-up flash on your camera, there is also an assortment of attachments available for these.

Need a second light? How about a reflector, these are available in multiple sizes in white, silver or several shades of gold. Have you tried shooting the underside of a mushroom in the forest or the inside of a downward hanging flower on a sunny day? A small (30 cm) reflector comes in really handy here.

New on the scene in the last few years are miniature battery powered LED lights. Prices are dropping and power is going up. By design they are somewhat diffused as the LED panel covers the entire face of the unit. An advantage of LED lights is that you can see what the lighting looks like before you take the shot.

Many DSLR and similar cameras now have video capability. Their built-in microphones are not exactly the best in the world, so you may consider a plug-in upgrade. If you already have an external microphone, do you need a windshield for it?

If you're an Apple fan, you may be disappointed to learn that the new MacBook Pro's no longer have built-in card readers. In fact, all they have are Thunderbolt ports, no USB at all, so you will have to buy new card readers, or adapters.

If you are making long exposure, or multiple frame (such as for focus-stacking), shots then a remote control for your camera is really important. This may be a wired, hand-operated release, a wireless release or a cable connecting to your tablet or phone.

Remote camera control software is now commonplace with several manufacturers in the market. You can find very capable software running on multiple platforms, Windows, Mac OS, Android and iOS devices.

Do you still make 4 x 6 prints? If so, Canon has their Selphy CP1200 colour printer designed just for you. It will read straight from your SD memory card, Wi-Fi network, or USB connection. Paper and ink are supplied in a combined package.

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Santa and the elves wish you Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Monochrome Architecture

by Pam Irvine

Monochrome Architecture is the February 2017 theme subject. Architecture is a broad subject, encompassing everything from skyscrapers to shacks. As a photographer, you're lucky there are lots of interesting buildings in Greater Victoria. You can choose to use the symmetry of a building for a strong graphic image, or focus in on interesting details such as curves or repeating patterns. Your camera may have a B&W setting (which affects only the JPG image) or, for more control over the tones in the B&W image, you can convert it to B&W afterwards. A deep depth of field is usually employed for architecture so that all the lines in the image are in sharp focus.

Old Buildings: A straightforward and simple composition often shows their natural beauty and elegance.

Modern Buildings: You can use a more modern, abstract style with new buildings. Try wide-angle lenses to exaggerate perspective, or shoot from unusual angles.

Interiors: Try using HDR techniques to get details in the shadows and avoid blown-out highlights in windows. There are many foyers and atriums as well as churches which can have interesting features.

Lighting: Side-front lighting usually produces the best architecture photos. It casts long, interesting shadows across the face of the building. This makes surface details stand out and gives the building a more three-dimensional look.

Reflections: Add an extra dimension to architectural images. Look for windows, water features, puddles or wet streets.

Distortion: There is often distortion in an architectural photo. This can create tension within the image. Simply position yourself near to the base of the building and shoot straight up. Or, stand further back and use a long-range lens, the building's walls and lines appear straighter.

Post-Processing: If you want to, you can correct distortion with Photoshop or Lightroom. Monochrome architecture often uses high contrast blacks and whites, which can be enhanced with post-processing.

Finally, check out the great article "[Architectural Photography: A Personal Perspective](#)" by Steve Barber in the November 2016 *Close-Up*.

October 2016 Competition Judges

We extend our sincere thanks to the external judges for the October Intermediate and Advanced competitions: Mike Byrne, Wes Bergen, Pierre Gauthier and Nancy Riker. We would also like to thank our in-house Novice Judges: Caspar Davis, Suzanne Huot, Steve Lustig, Judy Taylor and Normand Marcotte. Also thanks to Rick Shapka, Mars Romer, Leah Gray, Doug McLean, Phil McOrmand, Martin Wright, and Anne McCarthy who judged the Novice and Intermediate Prints. The results are available on the website at: victoriacamera-club.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx.

Wes Bergen (Wildlife & Natural World): Wes has been a keen amateur photographer for almost 45 years. He has experience with B&W and colour prints as well as slides, and has used medium and large format as well as 35 mm and digital cameras. Over the past 8 years, he has shot exclusively in the digital medium. He has been a member of the Lions Gate Camera Club for over 44 years and has held many executive positions including two terms as President. He has also been a member of NAPA and CAPA for almost as long. He is a frequent judge and presents workshops at local photography clubs and seminars.

Mike Byrne (Advanced Prints): Mike is a co-founder of ClockTower Images in Victoria. He grew up in Alberta's Rocky Mountains and has always pursued outdoor activities. As a natural extension, he started to produce outdoor adventure films and videos. Mike worked for the 2010 Vancouver Olympics and has been the official sports photographer at several sporting events.

Pierre Gauthier (Open & Creative): Pierre is a long-time and very active member of the RA Photo Club in Ottawa. He is currently the Nature Group Leader and also assists with the Fine Art SIG. "The proper evaluation of an image is to find the qualities of the various components of an image and to discern how they work together as an expressive and significant whole."

Nancy Ricker (Theme): This is the first year Nancy has judged for us. She has been a member of the North Shore Photographic Society for a number of years during which time she served as President, Vice-President, and Field Trip Coordinator, as well as a member of various other committees. She has been involved in photography for many years and has exhibited in various galleries and coffee shops. Her favourite photography deals with abstracts, textures and tapestries of nature.



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Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st
"Plasma Cutter" by Ian Crawford

Judge's comments: I really like this image, great exposure with a nice fall-off. Sharp everywhere that matters, with rock solid composition.



Advanced Digital Wildlife - 1st
"Female Common Merganser" by Leah Gray

Judge's comments: Great exposure and subdued lighting. Lots of detail in the bird's head, neck and beak, although focus falls off on the back. Water behind the bird is nicely blurred, but with retained interest. Reflection is excellent. The composition is good.



Advanced Digital Natural World - 2nd
"Penn Cove Sunrise" by Steve Lustig

Judge's comments: The upper half of the image appears to be a typical sunset/sunrise shot, but the rivulets in the foreground add a lot to the interest and composition. The upper part of the image is well exposed and has beautiful colour.



Advanced Nature Print - 2nd
"Northern Flicker Preparing a Nest"
by Doug McLean

Judge's comments: This is a really nice image that I feel is well composed and sharp.



Advanced Digital Open - 2nd

"Patterns of the Palouse" by Carole Valkenier

Judge's comments: Very elegant use of lines and curves to create a pleasing well framed composition. The tonal range and differentiation in both the green and earthen tones is very well managed by the correct exposure.



Advanced Open Print - 1st

"Finding a Landing Spot" by Meherzad Romer

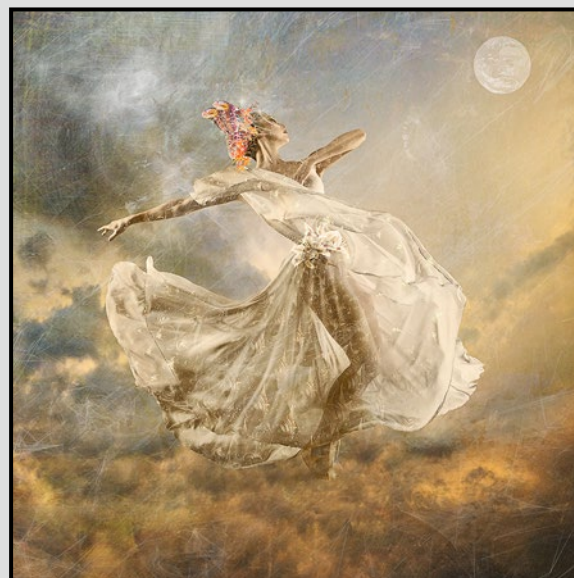
Judge's comments: This is a beautifully captured image, posed, composed and lit wonderfully. I'm not personally a fan of the overly processed image that turns the subject into more of a line drawing (almost) but in this case there is no denying the image's power and impact. Nice!



Advanced Digital Theme - 1st

"Double Web" by Rene Pauze

Judge's comments: Focus and exposure are excellent, but what gives the image impact is the repetitive pattern of the webs. Know that each web is different with dew drops on one and no dew drops on the other. Also, the symmetry of each web differs. Very strong composition with the smaller web offset in the top right corner.



Advanced Digital Creative - 1st

"Dancing on a Cloud" by Barbara Burns

Judge's comments: Elegant dream-like altered reality that expresses a poetic relationship between the dancing nymph and the heavenly world she inhabits. Excellent work !



Intermediate Digital Open - 2nd
"Put Out to Pasture" by Cindy Stephenson

Judge's comments: Imaginative capture of an old milk truck and the title brings it all home. Focus appears sharp throughout and the exposure is good. The touch of turquoise colour in the sign and on the fender plus the bits of rust bring the image to life.



Intermediate and Novice Open Print - 1st
"Bald Eagle Portrait" by Ray Douthwaite

Judge's comments: The black background compliments the sharp edges to increase impact. Great technical portrait. Outstanding work.



Intermediate Digital Natural World - 2nd
"Sitting Pretty" by Richard Letourneau

Judge's comments: Very nice lighting and exposure, great depth of field. It appears a polarizing filter was used to reduce highlights on the lily pads, well done. Composition is great, and the bit of cedar twig complements it.



Intermediate Digital Wildlife - 1st
"I am Ignoring You" by Nicci Tyndall

Judge's comments: The excellent lighting and exposure provide great detail in all areas of the bear. Focus and depth of field are very well handled. The extra space on the right accentuates the bear's "attitude."



Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st
"Arch" by Mohammadal Khashei

Judge's comments: A stunning image, the focus and composition are excellent.



Novice Digital Natural World - 1st
"Summer's Last Goodbye (last sunset of summer)" by Ben Nieuwland

Judge's comments: This is a really interesting image with the beautiful colors of the sky, flowers, and grass. A good eye for finding the flowers in the middle of a grassy field.



Intermediate Digital Creative - 1st
"Patterns in Oil and Water" by Don Piper

Judge's comments: A fanciful creation of a new bubble world shivering with a great circle of wavelets and an ominous suggestion of a floating figure in the right half creates a semi-nightmare reality.



Novice Digital Open - 1st

"Why is the Sky Down There" by David Axford

Judge's comments: A great capture. The tree provides great context for the adventurous cyclist. This is a wonderful frozen-action shot.



Novice Digital Wildlife - 1st
"Staring Contest" by Sharon Mosey

Judge's comments: Great capture of the lizard despite the harsh light. Excellent detail, good colors, and a nice diagonal composition.



Novice Digital Theme - 1st
"Crazed Pattern" by Gerry Thompson

Judge's comments: Utter simplicity, interesting composition, sharp focus, and a beautifully blurred background separated this image. A very strong image that fits the theme perfectly.



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I began taking photographs about 30 years ago when my children were young. I used an inexpensive Kodak camera and print film to capture their candid moments. These photographs provide wonderful memories and are enjoyable for my children now that they are parents. In the late '80s I graduated to a Pentax SLR film camera and slide film, which I learned to use by taking an introductory photography course at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology. In 2006 I switched to digital and now use two digital cameras, a Pentax K5 for macro and other tripod work and a micro four-thirds Olympus E-M1 for travel, event and street photography.

Once my children were old enough to refuse to be subjects for my photography, I had to find new subject matter. Given my interests in outdoor pursuits (hiking, skiing, kayaking), nature photography was the logical next step. I spent about 10 years photographing the mountains and wildflowers near Calgary, but when I moved to Victoria in 1996 I was overwhelmed by the vegetation and stumped by the lack of sunlight. Thanks to a course at the Monterey Centre, where I was introduced to the wonders of macro photography, I learned to make images in this environment. I still do nature and macro photography and helped establish the Nature SIG for the club.



"Chasing Shadows"

On my outings, I discovered that taking my camera along causes me to pay attention, to look more carefully, and to be mindful of the light and environment. With a camera on my shoulder, I am more attuned to the observed world. Whether or not I take a picture doesn't matter, I reap the benefit of being attentive to my visual surroundings. Consequently I carry a camera with me when I hike, kayak or travel, although photography is rarely the purpose of my trips. Now I feel very lucky that, thanks to my smart phone, I am never without a camera and accordingly, I am more attuned to my environment.

It is my goal to take a course every year to improve my seeing and technical skills. Some of these courses were

with the club, for others I traveled to Grasslands National Park, Death Valley and Whidbey Island. Each course enhanced my enjoyment of this wonderful hobby. As a retiree, I visit new locations and countries frequently. My camera is my reminder to be attentive in the new surroundings. I also create a blog to share my images with family and friends.

In addition to nature and travel photography, I am exploring new subjects and creative image processing. My interest in these new areas is prompted by two club activities: the Tuesday group and the Creative SIG. In the Tuesday group we are challenged to explore a different subject each time we meet downtown. This helps me see things in new ways and teaches me to capture moments. The first image was taken on June 5th at the Grand Prix cycling event downtown. It was a challenge to capture something moving as fast as these riders. I love the fluidity of the line of riders and their shadows. The image is cropped to emphasize the cyclists and converted to black and white to make their shadows more dramatic.

The Creative SIG provides both technical instruction and motivation through the meetings, monthly challenges and themes. Last January, we were challenged to make still life images. A still life is a different experience because, instead of finding a scene and recording it, the photographer must create the scene. This assignment made me think about colour, lighting, background and composition in new ways. In this image I used my east-facing kitchen window as a light source to create this homage to my first hiking boots and first backpack set on a burlap sack. I added a high key treatment in post processing.

Photography is a wonderful hobby and modern cameras add to the fun. As one club member said, "you are never bored if you have a camera." That's my motto.



"Old Friends"



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by John Roberts

With all the Christmas lights around town, or the truck parade coming up, shooting Christmas lights at night can be fun, but it can pose some difficulties. For those of you who are not accustomed to this type of photography, here are a few tips to help you get the images that you are looking for at this time of year.

- **Use a tripod:** This helps to get a stable image, and will allow you to close down the aperture to get more depth of field at the same time. While the image stabilization of some of the newer cameras seems to be quite impressive, nothing beats the good old tripod for a clean stable image.
- **Use a remote release:** Taking your hands off of the camera will again give you a more stable image. Using a wired remote, wireless remote, or the USB/WiFi/Bluetooth app on your mobile device, will give you the hands off ability that you require.
- **Use a low ISO setting:** Increasing ISO results in decreased definition in highlight or shadow areas. When you use a low ISO, you get the best detail in your highlights and shadows that your camera sensor can do.

For instance I was shooting indoors a few months ago, hand held at ISO 3200. The final image looked good, except that the candle on the table, or the light in a sign got a gummy look to it. By gummy I mean it looks like a back lit gummy bear with no defined edges. The whole area looks like it is a bit soft, and a bit sharp at the same time. The camera sensor and processor just did not know what to do with it. You will get longer exposures with a lower ISO, but hey, play with it, do some zooming during the exposure. This is where the tripod comes in really handy.

- **Use a flash:** There is always the ability to use a flash. The default camera setting will do one of two things. The first being to over-power the smaller coloured lights you are trying to photograph, producing a very flat looking image. The second, depending on the distance between you and the lights, is that the flash may do diddly squat. The picture will show a well exposed item in the foreground (that the camera thought was the subject), surrounded by a lot of dark. So, what you have to do, is either set the camera to slow flash sync, or the preferred if possible, rear sync, sometimes also called 2nd curtain sync. With Rear Sync/2nd Curtain the flash goes off just before the shutter closes, and allows the ambient

light to expose first, and then the flash will just fill in the rest of the image that is not lit up by itself, giving you a more dynamic image.

- **Wear gloves:** It has been cold out at night recently, and if you are out in the dark, and a breeze picks up, let's face it, your hands will quickly get cold. If you don't have gloves that have special fold-back finger tips for camera controls, or the modern touch screens that many cameras now feature, it is easy enough to acquire those. I have also seen a product that you can use to turn any glove you own into an iThingy/touch screen compatible glove. You dab a drop or two of a solution onto the tip of your glove, and it gives it the electrical conductivity that touch screens require. This product is called "AnyGlove," and can be found at many on-line retailers. I have not seen it locally yet, but great for use with a tablet or smart phone in the cold.
- **Bring a spare battery:** The cold will reduce how well the battery functions. A spare will eliminate the chance of low battery power ruining your fun.
- **Think about moisture:** One last thing to remember, when you come in from the cold into the warmth of your home, a restaurant, or the pub, condensation will build up on the outside of the camera. Leave it in a camera bag and allow it to acclimatize to the warmth before bringing it out to see your images. This may not sound like an issue if you have a weather sealed camera, but many of them are not, and moisture is the enemy of electronics.

Here is something that is different for pretty much everyone. Turn your noise reduction up one setting from the default, and, if you are shooting JPGs, the sharpness as well. I am not going to lie, I am lazy when it comes to post production. I do not want to go through and spend hours after a shoot and edit everything. Many people do prefer the more controllable detail and noise reduction that you can get in post-production software. But for those of us that would rather just shoot and forget, just do this quick setting change in your camera, you will get better results. As a side note to this, Auto Noise Reduction may have difficulty with this particular style of photography. I have found that it tends to over do it, and you end up with too soft of an image; and as a result, you end up sharpening more in post-production.

Just some simple tips, I hope that you find them helpful. Please contact me if you have any questions about this article at jrphotographybc@mac.com.

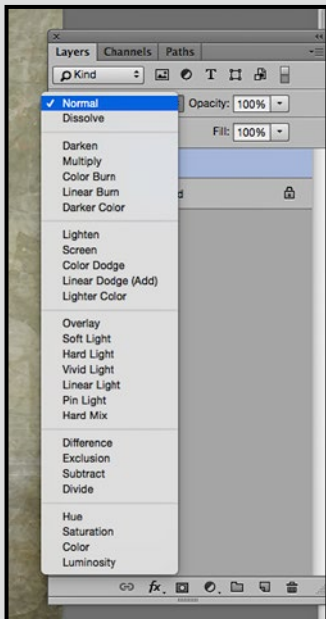
by Barbara Burns

Do you as a photographer need to know about Photoshop Blend Modes? If you are interested in making photo montages, collages or digital artistry with your images, then definitely yes!!! In order to make images more creative with Photoshop, there are a number of “must know” features. These include:

1. Knowing what each of the tools on the tool bar does.
2. Understanding Layers and how they work
3. Understanding Layer Masks and how they work
4. Understanding Layer Blend Modes and how to use them.

For the purpose of this discussion, I will assume that the reader has at least a basic knowledge of items 1) through 3).

The Blend Mode drop-down list is found in the upper left of the Layers Palette in the rectangular box with the word “Normal” displayed most of the time. Click on the up or down arrow and a list of 25 Blend Modes will appear, organized into functional groups.



Every type of layer, except a Background layer, supports Blending Modes. These influence how a layer interacts with the layers below it. The effects created by the various Blend Modes are as follows:

The first group of two Blend Modes combine layers. The effects are influenced by layer opacity. “Normal” is the default Blend Mode that is assigned to a layer when

it is created. This makes the top “Normal” layer dominant unless its opacity is reduced to partially reveal the layer below. “Dissolve” is used to create stipple texture effects, and reducing the opacity of the layer changes the effect of the speckles. I have yet to use it.

The next group of four Blend Modes darken the layers below. “Darken” creates a darkening effect on tonal values darker than 50% grey. “Multiply,” which darkens all pixel values, is one of the most useful of the Blend Modes. It can be used to increase the density of highlights and mid-tones. It is, most importantly, the mode used to eliminate whites from an image layer. This allows you to seamlessly layer an object or figure with a white background onto the layer below, as the white is completely eliminated (see image 2). “Color Burn” darkens the dark tones by increasing contrast. “Linear Burn” is a combination of Multiply and Color Burn. It darkens the layers below by decreasing brightness. I use “Multiply” very often, “Darken” occasionally, and the other two rarely.

The next set of four Blend Modes generally lighten the layer below. “Lighten” acts only on tonal values lighter than 50% grey. It replaces the darker values with lighter values and ignores any brighter values in the layer below. The opposite of “Multiply” is “Screen:” it lightens the entire image and reduces contrast. It is a very useful Blend Mode for compositing images, as it will eliminate blacks in the active layer. Thus an object or figure on a pure black background will layer perfectly onto the layer below, without any of its black background showing. “Color Dodge,” the opposite of “Color Burn,” lightens light tones and increases contrast, but has no effect on the dark image areas. “Linear Dodge” lightens by increasing brightness. Unlike “Screen,” it will clip the highlights to pure white and has a stronger lightening effect. I use “Lighten” occasionally and “Screen” very frequently and the other two rarely.

The next group of seven Blend Modes affect the contrast in the image. They all increase image contrast by changing the highlight and shadow values. “Overlay” darkens the dark values and lightens the light values, while maintaining the darkness and lightness of the layer below. I use it frequently but most often with the opacity reduced to lessen its overall effect. “Overlay” can produce a very pleasing effect simply by duplicating the layer you are working with and setting the Blend Mode of the new layer to “Overlay”. It will brighten and enhance the image. “Soft Light” is a combination of “Darken” and “Lighten” and creates less dramatic contrast effects than either “Overlay” or “Hard Light.” It is generally my “go-to”

Blend Mode when I am compositing and want both the new layer and the layers below to show through in the composite with lightly enhanced contrast. It is also very useful for dodging and burning. To use it this way, create a new fill layer of 50% grey and set the Blend Mode to "Soft Light." The appearance of the grey will disappear and you can then paint non-destructively on this layer, using a black brush to burn and a white brush to dodge. "Hard Light" is a mixture of Multiply and Screen and it will boost overall image contrast. I often use it when "Soft Light" is a little too soft but I generally reduce the opacity of the active layer to lessen any harsh contrast it produces in the image. "Vivid Light" is a combination of "Color Dodge" and "Color Burn". It decreases the contrast in lighter areas, and increases it in darker areas. "Linear Light" combines "Linear Dodge" and "Linear Burn." It increases the brightness of lighter areas, and darkens the darker areas. "Pin Light" is a combination of "Lighten" and "Darken" and is used to add special effects. "Hard Mix" is an extreme combination of "Lighten" and "Darken" and can be used to reduce high contrast effects. I rarely ever use these last four modes.

The next group of four Blend Modes mathematically compares and evaluates layers with one another. These Blend Modes produce special effects that are often quite extreme and I rarely use them unless I want to experiment to achieve sometimes startling results.

The final four Blend Modes change individual attributes of the layer. "Hue" combines the luminance and saturation of the underlying layer with the hue of the active layer. "Saturation" combines the luminance and hue of the underlying layer with the saturation of the active layer. "Color" reveals the colour of the active layer and maintains the luminance of the underlying layer. "Luminosity" is the opposite of "Color" and maintains the luminosity information of the active layer in relationship to the colour underneath. I use this Blend Mode frequently when compositing images, particularly when I am layering objects or figures and I want them to blend into the colours of the background, while maintaining their own tonal values.

While it is useful to have a general idea of the purpose of each Blend Mode, ultimately even the most expert digital artist will frequently just scroll through each Blend Mode looking for the most pleasing effect. A useful tip for cycling through the Blend Modes quickly is to activate the "Move Tool" and the layer you are focusing on by clicking on them, and then press the "Shift and + keys to move forward through the different Modes and the "Shift" and - keys to cycle back.

To demonstrate the effect of Blend Modes, I have included three images. I want to combine Image One (background) and Image Two (figure) but I do not want the white background of Image Two to show through. Layering Image Two on top of Image One and setting the Blend Mode of the Image Two layer to "Multiply" results in a new composite, Image Three. Above all, experiment and play with the Blend Modes. Sometimes they reward you with surprising and very satisfying results.



Producing a Water Wig

by Richard W. Letourneau

The words water and portrait do not usually go in the same sentence. However, I attended a Vancouver Island Photography Workshop led by Von McKnelly, that included a session on water. The premise was to capture the moment a burst water balloon struck a model's head, creating a dispersal of liquid, in the form of a "water wig."



The shot was done outdoors on a slightly overcast day. The model stood about 4 meters away in front of a black, draped background. A 1.2 m, circular gold reflector lit the torso and head. An assistant on a ladder held a tied, water-filled balloon about 30 cm above the model's head. Then the balloon was pierced with a sharp object.

With my Canon 7D Mark II on a tripod and a Sigma 24-70 mm f2.8 lens set at 44 mm, I used the following camera settings: high speed continuous mode, ISO 400, f4.5, 1/1000 sec.

On the countdown word "one" the photographer held the shutter down for several seconds as multiple shots increase the odds of capturing the sweet moment of best water position and shape on the model's head, thereby creating a "water wig."

In Lightroom, I adjusted saturation and vibrance, moved highlights to -100 and shadows to +100. I then added gold and grey split-toning, adjusted white balance, and decreased exposure. I used graduated filters around the model to ensure a uniformly dark background. Inverted radial filters were used to augment the natural and reflected light on the head, water and torso.

4UP

by Jim Metzger

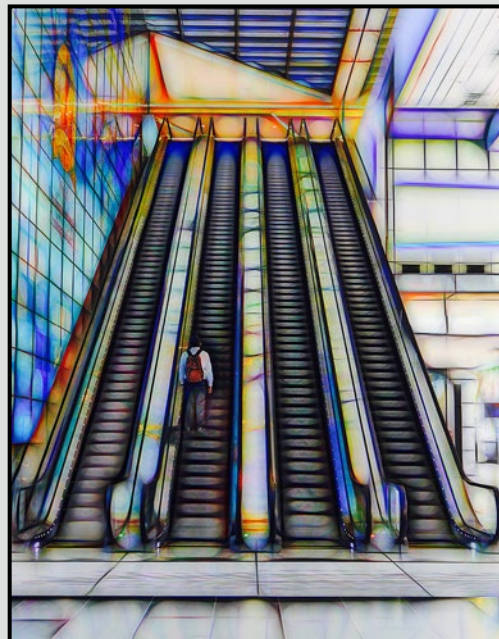
This is an image of four "up" escalators at the Suntec City Mall in Singapore. Taking the photo at about 7:30 am allowed me to get just one person in the shot.

I used a Panasonic 4/3 GX8 mirrorless camera with a 14-42 mm lens at 25 mm (50 mm equivalent), 1/60 sec, f5.4, ISO 2000. All my images are hand held.

The graphic quality of the scene is what first attracted me. I then waited for a person to enter the frame. I knew that the very bright colours and reflective surfaces would be perfect for creative manipulations.

It went into Lightroom for a bit of definition and a little shadow lightening. It then went into Topaz Glow. This is a program with 72 effects and 72 variations for each effect so the possible manipulations are endless. I used the effect "Graphic Sketch III" to manipulate the individual colour saturations and lightness, and increased the brightness aspect. This brightened up the upper right hand side and gave it more colour for a better balance with the left hand side.

I think this image works as it is a strong graphic, but with a human element to give it scale. This human element is a good focal point and even though some of the overall manipulations are pretty radical, the person remains recognizable as a person.



Tuesday Shoots

by Daniel A. Roy

“Tuesday Shoots” articles will now include information on the “Alternate Tuesday” outings. The original “Tuesday Shoots” are theme based, while the “Alternate Tuesday Shoots” focus on locations in and around Victoria. The locations will “suggest” the subject matter. Check out the VCC calendar for posted events. Note: The “Alternate Tuesday Shoot” is in its early development stage. We will soon post future locations to provide more lead-time.

December 6th: Cook Street Village. This is a popular location, not just for the locals; it draws people from all over Greater Victoria. Coffee shops and a British-styled pub anchor this delightful neighbourhood. A quaint collection of amenities and boutiques combined with a friendly atmosphere adds to its charm. Around the core are several heritage homes, many recently painted or refurbished to their original splendour. The Dallas Road waterfront is only a ten-minute walk away.

Sorry to bring this to your attention, but winter looms on the horizon. Cooler temperatures naturally affect our choice of clothing, especially if we plan on being outside for more than a few minutes. Gloves, scarfs, coats, and hats will be prominent attire on Victoria streets. This will be the theme for the second Tuesday of December.

December 13th: Dressed For The Weather. What will people be wearing this time of year? Will there be any new trends in winter fashion? Probably not, but I’m sure people will be bundled up to fend off the cold. People sporting bright coloured scarves and trendy winter hats should be in abundance, and this might give that special image some extra pop. A focal length of 30 to 40 mm is generally best for this form of street photography, but using a telephoto lens may produce a more candid result.



Weekend Shoots

by Teri VanWell

There is one field trip scheduled for the month of December and some fun places to go for more photographic opportunities.

December 3rd: Craigdarroch Castle at Christmas. The castle is a definitively Victorian experience. It is a shining example of a “bonanza castle,” a massive house built for the Dunsmuir family, entrepreneurs who became wealthy during the industrial age. This legendary Victorian mansion, built between 1887 and 1890 on a hill overlooking the City of Victoria, announced to the world that Robert Dunsmuir was the richest and most important man in Western Canada. The immense fortune of the Dunsmuir family is reflected in the four floors of exquisite stained glass windows, intricate woodwork and fabulous Victorian era furnishings.

The Club has the unique opportunity to enter the castle early to photograph the castle, as it would have been at Christmastime. Use a wide lens to photograph a whole room or choose a long lens to get a close-up of a Victorian era decoration.

Other Photographic Opportunities. Some other places to shoot over the holidays include:

Festival of Trees, November 16th to January 5th. The trees will be located at The Bay Centre as well as the Fairmont Empress Hotel.

Canada’s National Gingerbread Showcase, November 19th to January 2nd. Visit Laurel Point Inn as they play host to the annual gingerbread showcase. This year’s theme is “Around the World.”

Butchart Gardens, December 1st to January 6th: Visit the gardens to take in the Twelve Days of Christmas placed throughout the gardens while listening to The Festive Brass and Traditional Carollers.

Lighted Truck Convoy, December 3rd: Starting at Ogden Point, various sized trucks decorated in Christmas lights. Don’t forget your donation to the Food Bank.

Lighted Ship Parade, December 3rd: The Greater Victoria Harbour Authority will dispatch over 25 beautifully decorated boats from Ship Point at 5pm to head out into the darkness with only their lights showing.

by Don Zwicker

How do you take an idea from your imagination to a final image? Here are a few things to consider when setting up a location photo shoot:

- Have an idea or nurture an inspiration.
- Develop the concept in your mind, and then make each step real.
- Work the idea, find a location, work the site, and ask for help to make your vision a reality.



“Andrew the Piper”

It goes something like this. I was walking my dog along a forest trail, when I heard the sound of bagpipes drifting through the dense rainforest. The sound gave me a strong image of a young piper on his way to join up with a band of freedom fighters in the Scottish Highlands in the 1700s.

As I continued my walk I couldn't get the image out of my mind, I couldn't leave it alone. So I figured I would investigate the source and track down the piper. I knew where the sound “should” have been coming from, so I went off on a mission to find the mysterious piper.

I followed a winding road behind Thetis Lake and found a young man putting a set of bagpipes away in the back of a red sports car.

I approached this stranger and asked if it was his music I heard. I commented on how much I liked the sound.

I mentioned that I was a photographer then asked him a little about himself and the bagpipes he was playing. As it turned out piper “Andrew” was just getting back to his pipes which were handed down to him by his mother. His room-mates, however, didn't appreciate his music as much as I did, so he had searched out a lonely spot way out in the forest to practise.

I told him that his bagpipes had given me an idea for a shoot and would he be interested in being part of it?

I gave him my card with my website so he could check out some of my work. I told him that I would call him the next day to see what he thought.

I called Andrew and found out that he was interested, but he had just been posted to Halifax and would be leaving in two weeks. If I wanted to make this shoot happen, I would have to take steps right away to get it done.



“Establishing the Wide Shot”

Getting and staying organized is essential to keep on track and to avoid getting distracted. It's very easy to put out a lot of effort without any resulting end product. Think of the photo shoot as a project, with separate but inter-related parts. Each “part” leads to or supports other parts toward successfully completing the whole photo shoot.

Idea: I had the “idea” of an image in my mind. So now I needed to “work” it: put the pieces together to flesh it out and make it real.

Model: The first step was already taken care of by finding Andrew, the piper.

Location: I did some scouting around with a photographer friend to look for some suitable locations. I was looking for a place that would add to the mood of the shoot I had in mind. I imagined the shooting angles I

would use, and what time of day would be best for the kind of light that I wanted.



“Using Reflections”

Costume: This was taken care of in part by Andrew himself. It turned out that he was just getting his full piper “dress kit and kilt” custom made, and would have it ready to wear for the first time in a few days, a bonus! But I wanted to add some extra detail, touches to enhance the mood and “feel” of the piece.

Props: I started to ask around for period accessories, like old swords and old military memorabilia. As luck would have it I came across a guy who was willing to lend me whatever I needed. I’ve found that after doing this kind of thing several times, it is amazing what you can get in terms of help and actual “things,” just by asking.

Crew: You will need help to carry off a location shoot. I’ve always found that people will be more than happy to lend a hand and be part of the creative process if you just ask. As long as you can present a goal, and have some idea of what you might need to get there, people are generally more than willing to be part of the project.

You, as the photographer, need to focus on the image. But someone else needs to take charge of the other details, not the least of which is the comfort and care of the “Talent.” I always have a crew member dedicated to keeping the model “warm and watered” during the shoot. This might include someone for hair and make-up, if that’s an integral part of the set up. Take care of your crew and they will help take care of your vision.

Timetable: This seems like a no-brainer, but it’s harder than you might think to put all the pieces of the shoot together at the same time. The more organized you are to begin with, the more confidence your crew will have in you, the more successful the shoot will be.

Flexibility: I know, I just said you needed to be organized, and have as many details covered as possible. But “no battle plan ever survives contact with the enemy.” Try to consider contingencies and always be open to taking advantage of unexpected opportunities as they present themselves. You will be surprised how often serendipity plays a part in the outcome.

Equipment: This might go without saying, but do make a list. Be doubly sure that you have all your camera gear in tip-top condition, and have backups for as much as possible. Charge all your batteries and have lots of clean memory cards.

Shoot management: Like any shoot, it should be organized and focused toward the goal. As the lead photographer, you are the quarterback. Keep a good dialogue going with the model and support crew. Let them know what you want. Be aware of people’s comfort and fatigue.

Keep your vision in your mind while being flexible and open to opportunities as they come up. Try to have fun and make the shoot an enjoyable experience for everyone. Have a great time!



“Hero Character Shot”

A Time to Focus

by Nancy MacNab

Christmas is coming with the accompanying excitement of new cameras and lenses, flashes and gadgets that tend to appear under every photographer's Christmas tree. The time leading up to Christmas can be pleasantly spent in researching the latest and greatest items that will help you to get the award-winning photos you just know you'll be taking next year.

So what will be on your Christmas list this year? A new body, either camera or your own? A macro or telephoto lens? A sturdy tripod with an adjustable centre post that can be locked at any angle? Each year the temptation to accumulate yet more photography gear is very hard to resist.

However, while this new gear may be capable of helping you take fantastic photographs, the results you get still depend on you, your eye, your knowledge of composition and light, your reactions to the scene in front of you. The one thing that will really help to improve your photography is time. Time to learn how to use the camera gear you currently own. Time to practice with your camera so you simply react automatically when you need to change the settings. Time to develop your eye for light, colour and composition.

So once the excitement of Christmas is over, make sure you deliberately use your new gear with the goal of learning how to use it with ease. With new camera bodies and lenses, take the same photo over and over at different apertures to learn which apertures are the sharpest. Then take the time to compare the images so in the future, you will know immediately which aperture is going to produce the right part of the image in focus while leaving the remainder a soft blur.

Cameras today usually have a dozen or more aperture settings, so taking a photo at each aperture will result in very slight, almost indistinguishable differences in the resulting image. You may be better off taking the same photo at every "full stop" (f2.8, f4, f5.6, f8 etc.) to truly see the change in how much of the image is in focus. Remember also that the distance you are from your subject will also affect this depth of field.

To learn about your new camera's focusing ability, go to where the action is occurring, whether that is Esquimalt Lagoon for birds in flight, or dogs playing along the

waterfront on Dallas Road, or a sporting event. Along with the focusing, you will also be learning about shutter speeds. How fast a shutter speed do you need to use in order to freeze the motion? What speed gives a nice blur while leaving the subject still identifiable? Can you take a good photo that shows the subject clearly defined against a blurred background, which will require you to pan the camera, following the subject at its speed? All of these methods take practice, which takes time. Plan to do your practice before you leave for that once-in-a-lifetime trip somewhere.

Perhaps you got a new flash for Christmas. You will need to learn not only all the buttons and dials and what they do, but also about the distance you can be from the subject if the light is to reach it, what power or flash compensation you can set on the flash, and how these will affect the result.

The direction the light is coming from has a big impact on the resulting image. Can you bounce your flash off the ceiling? Or off the wall beside the subject? If you are photographing outside and want to bounce the light, you can try bouncing it off a reflector. In this case, the colour of the reflector will also change the effect you get.

Both books and the internet can provide you with ample information and inspiration on just about any technique you can think of. There are YouTube videos that will demonstrate various photography and lighting techniques. However, a theoretical knowledge is only so useful, so make sure you make the time to practice.

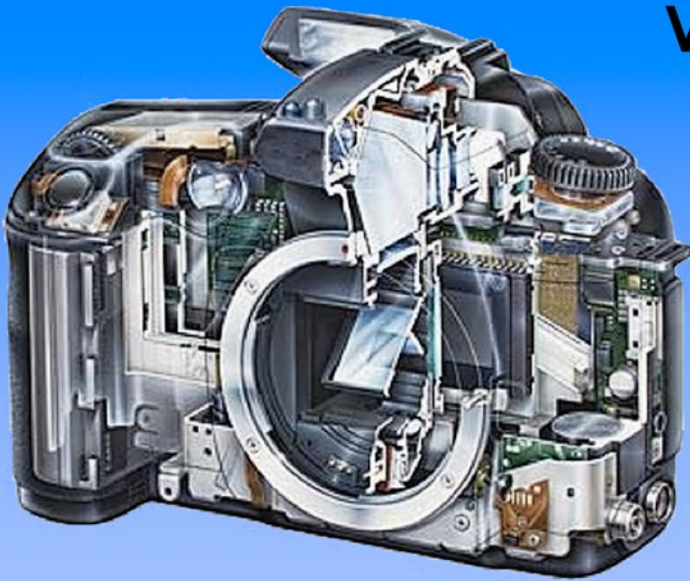
How to find the time is always the problem. Can you take your camera to work and get in some practice at lunchtime? What about on the way home from work? One advantage to photography is that you can literally use those spare moments to take a few photos. You can take advantage of five or ten minutes a day to grab your camera and tripod and try out a new technique or polish an old one. While being able to spend an hour or two at a time is preferable as it allows you to really focus on photography rather than the clock, a brief time every day is better than one hour once a week when it comes to developing your eye for photography.

Enjoy your researching of new equipment and learning new techniques; then make time to actually use them, developing your skill and your eye for a great image so you will be ready for those marvellous images you will make next year. See you out there!

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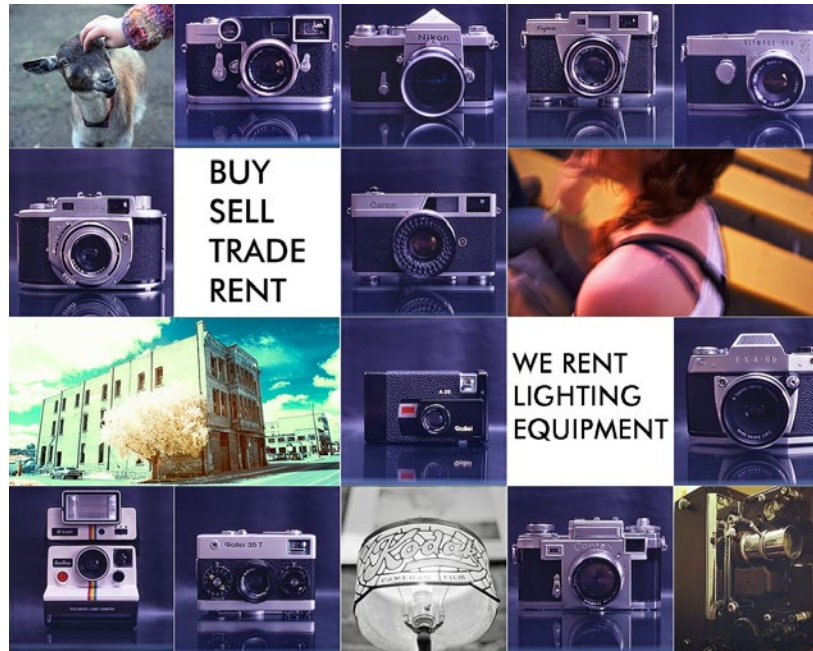
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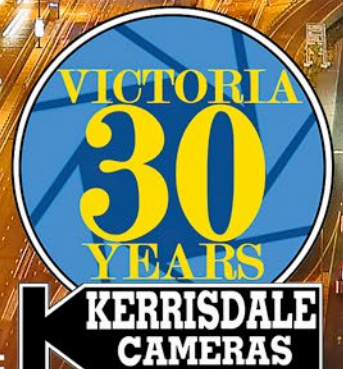
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