Newsletter Issue 6

Wairarapa Camera Club

Black & White Madness

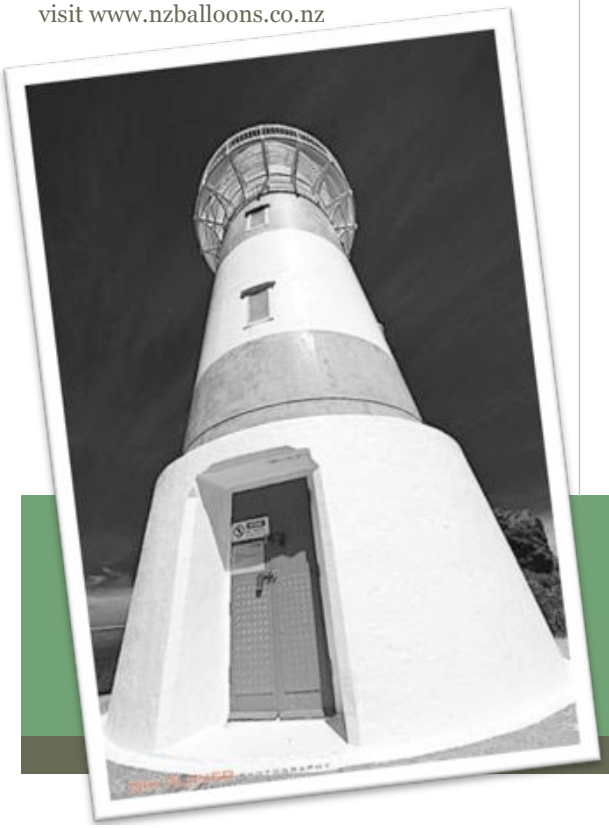
March 2010

Calendar

6th – 7th Mar The Harvest Rally. Wairarapa Vintage Machinery Club Inc - Harvest Rally 2010 Sat 9am - 4pm Sun 9am - 4pm

13th Mar Cross Creek Railway Society Mini-steam Festival. 10am 4pm Featherston town centre.

19th Mar – 21st Mar Trust House Balloons Over Wairarapa. For a full programme of events visit www.nzballoons.co.nz



Letter From The Editor

Hi to all members...

I hope the instruction night wasn't too taxing or confusing for you all ! Its quite difficult to cover all the aspects we planned in such a short time so I'm going to hold another workshop shortly. The last workshop I did covered 'exposure' and the feedback I had was great.

A big thank you to all those 'experts' who helped on the night.

It's the Black & White competition next month so I have devoted this issue to Black & White (with the exception of the Technical Corner) to help you get the best out of your conversions.

Don't forget that past issues of the newsletter are on the website under the News section and you can pass them on to whoever you like.

You can also email any questions and I'll try to answer them. I will publish them in the next news letter.

Cheers *Nik*

Top: "Leigh" canis familiaris (noseis snoutiss)

Left: Cape Palliser lighthouse

Both shot with a 14mm ultra wide angle lens and converted to B&W using Adobe Lightroom

You in Black & White


Helen James


Mike Buck


Bruce Levy


Sid Hayes

Club Info

To learn more about photography, to share your skills and experience or simply to enjoy photographic time with like-minded people, come to a meeting or contact us at

info@wairarapacameraclub.org

Meetings start at 7:30 pm on the first Tuesday of every month from February to November, at the Education Centre next to Parkview Motors in Dixon Street, Masterton.

WCC, PO BOX 502, Masterton

www.wairarapacameraclub.org

All questions, submissions and general information regarding this newsletter should be made to the Editor, Nik Player.

nikplayer@me.com

Technical Corner

This month we discuss Focus Modes. Cameras can use different methods to focus and you can have control.

Focus Modes

Most digital cameras have more than one focusing mode. When using an automatic mode, focus is locked whenever the shutter-release button is pressed down half-way.

Correct use of the two-step shutter button is key to obtaining proper focus. Other factors also come into play such as the amount of light falling on a subject, the amount of contrast in a scene and the motion of a subject.

Many cameras come equipped with an auto focus assist lamp that helps the camera focus better when lighting of a subject is low or lacks adequate contrast. A focus assist lamp is most effective when photographing still, non-moving subjects that are in fairly close range.

The LCD or electronic viewfinder indicates when and where focus is locked. A visual indicator, such as a small lamp or change in colour of the focus indicator, confirms when focus is achieved. Digital cameras may also have an audio sound indicating locked focus.

Auto focus

Single area focus — Camera focuses on a subject in the central area of the screen. Focus adjusts according to the distance of the subject. This focus mode is usually the most accurate because you, not the camera, decides where the camera focuses.

Continuous autofocus — Focuses continually on a subject. Continuous AF is useful, though not always perfect, when shooting moving subjects like sports and kids. Some cameras do this well, others do not.

Spot focus — Camera focuses on a very precise centre spot of the screen.

Multi area focus — Camera automatically focuses using multiple focus points. The focus positions change according to each subject, focusing on a number of objects within a scene. This mode can be less accurate than single area focus but the newer dSLRs are getting very good.

Pre-focusing

Pre-focus allows you to lock focus on a subject, then recompose. Digital cameras have different methods of pre-focusing, so check the manual. In the photo below I locked focus on the fence rail using the centre focus point and then recomposed the frame. The focus remained on the rail to the left of centre.

Manual focus

Manual focus area – Focus on a portion of a scene when not centred in the frame. This method is useful for close-up and macro shots.

Focus ring — Focus manually, from a few feet to infinity, by turning a focus ring near the lens.

Focus button — Depress a manual focus button and rotate a dial until the subject is in focus.

You will have to read the manual to learn what your camera is capable of in each of it's focus modes.

Cheers *Nik*

Photography Tips

Black & White Conversion

Here are a few tips to help you create good black & white photographs. Its not just as simple as removing all the colour with the saturation slider!

In the days of black & white film we had rich, dark "Blacks" and ice white "Whites" with great tonal contrast that set the black and white image alive. Then digital came along and the black & white image as we knew it changed. It changed into something dingy and boring. Most digital cameras have a black and white shooting mode. However, this usually does nothing more than create identical Red, Green, and Blue channels in the final picture file. Black and white film aficionados generally find the results from digital cameras lacking.

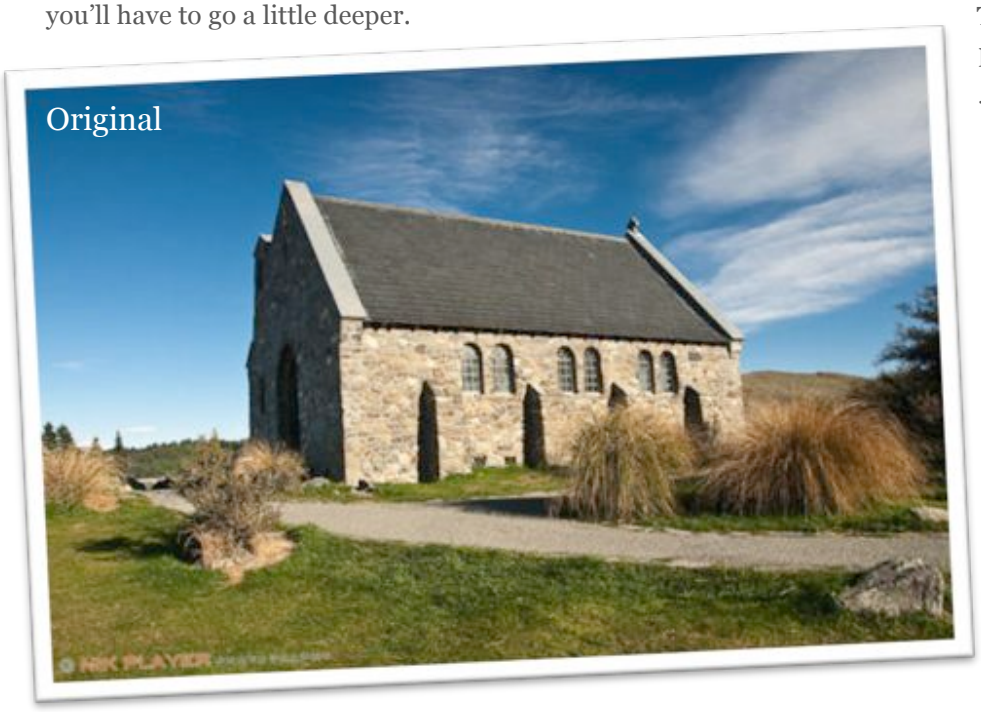
There are a couple of simple ways to get black-and-white digital photos...

1 Use your camera's built-in B&W setting.

2 Convert to B&W using the pre-set filters in iPhoto/Picasa/Photoshop.

3 Use Photoshop (or GIMP or whatever) to de-saturate or change to gray-scale.

These methods all work, but you end up with flat, muddy photos. Bumping up the contrast will improve matters, but to get a black-and-white picture that really pops, you'll have to go a little deeper.



Important Tip *Don't shoot in black & white. Shoot in colour so that you have control over the conversion later. If you want you can shoot a black and white version too so that you can see how it may look on the camera screen but get a colour version to work with later.*

Not all images lend themselves to B&W conversions. When the colour is removed from an image the composition changes, we no longer have colours to communicate a mood or to take our eye around or balance a scene. Light and dark tones and the shapes they create become more important. The eye concentrates more on the geometric aspects of the image, it is no longer influenced by the colours and this is important to think about when you chose an image for B&W conversion.

The three images below show an example of how the B&W conversion can make such a difference to the final impact of the photo.

The first image is the original colour image. The second image has had the colour removed by de-saturating it. This is basically what your camera does to produce a B&W photo. To get this effect I just moved the saturation slider down to zero. As you can see it looks ok but it's a bit boring and flat.

Image three has also been de-saturated but using a different technique. Because I shot this in colour the colour information remains in the image file and it can be used to artistic effect when converting to B&W.

This technique can be achieved in many common photo manipulation programs, for this example I used Adobe Lightroom which provides a utility to convert to B&W and mix the colour channels manually yourself. This can be

achieved in Photoshop and Photoshop Elements and a whole host of other applications.

Say you want to darken a red object to make it stand out, but you also want to keep the sky from going too dark.

You'd subtract red to darken the red object and add blue to lighten the sky. Low values of a channel darken its namesake colour, and high values lighten it.

Unfortunately I don't have time or space to go through all these techniques in this news letter but I hope this will show you what can be achieved. I would encourage you to do some digging on the internet for tutorials which explain how to use your software to make B&W conversions, there are plenty out there. I have described a method below for those of you with access to Photoshop that can replicate the effect I used in my example with Lightroom.

A common Photoshop method is to use the Channel Mixer.

Take your photos in colour, as usual. Be especially careful not to let highlight detail get overexposed. Do not blow out an RGB channel on your histogram. This is even more important for images that get converted to black and white, as you'll want significant detail in the light greys of your final image, and you don't want to limit any channel's ability to help you in that regard.

1 Start up Photoshop and open the image you want to convert. Choose Open from the File menu, navigate to your image and open it.

2 Select Channel Mixer from the Adjust submenu on the Image menu. In the mixer, click on the Monochrome box at the bottom, then adjust the Red, Green, and Blue channels and watch how the tones in the image change. The balance of the three channels is your "digital filter", so don't be afraid to adjust each channel individually until you find the right balance for your image. I often find that I want to be aggressive on the Red channel, less aggressive on the Green channel. Your values for the three channels should normally add up to about 100% If you stray too far from 100% the image can start to look un-balanced. You can use negative numbers for channel values, too, so you could have 80%, -20%, 40% as a conversion value.

4 Finish your adjustments. Normally, I'd try the Auto Contrast or Auto Levels controls first, just to see what effect they produce. If these controls didn't achieve the rich range of greys I was looking for, then I'd use Curves.