

Front cover: main image – Darwin Wiggett; bottom row, from left to right:  
Tom Mackie, William Neill, David Noton, Tony Worobiec  
Back cover: David Noton

A DAVID & CHARLES BOOK  
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David & Charles is an F+W Publications Inc. company  
4700 East Galbraith Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45236

First published in the UK in 2008

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN-13: 978-0-7153-2936-8 hardback  
ISBN-10: 0-7153-2936-7 hardback

ISBN-13: 978-0-7153-2940-5 paperback  
ISBN-10: 0-7153-2940-5 paperback

Printed in China by SNP Leefung  
for David & Charles  
Brunel House Newton Abbot Devon

Commissioning Editor: Neil Baber  
Desk Editor: Emily Rae  
Project Editor: Cathy Joseph  
Copy Editor: Nicola Hodgson  
Designer: Joanna Ley  
Production Controller: Beverley Richardson

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David & Charles books are available from all good bookshops; alternatively you  
can contact our Orderline on 0870 9908222 or write to us at FREEPOST EX2 110,  
D&C Direct, Newton Abbot, TQ12 4ZZ (no stamp required UK only); US customers  
call 800-289-0963 and Canadian customers call 800-840-5220.

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# INTRODUCTION

## TOM MACKIE

Digital SLR cameras have opened up newly found interests in landscape photography. Digital makes photography easier. There's no need to think about focusing, metering or what film to use. It's all done for you and your masterpieces will fly on to your memory cards. Don't believe it! You still need a good understanding of the basics. When I started shooting with a DSLR I had to learn a lot about this new technology, and it is a continuous education. A few years ago I couldn't tell you what a histogram was, let alone how to read one.

Digital can very easily create lazy photographers, and I find myself slipping into this realm on occasion. I have to consciously evaluate what I am doing all the time. When I'm shooting with my large-format camera, I naturally work slowly and methodically, as this is the nature of the camera system. But when I have a DSLR in my hands, my first instinct is to snap away. Look at all these strange new features that I've never had the pleasure of using, such as autofocus, auto metering and zoom lenses! But snapping away without thought only creates snapshots.

It's also very easy to shoot handheld, but this is not always a good approach to achieving the best quality. Having the camera on a tripod allows you to take your hands away from the camera and concentrate on what's going on within the viewfinder. Check the edges of the frame to make sure unwanted elements such as wires or branches are not slipping into view. Don't have the attitude that these can be taken out later in Photoshop; try to get the image right at the point of capture.

Just a word about processing and editing your files in Photoshop (actually some advice from my assistant, Lisa, who works her magic on all of my images): when working with multiple images it's easy to run an action in Photoshop to carry out several tasks at once. However, when it comes to getting the best out of each individual image, you can't action perfection. Treat each image on its own merits.

Digital has definitely opened up my photography, particularly the way I shoot. I now find photographic situations where previously I wouldn't even have taken the camera out of the bag because of technical constraints. I wouldn't say that digital capture is better than film, but it's certainly different.

I still use film, and I enjoy shooting with my 4x5 Ebony view camera, because there is nothing like viewing a large-format transparency on a light table. But shooting with large format comes at a price. I'm not just talking about film and processing – more importantly, my back! Working with large-format gear is slow, heavy and cumbersome. I now take the camera system to suit the location.

Digital has enhanced the output of my work, allowing me to achieve images that I wouldn't obtain with larger film formats, but I consider it an addition to the camera



V La Push Beach at Twilight, Olympic National Park, Washington. One of the great advantages of the DSLR is the wider exposure range compared to film. This allows me to continue shooting in low light levels long past when I would have to put the film camera in the bag. It increases my productivity, allowing me more time to work a scene.  
Canon EOS 5D, 24mm-105mm lens, 1/10 sec at f/18, ISO 100

formats that I use. It is not the end-all camera system that will satisfy all of my clients' needs. But digital is here to stay, so embrace it to whatever degree you choose.



V Dogwood blooming over the Merced River, Yosemite National Park, California.  
Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II, 70-200mm lens, 1/5 sec at f/13, ISO 100

## WILLIAM NEILL

I have used a 4x5 camera for most of my career, mostly for the outstanding quality. In 2004, I started using Canon's high-megapixel cameras and found many advantages. These include wider choice of focal lengths, immediate feedback on composition and exposure via the LCD, no more need for scanning film and the convenience of reviewing and editing the results.

Additionally, Canon's top model has progressed from my original 12MP 1Ds, to the 16.7MP 1Ds Mark II, to my current 21.9MP 1Ds Mark III. These advancements have made it easier to stick with the DSLR option due to the great improvements in resolution and noise reduction. Weight is another factor. As heavy as the Canon DSLRs are, they are still lighter than the 4x5 option, and I am not getting any younger!

Many photographers can benefit from the convenience and quality control afforded by modern DSLRs. Combined with the post-processing features of image-editing software, the speed of review to check exposure quality, sharpness, and so on is greatly streamlined. Simply learning to control your histogram while in the field is a revolution. But, to fully maximize your images, you must learn at least the basics of Photoshop, especially to make local adjustments within an image.

Learning is greatly aided by the freedom to experiment and take creative chances that the use of reusable memory cards offers us. I have found it liberating to use my DSLRs. My reasons are simple: excellent quality that will continue to improve, convenience in terms of seeing results quickly and easily, and the economic advantage of no longer buying film or paying for high-resolution drum scans.

^ This image shows the village of Castelluccio in Umbria, Italy, perched high above the Piano Grande with the mountains of Monti Sibillini National Park beyond. I'm bowled over by the crispness and detail of images shot on the Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II. I now preach the benefits of digital capture with all the fervour of a convert.  
 Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II, 100-400mm lens, 1/50 sec at f/8, ISO 100



#### DAVID NOTON

**In March 2005, I had a mid-life crisis. I terminated a long-term relationship with my Nikons, switched to digital, and ran off with a younger camera system. Like all such momentous changes it was traumatic and expensive, but it had to be done. Now, several years later, I'm ruminating over the changes, weighing up the pros and cons. What do I love about my new life? Freedom, flexibility and quality. What do I hate? The fact that I now feel wedded to a computer. Still, in all honesty, I have no regrets: the timing was right.**

I'm looking back at an article I wrote in 2003, when the 'Big Debate' was in full flow. The digital revolution was perhaps the biggest seismic shift in photography since the evolution of the negative. Pixels were replacing light-sensitive emulsion, and photographers were wondering if and when to make the change, and how it would affect them.

Back then I decided to stick with film because of issues such as power, quality and compatibility with my existing system. 'If it works, don't fix it', was my ethos. But things moved on quickly and just a year later I couldn't ignore the fact that the latest generation of digital SLRs were producing images of superior quality than my 35mm film cameras. A jump in available quality was enticing, not to mention all the other advantages of working digitally.

There was, however, a big problem for me and many other Nikon users, which delayed my decision: sensor size. Nikon's DSLRs use a half-frame sensor – suitable for press work maybe, but not for my game. For a full-frame sensor I'd have to switch to Canon, and change my entire system. As I had a shed full of Nikons worth the price of a small house, this was a tough call, but I bit the bullet.

I think the debate has now moved on; shooting digitally is the norm and most photographers have a foot at least partially in the pixel camp. I have to admit that I'm a convert. The digital revolution has sounded the death knell of 35mm film; the quality and versatility available from most DSLRs is far superior. As for medium format, it's a tougher call. I've done comparisons between my Canon and a Mamiya RZ67 and in my view, not only is the DSLR far more flexible and portable, it delivers superior image quality. Surprised? So was I; but whichever way you cut it, the EOS-1Ds Mark II produces a crisper image. And the ability to vary the sensitivity, or ISO setting, to suit the conditions is very useful, not to mention a digital camera's flexibility when dealing with mixed lighting.

Still, many will disagree with me, and let's never lose sight of the fact that it's the pictures that matter. Ultimately in this debate, intangibles creep in. A photographer friend of mine insists that he prefers the feel of film; he doesn't like 'metallic' digital images. I know what I think, though: using those two crucial tools, the Curves and Levels controls, wisely at the RAW conversion and Photoshop stages, I have far more control over all aspects of my images than I ever have done before. I think the flexibility offered by a DSLR system is a priceless asset that can translate into better pictures when the chips are down.

Conversely, shooting digitally can foster a looser approach, a more laissez-faire attitude that you can just blast away and sort it out later; that if you shoot enough one is bound to work. Well, garbage in, garbage out, as they say. In fact, I think that to extract the best from my DSLR I need to be even more meticulous behind the camera. However, the flexibility of digital capture undoubtedly allows me to explore more options and to extract more from any photographic opportunity. To avoid that condemning me to endless computer hours, I have to hone in on the best. I'd rather produce one great picture than 50 average ones.

The great challenge of the switch to digital has been first to ensure a tight, disciplined approach to shooting, and second to learn a whole new way of editing to avoid spending the rest of my life in Photoshop.



**V**This photo of Mount Rundle and the Vermilion Lakes in Banff National Park was taken with my Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III and a 24mm TSE lens. I used the tilt feature on the lens to get depth of field beyond that possible with a regular lens. The foreground snow was only inches away from the front of my lens, yet the whole image is sharp, even at my middle aperture setting of f/11.  
Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III, 24mm lens, 10 sec at f/11, ISO 100

#### DARWIN WIGGETT

**For me, the greatest single advantage of digital capture is the ability to see whether you captured the shot in the field. You can make adjustments on the fly to obtain the image as you want it. Because of the power of instant feedback, I have seen new photographers progress at a much faster rate than they would with film.**

Creative control is another big plus. Digital post-production is the chemical darkroom on performance-enhancing drugs. So much more can be done in the computer to manipulate images than was even imagined in the wet darkroom. The creative possibilities are endless. Of course, this advantage can be applied to film shooters who scan their negatives or slides, but capturing digital images and massaging them in the computer has opened up more people to personal expression than has the craft of wet darkroom work.

There is no longer the question of whether digital can match film in terms of quality. The detail, resolution and colour fidelity of digital capture easily matches or even surpasses 35mm and even medium-format film. Almost every stock photo agency in the world no longer accepts film, for both workflow and quality issues. Film and digital capture have different 'looks', and photographers generally prefer the look of one medium over the other, but in terms of quality of information captured, the nod now goes to digital.

There are some disadvantages to digital, too, though. My expenses for photography have tripled since my switch to digital, and I was a prolific film consumer! Most digital shooters upgrade their camera every 18 months to three years, and digital cameras are much more expensive than film cameras, which tend to be used for much longer periods. Also, digital users need computers, and these are upgraded on average every three years. Then there is the software, printers, monitors, calibration hardware, paper, ink, accessories and so on. The costs for professional digital capture are much higher than film. If you switched from film to save money, you're in for a surprise!

Digital imaging also sucks up my time like nothing else. In my film days, a two-week trip was followed by three days of work to get the film processed at the lab, to caption, label and file my slides, and to send submissions to my stock agency. Digital workflow after a two-week trip means I will spend two weeks behind the computer editing and processing the RAW captures, adding keywords, archiving and backing up multiple copies and preparing digital submissions to my stock agency. This is despite the fact that I am ruthless at editing – keeping only about 10 per cent of what I shoot – and am considered a 'power user' at Photoshop.

Digital photographers are notorious for having the attitude of 'fix it later in Photoshop'. With film, you had to get the shot perfect in-camera, so photographers were more careful about lighting, contrast control and composition. Many digital photographers are lazy with capture in the field, often preferring to correct their mistakes later in the computer, which eats up more time and money in the end.

Having said that, I use digital capture mainly because the advantages outweigh the disadvantages: I will give up time and money in return for instant feedback and greater creative control and quality.

#### TONY WOROBIEC

**As the overwhelming majority of my work is landscape, where quality really is an issue, I have been a devotee of medium-format photography for more than 20 years and initially doubted that I would ever return to using an SLR. However, in recent years I noticed that the quality of digital SLRs had improved so much that I felt sufficiently curious to buy one. In those years, I had forgotten just how flexible an SLR can be; coupled with an astonishing improvement in quality, I quickly appreciated that this new generation of cameras has a great deal to offer.**

The range of lenses available to a medium-format worker is limited, particularly the availability of zooms. Good landscape photography often requires trekking, and the heavier the equipment, the more reluctant I am to carry it. By contrast, digital SLR equipment is lighter and infinitely more flexible. I have restricted myself to just two zoom lenses, but their coverage is easily a match for all the medium-format equipment I used.

I particularly value using zooms again, partly because I do not constantly have to change lenses, but more importantly because I find that using a zoom greatly benefits my composition. It is easy to set off with a predetermined image in your mind, but being able to experiment with a range of focal lengths is truly invaluable.

Another important feature of digital is being able to set the ISO rating image by image. While the vast majority of my photographs are set for ISO 100, being able to shoot 800 or even 1600 at the drop of a hat certainly appeals.

I always shoot RAW and while I have been doing more colour work in recent years, my first love is monochrome. This is another feature of digital SLRs that I greatly appreciate. When shooting film, I needed to make a conscious decision to take a camera loaded with black and white or colour film. In the past I have jettisoned the occasional roll of film in order to change from one to the other.

Unquestionably the biggest advantage I find when shooting digitally is being able to immediately review what I have just taken. If I have any doubts about an exposure, particularly after an arduous trek, being able to bring up the histogram can prove immensely reassuring. Finally, when you return home, being able to download all your images onto your computer really is a boon.

**This scene in Weston-super-Mare, England, is a location I have visited on various occasions in recent years. I am fascinated by this fabulously ornate Victorian structure, which appears somewhat surreal when set against this featureless seascape. Taken on a winter's evening, the mackerel sky and the overall tonality of this image makes it a particularly suitable subject for monochrome.**  
Canon EOS 40D, 17–85mm lens, 42 sec at f/16, ISO 100

