



Newsletter September 2011

Contents

Chairman's Blog.....	1
Shoots and Creative Themes.....	2
Dan's Discussion Board	3 to 4
Claude's Photoshop Tips.....	5 to 7
Top Scoring Images for August.....	8 to 9

Next Club Meeting
October 3rd

Chairman's Blog by Angus Rule

Well folks, we are officially into the last quarter of the year. A warm welcome to all our members and visitors, or should I say, potential members. Also a special welcome to Marius, Simone and Christo from, The Power Within (www.thepowerwithin.co.za), our local TV crew from SABC.

For those of you who haven't heard, we were approached by Spirit Sister Productions and asked if we would mind if they came along to a meeting and to a shoot with us, so of course we said "yes" and this was bound to be our claim to fame. So Simone and Christo, joined us at Killarney. I still wonder what the racing folk thought, here was not only the paparazzi, with a serious selection of cameras and lens but their own TV crew.

We will also use tonight's meeting to view the AV from our sister club, Thornbury Camera Club, in the UK. Thanks once again to Bipin who put our AV together and I have just received confirmation that it has arrived safely at its destination.

"BUSINESS"

Calibrator – just a reminder that the club has a calibrator available for hire at R30. If you would like to use it please contact Frenske at frenske@cape-photography.co.za



Competitions – Firstly thanks to Ruth we have submitted our entries for the PSSA competition and look forward to seeing how they do. I will keep you posted.

The PSSA Congress - will be held from the 1st to the 6th October at Hartbeespoort, Gauteng. It is now possible to attend individual days, so if any of you find yourself in that neck of the world, it should be a good way to spend some of the time.

The Western Cape Interclub 2011,

Tickets have gone on sale, each club only gets 20 so let me know as they are selling fast. Remember the date is the 28th October and this is a fun event which let you meet and interact with members from other clubs and also gives us an opportunity to gauge ourselves against other clubs in the Western Cape. So do yourself a favour and book your ticket now.

PIX Magazine – Just a reminder that there are back copies available at the

bargain price of R20.00 with the proceeds going to charity.

Last month's shoot, "Killarney race track" was once again well attended despite the weather doing its best to scare us off. That said we were fortunate once again with only threats of rain but no actual water. It was my first time at Killarney and I must admit I was well impressed and will definitely be back. It's pretty much nonstop action and the perfect place to play with your camera. Trying to get the balance right, the balance between sharpness and showing motion. It's easy enough to shoot on a very high speed and freeze the object but somehow this doesn't work for action shots. You know it's a bit like the pin sharp helicopter where you see the rotor blades and it looks like it's about to fall out of the sky. But hey what better place than the race track where your subjects keep coming around virtually on cue, giving you just enough time to change position or camera settings. Of course I should also mention the panning opportunities. As an added bonus, we had go karts, various types of motorbikes and racing cars to choose from. Thanks to Roger for organising the shoot and the comps.

Creative Subject – Last month it was "Painting with light" and whilst entries were down, it was clear that some members had really put in some serious effort. And I think that they were suitably rewarded for their efforts. You may notice I am saying "they", that's because I didn't enter an image. I did play a little with some bottles and a laser pointer at about 10pm the evening before the meeting but didn't get anything that looked half decent. So I guess one has to make more time available, but I will just mention that I am in the process of moving home and was amazed to even find my camera never mind the laser pointer. Still I will have to try harder 😊.

This month creative subject is "Climate change" and to be honest even after giving it some serious thought I still have no real idea of what to say about it. So I did what I always do when I find myself stumped, I "Googled" it. But that didn't really help much. For what it's worth here is the definition according to Wikipedia. "Climate change is a significant and lasting change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns over periods ranging from decades to millions of years" I also tried searching for images and found

a lot of great images, however it appears you need a natural disaster to get them. So there lies the challenge, to come up with something for climate change.

Vino – Claude continues to spoil us with some great wines. Thanks again, I think it's added a nice touch to the evening. Now if only we could just find someone who does "beer" tasting.

Judge -Our Judge for the evening was Kurt Sunkel, from Studio 22. I still feel that I need to apologise for not forewarning him about the TV crew, but in my defence, I did really think that they would just somehow hover in the background, pretty naive I know. So my apologies Kurt for putting him on the spot, the good news though, is that members really enjoyed his comments and felt that he handled the whole situation rather well. Thanks for judging and we as a club are looking forward to possibility of working together with Studio 22 in the future and/or having you back as a judge (no surprises I promise)

Take care. Angus ■ 😊

Shoots and Creative Themes for 2011

Shoots	Month
Ten Shots and Social	May
Bo Kaap	June
Hout Bay Harbour (early Morning)	July
Motor Cross or Similar	August
Inthaka Island at Century City	September
Kirstenbosch	October
Car Rally	November

Creative Theme	Month
Black and White	May
Unusual Angles	June
Silhouette	July
Painting with Light	August
Climate Change	September
Macro	October
Still Life	November
Abstract	December
Occupations (people at work)	January

Dan's Discussion Board

Six months of this addiction called photography.

Back many moons ago when still in school on a Muddy Little Island off of the coast of France called England I studied photography and to be fair not a lot else as maths and English just weren't as fun as hanging around in a Darkroom during lunch or taking my dads prized Canon (yes I once belonged to the Dark Side) out at weekends seeing how much money I could cost him in Ilford Black and White Film. Unfortunately this habit died after leaving school for two reasons, one I couldn't afford my own darkroom or have anywhere to put it if I could, and two I tried to be clever and clean the Canon only for it to never work again, and you reckon they are robust Bruce!

Fast forward way to many years and I finally manage to convince management to let me buy a "proper digital camera", after all they are quite cheap these days I said, she agreed so long as I spent no more than R6000, bargain! I do my homework and rightly come to the conclusion that the best deal is a Nikon D3100. So I skip down to a trusty photographic shop and make the purchase, I'm happy and so is she!

Six months later and the R6000 budget and reality that management had is somewhat a distant memory as the +/-

R22,000 worth of kit shows you in all its glory, oh and a Nikon D800 is on the cards when its released next year! The most surprising thing about this is not that I have managed to spend this amount of money, or find it, its that I'm still married and we're talking to each other. So this month I thought that I would cover a few things that I've learned - what I would spend the money on again, and what I'd do differently (its not buy a Canon Bruce!).

Join a Camera Club

its quite funny that I'd actually contacted Bruce to see what I had to do to join CCC before I actually spent the cash on a camera. Coming from an endurance sports background I personally need an element of competition even if it is just with myself, to see progress. Therefore the judging aspect really appealed to me, and still does, but for totally different reasons than planned. I thought that I would be enjoying the judging for the ability to boast about how many medals I'd received this month, and I did for the first month, but then I realized that to enjoy other peoples work and have the opportunity to listen to somebody critique not only your work but also others work is probably the single best way to learn how to take better photographs. The fact that due to Claude's

generosity we can do this while enjoying good wine makes it even better. So now when friends ask me how to improve their photography I give a simple answer "join CCC".

Lenses

Once I had used my 18-55mm for about a week I realised that I wanted something more, so I went shopping and bought that "something extra". Before I did though I had sleepless nights over whether to buy a "super zoom" ie. 18-250mm or go pure and buy two lenses. It was my wife's view that swung me when she said "buy the two lenses, because if you don't I'll curse you for spending so much money when you could have spent less on a high end compact". OK I admit its a personal choice and there are some awesome super zooms out there, but to be honest I'm in love with my 18-105mm as it gives me so much scope and when I need to go long I slap on my 55-300. After feeling the weight of a super zoom my back and shoulders thanked me for it. I've also bought at 35mm prime, after talking to Bruce and reading so many people rave about their 50mm primes I went for it, but again the reviews all raved about the 35mm being a better option for Nikon than 50mm, after two months I have to agree with them as I love it.

Filters and bits and bobs

This is where I spent money that I never realized that I would. The first thing that I noticed is how damned expensive polarisers can be, then I went to a different shop and bought one for half the price for another lens and cannot for the life of me spot the difference in results. Likewise with ND filters, there seems to be a huge difference in price and I'm glad that I shop around. Other places where I have tended to haemorrhage money is on things like



cable releases (onto my second after crushing one on the rocks at Slangkop lighthouse), remote firing devices for my flash, hot shoe spirit levels, and camera bags, OK my Flipside backpack was a birthday present but even so I would have had to have bought it, spare batteries and memory cards. Its amazing at how quickly this lot mounts up but in fairness I am so glad that I have bought most of it especially the second battery as I have lost count of how many times I have run out of power half way through a day.

Flashes and Tripods

Being a newbie I listened to the guy in the shop when he said "unless you are doing weddings you've never need a flash gun or tripod." Two days after 2 Oceans and a morning of realizing that the pop up flash on a camera is good to about 2 feet from the camera and that you can put your back

out trying to hold your camera steady while suffocating due to not breathing so a shot at 1/2 second is sharp I bought both and am glad I did to the point where my tripod mount hasn't been removed from my camera in three months.

Laptops - this is where it got really silly, I never in a million years thought that I needed a new laptop, but when you just don't have enough processing power to edit shots taken in RAW you must do what you need to do. Likewise Lightroom3 rocks but its all money that I never envisaged leaving my back pocket.

So what are my top buys, other than a Nikon camera body, and what would I think twice about buying again;

1. Top purchases - tripod and flash, these two items irrespective of the lens that I am using are always with

me or in the car as they add a level of versatility to my shooting in a way that I never thought that they would, setting them up also means that I slow down and really think about composition. To go with the tripod I'd say that for under R200 just buy a cable release as it makes life so much easier.

2. Money I'd spend but maybe not as quickly - polariser for my 35mm prime, honestly I've used it once and then preferred the results without it, likewise on my 18-105 although I use this more often I do find that I am slower to put it on these days as it forces me to work a different angle rather than just thinking about "pumping the blue in the sky"
3. Expense that I never saw coming - laptop, I never thought I'd need a new one but did, I'm happy I've got it as I have more post processing power but would have preferred to spend the money on a wide angle lens.
4. Mind shift breakthrough - that its OK to use Photoshop just like it was OK to spend hours playing with chemicals and enlarger effects in a darkroom, just don't over do it!
5. Next purchase - most likely a full frame camera, don't get me wrong I love my D3100 but I want more, lots more and I do tend to spend a lot of time shooting in low light so want that ability and functionality.
6. Biggest surprise - that I can spend so much money on me rather than home renovations and still be married, its been a revelation!
7. Best thing I have done - joined CCC, quite simply having organised shoots, monthly themes, a judge critiquing your work once a month, not to mention the awesome people you meet really does keep me motivated to keep pushing boundaries and seeing where I can go with it. The membership fee has also been the smallest camera expense too so value for money is huge.

Until next month try and not spend too much money. ■

Dan.



Claude's Photoshop Tips

"Polishing Images"

Some thoughts and workflow for finishing off your images for submission to the monthly meetings. Within this will be some tips and some free software downloads. I hope everyone will benefit from reading the article which details part of my workflow.

After selecting my images for submission I examine them a number of times in different ways as shown below:

1. Before doing anything else I increase the image to 200% of its size and using the Hand Tool I examine the shadow areas and any large areas of the similar colour, such as the sky, for Noise. I can then decide if any Noise Reduction is required. I personally use Neat Image but there are many good Noise Reduction packages out there such as offerings from Topaz and Nik Software. As far as free software is concerned look at Neat Image Legacy Version, Helicon Filter Lite, Noiseware Community Edition and NDNNoise. Google them for the Download URLs. NB Helicon Filter is much more than just Noise Reduction Software. Adobe Capture Raw has excellent Noise Reduction tools but that can be another tutorial.
2. If I apply Noise reduction I always do it on a layer so that I can reduce opacity if I need to or to use a mask to only apply the Noise Reduction to limited areas.
3. I also view the image at 100% over the complete surface looking for Dust Bunnies, Unnoticed and Unwanted small Objects that appear in the image and Hot Spots that pull the eye away from the main subject. If possible I clean these areas with the Spot Healing Brush, Healing Brush, Patch Tool or Clone Stamp. As far as Hot spots are concerned there are a number of techniques to reduce the effect and one such adjustment can be done with Paint with Light discussed later in this article. After cleaning I look at the complete image to decide if any cropping is required and what shape it should be. If you wish to follow the Classical Composition 'Rules' and are not certain of how to do it look at this site and upload your image to



Above are some of the problems to look for and correct before presenting your image

4. Rules are not everything and if your image has balance then it is perfectly acceptable. Look at square and different rectangular formats to see which shape suits your image and gives it the most oomph when it is presented.
5. Centred main subjects are often frowned upon but some images work best this way.
6. After cropping comes the setting of resolution and re size – that's another tutorial on its own.
7. At this stage one needs to decide if the image needs sharpening. This is subjective so do not over sharpen unless it is intentional. Digital Projectors can emphasize sharpening halos.

TIP - Always sharpen on a Layer that is set to 80% opacity as this allows you to increase or decrease the amount of

sharpening after you have run the filter.

8. Sharpening is also a subject on its own. Examine your image and decide if it has lots of detail or if it is low on detail. Where an image has lots of open space or shadows I re-examine for noise in these areas after sharpening. Where there is a high level of detail I re-examine for Sharpening Halos. View at 100% and then at 200% and compensate if necessary with the opacity on the layer where you did the sharpening. At this stage I also examine the edges of the image to see that they are clean.

It is important to always keep your original image intact and work on a copy or layer.

Finally a word on frames – this is definitely my own idea on the subject and we have seen that different Judges have various views about frames. I almost only frame an image if it has a very dark background that will merge into the background projected by the Digital Projector.

CURVES TO LIVEN UP YOUR IMAGES

Have you ever had an image where the composition is good but it just looks dull? Yes - well then the S-Curve is for you - or is it! Curves are a very useful tool and allow very accurate brightness and contrast changes to an image. They should be used taking advantage of Adjustment Layers but other than knowing that you must flatten the image when you are finished or dump the layer in the trash if you are not satisfied, it is an easy procedure if used at a basic level.

This is a first look at curves and I may revisit it at a future date in more detail. I am going to show examples of the Curves that increase midtone contrast and brighten images. If your image is looking a little flat it is a candidate for Curves but the often quoted S Shape is not for all images. Often other shapes produce better results.

How to start with Curves

This is achieved by going to Adjustment Layers – Curves and placing a number of points on the graph as demonstrated below. Often this is two or three points plus the two end points but up to a total of 16 can be used.

The judicious use of Curves can increase the Gamma of the image to make it brighter without blowing the highlights however, if overdone it can reduce detail in both highlight and shadow areas. Task completed, the image can immediately look livelier but as with everything else in Photoshop it can be overdone because of changes in tonality and contrast.

As with any image you must decide what to start with and by examining the workflow below you will see what different approaches do. If you feel that the image needs to be lightened start at the mid point, and if it needs to be given more contrast start somewhere in the bottom left quadrant.

The Workflow for this is as follows:

- Go down to the bottom left quadrant of the graph and place an anchor point on the graph line as per fig. 1 point A and drag it straight down a short distance. This will increase contrast. Moving the point upwards reduces contrast and detail.
- For lightening an image go to the mid point and place an anchor point that you drag diagonally upwards. See fig 1 point B Moving the point upwards lightens while down darkens and increases contrast.
- Go to the upper right quadrant and place an anchor point on the graph line as per fig 1 C and move the point upwards and while this lightens it is also the area that will most noticeably change tonality towards red.

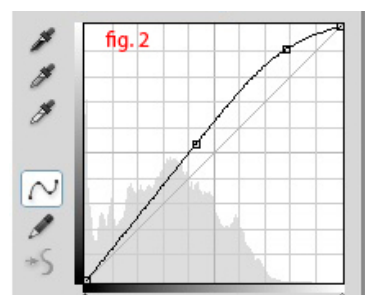
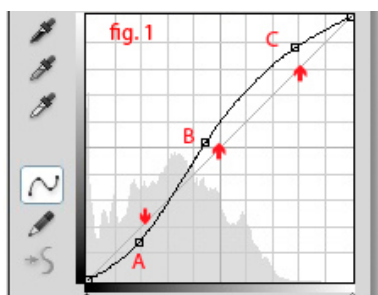
Also look at moving the anchor points to the left and right as this will change tonality as well as contrast - the thing here is to experiment and see what suits the image and you.

With the three portrait images below and the curves adjustment to two of them see which curve you think worked best.

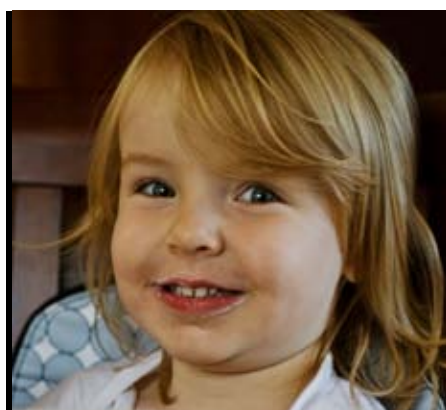
This completes the introduction to brightening your image with Curves for this month and all that remains is for you to play and decide what curve makes an image appear at its optimum. Curves would be usually be applied before resizing and sharpening.

TIP: The Curves Palette in CS 5 comes in two sizes and with two sizes of grids. I prefer the larger size palette and the smaller size grid - see which suits you.

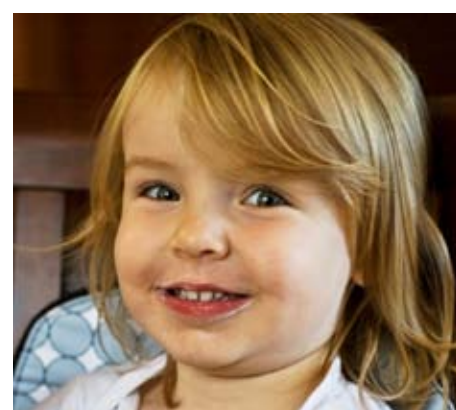
In the bottom left of the Curves Palette second icon in you can swop between palette sizes by left mouse clicking. To swop between grid sizes go to the top right of the Layers Palette and click on the icon immediately below the X - go to the Curves Display Options and choose the size grid squares that suits you.



Original Image



S-Curve adjustment



Highlight Curve adjustment

PAINT WITH LIGHT

On a similar vein the more advanced technique is for where an object is too bright or too dull within an image and you want to change luminosity to make it appear to be lit in a more pleasing way. Dodging and Burning respectively can achieve this and there are Dodging and Burning tools but, in my opinion, there is a way to achieve this with more control. The actual Dodge and Burn tools do have their place for where you want to only use them to emphasize Highlights or Shadows but they are not easily reversible and not as controllable in most situations.

Take an image that has an area that you want to brighten, lighten, darken or perhaps all three. This requires more advanced use of Layers and the Brush Tool.

The Workflow to achieve this is as follows:

Make a new layer by one of the methods below:

1. In the Layers Palate at the bottom right next to the Trash is a rectangle within a rectangle – Click on this.
2. At the top of your Photoshop Screen go to Layers – New.
3. The Keyboard Shortcut is Control – Shift – N and a New Layer Window will pop-up. If you change the Mode from the default Normal to Overlay before clicking on OK you save a step.

Any of these will insert a Blank or Transparent Layer above the image.

4. Go to Edit – Fill - found at the top left of your Photoshop Screen.
5. A window for Fill will pop-up and you can change the Contents – use 50% Grey.
6. The first two New Layer methods the Image will now be Grey and you must change the Blend Mode in the Layers Palette to Overlay. With the third option you will have already done this and the image will be visible.

If you turn the Layer on and off by clicking on the eye icon that is next to the Active Layer in the Layers Palate both Layers are exactly the same as the original. In simple terms your layer is 50% Grey = R 128, G 128, B 128. The underlying layer remains the same but if you make any part of the grey layer darker (more black) then that part of the image will go darker. If you make the grey layer lighter (more white) then that part of the image will go brighter.

- In order to make the changes make the Brush Tool active and set the size to fit the object you wish to make lighter or darker.
- Work with a very soft Brush
- Change the opacity to between 14 and 20% - you will have to experiment to see which percentage suits your image.
- If you wish to darken an object or area press D on the Keyboard to set the

foreground colour to Black.

- If you wish to Lighten an object or area press D and then X on the Keyboard to set the foreground colour to White.
- Go ahead and paint the area you want to change.

The low opacity allows one to slowly build up the brightness or darkening of the object. As long as you paint with the left mouse button held down you get a single change to the painted area. As soon as you release the left mouse button and then depress it again the next level of change can be laid down.

- If you wish to reverse the painted area you can go back using the history window or Edit – Step Backwards.
- If you want to get a section of your changed image back the original set your Brush to 50% Grey and paint over it and that area will go back to the original.
- If you want to dump the complete layer drag it to the Trash.
- If you make a selection then the brush colour will only be applied to the area of your selection
- You may also apply a white to black gradient to the grey layer to achieve a transition to brightness or darkness.

■ Claude



A flat crop of an Image taken on an overcast day



Paint with Light used to brighten and darken areas



Top image original - bottom darkened with Gradient to add depth to the flat lighting

Top Scoring Images

Creative - "Painting with Light"

Judge: Kurt Sunkel



"RGB Smokestack" Creative 27
Leslie Rose

Canon Sony SLT-A55V
DT 18-55mm F3.5 to 5.6 @45mm.
Aperture: f/5.6
Shutter Speed: 1/200
ISO: 400

Top Scoring Images

Shoot Killarney Race Track

Judge: Kurt Sunkel



"Lining Up" Shoot 27 Susan Crichton Stuart

Camera: Canon 5D Mark II
Lens (focal length) (70-200mm 2.8 lens) shot @ 145.00mm
Aperture: F-stop 2.8
Shutter Speed: 1/790 sec
ISO: 100

Comment: I shot this handheld, lying flat on the ground much to some people's amusement :)

Top Scoring Images

Open

Judge: Kurt Sunkel



Camera: Nikon D5000
Lens (focal length) : 55-200 f4.0-5.6
Aperture: f22
Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec
ISO: 100
Comment: West Coast National Park. Taken lying on my stomach on rather prickly ground! It was the only way I could get the detail I wanted whilst also showing the expanse of the field of flowers.

“Spring has Sprung” Open 27 Jackie Wernberg



Camera: Canon 7D
Lens (focal length) 12mm
Aperture: f/18
Shutter Speed: 5 seconds
ISO: 400
Comment: I used a tripod to hold the camera steady, pre-focussed on the mid distance to the left of the image, reframed and exposed. I used two Cokin ND grad filters to balance the sky and foreground and then increased the saturation slightly, did noise treatment and sharpened the image in Photoshop and noise ninja.

“The Cauldron” Open 27 Kevin McGilton