

Kingsbridge
V
Paignton

Judge: Pedro Landers

(Tavistock CC, Launceston CC and Nashoba Valley Photo Club)

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Introduction

- I am a physicist by training, it has been said that I don't have an artistic bone in my body - I look at images in detail and am less susceptible to the emotion in a picture
- My photography is “realistic” (but my finished images are not necessarily as they come out of the camera)
- As this is an inter-club competition my critique is a little more forceful than normal as I have assumed that I will not be in danger of discouraging less experienced photographers
- As always the following comments are just my view and others most certainly will have different opinions – take them or leave them as you chose

Title : Female Epistrophe Grossulariae

Score : 13

Critique:

We start with a nature image.

Hoverflies in flight are not easy subjects but the photographer has got this one sharp on the body but there is less detail on the compound eye. Good diagonals with the insect body in one direction and its wings in the other. The blur on the wing gives a feeling of motion. While the green background is unobtrusive the flowers are a bit bright, which is almost inevitable if there was enough light to get a decent depth of field, but they could have been toned down a bit in post processing.



Title : Just Passing

Score : 18

Critique:

Good conversion giving the grey animals definition against a grey background. Nicely sharp. Just about separation for the lead animal giving it prominence. I like the way the background gives a very subtle context. I am not sure why I find the right hand pile of dung distracting.



Title : Painted Lady on Ivy

Score : 16

Critique:

Very sharp over all the butterfly. Good background but the ivy flower has a few slightly distracting out of focus elements that could be eliminated. One of the ivy anthers goes out of frame unnecessarily on the right while there is a bit too much space on the left. A slight rotation counter-clockwise may help to eliminate more of the foreground flower.



Title : Red Dragon

Score : 13

Critique:

Well composed except for the front wheel just going out of frame. The lamps on the train provide bright spots to draw the eye away from the very bright left hand side. But even with the lamps this brightness draws your attention away from the Red Dragon, also there seems to be some detail behind the steam that could help balance the image



Title : My Hero!

Score : 12

Critique:

An image with a strong emotional message but one that doesn't go beyond that for me. The subject cross is the only one that is sharp but the others are sharp enough to make it a very busy image. There is good texture on the main cross. The tops of the two crosses at the front of the image are quite bright and could benefit from darkening down



Title : Model Train Enthusiast

Score : 14

Critique:

Good selection of DOF to make the main subject stand out well. The lighting is good again putting emphasis on the subject. The out of focus train in the foreground works well other than the bit of bright red. There is unnecessary detail on the edges in the top half of the image, crop the LHS to the orange pillar and darken the RHS. If the person's head was clear of the model it may have been a stronger image



Title : Looking towards Jura

Score : 14

Critique:

Sharp where it needs to be - foreground and the first two rocks. Well composed with an interesting foreground and a nice recession with the rocks. The mistiness in front of the hills works. The motion blur on the fluffy clouds doesn't work as well as it would on more linear cloud structures and I find this distracting. Possibly a case for two exposures and a composite



Title : We are enjoying this!

Score : 12

Critique:

This is a well taken record shot. It is sharp throughout and the exposure is fine with no burn-out on the bright reflections. The people form a diagonal with the characters in red making a good stopper at the end of the line. The image would benefit from a little more "punch" (contrast and possibly saturation). I get the impression one or two of the characters are hamming it up a bit.



Title : Giant Moray Eel Red Sea

Score : 17

Critique:

The DOF works well, with enough detail in the background to give context but not so much that it competes with the very sharp eel. Good composition with enough space in front but the body just clipping the edge of the frame on the left is a bit distracting. The colours work well together



Title : Male Erythromma Viridulum

Score : 16

Critique:

The damselfly is very sharp. The background is a little distracting behind the rear of the insect otherwise good. The colours are well rendered. If possible it would have been good to have the whole of the in-focus flower head.



Title : Monarch Butterfly Feeding

Score : 11

Critique:

The butterfly is sharp and it has been caught with its tongue out feeding on the flower. There is more space beneath the butterfly than above it which doesn't work for me. I am not sure that the colours have been rendered well, they are very flat and not true to life - I wonder if I am looking at the image in the wrong colour space



Title : Frozen Forest

Score : 16

Critique:

Two things get your attention immediately with this image - the great detail on the trees and the unusual (to English eyes) colour palette. I am not sure what the background is but it works but I may have cloned out the "blob" top centre. Would darkening down the whites to allow an overall brighter image work? Could you have got better separation between the trees by moving right or would you be taking a cold bath?



Title : Slam Dunk Dreams

Score : 14

Critique:

An interesting image in several ways. The textures of the underlying "stones" and the ripples make a good contrast as do the two colours. Add to that the reflection which takes a bit of working out but the title gives the clue. The reflected bushes bound the top of the image nicely. Making the shadow area bottom right less pronounced may strengthen the image a bit



Title : Liliana – Aged 98

Score : 13

Critique:

A strong character shot showing some context around the subject. The natural lighting shows one half of the face well but the side in shadow could do with lifting a little. I feel that the photographer has been caught between two styles of portrait, the complete person in context versus a more detailed head and shoulders - in making the subject big in the frame there is very little space above her head and a foot is cropped. Unfortunately there are some burnt-out areas on her hands.



Title : The Pass Through Widdale

Score : 18

Critique:

An interesting mono image, I am not sure if it is IR or an IR style conversion - effective whatever the method. Sharp throughout with just enough dark tones to balance the image - the walls work particularly well. Interestingly the horizon in the middle works here as both the sky and the land have enough layers to support that selection.



Title : Lake Ice Trees

Score : 14

Critique:

The headland, with its trees and rocks with a lot of detail and contrast, is a strong element however this is not supported by the foreground or the background which are a little featureless. The composition is good with plenty of space for the reflections of the trees - the breaking up of the reflection by the ice works well with the best part of the reflection clear of ice.

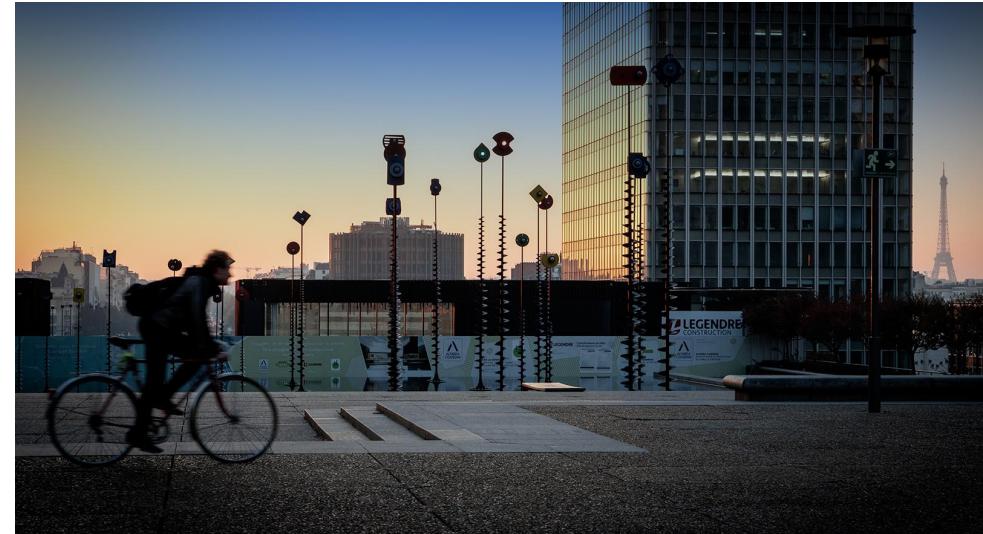


Title : Early Morning in La Defense

Score : 15

Critique:

A great idea. I like the contrast between the shadowy areas and the warmth of the sunrise. Just casually throwing the Eiffel Tower in the corner is a bit posey! It makes a good balance for the "modern art" in the centre. The cyclist is in a good position and he delivers some energy into the image



Title : Cuckmere Haven to Belle Tout

Score : 15

Critique:

A well composed view with a number of strong elements: the curve of the beach; the lighthouse; the layers of colour in the sea. For me it falls between an abstract and a seascape and doesn't quite work as either



Title : Tree Train Tree

Score : 18

Critique:

It all starts with a great title! The image has a strong composition - everything is where it should be. The angle of the smoke is matched above by the clouds and below by the lighter bit of the field. I like the layers of dark and light, just enough darker cloud to hold the image in. Well balanced mono conversion, just enough detail in the foreground dark layer



Title : Cirrus and Lighthouse

Score : 15

Critique:

This image gives a very strong first impression, the clouds seem to be pointing to the lighthouse. The positioning of the lighthouse in the frame works because of the interaction with the clouds. The dark sea gives a good delineation between the rocks and the sky but I find the dark patches in the sky a bit out of place. The mono conversion (or some other processing) seems to have over-emphasised the texture on the rocks and bushes which doesn't work for me



Title : White with Aubergine

Score : 18

Critique:

I can imagine that there will be mixed views on this image. After a lot of thought I have come down on the "like" side of the fence. There is just a hint of a join between horizontal and vertical which I find helpful on these type of images. This style requires the image to be pristine with no distracting blemishes - this is nicely clean but with quite a bit of subtle gradation in the teapot glaze. It would be stronger if the Aubergine shadow was not just going out of frame.



Title : Safe in the Waves

Score : 13

Critique:

With a complete silhouette everything depends on the shapes. The central wind-vane has quite a bit of detail and there is good separation between the sail and the "N". The two supporting "characters" are a bit lacking especially the left hand one where the roof ornament looks like a wilting vase of flowers. The sawtooth edge to the left facing roof line adds interest



Title : Male Orange Tip

Score : 17

Critique:

Another very sharp capture of an insect. A great location with interest in the seed-head and a soft background. The green sets off the butterfly well. The hint of the orange tip showing through the wings is great. The tiny bit of dandelion stem is a bit distracting, the antennae are a bit close to the top of the image and there is a bit too much to the right - a very slightly different crop would strengthen the image



Title : Helophilus Pendulus - Female

Score : 16

Critique:

Two in a row - ultra sharp insect. This image has a good DOF with detail most of the way down the leg. Yellow on yellow works well here as does the diagonal line created by the background and the insect. In getting the subject large in the frame I think the photographer has lost a little of the aesthetics of the image by cropping the flowers on the lower edge and on the left.



Title : Marsh Harrier with prey

Score : 15

Critique:

A good capture with the bird and its lunch nicely sharp. The strong light illuminates the darker parts of the bird well and the white parts are out of the direct sunlight so the exposure is great. The tree is a bit distracting, hiding quite a bit of the bird and making a few unwanted entries on the edge of the frame in the lower corners (this is where I need the pointer in the live critique). I am not sure of the bird ID - it doesn't look like a UK Marsh Harrier to me.



Title : The Chaos Theory

Score : 15

Critique:

A well created image, the balance between painting with light elements and the static elements has been well handled. The cage of light trails and the circle of light on the ground is a strong focal point. The brickwork is sharp along its whole length with some nice detail in the arch and in the graffiti



Title : Steam Trucks

Score : 14

Critique:

A good record of the line-up. The trucks are well positioned on a diagonal with the recession caused by perspective being amplified by the third truck being smaller. The reds and greens work together and are complemented by the bits of blue in the sky. I am not sure if the front truck is running or there is a random bit of dark cloud in the right position that looks like smoke - it looks good anyway. As always at these events the background is very busy, while the photographer has minimised this with their positioning and with the crop, the four pink/purple flags growing out of the third truck could do with muting a bit.



Title : A Pastoral Tune

Score : 16

Critique:

An image that tells it as it is - the sky says flat light but the photographer has made the most of what there was with the shepherd and his dog providing a splash of colour. I like the composition, his stick provides a nice line. The dog looking straight at the camera works well. Some of the ear tags on the sheep are a bit gaudy, toning them down may strengthen the image. I debated the merits or otherwise of the plants bottom left – I came to no conclusion.



Title : Gone Fishing

Score : 19

Critique:

Should be "going fishing" although I don't think it's a fish-eater. Captured at the perfect moment with a great amount of detail. The light is great as is the completely flat water surface. I suspect the colours are a little more saturated than they were in reality but this is a pictorial competition not a nature one so that is not a problem. I have several attempts at a similar image, none that match this one.



Title : Ascending

Score : 12

Critique:

There are a lot of interesting architectural features here with curves and lines - possibly too many as they intersect in random places and cut into each other. The person gives the viewer a focal point. The image is sharp and well exposed . The choice of mono is good but a slightly more contrasty conversion may strengthen the image



Title : Thames Estuary Sunset

Score : 16

Critique:

A nice capture with interest front to back. The first boat and its reflection takes your attention but then the other boats lead you back through the image to the sunset. The grass and the reflections of the illuminated clouds gives strong foreground interest. The sharp edge to the clouds gives another pointer to the sunset. The very regular triangle in the lower left hand corner confuses me a little.

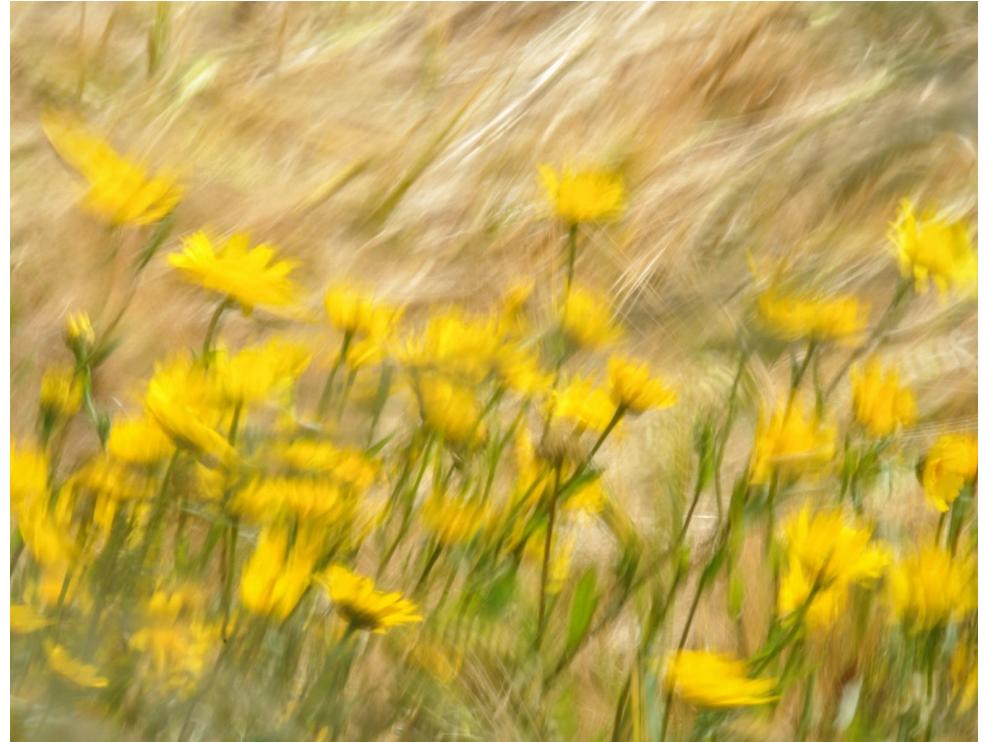


Title : Dandelions in Wheatfield

Score : 17

Critique:

Another image that may divide opinion. Blurry images that work are not easy - this works well, there is enough definition to "see" the scene perfectly. The colours work well together. I would think that this prints well. The very essence of summer. Just being picky but I think they are Hawkbit or Hawkbeard and not Dandelions



Title : Surfs Up

Score : 13

Critique:

An unusual angle to photograph a surfer. The fast shutter speed has frozen the action and the exposure is such that there is detail in even the brightest area. The subject is placed on the third, the down side of this is that there is rather a dead area of sea-foam lower right. While the surfer's "pose" is quite dynamic it isn't that elegant.



Title : Fatherly Love

Score : 15

Critique:

Caught him mid-snarl, the down side of this is you have lost most of the cub's face. The two front lions are sharp and well lit, with a relatively low angle sun that picks out the detail nicely (especially the wrinkled nose). The second cub adds context but a tighter crop to exclude it might be a stronger image as the adult is looking back into the frame

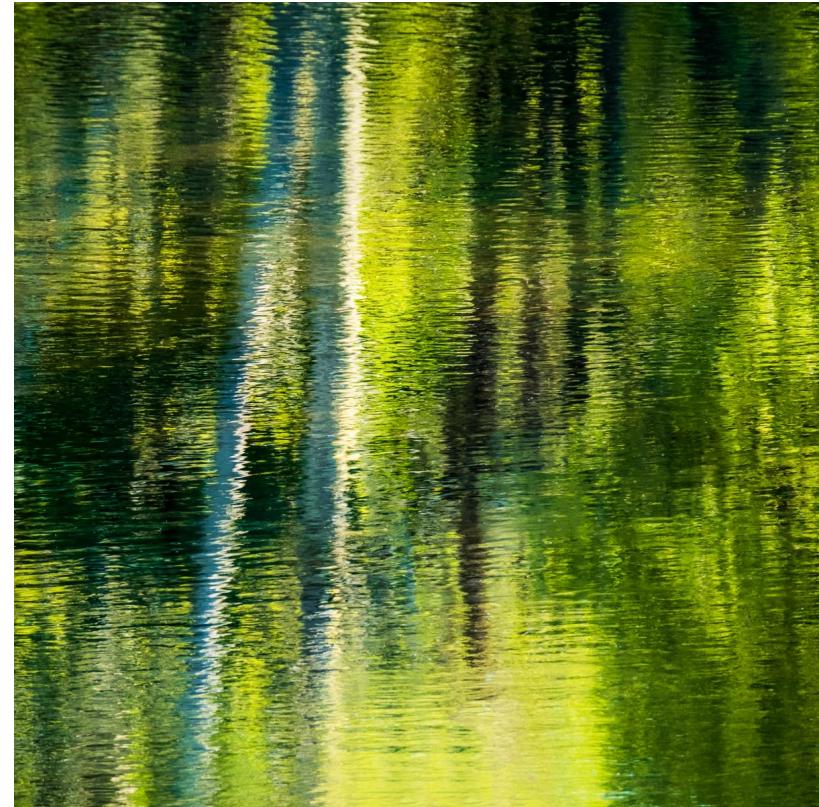


Title : Reflection of Spring

Score : 20

Critique:

Well seen, well taken and well presented. This image says "spring" to me loud and clear. There is not much more I can say about it – you may have guessed I like it!



Title : Marion and Joely

Score : 13

Critique:

Two characterful faces, well captured. The lower face is brightly lit but without any hot-spots, the upper one is nicely cast in shade allowing the facial features to show clearly. The sun is making the older woman's hair glow which is a nice touch. The mono conversion works well for the faces however the background is burnt out, this may be intentional, but the fact that some details of the tree remain visible makes it look unintentional. A very heavy positive vignette would help here I think



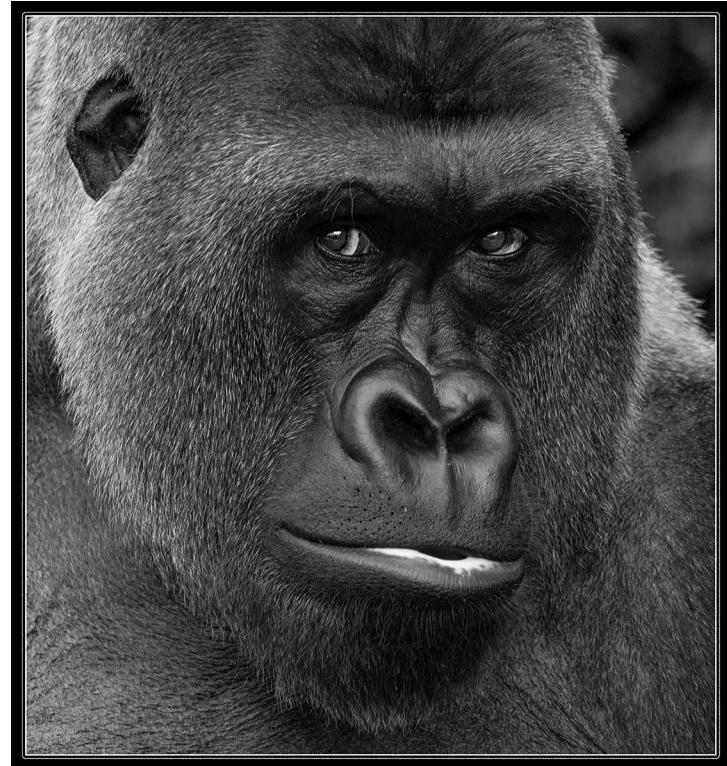
Title : The Stare

Score : 16

Critique:

The title captures the essence of the image - a great expression. Good detail where it is needed and the small bit of background is unobtrusive. The crop is appropriate. For the most part I think the conversion strengthens the image, the silver on the fur serves to frame the face but the white of the inside of the lip competes with more interesting parts of the face for the viewer's attention.

I am not sure about the rules of the competition but I would ask if the framing is fully the work of the photographer or is it a canned frame from the processing software

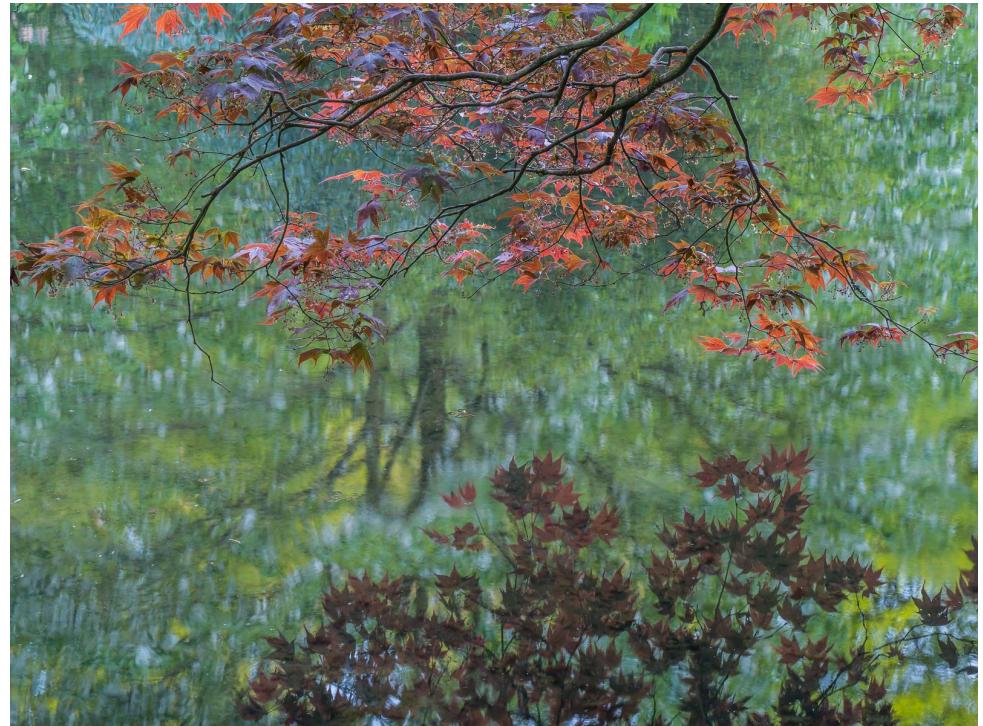


Title : Acer Reflection

Score : 13

Critique:

A well composed image with a diagonal separating the acer from its reflection. There is some nice detail with the acer flowers interspaced between the leaves but this gets a bit lost in the background. The colour palette is very pleasing with a nice contrast between the leaves and their reflection. The whole image is a little too muted for my taste and there are just too many bits and pieces floating in the water breaking up the reflection



Title : Gracefully

Score : 14

Critique:

A very relaxed looking pose which is always a good start with a portrait. An interesting lighting selection that brings out highlights in her hair but doesn't cause hot-spots on the model's face. The model's face is relatively dark but the red splash of her lipstick still draws the viewer's attention. Nicely sharp on the model and just little bits of detail in the background that breaks up most of the "negative" space. I am not sure that the darkening in the corners, particularly the top right corner enhances the image



Title : Nut Salad

Score : 14

Critique:

The award for the best title! The image is well thought out with the strong diagonal of the ironwork forming a solid backbone with lots of texture and subtle colour. The colour selection for the salad is good with hints of green and orange in the detail of the rust. The contrasting shapes work well together and the three main elements are well placed with respect to each other. Are bits of the lichen that white and featureless or are they burned out – I have assumed burned-out in my scoring?



Title : Cornering to Victory

Score : 17

Critique:

A strong action shot with a powerful impression of motion with the flying dust and the slight motion blur on the front wheel. The subject itself a very sharp. The gradation of brightness from the bright yellow helmet to the duller blue of the bike helps draw the eye to the rider. The background is blurred, possibly the transition from sharp to blurred is a little rapid to be directly out of camera?



Title : Puffin Coming in to Land

Score : 15

Critique:

An in-your-face image with strong detail on the Puffin's bill and eyes, the detail on the feathers, especially the white feathers is less strong. Good composition, the bird is in a good position within the frame and the horizon breaks up the background. The little bit of blur on the wingtips gives a sense of motion. It may be worth toning down the bright bit on the bird's left foot.



Title : Crepuscular Rays Snowdonia

Score : 15

Critique:

A lesson in what sunlight can do for you. A great combination of dark, menacing clouds and mountains and green, lush fields. The couple of illuminated bits of forest on the intermediate hills only accentuate the darkness of their surroundings. Everything that is light is sharp and even the brightest cloud has detail. Possibly the foreground sheep are a bit bright. I would ask if the two sets of farm buildings add much or if darkening them down or cloning them out would strengthen the image.



Title : Crane City

Score : 12

Critique:

An interesting gradation from dark to light with a pleasing set of tones - almost a monochrome but not quite. The cranes of the title together with the bright areas of smoke/steam break up the mid-ground as do a few of the more interesting buildings and the solitary bird flying. However there are a lot of uninspiring buildings that draw the eye because they are sharp and distinct. The more abstract, less sharp top third of the image works better for me than the foreground

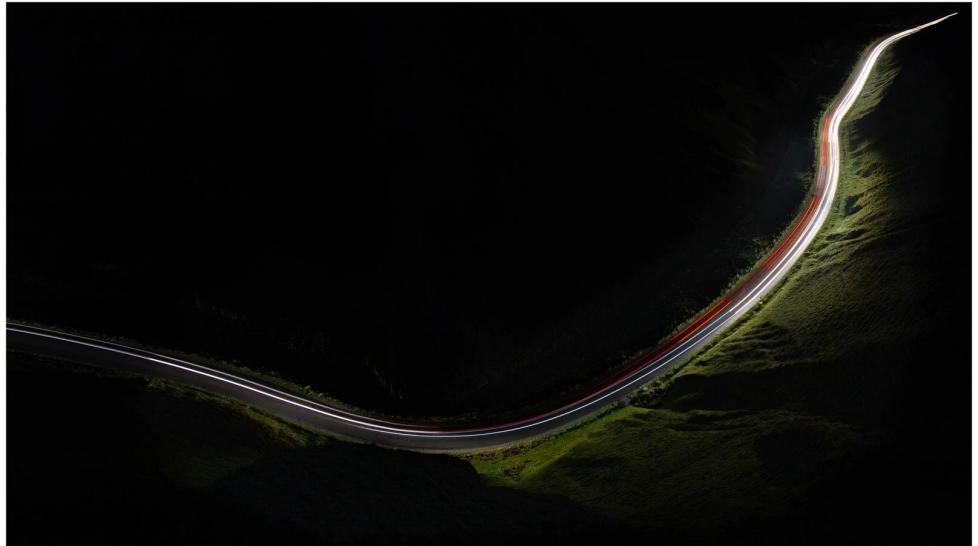


Title : Lights in the Pass

Score : 12

Critique:

This is an image that people will either like or dislike, unfortunately I fall into the latter category. It's a good idea, the shape of the road is interesting and the areas of hillside picked out in the headlights have some nice detail but just not enough when the rest of the image is black



Title : Elven

Score : 16

Critique:

The static, front on pose is given life by the unruly hair - this is quite effective. Very sharp. I like the crop, it gives just enough room on all sides. With the side lighting there is good contrast in her hair but her dress is a bit bright. There is a processing mark on the junction between her hair and her right arm



Title : Winter Dusk on the Avon

Score : 14

Critique:

A great set of evening colours. The composition is strong with the leading line of the river and the dark on both sides (trees on the right, hillside on the left). There is just the right level of detail on the nearer boats and even a little colour left in the red one. The repetition of the mast reflections is a strong feature almost mimicked by the three that break the horizon. I am in two minds over the value of the car headlights, however the fact that they also have a reflection is good. Does the front quarter of the image add that much?



Title : Flight over Seahouses

Score : 14

Critique:

Another image that falls between two genres - is it a seascape or a nature image? Whichever it is it makes a pleasing image with the tern in a good position. The letterbox crop is well suited to the linear nature of the seascape. However the tern lacks detail in the head and in the feathers and there seems to be some discrepancy between the shutter speed required for the bird and the somewhat softer spray.



Title : Maestro

Score : 15

Critique:

I don't think the photographer is getting the "look" but someone is! The Maestro is well isolated by both lighting and focus but the other player is sharp enough to add context. On the whole the mono conversion suits the image but it looks like parts of his hands are blown-out. There are a few distracting elements in the image: the sharp detail on the drum on the RHS; the hand of the second player going out of frame and the stand on the right hand third seeming to be holding his head on - they all go to detract from what is an otherwise strong image



Title : A Moment of Stillness

Score : 15

Critique:

A very pleasant image. The lighting works well with the shadows of the window bars, the cross and the subject adding to the effect. The blue sky and the blue rucksack balance nicely. I think that there is just enough detail on the RHS but it may be worth trying to lift the shadow a bit in that area



Title : Three Zebras

Score : 11

Critique:

A good idea well captured, there is good contrast in the stripes and you have got the tails all going one way. It would appear that a lot of processing has had to be done to get this image down to three zebras and unfortunately it shows when the image is viewed on a good monitor.



Title : Watching over You

Score : 15

Critique:

This has to be the "decisive moment" as he goes from going up to going down, which of course slows down the action for a split second. The starburst works well but almost obscures the subject of the title. In a lot of ways this is a very dynamic image with the skateboard action and the very dynamic shape of the jump. The image is sharp from front to back which gives a little too much significance to the detail in the background. The clouds are also a bit bright



Title : Over the Sea to Skye

Score : 16

Critique:

When I first reviewed the images as thumbnails this image was in my top category and it stayed in that list until I saw a strong processing line through image at 1/4 height. Once seen, my eye keeps being distracted by it, which is a great shame as I really like it, great colours, strong composition, good sky But!



Title : Riding Up and Out

Score : 15

Critique:

An image that gives a great sense of place. The background misty town and dry hills tell a story before you get to any of the main subjects. The balloons are nicely (possibly not conventionally) placed with "Voyager" breaking the horizon. The rider's red jacket gives a focus to the foreground "cameo" and the pile of rubble lower left seems to anchor the image. There seems to be more detail and colour to be had in the sky with a bit of work



Title : Flood Waters

Score : 15

Critique:

A subtle image, almost monochrome but none the worse for that. The elements are well positioned with the hillside to the left balancing the trees on the right. The spit of grass gives good foreground interest and leads the eye to the rushes on the left and then the eye comes back round following the fence and the trees. I would ask if the foreground greens are a bit strong? Also I may have removed the pylon/pole in the centre of the image



Title : Attendant, Lalibela

Score : 19

Critique:

A great portrait. His attention to something just over the photographer's left shoulder works well. A very harmonious colour palette but with good separation between the face and the background which are very close in colour. Good use of DOF with lots of detail where required.



Title : Winkworth Trees

Score : 15

Critique:

A strong mono conversion really brings out the features of the trees, especially the main one. There is just enough light to get the detail but it is dark enough to give good contrast with the bright background (it is hard to tell if it is misty or just bright but it works whatever it is). The shapes of the trees are very interesting with the right hand trunk giving a good diagonal. Would the image be stronger with the main tree off-centre by cropping the left hand tree? The fencing at the base of the trees is just noticeable which is distracting



Title : Winter At The Buachaille

Score : 19

Critique:

This may be a classic shot but this version stands up well against many others I have seen. Sharp everywhere with a good balance of tones. Just enough in the sky to fill the space without competing with the Herdsman. Good leading line. Could use a little more space above the summit



Title : Contemplation

Score : 17

Critique:

A well modelled and well composed portrait. The soft colours work well although the floor may be a bit dark for the rest of the image. The even lighting works well and although there are a lot of light areas none seem to compete with the face of the model. I find the transition between the floor and the backdrop a little artificial and the photographer's position gives the impression that she is sitting on a 3 legged stool



Title : Autumn Gold

Score : 15

Critique:

Another image with an instant impact. The colours work well with each other (but possibly not with the title). I like the strong maple leaf motif and its shadow. For me there is little to follow though after the initial "Wow, that is interesting". I get the impression that the top of the central "feature" goes out of frame. I noticed a few dark spots in the pattern on my high-res screen but they are not visible on a more normal one.

