

C R E D I T S

# Photography Week

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THE WORLD'S BEST-SELLING DIGITAL PHOTO MAGAZINE

10-16 JANUARY ISSUE 329

# Photography Week



INSPIRATION | IDEAS | IN-DEPTH REVIEWS



**EXTERNAL MICS**  
SIX TOP OPTIONS FOR  
OPTIMAL AUDIO  
QUALITY

# SCENE STEALERS

PRO TIPS FOR CAPTURING LANDSCAPE  
IMAGES WITH MAXIMUM IMPACT

W E L C O M E

# Photography Week



## JOIN THE CLUB...



Welcome to the world's No.1 weekly digital photography magazine. If you're already a reader, thanks for your continued support and involvement; if you're new to *Photography Week*, you've come to the right place! In addition to expert advice, brilliant tips and step-by-step tutorials, every issue features interactive galleries of the best new photos, how-to videos on

essential shooting and editing techniques, and in-depth reviews of the latest camera kit.

But that's not the whole story. *Photography Week* is more than a magazine – it's a community of like-minded people who are passionate about photography. To get involved, just follow any of the links below and share your shots and comments – your photo might even appear on our cover!

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We're more than just a magazine – read on and discover the many ways you can interact with and enjoy *Photography Week*



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# ADD IMPACT TO YOUR LANDSCAPES

Discover how to improve your scenic shots with landscape pro Mark Bauer's expert guide to perfecting your images

**L**andscape photography tends to look far easier than it is – and we can often return from a shoot in a stunning location somewhat disappointed with what

we actually managed to capture. Dedicated landscape photographers know they must constantly revisit a scene, sometimes several times over a number of years, in order to get

the very best shot possible of that particular place. Over the next few pages you'll discover the techniques that Mark Bauer uses to ensure he gets the very best from a location.



# FEATURE

## WORK WITH LIGHT

Light is the raw material of photography, shaping and defining the landscape

**A**s a landscape photographer, you need an understanding of the nuances of different lighting conditions and how they can affect your subjects. The main factors to consider are the direction and quality of the light, as these shape the subject and create the mood of the image. To successfully capture landscapes you need to know what light will best suit your subject.

Rural landscapes, particularly those with ranges of hills or mountains, really benefit from low side lighting, which reveals shape and texture, as well as adding depth; architectural subjects and coastal scenes with foreground interest also often look good in this light.

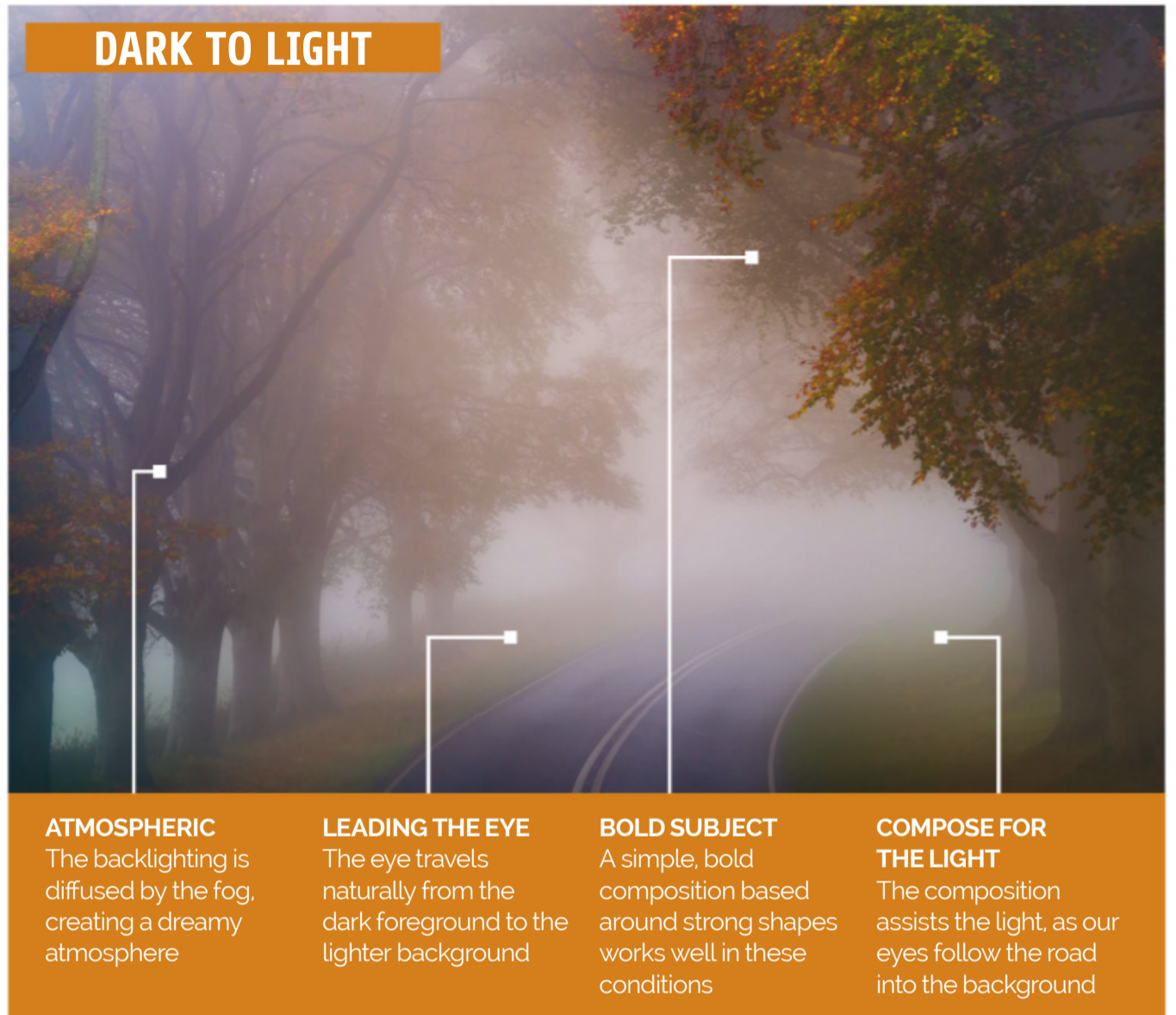
Backlighting can be very dramatic, with shadows racing towards the camera, emphasising shape and form. This works especially well with compositions based around bold, graphic subjects, and is well suited to woodland scenes; you can also try silhouetting the main subject.

Front lighting, producing shadows that fall away from the camera, can make a scene appear flat and dull. However, with the sun low in the sky, it can provide excellent colour saturation; look for colourful subjects, or those that will reflect the natural warm tones of the sun, such as sandstone cliffs.

The least photogenic light is strong, overhead lighting, which creates high contrast and harsh shadows. If you're shooting in these conditions, colourful, structural subjects can work well, as can monochrome images.

The 'quality' of light really means its intensity and colour temperature. The factors that determine these are the time of day, the season and the weather. So the colour temperature is warm at the beginning and end of the day and cool at twilight; the light is harsher in summer when the sun is high in the sky, and there is greater clarity in winter when there's more moisture in the atmosphere.

However, to achieve the most eye-catching results, it's best to try and shoot 'on the edge' – during the transition from one state to another. This could be the transition from night to day, from one season to another, from calm to stormy weather and so on.



### DARK TO LIGHT

#### ATMOSPHERIC

The backlighting is diffused by the fog, creating a dreamy atmosphere

#### LEADING THE EYE

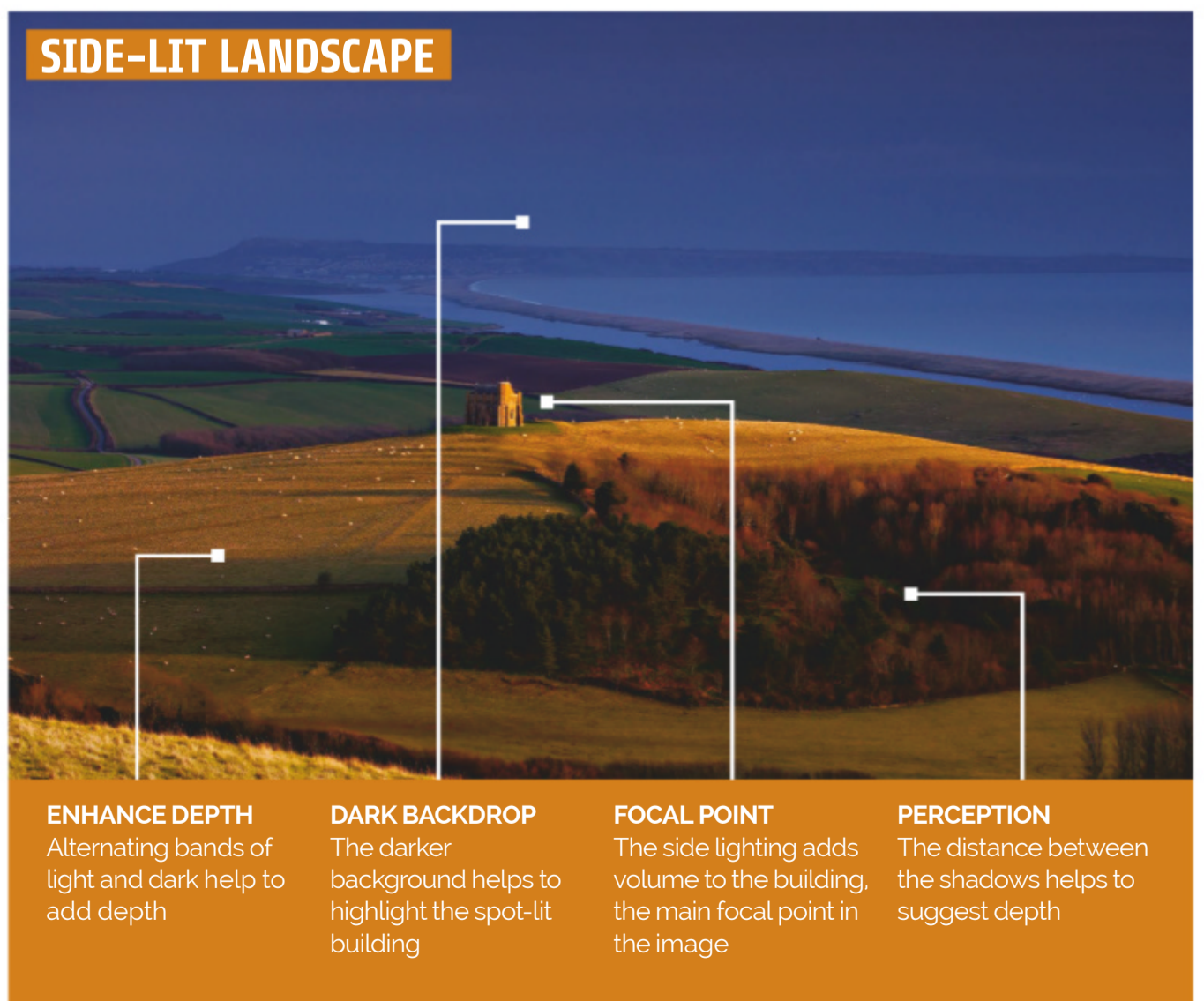
The eye travels naturally from the dark foreground to the lighter background

#### BOLD SUBJECT

A simple, bold composition based around strong shapes works well in these conditions

#### COMPOSE FOR THE LIGHT

The composition assists the light, as our eyes follow the road into the background



### SIDE-LIT LANDSCAPE

#### ENHANCE DEPTH

Alternating bands of light and dark help to add depth

#### DARK BACKDROP

The darker background helps to highlight the spot-lit building

#### FOCAL POINT

The side lighting adds volume to the building, the main focal point in the image

#### PERCEPTION

The distance between the shadows helps to suggest depth



# F E A T U R E

## WORK WITH LIGHT CONTINUED

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### FRONT-LIT LANDSCAPES

Front lighting is often considered unattractive in landscapes, but when the sun is low it can result in highly saturated subjects with lots of impact

### TYPES OF GRADUATED FILTER

'Hard' grads are suited to flat, uninterrupted horizons, whereas 'soft' grads work better with broken horizons. 'Reverse' grads are well suited to the bright horizons at sunset and sunrise.



# FEATURE

## WORK WITH LIGHT CONTINUED

**BALANCE THE LIGHT** Learn how to use grads to control contrast and capture a full range of tones



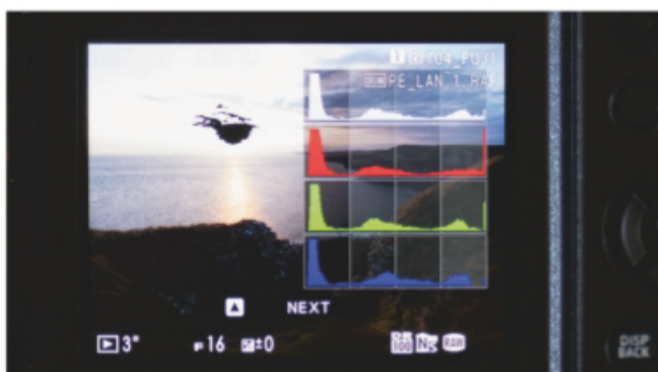
### FINISHED IMAGE

The final, processed image shows detail throughout the tonal range, from the deep shadows to the bright highlights in the sky



### 1 FIRST ATTEMPT

This is how the scene appears when shot unfiltered. The camera cannot capture the full range of tones and the sky is overexposed, with no detail in the highlights.



### 2 CHECK HISTOGRAM

The distribution of tones are spilling over the right edge of the histogram. How far they are pushed over can indicate how much overexposure is present.



### 3 SELECT A FILTER

Examine the scene to decide which type of grad will suit it best (see tip on the previous page). In this case, with a flat horizon and strong sunset, I selected a reverse grad.



### 4 FIT THE FILTER

Put the filter in the holder and position it so that it blends in with the horizon. Gently moving the filter up and down can help you to identify the transition line.



### 5 RESHOOT THE SCENE

Shoot the scene again with the filter in place, using the same exposure settings. Check the histogram and the image to make sure the grad is positioned accurately.



### 6 POST-PROCESSING

In most cases it won't be necessary, but if there is any evidence of filter use – e.g. a dark band on the horizon – this can be corrected with selective adjustment tools.





# FEATURE

## COMPOSE LIKE A PRO

We examine what makes some images just jump off the page

It's the fine details that elevate a good composition to a great one. The main aims of composition are to arrange the elements in the frame to create a balance and, crucially, to give the impression of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface.

Most photographers quickly understand the concept of the rule of thirds and the golden section as ways of achieving harmony. Using leading lines to guide the eye around the composition, and making use of foreground interest to create the illusion of depth, also soon become second nature.

More complex – but critically important – is the concept of 'visual balance'. Visual balance is comparable to physical balance. If we

place two objects of equal weight on a seesaw, they need to be equidistant from the fulcrum to achieve balance. Translated to visual balance, this creates symmetry – harmonious, but perhaps somewhat static. With objects of different weights, the lighter object needs to be further away from the fulcrum in order to balance them. In visual terms, this creates asymmetric balance, usually perceived as more dynamic.

Understanding this principle can help us when it comes to placing the main elements in the frame. It's common to have a main focal point and a 'counterpoint' in a composition, so we need to know where to place them to achieve balance. Clearly, we can't consider the physical weight of our focal points, so what contributes

to 'visual weight'? The main factors are size, colour and brightness (bright, saturated colours have more 'weight'), contrast, texture and shape – with high contrast, complex texture and complex shapes having greater weight. It's also worth noting that objects placed towards the top of the frame have more visual weight than those near the centre.

Closely related to this is visual separation. Make sure that the main elements in your composition have visual separation from each other, and the right amount of space around them – too little and depth perception is decreased, too much and the eye will not travel smoothly from one point to the next. The same is true for the foreground, middle distance and background planes.



# FEATURE

## COMPOSE LIKE A PRO CONTINUED

### DEPTH AND HARMONY

#### BALANCED COMPOSITION

There's just enough separation between the distant reflections and the foreground

#### SMOOTH WATER

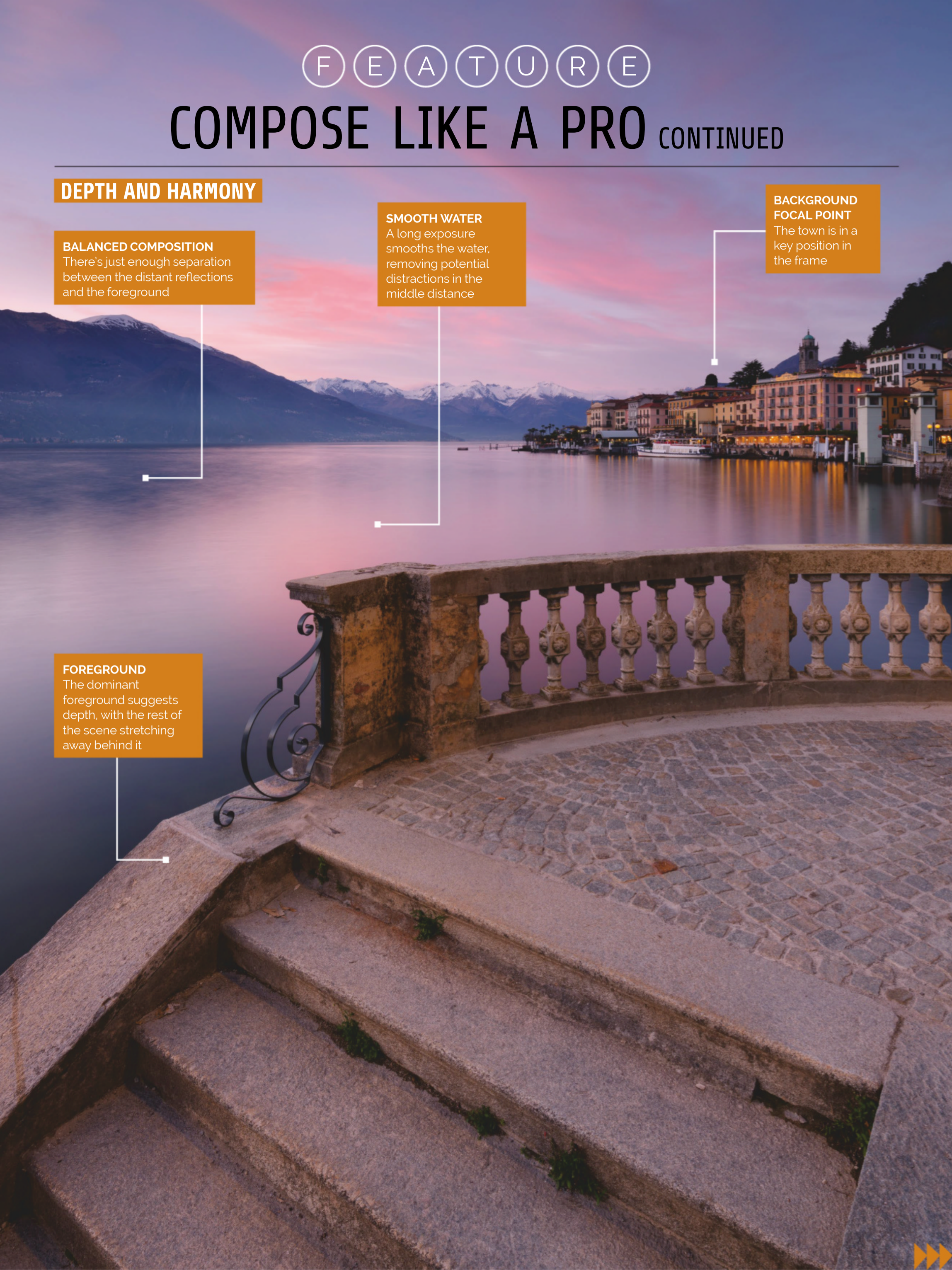
A long exposure smooths the water, removing potential distractions in the middle distance

#### BACKGROUND FOCAL POINT

The town is in a key position in the frame

#### FOREGROUND

The dominant foreground suggests depth, with the rest of the scene stretching away behind it



F E A T U R E

# COMPOSE LIKE A PRO CONTINUED



**LINEAR PERSPECTIVE**  
Strong foreground interest creates linear perspective, enhancing the perception of depth in an image



**RULE OF THIRDS** Here the sun has been placed close to the intersection of vertical and horizontal lines on a rule of thirds grid



**SPACE** Having enough space around the foreground focal point creates harmony and balance



# ADD IMPACT WITH PERSPECTIVE

Learn how to use perspective effects to add the wow factor to landscapes



**WIDE-ANGLE PERSPECTIVE**

Getting in close to foreground interest with a wide-angle lens makes the foreground loom large while the background recedes, creating an impression of depth

It's often said that perspective changes with focal length, but technically, this is untrue – it's the distance between the camera and the subject that determines perspective. However, to keep a subject the same size in the frame with a telephoto and a wide-angle you need to change distance from the subject, thus changing the perspective.

In practice, this means we use wide lenses to enhance linear perspective – get in close to foreground objects and everything behind will appear to stretch away into the distance, creating a sense of depth. On the other hand, by shooting from further away with a telephoto, the apparent distance between the foreground and

background will be reduced, creating a flatter perspective; this is sometimes called the 'stacking' effect.

Matching the right approach to the scene is the key to creating impact with perspective. Coastal scenes with strong foreground interest are a natural fit for enhanced depth using wide-angles, whereas the rolling hills of rural scenes or the overlapping forms of mountain ranges are more suited to the stacking effect of longer lenses.

This is not a hard and fast rule, and there are plenty of other options. On the coast, for example, longer focal lengths can be used to enhance the layered distant headlands or to make it look as if waves are stacked on top

of each other. In rural scenes, there's often foreground interest in the form of wild flowers, dry stone walls and so on.

The trick is to be able to study and assess scenes. Ask yourself the following questions: Is there natural foreground interest, which leads the eye into the frame and which links well with the background? Would the scene gain from enhanced depth, or would key focal points lose their impact? Is there a natural layering in the scene, which could be enhanced by the use of a telephoto? Are there patterns in the landscape that could be highlighted? If so, consider a longer focal length. Often, a scene will lend itself to more than one treatment, so you should also be prepared to experiment.



# F E A T U R E

## ADD IMPACT WITH PERSPECTIVE CONTINUED



# ADD IMPACT WITH PERSPECTIVE

## CONTINUED

**WORK WITH WIDE ANGLES** Follow these steps to create dramatic perspective with wide-angle lenses



**FINAL IMAGE**

The final image shows a dramatic perspective, with the foreground pulling the eye into the frame and the scene beyond, and is sharp from foreground to background



**1 ASSESS THE SCENE** When you arrive on location, look for strong foreground interest that connects well with the background. Here there is plenty, but it's obviously necessary to get in close.



**2 INITIAL FRAMING** Check the scene through the viewfinder, trying different focal lengths. Try to find a balanced composition with strong foreground interest and an obvious background focal point.



**3 CAMERA HEIGHT** Experiment with the height, paying attention to the visual separation of the main scene elements. Try to use wide-angle distortion to get lines pulling into the frame from the corners.



**4 FOCUS FOR DEPTH OF FIELD** To make the most of the perspective, make sure you have sufficient depth of field. Set the aperture in the f/11-f/16 range, and focus at double the distance of the nearest object.



**5 FINAL STEPS** Meter the scene and fit any necessary filters, e.g. grads to balance the contrast. Have a final check around the frame to make sure there are no distractions, then take the shot.



**6 REVIEW THE IMAGE** As well as checking exposure via the histogram, carefully check sharpness: zoom in on the nearest object and also the background to make sure the image is sharp throughout.



# FEATURE

## UNDERSTAND TONAL RELATIONSHIPS

How colour and tonal relationships influence the mood of your landscapes

One way of creating impact is to exploit tonal contrast as a basis for the composition. Tonal contrast is generated when light and dark tones are juxtaposed. Our eyes are drawn to the brighter tones in an image, so it helps if a focal point is lighter than its surroundings. We see this first, and then our eyes will travel around the rest of the image; this creates dynamism in the composition. Furthermore, as we tend to 'read' images from the bottom of the frame/foreground, to the top/background, combining a darker foreground with a lighter background creates a strong impression of depth.

These principles apply equally to colour and mono images, although if shooting mono you need to be aware that some colours, for example red and green, look similar when converted to greyscale. Black and white film shooters use coloured filters to increase the contrast between these similar tones, and digital shooters are able to do the same by tweaking colour channels when converting to mono.

When assessing a scene to decide whether or not it's suitable for black and white, look for a full range of tones, from true black to bright highlights, as well as prominent texture and an 'active' sky.

When working in colour, you need to consider the relationships between colours. Colours can be harmonious or contrasting, warm or cool, saturated or muted. The most important relationship is harmony and contrast. This is best understood by looking at a colour wheel. Colours that are next to each other, for example blue and green, are harmonious, whereas those that are opposite, such as blue and yellow, are contrasting. Neither relationship is 'better' than the other, but harmonious combinations are tranquil, whereas contrasting colours create tension and are more impactful.

Strong, saturated colours make for powerful, dynamic images, although rather than just increasing saturation during post-production it's better to seek out colours that are naturally saturated. Muted, pastel tones are more subtle, but extremely effective with the right subject, setting a calm, tranquil mood.



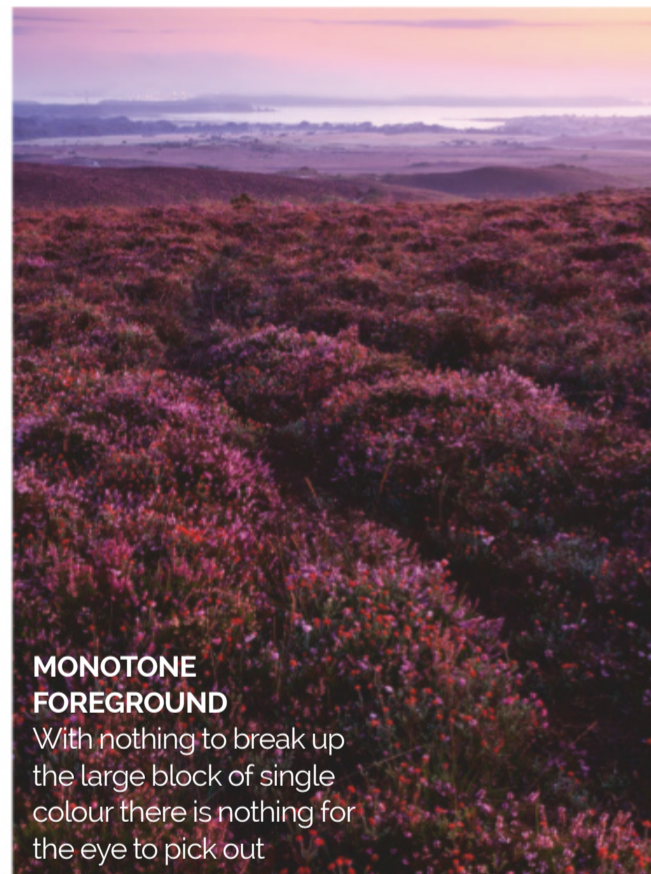
### COLOUR WHEEL

The colour wheel helps us to understand the relationships between colours. Colours next to each other on the wheel are harmonious, while opposite colours are contrasting



### CONTRASTING COLOURS

Orange and blue are on opposite sides of the colour wheel, creating a dynamic contrast here



### MONOTONE FOREGROUND

With nothing to break up the large block of single colour there is nothing for the eye to pick out



### FOREGROUND CONTRAST

Here the green bracken provides dynamic contrast with the purple heather



### HARMONY

With a palette including browns, oranges and yellows, this is a harmonious image



F E A T U R E

# UNDERSTAND TONAL RELATIONSHIPS

## CONTINUED

### MONOCHROME LANDSCAPE

#### TONAL RANGE

There is a full range of tones, from true black to white

#### DYNAMIC SKY

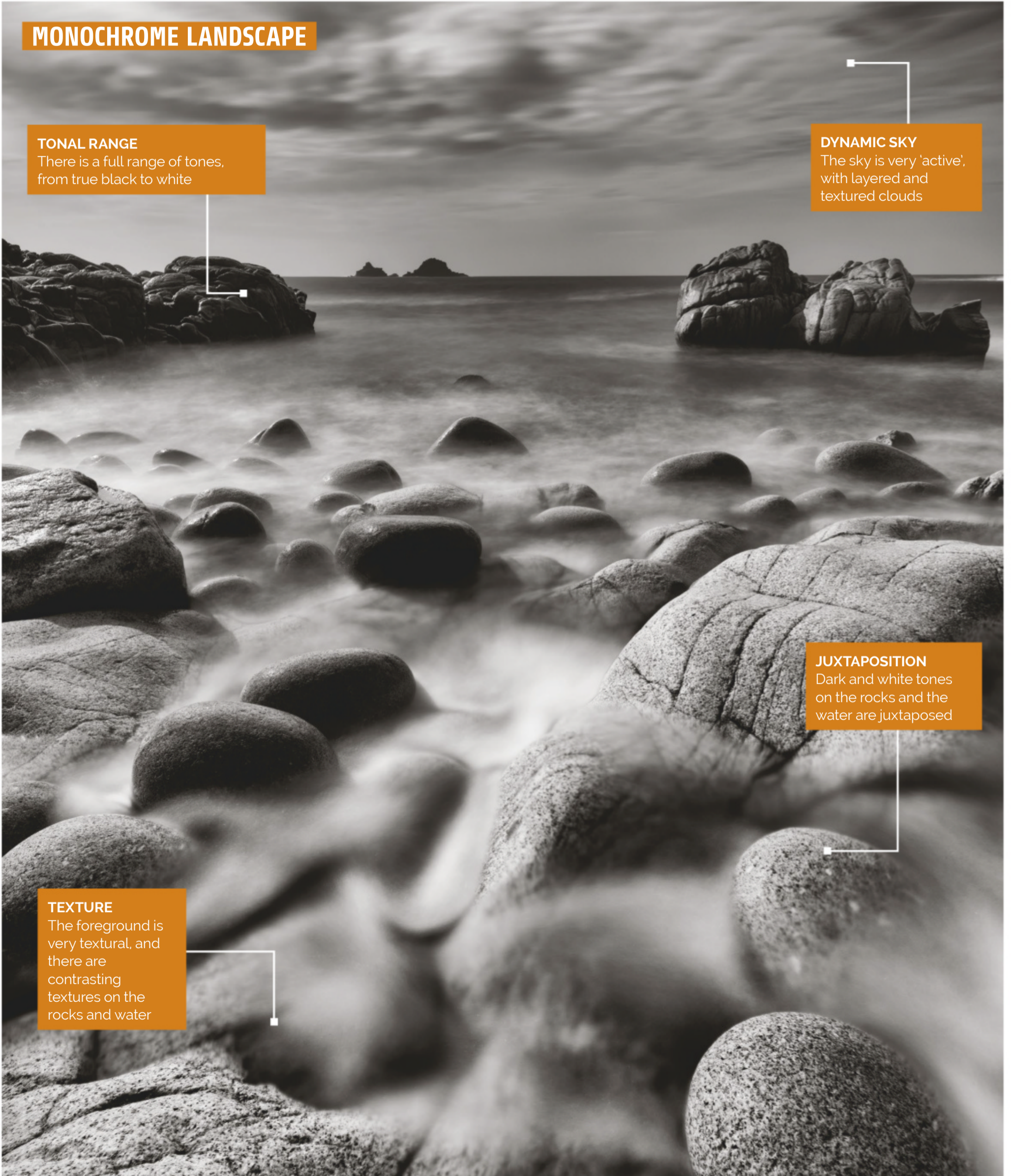
The sky is very 'active', with layered and textured clouds

#### JUXTAPOSITION

Dark and white tones on the rocks and the water are juxtaposed

#### TEXTURE

The foreground is very textural, and there are contrasting textures on the rocks and water





F E A T U R E

# UNDERSTAND TONAL RELATIONSHIPS

## CONTINUED

### TONAL CONTRAST

#### CONSIDER EACH ELEMENT

Here the dark sky pushes attention down to the focal point on the horizon

#### CONTRASTING BRIGHTNESS

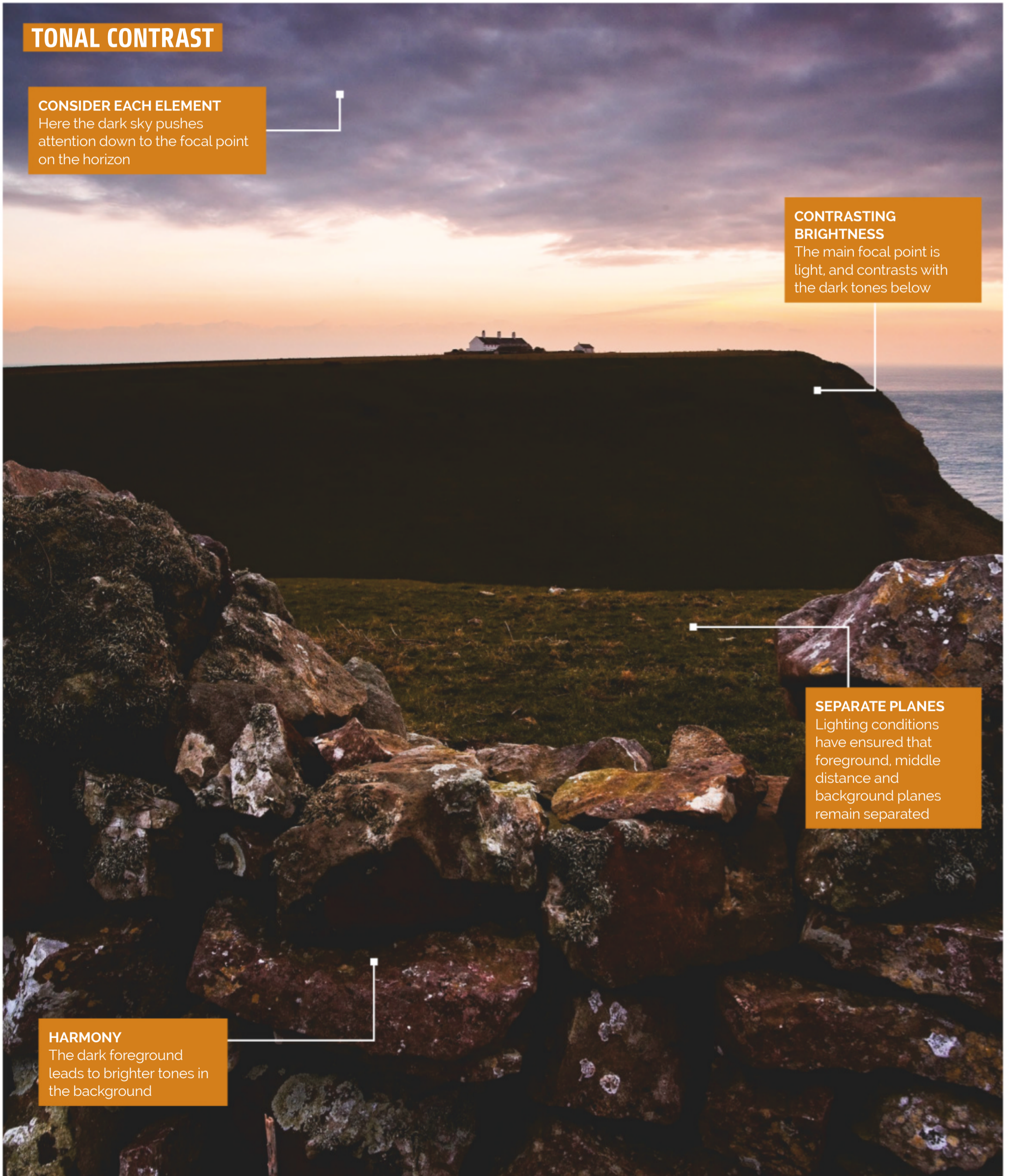
The main focal point is light, and contrasts with the dark tones below

#### SEPARATE PLANES

Lighting conditions have ensured that foreground, middle distance and background planes remain separated

#### HARMONY

The dark foreground leads to brighter tones in the background



# FEATURE

## REFINE LANDSCAPES USING SOFTWARE

A balanced approach to post-production is necessary for great landscapes

It's easy to go too far with post-production – the temptation is always there to push the saturation slider a bit further, or add a little extra sharpening to give your images more punch. The initial impression might be that these images have the 'wow' factor, but on closer inspection faults appear – unnatural colours, poor tonal transitions, haloes around edges and 'crunchy' texture. So what we should aim for is balance – an image that makes an impression, but still looks natural.

The first processing step is usually to ensure that the tones fill the histogram. There are of course exceptions to this 'rule': snowy and misty scenes, for example, are low in contrast, and utilising the full width of the histogram can result in an overly contrasty image.

Adjusting contrast and clarity adds punch to images, but make sure it suits the scene, and don't push it too far – blocked-up shadows, haloes and increased noise will result if you do. With shadows, it's vital to strike a balance – some photographers have a tendency to open up shadow detail too far, so that the image looks flat. It's also important to make the shadows look like shadows.

It's probably fair to say that there's a tendency in modern landscape photography to oversaturate images; in the competitive world of social media, some photographers feel that this is the surest way of attracting more 'likes'. This may be true, but if you want to be taken seriously as a landscape photographer, one who understands colour and tone, then a middle way is what you should aim for – vibrant but natural colours.

Sharpening is a key skill in post-production, and the aim with landscapes is to reveal fine detail. To achieve this in Photoshop or Lightroom, sharpen with a small Radius, moderate Amount and moderate Detail. Selective sharpening – and selective application of clarity and contrast – to areas such as skies and foreground texture can also help images stand out. Again, moderation is crucial, as pushed too far it will look unnatural.

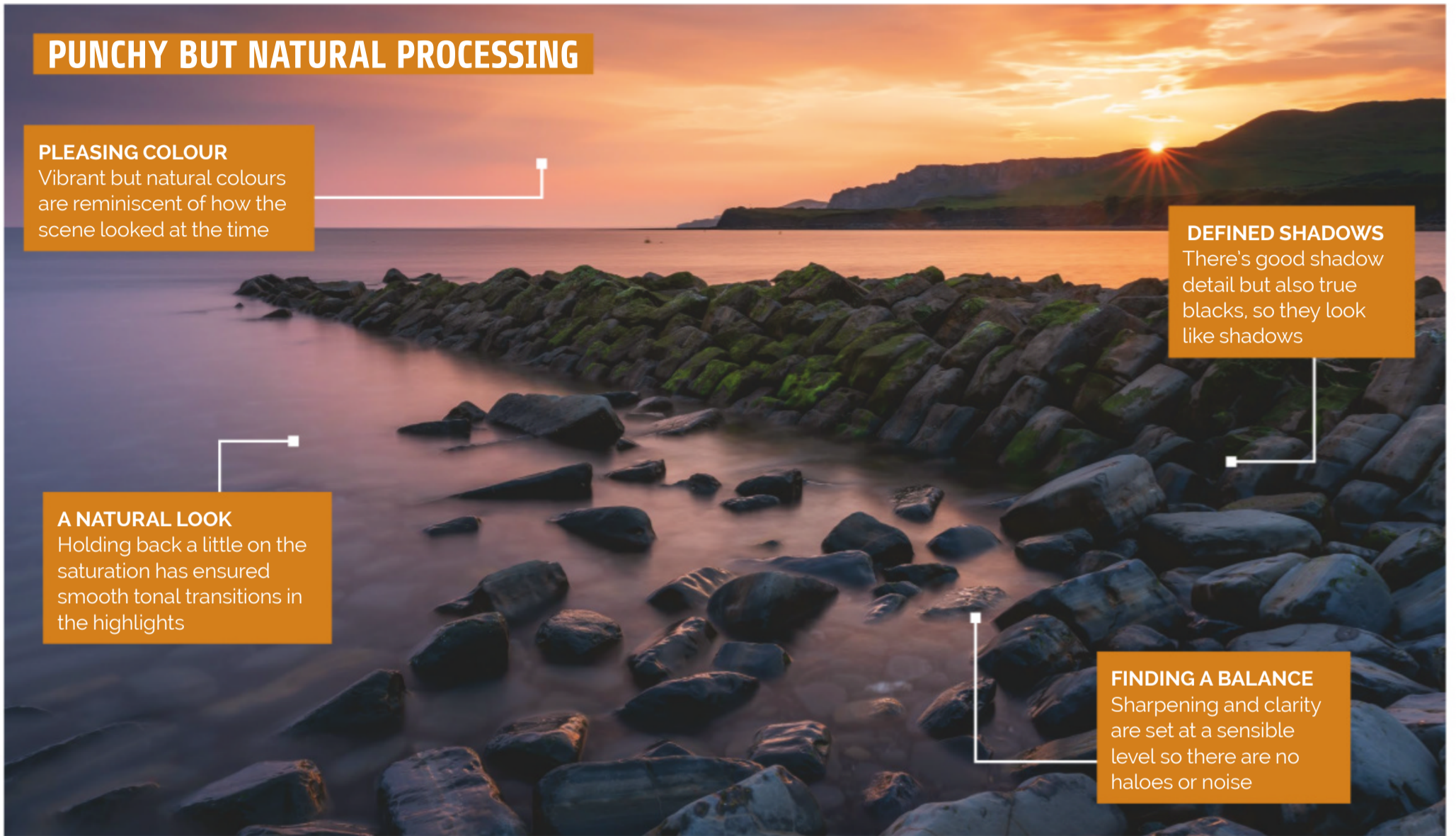
### BALANCED PROCESSING

A punchy but natural-looking image, with vibrant colour but good tonal transitions. Local enhancements have made the most of texture in the sky and foreground



# FEATURE

## REFINE LANDSCAPES USING SOFTWARE CONTINUED



# FEATURE

## REFINE LANDSCAPES USING SOFTWARE CONTINUED

**LOCAL ENHANCEMENTS** Learn how to enhance texture in key areas of the image



**AFTER EDITING**  
Thanks to the global and local adjustments, the final image has captured the mood of the original scene



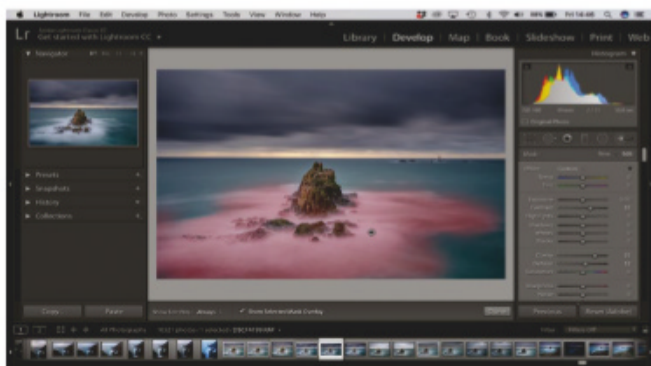
**1 IMPORT IMAGE**  
On import into Lightroom it's clear that the image will need both global and local adjustments to recreate the sense of drama in the original stormy scene.



**2 GLOBAL ADJUSTMENTS**  
We make the usual adjustments: white balance, tonal adjustments, sharpening, cropping and so on. The result is good, but more drama can be added.



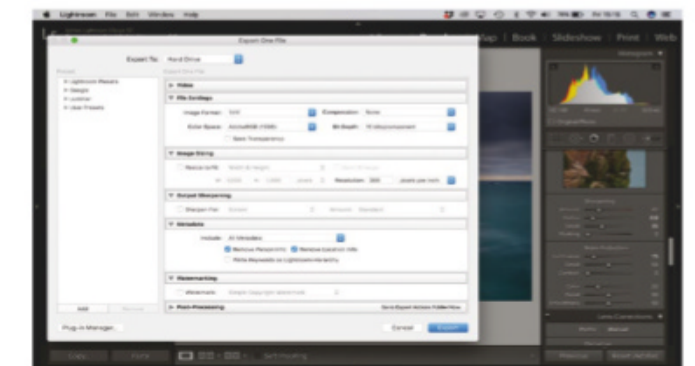
**3 REFINE THE SKY**  
We select the Graduated Filter tool, and pull a gradient down over the sky. We boost Clarity and Contrast, and darken the sky further, zooming in to check noise levels.



**4 ENHANCE WAVE TEXTURE**  
We select the Adjustment Brush tool, and paint a mask onto the waves and other areas that we want to adjust. We then increase Clarity, Contrast and Dehaze.



**5 CHECK FOR NOISE**  
We zoom to 100%, and scroll around the image looking for noise and artefacts. If there are problem areas we can pull back on the adjustments and/or add noise reduction.



**6 SAVE THE IMAGE**  
We finish by saving the image to a universal format such as TIFF or JPEG – TIFFs are recommended if you plan on doing any further adjustments to the image.



# 10 TOP TIPS FOR SUCCESS

## 1 BE PERSISTENT

It's very rare that you get a fantastic – or even a good – image of a location on your first visit. You'll almost certainly have to visit multiple times, tweaking your composition and waiting for the right conditions.

## 2 BE EARLY

Arrive on location a good 30 minutes before you think you need to be there. You can then set up without rushing, and be properly prepared for the light when it arrives.

## 3 WORK ON THE EDGE

For the most dramatic pictures, go out in times of transition – when a weather front is coming in, as day transitions into night, when a storm is clearing and so on.

## 4 KEEP IT SIMPLE

The most powerful compositions are usually the simplest. Try not to overcomplicate things; exclude anything from the frame that doesn't directly contribute to what you're trying to achieve with the image.

## 5 EMBRACE BAD WEATHER

Landscape photographers can get fixated on shooting in golden light, but with the right techniques you can create stunning images in any light. Try abstracts, long exposures and monochrome for starters.

## 6 DO YOUR RESEARCH

Time is precious, so don't waste it by going out unprepared. Use tools such as The Photographer's Ephemeris to work out the best time of day and year to shoot your location, and scout it for the best viewpoints.

## 7 TRY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Experiment with different camera heights to see how they affect your composition. Getting down low can add impact to foregrounds, while higher viewpoints can help to separate the planes in an image. See which works best.

## 8 USE LIVE VIEW

When we view a scene with our eyes (or through a viewfinder) we see three dimensions – which may not be conveyed in our image. Looking at the Live View screen shows if depth will be captured in two dimensions.

## 9 ASPECT RATIOS

Don't be constrained by your camera's native aspect ratio. Learn to see beyond this, and compose with a view to cropping the image to a square, or 2:1, or whatever ratio you think will suit the composition.

## 10 CREATE A JOURNEY

Arrange the elements in your composition so that they lead the viewer on a journey around the frame, taking in the key points. Try to find ways of directing attention into the scene and highlighting your subjects.



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G A L L E R Y

# XPOSURE

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



**NIER AUTOMATA**  
**SALVATORE VITALE**

"The model is Giuditta Sartori, playing the character 2B from the role-playing action game Nier Automata at the Lucca Comics & Games convention in Lucca, Tuscany."

<http://tiny.cc/4tlt1y>

# GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## ROCK POOL

**DAVID SELVAGE**

"This was taken at Kimmeridge Bay in Dorset, UK, before dawn as the tide was coming in and covering the famous ledges. There was enough reflected light from the sky on the rocks to give them definition."

<http://tiny.cc/p5sf1y>

## DRYAD'S SADDLE FUNGUS

**STEVE GILLIES**

"Dryad's saddle fungus (*Polyporus squamosus*) growing on a tree stump."

<http://tiny.cc/fxc90y>



# GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## I GOT YOUR BACK

**SHANNON O'SHEA**

"This is a cattle egret, a species of heron, photographed at the Gatorland theme park and wildlife reserve in Orlando, Florida."

<http://tiny.cc/tufmtv>

# GALLERY

THE WEEK'S MOST INSPIRING READER PHOTOS



## SERENITY

ANNA UTKINA

"This picture was taken at home on a windowsill, using only natural light."

<http://tiny.cc/76sf1y>



FACEBOOK

<http://tiny.cc/qi0oey>



FLICKR

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Taken a portrait you're particularly proud of? Shot a sensational sunset you'd like to show off? Then join the *Photography Week* Facebook community and share your best photos today! You'll get feedback from fellow readers and the *Photography Week* team, plus the chance to appear in *Xposure*, or even on our cover!

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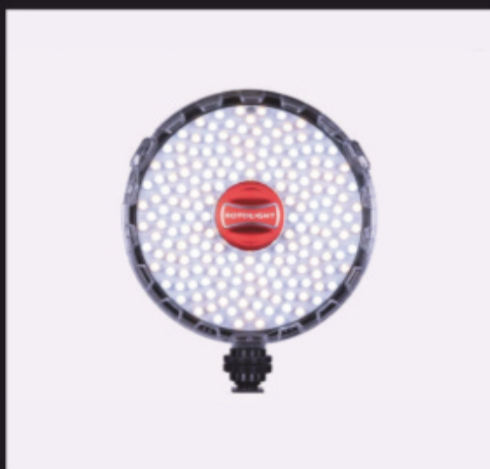
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I N S P I R A T I O N

# IT'S COOL, THAT

THE BEST THING WE'VE SEEN THIS WEEK



Images © Don Komarechka

## FREEZING BUBBLES TURN INTO LITTLE WINTER WONDERLANDS

Photographer shares the secrets of his mesmerising video

**T**hey look like particularly fragile and beautiful Christmas tree ornaments, but these are actually images of soap bubbles freezing, from a remarkable video made by Don Komarechka. At his YouTube page, Komarechka describes how he shot the film, titled *Winter's Magic*, and some of the challenges he had to overcome.

"For the majority of these shots, the camera has a pre-set focus point and a razor-thin depth of field," he explains. "Not

only does the bubble need to be placed in exactly the right spot, but if the diameter of the bubble is too small or too large, the front will not pass through the focal plane and everything will be out of focus."

Click the link to watch the film, which was originally licensed to the BBC for its *Forces of Nature* documentary series. You can see more of Komarechka's work at his website ([www.donkom.ca](http://www.donkom.ca)), and on his Facebook page (<http://tiny.cc/mgw41y>).



SEE MORE IMAGES  
<http://tiny.cc/8bw41y>

## CRASH COURSE

ESSENTIAL PHOTO SKILLS MADE EASY

# SHOOT A SHADOW PORTRAIT

Jason Parnell-Brookes shows you how to shoot a dramatic portrait using little more than a wire fence, a flashgun, and a touch of creativity

1

HOUR

Sometimes you might find yourself in the great outdoors, shooting in ambient light at uninspiring locations that challenge your creativity. But how do you create an arresting portrait without the advanced lighting rigs and other paraphernalia available in a studio setup? A wire fence in a park may not be particularly interesting in itself, but pair it with a flashgun and you have the recipe for a striking and atmospheric portrait.

In this project we'll be firing a flashgun behind a wire fence, and using the short, sharp shadows produced by the fence to envelop our model's face. We'll trigger the flash off-camera with wireless flash triggers, so that we can position the model – and ourselves – in the perfect place.

We'll work on our compositional skills by accentuating the contours of the model's face using the shadows created by the fence. And, as a finishing touch, we'll convert the image to monochrome for a moody film noir look that makes the most of the interplay between light and shadow.



# S K I L L S

## STEP BY STEP COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS



1

### GETTING THE LIGHT RIGHT

We used the Yongnuo YN622N wireless flash trigger kit, which costs around £70/\$75. We attached the wireless receiver to our flashgun, and placed the transmitter on the hotshoe of our camera. We then selected Group A and Channel 1 on both devices, and placed the light and trigger on a light stand.

2

### FINDING THE RIGHT SPOT

We positioned our model next to a fence, with the flashgun aimed towards her from the other side, around two feet away. We set our flashgun to 1/8 power (this will vary depending on the power of your flashgun). Next, we hit the 'test' button to check that the wireless trigger worked.



3

### DIAL IN YOUR SETTINGS

In Manual mode we set an aperture of f/6.3 to ensure the model's entire face was sharp, with a falloff in sharpness behind her. We set a shutter speed of 1/400 sec to underexpose the background by -1 stop - this was faster than our camera's flash sync speed, so we selected High Speed Sync flash mode (Auto FP on our Nikon DSLR).



### ZOOM OUT

If you're struggling to get defined shadows across the model's face, try moving the flashgun and the model closer to the fence.

Or, if your flashgun is adjustable, decrease the zoom function to create a wider spot of light - 50mm or wider is ideal.





# S K I L L S

## STEP BY STEP COME OUT OF THE SHADOWS



4

### TEST YOUR POSITIONING

Take some test shots, and note where the shadows fall on your model's face. We found that when the flashgun was in the upright position only horizontal shadows were visible because of the shape of the flash head; turning it on its side we got the opposite effect.

5

### GO DIAGONAL AND EXPERIMENT

Positioning the flash head diagonally gave us both vertical and horizontal shadows falling on the face. We then got our model to move very slightly to ensure that the shadows didn't fall across her eyes, as a subject's eyes help the viewer to engage with them.

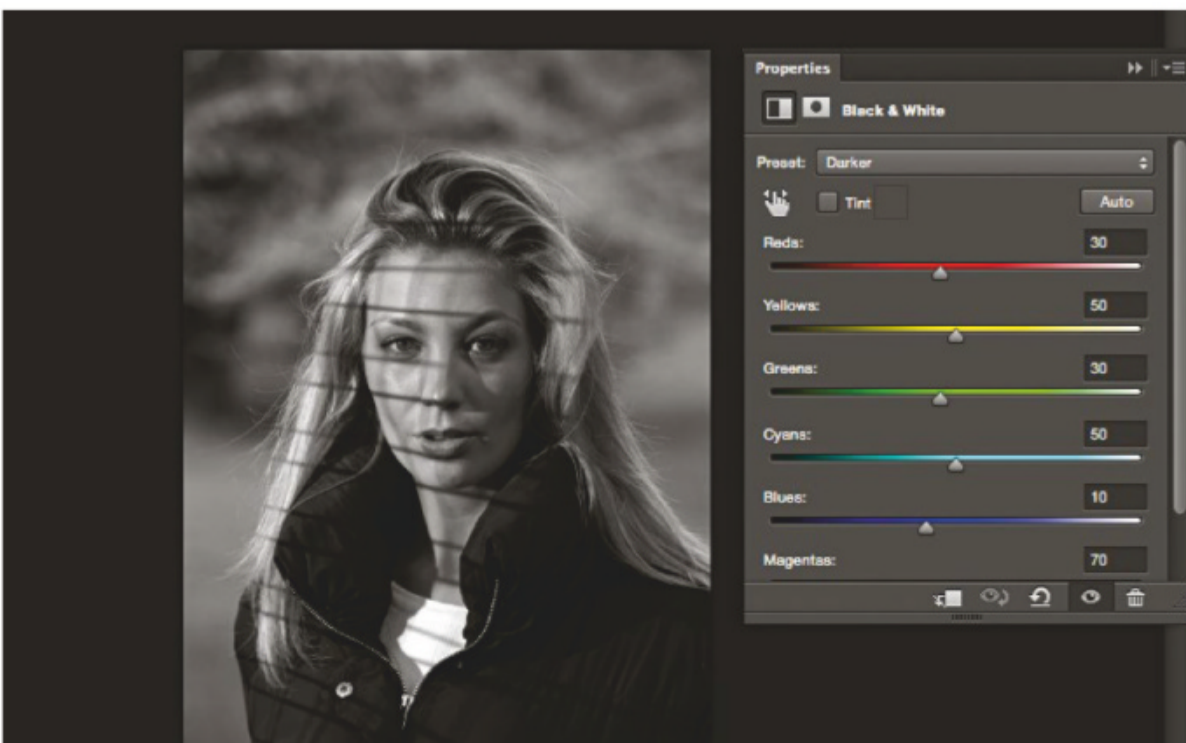


6

### CONVERT TO B&W

To enhance the effect, take your final image into Photoshop (or the editing software of your choice) and convert it to monochrome.

Here, we've added a Black & White adjustment layer, and selected the Darker preset from the drop-down menu.



### QUICK TIP

To ensure perfect synchronisation, turn your camera equipment on in this order: flashgun, flashgun trigger, hotshoe trigger, camera.

E D I T I N G

# PHOTOSHOP

LEARN ESSENTIAL EDITING SKILLS FAST!

HOW TO...

## BOOST COLOUR IN LAB MODE

James Paterson shows you how to make the most out of colours with this Photoshop mode

It might sound like something that requires a white coat and a clipboard, but LAB Color mode isn't just for digital imaging boffins; it's for anyone who wants to take control of colour in their photos, and in this video tutorial we'll show you how it works.

First, a little about colour modes. Most of the time we view and work on images in the RGB colour mode. This stands for Red, Green and Blue; any other colour can be made from combinations of these three. In RGB mode each pixel has a specific R, G and B value between 0 and 255, and this determines not just the colour intensity but also the brightness of the pixel – for example, if a pixel is R 255, G 255, B 255, it's fully white. So in RGB mode the colour and brightness of any given pixel are linked, making it hard to change one independently of the other.

LAB Color works a little differently. As in RGB mode, each pixel has three values, but instead of three colour values, there are two – the A and B channels. The third channel – L – is dedicated to luminance. Unlike RGB, the LAB values are based on how the human eye sees colour rather than how a device calculates it. The main benefit of this is that you can alter colours independently of brightness, as with the car here. You can also boost colour saturation, and easily convert images to monochrome.



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WATCH THE VIDEO  
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G E A R

# MINI TEST



# EXTERNAL MICROPHONES

Six sound choices for better audio from your camera

## FIVE THINGS TO LOOK FOR...

- 1 Frequency response alone doesn't tell you enough about a mic, so don't get bogged down on topline spec.
- 2 Don't get wowed by impressive high-frequency figures. Most 25-year-olds can't hear anything above 15KHz.
- 3 If the mic fits in a camera's hotshoe, check that it has a suspended shockmount to stop noise transfer.
- 4 A windjammer reduces wind noise, and is essential for shooting outdoors. Budget for this if the mic lacks one.
- 5 An average mic placed close to the source will outperform an amazing mic placed at a distance.



## MINI TEST: EXTERNAL MICROPHONES



## Audio-Technica AT8024

£186/\$249 [www.audio-technica.com](http://www.audio-technica.com)

The Audio-Technica AT8024 is a shoe-mount shotgun mic that offers a broad array of features. It sports a rubber mount to insulate the mic from camera and handling noise, and offers two pickup patterns for either wide-field stereo or cardioid mono. This means you can use it for recording ambient tracks like traffic or birdsong in full stereo, or home in on a tight pickup pattern for speech and spot sound effects.

Given that it's the most expensive option here, it's good that the AT8024 comes with both a foam windscreen and a furry windjammer that's very effective at cutting out wind noise – even in a strong breeze. This is a real bonus, as windjammers (also known as 'dead cats') often have to be purchased separately.

It runs for 80 hours on a single AA battery (included in the box), and delivers a 40Hz-15KHz frequency response. Overall, this is a great fit-and-forget mic that's well constructed and well appointed with accessories. The mic's noise floor isn't perfect, so it does suffer from a little high-frequency hiss, but recordings are full and natural sounding. It's great having the option to capture stereo at the flick of a switch, and there's also a roll-off filter to cut bass rumble, plus a three-stage gain option to tune the mic's output to your camera's input. Pair this with a lav for interviews or presenters, and you'll be well kitted out for high-quality videos.

**PROS** Stereo capture; windjammer included

**CONS** A little high-frequency hiss is evident

VERDICT



## Boya BY-M1

£15/\$20 [www.boya-mic.com](http://www.boya-mic.com)

The Boya BY-M1 is a wired lavalier mic with a switchable power source. This runs on an LR44 button cell, and needs to be switched on if you use a 'passive' source, or off if you record via a device with plug-in power, such as a smartphone. It comes with a clip to attach it to a jacket lapel, plus a mono 1/4-inch jack plug adapter, and also includes a foam windscreen to help dampen wind noise and speech plosives.

It offers an omnidirectional polar pattern, so picks up sound from all directions, and the frequency response stretches from 65Hz to 18KHz. While that's not as wide-ranging as some mics here, it's perfect for voice recording.

The plastic construction of the capsule is a little bulkier than that seen on professional lavs, but the 6m lead is long enough to mic up your presenter and keep things tidy in the frame.

Considering its low price, the BY-M1 delivers audio quality way beyond expectations. It has a hotter output than others here, and there's no attenuator switch to reduce the volume, so there's the possibility that it may distort on some equipment. On our Canon 5D Mk III test camera, however, the result was some excellent, hiss-free recordings with an extremely low noise floor.

Although the build quality means it needs to be treated with care, this is an outstanding little mic overall. It's a great contender as a wired backup mic, even if you have a pro wireless system.

**PROS** Great sound quality; very low noise

**CONS** A bit oversized; fragile build means it's easy to break if you're not careful

VERDICT



## MINI TEST: EXTERNAL MICROPHONES



## Rode VideoMic Pro

£135/\$170 [www.rote.com](http://www.rote.com)

This hotshoe shotgun mic offers a good selection of features for those seeking more flexibility and higher-quality recordings. It's suspended on a shockmount; this incorporates a chamber for a 9V battery block (not supplied), which serves as the power source for around 70 hours.

On the back of the unit are two switches that enable you to tailor its performance. One alters the output gain (-10, 0 or +20 dB) to best match your camera's input; the other offers the choice between a flat response or one with a low-frequency cut. The latter is often useful outdoors, when you want to reduce bass rumble that may be present in the environment.

The sound quality is excellent, with rich tonality throughout the 40Hz-20KHz range, and a flat response all the way through the speech frequencies, ensuring really natural-sounding recordings. Impressively, there's a very low noise floor that's comparable to the Boya BY-M1 lav mic, so only the hypercritical will be concerned about the small trace of mic-generated hiss that's present. The supplied foam windscreen serves to protect the mic, but outdoors, a furry windjammer is essential to prevent wind noise. The dedicated Rode model costs another £30/\$38 on top, so that pushes up the outlay.

That aside, The VideoMic Pro is an excellent piece of kit, and more than justifies its price with its thought-through features and slick performance.

**PROS** Great feature set for top-quality recordings

**CONS** Windjammer is needed, but costs extra

**VERDICT**



## Rotolight Roto-Mic

£59 [www.rotolight.com](http://www.rotolight.com)

Better known for innovative LED lighting, Rotolight also offers the Roto-Mic. Originally designed as a kit, with an LED ringlight that surrounds the mic (priced at £125/\$199), the Roto-Mic is also available separately. The mic sports an impressive frequency response of 40Hz-20KHz, and its output can be set to -10, 0 or +10dB to match up with the input specifics of the camera in use.

The polar pattern is supercardioid, so it picks up sound from a narrow area directly in front of the mic. As well as a foam windscreen, it comes with a furry windjammer that does a good job of eliminating wind noise outdoors. With this, we found the best results were obtained by placing it over the top of the foam windscreen, rather than swapping them over.

The Roto-Mic is suspended on a shockmount to isolate the mic from handling noise. Spare rubber bands are included in the box if you manage to break one when you're out in the field.

It's relatively compact, and is powered by a 9V battery block (not included). The only real downside of the Roto-Mic is some high-frequency hiss, which is noticeable when compared with some of the quieter shotguns on test here. This can be processed out in post-production using noise reduction software, so it isn't a deal-breaker considering the otherwise good set of features, but this aspect of its performance does get in the way.

**PROS** Comes with the accessories you'll need, including a windjammer

**CONS** High-frequency hiss is noticeable

**VERDICT**



## MINI TEST: EXTERNAL MICROPHONES



## Sennheiser MKE 400

£144/\$200 [www.sennheiser.com](http://www.sennheiser.com)

The MKE 400 is a very compact shotgun mic that mounts on a hotshoe via a mini shock absorber. Although it weighs in at just 60g it sports a rugged, well-constructed feel. It runs for up to 300 hours on a single AAA battery (supplied) and offers two gain settings (marked '- vol +'). To further tune the mic's output you can switch between a standard, flat response and a low-cut setting, which rolls off the bass to reduce any rumble present on location.

A supplied foam windscreen protects the mic capsule, but a windjammer for breezy conditions outdoors is an optional extra. The MZW 400 accessory kit (around £35/\$40) includes one, and also provides an XLR adapter that allows you to plug the MKE 400 into professional video or audio equipment. The polar pattern is supercardioid, so sound pickup is rejected from the sides and focused on a narrow arc in front of the mic.

Although the frequency response stretches from 40Hz to 20KHz there's a noticeable lack of bottom end on recordings, and it's rather thin-sounding, especially when compared with the Rode VideoMic Pro. Recordings are crisp and clear, with mids and highs punching through, but it'll take extra time in post to restore the low frequencies and get rich, natural-sounding results.

The diminutive size of this microphone is a real plus, though, and it will be very appealing to those looking for better sound from a super-compact and lightweight mic.

**PROS** Very small; good mid-to-high clarity

**CONS** Lack of bass gives thinner results

**VERDICT**



## Shure VP83 LensHopper

£182/\$199 [www.shure.com](http://www.shure.com)

The VP83 LensHopper is a short, hotshoe-mounted shotgun mic that runs for 130 hours on a single AA battery (included). It offers a supercardioid pickup pattern, which suppresses sound very effectively from the sides, focusing attention on where your lens is pointed.

The mic capsule is mounted on a shock-absorbing Rycote lyre system that isolates the mic from handling noise, and switchable gains of -10, 0 and +20dB are on offer to tune the mic's output to your camera's input. Another switch gives the option of a flat or low-cut response to reduce any bass rumble. In our tests with the Canon 5D Mk III, the VP83 gave the lowest noise floor of all the models here; barely any hiss at all was evident in our recordings.

Although the VP83 boasts a frequency response of 50Hz-20KHz, the response curve isn't as flat as that of the Rode Video MicPro, and there's less bass in the resulting output, giving a thinner-sounding recording. With the emphasis on mid and high frequencies, the mic actually cuts through really well in terms of clarity, but ultimately it doesn't sound quite as rich and natural as the Rode Video MicPro.

It's not a huge issue, as the low frequencies can be restored in post-production, so this ultra-quiet mic is well worth considering. It is relatively steep on the price side, though, especially when you add the cost of the dedicated windjammer (£35/\$45), which isn't included as part of the kit.

**PROS** Crisp, clear audio with noise-free results

**CONS** Bass response is a little lacking

**VERDICT**



# A P P S

## MORE GREAT MAGAZINES FROM THE MAKERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY WEEK

### N-PHOTO

*N-Photo* is a monthly magazine for Nikon photographers, and is packed with technique and Photoshop video lessons every month.



<http://tiny.cc/x2ehfy>



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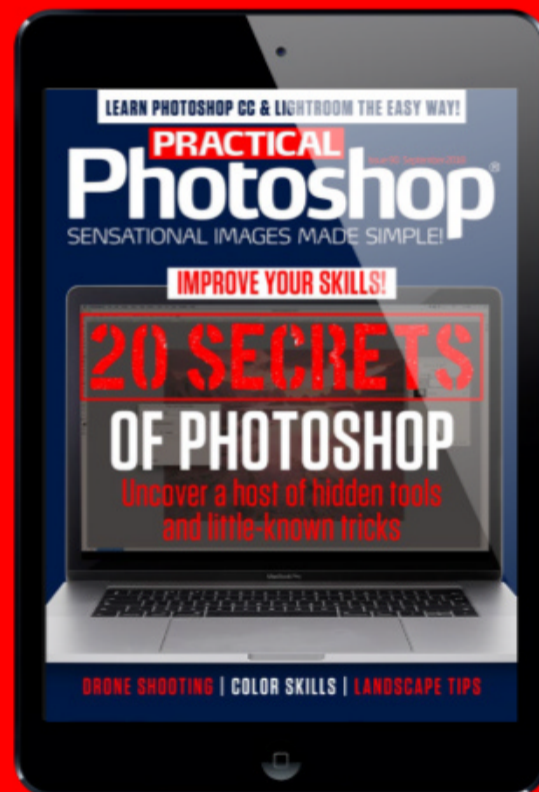
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