



# Camera Clips

Bi monthly publication

May 2012

## From the Editor

James Allan

Welcome once again to another edition of Camera Clips. This edition is full of material sent to me from members of the club. Perhaps of particular interest is a debate on the merits or excesses of photo manipulation. This debate has gone on from time immemorial. I believe there is merit from both arguments. When I look at images I have an inner sense as to what I think is OK and what is not. However when it comes to articulating this instinct I find it is hard to put it into words or to be persuasive. Read the articles and form your own opinion.

Our banner this month has been lifted from an image by Heather Connolly of shifting sands. Check out the selection of my favourite images from the last two club competitions. (page 2) I note that there has been some strong images especially from new members to the club. Melinda, Henck and Terry come to mind. John Duckmanton also has a favourite image to share. He has written a short article. Check out his reasoning on page 7. John invites other club members to share their images also. Perhaps it could become a regular feature of camera clips.

During the week my friend Alison in Macau sent me an article on the surreal landscape photography by Randy Scott Slavin. Have a look at the gallery of his images on page 5. I was particularly taken by these images and keen to explore how it was done. Venturing out into the garden with my tripod I tried my hand at a few ultra-wide panoramas. Although my results are not very skillful I discovered that it's not so hard, even if it is time consuming. I have given a few tips and a web address for those keen to try it out.

One of the first meetings I attended in the club, Gary Secombe exhorted us all to use polarizing filters for our landscape photography. At the time I had had mixed results and was not convinced. With time however I have warmed to the effects created by these small and inexpensive filters. Now I consider they are probably the most useful filter in your camera kit. Read on to find out why. Once again Enjoy

## Polarisation and Photography

James Allan

Having pulled over on the side of the road and taking my camera out to photograph the gorgeous lighting on the clouds and hills, I shake my head in bewilderment. Why does the resulting image look so dull and uninteresting? It might be that the perception of landscape is hard to capture with the camera. The experts use leading lines and clever construction to allude to scale and depth. A panoramic format goes part of the way. Also it helps to come back later in the day when there is more interesting lighting. There are a range of tricks. However I am aware there is another subtle effect at work. I discovered that the vision becomes decidedly less interesting the moment I take my sunglasses off to look through the view finder. Something about the sunglasses improves the colours and contrast in the image. That effect is caused by polarisation. I decided I needed to buy sunglasses for my camera. I discover in fact that you can – it's called a polarising filter.

So how does a polariser work? I won't bore you with all the detailed physics. The essence of it is that light has wave like properties. These waves can move up and down or from side to side, or in any direction in between. A polariser is like a sieve that strains out all of the light waves, except those oriented in the same direction as the filter. Once light has passed through, the waves oscillate in only that one direction, for instance up and down. This light is now polarised.

Light from the sun is not polarised. It's a mixture of waves moving in all directions. However when sunlight is reflected, say from a

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Contacting a member from the club; This month Mark & Jenny Pedlar : [mnjpedlar@biqpond.com](mailto:mnpjpedlar@biqpond.com)

## Upcoming Events

May 10—Speakers—My Passion, Three club members will show their images and describe why they are passionate about that genre of photography. Three styles – slides, stitching photos, underwater photography.

May 24—Competition—Seen Better Days—The image will be dominated by someone or something which is old, dilapidated or decrepit.



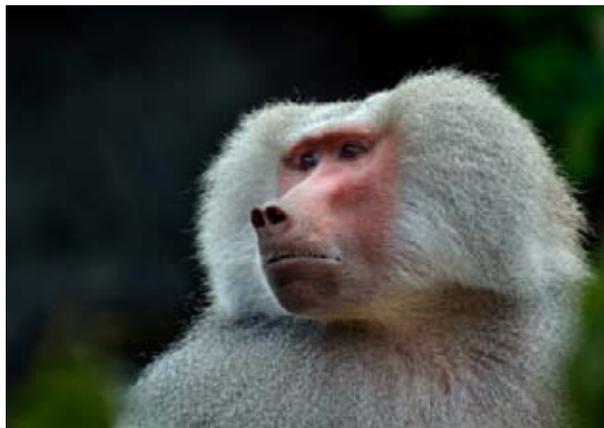
The Polarised image has less contrast, less reflections, greater saturation, a darker sky, greener vegetation and more detail in the shadows. The colours however look a little pasty and unnatural.



Photo Gallery—Images from the recent club competitions



Henck Smelter—The House of  
Burley Griffin  
Mark Swain—Remember the An-  
zacs  
Ashley Hoff— Steven Richards  
Porsche 911 (not in the transport  
competition but should have been)  
Hillary Fran—Freight Train  
Eric Budworth—Dandelion  
Ursula Prucha—Wallaby  
Helen Whitford— Contemplation  
Melinda Hine—Glenelg Jetty  
Chris Schultz—Stone Angel



“That’s been photoshopped” she exclaimed and left the club never to be seen again. Do you agree? Do some images go too far? Should manipulated images be relegated to a separate competition in fairness to those who do not wish to stoop so low? We have two points of view on this subject. Matt Carr and Warwick Harrison independently sent me articles with opposing points of view. Have a read and see what you think. Which argument do you find more persuasive?

In favour of the Negative—Warwick Harrison summarises an article by George Maciver.

### **ARE PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO USE PHOTOSHOP, FRAUDS?**

George Maciver argues that photographers should be encouraged to pursue their passions without all this nonsense about being frauds because they use Photoshop.

The word photography derives from the Greek *photos*, light, and *graphé*, to represent by means of lines or to draw. So photography is to draw, or paint with light. Photography is art by definition.

Some argue that the overuse of Photoshop can turn photographs into digital art. However, this argument makes no sense, because by definition, digital photography is digital art. You may strive to capture the perfect photograph, true to what you see in every detail, but what you produce is still digital art.

There is no such thing as an untouched photograph. Changing the settings on your camera alters the way an image is presented. We use flash to add light, reflectors to bounce light, doors and umbrellas to direct light; we introduce light which was not there in the original image, we manipulate the image to make it better. Does it really matter then if we manipulate images on location, or do it afterwards in Photoshop?

Taking all this into consideration, the question we should be asking then is when does photographic digital art cease to be photographic digital art? Answer? As long as you’re working with light captured by a digital camera, it doesn’t.

Of course, manipulated photographic images which are fraudulently sold as genuine is fraud, but those images are still photographs, they are still digital art.

Post production adjustments by whatever branded software you enjoy, is in essence, the digital darkroom. Tools such as toning, contrast adjustment, dodging and burning, are all replicated darkroom techniques.

We may not personally enjoy some aspects of photography, just as we may not enjoy some styles of music, but it is all digital art. Photography means painting or drawing with light, so there are no rules on what can or what cannot be used to draw or paint with that light.

George Maciver is from *the Highlands of Scotland Photography*, located in Brora, north of Inverness in the Highlands.

In Favour of the positive Matt Carr gives his own point of view

### **WHEN DOES A PHOTOGRAPH BECOME AN IMAGE?**

In these days of sophisticated photo editing software, it can be hard to tell the difference, in fact is there even a difference? I believe there is.

Let me just grab that can of worms first!

*Continued page 5*

The debate concerning manipulation goes back to the very beginning of photography

*“I wish to state emphatically that I do not believe in any sort of handwork or manipulation on a photographic negative or print.” - Alvin Langdon Coburn - 1913,*



*“Dodging and burning are steps to take care of mistakes God made in establishing tonal relationships.”*

Ansel Adams 1902-1984



## Photoessay—Randy Scott Slavin

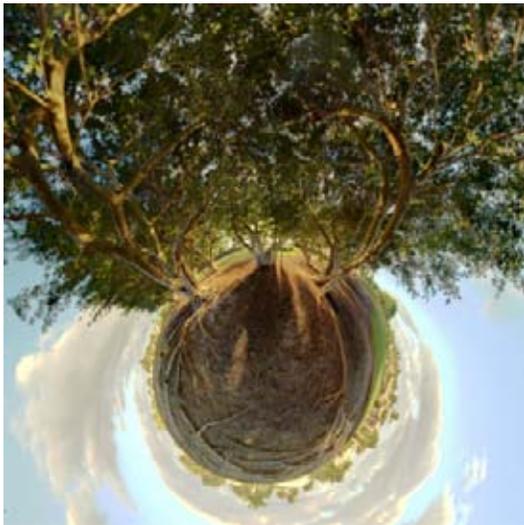


Randy Scott Slavin is an award-winning filmmaker and surrealist photographer based in New York City.

He is widely known for his powerful music videos and branded productions that mash up clever concepts with bold imagery, and channel the energy of pop culture. Slavin explains...

"In my music videos, I've continually tried to take concepts to the next level, to push the ideas to be more engaging, moving and stimulating—and I approach photography with the same philosophy... When I began shooting landscapes, I was compelled to push the perspective. After experimenting heavily with panoramic photography, I developed a technique that could realize my desire to turn the real into the surreal. The result is something rebellious, beautiful and provocative. My 'Alternative Perspectives' series is a collection of the works culled from these photographic explorations."

Slavin is a much sought-after director, pumping out a steady stream of hot content for brands including MTV, American Express, Bank of America, Frito Lay, Universal Records, Atlantic Records, Myspace and Island/Def Jam Records. He is the recipient of the South by Southwest Special Jury Award, The Holly shorts Film Festival Best Music Video Award, and Coney Island Film Festival Best Video Award, to name a few, including millions of YouTube hits.



## How to create a surreal perspective—the little planet or Tube world effect .

The key element is an image distortion filter in photoshop called "polar coordinates". A rectangular photograph has 4 edges. With this filter the picture is severely curved so that the two opposing edges on the left and right are joined together in a vertical line. The top edge is reduced to a single point at the centre of the picture and the bottom edge stretches all the way around to become the new circular perimeter to the image. This filter is akin to converting a Mercator projection of the world into an azimuthal projection.

If you start with a panoramic photograph this filter will create a tube world effect. If the image is put upside down the filter will create the little planet effect.

Now for the nuts and bolts. The beautiful perspective distortion effects created by Randy Scott Slavin require a 360/180 panorama. You need a photo that represents a full 360 degrees from left to right and 180 degrees from top to bottom. You should use a tripod. Overlapping by around 25%. When I take the pictures in portrait orientation. I can get 360 degrees in around 10 photos. Then I angle the camera up by 30 degrees and repeat. Finally again with the camera pointed down 30 degrees.

The amazing thing is that photoshop can automatically arrange these 30 images and stitch a rectangular panorama. Unfortunately it takes my computer about 30 to 45 minutes to do this, so I recommend you go and make a coffee and do something else for a while.

The image looks a bit ragged and it's necessary to crop the edges so that the left and right sides match each other perfectly. Now change the image size so that the vertical and horizontal dimensions are identical. Once you have a distorted looking square you are ready to run the polar coordinates filter.

The result is often a bit disappointing at first. There is a hole in the centre. If you remember to take a photo directly upwards and directly down you will have the material you need to create a patch to fill in this hole. Likewise at the outer edge the image may be quite distorted. You may wish to crop this out, or patch it with some of the original photos. Eventually however it is possible to create a surreal and distorted landscape.

If you need further assistance with this process try visiting the following website for more complete instructions;

<http://panoplanets.com/>

Let's start by looking at the Oxford dictionary's definition:

**Photograph, noun**

a picture made using a camera, in which an image is focused on to light-sensitive material and then made visible and permanent by chemical treatment, or stored digitally:

**Image, noun**

- a representation of the external form of a person or thing in art: *her work juxtaposed images from serious and popular art*
- a visible impression obtained by a camera, telescope, microscope, or other device, or displayed on a computer or video screen: *Voyager 2 sent back images of the planet Neptune*
- an optical appearance or counterpart produced by light from an object reflected in a mirror or refracted through a lens.
- a mental representation or idea: *I had a sudden image of Sal bringing me breakfast in bed*
- [in singular] a person or thing that closely resembles another: *he's the image of his father*

So, looking at the above it seems that a photograph is a picture made using a camera, and an image is a representation or an impression.

I have certainly heard lots of arguments from those espousing the benefits (of which there are plenty) of using programs such as Photoshop and that what Ansell Adams did with the large amount of dodging and burning in his photographs amounts to what can be done today in Photoshop, and to a point they are correct, but Ansell Adams (as far as I am aware) didn't cut and paste objects from one photo to another after the photo was taken.

Once you are cutting and pasting parts from one photo to another, that I believe is when you no longer have a photograph, but an image. Don't get me wrong - there is nothing wrong with creating images – I enjoy making them myself, and there are some really talented artists creating them, but is it really a photograph?

## Manipulated Images of Warwick & Matt



## Famous Cases of Photographic Fraud



Reuters News Agency photo of the bombing of Beirut. a reader named "Mike" pointed out the photo had been altered using the Photoshop "clone" tool. A day later Reuters released the undoctored original. (below)



The Cottingley Fairies, a series of photographs taken by cousins Elsie Wright and Frances Griffiths in 1917. They purported to show the girls cavorting with fairies. Although widely acknowledged in the press as forgeries, the authenticity was vouchsafed by Sir Arthur Connon Doyle. The great writer and spiritualist interviewed the girls and felt that their character was beyond reproach.



Dr William J Pearce—photograph of an apparition (spirit) 1903

sheet of glass or the surface of a lake it becomes polarised. If you then try and pass this polarised light through a second polariser— say the one on the front of the camera, it won't get through. It will look dark. That is unless the polarised light has the same orientation as the filter. It will block all light that has already been polarised in a different direction and allow unpolarised light to pass straight through.

This is where the fun starts. Try using the filter to take some photos, and you can quickly work out where all of this polarised light is coming from. If I compare the images I took with the polariser to those without I can see the effect clearly. The most obvious change is noted when looking at the blue sky. It is darker. Also reflections from most surfaces are reduced. This includes water, or grass, or buildings, or car windows etc. It seems to exaggerate the surface colour of objects and increases colour saturation. Overall the effect is pleasing (mostly).

The direction of the polariser can be changed by rotating it. If you turn the filter just 90 degrees you will notice the sky will change from the darkest hue to the lightest.

As it reduces reflections, a polariser can be used to reveal objects under the water or behind a window. It may be useful when photographing animals behind glass, reducing annoying reflections (not entirely unfortunately). Remember to rotate the filter to achieve the strongest effect.

A blue sky can be darkened. The clouds will stand out white fluffy and distinct. Unfortunately it does not darken an overcast or grey sky.

It is useful to increase colour saturation. This is particularly useful for sand dunes, cliff faces, painted billboards, buildings and desert landscapes.

Unfortunately the effect is not universally pleasing. There are a few instances where I hate the effect. Some vegetation, for instance most Australian native scrub is very reflective. The natural colour of the bush is a mixture of greens and reflected blues from the sky. With the polariser it all turns to a mucky unnatural sage green. Likewise removing the reflected blue from a lake reveals the true colour of the water. This may be a muddy brown or an algal green. I'd prefer a blue lake any day. (Brown tannin lakes in Tasmania however do look good)

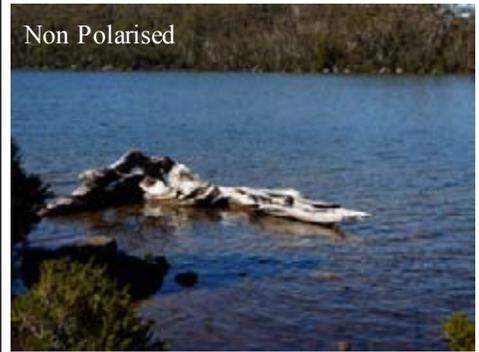
The sky also exhibits an interesting effect. If you point the camera toward or away from the sun there is virtually no darkening at all. (Polarisers are generally not useful for sunset photography). However at 90 degrees to the sun, the sky is so dark it is a deep shade of indigo bordering on black. A wide angle lens or a stitched panorama may render the sky as thick bands of dark and light hues. Some people find this look dramatic. Others complain that it is contrived and unappealing.

Now there are some special effects that can be achieved with polarisers. If you shine polarised light through a piece of plastic and photograph it with a second polariser set at 90 degrees to the light source (so called cross polarisation), the plastic comes alive with colourful swirls of light on a dark background. These swirls reflect the lines of stress. This technique has been used by engineers to test the adequacy of design of various components. It is also used to identify crystals.

My little Panasonic Lumix had no thread on the lens with which to attach a filter. However I was not to be deterred. I bought a cheap polariser and attached it with an old Nescafé lid and some duct tape and it worked just fine.

Lastly I should mention that digital cameras my loose the ability to auto focus through a standard polariser. I can't explain the mechanism, except to say that this problem is overcome if you use a circular polariser.

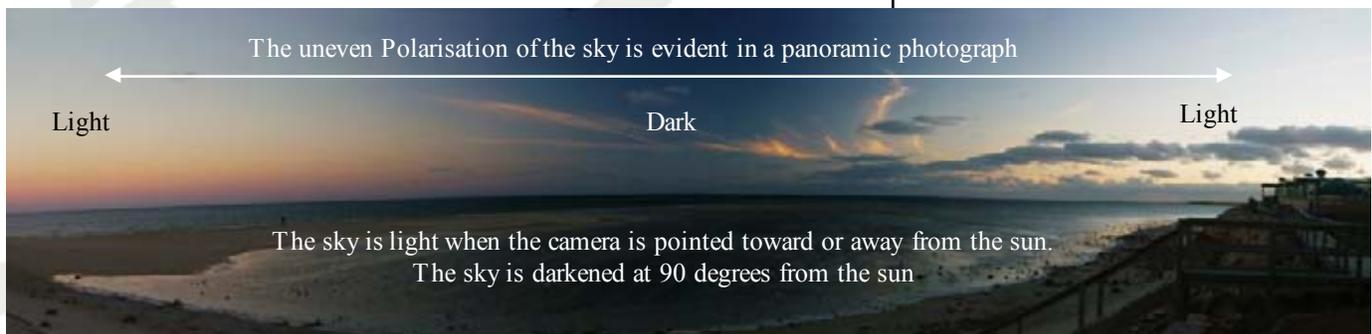
If you have never used a polariser before – go out and buy one. They are not too expensive. There can be a lot of fun exploring the possibilities of polarised light. After all there's a lot of it about.



Non Polarised  
The Polarised image has removed reflected light from the water, so that you can see objects below the surface.



Polarised  
The improved saturation and darkening of skies is particularly useful for Rock and Desert Features.



The uneven Polarisation of the sky is evident in a panoramic photograph

Light

Dark

Light

The sky is light when the camera is pointed toward or away from the sun.  
The sky is darkened at 90 degrees from the sun

## My Favourite Photo —

John Duckmanton

My Favourite Photo doesn't have to be a competition winner, just a picture that brings back fond memories to you of a situation, a person or holiday – any subject that is dear to you.

My favourite was taken in May 1978 in Nottinghamshire, England. It depicts a country lane with spring wild flowers on the roadside. The large tree in the middle distance is an old elm which succumbed to Dutch elm disease the following year. I have visited the site several times over the last few years but it just doesn't work without that tree.

In the background is a farmhouse built in 1790 which has also been transformed beyond recognition.

The figures are of my two sons with their grandfather and his dog returning home after a walk along the abandoned railway track.

The photo itself was taken using my old Pentax K1000 and the film was the first Kodak 400 ASA print film, freshly in the shops that week.

I had a 20"x30" framed print of this picture in my lounge for many years. I found the negative by chance recently and was able to scan it to digital and fix up a few scratches and remove power lines. I still love it.

One other picture that I love is one I found browsing the Web looking for historic pictures of working horses.

I have no idea where or when the picture was taken but the clothes suggest the late 1930's. The artist/photographer had a wonderful sense of composition and this is one picture that I wish I had taken myself. Doesn't follow the rule of thirds too well but what terrific leading lines!

Now, the rest of you, get those pictures out and swamp Camera Clips with your favourites!

John Duckmanton.

