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## THROUGH THE LENS THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER of ISLAND PHOTO GROUP

Dedicated To Excellence In Photography

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### Why I Shoot In RAW Format

by Jeffrey Blye

*A few months ago, I responded to a question which appeared in the Nikon D70 forum of dpreview ([www.dpreview.com](http://www.dpreview.com)). The question was in regard to RAW vs. JPEG images and was asked by a new user who was confused about which format to use when shooting pictures. Here is the question with my response:*

"I was wondering if anyone could simplify the RAW v. JPEG decision. I have no real understanding of RAW, other than that it is a noncompressed format. I have tried to discuss this with some digital photo friends of mine but they were no help. I guess I am trying to understand what makes shooting in RAW format a must to all the experienced people here. From what I've read since I purchased my D70, I think there are some things you can do in post processing a RAW file that you cannot do if you shoot JPEG. Ultimately, I would like to be able to get more out of my camera than simple post processing of JPEGs, but am a little lost at this point. Any help would be great".

The simplified explanation goes something like this: JPEG images are a result of in-camera processing. The processing follows a set of instructions dictated by the camera's manufacturer, in which exposure, tonality, color balance and sharpness (among other things) are applied to your image with little or no user input. During the processing, two major issues are apparent:

- 1) The image is compressed (to save space) in a lossy fashion, which means, pixels are deleted to help reduce the file size. Which pixels are deleted are determined by the algorithms used by the camera, not by the photographer. This results in a degraded image when compared to the original pixel information collected by the camera's sensor when the shutter was snapped.
- 2) JPEG processing generates an 8-bit image that results in only 256 levels of tonality, significantly less than the unprocessed pixel information the sensor captures. In general, this leads to poorer shadow details.

With that said, you can still get remarkably good photographs using the JPEG file format. It's a smaller file size than RAW and is universally recognized by most image editing programs and viewers.

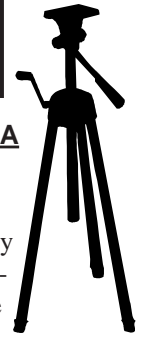
RAW images, on the other hand, give the photographer much more latitude, simply because the camera has not changed anything that the sensor had captured.

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### What's New ....

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### Quick Tips for January



### How Do I Compose A Photograph?

by Andrew Hudson

Composition is the key to an interesting photograph. Despite all the technical jargon, photography is essentially an art form, and its most important aspect is composition. To improve your art skills, find photos you like and study them, asking yourself: 'Why exactly do I like this picture?'

**Subject:** When you take a photograph, identify what the subject is. Look for something that activates your senses, that you can touch, feel, smell, or taste. This process is the most overlooked step in photography. Although it may be tempting to simply snap your photos and rush on, I urge you to take time to visually explore the subject and see what appeals to you. Ask yourself: 'What is the purpose of this photograph?' and 'What is the reaction I want a viewer to have?'

**Context:** Next find a 'context' - a simple backdrop which adds relevance, contrast, and/or location to the 'subject.' You can add depth by finding a 'context' in a different spatial plane than the 'subject.' For example, if the subject is a building in the background, make the context a flower or person in the foreground.

Now combine the two in a simple way. Remove any clutter that detracts from your message. Get closer - zoom in - and crop as tightly as possible.

**Subject Placement:** The placement of your subject in the frame denotes its relevance to the context. The center of the frame is the weakest place - it's static, dull, and gives no value to the context. The more you move the subject away from the center, the more relevance you give to the context.

**Lines and Paths:** Create impact by using real or inferred lines that lead the viewer's eye into and around the picture. Railway tracks, rivers, and fences are obvious choices, but there

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# IPG PHOTO GROUP

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## IPG Meeting Information

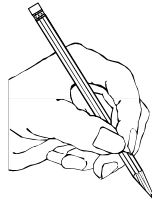
*IPG meetings* will be held from 7:30 - 10:00 PM on the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of each month, except for holidays, at our meeting room located at:

Ellsworth Allen Park  
101 Motor Avenue  
Farmingdale, NY 11735

*Critique Nights* will be held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of every month

All IPG members can submit 2 photos in each of the following categories:

**Color Prints, B&W Prints and Slides**



## President's Message

As 2004 comes to an end, I find myself reflecting on IPG's successes. We have maintained our membership roster at 36, which is very encouraging, especially at a time when some clubs have either experienced losses in numbers or disbanded altogether. We must be doing something right! Our results at PFLI competitions confirm the fact that IPG is a group of outstanding photographers. Our field trips have been interesting and well attended. But most of all, I think our greatest success has been the group's camaraderie and our willingness to share knowledge and to help each other become better at this hobby of photography. I look forward to the year 2005 being better than we expect it to be and with the anticipation that we will continue to grow and improve photographically.

I wish all of you and your families a Very Happy and Healthy New Year.

Charlie



Charlie Bowman, IPG President

### *Why I Shoot In RAW Format continued from page 1*

It is composed of unaltered and unprocessed pixel information collected by the camera's sensor when the picture was taken. Because the camera has not changed anything, the user is responsible for image tonality, exposure, color balance, sharpness, etc, all without any forced input from the camera itself.

The RAW image is processed by the user using a RAW image converter such as **Adobe Camera RAW**, **Nikon Capture** or a number of any other available software packages. Changes made to the image are not applied directly to the pixels, but rather as instructions appended to the image file or to an image database. The converter then reads in the user modifications and applies it to the image. Since no change is applied directly, this means that you can go back to the image at anytime and restore it to it's original pixel values or make other changes.

A significant factor for some is the fact that RAW files can be manipulated as either 8-bit or 16-bit images. Again, with 8-bit images you get 256 levels of tone, but with 16-bit, you get over 4000 levels of available tones. In general, quality seems to be better in RAW especially with regard to image resizing, sharpness and color temperature changes. It does, however, require post processing and good knowledge of an image editor (such as Adobe Photoshop).

Which one to use is up to you. For most, JPEGs are more than sufficient. However, if you like to take charge and image quality is of the utmost importance, then RAW is something to look into. As for me, once I started using RAW there was no looking back. It's a great format for getting the highest possible quality out of your digital images.

## Meet Our Members

*This month we're happy to have you meet one of our newer members, Richard Fiedorowicz. Richard was kind enough to provide us with this short bio.*

Valentine's Day 1945. Love was in the air. Sgt. Stephen Fiedorowicz came home to Ozone Park, Queens. November 14 that same year, I arrived, becoming the first-born in my Polish family's newest generation. Jadeck and Babci owned a two family house on 91<sup>st</sup> street. We lived upstairs. A sister and five cousins quickly joined Babci's regular Sunday get-togethers. Family influences endure a lifetime.

I was eight when my uncle wanted me to see something special in the basement tool room. The door closed – it was pitch black. I was to wait while he got ready. Soon he took my hand, put it on a button and told me to push and count to ten. Seconds later, in the dim orange glow, I could see him take the “index card” and put it in a liquid. Wow! A picture – my first contact print from a 120 negative. The magic smell of hypo has triggered photo lust in me ever since.

Ten photo-dormant years later, St. John's University claimed me as a freshman math and physics major. Glee club! Friends! Darkroom! Hypo – the addictive aroma reborn! Speed Graphic press camera. Tri-x 4x5 sheet film. D-76. Dektol. The SJU darkroom was my home away from home almost 24-7. I started sophomore year wearing three hats: the Photography Editor of the SJU newspaper, of the yearbook and of the literary magazine. Couldn't get enough. Bought my first camera: Minolta SR-7, a 35mm SLR with a fast 1.4 lens – loved available light. Gossen LunaPro meter. Ansel Adams zone system. Polycontrast filters and paper. Soooo much fun. Then they told me I had to go. Time to graduate. Get a job. Get a life.

New developments (Polaroid style): teaching math at Island Trees Junior High School, house, marriage, daughter, son, son, son, daughter. Five children in five years. Math and multiply! Got that new life: loved every bit of it. Downside: no “free” photo stuff and toys to play with! Solution: color slides. Mama don't take my Ektachrome away.

Zoom ahead a decade to '78. Built my color darkroom. Bessler XL, the works to make 16x20 prints. Fun, fun, fun. But... the Commodore PET 8K computer arrives at Island Trees. I was the only teacher with computer background (FORTRAN, punch cards, etc.) So a decade of teaching Regents Algebra became history. Computer education became my livelihood. Life, but fewer photographs, developed and my new Minolta XD-11 got lonely.

Doors close, new doors open. I was dubbed District Computer Coordinator. More toys! PageMaker, word processing, Photoshop, the “new” Kodak DC10 digital camera! By the time I retired in June 2002, I brought the high school's newspaper from typewriters, galley sheets and paste ups to a 16 page tabloid completely digitally prepared, camera-ready for the printer. The school's yearbook, literary magazine, and playbills also were made part of the total digital revolution. Students could elect two years of Desktop Publishing. Good job!

As for my own photography? I hardly pressed a shutter release from '88 until things started clicking again when Ro and I married 7/4/98. Honeymoon needed picturing! But we didn't want to be bogged down with camera bodies, lenses, filters, blah, blah, blah. I needed a “simpler” camera. So began another new era: Olympus pocketable point and shoot. Not bad. Good results, convenient. But I badly missed the manual controls, TTL viewfinder and my left hand on the lens barrel. I quickly started dreaming digital SLR. Maybe one of those Canon models the pros use. \$10K Ouch! Oh well. Maybe someday when I'd retire.

At last 7/1/2002! Change of life at 56, retirement! Canon PowerShot G2! Photoshop 6! Epson 2200 printer! 13x19 paper! Ten grandchildren! Heaven!

Needed some cameraraderie (sorry, couldn't resist) and so I joined Suffolk Camera Club. Soon realized I wanted a club whose focus was more on learning and sharing and less on competition.

Just this past September, “upgraded” again: Dell with XP from iMac with system 9. New toys to learn: PS CS, Wacom tablet, Canon PowerShot Pro 1, Camera Raw.

One of my goals for this year is to make significant progress learning my new equipment and their potentials. Another goal is to be more conscious and deliberate “behind the lens” before the shot. Much of my photography is an immediate response to a subject. I want to articulate in my head what I feel, what I like about the subject. I want to examine alternative possibilities to extend the range of what I do “instinctively.” I'd hate to stay stuck seeing and making my pictures through the same eyes I had five or even two years ago. Personal motto: Excellent photography through fellowship and learning!

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**Quick Tips** continued from page 1

are also inferred lines from the subject to the context. Lines have subtle effects. Horizontal lines are peaceful; diagonals are dynamic or tense; and curves are active and sensuous. You can also connect lines in a path or shape, such as a triangle.

A picture is a playground for the eyes to explore, so provide a path of movement, and some space for the eye to rest.

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