

Hird About The Place

The Scene by Hird Newsletter

Edition #2: July 2004

Dear Friends,

A special thankyou to everyone who has contacted us in response to our previous newsletter. Your praise and criticisms will go a long way towards making each successive newsletter better than the last.

June was extremely busy for both Graeme and I. As many people know, Graeme spent most of the month travelling in Canada (more about that later), while Michelle held the gallery, the kids and the house renovations together. My apologies to anyone who visited only to find the "Back in 10 minutes" sign on the door. A HUGE thankyou goes to Helen, who held the fort on Saturdays, Tracy who spoilt our monkeys, and the Hopkins Clan for their renovation skills and decorating advice. This coming month should run a lot smoother, especially as my parents are visiting during the school holidays to help keep the monkeys under control.

Races

The Kalgoorlie Boulder horse racing season is in full swing, with a meeting every weekend until mid September. Make sure you say 'Hi' and remind Graeme to take off the lens cap!



"Misty Parsons returns to scale"

The photos from each meeting are available for viewing the following week and we are happy to take orders at the races. Or you may give me a call midweek and I can email pics to you. We are sponsoring a race on July 17, the **Scene By**

Hird 1600m Class Two Handicap. Good luck to all entries. We are looking forward to a terrific day at the Races... M.

Travels: Eastern Canada!

No, I can't believe it either! An opportunity arose through my day job to go to Canada for some training and onwards to Timmins (Ontario) for a presentation/assessment of some 3D geology modelling. It actually happened! I went to Montreal for the training and had a small amount of time to make some photos while I was there.

A lot of flying in "cattle class" got me from Kal to Sydney to LA to Chicago to Montreal in only 30 hours. But it's not all glamour – when I got to Montreal, I had to learn how to drive on the wrong side of the road and navigate with the sun in the wrong direction. I've never been so lost in my life

Montreal's "downtown" area was bustling with people, and it seems I hit town just when the Montreal F1 Grand Prix was due to really fire up. People driving shiny red sports cars everywhere, gorgeous girls and some hunky blokes (so they tell me ...) lining the streets; sights, noises and smells so foreign to a Kal bloke that I felt like a real hick. Time to skip town, and I'd only been there 24 hours!

I took myself off for a long drive into the hills to the north of town, looking for some solitude and quiet, with perhaps a photo opportunity or two while I waited for the training to begin on Monday. I got the quiet I was looking for, and the solitude: just me, 20,000 mozzies and 100,000 little black (biting) flies! Don't worry about getting eaten by bears while you are in Canada – those little flying blood-suckers won't leave much for them.

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At this point, I'd love to show you the pictures I made, but at the time of printing, the films are still on their way from the laboratory.

Anyway, after the course finished, I drove to Timmins. Apparently, Timmins is where Shania Twain comes from, but I was ~~lucky~~ skilful enough to avoid the museum they have erected in her honour. If any of you are in mining, and feel Timmins holds some attraction for you, please think very carefully about what Kalgoorlie offers before you leave town for the wild green yonder. I think Kalgoorlie has much more soul (for want of a better word) and is certainly more vibrant. And there are less mozzies here

After fulfilling my duty in Timmins, I drove back to Montreal, stopping for a day near Algonquin Park. This park represents many of the things we think of when someone says "Canada". There are hundreds of lakes, moose and beavers: it is a very beautiful place. I'd love to spend a long time there with a canoe, a fishing rod and some camping equipment, but the variety of photographic subjects is somewhat limited to lakes, moose and beavers (but they are very pretty examples of said subjects). Once again, you'll have to wait for the pictures.

While waiting for my flight out of Montreal to London, I spent an enjoyable Sunday afternoon browsing in the art galleries of Old Montreal, gathering ideas on presentation and lighting for our own gallery, and marvelling at the ridiculously high prices of the works being displayed. I'm impressed that one person can ask \$50,000 for a sculpture somewhat smaller than an average television. And he's likely to get it, too!

Little did I know that while I was being impressed with the audacity of these artists, my rental car (containing my suitcase, plane tickets, cameras etc.) was being towed away from the car park where I left it. You see, in Montreal, many of the signs are in French, including the ones that say "If you park your car here on a Sunday afternoon without paying for a ticket, we'll tow it away at your expense." How do you say "**PANIC!**" in French? C\$69 plus a taxi fare

later, I'm on my way out of that filthy, stinkin' hole the Canadians call Montreal (Actually, Montreal was very pleasant until that little mishap. I hope to go back there one day. I might brush up on my French parking signs first though.) **G**

The Scene by Hird Quiz Night!

You may have heard that Graeme knows everything in the world (at least that's what our kids think), and that we both love going to quiz nights. Well, now we are going to run our own quiz night to raise money for St. Johns Ambulance Kalgoorlie Sub-Centre. We've booked the Blue Spec room at the Kalgoorlie Boulder Race Club for the night of the 13th of August, so make sure you keep the night free.



"1st Prize in the raffle"

All the usual rules apply: tables of six, \$10 per person, fully licensed premises, BYO nibbles, arrive at 7 for a 7.30 start. There will be prizes and auctions (including some of our prints) up for grabs. You can get tickets from us from the middle of July by phoning 90 911 611. The ambulance service will also have tickets for sale, and watch out for the raffle tickets too!

No Easy Answer!

"Should I buy a digital [compact] camera?"

I probably hear that question twice a week. There's good reason to ask: digital cameras are marketed as the new "must have" gadget that no family should be without. Just about everywhere cameras are advertised, these digital wonders steal the show – it's getting hard to find film cameras in consumer oriented ads!

But do you really need a new camera? Is there something wrong with the one you currently

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own? More importantly, does “going digital” offer any benefits for you?

What’s so good about digital compact cameras anyway? Well, they’re certainly cheap to run and they never run out of, um, film. They’re convenient to carry and easy to use. You get instant confirmation that your shot worked (or didn’t ...) and you can make short video clips with many of them. You can’t do that on a film camera!

The other question I hear twice a week in “So why don’t you own a digital camera Graeme?” The simple answer is “I don’t need one.”

There are good reasons for me to keep using film. I already own some pretty good film cameras, all of which function as their makers intended. Film images are an all-in-one high capacity capture/storage media with many megabytes of information and 150 years of technology in each piece.

So you need to ask yourself again “Why do I want a digital camera?”. Examine your motivation behind the desire for such a camera. Are you simply responding to effective marketing or does digital capture hold a **real** advantage over film for you?

Digital cameras are most suitable for people who *must* present their photos on a computer screen or in written reports. People who already own (and know how to use) a computer and printer but don’t own a camera are the perfect buyers for digital cameras. Digital compact cameras produce “fast food photos”, intended to be cheap and consumed immediately.

Film cameras are most suitable for people who want their photos to last several decades and don’t mind waiting some time to see the final results. If you don’t already own a computer and printer, or don’t know how to use them effectively, don’t even think about getting a digital camera. Film cameras produce “Mum’s home-cooked food photos”, taking more time to prepare and meant to last considerably longer than a burger, and ultimately more satisfying.

With film being a mature technology, everyone knows how to use and keep it. In 30-50 years, you’ll still be able to produce a print from the films you expose today. Compare that with digital files (of any kind) – can you still print out your curriculum vitae that you stored on disk ten years ago? I can’t read any of the 5¼” disks that I’ve still got in my shed, and they’re only 9 years old – that data is effectively lost. I guess it’s lucky none of my precious family photos are on them. Do you think there might be some way of reading your storage CDs in 40 years?



“from a time before digital”

Some people who use digital cameras are now missing the very thing they found inconvenient about film – the fact that somebody else makes the prints about an hour after they’ve dropped the film off. While printers and cameras are getting better at talking to each other, many people are still disappointed with the quality of the prints and the time it takes to make them. To rub salt into the wound, inkjet prints are more expensive than film prints from the chemist when paper, ink and the cost of the printer are taken into account!

If you’re like me and want the best of both worlds, I recommend a film scanner. For about the same price as a decent digital compact camera, you can turn all your old photos, and your new ones, into digital files. Film is a mature technology, and by scanning your film, you can use your computer to share your images with friends and family. In 40 years, you (or your kids) will still be able to scan those negatives and make new prints to replace the faded and tattered inkjet prints you made last week.

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So what's the answer for you?

- If you don't own a computer or don't know how to use it, stay with film.
- If you are taking pictures to keep for decades (eg family photos), stay with film.
- If you already own a good film camera and would like to print your own photos, get a film scanner.
- If you need to be able to quickly capture and share your images and you already own a computer, get a digital camera.
- If you just want some fun with photography and don't really care for printing hard copies, digital cameras are ideal for you.
- If you don't fit any of these profiles, buy a film scanner and a cheap digital compact camera, using each for their best purpose.

So as you can see, there is no straight-forward answer to the question "Should I get a digital camera?" Film, while no longer cool, is still a great option. It has an air of permanence, everybody can use it and it is familiar and comfortable. Digital compact cameras are cool, fast and fun, but don't get sucked in by the hype – they are not an easy answer. G .

Photo of the Month: Thunderstruck!



"Thunderstruck"

This month we are offering Thunderstruck as our Photo of the Month. Many of you have seen it in person, and it is certainly one of our most popular prints. It's normally selling for \$400, but with your subscription to the PoM, you can get it in July for \$360 (or \$320 if you subscribe to the Connoisseurs Collection). At this stage, everyone reading this newsletter is a subscriber to Photo of the Month – it's free for the first

three months! If you've admired this image for a while, now's a great opportunity to get it: it's never going to be cheaper than this.

Photography Tip.

Use a tripod where-ever possible. Tripods help you slow down the process of composition and allow more freedom to choose long exposure times for creative effect.

By mounting your camera on a tripod, you make the capturing of a scene a deliberate and considered action. It forces you to think about where the tripod should be placed to achieve the composition you had in mind. It's more "trouble" to take the picture, so you tend to be more selective about the scene you are about to capture, which in turn forces you to think about the composition critically before you set the camera up.

A tripod holds the camera steady over extended periods, so long exposure times can be used. This lets you choose a smaller aperture for the lens than if you were holding the camera, and a small aperture gives a greater "depth of field" (a fancy way of saying more of the scene is in focus, from near to far).

A long exposure time also lets you blur the parts of the scene that are moving, such as water or foliage, if that's what you desire. That's a creative option you don't have when the camera is hand-held, because the whole scene is blurred if the camera moves during exposure.

The best films tend to be "slow" (ie their ISO is less than 100) so a tripod is mandatory in low light conditions. For me, exposure times of more than 3 seconds are normal. I always use a tripod for my landscape work, and I recommend doing so to anyone who will listen. G.

That's it for July's newsletter. We've had fun writing it, and hope you had fun reading it. Next month, there should be a few pics from Canada, a story on large format cameras (my favourites), more photo tips and lots of other things we haven't made up yet.

Cheers,
Graeme and Michelle Hird.

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