

Hird About The Place

The Scene by Hird Newsletter.

Edition #12: May 2005

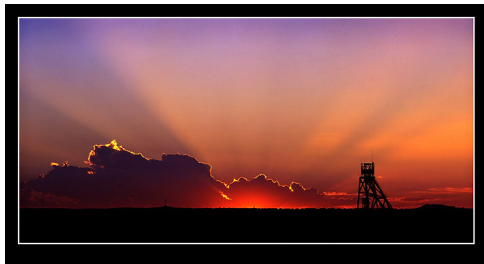
Dear Friends,

It seems like only yesterday we were sending out April's newsletter – hang on – it was! A series of events delayed the mailing of the last newsletter, but we are back on track now and hopefully we'll stay that way!

Now, this won't hurt a bit:

Photo Tip

Give up in despair, throw away your camera, come in and buy a print from Scene by Hird.



"Skies of Gold"

Only joking!!!! Cameras are great fun and everybody can use them. That's why everybody has one (and a few of us have way too many) – photography is the art of the people.

My tip this month is to ~~buy one of my prints~~² be very careful when cleaning the lens of your camera. The front surface of your lens has a coating applied to it to reduce glare and improve the contrast of the image on your film or sensor. It can easily be scratched when you use your shirt or handkerchief to remove those incidental marks like dust, fingerprints and dog slobber.

Microfibre lens cleaning cloths can be picked up very cheaply from the local pharmacy. Do not use any cleaning products to wet your lens: the old "heavy breathing" technique will provide enough impetus to shift most marks. Gently wipe the surface of the lens after ensuring there are no

grains of sand or dirt sitting on the lens. DO NOT rub the lens – only wipe it.

Finally, if you are able to attach a lens filter to your lens, purchase something called a "UV Filter". It's a flat piece of glass which screws onto the lens and provides protection from dust, fingers and dogs. They have also saved more than one lens during a fall from chest height. Scratching or breaking a \$20 piece of glass hurts less than doing the same to a \$300 lens. You should remove the filter for your very best photographs, but leave it attached most of the time.

Watch your Inbox

Did you like the offer I sent out? You didn't see it? That's probably because we don't have your current email address. The good news is it's easy to rectify – simply send me an email stating your case in two words or less ("Please" can be one of them ...) and we'll update the mailing list for you. My email address is graeme@scenebyhird.com

While I do prefer to send out **real** letters, sometimes an email is the best way to show you my work, especially when I have a few photos from a road trip I'd love to show you!

If you are interested in special offers or seeing my latest work, email is the best way to receive the information.

Our Second Limited Edition Print

The first time we released a limited edition print it sold out in 48 hours. We didn't even get the chance to announce it in the newsletter, so the majority of you never knew about it.

This time I'm announcing it to our favourite customer first – you! After all, it was you who supported us during our first 18 months of business. I would like to show my appreciation by

* only joking, I think

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giving you the first opportunity to own this exclusive Collector's Print from Scene by Hird.



"Inside Inside Australia"
(Limited Edition of 10 prints only)

With colours reminiscent of the Aboriginal Flag and a parched foreground defining the inner core of a local Menzies identity, the image resonates with the Goldfields in so many ways. *"Inside Inside Australia"* is 63x63cm (25x25") plus frame width. Of course, it is printed on our usual Kodak Endura Metallic paper, ensuring it will look fantastic for many decades to come.

We are only ever going to offer ten of these pieces as "Gallery Quality" prints[†]. Once we sell print number 10/10 the chance to own it will have evaporated like water from a salt lake (unless one of the 10 owners wants to sell their print - at a profit, of course!) This is one purchase you can't afford to put off until you leave Kalgoorlie - it probably won't be available.

The first nine prints are \$1000 (framed) and print number ten will be on sale for \$2000. If that price makes you sit up and pay attention, type the following link into your web browser and see what Ken Duncan is charging for his latest photo:
<http://kenduncan.com/gallery.php?fn=rtprod&id=2320>

Ken's limited edition prints regularly sell for \$150,000 after the edition sells out. I believe from the bottom of my heart that one day my

[†] There are also 475 tiny prints like the one contained in this envelope and ten small prints (27x27cm) in the Connoisseur's Collection. There will be no others printed - ever!

prints will too, since my life's ambition is to become known as Australia's finest landscape photographer. One day, you're going to kick yourself that you missed out on a Graeme Hird Limited Edition Print when they were priced at only \$2000

Questions and Answers.

Last month I suggested that you may like to ask questions of me to both help guide me for the content of this newsletter and to find out more about photography or Scene by Hird.

Graeme (no relation) from Essendon asked me this:

"Maybe you could elucidate on the digital SLRs please . We have an ordinary digital Sony 3.1 as well as a film SLR. I don't like the viewfinder on the digital as it often doesn't represent the actual picture and the view screen often can't be seen because of incident light. So I think I would like a dSLR next time.

I also don't like the delay between pressing the button and taking the pic. Finally I miss the bulb setting for taking night pics. We have some film pics of Inside Australia taken by moon light but this is not possible with the digital.

Do you have any comments on these points please and would you be prepared to recommend a digital that would fit these requirements. Maybe I have just gone into the \$10,000 bracket."

Other people have raised similar questions over the last year, so I'll answer to the best of my abilities.

Digital single lens reflex (dSLR) cameras behave very much like their film based cousins. They have the same exposure controls as SLR cameras (shutter speed and aperture), with the added control of being able to select the sensor's ISO (that's akin to being able to change film speed between every shot).

As with the film based SLRs, the lens which takes the picture is the one through which the photographer is composing. So as far as composition goes, what you see is what you get. The viewfinder is bright and contains information about the exposure and the camera's controls. Where the dSLRs lose out to SLRs is the size of the image in the view finder: for some reason, camera makers think a smaller area of view is acceptable in dSLRs, and they have simply masked

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off the view to match the view seen on the sensor[‡]. It should be a simple task for a camera maker to place a lens which enlarges the viewfinder image within the viewfinder, but they persist with postage-stamp vision – don't ask me why, but they all do it!

The latest dSLR cameras have very little lag time between depressing the shutter and capturing the image (and some are faster than SLRs in this respect). You push the button and instantaneously have the shot on the card (if instantaneously is 20 milliseconds).

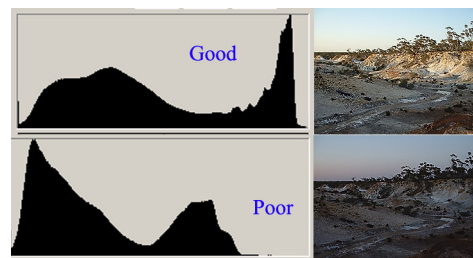
Compare that with digital compact cameras, some of which have a delay of around a second between pushing the button and the capture. When your dog is looking in just the right direction, you're fooled into pushing the button. You look at the LCD screen, and "Oops! Rover – that's not a polite thing to do in public! Let's delete and try again, shall we?"

And speaking of LCD screens: one of the biggest selling points for digital cameras is the viewing screen which allows you to re-shoot Rover again and again. Compact digital cameras tend to be marketed at the "consumer" market, in which the price of the camera is important. To keep their costs down, manufacturers use the cheapest components possible, and LCDs are one of the places they cut corners. Cheap LCDs aren't very bright, a property exacerbated when they get warmed by sunlight. So, in the harsh Aussie sun, you find yourself trying to see a dim picture made dimmer by the heat! A tip here is to use the optical viewfinder to compose the shot – at least that way you'll have some idea of where to point the camera.

Some dSLRs have a small shade which pops out to view the LCD. It protects the screen from heat and shades it from extraneous light when you view it. Most dSLRs have high quality, backlit LCDs which make viewing them in sunlight easier. They are usually bigger screens than those found on the compact cameras.

[‡] Nikon has even gone beyond that, and only show 95% of what is recorded on the sensor! Madness!

The biggest attraction to dSLRs for me is the histogram option in the image review screen. It is a feature which is unique to digital cameras and is an extremely powerful exposure checking system.



Histograms

When used correctly, it ensures the photographer never has a wrong exposure again (at least, not without knowing it at the time.) The good histogram above shows a good spread of pixels throughout the available range of tones (bottom axis) for the camera. That means the shot was perfectly exposed.

The poor histogram shows a bunching of the pixels towards the darker end (the left) of the graph and about 25% of the available tones at the right (bright end) are empty. It shows the shot was very much under-exposed.

Although I love to shoot with film cameras, this feature of dSLRs is extremely tempting (but don't tell Michelle, okay?). With one of these cameras, I would never go home with a bad exposure again.

So what can you expect to pay for one of these cameras? Nikon has just released their entry level D50 onto the US market, and it will sell for US\$850 with a lens – expect to pay AUD\$1400. Canon's entry level 300D costs around AUD\$2000. More advanced cameras from Canon cost around AUD\$4000, and their top of the range, 16.7MP dSLR costs only AUD\$11000 plus lenses (that's the one I want).

Just like my choices at the supermarket checkout queues, horse races and stock market investments, I've once again backed the wrong horse by owning some expensive Nikon lenses for my SLR camera. In the words of the great man: "DOH!" Canon are the market leaders in dSLRs and they seem to be several steps ahead of their competitors on each new release – I'd would recommend any of the Canon dSLRs if you're in the market.

Wish List Layby

For those of you who have a BIG event coming up – perhaps a wedding, anniversary or even a birthday milestone, we have opened the Scene by Hird Wish List Layby facility.

I works like this:

1. You come in and select a photograph which you especially love and open a layby account for it.
2. You let your friends know that you have opened a Wish List Layby with us. They each come in and pay off some the account.
3. They may sign the card we supply which will later be mounted on the rear of the frame.
4. We gift wrap and deliver your framed print.
5. You get a warm glowing feeling knowing that your friends love you enough to buy you a print from Scene by Hird.

The Scene by Hird Wish List Layby will make gift shopping easier for your friends and you will get the present you want!

Print Raffle for St John

The Scene by Hird Quiz Night is nearly upon us and the tickets are selling quickly. If you can find 5 friends for a fun night out on Friday 13th of May, drop us a line and pick up some tickets. They're \$10 per person and the tables are for 6 people. Quiz nights are a lot of fun and you'll be supporting a very worthy cause – your own community!

We are also drawing the raffle prize of our "Night Stalker" lightning photo on the night. Come in to grab a \$2.00 ticket – it is a very cheap way to own this \$470 photograph.

Photo of the Month news

The free twelve-month subscription to the Photo of the Month will be ending soon for some of you. I'll be sending out a letter to those people effected by the passage of time, and I hope you'll sign on for an extension of the subscription. Newsletter delivery won't be effected.

Some Words Of Wisdom.

Andrew and Fiona are very lucky people – they have moved to Yackandandah in Victoria. I begged them to take me with them, but it was of no use: their truck was packed and there was no room for my cameras.

However, when they left they wrote us a wonderful letter, some of which I've included here:

Dear Graeme & Michelle,

As a lot of people do, we have left Kalgoorlie for a change of scene. We have been enjoying receiving the monthly newsletter and photo and would love to continue receiving them.

The newsletter and Photo each month are a wonderful way to still see your work as we can't come into the Gallery anymore. We have 4 of your beautiful pictures now and it is just wonderful to look at them and remember the great times we had in our 10 years in Kalgoorlie.

Your work is simply stunning! And we are lucky enough to have some of your remarkable pictures on our walls and I am sure we will acquire more in the future.

Scene by Hird should be seen by all!! (Feel free to quote, no bribery necessary!!)

*Regards,
Fiona & Andrew James*

"Scene by Hird should be seen by all!!" Ooh, that's good – that's very good indeed! I wish I had thought of it, but I'm not a proud man – and plagiarism is not such a dirty word (even if it is hard to spell). I'm happy to use the words of wisdom from Fiona and Andrew in my next major advertising campaign. ☺

Thanks Fiona and Andrew.

Now that wasn't so bad, was it? Given the choice between having your teeth pulled and reading "Hird About The Place", I'm confident 9 out of 10 sane people would take the newsletter most of the time (the other one is a dentist, so we can't show you his face).

I hope you enjoyed the newsletter this month, and I'll speak to you in June.

Graeme Hird

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