

Hird About The Place

The Scene by Hird Newsletter.

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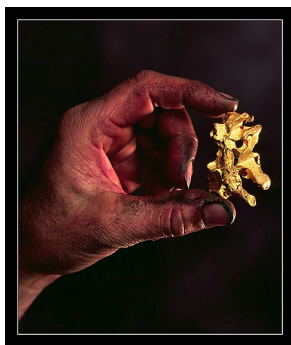
Dear Friends,

While the kids and I were in Perth last month we spent a huge day at the Royal Show. Its been years since I attended a Royal Show (the last one was in Melbourne) and trying to describe it to the kids was difficult ("It's a bit like the Kalgoorlie Fair, only bigger!").

We ate fairy floss and blew bubbles while watching cattle judging, fireworks and sheepdogs. We saw chooks with far too many feathers, had a ride through the Haunted House and stood in a queue for ages to get our favourite showbags (I almost had a hernia getting it all back to the car). I'm sure the 84,000 other people who attended that day had as much fun as we did! M.

Kalgoorlie Boulder Art Prize

I've entered three photos in the art prize this year. If you get the chance to visit the exhibition, keep an eye out for them. However, if you want to buy one, I recommend waiting until they are hanging in our gallery – I've had to boost the price to make up for the 25% commission charged by the Art Prize organisers.



"A Good Day's Work."

One of my entries in the Art Show

Congratulations to Tracey Nearmy, the Kalgoorlie Miner's senior photographer. She's won the photography award two years in a row with some very distinctive work. It's fantastic to see artistic work from our newspaper's photographers – most

other press photographers don't feel the inclination to shoot creatively after spending all week with a camera, snapping stories about business awards and school fetes. Well done Tracey – your shots deserved the accolades.

Also doing well was 11 year old Patrick Spivey, who took out the Best Young Artist award for artists under 18 with a terrific photo. Well done Patrick. G.

Our Web Site Updated – Finally!

Yep, I've finally pulled my finger out and done something about updating the web site. It now accurately reflects the images that are hanging on the walls in the Gallery, and clearly shows the availability of every print in our collection. You can now purchase on-line more easily, since I've included the prices of each picture and a "purchase" button. G.

Photography Tip: Use Slide Film

If you feel your pictures are lacking that little extra "oomph" that you see in the magazines (and in my gallery) try shooting on slide film.

Slide film has been the choice of professional photographers for over 40 years. It has higher contrast than print film, meaning the dark parts on a well exposed slide will be REALLY dark. Dark areas "anchor" the picture, making the brighter colours seem that much stronger.

Some slide films, such as my favourite - Fuji Velvia, have enhanced colour saturation. In the right conditions, Velvia makes the colours of a scene jump to life, and it's the secret key to those rich colours you'll see in my work.

While it's true that slide film is less forgiving of errors in exposure, when you get it right, *ooh la la!* It's truly a thing of beauty!

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These days, getting a decent print from a slide should be no more difficult than from a negative. All print labs who do enlargements will scan the film, be it negative or slide, and print from a digital file. The scanner shouldn't really care too much which type of film it is.

Storing slide film takes up less space than prints too, so you can fire away and not need to worry about filling up that spare room with unwanted prints.

To sum up, if you want results like the pros, use the same film they do. G.

How I print my photos:

I'm often asked about the physical processes I use to make the prints you've seen in the gallery.



"Myle Beach"

The first step for me is to use a large format camera to capture the scene. A large format camera uses film that is at least 5x4 inches in dimension. That means I have a **lot** of molecules to record the image, and hence to print from later. Such big film allows me to make very big prints without any visible grain.

The next step is to turn the image into a digital file by scanning the film. I have my own scanner which will scan the film at a rate of 2400 dpi (dpi = dots per inch, meaning it records the red, green and blue values of a segment of film measuring 1/2400 of an inch, and does it over the whole area of the film). Each "1/2400th of an inch" square then becomes a pixel in the image with its **RGB** values determining the colour of the pixel.

I then use a photo editing program to clean up the scan (the file always needs to be improved to allow for the physical act of scanning, which never gets

things perfect.) After restoring the image to how it looked on the film, I will dodge, burn, adjust contrast and "sharpen" the image, save it and resize the file to my final print size. A final sharpening step to restore edge sharpness after resizing is mandatory.

I then save the file as a final archival file, and save it again in a compressed format to send over the internet. I send the finished file to a lab in Sydney who is (I believe) the best print laboratory in the world. They have excellent "colour management" (meaning my print is the exact replica of my screen image) and use the best possible papers to print on. They're not the cheapest lab, but I want quality so I'm prepared to pay the premium.

The lab prints on real photographic paper (i.e. it's light sensitive) using lasers. The file I send them drives the intensity of the light and hence the exposure of the paper. It's just like the old "optical" enlargers printing on paper, but now it's laser light that exposes the paper.

One of the most important steps for me is the paper I'm using: Kodak Endura Metallic. Kodak recently sent out a document which certifies the paper will resist fading for 200 years if kept in optimal conditions (i.e. in the dark where nobody can see your prints good one Kodak!). More importantly though, they say Endura prints will resist fading for 100 years in normal household viewing conditions.

Endura Metallic has a layer of aluminium behind the emulsion (the "film" with the picture in it). This layer gives my images a sheen that can't be achieved through normal bubble-jet printing methods, making the colours seem more saturated – perfect for the colours of Australia. (By the way, a friend of mine in the USA prints on the same paper using an enlarger – his prints look good too.)

Why print digitally?

1. I can't print colour pictures in a darkroom at all. It's not a skill I've ever picked up. Black and white: no problems. Colour? Forget it!
2. The computer allows me to do the things I would do in a darkroom if I were skilled enough (dodging, burning, cropping,

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contrast control, colour correction etc.), so my prints are all my own work, rather than having a professional printer do all it all for me.

3. My prints are 100% perfect each and every time – no spots to worry about, no power variations affecting the darkness of the print, no exhausted chemicals to allow for. (Need I go on? There are a thousand variables, and I'm too lazy to list them all, let alone fix them in a real darkroom!)
4. **Quality!** There is a difference between optical enlargements and digital versions of the same image on the same paper: digital ones look better!



"Yellow Footed Rock Wallaby"

So with the quality being better and the prints being my own creations, I print digitally on Endura Metallic paper by choice. G.

Special Offer!

This month, as a special offer only available to subscribers of the Photo of the Month, we are offering 10% off the price of *any* print put on lay-by before 21/11/04 with a 30% deposit and to be picked up after 15/12/04. Bring your sample print into the shop to prove you're a subscriber – it's your "passport to save" this year. (Online lay-bys will be accepted too – you're on our mailing list, so we'll know it's you.)

Placing a print on lay-by allows us to plan our Christmas framing more effectively and it ensures our best customers (that's you) will not miss out on your Christmas gifts.

Feel free to lend your "passport" to a friend who would also like to lay-by a picture. We won't be *too* ruthless with our ID checks.

Photo of the Month: Sizzle!

We think you'll really like this month's photo. I made it late last year but I have not had it printed until now, just in time for the new storm season. The name of the photo was inspired by the sound of the main bolt. If you don't receive the Photo of the Month in the mail, please feel free to look on the web site – it's on the front page of www.scenebyhird.com.

Here's an interesting gift idea: buy someone a 12 month subscription to the Photo of the Month. It costs just \$29.50 a year and each month, your present arrives in the mail, ready to place in a favourite part of the house or office. And the recipient can get 10% off the full size print if they would like to buy it while it is being featured at the gallery. We've already had a few people buy subscriptions for their friends and relatives – we think it's a great gift.

Free Screen Saver

I've placed a screen saver of Kalgoorlie on the web site. You can find it in the new "Downloads" section of the site – I'm happy for anybody to download it and send it to their friends. It's a 1MB zip file and the easy installation instructions are contained within the file. G.

WIN!!!

A special promotion this month: we're running a competition in which the prize is the framed **Sizzle!** print, worth \$300. Simply come into the gallery, fill in a coupon and place it in the box (coupons can only be obtained at the gallery or in the Kalgoorlie Miner – apologies to our interstate and overseas friends). Entry is **free**. We will draw the prize on 1/12/04 and inform the winner by mail and on the web site.

We hope to see you over the next few weeks, when you're searching for a gift for a close friend or relative. You never know – our latest and greatest might be just the thing you're looking for ...

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