

Digital or Film?

For many, digital photography is a breath of fresh air, but be wary - believing our landscape images will be superior could be a serious blunder.

Having lost count of the number of people who have asked me: "have you gone digital?" I am always left wondering why it's such a much-asked question. The camera is only a tool in which a photographer creates an image. His personal ability to create a unique image remains the same.

For many forms of photography, digital has long held obvious advantages, but for landscapes the resolution necessary to make larger prints just wasn't available. But things have changed and digital cameras are fast becoming the tools that most pros use.

Modern digital cameras are perfectly capable of matching the 35 mm film - the format which most landscape photographers begin with. But can they really match the large format film cameras? This is probably the greatest question that all photographers face.

Instant LCD feedback is digital's greatest gift and this enables the photographer to check exposure and composition of their image in the blink of an eye. While this is a big advantage, the hours spent in front of the computer processing the raw images have to be a hindrance. A landscape photographer's time is best spent behind a camera not in front of a computer.

The pros and cons of digital photography will remain an issue for some time. At the end of the day a digital camera won't make a photographer's images better. The same values we apply in our photography should remain regardless of which camera we use.

Good photography remains as elusive and as enticing as it ever was; going digital doesn't change this or make getting good images any easier. It brings technical advantages, and plenty of them, but the majority of photographic techniques never change. Good landscape images come from the photographer's personal ability, not the ability of a camera. The camera helps, but the creative eye remains the same.

As a landscape photographer I am still hesitant to embrace digital photography and all the qualities that digital has brought to other professionals in different photography fields.

There are a few simple reasons that I still use a film camera:

The authenticity of my images could be questioned if I used a digital camera. It is often assumed that great digital images have been manipulated.

Too much time is spent in front of a computer.

Slide film produces stronger colors than a digital camera.

There are many advantages for changing to digital but I'm going to stick with film; for the time-being that is. With time film cameras will be a thing of the past and all our images will be exchanged for the pixels. But, be wary - believing our work will be superior would be falling into a great trap. For me size matters, the larger I can print an image the better.

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