

Monte Carlo or Bust!



With all the fast, expensive cars, girls in pink miniskirts with matching heels and great food a good time was had by all on our trip to Nice and Monte Carlo for my son's "Stag do".

Nice is a dream venue for photographers, I just couldn't get enough time to venture out and explore to suburbs. Monte Carlo was undergoing preparations for the F1 Grand Prix on the 26th May and the Top Marques show was attracting hundreds of super and hyper cars to the circuit with a vast attendance of 400 or so police officers trying to control those who wanted to drive fast around the circuit, perform "doughnuts" or just be a nuisance!



One of the 918 production units of this hybrid super car £600,000

In terms of my own photographic experience I found that I was far more comfortable using the iPhone 8 Plus especially when out early morning and very few people around. The Olympus OMD E-M1 mk2 and Panasonic 14-140mm lens just seemed to scream “steal me”.

There were very few situations where the extra reach of the Panasonic lens made it the obvious choice. When you factor in the extra weight, airport security checks and general inconvenience I’m beginning to realise why so many people are switching to smartphones for their general photography.

I certainly have nothing to complain about with the image quality of the images that I brought back and in some cases I prefer the results over the Olympus.



Ok the saturation may be a little bit much for some people however it could be reduced in post if needed. The fact that HEIC image format of the iPhone 8 Plus also supports 16-bit deep colour images which means the images have less banding in areas of almost identical tones – such as skies etc.

This image format also achieves a 50% greater compression with no loss of quality so that means that with the same storage you can save twice as many images or video clips.

On a later edition Mac running High Sierra the file can be opened and edited as a JPEG file.

Similarly, Windows PC's need a program called CopyTrans if you haven't updated your copy of Windows 10 which now has viewing support for HEIF files (*Build 17123*).

I did a comparison video between the Olympus OMD E-M1 mk2 and the iPhone 8 plus which shows just how good the images and video are from the iPhone [comparison video on YouTube](#).

The way to distinguish the iPhone clips is by the slightly warmer image tone and the increased depth of field.

The OMD was capturing 4K 30p whilst the iPhone was capturing in 1080p (had it set for 4K but after an update it reset to 1080p and I hadn't noticed ☺).

Upgrade to iPhone X



Having used the iPhone 8Plus on the Nice-Monte Carlo Trip and been very impressed with the images and video from it the only concern I had was about shooting video with the x2 lens as this didn't have the same optical image stabilisation as the x1 lens.

This meant any video shot using the x2 lens would have to be done from a tripod or other device to prevent that horrible movement that results from just hand holding the phone.

Knowing that the latest version of the iPhone, the X model, had stabilisation applied to both lenses I decided that this was going to be a next must have purchase.

I researched, and tried out, the Huawei P20 Pro smartphone as it is being advertised heavily now as a "game changing" camera.

Unfortunately it doesn't have stabilisation of the lenses in the 4K video mode only 1080p. It also doesn't have any option to add an external microphone, so that was the end of that!

OK the phone itself has a lot of features that I will never use. I hardly make any phone calls, texts or messages and my data package is about as low as I can get – all my WWW surfing etc., is done over Wi-Fi. Eager to test the x2 camera I went out and shot some video and images with the phone and yes the stabilisation of the x2 lens is sufficient for hand held video. [My Test Video is here on YouTube](#) I was very excited and it kick started my interest in going out there and making tutorials on smartphone stills and video capture.

From observations on the trip just about everyone taking pictures were doing so with their camera phones and yes they were shooting video in the portrait mode!

They must only replay these clips back on the device and never can see them full size on a TV.

So just like my quest with the FZ200 all those years ago when I wanted to help users get better image quality from that camera and then rolled this onto the FZ300/330 I think I'm going to try to run a couple of experimental video tutorials on capturing stills and video with smartphones.

There are lots of hints and tips that can be used with smartphones, even the ones that don't have stabilised lenses, so I'm quite excited to write the tutorials for the series.

I'm so convinced that the later generation smartphone is so capable that I will be shooting my son's wedding on the 5th May with it.

When I did my daughter's wedding with my Canon 5D mk3 I found it quite awkward taking the pictures and then being lined up by the "paid photographer" for the shots where I needed to be in.

With the iPhone, I will be able to just slip it into my pocket!

I will be taking along an external mic to capture the audio and possibly a small LED light and my DJI Osmo2 stabiliser so I can get some very smooth panning shots as they whisk around the dance floor.

Very much "out of my comfort zone" but if you never challenge yourself you will never learn anything new. I hope to bring you a few images from the wedding in the next newsletter.

Honestly with the quality from the iPhone I can see this very quickly being my go to camera for general photography and that some of my existing cameras are likely to be mothballed and reserved for those shots where either longer focal length shots are required, shallower depth of field or where the light levels are so low that the image noise would be excessive from the iPhone.

I'm quite shocked myself that I've become addicted to the convenience and image quality of the smartphone and can now appreciate why the likes of Nikon and Canon are struggling to get consumers attracted to their compact cameras.

Canon have only just offered 4K video in a consumer camera but it is not the best implementation and very low bit rate compared to even the Panasonic travel zooms.

It remains to be seen what equipment will find its way into my camera bag for my upcoming trip back to the Isle of Arran.

Review of the Ulanzi Bluetooth Remote Control

Getting a smooth shutter release on a smartphone is key to getting sharp images.

If you try to use the on-screen button there is a high probability that the phone will move during the exposure and may result in an image which is not optimally sharp.

With many phones, you can use the headset call button (Android) or the volume buttons (IOS) to trigger the shutter.

You can also get Bluetooth remotes which essentially act as a one button keyboard and react with the app to release the shutter button. Some of these have dedicated apps whilst others work as the one button keyboard.

I came across the Ulanzi Bluetooth remote control which is a one button keyboard type and reacts with the apps to release the shutter to either take still images or start and stop video recording. It has the addition of a clip which you can attach it to your selfie stick or other hand held rig.

Pairing is very straightforward, the only negative about this device is the brightness of the indicator LED to indicating when pairing or turning the unit on/off it is very bright and difficult to see in sunshine.

The unit itself works very well and makes the starting and stopping of video recording very easy.



"OTG" for IOS Smartphones

Android smartphone users have had the benefit of the "OTG" (on the go) facility for a long time now. With Apple's IOS this has been a long time coming because of the way in which Apple only allows developers access to only certain features of their IOS system.

If you shoot a lot of images or 4K video clips, then internal phone memory soon becomes full.

The usual way to offload the images is to upload to iCloud storage solutions however, this is very slow and depends upon your internet/Wi-Fi/cellular upload speed.

You can of course use your USB to lightning cable and use iTunes to copy the files or on the Mac use the image capture app to import into a specific folder.

The "native" apps only allow import from the iPhone camera roll so any images/videos that have been captured by other apps such as Filmic pro for video or 645Pro for stills may not be imported without the use of third party apps such as "Anytrans". I've also reviewed wireless transfer devices in the past but again these are quite slow if you have a few videos or hundreds of images to transfer.

There are several products on the market that will now allow you to export images from the iPhone and save them on a “flash drive”.

One that I have just tried is the iDrive device by TekQ (available on Amazon) which is available in various capacities but also as the device with zero storage. This was the best option for me as I have lots of micro SDXC cards which this device uses to store the files on.



Here is the device connected to my iPhone (which is in a protective case – hence the need to use the lightning extension cable as the device won't fit into the case cut-out)

Once you download the free app from the app store and plug in the device to the iPhone the app will launch and you will be presented with ways to view the files on the iPhone or stored on the iDrive sdxc card or you can do selective or bulk transfers to the drive.



In this illustration, you can see that I have selected the option to transfer the whole camera roll over to the iDrive SDXC card.

To transfer the images from the iDrive to a PC/Mac you use the USB 2.0 connector on the iDrive.

Similarly, if you want to transfer images from your PC/Mac to your iPhone you can save them on the iDrive and then use the Camera Roll Restore option or use the individual file transfer feature.

The device works fine however the files are exported as JPEG conversions and MOV video format from the HEIF/HEVC files on the iPhone which is not exactly what I wanted as I wished to use the Photos app on the Mac to edit the original files.

I'm trying to find a way around this problem or this may be another Apple constraint on the developers of apps!

UPDATE: it appears that the exports will always be converted to MOV and JPEG using this method. Only iCloud and image capture will transfer the native file 😞

Panasonic Lumix Bridge Camera Tutorial Part 3: Which Mode to Use..



Continuing with my series for new users to Panasonic Lumix Bridge Cameras I explain that there is no reason to choose scene types or filters to create your images. Shooting in Aperture priority mode with the lowest ISO setting will generally deliver the best possible images in a variety of situations. In this video, I set up and shoot Astley Hall in Chorley.

I explain my rationale of shooting in Aperture priority, the choice of aperture and watching the resulting shutter speed as determined by the metering circuit. [Link to video on YouTube](#)

How to Achieve Steady Hand Held Video Clips on Smartphones Without Stabilisation

The bane of shooting hand held video with smartphones which don't have any form of stabilisation is the shaky/wobbly look.

This is hard for any viewer to tolerate for long.

Now there are some ways to minimise this shakiness by employing a few techniques to restrain the movement of the camera during filming.

In the first of a new video series I explain a couple of ways to achieve steadier video clips with smartphones that do not have any image stabilisation.

Here's a link to the [video on YouTube](#).

It's part of a new series looking at smartphone photography for photographers
And I will be looking at:

Maximizing iPhone storage to accommodate 4K videos and hi-resolution photos

Controlling depth of field with an iPhone

Controlling 'shutter speed' with an iPhone

Comparisons between cameras on iPhone 6s, iPhone 6s Plus, iPhone 7, iPhone 7 Plus, iPhone 8, iPhone 8 Plus, iPhone X

Should I use a tripod with an iPhone?

Accessory wide angle lenses for iPhones

Backing up iPhone photos in the field or while traveling

HDR on the iPhone

Audio for videos on the iPhone

Best ways to share photos
iPhone camera composition tips
Using burst mode on the iPhone
Exposure adjustment on the iPhone
Should you zoom with the iPhone camera?
All about Live Photos

Our Son's Wedding this Saturday

Our Son, Oliver, will be getting married this Saturday to Samantha.
I'm not acting in any official mode for this occasion as they have booked a professional photographer to capture the days proceeding.
I will be taking a couple of my cameras along and I hope to be capturing the ceremony itself with a discretely placed smartphone and shotgun mic and later the evenings proceedings using a gimbal mounted smartphone.
I hope to publish some of the results on my Facebook page and here in the next newsletter.



Singleton Lodge, Singleton in Lancashire – The venue for the wedding (iPhone X image)

Well due to the time pressures this week with the wedding plans etc., I've not been able to spend much time on this newsletter, so my apologies. So until next time.....