

Newsletter for Weekending 28th December 2018

Last Newsletter for 2018

Well this is the last newsletter for 2018 and I would like to thank you all for your continued support and encouragement. It is this which enables me to keep writing the Photo blog and the newsletters. Thank you also to those who also use my affiliate Amazon links – it doesn't cost you more to buy products this way and the small revenue generated goes towards the cost of the web hosting etc. I hope that you have enjoyed, or learned from, some of the newsletter articles. I have enjoyed researching and writing them.

I have produced my usual photographic calendar for family and friends and this is one great way of showcasing your photos. You can use commercially available templates for online printing or find generic templates that you can customise and print yourself.

This year I have also sent a few desktop calendars which are pre-printed and you just attach 4 x 6 inch prints to complete the project.

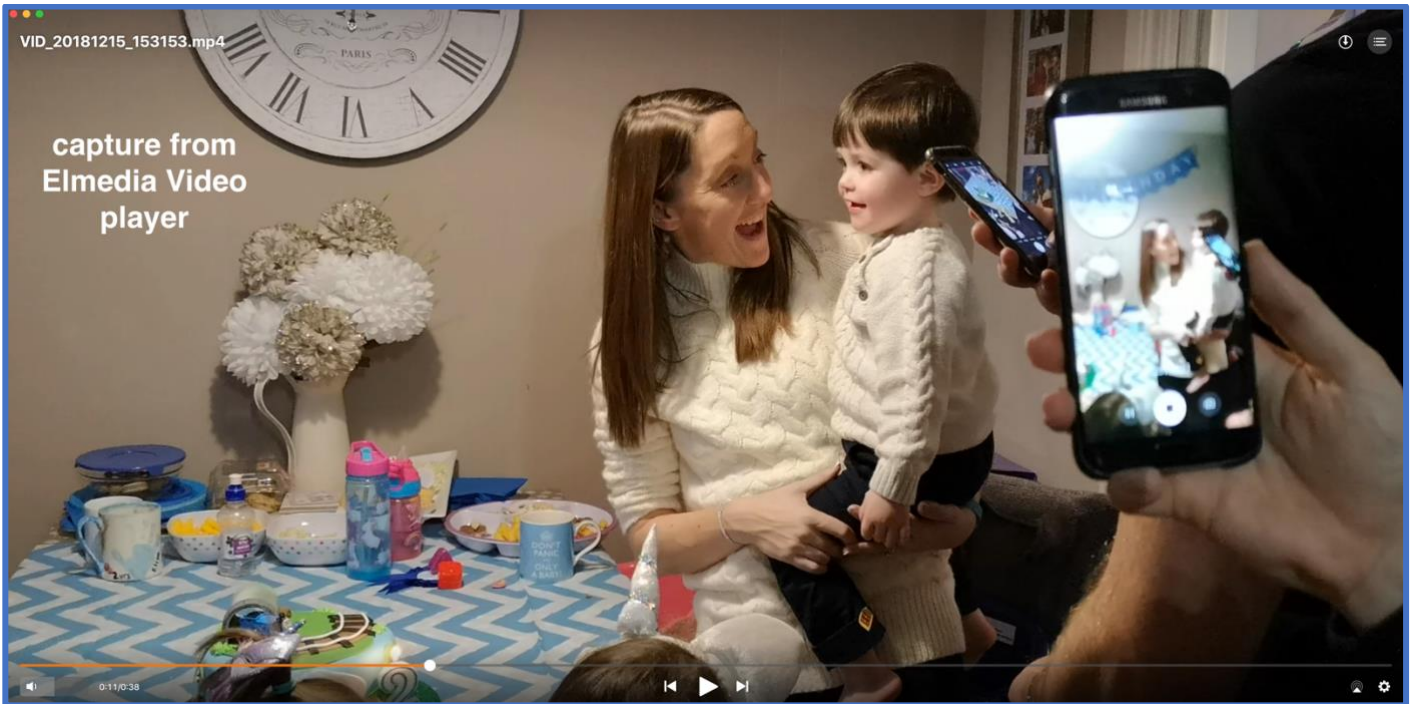
For next year, I have already planned the seasonal pictures that I want to include rather than just 12 of my selected images. This year they were all from the beautiful island of Arran in Scotland.



January 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Huawei P20 Pro Camera Update



screen shot from 1080p video file

After my initial disappointment with the DNG RAW files (having severe vignette and colour shading issues that I had to create a set of Photoshop actions to correct them) I have been using the camera a little more for shooting video.

The 1080p is fully stabilised (electronically – not optically like the iPhone cameras) whereas the 4K does not have any at all.

Quality wise it isn't all that bad and I have managed to extract still images (via screen grabs) from Quicktime player.

I did have an issue as I chose to shoot in the HEVC format to save memory usage however I could not open the video in any of the mac OS apps such as Quicktime and iMovie.

I had to use a third-party app to convert HEVC to MP4 (I used a trial version of Elmedia video player as I did not want to purchase the app as I'm sure the mac Mojave OS should support HEVC natively (unless the Huawei implementation is non-standard!

I've also been trying the camera with my Osmo Mobile 2 gimbal and like with the Apple iPhone the gimbal is badly designed in as much that it does not accommodate using an external mic as the central port is directly in front of the gimbal motor!!

It does mean that to use an external mic you must have the phone extended into the mount so that the cable from the external mic can be fitted. Then you need to add extra balance weights to keep the gimbal horizontal. The native camera app does not support audio except from the internal mic.

This means that you must use third party apps to be able to use an external mic.

Open camera, from the Google Play Store, supports the use of external mic and Filmic pro.

I use the Saramonic Smartrig + to interface my lavalier and shot gun mics to the camera as it requires the TRRS connection and the Smartrig provides this with switchable format between camera (TRS) and smartphone (TRRS).

It also provides 48-volt phantom power if needed by the microphone.

Unfortunately, the Cinema FV-5 doesn't support any object tracking like the native Osmo mobile app so it is again a compromise situation as to which app to use for the intended task.



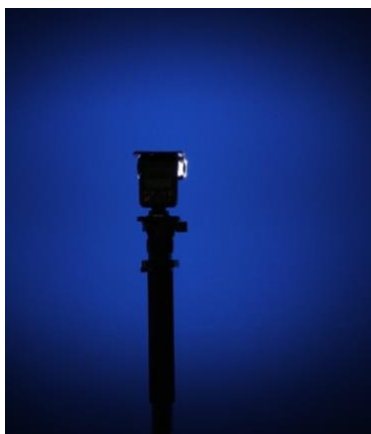
Shooting a Self Portrait (aka "Selfie")

I needed an updated image of myself so I decided to document the steps needed to shoot a reasonably good self-portrait.

I decided to use two flash guns for the shoot. One which would be used to provide an accented backlight on a black background. This could be the bare flash, resulting in a grey background or with the flash covered with a coloured gel, a coloured accent.

For this light, I chose to use the Godox TT350o flash which would be held in position by my monopod (which has a self-standing foot facility).

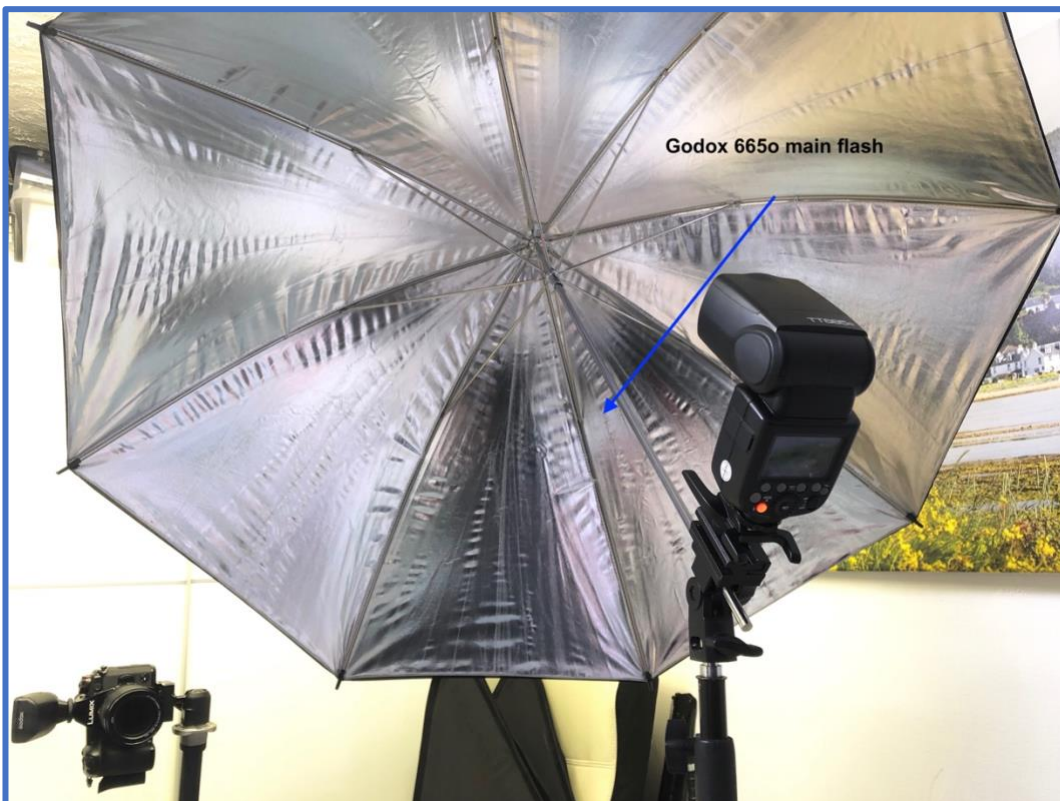
For the main light, I chose my more powerful TT665o flash gun which would be mounted on one of my light stands and would fire into a 1 metre diameter silvered flash umbrella.



This is the light pattern that would appear behind my seated position. The Godox TT350o with blue gel held in place with a rubber band.



The set up for the self portrait



The Godox TT6650 flash fired into the large silvered flash umbrella.

To trigger the two flashes, I used the Godox Xpro O flash trigger. This is slightly more expensive than the X1T-o unit but allows much easier adjustment to the flash channel settings.



The Godox Xpro-O flash trigger

By first setting the backlight to channel “B” and in the manual mode I fired of a test exposure to establish the intensity and spread of the light pattern that would be behind me. When I had this to my liking I got in position and turned on the main light on channel A and made a test exposure. When both exposures were exactly as I wanted I then set up the Panasonic G9 to be fired through the wireless image app. This allowed me to “see myself” from the seated position and then fire the shutter release remotely.



The final portrait after edited in Photoshop to rotate and crop the image slightly.

I created a video of the shoot here on [Youtube](#)

Saramonic CaMixer Review



It is a well-known fact that the internal microphones on all DSLR's and CSC's are poor in recording decent audio. They have no facility to reduce wind noise if used outdoors and often pick up camera noises like the image stabilisation and button clicks as we change setting during recording video clips.

The easiest solution is to use a simple electret off-camera mic. These can be lavalier types and worn by the subject or can be a short "rifle-mic" mounted on the camera hot shoe.

If you want to have more control over the amplification (or attenuation) of the mic signal or to use higher grade balanced microphones which require "phantom power" then you will need to use some form of control box. I have several Saramonic units and have been pleased at not only their build quality but their audio performance. I'm no audiophile but to me the resulting audio when used with semi-pro grade mics like the Senheisser K2 short rifle mic sound very realistic to my ears.

As I am using the Canon M50 more and more for video (the FZ2000/2500 does give fantastic results but can be quite large for some situations that I am recording) I wanted a smaller unit which still offered all the features that I need. These are the VU meters to ensure adequate recording signal for the camera, a facility to monitor the audio and provision for using XLR mics which require 48v phantom power. I found this solution in the Saramonic CaMixer.



The CaMixer mounted on the Canon EOS M50 (hardware included)

As you can see from the illustration above it is supplied with two plug in electret mics so the unit can be used on camera to provide better audio. It does have the faculty to mount a short rifle mic on the top of the unit if you want to isolate the sound pattern a little more than the omnidirectional pattern of the electret mics. For this purpose, they do supply a short mini XLR to XLR cable – the unit has a mini XLR socket not a full size XLR socket.

The single control marked “volume” is used to set the gain of the pre-amplifiers to deliver the correct level for the camera input. It is generally recommended to keep the camera input gain control towards the

minimum value and then set the gain to the correct level using the gain control of the unit. This keeps the noise from the camera pre-amps to the lowest value.



Here the Rode Videomicro mic used with this pre-amp.



In this illustration, the BOYA BY-1000 Mic is used with the pre-amp.

The unit is powered by a standard 9V battery, weighs 156g and costs £99 (SRP incl. VAT).

There is also an iOS and Android smartphone version of the CaMixer which includes a device holder and a handgrip.

The best use for the CaMixer is probably for on-the-go interview shooting when you want to point your mics directly at the sound source.

Frequency Response:

20 Hz to 20 KHz (+/-0.5 dB)

Signal to Noise Ratio:

82 dB @ 1 kHz, -30 dB input

Distortion:

Less than 0.03% @ 1 kHz, -30 dB input



Using the supplied lead any camera with a headphone monitoring port can be connected to this unit and it is then possible to monitor the audio from the unit or from the camera by sliding the front switch from record to playback.

Battery life is about 2 hours using an alkaline PP3 battery and using the phantom power.

Models for lighting practise

At this time of year there are usually sales and it's a good time to pick up models which haven't sold over Christmas and have been heavily discounted. I picked up a couple for under a quarter of the pre-Christmas price.



This is 'Arrow' character Malcolm Merlyn and he stands about 6 inches tall and is quite well detailed with a good variety of textures and materials. He is also slightly poseable.



Batman, not quite as detailed but still good for use as there are good shadow areas that can be created.

These characters are ideal for practicing your table top lighting techniques. Normally I will use either 2 table lamps with daylight LED bulbs or 1 light and a white board reflector.

It depends upon the amount of shadow that I want to create, or flatten.

I will be experimenting much more in 2019 with macro photography and trying new lighting techniques. I'll also be experimenting more with LCD back projection rather than the arduous task of cutting out the subject so that it can be used on a new background.

I know there are some super new processes in Photoshop CC to extract subjects but it still takes a fair amount of time.

Getting the background focus just right is also sometimes difficult to achieve.

Creating the right DOF illusion is something that I will need to look at more carefully.



Cut out using Photoshop CC and then layered over a background layer which had a Gaussian blur filter applied to it.



Sometimes the quality of the models might be a bit rough but shooting a silhouette against a white background and then superimposing the cut out into a suitable background image can work quite well as seen in the following images.



A straight forward image of this plastic set of elephants



A more dramatic image using a silhouette and an appropriate background image



Again, the two plastic models photographed against a white background to enable extraction to be made easier so that the “cut out” image could be overlaid on the sunset backdrop.



As the drama unfolds on the savannah plains the “seam” in the plastic moulding had to be cloned out as well as the injection moulding serial number and makers name on the underside of the dead zebra. It would have been better to use a hot air gun to reform the legs of the dead zebra into a more realistic position as well as add a touch of red acrylic paint to the neck of the zebra and the mouth of the tiger. Although you could argue that the tiger had just throttled the zebra and not actually punctured the neck. For absolute realism in these dioramas set ups, research would be key to ensure that the overall image made sense and that is why some modellers take weeks to prepare a scene.

Olympus and Panasonic “soft” shutter buttons



the Panasonic G9

You may have remembered that I have been having a love-hate relationship with my Panasonic G9 and Olympus OMD –EM1 mk2 camera shutter release buttons. They fire the shutter at the slightest pressure. I have lots of blurry frames captured as I walk from shot to shot or many short video clips! So, thinking about this could the reason be to hide design weaknesses in the camera image stabilisation?



When you hold your camera with the left hand around or below the lens, you have that support centred below the lens optical axis. With your right hand wrapped around the camera grip, the second support point is off-centre and above the optical axis. As you now press the shutter button you induce a slight off-centre rotational moment.

How the timing between the inducing of this rotational moment and the shutter delay works out is hard to predict and probably varies a lot depending on several variables.

How large this rotational moment is depending on how forceful you depress the shutter button and on how much depressing the shutter button is a downward force versus a compressing of grip around the camera and how much weight you support via your left-hand vs how much via your right hand. Anyone else having issues with these buttons or is it just me?

Proposal for Manchester Photo walk



A couple of years ago I planned to run a few Photo walks at various Manchester location. Unfortunately, due to medical issues I had to cancel those plans.

Now I'm back to "normal" I would like to propose another trial photo walk just to see how it is received. I would like to keep the numbers to 6 at the most for the first outing and I have a proposed date of Thursday May 16th 2019.

The venue would be around the very picturesque part of the city at Castlefield and should the weather be wet (after all it is Manchester) we could venture into the museum of science and industry.

This would be a great opportunity to get a little out of my comfort zone and meet a few of you. A chance to try other cameras that you may not have previously used and an opportunity to get some 1 to 1 tuition as we tour the area.

I would anticipate about 3 hours for the meeting plus the chance for lunch or a coffee and a muffin.

I would propose a start time of 11.00 to allow people to get there.

If you are interested in coming along [then respond to this email](#) and I'll set up a candidate list for it.