

The Lockdown Continues

Well, here in the UK we will be entering the 5th week of enforced lockdown as the Covid-19 Pandemic still is claiming many hundreds of lives, daily.

Fortunately the weather over the last month has been very warm with lots of sunshine. Ideal for those jobs around the garden, taking care not to fall victim of any serious accident whilst doing these.

First an apology I did intend to get this issue of the newsletter out last weekend however I've had a serious urinary tract infection and have just completed a months course of antibiotics.

Of course not being able to have face to face interviews with the doctor, you have to rely on telephone conversations for diagnosis etc.

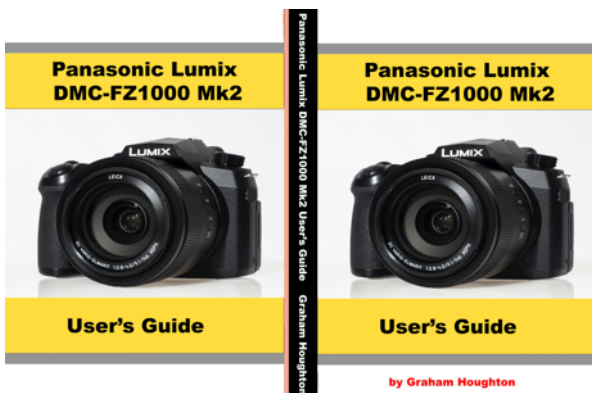
I must admit this infection really caused me a lot of pain and had to ask for stronger pain relief as paracetamol just didn't take the edge of the pain and discomfort.

I glad to report that this week has seen the passing of the symptoms and I can now carry out most tasks again.

One of the positives that did come out of this was the fact that I could sit down and finally finish the Panasonic Lumix FZ1000 Mk2 User's Guide.

At the moment it is under review at Amazon publishing with a hope that it meets their publishing criteria and hopefully be available early next week on all the sites.

The Panasonic Lumix FZ1000 Mk2 User's Guide



The initial artwork for the cover page for the hardcopy books.

This guide has 303 pages and packed with illustrations to explain the camera operation and controls etc

As usual the cost of publication is totally unrealistic for the materials used in the printing of these books.

To keep the purchase price down I have elected to add just \$1.50 profit to the colour publication and \$3.50 to the black and white version. Considering the hundreds of hours taken to produce the manual I think that this will be the last that I produce.

The final cost for colour is going to be about \$40 and \$15 for black and white but these could change as the final price is determined after review.

As with all my publications if you email me with the Amazon order number for your book purchase I will send the full colour PDF file to you by return email.

You will be able to preview the book contents once it gets approval and appears on the Amazon sites.

In addition the book is now available from my store page on my photoblog website

<https://www.grahamhoughton.com/my-store/>

The Hollyland Mars 400S HDMI transmitter/receiver review



The Mars 400S is a HDMI transmitter and receiver system for use by photographers and videographers to be able to preview the images/video being captured by the device. It has extremely low latency so the system acts almost in real time making things like focus pulling a possibility.

It can transmit over a distance of 400 feet outdoors and line of sight.

It is more suited to a larger production crew where the DP might want to share the captured video with the clients etc.

For people like me it might be useful for remote capture using a HDMI to USB capture device.

Used in conjunction with the Panasonic Image app I should be able to control the camera as well.

Main features of this system:

OLED Display Screen: Check out all device status and control the system with displayed information on the screen.

IOS & Android APP Monitoring

Support up to 4 APP connections while the transmitter is connected to 1 or none receivers.

Channel Scan: Scan the current environment on the receiver to find out available channels and avoid the channels with interference.

Three Application Scene Modes: Prioritize your video shooting over video quality, or low latency, or the balance between the both when there is interference.

HDMI+SDI Interfaces: Provide HDMI and SDI devices connection options.

Low-Battery Warning Indicator: Keep you informed 30 minutes in advance before the battery dies.

Industrial Metal Case: Equipped with a stable, reliable and durable metal case that avoids light external damages and easily cools the system down.

I did a full review of this product on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFzOdc7TptI>

DataColor Spyder X Pro review

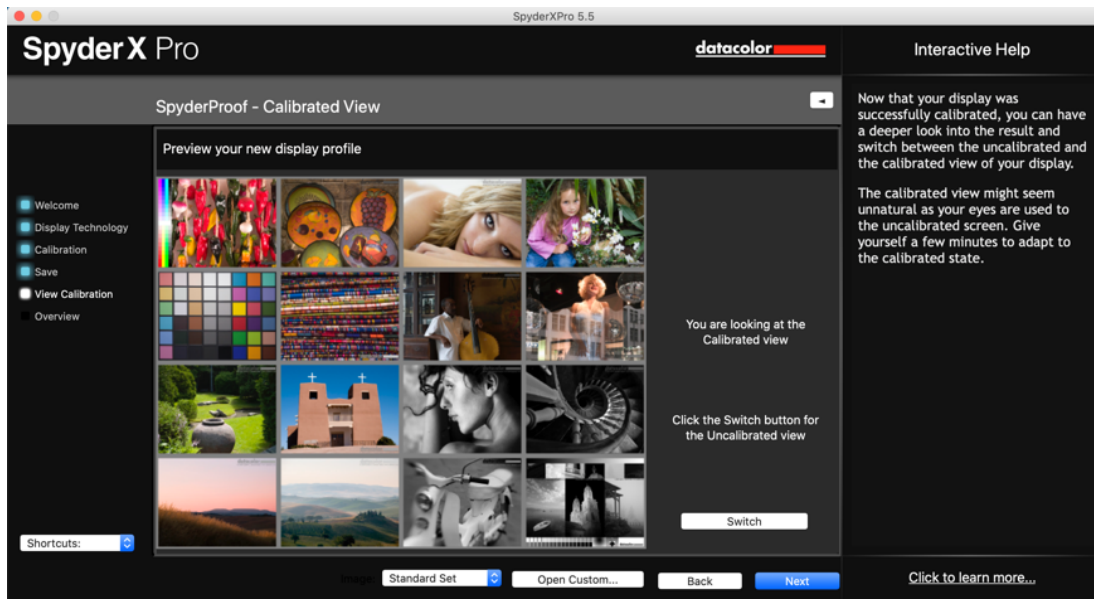


The latest in the Datacolor line up of monitor calibration devices is the Spyder X Pro.

Having an accurately calibrated monitor is essential if you are editing images across a variety of machines and want to maintain the same brightness, contrast and colour saturation.

I've been using an older product from Colorvision, the spyder color 2, for quite a few years to calibrate my windows PC's but because of the sensor technology used it is not recommended for later displays like those on the iMac. When Datacolor reached out to me to do a review of the new Spyder color X I jumped at the chance as this was the perfect tool for the iMac and my MacBook Pro laptop.

It is a much faster process to calibrate the screen from scratch or even quicker is you just want to verify calibration.



When you have completed the calibration process the software gives you a chance to see the before and after calibration results.

I did a full review of this product here on YouTube
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TEKI_aWjwPA

Long Term Review of the FZ1000 Mk2 (AKA FZ10002)



I bought my FZ10002 back in April 2019 and took it on a camping pod holiday to Arran, Scotland during the beginning of May. It has captured less than a few hundred images when it suffered partial operational failure due to condensation on the main PCB. This caused part of the circuit which controlled zoom and lens image stabilisation to fail. I sent it in for repair but quickly got the email back to say that it would not be covered under warranty. A new lens and main circuit board was fitted. Fortunately my house insurance covered the repair (less the £150 excess). I must admit the camera went out of favour for a few months after this event. I only picked it up again when I started to write the user's guide.



An image captured before the camera failed due to condensation problems

The FZ10002 has adopted the same menu structure as the more advanced micro four thirds flagship G9 camera. Coming from the FZ1000 mk1 was a bit of a learning curve when trying to locate features in the setup menus.

Of course the camera comes with several upgrades over the mk1 which makes it a more feature rich camera. However this does come at some penalty when it comes to handling and usage.

In particular the 3 new buttons on the lens barrel Fn1, Fn2 and Fn3 are only slightly proud of lens barrel and very difficult to press. Only the centre button has a slight plastic pip moulded onto it to assist in finding them.

Fn3 is the zoom assist button which allows the camera to quickly zoom out to allow you to reframe a moving object, for instance. Let go of the button and the camera quickly zooms back to the focal length that you had set.

This is a useful feature that I think that bird-in-flight photographers might enjoy.

It's a pity that these buttons sit just where you want to cradle the lens!

The touch screen, for me is a big advantage.

Not only for selecting menu choices but altering controls quickly and using the touch focus/touch shutter feature.

The "flyout" soft menu tabs can get in the way when wanting to use the whole touch screen. Thankfully they can be disabled.

Is the Mk2 a worthy upgrade from the Mk1 ?

I would suggest that anyone who already has a Mk1 in full working order just keep it and pass over the Mk2 or at least hold off purchasing one until the Mk2 price drops substantially.

For the new buyer wanting to enter the Lumix type 1 inch sensor family world, I suggest the FZ1000 Mk1 as a first option. This camera offers just about the best value for money right now.

I believe in keeping photography simple. Exposure is really only aperture and shutter speed dependant (as you should always shoot at the lowest ISO available whenever possible).

There's no need for all the fancy filter effects, so called image enhancement features like iHDR and i.Resolution. These are all JPEG options only.

If you shoot raw (and it is advisable on these larger sensor cameras) then you can do all these digital manipulations under much finer control.

Having said that with all the digital option menus turned off the out of camera JPEG images are very well processed – remember to knock the noise reduction back to -5 in the Photostyle that you are using if you want images with finer detail.



Free Image Editing Software This Month

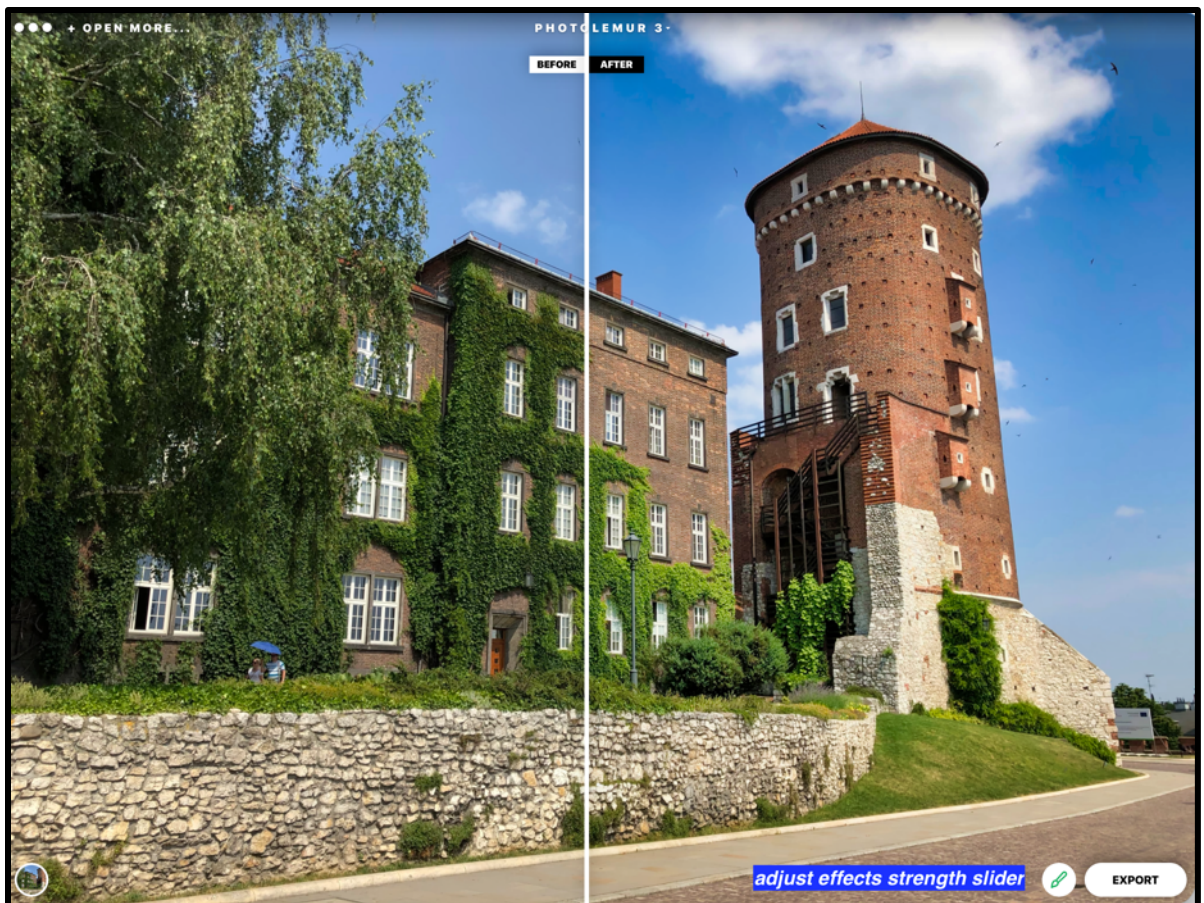
Continuing to find you the best of the free editing software I have selected an editor which requires no intervention other than opening the JPEG (and some RAW) files and click process. So sit back and let your computer do the hard work – now that's editing the smart way!

It's a fully AI (artificial intelligence) base program which is part of the Luminar suite by Skylum.

It analyses your image and applies corrections as the program determines might be needed. It enhances skies to bring out cloud detail (if it is there) enhance grass and foliage and apply brightness, contrast and sharpening to give, in most instances a better image.

It also has face recognition and options to alter facial processing.

You can “tone” down the effect if you think the processing is a little strong with an adjustment slider. The normal trial version of this program applies a watermark, this version is unlimited and does not.



The program gives you the before and after comparison. In this image I reduced the effect from 100% to 80% with the slider accessed by the paintbrush icon. Styles are from the circular icon at the bottom left hand side of the image.

Additional style packs can be purchased if you like the way this program works – you are given 6 free ones to try out.



Facial smoothing and eyes enlarges automatically

The final export stage of the program allows you to specify resizing as an output option as well as changing the destination of the output.

Here's the link to the software from Skylum.
Enter this into your browser address bar (not Google search bar)
bit.ly/photolemur3promo - expires 6th July 2020.

Keeping Photography Simple

Over the past month I have had several emails asking for help with photographing particular scenes like those that you might witness in Antarctica and Iceland and also topics like stained glass windows and photographing paintings.

I have always been a very keen advocate of keeping picture taking as simple as possible and it doesn't matter what camera you use to capture the image the process is always the same.

Let's face it an image is captured by the camera imaging sensor from light reflecting from the subject.

The exposure is based upon, in my workflow, by just two elements:

The first is the Aperture setting and in most cases setting a mid-range aperture yields the best lens resolution.

With the Panasonic bridge cameras this is around F4 to F5.6 at the widest angle setting.

The second is Shutter speed and in most cases if you have selected aperture priority mode then this is automatically set for you by the camera.

Notice I have not mentioned ISO – true the camera can have the overall processing pipeline increased from as low as ISO 80 to over ISO 12800 in some cases.

BUT the sensor has a natural or base sensitivity that yields not only the lowest noise but also the largest dynamic range (highlight to shadow ratio).

In only a couple of percent of all the thousands of images that I have captured over 30 years of shooting with digital cameras have I ever used anything more than the lowest ISO setting the camera has.

Any exceptions have been when the shutter speed would have been too slow to prevent image blur through handshake and with up to 5 stops of image stabilisation now available providing there is no subject movement you can comfortably shoot images with ½ second exposures without the need for tripods or other mechanical stabilisation.

Forget also any of the in camera JPEG image processing options like iHDR, i.Resolution and i.Dynamic. Turn all these off!

If you only shoot JPEG then my advice has always been to turn off the in camera noise reduction in the Photostyle menu to -2 (or -5 in later cameras) as this blurs fine detail even at the lowest ISO setting.

So Aperture priority, lens set around F4, lowest ISO and off you go.

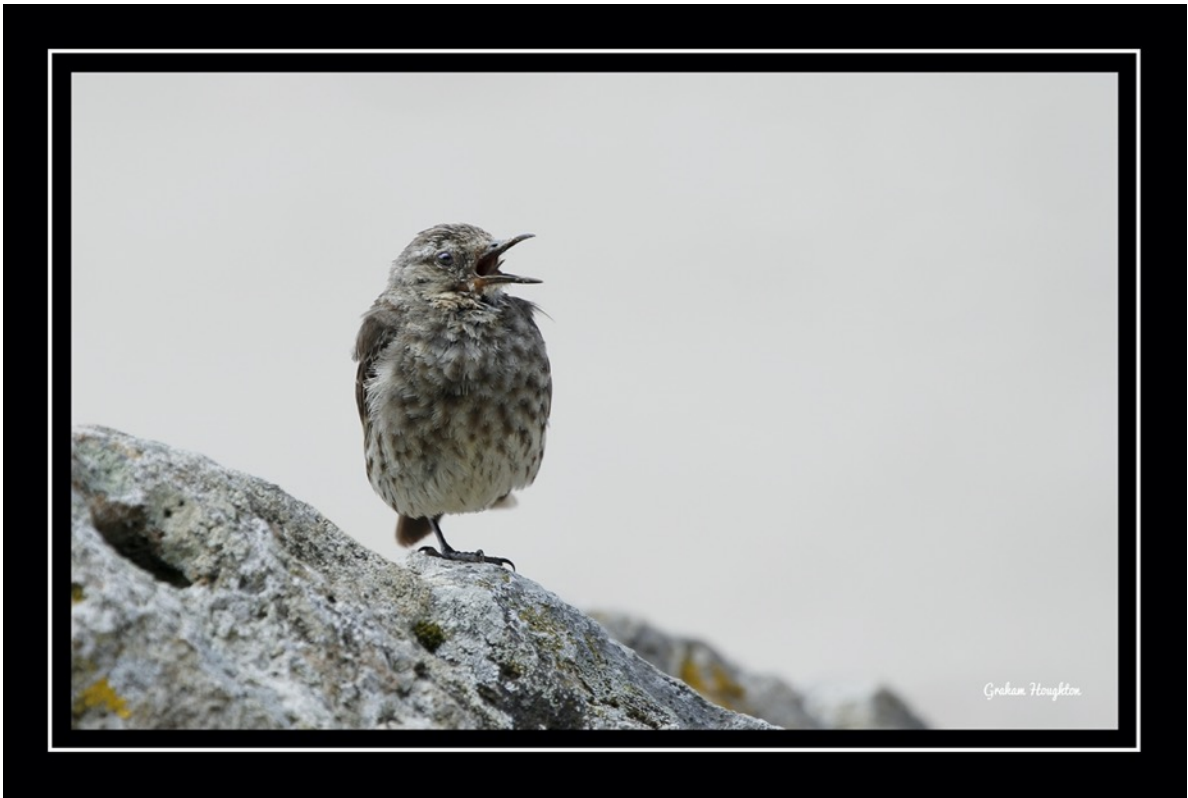
Exposure compensation is your key to getting the correct mid tone exposure and when you learn how to recognise this in the camera viewfinder you will get consistently more evenly exposed images without many that are over or under exposed.

I think it pays dividend not to take snapshots but to work a scene until you find a composition that works better. Keeping to the rule of thirds is a good starting point. Also when shooting children get down to their level and avoid pointing the camera down. The same for wildlife. Often low angle shots provide better images. Here's a sample of some of my images following this rule.











So just a few images to show that using the simple approach works. Use your knowledge that longer focal lengths can be used to isolate your subjects against cluttered backgrounds, such as in wildflower photography and wide angle gives you the maximum depth of field for your landscape shots.

If you are using your smartphone then again use an app that opens up the settings so that your images are not crippled by the in-camera processing – it's a little more tricky to get blurred backgrounds with some but with short telephoto optical lenses in some then it is a possibility.

When the lockdown restrictions are eased somewhat I'll be able to get out and about again enjoying shooting images again but in the meantime it's a good time to practice some indoor table top photography and learn about simple lighting and how the use of white reflectors and black cards can shape your lighting and create better three-dimensional looks to your images.

Now the FZ10002 user's guide is finished I'll probably make a few tutorials on how to do this and I have a few more products that will be arriving shortly for me to provide reviews on.

So that's it for this shorter newsletter due to the time that I have spent getting that guide to the publishers so until next month stay safe and stay well

Graham

