Beckham Digital

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Cover Photo – Stainless Steel

Regular readers will know that I am not a great fan of Photographic club rule makers, but if there is one rule that stands out for sheer stupidity it is the one that places a date stamp on the image.

You can't use any image taken more than two years before the closing date of this competition

Well, my cover photo would break all those rules easily. It was actually shot on colour slide film and scanned onto a Kodak CD sometime around November 1996/7. Boots the Chemists (UK) used to provide this service, where you could have slides or negatives scanned at high resolution onto a CD.

Well, I say high resolution, but by our standards of today it wasn't that high, but high enough at the time. I think the basic files were about 18mb in size once opened into Photoshop. Isn't it great that our hard drives today are now so large that I can keep my entire digital output on one internal drive in my computer.

It makes it easy and convenient for me to look back and drag some old image out of the archives like this one. I wondered if it would be worth running a competition to see if anyone could guess what this piece of stainless steel was destined for?

Perhaps not, as how many would guess that it's a stainless steel drain for a mortuary table. Now you wish I had kept quiet eh?

The steel was borrowed and taken home for the shot and I used a set of Bowen's studio flash heads via a soft box. Why did I ever get rid of those lights.

New Years Resolution

We live in a very judgemental society these days with many people quick to label others as ignorant or stupid simply because that person doesn't know what they know. It's something we see often in the photographic/computer world with some even labelling themselves stupid for not knowing some obscure fact about the software they are using. Why should they expect to?

Why are we all so hard on ourselves, and why don't those who are quick to judge realise that with a slight change of topic, it's them who are in the dark, they become the ignorant. The word ignorant always amuses me because it's often used as a derogatory remark a bit like amateur, almost as an insult. Yet all ignorant means is *lacking in knowledge or training; unlearned.*

Well, we are all unlearned until we do learn and we can't learn everything. These thoughts came to me recently when I could not understand a new technique that became available in the PicturesToExe software. The software was under test at the time and I could not find my way through the fog and I found myself baffled. It related to Custom Transitions and using backgrounds of a slide and a setting that said: *Transparent Background of Slides*

So, I asked others on the PicturesToExe forum and it wasn't until a project was sent to me by the software creators that I could study, that allowed the penny to drop. Now I look back and wonder where the mental block was, because I now find it simple. Does this sound familiar to you?

Anyone who says they have never been in this situation is obviously one of life's "know it alls" who can be safely ignored. So, why do many people find it extremely difficult to stand up in a crowd or on a forum and say. I don't understand this? We all know why, don't we? We don't want to appear dumb in front of our peers, but how can we be expected to know it all? It's not dumb, stupid or anything else. It's just something we haven't learned yet?

Is it a strength to put your hand up in a crowd, or on a dedicated forum and say "I don't understand that", and get an answer. Or, is it a strength to keep your head down and slink away and remain in the dark. So, our new years resolution should be, hold down your ego and ask the question. So what if it's a basic question to some, it's not going to be a basic question to everyone and they will be glad you asked it. Come along to our Forum and test the water.

Photoshop Master-Class Newsletter Video

When I sit down to record a newsletter video I do try and come up with an interesting, innovative or creative topic, but I have been making tutorials a long time now and the longer you do this, the harder it is to be as fresh and new every time. In normal circumstances I can always pick an Audio Visual topic, but we are likely to see a new version of PicturesToExe in the coming weeks. So, it's probably best to leave that topic for a while and look at the new version when it's released

So, this month I sat down and did what I normally do in my own everyday work flow. I looked back a few weeks at some images I shot at a place called Boreen Point and I took it from there.

Image below shot with a Canon 5D Mk2 Infra-Red converted camera 30th @F8 - 200iso

[Download the Video Here](#)

PicturesToExe News + Audio Visual – 3D Book

The beta testing of a new version of PicturesToExe 9 continues despite me hoping to have announced the release in December. The development of modern software cannot be rushed and it must be a nightmare trying to estimate a release date when you don't even yet know what issues testing may throw up.

So, a little more patience is required. I am not one of the best at this testing of software, because I am not technically minded. My strengths are that I am more practical, but then again that is what makes my tutorials still popular I guess.

When trying pre-released software, it's easy for user error to be seen as a bug and I have fallen into that trap a few times myself, but the trick is to ask and not worry about your ego. (See New Years Resolution above)

Anyway, in the course of testing, what I do is set myself projects and if errors pop up then I will report them. So, over the past weeks I have made dozens of Slide Styles, Custom Transitions and Projects. Some of the results are OK, but some are destined for the folder we call testing or better still Recycle Bin.

Of course, I have also taken the opportunity to get ahead where I can with tutorials and have a few ready for release. In one set of advanced animation videos I re-visited the making of the 3D book. I have attached a small demo with our newsletter video download and you get to turn the pages too.

In the demo, notice how the music plays despite the fact you can turn the pages at your own pace.

It has always been possible to do this in PTE by removing the tick for Synchronize Soundtrack and Slides. You will find this in Project Options > Advanced Tab and exactly the same place in PTE-9 when its released

Looking Back

This is a subject I can recall writing about a couple of times before, but I think it's worth the reminder. Sometimes when I am short of inspiration I go on a browsing mission. I look back at some old images, sometimes from many years ago. I look at the images I obviously ignored at the time, because now I see them with a complete fresh set of eyes.

I did this only today and found some images I took at Eagle Heights in Kent UK in 2003. My skill level with Photoshop was OK back then, but those skills are far better now and Photoshop is much better these days too. The images were of birds of prey, always an impressive subject and in this case they were shot with a Canon 1Ds. That camera captured 11 million pixels at the time, but the images still look good today and one of a Golden Eagle caught my eye.

Take a look HERE at the shot in Flickr because you will see it larger than I can reproduce here. I did search back to try and find a finished image that I had created at the time as a comparison, but the only image I could find that featured a bird of prey from the same shoot is the one below.

I am sure it featured in Digital Photo Magazine back then and it certainly featured on a tutorial disk I made around 2003/4. Simple montage techniques using layers, blend modes and layer masks. So I guess that I was very likely sidetracked at the time with many other projects and that's

how good images can fall down the cracks. We get tied up in other projects, then we move on and forget them. I am glad I looked back at the Golden Eagle now. Most of the images below were taken at Yosemite back around the same time. I should look back at those images too.

I still have a Montage Disk available HERE for Photoshop CS-6, but Montage techniques haven't changed from years ago. Any version of Photoshop will work fine with these tutorials. We have a PDF HERE too.

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