



Darran Leal's PHOTO TIPS

6 - TIMES ARE A CHANGING - From Phones to Big Sensors

A series of quick tips to help you improve your photography and inspire you to new results.



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TIMES ARE A CHANGING - From Phones to Big Sensors

Note that the following information is general in nature due to the many different cameras available and situations to shoot.

“TIME'S ARE A CHANGING”

We are all facing an unknown future with photography and equipment. From the overpowering take over of smartphones in the world (of interest - which have plateaued out currently) to small sensor cameras, up to giant large format sensor systems. How far away is 3D, holographic and VR technology? They are here now - watch this space.

I mentioned in Conversation Number 4 that camera brands are at great risk; some will go or merge. Whole formats might go! Yes, several individuals on Youtube Channels are predicting the demise of Micro Four Thirds (not that Youtube is the most reliable source of information - take it with a grain of salt), yet new cameras and lenses are being released as you read this. Some companies have been promising new gear for years - we are waiting.

Anything is possible including the demise (eventually) of 35mm sensors. Smartphones are only going to become more efficient and will affect our 'more serious' world of photography. So much, so that old time photographers like myself (celebrating 40 years of shooting this year) use smartphones for shooting about 20% of the time. Smartphones are nothing new for me, as I started with the iPhone 4 (now using the iPhone 8 plus) and have had images published from that older camera.

In September this year, I join digital guru (Emmy award-winning) Russell Brown in the USA on a “secret mission” using smartphones and the latest from Adobe. Look out for this (online) as it will open up new photo adventures for you.

Using your phone, uploading to a Cloud source and processing your images on a mobile device (phone, pad etc.) is nothing new. What is changing is the internet accessibility, upload and download speeds and technology continuing to become more user-friendly. Am I using the cloud & phone regularly? No. Does digital guru Mark Galer use it regularly - no but we are starting to use this technology for more serious use.

As always, I try to bring up these technological observations in a very general manner, we all understand how fast technology is evolving currently and I have to think about the relevance of these topics from field experience for a wide range of photographers.



Pearce and Frazer have used this technology since its conception. They love to use their phones with Adobe Lightroom CC. (Cloud-Based.)

I've had the ability to use the cloud since its inception, but have not used the technology to its fullest capacity due to poor and at times no internet speed.

If you are unaware, you can load Lightroom CC (was Mobile) (note the desktop version - Lightroom Classic CC) onto your phone and use it to shoot RAW files for a greater dynamic range of information. Then on the spot, you can process that photo. That is, you can process images shot with the phone or with your larger camera, on your phone. The processing options are not as many or sometimes as suitable as Lightroom Classic CC, but they are fantastic and overall, do a great job. One point most of the older generation will find problematic is the small screen of the phone.

The workflow can be managed onto other devices from iPad to laptop and desktop computers. Yes, a learning curve is involved, but not one that we can not help you within a reasonable time. (Or, google loads of tutorials online.)

Did you know that most modern smartphones now offer at least two built-in lenses and that they offer 12-40MP sensors? Did you know that you can add fish-eye to telephoto lenses? All have limitations and various degrees of quality.

Check out Russell Browns web link at the end of this feature.



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Like ANY sensor today, if we shoot in good sunlight at the right settings, you will achieve a great result. It's very difficult, if not impossible to tell the difference between sensors nowadays. If we printed a series of prints at A4 size, from an Epson photo printer and stood at a the correct distance, you wouldn't be able to tell the difference, and yes the iPhone easily prints great A4 size prints. Don't believe me - try it...

So how good is a smartphone camera?
As mentioned, it is a fantastic camera - in good lighting.

1. Obviously limited print size. Still does a reasonable A3!
2. Shoots poorly in low light - watch this space...
3. Offers limited lenses. Attached lenses are available and new models are now offering four different lenses, built-in.

MICRO FOUR THIRDS

I hope this sensor size lives on for years to come. It currently offers the best value for money camera systems, and the big plus is - weight! So many photographers are buying 35mm mirrorless systems for less weight, only to discover the only thing that does save weight is the camera body. The lenses are still big and heavy. They have to be able to resolve the 24-50MP of information.

How much information do you need?
How big do you enlarge your images?

APS-C

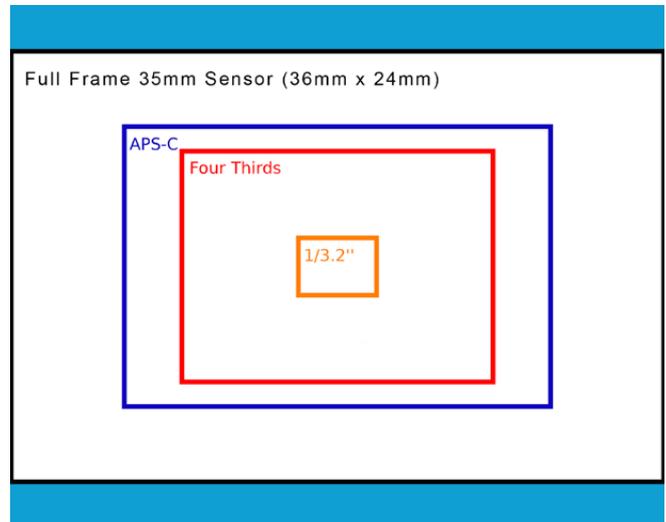
This is a sensor size that will most likely die off with the big guns Nikon and Canon. As with Micro Four Thirds, the sensor does not perform as good as 35mm in low light, but like that smaller sensor size, is only improving. Again, if you want true lighter weight equipment, this is an option.

35mm (full frame)

I love this size sensor as it offers the best combination of quality and value. Low light shooting can be incredible! However, one key negative is - weight. This is no issue if you work from your car, a studio or at home. However, if you travel, it is an issue.

LARGER FORMATS

Same as 35mm and even more. Slow and steady is the shoot answer. 'Medium Format' has always been this way. More use of a tripod and heavy weights means they shoot really well, but are not travel and sometimes user-friendly. The detail is fantastic, but only if you blow them up large and only if you crop a lot. Otherwise, how much information is enough? What's the use of having such equipment if you do not use it!



HORSES FOR COURSES

As you can see from this information, no system is perfect. All have pluses and minuses, with the key being - what will do the job for your interests.

MY PREFERENCE

As mentioned, I have gone to the smaller sensor Lumix G9 with the following lenses and accessories. If I take my complete kit of all lenses and accessories (which is rare as I target gear to the needs of the region), then my complete kit with bag weighs in at 7kg. Beautiful and lightweight!

Small sensor kit:

1. G9 body
2. 8-16mm super wide lens
3. Leica 12-60mm lens - equivalent to 24-120mm
4. Leica 100-400mm lens - equivalent to 200-800mm
5. 45mm Macro lens - equivalent to 90mm
6. Small Lumix flash
7. 3 x batteries

So the key for my travel photography interests is to take gear relevant to the destination. For example, In February/March of 2019, I guided tours to Tanzania and then Botswana. For these two tours, I took just two lenses - the 12-60mm (24-120mm in 35mm format) and the 100-400mm (200-800mm in 35mm format). My entire bag with gear weighed the same as just my old Canon and a Canon 100-400mm lens. That was bag and all with first aid kit and extras like sunglasses with case! Amazing...



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In April 2019, I am travelling onto Patagonia to meet up with the entire family. For this tour, I will be adding the new Lumix 35mm S1R. Why? Because this is a landscape based tour and 35mm high MegaPixel sensors perform better, offering more detail. (47MP) Plus I am simply keen to try it!

Another example is when we do the Lamington workshop. Deep rainforest with a mix of subjects to shoot. I do not need a 35mm sensor, so I will take the smaller sensor G9 and add the macro lens as the location offers a lot of great macro subjects.

WHAT TO CONSIDER

Whatever camera system you have or are buying, it is a tool only. The person behind the camera is the most important point. The right tool to do the job is of high importance and understanding how to work it will help you to reach your creative goals. So, if you are about to buy a new system (as many photographers are), then take your time to handle the camera and lenses. Don't base your purchase on someone's point of view! That including mine...

IMPORTANT - If buying a new kit!

1. All the brands offer very sharp high-quality lenses. No brand is sharper than another. The odd lens might be sharper in direct comparison.
2. How much information do you need to capture?
3. What are your photographic interests and goals? Some cameras are better at action for example than others.

Also, the most critical point when looking at new gear - get it in hand and try it first at your local camera store. Be happy to pay a little more for this service! Listen to the salesperson, but be clear that you make the decision, based on:

1. How it feels in hand.
2. Is it easy to work and understand?
3. Does it reach your goals like weight?
4. Will it achieve your photographic interests like portraiture, sports, nature.

I suggest you then go away. Have a coffee or milkshake and go back ready to buy - if you are prepared to buy. This will offer you the best chance of buying the right kit for your photo interests.

SOME GREAT WEBSITES TO CHECK

Mark Galer - markgaler.com

Here's a great article - <https://www.starkinsider.com/2018/03/camera-sales-plunge-28-in-january-2018-blame-the-smartphone.html>

Russell Brown - russellbrown.com

Julieanne Kost - jkost.com

Full Frame (35mm) to Micro Four Thirds - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggBhMbNF8LY>

Another great example video to watch is - <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/snaphappy4/298318562>

More of these tips will be added from time to time. Please check our website. Another great option is to download my eBook - it's FREE and loaded with more than 100 pages of information to help you shoot great images. It is fantastic on your phone as a quick reference or motivational guide.

Enjoy...



This lion was photographed as the sun hit the horizon at sunset, under the shade of a tree. In other words, very low light. Panasonic Lumix G9 camera with Lumix (Leica) G 100-400mm lens @161mm (322mm in 35mm format), Aperture Priority 1600ISO f6.3 160th of a second, hand held, with 30% image file crop in Lightroom.