

Good Morning/afternoon Everyone:

The judging for the SANP Photo Salon (set for Feb 27) was held last Saturday and the entries were really good. No I did not judge but got to see them and the competition was as expected very tough. The winners won't be announced until the Salon/Gallery dinner on the 27th. Congraulations to all who entered. "Ya dun gud!"

Here are some notes for this week:

(1) CLUBS

OAK RIDGE CAMERA CLUB:

The next meeting of the Oak Ridge Camera Club will be **TOMORROW EVENING Feb 9** at Roane State Community College, Oak Ridge Campus, 701 Briarcliff Avenue. The meeting will begin at 7:30 pm in the City County Room just inside the front door of the main building. Everyone is welcome.

FEBRUARY MEETING:

The February meeting will be at Roane State starting at 7:30 PM in the City Room (A111) and is a competition with the subject of "Things Aloft." If you have digital or print entries, please arrive a little early so that we can get them documented for competition. The "things" can be high like clouds, or low like bumble bees, or medium like kites, but they have to be photographed in a state unsupported by the earth. The subject matter includes, not only things stably aloft (like clouds and birds), but also things temporarily aloft, like dogs leaping for Frisbees, athletes dunking basketballs, and baseballs caught in flight as they approach the batter. Bob Epperson has agreed to judge.

Please bring prints to the meeting or send them for digital competition via e-mail to me at dfhubb@comcast.net. Remember that the files should be at a size 1450 pixels on the long side either vertical or horizontal. We can handle larger size files within the limits of e-mail; however, there is no advantage because all images are displayed at the same maximum resolution but smaller file sizes will put you at a competitive disadvantage. You may bring digital images to the club meeting; however, it is much better if you can send them in advance.

We will be awarding the 1st place winners, in both digital and prints, more Red River paper products so you may win something of value.

FUTURE COMPETITION SUBJECTS:

Please keep these competition subjects in mind as you go through your photographic day. Bob Stone, our competition chairman, has designated the theme of our April meeting as "Color as a Subject" where color is used to give a lifelike rendering of the subject. In these pictures, the color is an end in itself. An abstract work would fill the bill, or a false color photo, or maybe just a collection of unrelated but intensely colored objects. He made June "Water"

pictures. These topics are different than normal for us and cover a wide enough range that everyone already may have a few entries or be motivated to look at subjects a little differently.

Check out the new web site at www.cameraclubofoakridge.org. If there are any questions about the club, please call Douglas Hubbard at 525-1465 dfhubb@comcast.net.

LECONTE PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY. *LeConte Photographic Society will meet again **Monday, March 8**, at the First Presbyterian Church of Sevierville. Meeting and competition will begin at 6:30 p.m. Our speaker for March will be club member Lois English. Lois raises butterflies, (they are on the decline), a wonderful photographic subject. Lois will tell us how to raise our own butterflies and help the species.*

NOTE: As for the winter weather, our camera club, The LeConte Photographic Society will NOT meet, IF the Sevier County Schools are closed. WBIR TV10 will report Sevier Co. School Closings.

Club members have photos on display at the Gatlinburg **Anna Porter Library**, thru the month of February. If you're in the area, please visit this beautiful new library and don't miss their LeConte room with many books and items on the history of the park.

The LeConte Photographic Society is in its second year of club activities. We will continue with our format of competitions of three levels (*this is new*), critiques of images, and a program by a local professional, some may not be so local, but of interest. Fee for membership is \$25. per fiscal year, and that is 12 months - we have met through last summer and will continue to meet thru the summer of 2010. We offer a field trip for photography at least, once a month. Check us out at: www.Lecontephotographic.com or e-mail me, Dee at DeeMur@Charter.net

NEXT LEVEL PHOTOGRAPHY FOCUS GROUP...

NEXT MEETING IS next WEDNESDAY, February 17rd : Lunch Meeting at 12PM (noon) at Makino Japanese Buffet at 8217 Kingston Pike (in front of Chuck E Cheese). We will meet in the back room to the left. This will be the last meeting of this year. The club meets on the first and third Wednesday each month and all serious photographers are invited to attend and learn from the group.

...got topics? Send your suggestions to lisa@almphoto.com

Don't forget to invite any serious photography enthusiasts who would enjoy sharing and learning with our group.

:: GENERAL INFORMATION ::

Meeting format/Agenda

Each member should bring an article, website, book, DVD or photographs they have found useful on the topic to be covered to share with the group. Even if it is not a topic of interest to you, you will learn something and when we cover a topic that really fires you up you will have the opportunity to share your knowledge with everyone. Bring a paper and pen and be prepared to leave with some exciting, new information!

For more information contact:

W D Pinckard

865-567-7676

wdpinckard@mac.com

or Lisa Mueller

lisa@almphoto.com

PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF EAST TENNESSEE. PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF EAST TENNESSEE. PSET's next meeting will **Thursday, March 4th at 6:30pm**. Their new meeting place is the Rose Center, 442 W 2nd North Street, Morristown, TN 37814 (diagonally across from the county court house). This is about a 40 minute drive from Knoxville.

Please check out our web site at www.PSET.org.

Donald Wilson

President, PSET

www.pset.org

Email: donaldwilson2007@gmail.com

KINGSTON TN PHOTO GROUP: The next meeting will be at the Morrison Hill Christian Church in Kingston at 7pm **on Thursday March 4th**.

We will meet Thursday at 7PM at the Morrison Hill Christian Church in Kingston <http://morrisonhill.com/> at 7PM. We will continue our series based on Bill Fortney's Great Photography Workshop. Next month in March we will have Jim Ford present a special on underwater photography. We will have a learning exercise so bring your cameras and willingness to learn (and pitch in). Come and join us for a great evening of fun in photography!!!

For more information contact; Brian Kalderbach at kaldenbk@bellsouth.net .

DIGITAL LUNCH BUNCH:-- The next meeting of this group is **THIS** week on **Wednesday February 10** at noon at the Mandarin House on Downtown West Blvd at Gleason Road. *(This is located west of West town just off Kingston Pike. Going west (toward Nashville) from West Town Mall, get in the left lane and when you see O'Charlie's Restaurant on the right you TURN LEFT on Downtown West Blvd. and go the end of the road. The Mandarin House is on the left at the corner of Gleason Road.)*

Come and join our lively group. Everyone is welcome regardless of skill level. It is a lot of fun for an hour or so with a great bunch of photographers. Come and rub shoulders with some of the best! Cost is \$10 per person who eats at the buffet. Program this week is a surprise..especially for those who are unable to attend the WWW events. For more information contact Larry Perry at larryperry@att.net.

SOUTHERN APPALACHIAN NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS CLUB:

The next meeting of the club will be next week Tuesday evening MARCH 27, 2010. The Salon and dinner on February 27 will constitute the February meeting. The Salon and dinner are open to everyone. *(The salon is the gallery showing of the contest entrants and winners for the year.)* See more on the tickets and salon below.

For general club information contact Kendall Chiles at kchiles@knology.net or check out the web site at www.sanp.net.

REMINDER: SANP will **NOT** have a monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 23!

BLOUNT COUNTY PHOTO CLUB---

The club will meet again on **Thursday February 18, 2010**. **Our Club meetings have moved to the 3rd Thursday of the Month**. Harry Dunn will present a program on Yellowstone and Tetons for our Feb. 18th meeting of the Blount County Photo Club. *(Harry spent several weeks photographing Yellowstone and the Grand Tetons and several of his images were in the News Sentinel recently along with the story. He has*

put together a great program that is a MUST SEE. Larry) We will be in Room A at the Blount County Library. Please check our website for information about Bob Quinn's classes at FAB for photo lessons.

Our website: www.blountcountyphotoclub.com. (For more information contact Janie Mertz at aladytraveler@yahoo.com or 865 - 982-7368, cell 804-1051).

PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY OF CHATTANOOGA: PSC meeting on February 18

The Meeting will feature Chattanooga Professional photographer Craig Tanner whose landscapes and work has been featured in many publications and advertisements. Check out the club activities at www.chattanoogaphoto.org. I hope to see all of you at the next. Don't forget to put the **February Social at the Hamilton Place YMCA on February 1** on your calendar and bring a friend.

Items for the next newsletter need to be sent to psceditor@bellsouth.net by the 25th of each month.

Mary McLain, Editor
Email: psceditor@bellsouth.net
Photographic Society of Chattanooga
PSC Website: www.chattanoogaphoto.org

CAROLINA NATURE PHOTOGRAPHERS---ASHVILLE, NC:

Our next monthly meeting is scheduled for **this Sunday, Feb 14**. Our Member Program will be presented by Don McGowan. Please check website <http://www.cnpa-asheville.org> for more details and submission instructions for the Image Critiques. Hope to see everyone there!

Linda Deaton
Co-Coordinator
CNPA Asheville Region

Events Calendar:
Feb 4-7: CNPA Annual Meeting-Greensboro
Feb 7: Sunset Op - JumpOff Rock
Feb 14: Monthly Meeting

Feb 28: Field Trip - Greenville Zoo
Mar 13: Digital Workflow Workshop - Les Saucier

(2) EVENTS

Chuckwagon Cookoff in Pigeon Forge

Larry,

Last year when I had my photos from the Chuckwagon Cookoff in Pigeon Forge at the DLB meeting, a few people asked that I let them know when it was coming around again. Well, it's almost time. The Chuckwagon Cookoff is part of the Saddle Up! **Celebration February 25 - 28**. I think the Cookoff itself is free, but if you want to sample the food, the cost is \$5 per person. Other Saddle Up! events have admission fees.

Details are at:

http://www.mypigeonforge.com/events_winterfest_saddleup.aspx

Jack Goodwin

FIELD LEARNING EVENT

Black & White Photography

Saturday, February 20, 2010

Leader: Wayne Setser **Phone:** 865-394-1509 **E-mail:** wsetser@mac.com

Meeting place: Hardee's at the Harriman/Rockwood exit of I-40

Time: 6:30 AM

Destination:

Somewhere on the Cumberland Plateau. Our destination will depend on weather conditions and the interests of the participants. Some possible locations include: Ozone Falls, Black Mountain, Grassy Cove, Piney River, Laurel/Snow Pocket Wilderness, or others.

Learning opportunities:

This workshop will explore the lost art of black and white photography and hopefully improve your color photography at the same time. Black and white takes away those distracting colors, forcing you to focus (pun intended) on the other elements of a great photo; texture, shape, form, line, and tonal contrast. Some of the topics we'll explore include:

- How to "see" in black and white
- Composition
- Metering and exposure

- Basics of traditional large format photography (if you're interested)

What to bring:

Your favorite camera and lenses
Black and white film (if you're still using a real camera)
Your instruction manual if you're shooting digital
Tripod

Remember to dress for the weather and in layers!

Driving directions:

From Knoxville take I-40 west to exit 347, Harriman/Rockwood. At the end of the ramp, turn right and look for Hardee's on the left.

ANDY ARMSTRONG WORKSHOP

Andy Armstrong is going to be leading a two-day Photography & Photoshop Workshop titled "No Limits: Knoxville" on **March 1 & 2, 2010**. This workshop will be held at a large studio space in the Old City both days from 9am-5pm.

Do you want to learn how to get the best out of your clients during a shoot? Do you want to create images that turn heads? Do you want to wow your clients with every image? Do you want to produce images, albums, and specialty products that set you apart from your competition and help you get national and international recognition? If you do, then you don't want to miss "No Limits: Knoxville".

Join three-time international award-winning photographer and creator of Design House, Andy Armstrong for this intensive, hands-on photography workshop as he teaches and demonstrates interpersonal interaction, shoot strategy, pose flow, and how to there are "No Limits" in creating image after image that make mouths and wallets fall open.

"No Limits: Knoxville" includes:

- Live model shoots
- Posing demonstration and instruction
- Lighting demonstration and instruction
- How to communicate more effectively
- How to make your clients comfortable
- Hands-on coaching
- When and how to break the rules
- INTENSIVE Photoshop demonstration and training that will help you create your style and win awards

Cost for this workshop is \$199/person before February 1, and \$249/person starting February 1. So be sure to register early if you are interested! All of the information for

this workshop can be found at the following link:

<http://www.andyarmstrongphoto.com/?p=714>

If you have any questions, please email Andy Armstrong at

<http://www.andyarmstrongphoto.com>

ADAM JONES WORKSHOP WEEKEND

SANP is pleased to announce that Canon "Explorer of Light" Adam Jones will be presenting a workshop weekend for us on Saturday and Sunday, **April 24 & 25, 2010**. Each day will be a distinctly different workshop.

On Saturday, April 24 Adam will be presenting a classroom workshop, sponsored by Canon, in the Goins Auditorium at Pellissippi State Technical Community College. This workshop will have a limit of 150 people (capacity of Goins Auditorium) and include lunch at PSTCC cafeteria. Cost for Saturday will be \$20 per person and pre-registration is required. Pre-registration will be **limited to SANP members only until February 15**. After February 15 pre-registration will be open to the public, and we will be sending information to other photography clubs in the East Tennessee area.

Registration and payment for the Adam Jones classroom workshop will be limited to SANP members only until February 15, 2010. After February 15 registration will be open to the public. Make your check payable to SANP and mail it to:

**SANP
c/o Bob Turney
200 Skyview Dr
Lenoir City, TN 37772**

Advanced registration and payment is required. Bob must **receive your registration form and payment by April 9, 2010**. Upon receipt of your payment a confirmation letter will be sent via email or U.S. Postal Service. Bring this letter/receipt to the workshop. It will be your admittance ticket.

On Sunday, April 25 Adam will lead a hands-on field workshop in Great Smoky Mountains NP. This workshop will be limited to 20 participants and will cost \$75 per person. Because of the anticipated demand for this field workshop and its limited size, we will have a lottery drawing at the Salon on February 27 to determine the 20 participants and also 10 alternates for a waiting list. You must attend the Saturday, April 24 workshop to be eligible to attend the Sunday, April 25 workshop. Deadline to enter your name in the lottery drawing is February 15, and payment must be made by March 15 and is non-refundable. To have your name included in the lottery, send an email titled "Adam Jones Workshop Lottery" to kchiles@knology.net by February 15. This Sunday workshop will be open to SANP members only. Please make your check to Adam Jones.

SANP 2010 Nature Photography Competition Dinner Meeting Order Tickets by February 19, 2010

The SANP 2010 Nature Photography Competition dinner meeting will be held on Saturday February 27th at Buddy's Bar-B-Q Banquet Hall (Bearden), 5806 Kingston Pike, Knoxville TN. The banquet hall will be open at 6:00 P.M. for a social at which time the color and black & white print entries can be viewed. The buffet dinner will be served at 6:30 P.M. Afterwards, the slide and digital entries will be projected.

Tickets to the SANP 2010 Nature Photography Competition dinner meeting must be ordered and paid for by February 19, 2010. The cost is \$20.00 per person, members and guests. Make your check payable to SANP and mail it to:

**SANP
c/o Ann Ford
4367 Peace Dr
Morristown, TN 37814**

Advanced ticket orders are required. Ann must **receive your payment by February 19, 2010.** Upon receipt of your payment a confirmation letter will be sent via email or U.S. Postal Service. Bring this letter/receipt to the competition dinner meeting. It will be your admittance ticket.

THOMPSON HISTORICAL PHOTOS AVAILABLE:

You may have seen the item recently in the Knoxville News Sentinel about UT putting up a new online gallery of photos from Jim and Robin Thompson. The link in the article is incorrect. The correct link is:

http://dlc.lib.utk.edu/thompson/thompson_entry.html

CONGRATULATIONS TO TERESINA WHEATON. Her image of an owl in a red barn has been featured as the Photo of the Day on www.betterphoto.com. This photo will now be part of the collection of betterphoto editors and is up for the best of the gallery award.

I have belonged to this site of many years now and this is the first time I have been chosen for the Photo Of The Day. I am excited. Teresina

HEADLIGHTS AND STREETLIGHTS EXHIBITION

Local Photographer and artist Bobbie Crews Thurston is having an exhibition of her artistry

at the Balcony Gallery--Emporium Center located at 100 S. Gay Street from now until February 26. Viewing is from 9 am -5 pm M-F and Sat 11-3 pm. For more information call 523-7543.

(Note: I suggest you check this showing out. See if you can determine if her paintings are photos

or actual paintings!!! Hint...they are not photographs but you can't hardly tell,...they are that good!Larry)

(4) CLASSIFIEDS FOR SALE:

Canon EF 50mm F1.8 II with Canon ES-62 hood used 3 times (bought New) - asking \$100 OBO

Canon EF 28-135 F3.5-5.6 IS USM, came with Camera but never used - \$350 OBO
72mm CC30M Tiffen Color Compensating Filter. Magenta CC30M filters balance excessive green cast and produce creative effects. Great for early morning tint - \$60 OBO
72 mm Tristar Optics UV and C-PL Filter Bonus Pack Plus Carry Pouch - \$40 OBO

Scott
Hall Photography
www.hallphotoanddigital.com
865-591-0640

(5) MISC

*NOTE: I thought you might enjoy these comments from one of the blogs on contests.
Larry*

How to win photography competitions



I was recently asked to be one of the judges in [a photography contest run by Crestock](#). (more about the competition [in one of my previous posts](#)). It's a pretty high-profile affair: The prizes are very good, and there's a lot of [judges on the panel](#), including some esteemed bloggers, experienced writers, and successful stock photographers.

When it comes to this competition, it works like this: As one of the judges, I choose the 10 photographs I like best. For round 1, that meant choosing 10 out of 491 photographs. In other words, for every 50 photos, I can only choose one. Words can't describe quite how difficult that is: A lot of talent and creativity goes into competition entries, and a lot can be said about.

I won't lie to you – while I am a moderately successful blogger (hey, you're reading my blog right now, aren't you?), a soon-to-be-published author ([my book](#) goes on sale in about a month and a half) and a washed-up freelance / stock photographer who decided that I could only do photography as a hobby, because doing it for the money was soul-destroying – I have never actually judged a competition before. While the guys at Crestock were quite helpful in offering guidelines and ideas as to what I should be looking for, it got me a-thinking: What can you, as a photographer, do to maximise your chances in the battle of shutter times and lighting, against the rest of the pack?

A quick disclaimer: I'm writing this before I've seen who the winners are of round 1, and as such, some of the ideas and thoughts below might be completely contradicting the people who actually won. On the other hand, there are 13 judges, each with 10+1 vote, so in theory, 143 votes could be cast. On my own, I have very little (well, a thirteenth, or about 7.7%) influence on the final decision.

It's also worth noting that everything in this posts are merely my own opinions, and for all I know I might be the rank outsider: All the other photo judges in the world might very well disagree with me.

1 – Stick to the topic



First off, you would be amazed how many people submit photos that don't actually fall within the area of the competition. To use a concrete example: In the 1st round of the Crestock competition, the title of the photo was to be 'The Meaning of Life'. Now, I'm all for having a wide array of possibilities and interpretations, but there's something to be said for at least tenuously staying on target.

Take the image shown to the right, for example (check out [the much bigger version](#) over at Crestock). On its own, it's a pretty good photo: It's okay lit, and from my days of LAN parties ([The Gathering](#), anyone?), I can totally see how caffeine-laden drinks and computer keyboards can be part of the meaning of life.



What you have to remember, however, is that a lot of the judging that is done is based on people's own experiences: To most people, the meaning of life will not involve a can of Dr Pepper, and while I imagine it could successfully be argued that it might be the meaning of life to some, that is an ascertainment which would fill the viewer with sadness.

The closer you manage to stick to the target, the better. It doesn't matter if it's an illustration (a pair of lovers, as in 'the meaning of life is love') or a more abstract take on the subject (a beach chair in sunset, as in 'the meaning of life is to relax'). Making the audience (in this case, the judges) think about what they are looking at is great, but don't push it too far.

In the photo shown above, for example, with the lady with the red hair (see [a bigger version](#) here), initially seems to be way off target: What does a middle-aged woman with bright hair have to do with the meaning of life? But at the same time, the photo sent me into a train of thought: Of course it makes sense. She's ascending. She's on a journey. She's going somewhere. And she doesn't care about the rest of the world. Hell, that's as good a meaning of life as I've ever heard of...

2 – Know the rules – *then* break them



[Ansel Adams](#), seen by many as one of the greatest photographers to have ever lived, said something along the lines of ‘there are no rules for great pictures, there are just great pictures’. What he meant by that? Beats me, but it sounds good, no? Okay, just kidding. What I think he meant is that there’s no way to create a set of criteria which guarantee a good photo. Photography is viciously subjective, and ultimately your audience will think what they want. Take the rule of thirds, for example (as discussed [here](#), and in more detail [here](#)): It isn’t an iron-fast rule in itself, but people who don’t understand it, break it in ways that are un-pleasing to the eye.

The trick is to do something that works. In my experience, this means that you have to know all the ‘rules’ of photography (Get the [exposure](#) right, mind your backgrounds, have a vision, and get it all to work together), so you can choose which ones you want to break for a particular photo. Take the photo up there (I am, right now, pointing in vain at the photo, realising that you can’t see me point. Hmm. I can see this might be a problem. Try here for [a bigger version](#), either way), with the person walking on the train lines. Composition-wise, I would have done this photo very differently indeed. Barefoot might have been better. Throwing the rails off-centre would have helped. And yet, the pale colours, the reflection, and the notion of travelling somewhere by walking on trainlines somehow resounds strongly with me. It’s not the done thing. It breaks with rules and regulations, and it’s awesome. Just like this photo.

3 – Keep it simple



When submitting a photo to a photography competition, it’s tempting to select a photo you’re particularly proud of, or one that shows off a vast amount of different things at once. That’s not necessarily the best strategy. Remember that what you’re trying to do is to a) stand out from the masses of other photos and b) tell a story.

[As I said a while back](#) (and again in [a more recent photo critique](#)), photography is very much about telling stories, and while you are using a visual medium to do so, you still need to be a good storyteller, and have an eye for what appeals to people.

I guess it says something about me as a person, but here's yet another of the competition entries (higher res [here](#)) that spoke to me strongly: The simplicity of this image: a couple walking towards the sunset on a road reflecting the light of the [golden hour](#) makes this photograph stand out strongly.

4 – Tell a powerful story



I've worked as a journalist for a long time, but I remember one of the things they always said in J-school: If it has a human element people can identify with, the story is far stronger. That's why newspapers after a disaster will tell the story of Mr. and Mrs Smith and their individual tragedy, rather than the much drier factoid that 300 people died: We need to be able to feel that the people involved are related (or at least relevant) to us in one way or another. The best photographs, in my opinion, do the same thing. It doesn't have to be a tabloid story of murder, deceit, or deception, but if you manage to get an emotion in there somehow, you're onto something.



There are several levels of involving your audience emotionally. At the most shallow level, there is a recognition of emotion: A photo of a mother looking at a child might invoke this: You might feel that the mother loves the child, but the photo could leave you cold. Another photo would cause you to feel with the mother: Where you understand the feeling at a deeper degree. Finally, an image might be so strong that not only do you recognise and understand the emotion, you might actually feel the same.

The photo of the lovers in black and white, above, for example, works strongly for me at all levels. I recognise it as passion, I sympathise with the people in the photo, and I empathise strongly, in that this particular photo (not really safe for work, but look at [the](#)

[bigger version](#) if nobody can see your screen anyway!), with the feeling of pure, unbridled love and passion.



Similarly, I am affected by the photo of the young woman above. The image ([bigger here](#)) is titled 'religion', and while I'm not a religious person in the slightest, I recognise it as a powerful 'meaning of life' force driving many people. It helps that the photo has a beautiful girl in it and is cleverly captured. The same photograph could easily have been slanted in the opposite direction, with a mosque towering over the same model as an imposing, powerful overlord. The fact that the lady is much bigger than the spire representing 'religion' speaks to me, in that the human element is far more important than religion: Religion is built up of people. This interplay of symbolism, great photographic skill and tangential on-target-ism means that this photo definitely deserved one of my points.

A final example of the same is the photo of big feet / little feet ([bigger here](#)). The pure simplicity of using two pairs of feet as a symbol of family, love, and a meaning of life? Sheer brilliance.

5 – Technical perfection in pair with strong vision



As you may have guessed from the name of this website, I love doing photo criticisms. I'm a right opinionated little bastard, in fact, and some times, people disagree. A while back, I had a vicious argument with someone over a photograph which was – objectively – technically superior. His strongest argument was that I should 'look past the technical imperfections, and see how beautiful the model was'. Love makes blind, but you can't afford to be blind about photos you are going to submit to photographic competitions: You'll be up against some brilliant photographers (like *SUBA*, who captured the intensely likeable photo of the laughing girl to the left – check out [the bigger version](#), too!), and even small slip-ups will cost you enough points to lose you a competitions.

The thing is, creativity and originality can make up for some things, but there's only so much I'd be willing to forgive. A slight over-exposure on an extremely good, unrepeatable action photo? I can forgive that. Not getting the focus right on a studio shot? Not good enough. Go back, learn from your mistakes, try it again.



As a camera operator, you are a technician. Photography, in many ways, is pure physics. Optics, to be exact, but physics nonetheless. As with everything in optics, everything can be calculated. Exposures, refractive indexes, focal distances: Everything can be described mathematically. With modern cameras, you don't have to worry about much of it, but nonetheless, you still need to get it right.

The analogy is often drawn as such: A snapper that is technically perfect but lacks vision will never be a great photographer. You can imitate, but not learn true photographic vision. On the other hand, having a great vision of what makes a good photo is not an excuse not to acquire the technical skills you need to express your ideas.

In my opinion, all arts are the same: As an artist, you need a message (ideas, vision, originality, inspiration) and a means to express this message. It doesn't matter if you use a keyboard (poetry, prose), a paint brush (watercolours, oils) or a photo camera (polaroid, pinhole, SLR): If your means of expressing your message aren't up to scratch, your art simply isn't good enough.

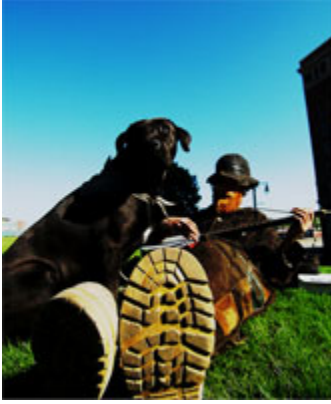
When it all comes together, you end up with photos like the person laying down in the hallway, above ([bigger here](#)).

6 – The X factor

So, you've worked hard, and everything seems to be coming together. You're on topic, you've carefully chosen which rules to break, your photo isn't over the top, you've got a story to tell, and your technical skills are as sharp as they come. What could possibly go wrong?

The final thing you need to keep in mind is that you're up against hundreds of other photographs. If you submit a photo that is similar to what other photographers have done, you both lose impact, and will probably both not win the competition. The key is originality.

And yet, even if your photo ticks all the boxes and is refreshingly original, you may find yourself struggling without a bit of X-factor: That special, invisible ingredient which will transform your photographs from very, very good to 'Wow, this is simply amazing'.



To me, in this round, the photo to the right does all that, and more. To try and explain why, let me walk you through the process:

When I think about the meaning of life, I think about many different things. Independence is a strong part of it, as is the idea of travel, of being on a journey through life. Love is important, as is loyalty, passion, and a sense that 'if you're happy, you need nothing else'. It was something that struck me when I last visited the Caribbean: Many of the people I met had little except each other, but seemed to be the most relaxed, lovely, and happy people ever.

The photograph of the hobo and his dog (check out [the full-size version here](#)) is right on the money in all of those things: Homeless? Maybe, but the guy seems happy, he's got a dog he loves, and he knows that it could be a lot worse than spending a day in the sunshine with his guitar. Compounded by the message, this photo is technically superior: The strong greens and blues of the grass and sky, the heavy shadows on the dog and the man, the way the sun catches his beard – it all comes together perfectly.

And the final tip... Develop your own style

There are a lot of fantastic photos out there, and a myriad of tutorials for how you can recreate them, but that's only half the story: you have to take something and make it your own. Think of it as cooking a new dish: Do you follow the recipe perfectly, or are you confident enough in the kitchen to use it as a base, and remove some things, and add others? If you're doing the latter, then you're probably doing the right thing...

Good luck!