

JPG

BRAVE NEW PHOTOGRAPHY

ISSUE
13
SNEAK
PEEK

Passport, Tools of the Trade, and Gravity Powered

Where the Action Is

Action photography is all about the thrill of capturing the decisive moment. The skate, surf, and snow sports communities have strong traditions of documenting their passion from the inside, casting the photographer as daring participant rather than mere spectator.

This community-driven passion feels right at home with the JPG ethos of Brave New Photography, and so it is with great pleasure that we welcome skier JT Holmes as guest editor of our Gravity Powered theme. To compliment Gravity Powered, we also present three How Tos on getting the perfect shot in snowboarding, surfing and skating, as well as a feature on some truly amazing gravity defiers.

Given JPG's global reach, and to celebrate the launch of 8020 Publishing's new travel magazine Everywhere, we turn our gaze outward to the world at large by presenting travel photography off the beaten track. Our Passport theme includes People of the Klein Karoo, Jill Coleman's photo essay documenting this South African community. Once again, we've been treated to a unique view of the world's people from those who know them most intimately.

We conclude this issue with Tools of the Trade, sponsored by the National Association of Photoshop Professionals. Showcasing the indispensable tools photo-pros use to get the job done, this theme includes an intensely personal view of the war in Afghanistan from American soldier Jeremiah Ridgeway.

Each issue of JPG Magazine surprises. That your tremendous talent permeates every issue isn't surprising, but your varied interpretations of each theme is part of what makes us so proud of our community. It's always a heck of a ride, and we thank you for coming along with us. So where do we go from here? Find out now at www.jpgmag.com. We hope to see you in the next issue!

– Paul Cloutier, Publisher

READ ME



Guest Editor JT Holmes

I look at these photos and like anyone, I feel something. I am brought to afternoons in high school spent mad at the world, with only Squaw Valley's KT22 for a punching bag. I am brought to delinquent moments in life in which you take a moment to think: how the hell did we end up here?

It's the thoughtlessness in youth, the anger in athletics, the balance amongst chaos, the consequences and disregard, the routine found in panic.

Like any sport that captures an individual's being, it's a passion, an evolution, a progression. For me it's skiing: Faster, bigger, straighter, steeper, more remote, more exposed. With bringing a BASE rig to the mountains, we are virgins again; new and twisted thoughts of questionable judgment flooding the mind constantly.

Two Saturdays from now, we'll be skiing off of the largest Casino in Reno with our parachutes. You can bet that at the top of a ramp, 365 feet above downtown Reno, with my skis, parachute, and friends; I'll be thinking, "How the hell did we end up here?"

– JT Holmes, Professional Skier

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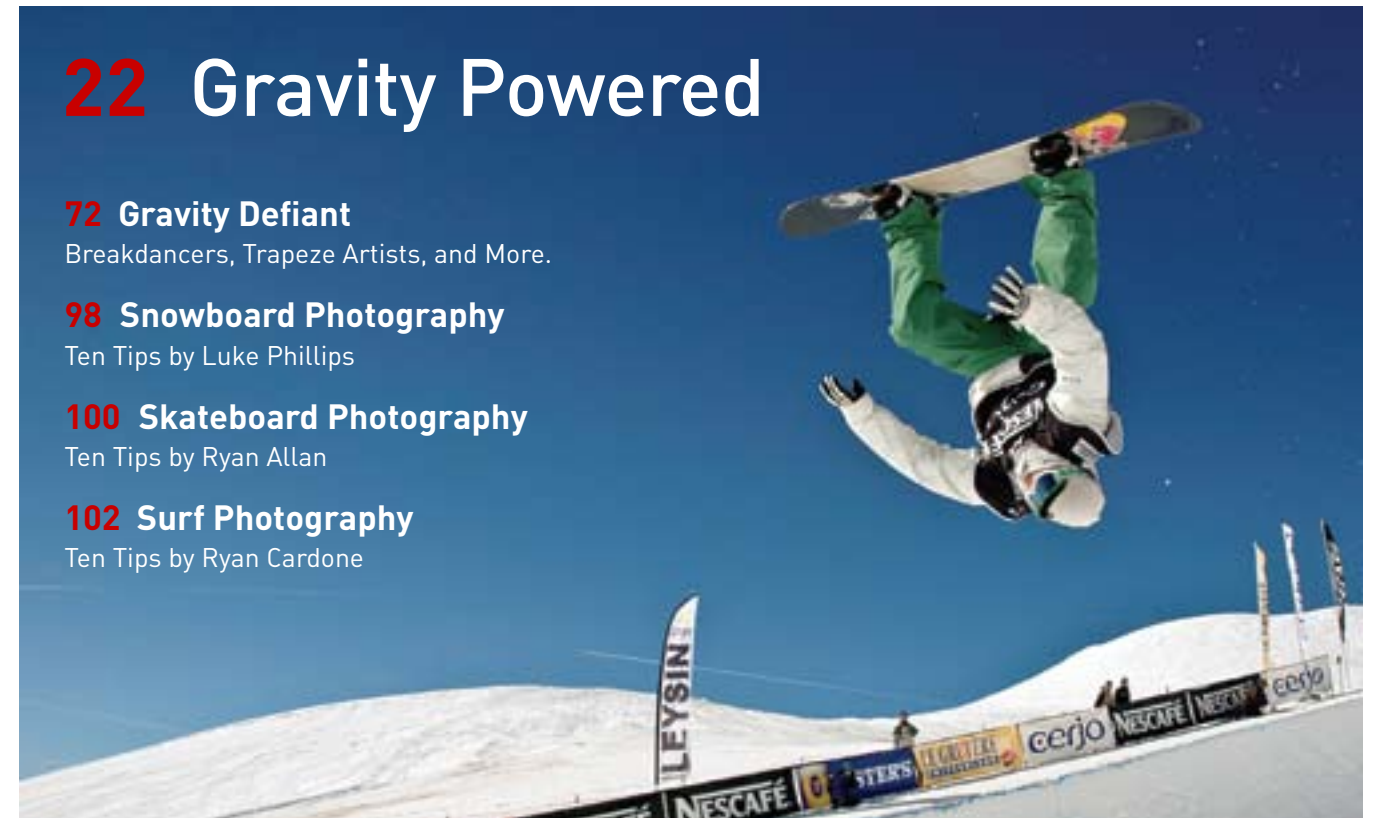
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HOW JPG WORKS



1. Shoot, Upload, Submit
JPG members upload photos and stories to themes.



2. Peer Review
The community votes on each photo and story.



3. Final Selection
Editors create the issue with the best of the best.



4. Publication
Contributors get \$100 and a free subscription.

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Prime Suspect

Canon EF 50mm f/1.8 II lens

By David Moore

It's cheap, plastic, and it wheezes, but it's by far my favorite lens. My precious is the Canon 50mm f/1.8 II lens.

Eschewing such luxury developments as USM focusing or full-time manual (and don't even think about image stabilization), this \$70 lens—known as the 'nifty fifty,' 'thrifty fifty,' or 'plastic fantastic'—produces amazing results.

It's in no way a pro-grade 'L' lens, but Canon has been working on this classic for decades—50mm is the standard focal length for 35mm film cameras—and it does one thing very well.

Bought on the strength of recommendation (Amazon reviewers in their hundreds sing its praises, and even the picky crowd over at Fred Miranda can't say enough good things about it), I was anxious to see how it compared to the competent but not amazing 28-105mm f/3.5-4.5 consumer zoom that I'd transferred from my old film SLR to my new Canon Rebel XT.

The nifty fifty felt like a toy with its plastic mount and worrying lack of heft. But when I looked at the first shots I took, I was amazed.

They were murderously sharp with

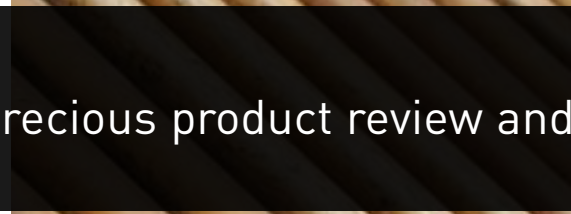
faithful color rendition and an overall feel so much better than you've a right to expect for \$70. If this was what it meant to use primes, I was hooked.

It's small and unobtrusive, while also fast enough for low-light shots of my constantly moving two-year-old daughter. And the necessity of zooming with my feet makes me think harder about framing and composition.

With the 1.6 crop factor, it's a reasonably long 85mm, so it works well as a walkaround lens outdoors. But its real strength is in portraiture, where its sharpness and creamy bokeh production really shine.

The autofocus is slow and grinding, and I wouldn't want to shake it too hard, but when it finally breaks (or gets lost down the back of the couch), I'll run out and buy another one instantly. 📷

David Moore is a writer, photographer, and web designer now living in Santa Fe, New Mexico (by way of England and Ireland). He likes a big cup of tea. He hadn't told himself he was visually illiterate for all those years. jpgmag.com/people/wycombiensian



Dropped In a Lake

Olympus Stylus 770 SW

By Jason DeFillippo

I recently bought a new Stylus 770 SW because it boasts the toughest specs of any point and shoot I've seen on the market. It's waterproof to 33 feet, drop safe from up to five feet, and crushproof to 220 pounds—an all around workhorse. I've lost countless point and shoot cameras to my back pocket and a bad memory, so this camera sounded perfect for me. I was also excited about being able to take it snorkeling and not have to ever use a useless underwater disposable again.

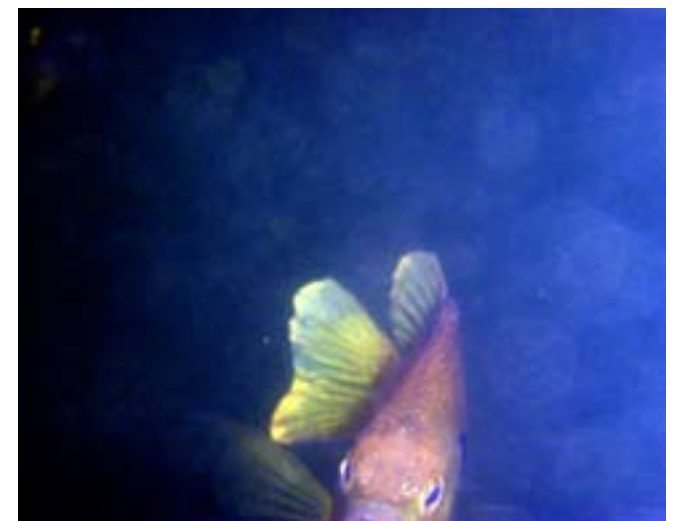
I was recently in West Virginia for a family reunion, which was held at a lake that was fairly well stocked with friendly bluegill, so I thought I'd give the underwater features a test run. These shots were taken by just sticking my arm a few feet into the water from the dock. I tried several different auto-exposure modes and varied the use of flash to see what different effects I could get. Unfortunately, I didn't make any notes so I can't elaborate on which settings resulted in which photos. I don't recommend using flash underwater, though, unless the water is perfectly clean since every bit of debris will be lit up like a small sun; removing the spots will require extensive image manipulation.

The results are interesting and I'm quite surprised and pleased with the images. The originals were slightly muddy and washed out, but auto levels in Photoshop cleaned them up. No other modifications were done to these.

My only criticism of the camera is that the LCD, while very large, is very, very hard to see clearly in direct sunlight. The thick glass over the screen is highly reflective and makes checking your shots somewhat difficult when on the spot.

For a mid-range point and shoot, I am really pleased with the 770 SW and plan on keeping it in my pocket (the front one!) for the foreseeable future. 📷

Jason DeFillippo has been snapping photos for over 20 years since he got a Pentax K-1000 for his 15th birthday. He's been published in Transworld Skateboarding, The Economist, German Forbes, and The New York Times. His favorite subject is large cities in the early mornings and the dead of night when everyone is sleeping. jpgmag.com/people/jpd



+1 more My Precious product review and +1 How To on double exposing your film

Passport

Photography can take you across borders and over oceans,
to exotic destinations and hidden corners of the globe.
JPG photographers took their passports for a spin and
brought back their most exciting discoveries.
Photographs of the world, by the world.

This was taken at the Sunset Beach Bar on Maho Beach in St. Maarten. There is no way you would get this close to a commercial airliner in America.

+17 more Passport images submitted and voted on by you



From the Front

War in Afghanistan

Photos by SPC Jeremiah Ridgeway, Essay by SPC Thomas Walton

We expected an attitude of resistance when we deployed to Afghanistan in February 2006. What we found upon arrival was another story.

I watched locals collecting dumpster trash around FOB (Forward Operating Base) Salerno, fishing out broken odds and ends to take home with them—some fighting over large finds. The generous US Army paid the wretches a dollar for eight hours' labor. Outside of the FOBs, it got worse. Many people around Camp Keating (locally called Kamdesh) lived in mud huts. Most were subsistence farmers, working tiny patches of land with primitive tools to support large families—not as a result of the war; it was just how they had lived for the last two thousand years. If not for AK-47s and RPGs, the people here have remained unchanged since Alexander the Great first conquered.

Our unit, 3-71 Cavalry 3rd Brigade Combat Team 10th Mountain Division, spent most of our deployment in the Nuristan province on the Pakistani border. Much of our mission was an attempt to stop insurgents and weapons flowing in from Pakistan. We built three bases: Naray, Camp Keating, and Camp Lybert. From these, we were expected to control the largest patch of rugged terrain in theater. The mountains so constricted our movement that, outside of the single road connecting the small bases, we were never able to conduct successful operations more than a couple kilometers from our camps or the road.

We were not fighting the Taliban, but HIG (Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin). Before US forces arrived, a lumber smuggling operation had been the area's biggest concern; US forces upset the status quo and turned neutral smugglers into this anti-US insurgency. HIG tactics were fairly simple in character but deadly in effect. The insurgents built positions overlooking our one road to ambush convoys with RPG and small arms, falling back into caves or over ridges out of sight. Ambushes could be stretched out over several miles and commonly came from across the river from our convoys, ensuring that we could not pursue. Typically, the HIG would disable a vehicle and then disappear when it got too intense.

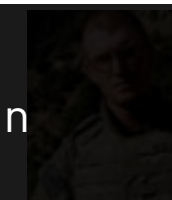
One of our missions was transporting supplies between Naray and Kamdesh. The one dirt road connecting the two

camps was usually in a sorry state of repair; at its widest there was barely enough room for an HMVEE to turn around, and at its narrowest a vehicle's wheels hugged the edge. 100-foot drops were the consequence of any deviation. The typical plan consisted of us driving down the road, waiting to be attacked.

If not for AK-47s and RPGs, the people here have remained unchanged since Alexander the Great first conquered.

During one daylight mission, D Company drove an LMTV (a large military transport truck) from Naray to Kamdesh with a convoy. Upon arriving at Kamdesh, the convoy reported that it had been very difficult for the LMTV to make the trip. Heedless of this report, command ordered the LMTV to make the trip back to Naray with a convoy at night. Soldiers on the ground were so sure of the mission's failure that they manned the LMTV with minimal personnel in the eventuality of a rollover. They couldn't sway command to cancel the mission. Less than two miles from the gate of Kamdesh, the road fell away under the tires of the LMTV and sent the truck plummeting down a 300-foot cliff into a river. CPT Benjamin Keating (for whom Camp Keating would be named) was killed and another soldier was badly injured. In a similar mission, a small team was inserted on top of a mountain out of range of all indirect assets and without immediate medical evacuation plans. The resulting firefight left four US soldiers dead, including SGT Lybert (for whom Camp Lybert was named). In all, 3-71 suffered nine KIA and a great many WIA. ■

+8 more captivating combat photos from an American soldier in Afghanistan



Jeremiah Ridgeway is a combat arms soldier with the 10th Mountain Division, stationed at Fort Drum, New York. He was deployed to Afghanistan for 15 months and leaves the military in July of 2008. He has plans to continue college and pursue conflict photography. jppmag.com/people/jehridgeway

Tools of the Trade

Extensions of human purpose, tools help us get the job done. Come see a diverse set of tools and the people who have mastered them.

Sponsored by the National Association of Photoshop Professionals



Man digging for lugworms on Brighton Beach at low tide. Apparently you can get £3 for 10 of them, and in two hours he can collect up to 100. Finding worms in the dark isn't easy—a head torch is essential. Brighton's Old West Pier can be seen in the background.

+15 more images of masters at work in the Tools of the Trade theme

Snowboard Photography

If at First You Don't Succeed, Try, Try Again

By Luke Phillips

Ever looked through a snowboard magazine and wondered what it took to capture each of those points in time? Let me tell you, it took a lot of lugging huge packs around through perfect powder days, whiteouts, and everything in between, plus a heap of patience.



Everything can get shut down due to a dangerous snowpack and avalanche conditions. It can rain instead of snow, or do neither, often for just as long as you can afford to be there.

1. LOVE SHARING THE MOMENT

I've been lucky to work with a wide range of people in the industry, but they all share one common thread: a love of capturing images for all to see and from which to take inspiration. Photographers, filmmakers, and the various media they work for provide a bridge from isolated events on snowbound mountains and streets around the globe.

2. KEEP SHOOTING

One top international photographer told me recently that he shot nearly 8,000 images last winter. Digital means you can just keep taking pictures and experimenting, something that anyone can now achieve. When it comes down to it, it's all about trial and error, and learning from that experience.

3. SOMETIMES IT SUCKS

The reality of trying to get through each winter, spring, and summer of shooting is not always as glamorous as it looks. Traveling is tiring and cash-draining, and you can't always afford the luxury of being where the motivated (and uninjured!) riders are. Even then, snowmobiles are guaranteed to get bogged down and won't move until you start digging. Batteries, trucks, and logic will almost certainly fail to function at some point, and riders will slam. They have bad days, and so will you.

4. TAKE THE WEATHER WITH YOU

Because light is critical, the weather can slowly drive you mad. Everything can get shut down due to a dangerous snowpack and avalanche conditions. It can rain instead of snow, or do neither, often for just as long as you can afford to be there.

5. IT'S ALL ABOUT PEOPLE

It is easy to get a fluke shot in a magazine, but very hard to sell the next one. And the next one. The trick is people. A truly epic shot might never reach the light of print if the rider isn't well known or because someone else made more an impression on an editor. It can take years to build up good networks, but it's necessary. Nine times out of 10 it'll be those with the network who get the banging shots. However, strong shots can equally well come from nothing but persistence.

6. LOOK FOR SOMETHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Always try to find original angles and make the most of what is available to you (it is much easier to be negative than positive). Any clown can fire off hundreds of sequence shots—what makes yours stand out from the crowd? Having said that, don't forget to shoot stock angles before you start trying to get the fantastically experimental shots.

7. HAVE A LITTLE FAITH

Never underestimate the insistent motivation of a rider wanting to get a trick dialed in perfectly. I am forever humbled by watching a friend crash and hike the same booter or hit the same rail multiple times to land it clean.

8. THE MORE THE MERRIER

Step 1: Gather motivated riders—as many as possible. Step 2: Offer them fame. Or beer. I find beer can work more effectively. Step 3: Get a session of riders, get a session going, and push them to make as many attempts as possible at the designated gnarly or original looking jump/rail/drop/

jib/other scary obstacle. This maximizes the number of times you can try different angles/setups before the landing is bombed out or riders are broken.

9. NOT ALL TERRAIN IS CREATED EQUAL

Terrain parks have sprung up all over the place in recent years, and have received coverage accordingly. For me, they are really only for the spring or summer. If there's powder on the mountain, going to the terrain park is just lazy. The first photo editor I ever met showed me a massive folder in his cabinet of park (mainly rail) shot submissions, saying he had no intention of using any of them. Unless it's a highly original angle or obstacle, the big mountain shot is often what they want.

10. BUILD IT AND THEY WILL COME

Making a small pile of snow to hurl yourself off is easy, but building big powder kickers in the backcountry is an art form. It takes years of experience to know what will work and what is dangerous, but in-run speed is usually the key factor. Shooting images that show the size of the jump, and the people involved in its building, is my first priority. Each booter is different, but I usually start shooting close and move progressively backwards to a longer angle for sequencing. 📸

Born in 1978, Luke grew up in and around London. Since then he has been sporadically roaming this earth, looking for a sugar mumma to support his many expensive habits.
jpgmag.com/people/lsp9

+2 other Ten Tips articles on capturing your favorite gravity defying tricks

Gravity Powered

Photography can freeze time, showing us just a single moment of a larger story. These photographs seem to capture people suspended impossibly in midair, leaving us to imagine what happens next. We all live with gravity’s relentless pull, making the illusion of flight all the more inspiring.



KIRKUK, IRAQ—DECEMBER 2: Jermaine Brown, a Harlem Globetrotter gives an impromptu slam dunk demonstration to a group of troops on an outdoor basketball court at Camp Warrior in Kirkuk, Iraq, on December 2, 2006. Navy Entertainment and Armed Forces Entertainment organized the Globetrotters’ trip to visit troops during a 21-day tour of the Middle East that included 12 different US Military bases located in five different countries.

+16 more theme images of awe-inspiring Gravity Powered moments

Just Say No To the In-Flight Movie

Photograph the World from 30,000 Feet

By Alexis Gerard

Taking a trip via commercial jet means an opportunity to photograph your world in a way that looks very little like anything you've seen published. Most aerial photography is done from low-flying private planes and helicopters that run below the cloud cover. At the other extreme we've also seen a lot of images of our earth shot from space. I've been fascinated by these types of images for years. I also travel a fair amount, mostly for work, and one day I noticed that the view from the airplane's window—which is higher than the former and lower than the latter—is different than either of them and very beautiful in its own way.

Getting worthwhile images involves technical issues, which I'll explain below; mostly it takes patience, persistence, and luck. You can have nothing but solid cloud cover under you for long stretches of time, and then a break will reveal something spectacular—but only for a few minutes. To maximize your chances, pass on the movies and video games. Read or listen to music so you can send a quick glance out the window every few minutes. Look not only for the wide view, but also for features on which to zoom in. Stay open to different types of beauty—cloudscapes, landscapes, landscapes-as-abstract—or you might come up with a different concept altogether.

There are three types of technical issues you'll have to deal with: conditions in the airplane, optimal camera settings, and post-processing. Here are some tips and tricks I've learned over the years.

PLANE ISSUES: Beyond the obvious (get a window seat), it matters which window seat you get. You don't want your view obstructed by the wing, and jet engines can leave a trail of air turbulence that causes distortion, so you will want to be seated ahead of them. If you really get into this, you'll find your side of the plane and the time of day can make a difference. You generally don't want the window facing you, so if you're flying north in the morning, the right side of the plane is best. Then there's the window itself—mine, for example, was scratched and had a change lives. He chairs the 6Sight® - Future of Imaging conference, and co-authored the book "Going Visual."

you will be instructed to turn off "all electronic devices" for takeoff and landing, which is just when you can get some of the most interesting views. Um, no comment!

CAMERA ISSUES: Objects outside your window move much faster than they appear. So in the interest of speed, turn off your autofocus and just set it to infinity. And since depth of field is not a consideration but shutter speed is, go with shutter preferred or, on the point-and-shoots, sport mode. I recommend those over full manual, because lighting conditions can vary dramatically very quickly.

POST-PROCESSING: Be prepared for lots of flat, bluish images that don't look like what you remember. That's because your visual system compensates to some degree for the crappy window and the haze below, but the camera doesn't. If you use automatic correction tools, you're most likely going to get a pretty psychedelic result. It can be fun, and some might like exactly that. I prefer to try recreating what I saw as closely as possible, which means that, even after processing the image in camera raw, I usually fine-tune it with three Photoshop tools: curves, levels, and shadow/highlight.

Finally, some references. In "traditional" aerial photography, the uncontested contemporary master is Yann Arthus-Bertrand. He has more books out than you can shake a stick at, and they're gorgeous. There's also at least one excellent aerial photographer showing his work right here on JPG, Dan Darroch (page 56 in this issue, and jpgmag.com/people/ddphoto).

For the "landscape as abstract" satellite view, don't miss Our Earth as Art (earthasart.gsfc.nasa.gov). And there's actually one book of exactly the kind of photography I'm talking about here, "Window Seat" by Julieanne Kost (oreilly.com/catalog/windowseat/), which has wonderful images and a lot of great technical information as well. ■

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