

Landscape Photography Workshop. Filters & more



 "A good photograph is knowing where to stand." Ansel Adams



# What I'll be discussing tonight..

- About me
- Inspiration
- Planning & execution
- Why use filters?
- Getting started
- Reading your Histogram
- Filters explained
- References + more
- Post processing demo





# About me

- Photography my weekend/after hours hobby
- Interest in photography began post high school now 8+ years and love it
- Design/IT background before photography
- Given a hand-me-down Canon DSLR (300D)
- Passion grew quickly from there!
- Self-taught through on-line tutorials, photography magazines, advice from other photographers
- Had a joint exhibition a few years ago in St Kilda
- Love to get away from the hustle & bustle!





# Inspiration

- Main photography interests lie in Landscape & Seascape photography
- Love to travel be it locally or overseas
- Inspired by many photographers but especially Australia's Peter Eastway & Christian Fletcher
- Love to shoot in the golden light hours but also late at night or middle of the day can be magic!





# Planning & execution

- I almost always have a plan before I head out shooting especially with land & seascapes
- Check sunrise / sunset times, forecast & tides if travelling to the coast
- Aim for quality over quantity
- If I come away with one great shot I'm happy!
- If you have a smartphone make the TPE app your friend
- To be able to capture what I want to show I use filters!





#### Why use filters?

- Unfortunately cameras cannot capture the tonal range that our eyes see
- Whatever medium we use, digital or film, our photos can fail to appear like our memories of the original scene.. Filters help combat this!
- I would argue they are most important piece of photographic equipment in my arsenal, my tripod being the second, camera 3<sup>rd</sup>
- We can use filters to:
  - Balance the exposure between a bright sky and a dark foreground (ND-grad)
  - Add saturation and reduce glare (Polariser)
  - Lengthen exposure times by reducing light (ND)
  - Warm, exaggerate, enhance mood, add drama
  - Reduce excessive amounts of time in post production
  - Limitation? Our imagination!



#### Getting started

- There are many choices out there but like anything quality comes at a price
- Cheaper systems are available from brands such as Cokin
- Severely limited when stacking multiple filters i.e. colour casts
- Below are some examples of this! Creativity can suffer as a result





# LEE Filters

- A few years ago I upgraded to LEE Filters and haven't looked back
- Wide range of filters available to suit different camera systems
- Can stack up to 3 filters in succession + a circular polariser
- Foundation Kit a good start, sets available with holder, suitable ring and a few graduated filters to get started
- Approx \$100-\$150 AUD for holder and 77mm ring (exc. Filters)
- Filters around \$130-\$150 AUD each, Polariser a lot more!





# **Using Filters**

- I always shoot in fully manual mode so I can control shutter speed, aperture and ISO
- The difference in light between the sky and foreground will determine which strength filter I'm going to use
- Generally speaking during the day I'll use a 0.3 ND Grad (1 stop), warmer afternoon light with higher contrast a 0.6 ND Grad (2 stop) & sunset with greater differences in light 0.9 ND Grads (3 stop) become the go to
- I don't use any fancy metering methods, I'll use the basic through the lens method and constantly refer to my histogram to ensure highlights & shadows aren't being clipped
- Tripod a must when shooting longer exposures anything slower than 1/25<sup>th</sup> if you have a steady hand!
- Disadvantages? Expensive, can be fiddly to setup, require a better understanding of your camera settings, vignetting can occur, requires more maintenance



# Reading your Histogram

- Understanding your Histogram is an extremely important part of owning a DSLR
- It will tell you if your image is correctly exposed, or under/over exposed
- In simplest terms a graphic representation of the tonal range within your image
- Shadows left, midtones in the centre, highlights on the right
- Low key? All the way to the left
- High key? All the way to the right
- Low contrast? Stacked in the centre
- High contrast? Spread out wide
- The ideal histogram will depend on your subject matter and what you want to convey in your image





Ideal Histogram

• The ideal Histogram for this scene looks a little like this!





Shot with my Lee Big Stopper (10 stop) and 0.6 ND Grad



#### Overexposed Histogram

Overexposed sky without ND Grad, note clipped highlights





Big stopper only



# Underexposed Histogram

What happens when you use an ND Grad that's too strong





E.g. using a 0.9 instead of a 0.6 in afternoon light



# ND Graduated filters

- Probably the most essential filters used in Landscape Photography & even in post production.
- Neutral Density Colour neutral
- Graduated reduces the amount of light entering the lens gradually in both hard and soft. Hard ideal for seascapes with flat horizon, soft when obstacles enter the scene!
- Remember to line up the filter with the horizon!







# ND Graduated filter example

#### Left with no filter, right with 0.9 ND Grad Hard edge











# ND filters

- An essential item in my repertoire of filters
- They reduce the amount of light entering the scene evenly
- Typically used to extend shutter speeds for creativity
- Allow you to use a relatively friendly aperture for long exposures e.g. f11
  without going up to f22 and losing image sharpness (diffraction)
- Interesting effects on people, water, cars, foliage or clouds
- A sturdy tripod is a must here!
- Like the Grad available in 0.3 (1 stop), 0.6 (2 stop) & 0.9 (3 stop)
- Easily combined with Graduated filters to balance sky and lengthen exposure



# ND filter example

- An example of combining both ND Graduated & ND filter
- Canon 5d mk III, 17mm, f11, 0.6 seconds, ISO 160
- Lee 0.9 Pro Glass ND & 0.6 ND Graduated Filters





#### ND filter example

#### Left with 0.9 ND Grad hard, right with 0.9 ND as well





# ND filter examples cont.







# The Big Stopper

- An ND Filter on steroids! Reduces the amount of light entering the lens by 10 stops
- Currently my favourite filter in my arsenal
- Ideal for capturing 30+ second exposures in bright daylight or at sunset well into 3+ minutes and beyond
- Requires full manual control and a shutter release if shooting for longer than 30 seconds (Bulb)
- Must manual focus and compose before attaching the filter to the holder
- Ideally you'll have a full frame body as noise is enhanced in longer exposures
- Alternative in low light? The new Little Stopper 6 stops
- Disadvantages? Manual everything, must be patient, at sunset you can have only one or two shots before the colour is gone especially in winter, blue cast

#### ALISTAIR WILSON

# The Big Stopper vs. Little Stopper

#### Broad daylight>

Late afternoon>

Sunsets >

Exposure Guide	
Normal Shutter Speed	with Big Stopper
1,000th	1 second
500th	2 seconds
250th	4 seconds
125th	8 seconds
60th	15 seconds
30th	30 seconds
15th	1 minute
8th	2 minutes
1/4	4 minutes
1/2	8 minutes
1 second	16 minutes
2 seconds	32 minutes

**Big Stopper** 

#### Little Stopper Exposure Guide

Normal Shutter Speed	with Little Stopper
1,000th	15th of a second
500th	8th of a second
250th	¼ of a second
125th	½ of a second
60th	1 second
30th	2 seconds
15th	4 seconds
8th	8 seconds
1/4	15 seconds
1/2	30 seconds
1 second	1 minutes
2 seconds	2 minutes



# The Big Stopper

- Left image 0.3 ND Grad, dull with no sense of drama (1/10<sup>th</sup> second)
- Right image 0.3ND Grad with Lee Big Stopper (74 seconds)
- Exactly the same ISO, focal length and aperture used (f13 @ ISO 100)
- Post processing example will come later on in Lightroom





#### Big Stopper examples



Big Stopper, o.6 ND Grad Hard – 86 seconds @ f11, ISO 200



#### Big Stopper examples



Big Stopper, 0.3 ND Grad Soft – 48 seconds @ f14, ISO 100



# **Polarising Filter**

- Reduces the amount of reflected light passing through your camera's sensor. Circular Polarisers ideal for DSLR cameras
- Their results cannot be replicated in post production
- Their effect is strongest at 90 degrees to the sun
- Polarisers will:
  - Make skies appear deeper, great for puffy white clouds!
  - Reduce glare on water and other surfaces
  - Reduce contrast between land & sky
  - Increase saturation and add 'punch'
  - Like ND filters a Polariser will reduce light entering the lens often by 2-3 stops
- Disadvantages?
  - Expensive \$400AUD+ !!
  - Longer exposures required, right angle to the sun required for max effect
  - Fiddly setup, not ideal for panoramas or extreme wide angles.



### Polariser examples

- Useful in waterfall photography
- Left without polariser, right at full effect. 6 seconds vs 10 seconds
- Here the polariser has reduced glare, added saturation, and reduced the contrast difference between the darker and brighter parts of the image



![](_page_26_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Polariser examples

![](_page_26_Picture_2.jpeg)

Big Stopper, Polariser, 0.3 ND Grad soft – 115 seconds @ f14, ISO 160

![](_page_27_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### Polariser examples

![](_page_27_Picture_2.jpeg)

Polariser only – 1/2th second @ f13, ISO 100

![](_page_28_Picture_0.jpeg)

# What's wrong with this picture?

![](_page_28_Picture_2.jpeg)

![](_page_29_Picture_0.jpeg)

# No filters?

![](_page_29_Picture_2.jpeg)

![](_page_29_Picture_3.jpeg)

![](_page_30_Picture_0.jpeg)

# Other filters..

- Warm up filters available in coral
- Sunset Filters super warm
- Reverse grad filters darker on the horizon
- Infrared filters block certain wavelengths of light
- Black & White filters

![](_page_30_Picture_7.jpeg)

![](_page_30_Picture_8.jpeg)

![](_page_31_Picture_0.jpeg)

#### References + more

- If you want to learn more about anything I've covered check out:
  - Cambridge in Colour <u>http://www.cambridgeincolour.com/</u>
  - Inspiring professionals book Landscape Photographer's guide to using filters
  - LEE Filters website <u>http://www.leefilters.com/</u>
- More from me:
- <u>http://alistairwilson.com.au</u> personal website with contact form
- <u>http://www.redbubble.com/people/Alistair35</u> On-line virtual store
- Social Media
  - Instagram @alwilsonpics
  - Facebook Alistair Wilson Photography
  - Twitter @alspics

![](_page_32_Picture_0.jpeg)

# Thank you!

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