



**BLACK
& WHITE
ISSUE!**

Discover the power of black & white

If you haven't discovered the magic of shooting mono, now is the time get started, says **Steve Bavister**. Inside every colour image you capture there's a black & white masterpiece just bursting to get out

If you stop for a moment and think about your all-time favourite photographs – the ones you think are really fantastic – how many of them are black & white and how many are colour? If you're typical, it's black & white images that predominate – with classic shots by photographers such as Ansel Adams and Henri Cartier-Bresson leading the way. In fact, some people find it hard to name even one colour picture they rate highly.

Maybe, you might argue, that's because black & white has been around so much longer. The first commercially-made colour film didn't come onto the market until 1935, while monochrome materials have been around since the nineteenth century.

But a lot worth recording has happened in that 68 years and, given the almost universal adoption of colour by the mass market since the 1970s, it's not a wild claim to suggest that there may have been more colour pictures taken since photography was born than black & white.

Even when colour was available, many leading photographers chose – and continue to choose – to shoot black & white in preference. You need only flip the pages of a fashion magazine, see a fine-art photographic exhibition, or check out the latest print advertisements to know that black & white is alive and well – and every bit as vibrant as it's ever been. Peer in the window of your local portrait and wedding

photographer and there's a good chance that you'll see monochrome images aplenty, because that's what many people want these days.

The reason that black & white is still popular is because many photographers find it a more creative, expressive medium. While colour gives you pictures that are a faithful record of the person or scene, there's a sense in which black & white reveals a deeper truth. It's almost as if colour sometimes gets in the way. Once it's removed you can see what's really there.

Because black & white photography reduces everything to shades of grey, the attention of the viewer is drawn more to the underlying structure of tone, shape, texture, line and form, rather than the surface structure of the content.

Supermarket customers will be familiar with the 'Buy one get one free' offers. With digital photography it's 'Take one get one free': inside every colour picture you take there's a monochrome picture that's yours for nothing, just bursting to get out. And once you've extracted it you're on your way to producing some memorable images. Whether you're new to black & white or an old hand, it's bound to get your creative juices flowing.