Coping with Extremes of Exposure

We are going to look at the methods producing correctly exposed images when taking photographs in difficult lighting conditions.

Example: The landscape photographer must correctly expose for foreground and sky when there is usually a least two stops difference in the exposure - the result is often either an underexposed foreground or overexposed sky.

Solutions:-

- **Graduated Filter**
  One way to compensate for the difference in exposure between foreground and sky is by using a graduated grey filter. This has the effect of darkening the sky and leaving the foreground alone.

If you do not possess a grey grad filter then try the following:

- **Dual Exposure**

  - *Shooting in Jpeg or Tiff*

  - *Check the difference in exposure between the sky and the foreground and note this figure down e.g. 2 stops*

  - *Next, set the camera up on a tripod and take a photo exposing for the sky*

  - *Without moving the camera or lens take a photo but this time expose for the foreground.*

  - *The important thing to remember here is that the camera must not be moved in any way.*

  - *Next we need to import the photos into an editing program e.g. Photoshop.*

  - *Open both of the images.*

  - *Using one of the images as the base, copy the other and place on top of the first. This is done by using the move tool.*

    Tip – Hold down the Alt and the Shift keys when moving the image, this will place the copy directly in the centre of the first image. Then close the second image.

  - *You should now have 2 layers, one for each image.*

  - *Add a layer mask to the second layer.*

  - *Set the default colours to Black and White and, using a soft brush paint away the layer mask to reveal the image underneath.*

- **Shoot in RAW**

  Shooting in Raw can halve the problem, expose for the brightest part of the image, remember, it is easier to reveal detail in shadow than it is in blown out highlights.

When converting the image in the Raw Converter perform two conversions, one exposing for the sky and one exposing for the shadow.

If you haven't done any of the above it is still possible to rescue some photos, but if the sky is blown out then forget it, it would be easier to import a new sky.

- ***Dual Levels Method***

  - *Import your image*

  - *Make a selection of the shadow area and copy this to a new layer (Ctrl+J) – Remember to feather the selection first.*

  - *Insert a Levels layer directly above the background image and press OK*

  - *Do the same above the Selection layer*

  - *Now, this is the clever part, hold down the Alt key and pass the mouse between the background layer and the first levels layer, when the cursor changes to two interlocked circles click the left mouse key. This locks the levels layer directly to the background layer. Now repeat the above for the Selection layer and the second levels layer.*

  - *Any adjustments made to the levels will only affect the layers they are attached to.*