CREATION OF LIGHTING EFFECTS TAKEN ON 21st AUGUST 2011 CANON EOS 1DS MKIII 17MM TS F4 L

'Lighting Effects' is the result of a fairly complex process that started with a challenging shoot in an abandoned church in the South Wales Valleys. The range of light within the church was huge, from almost total darkness in the shadows to the brightest highlights imaginable as the sun shone directly into the narrow windows.

The shot(s) were taken from a suspended gallery that looked down over the main body of the church. This was accessed via a very narrow, spiral stone staircase, which in itself was the first challenge - to get me and my rather hefty kit up there.

As I was using an ultra wide angle Tilt and Shift lens, getting the tripod set-up right was critical. The camera should be completely level before making any perspective adjustments but unfortunately on the climb up to the church I lost my hotshoe spirt level so I had to guess the level and Im not very good at that!

Final Image - 7 shot HDR composite (ISO 125 F10, shutter speed range 1/40 to 6 secs)

It was obvious that the only way to really capture the light rays and all of the detail in the architecture was to create a High Dynamic Range (HDR) composite image. I used my cameras autobracketting function to take 7 images, each one approximately 1 1/3 stops apart. These RAW images were:

Metered exposure 0 EV 0.4sec

-4 EV 1/40 sec

-2 2/3 EV 1/15 sec

-1 1/3 EV 1/6 sec

+1 1/3 EV 1 sec

+2 2/3 EV 2.5 sec

+4 EV 6 sec

The images were then tone mapped using a Lightroom / photoshop plug in called Photomatix Pro to provide a composite image. Although this mapping process is complex and huge variations and adjustments can be made, this is only the first stage in the creation of the final image The adjustments at this stage are globally applied to the whole image and localised "tweeking' is still needed to get the best out of the image without it looking overprocessed and unreal (like a CGI image). The image right is the initial output from Photomatix.

Further processing in Photoshop improved the contrast and colours of the image, corrected the perspective problems introduced by not getting the camera level, removed the lens flair and the friends that crept in un-noticed! Finally I also got rid of the ledge edge on the bottom right corner and extended the shaft of light to create a nice diagonal.