

CREATION OF LONG EXPOSURE IMAGES

I was first inspired to try long exposures a couple of years ago after seeing the work of Michael Levin in his book Zebrato. Unfortunately he gave no hints at all as to how he achieved the tranquil images and at the time very few people seemed to be using the technique. Consequently it took me a while to find out how to achieve the long exposures needed and I had to improvise to obtain the equipment needed. Nowadays this is a very popular technique and there are countless “how to guides” available on the Web and in magazines.

The 2 images described in this note were taken at almost the extremes of my experience with the technique – Dawn over Loch Lomand was taken just a few months ago and uses the latest (and in my opinion best) tech, while Sunrise over Porthcawl was one of my first experiments and used a very basic filter.

SUNRISE OVER PORTHCAWL: TAKEN ON 1st APRIL 2009 CANON 5D ISO 100, f18 27 secs



“Normal” exposure (1/30sec)



Long exposure using plastic ‘10 stop’ filter

These shots were taken on a storming morning at high tide. The image on the left shows the scene as it was seen. The long exposure on the right was taken using a plastic filter that was in effect made from the material used in Welding Goggles.

This cuts down the light entering the lens dramatically (approx 10 stops) so the movement of water and clouds is blurred.

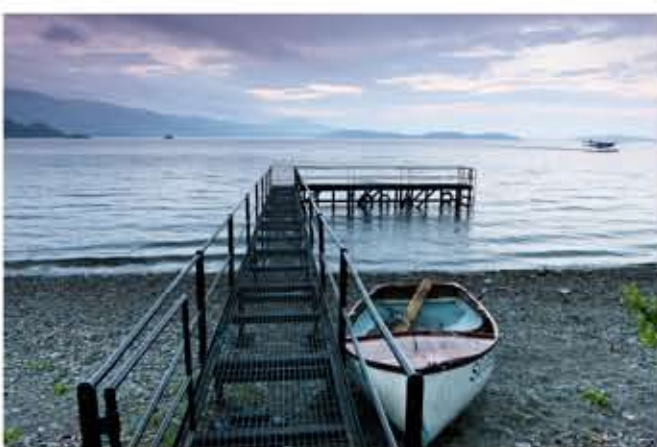


Final image - adjustments made:

- Horizon straightened
- Flair spots created by imperfections in plastic filter removed
- foreground brightened
- contrast in sky increased
- colour temperature adjusted to remove most of the magenta cast introduced by the filter (though not entirely as I quite liked the warm up effect it had on the image)

DAWN OVER LOCH LOMAND: TAKEN ON 8th MAY 2011 CANON 1DS ISO 400, f9 300 secs

I have to admit at this point that the title of this shot is misleading - it was actually taken at Dusk! When you view these two images together it becomes obvious from the difference in colour temperatures that the warmer tones of the Porthcawl image is an early morning shot, while the cooler palette of the Loch must have been taken in the evening. The light was falling dramatically as I took the shot and I had



“Normal” exposure 1/8th sec @f11

to mentally adjust the exposure as the shutter was open. I was using the Bulb setting and a remote shutter release to time the exposure; with an exposure of 5 minutes getting it wrong would have been annoying! Ideally I would have preferred to use a lower ISO setting to reduce the noise, but it would have dramatically increased the exposure time.

For this image I used a Lee Big Stopper glass 10 stop filter which is optically excellent (but very fragile and as rare as hens teeth at the moment!) and so doesn't introduce as many problems as my original plastic filter. It was perhaps overkill on this image, given the low ambient light conditions. Very little post processing done to this except to clone out the branch on the right hand edge.

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