



NEWCASTLE QUAYSIDE
This panorama was created from a sequence of eight frames, all shot handheld with an infrared-modified DSLR then stitched using Photomerge in Photoshop CS3. IR-modified Nikon D70 with Sigma 10-20mm lens.

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SHOOTING PANORAMAS

Panoramic photography traditionally required specialist (and expensive) film cameras, but these days, all you need to do is shoot a sequence of images with your digital SLR then 'stitch' them together using the latest software to create stunning, seamless images. Lee Frost shows how you can stretch your imagination

PANORAMIC PHOTOGRAPHY has played a central role in my career for many years now. I was first inspired to try it after buying a copy of Colin Prior's *Highland Wilderness* back in the early '90s. It's a book of his shots of the wild landscape of northern Scotland, taken with a 6x17cm panoramic rollfilm camera. It was as if I had found the missing piece to my own creative jigsaw, and after months of saving, I managed to scrape enough money together to buy a second-hand Fuji G617.

It was the start of a love affair that endures to this day and has seen me work with a range of different cameras, from Hasselblad Xpans, Horseman 612s and Art 617s, to a Fotoman, a Fuji GX-617 which I still own and use, and even a natty handmade 360° camera called a Lookaround. Oh, and along the way I wrote a best-selling book on the art of panoramic photography, funnily-enough titled Lee Frost's *Panoramic Photography*. You should buy a copy – it really is very good! [Nice plug Lee – Ed].

However, since I stepped over the to dark side last spring, with the purchase of my first digital SLR, I've discovered a whole other side to panoramic photography in the form of image stitching, and I have to say that I'm impressed.

Initially, I refused to believe that any digital technique could match the quality I was achieving with my Fuji GX-617 and Fuji

Velvia slide film. When the resulting 6x17cm trannies are scanned on a high-end Imacon scanner (admittedly at £9 a pop), I'm able to output enormous prints where every detail is as clear as a bell – some of my panoramas have been printed as big as 3x1m and they still look good. What's more, those images are created with one trip of the shutter, so there's no faffing around at a computer.

Oh, I knew what I was talking about. I'd been at this game for years and I had honed my craft. No digital upstart was going to convince me to part with my beloved Fuji. Then out of curiosity, I secretly shot a sequence of images with my Canon EOS-1Ds Mk III, stitched them together, sat back and thought, 'WOW!'

So simple, so quick, and so good. Yet again, I realised that being a stubborn old git, when it came to embracing digital technology, was doing me more harm than good. It's great to have principles, but the reality is that I'd sell my granny for the sake of a great shot, so I realised it was time to stop being silly and just face facts – creating digital panoramas is not only easy, but it's versatile and offers almost endless creative potential.

With a panoramic film camera, you're limited to the field-of-view offered by the lens or lenses available for that particular model, and the widest focal length rarely captures any more than you could in a single shot with a 17mm lens on a DSLR. ▶