



Don't be Afraid to Experiment

By photographer Tony May, Leeds, UK.

As a commercial and advertising photographer, one week I may be shooting jewellery, the next week interiors and people and the next week food. My business is still young, so every investment in equipment has to be carefully considered. My first big job happened when I was approached by a manufacturer of luxury razors and shaving accessories to shoot several hundred images for new glossy brochures. I had been shooting film up to that point but realised I had to quickly find a digital solution to the problem. I rented a Phase One P 25 for that job with the Capture One software. This and a lot of late nights helped me deliver the job on time and the client, designers and printers were very happy with the image quality. Every single commercial job since then I have shot digitally!

Having purchased my own Phase One back since then I know my investment will be protected when I come to upgrade, even if I decided to change camera platform. At the moment my clients love the images from my H101 back and Hasselblad ® H1 combination and they have recently won me two awards, which is really helping my business.

(One of my H101 food images won me the title Yorkshire Region Advertising Photographer of the Year 2007, awarded by the British Institute of Professional Photography and was judged best of all the commercial category winners to make me Yorkshire Region Commercial Photographer of the Year 2007).



I shoot with the H101/H1 in the studio and wherever possible on location. For me, with my still life work, shooting tethered is the only way to go. Why use a small preview screen when you can check all the details on a large monitor as you shoot?

I love to experiment with lighting setups to create a different mood that might excite the client and may shoot dozens of images for one piece before I get the shot I am really happy with. Where tethering isn't possible on location I use a Nikon DSLR and I use Capture One to process all my images. In the past I've also shot on Canons. Occasionally jobs require me to use both the H101 and DSLR systems and being able to process all RAW images in one software tool and get a consistent look makes life much simpler.

I had a previous career in IT and Capture One has the attributes I expect from a professional software tool. It's robust, the interface is straightforward and easy to learn and most importantly the tool is powerful and offers an efficient workflow. Even my oldest Mac runs the software effectively.

I particularly like the ability to process a batch of RAW files while simultaneously shooting or retouching. I have an area of my website devoted to client review of images from shoots. Once I have finished the initial review of the captures and applied white balance, profiles and exposure settings, I then define the presets in the process tool to generate thumbnails and QuickProof™ jpegs at the correct sizes for my website.

The Composition Mode facility is also very useful for me where my clients want product images shot from the same angles with the same perspective across all their ranges but where there may be months between shoots. I can just overlay the new image on a previous one and adjust the camera position until they match up. It's something else you don't have to worry about when you deliver the job.



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I would say don't be afraid to experiment with different profiles and styles as well as film curves to achieve the results you want. When shooting furniture with flash or mixed light sources, I use Portrait or Outdoor Daylight profiles to achieve the most natural rendition of the wood, sometimes using different profiles for different types of wood and tweaking the saturation. I like the results the film curves give but for highly reflective materials like chrome and silver I can use linear response to retain detail in more of the highlight areas and adjust the exposure compensation and contrast compensation controls to still get a "punchy" result. For me these techniques greatly reduce or eliminate the post-production work I have to perform on individual images.



Thinking about future investments as my business grows, well, I am lucky to have knowledgeable and enthusiastic local dealers and I like the fact that Phase One run an open forum for their users – it's refreshing and inspires confidence as well as being practically useful. You get to share other people's experiences, including the problems and solutions, and see the responses from the Phase One guys. It all seems a bit more open than other manufacturers and it's mostly very positive. I'm waiting to see Capture One v4, I have seen images from one of the latest P+ backs and I am impressed!

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