

# 65 and still sexy

Maybe it is time to put the pixel race into retirement now that Phase One has reached Prince Charles's status with the sixty-plus megapixels of the P65 back. But their lenses may go further still, they are so sharp, says David Kilpatrick.

IT WAS a full house – if a small house – when Team Valley specialist colour and large format lab Chromazone allowed Phase One to host an open day in their efficient workspace. Seventeen delegates sardined themselves into the small lecture room after purloining all the reception seating, and this was just the first of two 'sittings' of the day.

Eric Joakim of Phase One delivered a talkthrough tour of the new Capture One software in its version 4.5 form, after a less formal downstairs reception where Chris Ireland of Direct Digital Imaging (DDI) co-hosted the event. He had a wonderful array of his own gear set out to be handled, alongside a Broncolor studio set-up provided by JP Solutions.

It was this tabletop covered in unusual bits and pieces which made the sales pitch for the Phase One digital backs unique. Where Hasselblad has moved to a relatively closed system which almost demands the use of its own bodies, lenses and one-purpose software, Phase One has decided to make itself the Danish army knife of the digital world.

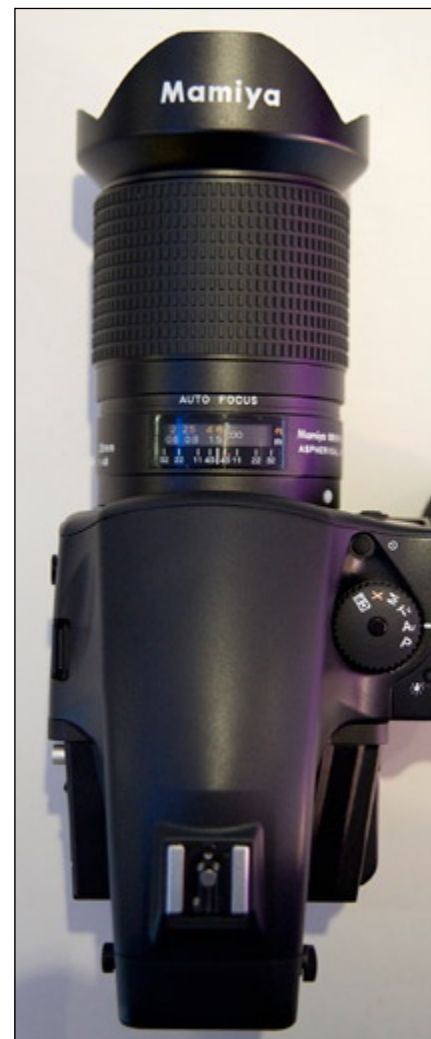
Chris showed backs with adaptors to fit them to monorail or wide-angle view cameras; he proudly gave away Chromazone printed samples from his digital pinhole landscapes made with the backs fitted to wooden bodies.

There was an adaptor sitting there to fit Hasselblad C/F lenses on to the Mamiya AF-based Phase One camera bodies, and a Ukrainian Hartblei 45mm Super Rotator tilt-shift lens (rare and valuable these days, due to worldwide demand) which we were told is being reworked to appear as a Phase One optic with new German glass, new coatings, new controls and a circular-diaphragm iris.

The message was that you can fit a Phase One back on to almost any optical imaging system. Chris was discussing a recent request from a specialist jewellery photographer; this involved fitting the entire Phase One 645-AF type camera on to the back of a Sinar,



Top: pix and gear awaited delegates to the free open day in Newcastle. Above: Eric talks through Capture One 4 Pro. Below: the Broncolor studio set up from JP Solutions.



The Phase One camera with 28mm *f*4 Mamiya true wide angle lens – equal to an 18mm and the widest ever designed for the 645 format – produces very sharp, high contrast architectural images effortlessly. This shot was hand-held at ISO 50 and *f*8 resulting in a 1/115s exposure. It's pin sharp, to the level of granules in the paintwork, and the strong reflected sunlight has produced no visible lens flare or sensor reflections.



allowing easy viewing through its prism finder for focusing with large format lenses at macro scales.

The star of the show was a pre-production P65 back, with a 60+ megapixel capacity and almost the same image area as real 6 x 4.5cm film backs. This produces files 9131 x 6842 pixels, 170MB per image of 8-bit data with an aspect ratio ideally shaped for most print sizes.

Working at a standard resolution for larger inkjet work of 150dpi (smaller inkjets generally need 200-240dpi as they are examined more closely) that's a five-foot high print straight out of the camera without considering Genuine Fractals or any other size boosting process.

Naturally, I wanted to try the back – and I also wanted to try the Mamiya AF 28mm f4 lens, unique in that unlike Hasselblad's digital 28mm it yields a true rectilinear image needing no software correction. Outside there was a hope of five minutes of November sunshine, and the only subject around was Chromazone's own modern industrial unit.

First, the 28mm with its angle of view equal to an 18mm on 35mm full format enabled me to get the building in view despite a rank of photographers' cars parked right up to the front.

Secondly, it flare-busted some extreme light aided by accurate auto metering at ISO 50.

But when we processed the raw files using Capture One 4 Pro, the real impact came from the microscopic level of detail shown in the files. The back has no anti-aliasing filter, and therefore reveals everything the lens can resolve. The experience is totally unlike using a 35mm DSLR, even a 21 or 24 megapixel version. This really is detail down to pixel level, requiring no capture sharpening to enhance it.

As an example, the shot on this page of the lab's front with inkjet printed signage showed detail down the dots of the printing system used for the red fascia signs. Our small repro clip is from a 45 by 60 inch enlargement, though for the whole shot, I cropped the bottom off to leave a neater square format which would print to the highest magazine quality to 20 inches square.

Unless you try one of these backs and see the level of fine detail present when viewed at 100%, you might assume they are just like bigger versions of a Canon 1Ds MkIII. This is not the case. The image, aided by a lens with any residual CA removed by C1 Pro, is a couple of orders better. You would



*This square crop from the top of a P65 frame is 6842 pixels across. The 28mm Mamiya AF lens has exceptionally good drawing and the sharpness was incredible – see the section below at 150dpi, which shows the texture of the inkjet printed sign panels on the lab's fascia.*



*The new Phase One 45mm f3.5 Super Rotator Tilt Shift lens will be based on this Hartblei design, using German glass in place of the original Kiev Arsenal factory optics, with new coating, mechanisms and aperture.*

need to take a 1Ds MkIII shot and reduce it to 50% size in Photoshop, then view it pixel for pixel, to approach the detail present in a P65 shot.

Having just invested in a 24 megapixel DSLR, seeing the results from the Phase One camera and this back was a bit of a confidence. No matter how good a lens I get, no matter how much care I take, any commercial client receiving one of these P65 images at full size would no longer be very interested in commissioning 35mm DSLR work.

As for the wedding and portrait field, there are backs with less resolution and they are going to look just as sharp pixel for pixel. Phase One is rolling out its own program of lenses modified from both Mamiya and Carl Zeiss designs – the 45mm TS, 120 MF Makro and TS variants, 45-90mm zoom, 75-150mm D zoom, the 28mm, 45mm, 80mm, 150mm f2.8... all are reworked to provide the same level of pixel-perfect sharpness.

The P+ backs compared with earlier models (available affordably refurbished) offer better high ISO, a better LCD screen, more dynamic range and the amazing ability to produce clean time exposures up to one hour.

## The software

Eric's demonstration of Capture One 4 Pro software obliged me to upgrade my Mac system to one capable of running it! It needs both the Leopard OSX version and Intel processor.

Most impressive was the tonal matching. Almost with a single click, flesh tones can be matched across a whole series of images – as, of course, can fabrics or paint colours. You can create and save ideal skin colours, and match new shoots up to these but early users discovered it also works for any other colour.

The workspace is much improved over previous versions with floating palettes and custom toolbars you can save as a default. There is a workable High Dynamic Range tool which can use a single raw file (many require multiple bracket shots) and you can stack up a set of variants on processing for any single raw.

The webpage auto production was so fast we didn't know it had happened, huge files resized and exported in a single click and apparently in no time at all.

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