

Phillip Island Monthly Club Competition – Judge Feedback for -July- Subject - OPEN-- Judge – David Burren

*Please refer to Judge Instruction Letter for ratings: **HC** (Highly Commended) - **C** (Commended)*

Sequence by Title	Member No	Title	Judge Rating	EDPI
1	770	Aged grass tree		<p>Lots of stories (even eyes and a face) in that tree. The left-most branch merges with the background bit. I wonder if you move the camera slightly lower (bend down slightly) if the separation would have helped. Not everything needs to be taken from head-height.</p>
2	431	Around the lake		<p>Be conscious of where the viewer’s eyes may go. The path leads us off to the left, but then we run out of picture, and head off to the right looking at the scene. The people on the right are muted in monochrome, but definitely contrasty enough to grab our attention.</p> <p>You could fine-tune the level here. The central post is fairly upright, but a ½-degree tilt to the right would make the background feel more natural.</p>
3	770	Ball of fire		<p>I don’t think the person on the right is really contributing to the image. You could experiment with crops.</p> <p>I think a vertical crop with the sun on the centre-line would work great here: leading us up into those clouds. Yes you lose the interesting side sky bits, but I think the result is worth it.</p> <p>There’s always going to be haze with shots like this. Hopefully your lens was as clean as it could be (and it can be worth removing UV/etc filters for it).</p>
4	325	Calm		<p>The reflected green blob on the lower right edge (an internal lens reflection of the sun maybe?) is unfortunate. It’s worth checking around the edges of our photos before we finish, as we often don’t want things there (like the steps rail) grabbing our attention and leading the brain out of the frame.</p>
5	862	Cowra Gardens		<p>Compositionally this works well, with the weaving path taking us into the scene.</p> <p>Be very careful with your “horizon”. Here the camera was tilted to the left, making the ponds on the right look like they should be flowing out of the frame. I think even a 1.5-degree tilt back to the left would make it all feel more settled.</p>

			<p>The white guide-rope at the bottom has colour fringes that are highlighting the chromatic aberrations of your lens. Using the Lens Corrections tools in Lightroom for example can remove those, and you'll find that it also corrects the colours of things like the stone path: those colour fringes are in fact everywhere!</p>
6	862	Cowra Gardens1	<p>An interesting and colourful scene, but a bit washed out (presumably due to the mist in the air). Improving the contrast (e.g. by pulling down the blacks end of the scale) can have a striking impact on making the colours pop again.</p>
7	325	Fog bow	<p>An interesting scene that many people either don't notice or don't try to capture. Nicely balanced across the composition.</p> <p>I see you were shooting in Manual, but the limitations of that camera's lens may have meant you couldn't stop down any more. If you'd managed a slower shutter speed there might have been a hint of movement in the car which would subtly improve its place in the composition.</p>
8	326	Frenchman's Peak Framed	<p>The composition has a lot of promise here, but the washed out white areas make it feel over-processed.</p> <p>Partly this is digital processing trying to compensate, and you ending up with huge "haloes" around those rail posts. The white border on the left is unfortunate too.</p> <p>Your camera can take bracketed exposures, and it might be worth taking a series of 3 shots on "motor-drive" so you have different brightness images all taken at the same camera location. If you were to feed those into Lightroom's HDR function (especially if they were RAW/NEF format) you might be surprised at how neatly you can manage to keep detail in the posts and the background.</p> <p>You had stopped down to f/13 in search of depth of field (DOF): be aware that if you then focussed on the foreground tree that more of the DOF will be to the distance than to you. It may be that you could focus manually even closer, and improve the clarity of those posts.</p> <p>If you use the bracketing in manual mode the aperture should be unchanged between shots. Otherwise aperture-priority would be my choice.</p> <p>Be aware that near the centre we can see a small hair that's probably sitting on your camera's sensor (and only noticed when you stop down that far).</p>

9	399	hooded robin		<p>At that focal length you have limited DOF. Be aware the body has ended up sharper than the face. Also be aware that if you manage to stop the lens down slightly (e.g. f/7.1 or f/8) it can help with the sharpness (obviously a good camera support helps with the slight loss of shutter speed, but at least the bird wasn't moving).</p> <p>Everything's a compromise with these shots. We wish the background wasn't so noisy, we wish the bird had been somewhere without those branches across the tail, etc. But overall it's nicely done.</p>
10	399	island trader	C	<p>It's always interesting to see the Island Trader come in and unload. Your composition's working well, with the mountain in the background and the jettly leading up to the left.</p> <p>I say "up": it does look very strange with the almost 2-degree tilt. That horizon is nowhere near level, which can make everything feel off-balance.</p>
11	431	Kitten	C	<p>A beautiful face which grabs our attention.</p> <p>Do be aware that the out-of-focus object in the background merges with the cat's backside somewhat, leaving confusion in the viewer's mind as to what's going on back there. If it was simpler back there, your viewers will just scan across it and just return back to those beautiful eyes.</p>
12	326	Mother and baby		<p>Simple and effective, with the mono treatment avoiding the eye getting dragged to colourful things like dummies which might otherwise dominate the image.</p>
13	431	Native_Hibiscus		<p>This could be an image of the hibiscus with a bee in it. But (maybe especially because the white centre has lost a little bit of contrast) it could also be a picture of a bee that happens to be visiting the flower.</p> <p>Either way it's effective.</p>
14	866	Old boat shed		<p>That old shed has definitely seem better days. But the image does feel over-worked, with the sky unevenly darkened around the trees, lighter and darker bits of distant water, etc.</p>
15	487	People watching	C	<p>The composition works well, with an effective story.</p>

Do be careful about the chromatic aberrations from the lens. Correcting for those does actually make a significant difference to the overall colours!

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16	862	PortDouglasDawn		A simple and effective composition. It is somewhat soft, but that's probably always going to be a challenge with that lens and aperture.
17	862	PortDouglasDawn1	C	Please colours and an interesting scene! Be careful with your horizons. A 1-degree tilt might not sound like much, but it can have a big visual impact.
18	862	PortDouglasLowTide	C	An interesting scene, with layers leading us deeper into it. Only about 2/3 rd of a degree tilt, but be aware that due to perspective distortion the roof of the building is probably not meant to appear level.
19	447	PRINT_Surf Fishermaman	HC	An interesting pose. We could almost imagine a warrior wielding a sword in a challenge to the oncoming wave. Overall very effective!
20	770	rawnsley_bluff		The tree is central, and it looks like you're trying to feature it. But the trunk merges into the background hill a bit. Sometimes a combination of selective focus as well as moving closer which could also make the tree protrude further into the sky, might help it stand out. I would be tempted to experiment with crops omitting the trees poking in from the sides, making it more about just the tree and the background bluff.
21	399	rennison bight		A simple scene which seems to be mainly about that stand of trees.

				I would consider cropping a strip off the bottom to avoid some of the stones in the lower left. Little things like that to simplify the image can have a surprising impact.
22	770	Rusty	C	A colourful scene! I do wish it wasn't cropped quite so tight to the handle at the bottom though.
23	325	sailors warning		Do be aware that the reflections of that sign in the centre do give our brains a strong signal about which way is "up". You've got a tilt of most of a degree to the left going on here. Other than that it's a fascinating scene.
24	866	Scallop Shell	HC	A wonderful image. I would be tempted to crop off some of the blurred foreground though. Also once I'd taken that shot I might reach in and carefully remove some of the sand from the top of the shell, and maybe then wet it again slightly. A little bit of "gardening" like that can (like other things I've mentioned) have surprising impact.
25	447	Sea Of Colours	HC	It doesn't matter that the left of the frame is probably "up". You've ended up with a very pretty abstract play of colours!
26	487	Silhouette on Lake Mulwala		Simple and quite effective. Do be aware that reflections off shiny features on the back of the neck have affected how the silhouette processing has "cut the line". It might be worth re-working that area slightly so the resulting silhouette didn't "stutter" so much. I wouldn't just draw a new line in: I'd probably change the contrast of the underlying image a little bit in those areas to help the solarise/etc function to find a better line.
27	326	Silos at Sunset		The detail in the image is suffering a bit (the right side may have had to be brightened, and that will always accentuate noise). But overall the composition and "story" work well.
28	325	smile		It doesn't "feel" like a smile to me. More like a face you don't want to mess with! That's not a criticism though.

			<p>The background has been “worked” a bit (areas darkened, etc) and the result is effective, but I’d be careful to not overdo it. As is I might be tempted to do some spot removal/”healing” on the yellow in the lower right, the bright leaf in the upper right, and the dot reflection off the green thing just above and to the left of the head.</p>
29	399	squawking	<p>A great capture of an action shot.</p> <p>Hindsight is 20/20 vision, but these always look better when there’s not a twig (“power pole”) sticking out of the subject’s head. A challenge to deal with in the moment though.</p>
30	487	Summer in Norway	<p>The consistent colours of the Norwegian buildings (especially up north and seen in vistas like this from Hurtigruten ships) always contrasts well against the snow. The reflection nicely balances the hill too.</p>

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31	869	Sunderland Bay		I like working with long exposures like this. But there is a lot of scene on the sides which might not be contributing a lot. I'd look at some slight crops (and if you go back there again maybe slightly different camera position) to make the interesting rocks and waves a stronger part of the composition.
32	866	Sunset Between Storms	HC	Almost apocalyptic! Certainly keeps us looking and exploring for a while.
33	487	Three in a Row		My first impression was "underexposed". You don't want to blow out the white feathers, but I think it could be stronger if we saw a hint of texture in the dark heads. I think this might work better with a pano crop to reinforce the line of birds.
34	326	Twilight Bay, Esperance		Interesting artwork, although the pixellation of the sky (which looks like it would have had interesting details) seems a little strange compared to the detail preserved in the rocks in the centre. I'd probably correct the tilt by about half a degree.
35	431	Water_Garden		A very simple and pleasant. Good afternoon (?) on the scene, complemented by the blue background. Do be aware that (especially when you step back and look at a smaller view) the vignetting you've applied there is quite heavy (and uneven). Making that vignette a bit subtler overall could be stronger.
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