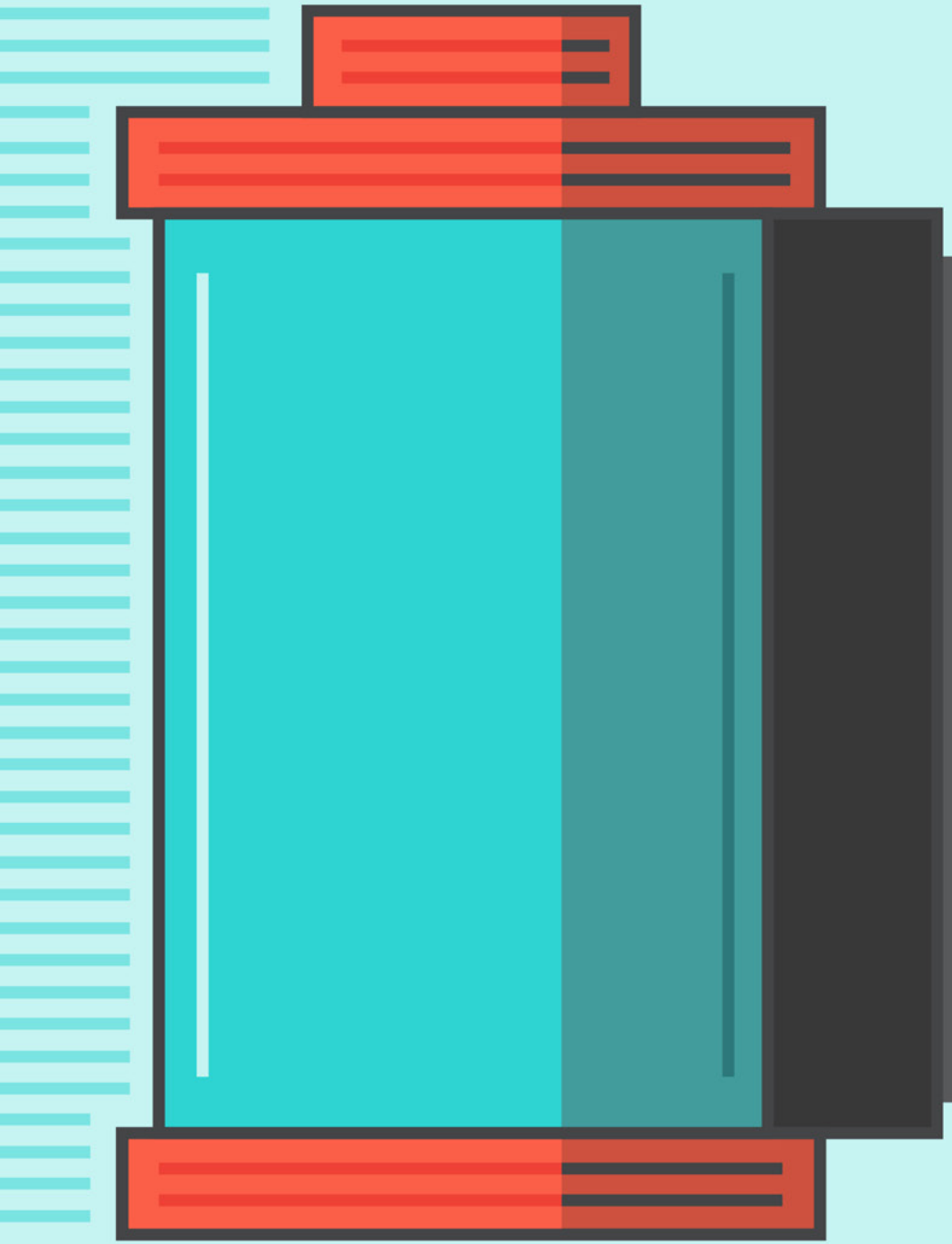

FILM PHOTOGRAPHY IN A DIGITAL AGE

an educational guide by: PHOTOSHELTER

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PART I

Intro

PART I

Intro

There are few experiences that evoke wonderment and excitement like developing your first print in a darkroom. The hazy ghost of an image slowly concretizes into the alluring beauty of a gelatin silver print. Since the beginning of the 21st century, existential threats to film's future have come from all sides. Industry stalwarts like Kodak have filed for bankruptcy and camera manufacturers like Nikon have ceased producing film cameras.

Yet somehow, film persists in a myriad of forms.

The Impossible Project resurrected Polaroid, Kodak Alaris continues to manufacture consumer film, and crowdfunding has helped support new projects like New55 Film and Ferrania. The ineffable qualities of film have attracted a younger generation of photographers and artists eager to work with a physical medium and resurrect alternative processes from the adolescence of film.

According to a recent Ilford survey, 30% of respondents are under the age of 35, and the recent growth in film sales is attributable to this new interest in the medium. Ilford has gone so far as to launch and maintain a website called localdarkroom.com to help consumers find local resources for film developing.

In today's digital world, there is a certain romanticism surrounding film and analog things. And more than the nostalgia, perhaps there is a human connectedness to the tangibility of film. It is, after all, a thing. A physical thing to hold in one's hands. A print can sit in a frame without need of power or WiFi, and be viewed with a surreptitious glance. A negative can survive power outages and hard drive crashes. And film moves us away from instantaneous gratification, causing us to move slower and hopefully with more intent. In that respect, an interest in film is relevant to all photographers, and perhaps the community of photographers should ensure its survival.

Consider this guide a tribute to all the companies and people flying the flag of film: Digital natives who have seen the beauty in analog, grizzled veterans who never gave up on silver, and companies who can't stop tilting at windmills. Perhaps history will look at them as a niche footnote; Luddies in the digital world. Or perhaps, we will remember those who helped save an artform for future generations.

PART I

Why Does Film Persist?

As with resurgence of vinyl records, the deeper we get into the digital age of photography, the desire for the analog format for film seems to grow. The grain structure, the "look," and the formats are all technical qualities that seem to attract the growing segment of film enthusiasts. But it goes beyond the actual medium for many photographers.

Photographers seem to find a meditative quality in slowing down the process of photography. No more chimping or motor drives. Twelve to thirty-six shots per roll instead of the thousands of JPGs that can be stored on a 256GB card. Working in darkrooms with noxious chemicals seems akin to the urbanite who discovers gardening. Your hands are in the dirt, and boy, does it feel glorious.

Despite repeated reports of its death, film continues to be produced and in some cases, re-invented. Old cameras are rehabilitated and new film cameras like the Lomo Belair and Wanderlust are created. New versions of darkrooms like Fojo.me intrigue. Given our penchant for physical items, it's unlikely that film would ever disappear for good.

Lomo Belair

Wanderlust

PART I

Why Do They Use It?

Although large format film still has no digital peer, digital photography has advanced by leaps and bounds. The former complaints about dynamic range and resolution have generally become historical footnotes, but many photographers cite how using film changes their process of taking photos for the better. Here are a few quotes from photographers using film regularly.

"There are some things which film does very well, and let's face it, almost everything you do in digital can be wonderful, surprising, full of capabilities. Better becomes more of a feeling than something you can metrically measure. The 'look' of film, the 'feel' of film, I think that is what I really love about it."

***David Burnett**, Photojournalist*

"I remember the first time I compared film and digital portraits taken in the same situation with the same lens. In my eyes, the film versions were better examples of what I envisioned when I tripped the shutter: the rendering of the color, the contrast, even the grain…I felt and still feel that a lot of the time a raw digital image looks a bit flat. To get something I like I usually need to spend some time working on post-production. But my preference for film photography goes beyond the final image. I like the process of taking a photograph with a full-manual camera. I like loading the film and setting the aperture and/or shutter speed. I like twisting the focusing ring and feeling confident that what I want in focus will be in focus."

***Mark Kushimi**, Photographer & Editor-in-Chief of* Contrast Magazine

"With film I'm more selective on what I shoot, more focused on the moments that matter. I recently sat next to someone on a plane who was shooting out the window at 6fps the entire flight, he easily shot more frames in those 2 hours then I had the entire past week on vacation."

***Brent Eysler**, Photographer*

"The one thing I think film will still reign supreme in for a long time is dynamic range. It is hands down much better than digital in that regard. I would also personally argue that the process, especially if you have a hands on part in it, is more rewarding."

***Brian Fulda**, Travel Photographer*

"...having a piece of film as an original, rather than just an ephemeral bit, has a certain satisfaction."

***Michael Reichmann**, Founder, The Luminous Landscape*

"Even though we have great editing programs and tons of filter apps—the color, contrast varieties, saturations, and light rendering from film cannot be replicated. There is a character to film that is really hard to put into words to explain its complexities."

***Desmond Centro**, Photographer*

"It is precisely *because* of the rapid technological developments that I'm shooting film again. In my humble opinion, our digital cameras can do almost *too much*, which can hinder us when thinking about how we want to apply an inherently technical tool (the camera) in a creative way (our vision)."

David Geffin

"I think film makes photographers slow down and be more deliberate. I have noticed after shooting so many wet plates that I am now a much slower digital shooter than I was. I impart a lot of how I shoot with that process into my more traditional assignments. Not being able to see what you are doing instantly makes you think and work differently."

Victoria Will, *Commercial & Editorial Photographer*

PART I

Iconic Film Cameras And The People Using Them

In the history of film, there are dozens of unique and beloved cameras. Ten years ago, photographers were scrambling to unload their film cameras, but now, some of these mechanical machines have become highly coveted by a new generation of photographer. Here's a handful of classics.

Leica M6

David Geffin, Photographer/Director

The venerable German brand was the first practical 35mm camera that used standard cinema 35mm film, and quickly became the favorite tool of photographers around the world. The street photographer's camera of choice has been used by legends like Henri Cartier-Bresson, Bruce Davidson, Garry Winogrand, Sebastião Salgado and more, and has become a fashion accessory for the rich and famous.

Last year, photographer David Geffin purchased a Leica M6, calling it "the single best investment in any piece of gear in years." Using primarily Tri-X, Geffin believes that the film-based rangefinder has made his eye better. "I find my brain becomes far more adept at hunting (and anticipating) the pivotal moments that I'm hoping to see and this is a great training tool for both my digital photography and videography. Additionally, seeing outside the area of what I will be capturing (by allowing me to see outside the frame lines) provides the ability to anticipate a moment much more readily than an SLR can, which is what I love about a rangefinder."

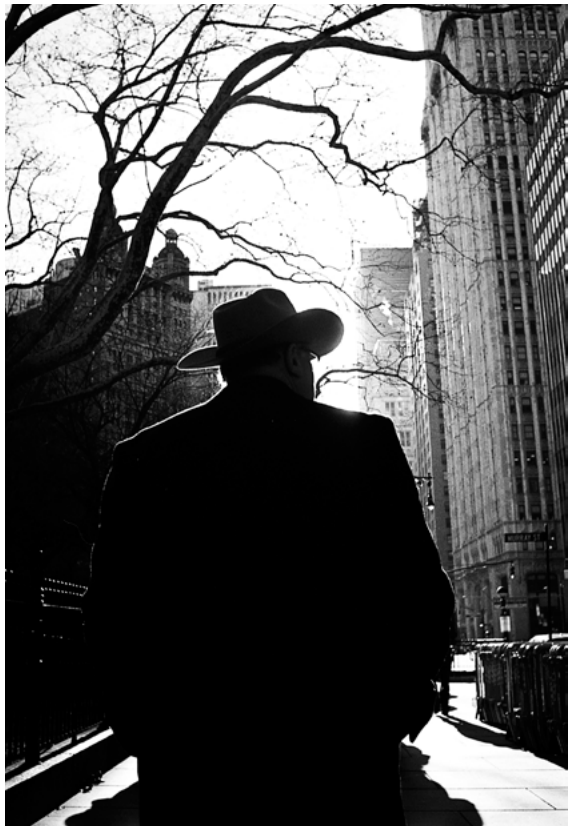
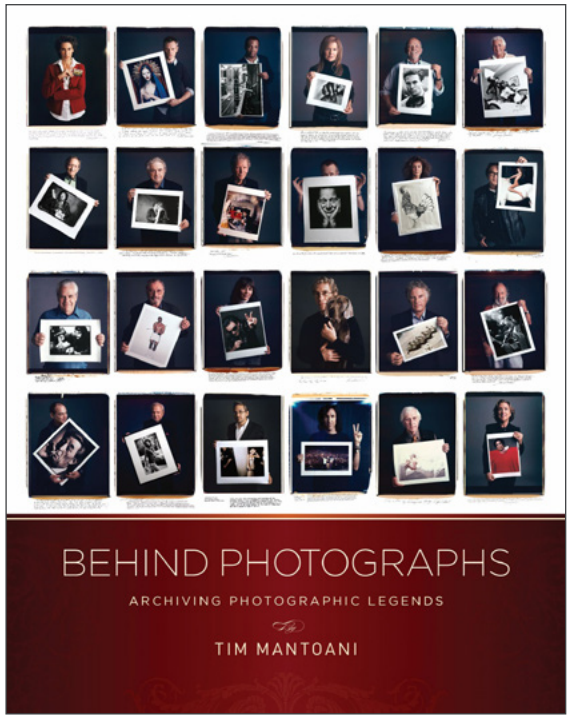


Photo by David Geffin

20x24 Polaroid

Tim Mantoani, Commercial Photographer



Initially developed in 1976 at the behest of Polaroid founder Edwin Land, the 20x24 cameras were designed to show off the new Polacolor II Film. Since that time, artists like Chuck Close and Robert Rauschenberg have used the camera to create iconic images. And today, photographers like Jeff Enlow and Tim Mantoani continue to use the camera despite the enormous cost of consumables.

After renting the camera in 2006, Mantoani turned to the camera for his project *Behind Photographs*, a portrait series of photographers with their most iconic image. He eventually acquired a 20x24 Wisner camera with a Polaroid back so that he could shoot on location, and has amassed a portrait collection of 150 renowned photographers ranging from Nick Ut's *Napalm Girl* to Jim Marshall's *Sound Check 1969* of Johnny Cash flipping the bird to Mary Ellen Mark's *Ram Prakash Singh*.

In a 2012 interview with KPBS, Mantoani described working with the camera, "In a sense it was working with a medium that was kind of vanishing, and a format that was totally unique to the professional market that not many people have shot with."

Mantoani published a compilation of the portraits in his book "Behind Photographs: Archiving Photographic Legends."

Hasselblad Xpan

Bryan Fulda, Traveling Photographer

Along with the Fuji GX617, the Hasselblad Xpan represents one of the iconic panoramic cameras that predated digital stitching by a decade or two. Unlike the GX617, the Hasselblad uses 35mm film, making it slightly less inexpensive to operate. The lens system consisted of a 30mm, 45mm and 90mm lens, none particularly too fast, but the camera wasn't exactly designed for sports or photojournalism.

Photo by Bryan Fuldan

Photo by Bryan Fuldan

Photographer Bryan Fulda was intrigued by the 1:3 aspect ratio of the Xpan stating, "I think people are so trained to seeing the 3:2 ratio in images that the Xpan's format automatically catches one's eye. Of course, it also has that cinematic look to it that can be so appealing."

Fulda fields questions about why he doesn't simply stitch together a series of digital photographs, which he counters with two answers, "First off, even though it's quite easy with software these days, it's still a pain, especially in large quantities. Second, and most importantly, you're not actually *seeing* how the panorama will look through the viewfinder. It's mostly guess work. Sure, you can crop it how you want it in post, but I'm a big believer in doing as much as possible in camera. It really helps me continue to build compositional skills."

Contax T3

Mark Kushimi, Photographer and Editor-in-Chief of Contrast Magazine

Photo by Bryan Fuldan

The premium compact T3 is coveted by film aficionados for its controls and Carl Zeiss lens. The fixed Zeiss 35mm f/2.8 and small form factor surely influenced the current crop of retro digital compacts like the Sony RX-1 and Fuji X100. And like those cameras, the T3's beauty doesn't come cheap with resale values nearing $900.

Mark Kushimi shoots with a variety of film cameras like his Leica M6 and Nikonos V, and depending on the situation, the Contax T3 fits the bill perfectly. "It's sleek, well-built, and has a really sharp Zeiss lens. It's not full-manual, but the user interface offers enough control over the camera's functions to get it to do what you want it to in difficult lighting situations. What I like the most about the T3 is its size. It's small—one of the smallest point-and-shoots ever made—and it easily fits in my back pocket. Sometimes the best camera is the one you have with you, and the T3 is compact enough to go with me anywhere."

Alpa 12

Michael Reichmann, Photographer and Founder, The Luminous Landscape

Alpa is to the Swiss as Leica is to the Germans. Impeccable craftsmanship and a rabid following define the manufacturer of luxury medium format cameras. Beautiful machined metal with wooden hand grips characterize the iconic design and in a bit to keep up with modernity, Alpa has modifiers to support digital backs and can even use an iPhone as a viewfinder.

Michael Reichmann has been a longtime advocate of the camera. "For landscape and architecture I like a medium camera that has movements. Perspective control is sometimes quite important, as is lightweight when hiking, and so the Alpa 12 can be an ideal companion, whether for digital or film."

The Alpa system supports Schneider and Rodenstock helical mounts, and all lens purchased through Alpa are individually calibrated. Alpa brings an unbelievably high level of precision and beauty at a cost, but for some, it is a cost worth bearing.

PART I

Film-Based Projects You Should Know

While most of the world has gone digital, a few stalwarts have been quietly pursuing projects to promote and preserve film. Here's a handful of the true believers.

Beijing Silvermine

@beijing_silvermine

The French photo editor and collector, Thomas Sauvin, started buying old photographic negatives by the kilogram from an illegal recycler on the outskirts of Beijing who are only interested in extracting the silver nitrate from the film. Sauvin refers to the imagery as "vernacular Chinese photography." The photos were taken by Chinese citizens between 1985 - 2006, before digital became ubiquitous, and feature scenes of everyday life that were largely invisible to the West.

From the over half a million images, patterns of photography have emerged like similarly dressed twins, family celebrations, people posing in front of their newly acquired refrigerator. These trivial moments, taken as a whole, represent a somewhat rarified look at a period of significant cultural and economic change in Chinese history.

Sauvin continues to exhibit edits of the archive at photo festivals around the world. His forthcoming book "Til Death Do Us Part" chronicles the major role that cigarettes play in Chinese wedding culture using photos from the Beijing Silvermine project.

I Still Shoot Film

istillshootfilm.org

Fashion photographer Rachel Rebibo started I Still Shoot Film (ISSF) six years ago to share photography taken with her vintage camera collection, but the site quickly turned into a community of film lovers—many of whom had grown up as digital natives and had no idea where to start with film.

The popularity of her *Beginner's Guide to Film Photography* made her realize that "many young people were actually interested in shooting film but felt pretty intimidated from a technical standpoint." Today, the site features exceptional work shot on film while explaining technical concepts so that anyone can understand film photography regardless of their experience.

Rebibo isn't surprised by the renewed interest in film. She says, "Alternative process is an excellent example of things you can do with film that are incredibly difficult (if not impossible) to recreate in Photoshop." And she still believes the beauty of silver gelatin prints surpasses that of any digital print.

Although she no longer uses film for professional jobs, you can still find Rebibo wandering with her Nikon FM2 in search of the perfect shot.

PART II

Companies Keeping Film Alive

The ecosystem of film is composed of more than just photographers. Film is a chemical miracle, and although formulations have existed for over 100 years, patents and supply chain issues have prevented new companies from simply taking over prior production. Fortunately, a few individuals are making the impossible, possible with science, perseverance, and a little bit of crazy.

PART II

New55 Film

Featuring Robert Crowley, Founder

www.new55.net

Originally started as a Kickstarter Project, New55 Film is seeking to mass produce 4x5 instant sheet film with a brand new formulation. The mastermind behind the effort is Robert Crowley, who also serves as the CEO of Soundwave Research Laboratories, an engineering company that specializes in advanced nanomaterials manufacturing.

Where did your interest in photography, and specifically film, come from?

I'm a product developer and anything that picks up or receives a signal is fair game. Antennas, light sensors, transducers and especially nanosensors. Film is the original optical nanosensor. I have over a hundred patents in several areas, mainly relating to small things like thin films, and sensors.

Are you surprised at the resurgence of interest in film and alternative processes (e.g. tintype, the Impossible Project, New55)?

No—I don't think it is a resurgence, just a consistent recognition and desire for the photographic arts. I don't think it ever went away. And to that point, I believe it is very early in the history of photography. Photography is in its infancy. The term "alternative" is probably incorrect: These should all be termed "photography". I think the distinction will emerge vs electronic capture, which is a still video image—not a photograph.

Given all the technical complexities of creating a new film, why bother? What do you think is so special about instant film?

Clearly, people want immediate results. They don't want to bother, so the work has to be packed into the product. It really is that simple. Behind the magic is story of cost, complexity and difficulty for sure.

What attracted you to the 4x5 format?

There are millions of 4x5 cameras out in the world. Almost all of them are in perfect working condition, and will probably outlast us. People who are new to photography are younger and are constantly rediscovering 4x5 cameras, since nobody ever throws a 4x5 camera away. The magic of the ground glass and the relative ease of 4x5 make a perfect combination. It is a seeing machine that evokes ideas, and big enough to be looked at with the naked eye.

Are there still things that you think film does better than digital?

Film and other things like wet plate make real photographs. Digital devices make still video images. If you want a photograph, make one. The immediacy of a real photograph is something that is much prized today, and very apparent to those who compare to electronic capture. Lots of effort has gone into trying to make electronic still images look like photographs. Clearly, they are something different than photographs, despite the similarity. Over time I expect this distinction to become more widely used, much like the previously antiquated term "wireless" emerged into current use. The word "photograph" could well become the term more or less specific to a projection plane light sensitive object, but not a file, or iPhone image.

New55 has been more than anything, a labor of love for you. What do you hope the eventual outcome of the project is for you, and for photography generally?
It is an exploration of new nano-enabled materials that will persist long after the project is over. I'm fortunate to be able to put nearly all my time into a project at this stage. It might be a business, and it might lead us to discoveries that we didn't expect. The use of silver in nanotech is growing and just being rediscovered. I read in scientific journals how researchers discover over and over how light sensitive silver salts and other compounds are, and they often exclaim their "discovery" stating that there could be important new uses in imaging! It's amusing, but also telling.

You can support the New55 by purchasing ready load film, monobath developer or a t-shirt at shop.new55.net

Photo by Robert Crowley

Photo by Robert Crowley

PART II

The Impossible Project

Alex Holbrook, Marketing Communications Manager

the-impossible-project.com

Polaroid founder, Edwin Land's inspirational words ring throughout the offices of The Impossible Project, "Don't undertake a project unless it's manifestly important and nearly impossible." In 2008 after the closing of the last Polaroid plant, Florian Kaps and André Bosman decided to raise funds and resurrect Polaroid instant film. Seven years later, The Impossible Project is one of the most recognizable and celebrated film revival efforts.

Digital is arguably more instant than instant film. Why do you think film continues to persist?

You cannot hold a digital picture! People are looking for "realness" to experience, they want a more hands on approach to photography and other experiences, look at the rise in vinyl. I also think that film offers another way to express yourself creatively. It is more honest in that if you want to manipulate it, you have to do something physically, you can't just add a filter and app—which in turn becomes a real ownership of an image.

Are you surprised at the resurgence of interest in film and alternative processes (e.g. tintype, the Impossible Project, New55)?

Not at all! It is a beautiful thing to have acknowledgement that what you believe in is right. The people that are using our film, 35mm and Tintypes are totally new to these formats, they never grew up in a world where the only way to take a photo of your dinner was to use a camera, shoot the film, take it to be developed and then pick it up! However, the smart phones of today have become entry level cameras for most people, which in turn results in users looking for other ways to take photos as well.

We have a whole new generation who is discovering these amazing new processes and really owning them, which in turn is enabling things like New55 to become a reality.

Film is only half the equation. The Impossible Project also refurbishes cameras and has made the Instant Lab. How important is hardware to the success of the brand?

Hardware is very important to us, as it ensures our future—without cameras people cannot shoot Impossible. Some of the classic Polaroid cameras that we refurbish are decades old—they really are some of the greatest inventions in the last century. We can still use them and they still look modern, but it is getting harder to source both them and parts to repair them.

We are currently developing our own camera, which will launch next year, and will be the next step in our hardware journey.

The familiar 600-type film seems to be the bread and butter of the company. Why bother making something so esoteric (and wonderful) as 8x10 instant film?

Because it is an incredible format! We love to innovate and explore different films and chemistries and would never "get comfortable" just making a product that is our bread and butter.

Although 8x10 is a very niche market, it is one that is a constant source of inspiration. It is also a learning ground for us as well—just because a chemical familiar works with a 600 film does not guarantee it will work with the large format.

So much has been written about the death of film, yet Impossible seems intent on helping to write its prosperous future. What do you think is the future of film?

Film is dead! Long live film!

I don't think anyone realized just how the experience of shooting film would be missed when digital was introduced. The future of film lies in it sitting alongside digital though. It will never replace digital, but act as an additional way of expression.

Every day we take another step towards creating a more secure future for film, in turn creating opportunities for the likes of New55, which in turn offers yet another medium for people to try.

PART III

Profiles

The survival of film requires the masses to participate in its use. But the use by high profile professionals whose work can be widely distributed is arguably as important in inspiring others to reach for film instead of an SD card. There is beauty in threading a roll of Tri-X into an old Leica, but we decided to profile a few photographers who are using formats or chemistries that still have no digital equivalent.

PART III

The Heralded Veteran Still Reaches for Film

David Burnett, Photojournalist

davidburnett.com

For nearly 50 years, David Burnett has been traveling and documenting the world—much of it on film. While most of the photojournalism world has shifted to using digital photography exclusively, Burnett stubbornly continues to carry around a Speed Graphic camera and dozens of sheet film holders—making him instantly recognizable on the sidelines of events such as the Olympics.

After all these years working in photography and seeing so many technological developments, why do you still shoot film?

As wonderful as the new tech and digital is—and there are a few great elements: speed of confirmation, speed of dissemination of images, and I'm sure there are other "good things"—there is something about film which still attracts me. In a way, I think I still appreciate that sense of dread, that pit in your tummy when you have no idea whether or not you HAVE a picture or not. In the first 150 years of photography, that was standard practice. You might have shot a Polaroid to give you an idea, but you never really KNEW you had it until you saw the negative or slide after it was processed. That sometimes took days, or even weeks. So you had a lot of what you did on faith, on hope, that your personal technique could match the vagaries of whatever you were shooting. When it works, it's very satisfying. When it doesn't…well… that hasn't changed in 150 years.

What attracts you to 4x5?

I love forcing myself to slow down a little (though it's true that I've become pretty good at shooting a fast 4x5 frame or two) because the combination of slowing down on the rear of the camera, and what is often perceived by your subject as "something special," gives you a chance to occasionally make a picture that you wouldn't have had with your 6 frames per second digital camera. And I love looking at those 4x5 contact sheets. Four on a page (8x10). THAT is photography!

Do you have clients asking you to specifically shoot large format or is that a personal choice per project?

I have had a few projects in the last year where we pitched 4x5 to the client, and in the end they loved it, and ran those pictures. I had a similar experience on stories I've shot for *National Geographic* the last decade. On each one I shot both digital and 4x5, and in almost every case, the film pictures were the ones that were used.

Photo by David Burnett

Photo by David Burnett

You've shot both color and black and white film in the past decade. What prompts you to pick one over the other?

Color is seductive, but black and white has a historic feeling to it (I guess I'm old enough to feel that way, huh?) and maybe even a permanence. I love both, but in large format, black and white is my favorite.

Are you surprised at the resurgence of interest in film and alternative processes (e.g. tintype, the Impossible Project, New55)?

I'm not surprised at all by the resurgence in film work which has developed. I think so many creative people are trying to find something to fill a void which the "complete" quality of digital represented. Photography isn't simply aiming your camera. It's something that combines what's in your heart with what your eye sees. In a world where everyone with a phone is a photographer, I think a lot of photographers are looking for a little something more.

If large format digital existed, would you give up on film?

Send me one with a Graflock back, and I'll get back to ya!

PART III

A 19th Century Technique in the Wild West (of Sundance)

Featuring Victoria Will, Commercial And Editorial Photographer

victoriawill.com

New York photojournalist Victoria Will was wandering the grounds of Photoville when she came across the Penunbra Foundation's Tintype studio. She was enthralled by the results, and ended up mastering the process to use at the Sundance Film Festival a few years later.

The story of your introduction to tintype at Photoville is so serendipitous. Can you tell us more about how you came upon the tintype booth and what attracted you to the process?

I'm always on the look out for things that will inspire my work, but also challenge me. In fact, I think the challenge is half the inspiration. As a photographer, I know I'm not alone in that perpetual hunt and I was at Photoville for just that reason—to learn and see what is out there. When I passed the Penumbra Foundation Tintype booth, I was hooked immediately. I had seen tintypes before at antique stores and yard sales, but I had never witnessed the process. Seeing it done made me realize that If I could learn it, I could apply this technique to my own work. I was immediately attracted to the one of kind, raw final product. The result is deliberate and intensely honest.

At what point after your introduction to tintype did you decide to use the technique at Sundance?

Instantly. I knew standing there at the booth at Photoville that if I could somehow learn the process, Sundance would be the perfect application. That was a BIG if, of course. But I accepted the challenge and went from there.

I imagine that you might have had some anxiety about using a newly acquired technique with movie stars who are typically impatient. What was the preparation process like and how did you feel before taking the first image?

Absolutely! I was sweating bullets. However, I had shot the festival several years before so I understood the timing and pace of the week. That was a big help in preparing. But that being said, it was still a gamble. I prepared by reading books, watching YouTube videos and reaching out to people across the country that had experience with them. People like Jody Ake, who have been making wet plates for decades, were incredibly generous with their knowledge. I took advice from anyone who was willing to give it.

When I arrived at Sundance, I was still uncertain if I could pull it off. I was incredibly excited and equally as terrified. My goal was to come away with maybe 20 portraits over the course of the week. But in the end, we made almost 75 the first year and 150 the second. That was in large part to the amazing team of people I had helping me. Because the time with each subject is so limited, we really streamlined a process for sensitizing the plates, shooting and then developing them in the quickest, most efficient way possible. By the second day we were cruising.

What was the reaction of the actors upon seeing their tintypes?

One of my favorite parts of making wet plates is actually the subject's reaction when they walk in the studio, smell the chemistry from the darkroom and realize we are doing something different. It is a festival of actors, artists, writers and directors—all creatively minded, so they tend to really embrace the fact that we are making something together. In fact, many of the subjects want to follow us into the darkroom to watch the rest of the process. When people are that interested in what you are doing, it makes the shoot that much more rewarding.

I enjoyed all the tintypes from 2014 and 2015, but I keep seeing the one of Philip Seymour Hoffman in my head. It's haunting, and of course, he died shortly after. Not to get too existential, but do you think there's something about this slow, analog process that brings out something different in your subjects?

Wet plates cannot be altered, so in a way, they are bit more honest since there is no photoshop to be done. We are all so used to seeing such polished glossy portraits and the tintype is a huge departure from that. Some would even say they are unflattering. But in my experience what I've noticed is that people are so used to the digital world that this analog process excites them. As a result, when they sit in front of the camera knowing that there is one chance to make the image, they are much more present. We are truly collaborating and working towards the end result. Perhaps that's the difference?

Are you surprised at the resurgence of interest in film and alternative processes?

Not at all. I think as visual and creative people, photographers are always looking for things that resonate with them. But as quickly as we find something we like, hopefully, we are also evolving—our aesthetic, our likes and our dislikes should all grow. Its so popular now though, I'm excited to see where the next shift takes us.

Is tintype/film/alt process a phase for you, or do you see yourself experimenting with the medium for a while?

I will always utilize it, but only when it fits and is appropriate for the subject matter. In a way, it has acted as a gateway to discovering other alternative photographic processes. As I mentioned above, I'm a perma-student, always looking to learn more so this is just the beginning.

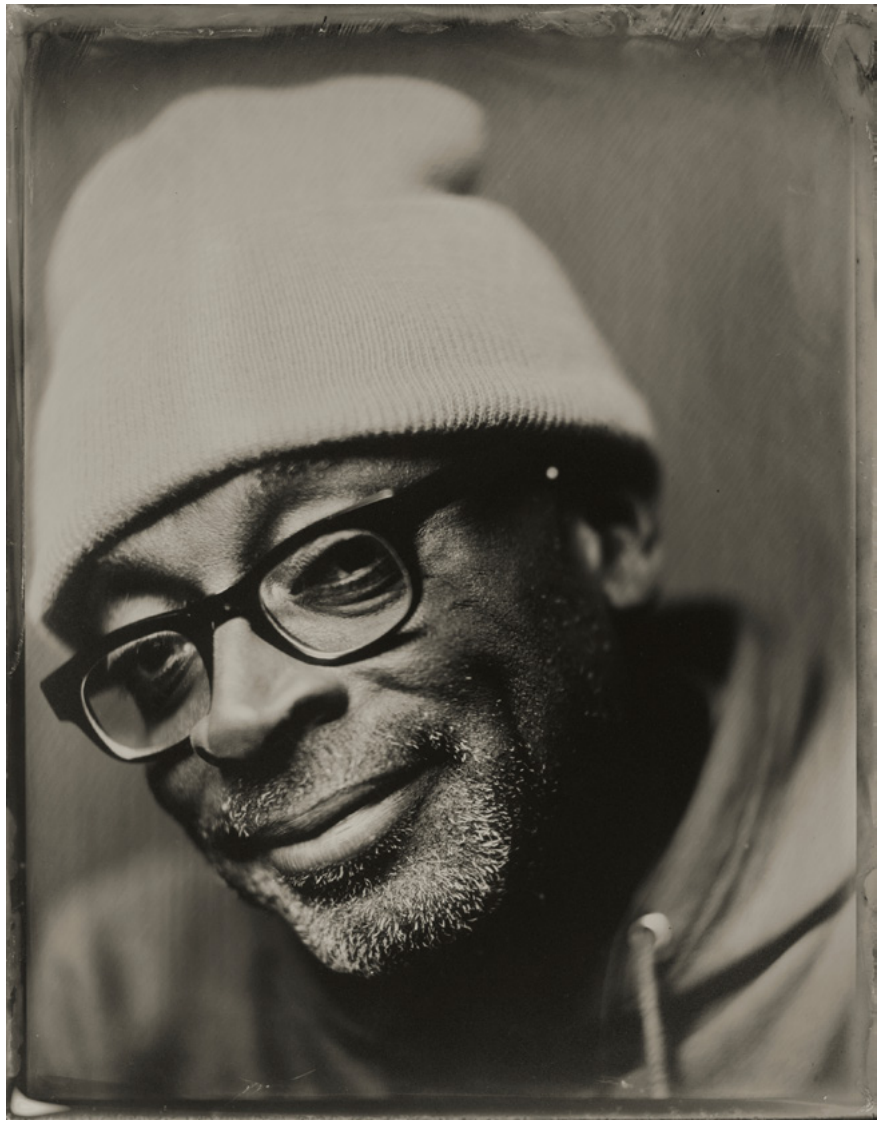


Photo by Victoria Will

PART III

A Large Format Master's Optical Embrace

Featuring Greg Miller

gregmiller.com

Greg Miller's large format photography has appeared in numerous publications including *The New York Times Magazine*, *New York Magazine*, *TIME*, *Esquire*, *Fortune*, *LIFE*, and more. In 2008, is enthralling portraiture earned him a Fellowship in photography from the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation.

As the majority of the world has shifted to digital (including much of the art photography world), you have held steadfast to shooting with film and 8x10. Why?

Because it's beautiful.

If only I could answer the "why" question by sending you to my website but that is only 72 dots per inch! But do go to my website! It will give you a clue, but it won't tell you why. The "why" is the sum total of all the parts. You begin to see why in a large print but that is not all of it either. It is in how people react to the camera, my excitement and enthusiasm in doing what I do. It is in the musty smell of my dark cloth and bellows on a summer day. It is in the passion I feel my subject deserves. Shooting 8x10 is an optical embrace.

Having said that, I love digital photography. Most of my jobs are shot digitally. I shoot 1000's of DSLR snapshots a month of my family. I love my iPhone, etc.

But I love my 8x10 camera more than any of that.

Are there things that you think film does better than digital?

Yes, film is better at having a large surface area. You can have the beautiful optics of an image from a large lens projected onto the large film area. 8"x10" is 4x larger than a medium format sensor surface area at 4.25 x 6.25 cm, so medium format digital will always look just a little better than 35mm, but not significantly so. And there are only several mediocre cameras that will take the backs.

Do you process and print all your own work?

I have processed all my color film, no matter where I have shot it in the world, at LTI/Lightside on 30th St. in Manhattan, since... I can't remember...1998? I used to have them print it too, but I enjoy printing too much. I print all my work in my studio in Connecticut.

Are you surprised at the resurgence of interest in film and alternative processes (e.g. tintype, the Impossible Project, New55)?

I guess it doesn't surprise me because the beauty of it all is very addictive. I am grateful for anyone who is shoot-

ing film and shares the same work ethic for photography as myself and others I know. We need a community. No one is going to run the machine that makes Kodak's Portra NC film for just me.

Your work so elegantly captures people in their environments whether wandering around the county fair or along the coast of Italy. What compels you to portraiture vs other subject matter like landscapes?

As early as I can remember, I have been drawn to photographing people and telling a story through people. I am fascinated with the idea of photographing strangers and creating a narrative even when people within the frame didn't know each other. I started working that way in the mid 90's with my Gotham series. In the beginning each photograph was its own individual story, but in time, I began wanting to tell larger stories with bodies of work. In the end, my projects, like Primo Amore, County Fair, Nashville, come back to themes of unrequited love and longing.

Do you think film will always exist in our lifetime, or will the economics of production make it extinct?

I find it very difficult to predict anything being around for our lifetime these days, whether it is bees, our current shorelines or film photography. But I think it says something that film outlasted the company that invented and manufactured it. I have a dream that someone will designate film photography a national treasure, like Jazz. I think it's important to preserve and continue teaching it in schools so that it continues to be embedded in our culture, as it has been for the last 150 years. And, most importantly, so that the creation of images doesn't end up belonging to corporations like Facebook or Apple, but rather remains the domain of each of us.

Greg Miller is a frequent lecturer and is teaching classes at the International Center of Photography and the Maine Media Workshops this Summer and Fall.

Photo by Greg Miller

PART IV

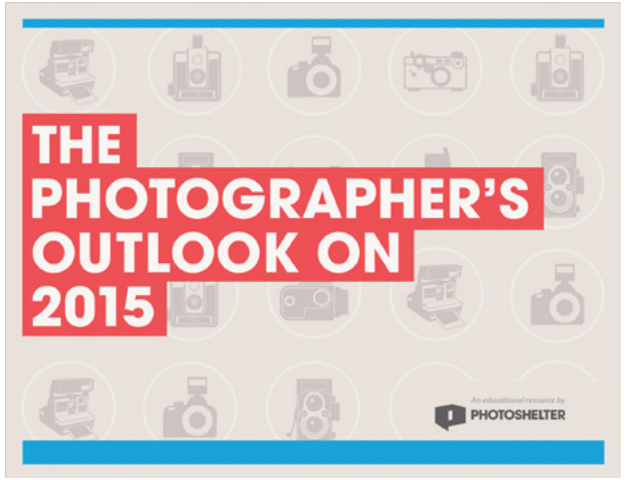
Conclusion

PART IV

The Future Film

For the time being, there seems to be sufficient interest to sustain a variety of businesses that manufacture film, film cameras and the assortment of paraphernalia that make film photography possible. But unlike the virtual world where a new photo app can be built and maintained with minimal effort, the supply chain of film relies on multiple vendors and partners to make it a reality. When a critical supplier of something like sheet film goes out of business, there is rarely another party that can quickly step in.

But the recent history of film has shown time and time again that insurmountable odds can be overcome. New technology combined with renewed interest makes us believe in picture perfect days ahead for film.



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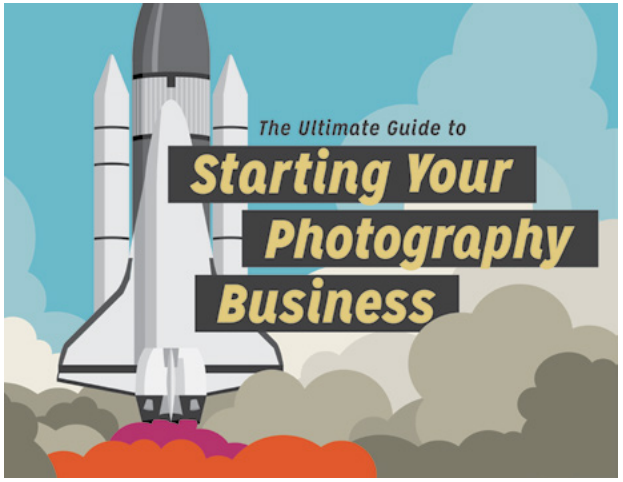

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