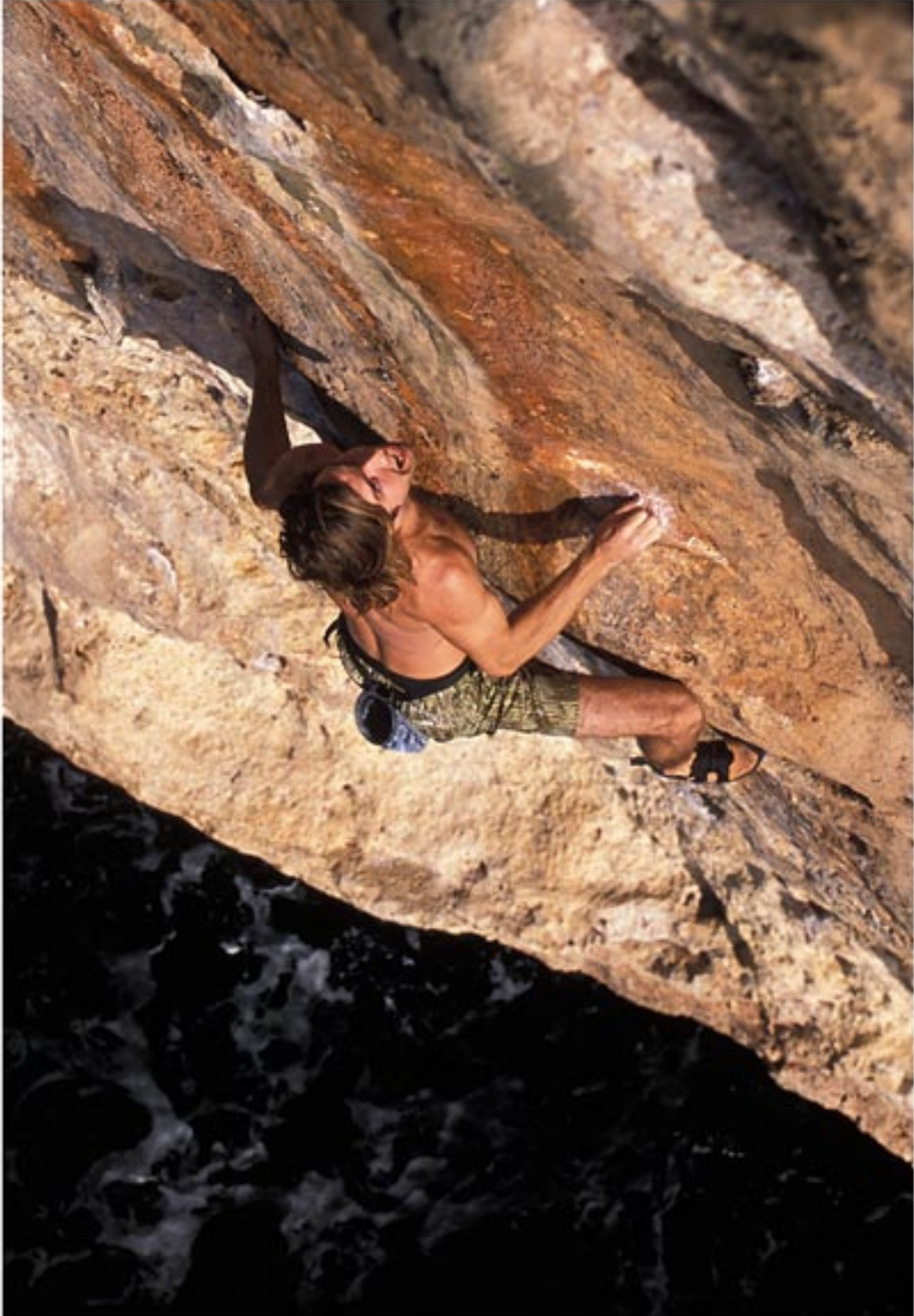


MICHAEL CLARK  
PHOTOGRAPHY



NEWSLETTER



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SPRING 2005 NEWSLETTER

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 All images © Michael Clark Photography except Equipment Review image of the D70.

# Taking it to the Next Level

And the road ahead...



I recently read an article on digitaljournalist.org entitled *The 8 Keys to Success: An Essay and Thoughts on what it takes to reach your True Potential* by David H. Lyman. (You can find the article online at [www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0410/lyman.html](http://www.digitaljournalist.org/issue0410/lyman.html)) While the article was written by a photographer and for photographers the eight keys are not specific to the business of photography and can be applied to any career.

Though much of the article was old hat there were a couple of things that really stuck with me. Speaking about Persistence, David says, "It will take at least two years to acquire 70% of the craft you will need to work in your medium. It will take another eight years to acquire the next 20% of your craft. At 90% you will have mastered your craft, but there is that 10% that will take a lifetime to acquire." As I move into my ninth year as a professional photographer I found this statement very insightful. It has also sparked an interest to expand my repertoire of photographic skills. In late 2003, I began to branch out and photograph subjects I had never shot before. I was getting a little bored with climbing and outdoor adventure photography and I wanted to expand my abilities. To that effect my personal work over the last few years has included portraiture, lifestyles, and business images photographed with Holga's, medium format, and studio lighting.

My bread and butter images are still the outdoor adventure and lifestyle images. Those are what I am known for and they are the images I get calls to produce. But that is changing slowly and as my skills grow I am getting calls to produce a variety of work much different than what I have produced in the past. I still love the outdoors and shooting intense action (like the images of Chris Sharma on the previous page and the cover) but I am trying to improve my

abilities so that I can create even better images, no matter what the assignment.

Part of my effort to acquire more skills and improve my abilities is by taking seminars, workshops and continuously learning about digital imaging. I am teaching a photo workshop this summer at the Santa Fe Workshops (see page 4) and I am also hoping to have the time to take Joe McNally's "Location Lighting" workshop as well. I am looking to take my photography to that next level where what I imagine in my mind is what I create. Joe McNally is the master at this and I am looking forward to seeing how he does it.

I am moving into a clientele that has bigger budgets and can afford to pay for high end work. And I want to be able to blow editors away with what I can produce. The artistic side of me has some incredible ideas; ideas that are very marketable but difficult to produce without a substantial budget.

I consider myself fairly skilled as a photographer already, but until I can really create the more complex images in my mind, I can't consider myself a "master" photographer. Of course, I don't know if I ever will consider myself a "master" photographer. That is just part of the fun of this business, we have to re-create ourselves and our work every so often and that is where I am right now. Let the fun begin!

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# The Real Deal

Michael's article in Men's Journal on Deep Water Soloing in Mallorca

# Adventure

ROCK CLIMBING

## Cliff Hanger

The world's best climbers have discovered a dangerous new way to defy gravity — free soloing above crashing ocean waves. BY GREG CHILD

**I** WE JUST SEEN THE FUTURE OF CLIMBING. It's not on Everest, or a wind-lashed Patagonian spire, nor is it on some gargantuan wall in Yosemite Valley. It's on the Spanish island of Mallorca, on a limestone cliff above the Mediterranean.

I immersed myself into a clan of cragrats, practitioners of a new mode of climbing called "deepwater soloing." I was bobbing in a swell at the mouth of a gaping sea cavern, watching the 33-year-old American phenomenon Chris Sharma perform on an as yet unclimbed route he was calling the Big Momma.

From the back of the cave — a cathedral-like chamber big enough to stack a dozen school buses — Sharma came

swinging through a forest of stalactites dangling from the dome's ceiling. Moving with the poise of a gibbon, he lunged between totem-like cave formations and fingertip-deep punctures in the rock. It was like no other display of climbing gymnastics I had ever seen. Every move placed him in a contorted, upside-down position, and he was doing it all without a rope or other equipment, with only the Mediterranean to break his fall.

Floating around me, Sharma's friends shouted words of climber lingo (support in English, Spanish, and German — *Go for it! Vinga! Greil!*) — urging him to battle the lactic acid blanching his arms and climb out of the cave and up a final 50-foot cliff. If he held on long enough, his route would likely stand as the most difficult solo first ascent ever done.

**TAKE TIME**  
Climbing photos: Chris Sharma on the Big Momma. It took 11 days to make the route. It had never been done before in Mallorca, Spain.

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY MICHAEL CLARK

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Chris Sharma hanging off his route *Big Momma* and featured in this two-page spread for Men's Journal's article on Deep Water Soloing.

Last fall, Michael secured an assignment from Men's Journal to photograph the new sport of Deep Water Soloing in Mallorca, Spain. Michael's images and the article written by renowned writer, Greg Child, is on newsstands right now in the March issue of Men's Journal.

For years, Toni Lamprecht, one of the sports originators, encouraged Michael to come photograph Deep Water Soloing (DWS) in Mallorca. And until this assignment for Men's Journal, no professional photographer had ever shot still photographs of DWS in Mallorca.

Mallorca is a limestone paradise for rock climbers. Not only is there an incredible amount of roped-climbing on the island, but DWS locations are everywhere waiting for climbers. The cadre of climbers participating in this sport is still relatively small. It isn't a sport for the timid. Some of the cliffs are up to 80 feet tall and a fall from that height is very serious. Michael was

joined by a crew of German climbers including Toni Lamprecht and American's Chris Sharma and Nate Gold.

The photographs don't do this sport justice really. You have to be able to hear the waves constantly crashing into the base of the wall and feel the wind blowing off the ocean to fully appreciate the experience - and the exposure. Toni told me the first time they tried it they literally "peed their pants" it was so unnerving. And this is from a guy who has run it out 50+ feet on remote big walls all over the world! As Chris says, 'It's the purest climbing experience I have ever had.'

**RECENT CLIENTS:** Men's Journal, Outside, National Geographic Adventure, Climbing Magazine, Black Diamond, Prana, CNET and Webshots.com.

# Adventure Travel Photography Workshop

A workshop by Michael Clark and The Santa Fe Workshops



Michael is working with the prestigious Santa Fe Workshops this summer to put on an Adventure Travel Photography workshop. The workshop is June 19 to the 25th in Santa Fe, New Mexico. For more information on the Santa Fe Workshops and Michael's workshop in particular you can go to <http://www.sfworkshop.com>. Below is the course description for my workshop. If you are interested in taking this workshop please contact the Workshops at (505) 983-1400. If you would like more information on my workshop please feel free to contact us here at Michael Clark Photography.

## Adventure Travel Photography

June 19-25, 2005



Travel and adventure, when put together make for a very photogenic experience. This exciting workshop will hone your adventure travel photography skills via hands-on experience and a mixture of lectures, discussions, and critiques. We will explore how to approach and photograph people at home and abroad, the tools and equipment involved, basic lighting skills with reflectors and fill flash, drawing the viewer into the image with remote camera techniques and marketing your adventure travel and outdoor images. Our week will include white water rafting on the Rio Grande, photographing cowboys on the famous Eves Movie Ranch, and documenting adventure

sports in and around Santa Fe. Michael's workshop concentrates on anticipating and creating powerful adventure images. The goal is to get every student thinking about how they can make a good image even better and then pursue that image. Students will be pushed to get creative with angles, lighting, and composition as well as capturing the intensity of the adventures we experience. Michael will also delve into career development, portfolios, and how to shoot for stock, editorial and commercial clients.

This workshop is for amateur and professional photographers who are interested in invigorating their adventure travel photography. No previous outdoor adventure experience is required for this workshop. A sampling of recent photography and a good working knowledge of your camera in manual mode are required for admission. Both Film and/or digital cameras are acceptable for this workshop. Students using digital cameras will need to bring a laptop and image editing software to process their images.

*Michael Clark is an internationally published outdoor adventure photographer specializing in adventure sports, travel and landscape photography. He has worked with numerous editorial and corporate clients including National Geographic, Nike, Nikon, DuPont, Sports Illustrated, Outside, Men's Journal, Outdoor Photographer, Pfizer, Climbing, Patagonia and many other magazines, ad agencies and corporations. He has risked life and limb on a variety of assignments to bring back stunning images of rock climbers, mountaineers, kayakers and mountain bikers pushing their sports to the limit in remote locations around the world. Michael was featured in Outdoor Photographer (September 2001) for his work with extreme sports. This is Michael's first year at The Workshops. He is excited to share with you his passion for adventure travel and the outdoors.*

# The Nikon D70

## Nikon's lightweight digital dynamo

Nikon's D70 is saving their butt! This little prosumer camera is pretty amazing in what it offers for the price. Instant start up, top-notch 6 MP image quality, decent auto-focus, and a lightweight ergonomic package. All for about \$900. It's no wonder Popular Photography gave it their "2004 Camera of The Year" award.

I bought the D70 early last year while I was waiting for Nikon to come out with the D2x. And while 6 MP these days isn't super exciting, this little camera has paid for itself three times over already. My only other option with Nikon last year was the 4 megapixel D2h which wasn't really that enticing for my clientele. Of course I have been looking over the fence at Canon's offerings a lot lately, and they have some incredible cameras. But I have so much invested in Nikon, switching systems would be a financial disaster so I am waiting and giving Nikon one more shot. If the D2x is good, I'll stick around. If not, well then I'll have to have a long talk with my banker.

But this is a review of the D70 so I will get back to it. First off, the D70 starts up instantly which is a big plus in my book. I hated the older digital cameras that took two to three seconds to turn themselves on - that's five or six missed images. The D70 is also encased in a stout rubberized lightweight body that is a pleasure to hold and carry around. I love having a smaller camera that doesn't kill my shoulders. I feel like a tourist, save for the huge lenses mounted on the camera. And even though I think pop up flashes are cheese-ball add-ons, I have used the D70's pop up flash with good results. Nikon's new iTTL flash technology is unbelievable and it is one of the big reasons I am hoping Nikon can pull through with the D2x.

And how about those 6 MP? I have been amazed at how sharp the RAW images are out of the camera. Nikon made the anti-aliasing filter thinner in the D70 and that results in sharper initial images than those of other camera brands. Of course the down side is there is more potential for moire, but of course that can be dealt with very easily in post processing. The other really nice thing about the D70 sensor is the color accuracy. I usually custom set the white balance when I shoot digital, and that helps but nonetheless I have found the D70 to have incredible color accuracy. And high ISO



noise is fairly well controlled which opens up a whole new world of low light photography not possible with film. Even shooting at ISO 800 is not out of the question since I can use Noise Ninja Software and make the images look like they were shot at ASA 200. I would never dream of shooting 800 speed film but digital has rewritten the rules for low light imaging.

I am starting to understand why Nikon has not completely gotten into the megapixel race with Canon. Looking at images shot with 8 MP DSLR's, they don't really look that much better than those taken with my D70 and 2 MP isn't that much of a difference. The 12MP sensor in the D2x, if it turns out to be good quality, will be a much nicer upgrade than an 8 MP camera. And with that camera, I will probably stop shooting 35mm film unless certain clients request it.

On the downside, the D70 isn't as durable of a camera as an F5 or a pro DSLR. It can still take a few knocks but I have to baby it a little if I want it to last. And the autofocus, while capable, is nothing to get excited about. The only other things missing on this camera are a synch cord port and mirror lock up which are minor niggings. I've gotten used to the tunnel vision viewfinder and barely notice it now, though at first it felt pretty small. All in all, for the money Nikon's D70 is hard to beat - which is why Nikon is making a bundle off this camera. Now, where is that 18 MP camera that Nikon really needs to get on the market so they can get ahead of the competition? C'mon Nikon.

# Hasselblad's 503CW

Digital compatible, user friendly in the field and well...it's a Hasselblad!

I have been shooting with my Hasselblad 503CW a lot lately and it is such a pleasure to use this camera. The Hasselblad is basically a box with a mirror in it. There is no autofocus, no in-camera metering, and without the Winder CW the ergonomics are sad to say the least. But one look through the viewfinder and all that is lacking is forgotten. Attach the Winder CW, with its whopping .8 frames per second, and the camera feels a lot more like a 35mm SLR, albeit a fairly hefty one. But of course the Zeiss lenses are the real reason you buy a Hasselblad. Everything about the Hasselblad exudes quality - it's better for the prices they charge!

My basic setup is the 503CW, 80mm f/2.8 Zeiss T\*, PM5 prism, Winder CW and a few A12 backs. The Hasselblad system is modular which makes it very easy to switch out components and customize the camera to your needs. And it is all mechanical as well, meaning it needs no batteries save for the winder CW. The shutter is built into the lens and allows you to synch flash at all shutter speeds. It's a pretty basic camera with a touch of elegance. Each camera is hand built in Sweden. The construction quality is second to none. And there is that esoteric "Hasselblad" feel.

The reason to shoot with the Hasselblad is the quality of the medium format images and the incredibly sharp lenses. From my tests the Zeiss lenses are the highest resolving lenses I have ever used.

The other reason I chose the Hasselblad is that more digital backs are made for Hasselblad than any other medium format camera system and the 503CW is designed to be digital compatible, so this camera will never be "outdated" as digital backs get better. Hopefully the prices of medium format digital backs will come down out of the stratosphere so I can actually afford to buy one, but for now I can rent a back when clients need high end MF digital.

I have seen sample images from Phase One's latest 22 megapixel back taken with a Hasselblad and they are the best digital images I have seen yet, no DSLR that I have seen can compete with Phase One's P25. The only problem with that back is that it costs almost \$30,000!

The only downside to the Hasselblad is that the focusing is reverse from my Nikons. I'll just have to get used to it. I really like the square image format, though I have to say it seems small compared to 6x7 images. Compared to the Mamiya 7, focusing with the 503 is much easier. Images snap into focus. All in all there isn't much to complain about with this camera. It performs flawlessly which is

why it has been on every manned US space flight since 1961.

While just about all of the medium format manufacturers these days make very nice cameras, Hasselblad still reigns supreme for its amazing lenses and system reliability. For more info on Hasselblad and their products go to [www.hasselbladusa.com](http://www.hasselbladusa.com).



[PORTFOLIO]





[PORTFOLIO]



# Digital and Medium Format

by Michael Clark

Before I was a photographer I was a physicist. I helped to create the world's first low temperature STM microscope that could slow the particles of an atom down so they could be "electronically" photographed by a chemically etched probe. All of this happened on a scale most people can hardly even comprehend. I bring this up because my experience with micro-electronics and CCD's gives me a different perspective than that held by the masses out there shooting digital. Don't get me wrong, digital is rewriting what is possible in photography, but we have only seen the tip of the iceberg in terms of what it can resolve, and that is where medium format will come in.

I hear a lot of people saying "medium format is dead." Pro photographers are selling off their medium format gear everywhere you look. Medium format seems redundant next to the latest 12 and 16 MP professional 35mm DSLRs. As a result medium format camera

**"I PREDICT THAT 35MM DSLRS WILL TOP OUT AROUND 22 TO 25 MP. ABOVE THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO USE MEDIUM FORMAT TO GET HIGHER RESOLUTION WITH DIGITAL."**

companies are having a very rough time staying afloat. But I can see in the very near future that they will have reason to celebrate once again.

Physics tells us that in order to increase resolution you need to increase the size of the lens and the size of the medium the information is being recorded on. In digital we have already seen this - an 8 MP image from a tiny 'point and shoot' sensor is inferior to an 8 MP image from a 35mm sized DSLR sensor. And it is well known that the larger the photo site on a CCD the lower the noise and the higher the image quality. All this boils down to the fact that as resolution increases the sensor size and lens diameter will have to increase as well and that is where medium format cameras will make their comeback.

A perfect example of this is Canon's EOS 1Ds Mark II with its 16.7 MP sensor. It is a fantastic camera and Canon is to be commended. Sadly, I don't own one personally but I am hearing from many who do that they have to use the best lenses Canon makes because the sensor is very close to outresolving the lenses. No matter how well you make a 35mm lens it can only resolve so much information. A Hasselblad lens still out resolves any 35mm lens, that is just physics. Optics will be the *limiting* factor for digital imaging.

I predict that 35mm DSLRs will top out around 22 to 25 MP. Above that you will have to use medium format to get higher resolution with digital. And I predict the limiting factor will be the size of the lenses, not the sensor size. Of course at 22 MP you may ask why would we need anything larger? But one look at a life-like print from a medium format 35 MP camera will have us all drooling.



Nate Gold taking the 60 foot leap off the top  
of the first cave at Cala Barcos in Mallorca, Spain.  
Nikon F5, 28-70mm f/2.8 AF-S Nikkor, Fuji Provia 100F