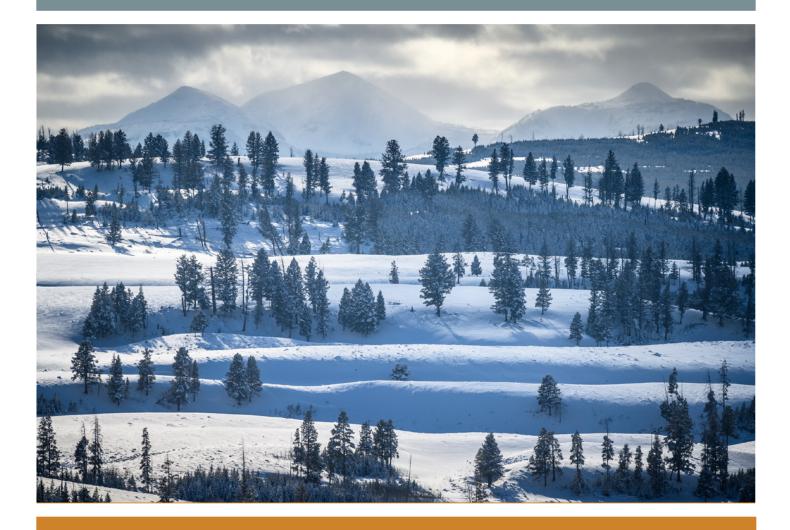
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WINTER 2019

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Cover Image: The view from the Grand Loop Road looking across the Blacktail Deer Plateau in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming. Opposite Page: The black sand beach at Waianapanapa State Park near Hana on Maui in the Hawaiian Islands.



### **editorial**



### **Skiing with the Bison**

From frigid Yellowstone National Park to the north shore of Hawaii

A s I write this I am currently at the Snow Lodge in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming. The temperature outside is -8 °F (-22 °C) and we are prepping for an early morning landscape shoot where we will crosscountry ski out to Biscuit Basin in near white-out conditions. Over the past week, we have seen a wide variety of wildlife and while I don't consider myself a wildlife photographer, every once in a while when I am on assignment we run into animals. Today we are seeking out Bison and are looking to capture them snow covered from head-to-tow in full-on conditions.

In a few days, I will be heading to the north shore of Oahu in Hawaii, to photograph some big-wave surfing and also to teach a Surfing Photography Workshop with my good friend Brian Bielmann. I only have two days at home to unpack, do laundry and repack. The idea of unpacking two full bags with heavy winter clothing and repacking them with nothing but shorts, T-shirts and a pair of flipflops is fairly comical given the snowstorm raging outside. But after freezing my buns off this past week standing on the beach in flip-flops sounds pretty appealing.

A few months ago, my good friend Levi Siver called me and told me conditions might be perfect for a wind surfing session at Peahi, a.k.a. JAWS, on the north shore of Maui. I purchased a ticket, set up a jet ski and a jet ski

driver, and flew out a few days later. As can be seen in the double-truck Portfolio image in this Newsletter it was definitely a large swell but it was also messy and all over the place. On the way out on the jet ski, the wind was creating three-to-four foot cliffs on the 40-foot swell. That meant we dropped off a cliff every few seconds and each time we hit bottom it seemed like someone turned a firehose on right in your face. This went on for twentyfive minutes as I held on with a death grip so as not to be launched off the back of the jet ski. We ended up sitting out there in the chop just off the shoulder of the wave for the next four hours waiting for it to clean up a bit. I puked twice and each time it was ripped out of my mouth by the wind and pulled 20-feet backwards. Luckily no one was behind us. I managed to get a few images but the day was a bust. The ocean can quickly humble you, as I learned on this trip. Luckily, Levi and the gang were game to go out at some other surf breaks and I was able to salvage the trip photographically—as can be seen on the next page.

Opposite Page: Marcilio"Brawzinho" Browne windsurfing at Kanaha on the west side of Maui in the Hawaiian Islands.

**Recent Clients:** Apple, *National Geographic*, Patagonia, Merrell, NEXTera Energy, MAC Group, Colorado Tourism, New Mexico Tourism, *Digital Photo Pro, Outside Magazine* and *Outdoor Photographer*.



#### news

### **CENTER Review Santa Fe Photo Festival**

The 2019 Call for Entries for this World-class Fine Art Photography Event



**O** ne of the premier fine art photography competitions takes place each year right here in Santa Fe, New Mexico where I live. That event is the CENTER Review Santa Fe Photo Festival and it has literally jump started many a career. As I am friends with the folks over at CENTER I thought I would take this opportunity to promote their event and spread the word. If you are an

editorial or fine art photographer looking for representation or looking to get your stellar images into a gallery or museum, this event is not to be missed. See the info and links below for more information on how to submit and be a part of this incredible event.

CENTER hosts its Annual Calls for Entry with NEW

opportunities for photographers and artists alike! Submissions are OPEN for the 2019 Call for Entries! The final deadline for applying is February 20, 2019. Apply today at: <u>https://visitcenter.org/awards-entry-form/</u>

#### // REVIEW SANTA FE PHOTO FESTIVAL

CENTER's premier juried portfolio review event is a weekend conference and festival for photographers who have created a project or series that are seeking audience expansion, critical discussion and community gathering in a profoundly unique sense of place. Join us in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo mountains for several special programs including artist talks, pop-up exhibits, a print raffle, and more.

Entry Fee: \$45 for members or \$55 for non-members Juried portfolio review dates October 17–20, 2019 Full scholarships available

#### // PROJECT LAUNCH GRANT

The Project Launch is granted to an outstanding photographer working on a fine art series or documentary project. The grant includes a cash award to help complete or disseminate the works, as well as providing a platform for exposure and professional development opportunities. This grant is awarded to COMPLETE or NEARLY COM-PLETED projects that would benefit from the grant award package.

Entry Fee: \$35 members, \$45 non-members \$5,000, Review Santa Fe, Award Winners Exhibition Juror: Virginia Heckert, Curator, Department of Photographs, The J. Paul Getty Museum

#### // THE PROJECT DEVELOPMENT GRANT

The Project Development Grant offers financial support to fine art, documentary, or photojournalist WORKS-IN-PROGRESS. The grant includes a cash award to help complete the project as well as platforms for feedback and professional development opportunities for the work's final stages. This grant is awarded to projects have not been exhibited or published.

Entry Fee: \$35 members - \$45 nonmembers \$5,000, Review Santa Fe Juror: Lucy Gallun, Associate Curator, Department of Photography, The Museum of Modern Art

#### // THE CHOICE AWARDS

The Choice Awards recognize outstanding photographers working in all processes and subject matter. Images can be singular or part of a series. First, Second and Third Place awarded in EACH category: Curator's Choice, Editor's Choice, and Director's Choice Award.

Entry Fee: \$70 members - \$85 nonmembers, all categories Entry Fee: \$30 members - \$40 nonmembers, individual CURATOR'S CHOICE: Makeda Best, Curator of Photography, Harvard Art Museum — DIRECTOR'S CHOICE: Monica Allende, Artistic Director, Getxophoto International Image Festival and Independent Curator — EDITOR'S CHOICE: MaryAnne Golon, Director of Photography, The Washington Post.

Check the <u>CENTER website</u> for more information on submitting for Review Santa Fe and applying for these grants and awards to further your photography.

### workshops

# **Photography Workshops**

An overview of workshops and online classes with Michael Clark

**E** ach year I teach a few workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2019. For more information on these workshops, and to find out how to register, go to the <u>Workshops</u> page on my blog.

#### **CUTTING-EDGE LIGHTING TECHNIQUES**

Santa Fe Workshops - Santa Fe, New Mexico July 28 - August 2, 2019

How do you separate your work from the pack? Do you want to break down the barriers that are keeping your photography from standing out? In the last five years, flash manufacturers have added some incredible technology to their strobes. Michael has been working with these new flash technologies for more than seven years and has even helped perfect the technology. High Speed Sync and Hi-Sync (HS) allow us to freeze action like never before, light subjects from ridiculous distances, and easily create lit portraits with incredibly shallow depth of field. In short, we can create images that were never possible before.

Designed for intermediate to experienced photographers, this 5-day workshop concentrates on creating unique images using cutting-edge lighting technology. Working with elite athletes, dancers and models both in the studio and out on location, we aim to create images that are not easy to duplicate. Topics covered during the week include high speed sync flash techniques, multiple exposure flash techniques, freezing motion, stroboscopic lighting, advanced portrait lighting, motion blur and rear curtain strobe techniques, and mixing continuous lighting with strobes.

Classroom time includes daily editing, group critiques, and one-on-one meetings with Michael. In addition, Michael shares his insights and experiences in the photo industry, including career development, portfolios, and how to shoot for editorial and commercial clients.

Cost: \$1,795 + \$325 Model & Location Fee

Visit the <u>Santa Fe Workshops</u> website for more information on this workshop and to register.

#### ADVENTURE SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Summit Workshops - Jackson, Wyoming September 14 -19, 2019

Instructors: Corey Rich, Lucas Gilman, Sadie Quarrier, Dave Black, Jen Edney, Ryan Taylor, Savannah Cummins, Ted Hesser and Michael Clark



An image created for the marketing materials for Elinchrom's Skyport transmitter that allows for their Hi-Sync (HS) technology to work with a wide variety of cameras. We will be discussing this and other advanced lighting techniques in my Cutting-Edge Lighting Techniques workshop this summer at the Santa Fe Workshops.

Action and Adventure Junkies Rejoice! Set out on a photography journey in the Grand Tetons with our faculty of adventure photographers and editors from National Geographic, Red Bull, The North Face, and more. Work with the expert photographers and learn the shooting and scouting techniques that they use to land their images in top publications, meet the editors behind some of the world's most daring photography expeditions and learn how they hire photographers, and even spend a night camping with the faculty as you network with them throughout the workshop.

In this workshop, you'll be exposed to every aspect of adventure photography, from adventure and outdoor sports photography to product and outdoor commercial photography. The Adventure Workshop is for any and all photographers, and although some hiking is required, there is no recommended minimum level of fitness. This will be my second year as an instructor for this workshop and I must say it is an excellent experience and a golden opportunity for those looking to jump into the adventure genre. There is no other workshop out there (on the topic of adventure photography) that gives you access to so many top pro photographers in a single workshop. Additionally, where else can you hang out with a top-end photo editor like Sadie Quarrier from National Geographic and sit down with several working pro adventure photographers? This workshop has literally started careers.

#### Cost: \$1,995.00

Go to the <u>Summit Workshops website</u> for the specifics on what is covered and what isn't. Please note that this workshop is taught by nine outstanding photographers and photo editors and offers an incredible opportunity to learn from not just one but many experts.

#### **ONLINE WORKSHOP CLASSES**

Over the last few years I have taught a number of online classes for CreativeLIVE, which are available for download on their website. These classes are in-depth, online two-to-three day courses. Hence, there is a lot of information and they are a very cost effective way to learn about various photography skills. Below are a listing of my most recent classes.

#### The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow

CreativeLIVE (www.creativelive.com)

This digital workflow class covers everything from image capture to the final print. This is not just a class on how to

process your images, it is a detailed class for any and all photographers looking to take their photography to a whole new level, stay organized and make sure that they are getting the best possible image quality. This Creative-LIVE class won't cover everything contained in my digital workflow e-book, but it will cover a good portion of the key basics. We are going to take a deep dive into color management, sensor cleaning, image organization, file and folder naming, processing images in Lightroom and Photoshop, printing, backing up your images and much more. To watch or purchase this class visit <u>www.creativelive.com</u>.

#### Cost: \$99 USD

Note that CreativeLIVE often runs sales so the class might be discounted below this price.

#### Advanced Lighting for Adventure Photography

CreativeLIVE (www.creativelive.com)

Last Summer I taught a two-day live class on advanced lighting techniques for CreativeLIVE and Red Bull Photography, which was broadcast live on July 17th and 18th, 2017. This advanced lighting class covers Hi-Sync (HS) lighting techniques for outdoor and adventure photography and also includes a section on capturing portraits of outdoor athletes. As part of this course, we photographed rock climbing, cyclocross, and trail running.

This class is available for download on <u>www.creativelive</u>. <u>com</u>. While this isn't an in-person workshop, like the others listed here, it is a resource that is available online and can be downloaded and watched anytime.

Cost: \$79 USD



Note that CreativeLIVE often runs sales so the class might be discounted below this price.

#### WORKSHOP TESTIMONIALS

"Within the short time I've been studying and practicing photography, I have had teachers who are good educators, but not great photographers, and vice versa, but few who are both. Count yourself in these narrow ranks...I went through 4 years of college and several careers getting less candid advice and encouragement than I got in 4 days with you. For what it is worth, thank you for that." – Brandon McMahon, Adventure Photography Workshop "Michael set an incredibly high bar for his workshop. He gave 110%, covered a broad range of topics and did an outstanding job." - Chris Council, Adventure Photography Workshop

"I just finished Michael Clark's Adventure Photography Workshop at the Santa Fe Workshops. I had a terrific time with the group of people. We came because of the Santa Fe Workshop's reputation of presenting an intense learning experience guided by fantastic instructors. We got both. Michael Clark really knows his stuff and has a lot of excess energy, which he focused on us, and he can also teach. He read our skills and weaknesses quickly and went to work to improve each of us technically. He sorted out our individual goals, even when we couldn't really articulate them. Then he gave us plenty of time to address those goals and ask question after question after question. The rough environments in which we photographed were great fun to explore. Couldn't be better." - Tania Evans

"Michael is the best instructor I have taken a workshop

from." - Participant, Cutting-Edge Lighting Workshop

"Priceless chance to learn from the absolute best. Every photographer should take this class!" - Jill Sanders, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow available on CreativeLIVE

"Michael is a true professional and readily explains all of the nitty gritty issues of a photographer's digital workflow, including important things like Color Management, Lightroom workflows, Printing, and more. He is eager to answer your questions and has a thorough knowledge and passion that he loves to share. He can get way deep into the subject, which I found fascinating. You can tell Michael has great experience in teaching and also likes to learn from his students. He is very authentic, honest, and direct. I highly recommend this class, and look forward to another one of Michael's courses in the future!" - Kristen, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow on CreativeLIVE

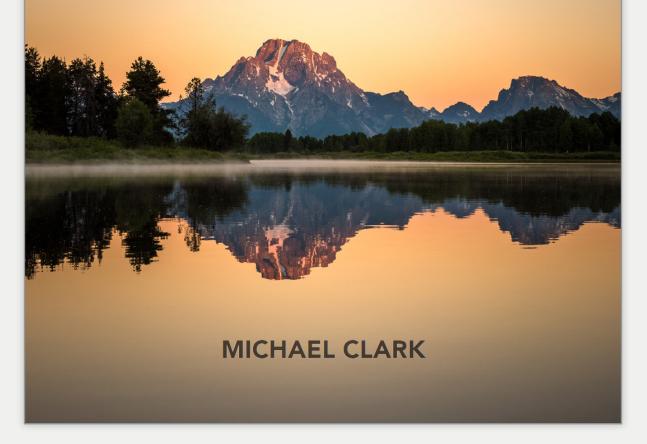
"I really enjoyed the surfing [photography] workshop! It was great on every level. I really can't thank you enough and I hope to take another of your workshops in the near future." - Ben Reed, Surfing Photo Workshop

"Your workshop at Santa Fe was too good and I came away with a lot of knowledge and renewed energy. The level of expertise that you and Michael shared was topnotch and I hope to repeat this experience again. Thanks for such a great workshop!" – Workshop Participant

For more information on my upcoming workshops, or to read more testimonials, please visit the <u>Workshops</u> page on my blog. Hope to see you at a workshop here soon! **A Professional Photographer's Workflow.** 

# A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER'S WORKFLOW

**USING ADOBE LIGHTROOM & PHOTOSHOP** 



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### equipment review

# The Nikon Z6

A review of Nikon's brand-new, 24.5 MP full-frame mirrorless camera



**Disclaimer:** I have been affiliated with Nikon in the past and was featured as one of their "Masters" in Nikon World Magazine as well as in their marketing brochures. Currently, I am not a Nikon Ambassador. Regardless, I wanted to be up front about my prior relationship with Nikon. The Nikon Z6 was loaned to me by <u>B&H Photo and Video</u> for a month long test period and I ended up buying the kit at the end of that period. This review originally appeared on my <u>bloa</u>.

n just about every aspect, the <u>Nikon Z6</u> is identical to the Z7 save for the sensor, which in the case of the Z6 is a 24.5 MP sensor instead of the Z7's 45.7 MP



While on a recent hike up in the aspens above Santa Fe, New Mexico I snapped this image of Katherine Mast hiking with our new husky in deep snow. The diminutive size of the Nikon Z6 and its 24-70mm f/4 S lens is significantly easier to hike with and still captures impressive images. Having used the camera in extremely cold and snowy conditions it seems to handle poor weather with ease. Tech Specs: Nikon Z7, Nikkor Z 24-70mm f/4 S, 1/1,600th second at f/8, ISO400.

sensor. Hence, for this review, I am not going to rehash everything discussed in my extensive <u>Nikon Z7 review</u>, that appeared on my blog and in the Fall 2018 Newsletter. I will instead concentrate on how the Z6 is different than the Z7 and why for me it was the better choice given that I already have two stellar Nikon D850 camera bodies. I encourage folks that have not read my Nikon Z7 review to check it out as pretty much everything I said in that review is applicable to the Z6 as well. In my Nikon Z7 review from a few months ago, I said that "I can see a lot of Nikon photographers adding a Z6 to their kit just for the video features alone. I will certainly be considering that here in the next few months when the Z6 is released." Only a month later, I did just that. Since I already have two Nikon D850 camera bodies, adding a Z7 didn't make sense. The Z6 seemed like a better option, mostly because it has better video capabilities. In reality, the Z6 just seems like a better value proposition and it allows me to jump into the Nikon mirrorless system and start acquiring Z-series lenses. It also allows me to start getting used to the new mirrorless cameras as I don't see myself ever purchasing another DSLR.

In this review, I honestly can't really compare the Z6 to the Sony A7 III or the Canon EOS R because I have not tried them out. Because I have so much Nikon glass—and because I have so much familiarity with the Nikon system—it really just isn't a wise option to switch up systems at this point. Luckily, Nikon again came through with a stellar camera, especially since it is their first foray into full-frame mirrorless. [Though to be honest, Nikon has been making mirrorless cameras for a decade or so starting way back when with the Nikon 1 system.]

#### **IMAGE QUALITY**

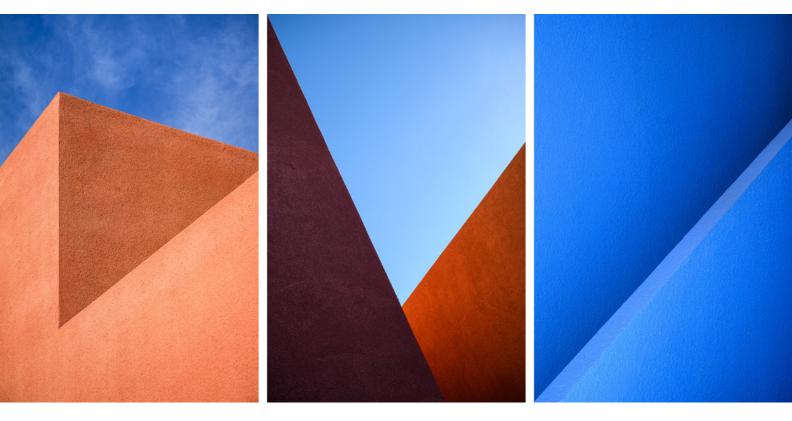
The Z6 is the first camera I have bought in a long time that has an anti-aliasing filter in front of the sensor, which slightly blurs the image to avoid creating digital artifacts in the image. My main cameras the last six years or more have been the D800, D810 and D850 alongside my Hasselblad H5D, with the D800 being the only one of those that incorporated an anti-aliasing filter. Hence, it has been a while since I have looked at images from a camera with an anti-aliasing filter and the images from the Z6 seem a little softer than those from my other cameras, but that might also be because it has much lower resolution as well.

In my experience so far, the image quality from the Z6 is very good. It is not as stellar as the Z7, which has nearly twice the resolution and seems significantly sharper. I have found that turning the in-body-image-stabilization (IBIS) on and off, depending on your shutter speed, has a much bigger impact on image quality than it seemed to have with the Z7. In my testing, if I am shooting at or below 1/400th second I turn on the IBIS and if I am above 1/400th second I turn it off. Luckily, it is relatively easy to turn the IBIS on or off without even moving your eye from the viewfinder. The Z6 image quality (from raw image files) also varies greatly depending on how closely you monitor several key settings in Lightroom, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section.

24.5 megapixels is nothing to sneeze at. While it isn't as profound as my D850 or the Z7, one can certainly make sizable prints from 24 MP images. Prints up to 30x45-inches are quite sharp even on close inspection. When resolution matters, and it often does for my work, I will reach for my trusty D850, but for those times when I need a lightweight camera and can get away with a lower resolution the Z6 is a great alternative.

I don't photograph a lot of architecture, but recently a good friend of mine, Charlie Pinder—the former Director of Photography for Red Bull Photography—was in town and his passion is architecture. Hence, the images shown at the top of the next page are from some fun days cruising around Santa Fe, New Mexico exploring some of the more modern buildings. It turns out this was a great test to see how the Z6 handled a wide range of scenarios and to test out its dynamic range and color response.

We also ventured out to one of Georgia O'Keefe's favorite spots, Plaza Blanca (near Abiquiu, NM) and shot some landscapes as seen on Page 18. This black and white image here is a good example showing the amazing dynamic range of Nikon's cameras. For this image I exposed for



This series of architectural images were captured while hanging out with my good friend Charlie Pinder, the former Director of Photography for my client Red Bull Photography, who has a passion for modern architecture. Even though I don't shoot much architecture it was fun to run around and think about lines and angles. It was also a great test for the Z6 and its dynamic range. All images captured with the Nikon Z6 and the Nikkor Z 24-70mm f/4 S lens.

the much brighter sky and let the landscape below go into deep dark shadows. When I pulled up the exposure slider and opened up the shadows I was able to balance out the tones in the image with very little noise penalty. As with my D850 and the Z7, the Z6 has a very wide dynamic range.

Speaking of noise, the Z6 does extremely well all the way up to ISO 12,800. I wouldn't hesitate to go to ISO 6400 and when I did the noise was not bad at all. I won't bore you with image samples at High ISO. If you want to see how it stacks up visit DPReview's excellent <u>noise comparison tool</u>. According to DPReview, the Z6 seems to have a fairly strong anti-aliasing filter, which explains my findings that the images appear a bit softer than I am used to and require just an extra kiss of sharpening in Lightroom to get the best image quality.

Overall, there are some quirks to getting the best image quality out of the Z6, but they are not difficult to master. I want to make sure the reader understands that the image quality issues I had with the camera—aside from figuring out when to use the IBIS—are mostly with Adobe's software, not the camera. Let's dive into dealing with the raw images in Lightroom.

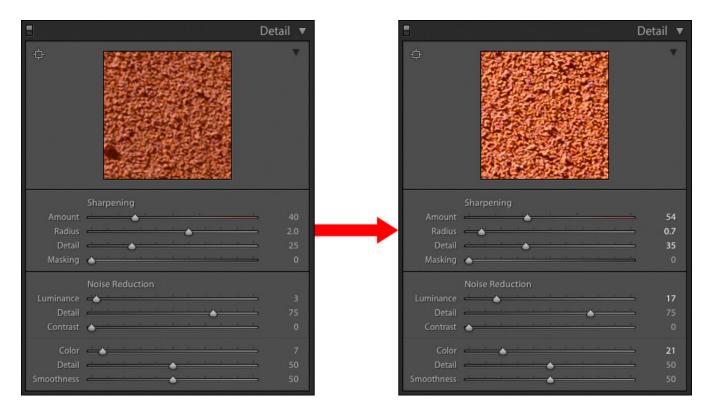
#### NIKON Z6 AND ADOBE LIGHTROOM CLASSIC CC

As noted above, I have found some strange behavior when viewing my Nikon Z6 images in Lightroom and



Plaza Blanca, also known as the "White Place," is a hidden treasure in northern New Mexico and a place where the famous artist Georgia O'Keefe painted often. This location has also been featured in quite a few Hollywood films like 3:10 to Yuma and Cowboys and Aliens. The image above was shot as a single image and then the shadows were lifted in Lightroom to get this final black and white image. Tech Specs: Nikon Z7, Nikkor Z 24-70mm f/4 S, 1/1,250th second at f/8, ISO100.

Adobe Camera Raw. First off, the Z6 profile that Adobe built is rather poor in terms of the default sharpening settings. All of my Z6 raw images appeared just a bit soft when viewed in Lightroom and ACR. Just to be clear, this is an issue with Lightroom and Adobe Camera Raw, not with the camera. If images are opened in Nikon's Capture NX-D software they appear as you would expect. For a few days I was quite displeased with the camera and considered returning it thinking that the camera was a dud or Nikon severely missed the boat with this camera—then I noticed the default sharpening settings in Lightroom's Develop module looked a little odd. A sharpening radius of 2.0 is huge and I would never use a radius that large in Photoshop's Smart Sharpening or Unsharp Mask dialogs. Once I reconfigured the sharpening settings (as shown on the next page) all of my Z6 images instantly snapped into focus, as can be seen in the image previews in the Detail dialogs, and are now very sharp.



Until Adobe can fix their raw profile for the Nikon Z6 in Lightroom and Adobe Camera Raw, to make the Z6 images appear sharp I had to adjust the Sharpening settings so that the Amount = 54, Radius = 0.7, Detail = 35 and Masking = 0. Once I altered these sharpening settings all of the images were much sharper.

While working with many different types of images from the Z6 in Lightroom, I have found that the amount of sharpening—in this case "Capture Sharpening" for raw images—varies widely depending on the subject and how textured that subject happens to be as well as how large it is in the frame. So, basically when working with the Z6 you will have to pay attention to how much sharpening is applied when processing the raw images. [Note: if you only capture jpeg images then this can be overcome by applying the right amount of sharpening in-camera.] Hopefully Adobe can correct this issue in the Z6 camera profile or ignore the EXIF data from the camera and give us the true unadulterated raw image files to work with.

The Nikon Z6 raw image files come into Lightroom with built-in profiles which are then rendered in the Develop Module. There have been some white balance issues (see Adobe's Help page <u>here</u>) and a few other bugs associated with the Nikon Z6 profile in Lightroom. I did not see any white balance issues when processing images from the Z7 so it appears that Adobe rushed out the Z6 profile, which is quite unfortunate. I am sure they will fix it with the next software update for Lightroom, but until then be sure to adjust the sharpening and noise reduction sliders as needed to get the best results.

Additionally, because Lightroom is reading the EXIF data and using Nikon's built-in camera profile for the Z6 it does not allow you to actually use a specific profile correction for each lens by checking the box next to "Enable Profile Corrections" in the Lens Corrections dialog. When you do click that box, the make of the camera simply







shows up as "Built-In" signaling that there is no Adobe profile for this and it is relying on Nikon's own lens profiles. As an example the vignetting is removed according to the camera's built-in profile, not using Adobe's lens profile correction feature. And from what I am seeing, the Nikon profile is removing some of the vignetting but not all of it, which creates a tough situation where you have to go into the "Manual" section of the Lens Corrections dialog in Lightroom's Develop module and manually remove it. I hope Lightroom can fix this and ignore Nikon's built-in camera profile because this sets up a painful process to work up Nikon Z6 images.

#### HANDLING

The ergonomics of the Z6 (as shown at left) are identical to the Z7, which is to say they are excellent. Interestingly, I did notice that the camera seems to start up significantly faster than the Z7 when I tested it a few months back though perhaps this was fixed in the latest firmware update a while back on the Z7. With the Z7 I missed quite a few shots waiting for the camera to initialize and come to life. The Z6 seems to boot up nearly instantly, which is much nicer for trying to capture those off the cuff images that just happen in front of you. I could just have the camera on all the time when shooting but it doesn't seem much different to turn it on versus waking it up from sleep. It still isn't as instantaneous as my D850 but it is decently fast.

Now that I have used both the Z7 and the Z6 for a longer time, I am also noticing just how well the ergonomics and handling of this camera have been designed. With one button push, using the top button next to the lens mount (Fn1), I can rotate the rear dial and adjust the white





balance without having to take my eye away from the viewfinder. Also, because of the EVF, as I change white balance settings I can see exactly how the image will be affected. And if I am even more concerned about accurate white balance, with both eyes open I can do a real world comparison to see if the color I am seeing with my left eye, which is looking at the real world, matches up with the color I am seeing with my right eye through the EVF. If one of the preset white balance settings isn't accurate enough, I can also jump into the specific Kelvin settings and dial it in even further.

Pushing the "i" button on the back of the camera with my eye in the EVF, I can very quickly turn the IBIS on or off as needed depending on my shutter speed. In fact, there are very few things you can't accomplish with your eye firmly planted in the viewfinder, which makes it easy to change a wide range of features. All in all, I continue to be impressed by the Z6 and the pains that Nikon has taken to make sure the ergonomics work for a wide variety of photographic situations. Honestly, the Z6 (and Z7 for that matter) feel about the same size as my legendary Nikon FM2 film camera except it has a much nicer grip, which the older film camera lacks. My now ancient Nikon FM2 film camera (above left), which I started out with over three decades ago, is just a hair smaller than the new Nikon Z6 as shown above. The Z6 is 12.7 millimeters taller than the FM2 and 7.6 millimeters shorter (in width) than the FM2, making them roughly similar in size. Hence, now we are back to the smaller size of 35mm film cameras before the big pro camera bodies took over in the 90s. I realize for most people this comparison is irrelevant, but for those of us that shot film like I did for the first half of my career it is interesting to see we have come full circle in terms of camera size. Of course, the Z6 is a much more advanced camera than the FM2. I could not have even dreamed of such a camera when the FM2 came out way back in 1982.

#### AUTOFOCUS

Another area where the Z6 interface seems a bit faster is with moving the autofocus points. I am not sure if this is just because there are fewer AF points or it is a fact of the Z6 being a faster frame rate camera. Either way, moving and changing focus points is much quicker than in the Z7, and this is a welcome change considering that the AF points stretch out over nearly the entire viewfinder. In



Above, you can see that the Nikon Z6 tracked my friend Charlie Pinder, the skier here, as he skied towards me. Charlie skied from side to side (at least in my frame) and the Z6 nailed focus on pretty much every shot while shooting at 9 frames per second, which I have to say surprised me. Charlie wasn't going crazy fast as the powder was slowing him down and the angle wasn't too steep, but it was still a challenge many cameras would fail. Also, in this extreme cold the Z6 did very well and the controls were easy to manipulate even with thick ski gloves on. Tech Specs: Nikon Z6, Nikkor Z 24-70mm f/4 S, 1/3200th second at f/5.6, ISO 200.

addition to the ease of moving AF points, it feels like the AF tracking is a bit more accurate and snappier than the Z7's AF tracking abilities.

Above are a series of images I captured of my friend

Charlie Pinder skiing straight towards the camera at 9 fps and pretty much every single image is sharp. To be clear, the AF tracking capabilities of the Z6 are still no where near as good my trusty Nikon D850 or the AF capabilities of the Sony A9 (especially with the new and forthcoming firmware upgrade). Hopefully Nikon can improve this functionality with a firmware update, but I was happily surprised at how well it did in my testing—as can be seen in this example.



I am also happy to report that the Z6 works flawlessly with the FTZ adapter (shown above) and all of my Nikkor F-mount lenses just as with the Z7. The adapter is easy to use and opens up a huge bevy of lenses (that I already own) for use with the Z6. Without the adapter, this system would be severely hampered. For those assignments where I want to travel just a hair lighter, I can see leaving one of my D850 bodies at home and taking the Z6 (and the FTZ adapter) as a backup to my main D850 workhorse.

In terms of customization, it very easy to change focusing modes on the Z6 by depressing the bottom front button near the lens mount (Fn2) and rotating either the rear dial or the front dial to adjust the focusing mode and AF point options. For my hands, these buttons are placed in a very easy to reach position—though I realize that may not be the case for everyone. Overall, the AF is snappy but not as fast as my Nikon D850. For everything but fast moving sports I think the AF is more than adequate. Of note, the AF in video mode is quite good—or at least as good as anything else I have used. Not having used Canon's DualPixel AF I cannot say how it compares to that, but suffice it to say that I will be using the Nikon AF-F focus mode when capturing video. For moving subjects I am guessing it would be able to follow focus better than I could manually—once the subject is selected. And it seems to recognize faces very well and track them as they move in the frame. Additionally, you can set the camera to do focus pulls and adjust the transition rate as well to really dial in the focus pull. With the silent focusing Z lenses, the Z6 really is a rock-solid 4K video option for Nikon photographers. This is definitely the best AF Nikon has ever had in video mode in any camera model.

#### VIDEO

I have done some testing of the video capabilities and must say I am quite impressed. The 4K footage coming out of the Z6 is as good or better than any other Nikon that I have seen. At high ISOs there is very little noise. The image quality is sharp and clean. Even wide open using the 24-70mm f/4 S lens, the AF tracking in video mode was bang on and tracked moving subjects or camera movements with ease. I have not done an entire video project with the camera as of yet, but I can easily see this rig, paired with an Atomos Ninja V external recorder to access the forthcoming raw video output, replacing the larger Red Digital Cinema Cameras we often work with when we are trying to go lighter. At the very least, the Z6 will give us an extra camera that can output fantastic video for use alongside the much more expensive Red Epic and Gemini cameras that we work with.

The ability to shoot at 120p in full HD is also a welcome

### NinjaV records Apple ProRes RAW from Nikon mirrorless cameras



addition on the Z6. And because you can choose the frame size, either FX (full frame) or DX (APC-C crop), that also gives you a lot of focal length options with a small lightweight kit.

While this section is short, this will be one area that I plan to do a lot more testing. Stay tuned for a more in-depth blog post on the video capabilities of the Z6.

#### **FIRMWARE UPDATES**

At the 2019 CES show that took place in January, Nikon announced that they would be adding a few new features to the Z6 and Z7 via a firmware update. Namely, those new features are Eye AF, ProRes RAW video output to an Atomos Ninja V external recorder, and an update to allow for CFexpress cards to be used in both cameras. Nikon is not normally a company to make such impressive firmware updates like this so it was quite a surprise. When I heard about the raw video output—in full 4K mind you—I was floored. Nikon will be the first camera manufacturer to have a still and video camera (in the same body) that can output both raw stills and raw video.

The Eye AF feature will also be a great addition. I know Sony users swear by this feature so we will have to wait and see how it stacks up to Sony's Eye AF. Having tested the Z7's face tracking AF I was sad to see that it did not lock onto the eyes by default so hopefully Nikon can make Eye AF just as solid in the Z series cameras as Sony has in their Alpha cameras. I am hoping that along with the Eye AF feature, Nikon improves all of the AF capabilities of the Z-series cameras. The ability to use CFexpress cards is also a huge leap forward for those looking to shoot fast action as it will massively expand the buffer and could even allow for internal raw video recording if Nikon wants to go that route.

This firmware update goes to show just how much Nikon believes in these cameras and how much effort they are putting into them to push these mirrorless bodies as far as possible. Who knows, perhaps Nikon can add more advanced AF modes—like 3D tracking—to improve the AF tracking as well. If they did that then the Z series cameras would be pretty much the complete package.

#### **NEW LENSES**

Along with the CES firmware update announcement, Nikon also announced the new Nikkor Z 14-30mm f/4 S Lens (shown at right), which is very similar to the 24-70 f/4 S lens. There are many groaning about the f/4 maximum aperture of this new lens but for those looking to go light and fast this is a great new addition to the lens lineup. If it is as sharp as the 24-70 f/4 S lens, which I have no doubt it will be, then it will be a great lens for landscapes, action sports and a lot of what I capture. Looking at my Lightroom catalog and filtering for my Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8 lens, I saw that in all the years I have owned the 14-24 I have only shot at apertures below f/4 (i.e. f/2.8, f/3.2, and f/3.5) 15% of the time. Hence, an f/4 aperture for me is not the end of the world, especially since the Z6 is a low light monster in terms of low noise.

And not to be forgotten, Nikon will soon be releasing the Nikkor Z 58mm f/0.95 S Noct lens. I realize it is manual focus, and a serious specialty lens, but man this lens is going to be a fun lens to shoot with—especially with focus peaking. I imagine it is going to be a hot rental item. I am certainly keen to try it out.

In all honesty, a huge part of why I bought the Z6 is to start building up a Nikon mirrorless (full frame) lens collection. Seeing how good the Z6 and Z7 camera bodies are I am not sure I will ever buy another DSLR or any more DSLR lenses—though that new Nikkor 500mm f/5.6 PF lens is quite exciting. The future is mirrorless, and if Nikon can solve their AF tracking issues and get the AF up to par with the D850 and D5, then I can very well imagine selling off my DSLRs and committing to mirror-less cameras. I imagine this conversion to mirrorless is going to happen much sooner than a lot of us would guess—within the next few years.



Looking forward to later this year, Nikon has told us in their Z lens roadmap that they will also have a Z 24-70mm f/2.8 S lens, which was just recently announced, and a Z 70-200mm f/2.8 S lens available. With the Nikkor Z 14-30mm f/4 S and the Z 70-200mm f/2.8 S lenses we will have the big three standard zooms native for the Z6 and Z7. At that point there are only a few other prime lenses I use that would need the FTZ adapter.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, just as with the Z7, the Z6 is a great new addition to the Nikon lineup and a stellar offering for photographers looking to jump into mirrorless. If you are a Nikon shooter, then the Z6 is a natural fit—especially if you are doing a lot of video. Seeing that this is Nikon's first attempt at a full-frame mirrorless camera, they got a lot right with the Z series cameras. The ergonomics, EVF and overall feel of the camera is stellar. The weather sealing also seems top-notch. I shot with the Z6 in rain, snow and very cold conditions and it never missed a beat. The battery lasted just as long as I found with the Z7, which is to say I consistently got more than 1,000 shots per fully charged battery and even up to 1,500 images per fully charged battery in extremely cold weather.

The more I shoot with the Z6 the more I want to shoot with it. Going back to my D850 is going to be toughthough I still love its image quality. When shooting with the D850, as I did on a recent assignment, I missed the Z6 EVF, the live histogram and the stellar IBIS that allows me to shoot handheld at 1/8th second and still get sharp images. I never thought I would say that I will miss an EVF but for the first time ever I am saying it here. I have been an optical viewfinder guy forever so this is a huge statement. Going back and forth between the D850 and the Z6, the edge-to-edge AF points were also missed. I am already starting to feel the pull of mirrorless and I now see why so many have switched over. Once you get used to how much faster and efficient it is to shoot with mirrorless then going back to a DSLR seems rough. With that said, the image quality out of the D850 is still very hard to beat even with a Z7. Match that with the wicked fast AF of the D850 and it will be some time before that camera is fully replaced in my camera bag.

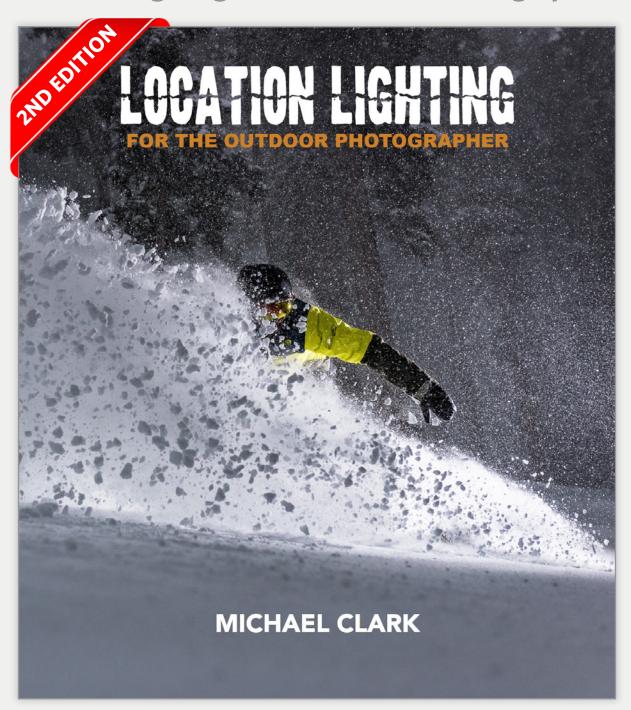
I am very eager to see Nikon release new lenses for the Z series cameras. Right now I only have the 24-70mm f/4 S lens. I am eagerly awaiting the 70-200mm f/2.8 S and

the 14-30mm f/4 S lenses to round out the kit with native Z-mount glass. I am dreaming of the day when I can go all mirrorless and still have wicked fast autofocus to shoot fast action. I can imagine having a few Nikon Z9 60-plus MP camera bodies in my bag along with a full bevy of Zmount lenses and perhaps a 100 MP Hasselblad X1D Mark II and a Hasselblad X-series lens or two with me all of which weighs in at under 20 pounds total. We will get there someday...it might just take few years but we are well on our way.

At only \$1,996.95 USD for the Z6 camera body it compares quite favorably to the Sony A7 III. While the Sony might have a leg up with faster AF and Eye AF modes, as well as a larger stable of native lenses, the Z6 has far superior ergonomics and an EVF that is much better than any other camera on the market—save for perhaps the forthcoming Panasonic Lumix full-frame cameras. With all of the new mirrorless cameras announced over the last six months it is a very exciting time to be a photographer. There are so many great cameras on the market right now, it is quite a difficult decision for those looking to get a new camera. If you have the money, the Z6 is an excellent mirrorless camera.

My thanks to <u>B&H Photo Video</u> for loaning me the Z6 along with the 24-70mm f/4 S and the FTZ adapter. As of now, I have purchased the <u>Z6 kit</u> so it won't be going back to B&H. That I kept this kit, and didn't send it back, is the best indication of my thoughts on this camera. It will be going with me on most assignments now—right along with my Nikon D850 camera bodies. If you have recently purchased a Nikon Z-series mirrorless camera please let me know what you think of it and leave a few comments on my <u>Nikon Z6 blog post review</u>. Until next time... ADVERTISEMENT

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# on assignment: YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

A winter exploration of America's first National Park.

NEWSLETTER **28** WINTER 2019

few weeks ago, while driving back from an assignment capturing images of giant wind turbines for NEXTera Energy, I got a call from my friend Richie Graham, with whom I have been on a number adventures. During the call, he mentioned a trip up to Yellowstone the following week, and I offered up, "If you need some company I would love to go with you!" Since he was heading up solo to photograph landscape images he was psyched to have some company. I was excited to get into Yellowstone in winter, as I had only ever been in the park in summer. It was one of those serendipitous moments that lead to this trip happening for me—especially since Richie pretty much had the trip all planned out.

We landed in Bozeman in a snowstorm, and the drive out to Gardiner, Montana was like driving over a frozen lake. In winter there is only one road that is open to public vehicles in the park. That road is the Grand Loop Road, which arcs from Mammoth Hot Springs over to the town of Cooke City just outside the park on the far northeastern edge. There is only one way into and out of Cooke City in winter and it is via this road, which makes Cooke City feel like an isolated town in outer Mongolia. We spent the first few days exploring Mammoth Hot Springs and The Grand Loop Road. That first day driving over to Cooke City through the

States ??

CHARLEN D

Lamar Valley we saw an incredible amount of wildlife and very few people. Around midday, after driving through a few Bison herds walking on the road, we came upon a Bison kill where three coyotes were jumping in and out of the rib-cage of the Bison carcass to rip meat from the interior. They occasionally nipped at each other to keep the status quo (See page 44). We spent close to an hour with them capturing images with 450mm lenses before moving on. About the only wildlife we didn't see that first day was a Grizzly Bear, since they were all hibernating.

The next day we cross-country skied up onto a ridge overlooking the Yellowstone River not far from the Tower Junction. This position offered up stunning views of the Lamar Valley and also gave me a great background to photograph Richie as he skied around (See page 36-37). The Grand Loop Road was generally snow packed, as can be seen on page 45. Up on the Blacktail Deer Plateau (See pages 40-41) the wind was brisk, creating frigid conditions on the two days we drove this road.

The meat of the trip was to go into the Snow Lodge near Old Faithful and spend a few days there exploring different areas on cross-country skis. Since most of the roads are closed in winter, to get into the Snow Lodge we took one of the Yellowstone snow coaches for the four-hour trip into the center of the park. Once at the lodge, it was only a few hundred feet to Old Faithful and a three mile ski out to Biscuit Basin. Of course, the lodge and other outfitters also offer a multitude of guided trips, which are pretty pricey. We opted to spend three days skiing around in all different directions since there was a lot of volcanic activity right there in the vicinity. In and around Old Faithful there are a dozens and dozens of thermal features to check out and there are several cross-country ski trails, some of which are even groomed for a portion of the trail. Not far from the lodge, we found these dead trees near the Crested Pool, just off the boardwalk, which made for crazy cool "Empire Strikes Back" type landscape images—as shown on the following page. With the water vapor from the nearby geyser blowing behind the trees it made for a magical series of images.

Along with all of the mud pots, pools, geysers and other thermal features, one of the most magical aspects of Yellowstone for me was watching the Bison. While driving in the car, we got very close to them as we passed them on the road. On skis though, it is quite tough to get close. On our last day, we had a major snowstorm that deposited about eight inches of fresh, dry powder, which made for amazing near whiteout skiing conditions. We headed out to Biscuit Basin to see if we could find some Bison since we had seen them in that area the day before. When I got there I skied out into a meadow across the river from where a herd of Bison was foraging. I tried to ski in as quietly as possible but they started moving away from me. Even so, with my 300mm lens and 1.4x teleconvertor I was able to get some pretty wild images as shown on pages 32 and 33. Watching the Bison ford the Firehole River with ease and plow through the deep snow with no one else around harkened back to what Yellowstone must have felt like a century ago, when it wasn't overrun by crowds. In fact this entire winter trip was the complete opposite of the heavily touristed park in summer. We saw a few hundred people total on our trip as opposed to the tens of thousands you would have to deal with in summer. I hope these images give you a sense of the park in winter, and maybe even inspire a future visit to this great national park in the dead of winter.





Previous Page: Dead trees near Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming. Above: A lone Bison making sure the herd safely crosses the river in front of him (out of frame) in Biscuit Basin near Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



A herd of Bison fording the Firehole River in Biscuit Basin near Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



Snow covered Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



Colorful Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



Richie Graham cross-country skiing on a ridge above the Yellowstone River near Tower Junction in Yellowstone Na tional Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



The view looking northeast along the Soda Butte Creek in the north eastern corner of Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



The Crested Pool boiling in Yellowstone National Park near the Old Faithful complex on a cold winter day in Wyoming.



The view at sunset from Grand Loop Road in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming. This panorama was created with eight Hasselblad 50 MP 16-bit images and ended up as a giant 2.35 GB image file that could easily be printed twenty feet long with stunning resolution.





Hot water vapor billowing up above the thermal features at Biscuit Basin in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



Sunlight streaming through dense water vapor at Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.



Coyotes going at it while devouring a Bison carcass in the Lamar Valley of Yellowstone National Park deep in the heart of winter in Wyoming.



The Grand Loop Road arcing up into the sky on the Blacktail Deer Plateau in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day in Wyoming.

# portfolio



#### perspective

ver the last four months I have been shooting a lot with the new Nikon Z mirrorless cameras as can be seen in the last few Newsletter equipment reviews. At first, I thought the new cameras were cute, tiny little gizmos that were a great addition to the camera bag alongside my two venerable Nikon D850 camera bodies and my Hasselblad. Now, after four straight months of shooting mostly mirrorless, I have had to pick up and shoot with the D850 and the Hasselblad again on recent assignments—and I have to say the little Z6 is so easy to shoot with, and so light, that I wish it was on par in every way with my D850. If the Nikon Z mirrorless cameras had the same autofocus capabilities as the D850 I can honestly say that I would sell my D850 camera bodies and commit fully to the Nikon Z mirrorless system. I am sold on mirrorless already—and it didn't take very long at all to come around to the new technology.

Why am I sold on mirrorless? It is just faster. The live histogram visible in the viewfinder is a huge part of it. With that live histogram in the viewfinder I know before I take the shot that I have the right exposure. No more "take a photo and chimp on the back of the camera" to see if the histogram looks good. Also, having the level feature available in the viewfinder is also a nice addition and not something that is possible in a DSLR. By hitting the "i" button I can bring up a whole host of items to

## Sold on Mirrorless

by Michael Clark

change on the fly quickly and easily. And not to be forgotten, the in-body image-stabilization (IBIS) is incredibly useful for capturing sharp images in low light.

Aside from specific features, the ergonomics of the Z6 have really won me over. Nikon did an incredible job with the Z-series cameras. It is astonishing they were able to shrink them down into such a small, compact body and somehow improved the ergonomics over and above my D850 DSLR. I didn't think I would be saying this ever when I first started shooting with the Z7 (or the Z6) but all of the button placements allow me to really keep the camera to my eye and adjust pretty much anything on the fly without breaking concentration on the subject.

In the end, all of these features add up to a superb camera system with stellar new lenses. I cannot wait for the Nikkor Z 14-30mm f/4 and 70-200mm f/2.8 lenses to be released so that I can have a basic lightweight kit. If Nikon can improve the AF tracking with the new firmware update promised for May 2019, that might push me over the edge towards selling at least one of my D850 DSLR camera bodies. We will have to wait and see, but as the guy who thought he would never go mirrorless, this oped is quite the reversal in just a few short months. Bravo Nikon! Bring on the firmware updates and keep improving these already stellar cameras.

## parting shot



A remote black sand beach at Waianapanapa State Park near Hana on Maui in the Hawaiian Islands. This beach is relatively close to Hana but to get to this side of the island requires an intense drive on extremely narrow, slow roads. Regardless, this beach and the surrounding basalt cliffs offer a stunning landscape for those willing to make the trek out to this spot.

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