



Inspiration and advice from one of your own

A PASSION FOR FASHION

Richard Maidment wants to be a fashion photographer and fills his evenings and weekends with portrait shoots to help him do just that. Time well spent, we say



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As fanatical as some of us are about being behind the lens, far too few of us actually get to practise the craft as much as we’d like to, and all too often our dreams of perfect pictures just never seem to come true. Well, fellow reader Richard Maidment is here to remind you what’s possible if you stick with photography and give it everything you’ve got. Richard only bought his first DSLR a few years ago, and since then he’s developed some impressive skills. But as fantastic as his portraits are, his camera history is actually pretty humble.

“My very first camera, many years ago, was a Konica Z-up 100 VP; a fully automatic compact,” Richard explains. “I then had a Casio digital compact camera a few years later. It wasn’t until December 2008 when I was 22 that I bought my first DSLR, which is the Canon EOS 50D I still use today.”

All credit to Richard for staying with one model. Some photographers are known for changing cameras more often than politicians fiddle their expenses. There is a camera change on Richard’s horizon though, and it’s another big step up. This time it’s to a model featuring a ‘full-frame’ sensor, which is larger than the APS-C sensors found in most DSLRs, and as a result gives

outstanding image quality. “I’m currently looking into replacing my EOS 50D with a Canon EOS 5D MkII,” Richard tells us. “The main reason for this is the full-frame sensor. After trying one out a couple of times and talking to other photographers, I decided this would be the best camera for me.”

The EOS 50D is still a cracking camera, though, and great proof that you don’t always need the latest gear to take the best pictures – just check out these portraits! But like most of us, Richard only bought it after months of painstaking research as to what to upgrade to from his compact camera. It was the point where Richard acknowledged how much his photography had grown from its beginnings in his childhood.

“I have always been interested in photography as a hobby, and as a child I would always have a camera to take on holidays and places we visited. In my school years I started taking more photos of my friends and at local gigs. About three years ago I wanted to produce better quality photos and after a lot of research and money saving I managed to buy that EOS 50D.”

It was that background of taking pictures of his friends that led Richard down the path of portraiture; a route



PREVIOUS PAGE

“This image was taken in a small park. The light was very strong so we took shelter under a tree, which created much softer light.”
Canon EOS 50D, 70-200mm, 1/1600sec at f/2.8, ISO 200.

THIS PAGE “I was approached by this girl who was keen on modelling and wanted some shots for her portfolio. We used the autumn leaves as props.”
Canon EOS 50D, 70-200mm, 1/640sec at f/2.8, ISO 200.

that many photographers find incredibly difficult. His character draws him to that challenge, though. “I like the interaction with people and I try to show a person’s individual personality in the photos I take,” he explains, adding that there’s much more to great fashion portraits than meets the eye. “When photographing a subject I want to show them at their best, so I talk to them and find out a bit about them first. Then I have a better understanding of them, we both feel more relaxed, and I can produce better images that are true to the subject.”

Sounds like a good game plan to us, but what about sourcing models? Like a lot of portrait photographers, Richard →



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progressed by using people around him. “I started out by photographing friends and people that I knew, then over a period of time I got more people asking me to do photo shoots and it built up from there,” he says. “I also use a couple of model and photographer portfolio websites to find models, and I have models contact me through them.”

We took a look at using modelling websites in the July issue of *Digital SLR*, but if you’re interested in sourcing models you can find out a lot more by searching the Internet for the relevant model websites.

Portraiture is one of the ‘big four’ photographic genres, along with landscapes, close-ups and wildlife photography, and we asked whether Richard had ever been tempted to try his hand at one of them instead. “I’ve never really had much interest in macro photography,” he says, “but it would be something I would like to explore in the future. I do shoot some landscape and wildlife photography as a

ABOVE LEFT “Another image from the photo shoot at the park. We decided to position the model under a blossom tree. I then asked a friend to climb up the tree and shake the branch so the blossom would fall. I only had a couple of goes to get this right, but I was happy with the result.” Canon EOS 50D, 70-200mm, 1/1600sec at f/2.8, ISO 500.

ABOVE LEFT “This shot was taken in an abandoned garage that I had found. The model had recently got a tattoo down her back. The lighting was all daylight.” Canon EOS 50D, 70-200mm, 1/100sec at f/2.8, ISO 640.

hobby, though, and when I first started teaching myself photography I used to photograph a lot of wildlife.”

So has this practice in other disciplines helped push his portraits on? “My main passion has always been portraiture and fashion photography, but I think exploring different types of photography, such as landscapes, has helped with my location photo shoots as I try to incorporate this experience into my photos.”

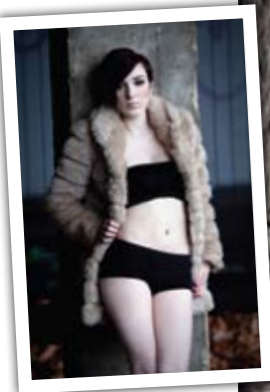
It’s clear that Richard does a lot of editing work on his pictures after he takes them, which is part of what gives them such an attractive look. It’s no accident, and by now it probably won’t surprise you to learn that Richard definitely knows one end of an image editing program from another. It’s all part of his drive to break into professional fashion photography. “I’ve always been interested in using computers and graphic design; I design my own websites and promotion material,” he adds, moving on to one of

the biggest cans of worms in modern photography. “I enjoy enhancing photos digitally and making the subject look their best. Some people feel that it makes the images ‘fake’ and I agree with them to some extent, but through experience, I’ve found they prefer to see themselves at their best with smooth skin, and things like wrinkles and dark eyes retouched. Also, in the future I’d like to work in fashion photography and in that genre photos are mostly processed and enhanced.”

To our eyes it looks like Richard has already developed his own signature style, but he’s not so sure. “I feel I’m still developing my style at the moment as I am always trying different things. As I am currently studying for my degree, the course has opened a wide variety of genres and styles for me to explore and help me build on my own style.”

This standard of photography doesn’t come along overnight (sadly). It takes a lot of practice and focus, but Richard’s free time has been filled with →

BELOW "Taken in an empty car park, I wanted to create a contrast between the fur coat-clad chic model and the dirty location. I used a flashgun to the right of camera to provide some fill-in light." Canon EOS 50D, 70-200mm, 1/160 at f/2.8, ISO 400.



IN A NUTSHELL

10 quick questions and answers

- 1. First DSLR?** Canon EOS 50D
- 2. Favourite lens?** My Canon 70-200mm
- 3. Prime or zoom lenses?** Zooms – far more flexible
- 4. What's the secret to working with models?** Get them to relax
- 5. Black & white or colour?** Both, depends on the image
- 6. The photo accessory you don't leave home without?** Flashgun
- 7. The best bit of photo advice ever given?** Shoot as much as you can, whenever you can
- 8. What piece of kit are you buying next?** Canon 10-20mm
- 9. Favourite meal?** Mmm, anything as long as it's Italian
- 10. If you could shoot a portrait of anyone living or dead who would it be and why?** Marilyn Monroe, I'm a huge fan of her films!

“ I mainly shoot on location so the chief problem I face is the weather, and consequently, the lighting ”

ABOVE "I find a lot of locations when I'm driving around – this was a bridge with interesting arches. The problem was that it was fairly dark where I positioned my model, so I used a Canon flashgun to illuminate the subject." Canon EOS 50D, 24-105mm lens, ISO 640.

RIGHT "This was one of my earlier shoots and I got to know the model through a friend. She was very into make-up so I cropped her face to draw attention to her bright eye liner and lashes in the frame." Canon EOS 50D, Canon 17-85mm, 1/200 at f/5.6, ISO 640.

both for the last two and a half years. "It took me about that long to get to where I am," he says. "I started taking photography seriously when I bought my EOS 50D camera. At that time I didn't have any technical knowledge of taking photographs as I'd always used fully automatic compact cameras."

Impressively, he took the burden of learning entirely upon himself and started getting to grips with the often-tricky subject of DSLR photography. "I began by reading books, watching tutorials and shooting as much as possible," he lists. "I would try out different techniques, settings and lighting, and try to recreate images that I liked. After about a year and a half I was at a standard where I was accepted onto a degree course in professional photography at the University of Gloucester, where I've recently finished my first year."

The kit he uses is a trio of high-quality Canon lenses to slot onto his 50D, and a separate, powerful flashgun for the odd time he might need to use it to add a little something to the available light in the scene he's shooting.

For the most part Richard shoots with natural light alone, arranging photo shoots for the precise time of day that will give him the kind of light he wants. But being so specific can present its own problems. "I mainly shoot on location so the chief problem I face is the weather, and consequently the lighting," he explains. "I always plan a shoot for a specific time of day to get the best lighting for what I want to achieve, so working quickly is key, especially in the winter months with fewer hours of daylight. I also use flashes and reflectors but only ever as a fill in, because I prefer the look of natural light."

Clearly, there's plenty to come from Richard and, as far as his plans go, he's playing it cool. "I have two years left to finish my degree at university, so I'm planning on getting as much experience and learning as much as I can in that time. Once I graduate I'd like to start working in fashion photography, maybe doing some work for magazines or even assisting a photographer to learn more about the business."

For such a bright young talent you'd have to say anything's possible! ■



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