



Re: The Future Of Slide Competitions

« Reply #13 on: April 07, 2008, 11:24:26 PM »



What is your Club doing about Slide Competitions?

Would you enter the East African Safari Rally driving a 1947 Ford Prefect?

There are, of course, places for this sort of activity - such as the traditional London to Brighton run - but this is for the specialist enthusiast. I suspect that, before too long, "slide only" competitions will go the same way. There will always be enthusiasts to take part, but today's people are likely to use modern kit and techniques.

I have just finished mounting what will probably be my last slide entry to the L&CPU Annual. I had almost forgotten what a tedious, fiddly, unrewarding job this is. In addition, my hands are getting a bit trembly (with age) and I find it very difficult to write legibly on those tiny labels. That's a job I shan't be sorry to wave goodbye to.

The quality of modern digital projectors is really excellent, and has the potential of getting even better (currently at higher cost, but getting more affordable). The kit my club uses is already producing images, on screen, which are twice as good as those specified for the current L&CPU Annual. We don't use slides at all, in our internal competitions, and haven't done so for all the eight years that the club has been in existence.

My hobby is all about producing pictures, as good as my limited talents can make them, and I see no merit in trying to do so with one hand tied behind my back.

For most of my (photographic) life I considered myself a "slide worker" - but after buying a dslr, I left the half completed Elite chrome film unused for about 18 months. I had to buy a new battery for the camera when I eventually got round to completing it. When it came back from processing, I wished that I'd left it unfinished in the camera!!

The advantages of digital are too numerous to go into - the one advantage that slides still have (quality) doesn't seem to outweigh all the disadvantages as far as most workers are concerned.

What is this "quality" Deano? Personally, I find that the quality of the images I acquire digitally far exceeds that which I used to get on film. Better dynamic range, total freedom from grain, cleaner purer colours, better sharpness and definition, no "popping" from the heat of the projector, no "bowing" which causes variation of focus across the frame - that's without going into things like no colour aberration from lenses, accurate exposure, choice of ISO rating, ease of storage and filing, **COST**, etc. etc.

What is this "quality" Deano? I agree wholeheartedly with all the advantages...

... BUT (personally) I don't think that the quality of digital images projected at 1024 x 768 quite matches a well exposed slide, projected with a decent projector - but it's not far off - and all the digital pluses (again for me personally) outweigh this single plus for film.

Hi Deano, I don't make images for projection at 1024x768, except for the L&CPU and some other competitions, where the organisers can't afford a decent projector. Projected at 1400x1050, images are super. I predict that, before long, all competitions will move up from low resolution projection. The PAGB has already upgraded and, if one of your images is chosen by the L&CPU for forwarding to the PAGB, you will probably be asked to produce a bigger version. (I sincerely hope that the L&CPU don't try upsizing the files submitted for the Annual, which would be disastrous)

Looked at scientifically the slide image has more information in it - but the perception is something quite different. The digital image is brighter, with whiter whites and more contrast. The viewing experience is far better, little noise, far better transition, no degradation due to dust, damage fading, lack of flatness etc etc.

The size of the picture too is in favour of the dpi. For a slide show you have to set things to accommodate portrait and landscape, for dpi you can fill the screen.

Add to that the author's facility for improving the image by removing distractions etc - even by the most elementary manipulation and you have a situation where the slides look much poorer. So I would say that you can compare slide with slide but not slide with digital - unless you have them converted to one medium - and that would mean more time and expense for you competitors.

The remaining problem with digital projection is that good setting up is vital. I have had one nasty experience with this where I visited a club and used some of my PTEs (Pictures to Exe presentations) on their projector. It was so bad I had to just put on a couple of monochrome presentations. That is the only time I have come across a poor set-up though.

On a good digital projector (especially a 1400x1050), properly set up, you will easily get a more impressive viewing experience, provided the images have been prepared properly.

There are already many (too many, I think) international exhibitions which have gone down the "dual projection" route, mainly, I suspect, so that the organisers can benefit from entry fees from both sides of the photographic community. I really don't think it's fair to compare a beautiful, crisp, clean, tidy, 1400x1050 digital image with a grainy, dirty, poorly focussed, faded, heat-discoloured slide

The reason for starting the thread was to get information to help in our Club's decision as to whether to stay with three slide comps and one digital or whether to reverse that situation. You might think that, with 8 slide workers and 28 digital the decision is a bit of a "no-brainer" but some people need convincing that we should make the change

There's a similar debate at my club, hence my earlier question about Clubs' experience with combined slide/digital "projected image" competitions.

Garstang wants its internal competitions to be: inclusive; fun/entertaining; instructive; and meaningful. We still require our judges to promote aesthetic excellence.

I understand there will be different values at higher levels of competition. I also understand the inherent advantage available to digital worker over their slide using colleagues. However, access to digital technologies is unequal amongst my club's members. So is the talent for photographic expression.

For the above reasons and at the present time, I believe combined slide/digital is the way forward for my club's internal "projected image" competitions.

We had the same discussion at our club committee meeting and have decided to stay with three at present. One reason is that if we drop slides in favour of digital then prints will suffer. If your club, like ours, are 90+% digital then giving them the option of print and digital they will all stop producing prints and move to digital. This will be detrimental to your film photographers. So we decided on one digital comp each season which keeps everyone happy.

I'm afraid I don't see the logic of that. My club has never used slides, projection being entirely digital, yet we have a strong print entry in our competitions, all produced from digital files, of course.

I suppose it depends on relative numbers of workers in each medium and the way your competitions are structured.

We have too many prints (despite a move to three per worker) to do more than prints in one night (colour plus mono) and too many dpi workers to do more than a dpi comp in one night. We could possibly combine colour prints with slides or mono prints with slides, but that would not release any more evenings for competitions. More than 100 images in an evening doesn't

allow enough time to do justice to them. I am not in favour of increasing the number of competition nights so it looks like fewer slide comps is on the cards.

At Hoylake PS we have decided to take this route as of next season. Because there are a number of workers in the club that still only use slides and at the same time there is a growing number of workers that only use digital as well as a few that work in both, not wanting to alienate either group we have taken the decision to incorporate the two together.

As syllabus secretary I have to make sure that the judges for monthly competitions are in a position to evaluate all of the submitted images.

Because we have no way of knowing how many images may be submitted into the competitions, as a consequence of the change, we shall be monitoring the numbers with the possibility of further restricting the total number of images that a worker will be permitted to enter into each competition.

It is our opinion that the judges that are booked to assess submitted images to monthly competitions should evaluate the image with which they are presented, and give no consideration to the medium. There are some images that "work" as digital projections and which do not "work" as slides and visa versa. It is, as always, up to the worker to decide on the appropriate medium for a given image.