

# Street Photography



**A Personal  
Point of View**

by **Kevin Shelley**

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## A Personal Point Of View

Kevin Shelley

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***“Shoot what you see, what you like and what catches your eye, not what the status quo says you should.”***

Kevin Shelley



CANVAS

# About The Author

I'm Kevin Shelley, a Street Photographer based in the UK. In fact I live miles from civilisation, slap-bang in the heart of the English Lake District. Here it could not be more possible to find an area of the country less suited to pursuing Street Photography.



This I turn to my advantage by ensuring that on each occasion I manage to visit towns or cities, I try to get the maximum 'bang for my buck' and capitalise on the time available.

Writing is also a keen hobby of mine. I upload my photography, camera reviews and various street related articles to the [Street Photography Blog](#), a site which I started in 2012 and which has grown to offer a wide variety of Street Photography related content.

I'm also a keen guitar player and for the last couple of years have been on a 'journey of discovery' in search of 'the Blues'.

**Kevin Shelley**



# Introduction

This ebook was born purely out of necessity.

You see I had a problem. For some time now I've been occupied with the issue of how my photography is presented. I've always had a disliking for photography sites such as Flickr. To me there can be nothing more disheartening or discouraging than to upload your precious photo's, only to see them disappear into the vast ocean of millions of other images, seen by no one and never to be seen again.

This resulted in the birth of the [Street Photography Blog](#). Here I had an outlet for my creative 'juices'. It gave me the freedom to upload whatever images I saw fit (and still call them street photography), write articles about my photography, street photography in general and about my experiences during visit to towns and cities. The added bonus being that I was in control of my work.

However, this wasn't without its problems. Despite the creative freedom the blog affords, there is still the dilemma of how to present the most important element of the website – my pictures – in one easy to access, all encompassing package.

The traditional gallery would be an obvious answer but this also lacked its appeal. One of the biggest driving forces for me is to present my photography in an interesting and intelligent manner. However with web-galleries there is the ever present spectre of boredom – after 5 or 10 images, the viewers finger begins to tap, tap, tap on the 'next' button (or swipes), regardless of how good or bad the photography.

Hence the idea of an ebook was hatched and I quickly set to work gathering together 40 or so choice images and lovingly stitched together in Adobe PDF.

Unfortunately there was still something missing, as what I had in fact created was a PDF version of a web gallery. I could see the viewer's finger still tapping away.

Continued . . .

**Then I had one of those moments of clarity. Over the years I'd accumulated knowledge, opinions, techniques, likes and dislikes regarding street photography. So why not publish the pictures, each with a little snippet of knowledge, advice, tips or wisdom, and related in some way to each picture shown?**

**Here then (and presented in no particular order) is the result, my first ebook. It's aimed at anyone interested in the genre, whether you actively take street photographs, or are thinking about doing so, or just want to look at some street photography.**

**Thanks and enjoy,**

**Kevin Shelley**



“... Always, always, always have your camera with you, even if just out for milk and a newspaper ...”



“ . . . Advertising hoardings and posters are a frequent source of potentially peculiar and amusing statements and phrases. If they happen to feature people as well, they can serve to satisfy both ‘requirements’ for street photography . . . ”



“ . . . The background to your subjects can be just as important, adding ‘atmosphere’ and context to the whole . . . ”



“ . . . Be conversant in photography law. Never delete your pictures when asked, not even by a police officer. Stay calm and polite – it may actually be an offence in your subjects country to photograph in public. Show them the pictures when asked, or offer to do so. When they see their face covered by their hand, they’ll wonder what all the fuss is about . . . ”



“... More often than not, the elements surrounding the main subject are just as important - without them, it just becomes ‘another picture’...”



“ . . . Bring unrelated and outside elements into the frame and through composition, make them a key ‘player’ in the picture . . . ”



“... ‘Create a theme with your work’. That’s what you’ll be told on photography forums. With time and practice however, you will notice themes appear in your work without prior thought or planning. Life around you is full of themes . . .”



“ . . . Be mindful of whereabouts you are taking pictures – just because you see someone else freely enjoying their art, doesn’t necessarily mean you are free to do the same . . .



. . . Anywhere not in a public space generally requires the permission of the landlord. Private shopping centres, shops, restaurants, libraries etc – in fact anywhere that an individual would have a ‘reasonable expectation of privacy’ . . .”



“ . . . Look for shared emotions or expressions between unconnected individuals. Happiness, sadness, laughter, worry. Emotions can spread like a virus amongst groups of people . . . ”



“ . . . You need to use an expensive camera and operate it in fully manual mode to get anywhere as a street photographer? Hmm. There are some that shoot nothing but a smartphone camera, or in this case, a cheap point & shoot . . . ”



“... Don't fall into the trap of believing that all street photographs are the result of an 'all-seeing-eye' – that the photographer for an instant in time was a knowing witness to a moment when symmetry, mimicry and time coincided. Many images are no more than 'happy accidents'...”

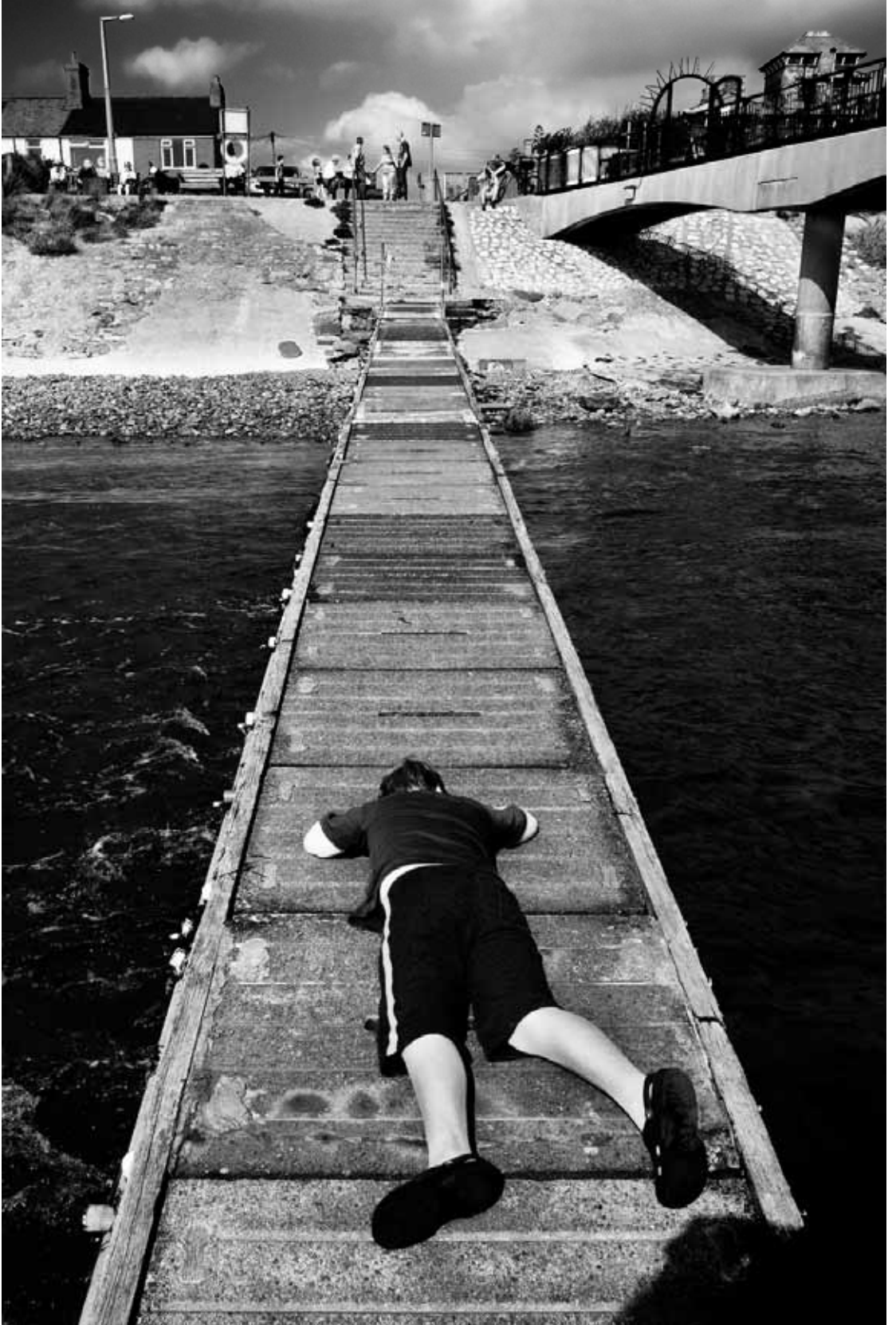


“. . . It's often said that an 'Individual Style' is the most difficult area of photography to master. Truth is, from the moment we first started taking pictures, we all had our own style . . .



. . . Over time however, we begin to assimilate the pictures, influences and advice of other photographers, thus 'diluting' the natural, pure and internal 'image' coming from within . . .”

“ . . . Just in case it needs reiterating, always carry your camera with you, even when waiting to catch a small boat to an island restaurant . . . ”



“ . . . Is he taking a picture of me? The subject has seen you pointing the camera in their direction - stand firm, take your time. They look to the person next to them, is he taking a picture of me? They look back – you click the shutter. Lower the camera and fiddle with the lens – uhhh, something’s not right. Look to the side of the subject. Raise the camera to your eye, frame something else. Lower the camera again - uhhh, something’s not right. Walk off to the side, frame something else . . .”



“ . . . Often a photograph will become more than you originally intended. A picture could simply have been taken of an office worker in a suit and looking at his mobile phone. Only afterwards and when viewing the picture in the comfort of your own armchair, does it morph into a bedraggled businessman, about to commit Hari Kari (ritual suicide) with a sword . . . ”



“ . . . Take a moment to look around and beyond your subject. There may be more going on than was first apparent . . . ”

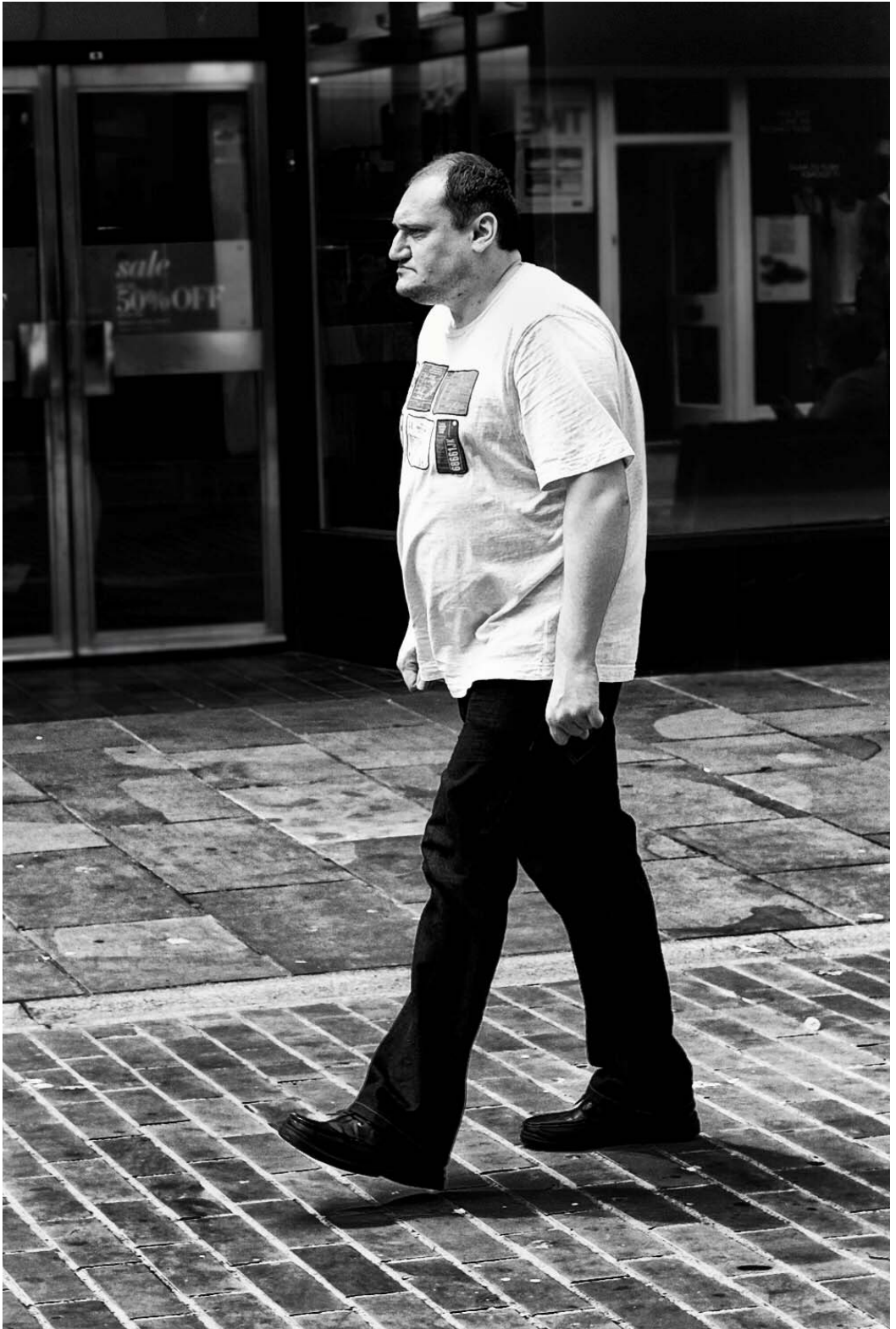




“ . . . A contentious issue in street photography circles – must a street photograph contain people? The answer is purely a matter of personal opinion – there’s no rulebook. To only photograph people is to miss the other 50% of the street . . . ”



“ . . . Street Photography tradition dictates that photographs of people ‘must’ be taken head-on, so that the viewer can ‘engage’ with the subject. This takes confidence in the photographer. If you find this difficult, then there’s plenty to be said for the 45-  
degrees-to-the-subject profile, often with engaging results . . . ”



“ . . . Between seeing the picture and taking it, such as a shot of someone making a phone call whilst rummaging through their handbag, the subject may suddenly do something unexpected . . . ”



“ . . . Old buildings and shops are as much an important and relevant part of the history of a place as the people who live there . . . ”



“ . . . The inclusion of people isn't always essential to get your message across in a street photograph . . . ”



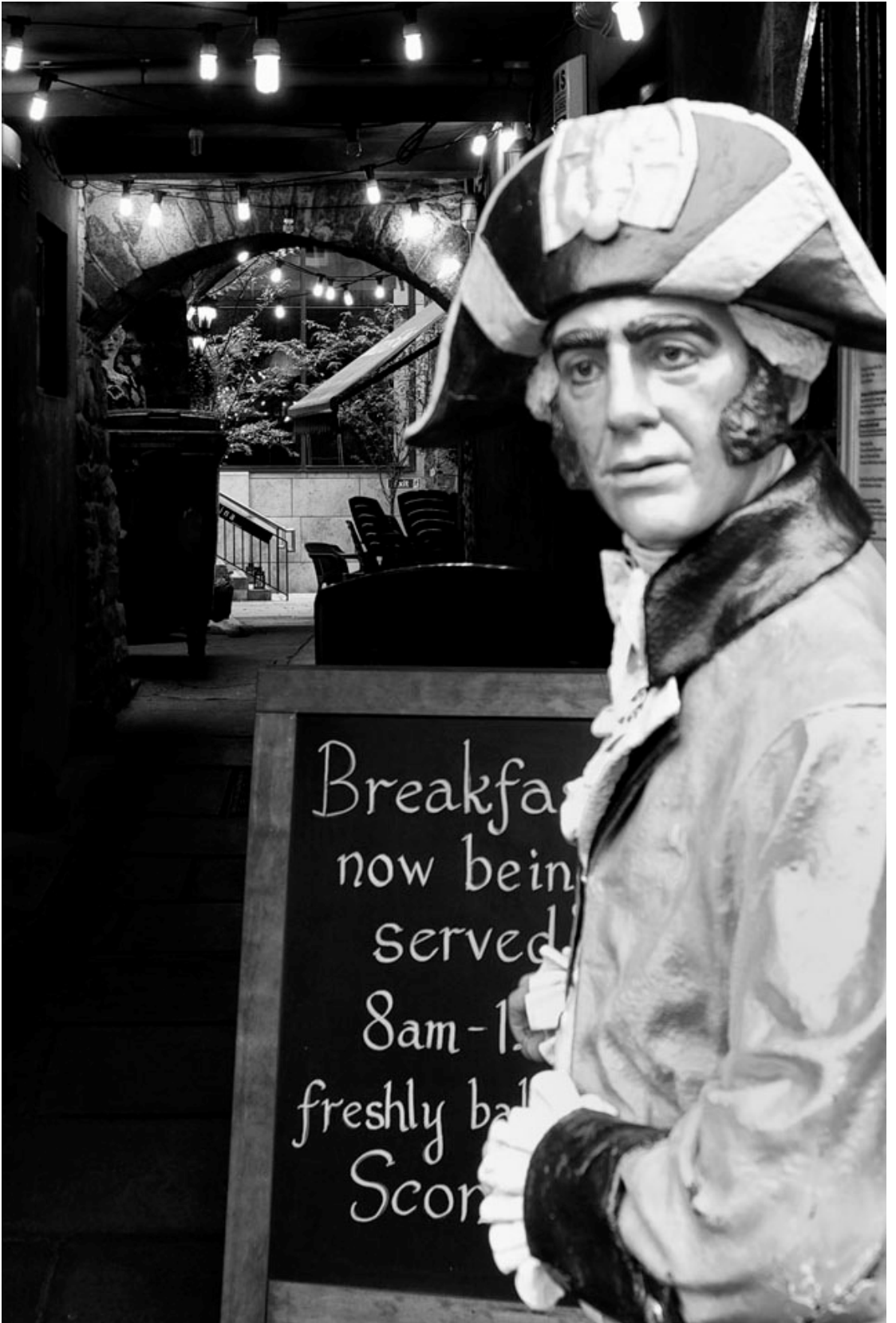
“... Photograph what catches your eye, not what the ‘status quo’ says you should. Originality flows from following your own ideals and beliefs – the path everyone else chooses is very crowded . . .”



“ . . . Photography transforms what it describes. Two shoppers become a homeless lady and a sympathetic listener. What looks straightforward in ‘the flesh’ can become something else entirely in a photograph . . . ”



“ . . . With a little thought and selective focus, it’s possible to add life and movement to even the most inanimate of objects . . . ”





“ . . . Photography is a very personal occupation. The observer of your photographs is forced to view the scene that you saw. That’s not to say that the observer will ‘see’ the scene as you saw it. A man stands in a phone box, but is he making a call, or answering a call of nature? . . . ”



“ . . . 35mm black & white film processed in an ancient developer such as Rodinal, can give your photographs a timeless quality. Self-developing would appear daunting at first, but is a skill both easily and quickly learnt. One reason why film is enjoying a resurgence amongst amateur street photographers . . . ”



“ . . . ‘Sharpness is a bourgeois concept’ to quote a very famous French photographer. Indeed, there are unavoidable times when a hastily taken shot in low light will exhibit more than a hint of motion blur. This can sometimes work in favour of the picture, offering a sense of tension, movement and speed . . . ”



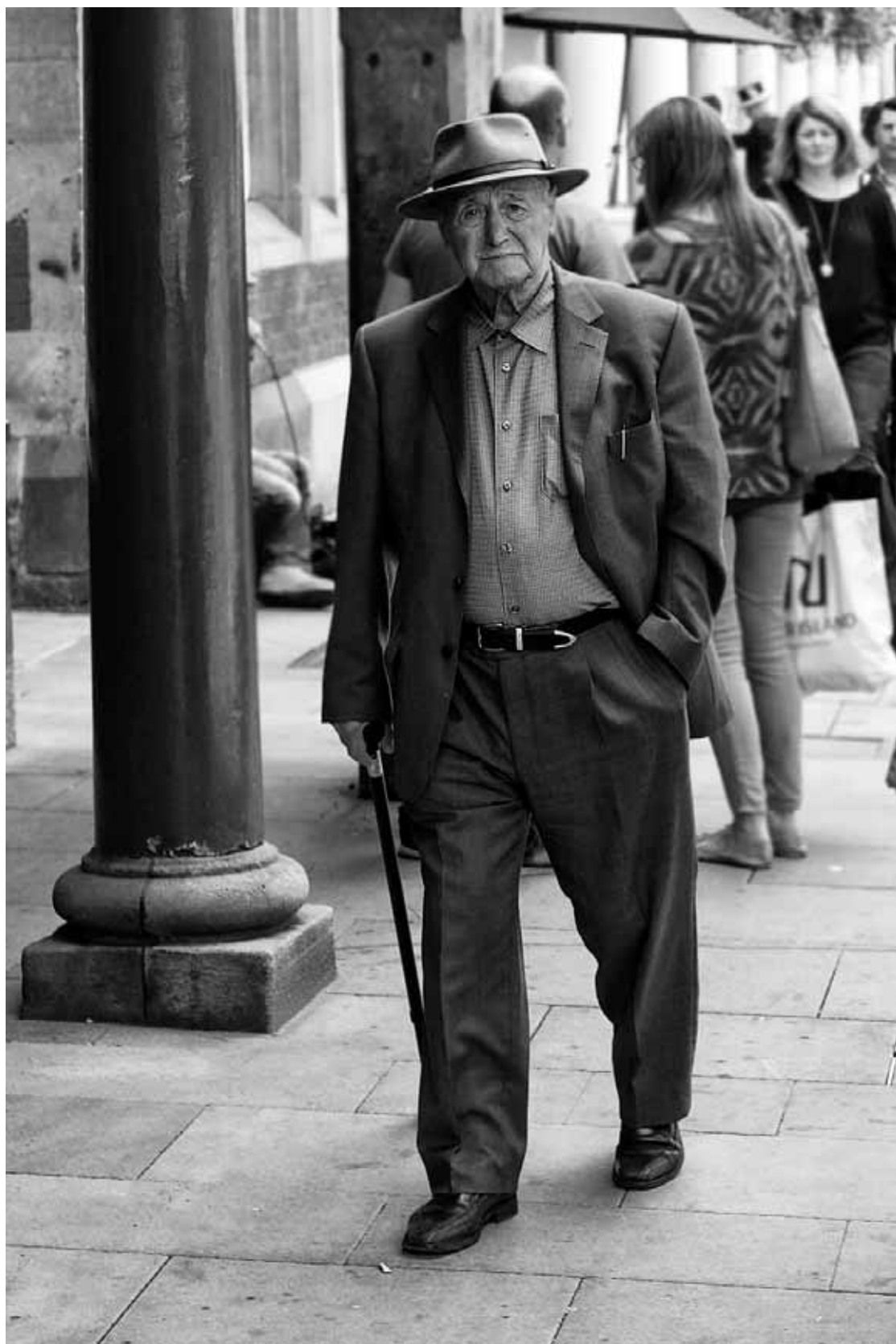
“ . . . Don't dismiss photographic opportunities because they lack an elusive 'deep meaning' or hidden message. Sometimes a few simple expressions are enough to make a fun and favourite picture . . . ”



“ . . . You see the subject, he doesn't see you. My word that old building is interesting, I'll take a picture of that. Stand facing the building at an angle of 45 degrees to the 'real' subject, as though framing the building itself. With the extra 'room' given by the rangefinder window, you keep an eye on the man. He glances towards you. Flick the camera in his direction and click the shutter. Go back to framing the building . . . ”



“ . . . Be on the look out for subjects with a story to tell. Loss, longing, loneliness – it’s all written on their faces and captured in 250<sup>th</sup> of a second . . . ”



“ . . . Is there a distinction between Street Fashion Photography and Street Photography? In reality they’re one and the same – fashionable people frequenting the streets of towns and cities . . . ”



“ . . . Street performers are frequently lamented as unsuitable subjects for street photographs. This attitude is at odds with the history of the genre itself – the very earliest street photography was of Organ Grinders, Shoe Shine Boys and Street Vendors – inescapable parts of street life around the world, even today . . . ”







“... The person in the picture can often be secondary to the main subject, yet nonetheless important. Signs, graffiti and old buildings make equally attractive subject matter and when shot on 35mm film, attain an aged quality . . .”



“ . . . Street photography is full of misconceptions, beliefs and misinformation. One is that street photography needs to be shot on a street. In fact anywhere that people gather, whether ‘real’ or not, is a good subject for street photography . . . ”



“... Practice studying nothing else but people’s faces and expressions. The eyes and mouth can say more than 100 words and gives a ‘window’ into their innermost thoughts and feelings ...”



“... Connections between subjects and seemingly unrelated objects are a ‘prize’ that street photographers continually look out for. Never hesitate to click the shutter . . .”



“ . . . Symmetry and interaction between people, whereby their actions, movements and stances appear to influence the other - one of the reasons why it’s often easy to decide which individuals in a crowd are together . . . ”



“... A subject’s frozen and rigid reaction to the imminent ‘horrors’ of being photographed can make the picture ...”



“ . . . If you are unsure how a subject may react to being photographed but you really want the shot, learn to quickly zone focus your lens to several key lengths – 2m, 3m, 5m. Practice shooting ‘from the hip’. In a short space of time, this can be done whilst continuing to walk, thus drawing little if any attention to yourself . . . ”





“ . . . Street photographers are constantly on the look out for the unusual, the out of place or the unexpected. Be ready, be focussed and above all else, always have your camera with you . . . ”





# The Beginning Of The End . . .

. . . I'd thought long and hard about how best to finish this ebook (well a few minutes at least).

It goes without saying that I hope you've enjoyed reading or flicking through it. Even more rewarding for me would be that you came away feeling just a little more knowledgeable, enlightened or even found some new ground and inspiration for your own work.

To that end, I would dearly enjoy receiving and reading any comments or thoughts, both good or bad that you may have.

If you would like to contact me, please use the contact form on the ['About & Contact'](#) page of the Street Photography Blog.

Thank you and after further thought, I believe the simplest way to end this book is to say . . .

**The End.**

