

# My life in cameras

Mike Smith looks back at the cameras that have shaped his career and life

## Mike Smith



A wedding, event and portrait photographer based in London and the home counties, Mike specialises in documentary work and environmental portraiture. He also undertakes a range of computational photography commissions generating 3D models for clients. He flexes his creative photography muscles by embarking on personal projects, the latest of which is a pop-up studio called Pause2Pose.

### 1985 Canon Sure Shot AF35M

After a series of low-cost hand-me-downs from my father, I eventually inherited the Sure Shot in my early teens. This was my first 'serious' camera in that it took good photos, a result of the autofocus, autoexposure and sharp 38mm lens. I used it extensively on climbing trips throughout the UK, but it left me wanting more.



### 1987 Pentax P30

The upgrade came in the form of a Pentax, a camera that my brother also had. This really was wonderful – it had a super-sharp, lightweight, 50mm Pentax f/1.7 lens, in-camera metering, a bright viewfinder (for the manual focus) and, most importantly, produced some great photos. It was my main camera for more than 10 years and I shot landscapes extensively. However, the most memorable event was my first funeral. Besides the 70–200mm jamming, I had a surreal wait in a one-hour photo shop because I was so paranoid the photos from the undertakers wouldn't come out. There really was no second chance.



### 2006 Nikon D70

After a photography hiatus, the D70 persuaded me to jump on the digital bandwagon. It was well built, it had a great range of lenses and the resolution was satisfactory. I'm also a particular fan of the Nikon firmware – I feel at home navigating the menus, and the functions – at least for me – do exactly what I want, the way I want it. As much as it surprises me, in-camera software is the unsung hero of Nikon – they do it very well. This was my principal camera on a number of kite aerial photography projects. At 1kg with the 24mm f/2.8D lens, it needed a big kite!



### 2012 Nikon D700

I wanted to make the jump to full frame and with the forthcoming release of the D800, did I wait or go with the tried and tested? I stuck with the D700, which turned out the cheaper option, in essence trading resolution for low-light performance. It is a stellar camera and I have no regrets. While not ideal for street photography – it's big – it fitted every need I had, is robust and will just keep on shooting.



### 2015 Bronica RF

I know, a film camera! I both wanted to shoot medium format and to supply a film option for clients on portraits and weddings. So it's not my 'go-to' camera, but it gets regular outings. And if you are looking for a lightweight option, two cameras jump out – the Mamiya 6 and the Bronica RF. I plumped for the latter and, after you get over a few of the quirks, it is quite simply brilliant. It's smaller and lighter than the D700 but shoots medium format.



Mike took this with the Nikon D700 which has excellent low-light capability

