



▶▶ EYE SPY

"This was shot inside the pod of the London Eye using the Nikon D3, after it had just been launched. This image actually won me the environmental Photographer of the Year award at the SWPP Convention in 2008"
Shot details: Nikon D3 with 14-24mm lens at 14mm and f4.5, 1/1000sec, ISO 320

Uzair Kharawala

"I saw great potential in this digital technology. The first time I witnessed it in action, I was mesmerised"

Glistening beads of snow begin to fall as the frost-bitten bride makes her entrance to the chapel. It's 15 degrees below zero, yet she walks defiantly in her off-the-shoulder angelic white dress, elegantly and effortlessly disguising the many layers of thermals and snug snow boots hidden beneath. The wedding photographer steps up, clothed in dozens of winter garments to stave off the biting cold long enough to be able to do his job, yet in his hands the camera he uses operates alone, challenging the dark and shooting without the comfort of flash. But this is no ordinary camera, no ordinary wedding and the person capturing it certainly is no ordinary photographer.

The event in question is the matrimonial union between James and Claire Bristow, a Buckinghamshire couple who decided to tie the knot at the famous Ice Hotel in Swedish Lapland. To photograph the once-in-a-lifetime occasion the couple needed a top-flight pro for the job and opted for none other than Uzair (Oz) Kharawala, a self-made business man, notable wedding and portrait photographer, photography instructor and Nikon evangelist. Never the type to let an opportunity go by, Oz relished his ambassadorship of the brand and offered to trial Nikon's full-frame DSLR magnum opus, the Nikon D3S, in the challenging conditions. The low-light powerhouse is famed for its revolutionary high ISO performance of 12800, expandable to 102400 equivalent (Hi 3), making shooting in low or no-light scenarios a breeze. Ideal then for a Lapland wedding in January, where the sun sets ▶▶



GETTING TO KNOW...

Uzair Kharawala

Website: sfphotoschool.com
Why photography?: Capturing images for someone that they will treasure for the rest of their lives is an amazing feeling. You have to have that passion for it – if you don't enjoy shooting images for someone else, then you are in the wrong business.

Top achievement: SWPP UK Environmental Portrait Photographer of the Year

Kit: Nikon D3, an array of lenses including: 50mm, 85mm, 35mm, 14-24mm, 24-70mm and 70-200mm, portable Lastolite lighting kit, Nikon SB900 and SB800 flash guns.

Preferred genre: Wedding/Portraiture

Available products: Foto SF Lite (software), Wireless Flash and How to take great Portraits eBooks, and Beginners' guide to Weddings. See <http://sfphotoschool.com/products> for more.

Courses: Oz runs a variety of business and portraiture-orientated courses; see www.nikon.co.uk/training and <http://sfphotoschool.com/seminars> for more details.

Advice: There is enough wealth in the world that if it was evenly dispersed everyone would have a million pounds. So it's up to you to go out there and find out who is sat on your million and take it.

▶▶ PERFECT PORTRAIT

"Taken for my DVD *How to Take Great Portraits*, captured using a Nikon D5000 and two off-camera flashes. The DVD shows how to create pro-quality images with a consumer-level camera"

Shot details: Nikon D5000 with 10mm lens at 10mm and f2.8, 1/100sec, ISO 640

▶▶▶ TRYST IN THE TREES

"A romantic engagement shot of a couple using a single off-camera SB900"

Shot details: Nikon D3 with 35mm lens at 35mm and f4, 1/640sec, ISO 500

▶▶▶▶ SHABBY VERSUS CHIC

"This image was obtained with the aid of a Bowens Ring flash and the Nikon D3x. The setting was fantastic; it is actually a disused railway depot."

Shot details: Nikon D3x and 35mm lens at 35mm and f7.1, 1/200sec, ISO 160





▶▶ **ICE HOTEL**

"This image was one of my choice selections from the Ice Hotel wedding. I employed all the ambient lighting and underexposed by about two stops to capture the rich colours in the background"
Shot details: Nikon D3S with 14-24mm lens at 24mm and f4, 1/60sec, ISO 1250



▲ **NORTHERN LIGHTS**

"This shot of the Northern Lights was taken on the Nikon D3S at ISO 12800 at f2.8, during a six-second exposure. I was extremely lucky to have taken some shots of the Northern Lights on the first attempt"
Shot details: Nikon D3S with 24-70mm lens at 26mm and f2.8, 6sec, ISO 12800

◀◀ **FLOWER GIRLS**

"I caught this fleeting shot at a wedding. I love the innocence of the flower girls playing by a window and the wonderful expressions on their faces. Always use window light if you can, it's gorgeous and it's free!"
Shot details: Nikon D3 with 24-70mm lens at 24mm and f2.8, 1/1000sec, ISO 2000



"It's been between minus 5 and minus 25 so I have to work quickly – I can't ask my clients to wait for me"

▶▶ at a premature 2pm. "The whole handling of the camera is simply amazing," enthuses the Pakistan-born photographer. "The D3S is not challenged by low light so I am shooting in the dark at ISO 8000 to 10000 like it is the norm. I wasn't even thinking about it and the images are all perfectly useable at full size, without any noticeable grain." Most photographers would be committing career suicide should they discover they had captured a whole wedding at this high sensitivity, but not with the D3S – and not Oz.

Oz has cultivated an admirable reputation for himself in photography circles as an astute entrepreneur, who at every step of development in the digital camera's evolution has been there before the masses. Oz's passion for photography began during his adolescence, but back then it wasn't models that inspired his creativity. "I was mainly shooting landscapes and I really enjoyed the practice of capturing a beautiful scene," he explains. "Slowly I moved away from film and began a gradual transition into digital." Shooting digitally for the best part of a decade, Oz was one of the first converts to the format and his ability to spot new trends and move on them didn't stop there. "I just seemed to be in the right place at the right time," he laughs modestly. "I saw great potential in this digital technology. The first time I witnessed it in action, I was mesmerised. At the time this method of shooting was very unique and a huge fascination for clients, who were amazed that the pictures were printing right there in front of them. Before this, the practice of sending off your roll of film to a lab to be processed meant clients were waiting weeks for their pictures. By being able to print images straightaway I was able to shoot at all kinds of places like dinner dances, corporate events, gymkhanas, weddings, etc,

print the image then and there and sell it to the client – that became the business."

Working with his wife and fellow photographer Farzana, Oz had tapped into an exciting gap in the market and one that reaped financial rewards and notoriety, so much so that the couple had to take on employees to satisfy the demand. The ventures didn't stop there, as Oz soon discovered the simplicity and effectiveness of off-camera flash way ahead of the competition. "When I first started using wireless flash, people thought I was crazy. They said you need all this expensive and heavy equipment to take well-lit shots, but when I showed them the results I was getting, it soon became a different story and before I knew it, everyone was doing it."

Today, Oz still favours the same style of shooting. "I believe in keeping lighting simple," he reveals earnestly. "I use a Lastolite lighting kit, which is very portable, and I just put on my Nikon SB900 or SB800 flash guns – that's all I use." True to form however, Oz is set to be one step ahead of the game, endorsing the potential benefits that DSLRs like the Nikon D3S will bring. "Throughout this wedding at the Ice Hotel I've mainly been able to use natural light, because I know the D3S can cope with it and the images I can get are amazing," he comments. "I'm definitely going to start shooting this way more because it's just so portable. It's been between minus 5 and minus 25 so I have to work very quickly, I can't ask my clients to wait for me while I set up a little light stand – they'll freeze, the energy will go and the poses will look flat. With the D3S, I'm up and running straightaway. The batteries can withstand the cold, too. Below-zero temperatures usually zap battery life quickly, but I've not had to change the battery once today." ▶▶



WEDDING RINGS ◀◀

“Since my work is mainly on location, I try and include the environment in my images as much as I can. The beautiful light and the graphical nature of this shot makes this one of my all-time favourite wedding shots”
Shot details: Nikon D3 with 14-24mm lens at 24mm and f6.3, 1/800sec, ISO 320

“There is so much competition out there, but my advice would be to keep going and never, ever give up”

▶▶ **AUTUMNAL COUPLING**

“This was for a late October wedding. A very low afternoon sun created a beautiful backlit image of the bride and groom”
Shot details: Nikon D3 with 14-24mm lens at 14mm and f4, 1/2000sec, ISO 320

▶▶ Another testament to Oz’s foresight was his prediction four years ago that the photo industry would see a huge increase in competition. “There are more and more individuals turning pro, and it’s not surprising with the affordability of kit,” he remarks. Rather than be usurped by new talent or become demotivated by the threat of change, Oz turned the trend to his advantage, producing and retailing software that enables photographers to help their business grow. “Along with Farzana, I run a photography business called SF Digital. Our photography

business was growing rapidly and keeping track of things was becoming a nightmare. We were using different software packages and dozens of spreadsheets to keep on top of things, but what we needed was a database. We could not find any off-the-shelf product or software which would meet our specific requirements as photographers.” Out of sheer frustration, Oz decided to build a software product from the ground up. “It was a daunting prospect, but I knew that with my technical skills and experience running a photography studio, if I stuck to my task I could create an invaluable tool for anyone in the industry. I spent many years researching and developing my system and I’m very excited about the result: Foto SF. This is not another accounting package or sales presentation software, but a dedicated studio management app that can be deployed quickly and tailored to suit the requirements of the photography business exactly.” Oz now sells the software solution at £60, available via download from <http://sfphotoschool.com/foto-sf-lite>. In tandem with this, Oz’s SF Photo School site is now up and running. The site is designed to guide and teach budding photographers tricks and techniques for perfecting their passion, a skill he has perfected while lecturing on a variety of courses including many for Nikon UK (www.nikon.co.uk/training).

So is there any advice this passionate pro can impart on anyone wanting to follow in his successful footsteps? “There is so much competition out there that you will get some bad days, weeks or months, but my advice would be to keep going and never, ever give up.” With that, and true to his word, Oz continues shooting Claire and James in the frozen igloo, fresh from a respite in the warmth of a nearby cabin. As he powers out seamless shot after shot on the D3S, you can bet Oz is already conjuring up his next big idea. To keep up with his ventures, visit www.sfphotoschool.com.

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