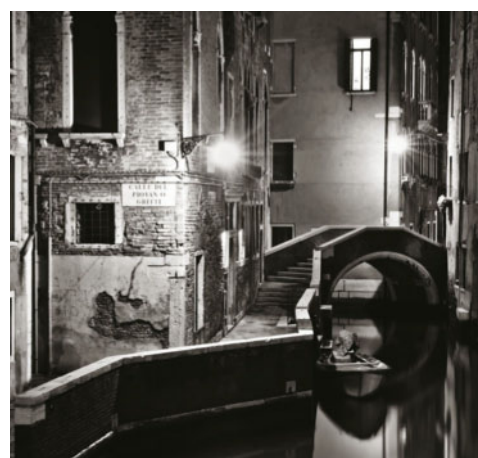
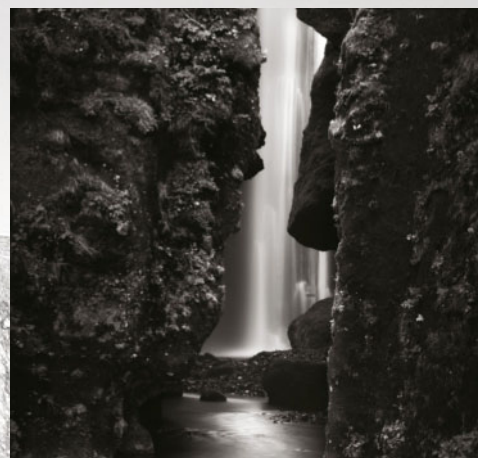
 **WAVERUNNERS** Nikon D3x, Nikon 70-200mm
f/2.8 AF-S VR, 1/500 sec, f/5.6, ISO400

CLOSE-UP

JONATHAN CRITCHLEY

*In this month's Close-up interview, **Keith Wilson** discovers that the sea means many things to photographer Jonathan Critchley – grand ships, horses galloping in the surf, tranquil harbours with fishing boats at anchor... Just don't mention the time he got submerged in Iceland!*



Growing up in the UK, Jonathan Chritchley fell in love with beaches and water at an early age. At the same time, he was encouraged to use his father's stash of old cameras, and later in life the two interests came together. In this month's *N-Photo* interview, the fine art photographer explains how he makes a living out of the sea...

How old were you when you first got hooked by photography?

Photography has always been part of my life. My father was a keen photographer and also a bit of a hoarder, so there were dozens of old cameras lying around in the garage and attic at our home. He used to

pass them on to me as toys, really – there was no film in them – and I remember getting used to seeing life through a viewfinder even at a very young age. It wasn't until later, when I was in my early 20s, that I realised my destiny lay in photography.


Which passion came first: photography or your love of the sea?

It has to be the sea. I've always been a swimmer and although I spent the first part of my life in Surrey, quite a long way from the sea, I used to long for the summer holidays in France, Italy and Spain, where the sun was warm and the ocean blue. When I was 13 we moved to the south coast of England, and at that point the sea really took hold of my life. ▶

“Light is incredibly important to me. ‘Luminescent’ is the adjective that gets used the most with my photos. I like that”

Jonathan Chritchley *Fine Art Photographer*



 **STALLIONS PLAYING**
Nikon D3x, Nikon 70-200mm
f/2.8 AF-S VR, 1/800 sec, f/10, ISO400



 **COLLIOURE, FRANCE** Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G
AF-S ED, 50 secs, f/9, ISO100

Was there a location that fascinated you most as a kid?

Two places, apart from those seen on family holidays. Firstly, Beer, a fishing village in Devon where I stayed as a child one winter and had a great experience helping my uncle and some other villagers save a grounded sailing boat. Second is Venice, which I first visited aged 13. It was a ‘coming of age’ trip that had a lasting effect on me.

A ‘coming of age’ trip to Venice sounds like a synopsis for a Luchino Visconti film! Can you elaborate?

It was the first time I’d been away without my parents. It’s somewhat poignant because my father passed away when I was 13 and I had an old auntie. She must have been in

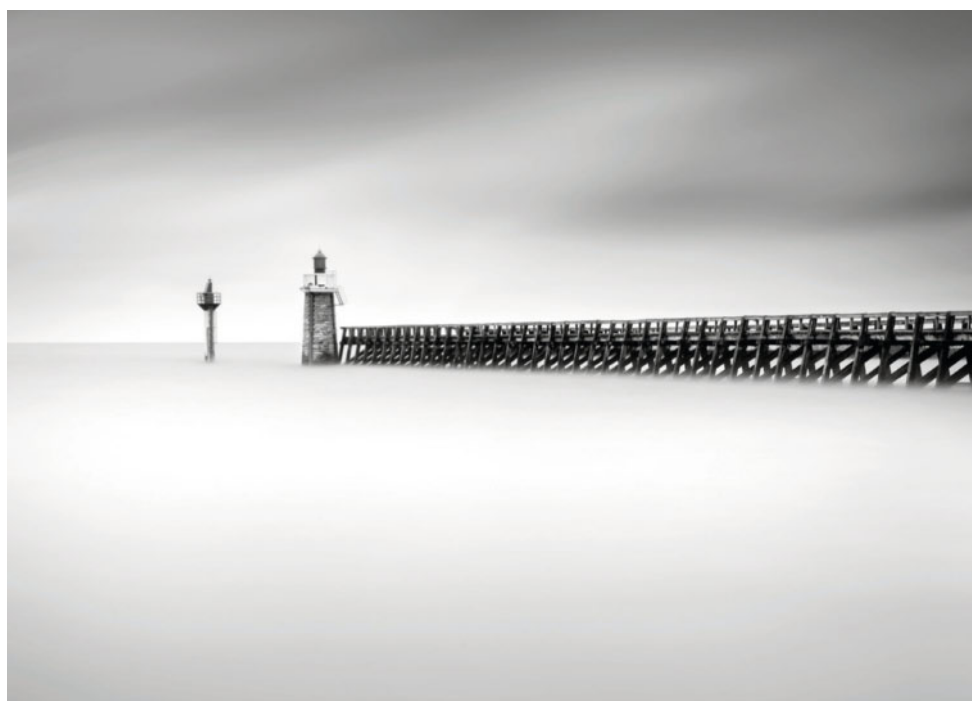
her 70s, and she took me there to find some solace, I suppose. She’d spent a lot of time there as a youth, studying at the Academy of Fine Arts. It was a big experience for me – it was such an amazing place for someone of my age to see people using boats as cars in a city that’s like no other.

What would you have been if you hadn’t become a professional photographer?

Probably either an artist – charcoals, pencil, that sort of thing – or an illustrator. I was signed up to join the Royal Navy when I was in my early teens, so that was always a possibility, and I was a lifeguard in my 20s, so that was another option. But I think the tug of the arts might have overcome the urge to wear red shorts and run around in slow motion!



ABANDONED FISHING BOAT Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 80 secs, f/16, ISO100



PIER, CAPBRETON, FRANCE Nikon D3, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 151 secs, f/16, ISO200

What stopped you joining the Navy?

I guess it goes back to my father passing away. When I was 12, my parents knew how much I loved the water and being by the sea, so I was all set to go to the Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. But after my dad's passing I didn't have the same feelings. Maybe I was rebelling, but in the end I didn't go.

What was your first big break as a professional photographer?

Taking test shots for aspiring models when I first started out. They were black-and-white images, and I supplied a session and contact sheet for £25 per model. I used to print the pictures myself, in the kitchen of my apartment. It was a classic learning experience and great fun.

It sounds like a dream job for a young man! How did you land it?

I just talked my way into it. I approached some modelling agencies and said I was really good! I explained that I didn't work in a studio but on a beach, so could add variety to their portfolios. I've always hated flash – studio flash – so I just worked with a reflector instead. So there I was, about 24, working with models in my favourite place – outside on the beach.

If you didn't photograph the sea and coast, what would you shoot?

That's a really tricky question. It would probably be either fashion or black-and- ▶

PROFILE

From surfing to decorating cruise liners, Jonathan Chritchley is all about the ocean...

■ Born and raised in England, Jonathan has lived in France since 1998, when he began work in marketing for an Australian surf company.

■ More than 3,500 of his black-and-white prints can be found decorating the cabins and staterooms of the MS Azura, P&O's second-largest cruise ship.


■ In 2007, Jonathan founded Ocean Capture, the specialist photographic holiday, tour and workshop operator.

■ Jonathan's first book, featuring his fine art black-and-white prints, is due to be published later this year.




Jonathan knows how to add an element of adventure and art to his self-portraits as well as his ocean shots

 **THENDARA, CÔTE D'AZUR (right)** Nikon D3x, Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8 AF-S VR, 1/800 sec, f/7.1, ISO200

 **FISHING HUT STUDY (below)** Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 10 secs, f/13, ISO100



 **GULF OF ST TROPEZ** Nikon D3, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 1/640 sec, f/7.1, ISO200



white portraits. I think that it would be just a job, though, to be honest.

What makes a Jonathan Chritchley photograph memorable?

Well, I don't know for sure, as I'm not really the person to ask, but I've been told that it's the use of light that people most remember. Light is incredibly important to me, but then I guess it is to most photographers. 'Luminescent' is the adjective that gets used the most with regards to my photos. I like that.

What do you consider to be the best shot you've ever taken?

A photograph of a sailing yacht called 'Moonbeam IV' (opposite), a beautiful 35-metre chunk of teak, mahogany and

sailcloth on which Princess Grace and Prince Rainier of Monaco honeymooned. During this particular session, the yacht was returning to St Tropez when the sky suddenly clouded up and we got perfect rays. It's a memorable moment, as well as one of my favourite photographs.

And the most successful?

The most successful has been one of my sail detail photos of a classic yacht called '1892', also taken in the Med (see page 106).

What makes classic yachts such a good subject to shoot?

They're amazing to see, but the history and Hollywood connections also add to the appeal. Some of these yachts are 100 years old, and in the '50s and '60s they were

owned by film stars. I photographed Errol Flynn's yacht, 'Sirocco', when I went to St Tropez. I was shooting from a helicopter. Every year, in late summer, they have a series of regattas for old classic yachts. It's a beautiful sight. They start in Antibes, then move to Cannes and on to St Tropez.

What's your 'desert island lens', the one you could never do without?

The one that I use the most is the Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8. It's a stunning lens that's rugged enough to take the beating I give it on a regular basis!

f/2.8 or f/8?

Sorry to be difficult, but it would be f/11, actually! I just find that at f/11 everything is at its sharpest, particularly when I'm



ACQUA ALTA, VENICE Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm
f/2.8G AF-S ED, 2.5 secs, f/18, ISO100

CELLULOID HEROES

Hollywood and the UK coastline might not seem like a natural pair, but inspiration often comes from unusual places...

Every photographer needs a muse, and for Jonathan, big waves, beaches and sailing ships aren't always enough. To create his arty black-and-white prints, he finds inspiration in a world without colour...

Where do you derive your photographic inspiration from?

■ From my peers and the sea, but mostly from movies. I really love black-and-white films.

What attraction do they hold?

■ It probably goes back to when I was growing up as an only son with three much older sisters. Sunday afternoons were spent watching black-and-white movies on TV. I prefer them to colour because of the way they're lit. When you think about it, the director and cameraman have to spend more time setting up the lighting for each shot because of the darkness of the shadows, the shapes they form and where they fall. It's about visualising how everything will appear in shades of grey.

Were any movies particularly influential?

■ I used to love films such as *The 39 Steps*, or any pirate movies – the type where there were lots of Spanish galleons on the water and I'd be standing in front of the TV wearing my pirate costume. Please don't publish that! More recently, Luc Besson's *The Big Blue*. It came out in 1988 and the first 10 minutes are shot in black and white. It shows two kids playing around in the Greek islands, diving into the water, and there are some shots where the sun hitting the sea looks like silver. You can't get that in colour.

shooting longer exposures. There's more detail and less noise.

What's the weight of your typical day's kit bag?

With two camera bodies, about five lenses and assorted paraphernalia, it's about 15kg. At airports I have to pretend it's really light so they don't make me put it in the hold!

Which Nikon cameras have you owned?

First was the Nikon FM, with a motor drive. It was sturdy, bombproof, uncomplicated and felt great in my hand. Then it was the F4 – it was much like the FM, but a little more complicated. The D70 was my first digital body, and I ran it in conjunction with the F4 and a Hasselblad. I still have it. After that it was the D2xs, which gave

MOONBEAM AND GOD RAYS Nikon D3, Nikon 24-70mm
f/2.8G AF-S ED, 1/640 sec, f/7.1, ISO200

me the feel of the old FM/motor drive combination I love – big, clunky, heavy and solid. The D3 has the same attributes but is full frame, and I'm now using the D3x for all of these characteristics – plus 24MP!

How many bodies do you currently use?

Two Nikons – a D3x and a D3 – and a Hasselblad 500C/M. I still have the D70 but I don't use it now. I think I'll save it for my kids, or maybe throw an infrared sensor in it – something like that.

Why would you convert it to infrared?

Well, there's no trade-in value with the older digital cameras because the

 LI RIVER, CHINA (right) Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 1/8 sec, f/18, ISO400



 FRUIT SELLER, ZANZIBAR Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 1/400 sec, f/10, ISO250

“I’d just bought the D3x when I fell into the surf, and it went completely underwater. But it dried off and I was using it again later that afternoon, so what could improve on that?”

Jonathan Chritchley Fine Art Photographer

specification and performance has improved so much. So, older cameras are just lying around gathering dust. But there are guys who can replace the image sensor with an infrared one, giving you another type of photography to try. It might not be everyone’s cup of tea in terms of colour, but convert it to black and white in Photoshop and in the brightest light the sky goes black, the greens go white and it can look pretty dramatic. But I’ll probably end up giving the D70 to the kids.

What’s the most unusual thing in your camera bag?

At the moment it’s a large, dead centipede! I just got back from Zanzibar and it must have crawled into my bag in my hotel room. Gave me a bit of a shock when I was

unpacking! It looks quite cosy, though – I don’t think it suffered.

What’s your essential technique for capturing great images?

Take the lens cap off! It never fails. Apart from that, it would have to be to make sure the horizon’s straight. With my work, if you get your horizons wrong, it’s pretty obvious right away. I know these things are fixable in post-processing, but I’m old-school in my methods and like to get things right on location, in camera. I get more pride from my work that way.

What about flashguns? When do you use them in your photography?

Never. I don’t even have one. Horrible things. Leave them for the paparazzi.

How important is it to stay on top of image workflow, and how do you do it?

It’s important to create a workflow that suits your style of work and your personality, and to stick with it. My workflow is very fast. I make choices quickly and don’t spend hours processing. I see the processing part of photography as an enhancement to what’s already been created, rather than a chance to fix what I should have got right on location. As soon as I start trying to mend things it’s time to move on to another photograph and start again.

How many gigabytes of pictures do you shoot a week?

I don’t shoot that great a quantity of frames, unless I’m shooting sailing boats.



ONLY IN ICELAND

There's something about Iceland that keeps drawing photographers back. Jonathan explains the country's lure

He might just have come back from the tropical climes of Zanzibar, but Jonathan's favourite location is one a little nearer to the Arctic Circle, with a climate that's much more changeable than the UK's...

What would you say is your favourite destination as a traveller?

■ Iceland, and that's as both a traveller and a photographer. I've spent three months there over the last three years and I'm in love with the landscape, the people and the food. The country has such a magnificent coastline, and it's such an amazing experience to be there and photograph it.

What makes Iceland so special?

■ What appealed to me the first time I went there was the space. You could walk for hours and days without bumping into another soul. It's also a place where you can photograph a landscape that's still being formed. I love that feeling of being transported back a million years. It's a view of the prehistoric – you're seeing a lava flow and a landscape that's constantly changing and evolving. It's a small country, the size of Ireland, and there's such a diversity of landscape. It's like nowhere else.

When are you going back?

■ 9 Later this year I'm doing a tour called Iceland 360, so called because we're going right around the island. It's the biggest tour I've done, two weeks, and so we'll be photographing the beaches, sea stacks, glaciers and waterfalls. But it's not just the scenery that makes Iceland special. No matter how off the beaten track you are, the people are always welcoming. And you get good food, too!



FROSTASTADAVATN, ICELAND Nikon D3x, Nikon 17-35mm f/2.8 AF-S, 1/80 secs, f/14, ISO320



FIR LAKE, GUILIN, CHINA Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 1/50 sec, f/9, ISO100



CANALE GRANDE, VENICE Nikon D3x, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 20 secs, f/18, ISO100

On an average morning I take maybe 20 frames, so if I shoot every day for a week, it would still all fit on one 8GB card.

What percentage of your shots do you delete?

I always delete the shockers – that is, if I haven't followed my golden rule and taken the lens cap off! Pretty much everything else I keep. It's always good to revisit images after a year or so, and it's amazing how your taste changes and how you see things that you didn't notice before.

Could you shoot a wedding if you had to?

It would be my worst nightmare! Technically, I could do it, I think. I've been taking photographs long enough to be able to get myself through most situations, but

the stress and mild panic would drive me insane. I imagine life expectancy in that game is fairly short...

How do you relax?

Apart from taking photographs, a process that I actually find very relaxing, I usually chill out on my boat, spend time at home with my kids or walk the dog on the beach.

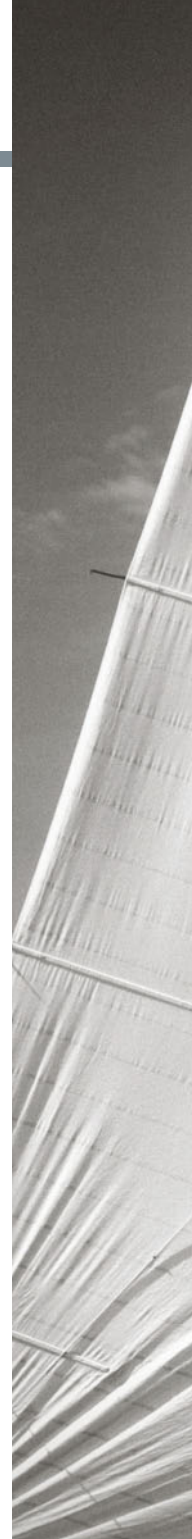
What do you think is the worst thing about photographing the sea?

The impact it has on my gear. I can't think of anything else, really. My gear takes a beating, whether it be from the salt, sand, rain or centipedes, and I have to clean the whole lot regularly. Filters inevitably get scratched and have to be replaced, too, which can get expensive.

1892, ST TROPEZ (right) Nikon D3, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 1/800 sec, f/8, ISO200

THE RACE IS ON, ST TROPEZ (below right) Nikon D3, Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8G AF-S ED, 1/800 sec, f/10, ISO200

TRADING DHOW, ZANZIBAR (below) Nikon D3x, Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8 AF-S VR, 1/400 sec, f/14, ISO200



“Some of these yachts are 100 years old and in the '50s and '60s they were owned by film stars. I photographed Errol Flynn's yacht when I went to St Tropez”

Jonathan Chritchley *Fine Art Photographer*

What type of assignment presents the biggest challenge?

I actually don't do assignments. I shoot entirely for myself and then find a home for the resulting photographs, whether it be in galleries, commercial projects or magazines. I tend to set myself projects, and the biggest challenge is usually the weather. Working outside and at the coast, the weather can obviously make or break a shoot. But you get very Zen about the whole thing after a while – there's no point in getting upset about it.

Was there a time when you were faced with a situation that seemed beyond anything you'd experienced before?

The day after I left work and decided to become a professional photographer, my

wife found out she was pregnant – with twins! That gave me the kick up the backside I needed to make a success of being a photographer. Failure was quite simply not an option!

What are the biggest changes you've seen in your profession, and how have they changed what you do?

The biggest change has, of course, been the advent of digital photography. It's made me get out of the darkroom, which is a blessing and something for which I shall be eternally grateful.

Unlike many film photographers, I absolutely detest the darkroom – the small, claustrophobic space, the chemicals, the smell... It's like a punishment for a serious crime against mankind! This was

why I started working quickly, because I couldn't wait to get out! The digital revolution got me out, and while I don't like sitting for hours in front of a screen, at least it doesn't smell so bad.

HD movie or stills?

If I want a movie camera, I'll buy one. My iPhone records good film, and I have a waterproof HD movie camera that I keep in my camera bag when I travel, so I don't need anything else that provides that service.

Do you think it's really possible to combine the two successfully?

For some people, I guess, but I'm not really the right person to ask. I think that despite all the changes photography has undergone



THE PERFECT CAMERA

When you work by the sea in a battle with the elements, you need something tough to shoot with

Jonathan isn't that keen on ever-more features being added to cameras. Reliability in extreme conditions is more important to him – but he still has a wishlist for the next Nikon D-SLR!

What would you put in your perfect Nikon?

■ I get irritated with too many functions on a camera. I want something that will be reliable, robust and give me good images. In return, I'll provide it with a good home and a chance to travel to exotic places! The more functions a camera has, the more there is to go wrong.

What makes your D3x so special?

■ I've had it only 18 months but it already looks 30 years old because it's been scraped so much! But it's so solid. I'd just bought it when I fell into the surf, and for two or three seconds it went completely underwater. But it dried off and I was using it again later that afternoon, so what could improve on that? The D4 will have to be able to cope like that in extreme circumstances and climates. I was hoping they wouldn't add an HD movie mode to it.

Why's that?

■ I'm in the fine art business, so the quality and size of print I can offer my customers is important. I'm always scared that Nikon will try to put too many specifications into a new camera, most of which are just gadgets.

over the last 10 years or so, it's still a specialist field. You do what you do. It's curious, though, because if I'm running a workshop and a client has a Canon EOS 5D Mark II, which as you know has a great HD movie facility, I ask if they've ever used it. And 95 per cent of the time they haven't.

What do you think has been your greatest moment as a photographer?

This interview, clearly! But apart from that, it would be the launching of the P&O cruise ship MS Azura, which has more than 3,500 of my prints on board. Now that was a buzz.

And the most embarrassing?

Getting wiped out by a wave on a beach in Iceland while taking a long-exposure

shot of a sea stack, only to find the whole thing was witnessed by a group of English schoolgirls, who found it all extremely amusing! My dreams of being the next James Bond evaporated with that moment, and haven't recurred since.

What's the biggest lesson you've learned in your career so far?

To trust my own judgment, to shoot from the heart and to never take my eyes off the sea in Iceland.

If a young Jonathan Chritchley was starting out today, would there be anything he'd do differently?

Nothing at all. The experiences you have – the failures, the successes, the agony, the joy – all this should be learned from

and then channelled into making you a better photographer. Without those experiences, how can you put any emotion into your work?

Finally, what's the best piece of advice you can give to someone starting out?

Stick to what you love, shoot for you, only listen to criticism from those who are better than you, be a perfectionist and never let a photograph get out that you're not 150 per cent happy with. □

To see more of Jonathan's images, visit www.jonathanchritchley.net. See www.oceancapture.com for details of Ocean Capture's photo breaks and workshops