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Asian Photography

AND IMAGING

Vol. 38 - No. 6

PRO-PROFILE

DRIVEN BY DISCONTENT

- Arun Manoharan

TIPS AND TECHS

HOW TO USE YOUR
PHONE'S ZOOM
LENS FOR BETTER
AUTOMOTIVE
PHOTOGRAPHY

COMMON
MISTAKES IN
MOTORSPORTS
PHOTOGRAPHY

PRO-PROFILE

GRASSROOTS TO WORLD -CLASS

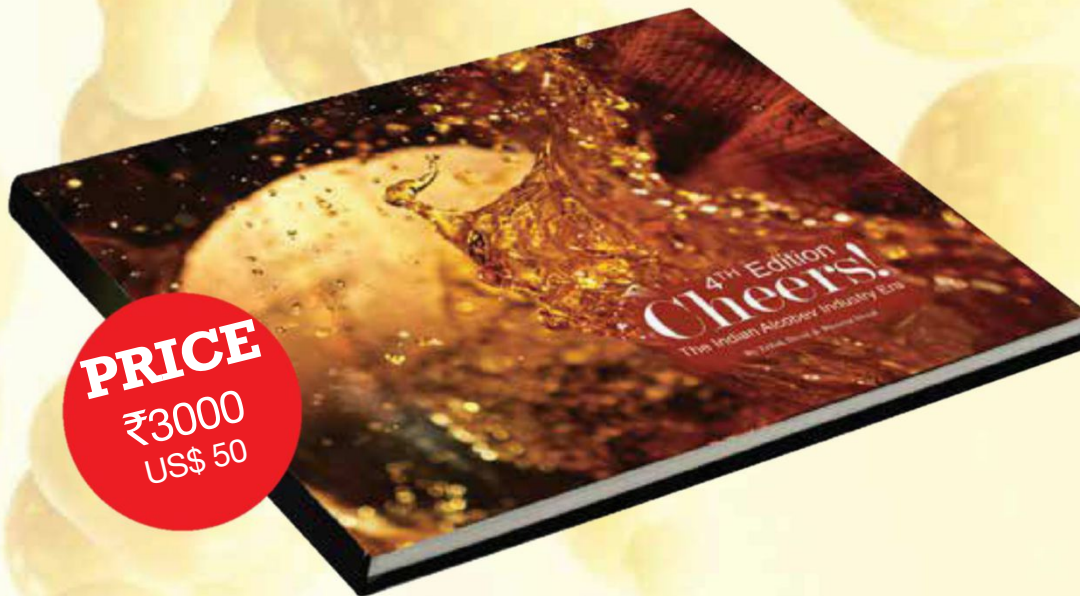
- Srinivasa Krishnan



Cover shot on
XIAOMI 17T

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The Indian Alcobev Industry Era



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When a Smartphone Earns the Cover

This issue marks the second time we've featured a cover image shot entirely on a smartphone. The previous was a photo by Photojournalist Ritesh Uttamchandani—featuring the Tsunami. While I remember that picture clearly, what's different about this cover is how it speaks volumes about photography—and the tools we use to create it—continue to evolve.

While smartphone photography has become commonplace across genres such as travel, food, and portraiture, automotive photography remains one of the most demanding disciplines. Cars are challenging subjects. Add motion to the equation, and the complexity increases significantly.

Photographing moving vehicles has traditionally been the domain of professional camera systems. Fast autofocus, high burst rates, specialised lenses and superior image quality have long given dedicated cameras a clear advantage. Those advantages still exist, and they remain important for many professional applications. However, the gap between smartphones and traditional cameras does continue to narrow.

Today's smartphones are equipped with sophisticated imaging systems, powerful computational photography, advanced stabilisation, and increasingly capable telephoto lenses. More importantly, they allow photographers to work in ways that were not always practical with larger equipment. Their compact size makes them easier to position creatively, quicker to deploy, and ideal for capturing spontaneous moments that might otherwise be missed.

What this cover demonstrates is not that smartphones have replaced professional cameras. Rather, it highlights a more important truth: great photography has never been solely about equipment. Cameras are tools, and while tools matter, they are only part of the equation. Timing, creativity, understanding of light, and the ability to tell a story remain far more important.

As photographers, it is easy to become preoccupied with specifications and hardware. Yet every technological shift in photography has ultimately expanded creative possibilities rather than diminished them. Smartphones are simply the latest chapter in that journey.

The fact that a smartphone image can confidently serve as the cover of a photography magazine—particularly one featuring an automobile, one of the most technically challenging subjects to photograph—is a reflection of both technological progress and photographic ingenuity.

Bhavya Desai

Bhavya Desai

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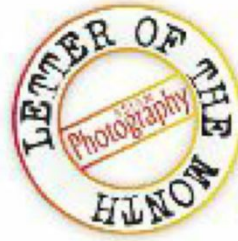
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LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com



Dear Sir,

I recently watched a review of the Sigma 17-40mm F1.8 DC lens and wanted to know if it is a full-frame lens. I have an FX3, and would this lens work as a wide-angle option on it? Please answer.

**Regs,
Kripal Mediaworks**

Dear Kripal,

If you've truly seen the review then you will know that this is an APSC lens and it won't work on full frame. The only benefit of doubt that I can give you is that the review is majorly in English and you couldn't understand it?

But happy to help. Try the Tamron 17-28mm f/2.8 Di III RXD lens. That will work better.



Dear Editor,

I was watching your video on the Tamron 17-70mm F/2.8 Sony lens and was wondering how I can achieve a similar framing with a crop-sensor camera. Which lens would be the best option to get a similar field of view and look?

**Regs,
Vishal Sharma**

Dear Vishal,

It depends on what camera you are using. Currently since I don't know then I am assuming things. Although to get the wide-angle look on a crop sensor that we have —you can always look at 10-18mm or 11mm prime lenses. That's what we have used to shoot it.



LETTERS TO EDITOR

Readers' Comments and Suggestions...

Send your letters at apindia.feedback@gmail.com

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Dear Sir,

I am using the vivo X200 phone and whenever I shoot videos I am getting a lot of lens flare issue. Can you provide some solutions?

**Regs,
Mehdi Hasan**

Dear Mehdi,

There's nothing you can do if it's pertinent. But you can try cleaning the lens with a fibre cloth. Sometimes there are fingerprints/dirt that aren't visible to the naked eye. Or else try shooting from a different angle or work on it on post processing.

If it still persists then there nothing that you can do and wait for an update to the OS.



Sony India Launches FE 100-400mm F/4.5 GM OSS G Master lens

Sony India has announced the launch of the Sony FE 100-400mm F4.5 GM OSS, expanding its G Master lens lineup for full-frame Alpha E-mount cameras. The lens is aimed at wildlife, sports, birding and photojournalism photographers, with a focus on improved autofocus performance and portability.

The new 100-400mm lens succeeds Sony's earlier 100-400mm telephoto offering, introducing faster autofocus, updated optics and a lighter internal zoom design. Sony claims autofocus performance is up to three times faster than the previous-generation model, alongside improved subject tracking. The lens uses four XD Linear Motors and updated autofocus algorithms, and is compatible with the high-speed continuous shooting capabilities of the Sony Alpha 9 III.

Optically, the lens incorporates a new ED XA element along with XA, Super ED and ED glass elements to reduce chromatic and spherical aberrations. Sony has also included Nano AR Coating II to reduce flare and ghosting, along with an 11-blade aperture for smoother background blur.

Weighing approximately 1,840g, the lens features an internal zoom mechanism designed to maintain balance while shooting handheld. It also includes optical image stabilisation,



customisable focus hold buttons and a dust- and moisture-resistant construction.

The lens supports Sony teleconverters, extending focal length reach up to 800mm, or 1,200mm in APS-C mode.

The FE 100-400mm F4.5 GM OSS will be available in India from May 22, 2026, at an MRP of ₹4,66,990.

Apple Acquires Popular Colour Grading Tool Color.io

Apple has acquired Patchflyer GmbH, a German software company best known for developing the web-based colour grading platform Color.io, according to European regulatory filings. The acquisition, which reportedly took place in January, brings both the technology and its creator, Jonathan Ochmann, under Apple's ownership.

Ochmann independently developed and maintained Color.io for nearly a decade. The platform gained popularity among filmmakers and photographers, attracting more than 200,000 users with features such as analogue-inspired colour grading, film grain simulation, colour space management, LUT creation, and visual effects tools.

In November 2025, Ochmann announced that Color.

io would shut down at the end of the year, stating that the decision was linked to joining a company that had "shaped and inspired" him. He said the move would allow him to build tools on a larger scale than was possible as an independent developer.

Apple has not disclosed plans for the acquired technology. However, industry observers speculate that some of Color.io's features could eventually be integrated into Apple's creative software portfolio, including Final Cut Pro, Photos, or Pixelmator Pro.

The acquisition is the latest in a series of purchases by Apple, which has continued to expand its software and creative technology capabilities through acquisitions and talent recruitment.

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Insta360 Launches Flagship Wireless Mic

Insta360 has announced the Mic Pro, its new flagship wireless microphone system aimed at professional creators, filmmakers, podcasters and event production teams. The system introduces two notable features: a customisable E-Ink display on the transmitter and a three-microphone array designed to emulate different pickup patterns.

The E-Ink display can be personalised through the Insta360 app with logos, names or other identifiers, remaining visible even when the device is powered off. Insta360 says this can simplify identification when multiple transmitters are being used on a production set.

The Mic Pro's three-microphone array uses digital signal processing to simulate omnidirectional, cardioid and figure-8 pickup patterns within a single transmitter. This allows users to switch between recording modes without changing hardware, making it suitable for applications ranging from interviews and podcasts to vlogging and ambient sound capture.

Other features include AI-powered noise cancellation, 32-bit float internal recording, 32GB onboard storage per transmitter, stereo internal recording and timecode synchronisation with less than one frame of drift over 24 hours. The system also supports up to four transmitters



connected to a single receiver and offers compatibility with cameras, smartphones and recorders through 3.5mm, USB-C, Lightning and Bluetooth connections.

Battery life is rated at up to 10 hours per transmitter, extending to 30 hours with the charging case.

The Insta360 Mic Pro with the dual-transmitter kit is priced at \$329.99 (approx ₹28,500).

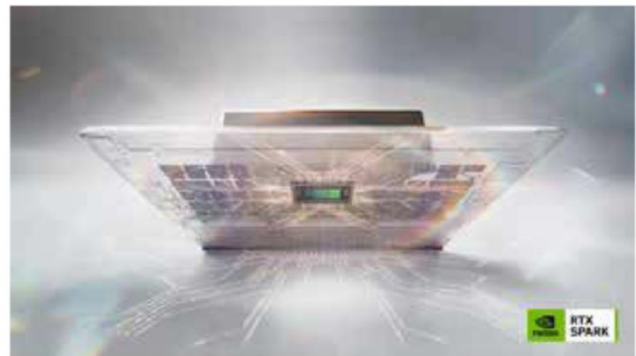
NVIDIA About to Launch Mac Competitor with RTX Spark

NVIDIA has unveiled RTX Spark, a new system-on-a-chip (SoC) designed to bring high-end AI, creative and gaming performance to thin-and-light Windows laptops. Developed around their Blackwell architecture, RTX Spark combines a GPU with 6,144 CUDA cores and fifth-generation Tensor Cores alongside a 20-core Nvidia Grace CPU co-developed with MediaTek.

The company says RTX Spark is built to deliver desktop-class AI and graphics capabilities while maintaining the power efficiency required for ultraportable laptops. The platform supports full CUDA acceleration and is designed to run AI models, creative applications and RTX-enabled games locally.

For content creators, RTX Spark could play a significant role beyond generative AI features. Modern applications such as Photoshop, Premiere Pro and DaVinci Resolve increasingly rely on AI-powered tools for tasks including masking, object selection, noise reduction and video enhancement. Adobe has already announced optimisations for Photoshop and Premiere Pro on RTX Spark systems, while support is also expected from developers including Blackmagic Design, Blender, CapCut, Filmora and Topaz Labs.

RTX Spark debuts in Microsoft's new Surface Laptop



Ultra— which Microsoft is touting to be the most powerful Surface laptop ever—and will also power upcoming laptops from Asus, Dell, HP, Lenovo and MSI. Manufacturers are expected to launch RTX Spark-powered devices later this year across multiple price segments.

With its focus on combining AI acceleration, graphics performance and battery-efficient operation, RTX Spark represents Nvidia's latest push into the premium laptop market, a segment that has been increasingly dominated by Apple Silicon-powered MacBooks in recent years.



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DJI's Third-Party Audit Finds No Security Backdoors

A security assessment conducted by a U.S.-based cybersecurity firm OnDefend has found no critical, high, or medium-risk security vulnerabilities in two DJI drone systems tested for the study. The evaluation examined the DJI Air 3S and DJI Matrice 4E drones, including their respective controllers, through software, hardware and radio-frequency testing.

According to the report, OnDefend independently sourced the devices from U.S. retail and dealer channels and found no evidence of data transmission outside the United States, no hidden backdoors, no unauthorized remote-access mechanisms, and no signs of supply-chain tampering or undocumented hardware modifications. The assessment also reported that all detected radio-frequency emissions were linked to known system functions.

The study identified 10 low-risk findings and 13 observations, primarily related to application security settings, session handling and wireless security. DJI stated that these findings are consistent with industry norms for complex connected devices and that it is working to address remaining issues through future software updates.

The assessment comes as DJI continues to challenge its inclusion on the U.S. Federal Communications Commission's Covered List, a designation that has affected the import and approval of some DJI products in the United States. DJI said the findings support its position that concerns regarding its products should be evaluated through transparent technical reviews.

The FCC is currently reviewing public comments related to DJI's appeal.

Xiaomi India launches Xiaomi 17T

Xiaomi India has unveiled the new Xiaomi 17T smartphone, expanding its Leica co-engineered T Series lineup. It features a triple rear camera system and introduces a Leica-branded 5x periscope telephoto camera for the T Series. The 50MP telephoto camera offers a 115mm equivalent focal length, f/3 aperture, macro capabilities, and up to 10x optical-grade zoom. Xiaomi also includes AI-powered Ultra Zoom, extending magnification up to 120x.

The Xiaomi 17T uses a 50MP primary camera with a 1/1.55-inch sensor. It features Leica UltraPure optics, Leica Summilux lens technology, and a 12MP ultra-wide camera with a 120-degree field of view.

A new Leica Live Moment mode captures short video clips and uses AI to automatically select the best frame as a still image. Leica-inspired portrait modes and photo styles are also available across all cameras.

For video, the smartphone supports 4K recording at up to 60fps with HDR10+. The device runs Android 16 with Google Gemini AI integration and is powered by MediaTek Dimensity processors, with the 17T using the Dimensity 8500 Ultra and the 17T Pro featuring the Dimensity 9500.

The Xiaomi 17T starts at ₹54,999.



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ML-SF3030



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Attachment
ML-CFL5



Collapsible
Diffusion Dome
ML-CD15



Collapsible
Soft Tent
ML-CS1625



Air Soft Tube
ML-ST1



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Accessory Kit
AK-B02



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Insta360 Launches Luna Ultra Handheld Gimbal Camera

Insta360 has officially unveiled the Luna Ultra, a handheld gimbal camera co-engineered with Leica designed to compete with DJI's Osmo Pocket series cameras. The camera features a dual-lens setup mounted on a three-axis gimbal, headlined by a Type 1-inch sensor capable of shooting 8K video at 30fps with Dolby Vision support.

The Luna Ultra also includes a secondary telephoto camera with 6x optical zoom, 10-bit L-Log recording, and up to 14 stops of dynamic range. Insta360 says the camera supports advanced AI-powered Deep Track 5.0 subject tracking, cinematic Leica colour profiles, built-in timecode, and magnetic lens accessories.

A detachable OLED touchscreen controller allows remote framing and operation, while the 1550mAh battery promises up to four hours of use with fast charging support. Internal storage offers 47GB usable space, expandable up to 1TB via microSD.

The Insta360 Luna Ultra is priced at \$769.99 (approximately ₹73,000+). The camera is available globally starting June 10. Insta360 has not yet confirmed an official India launch date, but availability through Amazon India and offline camera retailers is expected soon.



DJI sues Insta360 over Patent Infringement

DJI has filed two patent infringement lawsuits in the United States against the company behind Insta360 Arashi Vision Inc., over its newly launched Luna gimbal camera series.

The first lawsuit alleges that the Insta360 Luna Pro and Luna Ultra infringe two DJI design patents. DJI claims the products closely resemble its Osmo Pocket line, citing similarities in the handheld body, gimbal assembly, camera module, rotatable display, controls, accessory slot, and overall product architecture.

A second lawsuit accuses Insta360 of violating four DJI utility patents related to gimbal control and subject-tracking technologies. These patents cover features such as switching between follow and lock

modes, onboard subject tracking without requiring a separate app, image-based gimbal control, and integrated tracking with real-time display on the device screen.

DJI argues that Insta360's Luna cameras and related software "blatantly copy" its patented innovations. The company is seeking a permanent injunction, damages, profit disgorgement, and enhanced damages for alleged willful infringement.

Both cases have been filed in the Eastern District of Texas. DJI had reportedly been preparing the lawsuits since the 2026 NAB Show and filed them shortly after the Luna series officially went on sale in the U.S.



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AP PRO PROFILE



Arun Manoharan

DRIVEN *BY* **DISCONTENT**



Arun Manoharan has established himself as a prominent and highly influential figure in contemporary automotive photography and high-end retouching. His distinct visual style has earned him critical acclaim, prominent editorial features in leading automotive and lifestyle publications such as BBC TopGear, EVO, and GQ, and a prestigious inclusion in Lürzer's Archive. Driven by a disciplined approach to composition, technical precision, digital mastery and perpetual dissatisfaction, Manoharan's journey into the world of visual storytelling is rooted in a deeply personal narrative of overcoming communication barriers, which ultimately shaped his unique ability to translate mechanical design into evocative, cinematic art. **Asian Photography** spoke to him about culture, evolution of the craft, methodologies & more. Excerpts:

Arun Manoharan didn't envision becoming an artist or a photographer, it wasn't an obvious career choice. Growing up with dyslexia, he faced significant challenges with traditional forms of communication, which led him to discover drawing comics at a young age as a vital medium for self-expression and an essential emotional outlet to communicate his thoughts and feelings. Eventually, he transitioned from pencils to a camera and professional lighting equipment, finding that the visual language of automotive photography provided the perfect communicative tool he had been searching for. By the mid-2010s, after experimenting with a friend's camera, he realised that capturing automobiles was a profound way to express his deep passion, love, and gratitude toward the designers and engineers who follow their dreams, as well as the everyday consumers who spend their hard-earned money on these vehicles, treating them as major milestones in their lives.

In response to how he adapts his creative approach when shooting a highly diverse range of subjects from hypercars to luxury SUVs, motorcycles, and conceptual CGI projects, Manoharan noted that the physical objects humanity creates

are inherent reflections of inner desires, meaning each vehicle is designed for a specific purpose that requires a carefully tailored environment. He explained that a photographer can choose to either follow the intended, conventional path for that vehicle's purpose or intentionally place these cars in entirely unexpected, jarring locations to make the subject stand out from the crowd. While he acknowledges that conventional storytelling is repetitive and much easier for mass audiences to digest, he believes that such standard imagery easily gets lost in today's overwhelming sea of media information. For Manoharan, radical and non-conventional ideas carry significantly higher stakes and the risk of failure, but when executed effectively, they create an entirely new

“AI is largely built on stolen data... I refuse to use a tool built on stolen data, as it undermines the purpose of creation.”





branch of reality that provides fresh perspectives and becomes permanently hardwired into the viewer's brain.

When questioned about his visual philosophy and how he balances highly polished, cinematic imagery with genuine human emotion and atmosphere, he described his signature aesthetic as *"flow meets friction"* or a *"grounded-blockbuster"* approach. He is deeply in love with the interplay between the subtle and the fantastic, a philosophy that manifests in his tendency to shoot explosive, dynamic action sequences

in very subtle, understated locations, or conversely, to play with grand, large-scale lighting setups while positioning the central subject as simply as possible. Despite the highly polished and celebrated nature of his commercial output, he remains remarkably grounded and self-critical, admitting that he is never entirely happy with his own work and constantly questions whether he is doing a good job, a trait that prevents him from falling into creative stagnation.

Regarding the differences in client expectations, corporate mindsets, and creative freedom across



regional and international markets, Manoharan observed that the primary distinction lies in the level of respect given to the consumer's intellect and taste. He pointed out that many legacy automotive manufacturers in India remain tethered to outdated, rigid advertising practices from the 1980s and 1990s, often failing to view their target audience as multidimensional or diverse individuals. He highlighted specific industry anxieties, such as a well-known brand explicitly avoiding featuring women in advertisements out of a misplaced fear that its predominantly male customer base might be

“Automotive photography is my way of expressing my passion, love, and gratitude toward the designers and engineers who have followed their dreams.”







deterred from purchasing a product that appears “girly”. Manoharan noted that international markets tend to favour thoughtful campaigns that respect the customer’s passion, whereas Indian clients often prefer the safer, more conventional route of placing an A-list superstar next to a car, bypassing the opportunity to create deeply resonant, narrative-driven visual art.

When asked where he personally draws the line regarding the ongoing industry debate over authenticity, computer-generated imagery (CGI), and AI-assisted workflows in modern automotive photography, Manoharan emphasised that CGI has played an essential and legitimate role in commercial campaigns since 1995 to overcome logistical challenges, tight deadlines, and budget constraints. Having a professional background in animation prior to unexpectedly becoming a photographer, he views drawing, photography, and CGI as deeply interconnected mediums of the exact same art form, though he admits he will always prefer working with real subjects due to the unique sense of tactility the physical medium offers from the start. Conversely, he expressed strong ethical and creative reservations about generative AI, noting that while the industry uses it as a time-saving tool to

cut costs, the technology is largely built on stolen data. He warned that social media algorithms are actively diminishing human attention spans, forcing manufacturers to produce sloppy, repetitive content that our brains eventually perceive as mere noise, and stated that he refuses to use tools that undermine the purpose of human creation, asserting that the gruelling process of learning to create is far more valuable than the final product itself.

In closing, when asked what still excites him enough to continue chasing the next frame after spending years in the competitive automotive photography industry, Manoharan reiterated his persistent, driving dissatisfaction with his current body of work and his ongoing desire to learn. He colourfully likened himself to a donkey endlessly chasing a carrot, searching for an elusive, perhaps unrealistic state of total creative satisfaction. He concluded by noting that his passion is fuelled entirely by this pursuit of growth, and that if he ever managed to reach that unreachable goal of being completely satisfied with a frame he produced, he would happily leave the photography profession behind entirely to start a brand-new artistic path.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

GRASSROOTS TO WORLD -CLASS



Srinivasa Krishnan (SK)

Srinivasa Krishnan (SK) has spent over a decade capturing the chaos of motorsport and distilling it into singular, storytelling frames, operating at the highest echelons of global racing, starting from humble, grassroots. He has established himself as a premier visual chronicler of modern motorsport; where others chase the clinical sharpness of a speeding machine or the manufactured gloss of a podium celebration, his lens gravitates toward the raw, unvarnished human narrative under the helmet.

Asian Photography spoke to him about his growing up with big ambitions, the untold physical realities, working under pressure, and technical skills one must never forget. Excerpts:







When asked about the definitive turning point photography transitioned from a personal passion into a professional pursuit, SK reveals that his trajectory was actually quite unique because it never began as a personal passion project. He was already working as a professional photographer when Honda Racing India approached him in 2015 after discovering his work. Needing someone to document their motorsport activities, that single assignment became his formal introduction to the sport. What started as a standard professional engagement, however, quickly evolved into something much deeper. The more time he spent at racetracks, the more he appreciated the unique blend of speed, precision, engineering, teamwork, and human determination that defines motorsport. Every race weekend brought new challenges, new learning experiences, and new stories waiting to be told. Over the years, that grew into a professional relationship spanning more than a decade, opening doors to photographing everything from national championships to some of the world's biggest motorsport events. Looking back, he notes there was never a single moment when motorsport photography stopped being a profession and became a passion; rather, the two evolved together. Photography introduced him to motorsport, and

motorsport gave him a subject that continues to challenge, inspire, and push him to grow with every event he covers.

Reflecting on the various disciplines within the sport and which one proves the hardest to shoot consistently well, SK finds it difficult to single out just one. He notes that each presents its own distinct obstacles and that the real challenge lies within the nature of motorsport photography itself. He points out that people often see the final image but miss the intense physical work that goes into creating it. A typical race weekend involves carrying around 7 kilograms of equipment and constantly moving around the circuit, either on foot or on a track scooter, often under intense heat. This is followed by long nights spent reviewing, editing, captioning, archiving, and delivering photographs, only to repeat the entire routine for multiple consecutive days. Beyond the physical toll, managing thousands of images under tight editorial and client deadlines requires immense discipline to maintain consistency and attention to detail. Furthermore, he emphasises that motorsport photography demands a profound understanding of the sport itself—knowing the racing line, anticipating driver behaviour, understanding race strategy, and recognising decisive moments before they unfold. Unlike other genres, there is no opportunity to direct the subject or ask for a second take because everything happens in real time.



The complexity deepens significantly when transitioning to rally photography, which SK describes as a discipline with an entirely different layer of difficulty due to remote and challenging terrains like forests, hilly regions, muddy and ghat sections. Photographers frequently hike long distances uphill and downhill carrying heavy gear just to find suitable vantage points, making physical safety on uneven terrain just as important as creating compelling images. In these environments, basic access to support facilities, power sources, water, and reliable communication is highly limited. The harsh environment introduces a constant battle against dust finding its way into cameras and lenses, rapidly changing weather conditions, and poor mobile network coverage that complicates team coordination. What makes rallying particularly demanding is the stark lack of second chances; a car may pass a photographer only once in the morning and once in the evening at completely different locations. Missing the shot means the opportunity is gone forever. A photographer might spend hours planning, travelling, and prepping for a location, only to have a few fleeting seconds to execute the photograph when the car finally appears, creating a high-stakes, do-or-die situation where technical expertise, timing, and presence of mind are absolutely crucial. Ultimately, satisfying the diverse requirements of teams, manufacturers, sponsors, and media outlets under these conditions proves

that motorsport photography is about far more than capturing a fast machine; it demands physical endurance, logistical planning, adaptability, and the ability to consistently deliver high-quality work under pressure.

Turning the conversation to his years documenting Indian motorsport, SK weighs in on whether domestic racing receives the visual storytelling and global recognition it truly deserves. In his view, Indian motorsport has no shortage of talent, dedication, or compelling stories, having personally documented everyone from grassroots racers all the way to national and international champions and competitors. Throughout this journey, the passion, resilience, and commitment across every level of the sport have always stood out to him. However, he believes Indian motorsport still has room to grow in terms of global visibility, noting that the challenge is not a lack of narratives, but ensuring those stories reach a wider audience. Because he believes the drivers, mechanics, engineers, team owners, officials, volunteers, and families who invest enormous sacrifice into the sport also deserve to be seen and celebrated. Encouragingly, he has observed the landscape evolve significantly over the past decade, with digital platforms and social media enabling photographers, teams, and manufacturers to share their stories directly with a global audience, resulting in far





greater visibility today than when he started in 2015. As visual storytellers, he believes photographers have a responsibility to go beyond documenting mere race results and podium celebrations, focusing instead on the preparation, setbacks, and human effort unfolding away from the spotlight to build a stronger global connection to the sport.

Given the depth of his imagery, which often feels heavily documentary-driven rather than purely commercial, SK addresses whether he consciously approaches motorsport through the lens of visual storytelling. He confirms this, explaining that while motorsport is visually exciting because of its inherent speed, he has always viewed it as something far greater than cars and motorcycles competing on a track. His initial entry into photography was sparked by a fascination with narrative media, a perspective that naturally dictates how he covers a race. To him, the action on the track is only a single piece of the puzzle; the moments before and after, the quiet concentration of a driver on the starting grid, the grit of mechanics working behind the scenes, and the raw emotions of victory and disappointment are equally vital. Whether it's F1 or a local racing meet, he strives to document the actual emotion and experience of being there, firmly believing that meaningful storytelling exists at every level of the sport. While acknowledging that meeting specific commercial client requirements is an essential part of the profession, he actively searches for moments that add context and narrative value,

asserting that the most meaningful motorsport photographs are those that reveal the effort, sacrifice, and determination behind the final result.

When asked to identify the technical skills that up-and-coming photographers frequently underestimate, SK immediately emphasises the crucialness of consistency. He observes that while many young photographers focus heavily on creating a few standout, isolated images, professional photography is ultimately defined by the ability to deliver quality work reliably under all kinds of conditions. Because motorsport is a highly specialised and demanding genre, he advises newcomers to build a strong foundation across multiple photography disciplines before entering the field. At a technical level, a professional must learn to navigate rapidly changing lighting, track high-speed subjects accurately, and make split-second decisions under immense pressure, all while meeting tight client deadlines. He notes that while advanced equipment capable of tracking fast subjects and enduring harsh environments, gear alone is never enough. The true test of a professional is maintaining that exact same standard of quality throughout an entire event, a full season, and a prolonged career.

Concluding with advice for photographers striving to develop a distinct visual voice in a digital era where everyone has access to the exact same tools, SK suggests shifting





“Consistency is not a single skill, but the result of mastering many skills and applying them reliably, regardless of the circumstances.”



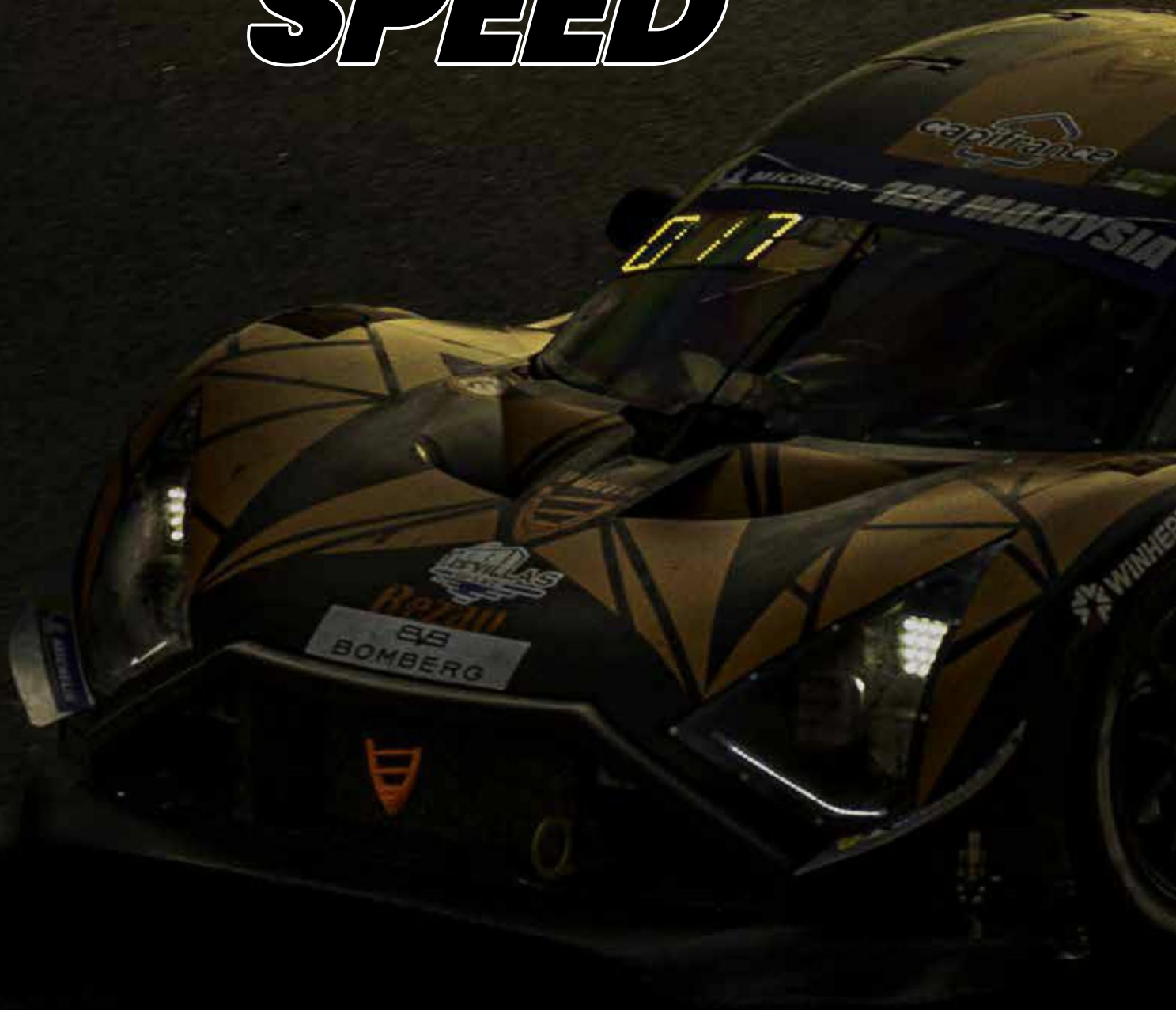
the focus away from manufacturing a specific style and concentrating instead on developing a unique way of seeing. He believes a recognisable visual voice cannot be forced overnight; it evolves organically through time, curiosity, and the subjects a photographer chooses to document consistently. He urges the next generation to spend more time understanding photography rather than chasing transient social media trends or algorithms. While learning from peers is valuable, he notes that the goal should always be to interpret a moment through one's own unique perspective and life experiences, and not become a carbon-copy of someone else's vision. Authenticity plays a crucial role because the images that truly resonate with audiences are those that communicate honest emotion and human connection. He advises patience, reminding aspiring creators that a visual voice is built over years of making mistakes, refining the craft, and discovering what genuinely resonates internally. Ultimately, while everyone may have access to identical cameras and editing software, SK emphasises that no one else possesses an individual's specific experiences or way of seeing the world—and that personal perspective is exactly where a true visual voice originates.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER



Ashwith S Pai

MORE THAN SPEED



For a photographer like **Ashwith S Pai**, the boundary between the grit of human conflict and the high-octane roar of the racetrack is remarkably thin. Emerging from a rigorous background in documentary photojournalism in Paris, Pai has seamlessly translated those sharp observational skills to the competitive world of motorsport. He avoids the predictable formulas of traditional editorial coverage. Instead, his imagery leans heavily on atmosphere, emotion, and an innate understanding of human sentiment away from the tarmac, establishing a distinct visual identity that honours the narrative essence of both disciplines. **Asian Photography** spoke to him about the intersection of genres and disciplines, competition on the field, navigating tumultuous demands, inspirations and more. Excerpts:





The intersection of documentary photography and motorsport imagery seems vast on the surface, but for Ashwith, the two realms are deeply connected by a shared visual instinct. What began as a distant “pipe dream” shifted into a professional reality during a photojournalism course in Paris. At the time, Pai’s focus was entirely on documentary work, specifically capturing the raw, chaotic energy of street protests. However, a turning point arrived with an opportunity to attend the 24 Hours of Le Mans. Encouraged by loved ones to take the leap despite having no prior experience, those first few frames trackside sparked an immediate realisation of a genuine calling.

Transitioning into the highly competitive and financially demanding world of motorsport was far from a traditional trajectory for him. The field inherently requires extensive travel, complex logistics, strict accreditation, and deep industry connections. Instead of relying on immediate trackside access, much of his early portfolio was built from spectator areas. These physical limitations ultimately shaped his distinct creative approach, forcing a reliance on inventive angles, precise timing, and narrative storytelling. Photographing endurance races served as a masterclass in patience and adaptability, demonstrating to Pai that while technical preparation is vital, success in this industry often relies on the luck of being in the right place at the right time.





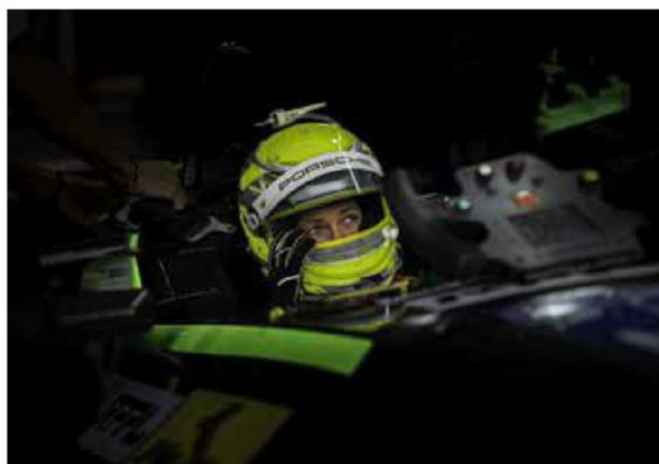


The rigorous training ground of documentary photojournalism proved indispensable behind the catch fences. Pai's ability to navigate dynamic, unpredictable environments, paired with sharp observational skills to catch fleeting moments, directly translated to tracking speeding machines. It allowed him to create strong, visually meaningful compositions out of pure speed.

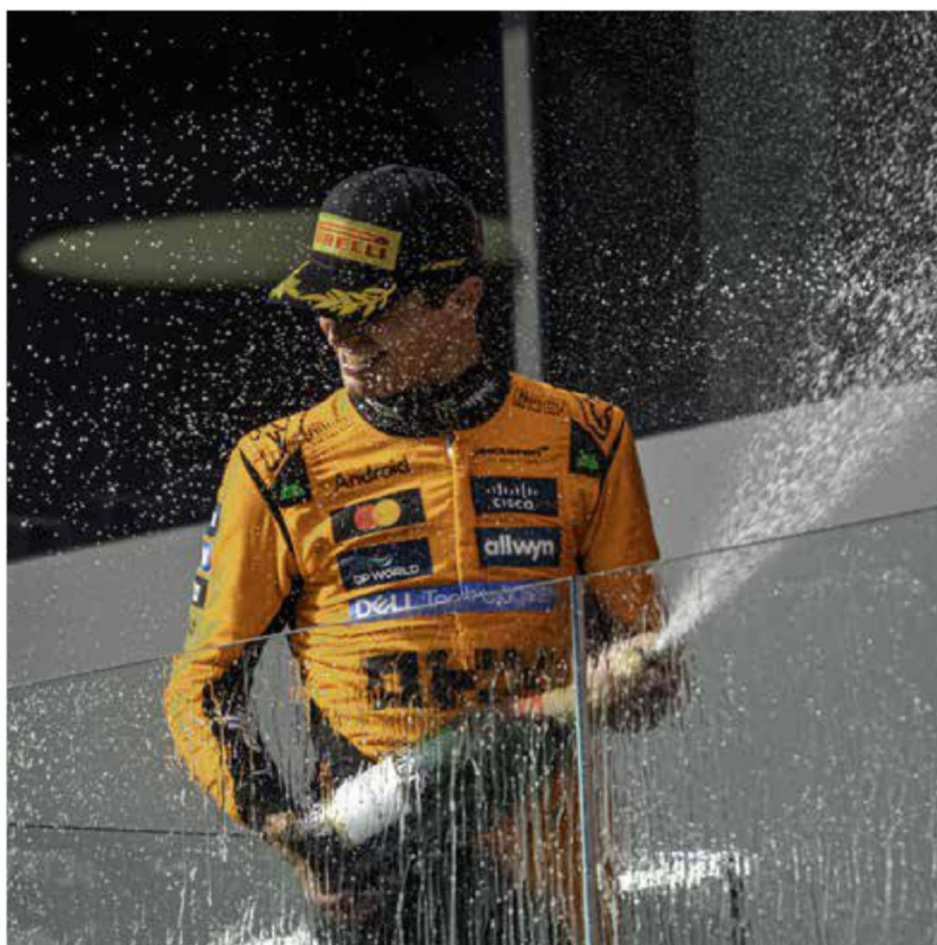
However, bringing that same documentary depth to the modern landscape presents its own set of modern challenges, particularly in the era of social media. The greatest hurdle is no longer just capturing a striking image, but fighting the rapidly shrinking digital attention span. While traditional documentary work requires viewers to slow down and absorb the underlying context, contemporary audiences often scroll past in seconds. In a saturated digital space where critical stories are easily drowned out, Pai finds that the real test lies in crafting work that retains its relevance and keeps the viewer engaged with the narrative behind the frame.

Consistency in motorsport photography presents an entirely different, highly physical challenge. Capturing a race effectively demands enduring long hours and fluctuating weather conditions while carrying heavy equipment and maintaining the mental focus needed to anticipate split-second actions. Because racing is inherently unpredictable, with lighting shifting

“Documentary photography often requires the viewer to slow down and understand the context behind an image, which is becoming increasingly difficult... in an environment where attention spans are constantly shrinking.”







“I think part of being a working photographer is learning how to adapt without losing your perspective. For me, maintaining a creative identity is more about staying consistent in how I observe and approach stories rather than forcing a particular visual style.”



constantly over a single day, staying technically prepared while keeping the imagery fresh is a constant balancing act for Pai. Rather than settling for standard, repetitive editorial shots, his focus remains heavily on experimenting with new creative techniques and methods. The goal is always to look beyond the mere sensation of speed to capture the atmospheric emotion of the event, translating exactly what it felt like to stand trackside.

This distinct creative approach is heavily influenced by the work of photographer Shameem Fahath, whose unique style and inventive compositions served as a major inspiration. A fortunate personal meeting with Fahath eventually led to an introduction to his mentor, opening up the path that defined Pai's professional journey.

Navigating the line between editorial requirements, client demands, and personal creative identity across both genres requires a fluid, adaptable mindset. While a distinct stylistic line exists between Pai's track action photos and his documentary storytelling, the approach merges seamlessly when the focus shifts to capturing people, emotions, and candid moments away from the track. Maintaining this balance feels entirely natural to him rather than conflicting. Ultimately, preserving a creative identity is less about forcing a rigid visual aesthetic and more about maintaining a consistent way of observing the world. Success with clients relies heavily on strong communication and flexibility—delivering exactly what a brief requires while remaining entirely true to a personal perspective.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

HOW TO USE YOUR PHONE'S ZOOM LENS FOR BETTER AUTOMOTIVE PHOTOGRAPHY

Smartphone cameras have become incredibly capable tools for automotive photography. While most enthusiasts focus on wide-angle shots and dramatic editing, one of the most powerful features for shooting cars is often overlooked—the telephoto or zoom lens. Whether your phone offers a 2x, 3x, 5x or even 10x optical zoom camera, learning how to use it correctly can instantly elevate your automotive images. For instance - the **Xiaomi 17T** which offers you a Leica Camera System and great results using its zoom.





Why Zoom Lenses Make Cars Look Better

One of the biggest advantages of a zoom lens is perspective compression. When you photograph a car with a wide-angle lens from close range, certain parts of the vehicle can appear exaggerated. The front bumper may look oversized while the rear seems to shrink away.

A zoom lens solves this problem. By stepping back and using optical zoom, the proportions of

the vehicle appear more natural. The result is a cleaner, more balanced image that better represents the design language intended by the manufacturer.

For three-quarter shots, try moving several metres away from the vehicle and switching to your phone's telephoto camera. You'll immediately notice the difference. Body lines become more elegant, wheels look properly sized, and the overall shape of the car appears more refined.

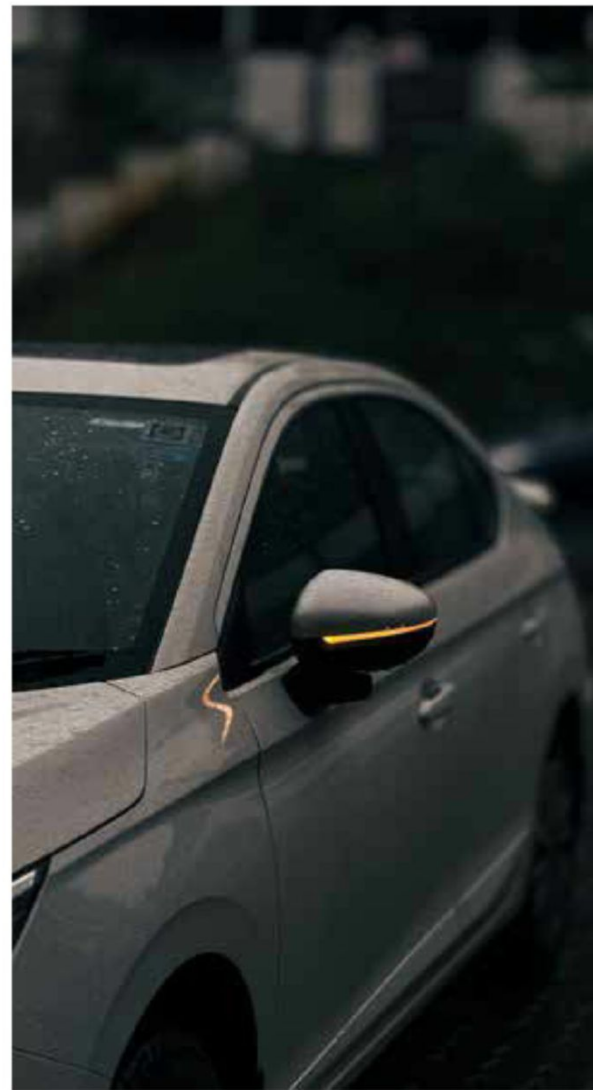
Use Zoom to Highlight Design Details

Zoom lenses are excellent for isolating details. Modern vehicles are filled with interesting design elements that deserve attention. Headlamps, taillights, badges, wheel designs, carbon fibre trim, exhaust tips and intricate grille patterns can all become compelling subjects on their own.

Instead of physically moving closer to these elements, use the telephoto lens and frame tightly. This approach reduces background distractions while drawing the viewer's attention directly to the feature you're highlighting.

Detail shots often add variety to an automotive photo series and help tell a more complete story about the vehicle.





Cleaning Up Busy Backgrounds

One of the biggest challenges in automotive photography is finding a clean location. Cars are often surrounded by parked vehicles, signboards, pedestrians or cluttered urban environments.

By zooming in and narrowing your field of view, you can eliminate many unwanted distractions.

Rather than showing everything around the vehicle, you can focus only on the sections of the scene that complement the car.

This is particularly useful at car meets and automotive events where finding an empty background is nearly impossible. A longer focal length helps separate the subject from the chaos around it.

Making the Background Work for You

Many smartphone photographers underestimate the creative possibilities of compressed backgrounds. Telephoto lenses make distant objects appear larger and closer to the car.

Mountains, city skylines, bridges and architectural landmarks can become much more prominent in the frame. Imagine photographing a sports car with a mountain range in the distance. Using a wide-angle lens may reduce the mountains to a tiny part of the composition.

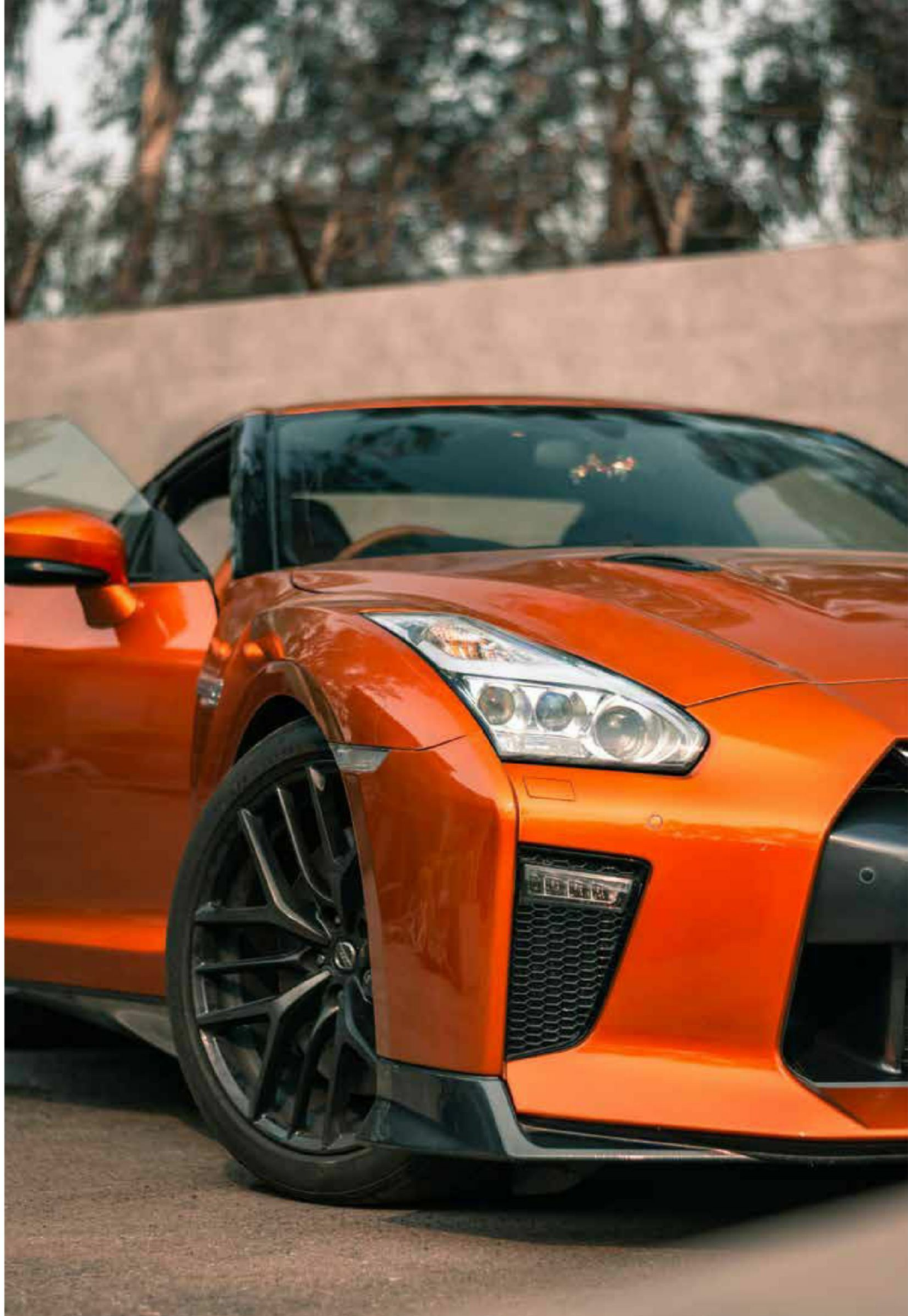
A telephoto lens visually brings them closer, creating a stronger relationship between the vehicle and its surroundings.

Capturing Motion and Speed

When shooting moving cars, zoom lenses can help create dynamic panning shots. Stand at a safe distance from the road and track the vehicle as it passes.

Because telephoto lenses magnify movement, they can enhance the sensation of speed when combined with a slower shutter speed. Many smartphones now offer Pro modes that allow manual control over shutter speed.

Experiment with slower settings while following the moving vehicle. Although achieving a sharp result may require several attempts, the final image can look significantly more dramatic than a standard static shot.





Getting the Best Light

Lighting remains just as important when using a zoom lens. The best automotive photographs are usually captured during the golden hours shortly after sunrise or before sunset.

During these periods, softer light enhances body contours and reflections without creating harsh shadows. Pay special attention to reflections when shooting with a telephoto lens. Since you're often focusing on smaller sections of the car, unwanted reflections become more noticeable.

Before pressing the shutter, check windows, paintwork and chrome surfaces for distracting elements that may have entered the frame.

Keep Your Shots Sharp

Unlike wider lenses, telephoto cameras are more sensitive to movement. Even minor hand shake can reduce image sharpness, especially in lower light conditions.

Whenever possible, brace yourself against a wall, lean on a railing or use a small tripod. Taking multiple frames of the same composition also increases the chances of obtaining a perfectly sharp image.

Another important tip is to avoid relying too heavily on digital zoom. Optical zoom uses a dedicated camera lens and preserves image quality. Digital zoom simply crops into the image, often resulting in reduced detail and increased noise.

For the best results, stick to your phone's native optical zoom settings and crop later if needed.

Think Beyond Full-Car Shots

Composition remains critical regardless of focal length. Use leading lines, symmetry and negative space to strengthen your images. Experiment with different shooting heights as well.

A low-angle perspective combined with a telephoto lens can make a performance car appear more aggressive and imposing.

Don't limit yourself to photographing the entire vehicle. Some of the most striking automotive images focus on only a small section of the car. A tightly framed shot of a headlamp, wheel or body crease can often be more visually engaging than a conventional full-car photograph.

The Takeaway

The zoom lens is one of the most underutilised tools in smartphone automotive photography. While wide-angle cameras are useful for showcasing environments, telephoto lenses excel at presenting vehicles in a more flattering and professional manner.

They reduce distortion, simplify backgrounds, highlight details and create stronger visual separation between the subject and its surroundings.

The next time you're photographing a car with your smartphone, resist the urge to walk closer. Instead, take a few steps back, switch to the zoom lens and let perspective work in your favour. You may be surprised by just how much more polished your automotive images become.

TEXT: BHAVYA DESAI

SHOOTING CARS DURING MONSOONS: **CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES**



For many automotive photographers, the arrival of the monsoon season is met with mixed emotions. On one hand, rain introduces a host of complications: unpredictable weather, muddy locations, soaked equipment, and vehicles that seem impossible to keep clean. On the other hand, monsoons offer some of the most visually rewarding conditions a photographer can hope for. Dramatic skies, reflective roads, atmospheric mist, and dynamic water spray can transform an ordinary automotive photograph into something cinematic and unforgettable. While most photographers instinctively look for clear skies and golden sunlight, some of the most striking automotive imagery is created when the weather refuses to cooperate. Learning to embrace monsoon conditions can open up a completely new creative dimension, allowing photographers to capture vehicles in ways that feel more dramatic, emotional, and visually engaging than traditional fair-weather shoots.



Why Monsoon Conditions Are Perfect for Automotive Photography

The first thing that makes monsoon photography unique is the quality of light. Unlike harsh midday sunlight, which often creates strong shadows and difficult reflections on a vehicle's bodywork, monsoon cloud cover acts like a giant softbox. The diffused light wraps around the curves of a car, revealing its shape and design more evenly. Details in the paintwork become easier to capture, while highlights remain controlled and less distracting.

The environment itself also changes dramatically during the rainy season. Roads become reflective surfaces, puddles appear everywhere, and moisture in the air creates a natural atmospheric effect. These elements can add depth and character to photographs that might otherwise appear flat. A wet road can act as a mirror, doubling the visual impact of a composition. Headlights and taillights reflected in rain-soaked asphalt create leading lines that guide the viewer's eye toward the subject. Even a simple parking lot can become an interesting photographic canvas after a rainfall.

The Challenge of Unpredictable Weather

One of the biggest difficulties of monsoon photography is dealing with rapidly changing conditions. Weather forecasts can provide guidance, but rain patterns often shift unexpectedly. A location that appears suitable during planning may become inaccessible within minutes of arrival. A bright patch of sky can disappear behind dark storm clouds, while a light drizzle can suddenly become a torrential downpour.

Unlike studio photography, where every variable can be controlled, shooting during the monsoon requires flexibility and quick decision-making. Successful photographers learn to adapt their plans on the fly, often changing locations, compositions, or shooting schedules based on the weather.

Patience is equally important. Sometimes the best photographs emerge during brief breaks in the rain when dramatic clouds remain overhead and roads are still wet. Being prepared to wait for these moments can make all the difference.

Protecting Your Gear from the Elements

Rain and electronics have never been good companions. Cameras, lenses, lighting equipment, and drones are all vulnerable to moisture. Although many modern cameras and lenses offer weather sealing, they are not designed to withstand prolonged exposure to heavy rain without protection.

Rain covers should be considered essential equipment during monsoon shoots. Waterproof camera bags, lens hoods, and microfibre cloths are equally important. Carrying multiple cloths is advisable, as they quickly become saturated when wiping water from camera bodies and lens fronts.

Battery management also becomes more critical. Damp and cool conditions can reduce battery performance, making spare batteries a necessity. Keeping batteries in waterproof pouches helps ensure they remain functional throughout the shoot.





The goal is not simply to survive the rain but to continue shooting confidently while minimising risk to expensive equipment.

Keeping the Car Presentable

One of the less glamorous realities of monsoon automotive photography is the constant battle against dirt and water spots. A freshly cleaned car can become splattered with mud and grime within minutes of driving through wet roads.

This challenge is especially significant when photographing sports cars, luxury vehicles, or classic automobiles where appearance is everything. Automotive photographers often spend considerable time cleaning the vehicle between shots. Towels, quick-detailing sprays, and portable blowers can become indispensable tools.

Interestingly, some photographers choose to embrace a certain level of dirt depending on the subject. An off-road SUV covered in mud can reinforce a narrative of adventure and capability, whereas a luxury sedan generally benefits from a cleaner presentation. Understanding the story you want the image to tell helps determine how much cleaning is necessary.

Safety Must Always Come First

No photograph is worth compromising safety. Wet roads significantly reduce traction, making high-speed driving shots more dangerous than usual. Standing water can conceal potholes, debris, and uneven surfaces that may pose risks to both vehicles and photographers.

Visibility can also deteriorate quickly during heavy rain. Drivers may struggle to see instructions, while photographers may find it difficult to track moving vehicles accurately.

Thunderstorms require particular caution. Lightning can pose a serious threat, especially when shooting in open locations. If conditions become unsafe, postponing the shoot is always the right decision.

Professional automotive photography is as much about risk management as it is about creativity.

Using Reflections to Your Advantage

Perhaps the greatest visual benefit of monsoon photography is the abundance of reflections. Wet asphalt, puddles, and waterlogged surfaces create opportunities that simply do not exist in dry conditions.



By positioning the camera low to the ground, photographers can maximise reflections and create dramatic compositions. The reflection effectively becomes a second subject within the frame, adding symmetry and visual interest.

Even small puddles can be used creatively. A carefully framed reflection can make a location appear larger and more dramatic than it actually is. This technique is particularly useful when working in urban environments where shooting space may be limited.

Capturing Dramatic Monsoon Skies

Automotive photography often benefits from strong environmental storytelling, and monsoon skies provide a ready-made backdrop. Towering storm clouds add scale, mood, and intensity to a scene.

A performance car photographed beneath dark clouds can appear more aggressive and powerful. An off-road vehicle surrounded by mist and rain can evoke a sense of exploration and resilience.

Instead of treating the sky as empty space, photographers should consider it an active part of the composition. Positioning the car lower within the frame often allows dramatic cloud formations to dominate the image and strengthen its visual impact.

Adding Motion with Rain and Water Spray

Rain introduces opportunities for dynamic action

photography that are difficult to replicate under dry conditions. Water spray generated by moving vehicles adds a sense of speed and energy to images.

A sports car slicing through standing water or a rally car kicking up spray creates visual drama that immediately captures attention. Photographers can freeze individual droplets with fast shutter speeds or emphasise movement with slower panning techniques.

Both approaches can be effective. The choice depends on whether the goal is to showcase detail or convey motion. Either way, rain naturally enhances the feeling of action within a photograph.

Night Shoots Become More Cinematic

Few conditions are as visually rewarding as a rainy night. Wet roads amplify artificial light sources, creating vibrant reflections from headlights, taillights, street lamps, and illuminated buildings.

Urban environments that appear ordinary during dry weather can become extraordinary after rainfall. Reflections stretch across the pavement, adding colour and depth to the scene. Combined with atmospheric rain and modern vehicle lighting, these conditions often produce photographs that resemble scenes from a feature film.

Many photographers deliberately schedule night shoots during monsoon season because the visual payoff can be so significant.

Timing Is Everything

Interestingly, the best monsoon photographs are not always taken during active rainfall. The period immediately after a storm often provides ideal conditions. Roads remain wet, reflections are plentiful, and visibility improves considerably.

Blue hour—the period shortly before sunrise or after sunset—is another excellent time for automotive photography during the monsoon. The soft ambient light balances beautifully with vehicle lighting, creating images with rich colours and strong atmosphere.

Morning shoots can also be rewarding, particularly when mist or fog is present. These conditions add depth and separation between the subject and background, making the vehicle stand out more effectively.

Post-Processing for Monsoon Images

Editing monsoon photographs requires a delicate touch. Rain naturally provides rich colours, dramatic contrast, and atmospheric conditions, so excessive processing can quickly make an image feel artificial.

Most monsoon automotive photographs benefit from subtle contrast adjustments to enhance cloud detail and reflections. Highlight recovery is often necessary to preserve detail in wet surfaces and bright lights. Selective sharpening can help emphasise the vehicle while maintaining the softness of the surrounding atmosphere.

Colour grading can significantly influence the mood of an image. Cooler tones tend to emphasise the stormy nature of a scene, while warmer tones can create a more cinematic aesthetic. The best approach depends on the story the photographer wishes to tell.

Turning Bad Weather into a Creative Advantage

Many photographers view rain as an obstacle. As a result, relatively few automotive shoots take place during monsoon conditions. This creates an opportunity for those willing to embrace the challenge.

Rain transforms familiar locations into entirely new environments. Roads become mirrors, skies become dramatic backdrops, and moisture in the air adds atmosphere that



cannot easily be replicated through editing. The resulting images often stand out because they feel different from the countless sunny-day automotive photographs seen online and in magazines.

For photographers seeking to develop a distinctive style, mastering monsoon conditions can be a valuable skill. The ability to create compelling images regardless of the weather demonstrates both technical expertise and creative vision.

Conclusion

Shooting cars during the monsoon is not simply about working around bad weather—it is about using the weather as a creative tool. While challenges such as equipment protection, vehicle maintenance, safety concerns, and unpredictable conditions require careful planning, the rewards can be extraordinary.

The combination of soft light, reflective surfaces, dramatic skies, atmospheric mist, and dynamic water spray creates opportunities that are unavailable during most other seasons. Photographers who learn to work with these elements rather than against them can produce images that are richer, more cinematic, and more memorable.

In automotive photography, perfect weather does not always produce the best photographs. Sometimes, the most compelling images emerge when the clouds gather, the roads glisten with rain, and the monsoon turns an ordinary scene into something extraordinary.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER





COMMON MISTAKES IN MOTORSPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Motorsport photography is one of the most exciting and demanding genres of photography. The combination of speed, noise, adrenaline, and unpredictability creates opportunities for spectacular images, but also exposes mistakes that can ruin an otherwise promising shoot.

Regardless of what event you're photographing, the challenges remain similar: fast-moving subjects, changing light, crowded backgrounds, safety restrictions, and limited shooting positions.

Many photographers enter the world of motorsports expecting that expensive equipment alone will guarantee impressive results. In reality, successful motorsport photography relies far more on technique, planning, and understanding the sport.

We all begin somewhere and have done this, and here's a checklist of what not to do when shooting your next motorsports gig.

1. Using Shutter Speeds That Are Too Fast

One of the biggest mistakes beginners make is freezing every car completely.

Modern cameras can easily shoot at super high shutter speeds resulting in razor-sharp images. While technical sharpness is important, a completely frozen race car often appears stationary. The image fails to convey the speed and excitement that define motorsport, leading to an overall dull image. So, start by reducing the shutter speed—if you were shooting at 1/2000s, try 1/1000s or 1/500s and adjust the exposure accordingly.

There's another aspect to this—blurred environments communicate speed far more effectively than a frozen image.

This is where panning comes into play. By tracking the subject and using slower shutter speeds such as 1/125s, 1/80s, or even 1/40s, photographers can create motion blur in the background and wheels while keeping the vehicle relatively sharp.

Many professionals dedicate entire practice sessions to experimenting with panning techniques because dynamic motion often separates great motorsport photographs from ordinary ones.

2. Ignoring the Background

Many photographers focus entirely on the car and forget to examine what lies behind it.

A beautifully composed image can be ruined by distracting elements such as parked vehicles, spectators, advertising boards, fencing, utility poles, or brightly coloured tents. These distractions pull attention away from the subject.

Before setting up a shot, spend a few moments studying the background. Move your position if necessary. Even a small shift in angle can eliminate clutter and create a cleaner composition.

Look for backgrounds that complement the subject, such as grandstands filled with fans, mountains surrounding a rally

stage, dramatic skies, or iconic circuit architecture. Gear-wise, shoot at the widest open aperture possible in times like these, letting the background fade away into a canvas for your subject to stand out.

3. Standing in the Same Spot All Day

Arriving at a circuit and finding one comfortable location may produce a collection of technically competent images, the resulting gallery will lack variety.

Motorsport events offer countless opportunities. Different corners, straights, braking zones, pit lanes, paddocks, and spectator areas all provide unique perspectives. Cars behave differently in each section of a track. Some corners showcase aggressive braking, while others highlight acceleration, overtaking, or dramatic body roll.

Moving around the venue will allow you to capture a wider range of images and tell a more complete story of the event. If access permits, create a shooting plan before the race begins and identify several locations you want to visit during the day. Recce the location beforehand, note down the spots.

4. Over-Relying on Continuous Shooting

Modern cameras can shoot 10s of frames per second. While burst shooting is useful, especially higher ones, relying solely on it can become a bad habit.





Many photographers hold down the shutter button continuously and hope one frame turns out well. This approach often results in thousands of nearly identical images and time wasted in culling.

Experienced motorsport photographers learn to anticipate action.

Instead of spraying and praying, they study the rhythm of the race, observe driver behaviour, and time their shots carefully. Predicting when a car will hit a curb, when sparks will appear, or when a rider will lean into a corner often produces stronger results than shooting endless bursts.

Continuous shooting is not a substitute for timing, it's a tool. For starters, switch to continuous Low burst mode to decrease the amount of shots while still having the opportunity to shoot multiple frames a second.

5. Neglecting Safety Rules

Motorsport photography can be as dangerous as the sport itself. Photographers sometimes become so focused on capturing dramatic images that they forget the inherent risks of high-speed racing. Cars can crash unexpectedly, debris can travel long distances, and weather conditions can rapidly change.

Every circuit and rally event has designated safety zones for a reason. Ignoring marshals, crossing barriers, standing in prohibited areas, or positioning yourself in run-off zones can put both you and others at risk.

No photograph is worth compromising safety. Professional motorsport photographers understand that respecting regulations is an essential part of the job. The best image is useless if it comes at the cost of personal injury.

6. Focusing Only on the Cars

Many newcomers believe motorsport photography is exclusively about photographing vehicles. In reality, some of the strongest images from a race weekend have little to do with cars.

The sport is filled with human stories: mechanics working under pressure, engineers studying data, drivers preparing mentally before a race, emotional celebrations after victory, and disappointed teams after mechanical failures.

Capturing these moments adds depth and context to your coverage. The people involved are just as important as the machines they operate.

7. Poor Autofocus Settings

Many photographers struggle because they use autofocus settings designed for static subjects. Single-point autofocus may work in certain situations, but motorsport photography often benefits from continuous autofocus modes that can track subjects across the frame.

Understanding your camera's autofocus system is critical.

Spend time learning tracking sensitivity, subject recognition, focus area modes, and custom configurations.



Different sports may require different settings. What works for circuit racing may not be ideal for rallying or motorcycle racing. Practice before, not on race day.

8. Shooting Only at Eye Level

Most beginners photograph everything from a standing position. Before taking a shot, ask yourself whether changing your position could improve the composition.

While eye-level images can be effective, constantly shooting from the same height limits creativity. Changing perspective can dramatically alter the impact of a photograph.

Try shooting from low angles to emphasise speed and make vehicles appear more aggressive. Elevated positions can reveal track layouts and racing lines. Wide-angle shots from unusual viewpoints can provide a sense of scale and atmosphere.

Creative perspectives often transform ordinary subjects into memorable images.

9. Ignoring Weather Conditions

Many photographers pack up their gear when conditions become difficult. Ironically, some of the most dramatic motorsport images are created during challenging weather.

Rain creates reflections, spray, mood, and visual drama. Dust clouds add atmosphere in rallying. Fog can create mysterious scenes. Golden-hour light often transforms

ordinary trackside locations into spectacular photographic opportunities.

Instead of avoiding difficult conditions, learn how to work with them. Carry weather protection for your equipment and embrace changing environments. Bad weather often creates the most memorable images.

10. Using the Wrong Lens for the Situation

Some photographers rely exclusively on telephoto lenses because they believe motorsport photography requires maximum reach— but using them exclusively can produce repetitive images.

Wide-angle lenses can capture dramatic pit-lane scenes, environmental portraits, and creative action shots that place vehicles within their surroundings. Conversely, using a lens that is too short can make distant cars appear insignificant.

Successful photographers build visual variety by choosing focal lengths that match the story they want to tell.

11. Forgetting About Light

Light remains the foundation of photography regardless of the subject.

If you concentrate on the action while overlooking the quality and direction of light, for example harsh midday sunlight creating strong shadows and excessive contrast or flat overcast conditions reducing visual impact, the resulting images will be unflattering or flat.

Whenever possible, position yourself so that the light enhances the subject.

Early morning and late afternoon often provide the most attractive lighting conditions. Side lighting can reveal vehicle shapes and textures, while backlighting can create dramatic silhouettes, dust effects, and glowing spray. Your recce must include areas with good lighting, as much as possible.

12. Excessive Editing

Post-processing should enhance an image, not rescue it. Over-editing is increasingly common in motorsport photography. Excessive clarity, oversaturated colours, unrealistic HDR effects, and heavy sharpening can make images appear artificial.

Motorsport already provides plenty of drama. The goal should be to preserve authenticity while improving contrast, colour balance, and overall presentation. Subtle editing often has greater long-term impact than aggressive manipulation. If viewers notice the editing before they notice the photograph, you've probably gone too far.

13. Not Researching the Event

Preparation is one of the most overlooked aspects of motorsport photography.



Photographers who arrive without understanding the circuit, schedule, weather forecast, or race format place themselves at a disadvantage.

Researching the venue beforehand helps identify key shooting locations, potential overtaking zones, sunset positions, and interesting background elements.

Understanding the sport itself is equally important. Knowing when critical moments are likely to occur allows photographers to position themselves strategically.

Good preparation often leads to better photographs than expensive equipment.

Ready to Gear Up?

Motorsport photography is a discipline that rewards patience, technical skill, and creativity. While gear certainly helps, avoiding common mistakes is often more important than acquiring gear.

The most successful motorsport photographers understand that compelling images are built through careful composition, intelligent use of motion, strong storytelling, awareness of light, and a deep respect for safety. They move beyond simply documenting cars and instead capture the energy, emotion, and atmosphere that make motorsport so captivating.

Avoiding these common pitfalls and continually refining your techniques, will improve your images and also develop a stronger visual style that stands out in an increasingly competitive field.

Here, success is measured by how effectively you communicate speed, drama, and the spirit of competition in a single image.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

THE MOST ICONIC MOTORSPORT PHOTOS EVER TAKEN

Few disciplines challenge a photographer quite like motorsports. It's an environment dictated by raw kinetic energy, where technical precision must merge with split-second intuition. To freeze a machine travelling at 200 mph while simultaneously capturing the intense human drama unfolding behind a tinted visor is an art form of razor-thin margins. The history of racing is written in these frozen fragments of time. The most exceptional motorsport images transcend their role as mere event documentation; they capture the evolving danger, engineering feats, and pure emotional gravity of the sport. Below is a curated retrospective of 20 iconic images that defined generations of racing history, complete with their historical context, photographer credits, and high-quality visual access.

Inferno in the Pitlane: Jos Verstappen's Benetton (1994)

During a routine fuel stop at the 1994 German Grand Prix in Hockenheim, fuel accidentally sprayed onto the white-hot engine cover of Jos Verstappen's Benetton B194. Within milliseconds, a massive, terrifying fireball engulfed the entire car and pit crew. Steven Tee captured the exact split-second of maximum ignition as crew members scrambled to escape. Remarkably, due to advanced fire-retardant racing gear, Verstappen and his crew escaped with only minor burns, but the image remains a stark reminder of the ever-present danger in the pit lane.



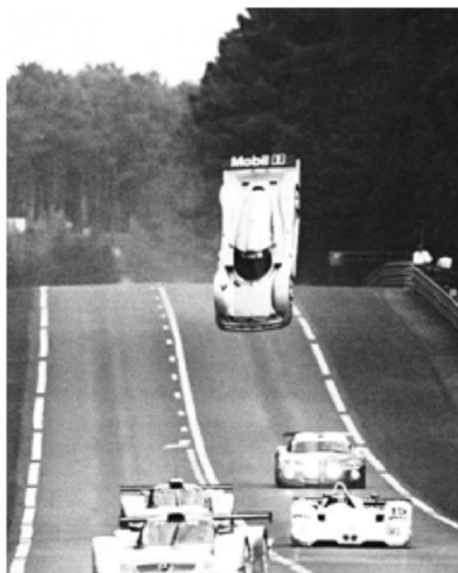
Credit: Steven Tee / LAT Images



Credit: Rainer Schlegelmilch

Sparks Fly: Mansell and Senna Side-by-Side (1991)

Captured during the 1991 Spanish Grand Prix at Barcelona, this image is the visual definition of Formula 1's golden era. Nigel Mansell (Williams) and Ayrton Senna (McLaren) are screaming down the main straight at over 190 mph, centimetres apart. The extreme ground-effect aerodynamics of the era compressed the cars into the tarmac, sending a brilliant shower of titanium sparks cascading behind them. Schlegelmilch's perfect panning technique turned a high-speed drag race into an immortal work of art.



Credit: John Brooks

The Flying Mercedes: Peter Dumbreck at Le Mans (1999)

Aerodynamic instability at the 1999 24 Hours of Le Mans caused the Mercedes-Benz CLR driven by Peter Dumbreck to suffer a catastrophic aerodynamic flip. Travelling down the Mulsanne Straight at nearly 200 mph, the car caught a pocket of air, lifted off the ground, flipped multiple times high above the trees, and crashed into the surrounding woods. Brooks captured the terrifying moment the car became airborne, leading Mercedes to instantly withdraw their remaining entries and abandon sports car racing for years.

The Leap of Victory: Tazio Nuvolari at the Nürburgring (1935)

Often called the “*The Impossible Victory*”, Italian racing legend Tazio Nuvolari won the 1935 German Grand Prix driving an outdated Alfa Romeo Tipo B, defeating the heavily subsidised, technologically superior “Silver Arrows” teams of Mercedes-Benz and Auto Union. The iconic photograph captures Nuvolari’s Alfa Romeo fully airborne over a crest at the grueling Nürburgring, capturing the sheer bravery required of pre-war grand prix racers.



Credit: Rainer Schlegelmich

The Original Le Mans Start (1969)

For decades, the 24 Hours of Le Mans began with drivers running across the track, jumping into their cars, starting the engines, and tearing away. In 1969, legendary driver Jacky Ickx fundamentally changed safety protocols by walking slowly across the track in protest, arguing that drivers were pulling out onto the circuit without properly fastening their safety harnesses just to gain a positional advantage. This photo captures the chaotic sprint of the field contrasted against Ickx’s deliberate walk—a protest underscored when driver John Woolfe tragically lost his life on the very first lap of that race.



Credit: Jesse Alexander

Juan Manuel Fangio's Focused Glare (1957)

Taken during Fangio's legendary drive at the 1957 German Grand Prix at the Nürburgring, this tight black-and-white portrait captures the five-time World Champion behind the wheel of his Maserati 250F. Mud-spattered, wearing a basic polo shirt, leather helmet, and simple goggles, Fangio's eyes pierce through the dirt. It is the definitive portrait of focus, grit, and raw willpower from an era when safety barriers did not exist.

Alex Zanardi's "The Pass" at Laguna Seca (1996)

On the final lap of the 1996 IndyCar season finale at Laguna Seca, Italian driver Alex Zanardi pulled off one of the most audacious overtakes in motorsport history. Racing down the iconic, steep "Corkscrew" corner, Zanardi launched his car down the inside of race leader Bryan Herta, cutting directly across the dirt and gravel traps to steal the victory. The photograph beautifully captures the car suspended in the dirt, completely defying conventional racing lines.



Credit: David Taylor



Credit: Louis Klemantaski

Stirling Moss and the Dust of the Mille Miglia (1955)

Sir Stirling Moss put on an absolute masterclass during the 1955 Mille Miglia, a grueling 1,000-mile open-road race through Italy. Alongside navigator Denis Jenkinson, Moss averaged an astonishing 97.9 mph over public roads in his Mercedes-Benz 300 SLR. Klemantaski, positioned directly on the dangerous roadside bends, captured the silver roadster drifting through an Italian village, covered in road grime and brake dust.

Michael Schumacher Celebrates on the Monza Podium (2000)

The 2000 Italian Grand Prix was a deeply emotional weekend for Michael Schumacher. After winning the race, he matched his idol Ayrton Senna's record of 41 career victories. Colombo captured Schumacher on the Monza podium performing his signature, exuberant "*Schumi Leap*", framed against a sea of passionate Italian Tifosi waving massive Ferrari flags below.



Credit: Ercole Colombo

Ayrton Senna's Quiet Contemplation (1994)

This haunting image captures Ayrton Senna sitting quietly in the Williams garage during the tragic 1994 San Marino Grand Prix weekend at Imola. Taken shortly before his fatal accident, Senna is seen without his helmet, looking pensively toward the pitlane. The photograph perfectly captures the heavy, sombre atmosphere of a weekend that irrevocably altered the safety landscape of modern Formula 1.



Credit: Jon Nicholson



Ken Miles and the Ford GT40 1-2-3 Finish (1966)

The historic culmination of Ford's bitter rivalry with Ferrari at the 1966 24 Hours of Le Mans. Henry Ford II wanted a manufactured, simultaneous photo finish, ordering Ken Miles to slow down so Bruce McLaren and Ronnie Bucknum could cross the line together. The photo captures the three iconic GT40 Mark IIs crossing the finish line in perfect formation, though a timing technicality ultimately stripped Miles of the clean triple crown victory he deserved.

Walter Röhrl Over the Crest at Sanremo (1985)

Group B rally racing represents the absolute zenith of loose-surface motorsport insanity. This image captures Walter Röhrl piloting the monstrous, winged Audi Sport Quattro S1 E2 through a narrow tarmac stage of the Rallye Sanremo. The car is fully airborne, clearing a crest while parting a dense wall of spectators standing directly on the live roadway. It perfectly frames the unbelievable danger and lack of crowd control that defined the Group B era.



Credit: Reinhard Klein



Credit: Paul-Henri Cahier

Mario Andretti and the Iconic Black Lotus 79 (1978)

The stunning black-and-gold John Player Special Lotus 79 is widely regarded as one of the most beautiful and aerodynamically revolutionary F1 cars ever engineered. Cahier utilises a beautiful low-angle perspective to capture American racing icon Mario Andretti sweeping through the Dutch sand dunes at Zandvoort, highlighting the clean, beautiful contours of Colin Chapman's pioneering ground-effect masterpiece.

Colin McRae Airborne in the Subaru Impreza (1997)

Nobody pushed a rally car quite like Scotland's Colin McRae. During the 1997 Rally Finland (The Rally of the Thousand Lakes), McRae launched his iconic blue-and-yellow 555 Subaru Impreza WRC over a massive "yump" (crest). Jones captured the car completely horizontal, feet in the air, with all four wheels fully extended off the ground against a backdrop of dense Finnish pine forests.



Credit: Glyn Jones



The Indomitable Spirit: Niki Lauda's Return (1976)

Just 42 days after suffering severe burns and near-fatal lung damage in a horrific crash at the Nürburgring, Ferrari's Niki Lauda returned to the cockpit at the Italian Grand Prix at Monza. Eisele's powerful portrait captures Lauda putting on his helmet over fresh, blood-soaked bandages. It remains an unparalleled testament to human resilience and the uncompromising drive of an elite competitor. Although a direct image of this exact description isn't available, the image that's most talked about is him at a press conference at Monaco.

TEXT: ANIRUDH IYER

Xiaomi 17T Camera Review

When Xiaomi launched the Xiaomi 17T, they didn't position the phone around performance, features or design. Instead, the company put the spotlight squarely on one feature—the telephoto camera. In fact, Xiaomi has gone as far as calling the device a 'Telephoto Master', making its zoom capabilities the centrepiece of the entire product. That's a bold claim in a segment where almost every flagship now offers some form of periscope zoom. After spending nearly two weeks with the Xiaomi 17T across daylight, low-light, portrait and long-range shooting scenarios, the question is simple: does the phone live up to the promise?



Design and Camera Specs

The Xiaomi 17T borrows much of its design language from the Xiaomi 17. The camera module retains a familiar layout, although the lenses are recessed into the camera island rather than protruding outward. Leica branding sits vertically alongside the camera array, while the flash is positioned outside the module.

The phone features a triple-camera setup consisting of:

- 50MP Leica Light Fusion 800 main camera
- 50MP periscope telephoto camera with 5x optical zoom
- 12MP ultra-wide camera
- 32MP front-facing camera



Daylight Main Camera

Powering the device is the MediaTek Dimensity 8500-Ultra processor, while the front camera supports video recording at up to 4K 30fps.

The biggest differentiator, however, is pricing. While the Xiaomi 17 launched at around ₹90,000, the 17T starts at ₹59,999, placing it at a highly competitive price.

Main Camera

The primary camera uses Xiaomi's Leica-tuned Summilux optical system paired with a 50MP Leica Light Fusion 800 sensor. Unlike the higher-end Light Fusion 950 sensor found on the Xiaomi 17, this setup is a step down on paper, but the real-world results remain impressive.

Images are detailed and well-balanced, with strong sharpness and good dynamic range. Colour reproduction is generally pleasing, although the camera occasionally pushes colours slightly beyond natural levels, even when using Leica Authentic mode. Shadow and highlight retention are handled well, helping preserve detail in challenging lighting conditions.

There are moments when Xiaomi's image processing becomes apparent, particularly in certain colour tones that can appear somewhat artificial. Nevertheless, detail capture remains one of the camera's strengths, with fine textures and intricate elements reproduced effectively.

Ultra-Wide Camera: The Weak Link

The ultra-wide camera is the least convincing part of the imaging system.

Its shoots at 12MP using the Omnivision 13B sensor and the image quality doesn't quite match the main camera. Photos tend to be underexposed, which impacts both highlight and shadow detail. Edge distortion is visible and sharpness is merely average for the category.

Colour reproduction remains reasonably natural, and Xiaomi appears to be improving performance through software updates. However, the ultra-wide camera remains the weakest lens in this system.



Daylight Wide

Telephoto Camera: The Star of the Show

This is where the Xiaomi 17T justifies its existence.

The 50MP periscope telephoto camera offers 5x optical zoom and up to 120x digital zoom. More importantly, it delivers results that make the telephoto lens genuinely useful rather than merely a specification-sheet addition.

At 5x zoom, images are sharp, detailed and visually pleasing. Colours remain vibrant without becoming excessively unrealistic, while detail retention is excellent. Moving to 10x

and even 30x zoom, image quality remains surprisingly strong. One particularly positive aspect is the minimal colour shift between zoom levels, an area where many competing smartphones struggle.

Performance begins to decline beyond 60x, where noise becomes increasingly visible. At the maximum zoom setting, aggressive computational photography takes over, resulting in a noticeable loss of detail and more obvious processing artefacts. That's hardly unique to Xiaomi, however, and remains a limitation shared by most smartphones attempting extreme zoom ranges.



Daylight Telephoto



Lowlight Main

For everyday use, the 5x to 30x range is where the camera performs best, and it's easily the standout feature of the phone.

Low-Light Performance

Xiaomi claims improvements in low-light photography through its Summilux optical system, and while the results are decent, they stop short of being great.

The main camera continues to deliver reliable results after dark, while the ultra-wide camera again struggles with underexposure. The telephoto camera remains usable up to around 10x in low-light conditions before detail begins to fall away. Some colour inconsistencies are also noticeable when switching between the different cameras.

Xiaomi also highlights improved lens coatings designed

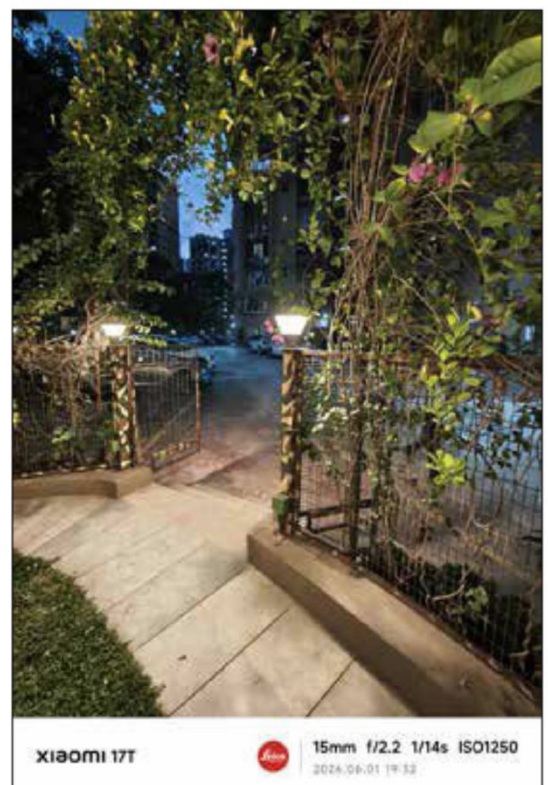
to reduce flare and ghosting. In practice, performance here is average rather than class-leading.

Portrait Photography

Portrait mode is another area where the Xiaomi 17T performs particularly well.

The phone supports portrait shooting at 1x, 2x and 5x focal lengths, providing useful flexibility depending on the subject and shooting distance. Edge detection is accurate, background separation is convincing and depth rendering is handled effectively.

The 5x telephoto portrait mode is especially impressive, producing detailed images with attractive bokeh and natural-looking subject separation. While occasional oversaturation can appear at 1x, overall portrait



Lowlight Wide



Portrait

quality ranks among the strongest aspects of the camera system.

The main areas that could benefit from improvement are colour consistency across the cameras and slightly more restrained colour processing.

Video Performance

Video performance is dependable.

The rear cameras support recording at up to 4K 60fps, with access to

the phone's zoom range during recording. Focus acquisition is reliable, stabilisation is effective for everyday shooting and colour consistency remains controlled throughout the zoom range.

For most users, the video capabilities will be more than adequate.

Macro Mode Disappoints

Not every feature is a success. The Super Macro mode feels

underdeveloped and fails to deliver the close-up shooting experience most users expect. The camera frequently asked me to move further away from subjects—at one point I wanted to be on the moon, which largely defeats the purpose of macro photography.

It's a feature that can be ignored.

Battery and Display

Away from the cameras, the Xiaomi 17T performs strongly.

The 6,500mAh battery comfortably lasts through a full day, even under heavy usage, while 67W fast charging helps minimise downtime. The display supports a peak brightness of 3,500 nits alongside a 120Hz adaptive refresh rate, ensuring good visibility outdoors and a smooth overall experience.

Verdict

The Xiaomi 17T succeeds because its telephoto camera feels genuinely useful rather than being included purely for marketing purposes. The 5x optical zoom system consistently delivers detailed, sharp and attractive images, while colour consistency across zoom levels is better controlled than on many competing devices.

Like any other phone it isn't perfect. The ultra-wide camera remains the weakest part of the setup, macro photography is largely forgettable, and flare control could be better.

But those things don't take away from what Xiaomi has achieved here.

At a starring price of ₹59,999, the Xiaomi 17T offers one of the strongest telephoto camera experiences currently available in its segment. Combined with a capable main camera, good portrait performance, strong battery life and a bright display, it gets most of the important things right.

If long-range photography matters to you, Xiaomi's claim isn't just marketing. The 17T earns its reputation as a telephoto-focused smartphone.

TEXT AND IMAGES: BHAVYA DESAI

PHOTO SCAPE

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Name: Ankan Naskar
Camera & Lens: Samsung Galaxy S25
Ultra (Wide-angle Lens)
Focal Length: 23mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1500s
Aperture: f/1.7
ISO: 1600
Instagram ID: ankan_n.26



Name: Danish Tauqir
Camera & Lens: OnePlus 12
Focal length: 14mm
Shutter Speed: 1/115
Aperture: 2.2
ISO: 64
Instagram ID: @danishtauqir



Name: Aslam Mulani
Camera & Lens: Samsung Galaxy S25
Focal length: 24mm
Shutter Speed: 1/100s
Aperture: f/1.8
ISO: 1600
Instagram ID: @photographerslamnaz1133



Name: Damayanti Datta Roy
Camera & Lens: Canon EOS 7d
Focal length: 50mm
Shutter Speed: 1/125
Aperture: f1.6
ISO: 1000
Instagram ID: zooming_zindagi



Name: Debarshi Biswas
Camera: Canon SX510 HS
Focal length: 4.3 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1600s
Aperture: f/8.0
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: @debarshibiswas_



Name: Dr. Tapas Kumar Barman
Camera & lens: Iphone 16
Focal length: 14 mm
Shutter speed: 1/2900
Aperture: 2.2
ISO: 50
Instagram Id: drtapas_photography



Name: Priya Ojha
Camera: Iphone12
Lens: Wide Camera, 26mm
Focal length: 4.2 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/2959s
Aperture: f/1.6
ISO: 32
Instagram ID: @escape_withpriya



Name: Satyam Chaudhary
Camera & Lens: Canon 600D & 18-135 mm
Focal length: 135 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/125
Aperture: f5.6
ISO: 400
Instagram ID: @satyamkasansaar



Name: Shaheen Iqbal
Camera & Lens: Fujifilm X-T3 + Viltrox 75mm f/1.2
Focal Length: 75mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1250 sec
Aperture: f/1.4
ISO: 100
Instagram ID: @jaarzii



Name: Soumyojit Sinha
Camera & Lens: Apple iPhone 13 Pro Telephoto Lens
Focal length: 77 mm
Shutter Speed: 1/1150 sec
Aperture: f/2.8
ISO: 32
Instagram ID: theblack_hood

PHOTO MONTAGE

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It is really tough to say anything about me as I am yet to understand myself as a whole. Every day and every moment I can find a different aspect about my own self. Life shows me ways and lights up different alleys leading to my inner-self. I can say that after spending nearly half a century on this planet I see how my life has shaped and re-shaped itself so many times. Whatever nature has shown me all around at different times has made me think of life and humanity in different ways. To register every landmark moment I have a companion whom I can never part with—my Camera. Being a school teacher by profession I have learnt to make the streets my laboratory where every move teaches me to think with a different perspective and made my Camera my confidante. I strongly believe ‘*Studium*’ and ‘*Punctum*’ as stated by Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida*. A photograph, to me, is like a symbol which can trigger emotions and relevance at a glance and a deeper observation must lead the mind to a different sphere where it can place itself in the midst of a sensation which can be felt inside. I do love street photography as well as conceptual photography. My interest to explore the deeper realms of human thoughts has often carried me to portraiture of unfathomable human expressions. Being attached to the art of physical acting in theatres, the psychological explorations have often driven me to view the unravelled spheres of human emotions and their expressions. In this way it has also been my interest to venture into Indian traditional dance forms and visit the richness of cultural excellence. Nature also has always been my inspiration.

Instagram: @ramtanu_sabood



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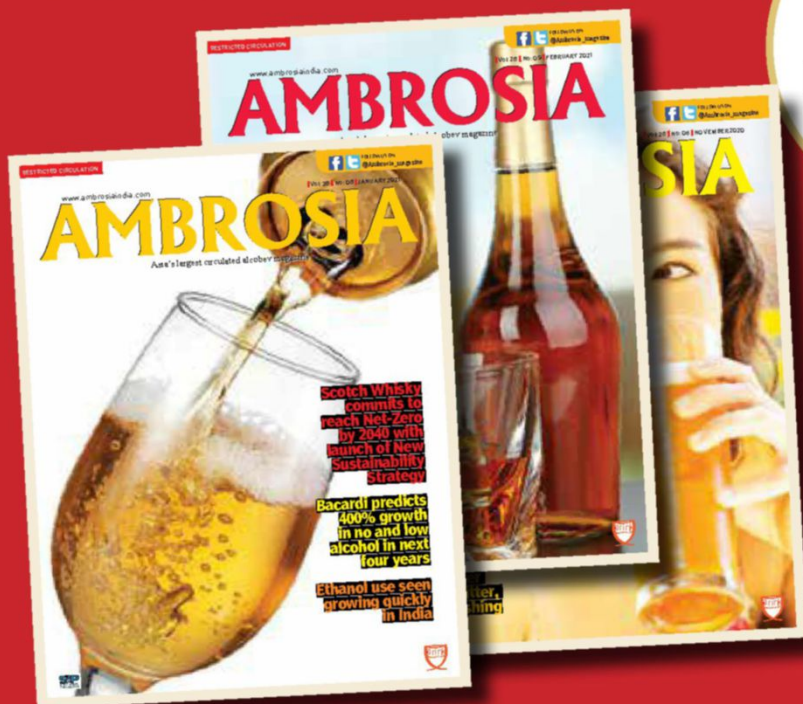
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