





DAVID LUND

David Lund was a graphic designer until his early 40s, but then started a new career as a successful commercial photographer. He tells David Clark how he made the leap...

COMMERCIAL photographers have to be willing and able to tackle any subject.

Accordingly, David Lund's eclectic portfolio contains everything from images of classic cars to fishing rods, portraits to landscapes, still life macro shots to aerial images. But he also has a specialism: he's an expert in photographing liquids, and top companies use his stunning images to create eye-popping adverts for their products.

Yet just seven years ago, David had his own graphic design business and had never worked as a professional photographer. In this interview he talks about his decision to change careers, the pleasures and the pitfalls of commercial photography, and how you need to be a bit of a 'mad scientist' to do what he does.

Were you interested in photography as a child?

I was, yes. I had a little Kodak camera. Later I went on to do O-level photography and I used to spend hours and hours in the darkroom, dodging and burning, trying experiments like putting bits of tissue paper under the enlarger light to give textures to images. I also did some photography at art college, where I studied graphic design. I went to Plymouth, where I did an OND, and then

01 COLOUR IN MOTION

Experimenting with creating effects with liquids, David used double cream with colouring pigment poured into water

Lens HC 120mm f/4

Exposure 1/800 sec, f/19, ISO50



// I made a massive leap, sold my house and spent an enormous amount on kit //

did a HND at Rochester and Maidstone art college. After that I did a degree at University College Falmouth, so in all I spent seven years at college.

What was your main skill?

I was always an image creator. That's the way my mind works. However, I've always been very dyslexic and my English is appalling. Even now I still occasionally spell my name wrong.

When did you start work as a graphic designer?

Straight away after college I got a job as the head designer of a music publishing company. I worked there for three years, then was offered an amazing job as head designer for a bigger marketing company. After a year I decided to set up my own company and it went very well. I paid off my mortgage in two years. Photography was always in the background, though, and I was always using Canon kit.



When did you take up photography as a career?

About seven years ago, I was invited to a Hasselblad demonstration in Falmouth. I thought, 'there's no way I'm spending £20,000 on a camera', but went along. When I saw the quality of the images, something in me just clicked and within a week I had bought a Hasselblad. Then I did a course on Advertising, Product and Still Life Photography run by Karl Taylor, and he kind of took me under his wing. I went to see him in Guernsey and we just hung out for a few days. I'm a big believer

in the idea that the best way you learn is being around people who are really good. One day I watched him photographing a pint of beer and it was fascinating to see how he worked. I decided I wanted to switch to photography so made a massive leap, sold my house and spent an enormous amount on kit.

What was the most difficult technical thing you had to learn?

The biggest learning curve is lighting and I took six months off to practise how to do it. As soon as you get in the studio, it all

becomes about lighting. I've spent literally thousands of hours, trying new things, new techniques. I've spent a lot of money and time on it, particularly because I'm shooting water using high-speed flash.

How did you get started as an advertising photographer?

A friend of mine, who was the head designer for a large marketing company, told me that big agencies get bombarded every day by photographers sending stuff. He said, 'You have to be able to shoot everything but you need to be known for something, otherwise you won't get on the radar.' So I had to specialize and I found I was often coming up with liquid solutions to things like album covers. The hardest, most complicated part of the industry is probably liquids, but I found I had a natural affinity for it. I spent about two years trying to learn how to do it and was constantly going out to buy pumps, hydraulic devices and various gadgets.

What do you like about photographing liquids?

I love the challenge of creating a particular movement or motion for an image. I often have to use devices like little whisks or small syringes to pump water through in one direction to get a certain flow. Karl Taylor says I'm a bit of a mad scientist. It's fun though, I enjoy

problem-solving. When I'm in the studio, working with liquids and freezing motion with my Broncolor lighting kit, the hours just fly by. You know when you're doing something right because you're not aware of time. I get completely lost in it. People say my character changes when I'm shooting liquids. I'm very polite, but very focused and direct. I know exactly what I want to achieve. It's clear in my head.

What's been the most complicated liquid shoot you've done?

I did a job for Shell which was incredibly intricate and very time-consuming, and had a budget bigger than the cost of my first house. I think it took about five or six weeks of 15-hour days, nonstop, to get it done. As with most other jobs, the liquid in the shots is not the one being advertised. Instead of oil we used water, with lots of food colouring and a special thickening agent. We had massive barrels of liquids of different thicknesses and colours. We created shapes in the air with them, then pieced them together in Photoshop. There was no CGI at all.

What kind of job presents the biggest challenge?

The most difficult thing is when a client has something they've created in Photoshop, a liquid image, and they're asking me to replicate that in the real

02 BALLOON EXPLOSION

This high-speed flash shows a balloon filled with coloured powder exploding, taken on a Hasselblad H3DII-39. It was captured with a flash duration of 1/10,000 sec

Lens	HC 120mm f/4
Exposure	1/800 sec, f/19, ISO100

03 RED PAINT EXPLOSION

The Broncolor Scoro flash generator was triggered by the sound of a balloon coated in red and yellow paint popping

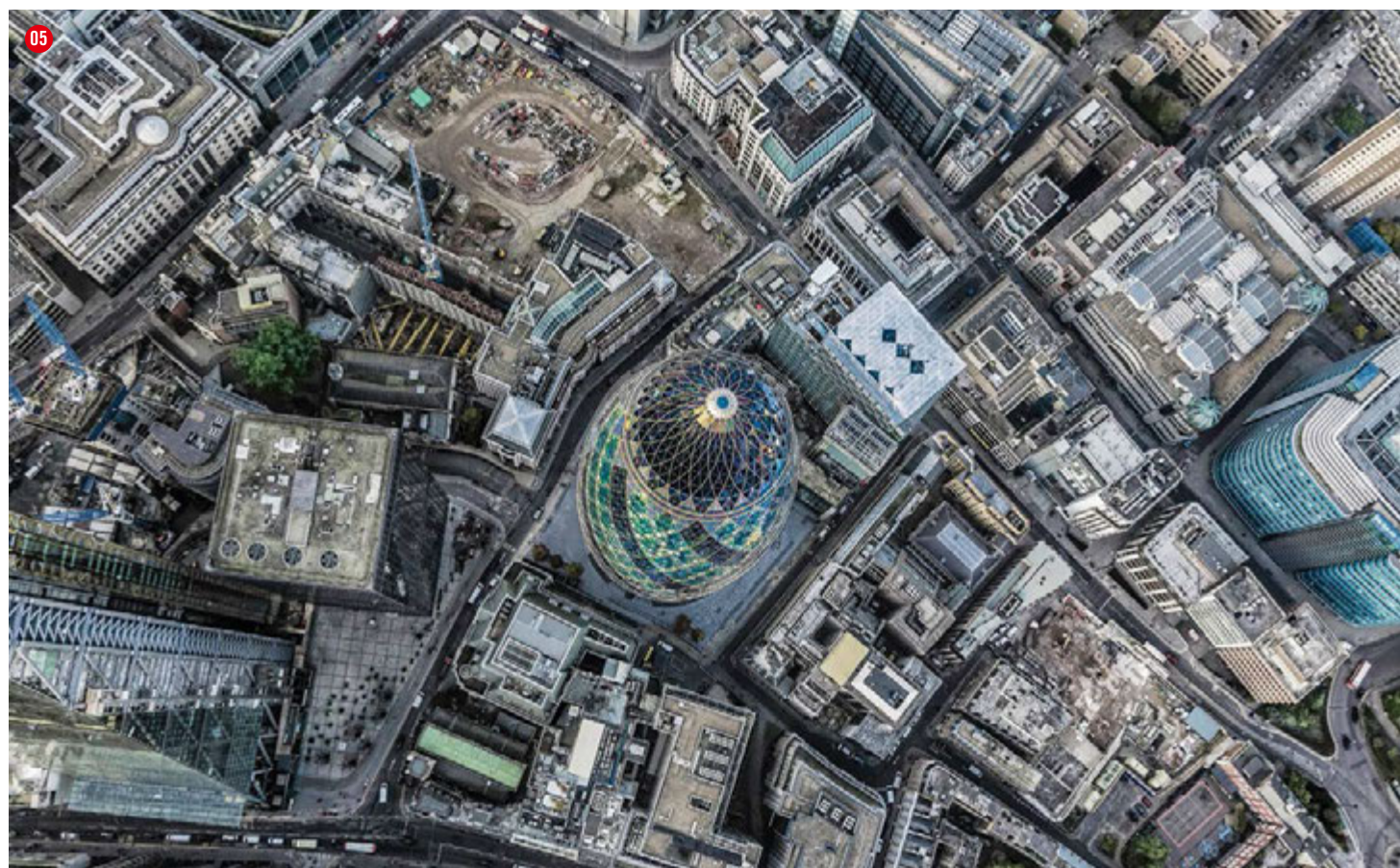
Lens	HC 120mm f/4
Exposure	1/30 sec, f/19, ISO100

04 CHOCOLATE TWIST

In this composite David simulated the appearance of melted chocolate frozen in motion using water-based paint

Lens	HC 120mm f/4
Exposure	Composite of around eight images

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05 CITY OF LONDON
On assignment for a building company, David shot stills and video over central London. This was taken above The Gherkin

Lens	Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM
Exposure	1/250 sec, f/4.5, ISO1600

06 LONDON EYE
David says aerial photography isn't as simple as it seems: 'It's all about composition and having a focal point.'

Lens	Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM
Exposure	1/500 sec, f/4, ISO1600

07 THAMES VIEW
These shots were taken on David's 5D Mark III. A twin-engine helicopter is required over cities, in case one engine fails

Lens	Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM
Exposure	1/800 sec, f/4, ISO1600

Aerial photography is fascinating and relatively easy compared with shooting liquids

world. For instance, when I did a shoot for Baileys Irish Cream, a designer had mocked up an image using a twirl filter to simulate an image of coffee and Baileys mixed together. That's easy to do because you're not dealing with physics, but to replicate that in motion was difficult. However, I nailed it. After three days of experimenting I discovered a technique that worked perfectly.

You shoot other commercial work, including aerial photography?

Yes, aerial photography is fascinating and relatively easy compared with shooting liquids. You can get some amazing patterns. When you look at them you're simply getting a perspective you don't normally see, so you immediately think 'wow!' But all you're really doing is sticking a camera out of a helicopter. That said, it's still about composition and having a focal point, it's about the weight and dynamics of buildings and looking at gaps in between them.

How do you approach aerial work?

I just handhold the camera when shooting still images. I've mostly shot from Squirrels, which are twin-engine helicopters. Generally if you're shooting in the day it's fine, but at night it's a



07

STORY BEHIND THE SHOT

complete nightmare. You've got to have an ISO that's very high for the final images to be sharp.

Which cameras do you use?

I currently have the EOS 5D Mark III, which I use for all my aerial work, my landscapes, some commercial work and my humanitarian work for a Christian charity. If you're shooting Raw on the Mark III, you have such a wide dynamic range and the high ISOs are amazing, with such low noise. I also use the camera for all my behind-the-scenes videos.

And lenses?

My favourite Canon lens is the 50mm f/1.2. It's just so bright and clear. The other lens I always take with me is the 70-200mm f/2.8. Canon lenses are so well made and can take the rough and tumble. The lenses are fantastic and image stabilization is absolutely brilliant, particularly when shooting from helicopters, to overcome problems from vibration and movement. But there's also the versatility and speed. When you're taking a photograph, it's amazing how even just a short burst of photos over literally half a second can produce images that are absolutely brilliant or no good at all. That's particularly true if they've got



Shooting the Shard

David Lund reveals how he photographed this section of the London landmark

"I went up in a Squirrel twin-engine helicopter, which cost £12,000 to hire for the day, but you have to use a twin-engine helicopter for flying over built-up areas. It took quite a while to get permission to do it. One of the key buildings I had to shoot was The Shard, which is over 1000ft high and the

tallest building in the UK. We were often flying at the minimum height of 500ft while doing the shoot and it felt like we were very close to it. This image was taken with the 5D Mark III and the EF 24-105mm at the 105mm setting. I needed a fast shutter speed and used 1/3200 sec at f/4.5, ISO1600."



08

08 SNOWCAPPED MOUNTAIN

David spent three weeks travelling through New Zealand and hired a helicopter to photograph from the air. This mountain scene was shot near Wanaka

Lens Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM

Exposure 1/6400 sec, f/4, ISO400

09 FOX GLACIER

This aerial shot was taken above the spectacular 13km-long Fox Glacier on New Zealand's South Island

Lens Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM

Exposure 1/100 sec, f/7.1, ISO100

10 SOUTH ISLAND

David shot this on the road to Queenstown on South Island, with the Southern Alps mountain range in the background

Lens Canon EF 24-105mm f/4L IS USM

Exposure 1/200 sec, f/5, ISO100

You can't do it just because you want to earn money, you've got to be passionate

people in them; the slightest of changes in facial expression can make the difference between them being brilliant or just okay.

Do you have favourite gadgets?

I love using my PocketWizard wireless triggers. I'm not a fan of the flash being on top of the camera, but just having it up to the right, something as simple as that, can do wonders.

What software do you use?

I do as much as I can in Lightroom, then I almost always take it into Photoshop. Then I use Topaz. The main filters I use for Topaz are DeNoise, which does it so much better than Photoshop, and Detail, which is brilliant for bringing out clarity. I always work in layers, so I mask in areas where I want more detail.

What's the key to using plug-ins?

You have to use the right plug-in in the right way, and it's almost inevitable that you don't want to apply it to the whole image. A sky doesn't want the same treatment as a piece of wrought iron or concrete. Sometimes I might have a few hundred images in a batch, so I use my AutoMate software and leave it to work overnight. That creates PSD folders with all of the layers with the things I want

applied. I can literally go in and manually mask in the areas of detail I want, then flatten the image.

Has your graphic design experience been important?

It has, because when you're purely a photographer sometimes you think it's all about the photograph. You only see your part of the story, but when you're a designer you realize the end purpose of that image, which is actually to facilitate marketing. As a designer I always understand the brief from the advertising company because I know typography has to go somewhere. I also always put enormous amounts of bleed because I know it can be helpful for designers. So it's helpful to understand the brief from a design perspective and to know you've always got to support the brand values.

Any advice for someone starting out in commercial photography?

I think the best bit of advice I'd give is don't assume you understand the area you're going into – experience it. To be a particular type of photographer, approach someone who does it and say you'd just appreciate the opportunity to see what happens, assuring them you'll be nothing but helpful. When you see a photographer



PROFILE

David Lund
Commercial Photographer

Born in Aldershot in 1969, David studied graphic design at college and completed his education with a BA (Hons) in Graphic Design from University College Falmouth.

He worked as head designer for marketing companies before setting up his own business in 1998. In 2010, he made the leap to becoming a pro photographer.

He now specializes in shooting liquids but also does a variety of other work. He has produced advertising images for high-profile clients including Shell, Rolls-Royce, Grant's Whisky and Baileys.

Next issue: Brilliant bird photographer and Canon Explorer Markus Varesvuo

working at first-hand, you'll understand things more and it will correct your idea of what that kind of photography involves. You'll discover how much prep time there is, how little shooting time, and how much post work is involved.

If you were starting today, would you take the same career path?

I would definitely still become a photographer because I absolutely love it. I spend a lot of time experimenting, trying new ideas and it's really enjoyable. However, I had no idea how complicated and tough an industry it is on a

professional level. You've almost got to be slightly mad to do it. You can earn silly money in one month, then have a quiet few weeks. You've got to be committed – you can't do it just because you want to earn money, you've got to be passionate about it. Being good is not enough, you have to really care about it and do it well. One thing I've learned in this industry: you've got to do more than you're paid for and eventually you'll get paid more for what you do.

To see more of David Lund's work visit www.davidlund.co.uk