



LIGHTENING THE LOAD

ADOPTING MICRO FOUR THIRDS

by Karin Leperi

THE GOODS
CAMERAS



Daniel J. Cox

► Daniel J. Cox is a commercial and editorial photographer with a lauded career landing hundreds of magazine covers that include two cover stories for *National Geographic*. A long-time DSLR shooter, Cox's focus has changed regarding camera hardware. A couple of years ago, Cox realized he was at a common Baby Boomer crossroads—he needed to lighten his load. Not only was he literally tired of hauling heavy gear, but he yearned for greater freedom to capture spontaneous moments that larger systems impede. So he became an early adopter of



IMAGES © DANIEL J. COX

Micro Four Thirds (MFT) technology. He's using it in his work and occasionally serves as a beta equipment tester in the field.

Cox embraces technology as a change agent and for the new opportunities it can present. His aha moment with regard to MFT came when he realized the market was collapsing for stock photography, an income mainstay for many traditional nature photographers. He felt he could no longer justify the expense of DSLR cameras and lenses.

From a financial perspective the new MFT cameras represented an easy choice, Cox says. "My life used to be in the world of stock production, and most of us know what's happened to stock. Quite frankly there's no longer enough money in the world of stock photography that allows you to justify the costs of paying for the big [DSLR] glass or pro bodies. It's just no longer there."

Because of the size and weight advantage of MFT systems, Cox switched. "I've



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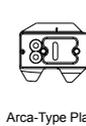
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MFT: THE GOOD AND THE BAD



PROS

INNOVATION: MFT format introduced in-camera stabilization, touch-screen LCDs, 4K video, 4K photo mode, post-focus, focus stacking, panorama mode, silent shutter, and wireless upload to name a few.

SMALLER CAMERA BODY AND LENSES: Smaller size, less weight, more discreet in areas biased against big lenses.

QUALITY LENSES: The Leica DG Vario-Elmar 100-400mm f/4-6.3 ASPH (200-800mm equivalent) and the Olympus M.Zuiko ED 300mm f/4 IS Pro (600mm equivalent) lenses are excellent optics for wildlife and nature.



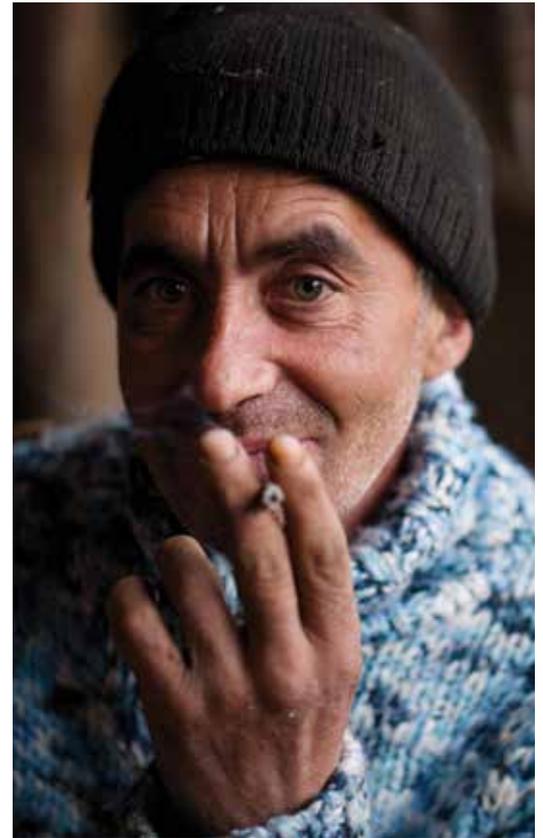
CONS

LOW LIGHT: If you shoot in low-light conditions extensively, a full-frame sensor is the better option, though fast prime lenses can amend the limitation.

HIGH ISO: Cox typically shoots up to ISO 1600 or 3200 if needed and uses DXO Optics Pro 11 to minimize noise.

PREDICTIVE AF: Though it did improve substantially with the Lumix GH4.

APPEARANCES: Some people have the misconception that a smaller camera can't create professional-level images.



actually sold many of my big Nikon lenses, purchased the equivalent in the Lumix or Olympus system, and put thousands of dollars that were left over in my retirement fund," he notes. "It's all serious business if you want to make a living as a photographer because MFT cameras have improved my bottom line with less pain in my back and shoulders. It's easier schlepping my gear around the planet."

Cox is adamant that MFT cameras have improved his photography by allowing him more flexibility and more opportunity for being in the moment when great photographs happen. "I find with my MFT gear I'm in the right place more often than I was with my larger DSLRs. Photographers who are feeling dread when it's time to pick up their traditional cameras are perfect candidates for the smaller, more mobile MFT system," Cox says.

Furthermore, MFT has made no difference to Cox's fine art, editorial, and commercial sales, and he processes images the same way he did with his DSLR photos. "The difference in the MFT files are negligible and compare quite nicely with the images I used to capture with my Nikon equipment," Cox noted. His workflow for publication, fine art prints, and commercial work utilizes DXO Optics Pro 11 and Resize 10 and is similar to his former DSLR image workflow. "Resize 10 works wonders for all my work, including my fine art prints printed as large as 24x36 inches."

Still, the bigger cameras have some inherent advantages. "As much as I love shooting the smaller system, you can argue that full-frame Nikon and Canon cameras are still superior in some instances, most notably lack of noise," says Cox. "But Lumix is moving fast, and the advantages of the Old Guard are dissipating quickly." •

Karin Leperi is a writer and photographer in New Mexico.



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