

Photography masterclass:

2. Getting to grips with digital SLR

Professional photographer **Zak Waters** originally started out as an assistant to several Magnum photographers and now freelances for the quality UK press and news agencies. Here he gives advice on getting to grips with digital SLR



For all of you who don't know, DSLR is an acronym for "digital single-lens reflex". This sounds more intimidating than it is – in essence it just means that when you look

through the viewfinder of your camera, you're actually looking right through the lens. What you see is what you get. The lens is used for focusing and taking the

picture through a mirror and prism system.

Buying into the digital SLR market can be quite daunting if you haven't had any hands-on experience with the lens-based camera market before, and the jargon can be somewhat overwhelming. Understanding what you want to shoot will help you understand not only which camera and lenses you need, but will also help pinpoint which part of the camera's technology you need to get to grips with first. It takes time to adjust, but the DSLR is well worth the wait.

Affordable DSLRs are very much the

fashion at the moment. The cost has fallen quite dramatically, offering you a smaller step up from the "point & shoot" market. These new inexpensive DSLRs are often packed full of new hi-tech goodies. Take the Nikon D60; it comes with an 18-55mm lens, 10.2 megapixels, an eye sensor which automatically turns off the LCD monitor when you look through the viewfinder and vibration-reduction lenses which minimise the effects of camera shake. The list goes on. Or there's the Canon EOS 400D, which comes with an 18-55mm lens, 10.1 megapixels, has a

Digic II image processing system which improves colour, sharpness, and automatic white balance, various preset picture styles and so on. Both of these cameras are available for just over £400.

For me, having total control in the process of shooting something is very important. Being more in control of the camera and what you are about to create is the essence of photography. Choosing your aperture or what you want in focus helps define who you are as a photographer. If you want full control then the DSLR market is for you.

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