

ME AND MY HASSELBLAD

Architectural photographer Sean Conboy has been a Hasselblad user since he first started to dream of turning professional and he's still in love with the quality and control that the system offers him

In the mind of Sean Conboy there was never any doubt about what camera system he was going to use when he finally achieved his ambition to turn professional. "It was always Hasselblad," he says. "It was the camera that showed the world that you were serious about your photography, and I saved up hard and acquired my very first one in 1981, when I was just starting out."

Sean's first ever job was as a general assistant to a local photographer, part of a job creation scheme, and he was soon hooked on the unique technical and creative challenge that photography offers. Spurred on by this experience, Sean duly enrolled at Blackpool and The Flyde College to study photography, where he completed a three-year course with a one-year placement in an industrial photographic unit. He then cut his teeth assisting several well-established architectural and interior photographers.

"As a student I was maybe a little unusual in that I was working with the Hasselblad throughout the course," says Sean. "When I left college, as well as assisting I spent two years working as a photographer on cruise ships in the US, and that was a fabulous experience. I enjoyed every minute, and when the ship visited New York I was able to add to my Hasselblad lens collection, buying a super wide and a fisheye at prices well below what I would have paid in the UK."

Having decided early on that studio work wasn't really what inspired him, Sean concentrated on finding assisting work with photographers who specialised in location shoots, and through this his interest quickly turned to the challenge of picturing buildings, inside and out. Finally, in 1988 he felt confident enough to go it alone and set up Photogenics, specialising in architectural photography. The rest, as they say, is history, and now Sean is one of the country's most respected architectural

photographers with a wealth of experience and a hugely strong client list behind him.

The need for quality

Medium- and large-format cameras were the tools of the trade for this particular sector, and so Sean maintained his connections to the Hasselblad system, using the camera for situations where movements to correct perspective weren't required. As the digital revolution started to take hold, architectural photography was one of the last bastions of film, since the quality of the early digital cameras couldn't compete with what the larger format film cameras could deliver. Eventually, however, client pressure for digital files became too great even in this sector and change was inevitable. Luckily Hasselblad had now made the move towards digital models whose performance was finally beginning to deliver the results that Sean and others in his sector were happy with.

"I finally moved across to digital quite late," says Sean, "and my first venture into this area was in January 2006 when I bought an Imacon 132c 22 megapixel back to partner my Hasselblad H1 body. It helped a lot that the Hasselblad and Imacon brands had merged because it meant I was dealing with just the one company. My feeling was that the products were designed to work together in a way that might not have been possible had two separate companies been involved."

"I then moved over to the H3D-39, which was the point where digital really started to replicate the tonality and quality of film. This is exactly what my clients want; the look of film and the convenience of digital. I have to be honest and say that the H3DII-50 that I've been using since 2007 outperforms 4x5in drum scans in my eyes and gives me a file size for any use. This is important, because my work can then be used in an A4 brochure or on the side of a building at 30x40 metres. I'm now looking to move on to the H4D-60, which will give me even more quality."

While many of his images are shot on medium format, Sean still regularly works with larger format cameras, and a big advantage for him is the fact that he can use his Hasselblad back on his Linhof



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ABOVE An established Hasselblad user since the 1980s, Sean now uses an H3DII-50 for his architectural and interiors work **INSET** Photographer Sean Conboy



ABOVE Hasselblads offer Sean's clients the look of film and the convenience of digital

Techno camera. "This is a really big thing for me," he says, "because it just gives me so much flexibility, especially when I might be travelling overseas on a shoot. It means that the two systems I use both produce images that are the same size and quality, and it just makes things so much easier to manage."

The quality of the Hasselblad lenses is also a big plus point for Sean. The one he uses the most regularly is the HCD 4/28mm, while he also has the 50-110mm, 80mm, 100mm, 120mm macro and 210mm in his bag. For the Linhof he uses 23mm and 32mm Rodenstock and 43mm Schneider optics. "I do tend to use a lot of lenses in my work," he confesses, "and they're part and parcel of the gear I need to be able to do the job I do."

So much has happened on the technology front since Sean first started out and it's been hugely beneficial for him to be able to grow and develop with the same system throughout. The relationship with Hasselblad that first started all those years ago is stronger and closer than ever, and for all its changes the camera remains exactly what it's always been: a high quality, professional piece of kit that the photographer knows he can always rely on.

MORE INFORMATION

Sean Conboy - www.photo-genics.com

H A S S E L B L A D