

C H A S I N G S H A D O W S

The best moments in life involve commitment. When landscape photographer Julian Calverley drives the All-New Land Rover Discovery into the pre-dawn darkness of a Scottish night, he is looking for one of those moments

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PHOTOGRAPHY JULIAN CALVERLEY



“SPENDING TIME ALONE IN THE LANDSCAPE
IS ESSENTIAL FOR ANYONE, I THINK”

Above: The coast of Elgol shows itself at its windiest best in one of Calverley's signature photos. Below: Calverley and the Discovery take on one of Skye's many hidden tracks; Right: a look at Calverley's carefully selected equipment for his trip to Skye, featuring his bespoke cameras from Swiss manufacturer Alpa



“JMW Turner is said to have strapped himself to the mast of a boat in a storm. It was his way of fully experiencing the conditions.” Landscape photographer Julian Calverley is talking about one of the greatest inspirations behind his own work. Julian has been returning to North West Scotland, and the Isle of Skye in particular, for the past 11 years in order to capture the essence of what he experiences in this majestic environment. But you won't find his images on tins of Scottish shortbread.

“I don't want to capture the chocolate box image of Skye,” he says. “I chase bad conditions.” He's come to the right place. The weather out here can be ferocious. The Isle of Skye is a series of peninsulas stretching like tentacles into the waters of the Minch, interspersed by long sea lochs. When weather comes in off the Atlantic, it is ensnared on the forbidding peaks of the Cuillin mountain range. The serrated gabbro rock edges of the Black Cuillin ridge tear at the clouds as they roll in, leaving strands of vapour to gather on the rounded granite cones of the Red Cuillin to their east. This almost treeless landscape of sweeping glens, clear, rushing rivers and near vertical rock faces has drawn artists and mountaineers since the dawn of the Romantic age, when people first began to view such places with excitement rather than fear. To Julian, this trip is different than his earlier returns to Skye, as it is his first time driving the All-New Land Rover Discovery through this impressive, humbling Scottish outpost.

“Every time I'd driven the 12-hour trip to this region from my home near London, it's always been in a Discovery,” Julian explains. “But this is the first time I've driven the new Discovery so I'm pretty excited.”

Much of Julian's time is spent as an advertising photographer, working with large teams. His landscape work is a chance to leave all that behind and go solo. “I like to come here in the winter, between September and March,” he says. “The lower light means I can shoot all day. I set out each morning well before dawn, so I can be pretty sure I will be alone. Spending time alone in the landscape is essential for anyone, I think. That solitude plays a big part in the process of making landscape pictures – being alone, feeling perhaps a little vulnerable in these big spaces, witnessing the power of the weather.”

ALARM CALL

“My initial impulse was simply to come to Scotland and try to capture this amazing landscape,” says Julian. “But I quickly realised I needed to embrace the atmospherics of the place. I've made a commitment. I've made an effort to be here. I'm not going to stay in the hotel just because it's raining and the clouds are down.” →



INNOVATIVE ISLANDERS
TOM EVELING &
CRAIG STEELE
CAFÉ SIA WITH
SKYE ROASTERY

“All our produce is local but our theme is Scottish-Italian. I drove a van to Pisa to collect a wood-fired pizza oven and bring it back here. Craig drove to Hampshire to collect his bright red 1984 French Samiac coffee roaster. It's a wonderful vintage piece of technology in which he roasts single origin, specialty grade coffee beans from as far afield as Tanzania, Indonesia and Honduras. We've caused quite a stir on the island.”

www.cafesia.co.uk



PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY: BRIAN COTTAM

Julian checks over his kit list by torchlight in the pre-dawn: a beautifully crafted, purely manual camera made by the Swiss manufacturer Alpa; a tripod from northern Italian camera accessory experts Gitzo; the precision mechanics and spirit levels of the Swiss-made Arca tripod head; a vented storm umbrella he can hold in one-hand to protect his camera while shooting with his free hand; a waterproof covering for the camera ("my least expensive piece of kit, but the one I return to the hotel for if I forget it"); merino wool base layer and full waterproof outerwear; maps; compass; flask of something warming; and to get around: the trusted Land Rover Discovery.

"It's very easy to get gear-obsessed," says Julian. "I keep my list of equipment minimal. I don't have an arsenal of lenses. It makes for a far simpler process, allowing me to focus on the moment. The camera I use doesn't have a viewfinder. It means I can view all the different elements in a very natural way. It's about getting under the skin of a place."

FIRST LIGHT

"I might be standing where I have set up for more than an hour," says Julian. "Yet the moment can come and be gone within a minute. That's how quickly the conditions can change out here – and that might just be it for the rest of the day."

In such tough conditions, with the possibility of so little reward, what's the hook? "Bad weather is exciting," says Julian. "It can be scary. It can be intimidating. In these conditions, I get an almost child-like feeling. I call it the 'goose bump moment'. If you're not feeling that excitement, why take a picture?"

Julian points out an image taken on low rocks near Elgol harbour. "The water in this image is actually coming from behind me, not in front of me," he explains. "The waves are coming up and around. You have to brace yourself and you do have to be aware and look around. But I tell you what: if you can pull off a shot, it's really satisfying."

It is also about judging the right moment to pull back to safety. "It got to the point where I thought, okay, I've got it now, I've got to get out of here," he remembers. "It's so loud. The wind is howling. The waves are rushing. Your jacket's flapping around. When it really closes in out there, it's good to know I'm in one of these." He taps the heated steering wheel of the Discovery.

Julian's Discovery has the same attention to detail as the rest of his equipment. Just as he selected the individual blocks of rosewood for the handgrips on his Alpa camera, so too he can select from oak, titanium

and aluminium finishers and premium leather and fabric materials, including the finest Windsor leather, finished off with tailored twin-needle stitching for the interior of the car. It's a nod of acknowledgement to those looking for the same as Julian: quality hidden in even the smallest of details.

"I've always driven Land Rovers," Julian recalls. "I learned to drive in a lightweight ex-military vehicle. The day after I passed my test, I drove from Land's End to John o' Groats. I liked the idea of Land Rovers, the look of them, the utilitarian nature of the vehicle."

As Julian's circumstances have changed, so have his Land Rovers. From the Series I he graduated to a Defender 90 and then a Defender 110. As his family and photography work grew, he eventually moved to a Discovery 3 and then Discovery 4.

"The design is beautiful," he says simply of the new Discovery's dynamic front end and rising belt line. "And it's comfortable," he says after his first drive. "It's luxurious without being ostentatious."

Comfort, he stresses, is also a question of reliability. The Discovery's versatility and off-road capabilities offer him the freedom to take it where he wants, how he wants it. "It's a vehicle that's at home in all environments. I'd be confident taking this vehicle anywhere," he says. →



INNOVATIVE ISLANDERS SHIRLEY SPEAR RESTAURANT OWNER 'THE THREE CHIMNEYS'

"Most crofting cottages are just two chimneys, two dormer windows and a door in the middle. This had an extra third added on because it was the village shop – hence The Three Chimneys. When I first came here there was a peat fire on the hearth and a mud floor. I ate mackerel and chips. Mackerel out of the loch, fried in oatmeal. Today, we use locally reared Highland cattle and Soay sheep, wild deer and hand-dived Sconser scallops on our menu. I've always wanted to promote what is good about Scottish food." www.threechimneys.co.uk



The All-New Discovery makes its way across a small bridge in Sligachan as the afternoon light sets in. Below and right: Calverley and his beloved Alpa camera





"I HAVE FOUND THAT THE SAME PLACE
CONSTANTLY CHANGES WITH EACH VISIT"



“AND I DIDN’T JUST SEE IT.
I CAPTURED IT. I MADE A PHOTOGRAPH”



This efficiency of design, a certain understated confidence, and not least performance, chimes perfectly with Julian’s own tastes in camera design.

LAST LIGHT

Days don’t last long on the Isle of Skye in midwinter. Light is fading fast by three and is usually all but gone by four. Yet in these final moments, further mutations can appear as the clouds constantly shift, bathing a distant mountain or expanse of water in sudden, unexpected sunshine.

“I sometimes come back to the hotel afterwards and sit down and wonder what I’ve just been through,” Julian says. “Often it might be weeks or even months before I look at the work. It’s a way of detaching yourself from it. I’ve got work I shot a couple of years ago that I haven’t looked at. The detachment means it has to stand up visually when I do come to revisit it.”

What Julian captures has a significant following. So much so that he has begun public speaking and leading bespoke tours of the highlands and islands for just one or two individuals at a time. “Bringing people somewhere like this and showing them how to do something in a new way is really rewarding,” he says. “Often it’s just about encouraging people to think differently and break habits.”

As Julian opens the boot of the Discovery, he explains how the new Intelligent Seat Fold fits his life. “When putting together your equipment list as a location photographer, the vehicle is an important part of it,” he explains. “This is not simply a seven-seater, it can be whatever you need it to be. The configuration gives me complete freedom to utilise a combination of seats and floorspace depending on the amount of gear I’m carrying.”

From advertising shoots to his solo landscape work, and even when not on a job, Julian’s Discovery has to serve as a base for people and equipment in every scenario. “It’s about flexibility, in any situation. I can arrange it to fit the numbers of passengers I am carrying at all times.” When alone and on the road, as here on Skye, the cabin also offers a feeling of security and calm that can be helpful in rough conditions, he says.

“In winter, weather conditions can change very quickly. But I know I’m safe in here. I can warm up very quickly.” And should the perfect storm come rolling in, offering up that one unique opportunity for capturing the perfect shot, the new robust, waterproof Activity Key wristband gives Julian the confidence that he will be able to get back into the vehicle and take off quickly, without rummaging for keys. Once back in his heated seat, he can rely on the connectivity of the InControl Touch Pro’s 10” Touchscreen display, the latest generation of Ingenium engines and Terrain Response 2 system that will monitor the driving conditions and



INNOVATIVE ISLANDERS
ALAN DICKSON
RURAL DESIGN
ARCHITECTS

“We did the first contemporary wooden build on Skye and this is now the first contemporary metal-clad house. It’s inspired by the agricultural buildings of the island. People think of houses on Skye as being little white cottages, but we were interested in all the in-fill buildings. That variety of material – the timber and the metal – gives you much more to play with as a designer. We were also interested in the human scale of the old crofting cottages, with walls as high as a man could reach. I built this house literally myself, from the foundations up.”
www.ruraldesign.co.uk

automatically select the best mode to tackle them. His love of the Scottish landscape and the Land Rover vehicle reveals an appreciation for a certain kind of enduring solidity and elegance. There is a sense of assurance about this monumental land that is present not only in the Land Rovers that tackle this terrain, but also in the other works of engineering that Julian admires – his camera equipment, his tripods, even a simple, elegant wristwatch. “Using equipment I am comfortable with and that I know I can rely on gives me the space and freedom I need to immerse myself in the scenery,” he says.

It is this that draws Julian back, often to the same remote places, time and time again. Knowing they will always offer up some new secret. “People think you can visit a spot, take a photograph in 15 minutes, and that’s it, you’ve experienced it,” he says. “But I have found that the same place constantly changes with each visit. Capturing those moments gives me real satisfaction. I’ve seen something no one else will see. And I didn’t just see it. I captured it. I made a photograph.” □

 **DISCOVER MORE OF SKYE**
Follow Julian on his journey to the Isle of Skye and explore the interactive story at landrover.com/skye-discovery