

SCANTASTIC

Do you have a lifetime of transparencies sitting in drawers or cabinets doing nothing? Have you ever dreamt of submitting them to a picture library, where they can supplement your earnings and be part of your pension fund? But maybe you don't have a high enough quality scanner, or can't spare the time to scan them? If so, read on.

Gareth Lewis is a perfectionist. He has to be. His business is scanning transparencies for submission to picture libraries and for other uses. Capturing every detail and nuance of colour in the original is difficult enough but eliminating every speck of dust and a host of other blemishes is the real skill.

His company, FreelanceImages.co.uk, is based in Grove, Oxfordshire, a short distance from the online picture library Alamy.com, who introduced me to him.

Basic scanning is no problem if you have a high quality scanner. I use the Nikon Super Coolscan 8000 which, at 4000 pixels per inch, produces 111Mb 14 bit scans from a mounted 35mm transparency. These reduce to 55 Mb 8-bit TIFFs for submission to Alamy.

At that resolution I get every last bit of detail out of my old transparencies.

I scan at 14-bit so that I can make adjustments to Levels, Curves, Color Balance and so on in Adobe Photoshop without any loss of quality. I also use the Photoshop CS Shadow and Highlights feature extensively, to produce definitive versions of my scans which exceed the quality of the original transparencies.

Even Ansel Adams would have appreciated the degree of control

which is now possible.

Scanning isn't all a bed of roses, though.

If you submit to an on-line picture library your scans must be free of any dust or they will be rejected. It's this dust elimination which is the problem. It's labour intensive and very boring.

Dust on transparencies is inevitable and it's quite impossible to remove all of it physically before the scanning process.

The solution is to use a scanner incorporating Digital ICE – Image Correction and Enhancement – which was developed by Applied Science Fiction in the US.

Digital ICE is a combination of hardware and software. It removes dust as if by magic during scanning and saves hours of drudgery, spotting dust from scans using Photoshop.

It works well on everything except Kodachrome, which is a pity because ASF is now owned by Eastman Kodak, where it is known as KADC – the Kodak Austin Development Center.

An infra-red beam inside the scanner

detects and 'removes' dust, dirt and scratches above and below the image itself but does not soften or otherwise adversely affect the detail in the image.

Yes, it is science fiction – come true.

Unfortunately it does not work with Kodachrome, or traditional black & white film, though it does work with black & white film processed in C41 chemicals, which have dyes, not silver.

Apparently it's the residual silver in Kodachrome which screws things up.

The effect varies from film to film but, at worst, manifests itself as a double edge to fine detail. This is a major problem for photographers, like me, who have lots of old Kodachromes to scan..

Fortunately, there is a remedy: go to Gareth Lewis at FreelanceImages.co.uk.



Gareth Lewis of FreelanceImages.co.uk scans a tray of slides using the Nikon Super Coolscan 9000

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FreelanceImages has the latest Nikon Coolscan 9000 ED scanners and these machines are unique in that they have a special version of ICE called 'Digital ICE Professional Technology'.

This is KADC's answer to the Kodachrome problem. And it works.

FreelanceImages charge £2.25 each for scanning and 'detailing' (sprucing up) 35mm transparencies in batches of 100+. For fewer than 100, the price is £2.75 each. Medium format scans cost £3.75 each, £3.25 each for 100+.

For me there's no contest. My time is worth far more than these reasonable

charges. There's nothing I hate more than spotting dirty scans in Photoshop.

The value of the service gets even better when you realise that even Digital ICE Professional Technology doesn't cure everything. It will not remove blemishes in the emulsion – and there were quite a lot of coloured spots in early Kodachrome – or fag ends in the shot.

The detailing service from FreelanceImages includes looking at every part of every image at 150% and removing any other blemishes.

There are other advantages. There is no extra charge for the CDs/DVDs on

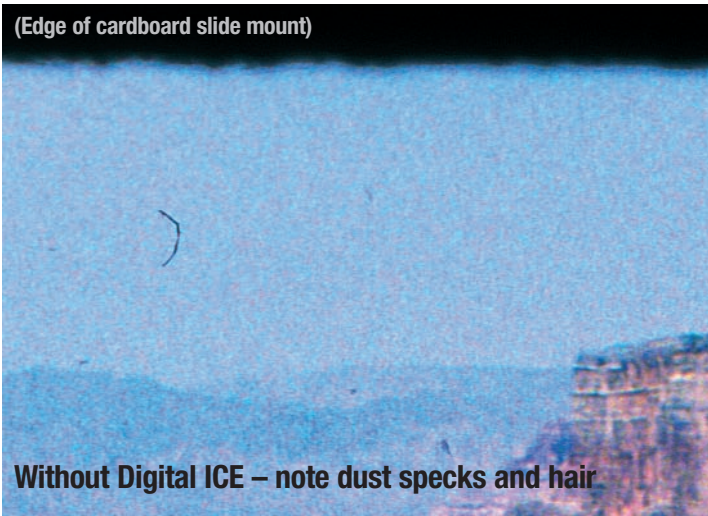
which your scans are returned. And because FreelanceImages is a Alamy.com Recognised Scanning House, Gareth Lewis offers a service where he will deliver the finished scans to Alamy for upload. It's a first-class service.

So – what are you waiting for?

For the full range of services offered by FreelanceImages, go to the website at www.Freelanceimages.co.uk or phone Gareth Lewis on +44 (0)7919 181830.

A special discount of 10% on all orders is offered to readers who quote this John Henshall's Chip Shop article.

(Edge of cardboard slide mount)

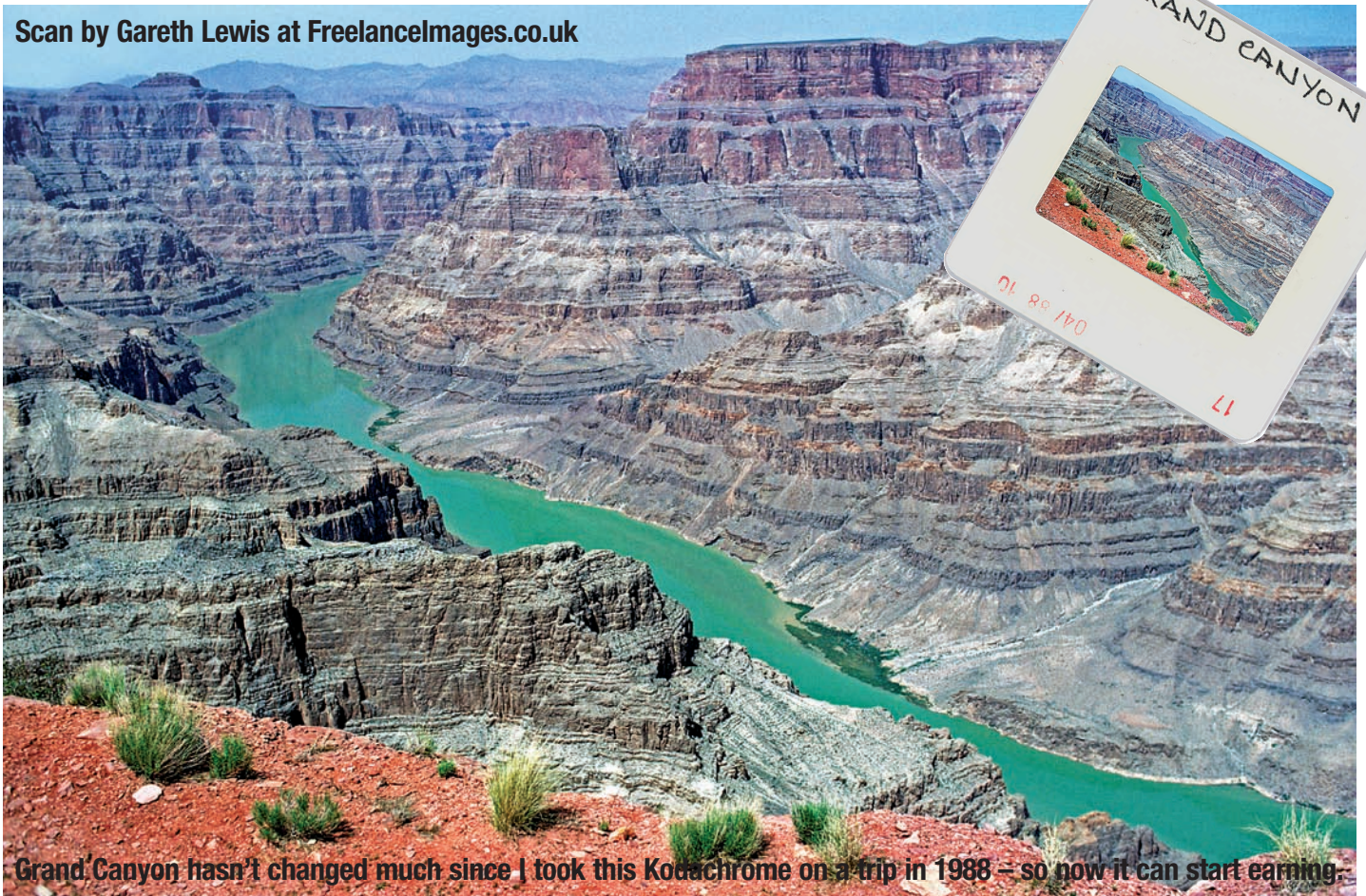


Without Digital ICE – note dust specks and hair



With Digital ICE and 'detailing' – clean

Scan by Gareth Lewis at Freelanceimages.co.uk



Grand Canyon hasn't changed much since I took this Kodachrome on a trip in 1988 – so now it can start earning.