

Lensbaby's new Edge 80 Lens establishes a whole new way of seeing pictures: Maxwell MD John Swainston puts the new Lensbaby Optic through its paces.

When the good folk at Lensbaby told me about the new Edge 80 Lens for the Lensbaby system, at first I didn't get it. What do you mean the same optic can be used for normal 80mm f/2.8 to f/22 portrait shots, and then, just by adjusting the Lensbaby angle, you convert it to a variable depth slice of focus across the image, with variable softness around the edges depending on aperture? It sort of defies physics. But that's just what Craig Strong, designer-extraordinary, has achieved. And now I've had the chance to use the first sample in Australia myself. And it works: Boy does it work! With just one sunny day from receipt until launch day, I had a sunny Sunday to get on my walking shoes, clip the new Edge 80 Optic into my trusty Lensbaby Composer and walk through Sydney to take a few quick snaps. It's true: Once again Lensbaby helps you *See in a New Way!*

To fit the lens in place of your Double Glass Optic, for example, just use the usual three point cover of the Optic Swap container, remove the existing Optic AND the aperture disc, and then drop in the new Edge 80 as described in the excellent instructional video you'll find on Lensbaby's website at <http://lensbaby.com/video.php?id=23> .

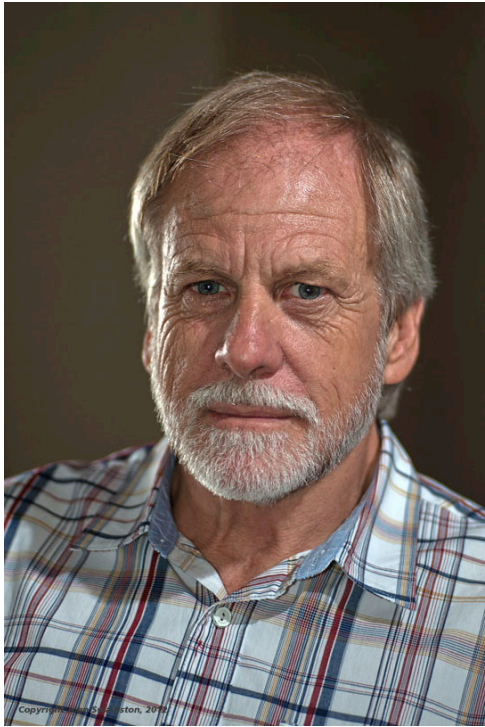
The first thing I did was set up the Composer so the Optic was parallel to the front of the camera, and tightened the retaining lock to ensure it stayed there. Using manual exposure, I set the aperture to f/2.8, and focused. Wow! This is a seriously sharp 80mm portrait lens (120mm equivalent for APS-Sensor cameras). In one image I had a rectangular target image and the lines show perfectly parallel, with almost complete absence of pincushion or significant vignette. A slight adjustment in Adobe Photoshop quickly removes any slight darkening at the edges. This would be absent on an APS sensor camera. Mine is a full 35mm-framed FX format Nikon D700. So optical quality looks to be very well sorted.

I shot a number of pictures in flat field and then tilted the Composer for a Lensbaby Slice of focus effect. Truly remarkable. I also got a couple of portraits done, one with flash indoors, and the other of a restless little Grandson. Shooting manually a 2-year-old can have its challenges, but he rose to the occasion. The other images of the Sydney Opera House enable one to track across the tiled roof and follow the line of tiles with the selected focus slice, and then use depth of field to control edge softness. The scooters and car shots suggest tremendous optical flexibility. Can't wait to shoot some product or food shots in a studio. The control is wonderful.

So, just one day's shooting, the first day. In the future I'll enjoy using the inbuilt aperture variables that other Lensbaby optics require replacement of the Aperture disc with the supplied magnetic applicator. I also re-learned that using one's feet with a fixed focal-length lens is a wonderful discipline. You think much harder about the image. Zooms have made us a bit lazy – read me!. It was really refreshing. And all with no lens change all day for a wide variety of images.

The Lensbaby Edge 80 is coming to Australia by the end of February, priced just above US List price. The local Aussie price includes 10% GST and the freight to get it here, so very comparable and available from your local photo supplier. Look for it around A\$340.00.

Your photography may never be the same. As someone in advertising once said: "Try it: You'll like it." I'd go further. Since it was launched on Valentines Day in the USA: "Try it - you will LURV this little baby!"



Lensbaby Edge 80 Portrait images – first with flash, and then on the terrace in daylight. Great depth control, thanks to inbuilt variable aperture and beautiful circular aperture blades, for smooth backgrounds/bokeh. (80mm f4, and 80mm f5.6 L to R) The next two shots of 4 Scooters: On the left the lens set to flat field, 80mm at f4, on the right, at f/2.8 and using almost maximum Lensbaby Composer tilt to slice the focus through just one bike.



(Flat Field)



(Slice of Focus)



(Flat field)



(Slice of Focus)



(Flat Field)



(Slice of Focus)



In this image I have used the slice of focus ability of the new Lensbaby Edge 80 to align the slice of focus with the run of the tiles on the roof of The Sydney Opera House, all captured tile by tile. The use of a narrow aperture for tight defocus produces a dreamy image, enhanced by Nik Silver FX. Maybe a bit carried away, but this lens makes one try for a different image. No wonder they call the roof of "The House" a shell. In this image you can almost imagine it like that.

All Images are © Copyright John Swainston, 2012.