What's new on the menu?

PERRY LEWIS CONTINUES OUR SERIES ON MENUS BY TAKING A LOOK AT THE OLYMPUS μ [MJU:] 830, WHICH INCLUDES SOME OF THE LATEST TECHNOLOGIES TO IMPROVE YOUR PICTURE-TAKING EXPERIENCE

Since the beginning of digital camera development, manufacturers have been looking at ways to use the electronic nature of the digital image to improve the final image quality. Using techniques that would simply not be possible using film cameras, they have made advances that enable us to get great shots at every opportunity.

In the last few years this has resulted in a wealth of new functions finding their way on to digital camera menus. Here we look at how these functions operate, where to find them and when to use them. Many of these functions are included in other Olympus cameras, so even if you don't have a μ[mju:] 830 it is worth reading on...

The △▽◁▷ symbols are not marked on the jog dial of the μ[mju:] 830; the marked symbols are ⚄, ⏲, 🌷 and ϟ respectively.

Shadow Adjustment

Shadow Adjustment technology cleverly analyses the scene and boosts the exposure of the shadow areas without overexposing the highlight areas. It could be described as a form of adaptive ISO. It is perfect for subjects with strong back-lighting or any scene where there is a big difference between the brightest and darkest part of the image. It will also help improve the exposure in dimly lit scenes.

To switch on Shadow Adjustment press the ⚄ button to bring up the option screen. Press ⚄ again to select **SHADOW ADJ. ON** (or **OFF**) and press **OK**. As you switch between **ON** and **OFF** notice how the screen shows the change in the darker areas of the image. Once set, just take your pictures as normal.

Remember that Shadow Adjustment also engages the Face Detection software, so this is a quick and easy way to switch Face Detection on and off.

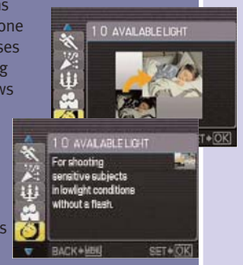
As the Shadow Adjustment works by selectively boosting the exposure (similar to increasing the ISO for certain areas of the picture), in some cases it may be possible to notice a small increase in the amount of noise in some shadow areas, especially if you are already using a high ISO. However, this is normally far outweighed by the increase in picture clarity.

Shadow Adjustment cannot be used in conjunction with PANORAMA, Bright Capture or 16:9 modes.

Bright capture

Strictly speaking this is not an item you will find in the menu, but rather the name of a technology used by several menu items.

Bright Capture allows photography in very dimly lit situations without the need for flash. It achieves this by not just using one sensor pixel to capture each point of the image; instead it uses one central pixel plus information from the eight surrounding pixels (of the same colour) to boost the sensitivity. This allows a relatively noise-free image despite the much higher effective ISO value that is achieved (ISO2500 instead of the usual maximum of ISO1600).



As there are more pixels being used for each point on the photo, resolution is decreased slightly when using Bright Capture, but with the high base resolution of today's sensors this still allows plenty of scope for good enlargements.

Bright Capture operates in two scene modes, Candle and Available Light, and also when the drive mode is set to Hi Speed.

To set the scene modes, turn the main control dial to **SCN** and the scene selection screen will appear on the LCD. Use △▽ to select either Candle or Available Light mode and press **OK** to set. You are now set to take low-light pictures without the need for flash.

To set the drive mode to Hi Speed first set the main control dial to 📷. Press the **OK** button and use the △▽ buttons to select the **DRIVE** modes. Use ◁▷ to Select [Hi] and press **OK**. You can now take pictures at a rapid rate of fire.

Note that the recording mode will change to a lower resolution while using these Bright Capture modes, but will change back to your original resolution upon exiting the modes. Also it is not possible to use Shadow Adjustment in conjunction with Bright Capture modes.

Note that when using certain scene modes in low light conditions the camera will automatically engage the noise reduction function, which approximately doubles the picture processing time.

Face detection

Face detection technology is a relatively new addition to the digital camera armoury. To understand its importance, let's first look at what went before. Auto Exposure and Auto Focus systems do a great job in the majority of cases; however their accuracy depends on a few assumptions.

For the AE system it assumes your subject is an 18% grey object and calculates the exposure accordingly; it does not know if it is a black object in bright light or a white object in low light, both situations that can fool an exposure system.

For Auto Focus systems it assumes the main subject is placed directly on the AF sensor marking, which as we all know may not be the case, especially when there are two people in the frame and the AF point passes between them.

Face detection technology monitors the image picked up by the camera sensor and analyses it for the pattern of a human face; eyes, nose and mouth. When a face is detected, it can reference the AE and AF system to read mainly from that point; resulting in both exposure and focus metered to the exact point of your main subject.

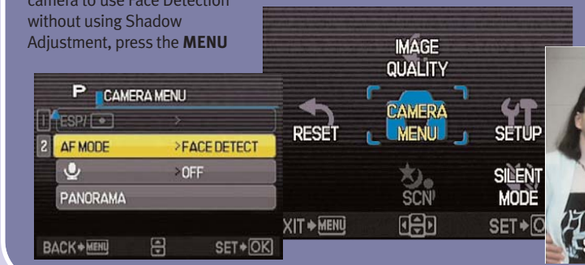
Face Detection is switched on when the Shadow Adjustment setting is used (see below left), but it can also be set independently. To set the camera to use Face Detection without using Shadow Adjustment, press the **MENU** button and use △▽◁▷ to select **CAMERA MENU** and press **OK**. Select **AF MODE** using △▽ and press **OK**. Select **FACE DETECT** and press **OK**. Finally press **MENU** twice to resume picture taking.

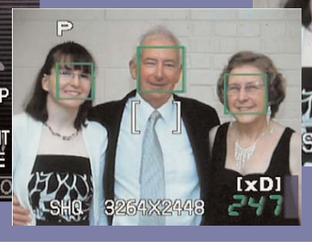
Note that with Face Detection set, the exposure-metering mode cannot be selected, as the AE metering point will be determined by the Face Detection software.

If no face is detected in the frame the AF metering uses the **iESP** focusing mode.

Face Detect cannot be used in 16:9 picture quality mode.

To use Face Detection, aim the camera at your subjects and the LCD will show a green box around any faces that it detects. First pressure on the shutter release will activate the AF, which will select a point within one of the green boxes to take an AF reading from – this point is indicated by the green AF brackets. Press the shutter release fully to take the picture.





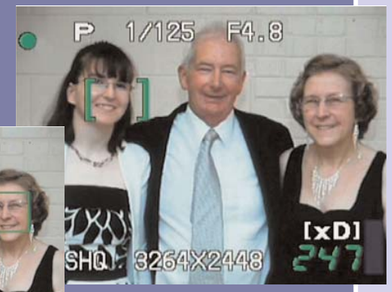
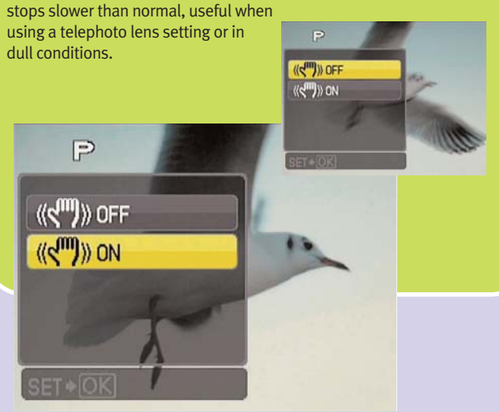


Image stabilisation

This uses a special mechanism to shift the image sensor so that any involuntary camera movement is compensated for. It senses the amount of movement in the body and uses this, along with the focal length information, to move the sensor in exact time to the image movement. The result: sharp images where once there would have been blur.

To use Image Stabilisation press the 🤚 button on top of the camera. Press the 🤚 button again to select **ON** (or 🤚 **OFF**) and press **OK**. Image Stabilisation will allow you to use a shutter speed up to three stops slower than normal, useful when using a telephoto lens setting or in dull conditions.



Perfect fix

This function allows you to perfect your pictures after the event by correcting for underexposure, dark shadows or red-eye. To correct exposure it uses the Shadow Adjustment technology to boost shadow areas and correct the general exposure. For the red-eye correction it uses a similar technique to Face Detection to find any eyes affected by flash and correct the red-eye reflection.

To use, activate the image playback using ▶ and select an image to adjust. Now press **MENU**, select **PERFECT FIX** and press **OK**. Select one of the three options and press **OK**; **ALL** – adjusts both shadows and red-eye, **SHADOW ADJ** – for shadow adjustment only and **REDEYE FIX** for red-eye adjustment only. Use ◁▷ to select the image to adjust and press **OK**, the camera will take a few seconds to process the image and in the case of an **'ALL'** adjustment will save the image as a new file. For a Shadow or Redeye adjustments the camera shows a preview of the result, if you are satisfied with the result press **OK** to save the corrected image as a new file, or press ◁ to cancel.