been recorded, it will appear as a movie file, with the file extension .mov, as shown in Figure 3-64.

Figure 3-64. Time-Lapse Movie Ready to Play

To play it, just press the OK button as with any other movie. You will see a greatly speeded-up version of the subject matter.

Special Effects Mode

Several notches around the mode dial from the SCENE mode is the EFFECTS slot, indicating the Special Effects shooting mode. This shooting mode provides you with interesting ways to alter the appearance of your images. These 8 settings operate in a manner similar to the scene settings, but there are some differences. The Special Effects settings are not designed for particular types of subjects, such as portraits, landscapes, or fireworks, as the scene settings are. Instead, the Special Effects mode settings offer manipulations to change how an image looks, regardless of the subject.

To select one of these settings, turn the mode dial to the EFFECTS position, as shown in Figure 3-65, then press the Menu button.

Figure 3-65. Mode Dial at EFFECTS

There are only 3 choices on the Shooting menu when the camera is set to Special Effects mode: Image Quality, Image Size, and Special Effects, as shown in Figure 3-66.
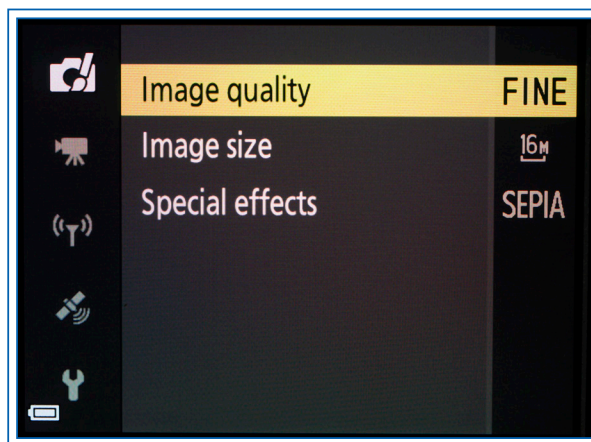

Figure 3-66. Shooting Menu in Special Effects Mode

Once you have set the quality and size of the images as you want them (I recommend Fine and the largest size for most purposes), navigate to the Special Effects line on the menu. Then press the OK button or the Right direction button to go to the next screen, which displays the 8 choices for effects: Soft, Nostalgic Sepia, High-contrast Monochrome, High Key, Low Key, Selective Color, High ISO Monochrome, and Cross Process, as shown in part in Figure 3-67.

Figure 3-67. First Screen of Special Effects Settings

(Only the first 6 settings are shown in this image; the other 2 are on the next menu screen.)

Highlight an option and press the OK button to confirm, then press the shutter button halfway or press the Menu button to return to the shooting screen. The display will change according to the setting you have chosen. For example, if you choose High ISO Monochrome, the display will be in black and white and will appear grainy.

As noted above, there are no other options available on the Shooting menu when you are using Special Effects mode, apart from Image Quality and Image Size. However, you can use the buttons on the multi selector to choose exposure compensation, the self-timer, or a focus mode. You also can choose a flash mode for every setting except High ISO Monochrome. With that option, the flash is forced off. The focus area is fixed in the center of the frame for all of these settings.

I will describe each of the options along with a sample image taken with that selection to illustrate a possible use for it.

SOFT

This setting, as shown in Figure 3-68, applies a small amount of blur to the image.

Figure 3-68. Soft Example Image

You could use this option when taking pictures of an aging movie star to soften facial wrinkles, or you might use it just to add a somewhat dreamlike or fantasy aura to the image, such as this shot of a casual stroller on a pathway through the woods.

NOSTALGIC SEPIA

With the Nostalgic Sepia setting, illustrated in Figure 3-69, the camera produces a monochrome image with a sepia (brownish) tone and softens the contrast somewhat to give the look of an antique photograph. You could use this setting if you want to produce an old-looking photograph of family members. For this example, I took a shot of a historic area at the

waterfront, with the idea that the sepia tint would add to the antique feeling.

Figure 3-69. Nostalgic Sepia Example Image

High-contrast Monochrome

This effect, which yields a black-and-white image with enhanced contrast, is likely to have a stark, harsh appearance. You might want to use it for street photography with a realistic or journalistic look. It also can be a good choice when you have a subject with a regular geometric pattern and you want to emphasize its shape with the sharply contrasting areas of black and white. I used this setting to enhance the contrast so as to highlight the shape and features of an historic house, as shown in Figure 3-70.

Figure 3-70. High Contrast Monochrome Example Image

High Key

"High key" is a technique in which a photographer uses bright lighting throughout the scene, striving for a bright overall look with light colors and few shadows.

Figure 3-71. High Key Example Image

This technique often is used in advertising photography. With the P610, this single setting cannot necessarily remake your image to look like a traditional high key shot, but, as seen in Figure 3-71, the camera boosts exposure to produce a brighter-than-normal image. Here, I used the setting for a shot of people attending an outdoor art exhibition. The High Key effect lightened the dark areas and made the atmosphere somewhat more cheerful than it would have been otherwise.

Low Key

The Low Key setting, of course, is the opposite of High Key. With this option, the camera emphasizes dark areas in the image. Here again, as illustrated in Figure 3-72, the P610 cannot produce a true "low key" image all by itself; what it can do is reduce the exposure and otherwise process the photograph to look darker and more shadowy than normal. It is good for producing a moody atmosphere. In this case, I used the setting for a shot of an outdoor fountain in full daylight, to make the scene look as if it were taken in the evening.

Figure 3-72. Low Key Example Image

Selective Color

This setting, unlike most other effects, lets you control its operation. When you first choose this option from the menu screen, the camera tells you to press OK to select a color, as shown in Figure 3-73.
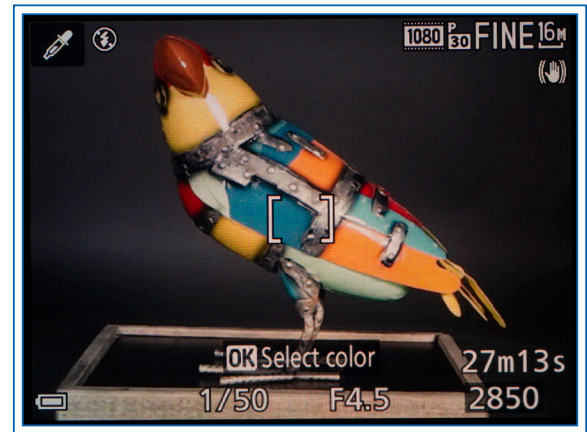

Figure 3-73. Selective Color - Message to Press OK to Select Color

When you press the OK button, the camera displays a yellow indicator beside a vertical spectrum of 12 colors plus one entry for no color, as shown in Figure 3-74.
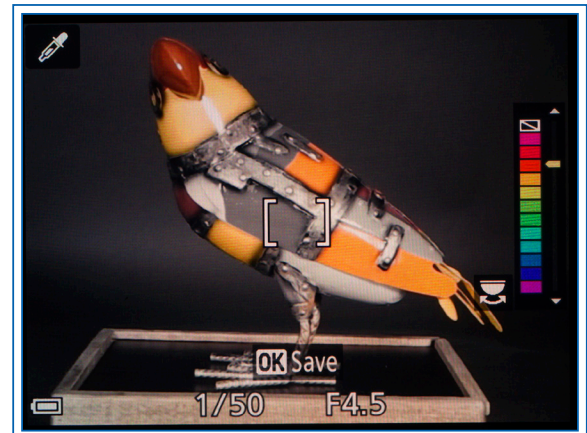

Figure 3-74. Selective Color - Color Selection Screen

Use the command dial to move the indicator to the block in the spectrum for the single color you want to retain in the image. The topmost block in the spectrum has a negative symbol in it; if you select that block, the camera retains all colors and does not use the Selective Color function. The result in that case is an ordinary image with no special processing at all. It will look as if you took the image using Program or Auto mode. You might want to consider leaving the Special Effects mode setting on Selective Color with this top option selected. That way, if you accidentally turn the mode dial to the EFFECTS position, any shots (or videos) you take will not have the exotic processing of a setting such as Soft, Nostalgic Sepia, and the like.

Figure 3-75. Selective Color Example Image

Figure 3-75 shows the image that resulted from setting the color to reddish-orange for a shot I took at an outdoor art festival.

High ISO Monochrome

With the High ISO Monochrome setting, the camera uses a very high ISO setting with monochrome rather than color processing. In fact, with this setting, the camera sets ISO to what Nikon calls Hi 1, which is the equivalent of ISO 12800, a setting that cannot be achieved through the ISO menu item. This is the only way to use this high ISO value.

Although this setting can be useful when you are shooting in dim lighting, in my opinion its best use is when you want the grainy effect produced by visual noise from high ISO settings. In Figure 3-76, I photographed a small cannon replica using this setting, to emphasize its shape and geometrical features.
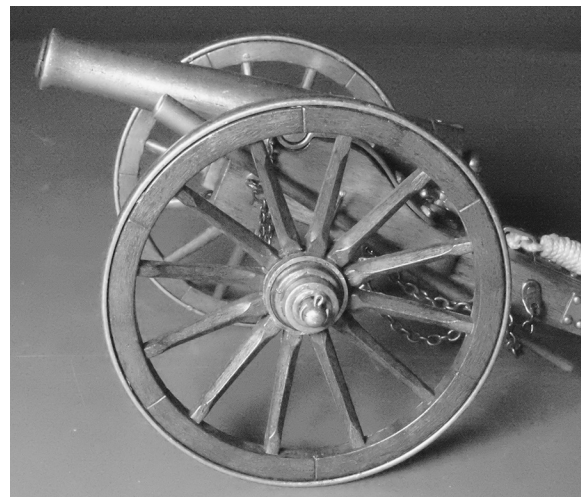

Figure 3-76. High ISO Monochrome Example Image

With this setting, the flash is forced off.

Cross Process

Finally, with the Cross Process effect, the P610 lets you add a color cast to an image. When you select this setting, the camera places a color scale at the right of the display with a pointer indicating one of the colors, as with the Food setting of Scene mode. Use the

command dial to move the pointer to your choice of blue, red, green, or yellow, as shown in Figure 3-77.

Figure 3-77. Cross Process Color Selection Screen

With the pointer in that position, take the picture; the image will be colored with the selected hue. This option can add an atmospheric aura to images or can be used to change or enhance an existing color.
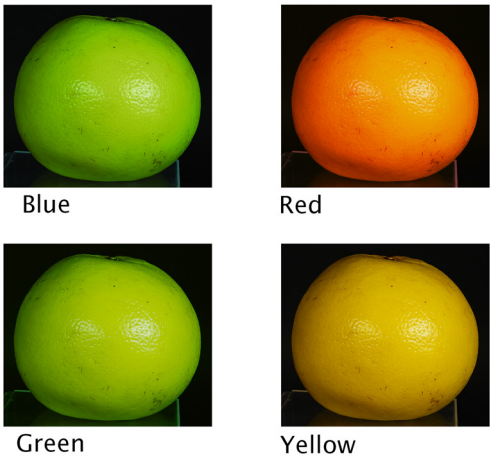

Blue   Red

Green   Yellow

Figure 3-78. Cross Process Composite Image

Figure 3-78 shows the use of all 4 settings as applied to a yellow grapefruit.

User Settings Mode

The last slot on the mode dial to be discussed is the U setting, as shown in Figure 3-79, which allows you, the user, to store a full set of your favorite or most often-needed settings for immediate recall.

Figure 3-79. Mode Dial U

When you turn the mode dial to the U position, you take advantage of a powerful feature of the Coolpix P610. You can set up the camera exactly as you want it, with a shooting mode, zoom amount, white balance, ISO, and other settings, and then recall all of those settings instantly just by turning the mode dial to the letter U. The only shooting modes that you can save settings for are Program, Aperture Priority, Shutter Priority, and Manual; you cannot save them for the Auto, Scene, or Special Effects modes.

Here is how this works. First, set up the camera with the settings you will want to recall. For example, suppose you are doing street photography. You may want to shoot with a fast shutter speed, say 1/250 second, at ISO 1600 in black-and-white, using continuous shooting with autofocus, at the 16:9 aspect ratio with a large image size and Fine quality.

First, make all of these settings. Turn the mode dial to S for Shutter Priority, and use the command dial to set a shutter speed of 1/250 second. Then press the Menu button and choose Fine for Image Quality on the Shooting menu. For Image Size, select 4608 x 2592 pixels, which, as indicated to the left of those numbers, translates to a 16:9 aspect ratio with an image size of 12 megapixels. Then navigate in the menu to Picture Control and select Monochrome. Set the ISO menu option to 1600. Next, select the Continuous item on the Shooting menu and navigate to the next screen; on that screen, go down to the second option, Continuous H, marked with an H on a stack of frames, for high-speed shots. You also may want to push the zoom lever all the way to the left, for wide-angle shooting.

Once all of these settings are made, press the Menu button to call up the Shooting menu, and scroll down (or scroll up and wrap around to the bottom) to select the Save User Settings item, shown in Figure 3-80, and then press the OK button or the Right button; you will see a confirming message saying Done.

Figure 3-80. Save User Settings Menu Option

Be sure you have all the settings the way you want them before you press OK or the Right button, because the camera does not ask you to confirm your choices; it just says "Done." I was a bit taken aback the first couple of times I used this feature, because in most other cases there's a chance to back out before you make your choices final; not here.

Now, to check how this option worked, try making some very different settings, such as Manual exposure with continuous shooting turned off, a shutter speed of one second, Picture Control set to Standard, the zoom lever moved all the way to the T for telephoto, ISO set to Auto, and Image Size set to the maximum, 4608 x 3456 pixels. Then turn the mode dial to the U setting, and you will see that all of the custom settings you made earlier have come back, including the zoom position, shutter speed, black-and-white shooting at ISO 1600, and everything else. This is really a wonderful feature, and more powerful than similar features on some other cameras, which can save menu settings but not settings such as shutter speed and zoom position.

The lone flaw I find with this mode is that there is only one slot for it on the mode dial, and therefore only one group of settings that can be saved at a time. But it's much better than nothing. I suggest you experiment to find one group of custom settings that is the most useful to you, and save it to the U mode for instant recall. Of course, you can change the settings that are stored as often as you like. You may want to jot down in a notebook some of your favorite groups of settings for various situations, so you can program the most appropriate set into the U slot when you're setting out for a particular type of shooting session.

Chapter 4: The Shooting Menu

Much of the power of the Nikon Coolpix P610 comes from the many options included in the Shooting menu, which helps you control the appearance of images and how they are captured. Depending on your preferences, you may not have to use this menu often. You may prefer to use the various scene settings or Special Effects mode selections, which choose many options for you, or you may prefer, at least on occasion, to use Auto mode, in which the camera makes its own choices. However, it's good to have this degree of control available if you want it, and it is useful to understand what items you can control.

As I discussed earlier, the menu options change depending on the setting of the mode dial on top of the camera. For example, if the mode dial is set to the green camera icon, for Auto mode, the Shooting menu options are limited, because Auto mode is for a user who wants the camera to make many decisions without input from him or her. If you have chosen one of the dedicated scene types with its own slot on the mode dial (Landscape, Night Portrait, or Night Landscape), the Shooting menu is re-named after the currently active mode.

For example, if you select the Night Landscape mode from the mode dial and then press the Menu button, the menu that appears on the display is labeled Night Landscape, rather than Shooting, as shown in Figure 4-1.

Figure 4-1. Shooting Menu in Night Landscape Mode

These menus, as in Auto mode, are abbreviated versions of the Shooting menu; they include only a few items from the normal Shooting menu, usually Image Quality and Image Size. In addition, they may include a specific menu item for the mode that is in effect. In this case, there is a Night Landscape menu item, which lets you select either Hand-held or Tripod for shooting.

When the mode dial is turned to the SCENE setting, pressing the Menu button brings up another version of the Shooting menu, called the Scene menu. This menu provides a way to select either Scene Auto Selector or any one of the 18 specific scene types (Portrait, Moon, Sports, Sunset, etc.).