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Astrophotographer's Story: Roi Levi

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Q1: Can you introduce yourself to us?

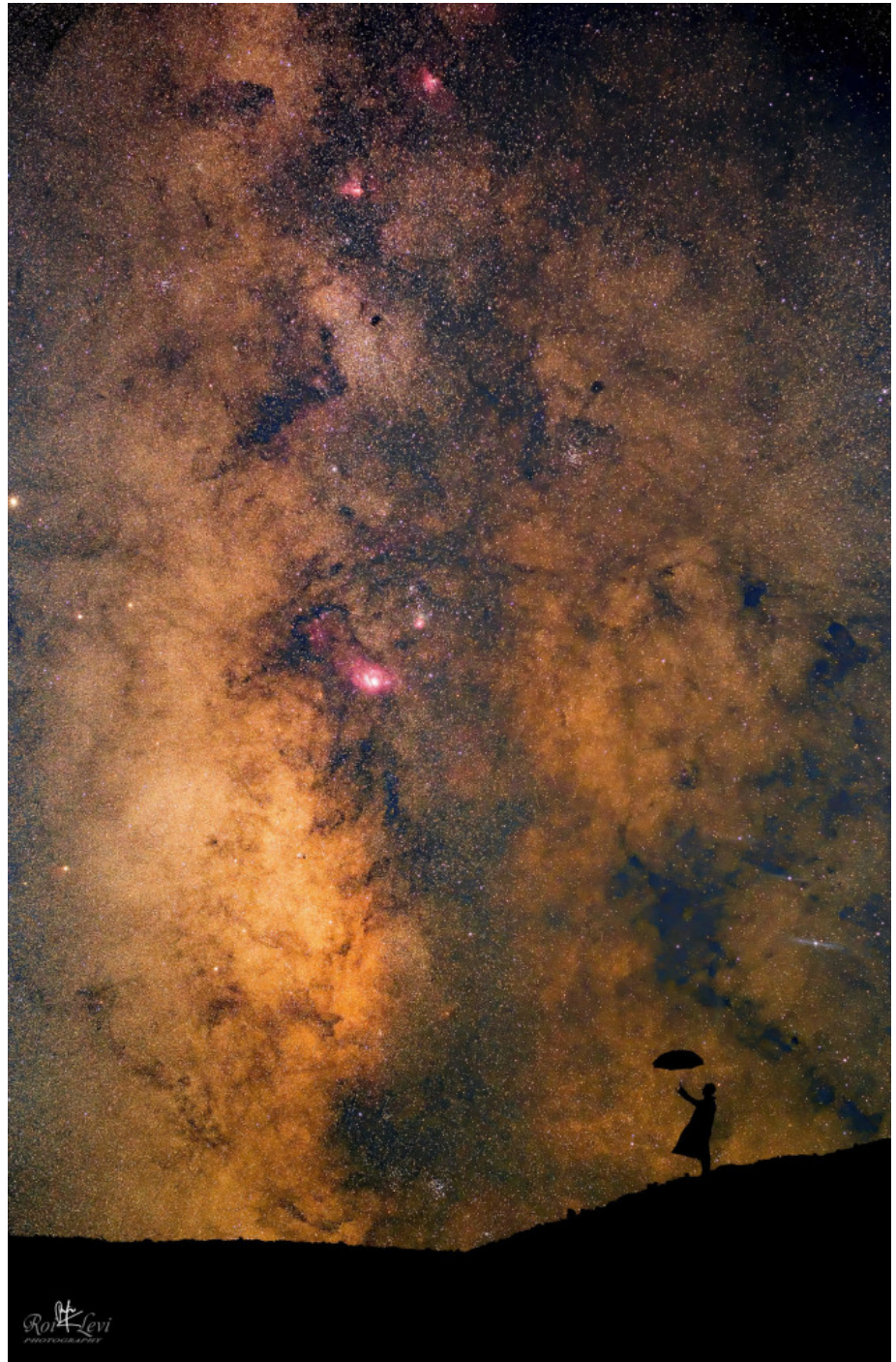
My name is Roi Levi. I am 39, working professionally as a photographer and lecturer in Israel and in USA as a landscape and nightscape astrophotographer. I guide astrophotography workshops, training photographers in how to shoot deep space astrophotography and milky way astrophotography. I work in the USA with Deep Space Workshops LLC conducting astrophotography workshops.



Q2: How did you capture the published NASA image of the milky way?

I captured the image with Zwo ASIAIR PRO connected to a DSLR, Canon 6d Astro modified with an Ioptron Skyguider Pro and Sigma Art 50mm. The image

"Raining Stars" is the silhouette of a person holding an umbrella with the milky way galaxy core filling the frame. After framing the shot, I set up using ASIAIR PRO. In autorun mode, I programmed to capture 6 light frames at 180 seconds. ASIAIR PRO is a great tool for both DSO and wide milky way photography.



Q3: What gear do you use and why?

When photographing DSO and teaching workshops, I am using ZWO cameras and ZWO ASIAIR PRO.

I have 3 mounts set up in my dome by Nexdome to shoot from my rooftop in the city.

Each imaging setup is equipped with dedicated astro cameras from ZWO. These are ASI1600MM Pro, ASI071MC Pro and ASI2600MC Pro. I am also using a modified h-alpha DSLR camera with the ASIAIR PRO.



I use ZWO guiding system with ASI AIR PRO and the ASI120MM, ASI120MM Mini and ASI178MC cameras. Having ASI AIR PRO has made my life much easier for travel, as it is definitely a useful tool to reduce weight when compared to carrying a laptop and big batteries. I use 3 mounts, as each serves a different purpose needed to photograph deepscapes, DSO, and wide field and milky way images.

My equipment setups are as follows:

Milky way astrophotography - iOptron Sky Guider Pro + William Optics Red Cat 51 + ASI AIR PRO + ASI071MC Pro + ASI120MM Mini.

This setup serves well for travel and hiking to locations.

Landscape astrophotography - I use Skywatcher Az-Gti + William Optics Gt81 + ZWO ASI2600MM Pro or DSLR astro modified camera and ASI AIR PRO. This setup is lightweight for GOTO and is my choice set up for deepscapes as it serves me well for travel and hiking to locations.

Astrophotography from the city - In my dome, I am shooting with a full set of Astrodon 3nm Narrow Band Filters, with the Skywatcher EQ6r + Celestron EDGE HD 8, and ASI1600MM Pro and ASI120MM Mini.

Laptop is needed for this setup with SGPro for dome control and I use ASI AIR PRO for GOTO.



Q4: How did you started with Astrophtography?

I first started to read and learn about astrophotography 20 years ago. Robert Gandler's work inspired me to go deeper into my studies in astrophotography. I consider him a master of all time in imaging and processing and I have learned a lot from his works. He won many APOD honors and I aspire to follow in his footsteps.

Q5: Normally we only use ASIAIR PRO for DSO imaging, how does it come to you to use it for milk way imaging?

Milky way image stacking with ASIAIR PRO simplifies the imaging process, providing an easy method to control via WiFi on a phone or tablet. Using ASIAIR PRO is much easier and more reliable than using a regular battery-operated intervalometer or other crashing apps like QDslrDashBoard intervalometer.



Q6: Do you think ASI AIR PRO has improved your shooting experience? Does it really make astrophotography easier and more interesting for you?

ASI AIR PRO allows me to have full control over my shooting processes no matter where I am shooting – in the desert shooting landscape astrophotography, in the city shooting narrow-band astrophotography, or in my dome. Whether I am shooting wide or deep space astrophotography, I control all the shooting stages with the ASI AIR PRO for focus, GOTO, plate solving, framing, guiding and triggering the camera. I find it to be much easier to use ASI AIR PRO as my trusted intervalometer and it definitely improves my shooting experience.

Q7: How did you do the post-processing?

I do most of my image post-processing in PixInsight. This involves many stages of processing steps in order to align, calibrate and stack the images and to enhance the faint data. In the final stage of the post-processing, I take the image into Photoshop where I apply curves to boost the signal.

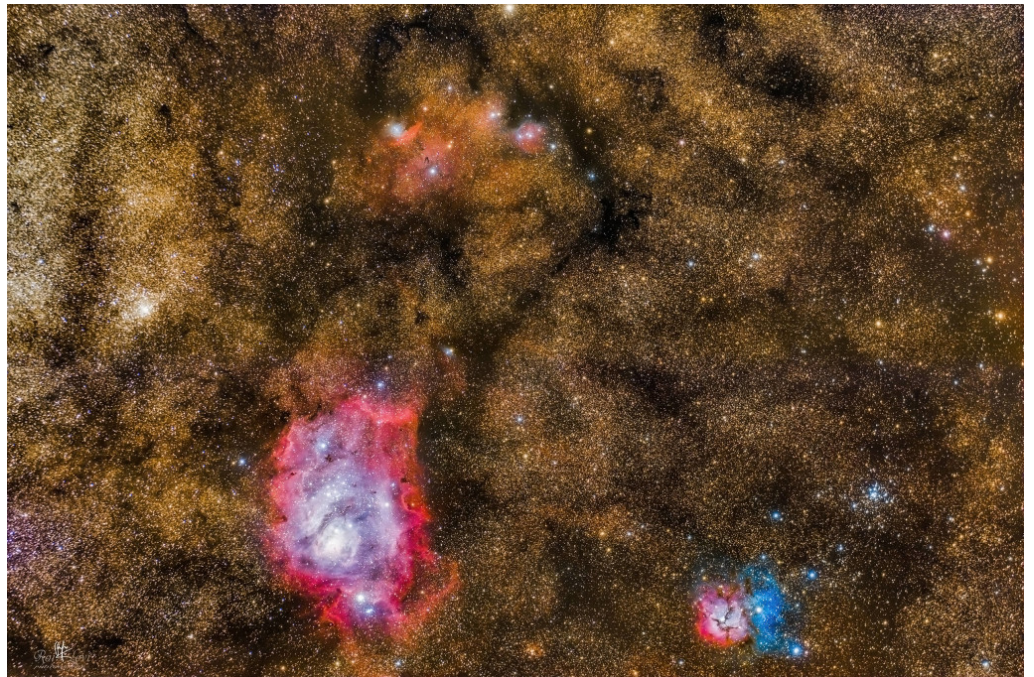
Q8: Where do you normally take astrophotos, from your backyard or somewhere remoter and darker?

On new moon I always travel to the desert near home for darker skies in Bortle 3. When shooting from my city in Bortle 9, I use Astrodon NB and LRGB 3nm, and Optolong L-pro filters. Astrophotography is best in dark skies and this is always my first choice.



Q9: When you take unusual images of objects with foreground what is your approach?

There is a new astrophotography technique we describe as "Deepscope" imaging. The main idea of deepscope is similar to HDR imaging. The approach is to frame a shot and take multiple exposures of both foreground and sky without moving the tripod for focus and exposure blending. This technique allows you to get a tracked shot of a rising or setting DSO with a sharp foreground. In this approach we use sky map planning apps to see where objects will rise or set in the frame near our choice of foreground. We set up the astrophotography mount, compose the framing for the foreground and take a picture of the foreground untracked with sharp details and then wait for the DSO we are targeting comes inside the frame. Once the DSO is framed where we want it, we start the tracker and shoot the light frames. We will blend the stacks of images together in post-processing to make a perfect HDR combination, resulting in a final blended image representing the actual whole parts of the frame focused and well exposed.



Q10: What achievement have you made in astrophotography lately?

National Geographic and NASA have published my images as well as photography magazines like DIY Photography and Photopills. I recently won in the most prestigious international photography contest, TIFA – Tokyo International Foto Awards, receiving the Bronze Award in the Landscape Category with my milky way image

“Milkyway Sinkhole” from the Dead Sea in Israel.

I am greatly honored to have had NASA post my images from my astrophotography workshop. To have my work represented by NASA has been a dream of mine. This honor has inspired me to work even harder, to keep learning and to improve my skills as I work to create new images on higher levels.



Q11: What are your future plans in astrophotography?

I am conducting astrophotography workshops in Israel, Texas and Utah. I hope this year I can collect a lot of good data and capture the night skies in unseen ways. I aspire to create my artistic visions, and I hope to have a great deal of opportunity to teach others what I know.

Q12: What was your first ASI Camera? Can you tell us the reason why you chose it?

My first camera was ZWO ASI071MC Pro. I chose this camera because it is an APSC OSC camera and I wanted to get fast imaging results. ZWO ASI071MC Pro is the best cost-effective astrophotography cooled camera and at the time it was one of the only APSC OSC cameras manufactured by ZWO.

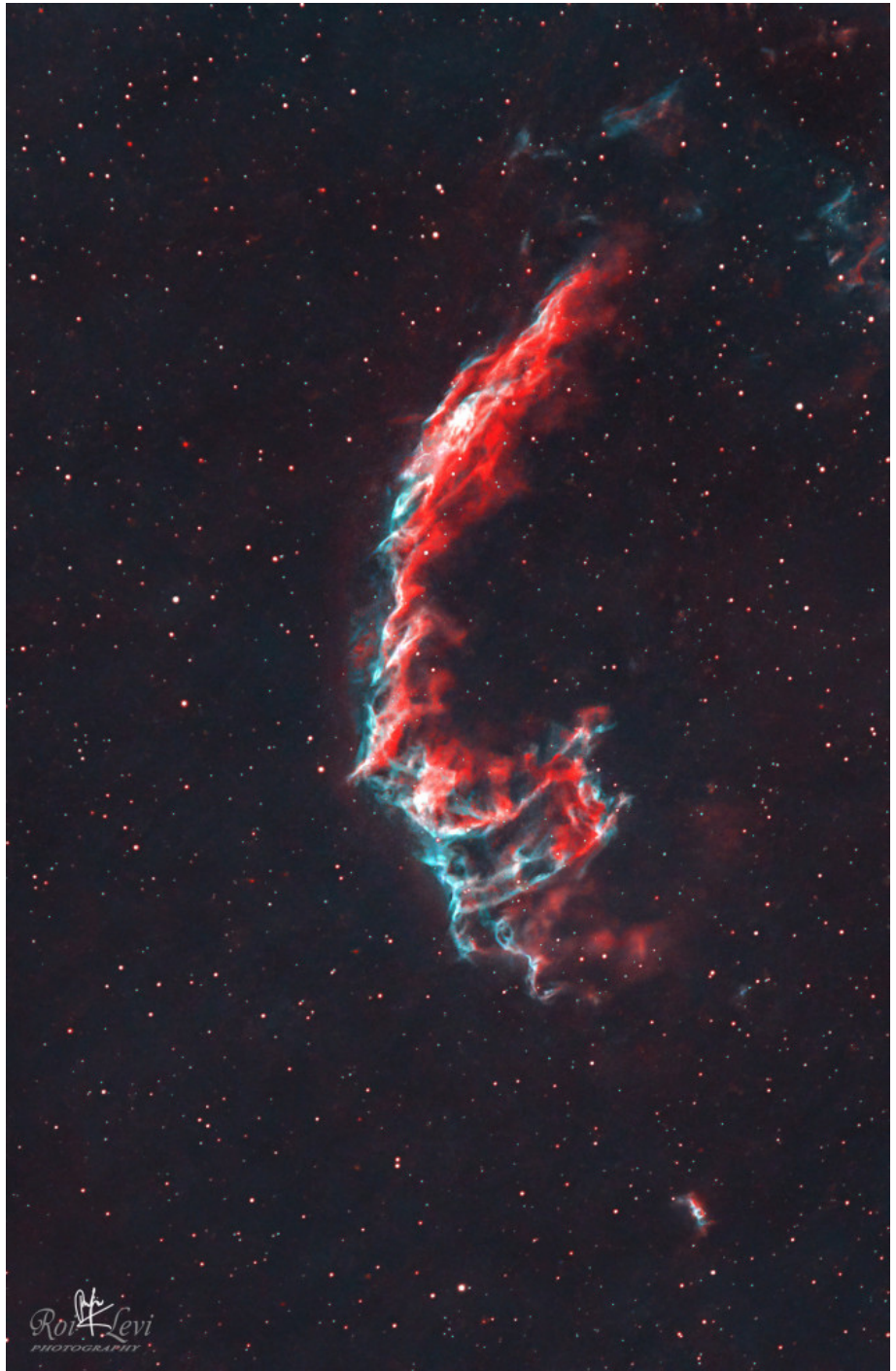


Q13: Which ASI model has a special place in your heart?

I hope to get the ZWO Full Frame cameras soon. To shoot with the ASI6200 cameras would surely enable me to capture more photons and produce incredible images in both mono and color in the dark skies like we will have in Texas and Utah and in the middle east.

Q14: Why did you switch from DSLR to ASI cameras? What is the reason you choose ASI2600MC PRO or the ASI1600MM Pro?

I am using all types of cameras, ZWO ASI and DSLR, as I need the variety for different applications. When shooting from my home in the city in Bortel 9, I prefer to use the mono camera ASI1600MM Pro with 3nm Astrodon filters, as with this setup I get the cleanest signal of NB imaging. The ASI images are much more detailed with far cleaner signals than DSLR images. The DSLR and ASI2600MC Pro I mainly use for DSO panorama imaging. The ZWO Cameras produce amazingly clean signal and great dynamic range, especially in dark skies. DSLR images need a lot of post-processing work compared to ASI images because they produce a lot of noise and the signal gets blown out. When shooting in dark skies, I shoot with ZWO OSC cooled cameras which save time and get the best signal from DSO's.



Q15: What kind of astronomy-dedicated products do you hope us develop in the future?

I would like to see the development of Dome Control added to ASIAIR PRO. I know a lot of folks on Cloudynights that would be very happy to switch from using SGPro and laptop to ASIAIR PRO in their domes! ASIAIR PRO has changed the game when it comes to flexibility and quality in the same package, and I hope to see more backyard help from ZWO by matching the system to work without the need for a laptop. Additionally, I would like to see a panorama feature in ASIAIR PRO to simplify deepscape imaging with foreground when we are making DSO panoramas.

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