

Discovering analogue

Getting into analogue might seem easy – whether you're about to give up Outlook in favour of a Filofax or start shooting 35mm, eBay and a series of unfortunate Buy It Now decisions are only a few clicks away. However, unless you're already familiar with your chosen old-school technology, the initial excitement may fade once you realise

that analogue hobbies rarely come with the shallow learning curve of modern gear.

"People can be scared to get things wrong," said Charlotte Longworth of the London Analogue Photography Meetup. Particularly when it comes to film – every under-exposure and missed focus costs real money. But, "you have to do things to learn how to do it."

The internet holds plenty of help: Alex Batterbee of London On Board explained that YouTube is a great resource for picking up the

finer points of board games, while the most cursory of web searches is likely to reveal plenty of expert advice. But since analogue pursuits hold an obviously offline appeal, there's much to be said from learning from the like-minded. Meetup.com is a gigantic repository of classes, get-togethers and tutorials run by hobbyists and professional instructors alike, many requiring no down payment greater than a sense of enthusiasm for your new hobby and a willingness to learn.

"Getting your phone out, unlocking the phone, going into the app and typing into the thing just takes a lot longer than my organiser." Attendee Sara Williams agrees that onscreen reminders don't work. "You just ignore it," she says. "And you forget it because you've ignored it, because it keeps annoying you by popping up, so eventually you just delete it, rather than actually dealing with it." Williams started the day the proud owner of 73 Filofaxes and planners; by the time we talk the number has increased by two.

Those practical benefits don't mean Filofaxy's followers are immune to the mid-century aesthetic charms of a paper planner. The tables are strewn with planners finished in soft, embossed leather, such as Jacquie Wapshott's Gillio planner – hers for "only" £87 secondhand. "Normally they'd be about £300," she says. "It is a beautiful, tactile object." Ian Dawes, whose business cards, I notice later, have three perfectly spaced holes drilled into them to make them easier to clip into a Filofax, finds his stationery spans the gap between beauty and practicality. He found his planner in a charity shop for £6. "If you were to buy it from the US brand new, it's £625." There's a pause. "I'm not kidding." A recent convert to David Allen's *Getting Things Done* (GTD) method of time management, Dawes also believes eschewing computerised time management makes him more efficient.

It may also make him more future-proof. "Technology moves on so fast that it's a whole exercise in itself just to keep up," says Max, whose Filofax ownership started in the late 1980s. "It appeals to me that the format of diary I've used for the last 20 to 30 years, I can carry on using that forever." That's hard to do digitally. "If I want to know when I went to a certain country on holiday I can go back and look, whereas if I've been doing that

electronically, those records would have vanished long ago."

Unearthing gems

He might find a kindred spirit in Jayson Brinkler, who once discovered a box Brownie camera in an antique shop. "What interested us wasn't the box Brownie – it was loaded with a roll of film.

"You could tell from the cars that it was taken in 1950, so these images had been stored in this camera for 50 years and hadn't seen the light of day. That's the beauty of film."

"You couldn't do that with digital," he says. "In, say, 20 years' time, you probably won't have access to any of your images. You can only store them on media like a computer hard drive or external hard drive, [and] a lot of those hard drives won't be accessible in years to come... whereas with film you haven't got that problem, you just keep your negatives and you can have access to them any time."

Vivian Maier is a case in point – an American photographer whose work was unknown while she was alive. It was only after she died that boxes of her negatives and prints came to life and she won plaudits for her work.

Analogue has its work cut out. Technology crackles onwards, and there's more money in selling an iPhone every two years than a Filofax every ten. But as long as old-school practices continue to offer practical, tactile and aesthetic benefits, a hardcore of users will still be filling out their diaries, hanging their photos and rolling their dice. I mention mix tapes to Ian Dawes at the Filofaxy gathering. "I miss them!" he tells me. "I had a Fisher hi-fi system in my bedroom and it had two decks, so you could copy." He recorded the chart rundown. "I wouldn't get

rid of those [tapes] for love nor money." He tells me he's thinking about giving them to his two-year-old son one day. "He won't have a clue." ●



RIGHT Marcus Walker poses with his Bronica medium-format camera

BELOW Jené Dubois holds up her treasured copy of *Filofax Facts*

"There's more money in selling an iPhone every two years than a Filofax every ten"

