

Polk County Camera Club

Newsletter

Sept-Oct



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“Paris” in Vegas

Night photography can be really challenging, but offers the photographer an extensive creative freedom. Two photographers shooting the same subject at night can create amazingly different images.

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Welcome to the Polk County Camera Club

Night Photography-film advantage Text & Photos ©Reinier Munguía

As challenging as it can be, night photography offers the photographer the artistic freedom only found in more traditional forms of art.

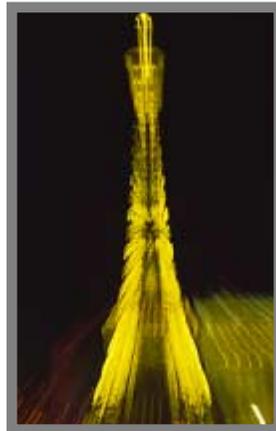
While digital cameras can be used for night photography, I prefer using film for a couple of reasons. Digital noise can be a problem when enlarging digital files. They show through the image as bright colored pixels, usually concentrated in the darker areas. Although this can be fixed via software, you'll always lose quality one way or the other, plus it can be time consuming. The amount of

noise increases with the exposure time. I usually like extended exposure times to obtain saturated colors. One minute exposures are common; shooting digital for such long exposures means heavy noise on your images. The other reason involves something only found in film and it's the ability to render lights in different color cast according to their source. Mercury vapor light fixture will render a green cast while tungsten lights are yellow. While this also occurs in digital cameras, the difference relies in the color saturation obtained with a longer exposure; something that can't be achieved digitally without the excessive noise.

As I always say, a tripod is an essential tool for the photographer, and with night photography it becomes quite clear. Night photography requires really slow shutter speeds meaning hand holding the camera isn't a good choice unless an artistic blur of lights is intended. Exposure can be tricky when it comes to night photography and a few factors need to be considered before pressing the shutter. I usually meter the lights from the buildings or any other source within the frame and use that as my startup exposure. Then proceed to check any other elements that can be incorporated in my shot. For exam-



When a tripod is not available, any support will work as long as you keep your camera steady, meaning even holding your breath sometimes. This image was taken using 30sec.@f16.
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ple: car trailing lights, the moon, the twilight sky, moving train, etc. When composing a night photo, try to include moving objects when possible to enhance the effect of your image. Note the trailing lights on the photo to the left; they give you an idea of the length of this exposure. This particular image I took while on a business trip to Vegas and I did not have a tripod with me, so I had to brace the camera against a handrail and hold my breath for the entire length of the exposure to avoid any body induced blur. Anything you can do to keep your camera from shaking will ensure a good image. Most of the time I use the self-timer feature on the camera to avoid the vibration caused when depressing the shutter button. A cable release is another option that can be used to avoid vibrations especially when a good timing is necessary to capture any moving light such as car tail lights.

But night photography can be more creative than that. Pick any subject you like and zoom-in or zoom-out during a long exposure and you'll be creating a totally new image. The image of the Eiffel tower replica was zoomed-in during a 3 sec. exposure with the camera braced against a light pole. Night photography is more dependent of shutter speed than aperture. While you can control the exposure by means of the aperture, it's the shutter speed that dictates the amount of blur on moving objects and the saturation of the final image. Controlling both to your advantage is the key to successful night photography. Even the most boring subject can be transformed into an outstanding image when shot at night.

If you want to have more fun with night photography, you can incorporate the use of flash to freeze and light up

a subject in the foreground. Now the aperture becomes as important as the shutter speed since the flash exposure can only be controlled by aperture. In this case, I set the aperture according to my flash to subject distance and then adjust my shutter speed for the background. In this kind of photography, it's important that the subject remain static during the length of the exposure. Any movement and a ghosted image or halo will appear around the subject.



This image was taken from the Eiffel Tower Replica by bracing the camera against the railings.
©Reinier Munguia

If you want to experiment with lights at night, nothing better than a little drive around town. Set your camera on the dashboard or on a tripod and ask a partner to drive you around town through a well lit avenue. Take long exposures as you drive through traffic lights, billboards and signs. You will come out with hundreds of creative images in one night. Try it it's simple and fun. -rmc

Digital Storage

Text & Photos ©R.Munguia

For those of you shooting digital, here's a good gadget. Tired of spending hundreds of dollars on Compact Flash or Smart Media cards. Then the Versonic VP-300 AKA the X-Drive Pro is for you. This portable storage device allows you to store all your digital files and even listen to your favorite MP3's. Yes, you heard right, it also plays MP3 files. The amazing part is that it costs less than any other device of this type in the market. With a price of only \$95.00 for the unit without a drive and \$250.00 with a 20GB hard drive (HD), it makes the VP-300 the best deal. After purchasing mine, I installed a 20GB HD from Toshiba. The installation was easy and in no time, I found myself dumping 1GB worth of images in the device. Everything worked just fine. The device plugs to your computer via USB and acts as a portable HD, so it can be used to backup your computer. This feature becomes really handy when you need to transfer files to off-site computers.



I Joined the Club

Text by ©Paulette Dalton

I have always been interested in photography, but never seemed to get the kind of results I expected. One day, I went to The Camera Shop to have my old Canon Rebel EOS 35mm SLR repaired. Hanging on the wall with some photos, I saw an advertisement for the Polk County Camera Club. I had toyed with the idea of joining a photography club, but never pursued it. I decided now was the time. It was a wise decision.

Since joining the club a few months ago, I have learned more than in the past 10 years on my own. Before the club, I was a typical amateur - I have boxes full of mediocre family and pet snapshots to prove it. I've always struggled with the proper use of aperture and shutter speed, and when I did get a good photo, I felt it was more luck than skill. Now, good photos seem to be the norm, not the exception.

Instrumental and essential to my learning has been Reinier Munguia, a professional photographer and club organizer. The love Reinier has for photography shines through in his craft and also in his willingness to share knowledge with others. He takes the time needed and has the patience necessary to teach anyone who wants to learn. I credit Reinier with most of the experience I've gained, and look forward to his continued tutelage.

Another person that is active in the club and deserves acknowledgement is Bonnie Shedd. Not only is Bonnie an experienced photographer, she cares a great deal about protecting wildlife. If it were not for people like her, there would be less wildlife for us all to photograph.

Since joining the club, I have been on many club outings. I cannot stress enough how helpful these are. I am surprised that more people from the club don't take advantage of these excursions, not only are they great photo opportunities, but Reinier and Bonnie are always there to help out and answer any questions. Between the two, they have a great knowledge of where to go, what type of opportunities will be there, and suggestions on how to best capture stunning photographs. From fireworks to wildlife, the club outings are both fun and educational.



*I took this image during the 4th of July Fireworks Workshop. .
©Paulette Dalton*

Joining the club has been a wonderful experience for me. I have been able to meet different levels of photographers each having their own unique way of demonstrating their talent. I have learned a great deal, but know that I still have a long way to go, though I find myself more confident in what I am doing. The best part is having new friends with the same interests that I enjoy.- *PD*

Quick Photo Art

Text & Photos ©Bonnie Shedd

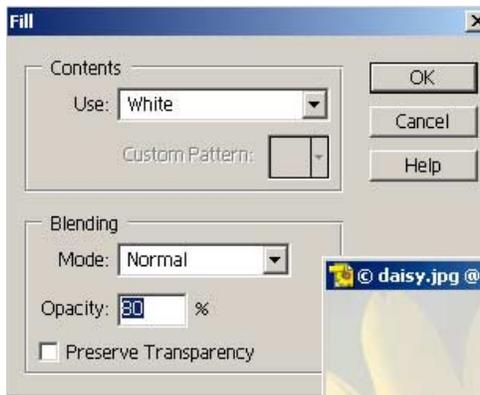
Here's an easy one for those of you starting in Photoshop or Elements. The steps are the same for either program

Step 1.

Open an image and in the layers palette and make a new layer using the icon next to the trash can in the layers palette.

Step 2.

Fill this new layer with 80% white using Edit/Fill menu. Use the default color (white or black) depending on your image and set it to 80% opacity. Your image will now look like it has grown a serious mold -- not to worry -- yet.



Step 3.

Choose a rough brush from the brushes palette such as "chalk" and make it very large (400 pixels or so). Select the eraser tool, set the opacity on the toolbar to about 50-60% and begin erasing on the layer you filled with white/black. Overlap some of the strokes for a more realistic brush stroke look. Here is what your final "art work" might look like.



We have selected PS Elements 2.0 for this tutorial, but the same can be accomplished using any version of Photoshop.

You can use different types of brushes to add even more texture to your image. This is an easy technique that's open for more experimentation. So get your brushes ready to paint and be creative!



Aperture Control - controlling depth of field Text & Photos ©R.Munguia

On our previous issue, we discussed how shutter speed affects how moving subjects will appear on film. We mentioned using fast shutter speeds to freeze the action or slow shutter speed to create a sense of movement. Now we'll discuss the other side of the equation for a perfect image. The aperture serves two primary functions in photography - controls the amount of light and the depth of field.

Depth of field is the distance in front and behind the subject that will be acceptably sharp at a particular f-stop. This distance in front and behind the subject is affected directly by the size of the aperture selected on the lens. In other words, large aperture such as f2.8 will give minimum depth of field while an aperture of f16 provides a greater depth of field.

But depth of field gets affected not



The top photo was taken using an aperture of f4, reducing the depth of field and creating a less busy background. The bottom photo was shot at f11. Stopping down the aperture, increased the depth of field and now the background became too busy.

©Reinier Munguia

only by the aperture selected, but also by the lens being used and the distance from the subject. With a wide angle lens, the depth of field will be greater even at wide open apertures than it would be with a telephoto lens set at the same aperture. Now we know that depth of field is also affected by the type of lens we use, but there's another factor we must consider. The distance from



For the top photo I used a 105mm at f8.0, notice the busy background The bottom one was taken using the same lens at f4.0, now the background it's softer. But the best image came out from a 300mm at f4, the background it's a lot better. (right)

©Reinier Munguia

the lens to your subject will dramatically affect the depth of field you can obtain. As you focus closer on your subject, depth of field is reduced. It's for this reason that macro photography requires stopped down apertures to increase the depth of field when shooting at high magnification ratios. The same applies to zoom lenses, using one of these lenses helps you to soften the backgrounds. By using the depth of field correctly,

you can transform an image completely. Let's say you're shooting a portrait for a friend but the background is too busy and competing with your friend. Then you select a larger aperture to render all that busy background as a simple blur that helps to isolate your friend's face from the background. Now, if on the contrary, your friend is standing in front of a nice background that can be used for reference to the location in which the picture was taken, most probably you want to increase the depth of field to ensure every detail is in sharp focus. Soon you'll realize how important is to have control of the subject's background. In nature photography being able to isolate your subject is extremely important, since most subjects are found in dense vegetation.

Keep in mind that for a correct exposure both aperture and shutter speed must work together. Any changes in aperture must be compensated with shutter speed. One advantage of using wide open apertures is that it will allow you to use faster shutter speeds, making handheld shots a breeze. -RMC

