

The Newsletter

Insight, Primesite, Foresight

May 2011 - Issue #11



Editorial

The May issue of this volume is of course late. Unfortunately the pressure of work and the drive-to-stay-alive kept me from doing the important things in life – photography and newsletters. Well, perhaps not photography!

It is with genuine regret that I put aside my responsibilities for this newsletter after this issue. I have really enjoyed entertaining you this year. I hope my ramblings have been fun, informative and worth reading. As you may expect, I am not giving up the pen! In fact I have promised the new Club Secretary, John Newth, I will support him and write some articles for future editions. Hah! I will be back! Just when you thought you had escaped me bashing your brain with my keyboard-cosh.

As expected the May programme turned out pretty well. The sessions through the month started well with the introductory early clinic on Tripods. There is a resource hand-out on the website now. Dick Fielding's trip to The Hawk Conservancy was excellent. And, let us not forget the AGM. A report later...

Now we are at the season end. The Tuesday night Club meetings have been transformed into the "Flagon-at-the-Dragon" sessions. The summer is upon us and the next thing we are planning is holidays and relaxation. Don't let your camera down. We want you all to report to us at "MCC Newsletter Towers". Your new editor will expect comical interludes, pretty pics and holiday reports. So keep us informed of your activities this summer.

Damon Guy – shy and retiring editor

Email the MCC Secretary
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Help the club with Amazon



Help M.C.C make a little money. If you use Amazon do it via our search box on the website, you can earn us a little commission.

Panning, the mysterious art...

I was lucky enough to escape for a day with my youngest son and John Newth to visit Santa Pod. This secret place is known only to several million people. Located in deepest Northants, this wartime airport has been converted into Europe's premier quarter-mile drag racing track. We headed up the M1 and by 10.30 were surrounded by literally thousands of mad speed freaks, hundreds of cool cars and one awesome robot!



An awesome singing and farting robot... I kid-you-not!

If you want to read more about the fun of the races and see some pictures you can go here... [At the Drag Races](#) where I've published articles and pictures on the event. Follow the links after the text with each picture.

Many of the photographs I show on the above link were taken with cars exceeding 200mph. Yet most are pretty sharp, and the feel of the speed preserved by the blurred background. So how is this panning done?

I set up auto-focus so my camera refocuses while I am composing the shot (panning). I

do this so as I pan through the shot the camera is ready for my release. I don't have to re-focus or I would miss the shot. I also set up for multiple shots from one release.

The skill in panning is to be able to track your subject at the same speed as it is moving. As the object comes toward you it comes in a straight line. You are panning through a semi-circle. As the subject approaches at about 45 degrees to you it is in the frame for a relatively long period and you are panning slowly. As it gets close your movement gets faster. When it is parallel to you the camera must move at the same speed as the subject. At 200 mph it's difficult to do and get a sharp shot. So the best place to catch it is on the approach (45 degrees). You can usually get several shots off during that approach phase.



Composing a shot on the approach gives the most time.

To compose a shot at very high speed for when the shot is moving fastest you have to plan ahead. Know where you want to take the shot. Pan with the object as it approaches, building the speed with it as it comes. Then you must shoot at the pre-chosen point. You will have to practice to do this as un-practiced shots usually blur. To get the next shot cleanly I was panning at about 190mph to track the car deploying its parachute as it ran passed me.



You must practice the release point for the fastest shots.

As the object approaches you often do not want so much magnification. So as you pan you can turn your wrist smoothly changing the zoom with your shot. Then you are able to change the focal length of the zoom while panning. This too takes practice - more on that in a moment.

To get satisfying background blur simulating speed you need to keep the moving object

sharp. That is done by smooth tracking with the object. If you are using a long shutter time the background will get movement blur while, if you are steady, the moving object stays sharp. A good shutter value will lie somewhere from 60th/sec to 125th/sec.

Think about it like this. Lack of sharpness should not be confused with blur. A moving object can be sharp if you are focused on it and panning to match its speed. This makes it stationary relative to the camera. Blur is introduced if the object and the camera have slightly different speeds. The object can still be in the field of focus but blurred when this happens. You must keep the object in the focus zone and steady. The skill is keeping the panning constant while the shutter is open. Auto-focus handles the focus-change while you keep the camera aligned with the moving object. The key is to make your movement a smooth arc. Don't snatch your shots!

Theory aside set your camera to a reasonable depth of field (f8 to f11 say). Set your shutter speed to about 125th/sec (when practised 60th/sec). Practice following something in the lens field while you shoot. I started with people walking, then later running. Next I shot bicycles and then moving saloon cars. Before long I could pan with most objects.

Incidentally, don't use auto settings. The camera can't produce these pictures as well as you. It uses a program for an 'average' situation. With a little practice full manual control will give you much better shots.

Damon

The Club Website

It is important to keep up to date with Club activities during the summer. We will try and keep you informed of events and activities. However, if you let us know what you are doing we can put up blogs on your behalf. So, keep us informed too. If you want to run a trip you can contact me or John Newth and we will be happy to help you get your trip running. We can easily post information on the web site.



Our site has been very active recently. You should keep an eye open for more information on the site.

Have a great Summer, but keep in touch!

<http://marlowcc.org/>

Safe travelling with your camera

Before the days of modern Health and Safety legislation, I did some work at motorsports events. I thought nothing of working with my tools or camera beside racetrack or rally with no yellow vest and outside marked areas. Today I am more aware. With summer looming we should remember that we are vulnerable without awareness of more subtle dangers. If you travel with your camera what can you do to keep yourself and your camera safe?

Before you go away make sure you have a plan of action to follow if you are attacked, robbed or assaulted. Know how to contact the local police, what you need to do and how you should tackle the paperwork. Some quick Internet research up front can save you days of anguish on location.

Next, be aware that you can actually injure yourself by carrying too much! Silly? Well, just think what camera equipment you really need. Then try to take less than that. You will be liable to lose less, save yourself carrying unused equipment; be more focussed in your shots and less vulnerable. Start by planning what you are going to shoot, where and what you need to do it.

Camera equipment is a flashing beacon to the criminal fraternity. It says, "Here is a newby!". "This person does not know the territory". You are then an open target. Lessen the visual impact. Use an old, knocked-about, camera bag. Better still use another sort of bag for your kit. It attracts

less attention. On the airplane carry it with you. Lots of camera stuff goes missing in baggage handling.

When out and about with your camera a big DSLR strung round your neck all the time says "Come and get meeee!" So, keep it in the bag until you need it. When you are done put it out of sight. Most bag thefts happen in open daylight and fast! Straps cut, thief runs. Your pride and joy disappears in one instant. So keep your bag firmly strapped, your camera in it or strapped to you. If you meet resistance – don't fight back. You will probably lose it anyway and it is not worth an injury.

Street photography is fun and rewarding. A friend or member of family nearby can help by keeping an eye on things while you shoot. However, keep your eyes open and rely on intuition. If you are remotely worried about people or the place you are in, put your camera away. Then get out of there. If you feel worried you probably should be!

Don't keep all your shots on one memory card. Change the cards frequently. At least you'll have some shots to take home if you lose a card. Keep them apart and hide them separately. Upload when you can. I upload to Flickr.com and sort out the shots at home. Internet cafes are everywhere.

Equipment is still vulnerable if left in a hotel room. So, think about using some protective equipment like 'Pacsafe'. Lock your protected bags to fixed objects. The products are available on Amazon (and other sites) and make casual theft difficult. Whenever possible store your equipment in the Hotel safe. It may cost money, but it will be there in the morning!



"PacSafe" - a mesh bag and a secure waist belt

Consider insurance. The cost is quite low for a short trip and may save you thousands. At the very least have the serial

numbers written down for every item of equipment. Keep the copies safe at home and make sure a friend can send them to you. If there is a theft you can describe the items to the police. They may turn up later and will be identifiable by serial codes.

Most people have safe and trouble free holidays. So don't be paranoid. Enjoy your trip. Be prepared and minimise the risks. Let us know if you have other tips for safe travel. We will put them on the website.

At the National Portrait Gallery

Last chance to see...

IDA KAR: BOHEMIAN PHOTOGRAPHER

Until 19 June 2011: Admission £3/£2.50/£2

An exhibition of works by photographer Ida Kar; an exhibition not to be missed!

'Excellent... Kar's portraits are both affecting and revealing...' **** The Times

Coming in July...

GLAMOUR OF THE GODS

Opens 7 July 2011: Admission £6/£5.50/£5

Glamour of the Gods is a celebration of Hollywood portraiture from the industry's golden age, 1920 to 1960. From Greta Garbo and Audrey Hepburn to James Dean and Marilyn Monroe, it is these portraits that transformed actors and actresses into international style icons. In many cases these are the career-defining images of Hollywood's greatest names and help to illustrate their enduring appeal.

And Finally...

Contributions?

Please think of contributing to this newsletter. Got any good, bad or ugly news? We would love to see it or read it.



Good websites...

Member David Wraight sent me this excellent link about the Human Camera. This proves the world's best computer has

to be the brain. Don't miss this incredible video...

<http://www.stumbleupon.com/su/2MBBxU>

...A quote

Photography is like making cheese. It takes a hell of a lot of milk to make a small amount of cheese just like it takes a hell of a lot of photos to get a good one.

Robert Gillis

...and some photography funnies

Ten reasons to date a photographer. They:

- 1) work well in the dark
- 2) want a great end result for everyone
- 3) work well on many settings
- 4) know how to focus
- 5) can make big things look small and small things look big
- 6) work well from many varied angles
- 7) zoom in and out and in and out and in and out and in and out...
- 8) shoot in many different locations
- 9) always know the right time to shoot
- 10) can find the beauty in anything

Photographers – who'd have thought...

