

THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



The Image, a newsletter

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March Club Meeting

The **Camera Club of Central Minnesota** met on March 2 in the Bremer Room of the Saint Cloud Minnesota public library starting at 6:45 p.m. David Bargabus and Richard Heath demonstrated portraiture photography. First a typical snapshot was taken of the model using a direct on-camera flash unit. The picture was flat; there was no perception of depth.

Heath described the concept of depth and how it greatly enhances the photograph. Depth is obtained through the interaction of light and shadow.

Apparently there is a body of knowledge of the different types of shadow, how to create the different types, what each type accomplishes, what to watch out for, etc.

Bargabus and Heath also demonstrated how the use of several light sources can enhance the photograph. First a main light was used and a corresponding photograph was taken and shown. Since the light was off-camera and strategically placed, the light-shadow combination was Rembrandt lighting.

By the way, the ability to take a picture and

have it captured by a computer and then displayed immediately was amazing. This capture-software is now included in Adobe's public Lightroom 3 Beta 2.

Next, Bargabus and Heath demonstrated the addition of a hair light. This separated the model from the background, giving more dimensionality.

Heath added a third light which made the background more visible, that in turn gave even more dimensionality to the portrait.

Barry Weber then took over and explained the concept of "capturing the event." He explained the many parts of preparing to shoot such photographs and followed up with showing several shots of such pictures. Weber described how he prepared himself to take such photographs by taking pictures of a digital clock and trying to shoot the clock just as the tenth of a second digit was a "0".

After Weber's explanation and demonstration of "capturing the event", most of the club members took their camera in hand and attempted to photograph repeatedly the "0" of Weber's digital clock.

With this preparation in hand, we all left the



Inside this issue:

MARCH CLUB MEETING MINUTES	1
APRIL CLUB MEETING	1
DO IT YOURSELF OR PURCHASE	2
I DON'T LIKE THAT PICTURE OF MYSELF	3
DEVELOP YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WILL WORK	3
THE ELEMENTS OF TACK SHARP	4
A PHOTOGRAPHER'S RIGHT	4
9 WAYS TO FIND OUT ABOUT YOUR COMPETITION	5
LIGHTROOM 3 BETA 2 AND PHOTOSHOP CS5	6

Next Camera Club Meeting on Thursday, 1 April

The next meeting of the Central Minnesota Camera Club will be on Thursday, 1 April at the Saint Cloud Public Library Bremer Room, beginning at 6:45 p.m. Yes, we are back to our regular day, the first Thursday of the month, and though it April Fools Day, this is no joke, we are meeting the 1st of April.

The assignment for the club for the April

meeting is the stop action task that we practiced during our last club meeting in March. Hopefully, we all have several photos that we can show of our stop action. So bring your stop action photos that you have recorded on your flash drive. What do you think? Should we begin with the May meeting of selecting the best photo and awarding a prize?



The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Do It Yourself or Purchase



April Sauers

I STARTED TO REALIZE THAT THE FLASH-MOUNTED DIFFUSERS WEREN'T THE BEST ANSWER.



Barry Weber

Assuming you've got a flash (or 2 or 3) it won't be long before you'll want to make a light modifier purchase or two.

In the earliest days of experimenting with my speed lights, I used dome diffusers with very limited success. I bought one of those "Tupperware" domes and the chrome inserts. I got the clear and the cloud versions. Honestly, these just didn't do it for me. I even bought some of the reflectors and diffusers that you Velcro onto your flash, but something inside me just hated putting sticky-back Velcro on a \$300 flash.

Then once I started learning lighting by watching the pros using speed lights and studio strobes, I started to realize that these flash-mounted diffusers weren't the best answer. In fact, if you've ever seen David Ziser, you'd know that it's almost always better to bounce your flash off a large white wall, ceiling, somebody's shirt who's standing there, etc. instead of trying to use one of the goofy stick-on diffusers. That's because it's better to have a big, white light source rather than just a soft, diffused, yet still small and bright (just barely bigger than the flash head itself) light source. I stopped worrying about little snap-on, stick on diffusers and started looking for ways to bounce my flash off something big and light colored. I was growing as a photographer and my images started look-

ing richer and less flat, like a snapshot.

Then as I learned more and more about lighting, I realized that there are times when you want to control the light rather than just bounce it off something big or shoot it through a translucent umbrella (which are great options normally, and much better than a small light source). For instance, sometimes it helps if you can precisely aim your light by shooting it through a tube (snoot) or simply manage the direction of the light by shooting through a grid attachment.

The DIY Temptation

I read on several DIY sites out there, how you can make grids by cutting and gluing together black drinking straws. I read about what materials make good snoots. In fact, I read about all kinds of cool little light modifiers that made way more sense than a clip on diffuser, and since there were some lighting effects I wanted to try, I bookmarked all those web pages, promising myself I would go back and build these cool little projects. Well, I never had the free time and just never did any of them.

Not Exactly DIY's

Then I happened to be viewing the Web site for Expo-Disc. They had just started carrying the product line from photographer/inventor David Honl, and they showed me the gear. It is simply brilliant! It's all kinds of those DIY projects, but with better materi-

als, better workmanship, and a really clever mounting system, all for a reasonable price.

The core of the system is the Honl "Speed Strap." It's simply a Velcro strap with a grippy rubber back instead of adhesive. That's really cool! All the benefits of Velcro without gluing something to my speed light! It's a bunch of gear like flags/gobos, snoots, gels, grids, and more, which attach to the Velcro straps. Basically it's a bunch of light modifiers that are usable, durable, and fully removable. I looked at their \$95 starter kit and thought, 'sure, I could make all that stuff in my garage some weekend, but even though I had a ton of DIY web pages marked, I had never gotten around to it. Besides, my time is worth more than it would take to create all this stuff, and in the end, mine would look junky and probably come apart in no time.

Pros Like This Stuff Too

This is a really cool set of light modifiers, and in spite of the reasonable pricing, even the serious pros aren't ashamed to use this gear. If you want a little more than the few items which come with the starter kit, you can always get separate items or you could just opt for the even more complete kit (which, ironically, they call "The Complete Kit").

I like this stuff and I think that the product line is pretty much a no-brainer purchase.

I Don't Like That Picture of Myself

I happen to think my daughter is quite pretty, so I have always liked pictures of her and shooting her portrait. And it amazes me that she doesn't even like to have her picture taken, so getting her to pose for shots is a chore. After one particular (rare) sitting, I showed her a bunch of very nice proofs, and she wasn't thrilled by any of them. They were beautiful portraits, and she couldn't tell me anything in particular that was wrong, she just did not like how they looked. After a little more discussion, she finally said something that struck a cord with me. She said, "That's just not what I see when I look in the mirror."

That reminded me of something I had heard years earlier. Many people who are not used to seeing their own

picture, only see themselves in the mirror. As a result, they see the reverse of what everyone else sees. Photo-shop makes it easy to help these people see themselves the way others see them. Just try the little trick I pulled on my daughter.

Give your subject a stack of proof prints to review or show them a slide show of images one at a time (not a sheet of side-by-side images or they'll figure it out). Make sure that you flip several of the better shots to a mirror image reverse. If they pick a reversed image or two as their favorites, explain to them that the reason they like it is because that's what they see when they look in the mirror. It's familiar and comfortable. But be sure to explain that this is not how the public sees them. The rest

of the world sees the reverse, so your client should use the mirror image of the one they think is best. Don't let them keep the wrong/mirror image, even if they really like it. Obviously if they select a non-flipped image, you're in the clear.

When my daughter was given a stack of images with some reversed images included, I actually heard her say something she's never said about her portraits, and she was excited! She said, "Now, that's a good picture! I like that one!"

Do you take portraits of people who aren't used to seeing their own picture? Mix in a few flipped images with your set and I bet you get happier clients.



Dave Bargabus

MANY PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT USED TO SEEING THEIR OWN PICTURE, ONLY SEE THEMSELVES IN THE MIRROR.

Develop Your Knowledge of What Will Work

Whenever I come back from a shoot I usually head straight to my computer and download my images. Like most of you, I can't wait to see all of the great shots that I got. And like many of you, I find that the majority of my shots kind of suck. They aren't necessarily bad, they just aren't great. But here's the deal, I don't just round up all of those bad shots and send them to the round file, I let them alone for awhile to marinate. It's not that I think they will get better over time, in fact the opposite is usually the case, when I look at them down the road and wonder, "What the @*#! was I thinking when I took that?" But that's sort of the point.

By leaving them for a while, I can separate the emotion from the photograph and start looking at it from a more analytical perspective. What is it that made that shot so bad? Was it the light? Was it my choice of lens? Maybe it was the angle that I chose or perhaps the lens. Perhaps I would have done better had I used less depth of field or maybe more. By taking some time to really look at the image you can start to develop that mental checklist for the next time you are standing behind your camera.

If you ignore the shots that didn't turn out the way you had envisioned and just send them to the trash, you are missing out on

an opportunity to learn from your experience. And it's not just the things that didn't work but also the elements that did. A great photo is made when a combination of things all go right so it's not fair to say that your "bad" images didn't have their good points as well. The point is that you should spend some time to really look at all of your images so that you can constantly evolve and create that internal database of experiences so that when you are presented with a similar situation in the future you will have the knowledge to know what didn't work the last time.



The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

The Elements of Tack Sharp



Dennis Strassburg

WHEN YOU'RE
CONFRONTED
JUST BE AS NICE
AS POSSIBLE TO
THE SECURITY
OR LAW
ENFORCEMENT
OFFICIAL

There are a handful of things I've learned, mostly from others, about capturing the sharpest possible image. Today I'm writing about the technique. Some other time I'll get into things like fast glass, strobes, VR or IS lenses, and other tech things that influence sharpness.

A steady surface

No matter how steady-handed you might be, if you want a sharp shot, you need to get your camera on a tripod. Even a cheap tripod, or a GorillaPod will do the trick. Heck, I've even put my camera down on a concrete post or a mailbox to stabilize it.

A remote shutter release

Usually we think about things like an IR control for remote

triggering, but there are other options like onOne's iPhone/iPod Touch option if you're around a local WiFi network. And there's always the good old trusty wired remote switch. The main thing to remember is that pressing the shutter release directly on the camera causes the camera to move just a little bit and in many situations, that's enough movement of the camera body to soften the image a little bit.

The Timer

This is really the reason for today's article. (You probably already know this but it's one of those things that, when somebody tells you, you find yourself saying, "oh, yeah. I knew that. I need to remember to do that next time." I

knew that my camera had a timer but I always thought of it as something to use when I wanted to be in the shot myself. I was in the Bahamas with my brother-in-law, George, shooting a night shot of our cruise ship, and I had put the camera on a post to stabilize it, but I just couldn't keep it still enough for a sharp shot with the long exposure necessary. George said, "Set your camera down and use your timer." That reminder was all I needed to hear. I turned on the timer to a 2 second delay, lined up the shot, pressed the shutter button, and let go of the camera. Two seconds later the shutter clicked and I had a great, sharp, low-light night shot.

A Photographer's Right

I recently stumbled across this little gem, a PDF document created by a Portland, Oregon, attorney which he calls *A Photographer's Right*. The attorney's name is Bert P. Krages II, and this is the link to his site where you can download his PDF:

<http://www.krages.com/phoright.htm>

As many of you know, photographers, especially photographers who own and carry a tripod, strongly resemble a terrorist threat. Actually, I have no real idea why so many people think it's a good idea to hassle photographers, but I know it happens all the time. I know that well-meaning law enforcement officials, security guards, and others, frequently interrupt photo shoots which they have no legal right to interrupt. Now, I don't intend to open

that can of worms here with long-winded discussions of what's actually the law and who has what rights, but I do have a bit of advice on how I approach the subject, even though I'm not an attorney.

A little 'off track,' but worth six minutes. I love a good, sarcastic jab at deserving folks and Stephen Colbert had me laughing out loud when he reported on a guy who was harassed because he was photographing trains. You've got to take 6 minutes and watch this right now! Then come back and read the rest of this article.

<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/217341/february-02-2009/nailed--em--amtrak-photographer>

Three Things Will Help In Most Situations:

1. When possible, obtain a

shooting permit in advance. As you'll find, most of the time a permit isn't necessary. Shooting photos of buildings from a public sidewalk, in most circumstances, is perfectly legal (though there are exceptions like military installations, etc.), but it's still a good idea to do what you can to see if you can get written permission from the city, building owners, etc.

2. Study the PDF provided by Mr. Krages and, if possible, consult your own attorney. The more you know, the better off you'll be.
3. Be nice. When you're confronted (notice I didn't say "if") just be as nice as possible to the security guy or the law enforce-



Vilma Walters

ment official on the scene. Yelling about your rights and becoming belligerent is pointless - even if you ARE right - because it will very likely ruin your day when you're taken to the pokey. And when everything shakes out and everybody discovers you were right after all, you've already got a cell

mate/pen pal you just spent hours with in the county facilities for half a day. And think about what might happen to all your precious gear while you're cooling your heels behind bars while the local lieutenant does a bit of legal research to discover just how right you were after all.

I printed a copy of Mr Krages' PDF and I carry it in my camera bag. It may turn out to be unneeded most of the time, and worthless in some circumstances, but you might just find it helpful if you find yourself having a pleasant, calm discussion with a deputy who was called to ask you to leave.



Jan Kaeter

9 Ways To Find Out About Your Competition

So, do you know? Too many small business people walk through their world in a fog. Don't get me wrong - I'm not trying to be nasty or mean with that remark. What I mean is that so many businesses are clueless as to what's going on with their competition.

We all want to do a good job for our clients. We all want to continue to learn to take better photographs. We all want to think we give our customers good value. But most of us has no idea what the competition is up to.

I get Jeff Gitomer's newsletter each week. Jeff is one fired up guy when it comes to sales. He has his finger on the pulse of the new customer we are all dealing with - regardless of your profession. Here are a few excerpts from his last newsletter:

Today's customer is....

- He's online. Checking out your website - and your competitor's website.
- He's Googling, not yellow-paging.
- He knows MORE about your competitor's product than you do.

It was the last line that got me thinking. Over the years in business, it was imperative for

one to know what the competition was doing. What were their prices? What was their style? What special products did they offer their customers? I always tried my best to be in the "know."

Today that just might be a little harder to do. Why? Because there are 10-20 times more photographers claiming to be wedding photographers working in your community. So you ask, "How in the world am I ever going to be able to check them all out?"

Here are my 9 favorite ways to check out your competition:

1. Pull up **Craig's List** and search for photographers doing business in your community. This might just be an "eye opener" for you, especially when you see photographers listing prices from FREE to a few hundred dollars.
2. Check **Yellowpages.com** for your community. It will pop several photographers - it popped 95 for me here in Saint Cloud, MN. Not all the listings have a web site listed, but many do and that's certainly a place to start to visit your local competition.
3. **The Knot** - you have to be a member to view their

listings but it's another great place to check out the competition.

4. Just **Google** wedding photogs in you area - lots will pop. Time to check them out, too.
5. Join your **local photographer's association** if your city has an active organization. It's a good place to rub elbows with like minded photographers. Heck, you may even make a friend or two who may recommend you when they're busy.
6. Send in your "**secret shopper**". OK, you might not like the idea but major companies from Best Buy to Circuit City, to Pier 1 Imports to Federated Department Stores etc. have been price shopping the competition for years. It's not fowl play, it's fair play if you want to know where you stand in the grand scheme of things.
7. Do a quick search over at **MeetUp.com** for wedding photographers. Depending on where you live, you may just find a group of like minded photog-



Denise Winkleman



THE IMAGE, A NEWSLETTER

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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota publishes a monthly newsletter which is distributed via e-mail. The newsletter will contain information about up-coming meetings, summaries of previous meeting, recommendations for photographers, announcements of photographic workshops, and other material that seems appropriate.

If you would like to send suggestions, comments, or other communications concerning the club or newsletter, please send your e-mail to rheath@tds.net.



Larry Grover

raphers who meet regularly discussing all things photography. Some of them may just be your competition.

8. Oh, this one is so basic. Hop in your car and drive around **visiting other "main street" studios**, although there are less of them these days. Just drop in and say "Hi". Hey, you might make a new friend or two along the way.
9. Visit your next bridal show as a guest and visit all the photographers displaying their work. Bridal shows are always fun to attend because they are the greatest single concentration of wedding photographers in one place at the same time. Just ask any photographer that's ever partici-

pated in one.

OK, if you've taken at least some of the suggestions I've outlined above, you've got some idea of what your competition is up to. What are you going to do about it? Do you need to revamp your products or service in any way to better compete in your area?

What can you do to differentiate yourself from the competition now that you have a clearer picture of who the competition really is?

How does your style, pricing, packages compare?

These are the kinds of questions you need to be asking yourself if you want to survive in

Lightroom 3 Beta 2 and Photoshop CS5

Adobe has just released the public Lightroom 3 Beta 2. Here's a quick summary of what's new in this release:

- Improved performance throughout the application for faster importing and loading of images.
- Native tethered shooting support for select Nikon and Canon DSLR cameras.
- Luminance noise reduction has been added to the previous color noise reduction improvements available in the first public beta for outstanding overall high ISO quality.
- Support for importing and managing video files from DSLR cameras for better overall photographic workflow control.
- Improvements to the import experience in the first beta to reflect public feedback
- Improved watermarking functionality from the first beta to reflect public feed-

back.

At the Spring NAAP Conference, Adobe also announced the existence of Photoshop CS5. I have been a pre-release tester for this product and I can tell you that it is going to be quite a program.

Adobe has just given us pre-release testers permission to announce its existence and to show before-and-after images using PS CS5. On April 11 at 10:00 p.m. CDT, Adobe will announce the new and upgraded features. You will want to learn about all the features of PS CS5.

Now I know that some of you have opted to use Adobe's Photoshop Elements. I am guessing that you will see corresponding improvements with that product as well, but then that is merely my prediction (guess).



Richard Heath