

Electronic flash unit is almost a necessity

Over the past few years, electronic flash units have been redesigned, miniaturized, and reduced in price so that everyone with a 35mm camera should consider having one.

Today, I'll discuss how flash units work. Later, I'll tell how you can use flash to improve your photography.

Basically, a flash unit (or strobe) consists of a covered reflector fitted around a gas filled tube which is ignited by an electronic charge. Electricity

comes from self-contained batteries (or AC) and is stored in a capacitor.

When you depress the shutter release, triggering devices in the camera fire the flash at the precise moment the shutter is open.

Instantaneously, the capacitor begins to restore more electricity in preparation for your next shot. This process is called recycling. Depending on the flash unit, recycling time will vary from a fraction of a second to as much as 15 seconds. When recycling time takes more than 15 seconds, it's time to replace (or recharge) the batteries.

Be sure to use the flash synchronization speed on your shutter speed dial, usually 1/60 second and indicated in red or orange.

THIS IS the speed you must set when using your flash because it synchronizes with the burst of strobe light. At faster shutter speeds, the focal plane shutter curtain would not have completely cycled and you'll only get a partial picture. It would be like looking at a movie screen with the curtains partially open.

Since electronic flash units fire at an average of 1/1000 second or faster, the indicated shutter speed on your camera isn't a factor in correct exposure. Adjustments are made only by changing the lens opening.

Thus, in a room where ambient light is weaker than the electronic flash (and this is almost always the case), slow shutter speeds don't result in over exposure or ghost images because aperture alone determines proper exposure.

In fact, the speed of flash is so quick that pictures taken with flash are often sharper because camera movement is negated.

Other advantages are convenience and economy. A small flash unit is easily stored in a pocket or camera bag where at one time bulky packages of flashtubes or bulbs had to be stowed. And once you have purchased an electronic flash, the only extra cost is buying batteries.

The cost per flash is negligible, however, because modern units can give



photography
Monte Nagler

you hundreds of flashes with one set of batteries.

The light output of a strobe is measured by a "guide number." The higher the guide number, the more powerful the flash unit. I recommend a guide number of at least 40 with 100 ASA film. This way, you'll be sure to have a strong enough flash.

MANY YEARS ago, the photographic industry introduced automatic electronic flash. Added to the flash unit is a sensor which measures light being reflected from the subject. This information is then relayed to a tiny computer

which senses when enough light has been bounced back, and, by means of a quenching circuit, cuts off all remaining light.

The main advantage of automatic flash is that you can photograph subjects at varying distances from shot to shot and get perfect exposure each time.

Dedicated flash units are becoming popular, too. These are units that are made to couple with the automatic features of your camera to give you a winning shot every time you depress the shutter.

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Monte Nagler's electronic flash froze the action of this shot at its peak. The picture of Dobble Palleschi in the arms of Matt DeShantz was taken at a recent Fairlane Town Center fashion show.

Artist enjoys winning streak

The Best of Show award from the Macomb Arts Council show which Jane McKenna won this month was the fifth in a row for this relatively new resident.

McKenna, a West Bloomfield resident, who works in pastel, oil and charcoal, won three awards last year — the Victor Klein Family Purchase Award at Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association; third place and honorable mention from the Fall Festival of Arts, Troy; and the Purchase Award from Northfield Hills Art on the Lake, Troy.

And not long before that she received the Best of Drawing award in the Michigan show at Paint Creek Center of Rochester.

McKenna studied at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association, Monroe Community College, Oakland Community College and privately.

Her work is available through Pictures and More of Farmington, Moriah Fine Art Gallery of Southfield and the Sales and Rental Gallery, Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association.

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