

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

Using filters captures the drama of clouds

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MONTE NAGLER

One subject that has always excited me is clouds. How often does a dramatic cloud pattern catch your eye and you find yourself staring skyward oblivious of other surroundings? We've all marveled at fickle cloud formations constantly changing in shape as they're nudged across the sky by gentle winds.

And we've all shared an ominous feeling at the sight of a fast approaching storm as black clouds threaten to disrupt a serene day.

Clouds come in a variety of shapes, textures and colors. They can be huge and billowy white or soft and wispy. They can be bold and dramatic, even frightening at times. Capturing them on film is truly exciting and will most definitely enhance your photographs.

How to better photograph clouds? First, learn to "see" them. Look for constantly changing shapes and patterns. See how clouds can become a colorful palette as the descending sun paints the sky. Notice how a receding black storm cloud serves as a sensational

backdrop for foreground objects being lit by the rays of an emerging sun.

Enjoy foggy, misty days, too. Some of the very best mood-filled pictures are shot in this type of weather.

Once you "see" the clouds, how do you enhance your photographs of them? Begin with a good sense of composition by using a low horizon line to accentuate the clouds and give your shot a feeling of spaciousness.

When shooting white, puffy clouds against a blue sky with color film, use a polarizer filter. Position yourself at a 45-degree angle to the sun and rotate your polarizer until you see maximum blue. The result will be an impact-filled photograph showing the white clouds contrasted against a rich, deep blue sky.

Add spice to your cloud pictures by using colored filters such as orange or red. Used at sunset, these filters with color film (slide preferably) will present you with truly dramatic results.

Black and white film "sees" white clouds and blue sky as an almost identical tone. Thus clouds become lost in the finished print. But filters in yellow, orange and red values will achieve cloud/sky separation for you.



Sky's no limit: Monte Nagler is always on the lookout for dramatic cloud formations. He found this one in Death Valley, Calif.

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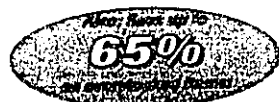


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