

DIVERSIONS

Panning can produce the look of real action

Most of us are used to seeing action shots where the subject is "frozen" at the peak of action. And, of course, there's nothing wrong with depicting subjects in this way. But if we could intentionally blur either the subject or the background to produce a feeling of motion, imagine the exciting results! After all, being creative as a photographer means that there may be times you'll want to transcend the face value of your subject and instead bring out its true essence.

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY



You can do this with action shots using a technique called panning. In short, panning means following the action

through the viewfinder of your camera and then shooting at a slower shutter speed than that required to stop the action.

Here's how it's done. Profocus on a spot in front of you where you'll want to make your final exposure. Stand firmly with the upper part of your body twisted in the direction from which the action will come. Follow the subject with your camera as soon as it's visible in the viewfinder much like a marksman will follow a moving target. When it reaches your pre-selected spot, gently squeeze the shutter release and continue following the subject through the camera as a sort of "follow-through." Your movement before, during and after the release of the shutter should be one continuous, smooth motion.

If possible, consider using a tripod when panning to help get a smooth, uninterrupted movement especially with a slower shutter speed.

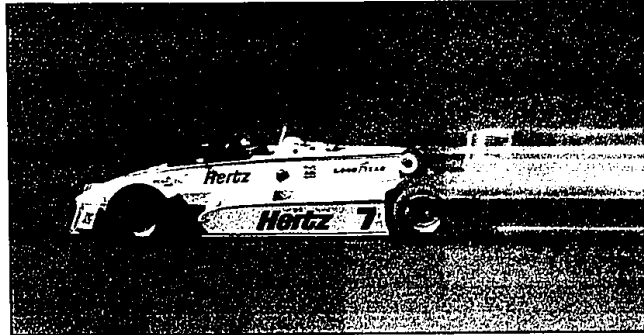
What shutter speed should you use? A good rule to apply is to

select a speed two increments slower than that required to freeze the action. For example, to take a pan shot of a speeding race car, use 1/125 second (normally you would use 1/500 second). To give a feeling of motion to a moving bicycle, try 1/200 second; a walking individual, 1/15 second. Remember that the slower the shutter speed, the more blur will appear in the finished picture.

Practice makes perfect. Before the actual shot, try following the action several times in order to get the rhythm of the motion. If you do, chances are you'll be rewarded with that special pan shot of which you can be truly proud.

As the old prospectors used to say: "Try your hand at panning." Your pictures will bring home the gold!

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills. You can leave him a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. His fax number is (248) 644-1314.



Golden moment: Combining panning techniques with a "speed" filter produced this exciting shot of a race car for Monte Nagler's camera.

Images from page B4

In the Lower Peninsula John Vachon captures the sneer of a little girl picking strawberries in Berrien County and a series shows everyday life at the migrant camps.

At a time when mainstream movies offered only caricatures of black Americans, Vachon caught the rich humanity of black migrant workers. Race is also a central theme of Arthur Siegel's pictures of wartime Detroit, scene of a major race riot and racial tension. Siegel brings that time vividly to life.

Other photos capture many distinctly Michigan images such as Arthur Siegel's atmospheric shot of Rouge plant employees voting on unionization and a picture of the then new Shrine of the Little Flower, home parish of the notorious Father Coughlin.

The wartime photos of working men and women in office and plant are interesting as architectural images and as reminders of patriotism in another troubled

era. The book ends with some wonderful photos of downtown Detroit, including a busy Cadillac Square, a crowded bus station, a Tigers-Indians game at Briggs Stadium, sailors on liberty and children at Interlochen.

In the Architecture

The Traverse City State Hospital is not a place anyone gets nostalgic about. The former state mental hospital was an experiment in humane treatment that went awry.

Photographer Heidi Johnson became enthralled by spooky images of the abandoned hospital campus buildings. Her book combines historic photos of the hospital with her eerie views of empty spaces, peeling paint, left behind "therapeutic devices," and deteriorating facades.

When the hospital opened in 1885, it was on the cutting edge of treatment for the mentally ill. In an interesting introduction,

Nancy Tones explains that psychiatric professionals at the time thought that architecture and flower gardens could help revive mental health. Great care was taken in the design of monumental hospitals in rural settings, literally asylums from a dangerous, cluttered world.

The theory proved false and recent trends have been away from any form of institutionalization, no matter how humane. Over the years, the hospital itself began to use more invasive methods and became less and less comfortable for its patients.

The book combines brief reminiscences of staff and patients with photos from the pristine beginnings to Johnson's ghostly after visions. The book also does a good job of illustrating how our view of mental illness has changed, though we still have a long way to go in providing proper care to those in need.

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