



photography

Monte Nagler

Flash unit will improve photos

Recently, I discussed how electronic flash units function. Today, let's see how you can apply flash to improve your photography.

First, some reminders: The burst of light emitted from a flash unit is the same "color" as sunlight. Therefore, always use daylight balanced film whenever you use your flash.

Remember to set the shutter speed dial to the correct synchronization speed, usually 1/60 second. Using any speed faster than this, unless you have a dedicated flash unit, will give you only a partial picture.

Ever see flash pictures of people and pets where red, beady eyes are staring back at you like something out of a science-fiction thriller?

This phenomenon, called "red-eye," is actually the reflection of the blood vessels in the eye resulting from the flash unit being too close to the camera lens.

Buying an inexpensive L bracket, available at all camera shops, will easily solve this problem. The flash is attached to the top of the L bracket which in turn is fastened to the camera. Separating the flash from the camera will restore those baby blues.

Always check flash-to-subject distances. If you're shooting with a manual unit, make sure you're within the distance limits.

With automatic strobes, note the distance ranges for each automatic mode and stay within these limits. Make sure, also, that you're using the aperture called for by your flash unit.

Remember, most flash units don't have the capability of lighting a subject beyond 30-40 feet from the camera.

Past this distance, the emitted light dissipates and your subject will be underexposed. Most people shooting flash pictures in giant stadiums are wasting film.

Here are some techniques to help you improve your flash pictures:

FILL-IN FLASH — This technique is used in sunlight to eliminate harsh shadows. For example, an outdoor portrait taken in direct sunlight will result in squinty eyes and deep, unflattering shadows. By placing the sun behind your subject and using "fill-in" flash, you'll get a natural looking picture with an added sparkle in the face.

Remembering to use your flash synchronization speed, select an aperture mode to correspond with an exposure that the natural light would call for.

BOUNCE FLASH — For soft, natural looking lighting with good modeling of features, tilt your flash unit so that the light is bounced off a white or light colored wall or ceiling before reaching the subject.

Automatic units will adjust for exposure with bounce flash in their own. With manual flash, you'll have to adjust for the extra distance the light has to travel.

DIFFUSED FLASH — To obtain a more natural look, the intensity of the flash can be reduced and softened by placing a handkerchief over the front of the flash unit. Add an extra f-stop of exposure to compensate for the diffusing effect.

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Monte Nagler took two photos of the same subject to illustrate his point. Direct sunlight on Mickey Nagler's face causes harsh shadows and squinty eyes in the photo at left. In the picture at right, however, backlighting from the sun and a fill-in flash appear to soften the light and add sparkle to her face.



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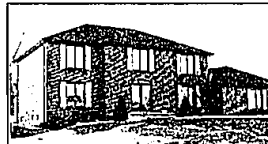
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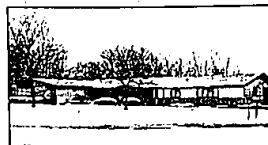
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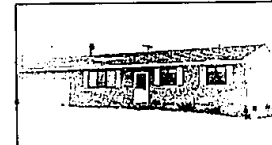
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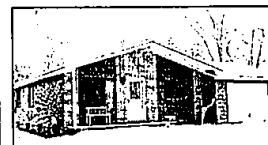
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