



F o c a l P o i n t

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Photo by Annette Conniff

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FROM YOUR EDITOR:

'Tis the Season cold and the flu season, that is! Thus, the delay in getting this issue of the Focal Point out earlier. My apologies.

In this Holiday issue you'll find some articles by Bob Knill, Arthur Ransome, Kay Muldoon-Ibrahim, John Bedke and Annette Conniff. And some great photos by members for you to enjoy.

Wishing you & yours a very joyous Holiday Season

Thanks to Bob Knill, Arthur Ransome, Kay Muldoon-Ibrahim, John Bedke and Annette Conniff for their contributions this month.

BCC Gets Out



Photo of Arthur and Kathleen in West Virginia by Kay Muldoon-Ibrahim



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Great Fun

By Arthur Ransome

There is a virus sweeping the land and it is extremely contagious. Catch it and you may never get rid of it. It spreads rapidly and there is no known cure. It goes by the name iPhoneography.



Many serious and professional photographers have caught the bug. However, for some reason several seem to be embarrassed to admit they have it. Phrases such as "great fun" are routinely used to hide just how much of a grip the bug has taken hold. But why raise a shield? Is it some kind of an excuse? Is it a way of saying "this isn't what I do for my serious photography"? Having spent small fortunes on "real" camera gear is it a way of justifying the expenditure? Why would we not want to admit that this is a serious part of our photography?

I have heard people say that it isn't "real" photography and therefore it can't be used to create art. People are entitled to their opinion, irrespective of how narrow minded it might be. I beg to differ though. Art is not about the tools we carry but rather how we use them to recreate vision. I don't much care if a photograph was taken with the latest \$7,000 full frame Leica M9, a \$50 toy camera, or the iPhone: if it creates impact and invokes a reaction then it has done it's job.





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Great Fun (cont.)

Take a look at the work of Chase Jarvis (<http://www.chasejarvis.com>) for example and then decide whether or not the iPhone can create art. Art shouldn't be discounted simply because of the tools that were used in its creation. The more I think about it, doesn't this argument sound familiar? Isn't this the same argument that "artists" used to discount photography as an art form when in it's infancy?

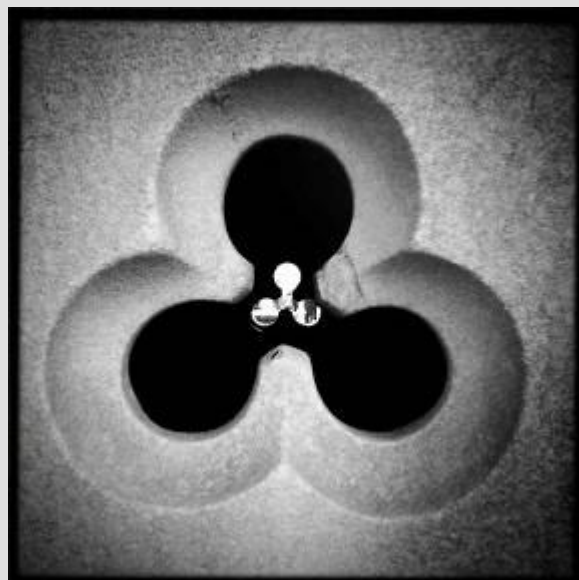


The arguments will continue but one thing I am absolutely, positively sure about though is that the iPhone is liberating. I carry my phone with me wherever I go. It is never more than a few feet away from me, and therefore I always have a camera with me. I have taken many pictures with my iPhone that I would never have taken otherwise, simply because I didn't have my "proper" camera with me.

The images were taken at Greenmount Cemetery in Baltimore City using my iPhone with the Hipstamatic App..... Great fun!!!

www.aransomephoto.com

www.aransomephoto.com/blog





F o c a l P o i n t

Make Your Own Photo Booth

By Bob Knill

With the holidays fast approaching, 'tis becoming the season for holiday parties. Liven up your next soiree with the help of a photo booth! It's cheap, you may already have the ingredients (and if you don't, here is a great reason to buy some new gear and start exploring the world of flash photography), and it's a ton of fun. All you need is a camera (which I am relatively sure you have), a hot-shoe flash unit, a remote cable release, a reflective umbrella, a light stand for the flash and umbrella, and a way to trigger your flash. If you're using a Canon 7D and a Canon speedlite, this can be triggered within the camera. Same goes for certain Nikon models using Nikon speedlights.



A photo booth is kinda like a self-serve car wash minus the car. And brushes. And water. And huge car bay. Okay, so maybe it's nothing like a self-serve car wash other than it being self-serve. The whole kit takes only a few minutes to set up and creates hours of entertainment. And I can almost guarantee you that the images become more interesting as the night goes on. Imagine that.



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Make Your Own Photo Booth (cont.)

The lighting consists of one speedlight shot it into a reflective umbrella. I had the umbrella set just barely off camera right and high. I like the look it gives...subtle shadows, soft, and enveloping. It was almost directly on-axis. Why not put it even more off to the side? I wanted to maintain some of that "true photo booth, straight on" light.



When adding flash to an exposure, there's a lot of variables to consider, but the most important thing to remember is that your shutter speed controls the amount of ambient light that bleeds into an image, while the aperture controls (for the most part) the flash exposure. Since I didn't want any of the overhead tungsten light in the room to show in the image, I set my shutter speed close to my sync speed of 1/250th. With an ISO of 200 and a shutter speed of 1/125, I assured myself a wide range of apertures that would still keep any ambient light out. So with those settings on the camera, that just left me with deciding what aperture I would use. I picked a flash-friendly aperture of 5.6 to start. This way, I could open it up or close it down without having to worry about ambient light filtering in.

I triggered my flash with a set of Pocket Wizards...one PW Plus II transceiver on the camera, and the other plugged into the flash. Pretty bombproof, those Pocket Wizards.

I chose to use my 50mm lens on a tripod set to manual focus, so the last thing I had to do was set my flash power. I started off with 1/4th power and it worked fine. I used my histogram to help determine the exposure. The first few frames came out okay, but the white wall behind my test subject was a little gray, so I opened the aperture a bit to increase my overall exposure. I could have cranked up my flash to compensate, but may have blown out the white wall.

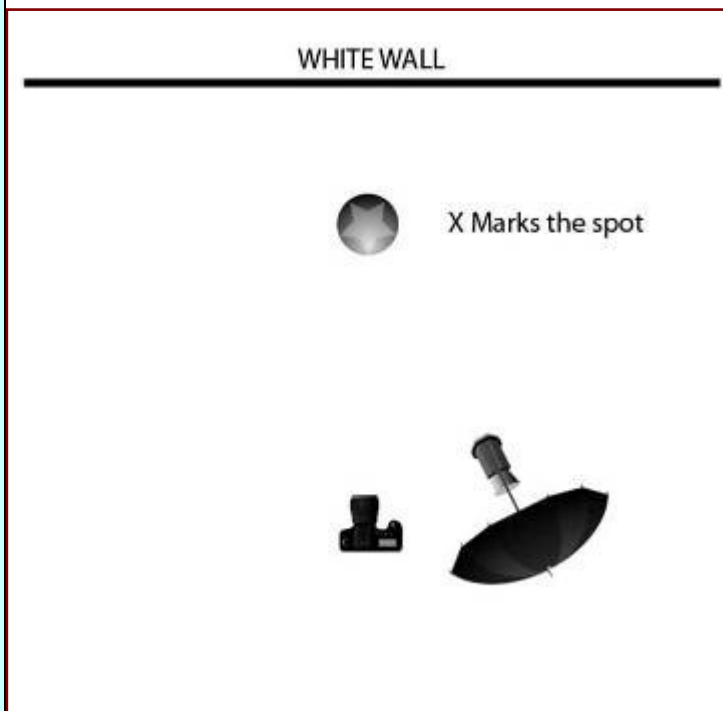
Here is where I ran into a few lessons learned. As I opened the shutter up, I gave a passing thought to the more narrow depth of field that would create. But with my camera- (and flash)-to-subject distance around 10-12 feet, I didn't think that another 2/3 of a stop would effect the depth of field all that much. I was wrong. Even with big "X" taped on the floor for the subjects to stand on, some of the shots came out a little soft...either the folks were too close, or too far away. But that also led to a few interesting photos!





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Make Your Own Photo Booth (cont.)



Finally, I set the self-timer to 10 seconds, and plugged in the remote shutter release. Make sure you set your focus to manual. This is important since the gig relies on the subjects pressing the remote shutter release and getting into position. If the focus point is not on a person (say they are standing a little off to the side of the "X") the camera will struggle to find focus and trip the shutter. This is where it's important to have someone stand in place, set your focus, leave it in manual mode, and Bob's your uncle! Self-serve photo booth. Throughout the night, party-goers came over to the setup, pressed the remote shutter release, got into position and ...well, you see the results. I also had my laptop on a stool tethered to the camera and fired off the Canon EOS utility that shows your shot at you fire. That allowed the crowd to see a full-screen shot as they were taken.

So what could have been done better? I might have gone a little wider...50mm didn't allow too

much room for groups. And certainly, I would have closed the shutter down more and bumped up my flash power to keep my depth of field sufficient. Bumping up the flash power here would have been okay since I didn't have to worry about a fast flash recycle time, as long as I closed my aperture to compensate for more light entering the lens. And lastly, file size. Luckily, I didn't run out of space, but had the party gone longer I would have had to change cards. I forgot to change out of shooting RAW. Next time, I'll set the camera to fire off medium-res JPGs so I can worry less about card space. But at least shooting RAW allowed me to change the white balance. The only post production editing done to the photos here was a mass white balance correction.

I highly recommend playing with this setup for your next soiree! And don't forget the props...like hats, wigs, and glasses! Having those accessible made it a lot easier for guests to step in front of the camera!

To recap: Camera on tripod with remote shutter release in place, lens (pre-focused) and set to manual. ISO 200 or even 100 would work. Shutter speed near your flash sync speed. Light shot into an umbrella set near the camera, up high and off to one side. Power will be based upon what aperture you use and how far your setup is from the wall. Shoot JPGs so you don't have to worry about swapping out cards. I included a diagram of the setup for your viewing pleasure.

Most importantly, have fun with it!!!



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Attention Gearheads

By Annette Conniff

Something different...attention fellow gearheads!

The first weekend of October I attended the Solomons Island Offshore Gran Prix on the Patuxent River in southern Maryland. I caught a cool shot of the *Miss Geico* race boat as she zoomed around the course. The *Miss Geico* is a 50 ft. Mystic powered by twin T55 turbines delivering 4000 hp giving her a top speed of 210 mph! Enough to get your heart pumping and your VR working on your lens!





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More BCC Gets Out

More photos of BCC's October outing to West Virginia by Kay Muldoon-Ibrahim:





F o c a l P o i n t

More BCC Gets Out





F o c a l P o i n t

Grand Canyon

John Bedke

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My favorite time for photography at the Grand Canyon is during rainy weather with a hint of sunlight.

I love the smell of the rain that mingles with the fragrance of Pine and Juniper trees on the rim. The Monsoon rainy season is late summer.



West view of Colorado River in Granite Gorge. (Lens information, DX size, 18-200 at 29mm f/11)



Alpen Glow light about 20 minutes after sunset, South Rim Village. (Two images stitched together, 18-200 at equivalent of 9mm f/11 on tripod)



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Grand Canyon



North view of the Colorado River and Palisades of the Desert to the right. (18-200 at 26mm f/11)



Moon rise over Walhalla Plateau. (18-200 at 26mm f/5.6)



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Grand Canyon





F o c a l P o i n t

Kudos

Jon Meyer recently had two of his photographic series published in the inaugural edition of an online ezine dedicated to psychoanalysis and culture. The ezine is called "*Off the couch: an ezine devoted to psychoanalysis and culture*" and the link is below. When you get to the opening page click on "Click here to read." The photography is on pp. 40-44.

<http://internationalpsychoanalysis.net/2010/12/01/the-off-the-couch-first-issue-is-here>

Congratulations Jon!



F o c a l P o i n t

Parting Shot



HAPPY HOLIDAYS !!!