

# THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



## The Newsletter of the Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Volume 9, Issue 5

1 May 2017

### Club Meetings and Other Bits of Information

The Camera Club of Central Minnesota will be meeting on the first Monday of each month with the second Monday of the month as back up starting in January 2017. We will meet at the Public Library in St. Cloud from 6:45 to 8:45 pm.

The club has monthly photo topics, image sharing and critique, hands on demonstrations of photographic gear and software, member online gallery links, discussions about photography, and is open to all.

#### Assignments

**Monday, May 1, 2017**, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is *Faces*.

**Monday, June 5, 2017**, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is *Construction*.

**Monday, July 10, 2017**, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is *Up Close*.

**Monday, August 7, 2017**, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is *Clemens/Munsinger Gardens*.

Remember, all your photo assignments and meeting dates are online at

<http://cameraclubmn.com>

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#### Our Responsibility to Remember

I've been a photographer since junior high. First, as a hobbyist, taking photos of my friends on my point-and-shoot camera, to remember the memories we were making.

It wasn't until about seven years later that I bought my first DSLR. And this opened up a whole new world for me, leading to my first professional DSLR, photographing for clients part-time.

It's important to realize your purpose as a photographer. I've written about the importance of looking back, and this goes right

along with that.

As photographers, it's our responsibility to remember. Remember the people closest to us, the adventures we have together and the lasting memories — good or bad.

The photographs you take of someone can literally be remembered for a lifetime.

In my case, just a few years ago, one of my friends tragically passed away. From the media coverage to the Facebook posts on his wall, there were so many lasting memories of this individual. There were a ton of photographs, courtesy of his friends and family.

As news came out of Jerry's death, I was reminded by a close friend of mine about a simple photograph I took of him — one that was quickly spread to the news stories and was used to remember his life.

I took the photograph at a friend's wedding. I don't consider myself a wedding photographer, but this was one of a handful of weddings that I have photographed.

I thought nothing of the photo at the time — it was of Jerry taking over for the DJ for a few brief moments — but now, that photograph is so much more powerful. It summarized Jerry's life in a way that was special to his friends and family. And it might very well have been the last professional photograph taken of him.

#### Photographs Become Others' Memories

Why do I mention this? As I stated above, it's our job as photographers to capture the moment. To remember for people.

You might think the photograph you capture at a reunion, corporate event, wedding or otherwise might not be important. After all, in my case, weddings are supposed to be about the bride and groom, right?



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## Our Responsibility to Remember (continued)

But what you might not realize is that regardless of the person, that photograph is a part of their story. It's because of this that we should try our best to capture everything as if it were the important part of their story — their lasting memory.



## How to Get the Most Out of Your DSLR

If you're like most photographers, you're probably planning your next purchase and looking for a new camera or another piece of equipment that will help you to capture those jaw-dropping images that you're after.

But while it's true that a new lens can often make a big difference — one thing that will make an even bigger impact on your photography is your knowledge of your DSLR. As Ansel Adams once said, "The single most important component of a camera is the twelve inches behind it".

Being able to use your camera effectively, and knowing the basics of composition will help you to capture some amazing images no matter what type of equipment you have.

Whether you're a beginner or experienced photographer, if you're looking to improve your photography, learning more about your camera can essentially open the doors to many more opportunities. If you are looking to get the most from your DSLR — or perhaps looking justify your next purchase — here's a look at some things that will help you to ensure that you're using your camera to its fullest potential!

### Read the Manual

If you haven't read the manual, your DSLR is essentially an expensive point and shoot! The manual is one of the most often-overlooked pieces that come with a camera, but it's one of the most important. Reading the manual will help you to become more acquainted with your camera, and will show you what all of those buttons and dials are for. Take the time to look through it, you should be able to find a copy online. It'll open up new opportunities for you

### Find Out What Features Your Camera Offers

Reading your manual should fill you in on this, but finding out what features your camera offers and trying them out can help you to get the most out of your camera. For instance, learning about burst mode, flash compensation, in-camera leveling, and time-lapse photography can all help you to capture the images that you're after. Some cameras also come with built-in HDR mode allowing you to merge exposures in camera.

### Master the Exposure Triangle

Learning about your camera's basic settings; shutter speed, aperture, and ISO, is another

important step that you'll want to take. One of the best things about a DSLR is having the ability to control the settings to create the exact image that you're after. While your camera's auto setting is pretty good at guessing, learning about the exposure triangle and understanding how the settings work together will help you to get the images that you're after.

### Get an External Flash Unit

Your on-camera flash can produce some unsightly results and has a knack for popping up at the most inopportune times! But this doesn't mean that you'll want to give up on the idea of a flash altogether. Instead, learn to use your flash. Yes, even your on-camera one effectively. You can purchase a relatively inexpensive diffuser to slip over the top of it to help disperse the light better.

Or, learn how to dial it down so it doesn't blind your subjects. You'll also want to consider investing in an off-camera flash. Having the ability to point the light where you want it will give you tremendous freedom when it comes to creating the images that you're after.

### Shoot in Raw

If you do any kind of post-

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processing with your images, you'll want to think about shooting in RAW. When you shoot in JPEG format, your images are processed in your camera. But shooting in RAW will keep all of the image data giving you a lot more flexibility when adjusting the exposure, white balance, and other details in Lightroom later. When you're first getting started with RAW, you may set your camera to capture both RAW and JPEG images, allowing you to have both images to share, and files to work with during post processing.

### Try Something New

Often, we get comfortable with one type of photography, making it easy to get stuck in a rut. To expand your horizons and gain more experience with your camera, consider trying something new. Experiment with different types of photography. Try your hand at landscapes, wildlife, or even street photography; or sign up for a class or join a photography group.

Challenge yourself to break out of your comfort zone... who knows, you just might find a new type of photography that you're interested in, and will learn a lot along the way.

### Shoot Often

In order to get the most out of your camera, you'll need to practice – a lot. Shooting different types of images, in varied lighting conditions will help you to put your knowledge to use and give you a better understanding of how your camera settings work. Remember: digital images are free to make, so don't worry about wasting images!

### Try a Prime Lens

While you don't always need a bigger or better lens to enhance your images, shooting with a different lens can help to broaden your skills, giving you a deeper understanding into how the settings in your camera are working. Prime lenses – lenses with a fixed

focal length – are relatively inexpensive and will present a great opportunity for you to experiment with using a narrow depth of field, as well as a fast shutter speed in low light conditions, helping you to capture some high-quality images.

While it's tempting to think that amazing pictures can be yours if only you had a better DSLR, it's important to remember that the best camera for the job is the one that you already own. Instead of assuming that you need a new camera because it would be somehow "better" or because it has more bells and whistles, take some time to familiarize yourself with all of the features that your camera has to offer.

You'll be able to tell when it's time for an upgrade when you've reached the end of your camera's capabilities and require something that will better assist you in capturing the types of images that you're after.



**DO YOU REALLY  
THINK THERE IS  
GOING TO BE A  
PERFECT CAMERA?  
DO YOU BELIEVE  
THAT WILL EVER  
BE OBTAINED?**

## I Finally Found the Perfect Camera

I finally found the perfect camera. This camera does everything you could ever need or dream of—from capturing the perfect frame and exposure to developing your skill and photographic eye.

I'm not talking about a video or multiple purpose camera that does it all. I'm talking about the perfect stills camera. A camera that helps you composite the frame. It knows the best time to press the shutter button for that perfect

image quality. The amazing thing is, and don't ask me how, but when I use it, it just knows the settings you need automatically. The depth of field, shutter speed, and ISO all sync perfectly.

But the most amazing thing to hear is how affordable it is. Are you ready? Here it is... it's the camera you already have.

Anticlimactic, I know, but it's true. The camera you already have is the best tool

to capture a moment. Do you really think there is going to be a perfect camera? Do you believe that will ever be obtained? If the perfect camera was ever made, companies would go out of business.

The perfect camera is the one you already have.

Be it cell phone, DSLR, mirrorless, rangefinder, medium, or large format. They all do their job and they all do it well. If you think you need that next whatever to become a better photographer, you will always



# The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

## I Finally Found the Perfect Camera (continued)



be running down a never ending rabbit hole.

I'm not here to stop you buying cameras, after all you are the reason the economy is running. But keep this in mind: camera operators care about the gear, artist care about the work.

If you love photographers like Robert Capa, Henri Cartier-Bresson, etc. do you really think they cared about what gear was coming out next, or is it possible they focused more on the story, the work, the craft? I would put my money on the latter. Sure they had their

preferred tools, but that's just it: a tool. Not a gateway to becoming a better photographer, just a tool.

If we didn't have the luxury of choice, we would all be better off. We wouldn't waste our money on gear that later we no longer use, or read reviews that are completely subjective aside from specs.

It took me a few years to come to the realization that gear is secondary. Who's to say the next whatever is perfect for you? Maybe the best camera is an old Canon AE-1, Kodak brownie, or Leica Illic. They all do the

same thing, and they all do it well: capture a moment. If you still need that extra dynamic range or more pixels to become a better photographer, I'm saddened. We need more artists in this world than technicians.

Perfect photographs do not move the heart, it's in the imperfections that we see beauty. Using one camera is the starting point to developing your style, vision and artistic voice. Be satisfied with what you already have, because it's not the camera that makes the photograph great, it's you.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU WATCH A FILM AND THINK, "IS EVERY LIGHT THAT GREEN IN A DARK ALLEY?"

## Split Color Portrait Lighting

There is a progression that takes place in the journey that is our lighting knowledge. At first it is learning the ways of ambient light (read: I don't want to buy a flash). As our career progresses we decide to buy our first flash and throw that sucker straight on the camera, only to question why the shadows on faces are gone... along with the artistic merit. Soon after that we discover a site like Strobist and point the flash at the ceiling and realize our first "Eureka" moment as a photographer. From there we buy our first off camera strobes and it is all downhill...

Off-camera strobes are something that I think should be classified as a different genre in the medium of photography. I say this because

they are a part of the knowledge base that some photographers will never need to understand to be successful (like photojournalists and landscape photographers). However, for advertising photographers, they are crucial to the workflow and often make or break an image. We often talk about how bringing lights to an image creates mood, but rarely discuss how it can destroy it, but I digress.

At a certain point in your career, you will reach a level of knowledge that must expand outside of its F-Stop constraints and into an on set Kelvin world that is not just a derivative of white balance. I am of course talking about gelling the lights. For the standard still photographer, this is probably a skill set that will not be critical to his

or her success, as it might slow down time on set and impede efficiency. However, if you ever want to work in Hollywood (or at least Los Angeles) you should be driving to the store to pick up a gel set before finishing this blog.

Now the reason I mention Hollywood is that movie and set lighting are more of a product of the color of a light, rather than its brightness. How often do you watch a film or TV show and think, "Is every light that green in a dark alley?" What you are taking in is actually quite special, for it is a color palette painting the on-screen action. If you want a nice example of this, watch *Man in the High Castle* on Amazon Prime. In it, you will see light coming through windows that appears like it



was lit with a neon sign... quite beautiful, really.

But you are probably wondering, "How do I incorporate this into my photography?" It is really quite simple: practice (after buying the gels at the store which you are currently driving to). There are multiple ways and theories behind approaching split lighting with color. One would be to perfect the hell out of your orange and blues (natural balance), while the other would be to master the effects set (your greens, yellows, reds etc.). Going with the natural gels route, you will find your lighting begins to complement the skin of your model. As an added bonus, you will also find that your specular highlights will also gain more depth and form will have more dimension.

The second approach, lighting with the non-natural set (effects colors), will give the image a unique artistic quality not found in the natural tones. Here is where it gets a little dangerous because (as is the case with adding lights) using the non-natural color set can destroy an image, especially a portrait. The reason for this is that we need to have context and balance for the eye of the viewer to not have an aversion. Imagine yourself standing in a room with a single green light bulb. While the light from it is probably fun, the reality doesn't strike you as normal, because light in our minds is white.

As with all photography tips, the answer of how to do this properly is the hard part, you need to learn both. This way, you will be able to tell the viewer's eye where the bal-

ance is with the knowledge built from the natural color gels, as well as create a narrative with the color set. Sure there are rules to be bent (or broken) when bringing color into lighting, but the fundamentals must be your base upon which you build.

One of the best ways to start learning your color-based light system is just like you did when you started lighting altogether, one at a time. From there, gradually build your repertoire, but be very respectful of the time it will take to do this. If time is not an issue, take a month to work with only one gelled light before adding any complexity to a schema that has added a dimension of depth that should be considered exponential in its most algebraic nature. The reason I say this is that where you can add a gel to a light, you can add two... are things getting confusing yet? Let's dive further down this rabbit's hole.

Beyond the factor of color, we can also dial in saturation in a number of ways. To a camera's sensor, the latitude of dynamic range will also affect the gamut that is taken in of your breadth of color. Think of it this way, throw a red gel on a light and crank it to 11 (figure of speech for blowing the thing out) and you are not really going to see red, heck, you're lucky if you see pink. Now set that very same light to a measured 18% and you will see a beautiful deep red that caresses the shadows with a feel that is on par with the gain of a sensor at high ISO.

Remember, what we have just done here is reflecting the variables that exist within one light and one gel. The next step along the way is anything you make it, be it counterbalanced color with offset lighting of varying power or the introduction of gobos to create diffused atmosphere, it is up to you.

Now go take the first step and snag two sets of the same gels... why two? Because you will probably melt the first one in a day (don't worry, as this is par for the course). Practice and patience are your best friends along this journey. Beyond what you have read here, I encourage you to shoot to your eye's taste, as this is the path to creating your vision.

Now for a couple tips to help you along the way:

Learn to light with no less than three heads at first. This way you will understand the purpose of a key, fill, and kicker before trying to modify them.

When practicing, underexpose so you can get an idea of the true color tone before cranking the light up and dialing out the saturation with watts.

This is the biggie.... **KNOW YOUR CAMERA'S SENSOR!!!** Not all cameras process color the same way. Some put heavier reception on the green or red channels, and knowing what tones will have more depth will complement your efforts.



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Membership is \$25 per year. Members should provide: Email Address, Mailing Address, and Phone Number.

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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota publishes a monthly newsletter which is distributed via e-mail. The newsletter will contain information about up-coming meetings, summaries of previous meeting, recommendations for photographers, announcements of photographic workshops, and other material that seems appropriate.

If you would like to send suggestions, comments, or other communications concerning the club or newsletter, please send your e-mail to [rheath@tds.net](mailto:rheath@tds.net).

## For Portraiture, Do You Use 85mm or 135mm?



One of the things that many portrait photographers and headshot photographers struggle with is figuring out whether they should get a 135mm or 85mm focal length for their portraiture. It's a tough question if you don't understand how one lens works vs the other option. In truth, they both do different things, but I'm not sure that there's a great reason why a photographer would want to have one vs the other option. They're both lens focal lengths that can do very specific things and do them very well.

So we break down which ones are best for you.

### Why Not Just a 70-200mm?

Generally speaking, 70-200mm f2.8 lenses aren't fast enough when it comes to an aperture setting for lots of photographers. But truthfully, I honestly think that many photographers will be just fine off with a 70-200mm f4 lens of some sort. F4 ensures that your subject's entire face is in focus and you can choose to go wider or tighter. Plus you've got a variety of other focal lengths you can work with. If you want something right in between, you can opt for 100mm if you wish.

But one of the best reasons why photographers go for the prime lenses has to do with their shallower aperture and typically their ability to be sharper and have better bokeh. If that doesn't matter to you and your clients aren't going to sit there demanding better bokeh, then read on.

Otherwise, I've truthfully solved your problem and you can probably close the article at this point.

### Quality: They're All Good

Now before I delve into this even deeper, you should surely know that pretty much every 85mm and 135mm lens options on the market right now are all good. There's no fantastic reason why you should worry about one vs the other. Good portrait photographers (and heck, even bad ones) can produce decent portraits with any lens on the market. They only become any sort of issue when you sit there and compare one vs the other.

Again, it really doesn't matter; just pick the one that suits your budget and needs.

### Your Style of Portraiture and Your Look

Now here's where I'm getting more into the nitty gritty of why you choose one lens vs the other. A lot of it has to do with your own particular style of portraiture. Do you like to work closer up to your subjects when it comes to an actual physical distance? Then you're most likely going to go for an 85mm focal length. Want to be a bit further away but more tightly composed on your subject? Then go for a 135mm lens. The latter also does a whole lot more to compress the scene and your subject depending on how you're posing and lighting them.

Then you have to consider ease of use. 85mm lenses can sometimes be tough to handhold and get crispy, perfectly sharp images without camera shake. 135mm lenses are even tougher to do this because by the time that the lens can get your subject in focus you've probably shook a bit and thrown off the focus. With a 135mm lens, I really recommend using a monopod or tripod.

