

Madison PhotoPlus the Photo Summit e-Photo Newsletter

DECEMBER, 2007

Photos by Candlelight

During the holidays, many photographers enjoy using the warm glow of candlelight to add sentiment to their photos. It's not hard to do, especially with a digital camera. With any camera however, consider whether you want a picture of the candle or a picture of what is being illuminated by the candle.

Consideration number one is the exposure. The flame itself requires very little exposure, while a much longer exposure is needed for everything else in the photo. Most automatic cameras have a difficult time correctly exposing for both the highlights and shadowed areas in a scene, but you can easily help it out.

The easiest solution is to eliminate the candle from the scene. If you only include what is lit by the candle, the camera usually gets the correct exposure. If you must have the candle and other subject in the picture together, arrange to have a reflecting device (outside the field of view) cast some light back onto the illuminated subject. A plain white napkin is enough to do the trick.

Consideration number two is the color quality of the scene. Candlelight is warm to the eye, and most digital cameras will try to make the scene either look like daylight or be very muddy. This is a situation where the camera's automatic white balance (WB) needs to be overridden. With the camera in shooting mode, do either of the following ...

... go into the scene modes (or shooting modes) menu by selecting "mode" or "scene" from your buttons or dial. Take the camera off "P" and browse until you see an icon for candlelight, and shoot the picture using that setting.

... go into the camera's main menu and find the WB setting area. Take the camera off auto WB and set it to either the light bulb or candle setting. If you are using a SLR camera, set your WB to 1500 Kelvin. (or as close to that number as possible).

Whichever way you choose to control your color balance, remember to set the camera back to its normal settings when you are done.

One more hint: pictures illuminated by candlelight often require long exposure times. You'll need a tripod (tabletop or full size) and a remote release. Using flash will destroy the mood and colorization you are looking for.

A Few Words from Bret

As some of you may know, my wife and I were lucky enough to welcome our new son into the world 6 weeks ago. He was early, and unexpected even until a couple hours before his arrival. (All are doing fine as of this writing). As a result, I was unprepared with a camera to record his birth.

Fortunately, family was able to arrive at the hospital in time to get a camera into my hands before birth. I was then able to get the camera with photos back to my family afterwards. Having already given them the logon information to the web site where I store my pictures, they then uploaded pictures for all to see within 6 hours of birth!

Literally within hours, we were able to allow friends and family anywhere in the world to see pictures of our happy event! A generation back, this was

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not possible. Each day, we are taking new pictures and uploading them for all to see, sometimes before even getting home! I am simply in awe as to how the digital / internet world has made it so easy to share our memories, practically as they are being created!

Of course, we are still making lots of regular prints. While having pictures online is great, having physical pictures to show will (hopefully) never go out of style.

These images have also been archived to CD / DVD media, with one copy in my home, and another with family. Decades from now, these pictures will be just as priceless as they are now.

Please forgive if this column jumps around a bit, as sleep is now much harder to come by!

We Recommend

As usual in our December issue, we offer some words from our sponsors - our stores. The Gift Guide which follows represents the feedback we get from our customers after they have owned the products mentioned. If our customers are happy and problem free, we pass that knowledge on to you as recommendations.

2007 has come and is almost gone. We all wish you a 2008 which will be happier and healthier than 2007 has been. We appreciate your support and look forward to sharing your enjoyment of this holiday season and throughout 2008.

Thank you.

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Most camera makers are doing away with viewfinder windows on their compact and pocket size point and shoot cameras. This may well be the last year to get one. Consider the Canon A720 IS and A570IS models that use AA batteries, or the SD850 IS if you prefer a very tiny camera which only uses rechargeable batteries.



If a viewfinder isn't a necessity, check out the Olympus Stylus 790SW, which is waterproof and shockproof (yes, that means you can drop it and Olympus will still repair it (if it needs repair) under warranty. And it comes in colors!



One of the best cameras of the year is the Panasonic Lumix TZ-3 camera. It boasts a 10 to 1 Leica zoom lens (28-280mm equivalent), true image stabilization and great image quality at a very affordable price. Yes, it also comes in colors.



Speaking of long zoom lenses, Olympus has an amazing 18X zoom camera - the SP-550 UZ. It has a 27-486mm (35mm equivalent) built in zoom which is very, very sharp. Coupled with the fact that the camera can use regular AA batteries, the SP-550 UZ is possibly the best camera to use while traveling.



This year there are several cameras selling for well under \$200 worth owning and giving: The FujiFilm FinePix Z5fd and Z10fd are excellent values, with large LCD panels and very simple to understand menus. They are certainly small enough to fit in a shirt pocket and feature outstanding Face Detection technology. (Yes, they also come in colors.)

The Casio Exilim EX-Z75 and EX-Z77 cameras are very well thought of by our customers who have bought them during the past several years. They have eBay and YouTube modes for directly uploading pictures and movies to favorite web sites. Great cameras at great prices and you guessed it ... great colors!



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Celebrate the Price War!

Digital SLR camera makers are competing for camera share during 2007, creating a price war where you (as the consumer) benefit.

For entry level and intermediate skilled photographers, we recommend the Pentax K100D Super. This SLR was the first to sell for under \$600 with zoom lens. The body is image stabilized, and Pentax has yet to obsolete ANY lens made since 1962. All older Pentax mount lenses will work correctly on a K100SD Super and will be image stabilized! (It will use AA batteries if you prefer, but sorry, it only comes in black.)



Olympus again has an excellent SLR - the E-510, with image stabilization and Live View (being able to use the large LCD panel on the camera back while shooting, not just in playback). Amazingly small and light, Olympus offers the camera with 2 zoom lenses for less than \$750.



Nikon and Canon both offer excellent cameras and lenses, but we don't have room to cover every product in this newsletter. We have them - come in and see them.

There's something new in Electronic FLash - the new EDF Series flashes from Promaster. These are the world's first dedicated flashes for digital SLR cameras that can be reprogrammed and upgraded to work with next generation cameras. These system flashes are priced hundreds of dollars less than many flashes from other companies.



Panasonic and Sanyo have super small digital camcorders this year, including high definition units for the new TV system. The Panasonic SDR-S10 is pocketable and weatherproof. The Sanyo VPC-HD2 shoots in high definition mode and also has a built in 5 MP still camera. Both are just a wee bit fat for a shirt pocket. Prices start at under \$300.

