

FP

FOCAL PLANE

AUCKLAND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

MAY 2003



WORDS FROM THE EDITOR

Hi everyone. Welcome to the May edition of Focal Plane. Hope you all had a great Easter break and I bet you are all getting back into the swing of being at work and gagging for the next long weekend. Those of you that took the extra three days between Easter and Anzac would be especially grateful. With the next meeting on May 15th being on macro photography, I thought that it would be fitting this month that I should include a wee article about the subject.

As always, I try my best to rummage up some relevent news articles and features for you to delve in to. I hope you like the film review. I guess One Hour Photo it is photography related in a way. It is well worth a watch.

I have to say that I am looking for someone to take over the reigns of the Focal Plane. Over the last couple of months, due to increasing workloads, it has been increasingly harder and harder to produce the Focal Plane on time. You guys have voted me in the produce the newsletter, and I respect that. If anyone out there would like to give it a go. Let me know. It is a great service to the club and It would be great to see it go to someone that has the time and energy on their hands to do it.



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Affordable Macro Photography

By Nico Mostert

Macro! It sounds small and expensive, believe me, it is, but how do I get started and what are the options available?

There are a few budget zooms with “macro” capabilities ranging from 28-80 zoom to 70-300mm zoom with 1:2 and 1:3 macro-focussing capabilities. They are a fraction of the cost of “real” macro lenses, but generally not durable and the quality is not always great. Nikon introduced their 80-180 macro zoom, but it is expensive! The prime macro fast lenses of 50 to 200mm ranges are excellent, but they are expensive and only give 1:1 reproduction.



There are other affordable options as well - like close focussing optics that screw in to your standard lens, extension tubes (hollow tubes that increase close focussing capability of any lens), bellows (the same principle as extension tubes), reverse rings for your standard lens and converters to a certain extent.

The good news is that you can use any combination of the above.

The drawback of close-up optical filters and reverse rings is that you can only use it for lenses with that specific diameter screw mount. Extension tubes, bellows and converters can be used with the full range of your existing lens collection.

I like combinations of converters, extension tubes, macro lenses and close focussing filters because I want far more than 1:1 reproduction. I like to fill the frame with something that is only a few mm in size. The simple rule is that the more glass you add the more quality and light will be lost.

A standard 50mm lens with a 50mm extension tube will give you 1:1 reproduction at the fraction of the cost of a 50mm macro lens. If you add a X2 converter you'll get 2,5 times the magnification. The possibilities and combinations are numerous. You can use this with the most basic SLR to the most auto-everything SLR. You'll have to use your advanced SLR in more basic modes. You'll lose autofocus, lens to camera information and most of your advance flash functions. The good news is that you do not need any of it. If you insist on keeping all the frills on your camera, your best bet is a prime macro lens. There are +1 to +6 diopter filters

for your macro lens and auto- extension tube sets if you want to do more than X1 magnification.

The rest of the tutorial will concentrate on manual approach for more than X1 magnification.

Magnification:

Standard 50mm at 0,5m focus setting on the lens and the following extension tube combinations.

- 12mm extension tube => about 0,35 magnification
- 20 mm extension tube => about 0.5 magnification
- 36 mm extension tube => about 0.83 magnification

You can use combinations of above. For example 12mm + 20mm + 36mm with a standard 50mm lens would result in about 1,5X magnification. Now if you add a X2 converter you'll end up with a more than X3 magnification and should be able to focus down to 4-5cm distance between lens and subject.

Aperture:

DOF is very limited when doing macro and DOF preview button is essential (also powerful light so that you can see). You'll create a few artistic exposures with shallow DOF, but for the most part you'll need f-stops of 8-16 for most X1 magnifications. When doing X2- X4 magnification exposures this increase up to f 16-64. (Maybe one of the only virtues of converters).

Shutter speed:

With the F-stop range as discussed, it is obvious that it is going to be very slow even with faster films.

For stationary studio work this does not matter and I like to use natural daylight and reflectors with or without fill flash. You can use shutter speeds as slow as you like with your tripod and cable release. If it gets down to the 1-20sec range you can even do a bit of light painting on the subject. You'll



still have to compensate for some light loss and reciprocal failure. It will differ for different lens combinations and you'll have to do a few test exposures. An easy solution is bracketing in the positive range of the exposure. If your fancy is mobile subjects, then you'll need to use flash to freeze the action.

The problem is that every addition of converters and extension tubes will result in progressive light loss and you'll have to make test exposures for each combo that you use. Start by what you think the exposure should be and bracket in half stops up. Once you know how much light loss each combination costs you in stops, write it down and you are set for fun. My memory is short and

I misplace most things that I write down, so I guess my light loss most of the time. Converters will increase your f stop by the factor of conversion. Each 1mm of extension tubes correlates with an exposure factor of about 0.1.

Example:

A 20 mm extension tube correlates with an exposure factor of about 2, or opening up 1 stop.

If you use TTL you can add 0.15 times the magnification for compensation. This is just a rough guide that I use for my Nikon set-up and I am not sure if it would be applicable for other systems.

The bottom line is do not give up and make test exposures and get to know your equipment.

Focussing:

Decide what magnification you need and set-up your simplest lens arrangement at the minimum focussing distance. Focus is achieved by varying the camera to subject distance. There is no room for autofocus in high magnification photography. A few mm movement is all that is needed. You can appreciate the problem of finding a fast moving bug in the viewfinder, let alone

Sorry this got a bit out of hand and should solve problems with insomnia if you got this far without falling asleep. I wrote this mostly from memory and personal experience. Feel free to question and disagree as I usually make mistakes. I could continue this with specific examples of problems of macro shots and how to avoid it. Feedback would

be appreciated, as I would like to avoid boring you to death. My apologies if some does not make sense, but English is a second language.

FILM REVIEW

One Hour Photo



The Film Fan Man's Review

You've got to give credit to Robin Williams. While other manic comic talents such as Martin Lawrence and Chris Rock seem incapable of creating a character that stands on its own (i.e., where you can't see the actor peeking out from behind the portrayal and doing a little wink nudge), Williams got that out of his system around the time of *Mrs. Doubtfire*. While not abandoning his comedic roots (or his appearances on HBO), Williams proved he has genuine acting chops in such films as *Good Will Hunting* and *What Dreams May Come*. Earlier this year he played a killer going mano a mano with Al Pacino in *Insomnia*. Now he sends the creep-o-meter right off the scale in *One Hour Photo*, the second feature film from music video and TV commercial director Mark Romanek

(1985's *Static* was his big screen debut).

Williams plays Sy Parrish, an obsessive photo clerk at the local Sav-Mart. He is attentive to his customers to a fault, especially to Nina Yorkin and her eight-year-old son Jake. We first come to think that something is rotten in the state of Denmark when Nina brings in film of Jake's birthday party. She asks for double prints; Sy marks a "3" on the work order.

It turns out that Sy has more than a passing interest in the Yorkins, as the depths of his obsession are slowly and meticulously revealed. Their ideal family life is everything that's lacking in his. As the Yorkins' Kodak moments unspool before Sy's eyes, he muses that "No one ever takes a photograph of something they want to forget." All the Yorkin photos show a nice, happy family.

But things are not always as they seem.

One of the best parts of the film is that you can almost tangibly feel Sy's loneliness and frustration. When his manager tells him "These aren't your customers, they're Sav-Mart's customers," it really hurts. And one particular sequence where Parrish wistfully considers himself "Uncle Sy" packs a double-barrelled punch that isn't fully understood until the final credits roll and you have the time to process everything that's gone before.

I can't say enough about Robin Williams' performance here. His character is every bit as suppressed as Williams is extroverted in real life. It would be the understatement of

the year to call him a tightly wound spring; he's more like a time bomb with an LED counting down to single digits. Williams communicates Sy's internal turmoil very effectively with his pursed lips, furtive glances and occasional outbursts.

The supporting players are just as good. Connie Nielsen and Michael Vartan are suitably all-American as the Yorkin parents (Nielsen reminded me at times of Catherine Keener, and I say that as the highest of compliments). Dylan Smith makes his feature film debut as their son Jake. Rounding out the principal cast are Erin Daniels as Will Yorkin's business associate Maya, Gary Cole as Sy's boss at the Sav-Mart and Eric La Salle as the detective who Sy tells his story to.

Perhaps even more impressive than the performers is the man who got such great performances from them. Director Romanek understands how to burrow deep into the mind of a man such as Sy and does so with drill-like precision. His pacing fits the material perfectly and is measured without being tedious. Romanek's use of color and perception is remarkable for someone coming from the slam-bang, quick cut world of music videos. (For every successful film director who started in commercials, I'll bet there are thousands of wannabes who never even earn the chance to have a multi-million dollar failure, let alone foster one on the movie going public.) Check out Sy's apartment and compare how it looks in the beginning to what it looks like in the end. I'm already planning a second viewing of the film to appreciate all the stylistic touches; I was so caught up in the plot the first time,

I'm sure I missed a bunch.

All that said, I had a couple of minor problems with the storyline. For one, Sy is telling the detective what happened... yet there were scenes and conversations that he would have had no knowledge of. Plus, if Sy were guilty of the massive quantity of pilferage as his manager accuses him of, wouldn't someone have noticed the thefts a long time ago? There also appear photographs that beg the question, who took them? And, without giving away too much, the ending – while striving for a certain ambiguity – is a little too ambiguous to be as effective as the rest of the picture.

Still, One Hour Photo earns eight out of ten stars, and I find myself still thinking about it weeks after seeing it. Let's just hope that Mark Romanek doesn't take another 17 years between features!

Bikkit.com

FOCAL NEWS

New Members

I wish to to put out a great warm welcome to the clubs newest members. They are:

Dave Barker
Robin Brown
Loise Sweet
Richard Carpenter

I wish you all the best with the club and

hope you all have the greatest time while you are all with us.

Overdue Fees

Just a reminder to some of you out there (including myself), that this years fees are still overdue and need to be paid. As a result, only current paid up members are allowed to submit their work at the monthly meetings. They can be paid either at the club next week or posted to Peter Patten at 51 Karaka Street, Takapuna, North Shore City.

For Sale

Peter Merrick is selling his darkroom equipment and literature to go with it. If you find you want to get into bakroom work, this could be a great opportunity. Contact Peter on 6200 222 or email president@aps.net.nz

Exhibitions

Magnum

Our Turning World

This fantastic exhibition is still on at the War Memorial Museum until June 15.

Northcote Shopping Centre.

East Timor

A photographic portrait by Gerald Lopez. Until 17 May.



**AUCKLAND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY
SINCE 1883**

Meeting on the 3rd Thursday of every month 7.30pm

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