



Shutter Release



October 2011

Welcome to October! Crisp nights, crunchy leaves, pumpkins in the field, spooky stuff at the end of the month (and candy, lots of candy). And at the club, here's how October will go, plus some reviews of September. If you missed the September newsletter, please read a copy as there is lots of basic information there, especially for new members.

Program

October 4: Guest Benjamin Luk, a local professional photographer, will talk about professional photography with an emphasis on working with models and clients, and he will bring some cameras and lights to look at too. **Not** just for wedding photographers or "wannabe" pros; this is all good information for general shooting! Ben is an enthusiastic speaker, so don't miss this one!

October 18: Member sharing and **print** competition. Send **two** member sharing images, any subject, via email to photos@nwphoto.org by the end of October 16 (Sunday). Bring **one print**, 8X10" or larger, to the meeting, your choice of subject, black and white or colour. Please be sure the photo has the title and your name on the back, and it helps if it is mounted on something firm, even the side of a cereal box. A matt gives a better presentation though. Relatively inexpensive matts can be obtained from places like Michaels, London Drugs, etc.

More program details on the website (www.nwphoto.org) or email program@nwphoto.org.

Outings

The solution for where to go and what to shoot, outings organized by someone else answer all the "what shall I do today" questions and get you out doing photography, giving you some good material for competitions and member sharing. Last season, we had feedback from people who regretted missing the outings once they saw the results posted, and this past outing will probably be no exception.

Saturday's "Foot and Mouth" walk on Main Street was, as Jim put it, a "smashing success". Five people (Robert, David L., Jim, Shona and visitor Cynthia) plus Justin, took a chance on the weather, and not only did the rain stop a few minutes after we started, there was sunshine too. We took our time ambling from 1st to 49th, looking for items on our lists and shooting an incredible range of architecture, signage, graffiti, people, windows, dogs and many very weird things. The Autumn Shift Festival was setting up between Broadway and 12th, adding to the experience. A couple of us stopped in later as it was in full swing and got some very interesting shots. Lunch was excellent and the buffet good value, but it was getting later by the time we ate, so we didn't have as much patience for the food photography as we should have.

For any of you who passed on the outing because of the weather, next time just give it a chance. Even if it had rained, reflections, splashes and wet dogs would have made for some great shots. South Main even has a page in the latest BCAA magazine!

The **next outing** is **October 22** and is called **Tragically Famous**. As background, each year that Justin has been Outings Director, we have had an “almost famous” outing. (Check “Past Outings” on the website for examples). Something like the album cover project last year, this year also requires forming up teams (you can pick your own) and creating “a tragic newsworthy event that has, will or may have happened.” You are responsible for planning location, actors, sets, props, costumes, time of day for available light and of course the subject. It must be presented as a print bigger than 8x10 **with a suitable caption**. The more enthusiastic may wish to incorporate it as a front page of a fictional rag. This will require some planning, so start working it out now! Should be good fun.

One more reminder about outings – You are welcome to upload as many photos as you like to the Past Outings section of the club website. Sign in as a member, go to Activities/Past Outings, find the outing gallery you want to upload to, and you will see a little camera. Click on the camera, navigate to your photo location(s), give them a title and a descriptive note if you like. Keep them a reasonable size: the standard 1024x768 makes it easy and works with most monitors.

Outing questions: outings@nwphoto.org or call Justin at 778-891-4774. Technical uploading questions: webmaster@nwphoto.org.

What you missed

Our guest for the first meeting was Allen Bargaen. Past-president of CAPA National and creator of the latest manifestation of CAPA’s evaluator training program, Allen is an excellent speaker. We asked him to comment on an assortment of images chosen from the entries to the three online theme competitions that closed during the summer break, with specific attention to suggestions as to how they might be made more “competition” quality.

The September 20 meeting was member sharing and digital competition (results in this issue). We also saw the results of the recently closed Lined Up theme.

Dues

Visitors are welcome to attend two or three meetings before making a decision to join. For returning members and new members, dues are set at \$45 this year. Please pay David, our Treasurer, as soon as you can so we can budget for the year.

Themes

Current running themes are:

On the Wall opens October 1 and closes **November 6**

Film Noir closes **November 13**

Because some of our themes were longer running, Photo of the Month displays may not be as long for some themes as others, and we apologize for the shortening of your moments of glory. Winning images do stay on the website (Themes: where everyone can see them) and also under your bio (where members can see them). Questions: email themes@nwphoto.org. (Use that email also if you mispost, double post, etc.)

Digital Slide Show course(s) October 22, 29, 30

If you have had any experience at all with “slide shows” beyond click “and this was me in front of...” click “and this is John in front of...” click “and this was a view of x but this guy walked in front” click..., you know that whether you use slides or digital images and software, creating a “wow” show, such as you might have seen at Burnaby Showcase or the Pacific Digital annual presentation, can be frustrating.

If you have had no experience but would like to go beyond downloading and filing your holiday images or life experiences, you might wonder where to start. Or, even if you have produced shows, you will not believe how much great information you will get out of these courses.

There is an upcoming opportunity for you to learn to produce impressive shows using Pro Show Gold. On October 22, 29 and 30, Derek will be presenting his Animatography series including Pro Show for Beginners, and Storytelling in the Digital Age 101 Physiology and 102 Psychology. These are outstanding value for \$85/day for **one** day or \$65/day if you take all three (plus tax of course). I guarantee these workshops will not only change the way you create shows, they will make you much more comfortable with the available tools and when and how to use them. And I’m not just saying this because Derek is a club member; many of our members have taken his courses and they are highly recommended.

All held at the Best Western Coquitlam Inn. Classes are small, so enroll now online: <http://courses.photoclans.net/AN101.php> where you will also find detailed course descriptions.

Competition Results

Results of the September 20 digital competition are:

Title	Artist	Scores			Total	Top 3
An Exotic Place Close to Home	Robert Jost	5	6	5	16	
Thorns Among the Lilies	Cathy Snyder	8	8	7	23	3 rd (tie)
Corvette Logo	Peter Ellis	7	6	5	18	
Gekko Stare	Nancy Matheson	9	8	9	26	1 st (tie)
Ice Cold Wonderland	Mike Garson	8		8	24	2 nd
Sunbrella	David Love	6	5	6	17	
Mammoth Curling Rocks	Keith Griffiths		7	8	23	3 rd (tie)
Med Look on Main	Shona LaFortune	7	6	9	22	
Dark Passage	Jim Furey	8	8	10	26	1 st (tie)
Waiting at the Station	Karen Justice	6	6	10	22	
Heavy Load	Cynthia Roberts	5	6	7	18	

Good job, everyone. Special thanks to our club judges: Barb, Keith and Mike (NOT in order of above, by the way; we’re keeping that secret) for putting themselves “out there” and for their comments. Let’s see more entries for the October 18 **print** competition!



Dark Passage © Jim Fury



Gekko Stare © Nancy Matheson

1st place images from September competition

Evaluating and Scoring and Commenting – oh my! (Shona LaFortune)

For the past several years, our club has **not** used outside judges, but has done our in-club competition evaluations, well, in-club. That means that most of us (since we use 3 judges per competition) will be asked to step up and be the “judges”. This can be an intimidating challenge for any members who are new to camera club judging. (Or sometimes even if they are!)

Relax, we’re all friends here. The comments we give to our member sharing images, and for the online Theme competitions, will give you some guidelines. There is a very short article on our website (Resources/Articles) on how to Critique. All this is just a starting point. It takes practice! In our club we score and then later we comment. Here are a few tips to get you feeling more confident:

Take a deep breath and really look at the image. What stands out (good or bad)? Does it have perfect “capture the moment”, a mood (calm, exciting, mysterious), distracting background, over-sharpening or...? If it is a nice shot you might see on a calendar or postcard, you might consider it “average”, so you might score it a 5 or 6. If it has extra good elements, start adding points. If it has technical faults or compositional issues, deduct points. (However, within clubs, we don’t usually give a score lower than 3 or 4 - it can’t be **that** bad.) Is it a subject of general interest? Posted family portraits probably aren’t meaningful except for the family, but a close-up of your old grandmother might show character that everyone can relate to. If it has filtration or manipulation, does it suit the image or is it there for its own sake (ie if you see the filter before the meaning). Don’t be afraid to give a perfect 10 if you think it’s a great image. That usually applies to something that’s creative, that shows you something old in a new way, has a lot of tension, etc. If you keep in mind that you should be able to **justify your score**, you will have your comments ready in your mind. If you can’t justify the score, take another look. Maybe you are missing something.

When it is your turn to comment, start by saying something positive about the image. You notice our online comments ask for what is strong about the photograph and then what could be “improved”. Every photo has something positive, especially if it made you think “wow”. Even if it is the 500th misty rose photo you have seen in your life and looks like a Hallmark[®] card you would pass over, consider that the photographer may be new and very proud of this image. And creating such an image does take some skill. Comment therefore on the light, appropriate soft background, balanced

composition... Very often there is nothing really **wrong** about an image, except that it is, well, ordinary. It is hard to express that in words without sounding like a jerk. My favourite is something like “This photographer has illustrated that he/she has the technical expertise to capture a scene perfectly. However, as it is an often-photographed subject, I hope this photographer will work in future to add his/her personal stamp to make this uniquely theirs.” That’s good advice for all of us, actually...

Then address any technical/composition issues **specifically** (don’t say “under-exposed”, explain why). At this point, some people find it difficult to come up with something **constructive**. I’ve heard quiet asides like “don’t take the photograph”. Obviously, newer photographers are looking for some recommendations without having their hearts broken. Borrow some tact if you need to, and make the comments as **helpful** as you can. Share your knowledge and skill! That’s what we are all here for!

Remember, you are evaluating the image that is up there, not the one you would have taken. If you start off by saying “I like...” you are talking about **yourself**, not the image. Try to understand what the photographer is trying to say before suggesting they back up, move in, etc. If they should move in, explain that you don’t know what the subject is, or that the subject is lost in the details. Backgrounds, for example, should add to the main subject/story or be unobtrusive.

This is a massive subject, and no one will always agree with the judges. Sometimes even the judges have second thoughts! So if you are the photographer on the receiving end, don’t take the comments too seriously. Try to learn from them, but if you are happy with your work, stick to it. It’s your artistic expression so take the comments into consideration, but don’t take them personally!

And if you are the evaluator, do the best you can. If you are in the audience, best to keep your comments to yourself until/unless there is an opportunity for everyone to comment.

Let’s try one:



First impression? What is it about? Family having a picnic in a pretty garden? If so, is all the background necessary? They are not recognizable, so they are just part of the scene. A garden being used is better than an empty garden, right? The trees give some framing. Does the family disappear into the background? Does it matter? Cropping the left would remove some flowers. How about cropping the bottom – would it help focus attention on the people? Would this win a competition? No, it’s a little too “ordinary”. Is it a little too cluttered with information? Is the centre of interest clear?

How would you score this? I would suggest perhaps a 6 or 7. It’s a nice photograph with a pleasant mood, but it has challenging exposure issues. Although it has an extra element that brings it over an “average” shot, it’s not much above that. Now you have a score. You **could** say “A lovely scene that captures the mood of a family enjoying a sunny day. The hard light did create a few exposure issues, and the family is a little lost in the background. Perhaps consider cropping some of the dark foreground to force the viewer’s eye a little more to the family.” Or, if you disagree with those comments, answer the questions in your own way and make your comments. See, wasn’t that easy?

Now, “Dark Passage” competition winner (top of page 4) deserved that 1st place score. It’s dramatic, compelling, moody, futuristic, takes your imagination on a walk... By the way, if you can’t find anything to improve, it’s OK to say so, but you better not be giving it a 6!

Last but not least, the Canadian Association for Photographic Art has evaluator training programs coming up November 13 (Kamloops) and March 10 (Fort Langley). Information: training@capacanada.ca. If you decide you like evaluating, this course gives you a start judging for other clubs in the lower mainland, and giving you an opportunity to see a wonderful assortment of photography. And it’s useful for learning to select your own work for submission too!

Thinking Ahead

As mentioned previously, we will compete in the digital competition “Fraser Valley Invitational” this spring. The theme is “Street Photography”, so keep your eyes open if this is not your normal type of photography. There will be lots of clubs competing, so try to capture a perfect moment.

Next issue: Titles: Do they matter? If you have comments on this, please write shona@nwphoto.org and I’ll include them in the article.