



The View Finder



Catawba Valley Camera Club

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Using Live View for Better Still Images

By Paul Burwell

Burwell School of Photography

Do you have one of those shiny new cameras with the “live view” feature on it? You know, where you can see in real time what your camera sees through its lens? A lot of people seem to assume that it is mostly useful for recording video on your camera, and it is darn useful for that, but there are a myriad of things a still photographer can use live view for as well.



Purple Finch: Canon 5D Mark II, Canon 500mm F4L IS, 1.4x Extender II, 2.0x Extender II @1400mm :: 1/800th of a second at F14, ISO 800 :: Live view used in place of mirror lockup function to reduce vibration during exposure

An excellent use of the live view feature on your camera is to help you focus. Many photographers rely on the autofocus feature of their camera but it’s been demonstrated that manual focus will often result in more accurate focus than the

camera’s autofocus system especially under difficult conditions. Manual focus isn’t optimal if you’re photographing action, but if you’re photographing a landscape or some sort of still life or macro shot, you can often improve on the camera’s attempt at autofocus by doing it yourself. Many cameras offer the ability of zooming in on the live image 5x, 10x or more which really allows you to fine tune your focus.

Depth-of-field, or the amount of the image that is in focus in front of what you’ve focused on and behind what you’ve focused on, can be very difficult for photographers to imagine. And even though many cameras have a depth-of-field preview button (usually found somewhere around the lens mount) use of this feature while looking through the viewfinder leaves you with a very dark image that makes it hard to see your subject let alone what is and what isn’t in focus.

Instead, turn on live view and engage a feature called exposure simulation. Compose your image and adjust the aperture you want to use. Depth-of-field is controlled through the aperture setting along with the distance to the subject. When the depth-of-field preview feature is engaged you can watch in real time the effects that

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How To Tell If It's The Gear Or Your Skill

Posted by David Peterson on 13 May 2012



In almost all cases, it's not the gear. It's you. The great photographers of history had much less gear than you do,

One question I always get asked is how much your gear matters. Does your photography improve all that much when you take that leap and purchase a much better camera, or do you only need so much? Having thought about this quite a lot, I devised a simple way to test whether it's you or your gear, and I came up with some surprising results. Do you want to know what really makes great photographers great? It's not what you'd expect.

Are you still making basic mistakes?

Certain basic mistakes are

entirely skill-dependent, and if you are still making them, new gear probably won't help you all that much. A new lens won't help you get the composition right. Neither will a faster camera or a better memory card. None of the following mistakes depend on gear, so if you still find yourself doing them, focus more on your skill and less on what to buy.

Basic mistakes:



Always placing the subject in the center of the frame. Doing so usually kills the intrigue and mystery of the image, forcing your viewers' eyes to stop dead on your subject. Don't buy a new camera. Try placing your subject anywhere other than the center of the frame, and you'll notice a big improvement.

Always using flash. Excessive flash usage can alter or destroy the colors in your image. Try to take the picture with nothing more than the natural light you have available to you. If you have no choice but to

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Calendar of Events



- June 6 **Projection Competition (2)** Hands, 7:00 p.m.
- June 20 **Projection Competition (2)** Open, 7:00 p.m.
- June 23 **Field Trip:** Frying Pan Mtn-Fire Tower, Donny Teague
- July 4 **Favorite Image for Collage**
- July 18 **Print Competition (2)** Reflections
- July 21 **Field Trip:** All-A-Flutter Butterfly Farm High Point, NC
- Aug 1 **Projection Competition (2)** Union Square Cannon
- Aug 15 **Print Competition (2)** Open, 7:00 p.m.
- Aug 18 **Field Trip:** Historic Brattonsville, SC Cynthia Harmon



The Great Depression Quiz

After a decade of roaring prosperity, North Carolinians summon their strength to face economic disaster.

1. The decline in price of cash crops hurt North Carolina farmers during the great Depression. In 1919, tobacco sold for 86 cents per pound but dropped to what price by 1931?
 - A. 9 cents
 - B. 25 cents
 - C. 35 cents
2. Industry boomed in North Carolina during the 1920s. Furniture manufacturing reached record levels in 1929 but declined by how much by 1933?
 - A. Half
 - B. One-third
 - C. One-quarter
3. Banks failed at a rapid pace during the Great Depression. In 1930 alone, how many banks failed in North Carolina?
 - A. 50
 - B. 120
 - C. 88
4. To combat poverty and malnutrition in rural North Carolina counties, Gov. O. Max Gardner introduced what program to encourage subsistence farming in 1929?
 - A. Live Well
 - B. Live-at-Home
 - C. Eat Fresh
5. To help balance the budget, the North Carolina General Assembly passed a sales tax in 1933 on all items except food staples such as flour and meat. How much was this tax?
 - A. One percent
 - B. Two percent
 - C. Three percent

Answers on page 6

Sent in by Robert Hambrick III

Priest's Retirement Dinner

A priest was being honored at his retirement dinner after 35 years in the parish. A leading local politician and member of the congregation was chosen to make the presentation and to give a little speech at the dinner. However, he was delayed, so the Priest decided to say his own few words while they waited: 'I got my first impression of the parish from the first confession I heard here. I thought I had been assigned to a terrible place. The very first person who entered my confessional told me he had stolen a television set and, when questioned by the police, was able to lie his way out of it.'

He had stolen money from his parents, embezzled from his employer, had an affair with his boss's wife, taken illegal drugs, and gave VD to his sister. I was appalled. But as the days went on I learned that my people were not all like that and I had, indeed, come to a fine parish full of good and loving people.'

Just as the Priest finished his talk, the politician arrived full of apologies at being late. He immediately began to make the presentation and gave his talk: 'I'll never forget the first day our parish priest arrived,' said the politician. 'In fact, I had the honor of being the first person to go to him for confession.'

Moral: Never, Never, Never Be Late!



Some pictures from the May field trip to Duke Gardens



Photo by Rick Bell



Photo by Rick Bell



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selecting different apertures has on the image's depth-of-field on a nice bright display. This allows you to get creative by pre-visualizing how much of your scene is or is not in focus.



Funnel Web spider with grasshopper prey :: Canon 5D Mark II, Canon 180mm F3.5L Macro Lens @ 180mm, Canon MR-14EX Ring Flash :: 1/100th of a second at F10.0, ISO 100 :: Live view used for fine focusing

White Balance (the color of light in a scene) is another setting that is hard to visualize ahead of time. And unfortunately, it is something the camera often has difficulty figuring out on its own. One situation that I've found where almost all digital cameras have difficulty calculating the proper white balance is when the subject is in the shade on a nice sunny day. Digital cameras seem to uniformly choose a white balance setting that is too cool (too much of a blue cast). Switching on live view can allow you to dynamically use the camera's features to adjust the white balance until you verify the white balance that you've chosen will render the images the way you'd imagined.

I've heard it argued that you shouldn't rely on the live view preview on the back of your camera for setting

white balance because it isn't a calibrated display, and that's true, it isn't. But in my experimentation it is darn near close enough that I am very comfortable using and relying on it.

If you're really lucky, not only do you have a camera with live view, but you've got a camera that can overlay a histogram on top of that live view. Why? Because you can see at a glance if you've got areas of over or under exposure and make the necessary adjustments to the exposure by adjusting the ISO, aperture and/or shutter speed to make the image you want to make instead of the image your camera's meter imagined making for you.

The final benefit I'll mention is primarily a benefit to Canon DSLR shooters with cameras introduced from the 40D forward but strangely isn't found in their pro line of cameras. That feature is the use of live view as a mirror lockup replacement. Mirror lockup is often used by photographers who are working with long telephoto lenses or extreme magnification macro photography. The mirror slapping up and down in the camera as it makes an exposure causes enough vibration to produce soft images.

Mirror lockup is the solution but it requires pressing two or more buttons and is inconvenient to use, especially for consecutive shots. However, shooting stills through live view mode on these cameras basically simulates mirror lockup (since the mirror is al-

ready locked up for live view to work) and a simple shutter activation is all that is required. Unfortunately other brands of cameras (and pro Canon bodies) slap the mirror back down and then do a regular exposure when an image is made in live view mode. Silly? Yes, but such is life.



Oil on water :: Canon 5D Mark II, Canon 180mm F3.5L Macro Lens @ 180mm :: LED illumination :: 0.4 of a second at F5.6, ISO 100 :: Live view used for fine tuning white balance

Of course, there are trade offs with live view. In most instances, you are going to want to use your camera on a support to really take advantage of it and of course it takes power to drive that fancy LCD display on your camera so your battery life will suffer. But, in my opinion, when the situation allows for it, there is no better way to get the image correct in the camera than by using live view.



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use flash, place a piece of tissue paper over the flash unit and take a few steps backward to dampen the harsh light coming from it. Not getting close enough to your subject. In most situations, it usually helps to get as close to your subject as possible. Try to fill the frame with your subject's features, and pick one of them to emphasize. You don't need a better zoom lens to do any of this. You can do it all yourself.

When To consider Making A New Camera Purchase

It's only the gear's fault when it's virtually impossible to get the shot without the gear. Only a few types of images fall into this category. Imagine trying to get a close up picture of a faraway surfer without using a big lens capable of zooming in that far. You could purchase a waterproof throwaway camera and go for a somewhat risky swim, or you could buy a digital SLR with a 500mm lens. There really isn't a third option here.



Other gear-dependent shots include:

Macro photography with extra magnification. (Macro lens)

High speed action sequences. (DSLR with a fast frame capture rate)

Nighttime photography. (A professional tripod.... sometimes)

Images with a blurred background. (A lens with a large aperture)

Vibrant colors and sharper subjects. (Adobe Photoshop Elements and a computer)

It's funny because I actually strained to come up with these examples. For almost all of them, there is some counter-example that doesn't involve the extra equipment you're considering purchasing. Nighttime photography is one of them. A tripod makes it a lot easier to control your image, but the gear is by no means necessary. You can use other

surfaces to keep your camera still through the long exposure times.

In almost all cases, it's not the gear. It's you. The great photographers of history had much less gear than you do, and they still managed to create moving images with a distinct style. They did it because they worked harder than anyone else. The skills they accumulated are worth more than anything you could buy.

So if you're ever stuck wondering if it's you or your gear, always assume the former. Gear will come and go over the years, but it takes someone with a vision to make something great with it. The early photographers did well enough without face recognition and all of the fancy features we see on the market today. You can too.

The Great Depression

1. A. *9 cents*
2. A. *Half*
3. C. *88*
4. B. *Live-at-Home*
5. C. *Three percent*



From the Editor

Time marches on and events happen that are sad. The passing of Carl Moser is most definitely one of those events.

I never got to know Carl as well as other long time club members, but I was a fan of his work as a photographer. He had the ability to find interesting images in the most ordinary places.

The club will miss his presence, I only wish I could have gotten to know him better and spend some time with him, from what I've heard he was a joy to be around.

Carl, being a founding member of the camera club, was I'm sure proud of his accomplishment. He surely will be watching over us as we go forward with the promotion of photography in our community. He will be sorely missed.

Donny Teague

Club Officers

| | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|---|
| President: | Rick Bell | <u>majrbell@gmail.com</u> |
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We're on the Web

<http://cvcclub.wordpress.com>

Presidents Report

Well, here I am again, about a week away from the submission deadline for the next contest realizing that I have nothing to enter.

Does this ever happen to you?

I have tried every year to make a list of all the contest topics for the year, and look at it every time I go out to shoot. I do pretty good for the first 5 weeks or so and then the senior moment takes over and I forget about the list and the upcoming contests.

I think my idea is a good one; I'm just half a deck shy on the implementation and in the brain pan.

By the way, speaking of contests, if you haven't heard, the Cannon is back on the square and we do have a contest sometime

in the future on that subject. It's one of those shoot at your convenience topic looking for individual interpretations contests. Remember Martin Luther?

Rick



Application for Membership

NAME _____ **DATE** _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ **STATE** _____ **ZIP** _____

E-MAIL _____

Please print clearly as our club correspondence is conducted via e-mail.

PHONE: HOME _____ **WORK** _____ **CELL** _____

Dues are \$35 per year. Meetings are the first and third Wednesday of each month.

Students: \$15 per year

CLUB USE ONLY: Date Received _____ **Cash** _____ **Check** _____