

U3A Hillingdon Digital Photo Group

“ACTION” SHOOTING

23rd April 2018

What “Action” are we talking about?

- **Subjects and Scenes like**
 - Historical “battle recreations”,
 - Athletic & school sports days
 - Horse riding & jumping,
 - Football & rugby (etc.) matches
 - Tennis tournaments
 - Wildlife e.g. “*Birds in flight*” (“*BIF*”), *running animals*.
 - Motor/motorcycle racing,
 - Airshows, etc.
 - Railway locomotives passing by

Examples of (my!) shots that went wrong!

- We have probably all had things go wrong!
 - Everything is blurred
 - Camera focused on wrong thing, & subject is blurred
 - Subject is missed, or partially missed
 - Someone's head got in the way
 - Something else got in the way
 - Many people got in the way!
 - Subject is lost in the background
 - Subject is far too small in final image

“Common Issues (1)”

- The location is unfamiliar to you, & so you don't know “the best place” from which to shoot.
- You are limited as to where you can stand or sit by artificial barriers or natural features.
- At “busy” venues, other people get in your way as they take shots, or just stand/walk around!
- The weather may be “against you”, e.g. *rain/snow*,
- Indoors, light levels are often low and “harsh”
- Shooting outdoors & “skywards” makes it difficult to get correct exposure levels – e.g. if there is a cloudless sky or heavy overcast clouds *(but you can often get good shots against clouds)*

“Common Issues (2)

- Subjects often move very quickly, & not always in the predicted directions!**
- You don't understand how to set the camera controls for the subjects**
- The camera chooses to focus on a different point (*especially behind/in front*) to what you want**
- Subjects blend into backgrounds**
 - and thus do not stand out in the final images**
- A subject looks “large” in the viewfinder - but becomes disappointingly small in final images!**

Maximise opportunities & Minimise Issues

- Understand the locations in which activities take place, & what they involve
- Decide on what you want to show, work out what means for the best location, timing & equipment
- *so, choose locations to maximise opportunities*
- Understand & maximise camera features which improve chances of successful shots
– *and minimise those hampering good shots*
- Try to catch subjects when they are doing
“**something interesting**” - not just “moving”!

Techniques – “Shutter Speed Control”

- *Most “action” shots need fast shutter speeds, typically at least 1/250s – but higher for BIF etc.!*
 - *So, find out how much shutter speed control you have, and practice how to set and adjust it*
- If the camera has a choice between “Programme” and “Automatic” modes
 - *the latter often gives more shutter/speed control*
- If available “Shutter Priority” (“Time Value”/“Tv”) mode is even better as it allows you full control.

Techniques – “Camera Focusing Modes”

- Focusing is critical in action shooting as the camera must be correctly focused on the subject
- Default settings generally attempt to keep *most* of the picture “in focus”
 - *thus you never really know what will be “sharp”.*
- However, many cameras allow you to select the area to be used to be used for focus assessment.
- Generally, use the smallest area available. “Spot”/“Centre point” focus mode is normally “best” as you can be surer about what it is focused on.
- OTOH, many cameras have good “focus tracking” systems which “lock onto” moving subjects regardless of if they are in the centre or not.

Techniques – “Panning -1”

- Pointing if you point a camera at where you think a subject moving quickly from Left to Right (or v.v.)” will be and just “pushing the button”, will invariably be too early/too late!
- So, “pan”, i.e. to track the subject in the viewfinder well *before* you start shooting *and then* carry on *after* you have stopped!
- Panning is easy with a camera with an “eye-level”viewfinder, but quite difficult whilst looking at the rear screen in “live view” mode!
- Have one eye looking at the screen/ through the viewfinder/at the screen & the other “looking past” it at the moving subject!

Techniques – “Panning - 2”

- Panning allows you to use slow shutter speeds to get sharp central images whilst emphasising the speed effects by blurring the backgrounds
 - otherwise “everything” is sharp but **the subject doesn’t appear to move!**
- *E.G.: with fast cars, jet aircraft (etc.) generally use 1/1000s (or faster), but by panning you could get down to 1/60–1/180s*
 - > **sharp subject and blurred background.**
- Conversely, using 1/1000s for a propeller-driven aircraft will “freeze” the prop blades,
 - so use 1/180s, and pan, and **then the blades are slightly blurred, which shows they ARE moving.**

Techniques – “Shutter Burst Mode”

- “Shutter Burst Mode” is a mode where the camera continuously shoots images for as long as you hold the shutter button down
 - *Useful when panning, or to **show a sequence***
- If a camera has the mode, how many shots per second, & for a total of how many shots?
- But, there will often be pauses as the camera writes to the card before you can shoot again
 - *get the fastest write-speed cards the camera can use to reduce those pauses.*

Techniques – “Pre-focusing”

- “Pre-focusing” is pretty much the opposite of Panning.
- It works where subjects are likely to move along well-defined paths (e.g. a *show-jumping or steeple-chase horse & rider at a fence*)
- Before the subject “arrives”, you pre-focus on a spot and start shooting as it arrives at the point
- Very effective if the camera has a “burst” mode
- *start the burst just before the subject reaches the pre-focus point, and end it just after it has passed, to have a good chance of “success”.*

Techniques – “Zoom lenses” !!!

- “Zoom lenses *can* help compensate for being unable to get “close to the action”, and so can maximise the subject size in the images
 - *However, there can be “downsides”!*
- “Long” zooms have a narrow “field of view”
 - *makes it difficult to “find” a moving subject - and then keep it in the viewfinder frame.*
- Most popular/”consumer” cameras & DSLRs, and zoom lenses, are slow to focus and zoom!
 - *Thus, zoom to give a moderate-sized image of the subject and stay at that whilst shooting.*
- **FINALLY - PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!**