

Freeze Frame

By Timothy L. Hale/Army Reserve Public Affairs

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Fill 'em up with flash!

There really isn't anything better for a photojournalist than to know that you have captured the ultimate in detail and color when making an image.

One of the ways that we can achieve this is to use fill flash – especially outdoors in bright sunlight.

Now, in a combat environment I would not advise using any flash at all.

That said, when we are in a training environment, there should be no reason not to pull out your SB-800 or SB-900 Nikon Speedlight and use it to the fullest extent possible.

Nikon refers to their lighting system as the Nikon Creative Lighting System.

I know you have read in this column before how I sing the praises of Joe McNally, in my opinion, the master of the Nikon CLS.

Short of taking one of Joe's workshops, the Intermediate Photojournalism Course at the Defense Information School does address the topic of using flash in your PJ work.

Short of DINFOS or a McNally workshop, this month we are featuring some recent work by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres, a 25V (Combat Documentation/Production Specialist) with the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) at Fort Bragg, N.C.

While photographing the recent 352nd Civil Affairs Command Best Warrior competition at Fort Meade, Md., Fimbres utilized a fill flash to capture images with plenty of detail.

"I have slowly begun loving to use fill flash," Fimbres said. "I really didn't understand how to make it work until recently."

Alternating between manual flash and Through The Lens (TTL) metering, Fimbres adjusted not only the flash settings but the camera settings as well.

Even though Fimbres has not been to IPC nor taken a McNally workshop, he has read McNally's Hot Shoe Diaries book (see the December 2011 issue of Freeze Frame for a review).

"The biggest thing (from the book) is using the flash in broad daylight to capture motion," he said.

"Getting the flash to fire on the rear curtain instead of the front curtain, gives me a mixing of light that adds an extra artistic element. It also puts the subject in sharp focus while blurring the elements around the subject.

Rear curtain sync is useful at slow shutter speeds with significant continuous light which will blur motion. A fast flash burst will stop the motion, as opposed to a slow shutter speed will blur it if enough light is present.

"It reduces the "Scooby-Doo" effect (casting a big shadow, especially indoors)."

Fimbres says jokingly, there is a little bit of prayer involved as well.

"When you're there live, there is always the element of uncertainty," he said.

"I know my exposure is going to be pretty good," he said, "but because I'm relying on the subject to be in the right spot at the right time, I also have to make sure to be in the right spot."

While the subject is visually important the background can be just as important as well, Fimbres said.

A good example is photographing a subject with a clear blue sky in the background.

By bringing the subject exposure level up to the level of the blue sky, both will be captured in vivid color.

For more information about using fill flash, visit the Nikon School website at:

<http://www.nikonusa.com/Learn-And-Explore/Photography-Techniques/g7jz8vfo/1/Six-Steps-to-Lighting-Magic.html>.

There are plenty of other tips and techniques on the Nikon website to improve your photography from basic to advanced level work.

For examples of Joe McNally's lighting work, visit his website at: <http://portfolio.joemcnally.com/#p=-1&a=0&at=0>.

There you can find information about his workshops and the books he has published.

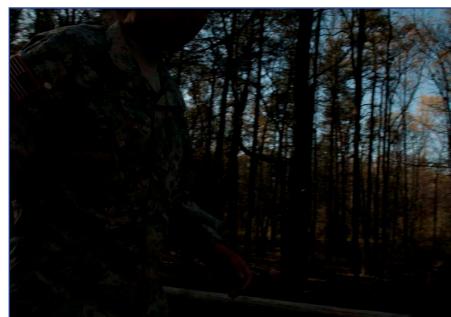
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(Photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres/USACAPOC(A), Fort Meade, Md., April 2012)

In this side-by-side comparison, Staff Sgt. Fimbres demonstrates how using fill flash not only lit the subject but also strengthened the color of the blue sky giving the image much better tonal range.

Technical specs: Nikon D300s, 17-50mm lens, ISO 100, f-stop 20, Shutter Speed 1/80 sec., Exposure: Manual



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres/USACAPOC(A), Fort Meade, Md., April 2012)

In this side-by-side comparison, Staff Sgt. Fimbres demonstrates how using fill flash not only lit the subject but also froze the motion of the Soldier negotiating the obstacle course.

Technical specs: Nikon D300s, 17-50mm lens, ISO 400, f-stop 16, Shutter Speed 1/200 sec., Exposure: Manual



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres/USACAPOC(A), Fort Meade, Md., April 2012)

In this side-by-side comparison, Staff Sgt. Fimbres demonstrates how using fill flash at night not only lit the subject but also added motion blur in a mixed lighting environment by utilizing rear curtain sync.

Technical specs: Nikon D300s, 17-50mm lens, ISO 320, f-stop 2.8, Shutter Speed 2.5 sec., Exposure: Manual

Timothy L. Hale is an award-winning photojournalist for the Warrior-Citizen magazine at the U.S. Army Reserve Command Public Affairs Office at Fort Bragg, N.C. He is a member of Nikon Professional Services, National Press Photographers Association and National Association of Photoshop Professionals. When he isn't on assignment for the Army Reserve he owns a photojournalism and graphic design service and he also freelances for an international photo wire service. He has been shooting professionally since 1981.