

## **Minoru Photo Club**

**July 24, 2018**

There are different ways of creating a sense of movement in photography. From John Hedgecoe's Photography Basics, he listed four ways – Slow Shutter, panning, diagonal movement and zoom movement.

For today, I will share with you what I have researched on the art of panning using a slow shutter speed.

There are many unwritten rules in photography. Keeping your camera steady is one of them. Well, for this artistic technique, you will need to forget all you have learned about the importance of shooting with a rock-solid camera. The creative result will be many cool motion-blur images

### **The Art Of Panning (by Natalie Norton)**

#### **What is Panning?**

Panning is one of many artistic techniques for more creative photographs. It is the horizontal movement of a camera, deliberately moving or panning the camera, as it scans a moving subject. It is the swinging of the camera - steadily to follow a passing subject, (can keep a moving image in one place on the film).

*Panning is another effective way of instilling a sense of motion in a picture with a moving subject.* The result is a fairly sharp subject set against a blurred and streaked background. This gives the shot a real feeling of motion, speed and action.

#### **SOME TIPS & GUIDELINES:**

**Subject/What should I Photograph?** – since you want to create a sense of motion, your obvious subject choices include cars, racing cars, joggers, cyclists, etc.. But do try this technique when capturing pets, horses, people running or even someone on a swing. Eagles and birds may be interesting subjects but it is more challenging. Passing traffic on busy roads is another good choice, particularly if you are just starting out.

#### **What Can Go Wrong?**

- **Subjects can appear static if a shutter speed is too fast or if you go too slow you can end up with a blurry subject.**
- **Shutter delay can mean you miss your subject all together**

- **Sudden acceleration** by your subject can lead them to appear blurred
- **If you don't take a good look around the frame before taking your shot, you can find other objects getting in the way or bright objects, such as colourful vests worn by officials at race tracks, in the back of shots can end up distracting the viewer even if blurred out of focus.**

### *Do I need a Tripod?*

*Some photographers find it easier to use a tripod or monopod to help them capture the perfect pan but you can work hand-held if you wish. It is really down to **personal preference**. Monopods are more flexible and it can move with the turn of your body while if you choose to use a tripod, a pan or ball head will make the task easier.*

### **Which Camera Mode?**

**Use the Shutter Speed mode, S or Tv**—*What shutter speed will work depends on the amount of **LIGHT**, the **SPEED** your subject is moving, your **DISTANCE** to the subject and also on the **EFFECT** you want. For instance, a slower shutter speed equals more blurriness and thus more of a sense of motion. If you use a shutter speed that's faster than the subject's speed, it will result in a static image, freezing the action and it does not show motion.*

Selecting a **slower shutter** speed than you normally would is advised. Some say that it is common practice to use shutter speed for panning as 1/15s, or 1/30s where your camera can usually be hand held; slower shutter speeds than these may require a tripod.

*Canon – Panning uses slower shutter speeds combined with the sweeping motion of the camera that follows at the same speed as your subject. A successfully panned shot will show our subject off sharply whilst its background is blurred.*

Canon also suggested using slow shutter speed starting with 1/60s. **Vancouver Photo Walks suggest the speed of 1/60s to pan a moving car and** then to experiment with 1/30s **for moving subjects like people walking or cycling to get the best image.** It can also depend on your subject; a racing car will probably need a faster shutter speed than a cyclist. If you practice your technique before the actual panning, you will have an idea of what shutter speeds work and what don't.

*You may end up using anything between 1/60s and 1/8s which, generally produce interesting effects – although at the slower end, you will probably end up with camera shake on top of your motion blur. However, you will have to experiment to determine*

*the shutter speeds that produce the effects that you would like with your chosen subject and circumstances. A bit of trial and error is needed.*

(The faster the shutter speed, the more clear the background will turn out and the less motion blur there will be. Slower shutter speed = more blur as mentioned earlier).

**Choose the Right Location** – selecting the right location plays an important role in getting a good image. It should be safe and without obstacles or obstructions for panning. Another important factor is to leave sufficient space between you and your subject so as not to constrain your pan.

*Panning works best with subjects moving directly across your field of view. For best results, setting yourself up parallel to your chosen subject will make it easier to capture a great pan.*

Also consider the background of your shot. Avoid having a background which is messy or too bright in colour. Distracting colours and bright spots, even when blurred, will pull focus away from your main subject. Single coloured or plain backgrounds tend to work best.

**The Matter of Distance...** The farther the subject is from you, the slower it will appear to be going and the easier it will be to stay with, during your pan. But the closer it is to the background, the more pronounced the appearance and the visual sensation of speed. These distance calculations will also have an effect on your lens choices for those using the manual or DSLR. "If you try to pan a sprinter from a spot near the track with a 50mm lens, it's going to be hard," Dave Black says. "It's better to get farther away, even up in the grandstand a little bit, and use a 70-200mm lens. That way it will appear that he's moving slower, making it easier to pan."

**AUTO FOCUS** – *Activate your autofocus function if available. Half press the shutter button to lock on, aim and pan moving subject. If auto focus of your camera is not fast enough, you may try pre-focusing your camera on a spot where you know your subject will move through. (You will probably need to switch to manual focus as auto can sometimes decide to change its focus when you hit the shutter. Lock your focus once you are happy and hit the shutter button just before your subject moves into the frame.)*

**Switch to continuous focus mode AI-Servo or AF-C –**

**In continuous-servo AF (AF-C), the camera will continue to focus if the shutter-release button is kept pressed halfway after the camera focuses. Because the camera continues to focus up to the moment the shutter-release button is pressed all the way down, this mode is a good choice for subjects that are in motion.**

*Shooting Mode – To increase your chances of capturing the moment or your subject, switch to **burst mode/continuous** shooting and begin shooting **before** your subject is parallel to you and then **continue** to take your shots once it has passed. (follow through)*

**As well as having a better chance of capturing the important moment, you will also minimize camera shake from pressing the shutter button. (Canon)**

**IMAGE STABILIZATION OR ANTI-SHAKE – turn it off as it may reduce the blur effect.**

**ISO – Vancouver Photo Walks advise that if shooting in daylight, drop ISO to 100, but if panning at night, increase ISO to 400 and up.**

*When using long exposures to photograph movement, there is a risk of overexposure. Here is how to prevent it: 1) use slow film or lower ISO to 100 or 200 2) set a small aperture to cut down the light (reaching the film) 3) Grey natural density filters reduce the amount of light entering the lens, and allow you to set slower shutter speed .*

**How do I Pan?**

**When you pan you're moving your camera in synchronicity with your subject as it moves parallel to you. In order to pan successfully your camera has got to follow the subject's movement and match its speed and direction as perfectly as possible.**

***Vancouver Photo Walks** - In shooting, timing and smooth camera movement are of utmost importance. **Press the shutter button and move your camera along with your subject, keeping them in the same place in your viewfinder. Adhering to this rule is the most important step.** You need to be following your target in order to keep your photo subject sharp and the background in motion. If you stand still, your subject will look like a ghost while the background will remain clear. )*

***You then need to twist from your waist until facing the point where your subject will be coming from. As they come into frame, follow them, keeping pace and twisting from your waist. Continue to pan evenly and keep it smooth, paying close attention to make sure your subject is in the same part of the frame while you complete your pan. Continue the pan even after the exposure is complete to ensure the blur is smooth. Don't hit the trigger button too hard either as this can cause shake which will blur your image. (Panning tips for beginners)***

### ***Importance of Follow through-***

When panning, it is important to remember to follow the subject through after you have fully pressed the shutter. Let panning continue, so smooth motion blur can be achieved from start to finish. Once you have released the shutter (do it as gently as possible to reduce camera shake) continue to pan with the subject, even after you have heard the shot is complete. This **smooth follow through** will ensure the motion blur is smooth from start to finish in your shot.

***A common fault is to pan too fast just like taking a panorama shot. This may also result in the image appearing to go backwards and to avoid this error, care should be taken to keep the subject in the center of the viewfinder throughout the pan.***

**Keep yourself and your camera as stable as possible** – minimizing vertical and tilt motions. You may well find this easier to do using the viewfinder (if your camera has one) than the LCD screen.

***If you handhold the camera, to improve the fluidity of your pan and to stop any unwanted movement always keep your elbows straight at your side, wedge the camera into your body as close as you can without becoming uncomfortable.***

***(When you know at what point of the track, etc. you want to take your shot of, face this direction with your feet, shoulder width apart so you have a sturdy base. You are then ready to begin taking your shots. Turn your upper body while you track the object/subject.)***

**Why Have I Missed the Subject?** - If you stood at a part of a track where cars/bikes suddenly accelerate you may find it begins to move quicker than you are panning and as a result they will be blurred or could have moved out of frame. As a result, it's probably better to move to a location where they don't accelerate as quickly or you could try using a slightly quicker shutter speed but remember you don't want to freeze your subject's movement completely.

Another problem some older cameras have is shutter lag. This is where there's a slight delay between you pressing the shutter and when the photo is actually captured. Panning well after you have pressed the shutter should help combat this problem and learning to anticipate when you need to take the shot will also help.

As mentioned above, switch to burst mode/continued shooting.

*Why would I want to use flash? If your subject is close enough for your flash to impact the shot, then you have a go at another technique called **slow sync flash** where you use a slow shutter speed and flash. The flash freezes the subject in motion as it fires and the long shutter speed ensures the background is blurred. As before, you need to perfect your panning speed because if you go too slow, your subject and background can end up merging together. Too fast and everything will be frozen and still. Do test various flash strength levels to find one that helps create the shot you are trying to capture.*

## **Panning and Patience**

If you're going to try panning for the first time you should approach it with an **experimental attitude**. It can be a lot of fun but can also be quite frustrating. If you're at a special event where you have fast moving subjects (like a car race etc) you'll probably want to mix up your style of shooting. **Don't just use** this technique all day – instead also shoot some shots at fast shutter speeds. This way you'll end up with a variety of shots and will probably end up with some useful ones instead of just having a collection of blurry unusable pictures.

If you want to practice panning (and it is something that you need to practice – a lot), head out into a busy part of your city and practice on passing traffic. That way you have a never ending supply of subjects.

Also keep in mind that it's unlikely that your main subject will ever be completely sharp and in focus. This technique is about getting a relatively **sharp subject** in comparison to its background. Some blurring of your main subject can actually add to the feeling of motion in the shot.

*Proper panning implies motion. However, panning creates the feeling of motion and speed without blurring the subject as a slow shutter speed sans panning would tend to do.*

## **Practice Makes Perfect; PERSERVE**

*With photographs of still subjects, you can be more or less sure that your photograph will resemble what you saw when you took the picture. But with a moving subject, the camera records the subject in an entirely different way from the human eye. When*

*watching movement, you do not see blur nor do you see frozen action. You cannot therefore rely on your eyes to tell you what the result of your photograph will be. Because of this, always be prepared to take a series of shots, experimenting with shutter speed and various apertures. (Dixons World of Photography- Successful Photography)*

Panning takes practice. Experiment, learn by taking lots of photos and working out why some work better than others. Is it the wrong shutter speed? **Be prepared to "waste" many shots to achieve success. But panning is an enjoyable and creative pursuit that you will love and it will give you some great artistic looks at conveying motion. (Creative Digital Photography by Jim Miotke and Kerry Dragger)**

Moose Peterson says that the **goal of panning** is to obtain **sharp images of moving subjects**. In this process, the movement of the subject is communicated by the **blurring of the background**.

#### **PICTURES:**

Children on seesaw – In an unusual application of the panning technique, the photographer rocked his camera from side to side in unison with the movement of the children on the seesaw.

Train – This is an example of a slow shutter speed (which panning also requires by the way) without the panning of the camera. Because the camera was held static, the moving object, the train, depicts the motions while the area around it is static.

M.P.L. Fogden – Panning with a subject travelling straight across the lens creates a blurred background enhancing the feeling of speed. The horse's legs and the rider's arms were moving faster than the rest of the subject and therefore appear more blurred.  
S 1/3s

Yellow taxicab by Deborah Lewinson – Panning and persistence can really pay off. An overcast day, neon lights, and colourful taxicabs were the perfect condition for this panning this New York Scene; read from the book

**Abstract Image** – panning the camera with a moving subject can create an abstract image. Pan at the same speed as the subject and only the background becomes an abstract blur. Pan faster, or slower, then both subject and the background become blurred, the whole image forming an abstract of lines in the direction of the pan. Richard Tucker

## **REFERENCES:**

- 1) JOHN HEDGECOE'S PHOTOGRAPHY  
BASICS**
- 2) MORE JOYS OF PHOTOGRAPHY by  
Eastman Kodak Company**
- 3) SUCCESSFUL PHOTOGRAPHY by Dixon's  
World of Photography**
- 4) CREATIVE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY by Jim  
Miotke and Kerry Drager**
- 5) VANCOUVER PHOTO WALKS**
- 6) ART OF PANNING by Natalie Norton**
- 7) DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY SCHOOL**
- 8) PHOTOzine**



## Recap: Panning Essentials by Dave Black

**SPEED.** Use slow shutter speeds to depict motion. Experiment and practice what works best for you.

**SHARPNESS.** Something – almost anything-in the photo should be sharp; more than one element does not hurt.. Blur means motion, but all blur might be interpreted as a mistake.

**FLASH,** Using your speedlight guarantees a point of sharpness. Use it with rear curtain sync for a dramatic depiction of motion.

**FOCUS,** Dave likes to lock focus on a zone through which his subject will pass, or use continuous servo autofocus when his subject or subjects are moving in unpredictable ways – but it is best to experiment with all focus methods to find your comfort zone.

**STEADINESS.** If there is a predictable path for your subject, a tripod is a good choice. When there is random or unpredictable movement, hand-held is the way to go. Practice to perfect steady smooth moves.

**DISTANCE,** Subjects far away will appear to be moving slowly than those close up, thus making them easier to pan with. The closer your subject is to the background, the greater the visual sensation of speed.

**PREPARATION.** Practice on easy subjects to get started: cars on the road, joggers, skateboarders, bike riders, your dog chasing a ball. It's the best way to determine the shutter speeds, focusing method(s) and pan movement that will do the job for you

**The VR Edge.** "The VR [Vibration Reduction] feature in various NIKKOR lenses makes panning a lot more consistent and much easier to accomplish," Dave says, "and your percentage of good pan pictures increases greatly when you use it." The VR function offers two setting choices: Normal and Active. Dave uses Normal for most panning circumstances. Active VR is recommended when a photographer is shooting from a moving vehicle—boat, bus, helicopter—but Dave often uses the Active mode when he's photographing horses. "Even though I'm just standing there, the horse and rider are kind of moving up and down as they gallop. There's a vertical change in the subject's plane, and I find that in cases like that, Active VR works better for me. I'd say that if there are a lot of moving parts to the subject, like a merry-go-round, try Active, but with a motorcycle rider, a guy running, a race car, Normal is best."