

YOUR SOURCE FOR CANADIAN PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO

NEWS

VOLUME 24, NO. 1 / SPRING 2015 / \$6.98



PORTFOLIO: TONY BECK

Images of Nature

MICHEL ROY

The Magic of Slow Shutter Speed

MICHAEL DEFREITAS

What's in My Bag?

FRANÇOIS DESROSIERS

Portrait Lighting Technique

KRISTIAN BOGNER

Lighting on Location

PLUS:

DR. WAYNE LYNCH

Iwokrama - The Green Heart of Guyana

MICHELLE VALBERG

Antarctic Adventure

and more!

COMPLIMENTARY ISSUE • FREE COPY

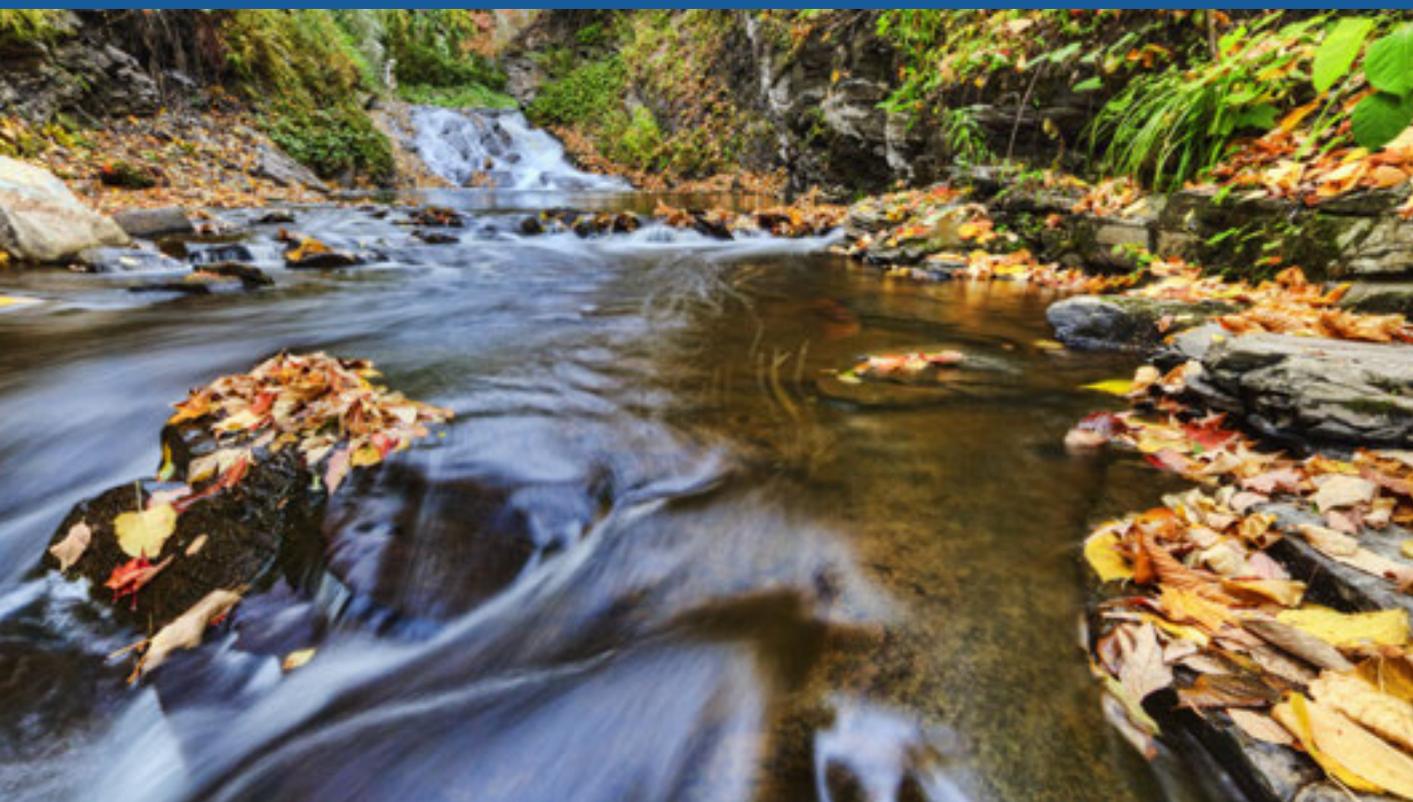


Special Feature | The Magic of...

BY MICHEL ROY

SLOW SHUTTER SPEED

There are times when creativity trumps reality, and your photographer's imagination yearns for an image that can only be captured when you view the world in slow motion. When this impulse strikes, it is time to pick up your camera and explore the magic of slow shutter speeds.



Rivers are a blast to shoot at slow shutter speed. ISO 100 f/16, 2 seconds exposure time.

Bio

Michel Roy, from Quebec City, is the owner of Digital Direct Photos & Videos, specializing in a full range of photography and video from corporate assignments to weddings. For a visual adventure, visit the website at www.digitaldirect.ca.

Most of the time, photographers keep an eye on their shutter speed to make sure it is fast enough to prevent blurred images. We all learn the rule of thumb – set the shutter speed to 1/focal length of the lens or faster. With a wide angle lens, you can get images that are reasonably free of camera shake when you hand hold your camera for a longer shutter speed. With a telephoto lens, you have to shoot for a shutter speed that is faster than the rule of thumb. Technology has skewed the traditional rule a bit – if your camera lens has internal image stabilization, or if your system has shake reduction built-in to the camera body, you can squeeze an extra stop or two of relatively stable images... but it all depends on how steady you are. Some people can hold a camera steady, while others have difficulty achieving good results at slower shutter speeds.

What do you do when you want to produce the impression of speed in a photographic setting that is otherwise sharp? You steady your camera and shoot at a shutter speed that lets the subject move within the frame. In most cases, the best result comes when the background is sharp and the subject has a sense of motion blur.

The best way to get sharp images with a very slow shutter speed is to use a tripod. When I use my tripod, it is because I want a very sharp picture, or a very sharp effect. The objects in



Change the speed to create different effects, 0.8 second exposure time.



motion will be blurred and the objects that are stationary will be sharp.

There are limitations to slow shutter speed photography in daylight. Even with a rock bottom ISO setting and a very wide aperture, the camera will see so much light that it will be technically impossible to use a slow shutter speed.

That's where the magic comes in. The solution is quite simple: to use very long shutter speeds in bright lighting situations, creative photographers use ND filters (Neutral Density). These filters block light without changing the colour of the scene, allowing you to shoot perfectly exposed images at shutter speeds that are 2, 3, 4, or more stops slower than the lighting would normally allow. ND filters also allow you to use wider apertures to achieve narrow depth of field, enhancing subject separation from the background.

It is very important to select high quality ND filters to capture the best possible image in terms of sharpness and colour fidelity. The ND filter should not add colour to your scene. Beware of low quality filters that will add an awful colour cast to your images. Please don't put a \$20 filter on a \$1500 lens!

ND filters come in many opacity ratings, from just a tiny tint to very dark, and they are available in strengths from 1 f/stop to 12 stops! ND filters can be uniform or graduated, a very useful characteristic for capturing sunsets and in situations where you want to balance areas of shadow with areas of bright illumination. ND filters can be screwed on to the front of the lens or they can fit in a filter holder in front of the camera. Your photo retailer can help you find an ND filter for every lens size.

There are so many uses for ND filters that once you acquire your first one, you will find that it opens the door to a new world of photographic possibilities. Some photographers make a very good living selling images that use these filters to perfection.

Let's take a look at the magic of slow shutter speed using variable neutral density filters. Now you may ask why



I choose a variable ND filter, when I could select a range of fixed power ND filters, and the answer is simple - because these filters are very cool! The variable ND filter is made of two polarizing filters stuck together, and this provides different exposure reduction effects when you turn the front of the filter. To my mind, this is the best way to start with filters and become familiar with the techniques.

There are many effects that can be achieved with the use of these variable ND filters. I love using them for pictures of flowing water, street light effects and painting with light.

ND Filters For Video Magic

For video work, the variable Neutral Density filter is the first thing you should buy to help you get the perfect shot. In video, we want to keep the shutter speed low, and most of the time the ND filter will let you double the capture speed setting of the camera; for example, if you capture at 24 fps, you might set your camera at around 1/50 of a second, and at this setting the only way to control depth of field, even at the lowest ISO, is to use an ND filter. With a filter, you will be able to cut the light coming into

The Fountain of Tourny, Quebec City, captured at 5 seconds exposure, f/16.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR SLOW SHUTTER SPEED ADVENTURES

- Take your time - this is not sports photography. You usually have all the time you need to verify and re-adjust everything.
- You can use a manual focus lens with no problem. These are inexpensive and they make a great addition to your kit.
- Get a quality variable neutral density filter (I use the new Rodenstock Vario Extended ND Filter)
- MRC (Multi Resistant Coating) is the quality build you are looking for. It will be scratch resistant and eliminate glare.
- Just the pressure of your finger can make the camera move, so use your self-timer delay or a remote. I like to set a 2 second delay so everything is very stable on the tripod.
- You don't necessarily have to buy filters for all your lenses. Inexpensive step up and step down rings are available so you can use one filter for several lenses.
- Keep your histogram exposure to the right. Use bracketing to make a series of images with different exposures, this is valuable to create HDR images or to mix photos in a composite image.
- For landscapes, shoot on a day without wind to achieve the best results.
- Shoot during the magic hours... early in the morning or just before sunset.
- Beware the "X Factor" when using a variable ND filter. If you push the filter to its maximum setting, you will have a big dark "X" in your frame - this is a limitation created by the polarization effect, and it actually helps you see when you have reached the maximum usable ND effect - so just don't push it to the limit... there is plenty of creativity to enjoy within the operating range of the filter.
- For landscape, I like to shoot around f/11, where the lens is tack sharp.



Percé Rock in Gaspé, Quebec. I took many images before catching the perfect wave at 1/3 of a second.

the lens, and you will be able to film at f2.8 or even wider!

All professional video cameras have an integrated ND filter. DSLR cameras don't have this feature, so we need to adapt the filter to the lenses.

Secrets of ND Technique

Let's start with the basic tips on how to use the variable ND filter:

Attach the ND filter to the lens of your choice, put your camera in manual mode, and make sure it is solidly mounted on a tripod. Choose the aperture you want to use, adjust the ISO setting low to avoid noise in the image, and you are ready to experiment.



With a variable ND filter you will change the speed setting of your camera by turning the filter to block or let more light get into the lens. The combination of ND filter strength, ISO, and aperture settings are the factors that will determine the shutter speed range you can use. Keep an eye on your histogram to perfect the exposure, and make sure you expose to the right of the histogram without burning out the whites... take the picture, then try different settings for speed and adjust the filter so the exposure provides the desired effect.

Some variable ND filters have indicators to show how much ND effect is applied, and some don't have any, but most photographers go by instinct and look through the viewfinder – as you turn the filter you will see the image get darker. There is no rule of thumb for slow shutter speed photography - you think about the effect you want to achieve, take a range of test shots, and select the image that works best.

Keep in mind that many subjects can be photographed to achieve a variety of slow shutter speed effects. Water in a babbling brook does not require the same shutter speed as a powerful waterfall to produce a similar impression of movement. I have shots of water in motion taken at shutter speeds from 1/10 of a second to 30 seconds, and the impact of each shot is a matter of personal preference. Fortunately, with a DSLR camera you can see the effect as soon as you take your picture, so it is fun to experiment with a variety of camera and filter settings.

Now it is time to go out and take some sloooow shutter speed pictures!

Make sure to upload your best shots to the Photo News Gallery flickr® group – look for my Sloooow Shutter Speed Challenge discussion thread, and let's see some of the magnificent art you will create!