

Night Photography – Some tips

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Some things that may be obvious to some but may not be to all. For most if not all night photography, you will need a tripod or a place where the camera will not move, most exposures will be below the speed where you can hand hold them.

Most exposures and low ISO's will be multi-second ones if not in the 10's of seconds. This will mean that moving objects will blur. That can be useful, as they can be made to become interest as well.

You can shoot at really high ISO settings, where you can hand hold the camera, but there are disadvantages. One is that auto focus will not work as the systems typically need at least a decent amount of light to work, as they generally work on contrast on the subject. Another disadvantage is that at high ISO there is a greater increase in the amount of noise that is recorded in the final image, generally the shadow area, but in extreme cases, across the whole image. This can, however, be the effect that you are looking for and maybe best converted to back and white. Another effect of high ISO is that the colour saturation is a lot less and this is also a good candidate for converting to back and white.

When using a tripod, it is essential, as with most photography, that you press the shutter release gently, don't stab at the control. You can further enhance this by using a shutter release cable, and electronic one that plugs into the camera, its count down timer and lastly, if the camera has one, a mirror up facility. These will all help on their own and some can even be used in combination, ie the mirror up and the timer might be combined in some cameras to help with timed exposures.

It might be useful to try to include some water into the picture, not only does this effectively increase the interest in the image, it can be used to create a mirror, a pattern for instance. You will defiantly have to use various camera settings to get the right image, camera metering at these low levels of light aren't very easy to get correct, and while you are there, it makes sense to take more than one or perhaps 10 so that you get more chances of getting an in focus and sharp image. Most of the time you will want to make the image with as high an f stop that your lens will give a really sharp image (this is NOT the smallest, as you will get diffraction at the highest f-stop)

One last thing, use flash setting for taking images at night, as with this setting, its on a known value and the camera will not attempt to colour correct. This will help you with post processing. All or most the lighting at night will be a mixture of sodium, halogen and tungsten. This will give an interesting mix of colours and perhaps a more natural final result.

Focus can be a difficult thing in low light, turn off auto (it won't work well anyway), and focus on a point of light in the area you want in focus, and you can use a small (high number f stop) so that the depth of field is greater. Though a small aperture can sometimes be used to create more mood in the image.