

CAR PHOTOGRAPHY

Sample



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Car Photography

*Photographing your car and the cars you like
in natural light and without a studio*

by
Alain Briot

Desire is the key to motivation, but it's the determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal—a commitment to excellence—that will enable you to attain the success you seek.

Mario Andretti

Prologue

You need great passion, because everything you do with great pleasure, you do well.
Juan Manuel Fangio

My primary photographic subject is landscape photography. I came to photograph cars not as a professional occupation, but because I wanted beautiful photographs of my personal cars for my own enjoyment.

We all have cars. Or we will all have cars. That is, unless we committed ourselves to public transportation for the rest of our lives, or we resolved ourselves to using a bicycle or walking as our only form of locomotion. Even then, the knowledge in this book still applies to you. You just need to photograph *other* people's cars instead of your personal cars. The fact that you have no car, even though it is quite rare these days, and even though I expect it to address only a small minority of readers, is not a reason to put this book down. There are cars all over the place, and if it so happens you do not own one, or do not own one that you want to photograph, there are plenty of cars around as far as photography is concerned!

Furthermore, many of the cars we want to photograph are not owned by us. They are either too expensive, too unique, or simply not for sale. This is the case for race cars, in particular those being raced at this time, because they are the sole property of the race teams. It is also the case for unique vehicles that belong to museums or to private collectors. Some cars are simply too pricy to purchase. Finally, regardless of our level of income, we simply cannot own all the cars that we like. While some make a good try at it, assembling fascinating collections over years of collecting, doing so is not commonplace.

In the end, for most car enthusiasts, seeing cars and bringing back photographs of these cars is how we enjoy most of the vehicles we like. I should say, bringing back *good* photographs, or better bringing back *great* photographs. This is what this book is all about. Owning a great photograph of a great car is almost as good as owning a great car. Not quite the same, I agree. You cannot drive the photograph, you cannot hear the scream of the engine when looking at a photograph, you cannot smell the rich scent of leather, oil and gas, but it comes close. When you have seen and experienced the real car, all this can come back to you when you look at a great image of the vehicle. Why? Because a great photograph captures not just the image of the car but its soul, its essence. It captures what a specific car is all about. It is, in its own way, what the car represents to you and, if you can share your vision with others through your photographs, to others as well.

However, while cars are beautiful and exciting, and while sport and luxury cars are unique, it is easy to create photographs that are commonplace. Creating expressive, artistic and unique photographs that go beyond representing the car in a literal fashion is challenging. Doing so requires knowledge. The purpose of this book is to provide you with this knowledge.

Chapter 1

About Photographing Cars

*I think that cars today are almost the exact equivalent of the great Gothic cathedrals:
I mean the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists, and consumed
in image if not in usage by a whole population which appropriates them as a purely magical object.*
Roland Barthes

1 - Car photography and landscape photography

Car photography requires specific skills and knowledge. Although I practice landscape photography regularly (it is my primary subject) I found out that only part of the skills and knowledge I use in landscape photography apply to car photography. Certainly, knowledge of light is similar. Good light is good light regardless of which subject or location you photograph. Similarly, knowledge of my cameras is the same. How they work, which functions I use, which lens I select and so on does carry over. Finally, knowledge of framing and of composition does carry over as well, but only to some extent. As we will see in this book, when photographing cars, composition needs to be approached differently than when photographing other subjects.

The main difference between cars and landscapes is that with landscape you go to the subject and you position yourself at a time and place that is the most propitious for the kind of image you want to create. When photographing cars you have to position the car where you want it to be in relationship to the background. This is the main difference with landscape photography, and even though it may seem minor at first, this is what makes car photography unique.

While in landscape photography the landscape is the main subject, in car photography the car is the main subject and the landscape is there as a 'backdrop,' as a 'décor' so to speak. In fact, you don't have to photograph the car in the landscape. This is only one option among many. However, regardless of what background you use, the background is chosen for its interest *in relationship* to the car. What matters most is not the setting in which the car is shown. What matters most is how the car looks in a particular setting. What is important is how this setting enhances, dramatizes, and 'says' about the car.

Not being a studio photographer, I personally prefer to photograph the car in a natural environment. This is the focus of this book. Plus, this is how most if not all of us photograph our cars. We do not have access to a studio large enough to fit our cars, provided we have access to a studio at all. The closest we can get to that is our garage, but it is usually far from being a photography studio!

2 - Location, location, location

Location is everything when photographing a car. A fantastic car in the wrong location will look out of place and may even cause the viewer to lose interest in the car and to dislike the photograph.

You want the location to either *complement* the car or *contrast* with the car. In the first situation the chosen location goes with the car: we expect to see the car in this location. In the second situation the location clashes with the car: we do not expect to see the car in this location.

Examples of locations that complement the car include photographing a racecar in a race setting, either on a racetrack, in the pits, or in a garage or preparation shop. Or photographing a luxury car in front of a luxury home, a luxury hotel, or at a country club. Or again photographing a 4x4 in an off-road environment.

Examples of locations that contrast with the car include photographing a luxury car in an industrial setting, for example in a factory, a smelter, a power-generating station, or in front of a graffiti covered wall, in a dilapidated building or in other run-down locations. These are locations where we do not expect to see this kind of car, therefore we are surprised when we see the photograph and we tend to look at it more carefully.

Regardless of the location you decide to use, be sure to scout this location ahead of time. Be careful of what is on the ground and behind the car. Unless you plan to replace the background, make sure there's nothing distracting behind the car: no telephone poles or trees sticking out from the top of the car, and no other distracting elements. You want to avoid cluttered backgrounds as much as possible because you want the car to be the most interesting element in the photograph. The background is there to add further interest to the car, not to take away interest from the car.

Also, make sure that the background is interesting, that it adds something to the photograph. Otherwise, minimize the amount of background you use around the car. There is no need to feature a large and uninteresting background in the photograph. Remember that if something does not add interest to the photograph, it will take away interest from the photograph. Therefore only feature the background prominently if it is interesting and visually appealing.

In selecting a location, it is important to remember that a quality photograph is not taken, it is made. In other words, a good photograph is a construction, not an accident. Luck, if any, is not what creates a good photograph. Skill, knowledge, deliberate intent and specific choices are the elements that help create good photographs.

2 – Why I photograph cars

It is interesting to pay attention at how most people look at car photographs. There is an assumption, especially when the photographs show my own cars, that the purpose is to brag about owning a specific vehicle. The fact is I photograph cars because I love cars, be it my own cars or someone else's, not to brag about them. I have been photographing cars for at least 5 years now, and if I were taking these photos to brag about owning specific cars, I would have stopped a long time ago! Bragging doesn't go on for years. It is a short lived thing. You brag, people get envious (if the bragging worked), you achieve what you wanted, and you move on. You don't go on doing it for years and years.

Plus, regardless of how long you brag about owning a vehicle, you don't put all your efforts into creating the finest car photographs possible. You don't spend hours planning a shot, composing the photograph, making sure everything is done right, processing and optimizing the photograph to get optimal quality, printing it to the highest standards, and making sure you are expressing a personal vision. No. If your purpose is to brag, you grab a quick shot with your cell phone and post it on Facebook. Bragging isn't about the quality of the photograph. It's about owning something that others don't have. Who cares how good the photo of that thing is. What matters is you have it and they don't. Your skills as a photographer are not at stake here. It's your buying power that is!

Quite frankly, I photograph cars for the same reason I photograph landscapes. Because I love them. That's all. I love landscapes and I love cars. I admit that having a passion for both is quite unusual because there isn't a whole lot in common between both. One is man made while the other is nature made. One is the product of science and technology while the other is the product of geology and natural forces. But to me, the one thing they have in common is that they are both beautiful. Landscapes are beautiful and cars are beautiful. Not all landscapes and not all cars of course, although the case can be made that with the proper light, composition and vision all landscapes and all cars can be made to look beautiful.

Chapter 2

The Car Photography Market

You can have any color, as long as it's black.
Henry Ford, referring to the Model T Ford

1 - A niche market

Car photography is an expanding niche market. There are more and more car collectors in the US and in the world. This is due to the growing number of historical cars that are being restored and to the fact that collector cars are now considered investment vehicles. While a new car depreciates the minute you drive it off the lot, collector cars keep or increase in value after you purchase them (this is a personal opinion and not an investment recommendation).

If you make a living selling fine art photography, photographing collector cars may be a profitable option. It fits in with portrait photography, pet photography and other types of photography in which you photograph either a person or a person's property. In car photography photographing cars owned by private collectors is particularly lucrative. People who own collectible cars are often affluent and can afford to hire a photographer. They also have an incentive to get high quality photographs of their vehicles to display in their home or garage, to use as illustrations for essays, interviews, websites, etc. or to use as advertising if they are selling their cars. This is where you come in.

2 – The number and the size of car auctions shows are expanding

In January 2011, in the Phoenix, Arizona area alone there were 5 separate car collector auctions:

- Barrett-Jackson (Westworld, Scottsdale)
- Russo and Steele (Loop 101, Scottsdale)
- RM Auctions (Arizona Biltmore, Scottsdale)
- Motoexotica Classic Cars (Tolleson)
- Gooding & Co. Sales (Scottsdale Fashion Mall)
- Silver Auctions (Fort Mc. Dowell)

These auctions generated over \$200 million in sales and attracted tens of thousands of visitors who came in person to the shows and millions more who watched these auctions on TV. Barrett Jackson is televised on the Speed network nationally and internationally. In 2011 Speed TV offered 40 hours of live TV coverage for the Scottsdale Barrett Jackson auction alone. This shows how important car auctions have become and how much money is tied to these shows. When you sell a collector car at an auction, you need professional photographs of your car. Most car collectors also want to have professional quality photographs of their cars and of other cars they like.

For a growing number of investors historical cars represent a viable alternative to traditional investment vehicles such as stock and bonds. The rapid and unexpected up and down fluctuation of stock prices, combined with the recent Wall Street scandals and the dramatic drop in value of home prices, have motivated a large number of investors to look at alternative investments. Historical cars are one of those, and this is generating additional interest to the collectible car market and, by association, to car photography.

Chapter 3

Photographic Equipment for Car Photography

*Driving fast on the track does not scare me.
What scares me is when I drive on the highway I get passed by some idiot who thinks he is Fangio.*
Juan Manuel Fangio

Introduction

When selecting gear for car photography you want a combination of features, versatility, practicality and lightness. Your gear must give you professional features and quality, while being practical and easy to carry. This means limiting the number of lenses to a minimum (I carry 3 lenses maximum), keeping the weight down, and making everything fit in a small camera bag.

The last thing you want is come unannounced with a huge bag filled with cumbersome and heavy gear! This scares car owners. Big heavy cameras can hit the car and damage it. Plus, the more gear you have the slower you work. Deciding which gear to use becomes an issue because a lot of time is spent selecting the camera, lens or other accessory you are going to use. Car owners don't always have the patience to wait! They move fast and they want to go. So you have to move as fast as they do, relatively speaking, with your photography. This means having a setup that you can use quickly without unnecessary fussing.

1 - The best cameras are the ones you have with you!

Avoid big heavy cameras. The number one quality of a camera when it comes to photographing cars is that it is not too big or too heavy. When I talk about camera size, I don't refer only to the size of the camera alone. I also refer to the size of the lenses and other equipment. A big camera uses big lenses, needs a big bag to carry it in, and so on. All this gear has to fit in the trunk of your car, and if you use a sports car, the trunk is small. Plus, even if you drive a car with a large trunk, a big, heavy and cumbersome camera bag will limit your mobility. It's difficult to move around quickly when you carry a lot of equipment!

For this reason I favor a relatively small and lightweight camera. I am not saying you need to use a digicam or a cell phone, there is no need to go that far, but I definitely want to avoid using a medium format camera for this type of photography or a big heavy DSLR. Of course, your preferences may, and most likely will, be different than mine. That's perfectly understandable. What I am describing here is my personal approach, an approach which is characterized by working in the field, not in the studio. It is also characterized by the desire to be as mobile as possible, to work quickly, and to be able to create a variety of different images without having to use different cameras. In other words, my goal when it comes to equipment is to be versatile.

As you make your own choices in regards to equipment, keep in mind that the photographs in this book were created with the equipment I recommend. Therefore, if you use the same equipment, you will be able to create the same kind of images.

2 - Cameras

At the time I am writing this book I use three camera systems: a Canon 1DsMk3, a Canon 60D and a Canon G12. The 1DsMk3 is the camera I take when I want maximum control and versatility during a shoot. However, it is heavy and cumbersome and that is where the Canon 60D comes in. The 60D is much lighter and can do most of what the 1DsMk3 can do. This is the camera I take with me when I go to a show or other event where I have to walk around a lot and carry my equipment all day. The G12 is the one I take when I

Chapter 4

The GoPro Camera

You need great passion, because everything you do with great pleasure, you do well.
Juan Manuel Fangio

1 – Introduction

DSLRs are great cameras for car photography. They are versatile and for most situations they represent the best compromise between cost, size and image quality.

However, there are instances where DSLRs simply don't work. The main reason being their size, weight and angle of view. There are situations where the lightest DSLR, or even digicam, will simply not work. I became aware of that when trying to fit my Canon 60D inside my Lotus Elise. I was trying to mount the camera on the suction cup rig to photograph me driving at night inside the car. While I was able to attach the suction cup to the inside of the rear window, the camera ended up being located between the driver and passenger seats rather than behind my seat. I was using an 8 mm lens, and even that wasn't wide enough to show the inside of the car the way I wanted to.

This is when I thought of using the GoPro camera instead of a DSLR. The GoPro is extremely small –it literally fits in the palm of your hand – and takes 1/4th, if that much, of the space taken by a DSLR. It is also extremely light. This means that it can be mounted virtually anywhere. In addition the GoPro lens covers 170 degrees of view, nearly half of a circle, which is perfect for close up action photographs.

The GoPro is designed for action photographs, comes in different models each designed for specific sports and activities: Motorsports, Surfing and Outdoors, and comes with its own mounting system. The GoPro cameras are sold as packages that include a wide variety of mounts, attachments, waterproof housing, etc. With DSLRs all this gear has to be purchased separately. This makes the GoPro a far less expensive option for sports photography.

Certainly, the GoPro has limitations: the camera has no viewfinder therefore the only way to know for sure what you are framing is to use the LCD screen. Unfortunately, the LCD screen is sold separately from the camera, which means an added cost. The maximum resolution is 11 MP and the camera does not record in raw format, only in jpeg format, which means a lower image quality. There is no on-camera flash or flash sync connector for a remote flash unit. Finally, if you want to mount the camera on a regular tripod you need a dedicated tripod mount that is sold separately, another added cost.

2 - Specs for the GoPro HD Hero 2 model

Field of view: 170 degrees, 127 degrees and 90 degrees

Resolution for photographs: 11 MP, 8 MP and 5 MP

Resolution for video:

1080p to 720, 1920 x 1080, 1280 x 960, 1280 x 720, 848 x 480

30 FPS at highest resolution

120 FPS at lowest resolution

Shooting speed: 10 Photos in 1 second in burst mode

Time-Lapse: every 0.5", 1", 2", 10", 30", 60" plus Self-Timer

Audio: 3.5mm Stereo External Microphone Input

Natural and High Wind Audio Modes

Website: www.gopro.com

Chapter 5

Preparing the Car for a Photography ‘Session’

Straight roads are for fast cars, turns are for fast drivers.
Colin McRae

1 – Introduction

Cars need to be prepared to look their best. A clean car looks and photographs much better than a dirty car. While some ‘grime’ can be removed in post processing (see Appendix C: Digital Car Wash), there is a limit as to what can be done on the computer. In this chapter we are going to look at what it takes to get your car to look your best for your next photo session. We are also going to take a look at the wide variety of available cleaning products.

2 – Cleaning the car

Make sure the car is clean when you photograph it. Unless you are photographing a 4x4 vehicle and you intentionally want it covered in mud to show that it is an off road vehicle, people expect to see photographs of clean cars, not dirty cars. If the car is dirty, it will not look good on photographs.

Be sure to also clean the tires. There should be no marks on the sidewalls and if you show the tread, there should be no gravel embedded in the thread pattern and no dirt on the rolling area of the tire. Remove gravel struck in the tread with a small wooden stick, and wipe the rolling area of the tire with a towel.



When you want great photographs, a clean car is a must.

Cars always need a little bit of cleaning during the shoot no matter how careful you were to wash them. For this reason it is important to carry a small cleaning kit with you when you photograph on location. This can consist, at the minimum, of 3 to 5 microfiber towels in medium and large sizes, a ‘quick detailer’ spray bottle, a no-streak spray bottle of glass cleaner, and a spray bottle of tire cleaner. I prefer the matte tire cleaner to the

Chapter 6

My First Car shoot

*Driving is a spectacular form of amnesia.
Everything is to be discovered, everything to be obliterated.*
Jean Baudrillard, America (1988)

Introduction

Even though it was written several years ago, I wanted to include this essay in the book because it shows the challenges offered by car photography. My first car shoot was a journey of discovery. The challenges I faced back then have become easy to solve, or have disappeared altogether by now. However, at that time they were hurdles that were hard to overcome.

In a way, the idea of writing this book started with this first shoot. After completing the shoot I began to study car photographs more closely to find solutions to the problems I encountered. As I studied the work of other car photographers, I started to understand exactly how each type of image was created. The result is the book you have in your hands.

My first car shoot

In November 2006 Natalie and I set out on a sports car shoot. This was 100% new to us because I had never photographed a sports car, at least not with the goal of creating a fine art photograph.

The only knowledge I had about photographing sports cars came from looking at sports car photographs in magazines and reading sports car reviews and essays. Because some of these essays discussed aspects of the photographers' work, I thought I was ready to do a car shoot. The problem was that the information presented by these writers was superficial and did not apply to our specific situation.

For example, one of the essays mentioned the need to wash the car carefully and mentioned that when rushed the photographer would clean only one side of the car—the side facing the camera—leading to surprised looks on the part of people passing by. The same essay also mentioned shooting one car from another, or shooting while the car was in motion, by standing in the rear trunk or in the back seat in a convertible.

None of this proved very helpful. We did clean the car, on both sides, and made sure it was immaculate. When it came to shooting from a second vehicle this could not be done since it was just Natalie and I and this technique required three people: two drivers plus the photographer. Shooting with the vehicle in motion was equally impossible because the car we wanted to photograph was not a convertible, had no back seats and although it had a rear trunk, this trunk opened via a hatch which, when raised, did not allow someone to stand in it.

We therefore had to scrape all that “knowledge” and start from scratch. The knowledge that I did use came from my experience doing landscape photography. I realized that I could apply this knowledge to cars by simply approaching the car as I would any foreground object in the landscape, except that instead of using say a cactus, a boulder or a tree, I would use a sports car.

The problem is that a car is a car, not a boulder, a cactus or a tree. As such, it has unique requirements that cacti, boulders and trees do not have. For one, a car looks best at a specific angle. In that sense a car is much closer to a person than to trees, boulders, etc. For example, I discovered while I was photographing the car that

Chapter 7

Where to Find Cars to Photograph?

The car has become the carapace, the protective and aggressive shell, of urban and suburban man.
Marshall McLuhan

Besides photographing your own cars, there are a number of locations you can visit, wherever you live, to find exciting cars to photograph:

1 - Car auctions

Look for car auctions in your area. The simplest is to do a Google search or talk with car people where you are located. See the previous chapter for a list of car auctions in the Phoenix, Arizona area.

2 - Car museums

There may be one or several car museums where you live. If not, travelling to a car museum is worth it because of the unique cars you will see on display. In the US a great museum is the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, because it features many Indy 500 winning cars. Another one, also related to racing, is the new Nascar Hall of Fame in Charlotte, North Carolina. There are also numerous museums whose focus is on historical cars rather than racing cars.

3 - Car gatherings

People like to get together and show their cars.

Some gatherings are informal affairs organized locally on Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning in parking lots or public parks. These attract local car owners who come there as much to show their cars as to socialize with other car owners who share the same passion.

Other gatherings are carefully organized events that attract thousands of people from all over the country and, in some instances, the world. One of the most famous ones in the US is the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance which attracts some of the world's premier cars and whose reputation is famous worldwide. These events usually include judging and awards.

Whichever gathering you attend, these events are great opportunities for photography. They are also fantastic opportunities to meet car people, talk about cars and learn more about the cars you are interested in. If you are doing this as a business, there are also opportunities to market your services, look for potential customers and build a mail or email list.

See Chapter 4: *Photographing Cars at Shows* for a detailed account of how to photograph at car gatherings.

4 – Racing events

Racing events provide fantastic opportunities for car photography. These range from local events to national or international events. I found that local events tend to be informal and provide easy access to the pit area where a lot of interesting photographs can be taken. Of course, national and international events have the advantage of being well known and of providing access to famous cars and drivers.

See Chapter 5: *Photographing Car Competition Events* for a detailed account of how to photograph racing events.

Chapter 8

Photographing Car Shows and Auctions

Flying a machine is bravery....Engineering a flying machine is brainy....
Niroshan Kiriwella

1 - Outdoor versus indoor shows

When going to a show find out first if it is held indoors or outdoors. What is nice about outdoor shows is that they do not suffer from the horrible lighting conditions you'll find at indoor shows. The light is all the same color, being natural sunlight or open shade if the atmospheric conditions are cloudy. At indoor shows you will have a mix of different light sources, deep shadows and uneven lighting. The reflective nature of cars will show all of the harsh light sources directly in the paint creating hotspots and bright reflections.

2 - Attend the show over several days

If the show lasts several days, don't go only just for one day. Go to the show two days or more. Being there for several days allows you to check your photos at the end of the first day and see what worked and what didn't work. Then, when you return to the show the second day you can redo the photos that did not work. You can also take photos that you did not think of on your first visit. Spending several days at a show gives you many more opportunities to take great photographs.

3 - Come early, stay late

Make the most of your day at the show by coming when the doors open and staying as late as possible. Not only will you get better light early and late in the day if the show is outdoors, you will also have less people and therefore an easier time getting close to the cars and photographing them without having people in your shots.

4 - Pay attention to the light

Harsh noon light isn't the best light at all. Soft, overcast light works much better. However, you cannot control the light when you are at a show, so your best bet is to pay close attention to the light quality and work with what you have. Try to photograph cars in the shade on sunny days, or come early and stay late to take advantage of the warm and soft light around sunrise and sunset.

5 - Travel light

Shows are tiring. Lots of walking, lots of people, lots of excitement, many cars to see and photograph, all combined to make your visit long and tiring. Combine that with having to carry heavy camera gear and you will run out of steam, and out of inspiration, rather quickly. To prevent that from happening the best is to keep your camera gear to a minimum. At shows I use a Canon G-Series camera, such as the Canon G12, or a light DSLR, such as the Canon 60 with a single lens. My favorite lens for shows is a long-range zoom such as the Sigma 18 to 200mm. I also use large capacity Flash or SD cards so I don't need to carry multiple cards, thereby not running the chance of losing a card. A 32 or 64 GB card in either of these two cameras allows me to shoot all day without running out of storage space. Either of these two camera setups do everything I want. They also prevent me from carrying heavy camera gear and they save me time because I do not need to change lenses. This last aspect is very important because changing lenses in a busy environment is always challenging.

6 - Talk to car owners

Talk to car owners. Ask them questions and compliment them on their cars. That's all it takes. People are happy to show their cars and to talk about them. You will be surprised how fast people open up and share interesting information about their cars when you talk to them and ask questions. It's also an opportunity to talk about your photography. Bring some business cards and give them away. If you do this as a business,

Chapter 9

Photographing Racing Events

What's behind you doesn't matter.
Enzo Ferrari

1 – Introduction

Racing events are a great way to find exciting cars to photograph. Not only will you be able to photograph cars in action on the track, you will also have the opportunity to photograph cars in the pits. While cars on the track will give you the opportunity to create action photographs, cars in the pits will give you the opportunity to photograph details and carefully composed images. Finally, there is also the public event side of car competition: what the people, the mechanics, the drivers do can be very interesting and lead to the creation of fascinating photographs. All in all there are a multitude of photographic opportunities offered to you when you attend a racing event.

2 - Tips

Most of what I said about car shows applies to car competitions.

- Get there early
- Don't carry too much gear
- Be prepared. This last tip is particularly important. You must be proficient at doing the type of shots you want to create. An event is not the proper place to learn how to do something. To create successful images, you have to learn how to create the photos you want before attending the event.

3 - Panning

Panning is an important technique to master when you want to photograph racing cars at speed on the track. To learn this technique read my detailed tutorial in Chapter 19: *Rolling Car Shots: A-Panning*.

4 – Other shots

A variety of photographs are possible at a show. However, you need to learn and practice how to do these shots prior to the event because once you are there you will have to work fast. A car race is not a good place to practice because of all the action going on and all the people around you.

5 – People

Racing is about people as much as it is about cars. For this reason I like to photograph both cars and people when I attend racing events. People provide not only another subject, they also provide additional interest. When you include people in your pictures, you tell a story. What this story is about is your decision. How well this story is told in your photographs is what will make your images interesting.

What is important is to show people *doing* something. Don't photograph people staring straight at you, or aware that you are photographing them. People are busy during competitions, so photographing them while they are doing something is not difficult.

Chapter 10

Photographing Cars on Location

Why did they keep changing guitars and amplifiers when they were perfect? They did the same things with cars, if you ask me. They forgot how to make them right, because they focused on style and bells and whistles.
Buddy Guy

Introduction

We are now going to look at a variety of possible compositions specific to car photography. This section is about presenting you with compositions done on location, while Section 4 will focus on compositions created in the computer.

In presenting these different composition keep in mind that the example photographs are just as important as the text in understanding how these shots are created. Be sure to study the photographs since the textual information is not meant to duplicate the visual information provided by the photographs.

1 - Get High

Get high to photograph the car from above and to show the entire vehicle. Use a ladder, climb on something, or shoot details looking straight down from your own height.



Uncropped photograph



Cropped and straightened photograph

Chapter 12

Photographing Cars in Industrial Settings

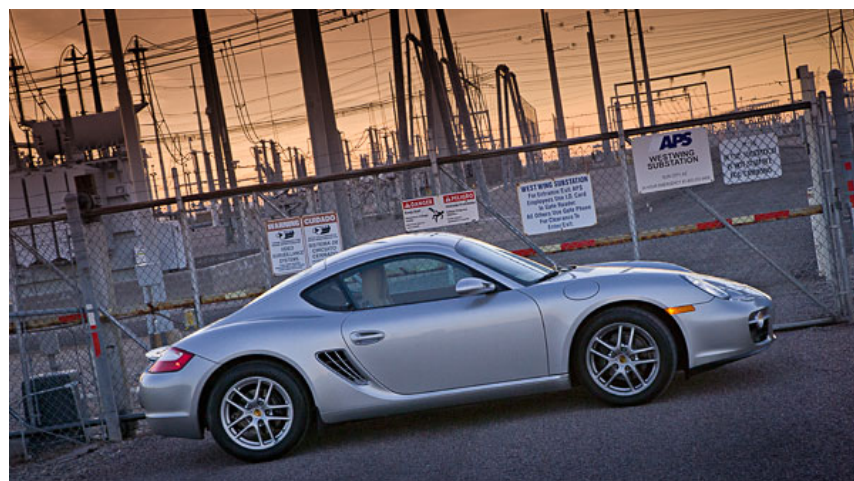
The drawing is the only great master that dominates automobile construction.
Ettore Bugatti

1 - Industrial locations #1 – In front of the Sun City APS Generating Station

This category of photographs is in direct contrast to the previous category, beautiful locations. Here we find old factories, run-down buildings and industrial locations, these being a few examples among many other possibilities. Unlike beautiful locations that are chosen because we expect to see beautiful cars in beautiful places, industrial locations are chosen because they offer a stark contrast to the elegance, the beauty and the cutting edge technology aspect of a sports car.



Porsche and Electrical Generating Station #1
Original photograph straight out of the camera.



Final Version after gradient, vignette and cropping were applied in Lightroom

Chapter 13

Photographing Cars in Unique Settings

Aerodynamics are for people who can't build engines.
Enzo Ferrari

Introduction

Certain settings are not only beautiful, they are also unique. When photographing a car in these locations the photographs are just as much about the setting than they are about the car. The goal then becomes to do justice to both.

In this chapter I present examples of cars found in 2 unique settings: the Wigwam Motel in Winslow, Arizona and the Hackberry General Store in Hackberry, Arizona. In both of these I did not bring the cars. Instead, the cars were present in the location and part of the owners' collection.



Wigwam Motel, Holbrook, Arizona

Chapter 14

Photographing Cars under Different Lighting Conditions

So much of my life is spent just focused on driving race cars.
Jeff Gordon

Introduction

The word *photography* comes from the Greek words *photos* – light - and - *graphos* - writing. Photography is therefore ‘writing with light.’ This shows how important light is in photography. Light truly has the capability of transforming a photograph.

In this chapter we are going to see how the same subject, namely the Wigwam Motel in Holbrook, Arizona, is transformed by different types of light such as daylight, neon, UV, dawn, etc.



7ar and teepees along Route 66

Chapter 15 Photographing Old cars

*Racing, competing, it's in my blood. It's part of me, it's part of my life;
I have been doing it all my life and it stands out above everything else.*

Ayrton Senna

1 – Old cars

Old and decayed cars can be just as beautiful as new and shiny cars. What is interesting in photographing old, decaying cars is the variety created by the aging process. No two cars age the same way. There is variation in texture, color, shape, damage, wear, etc. These marks are scars that tell the unique story of what each car went through. They say "I have lived through a lot", they talk of experience and abuse. They say something about the passage of time and what it does to the things we own. Indirectly, or metaphorically, they talk about the people who owned and drove these cars. They talk about us.

We are interested in how old things look like because of how they contrast with new things. Old cars say something about how things fall apart and what is left when they do. They inform us about what happens when things age, when they are exposed to the elements: extreme heat and cold, rain, rust, snow, tempests, storms, hurricanes and a whole lot more. They show what happens when things are left to decay.

We are interested to see how what was once new turned into something old. We may even want to compare how the same thing looked new and old. How the change took place. What happened. A documentation research of sorts. A curiosity fulfilled.

It is a form of "nosiness" but it also takes the form of a study in the "aesthetics of old". In what makes something old beautiful. In how decay can be aesthetic.



Old Studebaker

Chapter 18

Photographing Car Details

It is not always possible to be the best, but it is always possible to improve your own performance.

Jackie Stewart

1 – Introduction

Sometimes, photographing the entire car does not lead to creating a strong image. It may be because the background is not pleasing. Or there may be people standing around the car and you cannot get the whole car by itself. Or it may be because what attracted you in the first place is not the whole car. What attracted you, instead, may be a detail of the car.

The problem is that we are not necessarily conscious of which detail attracted our eye. In that instance we need to find out what this detail is. We do so by taking photographs of the car, progressively reducing the field of view to capture only sections of the car until we find the detail that is most attractive to us. The goal is to isolate this detail from its surrounding so that it stands out on its own as an interesting image.

More often than not isolating this detail means focusing on how the light plays with the shapes of the car. How light reflects on the curves of the car and how nearby elements are reflected onto the car. It also means creating a simplified composition that may be somewhat abstract. The examples below exemplify these visual concepts.



Spyker front Hood

Here I was attracted by the car as a whole (see images on the next page) but while the car was beautiful the environment was not propitious to good photographs. I therefore had to narrow my interest down to a detail of the car. I tried several different things (see other photos below), and eventually found this composition to work best. It shows only a small section of the car, but the palm tree reflections add something important. Besides saying “exotic locale” the palm tree shapes break down the linear and metallic lines of the car by bringing an organic looking element. The lines of the car itself have been simplified to the extreme. Finally, there is a striking visual difference between the uniform paint areas and the detailed grill and emblem. Although simple at first look, this image is all about comparing surfaces, textures and level of details.

Chapter 19

Selective Focus Photographs

Have you ever noticed that anybody driving slower than you is an idiot, and anyone going faster than you is a maniac?
George Carlin

Introduction

Creating interesting car photographs that go beyond mere snapshots can also be achieved by using selective focus. In short, selective focus means creating images where only part of the subject is in focus, therefore sharp. The rest of the image is intentionally left out of focus and therefore blurry to various extents.

Selective focus creates added interest because not everything in the image is clearly visible. While some areas are sharp and make easy to know what we are looking at, other areas are blurry and it is hard to tell what we are looking at. Of course, the blurrier an area is, the harder it is to tell what we are looking at. This gives a feeling of mystery to the image. It also creates depth and variation in the image.

Several techniques can be used to create selective focus images. In this chapter we are going to look at several of them.

1 – Creating selective focus with long lenses and wide apertures.

Don't hesitate to use a longer lens when creating selective blur photographs. Because the focus area of a long lens is much smaller, a longer lens makes it easier to have some areas in focus and others out of focus. In the example below a 70-200mm lens was used at the 150mm setting. I had to stand slightly farther away from the car than if I used a wide angle lens but I was able to create a nice mix of sharp and blurred areas in the photograph.

Use a wide aperture such as $f4$ or so. Depth of field increases when you use small apertures such as $f16$, $f22$ or smaller. By using a small f-stop, only the area you focus on will be sharp. Everything else will be out of focus. By doing this you will be creating depth in the photograph and introducing a feeling of mystery.

2 - About Aperture numbers

Aperture numbers can get confusing because larger numbers represent smaller openings. Don't get confused by these numbers. What they refer to is the actual diaphragm opening of the lens. To visualize this look at the inside of your lens while turning the aperture ring from $f4$ to $f22$ for example, and while depressing the depth of field preview button. You will see that the opening in the diaphragm gets smaller and smaller as the aperture numbers increase. I know this is illogical, but that's the way things are. The f-stop numbers represent the amount of light that goes through the aperture, in fractions. So as you close down the lens, you go from getting $1/4^{\text{th}}$ of the light into the camera to getting $1/8^{\text{th}}$, then $1/16^{\text{th}}$ and so on. This is why the numbers get larger while the opening gets smaller. A lens able to let in all the light in will have a maximum aperture of 1. I believe there is only one lens, a Leica I believe, able to achieve this. Creating an $f1$ lens is extremely challenging because all lenses remove light to various extents.

3 - Don't photograph head on. Instead, stand to the side.

To create effective selective focus photographs don't stand right in front of what you want to photograph. Instead stand slightly off to the side. When you stand right in front of an area, say the rear of a car, all the elements are on the same plane. You are, basically, photographing a flat subject. Regardless of which f-stop you use everything will be pretty much sharp.

Chapter 21

Rolling Car Shots

Patience is something you admire in the driver behind you, but not in the one ahead.

Bill McGlashen

1 - Introduction

Static shots are nice. They give you a lot of time to compose the image and get everything just the way you want.

But what if you want to add some motion to your image to give it a feeling of speed? That's where 'rolling shots' come in. There are four different types of rolling shots and we are going to learn how to create them all.

In this chapter we are going to look at the first three: panning, panning blurs and drive along photography. These are done with the camera handheld. In the next chapter, Chapter 22, we are going to look at the fourth one: Rig Photographs. These are photographs that are created by using various rigs to attach the camera to the car. This is a complex subject with a multitude of possibilities and for this reason I decided to dedicate a separate chapter to it. In Chapter 23 we will look at rig photographs taken at night without flashlight. Finally, in Chapter 24 we will conclude by looking at rig photographs taken at night with flashlight added.

A rolling car shot is a photograph taken while the car is in motion. This type of photograph shows the car sharp and the background blurred. The reason behind having a blurred background is to intentionally create the impression of movement. Having the car sharp and the background blurred makes the car look like it is travelling at speed. When everything is sharp, the image is static and the car does not look like it is moving. Rolling car shots are used to give the impression of motion and to separate the car from the background and other distracting elements in the photograph.

2 - The four types of rolling car shots

There are four types of rolling car shots, as follows:

1 – Panning

Panning means standing along the road, or the track, and following a moving car with the camera.

The panning technique is achieved by keeping the subject in the same position of the frame for the duration of the exposure. The length of the exposure must be long enough to allow the background to blur due to the movement.

2 – Panning Blurs

Panning blurs are panning photographs in which both the car and the background are blurred. These images are artistic in nature and rich in creative possibilities.

3 – Drive along photography

Shooting the car from another car while driving along, in front or behind the car. A variation of this technique is moving car photography, which involves shooting from the car while it is in motion. To do this someone is driving the car while the photographer stands in the passenger seat, the backseat or the 'boot.' I do not show this type of photograph in this book because it is very similar to the drive along example. It is also more dangerous than the drive along example where I shot through the sunroof and limited the risk of falling off the car while photographing.

4 – Rig photography

Shooting with the camera either mounted onto a pole attached to the car with suction cups, or mounted directly onto the suction cup. Because the pole and cups can be positioned on the car in many different places, a wide variety of rig photographs are possible. In most cases a remote control is used to trigger the camera. Finally, if the pole, suction cups and other mounting apparatus are visible in the photographs they must be removed in Photoshop during post-processing.

Chapter 32

Creating Car Collages

1 - Introduction

A car collage is a “portrait” of a specific car created by taking multiple photos of the car and blending them together in a pleasing composition in Photoshop. The edges of each individual photo are blurred and parts of the images are deleted for the purpose of blending the photographs together into a seamless composition.



Yellow "Stinger" Hot Rod Collage

How to create this car collage is explained in detail in the book !

Chapter 33 Creating Zoom Blurs

2 – In-Camera Zoom Blur Example 1

In this first example the blur effect was created 100% in the camera using the Zoom Blur technique described above.



Hot Rod Zoom Blur, Surprise Drag Strip, Arizona.

How to create this effect is explained in detail in the book !

Chapter 35 Creating Locally Colorized Black and White Photographs



Another photograph of the same location using the techniques described above.

The sepia coloring of the background gives a historical quality to the photograph. This works well with this location because the diner has a retro look and the car is a historical vehicle. The sepia color therefore plays up the historical aspect. To some extent it shows something that we expect to see. Keeping the full color on the car makes it stand out, almost as if it was cutout, or as if the car was in front of a painted background.

The contrast between the sepia background and the full color car is also metaphorically representative of old and new. The car was once new, very much like it looks in this photograph, but that was a long time ago, and this past time is represented by the sepia color of the background. Old and new, flashy red and sepia.

How to create this effect is explained in detail in the book !



Sunday Drive #3

How to create this photograph is described in detail in the book !

6 - Photograph taken with setup #1

...B//\h8fjY

How to create this photograph is described in detail in the book !

About Alain Briot



Alain Briot creates fine art photographs, teaches workshops and offers DVD tutorials on composition, image conversion, optimization, printing, marketing and personal style. Alain is the author of *Mastering Landscape Photography*, *Mastering Photographic Composition, Creativity and Personal Style* and *Marketing Fine Art Photography*. All 4 books are available in eBook format on Alain's website at this link: <http://beautiful-landscape.com/Ebooks-Books-1-2-3.html>

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