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The Hot Shoe Diaries: Big Light From Small Flashes



Synopsis

When it comes to photography, it's all about the light. After spending more than thirty years behind the lens—working for National Geographic, Time, Life, and Sports Illustrated—Joe McNally knows about light. He knows how to talk about it, shape it, color it, control it, and direct it. Most importantly, he knows how to create it...using small hot shoe flashes. In *The Hot Shoe Diaries*, Joe brings you behind the scenes to candidly share his lighting solutions for a ton of great images. Using Nikon Speedlights, Joe lets you in on his uncensored thought process—often funny, sometimes serious, always fascinating—to demonstrate how he makes his pictures with these small flashes. Whether he's photographing a gymnast on the Great Wall, an alligator in a swamp, or a fire truck careening through Times Square, Joe uses these flashes to create great light that makes his pictures sing.

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Customer Reviews

When it comes to photography, it's all about the light. After spending more than thirty years behind the lens—working for "National Geographic," "Time," "Life," and "Sports Illustrated"—Joe McNally knows about light. He knows how to talk about it, shape it, color it, control it, and direct it. Most importantly, he knows how to create it...using small hot shoe flashes. In *"The Hot Shoe Diaries,"* Joe brings you behind the scenes to candidly share his lighting solutions for a ton of great images. Using

Nikon Speedlights, Joe lets you in on his uncensored thought process-often funny, sometimes serious, always fascinating-to demonstrate how he makes his pictures with these small flashes. Whether he's photographing a gymnast on the Great Wall, an alligator in a swamp, or a fire truck careening through Times Square, Joe uses these flashes to create great light that makes his pictures sing.

JOE McNALLY is an internationally acclaimed American photographer and longtime photojournalist. His most notable series is "Faces of Ground Zero" • "Portraits of the Heroes of September 11th," a collection of giant Polaroid portraits. He also photographed "The Future of Flying," the first all-digital story for National Geographic. His award-winning work has appeared in numerous magazines and, in 2008, Joe wrote the critically acclaimed and bestselling book *The Moment It Clicks*.

Anything ol' Joe puts out is worth the read. This man is smart, talented, and a funny read (usually). He leads the way for a generalist who is sponsored by Nikon, so that is kind of a downer. I don't care much for whorin' for a manufacturer, but in this day and age it is the norm. Joe hasn't lost his edge as an educator, and he is sharp as ever for a 64 year old. Get this book and learn something, and have a laugh along the way. His credentials are impeccable, having worked for some of the major magazines in the 20th century, including the National Geographic since 1987.

In a nutshell?... This is a fantastic book, lots of information, etc. Definitely a "do not hesitate, but just buy it"... There is some info that might be daunting to a new photographer, but for those that have a basic understanding of flash photography, it will open your eyes to more possibilities than you can use. Joe McNally is a great teacher and educator, if you get a chance to see him in person, it is well worth the admission.

If you have access to an unlimited number of hot shoe flashes than this is for you. Even if you have on or two there are ideas. Information and learning is an ongoing process. Well written and easy to understand, if you understand a little and are interested in learning.

If you're into photography and have been keeping up with the latest trends, no doubt you've heard of *The Strobist*. *The Strobist* is all about using small off camera flashes for big results. Having no experience or formal training in off camera lighting, it was all foreign to me. To learn more I started

reading *The Strobist*. While David Hobby does run an excellent and useful site, things just weren't clicking for me. The site hits the all key points, however for me, it just doesn't have enough instruction, explanation, or examples. This is where Joe's book comes in and fills that gap. *The Hot Shoe Diaries* is just that, a diary or collection or blog posts if you will. This book isn't set up like a formal, instructional "how-to" book. In each entry Joe shows a photo or set of photos and covers the why and how behind the lighting of it. It's a collection of real world examples that really drives the concepts into your head. Reading this book has made me a lot more comfortable with the subject and I feel ready to put in the practice it takes to master off camera lighting. This is a change from before when I felt pretty lost. The one thing that turned me off about this book is that it's very Nikon-centric. While I find his discussing of equipment interesting and very useful, he tends to become a sort of zealot when it comes to talking about the Nikon creative lighting system. For example, instead of using pocketwizards Joe insists on using the Nikon brand IR trigger and explains how he works around the limitations of IR. I think if he weren't sponsored by Nikon this wouldn't be the case. Though I think of this a fault to the book, I'm sure Nikon shooters will appreciate it. As a Canon shooter, I felt he could have been more neutral and objective. Overall, this book was very good and very helpful. It wasn't hard to look past the Nikon talk and apply the concepts to my system of choice. This is definitely one of those books I will be referring to every time I use off camera lighting.

This is a must read for anyone curious about lighting and anyone wanting to understand the intricacies of Nikons Creative Lighting System. Joe's easygoing style mixes humor, technical detail and philosophy into a well rounded easy fun read! I learned a great deal reading this book about lighting and about photography. The example photos are spectacular. They help the viewer "see" the light. Having I read this book I will forever view photographs differently. And when creating a photograph my minds eye has been greatly expanded. This book is about the how too to use light as a creative tool and more significantly it is about light and it's variances and subtiles. And it also make a good reference for lighting solutions in the field.

A good book by a great photographer, wonderful images and lots of interesting insight. However, it is all about Nikon cameras and flashes, so for those of us that don't use Nikon, a lot of the good information is useless or at least takes work to transpose and make useful. That's really a shame, it would not have been hard to either write this in a more general way or have some co-author "translate" things to at least 'the other' big camera maker Canon. (Note: I own Canon gear but would

be just as happy with Nikon gear, I'm not a Canon fan boy or Nikon hater. Both are exactly equal in my book, I just could not afford to buy one of each) So, had I known that it's so Nikon focused, I would not have bought the book, and I'm glad I did not order his other book at the same time. And I won't. There's just too much camera and flash specific writing that has no value for me with my Canon gear. Unfortunately. That aside, and if you can get past his sometimes patronizing, sometimes overly forced beer-drinking-buddy like writing style, there's a lot of fun and interesting info from the front lines of photography in here. The images are fantastic and I do take good value information with me, I just wish it would be either more generic (i.e. not all based on model numbers) or - well - based on Canon gear :-D The value of the information is greater than the style and gear shortcomings, so 4 stars seems to be fair. 5+ stars if I had Nikon gear.

Yes, this book has a strong Nikon slant. But the majority of the information presented is still applicable to shooters of other brands. Yes, McNally writes like he's sharing beers with you at a backyard barbeque. But I kind of like that. The book has plenty of great case studies in how to use speedlight-based lighting, and if you have any sort of analytical mind, you should be able to easily see how to apply it to your gear setup. It's not a step-by-step instruction manual though: it's clearly targeted at people who have a handle on the basics of off-camera flash. I suggest digesting the information at strobist.com, then using this book as set of useful case studies in how to apply it.

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