Alan Hess on Monday Motivation

Welcome to another Motivational Monday. I'm Alan Hess, a photographer based in sunny Southern California, where I live with my wife and two rescued boxers. Today I want to discuss the scintillating subject of shutter speed (I know, sexy, right?) and how it can change the look and feel of your images.

The basics are pretty simple, the shutter speed controls how long the shutter is open allowing light to reach the sensor. Slower shutter speeds equals more light, faster shutter speeds equals less light, pretty standard stuff. But what shutter speed should you use to capture action? Should you always try to freeze the action? Is a little blur a good or bad thing?

I have been working on a new book (available later this year) called Making Great Photos, aimed at folks who want to take better photos and just didn't quite know where to start. In the book, I discuss how the shutter speed can freeze motion or show motion. So for this blog post I am going to show you a couple of photos taken at the same place of the same subject but with different shutter speeds and let you decide which one is better.

The first thing I want to point out is that I didn't have any special permission, or any special access to take these photos. All I did was go to the race track and took photos of the horses as they ran by. I chose a spot where I would be able to capture the horses as they ran by. I took a couple of

test shots to make sure I had my exposure settings right with a shutter speed of 1/8000 second in shutter priority mode on my Nikon D4. I then looked at what the camera said where the proper settings for aperture, then changed to manual mode and entered the aperture and shutter speed. The final settings were 1/8000 second, f/2.8 and ISO 500which you can see in the test shot gave me a nice exposure and a shutter speed fast enough to freeze any action.

Next up came the actual race. I watched as the horse came around the track, put eh focus point right over the lead horse and started to take a long burst of photos while tracking the horse as it went by. The resulting set of images was great and

the best was the following image which showed the horse with all four hooves off the ground as it galloped in for the win.

This is exactly the type of image that I love, a tack sharp photo of the horse in full gallop. But is this the best way to show the horse running? That’s why for the next race, I was going to use a much slower shutter speed and pan along with the horses to see what difference it would make. The main question would be what shutter speed to use to show motion but not be so slow that everything was blurred. From seeing how fast the horses were running I picked a shutter speed of 1/80 second. This meant that I had to drop the ISO and use a much smaller aperture to get a proper exposure. The settings I used

were 1/80 second, f/8.0 and ISO 100. This gave me the exposure I wanted as you can see in the test shot.

Then it was time for the race and this one was much tougher trying to keep the horses in the frame as the ran by. The key is to move the camera along with the horses trying to keep them in focus while the background is blurred. It worked great as you can see.

Again, I managed to capture the horses with all four hooves off the ground as they tore past my position. This image really shows the motion in a way that the previous “frozen” horse does not. Just goes to show, there is no wrong shutter speed, it all just depends on the story you are trying to tell. So which is your favorite shot, the frozen horse or the blurred horses?

My new book, **Make Great Photos** will be out later this year. You can find out more here.

You can learn more about Alan through his website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or his Portfolio.

https://layersmagazine.com/alan-hess-on-monday-motivation.html