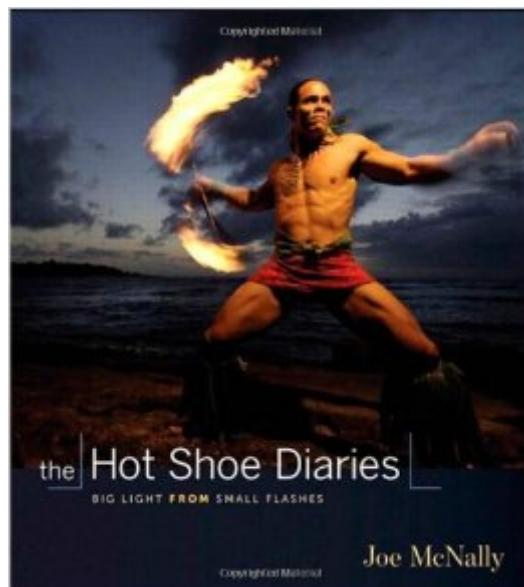


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The Hot Shoe Diaries: Big Light From Small Flashes



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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

SPOILER: 'Hot Shoe Diaries' is pure McNally and the best book I've ever read on flash photography. Two words: "buy it." LONG VERSION: Joe McNally's photo secrets were kicked out of the closet by the skeletons a long time ago. That's great news for those of us who have become infatuated (and infuriated) with the use of small flash units. Joe's latest book 'The Hot Shoe Diaries' is an exposé that tells all. There's never been a book on flash photography that covers the subject so thoroughly,

so beautifully and so humorously. I'm certain that 'HSD' will reign as the undisputed champion on flash photography for a long time. The first thing to know about 'HSD' is that even Joe has a hard time taking himself seriously. Joe repeatedly demonstrates his understanding of where he stands in the universe by filling 'HSD' with memorable photos - such as the self-portrait where he uses a chicken as a lightstand. Joe's humor is what sets 'HSD' apart from other photo books. It is what protects us from mind-numbing concepts, such as the "Inverse Square Law" (when did Congress pass that one anyway?). Joe starts with the basics: gear, the fundamentals of digital photography and simple flash. He moves on to talk about one light shots. And two light shots. And lots-a-lights shots. He talks about where to put the lights and what to put between the lights and the subject. He shares a lifetime of stories. He inspires and encourages. Like I said, "pure McNally." As with his first book, 'The Moment It Clicks', Joe fills the covers of 'HSD' with amazing and beautiful photos. These are the heart of 'HSD'.

Pros: 1. If you are a photography junkie, the book is fun to read - feels like you are having a couple of cold ones with a pro, and he is kind enough to tell you about his work. 2. If you already have a solid understanding of flash photography, the book will help you to get to the next level. [...] 3. This book is extra helpful for Nikon shooters.

Cons: 1. If you are a newbie, phrases like "so I just dialed up the shutter speed to kill off the extra ambient light I didn't want in the shot" may not mean much. (not quoting here, just relaying what sounds like) The book does not contain many specific instructions a la Scott Kelby "the shutter speed controls the ambient light, and therefore when you reduce the shutter speed you are letting in additional ambient light which works great in certain applications for dimly lit scenes" right next to a picture showing the difference. (Scott Kelby obviously sounds better than this) Newbies want specific instructions with detailed settings information, and before and after samples! Most likely the book wasn't written for newbies (like myself) so can't really complain about it (I guess).

2. I love Nikon products just like any other loyal Nikonian, but sometimes the book sounds a bit like infomercial for Nikon products we may not need to get. For example, yes, the SU-800 the wireless off-camera flash commander is great because it makes it very easy to control multiple flashes in multiple groups. Can't my D90 do the same thing (albeit for fewer groups)? Yes, one can take the SU-800 off-camera and put it in direct line of sight with flashes while I can't do that with D90 - ok, but then wouldn't Pocket Wizards / Radio Poppers do a better job anyway?

I have mixed feelings about this book. For anyone who has had some experience with mixed lighting, color management, etc., it is written in a very "easy to understand" sort of style, and

contains great food for thought. For a newer shooter, you will drown in this technically. My three problems with it are that it is completely Nikon centric and he advocates using TTL or some form of it in every situation. That may work for Nikon gear, but I have found Canon's flash exposures to be all over the place when left in "Auto" mode. You need to be aware that there is little to no guidance or advice other than that in this book. It is all about Nikon electronics and which buttons to push. If you are looking for advice on using speedlight flash manually, it's not here. I actually wondered as I was reading it whether Nikon sponsored the book. Way too much emphasis on Nikon gear and specific settings. As a result, it is less about small flash and more about about Nikon small flash and "CLS". That should have been part of the book's title I think. And to be clear, this is not about Nikon vs Canon and who is better. It is irrelevant. I just think that to do a book like this, it should not rely so heavily on one manufacturer's technical exposure system. The second thing is that there are not enough scene diagrams. Joe describes the set-ups, but it would have been better to show more sketches as he did in just a few examples. Diagrams help to visualize the distances involved; whether he was working alone using stands for the remote flash, or having assistants moving and holding them, among other issues.

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