

Tuesday, September 30, 2008

2008.09.26: Photokina 2008: What's new from Bowens

I spoke with Mark Aherne, technical director of Bowens International that manufactures most of the lights that I use, about some of the new items to the Bowens line up. I'm most excited about the new monolights but the soon-to-be-released QX3 2500W/s power pack that will eventually replace the QuadX 3000 pack that has been the basic workhorse of my studio is interesting as well. First, a bit about the QX3:

The new specifications are definitely interesting - greatly improved recycle time, improved flash duration, three asymmetric channels (as opposed to four headers distributed over two channels on the QuadX) in a pack that is about the same weight but with slightly smaller volume. Furthermore, the interface has been simplified and the screen has been prettied up . . . a lot:

But it still wasn't the type of AC power pack announcement I was hoping for. What I was hoping for was a replacement to the Quad 2400 power pack with significantly faster flash duration and recycle time in a package MUCH smaller and lighter than what they are offering now. In the areas of compact AC power packs, Norman, Dyna-lite, and Profoto still rule. Anyhow, onwards to the monolights:

The analogue interface enhancements are almost revolutionary in the world of monolights. To get one tenth stop precision we used to have to resort to digital interfaces which often slowed down a photographer's or assistant's access to lighting setting changes. Analog dials, while quick, were often not very precise and were limited at best to one third stop precision. With Bowens' new dual-dial power control system a user can have the most intuitive control of his or her light with precision traditionally limited to digital lights. On top of this, Bowens has added an integrated option slot for Bowens Pulsar and Pocketwizard receivers and all of their lights now have the Travepak/Turbopak/Explorer style DC input plug for battery power.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Lighting at 23:47

Saturday, September 27, 2008

2008.09.24: Photokina 2008: Leaf AFi-II 10 Demo

A Calumet Netherlands Leaf specialists gives me a demo of the upcoming Leaf AFi-II 10. This camera is the evolutionary next step following the Leaf AFi which is based on the Franke & Heidecke chassis evolved from the Rollei 6008AF and uses the same lens mount. I spoke to many people at the leaf booth including Ari Briggs, Executive Director of Sales and Marketing and Seth Greenberg, Director of Marketing for Leaf. These people presented some insight on some of the nuances of the camera and little quirks which are spun differently for marketing.

While the AFi/AFi-II/Sinar Hy6/Rolleiflex Hy6 are marketed to support all of the old lenses of the Rollei 6000 series, some of the people at the Leaf booth noted that these lenses aren't tuned for digital sensors which have lower tolerances for variances and some of the older system lenses may not perform as well as the newer versions of the same lenses which have been optimized. However, another representative who has both the Rollei 6008AF and the new Leaf AFi noted that between one of the new lenses and a good sample of one of the old lenses, a shooter may not be able to see a difference in his prints until he or she views them both side by side.

The margin for error in tuning of these systems is very small. During the demo, I witnessed how even switching between identical digital back models from one body to another could completely throw out the focusing from one body to another. It isn't that the bodies are fragile but it's because the back and body are tuned together out of the factory so that the body holds the back and the lens so that the lens very precisely casts light from the lens and focuses on the sensor but these tunings will be different on different bodies.

It is also interesting to note that many of the lenses that are available for the AFi/Hy6/6008 system are available at wider relative apertures with faster shutters and are designed with 6x6 format coverage whereas the lenses of systems like the Hasselblad H or the Mamiya/Phase One digital platform are available with narrower relative apertures and, especially in the case of the current Mamiya system, have much slower flash sync but have a focal plane shutter. While the wider relative aperture is optically and creatively very attractive, it's important to note that lens of similar focal length in the Rollei/Leaf/Sinar system are SIGNIFICANTLY heavier than those of the Mamiya 645 or Hasselblad H system. For a medium format system, weight isn't my first consideration when purchasing but for our smaller friends, the weight of some of this glass is so great that it may become prohibitive.

After viewing the Hasselblad booth I think that the Leaf AFi-II is still on the top of my list for what will be replacing my Rollei 6008AF/Phase One digital medium format system.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Equipment at 02:11

Friday, September 26, 2008

2008.09.23: Photokina 2008: Laptop Screen Shade

There are a few screen hoods on the market but this offering by Screen-Shade was one of the easiest and fastest to setup. Distributed by Lee Filters USA in North America.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Equipment at 03:21

2008.09.25: Photokina 2008: Broncolor's new Scoro power packs and UV light modifier

This video shows two of Broncolor's representatives describing some of the new features and enhancements of Broncolor's new flagship power pack. As noted in the video, the pack won't ship until the beginning of next year but it's an exciting new offering by Broncolor.

We also discuss Broncolor's new UV light mod.

Posted by Klyment Tan in Lighting at 03:16

Tuesday, September 23. 2008

2008.09.23: Photokina 2008 Day 1

I have waited two years for this day. We are here again Koelnmesse, at last. It's 8euro (about \$12) per hour for wireless internet access so I will likely be blogging more during the evenings but I am uploading videos to Youtube with very brief descriptions of interesting things I come across. Looking up videos with "Photokina" in their name on my Youtube page: http://www.youtube.com/profile_videos?user=Klyment

Posted by Klyment Tan in Events at 06:27