

PCQC Video Presentation

Fundamentals of Photography II with Joel Sartore—National Geographic

Lesson 21: Live Event Photography: House Party

If you are asked to be the designated photographer for family or other home events, lower your expectations. You will not only have to concentrate on photo taking but also on enjoying yourself. Travel light and minimize equipment. Think about prior lessons and how to make photographs of group events. In many cases a smartphone will do.

Lesson Takeaways

- Like the lesson on photographing the T-ball event, arrive early. You will most likely get some interesting and memorable shots of the preparations. It also gives some perspective on the physical setting. Find areas where you think people will congregate and areas that will offer an uncluttered background. As in the T-ball lesson, try to tell a story that has a beginning, the main event, and an end.
- Scout around and look for places where people might congregate and find positions that will allow for good lighting. Look for elevated areas such as a staircase that will allow you to get some good crowd shots.
- Try to melt into the area by shooting at the periphery of the group. This will allow some good candid shots rather than having folks engage with the camera.
- While many photographers try not to overexpose shots, sometimes a blown-out background eliminates clutter and makes the subject pop. Look for emotional situations such as when people reunite after long periods away.
- Be patient and let the action unfold. Look for things that might make interesting subjects such as bright colorful clothing, group laughter etc.
- Evenly lit scenes can often be handled with a smartphone.
- If you are shooting at an outdoor cookout, try shooting through the smoke of the grill to add drama to the scene. Note that you can't see smoke in a brightly lit sky so try shooting with a darker background.
- Stay for the clean-up to give closure to your story. You might get some interesting if not silly shots.

Assignment

Volunteer to photograph a friend's, neighbor's or relative's next gathering/party. Arrive early and capture some of the pre-party planning and decorations. Look for areas that will offer a good uncluttered background. An elevated spot will allow for some good crowd shots. Let the action unfold and work the periphery so that partygoers get used to your presence and forget you are there. This will allow some great candid shots. Keep moving. Take lots of pictures. Stay for clean-up.