

PCQC Video Presentation

Fundamentals of Photography II with Joel Sartore—National Geographic

Lesson 22: Live Event Photography: A Day at the Ranch

In this lesson we'll use a day at the ranch, specifically a cattle-branding, as an example of how to photograph fast moving action outdoors. This type of photo shoot will require you to use many problem-solving tools.

Lesson Takeaways

- When you are in the field, such as outdoors on the ranch, the lighting may not be optimal and will require workarounds to get a decent photograph
- Set the context of your story by shooting some detail shots, for example a rancher's boot in a stirrup, or taking shots in different seasons
- When shooting in potentially dangerous situations, stay out of the subjects' way and stay safely on the sidelines
- Distill the drama of a chaotic scene into a single layered shot
- Try lenses of different focal length for scenery shots
- Look for repetitive action that you can anticipate. Set up your camera and wait for the action to come to you. Be patient
- Look around and get some photographs of the spectators. If possible get above the action
- Don't forget about layering and framing. A photograph of a man on a horse with another rider in the background or a branding in the foreground will make for a better picture than a single rider on a horse
- It's better to get a good photograph the first time rather than fixing things later with post-processing
- After the event, get some photographs of the people. For portraits find some shade and use a reflector or light box to fill in shadowed areas. Use an open aperture and focus on the eyes; this will remove background clutter by blurring all but the subject
- If the subject is up against a background such as a wall, it's best to move the subject. Otherwise it will be difficult to blur the background by using a wide aperture
- If photographing children, talk to them to put them at ease. Take your photo of the children at eye level rather than from above (unless that is your intention)

Assignment

Find a venue, activity, or situation where there is fast paced action (e.g., a charity race, bazaar, or busy area of town). Try to find foci of repetitive action and get set up for the shot. Have patience and wait for the action to come into camera range. Try to get some shots from an elevated position. The goal will be to distill the chaos of the scene into a single shot.