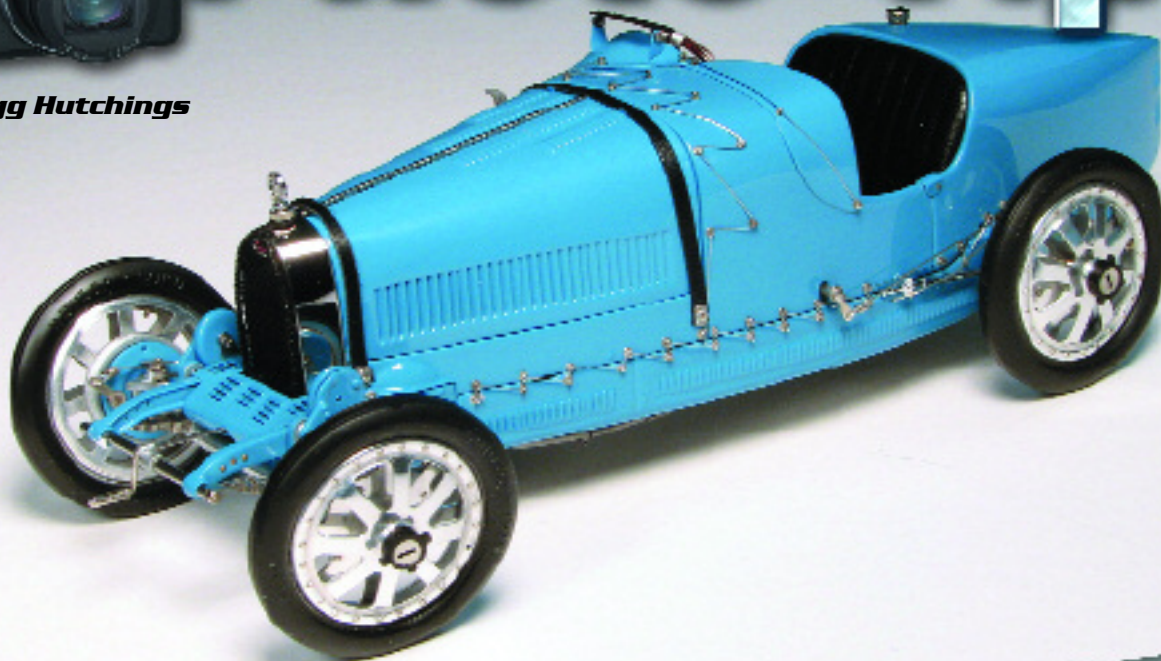




Photo Tips

by Gregg Hutchings



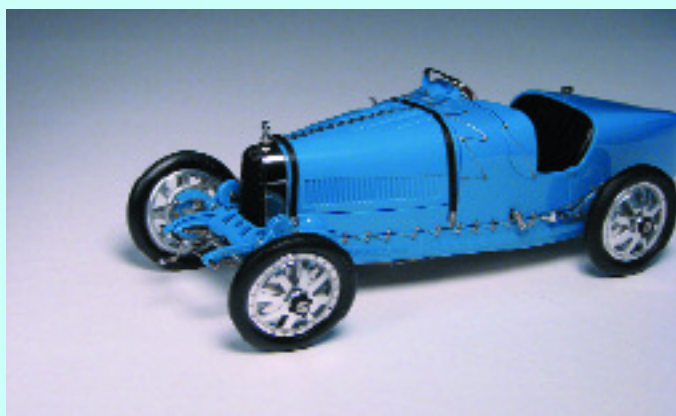
At the IPMS Nationals in Anaheim this past August, I had the opportunity to give a seminar on model car photography. During the second day's presentation, Aaron Woods brought his digital camera and asked if a cheaper camera (sub \$300) be able to take magazine-quality pictures. Well, there was only one way to find out, and sure enough, yes, you can take print-quality photos with a cheaper camera, using hardware store bought lights, and some of the tips and tricks you learned here in the August/September issue of MCM with Doug Whyte.

Aaron's camera was the Canon IS3, which is a great point-and-shoot camera that comes with what I consider to be the most important feature on a digital camera to use for model photography: a true Manual setting. This will let you adjust the f-stop, shutter speed, and virtually every control and function of the camera, just like a good film SLR camera. Digital cameras have to deal with white balance in a whole other way than the old film cameras, and fortunately, you can do this on the fly and see your results instantly. At the

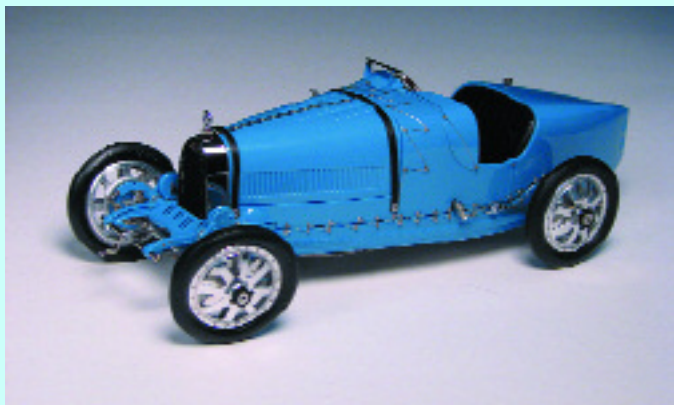
seminar at the IPMS show, I was using my standard setup: Mac PowerBook, Canon EOS 30D, Photogenic 1250 Studio strobe light with a 24" x 36" soft box, white background, and a borrowed LCD projector that showed what I was doing on a huge screen in the room. Aaron brought up his camera, I plugged it into the Mac, and it connected to it instantly! It helps that it is the same software that I use for the 30D, and it will also control any newer Canon digital camera. To make the playing field "equal," I put away the mega-bucks studio lights and brought out the hardware store lights: two 12" reflectors with blue photo 250 watt bulbs. This setup would probably run about \$50. You could probably find a deal in your area if you shop Craigslist, eBay, or local garage sales. You will need light stands or some way to clamp the reflectors, but that will depend on your on setup at home or at shows. I always use a white backdrop, no matter what. After reading Doug Whyte's trick on shooting white cars on the white background using a blocker, I tried it shooting white models at the show, and the result was incredible. Thanks, Doug!



The first shot you see here is done with no adjustments whatsoever. You can see the fluorescent color cast from using the auto white balance setting.



This shot the only change was to set the white balance to flash, which is usually a lightning bolt icon. You can play around with the white balance settings on your camera to get the best color balance you can.



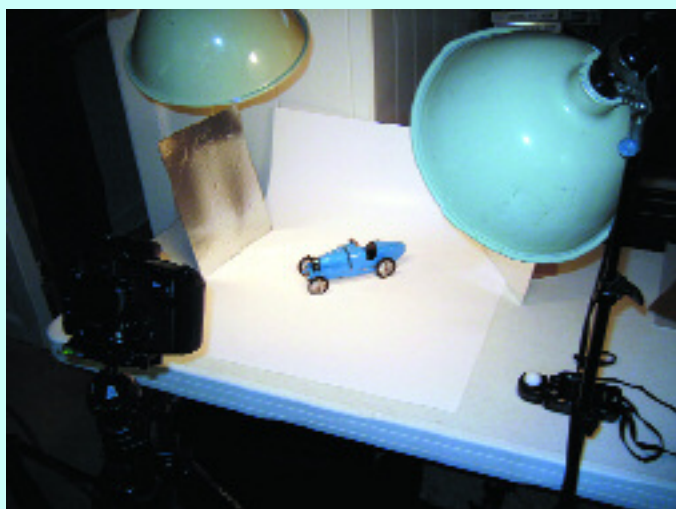
Here the camera was adjusted to center the CMC Models Bugatti in the middle of the shot. The exposure mode set the F-Stop to f/3.5 and the Shutter Speed to 1/125 sec. You can see how the front and rear of the Bugatti is not in focus.



Oops! The exposure was set to manual at 1/4 sec and f/8 F-Stop. little bit overexposed, wouldn't you say? This is the beauty of digital cameras, you get to see the results, and mistakes, instantly.



Now this is more like it. The F-Stop was kept at f/8 (which is the highest for this camera) and the shutter speed was bumped to 1/8 sec. I have done no color adjustments on any of the pictures on this page. The lead-in shot on the previous page is color adjusted, tweaked, and set to our color standards. And to think these shots came from an affordable camera with easy to find lights, and of course, a tripod.



Don't forget to play around with reflectors, bounce cards, and moving the lights around to get that perfect "beauty" shot.

F-Stop It



The easiest way to show you the differences in the aperture settings is to run a set of bracketed shots. This first shot is done with the \$80 Canon G3, set at Aperture Priority (AV), at f/8. The camera adjusted the shutter speed to 1/20 second. The camera was on a tripod, with two daylight fluorescent bulbs aimed at the model.



This is the Canon EOS 30D, also set at AV, f/8, and 1/160 second shutter speed. I used the macro lens on this, which is a 50mm lens that can go down to f/42.



Here the EOS 30D is at f/11 and 1/80 second.



This is at f/16 and 1/50 second.



The EOS 30D at f/22 and 1/20 second.



And this last shot is at f/32 at 1/13 second. I did not do any color correction or adjustments on any of these images. You can also see the dust on the sensor all over the image. The higher number f-stop you use, the more pronounced these dust dots will be.