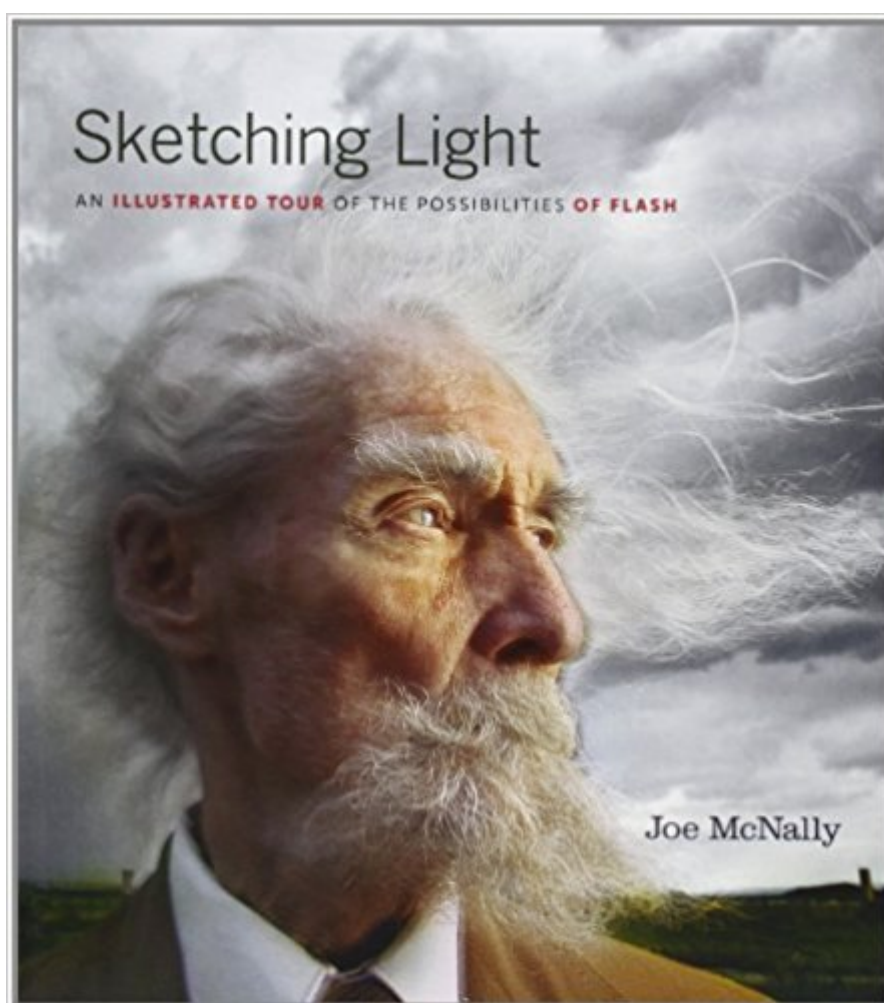


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Sketching Light: An Illustrated Tour Of The Possibilities Of Flash (Voices That Matter)



Synopsis

Following up on the great success of *The Moment It Clicks* and *The Hot Shoe Diaries: Big Light* from *Small Flashes*, legendary magazine photographer Joe McNally takes us on another memorable ride with *Sketching Light*, another trip into the land of light--but this time running the gamut from small flash to big flash, and everywhere in between. Of course, Joe includes coverage of Nikon Speedlights, but he also covers big flash, as well as "in-between" lights as the Elinchrom Quadra. The exploration of new technology, as well as the explanation of older technology. No matter what equipment Joe uses and discusses, the most important element of Joe's instruction is that it is straightforward, complete, and honest. No secrets are held back, and the principles he talks about apply generally to the shaping and quality of light, not just to an individual model or brand of flash. He tells readers what works and what doesn't via his let's-see-what-happens approach, he shows how he sets up his shots with plentiful sketches and behind-the-scenes production shots, and he does it all with the intelligence, clarity, and wisdom that can only come from shooting in the field for 30 years for the likes of *National Geographic*, *Time*, *Life*, and *Sports Illustrated*--not to mention the wit and humor of a clearly warped (if gifted) mind.

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Customer Reviews

Following up on the great success of "The Moment It Clicks" and "The Hot Shoe Diaries: Big Light from Small Flashes," legendary magazine photographer Joe McNally takes us on another

memorable ride with Sketching Light, another trip into the land of light--but this time running the gamut from small flash to big flash, and everywhere in between. Of course, Joe includes coverage of Nikon Speedlights, but he also covers big flash, as well as "in-between" lights as the Elinchrom Quadra. The exploration of new technology, as well as the explanation of older technology. No matter what equipment Joe uses and discusses, the most important element of Joe's instruction is that it is straightforward, complete, and honest. No secrets are held back, and the principles he talks about apply generally to the shaping and quality of light, not just to an individual model or brand of flash. He tells readers what works and what doesn't via his let's-see-what-happens approach, he shows how he sets up his shots with plentiful sketches and behind-the-scenes production shots, and he does it all with the intelligence, clarity, and wisdom that can only come from shooting in the field for 30 years for the likes of "National Geographic, Time, Life, " and "Sports Illustrated"--not to mention the wit and humor of a clearly warped (if gifted) mind.

JOE McNALLY is an internationally acclaimed American photographer and longtime photojournalist. His most notable series is "Faces of Ground Zero" Portraits of the Heroes of September 11th, a collection of giant Polaroid portraits. He also photographed "The Future of Flying," the first all-digital story for National Geographic. His award-winning work has appeared in numerous magazines. Joe's previous books are the critically acclaimed and bestselling *The Moment It Clicks* and *The Hot Shoe Diaries: Big Light from Small Flashes*.

Amazing book. He's a frikkin' genius writer, because he's so uninhibited and confident and smart that he gives you a brain-dump of everything in his mind. Take from it the bits you like, run with 'em, and have fun making some awesome shots. If you haven't used a lot of flash before, you'll sometimes read over a page and have no idea what he's talking about. WTF? Not that he's overly technical... kind of the opposite, that he's so gushing and enthusiastic and dropping all the hip terms for everything ("start with a bit of a hot rim and then back it off, 'cause in a sidelight situation it's gonna blow it out by a stop... then it gets piped backed to the lens and baby, it's dark out there!"), that it's hard to bring him out of orbit and back into the land of 'OK, what button do I push?' But stick with it. Read the book, shoot, read it again, shoot some more. You'll get it. McNally gets a lot of attention for using flashes in extraordinarily complex setups -- and yeah, he does. But he's always focusing on the people... the story... the eyes. He's not a landscape photographer. His stories about interacting with his subjects (models, celebrities, musicians, quarterbacks, astronomers, bagpipe makers) are what this is really about. This book has longer stories, more details and more diagrams

compared with the previous books. If you don't have his other books (Hot Shoe Diaries, or The Moment it Clicks) and you want to learn his techniques, *get this one instead*. It's fatter, it's got more writing, and the narratives are longer and more intricate. This one is more chapter-based with various techniques, and the other two are closer to "here's a cool photo, and here's a page about how I took it." If you have the other two and love him, then get this one since it's essentially all-new material, and his technique and philosophy are so useful and inspiring, that the more you read and see of his work, the better your photos will end up as a result.*** Important note: McNally uses only Nikon and makes only passing mention of Canon. Everything is virtually interchangeable, *but* there's one important difference about flash exposure you need to know if you're a Canon shooter. All over the book, he's talking about the EV exposure compensation being a global adjustment (e.g., p. 213, 345) -- that is, if you change the EV on the camera, you program underexposure into the flash as well. That's how it works on Nikon, but *not* on Canon! On Nikon: the camera EV and flash EV are indeed linked: lowering the camera EV lowers the flash output. So, to highlight the foreground, you go -2 EV on the camera, and then back up +2 EV on the flash to compensate. But on Canon, this is *not true*: the camera EV and flash EV are independent. Dropping the camera EV drops the ambient exposure, but keeps the flash output the same! So to do the same as above on Canon, you want to do -2 EV on the camera, and leave the flash at 0 EV. If you do what McNally says, you'll end up over-flashing your subject on Canon. This difference is *not* well documented, but you can find some more info on it at Canon's web page -- Google for "Canon EOS speedlite system tips" and click on the tips by photographer Stephen Wilkes, and there are a lot of sample photos for how this works. Neither system is better or worse -- but you do need to be aware of the differences!*** Update February 2012. Nikon's new D4 will ship soon. The D4 offers the option to set the flash level using the Canon way, not the Nikon way... that is, on the D4, doing a -EV on the exposure will now leave the flash EV unaffected. Nice change, since it means you need to do one adjustment, not two, to lower the ambient level. It appears that this is an option (not a full-time change), and that this applies to the D4 only, not the D800. For details, search for an article called "Exposure Compensation When Using i-TTL Gets Easier with the D4" on Nikon's site.

If you are a student of light, then consider Joe McNally's new book *Sketching Light* to be a must-read. Sitting down with *Sketching Light* is like sitting down for a beer with Joe as he talks you through his favorite pix in a photo album. The conversation will wander, stories will be spun, jokes will be told, detailed insights will be shared, advice will be given, and you'll walk away grateful for the opportunity. Short bits to know about 'Sketching Light'...>The book is Nikon-centric. Joe is

Nikon-centric. Don't let this worry you. If you shoot Canon, or Sony, or any other brand, don't despair. Strip out all the Nikonian jargon and 'Sketching Light' remains a heavyweight when it comes to lighting. (And, if you shoot Canon, check out *Speedlite's Handbook: Learning to Craft Light with Canon Speedlites* -- written by yours truly. It will give you all the buttons and dials info that you need to drive a Canon Speedlite.)> 'Sketching Light' is a book about the possibilities of flash and it covers the full spectrum. Joe shoots Speedlights. Joe shoots big lights. Sometimes you need just a breath of on-camera fill flash from a Nikon SB-910. Sometimes you need the punch of an Elinchrom Ranger. Sometimes you need one light. Sometimes you need to haul out every light that you can get your hands on.> There are plenty of set shots that show Joe and his gear in action. You'll also find Joe's signature lighting diagrams--drawn by hand on napkins and sketch pads--for nearly every shoot in the book. I recommend keeping a highlighter and a black marker on hand so that you can annotate your "aha!" moments as you read.> Yes, there are photos in the book that no mere-mortal could make. Joe is, after all, the Indiana Jones of photographers. Yet, there are also dozens of shots that you can make today with gear that you likely have around you right now.> There are no photo captions in the book. At first, you'll hate this. You've likely grown accustomed to flipping through photo books, pausing at a pic, and having the caption give you the basics so that you can move on. 'Sketching Light' makes you earn your knowledge. I guarantee you, however, that as you read Joe's narratives and decode his photos, you'll be a stronger photographer for your efforts.> This is not a beginner's book that lays a foundation of basic concepts and then layers new ideas on top. Rather, Joe starts right in at an intermediate level and keep moving. Think of 'Sketching Light' as a long conversation that jumps around and you won't be disappointed. Each "chapter" is really another "hey, let me tell you about this now...." And yes, you can jump around 'Sketching Light' and read the chapters for the pix that interest you today and then jump to another spot tomorrow.> 'Sketching Light' may give you deja vu. If you've read Joe's blog, watched his videos on Kelby Training, or attended one of his seminars/workshops, then you've likely seen some of these pix and heard some of these stories before. I see this as being like catching up with an old friend rather than a shortcoming. Of course, there were pages and pages of material in 'Sketching Light' that I'd never seen before. While wrapped in a cover that says "flash", for me, 'Sketching Light' is really about vision and using whatever gear you have to craft images that express that vision. It's about dreaming big and having the courage to fail. It's a book that says "go out there and create the images that only you can create."

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