

The following suggestions posted here are just some of the main points that will help you yield photos that we can use. If you have ideas you think were overlooked here, please let us know with an email.

For any shooting you do, be sure to **carry an ample supply of batteries and memory cards**. Carry enough for at least 6-8 hours of heavy shooting, double that if you are covering 2 shifts on a single day. If you don't have enough to cover your assignments, spend a little \$ for more. [SterlingTek](#) sells aftermarket batteries for a fraction of what the camera manufacturer's brand costs (they also sell memory cards, but you might do better elsewhere by doing a search for the current sales). Remember too, that you'll need several chargers to recharge them (if you want them done quickly...otherwise you CAN charge one at a time, BUT that will require many hours and you might run out of time. Don't forget about your flash batteries, the same applies.

Music

Well composed, in focus, well lit shots, are your main concerns.

Be sure to include entire subject in framing. No "arty" closely cropped subjects that are missing key features.

(Unfortunately?) Drinking and drugs inhibit the good quality photography we are looking for. A sharp mind will improve your portfolio, and potentially your income after a year. Caffeine is a helpful alternative!

YOUR PRIME DIRECTIVE:

- 1) Shoot [Whole Band](#)**
- 2) Use [appropriate & Good Lighting](#)**
- 3) Add your [Creativity](#)**

COMPOSITION AND SHARPNESS

For music acts, be sure to capture entire band, and include SXSW banner whenever possible. Then concentrate on tighter shots of individuals, but be sure not to get too tight and include instrument use and surroundings as appropriate. Remember to leave crop and straightening buffer zone.

- **Avoid microphones** in front of **faces**...these are instant rejects! Move to where you get clear views of eyes and faces. Or, capture faces when visible.
- Use a wide enough lens to **include the subjects** from your position.
- Be **STILL and STEADY** for sharpness. If your in front of a mosh pit, try and hold the camera still. An "Image Stabilized" lens (or body) will give you a stop or two of speed.
- When shooting at stage front, use a **wide angle lens** (35mm is not a wide angle lens when you're close).
- Anticipate **dynamic actions** about to happen. Keep your other eye open.
- If you have a "**Live View**" screen you can raise over the crowd's heads (just don't get too annoying...especially in front of the drunk surly dude).
- Don't necessarily place your subject in the center of the frame. Often you get a more dynamic shot with your subject at a "**Rule of Thirds**" placement, looking INTO the frame center.
- Try **researching** your bands for their set up, or any antics they are know for.
- Scout **venues** before the shows for best vantage points.
- In **post processing**, **DON'T DO ANY CROPPING** unless it is an obvious necessity.

Please let SXSW decide on the crop.

LIGHTING

Try to use only stage/ambient lighting whenever possible, but not at the risk of unsharp images.

- Use a "**Fast Lens**" (meaning a wide aperture lens, such as $f1.4$, or even $f2.8$).
- **Subject motion** begins to show up around 1/60th to 1/125th sec., or even faster depending on subject's speed.
- If using a **high ISO**, try reducing noise in post processing with software such as: Noiseware, NoiseNinja, etc. (Test your camera for quality of high ISO range).
- Consider strapping a **monopod** to your pack. That's another stop of speed for static shots.

If you still need the aid of a flash:

- PLEASE use a **Diffuser**: The [Sto-fen Omni Bounce](#) is a good cheap one at \$20; [Gary Fong products](#) "Whale Tail" or "Lightsphere" are a bit more costly, but are quite good. You can even make one from a plastic milk jug! Reflectors are not as effective, are clunky, and block other's views.
- Use "**smart**" flashes (i.e. Speedlights) by your camera manufacturer.
- Don't overpower the image with the flash...**NO BLOWN OUT HIGHLIGHTS!!!** Most cameras have flash compensation to give a more pleasing fill. Underexpose the flash a bit if your results are too bright.
- Set camera function of flash to "**Rear Curtain Sync**," which fires the flash at the end of the exposure. If you are using long exposures, it will provide the flash (light detail) at the end of any streak movements from the subject (streaks lead in to flash of subject).
- Try using **off camera flash** hand held with a Sync Cord, above and to the side of camera at arm's length (that is, if the atmosphere is conducive). Flash Brackets are too clunky for carrying around at the music venues.

GEAR TIPS

Carry all the gear you'll potentially need or want, but try and get into a smaller pack. Covering the music venues is often a crowded hectic environment. Keeping a sleek profile in front of a packed crowd will not only provide you with ease of use, but doesn't piss off the person behind you trying to rock out. Pack on the light side for your own comfort...the nights are long, and you have to get around quickly.

Events, Panels, Parties, etc.

In addition to the Directive, and the Tips & Tricks above in Music...shooting "non music" events can benefit from different gear and techniques:

COMPOSITION and SHARPNESS

Sharpness is biggest difference from stage acts. Event images should not contain blur from long exposures. Be sure to focus attention to the subjects, and avoid side and background distractions.

- Don't necessarily place your subject in the center of the frame. Often you get a more

dynamic shot with your subject at a "**Rule of Thirds**" placement, looking INTO the frame center.

- In **post processing**, **DON'T DO ANY CROPPING** unless it is an obvious necessity. Please let SXSW decide on the crop.

LIGHTING

Lighting is where the main distinction lies from Music. Generally, the ambient light isn't as dramatic as music, but there are events that are similar.

- Absolutely **PLEASE use Diffusers!!!**
- **Be sure eyes are lit and visible!**
- **Off camera flash** is even more desired for event photography. A Flash Bracket is great for events by keeping the flash above the camera for verticals. Or, hand held with a Sync Cord, above and to the side of camera at arm's length (if the atmosphere is conducive). Be creative with your lighting.
- Although a portability issue and requires practice, **Off Camera Keylighting** will achieve a higher level of professionalism, check into a multi speedlight system (even just a second "keylight" is a huge improvement). Check out Strobist.com for an awesome, affordable and (fairly easy) portable off camera lighting system.
- Many interiors often have "crappy" room light...fluorescent, and other off color temps. Consider setting a **Custom White Balance** for the ambient light. Be careful how you use this though. Sometimes setting a custom WB can diminish other effective appealing light. If you don't like the results you get, or forget to set a WB, you can correct it in post production. Remember to reset it after the shoot!

GEAR TIPS

Consider having two lens/bodies at the ready. Events are generally less crowded than the music clubs, and most environments are conducive to having your gear out and handy. One body with wide angle, and the other with a portrait lens, will keep you ready for shooting groups and individuals.