

## Re: folly of astrophotography

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MitchAlsup@aol.com (Mitch Alsup) wrote in message  
news:<e90782f7.0411191136.1e75c75d@posting.google.com>...

> *One of the strange things I learned in the first few weeks of  
> dSLR ownership, is that digital changes all the rules. A) each  
> 'shot' is free, however, b) the cost structure to be able to take  
> that shot is quite steep. The other thing I have learned is that  
> even with an excellent camera and all the electronic gizmos that  
> take the hard work out of the picture taking process, one should  
> not expect more than 10% of their shots to be keepers. With the  
> added difficulty of astronomy of extremely dim objects and the  
> problems of tracking that object during the course of the exposure  
> this 10% will drop into the 1% (or less) range. Even short exposures  
> are subject to the camera movements setting up vibrations in the  
> telescope that blur the very detail one is trying to capture.  
> Indeed, some of my best images of terrestrial subjects are long  
> exposures of landscapes taken at twilight. The longer exposure,  
> it seems, the better the image. I believe that the camera movements  
> are setting up lens/tripod vibrations that take a few seconds to  
> damp out.*

The mounting is everything. Photography shows up the total inadequacy  
of most mountings. If it wobbles with visual use it doesn't deserve to  
be called a mounting. It's a jelly!

> *In general, I fully agree with the new amateur astronomers would  
> do themselves well by staying away from astrophotography (film or  
> digital) until they get a few years under their belts and understand  
> the delicacy one needs to focus a telescope without inducing large  
> vibrations and the delicacy of focusing at all. In addition to the  
> polar alignment issues, and all the other stuff, it's a simple time  
> issue. If it takes 1/2 the night to set up all the gear and the  
> results don't turn out so well, it seriously degrades the astro  
> part of the equation without making the photography part any fun  
> whatsoever.  
>  
> *Mitch**

sci.astro.amateur: Re: folly of astrophotography

Unnecessarily pessimistic! A permanent pipe pier and a solid mounting. Then your very first moonshots can be amazing. Why do people insist that they set up their entire kit every time they go outside? Even have to wait for it to cool down. It's like doing an engine tune-up every single time before driving to the take-away! That would soon put you off take-aways!

Long exposure photography is much more difficult. But taking snaps of the Moon and major planets has hours of fun just waiting for anybody who tries with the simplest digital camera. An eyepiece with a decent clear aperture (large eye lens) helps to avoid vignetting. Keep the power reasonable: 80–120x maximum if your mounting and tripod are at all wobbly. Take a few pictures with the camera set to auto and infinity. Go back indoors, download your snaps and see what you've got on your computer screen. You'll be delighted!

Chris.B