

## JOHN'S PHOTO BOOTH

by John Lucas

This is a very simple photo booth using 1 quartz light. The heart of the system is a translucent panel made of PVC and white cloth. I like translucent panels because I have more control over the light. I can move the light around a lot more because it is on the outside of the panel.



This panel diffuses the light so that it doesn't create a hotspot that's as harsh and the shadow is not as dark and has softer edges.

I use Quartz lights because they are very close to the correct color temperature for tungsten films or for the tungsten setting on digital cameras. Quartz lights burn for hundreds of hours and are fairly inexpensive. Photofloods are almost as expensive as quartz lights and only last 10 hours or so. I place the light on a Boom arm because you need to be able to move the light freely. I start with the light shining on the top and the side panel. If it doesn't light the piece properly I move the light so it shines either more on top or more on the side.

You may also want to shade the light so it doesn't shine on the camera or on the background. If it shines in the camera lens it will degrade the color and contrast of the image. If you want a darker background then put a piece of cardboard between the light and the background.



This image is pretty good. Moving the left panel further away would darken the left side. I wanted to see how the piece would look with the left side brighter so I added a reflector. A white reflector wasn't enough and a mirror was too harsh so I used a chrome reflector. Crinkled aluminum foil would produce the same results. I'm actually picking up direct light for the reflector. This is light that is leaking past the front of the panel. This is much stronger than the light that is going through the panel. If a reflector inside the booth doesn't bounce enough light back then pick up light from outside the booth.



I thought this worked much better. You could produce the same shot by using a second light. The second light would be on the left shining through the panel. You would have to make the second light dimmer. You can do this by moving the light further away. You can aim the light so the dimmer outer edge is lighting the panel. You could put wire screen in front of the light. You could add 2 layers of white cloth to the panel or you could use a lower wattage light.

If you look at the photo above it appears like the light is coming from above and to the right. This looks quite natural. If I make the left side just as bright as the right side the piece begins to look flat and loses its 3 dimensionality. I find that a reflector works quite well in many situations.



The boom arm allows me to position the light anywhere I want quite easily. You can build it to any length that fits your workspace.

This photo booth is not foolproof. You have to learn to look carefully at the reflections and shadows and try to figure out what to do. Be willing to try anything.

A suggestion for penturners is to try using a white Styrofoam cooler. Cut one side out of it and place it over the pens. Then shoot at an angle that won't show the cooler. Light it from the outside with one or more lights. It works unbelievably well. If you don't want to do that just make a small frame from wood and cover it with white cloth. It doesn't have to be as big as my photo booth.