

METZ 60 CT-4 FLASH

Power and Control in One System

by Jack and Sue Drafaahl

PHOTOGRAPHIC'S USER REPORT

Have you ever been in a photo situation where you needed a portable electronic flash with lots of exposure control and lots of firepower? In most cases, you either had to use a small portable flash with its full complement of exposure controls, or go with a real powerhouse flash that has little flash control. The Metz 60 CT-4 takes the best of both worlds and combines them into a remarkable flash system with the power to light the most demanding scenes, and all the whizbangs found on the smaller portable flash units.

BRUTE POWER

Many times, photographers find themselves in situations where they have to light a large room or shoot a sporting event from a great distance and need brute lighting power to illuminate the scene. With an ISO 100 guide number of 197, the 60 CT-4 can deliver the power needed. For example, with an ISO 100 film you can shoot subjects up to 50 feet away at f/4. If you need greater distance, an ISO 400 film will provide distances out to 100 feet, and an ISO 1600 film will reach out to a distance of 200 feet! This gives sports photographers the ability to shoot across the width of a football field, or the entire infield of a baseball diamond.

Bounce flash with the 60 CT-4 allows the photographer to shoot in very large rooms and avoid those harsh direct-flash shadows. In addition to the large flash head atop of the unit, there is a smaller fill-flash tube under the main flash tube. This double head is designed for situations where you need the bounce flash to light the room, and a small direct flash to illuminate a person in the foreground.

The power necessary to deliver this amount of light comes from a heavy-duty power pack that accepts both Dryfit and NiCd batteries. The battery case hangs over your shoulder for ease of shooting in the field. According to the manufacturer, over 160 full-power flashes can be made on one charge. Recycle time is fast enough to keep up with motor-drive cameras at 5.5 frames



per second in some modes. The 60 CT-4 battery can be recharged in the battery case, or by means of an external charger. The recharging time varies from 4-6 hours, depending on use and battery type.

VERSATILE FLASH

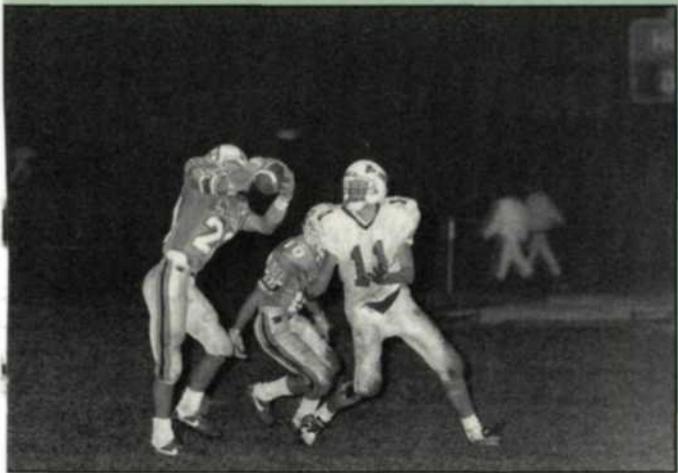
The Metz 60 CT-4 has an impressive array of flash controls and configurations for every possible lighting scenario. The flash-bracket camera plate has a 1/4-20 slotted camera screw that accommodates all types of small- and medium-format cameras. Two tripod sockets are located near the point where the flash head joins the camera plate, allowing the photographer to mount camera and flash as a single unit on top of a tripod. This technique is useful when each shot has to have the same composition, or where mixed lighting requires a long exposure.

The camera bracket can be reconfigured from horizontal to vertical and back via a special slotted post at the end of the camera-mounting bar. The flash head itself has a slot on each side of the handle that allows the camera to be mounted on either side of the flash. An additional tripod socket can be found at the base of this handle for situations in which you want to separate the flash unit from the camera and mount it on a separate tripod or light stand.

1. We tested the Metz 60 CT-4 with two camera systems: the 35mm Nikon N6006 shown, and the medium-format Mamiya Super 5x4.5. The flash system performed admirably with both cameras.
2. With the N6006 and an AF 180mm lens, the Metz 60 CT-4 flash provided the power to photograph a night football game at distances ranging from 40-100 feet, using ISO 100 and 400 films.
3. Using the 60 CT-4's bounce capability, we evenly illuminated this large room at our local NEC America plant.

The exposure-mode control is located at the center back of the flash head, and is operated via a large, knurled nylon dial. An LCD panel displays eight autoexposure settings, TTL, and nine manual-exposure modes. Each function is illuminated so that all functions are visible in total darkness. For each auto f-stop selected, a corresponding maximum flash distance is displayed. Each time you reset the film ISO, a new maximum autoflash distance appears on the LCD panel.

Below the exposure function controls, you will find two lights and a button. The red light on the left indicates a good exposure when the flash is fired. The green light on the right is a basic ready light, and tells you when the flash is ready to fire. A test-fire button is located to the right of these two lights, and can be used to test-fire the



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flash or to make flash-meter readings without having to fire the camera. Two additional switches are included on the back of the flash head; these lock the exposure-function control, and turn the fill-flash tube on and off.

The flash head itself can be rotated 360° and tilted up to a 90° angle for perfect bounce flash. A wide-angle diffuser is tucked under the flash head, and can be slid out and locked in place on the front of the flash. When this happens, a button inside the flash head is tripped, and a new maximum auto flash distance is illuminated. A telescopic accessory is available for situations requiring flash at more extreme distances. This adapter fits on the front on the flash head and requires the use of the TTL function to produce accurate exposures.

Additional manual flash controls are located on the top of the flash head. A standard ISO/feet/f-stop dial tells what f-stop to use at specified distances. Variable power settings, from

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full power down to $\frac{1}{256}$, give the photographer total creative control. An accessory bounce card can be attached to the flash head when it is in the 90° position, allowing softer lighting when there is no surface to bounce from.

FLASH-SYNC SYSTEMS

Flash sync cords for the 60 CT-4 range from the standard PC cord to very sophisticated autofocus TTL packages that duplicate most of the functions of the camera manufacturer's flash units. In an effort to be compatible with as many cameras as possible, the Metz SCA 300 system permits connecting the 60 CT-4 to most Canon, Olympus, Minolta, Nikon, Leica, Rollei, Cosina, Ricoh, Chinon, Pentax, Contax, Yashica, Bronica, and Hasselblad cameras. These adapters provide such features as flash-ready lamp, exposure auto check, TTL flash control, flash-sync control, and autofocus-assist beam projection.

FIELD TESTING

Field testing every possible camera and flash configuration for the Metz 60 CT-4 would take this entire issue to document. So, we narrowed our tests down to one medium-format camera with autoflash, and one 35mm camera with TTL flash. Our first test was done with a Mamiya Super 6×4.5 camera and a 45mm lens. We selected several large rooms at our local NEC America plant to see just how well the 60 CT-4 worked as a bounce flash. We tried progressive increases in auto f-stops until the flash-OK light on the back of

the flash head did not illuminate. With an ISO 400 film, this occurred at about f/11. After most exposures, recycle time was under one second. The resulting photos were evenly illuminated, even when extreme wide-angle shots were made.

For the 35mm TTL tests, we decided to push our luck and try the new Nikon N6006 with an AF 180mm lens. A local high-school homecoming football game was the subject, and Ektapress 100 and 400 were our film selections. We mounted the camera on the flash bracket, and used the special TTL adapter designed for the new Nikon cameras. Most of the photos were taken from the sidelines, with flash-to-subject distances ranging from 40–100 feet. The recycle times for most of the action shots were so quick that many times two flash shots were possible of the same play action. We found ourselves going through a lot more film than we had with flash units we have previously used.

We also tested the unit in total darkness, and found the red AF-assist beam to be as efficient as the one found on Nikon flash units. One new function found on the Nikon N6006 is the Rear/Slow sync. With this setting, the photographer will get balanced exposures between available light and flash. The Rear function fires the flash at the end of the exposure, while Slow fires the flash at the beginning.

Again, we set the N6006 to autoexposure, but this time we used the Rear/Slow functions with the 60 CT-4 flash unit. What we found was a perfect match, the difference being in power. The results of the small-format tests were impressive. We missed a few shots when we tried to push the flash recycle time beyond two shots on a single play. All other shots of the homecoming were perfect, exposurewise. We can only assume that when the 60 CT-4 works this well with the two configurations we tested, it would perform equally well with other camera setups.

CONCLUSIONS

When you take all the good features of small and large portable flash units and combine them, it makes the Metz 60 CT-4 one powerful and versatile flash system. The workmanship and reliability of the 60 CT-4 are excellent, making this powerhouse flash a welcome contribution to any photographer's camera bag.

The Metz 60 CT-4 lists for \$776, and is marketed by Bogen Photo Corp. For further information contact your local camera store, or Bogen at 565 E. Crescent Ave., P.O. Box 506, Ramsey, NJ 07446-0506; (201) 818-9500. ■



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