

Photo-tip: Catching the Action

by Milton Heiberg

Hey dude! Like, surf's up man! Let's go!

There are more surfers in the water than sharks, so the safety odds are pretty good. And the action photography is superb. There are several factors to keep in mind when photographing surfers.

On the **technical** side, a moderately high ISO and *very* high shutter speed are a must. A camera body with a fast continuous shutter mode helps greatly, but with good skills in “decisive moment” selection, you can get the image you want with slower fps (frames per second) shutters. I almost always use RAW mode for general photography. However, in action situations the JPEG mode allows a much longer burst of exposures. With smaller JPEG files your camera won't suddenly stop at the point of best action as it would when loading large RAW files to your media card.

My **settings**: With a Canon 40D and 70-200mm lens, aperture priority (AV mode) at f/11, ISO 400, JPEG in the “L” position, continuous shutter set at “H.”

On the **practical** side, with more than thirty surfers within the range of your lens, most of them will start a good wave and then fall apart. Choose the best surfers, and stick with them. In the long run, they will give you the best action flips and turns.

Try to have the subject surfing toward you. If the waves are high enough, and you are lucky enough, you may get that great shot of the surfer inside the tunnel. However, on a normal day follow the good surfers in either direction. With their flips and turns you can catch some pretty good gymnastics.



Steady



Good flip



Oops!