

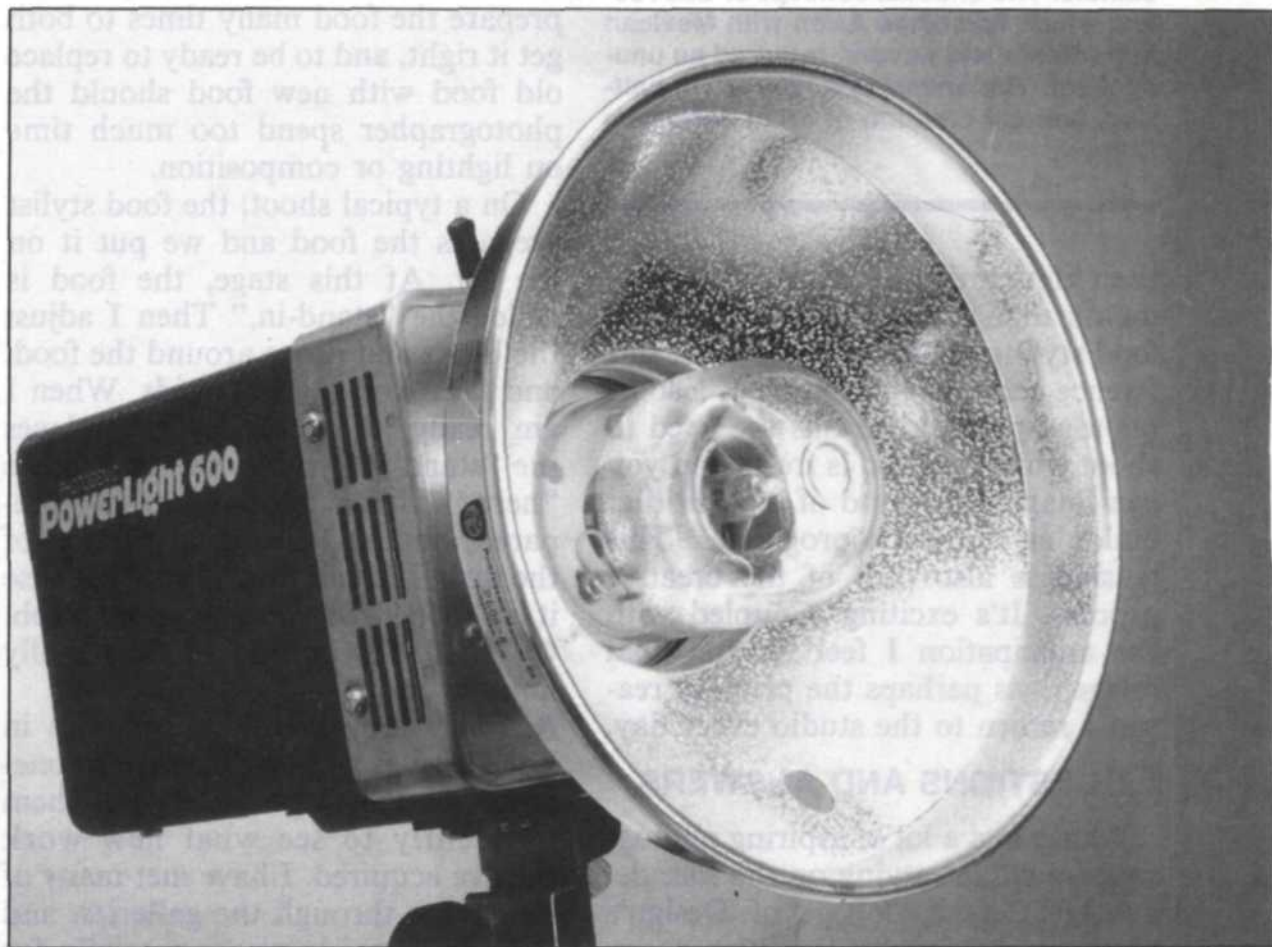
PHOTOGENIC POWERLIGHT 600

Versatility in a Self-Contained Studio Flash Unit

by Jack and Sue Drafa

PHOTOGRAPHIC'S USER REPORT

Lighting equipment and lighting techniques have always been a "trendy" part of studio photography. With the old masters, it was hot, incandescent lights for Rembrandt lighting, comprising key, fill, background, and hair lights. The lighting setup would take hours, as the photographer diligently worked to perfect every shadow and highlight. Then came umbrellas and softboxes, which allowed one to soften and eliminate shadows. Photographers found soft lighting to be much less complex, since the desired effect could be accomplished



PHOTOGENIC ECLIPSE

Webster's defines the word "eclipse" as an interception of the light of one heavenly body by another; to obscure or hide; to surpass. The interception of light also holds true when photographing subjects—whether they're "heavenly bodies" or not!

Light for photographic purposes can be intercepted in many ways, not the least of which is with the use of a bounce umbrella. The soft, diffused light a bounce umbrella creates can make almost any photograph appear to have been shot in a studio!

However, a common problem attributed to many bounce umbrellas is the loss of a percentage of usable light due to inadequate design. It seems that most of the umbrellas available today lose this percentage of light because of their shape, and the fact that they are made of translucent materials.

The Photogenic Machine Company of Youngstown, Ohio, however, just may have come up with an answer to this problem. A recent product introduction, called the Eclipse, is an umbrella that reflects a more even distribution of usable light, virtually eliminating light fall-off towards the outer edge of the light spread. The umbrella provides a spread of light usually attributed to much larger umbrellas. The reason? Because it is flat throughout its center. The curved outer edge of the Eclipse also helps to achieve a "wrap-around" effect reminiscent of smaller light-spread umbrellas, making it desirable for portraits. The combination of these two features gives the user advantages commonly found when using two separate umbrellas.

Covered with a removable black blocking material on the outer surface, the Eclipse is also designed to eliminate loss of light through the top of the umbrella. Another feature: The reflected outline of the umbrel-

la's ribs when shooting high-gloss subjects has been eliminated. The inside of the Eclipse is covered with a white, satinlike material that hides the umbrella's metal ribbing, thus eliminating a common problem when shooting things like vases, or close-ups of eyes.

Photogenic's Eclipse measures approximately 41 inches across when opened, and its shank is 27 inches from top to bottom. The length of the shank makes the umbrella quite portable. A brass tip is located at the bottom to resist crushing when the shank is attached, via clamp, to a light stand. In the closed position, the umbrella is secured tightly with a strip of Velcro®.

As mentioned earlier, the black blocking material can be removed. Because the ribs are located on the outer side of the umbrella, there is still no reflection of them within a glossy surface being photographed. However, the removal of the light-blocking material enables the um-

quickly with only one or two lights.

To complete this newer type of studio lighting, we add the final ingredient—electronic flash. At first, studio strobes came with large, separate power packs that operated multiple flash heads. Each flash head had a large cable connecting its control and power lines to the main power pack. Today we are seeing a move toward the self-contained flash head, which has its own power control, flash head, sync, and slave control incorporated in a single unit that attaches to a light stand.

Photogenic's entry into the self-contained studio flash market is its PowerLight 600. This compact and powerful flash unit boasts a variety of features that help make studio lighting a snap.

BASIC LAYOUT

On the front of the PowerLight 600 you will find the lamp and reflector section. A small socket is located at the very center, and is designed to hold a single 100-watt quartz lamp that serves as a modeling light. Around this socket you will find three large flash-head sockets that will take a glass-enclosed, circular, 600-watt flash tube. When both the modeling light and flash tube are in place, they align on the same axis, so the modeling light will provide the exact same effect as the flash tube

when it is fired.

The reflector is attached to the front of the flash head using two quick-release clamps. Umbrella shafts fit through a small hole in the reflector and then attach to the base of the flash head. A heavy-duty light-stand mount is located on the bottom of the PowerLight 600 flash head, allowing it to be attached to almost any light stand on the market. This heavy-duty bracket has a locking screw for attaching the head and positioning it in a specific direction. Just above the locking screw you will find a control that allows you to pivot the flash head up and down on the light stand. With these two controls, you have unlimited movement and directional control of the flash head.

The back of the PowerLight 600 is the control center for all flash-head functions. Starting at the 9 o'clock position, a red, lighted rocker switch turns the unit's power on. The modeling-light selector is located at the 10:30 position, and has three positions: adjustable, off, and full-power. At the 12:00 position, an orange lamp housing indicates where the photo slave is located. Two slide bars are located on the right side of the panel, allowing independent control of both the modeling light and the flash, from full power down to $\frac{1}{32}$ power.

The sync jack can be found at the

6 o'clock position, and uses a standard phono-jack sync cord. The green ready light and test-fire button are located just above the sync jack and allow the photographer to take test readings of the flash before making the final exposure. The power-cord jack is located at the 7:30 position and operates from 105–125 volts. A safety circuit breaker and thermal switch is included inside the unit and can be reset via a button located at the 8:00 position on the back of the flash unit.

KEY FEATURES

- * Quick-change clamp for all Photogenic accessories.
- * Easy-to-replace plug-in flash tube.
- * 2–3-second recycling.
- * Individual variable control of modeling light and flash.
- * Built-in slave.
- * Voltage regulation of $\pm 1\%$.
- * 600-W/S power rating.
- * Circuit-breaker protection.

The PowerLight 600 lists for \$495. Photogenic offers a wide variety of accessories such as stands, booms, diffusers, softboxes, umbrellas, and barndoors. For further information, contact Photogenic Machine Company, P.O. Box 3365, Youngstown, OH 44512; or call 1-800-682-7668.

SETTING UP

Setting up the PowerLight 600 for use is very quick and simple. First you set up a light stand and lock the legs into place. Unscrew the light-stand locking screw on the base of the flash head, and set the head on the light stand. Retighten the screw with the flash head aimed in the desired direction. Make sure that the pivot knob is tight so that the flash head has no movement. Check to make sure the power switch is off before attaching the 100-watt quartz modeling lamp to the center socket of the flash head. Try to use cotton gloves when installing any type of lamp into its socket. Oils from direct contact with your hands will decrease the life of a lamp.

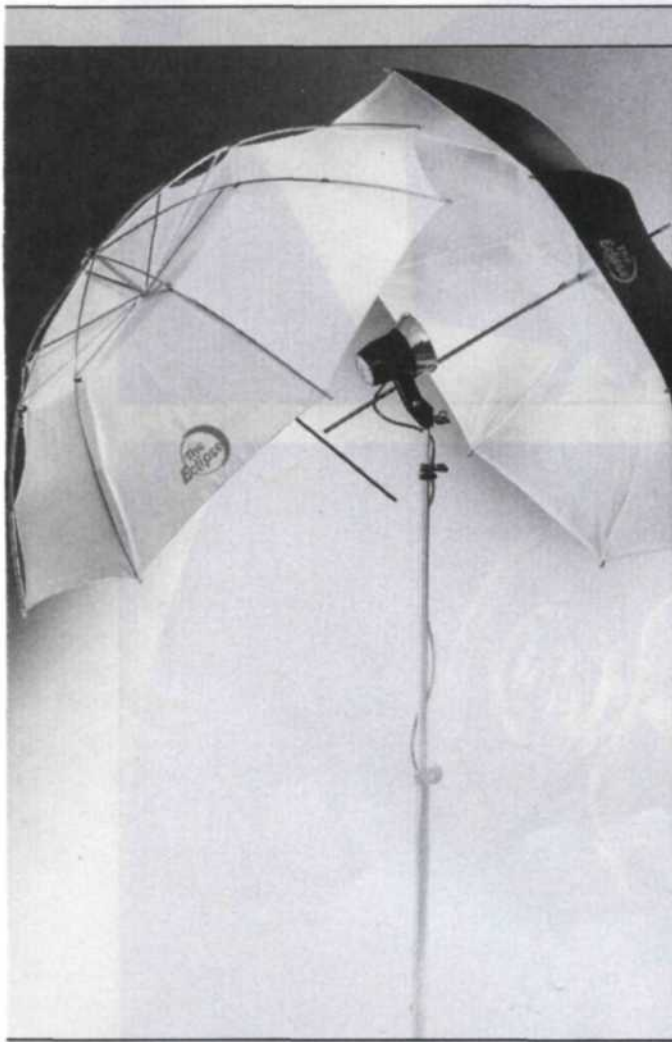
The base of the three-pin flash tube is configured in such a way that it can only fit into the sockets in one way. To insert the flash tube, hold the back of the flash head with one hand, and press the tube into place with the other hand. The reflector is installed by squeezing two levers at the top of the flash head and sliding it into place. Releasing the levers locks the reflector in position. Finally, the umbrella shaft is slid through the hole in the reflector and into a

umbrella to be somewhat translucent—passing approximately 25% of the light through its top. This light can be bounced around the room, creating an even softer effect.

The black fabric is easily snapped in place via double tips located at the ends of the ribs. It is also secured in place at the top of the umbrella by means of a screw-on tip. The Eclipse can be purchased with or without the light-blocking material attached.

After testing this product on numerous subjects, I discovered that it lacks one very desirable feature. The inside material only comes in a white satin fabric. In this writer's opinion, a gold inside material version would really round-out the versatility of the Eclipse umbrella line. The suggested retail price of the Eclipse with removable light blocking material (model EC45-BC) is \$40. The EC45 (without blocking fabric) is \$20.

Photogenic Machine Company, P.O. Box 3365, Youngstown, OH 44512.—Don Garbera. □



clamp at the base of the flash head, where it is locked into place. Attach the power cord, turn on the power, and you are ready to go.

USING THE POWERLIGHT 600

Turn on the power, and set the modeling light to "adjustable." Position the flash head(s) for the desired lighting pattern. We recommend starting with the $\frac{1}{4}$ setting to achieve maximum depth of field and very short recycle times. Press the ready-light lamp once to ensure that the flashes are operating correctly, and to clear the first charge. Using a flash meter, take a flash reading. Adjust the power setting accordingly, and start taking pictures.

If you don't have a flash meter, but do have a standard light meter, shoot a test roll, noting the f-stop reading for the modeling light, and how it corresponds to the power-level setting on the back of the flash. Process the roll, and adjust your meter so that the modeling light gives you exposure values for the flash itself. Remember, this only works if you always keep the modeling and flash sliders on the back of the flash proportional to each other.

Photogenic has worked to make studio lighting simpler and more compact. The Photogenic PowerLight 600 is a necessary tool, whether your studio is located in your garage, den, car trunk, or down on Sunset Boulevard. The PowerLight 600 works great for all types of photography from formal portraits to photographing inanimate products. The exact alignment of flash tube and modeling light removes lighting questions and truly provides what-you-see-is-what-you-get lighting. Go get yourself a Photogenic PowerLight 600 and see what dynamite lighting results you can get. ■

Top: All controls are conveniently located on the back of the self-contained PowerLight 600 unit. At left, top to bottom, are the modeling-light switch, main switch, reset button, and power cord. At center, top to bottom, are slave, ready light/test button, and sync-cord socket. At right are sliding modeling-lamp and flash power controls.

Center: Umbrella reflectors attach easily to the PowerLight 600, for soft and efficient lighting.

Bottom: The PowerLight 600 employs a circular, 600W flash tube, and a centrally located 100W quartz modeling lamp.

