Most of our Lighting is Continuous

Our oldest continuous light source is the sun. It’s been around for a long time and it’s plenty powerful. And it’s free.
Those are the good points about the sun.
On the other hand, it’s not available about half of the time. And it’s never coming from the direction you want, it’s harsh, and it doesn’t want to come indoors for your convenience. In short, you just can’t count on it.
Photographers like to have control over their light sources. They can choose between electronic flash (also called strobe) or continuous lights. Each has its own advantages.

Advantages of Continuous Light Sources:

+ They don’t have to be synchronized to the shutter
+ You can always see where the shadows are falling
+ The camera’s light meter can see continuous light, making it easy to adjust exposure
+ You can set any shutter speed on your camera from the very slowest to the very fastest. When using strobes, most shutters can’t be used at speeds above 1/125th of a second. This varies by camera model, but it limits your ability to shoot with flash when outdoors
+ Continuous lights cost less than most studio strobe lights
+ You can take pictures in a continuous sequence, without waiting for strobes to recycle

Drawbacks of Continuous Light Sources:

+ They draw more power, so you might pop fuses or circuit breakers if you plug in too many lights on a circuit. Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) use less power than photofloods, and Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs) use even less
+ They don’t have the brief, intense pulse of light that lets strobe units freeze action
+ Because of their continuous brightness, subjects may find them annoying
+ Some continuous lights must be plugged into the AC power supply
+ Color of the light varies by type, so you must match the color temperature of the units

Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs)

LED lights are the future of continuous lighting, and it wouldn’t be too strong to say they may be the future of studio lighting for most of us.
LED lights are arrays of very small lights that burn very cool and last a long time. Because almost all of the power that goes into the bulb gets converted to light instead of heat, you get a lot of light for a small amount of energy.
Put together a lot of tiny LED bulbs and you create a usable studio light that’s very versatile.
The **ProMaster VL-380** light is a small studio light powered by LEDs. It can be used with a reflector or a soft box. It can even go on the road because there is a battery power option.
CONTINUOUS LIGHTING

The Easy Way To Do It

It’s a truly portable solution for continuous studio lighting. Its ability to operate on common AA batteries or from AC power allows you to have great light for amazing photos wherever you need it.

The light head is comprised of 380 individual bulbs (hence the model number). Each unit is packed with a removable 10" diameter reflector and a collapsible soft box. The soft box features double diffusion for even softer light.

The unit comes with an AC power supply but you can take it in the field by using 10 AA batteries, either alkaline or rechargeable.

These lights provide huge flexibility no matter what camera platform you use them with. You don’t need a DSLR camera and all its complicated controls. A point and shoot camera can do a great job for simple money-makers like head shots.

LED Light Studios can even make acceptable results with smart phones.

LED Lighting In Action

While setting up for shooting head shots I tried my iPhone on for size. The lighting was extremely simple – a single LED studio light on the left, with a softbox.

I used a 41” collapsible reflector, on a stand so nobody had to hold it. John, the model, was seated at a posing table, and I put another small reflector on the table to provide more fill lighting from underneath. Our background was a ProMaster 6’ x 7’ pop-up background.

The results with this simple lighting setup don’t look much different than they would have with a “real” camera, and certainly far better than they would have with just the ambient light in the room.

The VL-380 is available singly or in a money-saving package that includes two lights, two stands, two soft boxes and a nice fitted carrying case to hold the entire outfit.

The big brother of those lighting systems is the ProMaster VL-1144.

With 1144 LED bulbs (hence the name) spread out over a a big flat body, the VL-1144 produces about as much light as 700 watts from a photo flood bulb. Its actual power usage is only 68 watts.

The VL-1144 is about 14” in diameter, so when used at close distance it gives a nice soft light. An optional 24” x 24” softbox is available and a rechargeable battery pack is also an option.

All of these LEDs are suitable for video as well as still photos, because the light remains constant. The light from all ProMaster LEDs is very close in color temperature to sunshine. That means that they make great fill-in lights when shooting outdoors, and when you go indoors, you don’t have to reset the color balance of your camera.

ProMaster makes battery-powered lights that mount on the shoe of a DSLR and provide excellent fill for video usage.
The LED 30 has 30 bulbs, runs off a pair of AA batteries, and can sit on a camera’s accessory shoe. It also comes with a bracket for cameras, which don’t have an accessory shoe. Using a clamp-on bracket for smart phones, it’s amazing how much a small light like this will do for your videos. It fills in shadows under the subject’s eyebrows and perks up the colors.

A big brother to the LED 30 is the ProMaster LED 120, which has 120 super bright daylight LEDs. A built-in diffusion screen helps reduce hard shadows. A 3300° yellow filter to simulate tungsten lighting is included, so you can snap it on to fill in incandescent or old-style studio lighting.

The ProMaster LED 120 is a great choice as a video light or fill in for stills. Some features include:

+ Shoe mount to any standard flash shoe or mount to standard ¼-20 thread
+ Uses 4 standard or NiMH AA batteries (not included)
+ Universal mounting bracket is included

The LED-120 Super looks just the same but includes rechargeable batteries and features adjustable brightness, giving you the ability to dial down your light so it looks more natural.

Get totally shadowless illumination with the ProMaster RL-60, which encircles your camera's lens. Since you are photographing through the light source, there are no shadows – great for close-ups, medical or crime scene photos. When you snap pictures of people, their eyes will have a circular catch light. It’s easier to use than traditional ring lights, which have to synchronize to the camera’s shutter mechanism.

The ProMaster RL-48 Macro LED Ringflash is perfect for close-up and macro photography. Using a ring light mounted to your lens helps to eliminate shadows and provide even, consistent illumination. The ProMaster RL-48 offers you the flexibility to choose either variable power continuous light or flash, depending upon the best mode for your situation. The light comes complete with 8 different mounting rings to fit most lenses and 4 different interchangeable diffusers. This is the perfect choice for enhancing your close up photography.

Unlike a “conventional” strobe the flash portion of the RL-48 is also an LED. It’s a bright burst, but at 1/100th of a second it doesn’t freeze action the way a true strobe does.
Compact Fluorescent Bulb (CFL)

CFL bulbs were originally intended as an ecologically sound replacement for household incandescent bulbs.

Bulbs designed for the photographic market are especially color balanced to have a color temperature of 5,500º Kelvin. That’s about the same color as daylight, so it’s important that you don’t use regular household bulbs.

CFL bulbs give much more light for every watt of electricity consumed, because they don’t waste it in the form of heat. That means an 85 watt CFL bulb makes about as much light as a 300 watt incandescent photo flood and less than a tenth of the heat. The initial cost is higher but CFLs last much longer than incandescent bulbs.

Continuous Lighting Components

ProMaster Cool Light reflectors can be used with either incandescent or CFL photo flood bulbs. When used with CFL photo bulbs, they give the best results and many advantages:

+ They are powerful and yet they don’t overheat your subject
+ You don’t have to synchronize continuous light (make sure it goes off at the same time as the shutter) as you do with strobes
+ The color is about the same as daylight, so you don’t have to reset your white balance
+ With continuous lighting, “What you see is what you get.” You see where the shadows will fall so you can control them
+ Cool Lights are energy efficient so you won’t blow all the fuses
+ The power cords are long so you don’t need extension cords
+ Less light gets “lost” than with an umbrella
+ Continuous light is excellent for movies (in fact, strobe lights are useless for movies)

Two models are available. The Super Cool Light Reflector 10” is 10 inches in diameter and uses one CFL bulb. The Super Cool Light Reflector 4 is 16” in diameter with a 4 lamp reflector with 2 stage lamp control. It comes with a cloth diffuser to soften the light. Both models have a rugged tilt mount that fits the most popular light stands.

Photographers have always liked the cool soft light of a light box, and wished they could be used with continuous light sources. Now they can.

ProMaster has created two soft boxes designed expressly for use with the newest CFL bulbs. Unlike incandescent photo flood bulbs, CFLs won’t set the cloth of a soft box on fire. And because they don’t draw as much current, they won’t make circuit breakers pop as often. Even if you use the maximum 4 bulbs of 85 watts each, it only adds up to 340 watts of draw.
Available as either a 50 cm x 70 cm rectangle or a hexagonal model, both models have sockets for as many as 4 bulbs from 22 watts to 85 watts each.

Bulbs fit into a lamp holder allowing you to control the lamps in 2 lamp arrays, allowing for the use of either 2 lamps or 4.

That lamp holder has sockets to mount a soft box (included) or an umbrella (optional). There’s a sturdy mount that fits onto standard light stands.

Why are they called “3-in-1”? Because they can be used without any kind of reflector, or with the bulb holder and an optional umbrella, or with the soft box diffusers which make it a consistent light system. As long as all the CFL bulbs come from the same family, the color will match.

These products provide excellent light for YouTube movies or professional studios.

A complete light unit will include a 3-in-1 unit, up to 4 bulbs, and a stand. Because of the large size of the reflector you’ll want to choose a stand with a wide base, such as the ProMaster LS-2 or LS-3.

You’ll want a light stand for each soft light unit.

Ruggedness and a wide stance are important when choosing a stand for your light equipment. ProMaster light stands are rugged and finished in black for less reflectance in the studio.

ProMaster light stands have a standard 5/8” diameter stud and also a threaded ¼” x 20 mount.

When using a heavy light system make sure that one of the three legs is directly aligned with the length of the light to minimize the chance of tipping.

LS-1n is 78” high and has 3 sections. Tube diameter 22mm.

LS-2n goes up to 108” and is even sturdier, with wide-spread 34.5mm diameter legs. The center tube is spring loaded to keep your lamp heads from crashing down.

LS-3 has an Air Cushioned Center Column for easy height adjustment. It’s got quick release flip style locks to make setup fast. Maximum Height: 9 1/2’, tube diameter is 34.5mm.

LS-4 is ProMaster’s largest stand and can handle any lighting requirement. It goes to a huge 13.5’ height and of course the legs have a wide stance to prevent tripping.

For the ultimate in stability, our LS-5 “C” stand is heavy and sturdy but it’s not as portable. Made of heavy duty steel, it is ideal for professional photographers and videographers. It is compatible with a wide variety of photographic equipment and accessories. Because of the extra stable design, “C” stands are widely used to hold light booms, hold backdrop supports, reflector supports and much more. The maximum working height is 10’ 8” with 35mm tube diameter.