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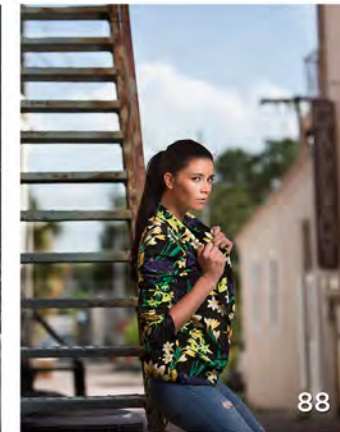
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Shutter Magazine is about photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful, and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. Shutter Magazine uses the latest technologies to deliver information in a way that is relevant to our audience. Our experienced contributors help us create a sense of community and establish the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

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THE COVER

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LAUNCH POINT



A Message from the Editor-in-Chief

Natural light is great, but a professional photographer has to learn to master all light sources.

- Sal Cincotta

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This month for the lighting edition of Shutter, our travels take us to the Fairy Glen in Northern Scotland. The area is beautiful, gorgeous, breathtaking—and that’s the understatement of the year. I found myself staring at the landscape trying to process what I was seeing and how to use my camera to tell the story. Honestly, I am not sure I have done this scene any justice. Sure, I got the shot, but this is just a snippet of the landscape.

The key to creating dramatic portraits for my clients is the way I light the scene. Too many shooters claim to be “natural light” photographers. To me, that’s just code for “I have no clue how to use flash.” Figure it the hell out. It’s not that complicated. I think it’s more fear than anything else that hinders photographers from using alternate light sources. While this month’s article is not a how-to, it should inspire you to get out there and try.

≡ Concept

As legend has it, the Isle of Skye is home to a race of fairies, or “little people.” This dates back to prehistoric times. The Fairy Glen is where the tribe meets.

So, yeah, sounds like a pretty damn cool place for a photo shoot. My vision for the shoot had a fantasy feel to it. From the wardrobe to the edit, it had to match this theme. Alissa, my second in command, had a pink dress we had used previously on a shoot, and we all agreed it would be perfect.

The goal was to create a dreamy, fantastical image that captured the essence of the Fairy Glen. After all, the last thing we wanted to do was piss off the fairies.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Location

Inside the Fairy Glen, we found Castle Ewen, supercool ruins located in the Isle of Skye near a town called Uig. Again, words cannot explain the beauty of this location. Locations like this are extremely tough to shoot when there are tons of tourists around. I try to be very respectful of the location and others' enjoyment of the view. They don't care about our shoot, nor should they. It was about 6 p.m., and luckily for us, everyone had cleared out. We were the only ones there, and it was incredible.

Always look for locations that offer something unique to your portfolio. If you choose an iconic location that everyone has shot, you have to do something unique. For me, that location is the St. Louis Arch, the most cliché spot in St Louis. When I shoot there, I am always challenging myself to do something unique.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Lighting

While not impossible, it is somewhat difficult to create a dramatic portrait without some sort of alternate light source. That can be everything from a flashlight to a reflector to a strobe. You have to learn how to work with all sorts of light as a professional photographer. It's not enough to be a natural-light photographer—unless you are just shooting landscapes, but even then, there are some amazing photographers doing cool things with light painting and other techniques.

We used the Profoto B1 and the Profoto Octabox. Normally I shoot bare-bulb for a hard-edged light, but for this shot I wanted something a little softer. Using light-shaping tools is key to getting the look and feel you want. Whatever light tool you choose, make sure you have access to the cast of supporting characters, the light shaping tools.

The light was camera right and handheld with a human light stand. The lighting was changing very quickly, as it does in Northern Scotland—clouds, rain, sunshine, repeat, every 15 minutes. You have to work fast. I didn't use a light meter because by the time I got back to my post, it had changed again. You need to be prepared to keep adjusting in-camera. If that's not enough stress, you have a model to contend with. We needed motion, so we had her moving forward, wind catching the dress, and the perfect expression toward the light to create this surreal landscape image. Sounds easy, right? Hardly. And that's why I love shoots like this. I love creative challenges. They keep me growing as an artist.

Gear

Hasselblad H5D-50c
Hasselblad 24mm lens
Profoto B1
Profoto Octabox
1/180th @ f8, ISO 400



Closing

Every time you get out there, push yourself creatively. This was not an easy shot. The vision, execution and post-production all have to work together. That's the challenge we all face. We all see a shot in our head, but how difficult is it to execute the entire thing?

This kind of shoot is heaven for me. I want to be able to work on my craft at my own pace. Working on a shot like this on a wedding day can be complete chaos for both you and your client, and your confidence can take a big hit if everything doesn't go according to plan.

Difficult shoots help me learn to communicate better with my team, and give me the confidence to do something different for my clients. Knowing you can do something is half the battle sometimes. ■

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Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, author and the Publisher of *Shutter Magazine*. Sal's success is directly tied to the education he received in business school. He graduated from Binghamton University, a Top 20 business school, and has worked for Fortune 50 companies like Procter & Gamble and Microsoft. After spending 10 years in corporate America, Sal left to pursue a career in photography and has never looked back.

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Creative

Color Balance

Using Gels

Turning the Ordinary Into Extraordinary
with Michael Anthony

Color balance can be a thorn in any photographer's side. When you are first learning about light, there are so many variables in regards to the shape and exposure of a light source. Having to learn about the color of a light source can be overwhelming.

Learning about color balance is necessary for any wedding photographer because we often encounter venues with ambient lighting that differs from the color of our flash. This is referred to as "corrective color balancing," a topic that deserves an article in itself. Today I am going to show you how to use creative color balancing to make amazing and one-of-a-kind portraits for your clients.



In order to understand how to use color balance creatively, you need to understand very basic color theory. So take a look at the common color wheel, that thing we've been looking at since we were in elementary school ([Image 1](#)). The color wheel shows primary colors and their complements. Together, a primary color and its complements form a triad, found in a triangular pattern on the color wheel. Note where orange and blue fall on the wheel, as they will be essential to understanding the magic of color shifting.

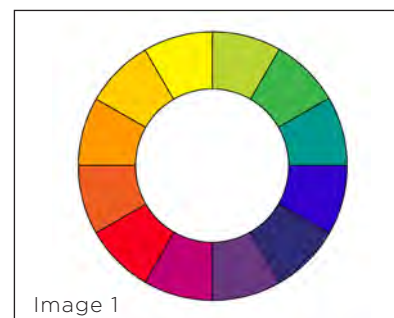


Image 1

Making Magic Happen with Color Shifting

I first stumbled across color shifting on my very first bridal shoot. From day one as a portfolio-building wedding photographer, I was using color shifting to create images that have a fairytale look.

When I stumbled across this technique, it was entirely by accident (an accident that I contribute to helping launch our business, as you will see in a second). I was using a CTO gel on a flash in the evening when I began my shoot, experimenting as a strobe newbie to create sunlight. I had forgotten to change the white balance on my camera from the night before when I was shooting in a tungsten environment. This resulted in a scene that turned the ambient light blue, with my flash providing the clean daylight color on my subject. Looking through the back of my camera, I came across something that was very different than what I have seen in other photographers' portfolios, which meant it would be easily remembered by my potential clients. I went on with the shoot, with a plan to experiment with this technique when I got home.

The next day, I created this image ([Image 2](#)) during a stylized bridal session I was shooting to build portfolio work. It ended up becoming an iconic image that helped launch our new business.

This is a very popular venue in the Los Angeles area, and I cannot count how many weddings we have booked as a result of a bride finding this image in a Google search. When brides search for wedding photos from this venue, this image looks so different from anything else that they cannot help but stop and stare at it. Brides who connect with our style are sold after seeing this single photo because it showcases their wedding venue in a way that no other photographer has. By shifting color to blue in camera by setting our camera's white balance to tungsten, and then adding a strong backlight without a CTO gel (to add more blue to the ambient light), I was able to create an image that looked straight out of a fairytale.



Image © Michael Anthony

Image 2



Image © Michael Anthony

Choosing Your Equipment

As with most things in photography, your equipment will help you accomplish a task more efficiently, as long as you know how to use it. When you are choosing a modification system for your lights, you need to consider things like speed, reliability and ease of use. We use two lighting systems in our studio: Canon 600EX-RT's and the Profoto off-camera flash system. Both of these serve different purposes that meet all of the above considerations.

For our speedlights, we are huge fans of the MagMod system. MagMod has made gelling flashes extremely easy, and has added amazing tools like their grids, which offer amazing control of light spill. There has never been another system that allows for easier creative color effects in a speedlight system. I've captured amazing photographs using this system. Trust me: Owning two for your speedlights will improve the quality of your flash photography as long as you know how to use them.

Here is an example of the stackable MagMod system on our speedlights (Image 3).

For our Profoto lights, we have cut custom gels to fit over the flash heads. These can be attached in between the frosted glass disc and the metal prongs that hold the disc in place. We do it this way rather than use a dedicated gel holder because it allows us to attach modifiers to the Profoto head, which has always been a challenge when using gels on our flash. This is what our solution looks like (note that this technique for attaching gels to your light is not endorsed by Profoto; you are assuming all responsibility for your equipment by doing it) (Image 4).

Shifting Ambient Color Blue

Color shifting is a technique by which you shift the color of the ambient light in a scene, and balance the light on your subject with a corrective flash gel, such as a CTO (color temperature orange) or CTB (color temperature blue). There are primarily two ways to shift color. There's the easy way, which is to shift your ambient light blue by setting your camera's white balance to tungsten (3200K) and balancing the light on your subject with a CTO gel.

Shifting ambient light blue usually looks good when you are trying to emulate or emphasize an image taken at nighttime. There is a bit of a surreal look to this technique that is unique and different. I highly recommend using this technique at dusk, which occurs just after the "golden hour" when the sky is its bluest. The French call this time of day *l'heure bleue*, or the "blue hour." You can imagine the gorgeous effects you can get when making already blue ambient light even bluer.

Now that you have your subject balanced and your ambient light the correct color, let's add some additional light sources to make an awesome photograph look extraordinary. By adding additional nongelled flash sources, you are emphasizing and adding to the blue ambient light. I often use an ungelled light as a backlight when I am shifting color because it gives a very fashionable look that is consistent with our studio's style.

Now, go a step further and place your light behind a water source such as a fountain, and see the cool effects you can get. Take a look at this example where we did just that (Image 5).



Image © Michael Anthony



Image © Michael Anthony

Shifting Color Orange

The second way, shifting your ambient light to a warmer tone, can be a bit harder. This is best done when trying to emulate or emphasize sunlight. I have found that the best way is to use a single or double CTB gel, depending on how orange you want your ambient light. When you use a double blue gel, however, you will not be able to simply adjust your white balance in camera to get perfect color like you can with a standard one-gel color shift. Nor will you be able to do it in post-production, since many Raw converters are limited in the maximum color temperature that they can produce, meaning that the color will just not come out right. In order to get perfect color when shifting ambient light orange, you have to use a gray card to obtain a custom white balance.

Let's break down the basic steps to getting this awesome look.



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8

Images © Michael Anthony

Step One -

Set up your light sources and composition for your photograph.

Step Two -

Gel your flashes. You can use one or two gels. MagMod's speedlight modification system makes it easy to use multiple gels. Keep in mind that you will lose some power when shooting through a gel, usually about a stop, depending on the color.

Step Three -

Obtain a custom white balance of your gelled flash by using a gray card. (Canon users should take a properly exposed photograph with the gray card. Fill the frame and lighting with your gelled light. Navigate to White Balance > Custom, select the image you took and press Set. Consult your owner's manual for more detailed instructions on obtaining a custom white balance.)

Once you have completed these steps, you are ready to get going. When you shoot, your flash should be putting out perfectly balanced light, while your ambient light is a very warm orange tone. Remember, these are creative effects, so use them with intent, or it could look fake. For instance, if I am creating sun flare using flash (as I wrote about in June), shifting color to orange would be completely appropriate. Also, going back to our color wheel, if I have a model dressed in a beautiful blue gown, shifting ambient light to the perfect complementary color of orange would be totally appropriate creatively.

To help you visualize the effects you can get from color shifting, here are three examples of an image where we used color shifting from blue to orange, with a middle daylight balanced image in between (Images 6-8).



Images © Michael Anthony

Understanding Color Theory

Let's go back to the color wheel. Sir Isaac Newton invented the first known color wheel in 1706 by arranging colors in a progression on a circular rotating disc. He found that if he spun the disc quickly, the colors would blend together and disappear. There's science behind choosing colors for your photographs.

By using colors on the wheel that are opposite each other, we are creating an image that is visually pleasing to the eye. These are referred to as complementary colors, which always look good together. (Notice how orange and blue are opposite each other; try experimenting with multiple sheets of CTO or CTB gels when color shifting to get amazing results.)

Choose a color on a color wheel, and then draw a triangular pattern from the head. The two opposite colors you land on complement the main color you chose. These are referred to as triad colors. You can use all three of these colors together, but even using two of them will usually produce a visually pleasing result.

“Trust your unique way of seeing the world, and I promise your ideal clients will search for you.”

Color shifting has been an essential part of our studio's style. While the technique behind these images is simple, it is not often done, allowing us to make our clients wonder how we were able to create an image that looks so different from anything they have seen at the same venue.

This look's aesthetic is not desired by every bride or portrait client, but I highly recommend you distinguish your work from your competition by creating images that are distinct and unforgettable. Before you press the shutter button, ask yourself if the shot is something the majority of photographers could accomplish in the same place.

If your answer is yes, then you need to do more to distinguish your shot.

Look for creative ways to set yourself apart from other photographers using the techniques brought to you each month in the pages of *Shutter Magazine*. Trust your instincts and your unique way of seeing the world, and I promise your ideal clients will search for you. ■



Michael Anthony is the owner of Michael Anthony Studios, a wedding photography studio based in Los Angeles. He has won multiple awards in international image competition for his creative use of light, storytelling and environmental portraiture. The five-member team at Michael Anthony Studios photographs around 60 weddings and over 200 portrait sessions a year.

michaelanthonyphotography.com

WEDDING VIDEOGRAPHY 5 CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS WITH ROB ADAMS

Wedding videographers have it tough. We've always been low on the wedding vendor totem pole. It's gotten better in recent years as technology has allowed videographers to produce a better product, earning us a modicum of respect among planners, photographers and banquet facilities. But we still face unique challenges. Here are some of the common potential pitfalls we face, and how to deal with them.

CHALLENGE #1 // STRICT CHURCHES

This is a problem for both videographers and photographers, but more so for videographers because we are often tasked with capturing the entire event, not just several important moments. I've had church clergy tell me I'm not allowed to stand near my cameras at any point except during the vows. Seriously? My cameras don't operate themselves. I've been told my crew can't film people in the audience (essential for parents' reaction shots). I've even been told I'm not allowed inside the sanctuary—you know, the place where the ceremony takes place. I once filmed an entire ceremony from out on the sidewalk while zoomed in to try to get what was happening inside the church. I've also seen a priest completely stop a ceremony in its tracks and kick out a photographer for walking softly to get a different angle. While I understand that some rules are necessary to minimize distractions, some clergy take it too far. I guess a few bad apples have spoiled the bunch in their minds.

SOLUTION

Research the venue. Some churches are proactive and let you know before the wedding what their rules are, but it helps to find out as soon as you can where you are allowed to be, and then adjust your plan accordingly. I run a minimum of three cameras during a wedding ceremony, so I find out where the boundaries are and then try to stay just outside of them, using long lenses to get my tight shots. Often, because I can't control the lighting situation, I crank up my ISO and use an extralong $f/2.8$ or $f/4$ lens to get my over-the-shoulder angle for the vows. I usually keep one camera as a wide shot, and making use of a balcony or an elevated position from the back of the church over the crowd is a good bet for this angle.

By working within the parameters of church rules and giving the proceedings slightly more space, you make a good impression on the church (you never know if you are going to work there again) and you make yourself even more invisible to your clients, which is always a plus. In extreme cases like the ones where I've been told I can't be standing with my cameras, we've busted out our trusty monopods and sat in the crowd with the guests. You can use the pew in front of you for stability, and use a longer lens, like a 100mm or 135mm, to get relatively close shots. Get creative and try to make it seem like the angle was meant to put the viewer in the audience. Use other audience members as foreground. If you are told you cannot be inside the church under any circumstances, it's best to have a clause in your service contract that covers you. I make my clients initial a line item that states we are not responsible if we are denied access to any part of the wedding day.

Lastly, always be kind and gentle when addressing clergy. The officiants who tend to be not so nice may be reminded of a certain Bible passage that talks about kindness.

CHALLENGE #2 // POORLY PLANNED SCHEDULES

This one really irks me. There's no reason for a poorly planned wedding-day timeline. After years of allowing day-of coordinators, planners, brides' mothers and even photographers plan the day, leaving me no time to do what I have to do, I finally took the bull by the horns and started ensuring that I get my time. I get to the ceremony about 20 minutes before the scheduled start to meet the rest of my crew and go over the plan of attack. I also request 10 to 15 minutes at the end of a photo session to get specific video shots.

Lastly, I encourage a first look before the ceremony, when the bride and groom first see each other. That allows me to knock out that important imagery up front, and leaves me time after the ceremony to get shots of cocktail hour, eye-candy of the reception room and table details, and setup time-lapses. I also have time to go over the approach plan for the reception formalities with my team. When I don't have time to get this stuff, the film suffers and my day is far more stressful. Not having time to get prepared in each location only leads to my shooters getting in each other's way and butting heads with the photographers.

SOLUTION

Have a creative scheduling session with your client. Three to four weeks before the wedding, before the couple meets with the photographer and venue one last time, I like to Skype or just phone chat with them to go over a few key items. First, I ask them to remind the photographer that I will need no fewer than 10 minutes to work with the couple at some point before they hide away for the ceremony or join the cocktail reception. I lay out the importance of this time and how it will affect their film, explaining that a rushed timeline will cause me to miss certain details. I also ensure they timeline their hair and makeup people. Nothing screws up the day more than hairdressers or makeup artists taking way too long to finish up with the bridal party and bride. This all has a ripple effect that pushes everything back, and my creative time is the first thing to get cut. Encouraging clients to tell their stylists to arrive a half-hour earlier than they need to be helps minimize the imminent damage.

Lastly, communicate with the photographer. It's important that we all get what we need. By talking ahead of time, we can carve out expectations before the stress begins. Plus, I always try to be flexible. If I'm getting great stuff while the photographer is working, then I'll forgo my 10 to 15 minutes. But if the photographer is using a backdrop and studio lighting for all of the portraits, it's important she knows I'm taking the bride and groom away at some point.

A smart photographer pushes the bride and groom to budget more time into the day to accommodate all of us. There are other benefits to the creative scheduling session. It gives you a chance to let the bride and groom map out expectations for the film. It helps if we know that the couple is having family come from Europe so we can be sure to capture them along the way. We can also discuss which parts of the day are more important. If a bride doesn't care about capturing cocktail hour, that's more time I have to focus on the reception room details.

CHALLENGE #3 // NO TIME FOR A PHOTO SESSION

So you got the bride and groom and the photographer to agree to your 10 to 15 minutes, and now it's raining. Hard. There's no way the couple is going outside, and the inside of the venue looks like a hospital waiting room. Or worse, it's beautiful outside but the couple has been running late all day, and there's no time for creative shooting at all.

SOLUTION

Don't fret. This brings us an opportunity to not only get great stuff but to make more money. I just try to sell the client on a day-after session. It doesn't have to be the day after the wedding, but sometime when they get back from the honeymoon. My brides are more than happy to put the dress back on and do their own hair and makeup to do a short, creative shoot. Don't worry if they don't look exactly like they did on the wedding day. It's subjective, fun, creative and generic footage of her and her husband to mix into the edit. For the groom, there's no need to call up Men's Wearhouse and rent another tux. A simple pair of black pants and a white shirt will suffice.

I block out about two hours to shoot eight to 10 great shots in a fun location—a mix of wides, medium-tights, and Glidecam or slider movements. Simple and clean. The best part is, I can command upward of \$1,200 for a shoot like this. If you really want to go nuts, offer them makeup and hairstyling, and roll it into your cost. Another way to get around having zero photo-session shots is to do some night shots. Wait until after cake cutting, and then bring the bride and groom outside with a battery-powered light source and go nuts with some dramatic-lighting footage. I can usually grab five to six shots in about 10 minutes if I'm feeling motivated.

CHALLENGE #4 // LOW-LIGHT RECEPTIONS

Sometimes I wish I were doing still images. Off-camera flash is an art form. But it's so much easier to use flash at a dark reception than dealing with continuous video lighting. You have to be very careful not to blast tables with your lights or annoy guests and vendors with huge spotlights on the dance floor. It's a delicate operation. But there really isn't much choice. Either I light the room somehow or I have crappy footage. Here's how I do it.

SOLUTION

Get good lights. You want reception lights that are glass focusable and have great "throw," the ability to pinpoint spots across long distances without spilling light everywhere. Dedolight and Lowell make decent spots. I use the ARRI 650 Fresnel Tungsten cans. They are big and run hot, but with barn doors or a snoot made of black foil, I'm practically a light surgeon.

I use two lights during a reception, and am very specific with where I aim them. Often, I'll aim one toward the door where the introductions will take place, and then one directly onto the dance floor—all the while maintaining a tight spot of light that doesn't hit anywhere I don't want it to.

For goodness sake, don't put a light on top of your camera. This is an amateur move, best saved for paparazzi trying to get an up-skirt of a socialite exiting a limo. Keep your light off-camera for the best look. If you don't want to go crazy with lights on stands, have an assistant carry a portable spot 45 degrees off camera and stay close to you at all times. If you don't feel like dealing with lights at all, today's cameras have sick ISO capabilities. Crank it up and try to remove the accompanying video noise in post-production.

Lastly, make use of the DJ's lights. You'll often have to shoot at 1/50th or 1/100th of a second to reduce unsightly roll-line artifacts, but they can do the trick.

CHALLENGE #5 // NO ACCESS TO AUDIO AT THE RECEPTION

The sound from the toasts is one of the most important things I need to capture on a wedding day. It's also one of the hardest things to capture cleanly and consistently. We use thousands of dollars' worth of pro audio gear to accomplish this and minimize potential problems, but every so often, we are met with circumstances that don't even give us a chance to use it at all. We've run into some DJs and bands that flat out refused to allow us to tap into their soundboards for an audio feed. We've also had best men and maids/matrons of honor decline to wear a body mic for the video. So now what?

SOLUTION

Use ambient mics. It's very hard to match having a strategically placed microphone as close to your source as possible, but when that's not an option, you can always lean back on your ambient microphones to get you by. Have two or three portable audio recorders in your bag (you should have this anyway if you are doing professional wedding films). Place one right against the DJ or band's speaker. Position it on a mic stand 3 to 4 inches away from the face of the speaker, with the pickup aimed somewhere between the woofer and the tweeter. This gives you the best sound in this situation. Place another one on a mic stand near where the person giving the speech is going to be standing.

The setup may be a bit unsightly in your shots, but it's better than having no audio to work with. If you have to keep it low, position it about waist high and pointed up toward the person's mouth. Once you've established this position as the spot for the speeches, you may be able to get the speech givers to stay in that position if you ask nicely (always ask nicely). Finally, position your optional third recorder on the bride and groom's sweetheart table. Conceal it if possible. You'll capture anything the couple says in response to the speeches, and it could save your butt if the speech giver heads for the sweetheart table. Have a limiter turned on to record even sound, and check to ensure the level isn't set too high. Think strategically about where to place these mics, and you'll save yourself some serious headaches in editing.

I've compiled these tips and tricks from more than 17 years of filming weddings. I hope they'll help you avoid a major problem or two at some point. I'd love to hear some of the unique problems you may have experienced. I'll be revisiting this topic down the road to provide solutions to other issues. Feel free to email me at rob@robadamfilms.com with your questions or experiences, and I'll certainly consider discussing them next time. ■



Rob Adams is a New York City-based wedding cinematographer, commercial film producer and educator who has been producing wedding and corporate films for high-end clients for more than 17 years. Rob's visual storytelling style and knack for creating amazingly high-production value under pressure is industry-leading. He films and speaks around the world.

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THIS MONTH
AUGUST 2015



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THE LIGHTING EDITION

featuring

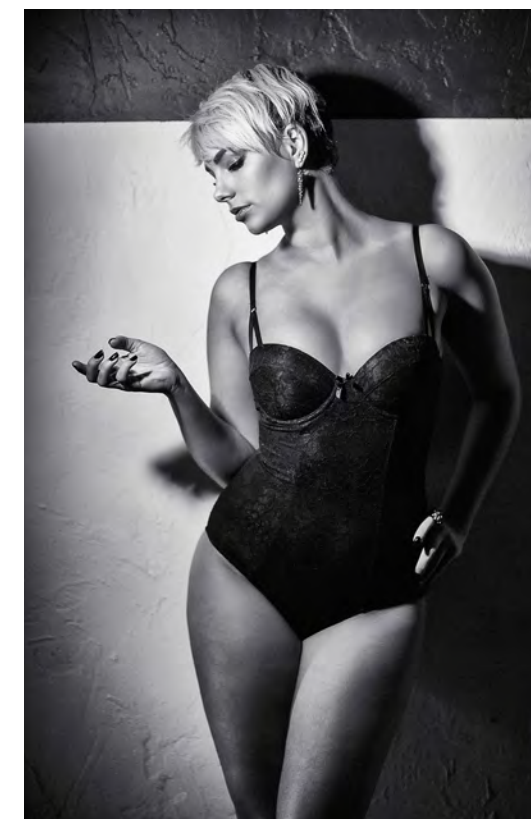
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Image © Craig LaMere



Images © Craig LaMere



Easy Solutions for **HARD LIGHT** with Craig LaMere

For the most part, whenever I hear shooters talk about how to light people, around 95 percent of the conversations is about how to create soft, diffused light. Everyone wants the biggest softbox, they want the deepest octa or they want a set of continuous light to get that pretty, diffused window-light look. What I seldom hear from longtime shooters—and very rarely from new shooters—is how they want to create hard light.

With that in mind, this month I want to talk about a type of light that is way overlooked by most shooters. Hard light—by which I mean a nondiffused, specular, direct light—is thought of as a big no-no by a lot of shooters. But to me, it's one of the coolest and best types of light, one that makes your work pop and stand out from the crowd.

Here are three ways to either create or find this type of light.

Modeling Lamp as Constant

A strobe head comes with two lights. One is the actual flash tube that creates the light you use to make your image. The other is what is called the modeling lamp. The modeling lamp is used as an approximate guide that shows you how the light is falling in conjunction with your strobe.

Here's a memorable early experience I had shooting strobes with barn doors.

I had been shooting strobes for a long time, always with an attached softbox, a strip light with a grid or a beauty dish. I decided to practice with my barn doors. I put them on and turned the head on. The light that came out, because the lamp was at full power, was super bright. It reminded me of a Fresnel light. I shot my session, but kept thinking about how bright the modeling lamp was in my Einsteins.

I wanted that old black-and-white Hollywood feel with a lot of depth of field, but with a hard edge. I also wanted that "shoot what you see" feel, the latitude of shooting you get

using constant lights, but in a harder form. I knew the light from the modeling light was not going to be strong enough to shoot at f4 or more without really pushing the ISO; if I wanted to be past f4, I would just shoot the strobe as a strobe and not try to use it the way I was hoping to. I figured I'd shoot at f2–f1.2 with my 85 L 1.2.

I scheduled another practice session for the next day to see if the lamp with the barn doors was bright enough to use as a continuous light. It was. It was awesome to just put the light where I wanted it, to use the barn doors to control exactly how I wanted the light to fall. I achieved a very crisp and edgy light.

Because I was using my strobe as a constant light, I used my constant rule, which is to spot-meter in camera. There were two small issues I had to resolve that were no biggie. Because I was using the modeling lamp as the main, I had to employ a custom white balance since the light was crazy warm in tone. I moved my ISO to 400—which for today's bodies is nothing as far as noise goes—so I could shoot at the speed I wanted. I'm a hand holder, so I like to shoot at 1/500th and up because I'm kind of shaky.

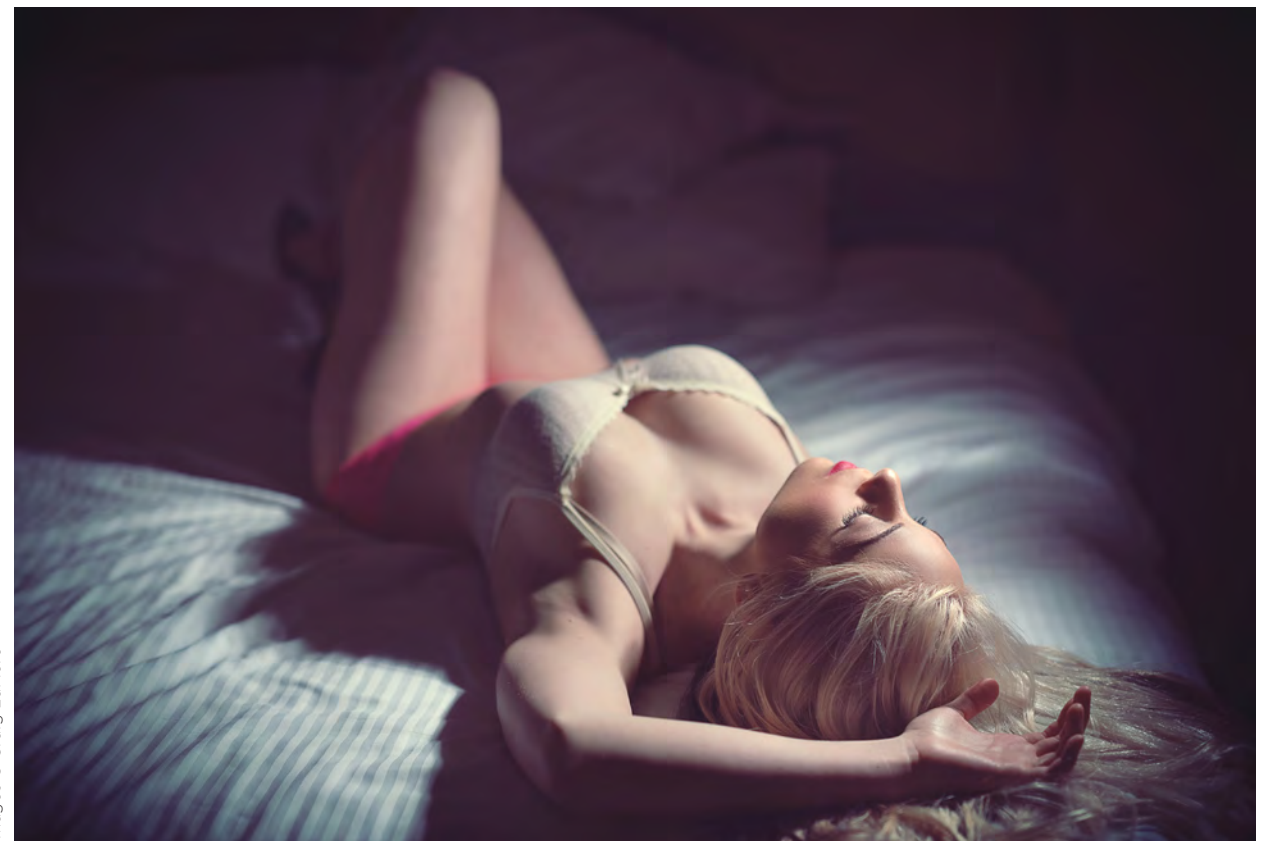




Image © Craig LaMere



Images © Craig LaMere



Hard Light Indoors with the 7-Inch Reflector

When my first set of strobes showed up on my doorstep all those years ago, I was so excited that I tore open the cardboard boxes to get at my green AlienBees 800s. There was a black plastic cover over the modeling light and flash tube.

There was also a silver round thing in the box that I never really paid any mind, because all I could think of was getting to the studio and trying out my softboxes that had been delivered the day before. The silver thing was a 7-inch reflector. At the time, the only thing I knew to use it for was to get a grid for it and use it as a rim or hair light modifier. I had been shooting everything in studio with my 4x6 and 3x4 box to get that soft feel or with my white beauty dish to get a little harder look. I was getting bored and wanted an edgier look and feel to some of my images. So I wondered what would happen if I shot with this 7-inch reflector. Shazam. That's what happened. I have never been more surprised by the light from any modifier more than I have been from using the 7-inch silver reflector.

The 7-inch reflector has about an 80-degree spread, which is about two-thirds the spread of a white 22-inch beauty dish and about twice the spread of a silver beauty dish. Because the 7-inch reflector is so shallow and the sides are so close to the flash tube of your strobe, it is very direct light; and because it is such an efficient modifier, there is not a lot of light loss. There is no baffle or diffuser between the light and the subject, so it produces just about the hardest light you can get.

When I shot the 70-inch reflector the first time, I shot it very directional in my studio. I was trying to shoot a Rembrandt pattern, and because of how specular the light is, it falls off like mad in a hurry on the shadow side. You can go from properly exposed to clipped in a few inches, depending on how close you place the head to your subject. I found that the modifier, if you are going to shoot really directionally, works best at a medium distance so some of the light can get into the shadows. I started playing with different patterns and found I really liked the light I got when I placed the strobe in a butterfly or loop position because of how the hard shadow was lessened. The hard edge is still there, it is just not as pronounced or long as it is in some other lighting patterns.



Images © Craig LaMere

The Hour Before Golden Hour

Every photographer's favorite time of day, the Golden Hour, is the hour before sunset. That's when the light is perfectly soft and naturally diffused, making it near impossible to get a bad shot.

But there's a time of day a lot of shooters overlook: the hour right before the Golden Hour. The hour right before the sun sets provides a very intense hard light. Some people say there is hard light outside in full sun most of the time throughout the day. True, but the light an hour before the Golden Hour is such good light because of the angle.

Shooters get hung up on natural light versus studio light, and to me light is light and the how, what and why you use it are the same. When you are thinking about how you would use your 7-inch reflector in studio, you're taking the same things into consideration as you are when you're considering how to use the hard light of the sun outside.

If you were shooting in your studio, you would not just stick your strobe anywhere and fire it and hope you have a good image. You would place the light at the angle and direction you want in order to achieve the look you want. So, why would you just go outside at any time of the day and just shoot? You wouldn't. That's why I love the hour before the Golden Hour so much. The angle of the light at that time is perfect for butterfly or loop lighting.

Eyes get a full blast of awesome specular light in the hour before Golden Hour. The only real downside to this is the light is so intense at times that your subject's eyes will start to water if you have her looking into the sun too much. I have the subject pose and then close her eyes until I set focus and compose the shot. Then I tell her to open her eyes wide, and I get the shot. ■



Craig LaMere is an award-winning professional portrait photographer from Pocatello, Idaho. As well as running his full-time studio in Idaho, Craig is an international educator and speaker specializing in lighting and posing. He has two dogs named Logan and Steve, and two cats named Emit and Martin.

mozstudios.com



Image © Lori Nordstrom

..... Lighting 101

Keeping It Simple

..... with Lori Nordstrom

Great portrait lighting is a must for the pro photographer. It can make or break an image, and even someone who doesn't know good light will choose a properly lit image over one with poor lighting every time.

Light can come from one or many sources. When outdoors, the sun is your main light, while a reflector or other reflective surfaces is the fill light. I prefer beautiful natural light, but it's not always easy to work with. Posing has always come easily to me, but I really had to work at, ahem, seeing the light. When good light starts clicking for you, you'll start noticing light patterns everywhere and become aware of how to move a subject within the light for the best look. I've learned that for most portraits, I want to look for highlights in the eyes. Watching the eyes helps you control the image.



Image © Lori Nordstrom

Lighting Baby Steps

When I moved to a studio space after having worked on location for several years, I purchased lighting based on the only thing I knew, which was natural light and window light. I had moved from Texas to Iowa, which is really cold all winter, and realized I would not be able to photograph outside all year as I had been doing where I grew up. I knew I would need some sort of indoor studio lighting, so I bought what made sense to me at the time, which was a 4x6 softbox (my window) and a large reflector.

I began photographing in my new studio with my new lighting, and, while I was in a new retail space and I was selling portraits, I still felt like I wasn't as "real" a photographer as many of my friends and the instructors I saw who wrangled all sorts of lights and moved them around with ease to create beautiful work. For a time, I felt bad about my simple one-light system. I watched photographers I admired using a three-light system, or even five lights, adding not just a main and a fill, but a background light, a hair light and some sort of kicker. Off-camera flash is popular, but I still prefer the simple, sweet look of natural light or one light in the studio for my style of portraiture.



Images © Lori Nordstrom



Images © Lori Nordstrom



Image © Lori Nordstrom

100 Images That Changed Everything

Not long after purchasing my new lighting, I took a weeklong class with portrait photographer Darton Drake. This class made me believe in myself as I came to realize the power of using one main light. Just the fact that Darton himself was primarily a one-light shooter was enough to make me feel better about my lighting choice.

One of the projects that Darton had the class do was to take one subject, one light and just one prop (a chair) and photograph 100 different images. What a great lesson in posing and lighting. I encourage you to try it—it will teach you so much. I discovered a true love for lighting with one main light: a 4x6 softbox and one large reflector. To me, the 4x6 is the next best thing to natural or window light, my first love. The large softbox gives a wonderful, soft light and a beautiful “wrap” around the subject. I normally place my subject toward the backside of the 4x6, and place the softbox about shoulder height. This allows for a really natural fall-off and “vignette” of the subject.



Images © Lori Nordstrom

Giant Steps

Some would say this lighting is somewhat flat. But once you play with the lighting and practice the 100-pose challenge, you will find that the placement of the softbox and the subject makes a huge difference with just this one light. You can create many looks, from very dramatic to even and soft.

Get to know your lighting. Learn to really see what happens when you add or subtract light. Look at contrast and separation. Look at details, and especially the highlights in the eyes. But don't beat yourself up, like I did, when choosing what works best for you and your situation. Get to know one light first, and then add lights as your experience—and, more specifically, your style—call for them. ■

My Lighting Gear

- Photogenic Lights
- Radio Poppers
- 4x6 SweetLight Softbox
- 72" SweetLight Silver Reflector



Lori Nordstrom (M.Photog.Cr., CPP, ABI) owns a boutique studio (NordstromPhoto.com) specializing in children and family portraits located in the tiny, picturesque town of Winterset, Iowa. Lori began her career photographing her own kids in her backyard almost 20 years ago, and is now known not only for her simple and sweet portraits of children, but as a leader in the photography industry in the areas of business, marketing and sales. Lori is a PPA-approved business instructor, and is passionate about sharing her knowledge with other photographers and small business owners.

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STUDIO LIGHTING



Image © Blair Phillips

Taking It Outdoors

with **Blair Phillips**

The sun can be one of the biggest enemies of outdoor photography. I used to hate working until 9:00 every night in the summer months because I was relying on nothing but natural light. I would book the majority of my sessions in the late afternoon and evening. When I reached my breaking point, I was ready for a change. That's when I learned off-camera lighting. The turning point in my career was seeing the results I got from taking my studio light outdoors. Now I was able to go home at 5:00 every night. I even regained my love for photography.

Managing your outdoor lighting may seem like a lot of added stress and work. Let me break it down for you with two simple techniques that take the guesswork and stress out of the equation. First, let's look at the basics.

Time of Day

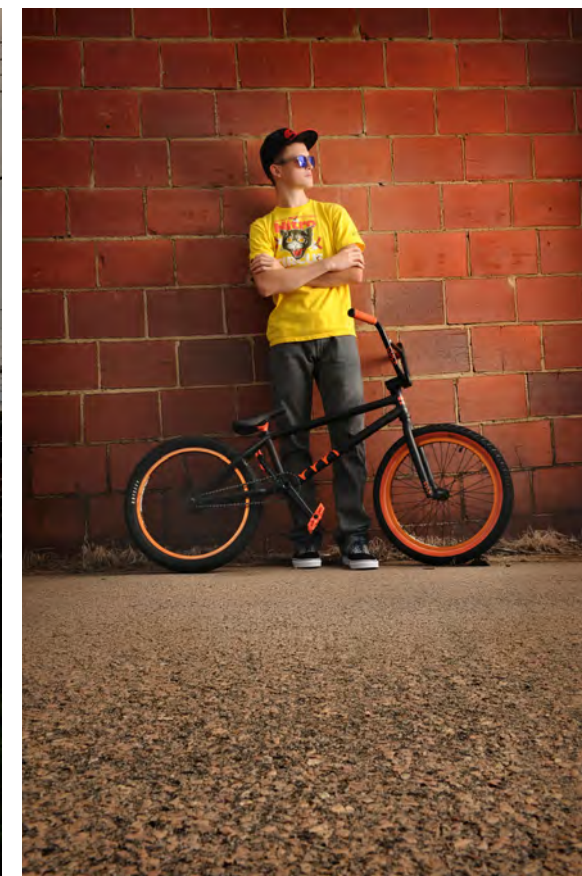
Early in the morning and later in the evening are the best times to shoot outdoors in natural light. But when you use studio light outdoors, you can shoot any time of day and manipulate your scene into several different looks. One little light can change your world forever. We now photograph our sessions beginning at 8:00 in the morning, and the last one at 3:00 in the afternoon. I can go out in the middle of the day in the blaring sun and create beautiful images straight from camera. In years past, I always had to find some shade to work in.

Equipment

This subject will always be ripe for debate. I can only give my opinion based on what I have tried and am currently using. I started with one Nikon flash unit. I quickly realized that one flash was no match for the sun in the middle of the day. I was using that flash at full power trying to overpower the sun. It nearly melted from repeated full-power flashes. I didn't really like the harsh look I got from it, preferring the look I got from softboxes in the studio.

My light of choice is an AlienBees 800 or 1600. One of these lights equals four or more times the power of a single flash unit. I use AlienBees's portable power system to operate the light out in the field. The bigger the softbox, the softer the light, so my best results come from the Westcott Rapid Box. This is a large softbox that opens and closes like an umbrella. I also use an AlienBees CyberSync trigger transmitter to make my lights fire. This equipment is absolutely bulletproof, and I have used this setup for several years with no shortage of abuse.

When I began using outdoor lighting, I quickly became frustrated having to carry everything. The most frustrating and embarrassing thing was trying to keep my light from blowing over. I developed and manufactured a cart that makes outdoor lighting extremely portable and so easy. My light cart has large pneumatic wheels that allow you to simply roll your light, softbox, triggering device and even your camera bag anywhere you want to go. This way, all of your lenses are right there with you. No more relying on everyone to carry all of your gear for you. This gives me freedom and motivation to explore new locations. Shooting outdoors has become so much fun again. Nothing shows a lack of professionalism like asking your clients to help carry your gear from location to location. This setup helps validate your pricing and prove why you are worth it.



Images © Blair Phillips



Images © Blair Phillips

My Methods

Starting out with additive outdoor lighting can be a little intimidating. It only gets easier. There are essentially two ways I tackle it.

Method #1

One technique I use is when I'm shooting into a darker background. With this method, I expose for the shot as if I am relying on natural light. I turn my light on and turn the power down really low. All that I am looking for is to add a really nice fill flash into the eyes. This method allows you to shoot at very shallow apertures. The main objective for using additive outdoor lighting in this way is to first achieve proper exposure on your subject's face without the lighting firing on it. Once you have good exposure on the skin, simply turn your light on, adjust the power to its lowest output and then take a shot with the light hitting your subject. This typically supplies just enough light to brighten the eyes. It avoids dark eye sockets and helps bring the eyes to life.

Method #2

The second method is to overpower the sun. Use your camera's built-in meter to determine proper exposure for the sky. This will darken down the overall exposure of your image. Now you need to add a large amount of lighting back on your subject to achieve proper exposure on her. Turn your light output to nearly full power while using it on your subject. If the amount of lighting on her is too bright, simply turn down the light output. If she is too dark, turn up the output. The main objective of this method is to darken a really bright sky while maintaining proper exposure on your subject. This method also brightens the eyes and eye sockets.



Images © Blair Phillips

Unleash the creative animal inside of you and get your lighting outdoors so you can own your life again. If you have been using off-camera lighting for a long time, it may be time to completely change the way you do things. This could be as simple as changing your modifier, placing your main light outside your comfort zone or adding a second light to the mix. Whatever the missing link is, no one can help you find it but you.

So grab an extra light, get that thing outside and make some magic happen. ■



Blair Phillips launched his business nearly 10 years ago in a small town. Since then, Blair Phillips Photography has become a beloved household name to its many fans and clients. Each year, Blair photographs up to 30 weddings and over 600 high school senior, newborn and family studio sessions. He has educated photographers all over the United States at events by WPPI, WPPI U, Imaging USA, SYNC Seniors and various state PPA groups.

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3 Easy Lighting Setups

for the
Natural-Light Photographer

with Vanessa Joy

“Lighting, lighting, lighting” in photography is a lot like the real estate mantra of “Location, location, location.” It’s almost all that matters. Lighting controls the mood of the photograph, the way the subject is depicted. At its essence, it helps photographers create a consistent brand.

The naturally lit photograph is a popular look that our clients want. Which is great, because natural light is easy to work with and learn, as opposed to off-camera flash, especially for the budding photographer. But there comes a point when natural-light photographers, myself included, want to experiment with OCF to bring a competitive edge to their work or just try something new.



Images © Vanessa Joy

OCF, for most natural-light shooters, is daunting. Instead of working with existing light and manipulating it to create the image you're envisioning, you have to bring in lights and learn to make them create the effects you want. Top that off with potentially tricky equipment, and most people put down the flash before they even squeeze off a picture. I'm here to give you some hope. It doesn't have to be that frustrating.

The first step is getting equipment you can learn. I started with PocketWizards on Canon Speedlites, and then RadioPoppers, but didn't love their functionality at the time. Just the fact that

I had to troubleshoot misfires constantly from a plethora of things that could be wrong was too much for me to deal with on a fast-paced wedding day. It's a bit more of an investment, but I ended up with the Profoto B1 and B2 systems, and I haven't looked back. I'm not saying you have to go with Profoto lights—you just have to find a system that you can work with and that will be a help, not a hindrance.

After learning your equipment, experiment with these three simple lighting setups. They will give you a good basis to start incorporating OCF into your portfolio and shooting workflow.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Images © Vanessa Joy

1 - Fill It In

If you're a natural-light shooter, this setup will not only be easy, but it will fit nicely into your existing brand since it can be done in a way that doesn't look like it's lit. In fact, using OCF as a fill is a great way to work with harsh overhead sun or cloudy days when a reflector just isn't cutting it.

Normally, I position my light around a 45-degree angle to my subject, slightly above eye level, bare bulb or with an umbrella. I set my exposure in-camera for my background, set the B2 to ETTL and fire. If I want to make any adjustments from there, I can switch to manual on my transmitter and adjust the intensity from there.

2 - Backlight

This is another easy-peasy setup for natural-light photographers and one that will add depth to a photograph. Plus, in the absence of sun on a cloudy day, you can add some flare.

If I'm adding backlight to a day photo, I'll gel my light to give it some warmth, but if it's a night photo, I'll leave it daylight balanced to keep it cool and matching the twilight sky that I hopefully have to work with in the background. After that, just place the light roughly 8 feet behind the subject, pointed toward her head, expose for the rest of the image and let ETTL do the rest.

Images © Vanessa Joy

3 - Double It Up

Now that you've gotten the hang of using a light to fill a shot and using a light to backlight a shot, try both at the same time. This setup is one I typically use for night shots of my bride and groom because it lets me create a dynamic night photo with the couple properly lit instead of going to a silhouette (which I also do).

The same process applies, with one light behind the couple and one light to the side. Normally I position the front light closer to a 90-degree angle than a 45 to give more drama to the light and image. Set your camera exposure for the background and use ETTL on the lights, and you should be all set. If I want to brighten or lessen either light, I switch from ETTL to manual on my transmitter and adjust it until I like the ratio.

If you're working with a nighttime photo, don't be afraid to lower your shutter speed a bit below normal. It'll let in more ambient light, making your background brighter, and you won't have to worry about motion blur as much because your flash will typically freeze your subject. Have an assistant help you move your lighting around. Not only will it help speed things up if you want to make adjustments to

your light's position, but having a human light stand ensures that your lights won't fall over, trip someone or blow away with any small gust of wind.

Having the freedom of OCF on my weddings has helped me in so many scenarios, from difficult lighting to creating images with a bit more oomph than if I had just used natural light. The night photos in particular tend to be the "wow" images that my clients love, and end up on their walls and as full spreads in their albums. Using OCF as a natural-light photographer has expanded my photography knowledge, made me much less worried about lighting conditions that are out of my control and let me create images that Uncle Bob just isn't getting.

Getting used to your lighting equipment may involve a bit of a learning curve. Make sure you know it in and out. It's not something to test out for the first time on a paying gig. Once you've mastered these three easy OCF lighting setups, branch out and learn how modifiers affect the light, and just have fun with it. Before you know it, you'll be able to use your lighting bag of tricks on command on any job. ■



Images © Vanessa Joy



Vanessa Joy has been a professional wedding photographer in New Jersey since 2002, and an influencer in the photographic community for years. Since starting VanessaJoy.com in 2008, she has taught photographers around the globe at almost every major platform in the industry (LearnPhotoVideo.com). Vanessa has been recognized for her talent and business sense at the renowned industry events CreativeLIVE, Clickin' Moms, WPPI and ShutterFest. Her peers love her informative, open-book style of teaching.

VanessaJoy.com



Image © Chris Thornton

product review

MAGMOD with *Salvatore Cincotta*



Why MagMod?

We all seem to be constantly looking for better quality of light. Light modifiers are a big part of the equation— they can help us shape and control the light in a way that adds new dimensions to our portraits. MagMod is a company focused on giving you the light-shaping tools you need for your speedlights.

Last month, we spoke about the incredible MagMod modification system and focused on the grids, snoot, and gels, and showed some real-world applications (check out July Shutter Magazine for the review).

This month, we focus on the MagSphere and the MagBounce.

The MagSphere has one purpose in life— to create soft, diffused, omni-directional light.

Features include

- Round shape to give you better catch lights.
- Increase the size of your light source by 250%.
- Light emits from all sides pushing it directly towards your subject and bouncing upwards.
- Works with modular MagMod system.

The MagBounce, while still creating soft light, is about creating big light. Increasing output by 300%, the MagBounce can give you the power and versatility you need to light the most demanding shot.

Features include

- Incredibly soft light - similar to a softbox.
- Increases the size of your flash by 300%.
- Rotates 360 degrees allowing you to shoot in both portrait and landscape.
- White matte silicone provides optimal diffusion.



For More Information, Visit magnetmod.com

5 IDEAS FOR — — — — —

INCORPORATING RINGLIGHTS

INTO YOUR STUDIO — — —

with **Melanie Anderson**

Many of you know how much I use ringlights daily. I'm obsessed with them. They give off beautiful light that I can use for portraits, sports, commercial and video. A ringlight is a daylight-balanced circular constant light. In this month's video, you will see me demonstrate how I use this light for an extreme-sports session in which I explain my camera settings. But first, read on for five ideas for incorporating ringlights into your studio, plus three action plans.

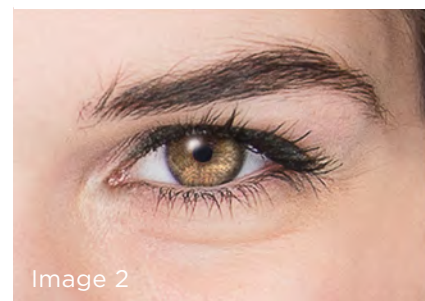
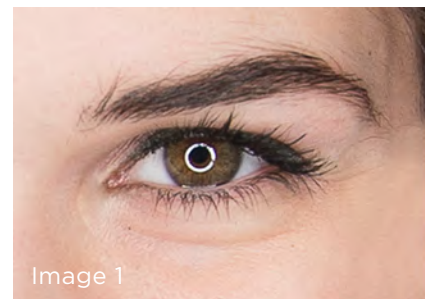
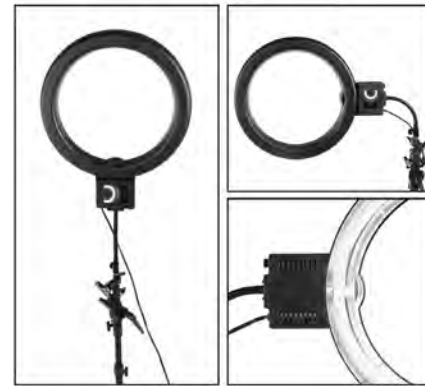


1. Commercial Photography

We photograph hundreds of headshots a year. So many, in fact, that we are known for a particular style in our area, the Ringlight headshot. People actually ask for the pictures with the “cool” or “crazy” eyes. They notice the circular light around the pupil (Images 1 & 2). They don’t always understand why they like them, but what they do notice is the great lighting. Ringlights give off a beautiful flat light. That’s not traditional portrait lighting, and I’m OK with that. Flat light sells. And I’m in the business of selling.

A few years ago, my local chamber of commerce asked why I was not a member. I explained that I wanted to be part of something that was forward-thinking and creative. I opened up their directory and showed them what I meant. The headshots of the board of directors were from several different photographers with a multitude of backgrounds. There was zero consistency or branding. I asked if they would consider allowing me to “brand” their board of directors, to showcase that this chamber of commerce saw the importance of creativity and the value in branding (See the Before and After on Page 157). They agreed. That was four years ago. Now, every August and September, the new board of directors comes to my studio for new headshots (Images 3 & 4).

As you can see in these images, we also use ringlights for product photography and on location (Images 5-7). Again, these lights provide the perfect brightness, allowing me to capture awesome detail.



Images © Melanie Anderson



Image 3



Image 4



Before

After



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7

Images © Melanie Anderson



Image 8



Image 9

Images © Melanie Anderson

2. Volume Sports

We photograph a ton of sports teams in our area. I shoot them a bit differently than the competition. I like shooting inside, in a controlled environment where I can control the lighting. For high school sports, we actually do them headshot style (Images 8 & 9). Our high schoolers love this. They use these images for their profile pictures on social media. After we post them to our fan page, we love seeing their profile pics immediately change to the images we took. And most keep them up until we post the new ones for the next season. That's incredible word of mouth and free advertising.

I photograph athletes in a three-quarter crop because parents prefer to see more of the uniform and their child. I set up three ringlights, surrounding them with light, and then move very quickly. (Check our Anderson Photographs YouTube channel for behind-the-scenes videos of several volume sports leagues.)

3. Extreme Sports

As I demonstrate in this month's video, it's fairly easy to use ringlights to capture an extreme look. The example in the video shows our signature extreme headshot (Images 10-12). The additional example was taken in a warehouse, where I captured several images for a 16x24 composite. We sell a ton of these in our studio. Ringlights can be taken on location, where we plug in if we can; otherwise, we use Paul C. Buff Portable Power.



Image 10



Image 11

Images © Melanie Anderson



Image 12

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Image 13

Image © Melanie Anderson

4. Fashion

I don't photograph a ton of fashion, but when I do, the ringlights are always a client favorite. As you can see in these images, these truly are "beauty" lights, and, again, flat light sells. They also fill in all the fine lines and wrinkles, keeping post-production time to a minimum (Images 13-15).

5. Video

We have recently incorporated video into our product line for commercial clients. I use ringlights whenever we need to enhance lighting on a person speaking or a product being showcased. (You can view several commercial videos on our Anderson Photographs YouTube Channel.)

My Typical Equipment and Settings for Shooting Through the Ring

Nikon D4
 24-70mm f/2.8
 F4
 1/160
 200 ISO

When I shoot more than a three-quarter image, I often switch to my 85mm f/1.4 lens and bump my ISO up to 400. This allows more ambient light to come in.



Image 14



Image 15

Images © Melanie Anderson

Action Plans

1. Contact Your Local Chamber of Commerce

Take a look at your chamber of commerce's website, social media presence and annual directory. Are the images cohesive? If not, do what I did and offer to help brand them. Show them my before-and-after piece if needed.

2. Offer Extreme Senior Shots

Offer a new "extreme" product to all your senior clients. Photograph a boy and a girl of high school age. Do as I have instructed in the video. Post to all social media outlets, explaining that you are now booking seniors for extreme sports shoots. If you need inspiration, check out our website and social media platforms for examples of posing, style and processing. If you need further help, just ask.

3. Build Your Food/Product Image Portfolio

Contact a local restaurant and offer to take pictures. Explain that you are building your portfolio. Look everywhere for inspiration, and start creating. Begin building your commercial photography business this way, or to add to your existing business. As a bonus, a restaurant might just let you sample some of its cuisine. ■



Melanie Anderson is an award-winning photographer and wife to her husband of 20 years, Bill, and a mother to their four children, Sarah, Emily, Kayla and Billy. Anderson Photographs is located in the Arts & Entertainment District of downtown Hagerstown, Maryland.

Melanie is a Certified Professional Photographer who received her Photographic Craftsman degree in February 2015. Melanie is passionate about one-on-one mentoring and works diligently to provide educational resources and workshops to fellow photographers through Anderson Education. Learn more at AndersonPhotographs.com.

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Image © Michael Correntino

High ——— —— Speed —— ———— Sync

The Ins and Outs with Michael Correntino

Nailing the perfect exposure involves a creative balancing act between your camera's shutter speed, aperture and ISO settings, known collectively as the exposure triangle. Each setting has a direct relationship with the next, and each affects the other. For example, if you're shooting in an ambient-light scenario, a wider aperture setting will necessitate a faster shutter speed, while a smaller aperture setting will require a slower shutter speed.

It follows, then, that if you want to shoot at $f/2.8$, for instance, you'll need a shutter speed fast enough to bring the exposure back into balance. This is due to the extra light contributed by a wide aperture setting. The wider the aperture setting, the faster the shutter speed needs to be to make up the difference. The faster the shutter speed, the smaller the amount of ambient light contributed to the exposure and the more latitude there is to use wider aperture settings.



Image 1

Image © Michael Correntino

Image 1 — The first step in establishing an ambient light and flash exposure is to leave your speedlight or strobe off, and determine a solid ambient exposure. Here I've chosen an $f/2.8$ aperture to throw the background out of focus and maintain attention on the subject. Shooting with a 70–200mm adds to the effect by compressing the background.

Based on ambient lighting conditions, shooting at $f/2.8$ necessitated a $1/1600$ of a second shutter speed at 100 ISO. This shutter speed is fine for ambient-only situations, but once flash is introduced, it will need to be reduced to $1/200$ of a second, and the lens will need to be stopped down significantly. Or you can use high-speed sync.

High-Speed Sync

Things get interesting when you shoot with a mix of flash and ambient light. If you're comfortable shooting at apertures hovering around $f/11$ to $f/16$, than you'll be fine straight out of the gate. But if wider apertures are what you're after, that's when things start to break down. This brings us back to balancing the exposure. Wide apertures necessitate fast shutter speeds, and with a mix of flash and ambient, you often end up needing really fast shutter speeds. So fast, in fact, that they outstrip the camera's maximum flash sync speed—or "X" speed—which is typically between $1/200$ and $1/250$ of a second. That's where high-speed sync (HSS) saves the day. HSS allows the use of shutter speeds far beyond the camera's X sync speed, generally up to $1/8000$ of a second. This means significantly more creative flexibility in aperture settings.

I'll cover three of the most useful applications and benefits of high-speed sync. First, let's delve into a few essential concepts.

How It Works

In this article, I'm specifically addressing DSLRs with mechanical focal plane shutters, those with front and rear shutter blades typically referred to as curtains. Leaf shutters and electronic shutters with no rear curtain do not apply for the purposes of this discussion.

At shutter speeds above the camera's maximum flash sync speed, exposures made with flash will only be partially illuminated by the flash. You've probably experienced this phenomenon's telltale horizontal underexposed band across the image.

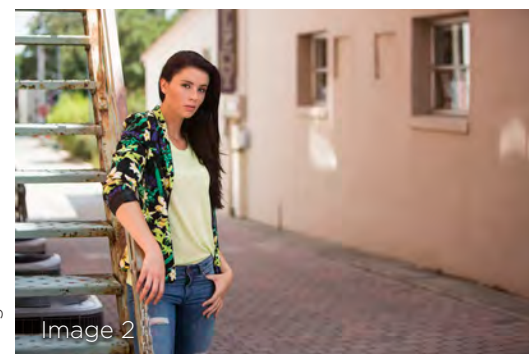


Image 2

Images © Michael Correntino

Image 2 — Switching to high-speed sync allows shutter speeds above your camera's maximum flash sync speed. This is important because it permits balanced ambient and flash exposures using wide apertures. Settings: $f/2.8$, $1/1600$, ISO 400, TTL flash.

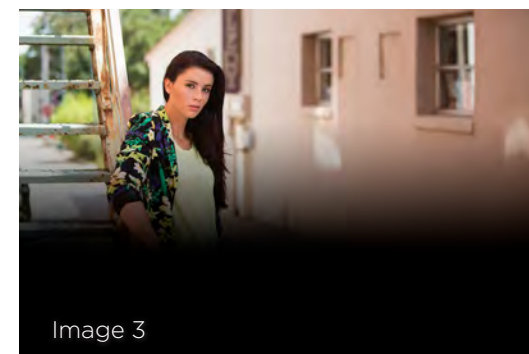


Image 3

Image 3 — To obtain the correct exposure with ambient light and fill flash, and create a soft background using an $f/2.8$ aperture, the shutter speed needs to be $1/1600$. Unfortunately without HSS, that exceeds the camera's maximum flash sync speed by three stops and produces this unwanted effect.

This is because the mechanical focal plane shutters inside DSLRs contain two shutter blades: a front and rear curtain. The rear curtain follows the front curtain during an exposure. How quickly the rear curtain follows behind is determined by shutter speed.

In a non-high-speed sync-enabled exposure, one made within the camera's maximum sync speed, the camera's front curtain opens completely and in the process reveals the entire surface of the camera's sensor; then the flash fires; and then the rear curtain engages, traveling behind it to cover the camera's sensor once the exposure is complete. The camera's maximum flash sync value represents the shortest amount of time available when the entire surface of the camera's sensor can be exposed as a whole before the rear curtain starts following behind the front curtain.

At shutter speeds above the camera's maximum flash sync speed, the front and rear curtains travel across the sensor in unison, creating a small slit through which light can pass. The width of the slit created is dependent on the shutter speed. The shorter the duration, the narrower the width of the slit created. This is what's responsible for the underexposed horizontal black band mentioned earlier. The reason is that at no time during the exposure has the entire sensor been visible to the light from the flash. Therefore, only a portion of the image has been illuminated by it.

High-speed sync solves this problem by instructing your speedlight or HSS-enabled strobe to fire a rapid series of flash bursts during the entire length of exposure. This ends up illuminating the entire surface of the camera's sensor as the front and rear curtains' small slit travels across it. All is not wine and roses, though; I'll discuss HSS's inherent compromises below.

TTL

High-speed sync was created to permit the use of shutter speeds that exceed your camera's maximum sync speed. The advantage is access to wider apertures in ambient and flash mixed scenarios. HSS is available exclusively using the TTL (through-the-lens) exposure mode since it relies on the camera to calculate the correct amount of flash output based on your aperture and ISO settings necessary to create a solid exposure.

You're not stuck with the exposure the camera gives you. If you know what you're doing, you're still completely in control. Remember, shutter speed controls the contribution of ambient light, flash exposure compensation (FEC) controls the contribution of flash \pm three stops, and aperture governs both the amount of flash and ambient light contributed, as well as depth of field. ISO controls the camera's sensitivity to light, making your shutter speed, aperture and flash settings more or less powerful overall. FEC can be found in the menu systems of many cameras, on the camera body itself, on handheld flash units, and on remote control transmitters and strobes. ISO affects the "volume" of these controls overall by determining the camera's sensitivity to light.

Using TTL also doesn't relegate you to using one of the camera's automatic exposure modes. Even though your flash is set to a semiautomatic TTL metering mode, your camera controls can remain fully manual, allowing you maximum creative control.

Alternatively, aperture priority (AP) mode can be used to set the desired aperture, allowing the camera to determine the shutter speed used as you shoot. I prefer working completely in manual mode, which lets me determine exactly how much ambient light to contribute to the exposure via my shutter speed settings.



Images © Michael Correntino

Image 4 — In this image I've introduced fill flash. Without high-speed sync, a shutter speed at or below the camera's 1/200 maximum flash sync speed is required. In addition to switching to 1/200 of a second, I also had to stop down the lens from $f/2.8$ to $f/11$ to make up the difference and bring the exposure back into balance. The light is clearly more balanced, but the background is now distracting due to the increased depth at $f/11$. Not good.

ND Filters vs. High-Speed Sync

You certainly could use ND filters to achieve a reduction in light. But like all solutions, this one involves compromises. First, there's the added expense of purchasing quality ND filters. I prefer Tiffen's 4x4 glass filter over lens-mounted variable NDs, as they work with all my lenses regardless of their diameter. Using fixed nonvariable filters allows me to know exactly what the amount of filtration is and then adjust the exposure accordingly. They don't come cheap, and you need to invest in a holder as well. I use a LEE Filters Lens Shade Filter Holder. Secondly, ND filters can substantially cut the amount of light entering the camera, making focusing a chore. Thirdly, they reduce light overall, meaning ambient light as well as light from flash. With high-speed sync, I have independent control of each light source.

High-Speed Sync 3 Ways

Finally, let's look at the three major advantages of high-speed sync.

1. High-Speed Sync for Wide Apertures

Location portraits often benefit from the use of wide apertures. This is due to the pleasing bokeh they produce, the separation possible between the subject and background, and the reduction of unwanted, distracting background elements. If you use aperture to balance the exposure by stopping down, you'll increase depth of field and therefore reveal more of those unwanted background elements. When you're working with flash and ambient and want wide apertures, high-speed sync comes to the rescue. This is because HSS allows you to balance the exposure using shutter speeds that exceed the camera's maximum shutter speed so you don't have to rely on aperture.

2. High-Speed Sync for Underexposing

This is essentially an offshoot of the above advantage. A wide aperture setting and a natural balance between flash and ambient are the goal. Here you'll employ even higher shutter speeds to further knock down and underexpose the ambient light to create dramatic skies and cool day-for-night looks.

3. High-Speed Sync for Freezing Action

Unlike traditional flash photography, where shutter speed is basically immaterial when freezing action, with high-speed sync, shutter speed plays a vital role. Here's why: When you're not using high-speed sync, you're reliant on the speed of the strobe's flash duration to freeze action for you. With high-speed sync, a series of rapid bursts of light is fired from the flash during the entire duration of the exposure. This essentially turns your speedlight into a constant light source. When working with constant light, shutter speed very much affects the ability to stop action.

Image 5 — Flash and ambient without HSS. Note the distracting background. This is due to the narrow aperture required to balance the exposure at 1/200 second. Settings: 1/200 sec., f/11, ISO 400, manual flash.

Image 6 — Flash and ambient with HSS. Note that this image is nearly identical in every way to the previous image, except without the distracting background. This is thanks to high-speed sync, which allows the use of shutter speeds up to 1/8000 of a second, making wide apertures such as f/2.8 possible when using flash. Settings: 1/3200 sec., f/2.8, ISO 400, TTL flash.

Image 7 — HSS for punchy skies and the day-for-night look. HSS affords shutter speeds up to 1/8000 of a second. The higher the shutter speed, the more ambient light is subtracted from the exposure. This a great technique for holding detail in skies and creating a day-for-night effect. Settings: 1/8000 sec., f/2.8, ISO 400, TTL flash.

Image 8 —HSS for freezing action. High-speed sync essentially turns your flash into a constant light source due to the continuous pulses of light that occur during the entire exposure. With constant light, fast shutter speeds are used to freeze action. So if you're looking for action-stopping flash on location with wide apertures, HSS is the ticket. Settings: 1/8000 sec., f/3.2, ISO 400, TTL flash.



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Image 8

Images © Michael Correntino



Image © Michael Corsentino

Shortcomings and Compromises

High-speed sync is great, but it isn't without its tradeoffs. Here are a few important things to be aware of.

— Reduced power: With HSS, you'll see a marked reduction in the power output of your strobes. This is normal. You're asking the flash to do considerably more work with the rapid bursts of light it has to deliver. You may want to gang up multiple speedlights to reach the desired output, or consider larger, more powerful HSS-enabled strobes.

— Energy suck: Four times as much energy is consumed using HSS, so flash battery life will be shorter. You'll want to have plenty of spares on hand.

Depending on your power output needs and budget, you may want to consider larger, more powerful HSS-capable strobes, such as Profoto's B1 and B2. They offer considerably more flexibility. You can do a lot with speedlights, but when it comes to high-speed sync, extra power can be a lifesaver. ■



Michael Corsentino is an Orlando, Florida-based editorial fashion and portrait photographer. In addition to his busy shooting schedule, Michael is a passionate educator, teaching workshops domestically and internationally. He is an author of two books, writes a monthly lighting column for *Shutter Magazine* and is a regular contributor to *Photoshop User* magazine and *JointheBreed.com*.

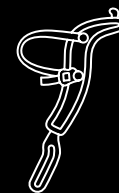
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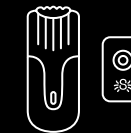
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Invisible Light

Epic Flash That Feels Natural

with Phillip Blume

As an exchange student at the Universitat de València in Spain, I discovered a world of quiet inspiration. I would venture out early onto the narrow stone streets of El Carmen, my 12th century neighborhood, on a pilgrimage to explore the city's art galleries. Exhibitions were impressive. But don't imagine expansive Parisian museums. The beauty of a Valencian gallery isn't in its grandiosity, but rather in its heart. Inside the twisted, crumbling arteries of ancient Moorish architecture, I often needed to press my back against cold stone to properly view a large medieval tapestry, or to admire an original Picasso hung casually on the opposite wall. I was enamored. In those dim corridors with not even a security camera to break the solitude, I gave my eyes time to adjust and contemplated the priceless artwork before me.

But Picasso probably didn't consider these works priceless. He was prolific and, like anyone, didn't finish every project he started. One gallery's walls teemed with early sketches by this father of the Modern movement. It struck me that he'd left them only half-painted, the other half abandoned in pencil scrawl and charcoal dust—bones forever waiting to be clothed in flesh. Picasso buried them. We value and display them now only because he was brave enough to abandon them. It takes humility to leave the old behind. Yet we tend to cling to what's comfortable.

Isn't that just like us? As a wedding photographer, I've wrestled with the temptation to create images that are "good enough." After all, I'm working under a time crunch. Fleeting moments need to be documented. Just spray the scene with direct flash (or nothing at all!) and load it into the camera's memory for your client, right? Who has time for art direction? If anyone criticizes our lackluster work, we stubbornly retort, "Well, that's my style, and I'm sticking to it!" That reasoning, at best, is uninspired. As a result, our images are bare skeletons. Unfinished. Lifeless.

So how do you bring cold bones to life? Finish painting them—with invisible light! When I say "invisible," I'm not referring to infrared or unseen light. Instead, I use the term *invisible light* to help our Blume Workshop attendees grasp the storytelling impact flash can have when you blend it seamlessly with ambient light for a better image. Stylistically, my goal is to draw the viewer into a story, not to distract him with the photographic process. A few subtle techniques can transform a poor lighting scenario into an ideal environment. Let's explore some of them here.

Rescue Highlights

It all starts here. Most portrait photographers begin their careers by placing friends in front of pretty backgrounds. At first they wonder why the exposure of a beautiful sunset came out so well, yet their friend became a dark silhouette. Or their friend is visible, but the blue and purple sky looks white in the finished image. Your camera can't see the range of light your eye can. So beginners eventually learn to go manual: expose for the bright sky, then use a flash to illuminate the shadowed friend. The concept is simple and valid. So why do our subjects now look like cardboard cutouts

cutouts against a fake background? The answer lies in light direction and ratios (Images 1a & 1b).

Direction

Direct flash from an on-camera strobe (by itself) can never create subtle, "invisible" light. Do you generally walk around with light shining out of your eyeballs? Most of us aren't mutants, so images lit directly from our point of view look unnatural and flat, lacking shadowed depth. The solution is simple: Move your light off-camera! Notice I did not say, "Move your flash off-camera." Yes, often your flash will need to leave its hot shoe and go to a stand. But, just as often, I find myself simply bouncing light—pointing my flash head (set at TTL one stop or so) away from my subject and toward the nearest lightly colored surface (it doesn't have to be white). Here's a tip: Change your camera's default meter setting to "spot meter," then be sure to move the focus point over the object you want to properly expose (usually the side of your subject's face receiving the bounced light). Boom! Perfect exposure every time.

The light that bounces back is directional and softer, and, without being gelled, still picks up some of the environmental color. The resulting shadows sculpt your subject beautifully, but watch out. Even a little direct "spill off" from your flash may negate the effect. To make the light appear more natural, attach a solid card *between* your flash head and your subject. It seems counterintuitive since many photographers attach a card to the *back* of their light (or use expensive Tupperware) to fill in shadows intentionally. But only in rare indoor situations does such powerful fill enhance the natural look. I'll touch on that later. In the meantime, I don't recommend investing too much in translucent, Tupperware-like modifiers for your flash. (Images 2a - 2c).



Image 1a



Image 1b

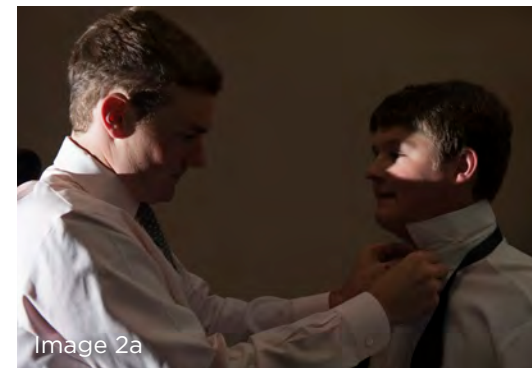


Image 2a

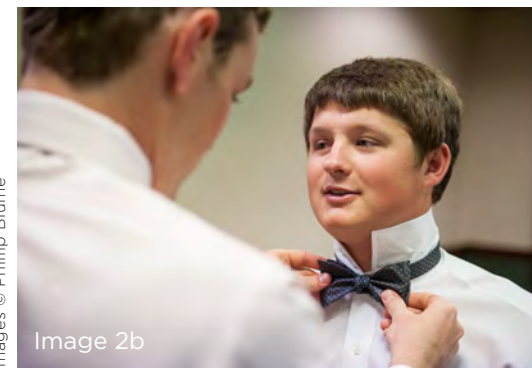


Image 2b



Image 2c

Images © Phillip Blume

Images 1a & 1b — From a styled shoot at ShutterFest, the original exposure is a good picture in itself. However, by exposing for the white silk dress and adding a shoot-through umbrella at camera right, the mood is altered and the silk's texture becomes more apparent.

Images 2a - 2c — An unattractive space or mixed-light environment can be "hidden" by creating a "black box"—blocking out almost all ambient light via a low camera exposure. A flash placed just 3 feet in front of the groom lights his face while keeping the rest of the space dark.



Image 3a



Image 3b

Images © Phillip Blume

Images 3a & 3b — While visible, the ambient exposure is shadowy and unflattering. A flash (placed low from camera right, shot through an umbrella) imitates the direction of the natural light, while smoothing out shadows for a fresh, airy look.

Logical Direction

Another crucial thing about direction: If you're going for the natural look, place your off-camera light intentionally so that it originates from the same direction as the natural/ambient light (Images 3a & 3b). Is the sun shining from camera right, casting long shadows across mountains and trees in the background of your image? Then it makes little sense to light your subject from camera left, casting a shadow across her left cheek, opposite to nature. An untrained viewer may not be able to put his finger on it, but even he will feel like something is amiss in this photo.

Likewise, you don't want to rim-light your subject who is standing in front of a dark indoor wall. Why would a wall project light? You may, however, light the wall itself to create separation. Consider shining a second light toward it from the same direction as your keylight, perhaps simulating sunlight through an unseen doorway. Or simply move your subject closer to the wall itself, using one light to reveal both subject and background. It's funny: Most amateur photographers I meet instinctively tend to light the darker side of a subject's face. We want so badly to make dark things brighter. But it isn't necessary, and too often looks forced. Just because a subject's left cheek looks "already lit" to your eye doesn't mean it doesn't need more lighting. You can darken the exposure and, as far as your camera is concerned, that bright cheek is now dark. Paint where you like. You now have a blank canvas.



Image 4a

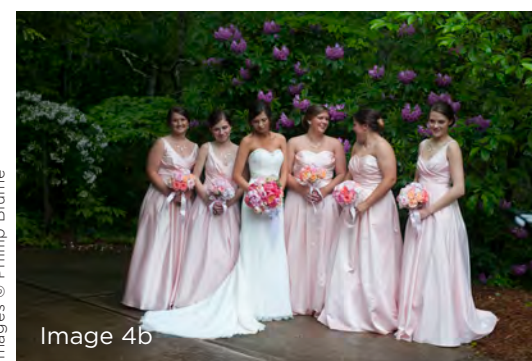


Image 4b

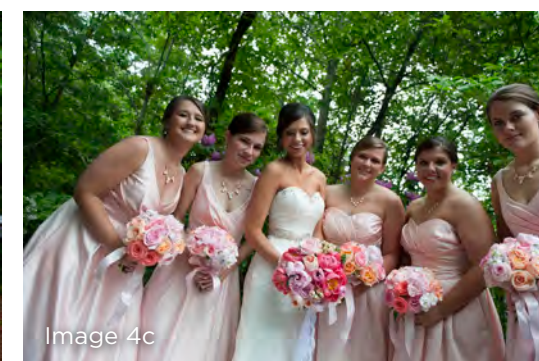


Image 4c

Images © Phillip Blume

Images 4a - 4c — First, expose for highlights in the bridal party. Next, add flash at a low manual setting; adjust as needed. From camera right, the flash barely affects the highlight areas (because of the narrow flash-to-ambient ratio) but greatly brightens dark areas in the girls' faces.

Ratios

The topic of lighting ratios is more complex and better left for another day. Suffice it to say, if you want every trace of your lighting setup to remain "invisible," try not to underexpose your background more than two stops darker than your subject. That's the line where things start to look "cut out," or interior spaces begin to look like caves. I generally keep my ambient-to-flash exposure ratio even narrower (Images 4a - 4c). Indoors, that may mean pumping up your ISO to get an almost correct exposure, then merely supplementing with flash. Outdoors, it may mean thinking more like an "available light" photographer (choosing somewhat evenly lit locations). However, you will retain a lot more flexibility to show off the environment and to fight the sun. (In other words, if you're armed with flash, you aren't limited by light that's "too intense." You just want to avoid, say, expansive landscapes with irregular, high-contrast light patches you can't fill.)



Image 5a



Image 5b

Images © Phillip Blume

Images 5a & 5b — Choose a low manual setting for your backlight. Test to confirm it is subtle and doesn't blow out fine details (e.g., the smoke). Finally, add a main light—in this example, on-camera flash in TTL bounced against a wall in front of the subject.

Fill Light

Let's talk more about fill in outside portraits. Maybe washed-out backgrounds don't bother you, and that's OK. (Hey, sometimes you want to hide an ugly background by overexposing it. I actually like the light, "airy" feeling produced this way.) But blown-out highlights become a big problem when they creep into your subject's hair and clothing. That's why I almost always use flash outdoors—often allowing the ambient light exposure to remain quite bright (i.e., some blown-out backgrounds). Yet I use a low-powered flash to soften shadows and add a catchlight in the eyes. In this way, I'm basically treating my light stand as "fill" lighting. It's not super high key because I'm essentially just lightening unwanted shadows, but I'm doing so directionally rather than across the image. You can see how terms like *fill light* versus *keylight* get subjective as you approach this fine line.

Backlight

Even if you enjoy spending hours in post-processing, it's just too easy to blow out highlights beyond recovery. For example, did you know light directed toward your lens appears at least a full stop brighter than the same light pointed away, toward your subject? That's a big consideration when creating nondistracting light, since we almost always begin by backlighting subjects with the sun. Even at night, you likely place a flash behind your subject. Backlighting is smart and creates separation from a dark background. Generally there are no rules about how bright a backlight should be—it's up to your artistic vision. But unless you want your bride to look like the divinely illuminated Mother of God, you should plan to set your backlight about 10 feet behind her at two stops below even exposure (as metered on your subject's face). That should compensate for the unusual strength of incoming flash, while also keeping the rim subtly visible behind your brighter main light (Images 5a & 5b).



Image 6a



Image 6b

Images © Phillip Blume

Images 6a & 6b — This indoor groomsmen portrait was plagued by mixed daylight (through a skylight), fluorescent light ahead and incandescent light from the room behind. By dimming the scene and adding brighter flash at camera left, the overall ratio of light became more even. The orange light behind was hidden behind the groomsmen using a lower camera angle.

Blend Mixed Light Sources

This is where I'm supposed to talk about gels, right? White balance is probably the first thing some of you thought of when I wrote, "making flash look natural." It's too broad a topic to fit here. So watch the video below. It may surprise you how I approach gels (Images 6a & 6b).

Reveal Shadows

We began with highlights, so it makes sense to end with their counterpart, shadows. For outdoor portraits, I usually don't need a second light. I'm going for a natural look, which means I leave my ambient bright enough to cut down on contrast. Indoors, though, contrast between light and dark can become high enough to feel unnatural. This usually happens with the classic "window portrait." Ever wonder why your groom's face goes intensely bright, while his black suit disappears into hotel room shadows just inches back? Or the front of your bride's dress is blown out while her bridesmaid in blue looks like a floating head beside her? You may have chosen the perfect north-facing window with indirect light, but you forgot the inverse square law. If you want more even light with slower fall-off, you simply need to move your subjects a little farther away from the light source. Once they fall back from the window a bit, adjust your ISO accordingly and watch the results improve.

Hotel is too small? Don't have space to move? In that case, I'll aim my on-camera flash away from the window, letting it bounce back to fill the shadows *just slightly* (maybe -2.5 stops). The same goes for large groups: Place darker-skinned,

darker-dressed people closer to your light, then back it off so that it's relatively equidistant from each individual in the group. Voilà!

But why learn to blend flash with ambient light? Why not become an available-light shooter and leave flash out of the equation altogether? It's easier. To be sure, available-light photographers (an odd term, since all light, including flash, is available for our use) don't need to learn these techniques . . . if they can control the weather, order up overcast days on demand and guarantee every venue they work in will feature plate-glass windows and nonmixed lighting schemes.

I, on the other hand, am not a god. I can create the illusion of superhuman power, though. I can dim the sun, transform colors, or even place a rainbow in the sky—all within my camera, with the use of flash. Plus, flash lets me do it in a consistent and timeless way. Timelessness sets you apart from the ebb and flow of industry trends. As a result, this style tends to command higher dollar and complements a longer-term business strategy. So if you ask me, let there be light! ■

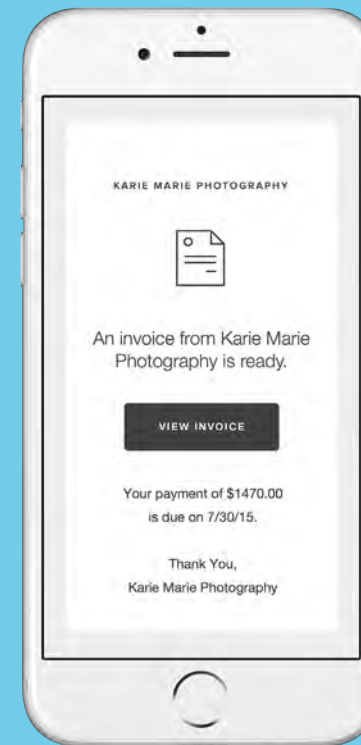


Phillip Blume is an international award-winning photographer and, with his wife, Eileen, cofounder of Blume Photography Studios and Come-Unity Workshops. In addition to photographing weddings and portraits worldwide, the Blumes focus their efforts on personal projects to help those suffering extreme poverty. As educators, the two have appeared on CreativeLIVE, and speak to thousands of photographers every year. They live with their children in rural Georgia.

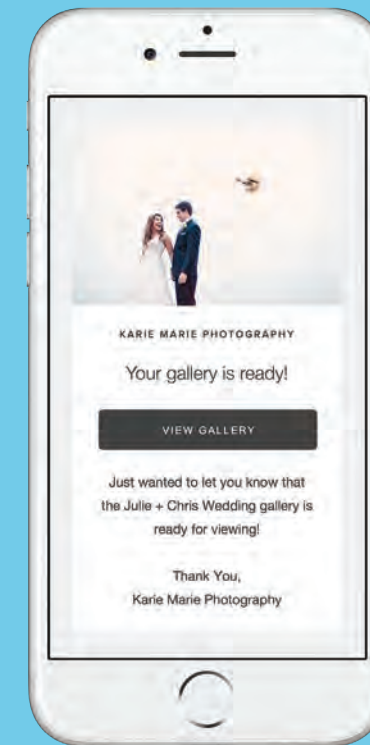
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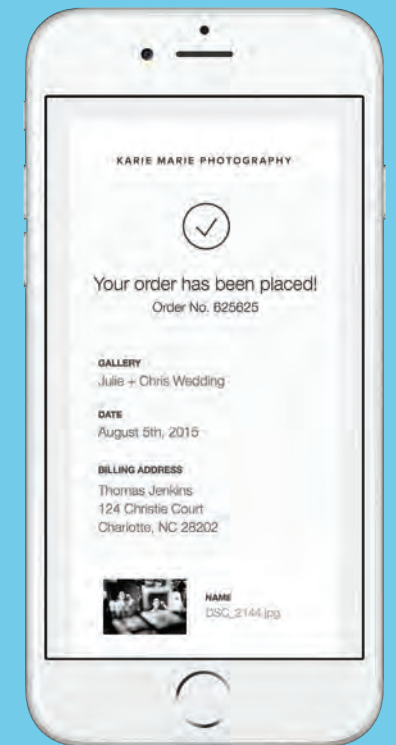
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Shedding Light on
**Off-Camera Flash
Equipment**

with Leonardo Volturo



Image © Leonardo Volturo

If you're in the market for off-camera flash (OCF) equipment but confused by all the options, you're not alone. This month, I'll help shed some light on the pros and cons of the industry's leading systems.

Speedlights

These handheld flashes are great because they're one of the most portable, they're lightweight and compact, and they often have a lower cost of entry than other systems. Must-have features include through-the-lens metering (TTL) and high-speed sync (HSS). TTL allows the camera to automatically adjust flash power based on what it determines to be the correct exposure. High-speed sync is great because it allows you to shoot at any shutter speed, giving you the ability to shoot at wider apertures to achieve the look you want without the restriction of the camera's built-in maximum flash sync speed. (For more on the benefits of high-speed sync, check out Michael Corsetino's HSS article in this month's issue.)

Recycle Rate

In the minus column, speedlights have very slow recycle rates. Recycle is the length of time it takes a flash to recover after being fired; once recycle is complete, the flash is ready to deliver full power output again. A few AA batteries really can't keep up, especially if you're shooting at high power and fairly quickly. To combat that, you can purchase external battery packs that plug into your speedlight and decrease recycle time. But now you're increasing cost and decreasing portability, and putting unnecessary strain on your speedlights that can damage them.

Triggering

To fire your speedlights, you're going to need a transmitter on your camera and a receiver plugged into your speedlight. The most popular option is the PocketWizard. Going that route adds additional expense and something else hanging from your light. Alternatives include the Canon 600EX-RT or the Phottix Mitros+ systems, which come with built-in radio transmitters, eliminating the need for any add-ons.

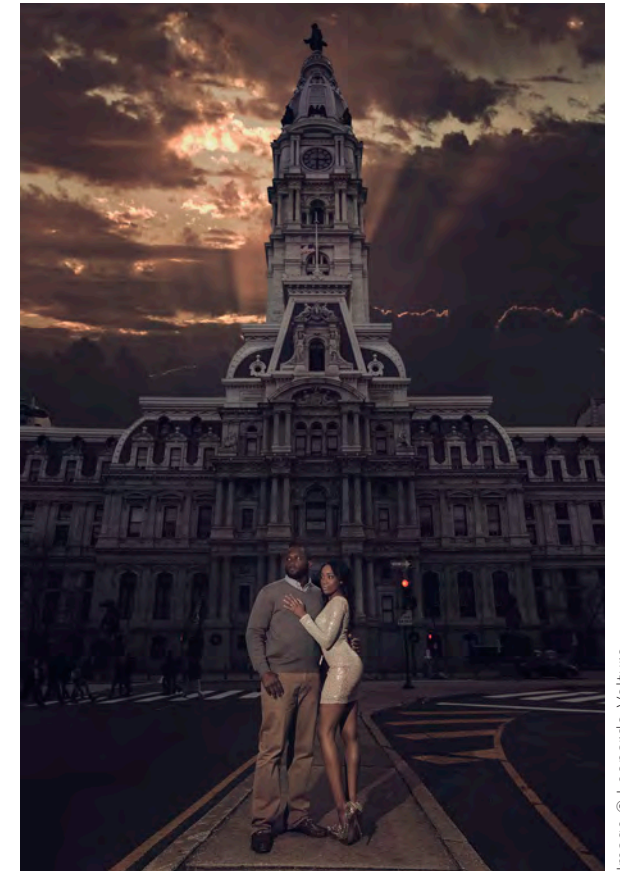


Image © Leonardo Volturo

Power

The biggest issue you're going to run into is lack of power. You should be OK when your subject is close to your light source and you're not trying to battle the sun. When I'm out in the brutal Miami sun, I need all the power I can get. That means you're going to want to start looking at larger, more powerful strobes. Current portable strobe options will give you anywhere from four to 10 times the power over even the best speedlight. So when you start talking about using four or more speedlights to get the power and flexibility that you need, you're at or above the cost of portable strobe options. If speedlights are already part of your kit, then I suggest you work with them to get your feet wet with OCF. Push their capabilities as far as you can. When you're starting to feel like you need more power, you'll know it's time to consider portable strobes.



Image © Leonardo Volturo

Portable Strobes

Portable strobes come in two flavors: “pack-and-head” systems and self-contained monolights.

Pack-and-Head

These systems include a battery pack with a separate corded flash head. The two most popular choices are Profoto’s B2 and Phottix’s Indra500. A two-head Indra kit is just over \$2,000, and a two-head Profoto B2 kit is \$2,595. Both systems sport TTL, HSS, a modeling lamp (to help with focus and provide a preview of your lighting) and built-in radio triggering, with full control over all settings from their controllers. They also feature very fast recycling times: The Indra500 ranges from 0.1 to 2 seconds, and the B2 clocks in at an even faster .03 to 1.35 seconds.

Profoto vs. Phottix

I am a Profoto shooter, and I’ve had my hands on the Indra500 only a couple of times. For a little added insight, I reached out to my friend Rob Roscigno, a talented wedding and portrait photographer based in New York City. Rob’s been working with an Indra500 for several months.

“One of the immediate attractions to the Indra was that it has the Phottix Odin [radio flash triggering system] built right into the strobe,” says Rob. “This meant that I could combine strobes and speedlights with one system since I was already using the Odin system to trigger my Nikon speedlights.” Having that ability to mix strobes and speedlights is definitely a standout feature. For example, you could use the strobe as your keylight and a speedlight as a fill or rim/hair light, which typically don’t require as much power.

I asked Rob if there was anything he didn’t like.

“If I had one complaint, it would be having to use a separate head and battery pack,” he told me. “But for the convenience of mixing speedlights and strobes, I decided that having a separate head and battery was worth the small inconvenience.”

The Indra500 puts out 500 watts per second, while the Profoto B2 puts out 250 watts per second. That's a one-stop reduction in light output, which may be underpowered for some applications. Both battery packs can power two flash heads, which increases flexibility, but you have to be willing to divide the pack's power between the two flash heads. Therefore, if you wanted two lights at full power, you would need a separate battery pack for each head. When it comes to battery performance for each system, you're looking at around 340 full power flashes for the Indra500 and 215 for the Profoto B2.

The Profoto B2's, which are now a part of my location lighting kit, are extremely lightweight, weighing in at only 2.2 lbs. for the battery pack and a very slender 1.5 lbs. for the flash heads. I love how compact they are. The B2 flash head fits easily in the palm of your hand. I've used these über-portable strobes for fast-moving shoots in NYC, in extremely tight spaces and on 13-foot light stands, all with no issues. Profoto has also launched an entirely new line of light-shaping tools for its OCF systems. Each is extremely portable and very quick to set up, great for location work.

The B2's corded flash head might be an issue for some, but for me it hasn't been. The build is rock solid, just what you'd expect from a Profoto product. Both of these pack-and-head systems offer great flexibility and portability, with plenty of power to get the job done.

Monolights

The next category of portable battery-powered strobes is monolights. These have removable, rechargeable batteries built right into the head. They're completely cordless and come with built-in radio control.

Profoto B1

The current king of this category, the Profoto B1, was released at the end of 2013 and was the first of its kind. It features 500 watts per second of power, TTL, HSS and a modeling lamp, and is completely wireless. The B1 provides up to 220 full power flashes and recharges its battery in as little as an hour. We use several of these in our studio and for location work. The downside is its weight, at just over 6.6 lbs. Your assistant may need frequent breaks from holding it, so use a light stand and sandbags when you can. The B1 is also the most expensive, coming in at \$2,095 at this writing.

Other Options

There are a couple of other options in the battery-powered monolight market. One is Dynalite's 400 watts-per-second Baja, which comes in at \$599. This unit has a 3.7 second recycle rate compared to the B1's 0.1 to 1.9 seconds. It has only a six-stop power range, compared to the B1's nine stops (same with the B2), allowing you more control to fine-tune your light output. The modeling lamp is a 5-watt LED, while the B1's LED delivers 20 watts. Another possibly better-known unit than the Dynalite is the Flashpoint RoveLight. It's a 600-watt second monolight carrying over the same features as the Dynalite.

Dynalight vs. RoveLight

Both units lack TTL metering. This may be a deal breaker for some. The RoveLight's battery is capable of up to 500 full power flashes, compared to 550 for the Dynalite, and has a recycle time of 0.3 to 4.5 seconds (compared to RoveLight's 3.7 seconds).

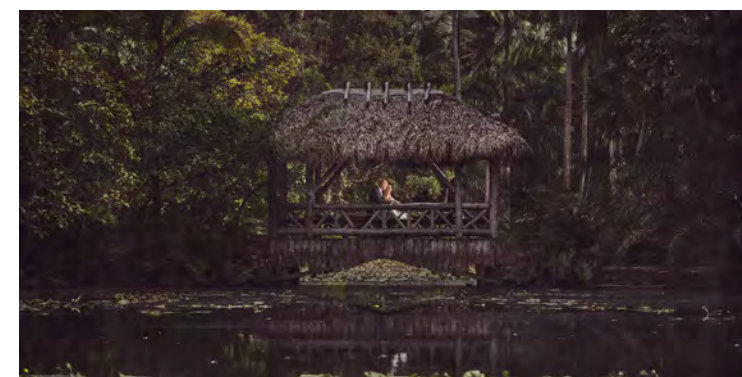
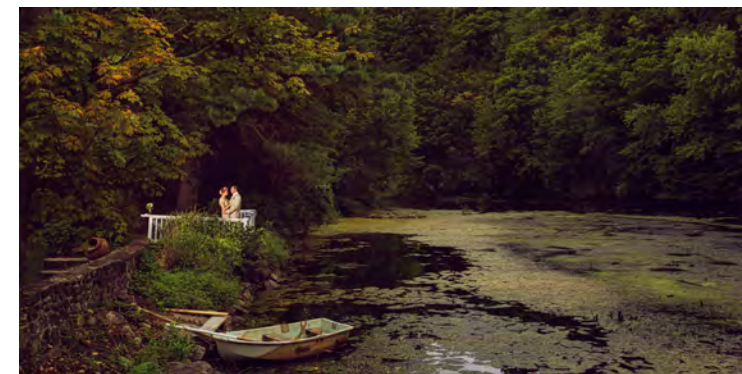
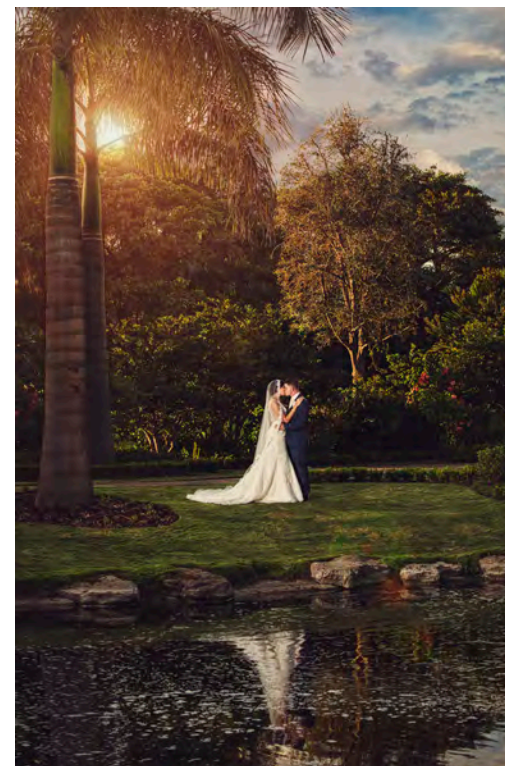




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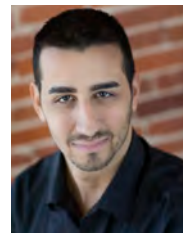
Build Quality

The biggest concern for me with both units is build quality. They just don't have the rugged feel of other units on the market. For more perspective, I turned to someone who has been using the RoveLight for some time, my friend Amanda Jayne, an Idaho-based photographer, who agrees: "The overall feel isn't that of a high-quality piece of equipment, unlike the Profoto B1, which just feels sexy." I've heard people report issues with the RoveLight's included remote, saying it barely works. Amanda doesn't have much of an issue with the remote, though, and estimates she ends up opting instead for something like a PocketWizard in only very rare cases. It does get praise for its power and battery life, as well as the Bowens mount option that allows it to accept a wide variety of light modifiers; the same mount is included with the Phottix

and Dynalite products. The RoveLight is also affordable at just \$599, offering a lot of power per dollar. All of the tools in this segment offer great power and the quickest setup to get out there and start shooting.

Conclusion

After reading this, you may still be asking yourself what the right system is for you. The reality is, there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. It's all about finding the right tools for your needs—tools that help you get the job done and offer the features that matter most to your work. ■



Leonardo Volturo is an international award-winning wedding and portrait photographer, writer and educator. He and his his wife, Melissa, operate Leonardo Volturo Photography, a boutique South Florida studio. Together they cater to discerning brides around the world with their signature blend of modern, stylistic and dramatic imagery.

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Focal length: 15mm Exposure: F/8 1/40 sec ISO400 © Ian Plant

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Q + A

WITH

Salvatore Cincotta



- + Speedlites vs. strobes on location.
- + Tips for simple Speedlite setups.
- + Using Speedlites outdoors to overpower the sun.
- + How to use both Speedlites and strobes on location.
- + Using a run-and-gun light setup in difficult situations.
- + Understanding light meters.
- + When to consider Speedlites vs. Profoto B1 vs. Profoto B2.

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INSPIRATIONS

— best lighting image —

Put 10 photographers in a room and ask them to shoot a paperclip, and there's no telling what will happen. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why I love being a photographer. We all see the world in our own special way. Ultimately, though, nothing is truly new or unique. Everything is inspired by something that came before. In that spirit, this month we asked you, our readers, to submit some work you thought would inspire your peers. What you gave us was inspiring for sure. Enjoy.

— **SAL CINCOTTA**
Editor-In-Chief



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THE
Assistant's
Manual

THE BEGINNING

WITH
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As professional photographers and business owners, I'm sure you've poured your heart and soul into building a business that allows you the freedom to do what you want when you want, and live your creative passion every day. With the success of building that dream comes the reality of overloading yourself to the point where you can no longer do it alone. Enter your new photo assistant, right hand, second in command, etc. Whatever the title, if you're at a point in your business where you are ready to hire the newest addition to your team, below are a few steps to take in the first few months to ensure a successful journey for both of you. Whether you're hiring part-time or full-time help, an assistant will help the flow of photo shoots, office management and daily routines, allowing you to focus on building and perfecting your brand even more.

The Training Process

About three years ago, Sal had the time to dedicate all his energy into training me to be the assistant he needed. Here's how you have to think about it: You're setting this person up for success. You are investing a lot of money in this person so she can be part of your team. You have to put in the time needed to train her. Below are three steps Sal took in the beginning to make sure I was set up to be successful. for success.

Step 1 - Put Your Assistant on the Bag

When I first started working for Sal, he had me "on the bag" for about three months before I could really serve as any kind of beneficial assistant. I learn by observing, then asking questions. Having me sit back and watch the process to make sure I really understood his style of photography was probably the best thing he could have done to ramp me into the assistant he needed. I had to give up every weekend during this training period to sit with a gear bag and watch how he and Gage (his assistant at the time) worked together on a wedding day. By doing this, Sal was able to not only show me the process and workflow, but he also built loyalty in me and used this as a chance to see whether or not I would last. If I could give up every weekend for three months to sit with a bag for eight to 10 hours a day, I had what it took to work side by side with him, and he knew he could rely on me.

Step 2 - Be Accessible and Patient with Your Assistant

Naturally, with any new hire, there are going to be a lot of questions, and even more mistakes made. What may be second nature to you seasoned vets out there may be a foreign language to your new assistant. Patience is key when it comes to hiring bodies, especially when hiring someone you are grooming to be your right hand. Making sure your assistant understands not only *what* you're doing but *why* is the most important thing you can do while you're still in the early part of training.

Sal has a three-strikes kind of rule for making mistakes. His motto is "Run into a new wall." Meaning, don't make the same mistakes over and over again. The first time, he's very lenient—it's a coaching moment, really. What happened? How did it happen? What is the solution to make sure it doesn't happen again? The second time the same mistake is made gets a very firm correction from Sal (you don't want to get the firm correction point, trust me). Third time? Welcome to your worst nightmare.

Run into a
new wall.

*...don't make the same mistakes
over and over again.*

Step 3 - Make Your Assistant Uncomfortable

Yeah, I said it. Make them squirm. Push your assistant to the edge, then push just a little harder and see how they respond. I hated every second of the training process under Sal, but it made me who I am today. You have to push assistants to step out of their comfort zone and feel the pressure. To some, this may seem like a sick and twisted way of training, but it is exactly how I learned.

I was convinced for a solid four months that Sal's only mission in life was to put me in situations where I didn't have the answers or any clue what I was doing just to watch me go into full-blown panic mode, for his own personal entertainment. Two and a half months into the job, I was on the bag for a wedding that allowed over three hours for creatives. Sal flew through the locations and got everything he needed, with over an hour remaining. As I sat by a tree guarding the bags, ready to switch lenses at any moment, Sal decided to change things up a bit.

"Alissa! Get over here!" I ran over to him, and Sal handed me his camera. In front of all 26 people in the wedding party, he said to me, "Your turn. Take a stab at it. Change the posing and show me what you can do for a group shot."

I have no poker face whatsoever. I can only imagine the sheer terror that washed across my face in that moment as my heart started pounding, hands started trembling and armpits started sweating profusely. There was no way for me to recover from the reaction everyone had just witnessed, but Sal hopped in and walked me through each part. Step by step, he had me start with the bride and groom. He made me pose them, then he critiqued and explained what I was doing right and what I was doing wrong.

Constant and Consistent Communication

As the primary photographer, it is your job to communicate your expectations clearly and make sure your assistant understands what you need at all times. Sal has always been very clear about what he needs from me in any given situation. Maybe it's the New Yorker in him, but I am never unsure what I should be doing—anything from what light setup he wants to when he wants his coffee. Be direct and confident in your direction, and always make sure your assistant understands what you need.

As the assistant, it is your job to be a sponge and remember to stay open-minded to critiques and direction from the primary. It's very easy to get caught up in the stresses of learning your new role, and to start taking things personally. If the photographer you're assisting tells you to go get the flash, trigger, battery pack and a different lens for a shot, go get it. Don't read into it—they're not being rude or treating you like less of a human being. That is your job. Do it, and do it with excellence.

As the assistant, it is also your responsibility to speak up when you don't know the answer. Your job is to make the primary photographer's job easier, so if you're afraid to speak up when you're uncertain, that is actually creating more work in the long run when issues arise. It is OK to raise your hand and admit you have no idea what your boss is talking about.

Establishing Process

We are such a process-driven company, it's almost impossible for me to understand how companies can function without it. I remember thinking Sal was an absolute crazy person when I first started (who am I kidding, I still think that), but now I realize his OCD behaviors all serve a very important purpose. Process will always save you when things don't go according to plan.

Establishing a process between you and your assistant is essential for all strategic parts of your business, and will make your life so much easier. You have taken the step to hire a new person to work alongside you; now it's time to let go of some of the mundane tasks keeping you from doing what you love.

Every Friday night before a Saturday wedding, our gear-prepping process is always the same. It started with Sal doing it all by himself; then he let me sit and watch; then he let me do a few parts of the process; and now we each have specific duties within the main task of prepping gear. I know what I own and Sal knows what he owns. About a year ago, Sal was traveling home from a trip the night before a wedding and asked me to prep everything on my own. Guess what happened? I forgot to put the extra battery in the gear bag. It really is inevitable—you have to start implementing processes and operating under Murphy's Law. If you do, your day-to-day workflow will become second nature and the number of things causing you stress will continue decreasing over time.

The importance of proper training when you are ready to hire your first assistant should never be overlooked. You're taking a step in the right direction to build and perfect your business. You're investing time, energy and a lot of money into this person. It is your job as the business owner, visionary and primary photographer to equip your assistant for success. ■



Alissa Zimmerman graduated with a degree in television production and has been a part of the Salvatore Cincotta team since 2011. Today she is behind the camera regularly as Sal's second shooter and as the executive producer and camera operator for Salvatore Cincotta Films, Behind the Shutter, Shutter Network and Sal Cincotta's School of Photography. Alissa is the creative director for *Shutter Magazine* and serves as Sal's right hand, managing daily operations within the family of Salvatore Cincotta brands.

salcincotta.com

• 5-PART •
WORKFLOW

WITH LIGHTROOM CC

with Dustin Lucas

Part 1 Storage & File Management

In recent articles, I compared Lightroom CC to previous versions and other programs, concluding that Lightroom was the superior total workflow solution for large-volume photographers. I've used Lightroom for years, and have continually changed my practices and refined the best ones.

With this article, I embark on a five-part series in which I will break down a simple and powerful workflow primarily using Lightroom CC. Over the next four articles, respectively, we'll cover catalog management, processing images, output methods and archival/backup strategies.

Storage: In-Camera

Let's start by deciding on the type and number of memory cards you should buy. You need to determine the file size your camera records and roughly how many images you will be taking in a session (Image 1).

For a wedding, I will have a little over 3,000 images from the primary and 2,000 from the second shooter. Shooting in Raw format, you will average a file size of 30MB for a full-frame camera. Get familiar with your camera's card slots and in-camera backup options. For weddings, you should be recording to both cards at the same file quality and size. That's because you are lowering your data-loss potential by having two storage devices instead of one (Image 2).

If you have only one card slot, I suggest shooting with multiple low-capacity cards. You are decreasing the chance of losing all your photos from one corrupt card. You don't need two memory slots to be safe from corruption—you just need good practices. Having two card slots allows you to shoot in multiple formats separately in camera. This means you can shoot a smaller JPEG format for same-day processing and slideshows. You can store these files on a single card throughout the day, which is very handy for editing on the fly. A disadvantage of shooting Raw + JPEG is that you have to import from multiple cards and sort that data. Recording in small JPEG is the answer.

Factoring in about 500 images recorded, you would need two 16GB cards; with 1,000 images, you would be using two 32GB

cards, etc. I like to use slot 1 as the "active" slot for swapping out multiple smaller memory cards throughout the day, and slot 2 as a total backup with a 128GB card. This option is limited to 3,500 total shots for the day, but it requires fewer cards to be handled. Of course, for those of you using 36MP and higher cameras, you will need more storage overall.

There are many ways to determine what workflow is best for you. Find out what makes the most sense. Do not base your decision purely on cost, since memory cards are always gaining capacity and going down in price.

Storage: Card to Computer

It can be daunting to figure out what you need to transfer images from your cards to your computer. Let's start by breaking down how your data can and should be saved in multiple places. Think about on-site and off-site locations. If you have a separate studio space, you should have storage options both in your studio and at home. If you work entirely from home, look into online storage solutions. (Refer to my December 2014 article, "Mastering Your Digital Workflow: Import and Backup.")

You need to invest in a multiple hard-drive system when working with a large volume of images. This allows for the chance of a drive crashing so you don't lose your entire collection of work. This is where RAID comes in, which stands for "redundant array of independent disks." You want copies of copies when storing massive quantities of files (Image 3).



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

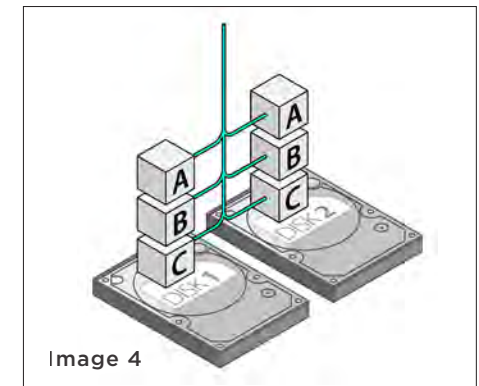


Image 4

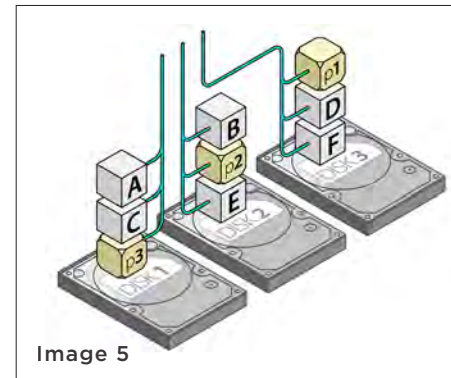


Image 5



Image 6

RAID Systems

Keep in mind that we are using multiple hard drives within one storage device. Let's distinguish storage devices by naming the first one "working" and the second "backup" (or "secondary"). For the working drive, stick with a single hard drive system for portability, directly connected to your computer for the fastest performance. A few options for a backup storage drive are RAID 0, 1, 5 or 6. RAID 0, or striped drives, give you full capacity of all combined hard drives and up to twice the read and write speed. This is a good option to work off of for the performance increase, and, paired with Thunderbolt or USB 3, you will have little lag. However, if a drive fails, you lose everything on this system. This option is the highest performer but carries the most risk of failure. Not a good option for archiving or backing up.

RAID 1 mirrors the drives, giving you an identical copy, but it reduces your total capacity by 50 percent. So what does that mean exactly? Say you purchased two 2TB internal hard drives for your storage device—potentially you now have 4TB total. RAID 1 configuration chops your capacity down to 2TB. You gain some performance in the read speed, but nothing for writing data. This allows one drive to fail without losing any data at all. This is very important when configuring a backup plan. This is a good starting storage solution for your backup (Image 4).

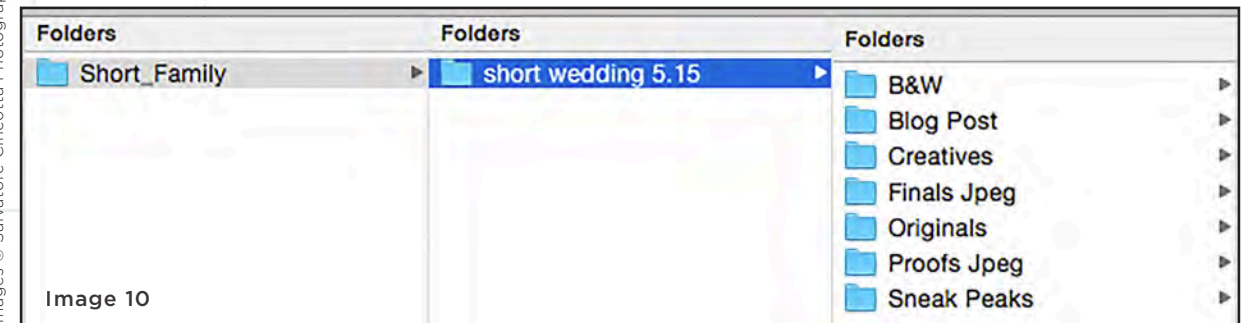
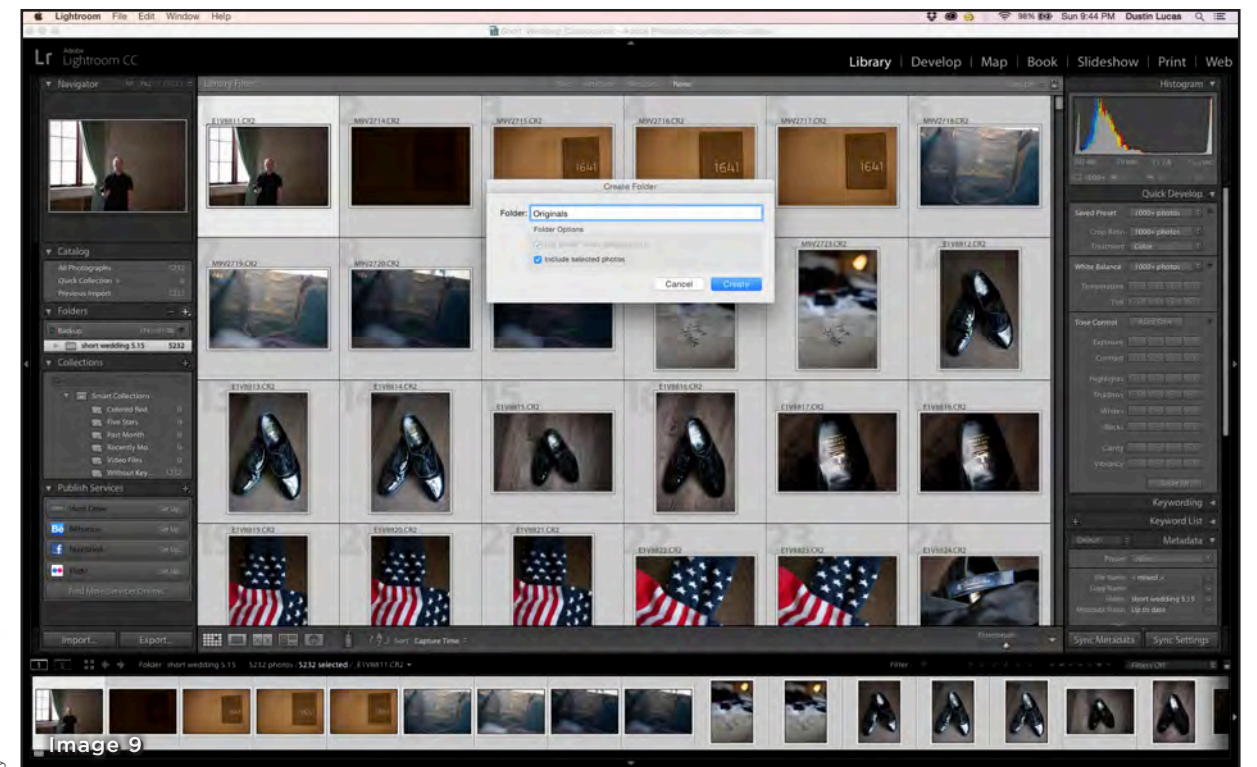
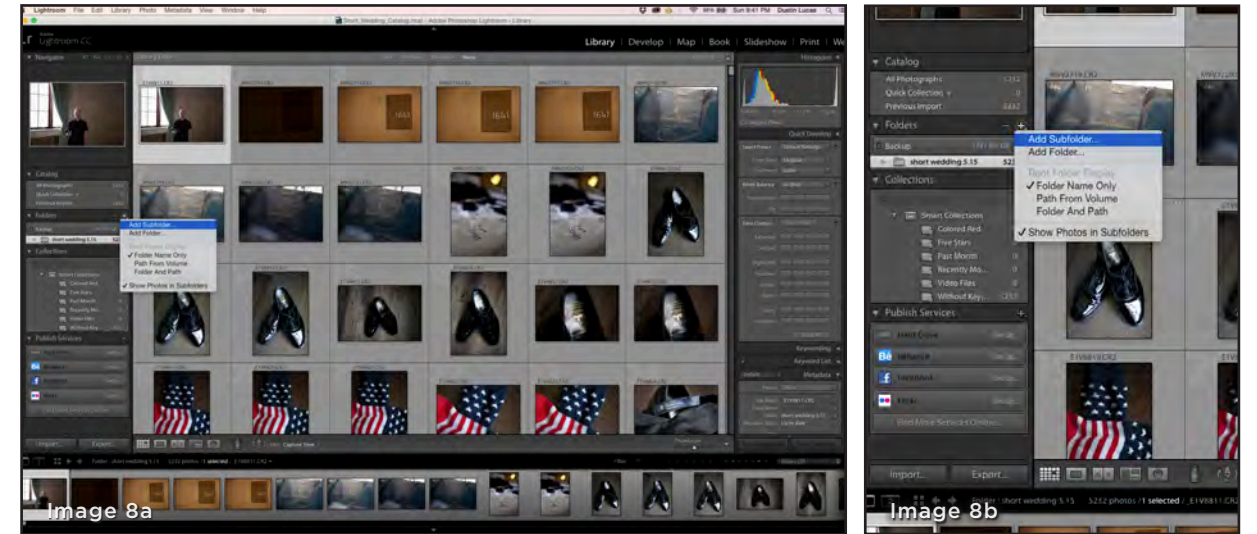
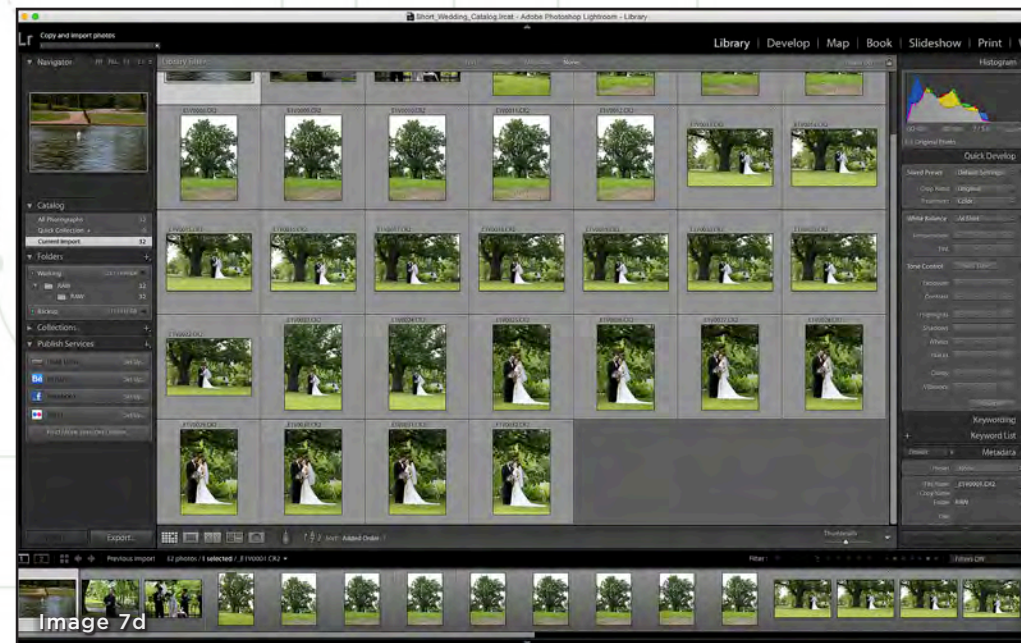
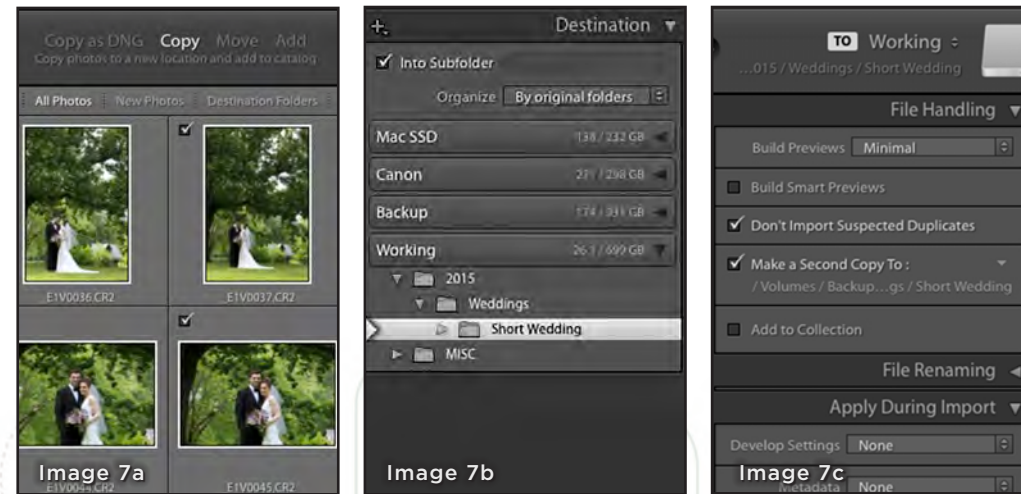
I suggest using RAID 5 configuration because it requires at least three drives. If you have three 2TB drives, RAID 5 shrinks your total capacity from 6TB to 4TB. The advantage is that you gain back capacity and still have the safety of a single drive failure (Image 5). This configuration is very popular among photographers and gives you great reliability at a nonenterprise level. RAID 6 can lose two hard drives and requires at least four total to configure. This is a great option for setting up a server that is continually reading and writing data for your archive of image files. A major issue with RAID systems is that if there is a corrupted file or issue while writing data, both drives will have the same problem. You will need to set up a backup drive to update daily so you can prevent corruption down the road.

You definitely want to invest in data integrity. I see a lot of studios using systems from Drobo, which has created quite a name for itself. The Drobo 5D has given photographers ease of mind with a built-in battery backup for power outages. Drobo's BeyondRAID technology has given us the next level of RAID protection, with more hands-free maintenance and faster data recover (Image 6). Proprietary file software does raise the question of difficulty in recovering data from a crashed drive. Research the flexibility of swapping hard drives into newer systems, and keep compatibility issues in mind.

File Management within Lightroom

I have adopted a few practices for managing files and folders. Let's start by ingesting our files directly into Lightroom by first creating a catalog. (Look for my article on cataloging in the next issue.) I create a file named "Short Wedding Catalog" and save it on my local hard drive. From there, I import the images with the Copy option selected to ingest the images from the memory cards or external hard drive to my working and backup drives (Images 7a - 7d). Once this process is complete, I move to Library Mode and begin creating my folder structure directly in Lightroom.

On the left-hand side, you can drop down the Folder panel. As you can see, the only folder I have so far is named "short wedding 5.15." I create an "Originals" folder and move all the files into it. I select all the files and click the plus symbol right above the folder source, and choose "Add Subfolder" (Images 8a & 8b). I check the Include Selected Photos option after naming the folder "Originals." (Image 9) I hit Create to begin moving the files and change the actual location they're in. In Finder, I am seeing the same folder structure as well. It's that simple (Image 10).



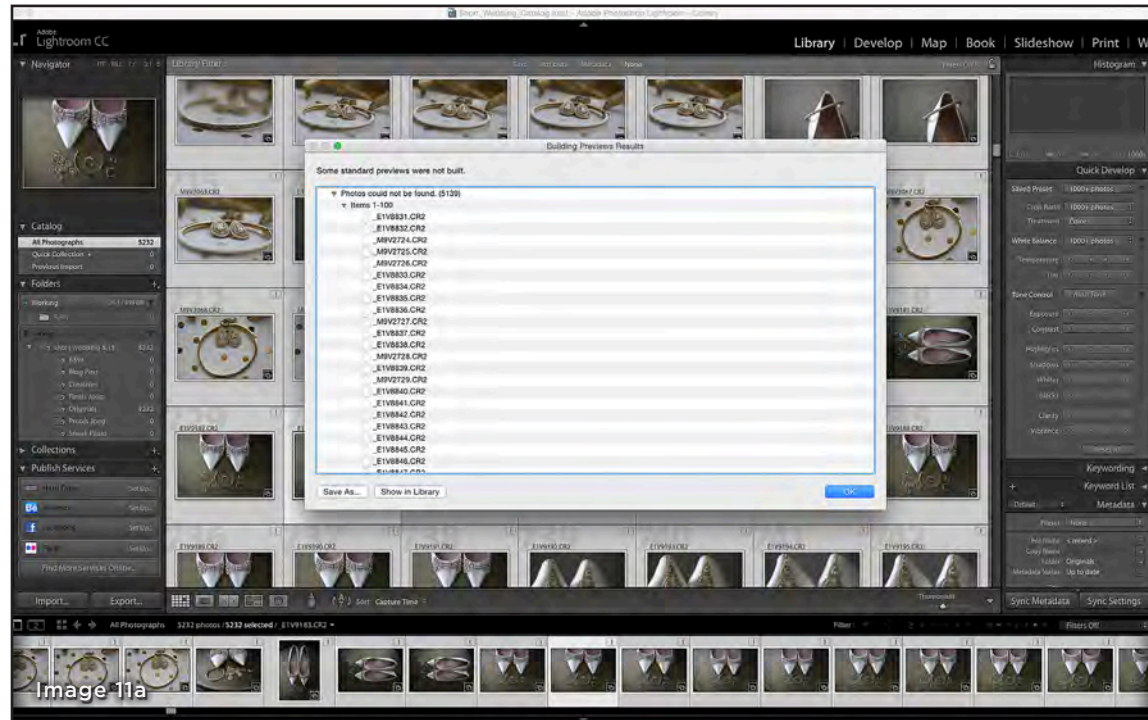
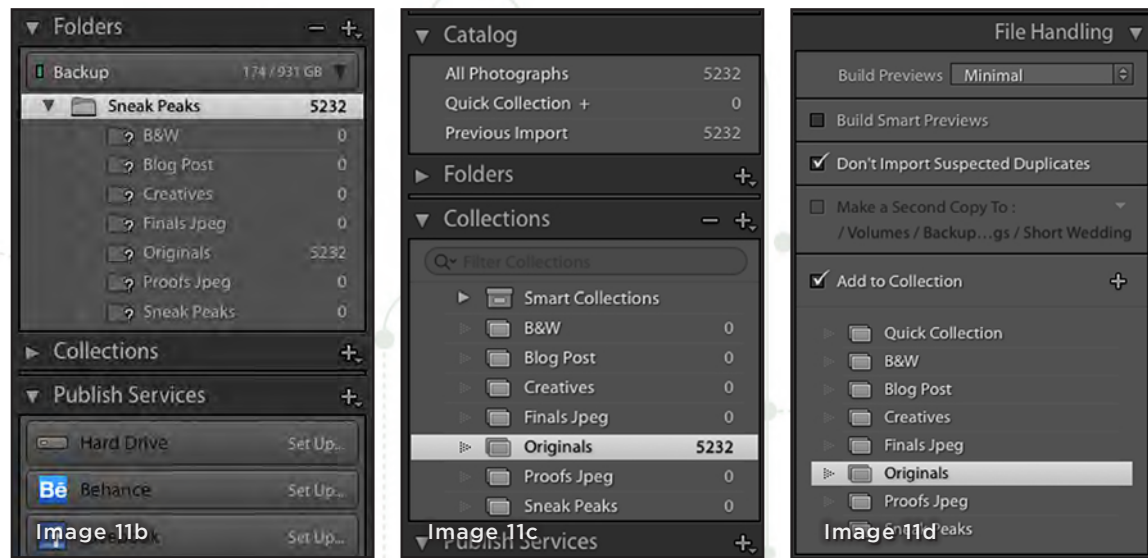


Image 11a



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

File Management within Lightroom

If you are importing your files into Lightroom before making these folders, use Lightroom to create your folder structure. Once you begin moving files around, it becomes difficult to relink the folders without losing the organization you've created. The alternative is to use Collections to organize files solely within Lightroom so you don't affect the storage folders. You can import into Collections, but I wanted to demonstrate Lightroom's abilities for folder structure in this section (Images 11a - 11d).

Conclusion and Continuing with Catalog Management

Hopefully now you have an idea for some storage options for your current workflow. A RAID system is definitely the way to go for your working drive so that you have access to all your data when you need it and save yourself from losing files. Invest in a storage solution based on your current and future volume. By allowing Lightroom to manage your file and folder structure, you can control everything in one place. This is a huge time saver. ■



Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his master in fine arts degree, a career opportunity opened once he began working with Evolve Edits. Through teaching photography classes and writing about photography, Dustin continues to expand his influence on art and business throughout the industry.

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SONY vs. CANON

PART 2

with Joe Switzer

We have a winner! What lens brand should be in your camera bag for the second half of 2015? In Part 2, I focus on Sony A-mount, Sony E-mount and Canon L series lenses. Last month, Canon was ahead of Sony, with a score of 3 to 2, judging on depth of field, color, sharpness, manual focusing and lens flare.

This time, we are adding a group of A-mount Sony lenses to the mix, including a 135mm, 50mm, 85mm and 16–35mm. We really wanted to go exclusively with Sony E-mount lenses because of weight and the automatic focus option, but wanted a shallower depth of field, which was the primary reason we purchased over \$10,000 in new Sony A-mount glass.

Before we made the final decision, we took into account the overall feel and performance of all the different lenses and how they impact the team and our shoots. The Sony A-mount lenses require an adapter just like the Canon lenses do for the Sony A7s. The E-mount lenses require no adapter.

For the past month, we have been using both Sony and Canon lenses on our shoots, and mixing the footage in our final productions. Guess what? We couldn't tell a difference between the lenses when we watched the final edited footage. (Obviously, you do see differences when you take your time to carefully compare side by side.) All the filmmaking was done with the Sony A7s on the picture profile 7 setting.

We tried out a total of over \$20,000 in new Sony lenses for this article. It was back and fourth internally on which brand we were going to choose for our company. We feel like we made the best decision for our team, and hope that we can help you make the right decision for yours without your having to spend so much time and money. The footage we captured was from a corporate shoot and a few shots in my backyard.

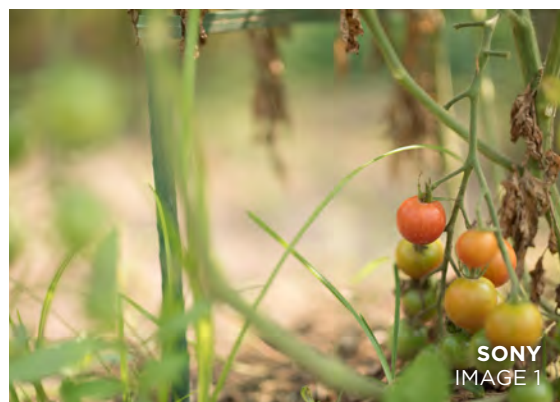
Most of the Canon lenses used were the 50mm EF f/1.2, 14mm EF f/2.8, 200mm EF 2.8, 85mm EF f/1.2, 100mm f/2.8 macro and the 135mm EF f/2.0. Some of the Sony lenses in the competition are the FE PZ 28–145mm f/4 OSS, Vario-Tessar T* FE 16–35mm ZA OSS, Sonnar T* FE 55mm f/1.8, Planar T* 85mm f/1.4, Sonnar T* 135mm f/1.8, Planar T* 50mm f1.4 and the Vario-Sonnar T* 16–35mm f/2.8.

DEPTH OF FIELD

Maybe your shoots don't require a shallow depth of field, but this is very important to us. We like to be able to go as shallow as possible. Most of the time, our aperture is set as low as we can go because we like the way it brings out our subjects. The Sony E-mount lenses lost this battle to Canon last month. This time around, to level the playing field, we purchased the Sony A-mount lenses. You'll notice that all the E-mount lenses don't have the lowest aperture option. Sony A-mount and Canon L lenses have basically the same aperture.

The A-mounts we compared were Sony's 50mm f/1.4, 85mm f/1.4 and 135 f/1.8 versus Canon's 50mm f1.2, 85mm f/1.2 and 135mm f/2.0.

On a typical shoot, we use the 50mm for more shots than the 85mm and 135mm combined. For that reason, the depth-of-field winner is more weighted toward the performance of the 50mm. What I wanted to find out is if I could actually tell a difference between the 1.4mm and 1.2mm. With the Metabones adapter, the Canon only goes down to 1.3. I could still tell a difference with depth of field, but it was minimal. Look at the brown dead leaves in the photo, and you can see that they are more blurred out on the Canon image. Sony A-mount lenses have a much better aperture than the E-mounts, but if having the lowest aperture is a priority, then Canon is for you, followed by Sony A-mount lenses and, in last place, the Sony E-mount lenses. (Images 1 and 2).



Images © Joe Switzer



Images © Joe Switzer

COLOR

Both the Sony E-mount and A-mount lenses appear to have better color than all the Canon EF lenses. The color in camera on the Sony A7s was set to PP7, and nothing was color corrected in the video or in the photo comparisons besides exposure. With Sony lenses, the colors are more defined. You'll notice that the colors pop more on the concrete outside the building; check out the reflection on the windows and the greens and blue. There's a more lifelike look with less color correction in post. Sony remains the winner in the color category. This might not be a concern for you since you can slightly adjust color in post-production and get the same results (Images 3 and 4).



Images © Joe Switzer



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SHARPNESS

It's very hard for me to tell the difference, but if you put two photos or video shots side by side, the Sony lenses always look a little sharper. You'll notice that when you look at the tree, you can actually see more leaves with Sony and that they are more defined. The more details and the closer we shot objects, the difference in sharpness was more obvious, but with the wider shots, it was harder to tell the difference. Many filmmakers I know shoot with details and sharpness turned down. The camera gives them the flexibility to edit sharpness the way they want it in post. Still, if you're a detail person and are concerned about the sharpest lens, then Sony is for you (Images 5-8).



Image © Joe Switzer

IMAGE 9

MANUAL FOCUSING

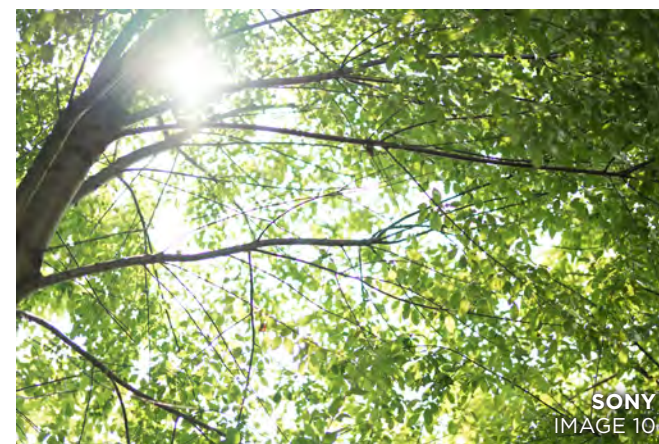
There are situations where automatic focus is the preferred choice. With Sony's E-mount lenses, you have the option of quickly changing to autofocus on the fly. My company uses manual focus 99 percent of the time. For years, we've never even had the choice of using autofocus because we filmed exclusively with DSLRs. We are more passionate about the feel and performance of the manual focus than with any tracking autofocus function because we know the exact spot and area where we want the focus to be. When you work 12-hour days pulling focus, you'd better be comfortable with the feel of manual focus, and the Canon is better.

The Sony 85mm manual focus was loud and grinding compared to the buttery-smooth feel of the Canon 85mm. Look at the 2.17-pound Sony 135mm f1.8 lens below compared to the Canon 135 lens on the above (Image 9). The Sony felt like it had a gap and delay in the manual focus. I didn't like that; the feel of the focus pull might be the single most important quality I value in a lens. You'll end up holding your lenses more than holding your own children, so the way the manual focus performs is crucial. Canon remains the winner because of the way the lenses feel and perform.

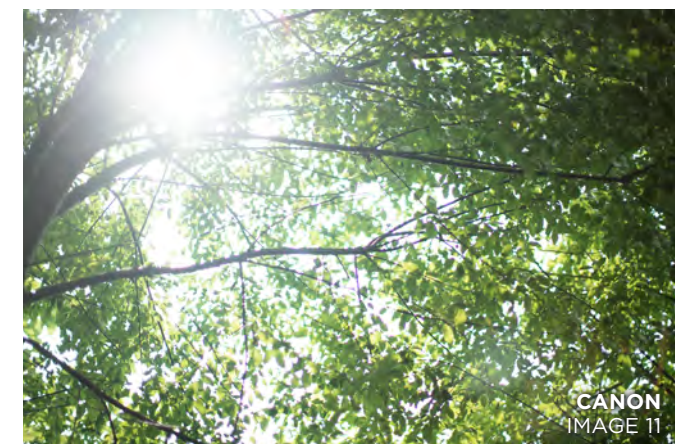
LENS FLARE

If you've seen the recent *Star Trek* or *Transformer* movies, you know what lens flare is. I can't get enough of it on my shoots. Shooting into sunlight can be a challenge but can pay off with tremendous dividends. Some photographers and filmmakers try to limit lens flare. In many cases, the more you pay for a lens, the less flare you'll get.

Some editors don't mind less lens flare because they can add it in post-production artificially. I would rather shoot what I want in camera and be done with it. I always choose the lens with bigger flare. You can see with the 50mm that the Canon lens gives me a bigger flare than the Sony 50mm. In Part 1, we found that the Canon 14mm had larger flare than the Sony E-mount 10-18mm. The majority of my shots for any video come from these two lenses. This means Canon wins the lens flare category (Images 10-12).



SONY
IMAGE 10



CANON
IMAGE 11



CANON
IMAGE 12

THE BOTTOM LINE

The overall feel and performance of a lens trumps everything. You don't need to be wasting time and money on lenses that won't give you the competitive advantage you're looking for. So what lenses do you need to buy? Do you need to use both Sony and Canon? We tried that on our wedding shoot in San Francisco. Even though we were able to get the shots we needed using both brands, we felt that as a team we missed being able to swap lenses quickly between us and not miss any shots. Our creativity was limited because we were not in sync with our lenses.

Your lenses need to give you an unfair advantage against everyone else so you can have a better final product. Even though the flexibility of using Sony's newest 28–135mm gave us more options during the wedding ceremony, the lowest aperture was 4.0, and that was limiting. Our style is to shoot as shallow as possible most of the time. Maybe your style is different. Perhaps your camera lens flare, aperture and autofocus mean something different to you than they do to me. It comes down to what you value as a filmmaker.

All that being said, we have a lens winner—for us. By a unanimous decision, our team has chosen Canon. We did keep one Sony lens, though: We fell in love with the 0.9-pound Sony E-mount 10–18 f/4 because of its weight and automatic focus option. For our gliding and motion camera movement, we may exclusively start using that Sony lens.

Looking at the big picture, the lens flare, shallow depth of field and, most importantly, how it feels all mean more to us than color and sharpness. Now we'll all be in sync for the remainder of 2015. ■

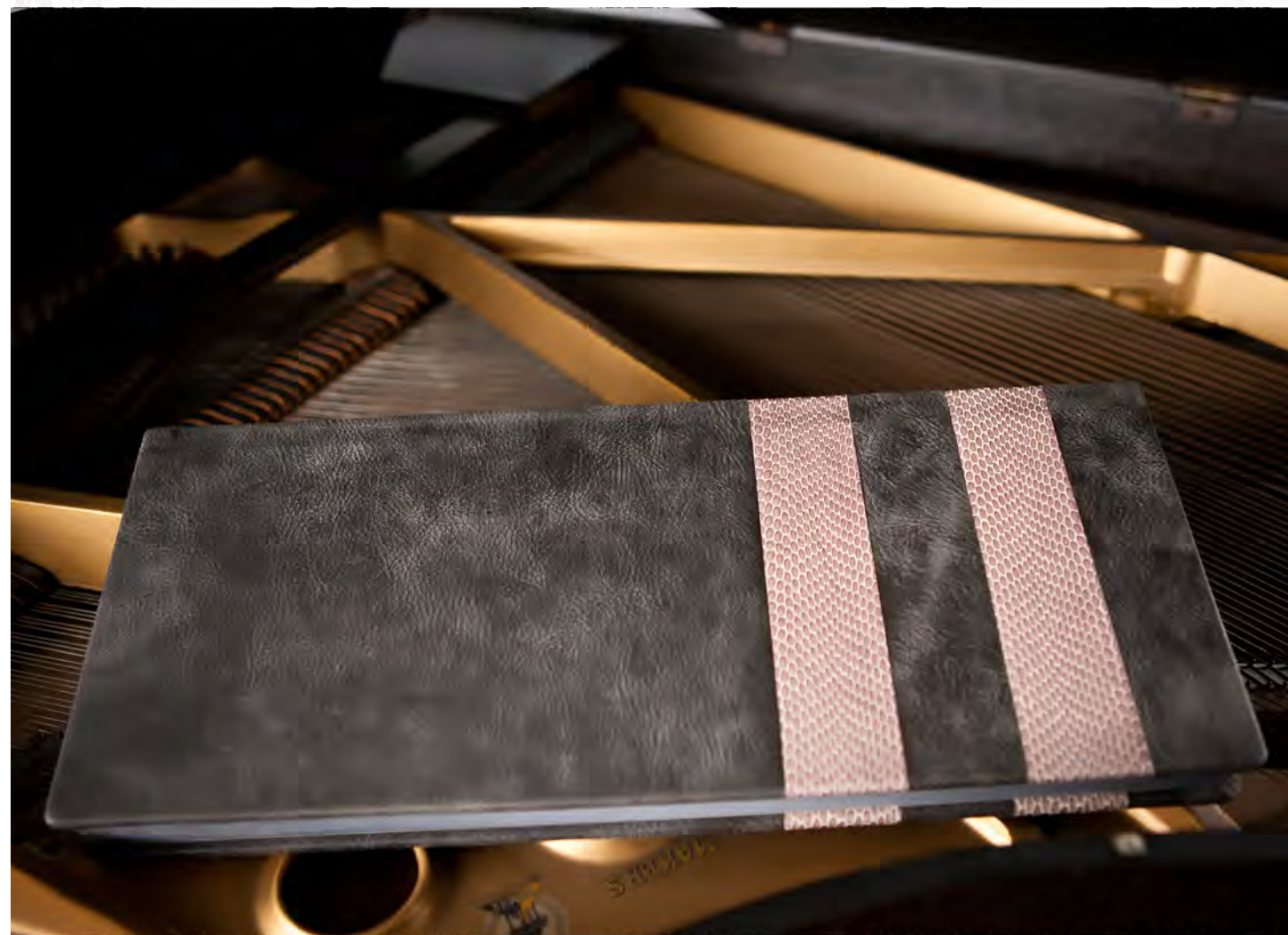


Joe Switzer founded the international award-winning photo-cinema business Switzerfilm. His team is made up of four young creative minds striving to take the world of wedding cinema and photography to the next level. The team travels the world for inspiration, going anywhere and everywhere to top their latest work. Joe finds joy in teaching all over the world and helping up-and-coming "ographers" lay the groundwork for a solid future. Over the past 10 years, he has counted the majority of his clients as lifelong friends.

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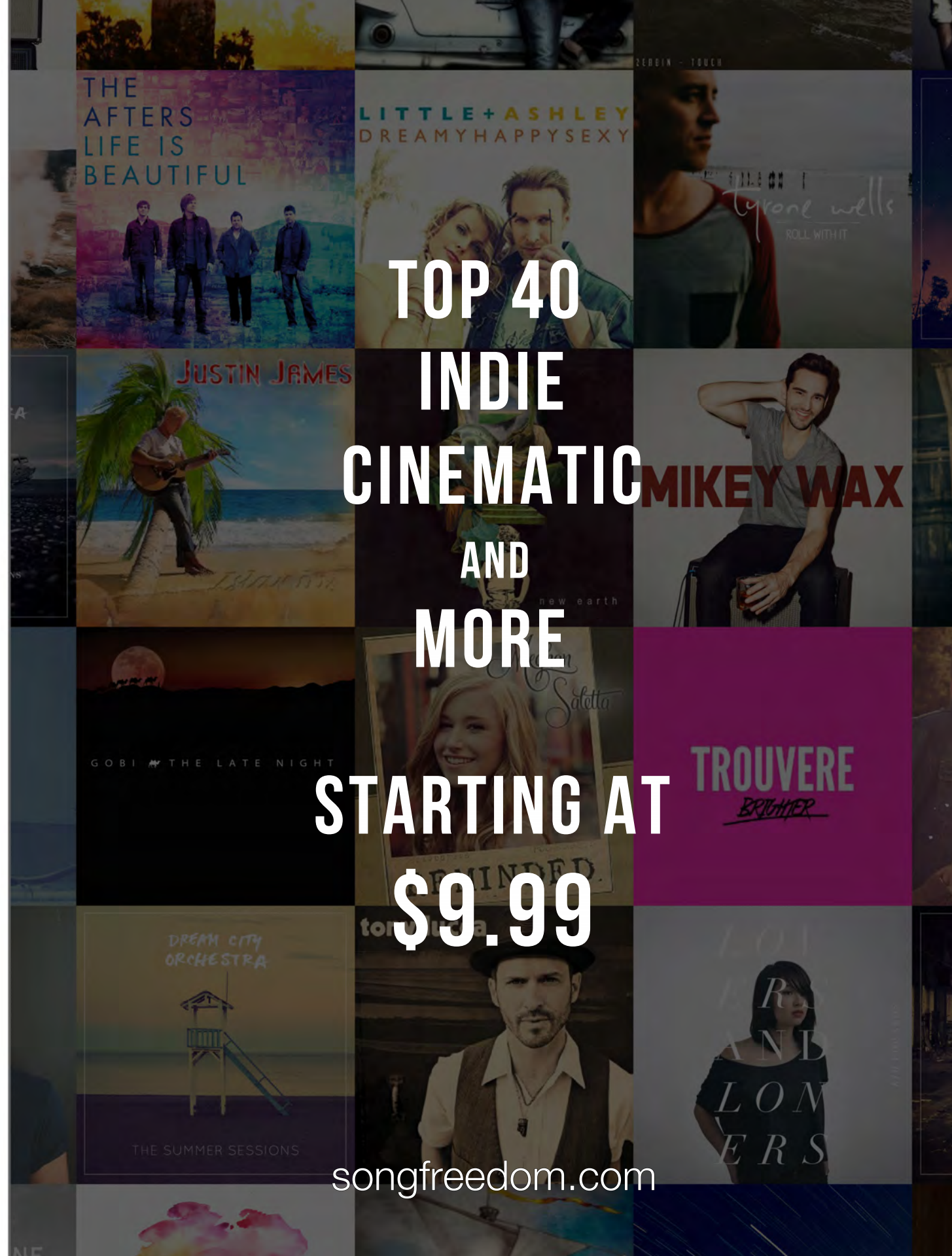
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RELATIONSHIP
BUILDING



Relationship Building

There's a great book out called *UnMarketing* by Scott Stratten that's well worth the read. The subtitle alone tells you what it's about: *Stop Marketing. Start Engaging.*

Even stronger is the message on the back of the book: "If you're ready to stop marketing and start engaging, then welcome to UnMarketing. The landscape of business-customer relationships is changing, and UnMarketing gives you innovative ways out of the old 'Push and Pray' rut. Instead, draw the right customers to you through listening and engagement, enabling you to build trust and position yourself as their logical choice when they need you." The point Stratten makes isn't new, but he does an outstanding job bringing the concept into contemporary marketing. It's all about relationship building, one of your strongest tools to build your business and your brand.

Several years ago, I interviewed Angela Carson on a podcast. Angela is a well-known and very successful children and family portrait photographer in Detroit. At the time I interviewed her, Detroit was economically in the pits. Unemployment was at an all-time high. Crime was up. The city

was having one of its worst recessions, but Angela was having one of her very best years. She knew at the time she needed to do approximately 125 portrait sessions a year. She'd paid attention to her clients over the years, and knew that about 70 percent of her sittings were repeat business.

So, Angela focused on staying in touch with her clients all year long. With some, she's practically a member of the family. Birthdays, anniversaries, all types of celebrations—she's often involved not just as a photographer, but as a friend.

Let's look at a list of things you should be doing to build stronger relationships.

Identify Your Past Client Base

While it seems obvious, there are thousands of you out there who don't track much of anything in your business. When I asked one of the most respected wedding photographers in the industry about his database once, he told me, "I don't know where anybody's information is. All the past invoices are in shoeboxes!"

OK, so that's extreme, but you need to build a file on every client you've worked with. Make it a point to keep their obvious information—address, phone number, email address—but also record their anniversary date and birthdays of everybody in the family.

Maintain Your Database

Building it is one thing, but maintaining is just as important. If you've ever purchased a mailing list, you already know the likelihood that at least 5 percent of mailings will be undeliverable. Americans move around, and to have an effective database, you want to know you're hitting your target whenever you send something out.

Anniversaries and Birthdays

Set up your filing system so you're getting regular updates when a past client's birthday or anniversary is coming up. People love the pleasant surprise of a card on that special day. If you're a family portrait artist, keep track of the kids' birthdays.

I know I've written about this before, but let's hit it again. David Ziser is one of the finest wedding and portrait photographers in our industry. As couples' anniversaries approach, he congratulates them and offers a free portrait sitting as a gift. Think about the power behind an offer like that. The younger the bride, the more friends she has who will be getting married. Photography is a word-of-mouth business, and a client won't forget that her photographer remembered her, let alone gave her an anniversary gift.

Send Holiday Cards

Holiday cards are a necessity, but go beyond Hallmark. Design custom cards featuring your images, and add a handwritten note for special clients. You don't have to write a letter; just one sentence, like, "Hope all is well with you guys—wishing you a wonderful holiday season." On the back of the card, you're always going to have your address, phone number and website.

Own Your Zip Code

Draw a 2-mile radius around your base of operations. Now, get out and introduce yourself to every vendor/business in that circle. The concept couldn't be more basic: It's shaking hands and meeting the people in your community.

"But Skip, I'm a wedding photographer!" OK, let's put that excuse to bed. You're a photographer and an artist. You can shoot anything. Say something like, "Most of my photography work is wedding-oriented, but if you ever need help with anything in imaging, I've got a great skill set and some terrific associates. I'm in the neighborhood and here to help with any of your photographic needs."

Be a Lunch Slut

It's my favorite expression because I'll go to lunch with anybody who's interested in photography. A conversation over lunch is the perfect time to talk about photography, your business and your lunch buddy's business.

Whom Are You Having Lunch With?

This is about building a relationship with wedding planners, hotel sales staff, the bridal salon, florists, etc. Remember, the whole purpose is to build a relationship with people who are potential clients, but also referrals. You have an opportunity to work with other vendors and complement each other's brand, all while focusing on the same target audience.

Be Active in the Community

Your community is at the center of so many opportunities as a building block for your business. The relationships you build are at the core of your brand, reputation and development of your business.

Social Media Is a Relationship Builder

Let's use Facebook and Twitter as examples of how you can build relationships through social media.

To start, you can't just watch the parade go by—you need to participate. Get involved in various forums where you can contribute expertise and support.

Here's a prime example. Chris Fawkes of Australia started the Facebook Wedding Photographers group a few years ago. After a year or so, he had 3,000 members, and although we had never

met, he sent me an IM and asked if I had an interest in working with him on building the forum. We started talking via Facebook. We changed the parameters of the group, and today we're just over 23,000 members. A few months ago, we had a Skype session, and suddenly the world got smaller. We've since brought in two additional administrators. We "talk" all the time and have become the best of friends, yet we've never physically met.

We've added two more forums to the mix: Advanced Wedding Photographers, with just under 3,000 members, and GoingPro, a forum primarily for new photographers, with just under 3,200 members. Chris is involved in all three forums.

Out of our mutual interest in wedding photography and helping photographers raise the bar on the quality of their images and skill sets, a terrific friendship has grown. Who knows what our next project might be?

Twitter offers the same opportunities, but in 140 or fewer characters. But relationship building on Twitter is exactly the same as on Facebook: It's about being helpful and sharing information.

With so many conventions and live workshops around the world, there's always a chance to meet face to face with those artists you've been talking with online. I also revert back to using the phone a lot. It's not uncommon for me to just pick up a phone when somebody has asked a question that's too difficult to answer on Twitter. Plus, the phone is a wonderful tool, giving you the ability to add a whole new dimension to a relationship versus one based completely on text.

ShutterFest It's Not a Convention but a Community

I can't think of a better way to wrap up the topic of relationship building than to use ShutterFest as an example. Whether you've attended either of the past two programs or are signed up already for 2016 is irrelevant. ShutterFest is a community of artists who all share a passion for the craft. They stay in touch publicly through Facebook. There are almost 2,500 members, and the underlying foundation for everything is about working together and helping each other through the challenges of being an artist and entrepreneur.

Many of us get together at other conventions. We've done guest posts on each other's blogs, done podcasts together and even grabbed a lunch or two after the convention. Anybody needing help on a specific project or challenge has the opportunity to put out a call for help in the forum. Someone will often respond within minutes.

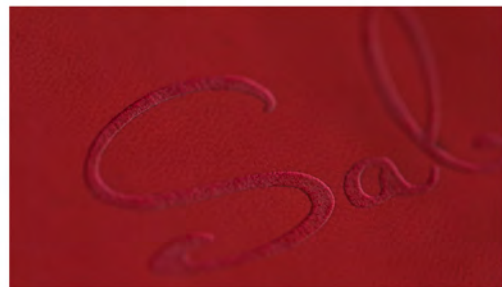
Building relationships means building trust with clients, vendors and other photographers. It's a key building block for all your marketing efforts. This article covers only the tip of the networking iceberg. ■



Skip Cohen is president and founder of Marketing Essentials International, a consulting firm specializing in projects dedicated to photographic education, marketing and social media support across a variety of marketing and business platforms. He founded SkipCohenUniversity.com in January 2013. He's been actively involved in the photographic industry his entire career, and previously served as president of Rangefinder/WPPI and Hasselblad USA. He has coauthored six books on photography and is involved in several popular podcasts, including *Weekend Wisdom*.

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