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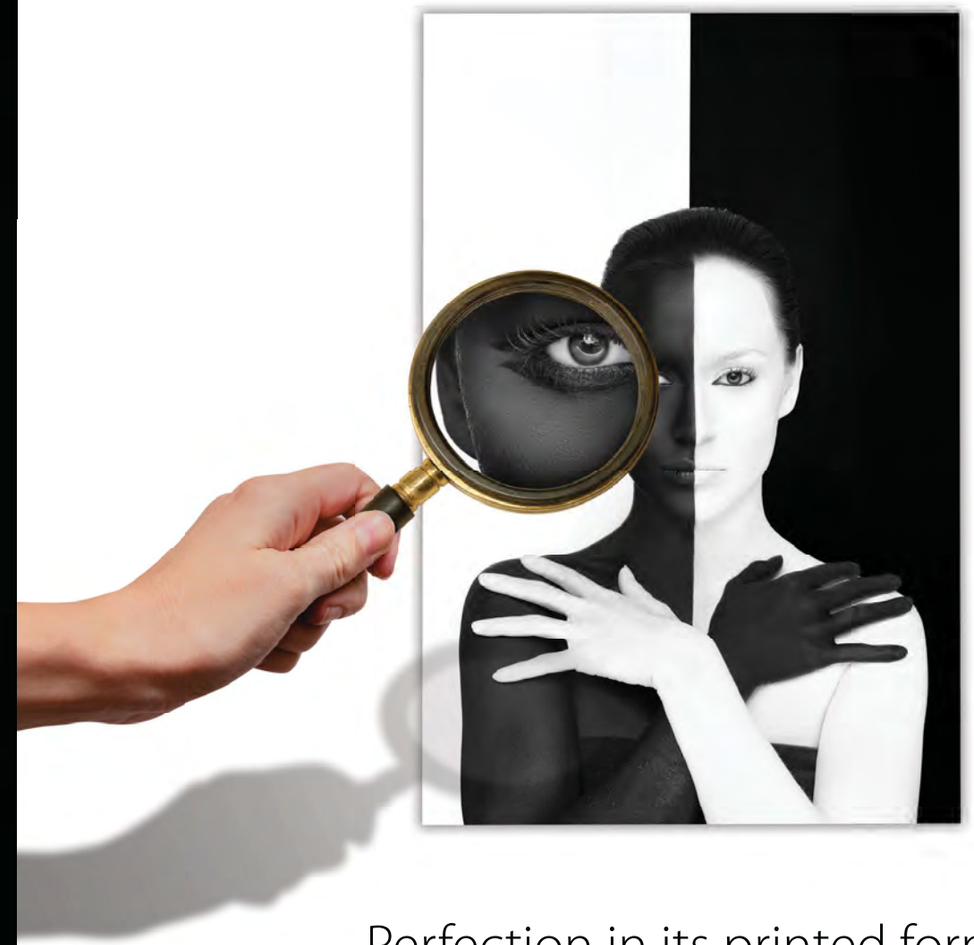

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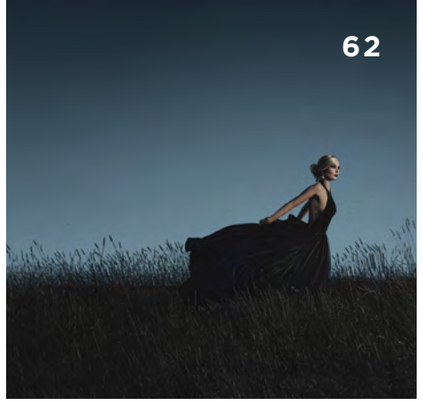

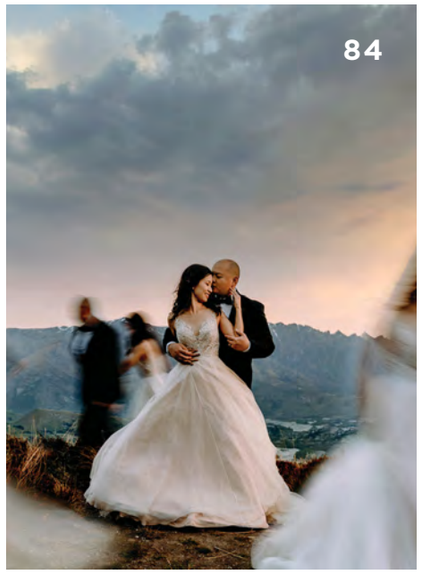

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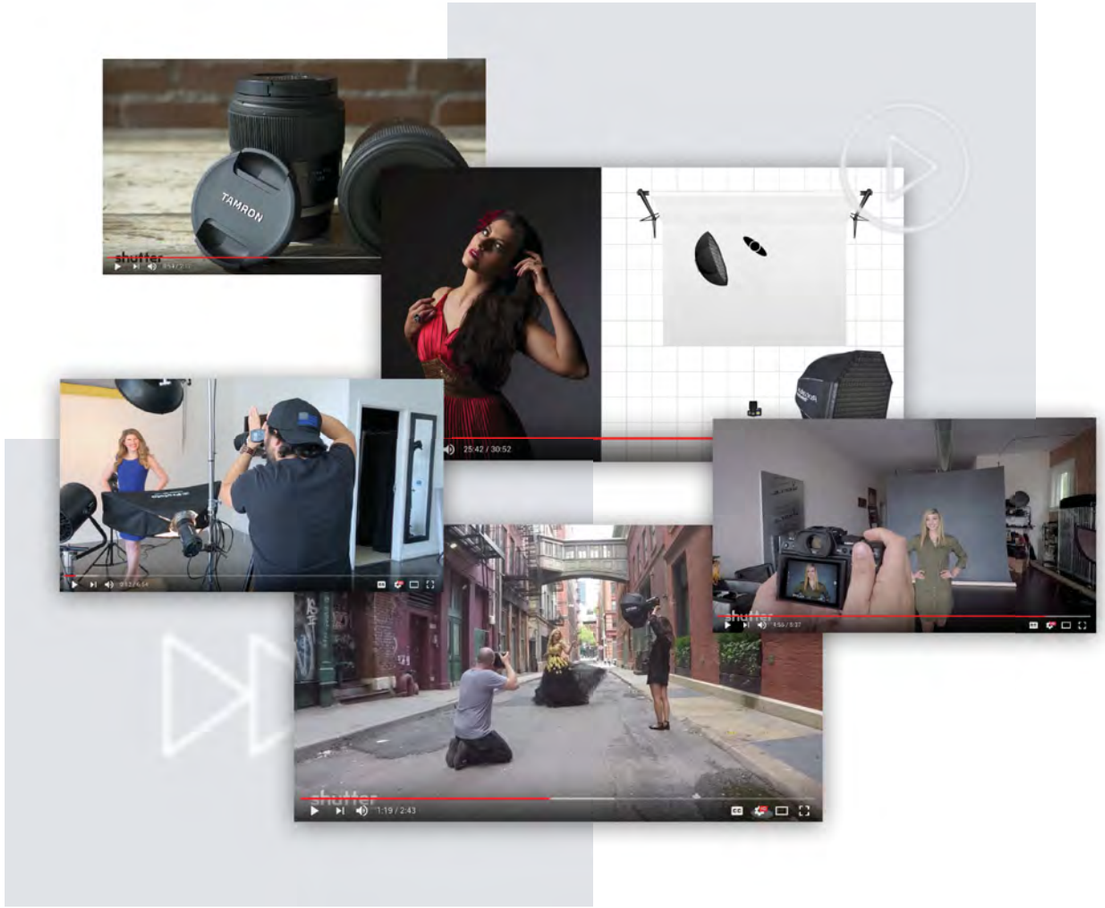

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MISSION **STATEMENT**

Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter* 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 have established the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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Tinted Photography
Vanessa Joy

THE **COVER**

TITLE: wild at heart
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WEBSITE: dixiedixon.com
CAMERA: nikon d850
LENS: nikkor 85mm lens
EXPOSURE: f5.0 @ 1/1000 iso 320
LIGHTING: natural light
MODEL: carsyn hodde w/ wallflower agency
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LAUNCH **POINT**

A message from the publisher

The world is shrinking.
Explore, document, and share it through your lens.
- Sal Cincotta

ABOUT THE IMAGE: I love capturing the connection between humans and the beautiful beasts of our planet! The shoot honestly felt like a dream as it all came together with the wardrobe, hair/makeup, and weather. Gerald is an orphan giraffe who was adopted by an incredible animal whisperer, and he just so happens to be a great model as well. He had such a funny personality; there is a serendipitous nature of shooting with animals as you never quite know what they are going to do but certainly makes it exciting. Our dreamteam had a blast creating this and Carsyn, our stunning fashion model was a real trooper in bringing this shot to life with her enthusiasm and brave soul.

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5 RULES FOR BETTER PHOTOGRAPHY PRICING

with **Vanessa Joy**

Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

If you've ever heard me speak about pricing, you've probably heard me lament about one chronic problem I see in the industry. I'll always say I know so many amazing photographers – crazy talented ones that I'll admit I'm just a wee-bit jealous of. But just because they're amazing photographers doesn't mean that they're making a living as photographers and putting food on their tables. I see entirely too many starving artists in our industry.

The problem can usually be narrowed down to business skills, although sometimes a bad personality peeks its nasty head in. But even if the marketing is good and the business sense is great, some serious bankruptcy-causing mistakes can be made in the pricing area. Let's take a look at the basic structures of pricing so you can avoid common pitfalls.

1. PSYCHOLOGY

First, when you're creating pricing and packaging, you want to play to human psychology. What does that mean? It means that you want to list your highest package first. What that does is lets people look at the top-of-the-line package and wow them in a way that almost price-shocks them. After that, your offerings below your highest package don't seem so unobtainable. And then if you have a client that wants everything, they'll see that all the options below that first package don't include everything they want, so they'll end up going with the first one.

Collection A

Full Day Coverage
12x12 Wedding Album
40 Pages Towards Your Album
Two, 8x8 Identical Parent Albums
8x8 Mini Wedding Album
Engagement Session
10x10, 30 Page Engagement Album
High Resolution Wedding & Engagement Files
Complimentary 5x5 flat Thank Yous with envelopes

$11,950 (value over $17,350)

Keeping psychology in mind, you'll want to make sure your pricing and packaging is easy to read and easy to understand. The last thing you want is your client glazing over when you bring up your collections. Stick to three or five collections and use an easy-to-read font and a very simple format. This is especially important if your pricing is online because it will be read on mobile devices.

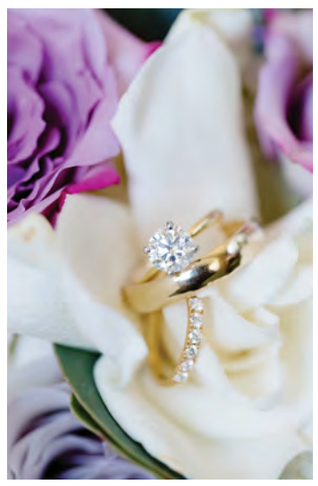
Image © Vanessa Joy

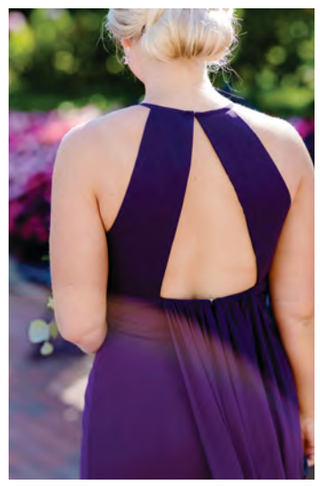
2. DO THE MATH

Second, when you're creating your packages, you can't be lazy. You do have to do the math. To create some rough estimates on what your pricing and packaging should look like, your prices should be three to five times your cost of sales. That's a good starting point anyway.

Let's just say your cost per job is $1,000. Cost per job is your cost of sales plus your cost of business. Obviously, and especially if you're a wedding photographer, it may be a little bit higher than that. Your cost of sales includes your second photographer, what you pay for post-production and album design, and other costs. Then you have your cost of business, like studio overhead, your online galleries, your website, and marketing. Take your total cost of business for the year and divide it by the number of jobs you photograph and you've got a cost of business per job.

If your total cost of sales and running a business is $1,000, then the minimum that you should be charging for your wedding packages is $3,000-$5,000. Again, this is a rough estimate, so make sure to actually do the math. Don't just create some packages and throw some numbers out there and have no idea what your costs are or how much profit you're making. That's a fast track to bankruptcy.





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3. DON'T THINK YOU'RE RICH

Third, when all of that money starts coming in, it might seem like you're making a ton of money. Trust me, you're not. Like I just articulated, you have a huge cost of sales and cost of business. On top of that, you have taxes to pay. If you're a freelance photographer and you're working for yourself, you don't get taxes taken out of your paycheck. You have to prepare for the end of the year by saving the money and perhaps putting it in a separate account and forgetting about it. You'll be happy you have it stashed away when you have to pay your taxes at the end of the year. Or, you can pay estimated quarterlies, which is what I do. I pay a little bit every quarter so that it's not such a huge bill at the end of the year. Definitely work with an accountant for things like this. I recommend working with a bookkeeper as well to keep everything on track.

4. DON'T GIVE IT ALL AWAY

The fourth element of pricing to think about when you're creating the packages you want to book is to create packages that *have everything* that the client wants. For me, that would be digital files, full day package, and a wedding album. However, do not have those must-haves in every single package. There won't be any incentive for a client to book higher packages if they get everything they want in the lower packages.

My lower packages (which you're welcome to see at www.vanessajoy.com/wedding-collections), you can see collections D and E have almost nothing in them. They have only eight hours or less of coverage and a small wedding album. Neither of them include digital files. Only collections A, B, and C have those digital files, full day coverage, and nice size wedding album. As you go higher in my packages, you've got parent albums, larger albums, and the engagement session in there too.

Price your packages so they're more advantageous for the client as they go higher. Meaning they offer a bigger discount over the a la carte pricing that you should have listed below your collections.

Collection A

Full Day Coverage
12x12 Wedding Album
40 Pages Towards Your Album
Two, 8x8 Identical Parent Albums
8x8 Mini Wedding Album
Engagement Session
10x10, 30 Page Engagement Album
High Resolution Wedding & Engagement Files
Complimentary 5x5 flat Thank Yous with envelopes

$11,950 (value over $17,350)

Collection B

Full Day Coverage
10x10 Wedding Album
30 Pages Towards Your Album
Two, 8x8 Identical Parent Albums
High Resolution Wedding Files
Complimentary 5x5 flat Thank Yous with envelopes

$9,950 (value over $13,900)

Collection C

10 Hours Coverage
10x10 Wedding Album
30 Pages Towards Your Album
High Resolution Wedding Files
Complimentary 5x5 flat Thank Yous with envelopes

$8,550 (value over $9,650)

Collection D

8 hour coverage (additional hours $500)
8x8 Wedding Album
20 Pages Towards Your Album
Complimentary 5x5 flat Thank Yous with envelopes

$8,100 (value over $8,350)

Collection E

6 hour coverage (additional hours $500)
6x6 Wedding Album
20 Pages Towards Your Album
Complimentary 5x5 flat Thank Yous with envelopes

$7,300

Destination Photography available with Full Day Packages plus travel & accommodations. Pricing Subject to Change

BROWSE A LA CARTE OPTIONS

Image © Vanessa Joy

Images © Vanessa Joy

5. DON'T STAND STILL

Fifth and finally, the best piece of pricing advice I have ever been given, I'm going to pass on to you. I wish I knew who gave it to me because I would thank them up and down. This advice helped me quadruple my business in the first few years.

Anytime someone books your highest package, raise your prices, because they would have paid you more. When a client books your top-notch collections, it's a really great indication that it's time for you to move up a little bit and either your clientele or photography skill, or both, are getting better.

Don't panic! You can raise your pricing through little baby steps. It can be just $100 here or $250 there. However, the method of raising your prices every time someone books your highest package will really help elevate your business, even if it's just by a little bit here and there as you go.

I hope this gives you an overall picture of how to create or alter your photography pricing. I have a free short video on this at www.BreatheYourPassion.com/money. You can also check out Behind the Shutter on YouTube and see this month's edition of ShutterMag for more on this topic. ■

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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 © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

BRINGING CLIENT CONCEPTS TO LIFE

with **Michael Corsentino**

Image © Michael Corsentino

Image © Michael Corsentino

As professional photographers, we're often called upon to wear several hats: photographer, location scout, wardrobe consultant, art director, grip, etc. Such was the case with the portrait featured in this month's article. Angela hired me to shoot a portrait she planned on gifting to her husband. She planned to wear a leather motorcycle vest which had significant sentimental value to her husband, and she wanted something that said "badass." That was the entire client brief! Badass is right inside my wheelhouse, so I was excited to create something cool for her. The location and art direction were left up to me. This is actually a bonus as I have more control of the entire look of the portrait I'll be creating. I had several locations in mind. On a lark, I reached out to a local welding shop I've worked with assuming it was a long shot at best. I asked if we could shoot there and… they agreed! A lesson relearned that it never hurts to ask. I knew with all the machinery, metal, and the shop environment, this would be the ideal location for an edgy, badass portrait. It actually ended up exceeding my expectations as I was able to catch the owner welding in the background of the top selection from the session.

Shooting professional models is a relative cake walk. They know how to move, they subsist on a steady diet of cotton balls and Diet Coke, and they have no problem preforming on demand in front of the camera. I'm kidding about the cotton balls and Diet Coke! My point is that with real people, aka non-models, you have subjects with real curves and real bodies. Treating those curves and bodies with the respect they deserve is the key to creating successful images that clients will love.

With real-world subjects, lighting and posing become even more critical. There are ways to flatter the figure with both of these elements. Knowing when and how to plug these techniques in is the key to creating optimal results. When it comes to flattering curvy bodies, nothing beats "short lighting" as it creates a thinning appearance for the figure. Short light, which I used for this portrait, is really simple. The term "short light" is used to describe a light's position – in this case, a strobe – relative to the subject and camera. With short light, the illumination for the subject comes to the side of the face and figure facing away from the camera. In this lighting pattern, the shadowed side of the face and figure are positioned toward the camera as you can see here. I'm hardly a posing expert, but I can tell you that shooting a heavier-set subject from the side of their body rather than from the front also goes a long way toward flattering their figure and face. I've done both of these things for this portrait. Using these two techniques will get you far when shooting curvy subjects.

After getting the key light dialed in with both its position and exposure, I added a second light to the mix to serve as an accent for the key light. This second strobe was positioned opposite the key light in what's commonly referred to as a cross light arrangement. This lighting pattern creates a more sculptural, dimensional look than one light used alone. Reference the before and after accent light images to see the difference. I prefer to work one light at time, adding additional lights only as needed. Woking this way keeps things simple and uncomplicated, lets me focus on the photography, and it's a less-is-more approach that works for me. Once both lights were balanced appropriately it was easy to move the entire two-light setup around as needed to capture the subject using different angles and areas of the welding shop.

The accent was modified very simply with a sheet of tough spun diffusion paper taped in front of the strobe's standard small reflector. Smaller reflectors create a more specular, contrasty light and the tough spun helped knock down the exposure. Without it, it was too bright even at the strobe's lowest power setting. 2 Elinchrom ELB 500 packs and their compatible heads provided the illumination for this shoot. For the key light, I choose my go-to location lighting modifier, the Elinchrom 27.5 Deep Octa. It's easy to travel with, sets up in seconds, and it's a versatile all-around tool. I used it fully diffused with both internal and external diffusion fabrics in place in order to strike the perfect balance between soft and specular light. The key light and modifier were supported hand-held by the subject's friend using an extendable paint pole with a Kacey paint pole adapter. I prefer the ELB packs and heads for location work. At just under 5 pounds, they're super easy for assistants to use hand-held without fatiguing. I also brought along a pack of colored gels in case I wanted to throw in an additional background strobe with red or blue light. I ended up not feeling that was necessary, but it's always smart give yourself options.

Image © Michael Corsentino

All in all, the shoot came together really well and my client couldn't be happier. Bringing your client's concepts to life doesn't have to be complicated or onerous. The key is good communication, a clear idea of what you're trying to accomplish going in, and a simple, effective lighting plan. My advice is always to keep it uncomplicated and creative. Keep your eyes and ears open and always think about what you're not seeing. The final you're seeing here isn't where I started out during this shoot. It's easy to miss something potentially great when you're in the shooting bubble. In my experience, the strongest image may not be the one you're shooting but something still unseen and undiscovered. Stop, look around, reframe. You'll be surprised at the hidden gems just waiting for you! ■

Image © Michael Corsentino

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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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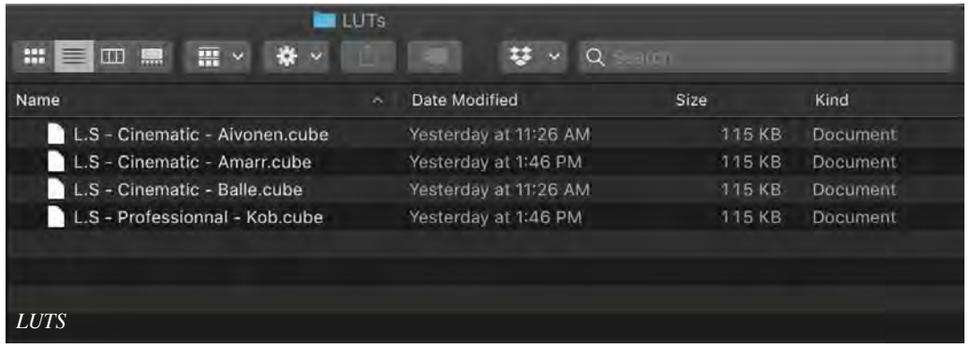
COLOR GRADING FOR VIDEOGRAPHERS

with **Rob Adams**

Video production is a complicated world. Even if you've been involved in the world of video for many years as I have, the speedy technological advancements on the production side and the changing conditions on the business side create a state of constant required learning. If you're not abreast of these changing dynamics and techniques, you're likely going to be losing money. One aspect of video that probably changes faster than the advancements in technology is the expedient furtherance of visual styles. This is either the bane or passion of any video maker (depending on who you talk to) trying to create a profitable formula with their video work, whether it be weddings, commercial, feature-filmmaking or music videos. In order to be expedient with delivery and creating or emulating a visual style while avoiding spending too much time on the process, any video post-production artist must be proficient in color grading. On the contrary, a video producer must have the resources and funds to hire a professional colorist. In the case that they do not, the producer/editor themselves must exhibit a basic comprehension of coloring in order to meet a client's expectations. In more simple terms: you must know how to color grade efficiently and effectively if you cannot hire a dedicated colorist.



LUTS

Color grading video footage is an art. I recognize that there are dozens if not hundreds of LUT (look up table) packs for sale and plugins that promise "easy" color grading to "any footage," but these solutions more often than not end up acting as the "get-rich-quick" band-aid to a more complicated process. In this article, I will attempt to explain the difference between manual color grading and just applying a LUT to your footage. And if you don't know what a LUT is, pay careful attention. It's a car salesman's term that can be very misleading, albeit attractive.

Log vs Graded

Color grading is one of those types of skills that has many different levels of execution. That means you can either create a minimal grade to sweeten your footage and make it look polished for mood, feeling, or to exhibit time of day. Or you can take it to an extreme where every little detail of the motion image is manipulated, from grading the background to adding supplemental light, to skin retouching and changing the texture of fabrics, hair, or environment to where it almost borders on computer-generated imagery. Advanced color grading is very similar to photo re-touching or compositing in many ways and is commonly used in commercial broadcast production and motion-picture finishing. We aren't going that deep in this article. I just want to introduce you to the 3 main modules of color grading:

Step 1. Exposure Correction and Enhancement
Step 2. Secondary Grading for Mood and Style
Step 3. Basic Re-Touching of Key Elements

Steps 2 and 3 are fluid and almost interchangeable in that they, in certain cases, either stand alone in the presented order or they can be swapped or merged into one step. This will be become clearer as we move along.

Let's start with the tools used in color grading. Nearly every desktop video editing application on the market has some sort of color manipulation tools included, but they are not created equal by any means. They are, however, divisively split in how they are viewed by the user market. Final Cut Pro X has a nicely equipped suit of proprietary color tools built in, which some find adequate but others find lacking in how they manipulate the footage based on its algorithm and use of the color-space. Adobe Premiere uses third-party-created Lumetri plugins that are included with the application. Some love it and some hate it. Both contain what are considered to be pro-level color grading capabilities, but the reigning king application in the world of color grading is a program from Blackmagic Design called DaVinci Resolve. Resolve in recent years has also become a powerful editing platform in its own right, making it a direct competitor with FCPX and Adobe Premiere in that space, too.

Resolve boasts color grading "node-based" tools that are more indicative of what major motion-picture production companies and special effects design artists and colorists use, so depending upon what level you work and are comfortable with, you can choose the tool that is right for you. The irony here is that despite its quite sizable time-draining learning curve, DaVinci Resolve is a FREE program whereas the color grading capabilities built in to FCPX and Premiere come along with the respective price tags of those programs.

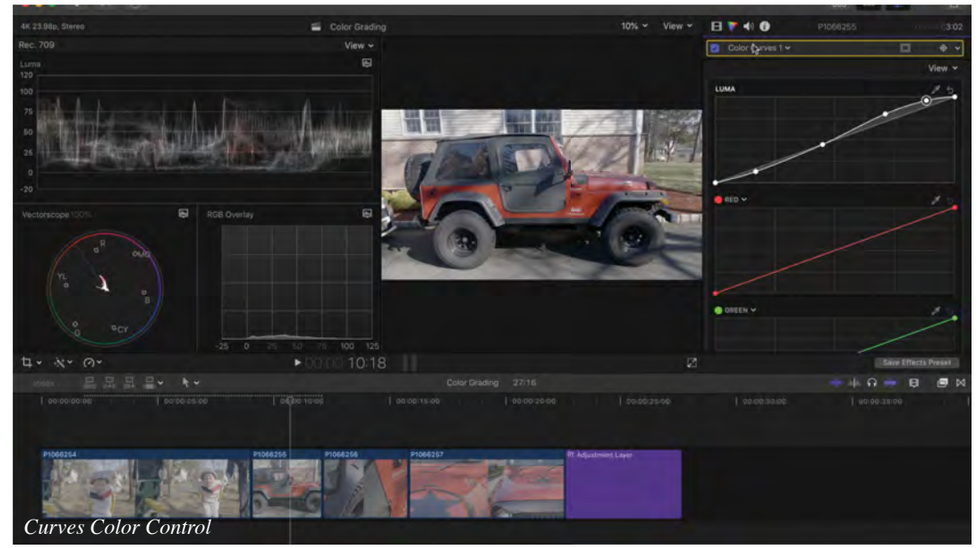
All of these programs have video scopes which will guide you with a graphical representation of your visual image. The waveform monitor scope gives you a vertical representation of luminance levels (and some color saturation) as opposed to the horizontal wave-based readout of a histogram, while the vector scope gives you a graphic basis for referencing accurate color and saturation, both of which you likely won't be able to do "by eye" on an uncalibrated video reference monitor. A histogram and various other forms of waveform monitors are included with all of these applications and are measurement tools. Learning to read and use these scopes is paramount to being a successful and accurate colorist. Honestly however, most of today's video editors who need to color grade their own footage "eyeball it" and use the scopes for basic reference to avoid clipping the highlights or crushing the shadows and making sure skin tones are properly exposed for most playback sources.

We're talking about very basic color grading, so I'll be demonstrating using FCPX to illustrate the main techniques.

If you're filming your video with a DSLR or mirrorless camera using a baked-in picture profile containing some level of contrast and saturation, and if you are taking care to watch your white balance while filming, you may not need to do a heavy grading process in order to get your footage to its desired result. But since color grading is a highly subjective process, it's entirely up to you how far you want to go. If you're filming with a LOG (logarithmic) picture profile, you will no doubt have to do some moderate to heavy grading to get the footage looking sexy and appealing.

LOG mode filming is a baseline standard designed to make use of your camera's maximum potential dynamic range capture, creating images that have a very wide falloff between light and shadow, thereby allowing far more of the image to retain details despite a wide disparity between the lights and darks in the image. It was originally used in the processing of film negatives to digitally recreate the most "flat" image possible that would retain the most detail. But before we start making our footage look artistic, we must first correct any exposure levels and get the luminance curve set.

In this example I'm using footage shot in V-LOG on my Panasonic S1 and filming in 4K at 150mbps 10-bit so I have lots of latitude in my raw footage to push it hard without having artifacts or noise introduced once we start adding contrast and lifting the overall exposure. It's not quite as good as using a RAW format, but the processing of RAW video is a more complicated process that requires heavy processing power.



Curves Color Control

STEP 1. EXPOSURE CORRECTION AND ENHANCEMENT

Step 1 is to raise the overall exposure to get the mid-range of image above under-exposed and to get skin tones around the 70%-75% IRE mark on the waveform monitor (scope). This is similar to "pivoting" the overall levels higher or lower to adjust the global exposure. Next, we use our individual color curves or wheels to adjust the highlights, mid-tones, and shadows to create a nice S-curve on the footage. This is a very similar process to photo editing if that's the world you originate in. We need to be very careful not to push the high-key highs and deep black lows too far to avoid clipping and crushing. We're likely not dealing with video shot in the equivalent of a RAW format, so you will be limited by the compression codec used upon recording the video. Once you have the image looking how you want it in the highs and lows, we can move on to adjusting skin tones. We now apply a second color curve and use the eyedropper to select the luminance point or range of the subject's skin to individually adjust the exposure levels of this range of pixels. We can apply blur or softening here to smooth out skin texture or simply brighten or darken (mute) selected areas for a smoother, more vibrant and even appearance. You can also make minor adjustments to the color in these areas to ensure the look is close to what you expect overall. Don't overdo this part though. The color and mood of the image comes in the next step.

STEP 2. SECONDARY GRADING FOR MOOD AND STYLE

Step 2 is to start applying a mood-style to the image by adjusting the warmness/coolness and hue of the overall image to create a global environmental look. This is the part that most LUTs handle, although most LUTs may be too powerful on exposure correction to use at this point. I'll illustrate how LUTs are used at the end of this article. By adjusting the color temperature and hue of the image and the color parameters in each of the color wheels you can dial in the mood of your creative look. Darker, more monochromatic tones tend to denote dusk, dawn, cold or twilight/night settings while warm, bright, and saturated color tones exhibit the feel of sun, daytime, morning or heat. It's purely subjective, but the goal is realism that works in the context of your story. If the grade stands out as too harsh, it's likely going to be noticed by the viewer and take them out of the moment. The rule of color grading is if it goes unnoticed to the untrained eye, you've done your job well.

Example of Graded Shot

STEP 3. BASIC RE-TOUCHING OF KEY ELEMENTS

Step 3 comes after you've got the image looking close to the final image you had in mind. The final corrections or enhancements come in the form of tweaking certain areas of the image to attract attention or detract attention from a specific subject or area. This can be done using masks or vignettes to blur out the peripheral and draw a viewer's focus to something. Be careful not to overdo this step. It's easy to do and very noticeable if applied with a heavy touch. Masking can also be used to change the color of a specific item in a scene that may be overpowering the image and drawing too much attention away from the main action. To judge this, you have to be aware of where the eye gets drawn when the image first appears on the screen.

Finally, let's talk about LUTs for a moment. LUT stands for Look-Up-Table. It's a mathematical formula that is used to distinguish two images from one another. The idea is to re-map certain colors of the original image to different colors in the a new image. 3D LUTs are the most commonly used type of LUT in color grading and contain data for changing the color of one image to a set of colors or a color chart in the new enhanced image. Essentially they are filters like any photo filter. When used properly you may get a desired look but final tweaks more than likely will be necessary to get all of your footage to match, especially if the footage you filmed was shot in differing light scenarios, or with different cameras using different color-science and picture profiles. Most LUTs are designed to be used on footage filmed in LOG. LUTs are sometimes created and based on color charts to give a scene a consistent look based on a series of colors to create a mood. Before committing to a LUT or pack of LUTs, experiment with some free LUTs found online to determine if your shooting style and camera settings work well with a blanket approach to color grading or to determine whether LUTs give you a good starting point with which to tweak and mold a specific look that works for you.

I will leave you with this. Shooting and editing/grading footage shot in Log format is a very advanced workflow. If you're new to color grading, it may be best to work with a baked-in color profile like neutral first and play around with color grading to get a sense of how it manipulates the image. If you intend to grade your footage, you should also be shooting with the highest bit-rate possible. 8-bit video files won't hold up under grading as well as footage shot in 10-bit or 4:2:2 color space. ■

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Rob Adams is a veteran wedding filmmaker and educator. During his 22 years filming weddings he has helped to define modern wedding storytelling with his blending of visuals and spoken dialogue. He has been a frequent contributor to Shutter Magazine and has spoken at various photo and video conferences around the globe.

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THE TRAVEL EDITION

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Image © Dixie Dixon

THE TRAVELING COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHER

with **Dixie Dixon**

Image © Dixie Dixon

You could say that I tend to live my life in transit. I am a traveling nomad, a road warrior of sorts, and sometimes I feel more at home on American Airlines aisle seat 10c than anywhere else. When I decided to become a commercial photographer, I had no idea how hard it would be, but I had an internal knowing that it would be worth it. From a bird's-eye view, this adventure looks quite glamorous and the end result of these productions most certainly is. But what folks don't get to see are the 16-hour days in 110-degree heat put in to get the shot, the 4am call times for light, the intense pressure of clients' high expectations, the cold-calling to get new clients, the all-nighters I pull to get retouched images over to a client before their print deadline, the endless hours my Dreamteam and I spend estimating and planning productions, and the hundreds of emails that go back and forth for each and every shoot. There are no sick days in this kind of work. You could call it sweat equity or you could call it true grit… If you live your life as a commercial photographer, or any kind of photographer for that matter, you know exactly what I'm talking about. That being said, in writing this, I hope to illuminate the fact that anyone that has the dream of being a traveling commercial photographer, you can do this! I began with only an idea in mind, I had no inside connections, no experience, and no clue how I was going to make this all happen. The photography game has primarily been trial and error for me and this industry changes constantly. The truth is, there is no set path to success in photography. That fact alone should liberate you. You need no degree, formal training, or certificate to become a photographer. The most important decision you have to make is to define what success looks like to you and go after that vision! I've always loved the idea of travel and pursuing my passion of photography, so I've made decisions in my life accordingly to pursue that passion, from keeping my overhead low (overhead is basically just business expenses, so I don't own a big studio, I rent studios when needed, etc.) and also waiting to do the whole family thing. This business is a bit easier to break into when you're not having to support a family, but doable either way as I know folks who make it happen. I just knew that I wanted to focus on my career and travel often. I am always most present in this world when I am creating art and working with the Dreamteam, and that is what has kept me going in the toughest parts of this business! So as we all adventure ahead in 2020, I wanted to share some of my favorite tips on how to bring creative ideas to life on your destination projects.

Images © Dixie Dixon

THE DESTINATION COMMERCIAL PROJECT: TIPS FOR TRAVELING

Pack Smart: I always travel with and carry on my Nikon camera gear, MacBook Pro, and G-drives and will rent lighting and grip equipment when we get to the main city nearest to a location. Or I'll use Borrowlenses and have it shipped to the hotel. If a location is super remote, we may end up traveling with lighting. So basically I carry on my Manfrotto Roller bag and backup and always pack an extra pair of clothes in the backpack in case checked luggage doesn't make it.

Image © Dixie Dixon

Images © Dixie Dixon

Camera Gear: I usually travel with 4 camera bodies, lenses, and I typically use one body for stills and one body for video and then I have backups. My current bag has the Nikon Z 7, D850, D5, and D810 with prime lenses. Everything is labeled on the back cap of my lenses.

Hard-drives: I always backup all the images and video on set to 3 separate hard-drives. I love the SSD G-Technology drives because they are small, fast, and rugged. Then, I'll Fedex one of the drives home after a production and my team and I will fly with 2 drives so we are sure not to lose anything. When clients are putting big bucks into the production, the last thing you want to do is lose any imagery or video created.

Camera bags: After breaking 3 suitcases in one year alone, I found that there truly is an Art to Traveling, and that art begins with finding reliable, durable, and functional camera bags, because boy my luggage sure takes a beating! Many shoots take me to rugged areas and remote places so I need something I can rely on. Nothing is worse than having to drag a heavy bag around the country with broken wheels or handles. I have found the Manfrotto Reloader Bags to be extremely reliable! When I'm jumping on a flight, I need a bag that I can fit ALL of my camera gear in, fit in the overhead compartments, and keep everything safe and secure. And once I get to a location such as the beach where I'm dealing with sand and the elements, I like to put my essentials into my backpack so I can wear it and shoot at the same time. It has easy access compartments so I can switch lenses quickly.

Image © Dixie Dixon

Images © Dixie Dixon

Lighting: Lighting-wise, my team and I love to use the Profoto B1x's or B1's on location because they are super powerful and battery operated, so no need for generators. Sandbags are a must to keep stands/lights from falling over.

Insurance: It's always a great idea to insure your gear as it takes a beating when you travel. And most locations require proof of insurance anyways, so you've got to have it. I love TCP insurance because they are reliable and quick in getting COI's back within a couple hours. So many productions happen so fast, this kind of speediness is needed.

Media Rates: : Not many people know about this, but all airlines have a flat baggage rate for members of the media, photographers, and filmmakers. American Airlines has the most friendly policy for photographers and has a flat rate of $50 per bag up to 99 lbs. All the airlines have slightly different language in their policy, but they all will basically require a form of identification from your company that proves who you are. Most of the time, a business card and business credit card works. If you have a media pass that you can print and wear, even better. Just ask when you get to ticketing; it may take a little more time but is completely worth it! You can Google each airline's Media Rate Policy online.

Image © Dixie Dixon

Image © Dixie Dixon

Airline Credit Card: : It's a great idea to sign up for a credit card for the airline you travel the most, which will give you priority boarding, a free checked bag, and lots of other perks. I charge all of my production/business expenses to this card and then pay it off monthly in order to rack up a ton of miles and status.

Shot list: Always carefully consider your shot list as well as climate when packing gear. Packing hand warmers in cold climates is a must for crew and models.

Dreamteam: Ideally if the budget allows, I prefer to travel with my normal crew consisting of my producer, lighting tech, and Digitech, and then we book local talent for wardrobe, hair/makeup, and models. I always work with people that keep it positive. It takes so much hard work to make these productions happen and you need to be surrounded by solid, positive, solution-oriented folks.

Image © Dixie Dixon

Location Releases: My Dreamteam and I always fly out and arrive a day or two before the job in order to scout locations and pick up any last-minute needs before the shoot starts. Then, we always book an extra day or so after the production in case of bad weather. If we don't end up needing those weather days, we can either set up a test shoot for the portfolio in the beautiful location or take a day off to enjoy travel.

Utilize AirBnb or Vrbo: I A lot of times it becomes more cost effective to book a house on Airbnb than a hotel. Sometimes we will even utilize Airbnb for renting a location to shoot in. It's important to communicate with the owner of the house to let them know, as the price may change a bit for a commercial production.

Scheduling: I always work with my producer to schedule the most important shots during best lighting – sunrise/sunset. We'll use the Sun Seeker app when scouting locations to see where the sun will be at different times of the day. The crew goes into overtime after 10 hours, so a lot of times we need to choose either sunrise or sunset and create or find shade during the day.

Shoot Personal work: As a photographer, you always want to be shooting personal work as it keeps it fresh and attracts your ideal clients. When I'm going to be in a gorgeous location for work or play, I always try to book an extra day to shoot personal work. Much of the time, these shoots may be simple and I'll book a local model to collaborate with and we go create new content. Other times, I may shoot a more elaborate personal project and utilize a whole crew, model, hair/makeup, and wardrobe. I work with artists who want to build their book and will work in trade for images since they're not being used commercially. Then I'll pay my photo assistants. This is the nature of the business and personal work always drives paid work.

Images © Dixie Dixon

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I hope this helps you in your future destination photography gigs and I'd love to leave you with a little nugget of wisdom that I paraphrased from a brilliant graduation speech by Jim Carrey that really resonated with me this year:

"So many of us choose our path out of fear disguised as practicality! What we really want seems impossibly out of reach and so ridiculous to expect that we never dare to ask the universe for it! The truth is, you can fail at what you don't want to do, so you may as well take a chance at doing what you love! Fear will always be a player in your life but you get to decide how much. Your need for acceptance can make you invisible in this world. Be authentically you and don't let anything stand in the way of your light! We need to ask ourselves, what does the world need that my talent can provide? All of us are ready and able to do beautiful things in this world! So your job is not to figure out how it's going to happen, but to let the universe know what you want, work towards it, and let go of how it will come to pass! It will unfold exactly how it's supposed to for your greatest good!"

- Jim Carrey ■

As one of the sixteen original Nikon Ambassadors in the United States, Dixie Dixon has spent the last decade bringing creative visions to life for brands, ad agencies, fashion/commercial clients as well as educating others about the latest cutting-edge photography techniques and technology. Dixie brings a wildly positive energy to the set that creates a one-of-a-kind experience for her clients, inspires her dream team of colleagues, and earns the business of some of the most exclusive brands in the world.

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Why the Profoto B10+?

"All light is the same." WRONG. It's not. Anyone saying it is doesn't know what they are talking about.

Look, there are all sorts of options when it comes to light. Different prices, different sizes, different power options. "Cheap" rarely works with anything in life, and it surely doesn't work with professional lighting. I'm not debating that there are give-gets with every decision we make. It's truly no different than the decisions we make with our cameras and lenses or the computers we buy. There are always trade-offs.

So, when it comes to light, what are you willing to give up?

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- Capacity // 200 full power flashes (this is insane stamina)
- Continuous Light // 2500 lumens (yes it offers continuous light as well)
- Weight // 4.2 lbs (perfect for any wedding or portrait session)

Portable. Powerful. Consistent Color.

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HOW TO GET **STARTED** IN DESTINATION PHOTOGRAPHY

with **Sal Cincotta**

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

If you love travel, then you have probably fantasized about traveling the world and getting paid to do what you love: Photography. I still remember my first destination wedding. I was hired to shoot a wedding in Ireland and I nearly lost my mind. I couldn't believe someone was willing to pay me money to travel across the globe to take pictures. I had already had the travel bug, and after this? All bets were off. I was hooked and would spend the next 10+ years looking for any and every way to travel the world doing what I love.

If you want to travel the world creating great photography for your clients, here are some things to consider when getting started. I will tell you this: the first job is the toughest. Traveling to another country is challenging enough, but photographing in another country adds a new level of complexity. So, how do you get started?

GET AGGRESSIVE

Look, the reality is if you are just getting started, you have no destination portfolio to show. For some reason, clients think photography is different in Mexico than it is in your home city. If I can create a great portrait in St. Louis or New York City, I can do the same in Brazil.

Perception is reality for most people. So, when they don't see any travel work in your portfolio they assume the worst. I learned this very early on in my career and I stopped trying to fight it. Instead, I embraced it head on. I had a meeting with a bride who was getting married overseas, so I already knew I was at a disadvantage. I had to explain that she would be better off hiring me as a local photographer instead of someone overseas. Someone who she had no recourse with if something were to go wrong and no relationship with prior to the event.

I wanted this job bad. I knew I could use this to build my portfolio and book other jobs. My mindset was simple: Break even on this job and make your money on future jobs. And that is exactly what I did. I said, "Look, I want your wedding for my portfolio, I'm not going to lie. However, I can't lose money on your wedding. I'm willing to basically cut my profits to zero if you cover my costs and time to get over there and the cost of the album and products we deliver."

Contract signed. Done. And with that strategy, we have never looked back. Today, we photograph weddings, commercial work, and portraits all over the world. This was one of the smartest business decisions I could have ever made.

SHOOT IT FIRST

If you want people to hire you for destination work, you have to have destination work to show. It is like the chicken and egg thing. Just like in sales, you have to *show it to sell it*, well, this is your show it to sell it moment. Before I really started showing a travel portfolio, I would get asked all the time, "Do you travel?" What kind of insane question is that? Does a bear shit in the woods? Of course I travel. Now, what this opened my eyes to was the simple fact that people assume a lot of things during the sales process and if you are not making it obvious through your words and imagery, then they will assume you just don't do it.

If you want clients to see you as a destination photographer, then you are going to need to invest in some travel. Airfare today is insanely inexpensive. Take a trip to another part of the world, wherever it is you would like to offer coverage. Schedule multiple shoots wherever you plan on visitng. By the way, this does not have to be international, that part is up to you. Here is the rub in all this: This becomes both a mini-vacation and business trip all in one. Now, you have a tax deduction.

INVEST IN YOU

Every year, we take a trip to another city in the world with one goal in mind: Practice and build my portfolio. While this obviously costs me money, the money invested comes back ten-fold from new business tied to my social media and the work I produce on these shoots. Not to mention, it gives me a chance to work on my craft and become a better photographer. How could that be a bad thing?

Keep in mind, this trip does not have to be a vacation of a lifetime, nor does it need to be international. You can start this assignment in the simplest of ways. Find a city 3-4 hours from your home base and drive there. This keeps your travel costs down and accomplishes the same goals. You get to another city and build your portfolio with fresh new images for use on social media, your website (and of course, for bridal shows if you are a wedding photographer).

Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

FIND THOSE CLICHÉ SPOTS IN EVERY CITY

This is probably one of my favorite things to do. Look, a park is a park is a park. I don't need to travel across the globe to get a picture of a tree-lined path. If you want to send the message to prospective clients that you do, in fact, travel, then you need to show pictures that are iconic in those cities. When someone looks at your portfolio it should be undeniable that you are in another city.

What I love most is when I post these pictures of the cliché spots around the world, the Eiffel Tower, the St. Louis Arch, the New York City skyline, people all say the same thing, "I have never seen that perspective." Exactly! When you see the Eiffel Tower, you know I'm in Paris. When you see the NYC skyline or the Brooklyn Bridge, you know I'm in New York.

I get it. You want to do something unique something original, but what you are missing is that having a picture in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris might be cliché to some, but it's the coolest thing in the world for your clients.

When I am at a bridal show, I showcase a ton of travel imagery. It's shocking how much business we book solely based on people seeing our travel work. It instantly instills confidence in my couples that I am a well-traveled person with experience working in other countries around the world. An interesting side effect: It lends credibility to our brand for people who are not traveling for their wedding. They love seeing these unique images and hire us to do something equally as epic for them on their local wedding day.

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

SHOW IT EVERYWHERE

While this may seem obvious, I'm surprised at how many travel photographers don't lead with these destination images. If you want to be on the tip of everyone's tongue when they are getting married or thinking about destination photography, then this needs to be a staple of your portfolio. Don't take one single image from a destination and show that for the next five years, either. You have to continuously update your body of work, specifically your travel stuff, or you'll end up looking stale.

Your final goal should be to create portraits that force people to associate your name with travel. Locally, complete strangers will see me in Starbucks and say, "Oh my God, I saw those pictures from >>insert city<< and they were amazing. I have always wanted to go there!" The conversation ensues from there. While this person may never make it to their dream destination, guess what? They want their favorite photographer to take their next headshot or family portrait. And that's how business is done.

You have to understand there are unintended positive consequences of this strategy. You will become known as a *World-Renowned Photographer* in no time in your local market. That, my friends, is an awesome thing.

I hope this helps point you in the right direction. If you love travel as much as I do, you will not regret embarking on the path to destination photography. It is incredibly rewarding and exciting, but most importantly, it is inspiring to travel the world and explore new cultures, cities, and people. ■

Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, author, Canon Explorer Of Light 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.

salcincotta.com

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

FOLLOW YOUR PATH

with Joel Grimes

Image © Joel Grimes

I'm on a mission. For some unexplained reason, I relish in seeing others experience the joy of being an artist and living their dream of making a living with their camera. Hang out with me for any length of time, and I will ask you a lot of questions, such as: What do you love to do more than anything on the planet? How many non-paid, non-client self-assignments do you do a month? Are you working on a body of images in a series? How do you feel if someone tells you your work sucks? What are you doing to market your work? My goal is to get photographers to get off their butts, get out, and create their own path.

Image © Joel Grimes

Image © Joel Grimes

I attended my first photography class back in 1972. I was a freshman in high school, and at the time I had no idea that an elective would set me on a lifelong journey. In college, I struck gold with my very first photography teacher. He began my first day in class by making this statement: "Photography is not just a way to document the world around you, but it can open the door to be an Artist and have an outlet for the creative process." After that, I was hooked, and for 42 years, I have been chasing photography as a creative process.

The photographic process can often be a challenging world in which we navigate. There is this tug-of-war that happens between the technical and creative side of things. Most of us gravitate to one side or the other. In years past, I generally gravitated toward the technical side of things because it was more tangible, something I felt like I could master. The creative world seemed too nebulous, too subjective. I often wondered if I was on the right track, and if I was doing it right. This, in turn, fueled my insecurities. I used to think: Maybe I'm not smart or talented enough. My experience now has revealed that I was not alone and that many of us have those same thoughts.

Once I started to master the technical, I soon discovered the most technically proficient photograph on the planet could be a complete bore. So, I had to accept the challenge of learning how to create images that go beyond f/stops and shutter speeds or flash meters and lighting ratios. My biggest problem was not knowing where I wanted to end up. I was like a dog chasing my tail. I looked to others to define my direction.

Today, as I am working through the creative process, I ask myself a question: "What do I like, what fits me?" What a revelation! This insight bridges the gap between the two worlds. If we can come to an understanding that the creative process is a thousand times more about what we like or dislike, the creative side explodes into a constant stream of ideas. Instead of the creative process being a gut-wrenching process, it can be the most natural thing we will ever do.

The challenge comes when we step outside of what happens to us naturally. We fail to see our uniqueness and move into the realm of trying to please those around us. Once I formulated what I liked, it was really easy to be me. The problem lies in my humanity, in my inability to believe that being me is what is right. When someone is born with curly hair, they generally tend to straighten it, and vice versa, if you have straight hair, you curl it. We all have been there. Our humanity tends to want what we don't have. As a result, we tend to spend a great deal of effort doing the opposite of what comes naturally.

Image © Joel Grimes

Image © Joel Grimes

I have this saying: "Your intuition will never lead you down the wrong path." Never! This is because your intuition is a culmination of a lifetime of testing what you like or dislike. You have repeated the process millions of times. You are conditioned to respond in a certain way. It's built into the very marrow of your bones. Your intuition is the greatest asset you possess as an Artist. It drives you down a path of uniqueness. It separates you from the masses. You stand out because you are you. And being you is a whole lot easier than being someone else. Learn to trust your intuition.

However, being you, or working from your intuition, opens the door to criticism. Someone will not like what you like. Someone will tell you that you did it wrong, that you suck. You quickly discover that not everyone loves what you do. And you hate that feeling. Sometimes it hurts so much that you want to quit.

You learn that it is much easier to stick with the status quo. You follow trends because it is much safer. You hate to be criticized so much that you will avoid it at all costs. So you hesitate to let your intuition guide you, and you end up copying someone else's uniqueness, and you blend in. You become boring, nondescript, and uninteresting.

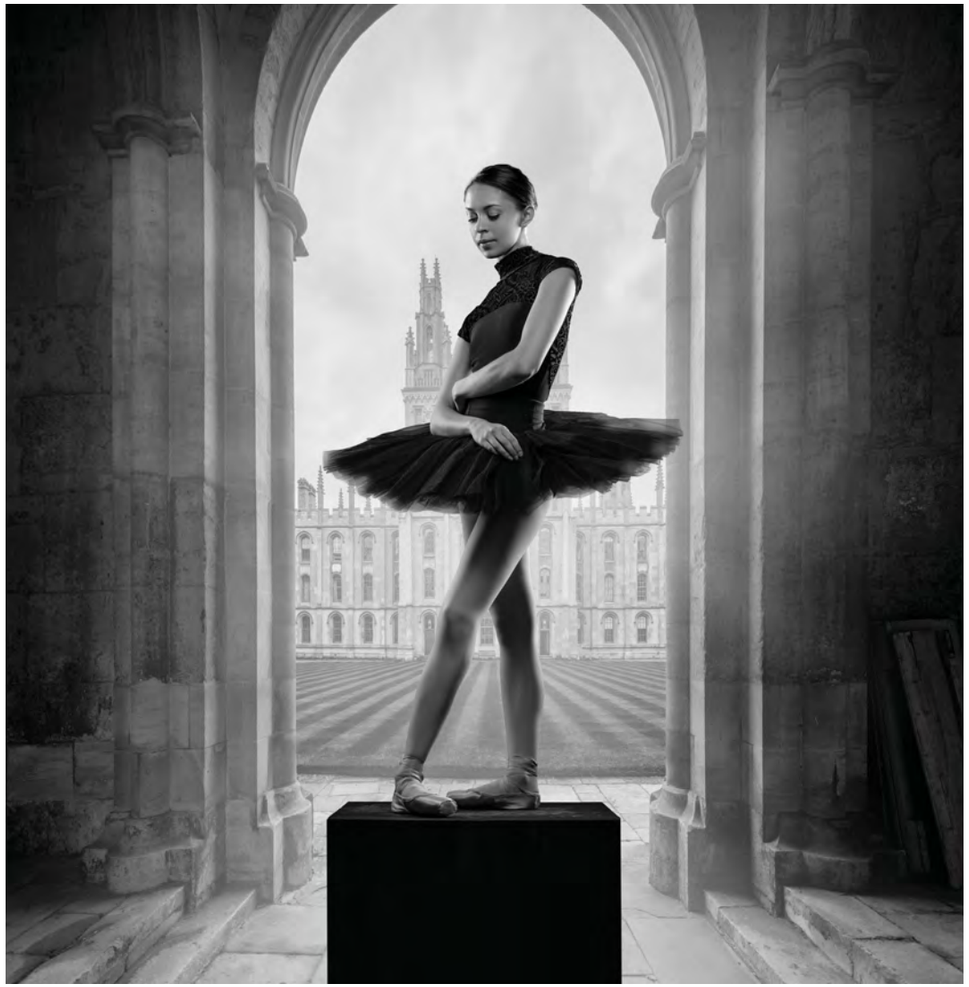

Image © Joel Grimes

So stand out, be you. Believe you have something to offer, that you are something extraordinary. Don't be swayed by the critics, the insecure bystanders that don't want you to succeed. Stay true to you, and let your intuition be your guide, and great things will follow. ■

For over 35 years Joel has worked for many of the top advertising agencies and corporations across the globe for clients such as AARP, AES, Abbott Labs, Archer Daniels Midland, Arizona Office of Tourism, AT&T, Broncos, Comcast, Febreze, Goldman Sachs, Hewlett Packard, Hyatt, Kodak, Nikon, Pentax, Phillips 66, Philip Morris, Procter & Gamble, Pfizer, Qwest, Sony, Sturm Ruger & Co, United Global, USA Boxing, Visa, Volvo, Xcel Energy, and most recently Red Bull. Over the years his assignments have taken him to every state across the USA and to over fifty countries around the globe.

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HOW TO CREATE **ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME ELOPEMENT IMAGES**

with **Sirjana Singh & Benjamin Lane, Tinted Photography**

Image © Tinted Photography

Elopement has had a bad rap in times past. The idea of running away from family and getting married in secret was bound to ruffle some feathers. But in the last decade or so, the idea of eloping has grown in popularity and has begun to stake a claim on the mainstream wedding market and in the hearts of couples everywhere. This is because it's no longer about running away, but about giving the power back to the couple in love and allowing them to celebrate their wedding and create memories in a way that speaks to them. As elopement photographers, it's our role not only to deliver great photographs, but to understand our couple's "why" and to help facilitate and plan an incredible once-in-a-lifetime experience on their big day.

Image © Tinted Photography

For us, it's about empathy. As artists, we believe many things go into creating beautiful, unique work, but being empathic with our fellow humans is the only way to truly understand and grow the way we create art. That's what photography is to us. It's getting to know and learn about life from some of the most energetic, gifted, and spirited souls our planet has. What we do enriches our lives and our marriages daily. So we've put a lot of thought into creating an experience for our couples that will reflect this enrichment in our art and give our couples the once-in-a-lifetime photographs that they deserve. We call these "adventurous elopements."

What is an elopement to Tinted Photography? It's just not about trekking to an incredible spot in the golden hour and taking some photos. Because really, where's the adventure in that? We want our couples to be exploring and discovering new incredible places together, forging plenty of unforgettable memories and exciting connotations well before they say their vows. We discuss with them what they would like out of their photos and we plan a surprise itinerary based on their needs and personalities. By keeping the exact locations a mystery for them, they get to explore some breathtaking places for the first time together, without having Googled everything before they arrive! The secret to creating once-in-a-lifetime elopement images lies not in the way you use your camera, but in the way your couple is feeling on their day.

Images © Tinted Photography

Images © Tinted Photography

EXPERIENCE IS EVERYTHING

Without positive memories to match their beautiful photos, even the most out-of-this-world images will fail to elicit “warm fuzzies” from your couple as the years go by. So how do we do it?

Let’s say right here that there is no one way to create once-in-a-lifetime elopement images for your couple. But here’s what we’ve learned over the past couple of years as travelling photographers.

Book couples you vibe with and not just anyone who likes your work. This is as important for them as it is for you. If you have a couple who gets you, the whole process is smoother, less stressful and more creative. Having a natural dialogue means you can freely set expectations, discuss ideas, and ask them to do crazy fun stuff on the day without sounding overbearing. We talk to prospective couples and are upfront and chatty about our process from day one.

Image © Tinted Photography

If a couple comes along who you gel with that wants to do something potentially outside your comfort zone, like an underwater session or a starlight shoot, jump at the opportunity. Occasionally you'll get a couple who will challenge you and revolutionise the way you work moving forward; we call these our "Branch Couples" because they make us branch out in a new direction. These couples are the reason why we now only photograph 4 or 5 traditional weddings a year, and the rest of our calendar is filled with elopements and adventure sessions the world over.

Plan ahead in detail. Odds are you have more experience with photoshoots than your couple does, so educate them leading up to their shoot. We discuss everything from what to wear to hair and makeup to footwear to timelines to travel plans. Our goal is to take the stress off their shoulders early on. By sweating the small stuff, it means they won't have to, and we'll have a couple who shows up looking dapper and feeling cool, calm, and ready to get married.

Image © Tinted Photography

Image © Tinted Photography

Have a plan for the day and scout your locations ahead of time. Even if we are shooting on the other side of the world, we will have planned and researched the area using GoogleMaps, Instagram, blogs, and our network of amazing friends and colleagues we have been happily building over the years. We'll arrive a couple of days before the shoot to scout locations in person. Think about the needs of your particular couple. Are they fit hikers who love backcountry huts and incredible rocky vistas or do they prefer to stroll along country lanes and visit cafes together?

Think about the light and the weather. The majority of our elopements last at least two days, so we create our itinerary around the time of day and the weather we might encounter leading up to their vows in the hour or so before sunset.

Let your couple know that this is a team effort, and they will get more out of their time with you if they chime in with ideas and keep an open mind. People often ask us how we have a different style for each of our couples, and that's the answer. We let the couple bring their unique charm, and we foster it. Our final product is always art we've co-created with our couples.

Remind your couple that this is a day to celebrate. The photos are just a happy side effect. Help them realise their marriage without feeling like it was an event just for the camera. It's not as easy as it sounds for an eloping couple as you are there ostensibly to prove what took place that day. We try to make sure they know what we'll be doing and when. We'll let them know, for instance, that in the morning we will be standing back as photojournalists and capturing them getting ready. Then in the afternoon, we may be more hands-on and create some stunning editorial pieces for them before we step back again and give them some space for their ceremony.

Image © Tinted Photography

Lead the way. Make your couple feel confident and comfortable being themselves on this (let's face it) less-than-usual day together. We're lucky that working as a husband and wife means we can normalise PDA for our couples and lead by example. If we're happy to walk along a narrow path in the mountains then more than likely they will be too. If we're open about our feelings and start to gripe about how hard a steep climb is, they will feel more comfortable speaking up if they feel out of their depth. So much of what makes an elopement session "once-in-a-lifetime" comes back to experience. If the couple's experience is positive, you are going to create better work, period.

Images © Tinted Photography

Image © Tinted Photography

However long you've been a photographer. Whoever you like to photograph. Whether you're based at home or a different Airbnb each night. No matter how proficient you are with f-stops, focus modes and Adobe Lightroom. The one thing that will get you better photos is the people whose story you're telling. Remember to be empathetic, not just with your couples but in all walks of life. To capture love with feeling in your camera – we believe it helps to understand the thousands of ways it can be expressed. Treat every couple as a learning opportunity. Support and try to understand their connection so you can bring that knowledge with you on your next adventure. That's how we grow as humans and create award-winning, once-in-a-lifetime elopement images whenever we adventure out with a new couple. ■

We are Sirjana Singh and Benjamin Lane, the wife and husband team that make up Tinted Photography. We have been photographing elopements and adventurous pre-wedding and honeymoon sessions in New Zealand for nearly a decade. But, for the past two and a half years, we have been living "on the road" as digital nomads, clocking up more than 120 flights to over 40 incredible countries, not to mention a myriad of awards and accolades along the way. Our goal is to enrich our lives and the lives of those we create art with by being empathetic and holistic in our approach.

tintedphotography.com

SHOOTING LIKE A WORLD TRAVELER AT HOME

with **Casey Dittmer**

Image © Casey Dittmer

Most of us love to travel. The excitement of new locations, new scenery, fresh ideas. It inspires us and feeds our creative soul. If you're like me, I tend to put a lot of planning and creative energy towards shoots that take place while I'm traveling. I look forward to it, marking these shoots as standout portfolio builders and points of growth. But, have you ever stopped to think about all the missed opportunities for amazing shots right in our own backyards?

Look, I get it. We get used to shooting in certain spots. Seeing locations through the same eyes, same angles, and using them in the same ways. We get comfortable and complacent. The truth is that travel is not always possible. The added costs and time it takes can prevent it from happening. Shit, life happens, and before we know it a full year has gone by and because we hung our hopes on "making great shots in new locations" we're now left with no new portfolio material.

Image © Casey Dittmer

As photographers, we can very easy fall into "the grass is greener" when looking at where others shoot, live, and travel, but what if we made a conscious effort to step out of our routine to find that fresh location feeling in the old "go-to" haunts. I've been challenging myself to this over the last couple years and I'm amazed at the places I had been missing. Here are 3 simple rules I have been following that have rejuvenated my love for shooting in my local area.

Image © Casey Dittmer

Image © Casey Dittner

WANDER

This will be good for you on many levels. Throw the family in the car and just drive. Better yet, let someone else drive while you look, enjoy, and plan. Take your time and go down roads you have never traveled. City roads, dirt roads, mountain roads, doesn't matter! There is so much out there that we never see because it's not on our designated routes. Drive down normal roads in a new direction. (The view could be totally different than you are used to). Make a point to explore the areas around you. It's always amazing when you stop and think about how few places we visit when they are right there, always available. We take them for granted. I've started asking myself, "If I were to plan a tour of our area to someone who has never been here… where would I want them to go? What would I want them to see and experience?" So, THINK like a visitor! These images are taken on a side road towards Moab, UT. It's about an hour from my studio. Here's the thing... the interstate takes to you Moab from my town. It's quicker and the most common route. One time, my husband decided to show me the "scenic route" which I somewhat protested because I just wanted to get there. HOLY COW. It truly was the scenic route and has added a new shooting loop that we offer to clients. It's a dirt road that passes by the creepiest abandoned town that looks like it's straight out of the movie *The Hills Have Eyes*. No joke. After dark, I lock the doors and don't stop. But it's so worth it and now it's the only route I take to Moab.

SLOW DOWN

I know I get in a hurry and that forces me to stay in my comfort zone. I fall into safe angles, safe locations, safe and well… boring. So, with each client you have going on location, give yourself a little extra shoot time. Enough that you can walk a little further, drive to a new spot, or even more time to make unplanned stops. These images are taken in several little spots that are along the route. You should always be watching, looking and willing to stop. I joke with clients to never follow me too close because I'm notorious for all of a sudden stopping and pulling over. Don't be so consumed with the destination that you miss all the goodies on the journey. In an effort to push yourself out of your comfort zone, challenge yourself to make MORE of each location. Shoot your normal comfort shots. But then play. Get low, get high, turn around, go at a new time of day… there are so many ways to make a spot look totally different. I had gone on this Moab loop several times before taking Lora and Isaac on it for their session, but I really wanted to make sure they had some images that were unique and special to them. We stopped at several new spots that I had eyeballed but never taken the time to explore or even just try new angles. We also went at a new time of day. How the light played on the mountains and monuments gave us exciting new images and helped me add to the ways I can use this location with future clients. Slowing down and taking the time to rethink a commonly-used location made all the difference.

Image © Casey Dittmer

RESEARCH

Weird thought, right? You have lived there your whole life, or a long time at least. You know what's around… WRONG. When traveling, we wouldn't dare think of setting up shoots without hours of research to look at buildings, gardens, scenic spots… all the possible places to shoot. Why don't we put that same effort into places closer to us? It's silly really. There is always so much out there that we just don't know about and a little research will go a long way. Don't overcomplicate this. A simple Google search will lead you to new possibilities, new travel routes and new ideas. Don't forget to dive into needed permits and fees as those are becoming required nearly everywhere. Lean into Instagram and follow local hashtags, "visit" pages and tourist pages. Let others do the work of finding new spots and then go shoot! You can even go old school and simply ask people their favorite spots to visit. Most love sharing. I've created a checklist of "Colorado Hot Spots" for me to visit. It's like a local travel bucket list. How dare we take the time to travel the world without appreciating and utilizing what we have at our fingertips everyday. As a last step, go and visit your local visitors center. They will have brochures and ideas on places to check out. Treat it like you know nothing, no expectations, no ideas… open your mind and go down the rabbit hole.

Image © Casey Dittmer

So… easy peasy lemon squeezy! These three simple things can really add some depth to your everyday shooting and give you more defining images for your brand. Traveling should be looked at as the cherry on top, not a replacement or an excuse to slack on our everyday shooting. Push yourself to find the diamonds in your area. To see things differently than everyone else who shoots there. Remember that not all great shots need sweeping wide scenes. Find those little nooks of amazeballs and create epic shit. All this will help you when you do get the opportunity to travel. It's like a practice round helping you to prepare and to make the most of each spot. You will also find that there's less pressure while traveling since this isn't your only chance to create gold. Locations are what you make of them. So make them great. ■

Casey Dittmer is an award-winning published photographer from western Colorado. As a 17-year veteran of the photographic industry, Casey has seen trends, economies and businesses come and go. She loves traveling and sharing her knowledge in the hope that it will help other photographers build a strong base for their business and avoid some of the roadblocks she has encountered.
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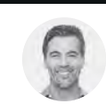

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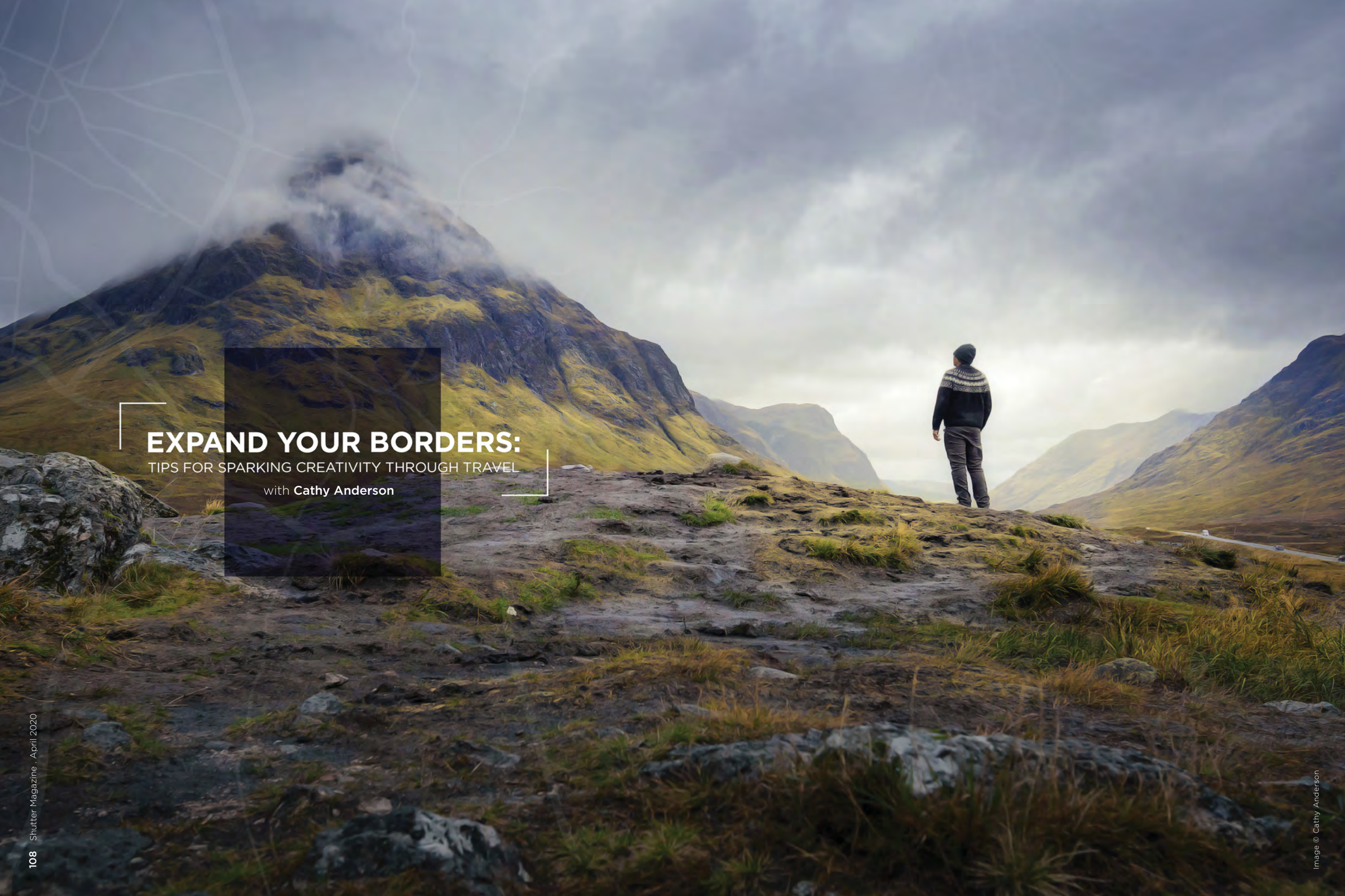

EXPAND YOUR BORDERS:

TIPS FOR SPARKING CREATIVITY THROUGH TRAVEL

with **Cathy Anderson**

Image © Cathy Anderson

Image © Cathy Anderson

I am an artist—a creative soul that cannot be tamed, a dreamer with a big heart who refuses to allow societal rules to define me. But I didn't pop out of my mother's womb with big ideas and a nomadic spirit; it was something I fought for over the span of several decades. I was born into a world of manners and politeness; you are conditioned to believe the ideals of your community and are told what to say and when to speak. It was a toxic environment that killed individuality and creative expression, but I never realized that there was a different way while inside the comfortable confines of my hometown.

I had not grasped how strong and negative of an influence small-town America and its "hometowners" had upon me. Hometowners live comfortable lives within the same geographic region; they are conditioned to inherit ancestral ideals and to fear the unknown. Without exposure beyond the city limits, they live mechanically and rarely venture past what is familiar, sinking into a jaded life of repetition.

I am eternally grateful that my parents valued creativity so much; they unknowingly laid the foundation for my artistic career. I was raised in a darkroom, attended weekly art classes, and played the saxophone. Because they exposed me to many different outlets of expression, I began to create my own language of expression that was broader and deeper than a small-town mentality. They introduced a fledgling creative to innovation—making changes in something established, especially by introducing new ideas or methods (*Oxford dictionary*). That foundation helped me eventually understand that the hometowner way was *not the only way*. I often found myself alienated within my community as my dreams grew bigger; my rebellious ideas were unwelcome and *wrong* and I became silenced by antiquated ways of thinking.

A creative person always [tries] the wrong ways. If you always follow the right way to do [something], you will never be creative, because the "right way" means the way discovered by others. An artist has to live in rebellion because creativity is the greatest rebellion in existence. – Osho

It didn't take me long to realize that my dreams outgrew the city limits' borders. My life took a rogue course and I planned several international adventures to places across the globe—Jamaica, France, Iceland, and the United Kingdom. Traveling abroad allowed me to compare the "normal" American way to the exciting reality of how international cultures truly exist. Somewhere in history, our great nation branded itself as the governing body that defined "normal." Our way was the "only" and "right" way, and our ideals became the standard for happiness. A personal friend describes it best, saying:

Our minds are limited by our experiences. It is impossible to conceptualize new ideas until we've had exposure to things we've never known. –Amanda Nowatka

How is it possible to dream bigger than what we've always known if we are not exposed to new concepts and ways of living that we've never seen? A foreigner from a tropical island may define contentment as earning a modest fisherman's wage and living a quiet life in a small, beachfront shack. Americans often see his "tropical paradise" as "less fortunate," only because the "American way" dictated that a fat wallet is the bellwether for contentment.

Image © Cathy Anderson

Images © Cathy Anderson

Images © Cathy Anderson

Image © Cathy Anderson

My adventures exposed me to the dissonance between the teachings of my youth and the reality of life in a foreign country. My heart longed to begin a rebellious journey that introduced me to "outsiders," to challenge the familiar and comfortable "American way," and to search for *other* ways *foreign* to my experiences. Oddly enough, I began to identify connections between international travel and my creative process. Creation is the fabrication of new and original ideas that challenge what is familiar, adapted and molded by the influence of outside forces. An outsider's point of view that doesn't align with the American way isn't wrong; it is a different and new concept. It opens our world to a beautiful diversity that fuels innovation, art, and creativity. Creativity begins when an artist lets go of communal standards and allows their established way of thinking to be affected by outside forces. It opens closed minds and can grant the courage to explore and freedom to define new standards. I grew and changed as I photographed unfamiliar landscapes, tasted exotic foods for the first time, and met amazing people from distinctive cultures. My adventures silently influenced my belief system and helped me understand that the familiarity and comfort of the "American way" is simply one point of view, but not the *wrong* or *only* way of living.

Traveling is a critical part of my creative process—I cannot thrive creatively in the presence of apathy, boredom, repetition, or stress. When I get bored, I fall into a routine and my work becomes mechanical, producing the same result over and over. My life must be filled with inspiration and excitement to foster my imagination. The excitement of travel serves as an outlet and therapy that renews my mind and stokes my creative flame. Seeing the world excites me, showing me something new and unexpected around every turn, and helps me to forget my stressful life. It challenges my current point of view and influences higher levels of thinking so that I remain creative and innovative. The pursuit of creativity reveals new and exciting concepts with every step of the journey in the same way that eating new food, discovering grand vistas, or experiencing different cultures invigorates the vagabond inside of me.

The day a creative soul loses their thirst to learn and their desire to be challenged is the day they die as an artist. – Cathy Anderson

In the words of Kenny Chesney, I've become a "wild child…with a rebel soul [and] a whole lot of gypsy." I can only be tied down for a fleeting moment before I run off "chasing the sun" on my next untamed pursuit. I refuse to let others silence my spirit and am passionately committed to an unapologetic life full of excitement and innovation.

Image © Cathy Anderson

Images © Cathy Anderson

Images © Cathy Anderson

I came from a small town and I know how it feels to be afraid of venturing outside the city limits. But I also took a leap of faith and began to see the world, a beautiful and exciting world, outside of comfortable borders. Let me help you plan your own journey. Check out my favorite travel tips in the list below:

WHERE TO GO: Choose a location and plan months in advance, collecting information from Youtube, Instagram, and travel blogs. On Instagram, follow hashtags and tourism accounts related to your destination and create a collection of saved photos of locations you want to visit. Then, compile everything within a custom Google Map to guide your travels.

WHEN TO VISIT: Research the best times to visit your destination. Consider what you want to see and when to travel to achieve your goals. For example, in Iceland, you only see ice caves and northern lights in the winter and the highlands, puffins, and green hills in the summer. Consider traveling in the shoulder seasons to save money when crowds are sparse and prices are low. Research the season, weather, and temperatures of your destination and pack accordingly.

AIRFARE AND TRANSPORTATION: Use search engines or sign up for newsletters that find discounted flights (Google Flights, Scott's Cheap Flights, travelzoo.com, skyscanner.com). If your plans are flexible, utilize skyscanner.com to explore an entire month or several areas simultaneously. Also check out budget airlines (domestic: Southwest, Allegiant, Spirit, Southwest, Frontier, WestJet; international: Norwegian, RyanAir, EasyJet), but make sure you read the fine print to determine what is included. Traveling around Europe is easy because of a highly-developed travel infrastructure. To get there, book a cheap fare from your home airport to a major domestic hub where international budget airlines connect, allowing you to purchase more affordable fares to overseas locations. When you arrive in Europe, you can easily navigate through several countries by booking cheap flights through RyanAir.com or riding a high-speed train or mass transit (buses or subway). Don't forget about credit cards with travel miles and loyalty programs!

RENTAL CARS VERSUS TOURS: Rent a car and skip the tours. If you are willing to venture off the beaten path, most locations boast awe-inspiring natural wonders that are free to visit. You won't be bound by itineraries and timelines. Your personal car insurance normally only covers rentals in the US and Canada, so make sure you purchase proper coverage. Don't forget to check on necessary travel documentation: passports, international driver's licenses (consult AAA.com), or visas. Enroll in TSA PreCheck or Global Entry to expedite your time at the airport.

Images © Cathy Anderson

ACCOMMODATIONS: Use booking.com for accommodations. It lists many places that don't require pre-payment and offer free cancellation.

FOOD: Buy groceries and don't eat out a lot. Research budget grocery chains (like Tesco in the UK or Bonus/Kronan in Iceland) at your destination to save money. ■

Cathy Anderson is a second-generation photographer and educator based in North Carolina. She earned her Certified Professional Photographer, Master Photographer, and Photographic Craftsman degrees from Professional Photographers of America (PPA), and her award-winning work has been featured in national news media, magazines, art galleries, and the PPA Loan Collection. She is a speaker and educator who has taught at regional, state, and national conferences, including ShutterFest, SYNC, Canon Corporation, and Imaging USA. Her photographic specialties include adventure, extreme sports and landscape photography, "sportraits," in-camera artistry, and dynamic lighting.

cathyanderson.smugmug.com

4 PILLARS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LOCATION SHOOT

with **Hugo Verwijs & Laura van Eer**

Image © Hugo Verwijs & Laura van Eer

During the first week of September 2019, Laura and I, both coming from The Netherlands, had the opportunity to do a photo shoot in London, UK. This article is, just like the shoot, a close collaboration between the both of us.

[Laura] Hugo and I have known each other for multiple years through shooting. I contacted him for the first time when I saw some of his portfolio pictures on Facebook; they spoke to me. They were cool and sturdy yet still classy. I reached out to him because I thought we could work well together due to our shared vision. Through the years, we have met up multiple times, and every time it has been a blast with great results. I was really happy and surprised Hugo reached out to me when he found out I was moving to London for my internship.

Over the years, I worked with Laura on several occasions. For a hobby photographer, it's a true pleasure to work with a professional model. Laura doesn't need much direction, works hard and doesn't complain even when we're shooting outside in the pouring rain. She also has a great sense of humor and it is always good fun working together. After shooting with Laura, the results are always "next level."

In this article, we will share the 4 pillars of a successful location shoot with you, based on our recent experience in London.

PILLAR 1. PREPARATION

Preparation started at home in The Netherlands the minute I learned that I had to go to London for work. I knew Laura would be doing an internship there during the same period, so I contacted her straight away to see if she was available for a shoot on Saturday.

[Laura] The moment Hugo and I got into contact about shooting in London, I was immediately excited. The shoot would take place the first weekend of my internship. However, I had no idea how I would feel after working a 40-hour work week. But since it was such a unique opportunity, we decided to just plan the shoot and see how it would go.

Next was finding locations to shoot. Pinterest and Google images provided a lot of inspiration, the most valuable being: Millennium Bridge, St Paul's Cathedral and surroundings, and the Tower Bridge. Since these locations are not that far apart, I decided to book a hotel in the area to be able to use that as a base camp.

I arrived in London the Monday before the shoot. During daytime I was busy working, but in the evening I was able to scout the locations I had found on the Internet.

Now that I had visited the locations, I was able to go shopping. I had brought some basic clothing with me, but needed some tops/sweaters to finalize the looks.

Images © Hugo Verwijs & Laura van Eer

Image © Hugo Verwijs & Laura van Eer

I determined the times of sunrise and sunset. These would be the ideal shooting times, since the locations would be less busy.

Laura and I decided to meet the evening before the shoot to discuss the shoot, fit the outfits, and decide what to wear at each location. When she arrived, she brought a colleague, Thomas, who was willing to assist (but not early in the morning).

PILLAR 2. START EARLY AND/OR FINISH LATE AND KNOW WHEN TO STOP

Not only is the light more beautiful in the early morning and just before sunset, but touristic locations are also less crowded, so we decided to start early Saturday morning.

[Laura] The next day we started shooting really early. Because I had to do hair and make-up, I started at 5 a.m. I joined Hugo around 7:30 a.m., quickly changed into my first outfit, and together we walked to the Millennium Bridge.

[Laura] Around 4 p.m. Hugo had made a reservation to go to the sky garden. The views we got there were spectacular! Since the sky garden was not as much garden as we expected, and we were pretty exhausted after a day of hard work, we did not shoot there, but enjoyed a beer and the view (and made a few pictures).

PILLAR 3. AGILITY

Create a shot list, not a timetable

A shot list is less stressful and keeps room for alternative locations that you may have missed during your scouting.

[Laura] I left in time, with my make-up and hair fully done, sitting in the train waiting for my next stop. The train stopped on the middle of the rail, there was no way out, and we stood there. Not just one minute, or two. For literally ten minutes the train did not move. I panicked and immediately texted Hugo, because I had no idea how long we were going to stay there in the middle of nowhere. Luckily, after 10 minutes the train moved again and I was only 8 minutes late. This was not according to the plan, but having a shot list instead of a timetable made it less stressful.

When scouting, I had found a perfect location for a shoot with St Paul's in the background, reflecting Laura in glass windows on both sides of the street.

[Laura] We were walking around St Paul's Cathedral, because we were looking for a certain spot. Unfortunately, the spot was not available, since the windows, which we needed for the reflections, were being cleaned on both sides of the street. After deciding to move on to the next location, we passed a metal art piece, which neither of us had ever seen before. And before we knew it, we were shooting again, unplanned. It was interesting to see how the art worked well with the outfit, and the spontaneous ideas we got.

Travel light

Since we would do most of the travel by foot, it was important to travel light. So, I just packed my camera, 2 lenses, a flash and a remote control:

- Olympus OM-D E-M10 Mark II;
- Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 45mm 1:1.2 PRO (90mm full frame equivalent);
- Panasonic Lumix G 20mm / F1.7 II ASPH (40mm full frame equivalent);
- Godox camera flash V860IIo;
- Godox Xpro-O TTL Wireless Flash Trigger.

Get one assistant

The larger the team, the harder it is to get around. However, one assistant is really helpful. He can act as a VAL

(Voice Activated Light stand), carry stuff, and watch equipment and personal belongings at busy places.
[Laura] Also the three of us had a very good vibe working together.

Work fast

There is a lot to see and to shoot and it is very tempting to stay at the same place for a prolonged period of time.

[Laura] We quickly started to shoot on the Millennium Bridge, delaying wedding shoots and doing our thing. We worked quickly, and before we knew it, we were already past the bridge, St. Paul's Cathedral, some random artwork, and arrived at the Tower Bridge. During a well-deserved coffee break, Thomas, my colleague, joined the team. We didn't waste much time and soon we were shooting again! After some outfit changes and new ideas, we had to wait a little while for the rain to stop, and we continued on the Tower Bridge.

PILLAR 4. LUCK

During the week I became pretty nervous, because the weather forecast predicted rain, rain, and heavy rain for Saturday. However, we had just a minor shower around lunch time.

[Laura] During this shower I was changing in the restroom of a restaurant. When I came out, my team had disappeared! So, me, a girl in high heels and a skirt, arms full of clothes, was just standing for approximately 10 minutes outside of the restaurant, alone. But hey, at least there was a little bit of shelter from the rain!

[Laura] After the rain we found each other and started shooting again. This was a really cool location due to the reflection of the Tower Bridge in the windows of a business building. Because we were using a flash, we caught the attention of a security guard who sent us away. Fortunately, we had the shots we needed.

Image © Hugo Verwijs & Laura van Eer

Image © Hugo Verwijs & Laura van Eer

CLOSING REMARKS

[Laura] To me, personally, it was exhausting after my first week of work. However, Hugo is very chill and relaxed, and it was great to shoot together again. The overall vibe of the shoot gave me the energy I was lacking and because of that we have gotten such great results! I am happy that we did this shoot, and I hope Hugo has to work more often in London while I am working here.

There was a lot of uncertainty when we were planning the shoot. But at the end of the day, we love the results and it was totally worth it. Also, being published in Shutter Magazine is something neither one of us could have dreamed of. ■

Hugo Verwijs started model photography shortly after he had joined the foto club of Den Helder in 2011. He portrays his talents as strong and independent individuals. He loves shooting on location, but also likes experimenting with lighting in the studio. Laura van Eer started modeling at the age of 18. During her professional career, she modeled internationally in countries such as India. At the age of 21 she owned a modeling agency in The Netherlands. Based on this experience she started an International Business degree course at the university of applied sciences in Arnhem. As part of this course she studied in Chile and the United Kingdom where she also modeled for photoshoots.

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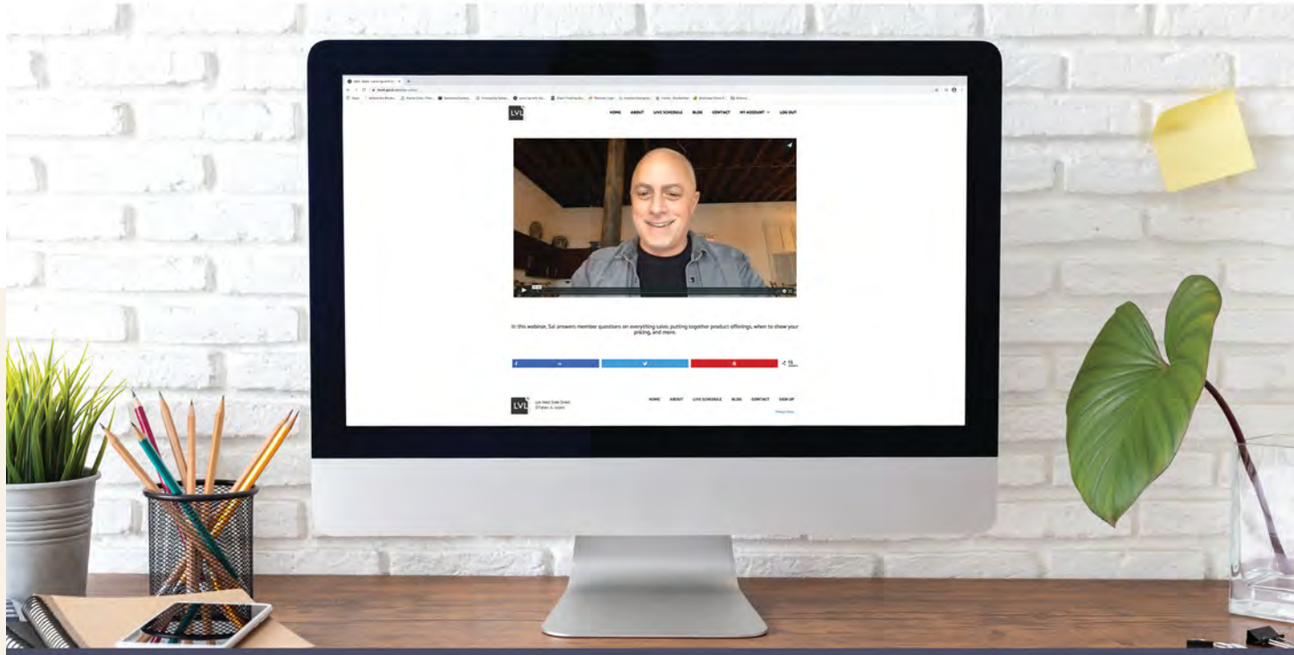

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HOW TO CORRECTLY PRICE DESTINATION WEDDINGS

with **Michael Anthony**

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

I'm going to go out on a limb here and guess that you're probably interested in shooting destination weddings. There are a lot of reasons why photographers want to photograph destination weddings. For one, you get to experience capturing the wedding in an entirely different scenario than what you're currently used to. Destination weddings often have carefree clients who are interested in amazing photography and will typically choose places that feature beautiful scenery.

As an artist, this can be inspiring because we tend to work our best when we go into a wedding without any expectations. Destination weddings are tough to book and even tougher to price correctly. If you've ever been in a Facebook group, you know exactly what I mean. A bride will post that she's getting married in Hawaii, and she's looking for photographers that "don't cost an arm and a leg" and she is not able to pay for travel. In every other industry, if somebody is asking you to travel to another state and donate 10 to 12 hours of your time to work for them, you are definitely going to ask to be paid for that work. However, it's pretty shocking that this type of Facebook post will typically generate anywhere between 50 to 100 comments from eager photographers looking to photograph the wedding.

It's understandable because in our industry, it has almost become a status symbol to be a destination photographer. Photographers inherently have a desire to share their work with the world, and if a couple is willing to fly you across the country or world to photograph their wedding? That notion alone can be used to prove a photographer's worth to potential clients.

Now I don't want to get too much into the merits of that notion in this article, but coming from somebody who photographs 8 to 10 destination weddings a year, I can tell you that clients don't care where your last wedding was. In fact, if you show a local client a wedding that took place at a beautiful destination, the question that always follows is: "But I'm not getting married in a place like this. Can you still take beautiful pictures for me?"

At the end of the day, destination weddings are inspiring to shoot. They can reinvigorate your creativity and allow you the opportunity to see places that you may never have gotten to see otherwise. When I left my job working for the Los Angeles Police Department to become a full-time photographer, I never in a million years would have guessed that in just a few short years I would have seen as many countries and places in the world that I have. The experiences that Jen and I have gotten to share through photography and specifically through destination weddings is worth more than any of the dollars that a client could have paid me. But let me be clear, we run a successful business that can operate without us being present in Los Angeles at any given time. That's not the scenario that most photographers are in today. This means that if you plan to leave the state to photograph a job, you're potentially missing out on the opportunity cost of local jobs. This is why many photographers lose money when they photograph destination weddings and they don't even realize it.

So understanding that, today I'm going to teach you how to properly price a destination wedding. I'm also going to teach you how to go about booking the logistics, and what you can do to give yourself a better chance of landing the job than those Facebook photographers willing to do it for free.

Image by Michael Anthony Photography

But before we start, it's important to really understand what your cost of doing business is. Now, we can use a rudimentary formula to figure this out, but in reality it's going to require you to do some work to understand your numbers in full.

The basic formula for your cost of doing business is revenue generated minus cost of goods sold minus business expenses divided by the number of jobs that you shoot. So let's break this down.

If we do 100 weddings a year at $7,000 a piece, that equals $700,000 in revenue. If the cost to produce all of those weddings was $200,000, that would leave me with a revenue of $500,000. Now I have to factor in all of my business expenses.

Let's keep this simple and say that I have $20,000 in advertising, $100,000 in salaries or contractor payments, $30,000 a year in rent, and $50,000 in miscellaneous costs. Now my gross profit is $300,000 prior to taxes.

Now divide that by 100 weddings and you get a cost of $4,000 to produce a wedding.

Does that number scare you? It should if you've never looked at it before. The reality is the average wedding photographer charges about $2,500 per wedding and will shoot far fewer than 100 weddings per year. When we first did this number, it forced me to update pricing because we were losing money on the front end of all of our contracts.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

So once you figure that number out, you'll have a better understanding of how to price your work for local weddings. With destination weddings things get a little more complicated.

Often times we assume that our only costs related to a destination wedding would be the flight and the hotel. In reality that could not be further from the truth. Let's look at some of the other costs to travel to a wedding in another state:

Childcare.
Animal boarding.
Transportation to and from the airports.
Meals, which are generally going to be much more expensive at resorts, sometimes up to $100 per person per day.
Gotta get work done on the airplane? Wi-Fi charge.
Want snacks for the long flight? More charges.
Baggage fees.
Tips for bell staff at hotel.
Incidentals at hotel.
Car rental if you plan to shoot at remote locations.

Oh, and then you have airfare and hotel.

But the biggest cost that most photographers forget to charge for is opportunity cost. If your destination wedding is on Saturday, you typically have to fly out Thursday or Friday and if you plan to do a day-after session with your couple, then you will most likely have to come home on Monday. That puts you out of the office for a minimum of four days. However, if you're an active wedding photographer, then that Friday and Sunday could possibly be booked by another client.

Now I want you to understand that I am not trying to talk you out of your desire for doing destination weddings. I am trying to show you how to do them and be profitable, and part of that is understanding all of the costs that go into shooting a destination wedding.

Now even though we shoot 8 to 10 destination weddings outside of California every year, I get well over 50 inquiries a year for weddings that will take place at destinations. I understand these costs and every destination wedding that I shoot now is profitable as a result. And just so you understand, the only reason why I took a serious look at these numbers was because I kept losing money in the beginning when I started shooting destination weddings.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

Before I get into showing you a pricing model, I want to go over some rules you have to promise not to break in order to be profitable shooting destination weddings.

Rule number 1: Be disciplined when considering whether or not to turn your destination wedding into a vacation. Any rules I'm going to teach you about profitability have to do with shooting the wedding only. If you opt to take a vacation at the same time that you're shooting the wedding, you're going to have a much harder time remaining profitable.

Rule number 2: Book your own travel. Allow your client to own the hotel, but require in your contract that you stay at the same hotel that they are. Every single time we have made an exception to this rule, I've ended up on a flight that was unnecessarily long and uncomfortable. On the other side of the equation, when we attempted to book our own hotels, we would often times overpay while at the same time the client feels like they are paying us more. By taking that fee out of our contract, the client looks at that money as going to the hotel rather than going to us. This will make booking the job much easier.

Rule number 3: Always try to get there two days early just to be safe. Flights are unpredictable. Even in my own business I don't have the ability to always follow this rule, but you should always attempt to get there two days prior to allow for any delays or flight cancellations. There was one time where we did follow this rule and our flight was canceled on Thursday, however, we were able to make it there the next day with one day to spare before the wedding.

Rule number 4: Do things legally! It may seem easy to just check the "no" box when they ask you if you're there for work, however, the last thing that you need is to be turned away at the border prior to shooting a destination wedding. Canada and Mexico are notoriously difficult to shoot in, but getting permits for both of them is actually much easier than people think. Contact your local consulate and asked them what the requirements are. For Canada, not every destination wedding will require a visa, but make sure you give them all of the specific information prior to your flight date.

Rule number 5: If you plan on doing this a lot, get an airline card that allows you to use points to book your travel. This will save you on baggage fees and help you convert some of those points back to dollars if you wish.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

Okay, so let's talk about how to price destination weddings. Destination weddings should not be priced based on your current price sheet. Different markets require different rates. If I'm shooting a wedding in San Francisco where the average price of wedding photography is much higher than my hometown of Los Angeles, I have to charge more for that wedding. If you're working in the luxury market and you try to charge your own rates in a much more expensive market, that could even be a turnoff for the clients looking to hire you.

All destination weddings for our studio are done by custom proposal. This means that a potential client has to meet with us to discuss their wedding in detail.
In addition, you have to take into consideration your business model. For local weddings, I will typically do an engagement session with our clients which can result in sales from $1,000-$1,500. If my clients don't live in Los Angeles, then I have to take the money that I would typically make from the engagement session and bundle that into my package cost.

So let's just say that I have a client in New York City, where my packages start at $10,000. If the client lives in Los Angeles, then I would include an engagement session like I do with all of my clients. If the client doesn't live in LA, and is not going to be doing an engagement session, I would be starting my rates at $11,500 before any other considerations.

You can't just add more cost to your package without giving clients more value. Typically, what I try to do with destination clients is to offer rehearsal dinner coverage the night prior to the wedding and a free day-after session the day after the wedding. You may consider giving them a larger book, more hours of coverage, or something else to justify an increase in cost considering that you're not able to give everything that you typically give in your package.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

So how do you calculate your base rate? First you will take your CODB, and figure out your desired profit per day.

Let's just say your CODB is $2,000 per wedding and you want to make $2,000 in profit. So now you have a base rate of $4,000. Then add your market adjustment, if any. You can figure out cost differences between markets by looking at TheKnot.com, however, if you are in the luxury market you may want to double or triple that number.

Assuming no market premium, now let's figure out opportunity cost. If I'm working on a weekend away, I will add one wedding of average profit to my cost. So if my average profit from a wedding is $2,000, now you are looking at $6,000 ($4,000 base cost + $2,000 opportunity cost). I then will add $500 per additional day that I'm out of the office for travel because now I can't book any other shoots on those travel days. So for a Thursday to Monday trip, I am adding $500 for Thursday and Friday. My studio is closed on Mondays so I don't look at that day as opportunity cost.

Now you're at $7,000 ($4,000 base cost + $3,000 opportunity cost).

Now we'll look at the client's situation and see if we'll make money on the engagement session. If not, this is where I would add to this collection. Let's just say you average $1,000 on an average client's e-session.

Now you're at $8,000.

Now we'll look at our travel costs. Remember, the client is owning the hotel, so you can remove that from your fees. You have to take into consideration everything I mentioned earlier. If you look up airfare and you're finding rates for $500-$700, add an additional $200 to cover any price changes that could happen between the time you quote the client and the time you purchase the tickets.

Depending on where you're going, you may have to charge for meals. I only charge clients a higher rate if we're staying at a resort or in a place like Las Vegas where meals are overpriced. At normal locations like New York I don't factor this in the cost because there are plenty of places to eat at that are affordable. I don't factor costs for food for all-inclusive resorts.

Now you will add on all of your ancillary costs. For us, that typically consists of dog boarding (we don't have real kids, just the furry ones) and transportation. We have an airline card that allows us to have free checked bags. These fees are typically around $1,000 for us.

So now you can see that a package that you would sell locally for $4,000 needs to sell between $8-9,000 for you to be truly profitable and not miss on opportunity costs.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

When you're presenting pricing to your clients, you do not want to itemize all of these costs. Clients don't understand what opportunity cost is, and they definitely are not going to want to pay for it. Instead, create a custom quote for them with your rates starting at $8-9,000 including all of your travel. This will make the collection seem much more inclusive for your clients without you having to justify why you're charging for certain items. Furthermore if you attempt to itemize costs, clients will find ways to cut them down. If you're going to be traveling for a living, you want to be comfortable and you don't want to have to worry about catching some red-eye flight that has nine stops before getting to your destination which is only three states over.

I hope this helps if you're having trouble pricing destination weddings. I know for a fact that many of you are going to have questions about marketing for destination weddings, so if that's the case, make sure you check out my video that goes along with this article this month for three tips on how to book more destination clients. ■

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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.

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UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY

5 TIPS FOR YOUR UNDERWATER JOURNEY

with **Karen Bagley**

Image © Karen Bagley

I am so very passionate about the underwater world that we have on this planet. I have built a career around this passion and have had the privilege to photograph models and wildlife in oceans around the world. My travel underwater photography is a huge part of my business and I want to share my journey to help others who have this very same interest.

Underwater photography while mesmerizing is not for the faint of heart. You have all of the regular challenges that come with shooting on land, and then about 1000x's more challenges that come from shooting in a moving environment. All of this is intensified when you are shooting in the ocean versus a pool. While almost everything can be controlled on land, that is not the case while underwater. You have a split second to get what is in your mind, set up and captured in camera to eventually share with the world. While that challenge is quite addicting for me it also makes it difficult for those interested in underwater photography to know how to go about getting started or improving in this very amazing yet difficult field. For that very reason I have created 5 tips to help you start or improve your underwater business.

Image © Karen Bagley

Image © Karen Bagley

Image © Karen Bagley

TIP 1. UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES

Before even picking up your camera to take the dive it is vital that you know the dangers and challenges associated with being underwater. You must be mindful that ocean water will make you more buoyant because of the salt. This is great if you want to stay on the surface but for true underwater work, we need to be able to go several feet below the surface. If you are a diver – great – you have the gear you need to keep you under for an extended period of time. For me, a free diver. I need to know what my models are experiencing. I do not want them trying to hold their breath longer than they should just to stay down a few seconds longer because I have dive gear. When they feel the need to come up, they need to come up. With that you are now on a time clock. You have a matter of seconds to go down, fight the currents, compose your subject, capture your subject and then come back up for air. So, imagine you have an entire wedding to capture in 15- 30 seconds. Now mind you, you have multiple times to try and get all the important shots you need, but you are also trying to get these shots in very powerful wind where everything is moving constantly AND you are holding your breath the entire time… now you have an idea of how underwater photography plays out. So, you need to be able to move quick on your flippers (pun intended.) You need to have a plan, and an idea and a way to execute this plan. You need to take time with your models before getting in the water letting them know what you are looking for and how they can go about making this shot come to life. Running a couple of tests with your model is vital. No camera, just you and your model going down together so you both get a good feel for how the water is that day. Then let the shooting begin!

TIP 2: EVERYTHING FLOATS

While the housing units to shoot underwater are very heavy outside of water, they are made to float in the case that you let go of your camera and housing in the water. When I first began underwater photography, I had only a $60 waterproof bag from amazon. This bag was so buoyant it would literally pull me back to the surface in a matter of seconds. Nobody expects to have such an issue with floating underwater which leads to photographers getting frustrated and thinking they cannot shoot underwater. I refused to not figure this issue out. Leading to me improvising. I would tie a 10lb weight to my amazon bag. Yes, I literally drove around with a 10lb dumbbell in my car. It was a risk because if I dropped my camera then that weight would drag my camera to the bottom of wherever. I did what I had to do because I realized I wasn't going to get anything at the surface. Knowing that floating is such an issue underwater how do we combat that? You must get yourself a weight belt. One heavy enough to help you control your own buoyancy and the push back you get from your underwater housing. Make sure you test your weight belt before getting in the ocean where you cannot see the bottom. You should never go into deep waters without testing EVERYTHING in more shallow water. I do not always shoot with a weight belt because it slows me down and sometimes the water/oceans I shoot in are hard to reach, I have to hike to them. If I can lessen my load I will. When I do not have my weight belt, I must forcefully push myself down (housing leading the way. If you let it drag behind you, you will never get down low enough) into the water deeper than usual because I know I will float ten times quicker. Sometimes I will even have my husband give me a push and /or stand on my back or shoulders underwater. Floating can be a huge issue but it can be overcome.

Image © Karen Bagley

Image © Karen Bagley

TIP 3: TRUST YOUR CAMERA

When it comes to your settings when shooting underwater you must know your camera like the back of your hand. You need to be able to control the things you can control and then let your camera pick up the slack. Cameras these days are POWERHOUSES. If you think you are going to have time to play and change your settings the way you would on land, you got another thing coming. Some of your settings need to be set and others need to be able to adjust given the lighting circumstances. The SECOND you are underwater you immediately loose light. The deeper you go the more light you lose. Because of this many of my ocean underwater shoots are shot on auto ISO. I am fine with my images having some grain in them. What I do not want is my images being blurry because the shutter speed is too low … nor do I want shallow depth of field if my aperture is too low, trying to compensate for low light. Along with low light situations you also have a huge change in color the SECOND you go underwater. For obvious reasons, everything is going to be more blue/green. You can somewhat counteract this with setting your camera to automatically adjust your white balance based on the lighting situation. There are also filters you can use on your lens to help balance this out. I personally do not use these filters which is just a personal choice. But really all of your colors can be adjusted in post-production. You can also help yourself by understanding the best time to shoot underwater which leads me to my next tip…

Image © Karen Bagley

TIP 4: FIND THE LIGHT

KNOWING… I mean really knowing ambient light is going to be another huge piece to this puzzle. There is of course lighting gear for underwater but it is large and cumbersome and still is not powerful enough to overpower the sun… so for me I shoot ambient as much as I possibly can. With that comes responsibility in knowing which direction you want to shoot in based on the direction of the sun and where you place your subject. Being able to compose your subject based on your light source to create a true work of art takes time and quite a bit of studying the sun and water. Practice is going to really teach you the most when it comes to this tip.

After

Image © Karen Bagley

Before

Image © Karen Bagley

TIP 5: POST PRODUCTION IS YOUR KEY

While every photographer, including myself, Is going to tell you to get your images as close to perfection in camera when shooting on land… it just Is not possible when shooting underwater. You can get as close as you can but even still you will HAVE to spend time in post-production. Color correction will be the first thing you will do in post. For me I do all of my color correcting in lightroom. I use the lovely little eye dropper tool and voila my color is almost 100% corrected. Sometimes you will have to a custom correction but that is rare. Color correction will go a long way but then you will have to manually adjust highlights/shadows, etc. Then you will have to remove backscatter, debris and even salt. Without a fairly good knowledge of lightroom and photoshop your underwater images may possibly suffer. I would say post production is a good 40% of the final outcome of your image. Yes, that is higher than what I would like to see on land but that's just it, you're not on land. Embrace the postproduction work that is sure to come along with any underwater session.

Implement these tips and you will be well on your way to creating AMAZING underwater photographs! ■

Karen Bagley is an award-winning photographer and the owner of Significant Moments Photography who specializes in maternity and underwater portraiture. She is a wife and a mother to two girls, and enjoys sharing her knowledge with other photo professionals. Karen's a high-energy artist who constantly creates new ways to make everything she does fun.
significantmomentsphotography.com

INSPIRATIONS

Inspiration can come when you least expect it. As photographers, we are visual artists. We express ourselves through our camera and the images we create. Inspirations represents a sampling of our industry and the vision of professional photographers from around the world.

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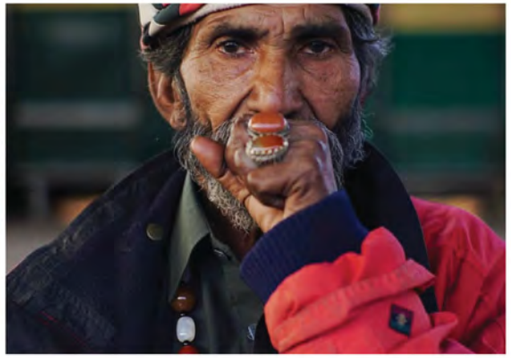

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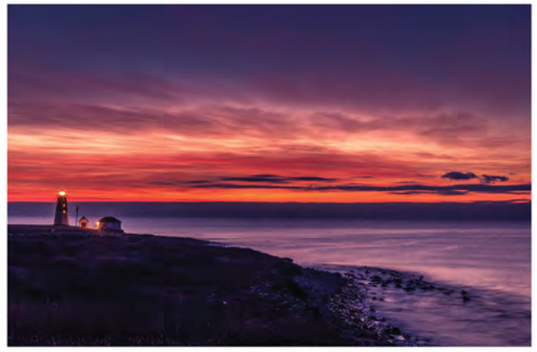

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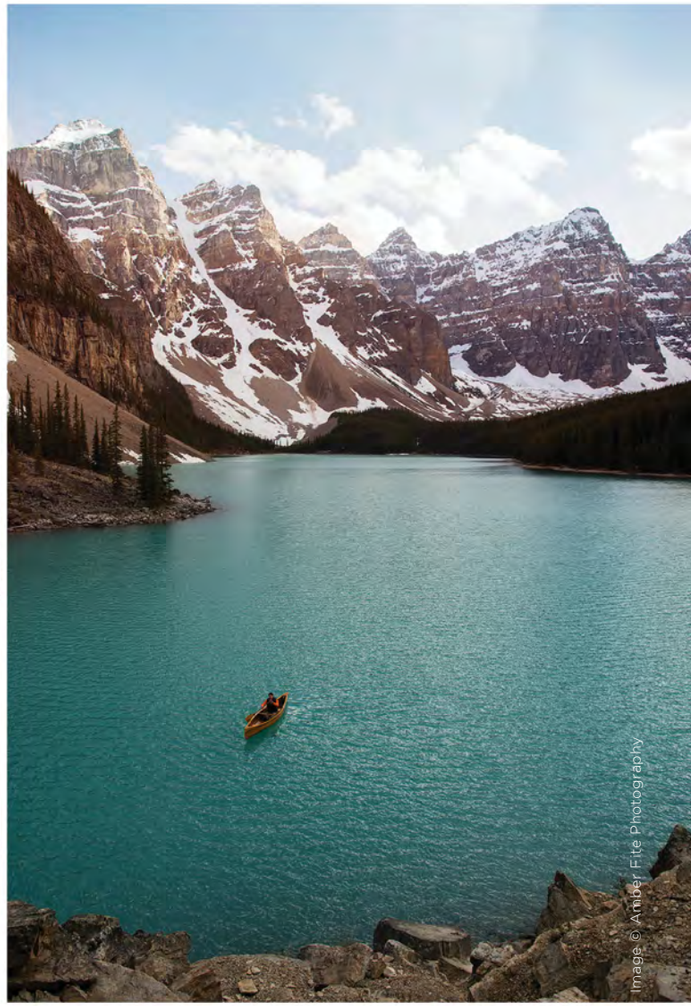

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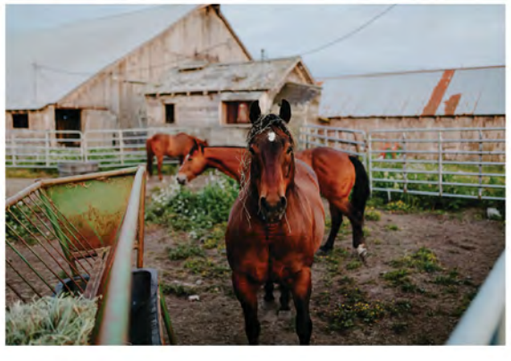

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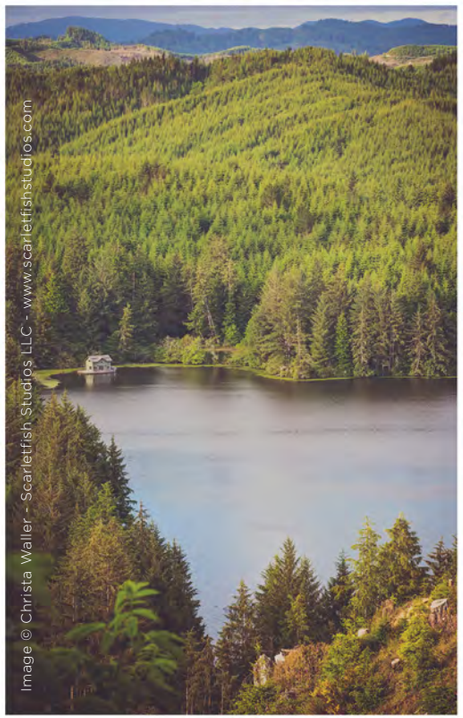

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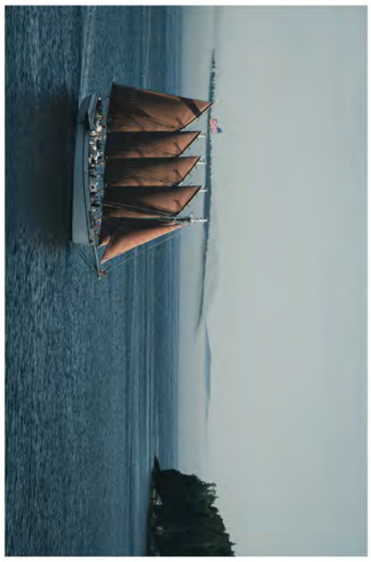

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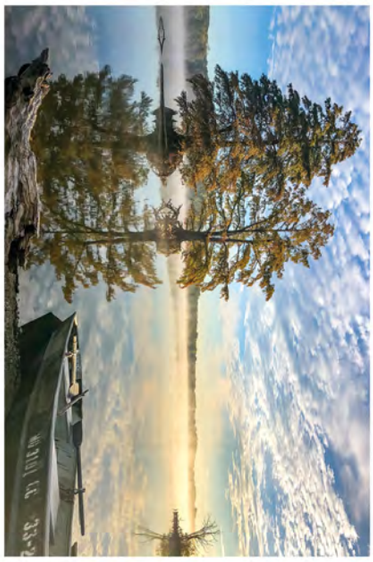

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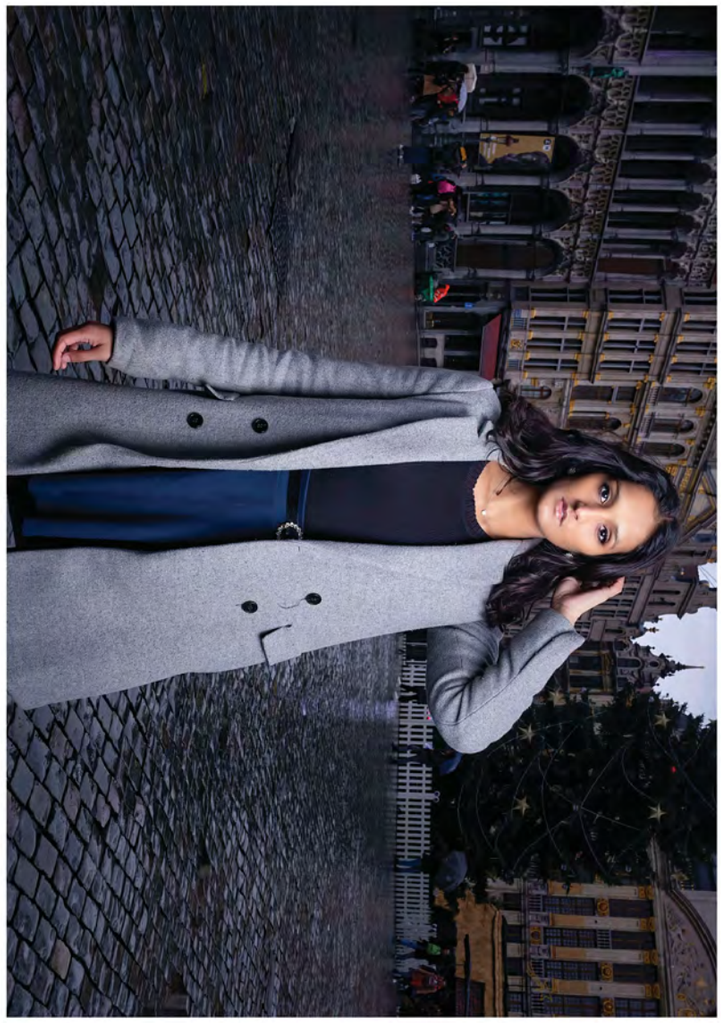

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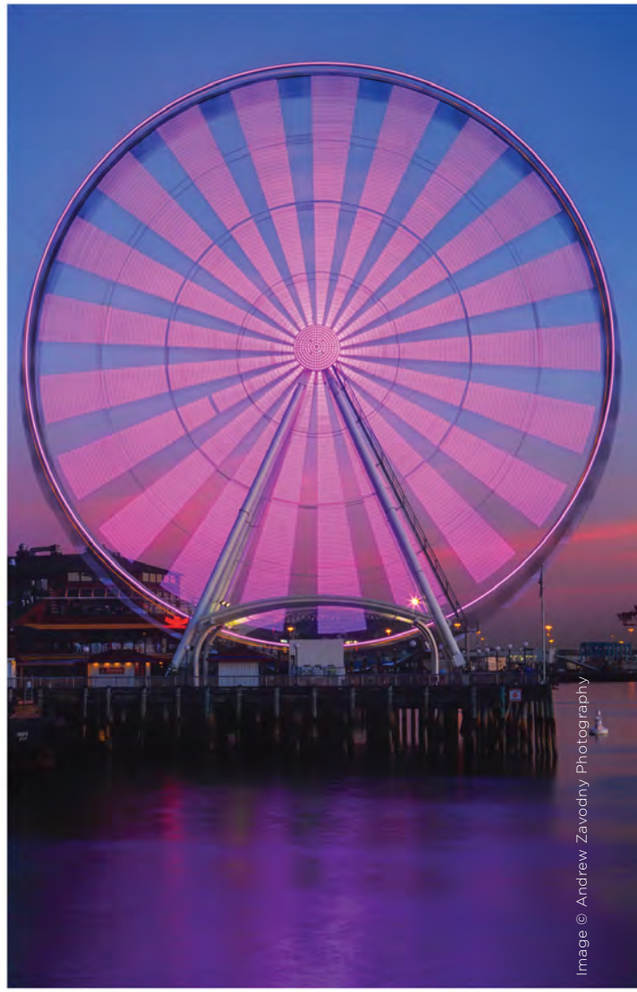

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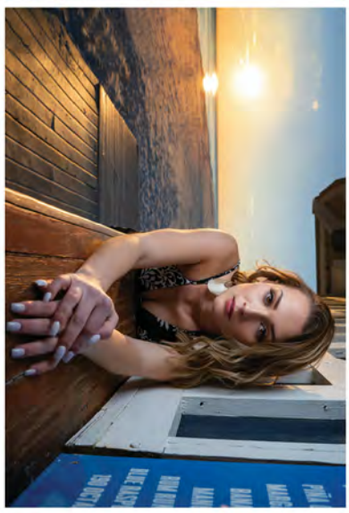

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TRAVEL LIGHT WITH LIGHTROOM CC

with **Dustin Lucas**

When it comes to traveling and personal photography, I like to edit and share my images on the fly. This means I'm not waiting to connect to my RAID storage drive at home before I can get started on my images. I want to quickly ingest memory cards, save Raw files to a fast external drive, and add my photos to Lightroom. Lightroom Classic is typically my go-to for photo gigs, however, in this case I want to be mobile and share edits fast. This is when I use Lightroom CC. I can truly travel light for post-production and have the ability to edit from my phone.

Many creatives are sensitive to color and want to control output by always working in a calibrated environment. I get the resistance to editing on a tablet or a phone, but with mobile platforms, sometimes convenience is better than control. I always preface using any piece of software with understanding the limitations of its function. With Lightroom CC, I can take an image with my phone or mirrorless camera and edit with professional software seamlessly.

This app is really simple to use and I recommend setting it up on your laptop first to set up preferences and workflow. I will cover the difference between the desktop and mobile versions so you can make smart decisions when using it. Lightroom is faster than ever with its ability to add/import photos directly into the app. Did I mention you can fully edit in Lightroom CC? Many of the same tools from Classic are available. Once your images are ready for the light of day, you can share them instantly on your mobile app.

SET UP YOUR APP

I understand the backlash from the Adobe subscription controversy, so if you're against this model, then this article isn't for you. You have to purchase a plan from Adobe to get access to this app, which includes cloud storage. It makes perfect sense as you will have to store images in the cloud to access them between desktop and mobile devices. Check out the best plan for you at https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/plans. Before we get started adding photos, you'll want to install the app and set your preferences. (Fig. 1)

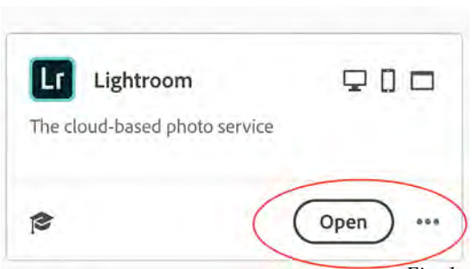


Fig. 1

Preferences are simple to set and the options are minimal. You have Account, Local Storage, General, Performance, and Interface. Out of all the default settings, I only change a few regarding local storage and performance. In Local Storage, I set photo cache to 10%. In Performance, I turn off graphics processor as a habit from Lightroom Classic. (Fig. 2ab) Since the majority of my images will be accessed in the cloud between desktop and mobile apps, local storage beyond my external is not necessary. Let's compare Lightroom CC desktop and mobile versions and get the workflow dialed in.

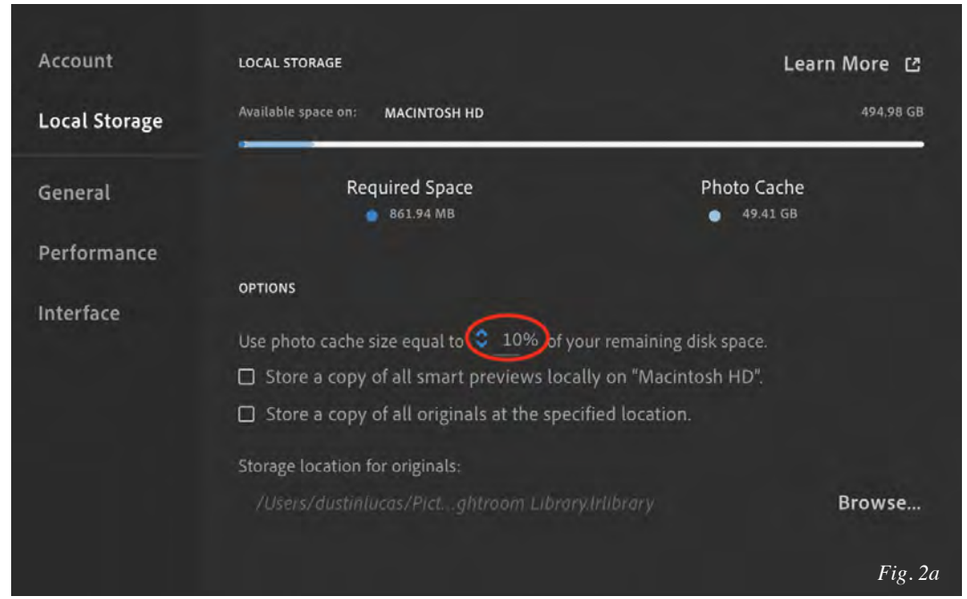


Fig. 2a

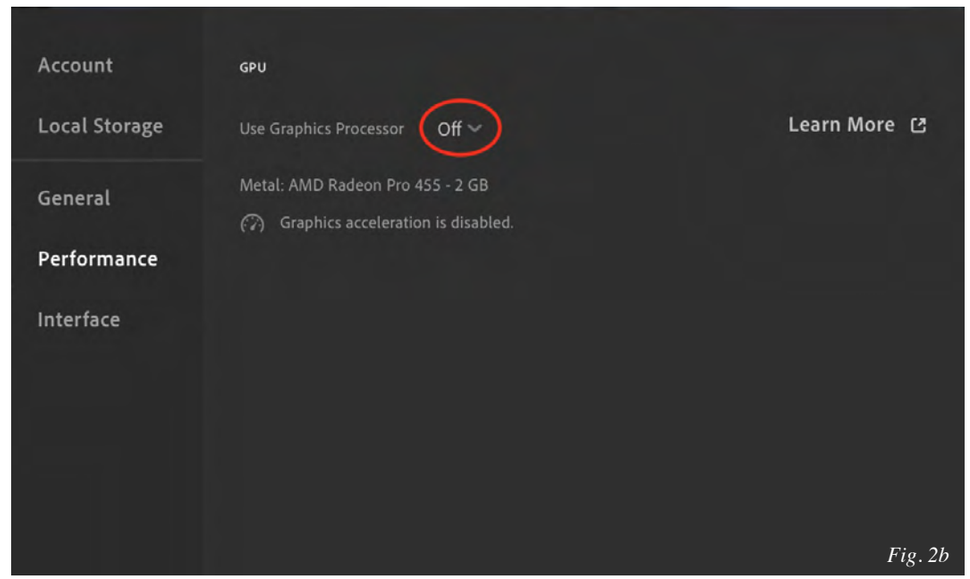


Fig. 2b

Not to confuse you with Lightroom Classic, this desktop version of the Lightroom CC app is fully online and synced with the mobile version. This is all done by storing files in cloud storage. Now you have a fully-synced system in Lightroom, whereas before you would have a single catalog on your computer not connected to other places. Lightroom CC is not a catalog-based system because it's synced across the cloud. Beyond syncing metadata between multiple devices, it's easy to sync files to your social media platforms.

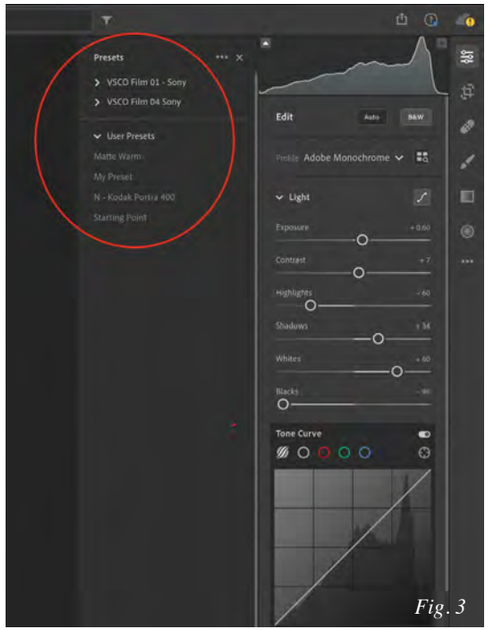


Fig. 3

Lightroom CC on a mobile device allows you to do this, but the desktop version can't. All your presets, profiles, and other develop settings quickly sync between apps without a problem. (Fig. 3) You can sync images from your Lightroom Classic catalog as well. The only caveat is you have to dedicate 1 catalog to syncing. (Fig. 4) Once you connect the catalog to the cloud, the sync app automatically adds images from the cloud to your catalog. (Fig. 5ab) Choosing images from your catalog is a 2-step process and quite simple. Add images to a Collection and click to the sync checkbox located to the left of Collection. (Fig. 6ab) This is a quick way to start adding images to the cloud manually since the catalog is technically offline. Now that we're set up to work in Lightroom CC, let's add some new images and get started.

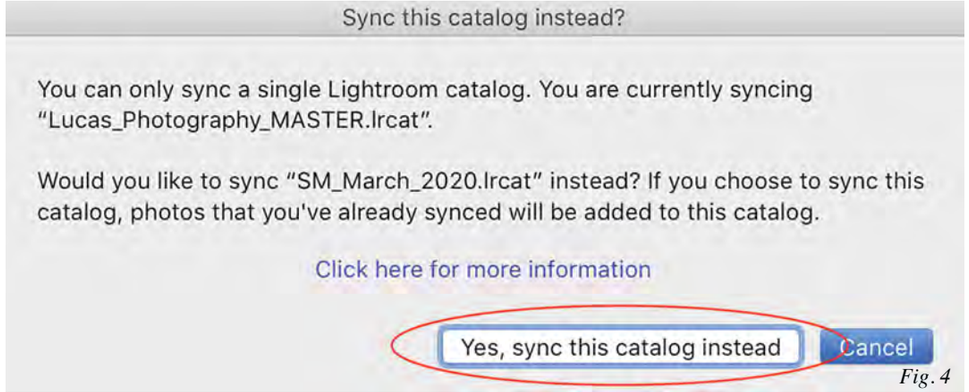


Fig. 4

Fig. 5a

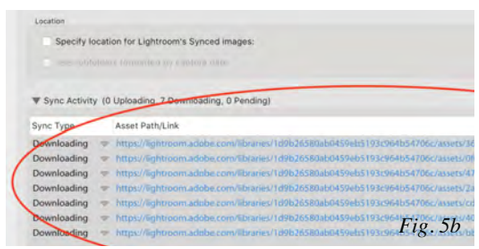


Fig. 5b

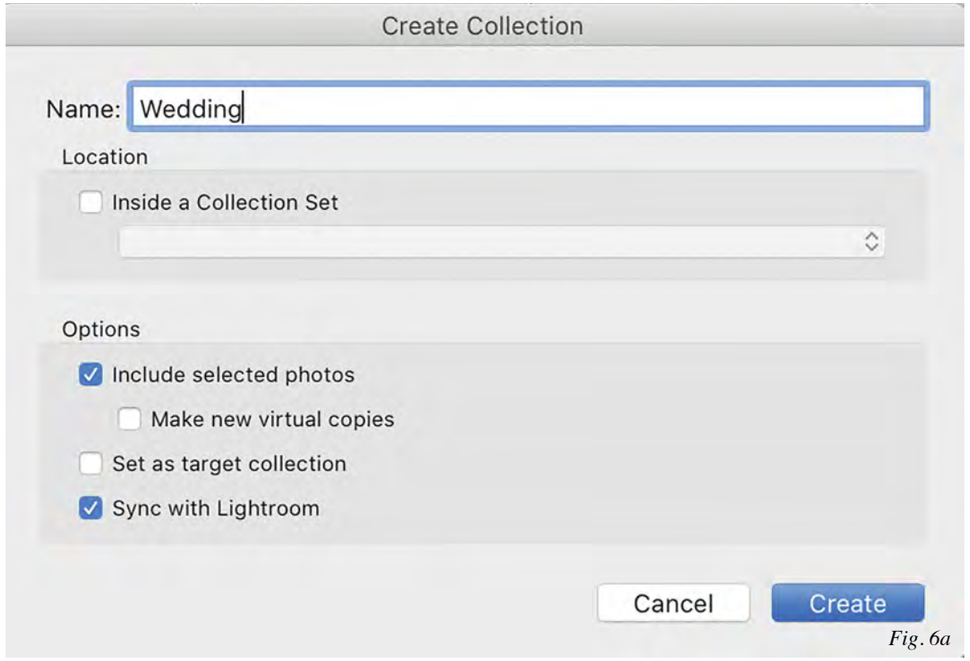


Fig. 6a

Fig. 6b

ADD AND ORGANIZE IMAGES

Lightroom has always been criticized for its inability to browse images instantly. Selecting images to import can be a pain to some, but Adobe requires this because your images are being synced to the cloud. You would have storage issues if all images were added automatically. Once you open the app you can quickly click the "+" button in the upper left corner to add photos. (Fig. 7) Then, you can choose to add them to an already existing album to quickly start organizing your images. (Fig. 8) This is a simple way to start. Keep in mind images are automatically sorted into date folders for additional organization.

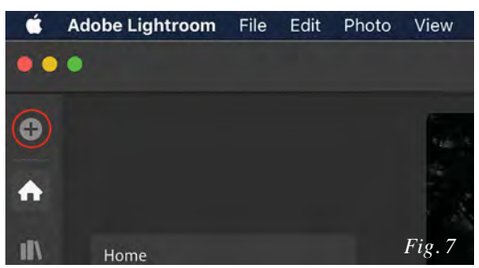


Fig. 7

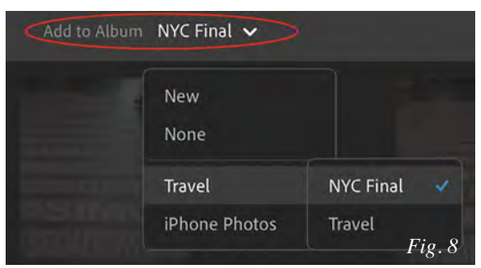


Fig. 8

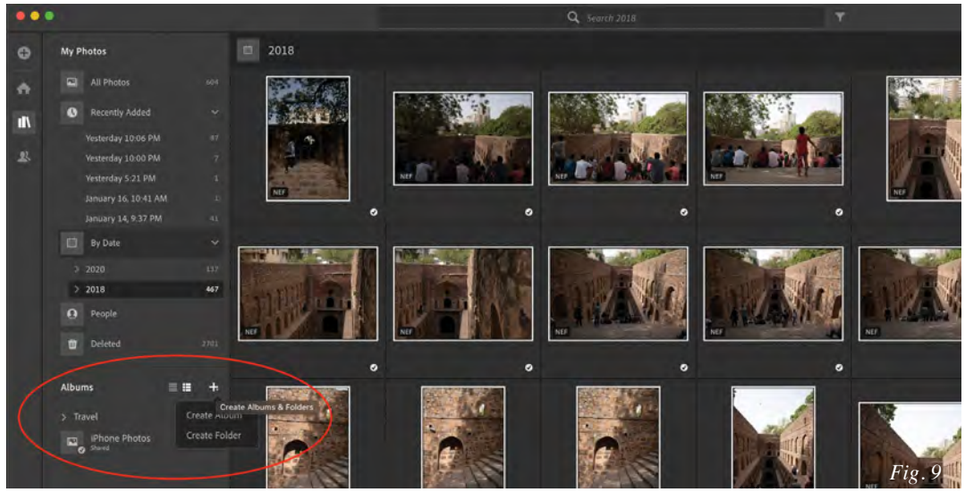


Fig. 9

You can also create folders and albums later if you decide to rearrange images. (Fig. 9) Folders can contain multiple albums. This becomes really helpful as your library grows with more and more images. (Fig. 10) Another really useful way to bring images into Lightroom CC is the Migrate from a Catalog feature. This allows you to migrate a catalog into the app. This can be a really useful way to bring in older work into Lightroom CC. (Fig. 11) Keep in mind there are a few limitations when performing this feature. You can only migrate a catalog one time. (Fig. 12ab) Also, catalogs connected only to smart previews will not migrate into Lightroom CC. (Fig. 13) You must connect the originals to the catalog before migrating resolution. This becomes important when zooming in on an image and exporting for print. (Fig. 14) For sharing on social media, we will have no issues with smart previews. (Fig. 15)

Now that we have our images added to Lightroom CC, let's cull and edit our favorites.

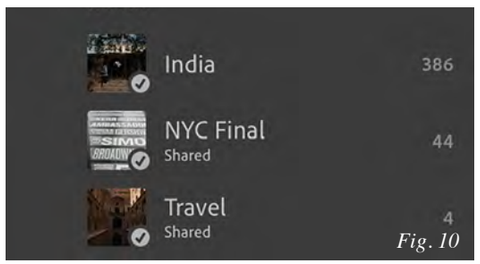


Fig. 10

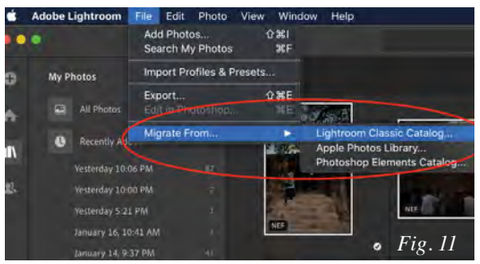


Fig. 11

Fig. 12a

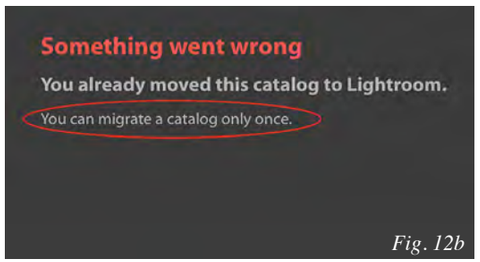


Fig. 12b

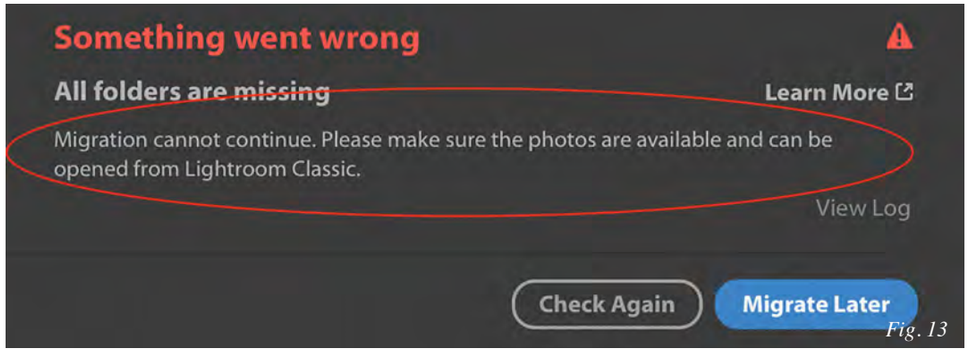


Fig. 13

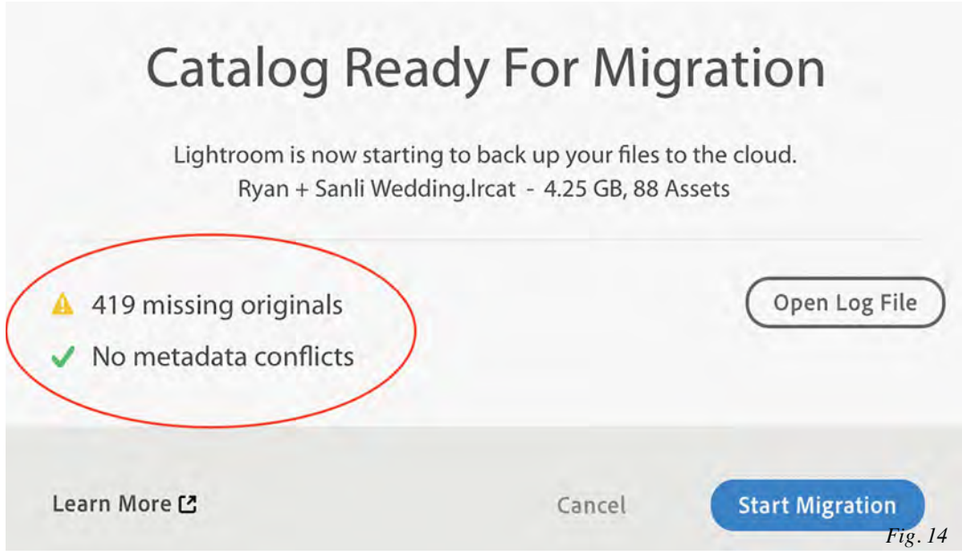


Fig. 14

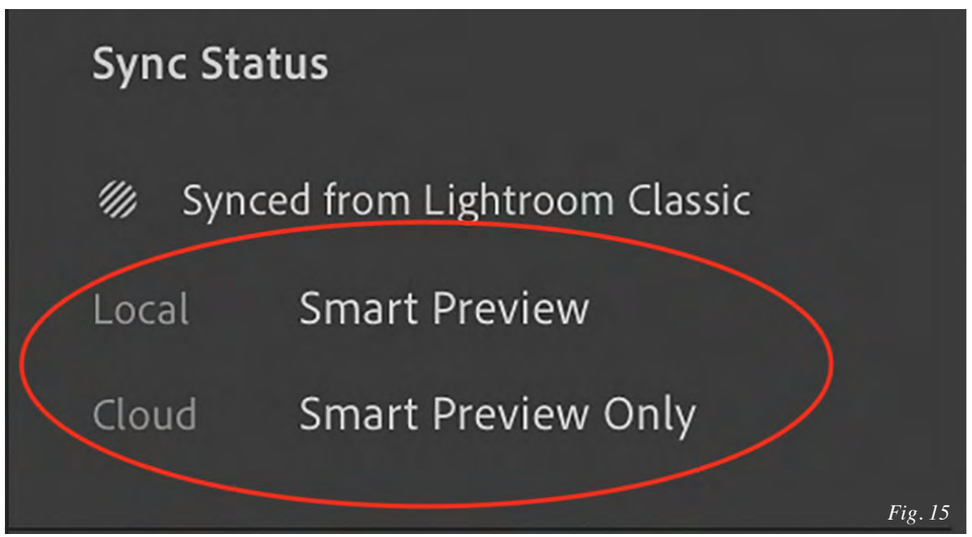


Fig. 15

EDIT IMAGES

Culling is simple to do in My Photos, which is similar to Library or grid mode. Strike the "g" key to jump into My Photos. Double-click the first photo in an album to enter detail mode and start culling your images. (Fig. 16) You can use star ratings quite simply by using keys 1-5. If you prefer flags, strike the "z" key to pick an image, use "x" for rejected, and "u" for unflag. (Fig. 17) There is also the ability to add keywords, image data, and change capture time. (Fig. 18abc) Let's move into Edit mode to apply some adjustments.

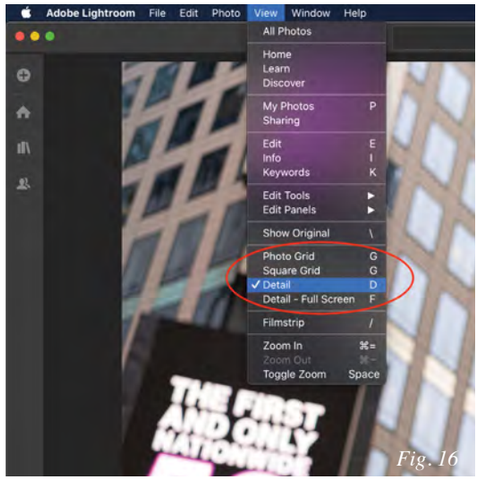


Fig. 16

Fig. 17

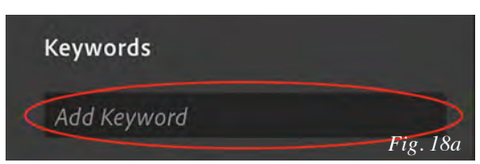


Fig. 18a

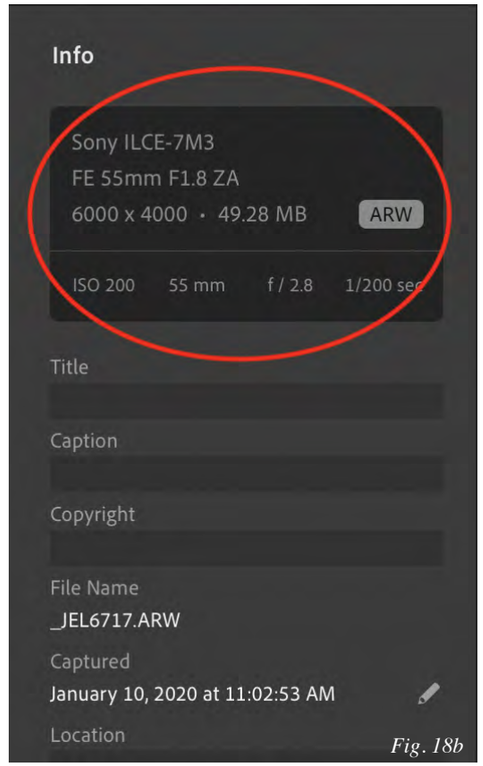


Fig. 18b

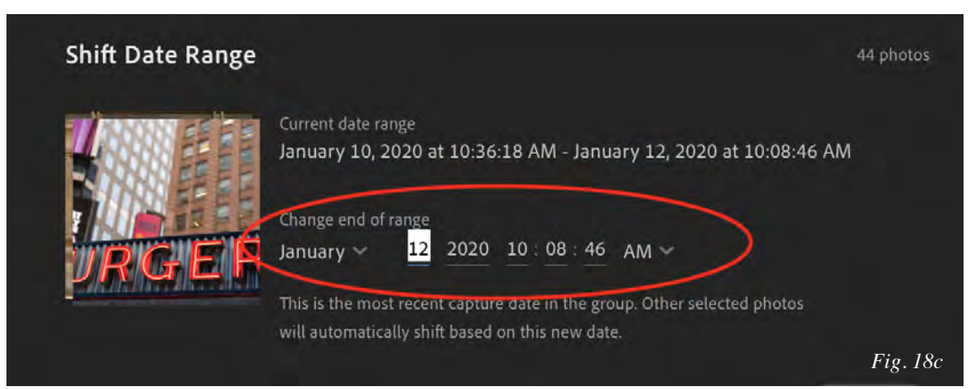


Fig. 18c

Fig. 19

I really appreciate the layout of the Edit module because you finally have the correct order of operations when it comes to color correcting. (Fig. 19) Start with applying my preset including the Profile, then move to Light for brightness and recovery, Color adjustments, Effects for tonality and creatives, Detail for sharpening and noise reduction, and Optics for lens correction. Geometry is basically Transform like in Lightroom Classic. (Fig. 20abc) This app also has target adjustment tools as well to make things even easier when you need to adjust a specific color or tone.

Other useful tools migrated to Lightroom CC include spot removal, adjustment brush, and linear and radial gradient tools. (Fig. 21) Cropping and straightening can be activated by striking the "c" key, although I can't seem to cycle between images in this mode. That makes using crop really slow for me since I have to exit the tool, click the right arrow to advance images, and then click "c." They have brought over copy settings and sync to make editing faster of course.

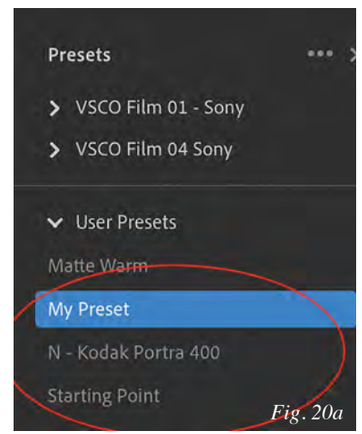


Fig. 20a

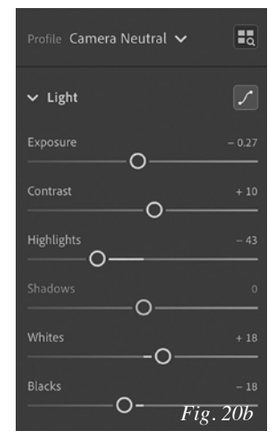


Fig. 20b

Fig. 20c

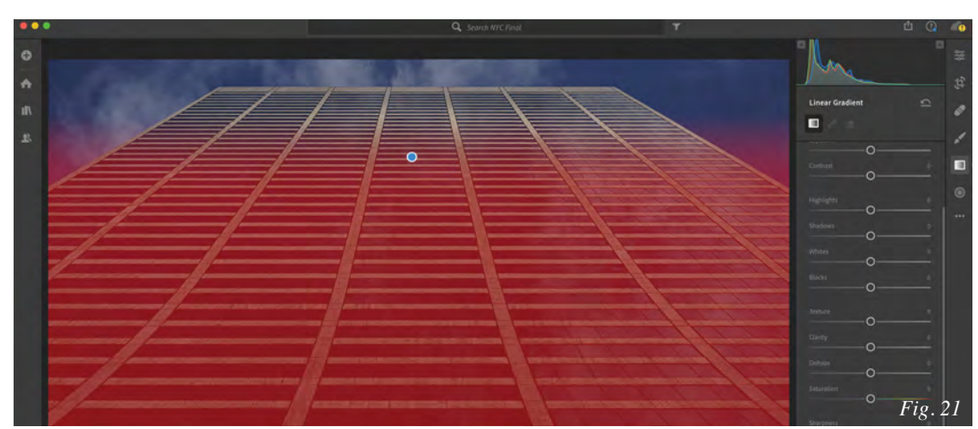


Fig. 21

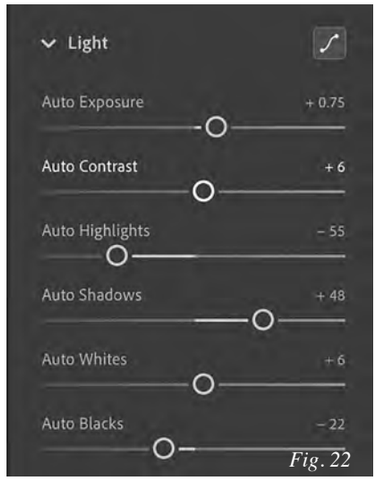


Fig. 22

A few extra tips would be to hold down shift while double-clicking many of the editing tools to auto-apply just that one. I like this for blacks, whites, and tint to help get me good density and help with color casts. (Fig. 22) Also, I usually show the histogram and strike the "j" key to show clipping. (Fig. 23) You'll want to check for dust spots on your image sensor. I use the healing brush and turn on visualize spots. This makes it really easy to spot dust and remove. No one wants sensor dust on a final image. (Fig. 24) Once your edits are dialed in, let's export and share them immediately.

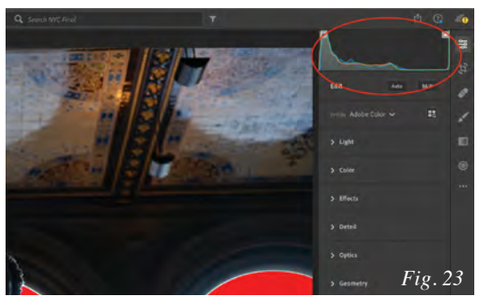


Fig. 23

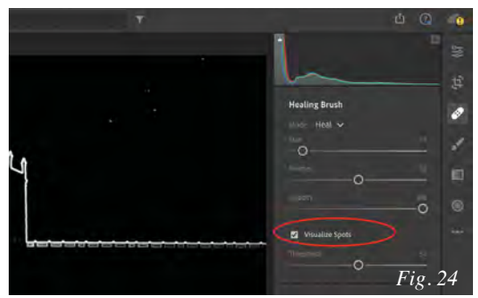


Fig. 24

EXPORT AND SHARE

I find that exporting is best on a desktop while sharing has to be done on the mobile app. On the desktop app, you can choose to export the images the same way you can from Lightroom Classic with the exception that you can't apply droplets. (Fig. 25) You can also share a link with your client to view, comment, and download. Albums can be shared and you can invite people to access them quite simply. (Fig. 26ab) There are additional settings to share the link to Facebook or Twitter, custom name album and author, adjust the theme/layout, allow comments/likes as well as choose ability for people to download. (Fig. 27) Sharing can be turned off if you want to pull the gallery offline. Once you share the album you can access the link and view your gallery in a browser. (Fig. 28)

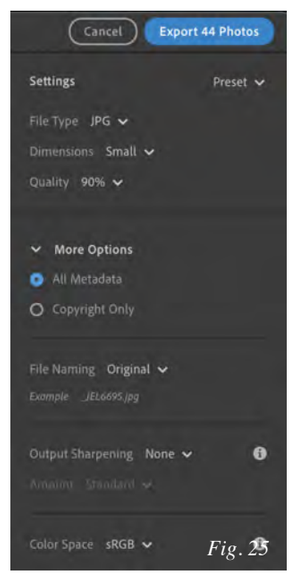


Fig. 25

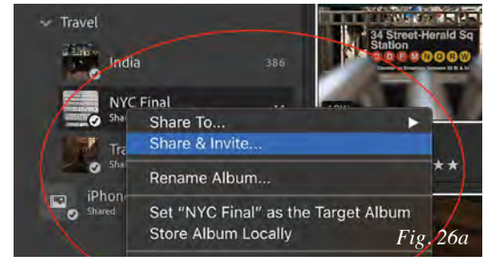


Fig. 26a

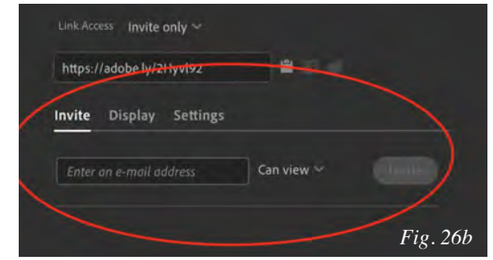


Fig. 26b

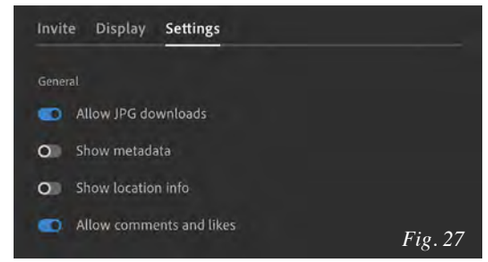


Fig. 27

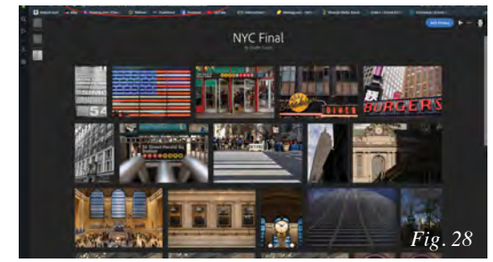


Fig. 28

Sharing on the mobile app allows you to directly post to Facebook and Instagram which makes getting my images on social media so much faster than before. (Fig. 29) As you can see in the mobile app all my images are synced and ready to share on social media. Instagram is much simpler as you can punch in your captions and hashtags right away. (Fig. 30)

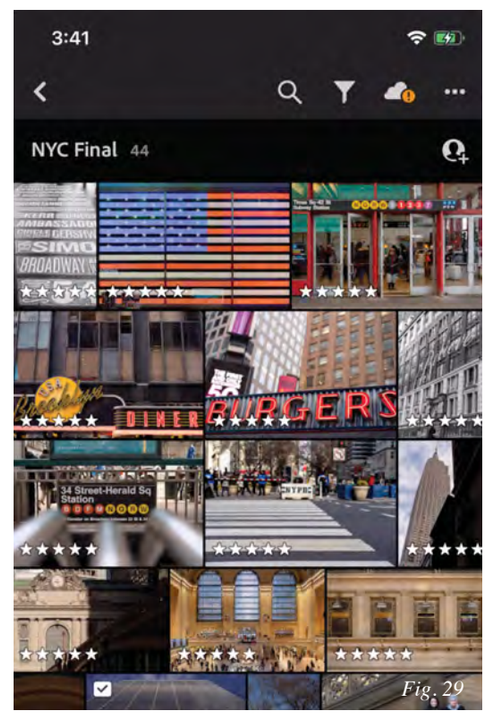


Fig. 29

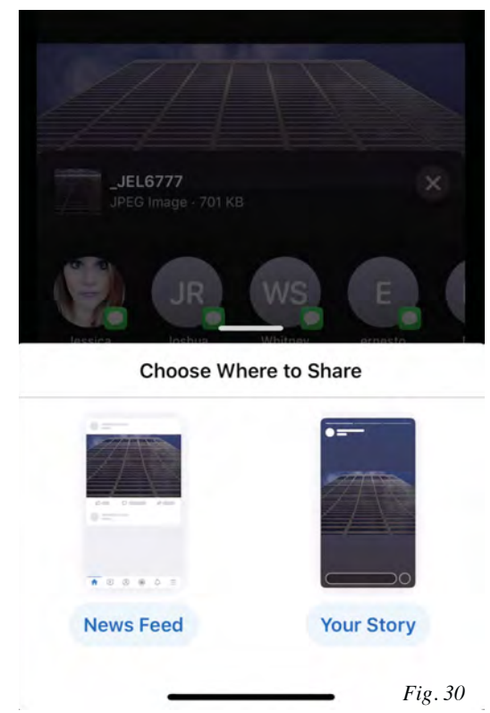
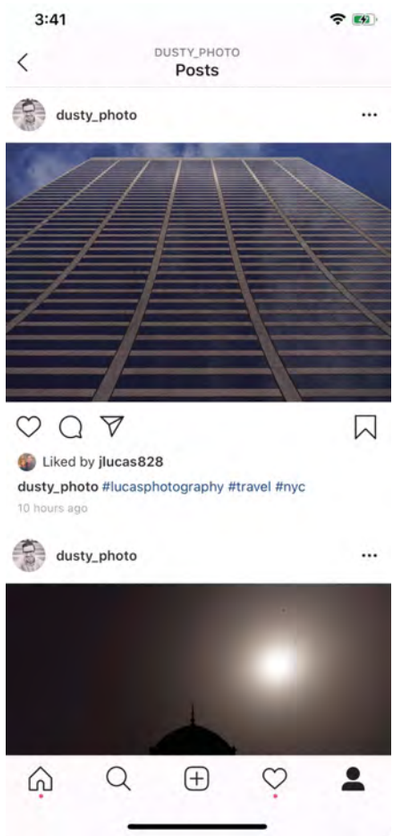


Fig. 30



THE RESULTS

Lightroom CC simply lets you edit and post images on the fly. Traveling light is important because you aren't going to lug around more gear to be able to ingest files from your memory card. In fact, you could hook up your camera, import files directly to the cloud, and bypass having to use an external drive. I use a 500GB SSD USB 3 drive so I can pull hundreds of files off the memory card in a flash. Doesn't hurt to have a backup on the road! Once I add and organize my photos, I'm ready to edit. Editing in Lightroom CC on an iPad is effortless, especially with an iPad Pro. Once I'm ready to export and share, my phone syncs automatically with the app to get the up-to-date version ready for Facebook and Instagram. Boom, now I'm ready for my next trip! ■

sm
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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine

Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his master of 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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photographer | joel grimes | joelgrimes.com
image title | nefertiti

exposure	f/7 @ 1/200 iso 100
lighting	three godox ad 600's: two lights in the westcott 3x4 softboxes with grids one light in the westcott 24-inch beauty dish
location	burbank, california
gear	canon eos r canon 90mm tilt-shift lens

Image © Joel Grimes

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