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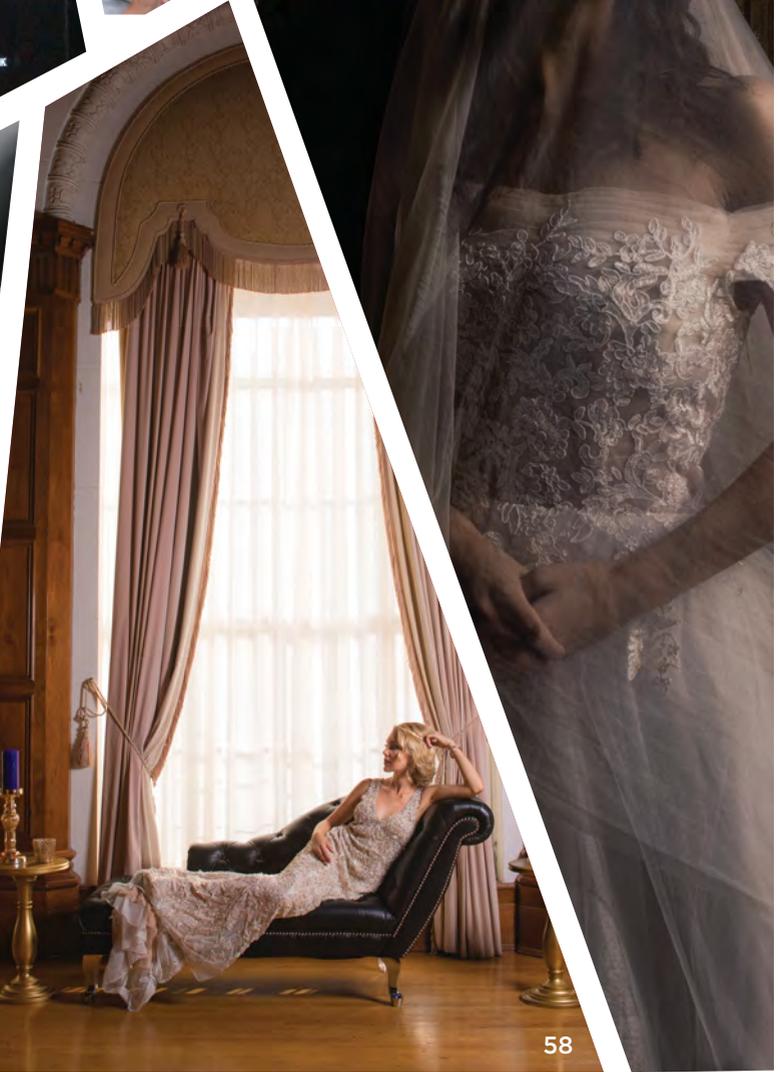
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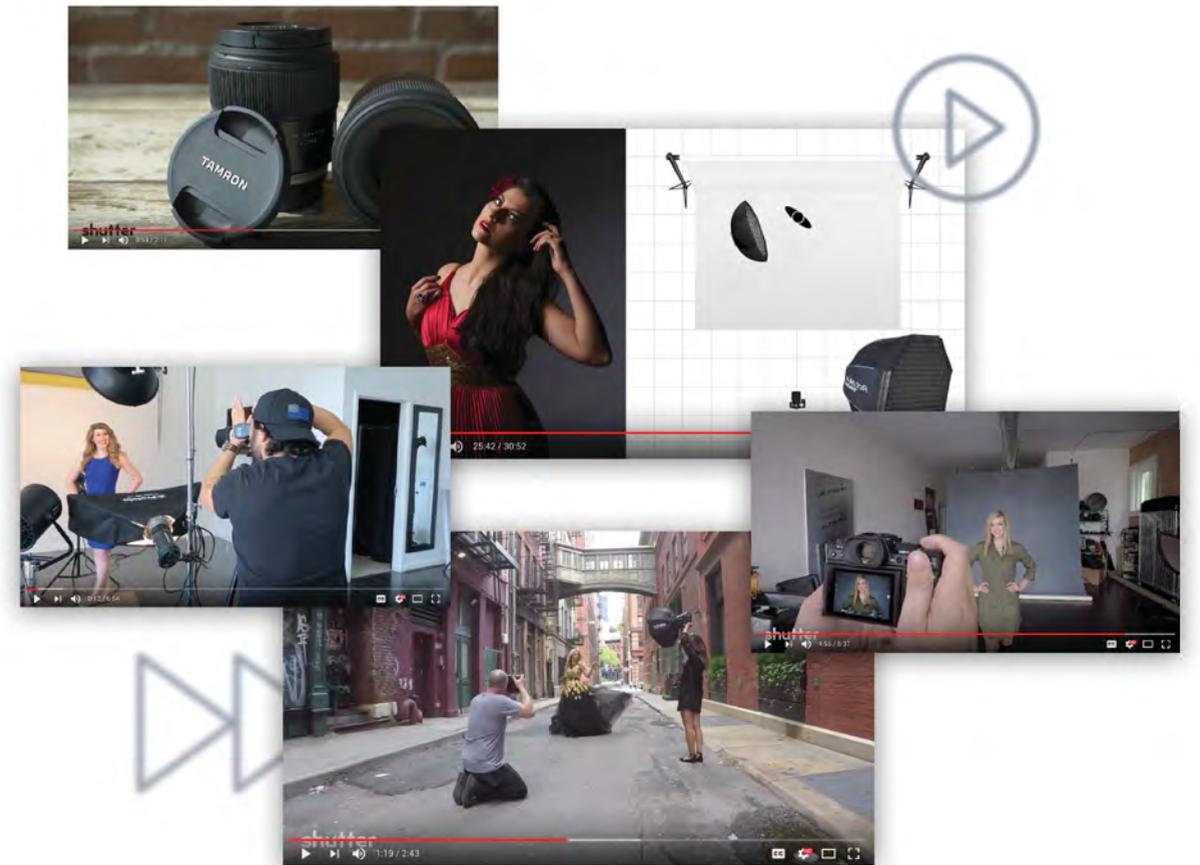
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## MISSION STATEMENT

*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.

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## THE COVER

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Sal Cincotta | [salcincotta.com](http://salcincotta.com)

**CAMERA:** Canon 5D Mark IV

**LENS:** Canon 85mm 1.2

**EXPOSURE:** f1.2 @ 1/100, ISO 50

**LIGHTING:** Profoto B2 & Profoto B1 with OCF Beauty Dish

**ABOUT THE IMAGE:** This image was taken near Borgarnes, Iceland, in August 2017.

**MODEL:** Hjördís Björg, Eskimo Models

**HAIR & MAKEUP:** Sandra María | [sandramaria.is](http://sandramaria.is)

# LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

*Today we live in a  
digital world.  
How will you use technology to  
stand out  
from the crowd?*  
- Sal Cincotta

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography





STUDIO

PORTRAITS WITH

# Flare

with Michael Corsentino

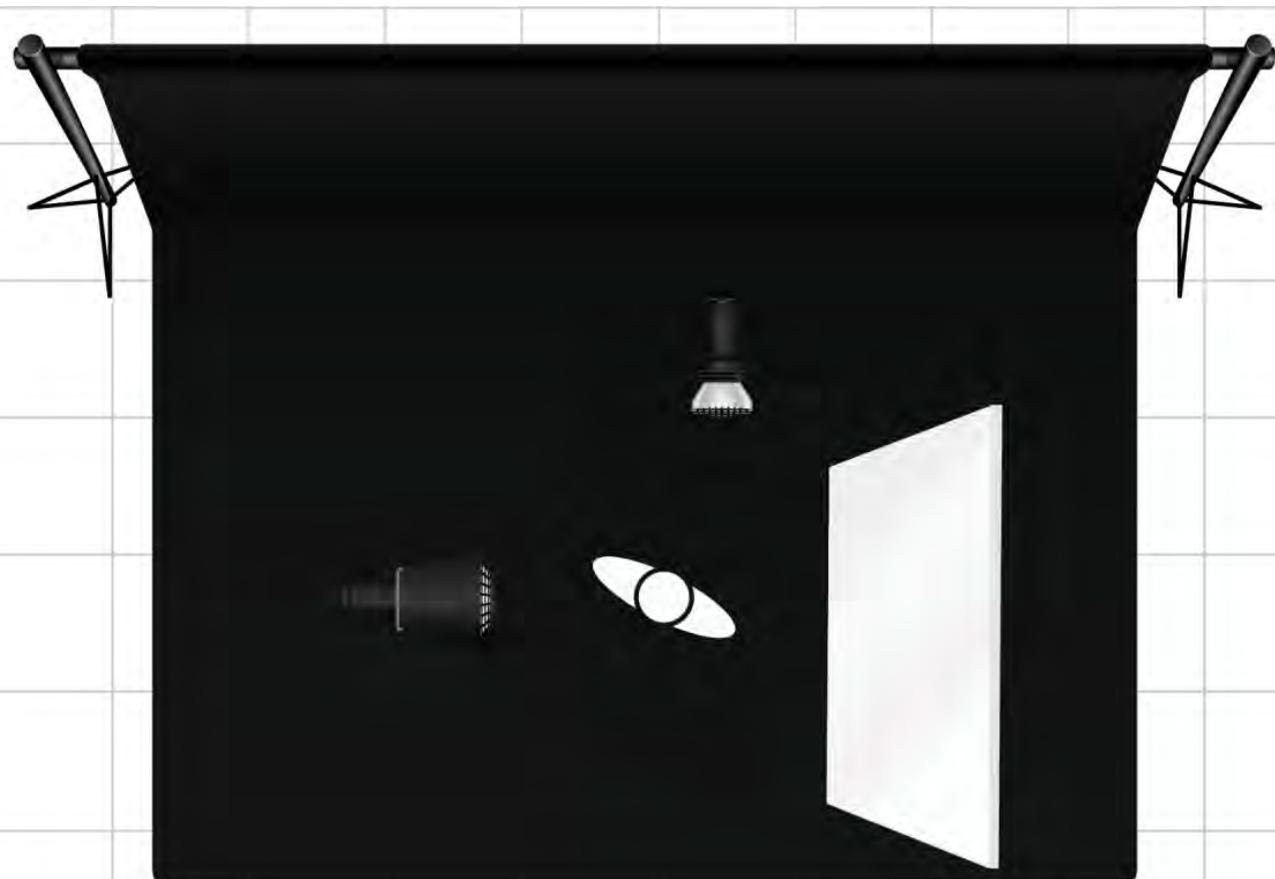


Image © Michael Corsentino



Image © Michael Corsentino

In photography, we use a range of classic lighting patterns, many based on the work of the master painters, to produce predictable and repeatable results. These foundation patterns are clamshell lighting, Paramount lighting, Rembrandt lighting, loop lighting and split lighting. Rim and accent lights can be added to any of these patterns to add further refinement and sophistication. The combinations are virtually endless.



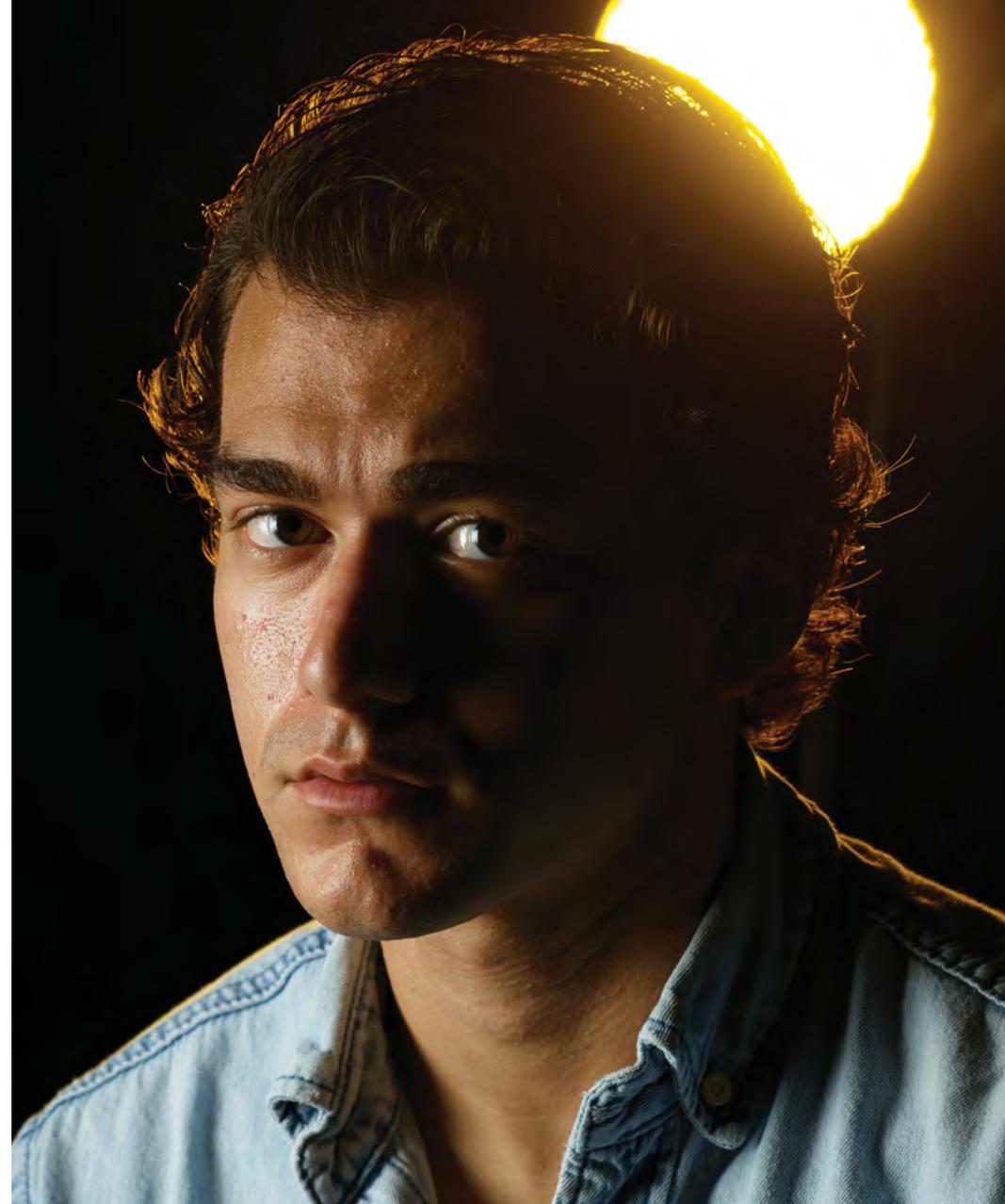
One lighting arrangement you don't hear a lot about is backlighting. This is when you place a light behind a subject who is facing directly toward the camera position and unobscured from its lens. This introduces flare, which is typically something we try to prevent. Flare can be unpredictable and difficult to control, causing unwanted optical artifacts such as ghosted dots across an image, as well as loss of overall image contrast. Tools like lens shades, flags, honeycomb grid spots and egg crate grids help reduce flare. You can always just use your hand to block light from directly entering the lens as well.

There are circumstances when flare can be a major asset. With a little know-how and a few lighting modifiers, flare in the studio can be harnessed as a worthy addition to your lighting repertoire. In this article, I look at creating flare using studio strobe. Working with flare from the sun is a topic for another day.

Image © Michael Corsetino

Flare is perfect for adding drama and sizzle when creating images of actors, musicians and other entertainers. Think *Dreamgirls*, Beyoncé and countless other subjects where one or more lights behind the model creates a dramatic entertainment-oriented background effect.

For this effect to work best and not end up silhouetting the subject, there needs to be additional illumination from the front. The strobe placed in front of the subject serves as your keylight and can be positioned using any of the foundation lighting patterns. I opted for directional side light on the opposite side of the strobe used for flare. This resulted in a semi-crosslit pattern and created balance between the lighting on the left and right sides of the image. In addition to subject illumination, the keylight helps balance foreground and background light and adds back contrast that's lost when light enters the lens. In some cases, you may want to add back additional contrast in post.



There are a few tips, tricks and tools that will help make working with flare significantly easier, predictable and more manageable. First up is focus. Light coming directly into a lens can wreak havoc on autofocus. The good news is that, unlike the sun in the studio, you can turn off the modeling light on the strobe designated for backlight; now focus is no problem. So step one is to turn off the modeling light so that the only time there's flare is when the flash fires.

Bare flash throws raw light everywhere. It has little to no shape and washes out contrast. This is where a few keylight modifiers save the day and make working with flare more manageable, controllable and predictable. Honeycomb grid spots and egg crate grids focus the strobe's beam of light into a tighter, more defined spread and are often used to keep light from spilling back into the lens. Here I've added a 7-inch reflector and a 10-degree grid spot to the background strobe used to create flare. I used this to confine its light to a tight circle and reduce the amount of light directly entering the lens. The overall effect is smaller in size and therefore much more manageable than bare flash, resulting in less loss of contrast.





One technique not used here is bare flash as a backlight combined with very narrow apertures. This is a great way to add starburst effects to your images. It varies from lens to lens, but when flash hits a very narrow aperture, such as f22, a starburst effect results. Give it a try sometime. It's a fun technique to play with.

I placed the keylight camera left to the side of the subject. This was modified with an Elinchrom 14x35-inch strip box with a 30-degree egg crate grid to create a narrow vertical shaft of crisp light. This kept the keylight from spilling back toward the camera position. As is my normal practice, the keylight was the first of the two strobes I dialed in. Working one light at a time is the clearest way to see the contribution each light is making to the exposure. I metered the keylight using a Sekonic L-858DR handheld flash meter with its power set at f11 to match my camera settings. Then I made my first capture and assessed the results. This is the point where I season to taste and make adjustments to the position of the keylight and its power.

Now that the keylight was dialed in at f11 and correctly positioned, I turned on the background light and also metered it at f11 to match the power of the keylight. From test captures with the background strobe firing, I could see it was illuminating parts of the housing used to attach the grid. To remedy this, I masked off these areas with gaff tape, a must-have in any studio.

During the next series of captures, I further refined the lighting by adding a V-flat camera right to open up the side of the subject opposite the keylight, which was falling into shadow. With the lights set, I then experimented by introducing color for the background light. I started with blue and settled on yellow to add warmth to the image and complement the subject's shirt and skin tone. I adjusted the height and left-to-right position of the background light throughout the shoot.





Image © Michael Corsentino

Give flare in the studio a try. It works equally well with strobes and handheld flash. Once you know how to control it, flare is a great way to give your images extra sizzle. ■

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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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BRINGING COMPOSITES TO

# LIFE

FROM STORY TO FINAL VISION

with David Byrd



Model: Cassandra Dorff  
Designer and HMUA: Rachel Frank Designs ([rfdbyrachelfrank.com](http://rfdbyrachelfrank.com))

I recently had the pleasure of experiencing Project Lunacy for the first time, and, oh my, was it an interesting ride.

On day one, we hit the ground running with Sal as he taught a new platform. He had one major nugget of wisdom that hit me like a truck. He showed us how he creates with intent by walking around the room and seeing what spoke to him.

He settled on a great symmetrical part of architecture in the room and began his process of creating beautiful imagery. I caught only bits and pieces of the image making because I sat dumbfounded in the knowledge that *Salvatore Cincotta's creative process is similar to my own*. As I reflected on it, I began to wonder if this process was true for others.

### THE SPARK OF AN IMAGE BEGINS...

To bring a story to life through composite art in Photoshop, I often begin with the existential question: What is speaking to me? This doesn't always come in the form of a place or location, as it did for Sal that day. The spark of an image can begin with a single emotion, a piece of music, a line from a play.

The piece featured in this article, "The Spirit of the Forest," began with a location. I grew up in the Midwest but now live in the Southwest. The Southwest has an exotic beauty unlike any other place on Earth. Both worlds speak to me, but I found that I missed the voice of the Midwest, with its endless rolling hills of grass, trees and flowers, the steady march of picturesque seasonal changes. When I had a private workshop in Green Bay, Wisconsin, I spent three days driving there, and noticed the transition between my current home to the one I fondly remember.

On that drive, I thought about where I wanted to be in a year, five years, when I am an old man sitting in a chair admiring the fall colors. I felt the progression of time in a way that I never had before, and felt a renewed sense of spirit to forge my way forward through time. The passage of time and the forest landscape of the Midwest—that is what spoke to me as the driving force behind this piece.



Image © Reality Reimagined



Images © Reality Reimagined

### **BUILDING ROOTS WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM A SWORD**

I began with our model Cassi and the brilliant design she is wearing by Rachel Frank Designs. I knew the world I would be building around her and the intent behind it, so I started with how she fit into that world. As we flowed through poses, I molded her movement into that of the ethereal spirit I saw in my mind, a sense of grace, power, life and the gentle wisdom that one would find there. The length of the dress and its many layers became analogous to the roots of a tree and thus her connection to the forest. The poses suggested the movements of a ballet dancer, grounded by the dress. We saw her emerge from the life around her.

Our story of life and the personal connections were there, but a final integral piece was missing. I visualized myself walking through a forest of beautiful color as I had done so many times in the past. The smells and sounds were all there. And then I realized that almost every time I would go on that walk, I would pick up a leaf and take it home with me. It was a symbol of the serenity of the forest, and it anchored me to that magical place. I knew then that Cassi had to be holding something, offering us something to take with us that would help us battle the outside world. I also wanted a juxtaposition to the grace of the forest to reflect that forthcoming battle. So we brought in the sword.

We experimented with poses of Cassi holding the sword as if she were prepared for battle, and it immediately felt wrong. The forest was a place of life and grace—it couldn't fight our battles, it could only renew us to face our own struggles. I had her hold it to mirror the Sword in the Stone, and in that moment, the final vision came into focus. I saw the forest around her, the light streaming through the trees, the various colors and the ground foliage that I would integrate into the dress to tie it all together.

## BRINGING IT TO PHOTOSHOP

For every composite I create, I begin with a general retouch of the subject in their original image before I extract them. I start with the skin, smoothing out all of the textures, and then adjust any areas that are distracting. I then move to frequency separation, my first artistic pass over the image.

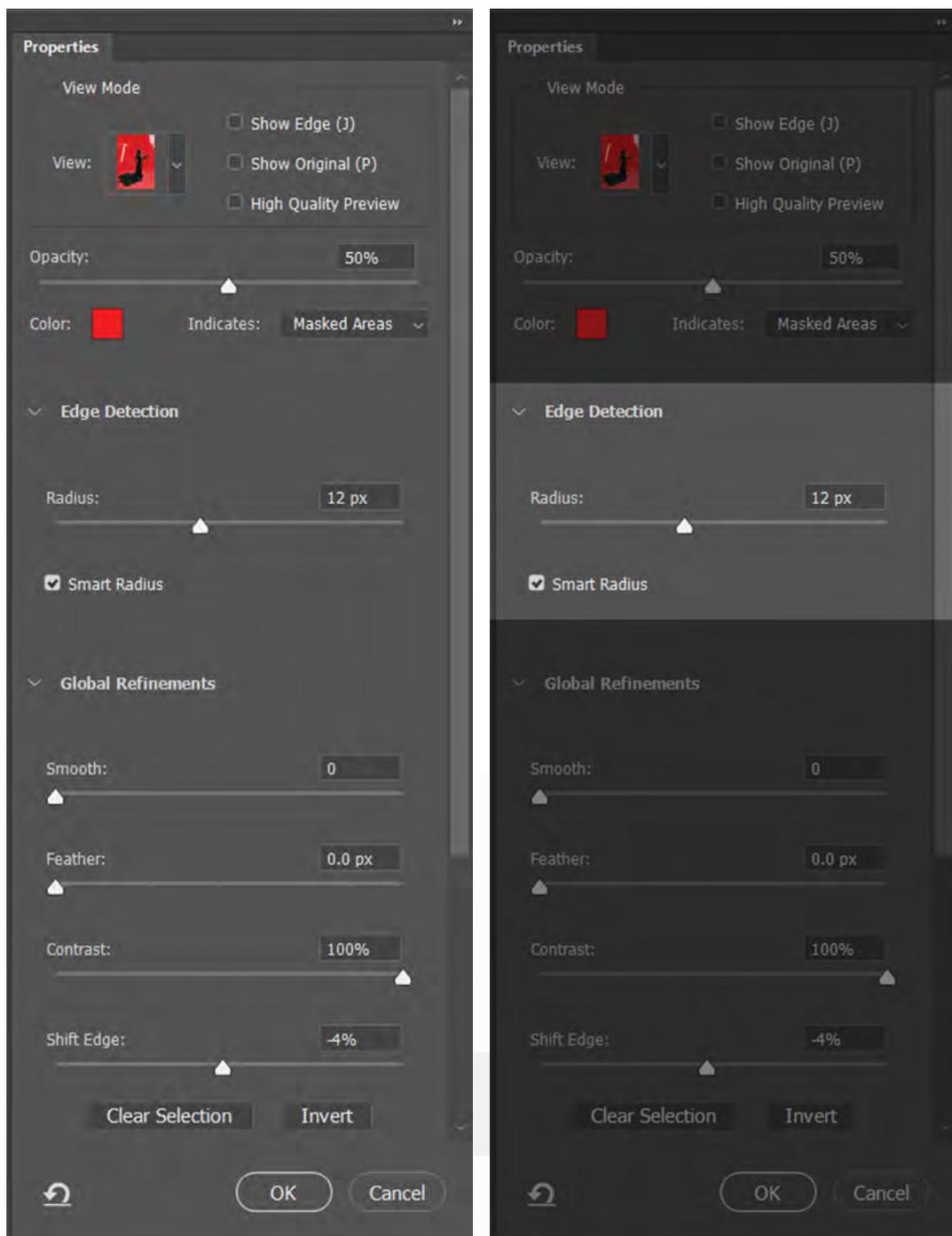
I use frequency separation in ways that would make most professional retouchers throw their pen tablet at me. It's an opportunity to paint like a traditional artist. Simple issues like wrinkles in the fabric of the dress can be adjusted during this process, but I can also create new folds in the fabric to give it that effortless drape and flow.

The real fun begins when I move from frequency separation to dodging and burning. I use the curves adjustment layer method, with one layer for general highlights, one for shadows and a third for strong specular highlights that define the structure of the face and key areas of the body. I always start with shadows to accentuate the sense of drama that I have created with my lighting.

Beginning in one region of the body, I enhance shadows so I have an overall visual map of where we are sculpting. Once I have all of the shadows in place for that region, I move to the corresponding highlights of that same zone. If there are any specular highlights needed, I do those last and bring them in as subtly as possible. After all of the regions of the subject have been sculpted, I bring down the opacity of the shadow layer until it blends with the highlights, creating the form that will draw the viewer's eyes to the key areas of the subject.

Since this piece required special effects (on the sword), I retouched the sword similarly to how I did her body. This included removing distractions, painting with frequency separation to augment the shape of the blade and then dodging and burning to give it a three-dimensional life. The glows and particles came later as the final image began to take shape.





## EXTRACTION

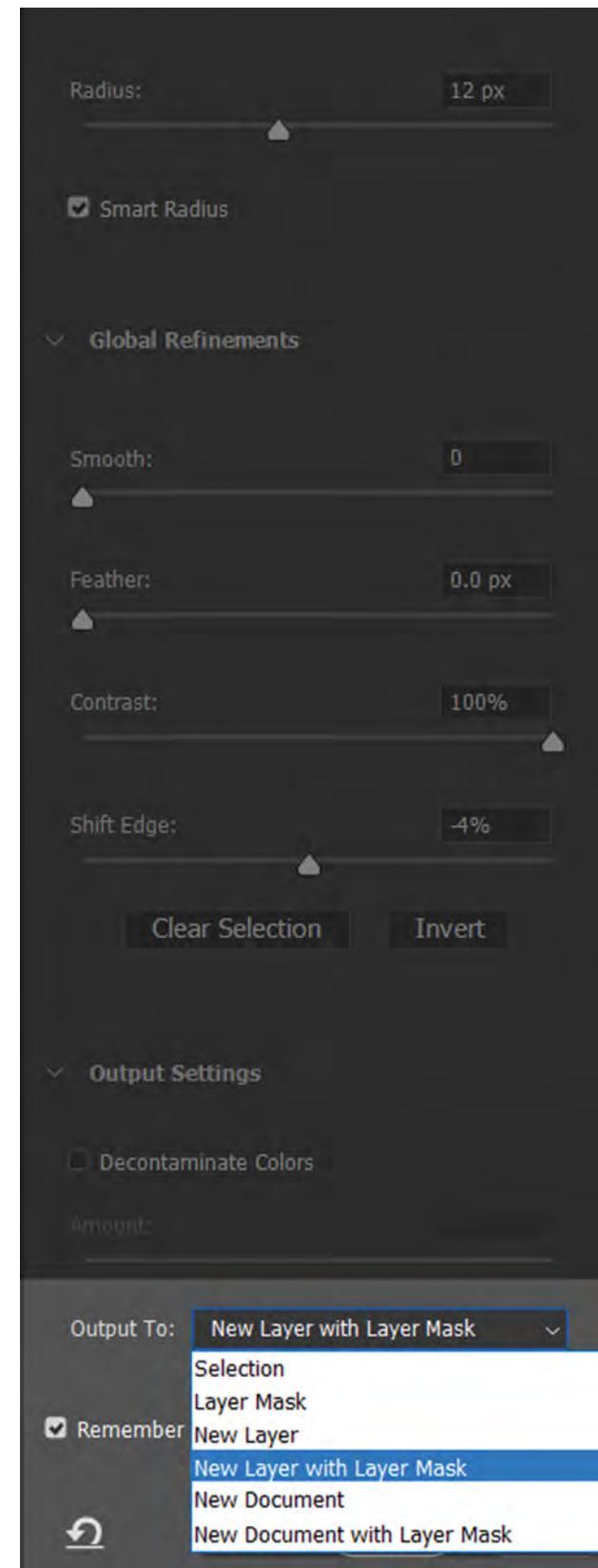
To extract my subjects, I use the quick selection tool and go through the process manually rather than letting Photoshop decide for me with Select Subject. I begin by lightly tapping on the subject, usually in the center of their body, so that Photoshop can target the pixels I'm looking for. Sometimes the algorithm can go too far and grab parts of the background, but a reduction of the selection gives Photoshop the guidance it needs.

Once I have a great selection in place, I move to the Select and Mask option that is available while the Quick Selection tool is active. In this new dialogue, I can use the most powerful aspect of the quick selection process, which is the Radius dialogue and Smart Radius. Check Smart Radius and set a threshold of pixels between 8 and 12, and Photoshop will further refine the edge of the selection and provide you a feathered edge. Of course, there will always be troubled areas of this process, but until Skynet takes over Adobe, you'll have to rely on your own mind to fix these areas with a mask.

To do so, drift down to the Output To dialogue and select New Layer With Mask. When you approve these adjustments, you'll be brought back to your workspace and a new layer will be created with a layer mask. Your original background layer will be turned off so you can see the transparency of the mask.

## REFINING THE MASK

I spend a great amount of time refining this new mask. I go around the perimeter of the subject and paint either black or white on the mask to gently create the perfect selection. This can be a time-consuming process and a bit daunting, but it is essential to your composite. That's because as you move into the final vision and add special effects and other elements, if you have a rough selection of your subject, effects like Outer Glow will reveal those issues and reflect on you as an artist. Take great care with your mask, and you'll get questions like, "How did you get such a sharp, beautiful edge to your subject?"



## WORLD BUILDING

When the subject is ready to go, I create a new document that will become our future composite. I create a 12-inch by 18-inch canvas at 300 ppi in 16-bit mode. A 12x18 image will scale to 24 by 36 without having to adjust crop. It also allows you to keep the document data size a bit smaller, which is key as you continue to add to your composite.

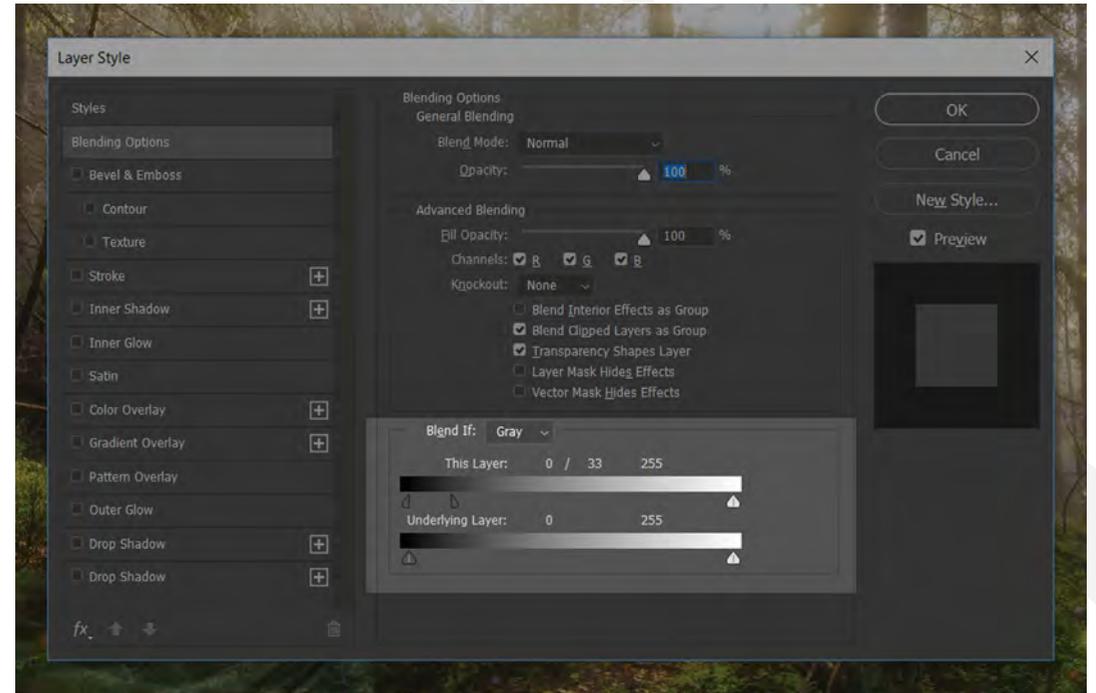
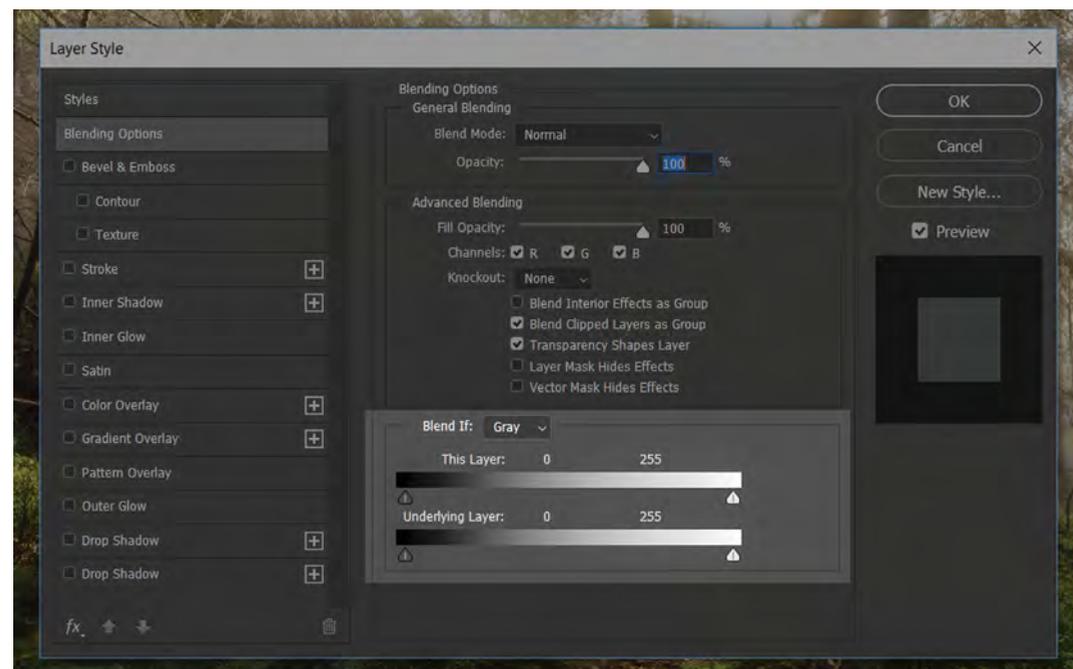
To create a world, I start with the ground the subject is standing on. The stock I use has the same perspective angles at which the subject was shot. If I were kneeling down when I photographed Cassi and then used a stock image of the ground shot from far above, the viewer would know something was horribly wrong.

Once I have that ground in place, I add foreground and background elements to finish the horizon of this world. Lastly, I add an appropriate sky stock that fits the mood of the scene and tonally matches the background.

For this piece, I used only one stock image: the forest. I added a sun flare to the sunlight streaming through the trees to increase the drama and power of the sun.

I blended the dress into the ground foliage to create the illusion that the rays of sunlight were interacting with the sword and Cassi, as if she were actually there.

To blend the dress, I used a simple process in Photoshop called Blend If. Go to the Layer Style window of any layer (Layer/Layer Style/Blending Options) and navigate to the bottom of the window to find the Blend If dialogue. Here you instruct Photoshop to either blend the existing layer with the one beneath it or vice versa. Set your threshold to gray and not red, blue or green. This allows Photoshop to begin the blending process with either the highlights, shadows or midtones of the corresponding layer. Moving the highlight or shadow sliders left and right will yield terrible results.



Instruct Photoshop to use the midtones to feather the effect. Hold down the Alt key while placing your cursor directly in the middle of the triangle symbol. When you click, hold and drag, the triangle splits and you now have midtones to work with. I chose the layer of Cassi and made a duplicate of it, then turned off that duplicate so I could see only the original layer of her. I'll explain why I did that in just a moment. I used the midtones of this layer and started blending the shadows by splitting the triangle on the left. As I brought it toward the highlights, slowly, I watched the interaction of the shadows of the dress with the shadows of the forest beneath it until I found a good balance that made it look like they were intertwined.

Now that duplicate layer comes into play. Since this layer has not had any adjustments via Blend If, I can carefully paint in key areas to finish the effect. I added a Hide All Mask—or “black mask”—to the duplicate layer. I painted white on this mask at an opacity of 100% and a flow of 5%, and gently started bringing the real image of Cassi back into existence. This allowed for a transition to take place between the real image of Cassi and the Blend If layer of her—making it appear as if she were merging with the forest.

To create the sunlight interaction between the sword and Cassi, I created a blank layer above her and then started painting in a soft white/orange color in the same direction of the rays of light. I refined these using a mask until I had a clean edge where the light would hit her body and pass through or be blocked, depending on the area of special effects.

## MAGIC SWORDS

To create the magical sword of the forest, I made a selection of just the blade itself and created a new layer of that. I added an outer glow to the blade (which is why the selection and mask need to be perfect) and expanded the glow out to the maximum size allowed. I made a new blank layer above the blade layer and changed the blending mode of this new layer to Color Dodge. I painted a golden green color into the blade to give it its magical power. I added some glowing dots in a sparkly pattern around the sword to give texture to the magic.

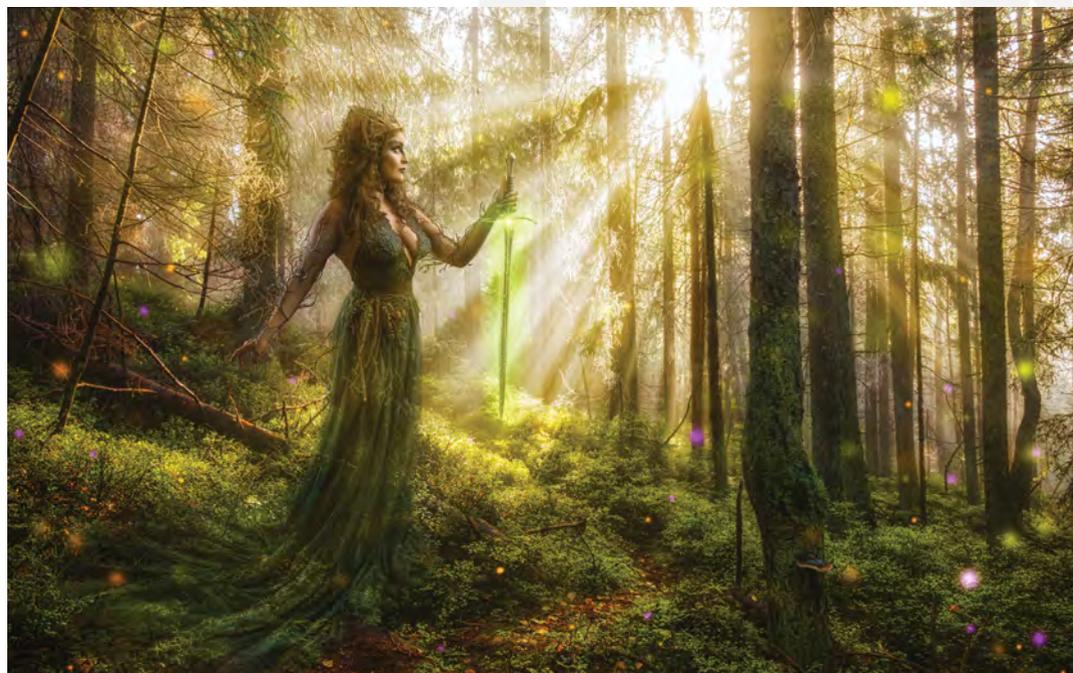


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## FINAL VISION

Once the foundation of this composite was complete, I moved to the most rewarding part, which is adding my own artistic style. Every year I evolve my artistic enhancements. I start by adding a new color palette that I infuse into the whole piece.

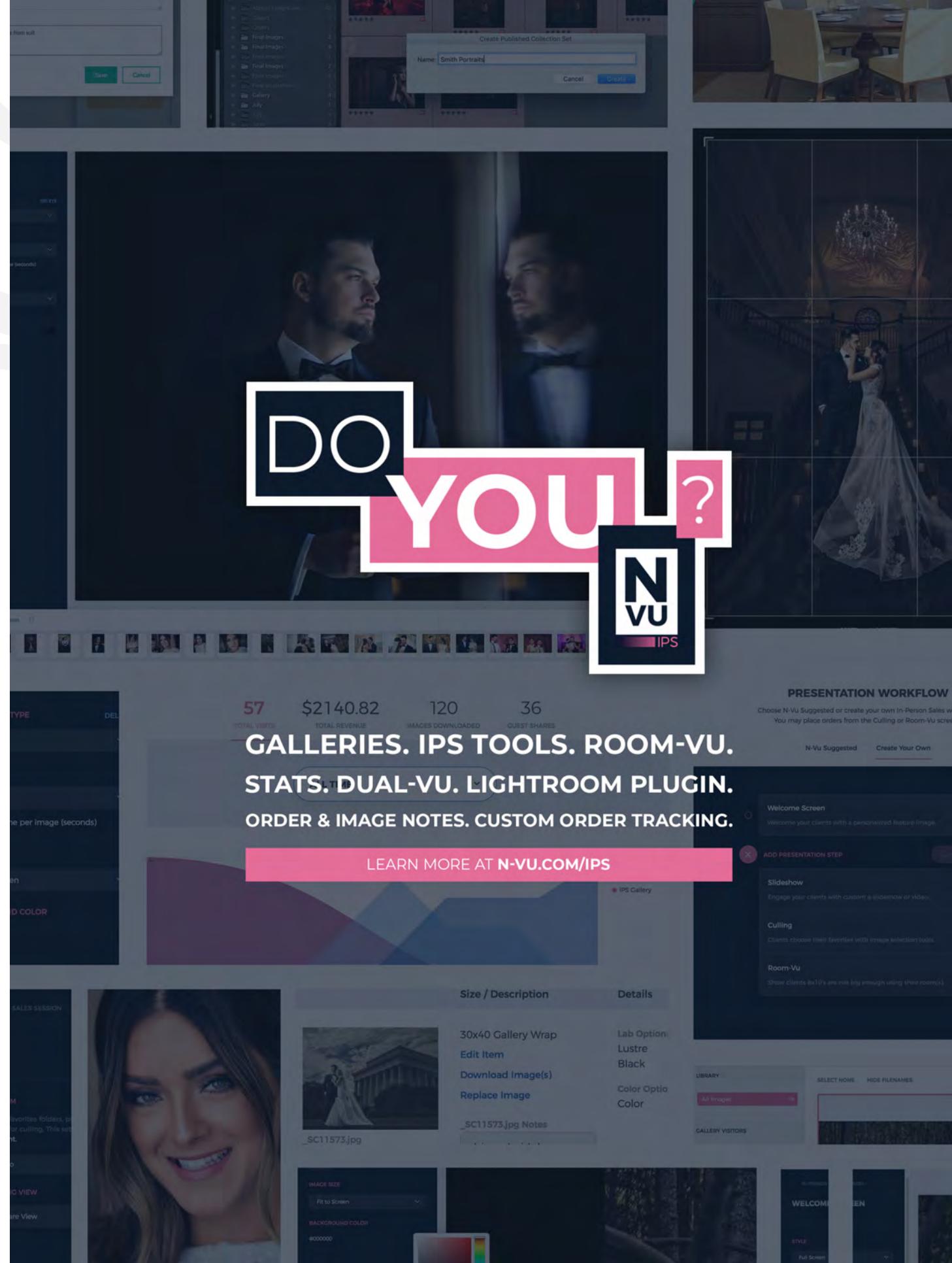
The shadows are a certain color, and then I choose a complementary color for the highlights. This unifies the composite to convince the viewer that it's real. I add textures, sharpening and other adjustment layers to achieve my vision. I add a soft vignette to the image to drive focus to the areas where I want the viewer to begin the journey of my art and the story it's telling.

This piece came to life because I asked myself a simple question: What is speaking to me? This can be the defining moment that leads to a beautiful, award-winning image from an artist like Sal or the creation of a world of fantasy from my imagination. Ask yourself the same question and set yourself up for creative success. Go for a walk in a forest, listen to your favorite music or just stand in a venue for the first time. Close your eyes and listen to the voices around you. ■



David Byrd has an overactive imagination and has used that gift in his art. He has a degree in theater, and worked as an actor and director before turning his attention to photography and Photoshop. It was through those collective disciplines that he realized he could tell stories from his imagination through photography, similarly to how he once did it in the theater.

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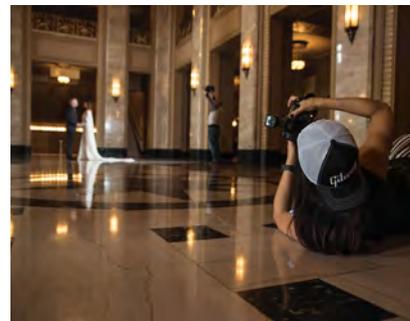
POST-PRODUCTION. SENIORS. PRICING. **AND MORE!**

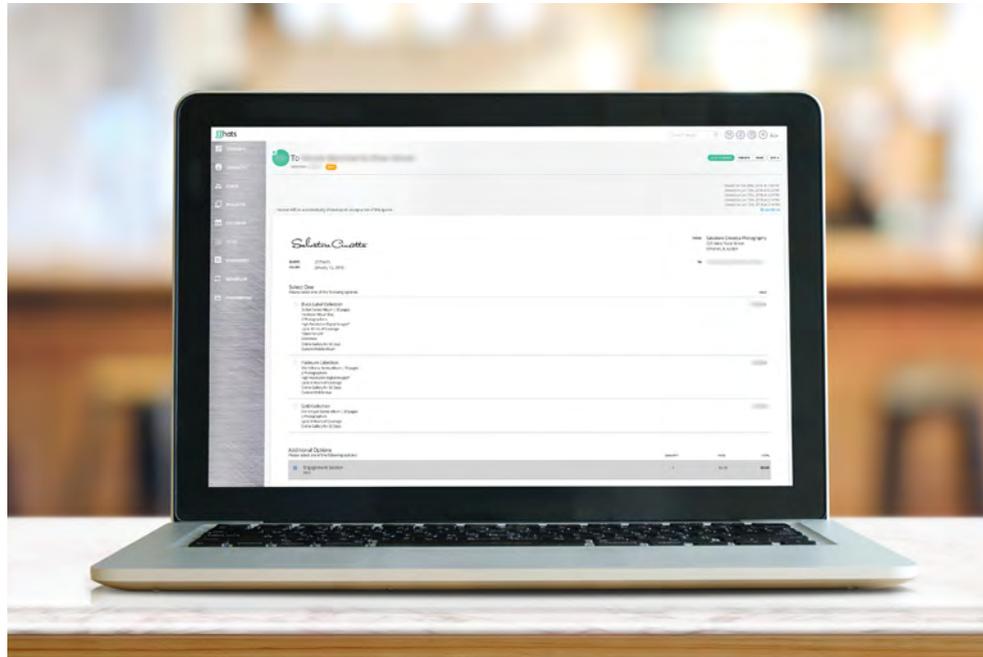
REGISTER NOW

[SHUTTERFEST.COM/REGISTER](http://SHUTTERFEST.COM/REGISTER)



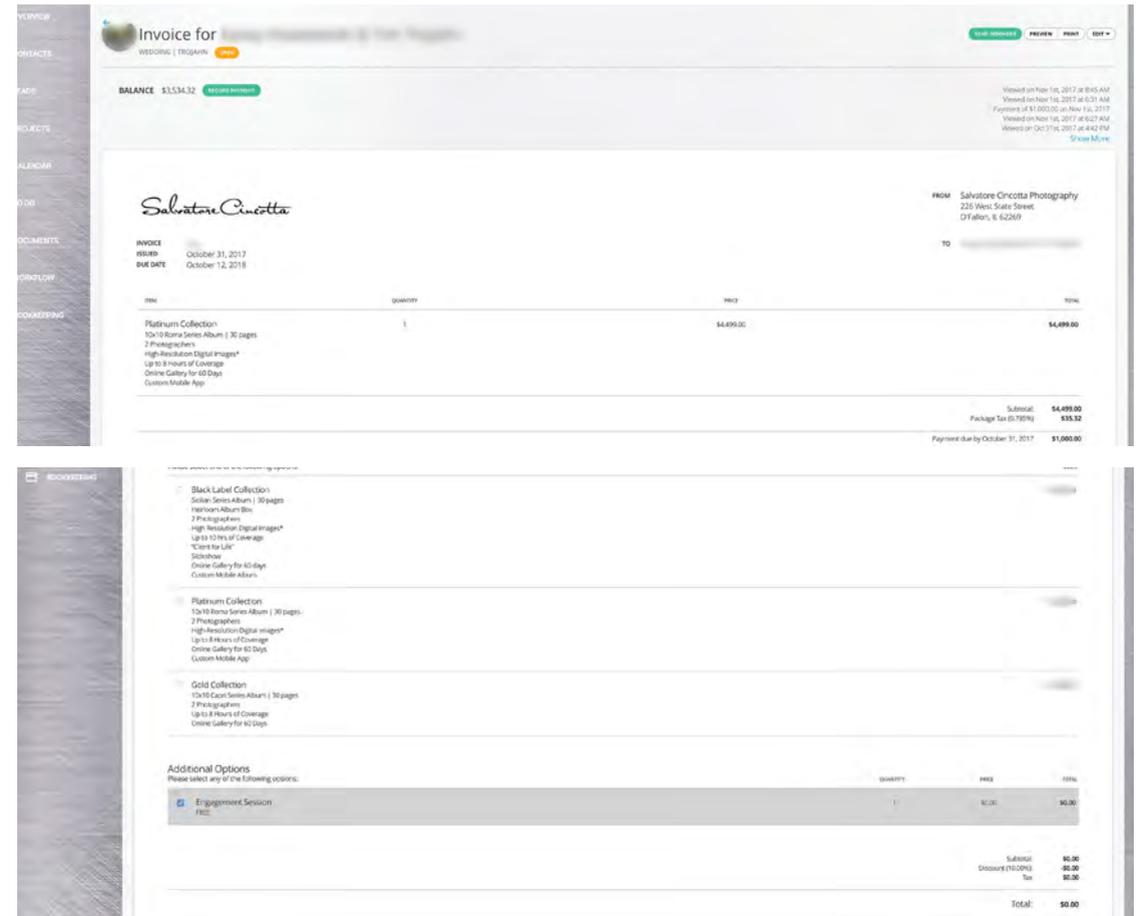
# SHOOT. LEARN. PARTY.





# product spotlight

**17hats** with *Salvatore Cincotta*



## Why use 17hats?

Success is not easy. The journey to success is much harder than the journey of success.

What does that even mean? Small business owners may be very good at their craft, but when it comes to managing customers, deliverables, quotes, contracts, invoices—this is not our gift in life.

17hats helps you tame the chaos of your business and get you back to doing what you love. With 17hats, you have a tool that allows you to put everything in one place via four critical systems—Lead Management, Booking, Onboarding and Fulfillment—for an all-in-one customer service experience.

Sound too good to be true? Check out the video below to learn more.



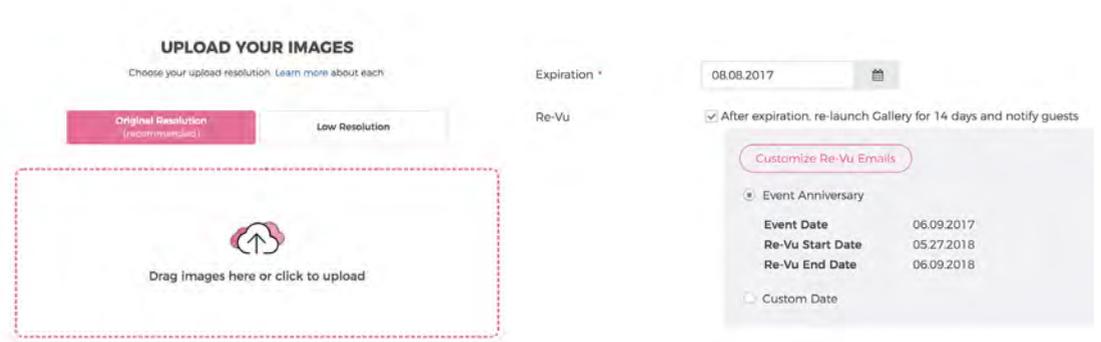
For more information, visit [17hats.com](https://17hats.com)



# Tools

FOR SUCCESS

with Sal Cincotta



Single Upload

Re-Vu



Room-Vu

### Single Upload

Upload your images once. Make slideshows and galleries. Conduct in-person sales.

### Room-Vu

Show your clients exactly what images will look like on their walls with this incredibly easy tool.

### Re-Vu

N-Vu offers you unlimited galleries, unlike their competitors. This allows you to relaunch all your client galleries around the holidays, for example, when you can make more money.

### IPS

IPS software is built right into the tool. Its feature list is long, and includes everything from slideshows to culling to ordering and order tracking.

There is no escaping it: We live in a digital world but we operate in some old-school ways. From photography to our tax returns, we must all learn to operate efficiently and effectively in this new world.

Here are some of the tools I use to run my business smoothly and make maximum use of my time. This isn't just about saving time. It's about giving your customers a unique experience.

### N-Vu // In-Person Sales and Online Galleries

Photographers sell in person or online or both. In our studio, we do both, so we need more than just a gallery. So many tools in the market are half-baked. They are trying to capitalize on new buzzwords like IPS, but they don't understand them or they don't provide complete solutions.

If you do IPS, I guarantee you are using three to five tools to complete your sale, post it online, track orders and sell to your clients. It is pure insanity, a complete waste of money. How many tools are you paying for? Wouldn't it be nice if you had just one? N-Vu IPS is the closest thing to perfect there is on the market, and it will continue to dominate as the industry leader.

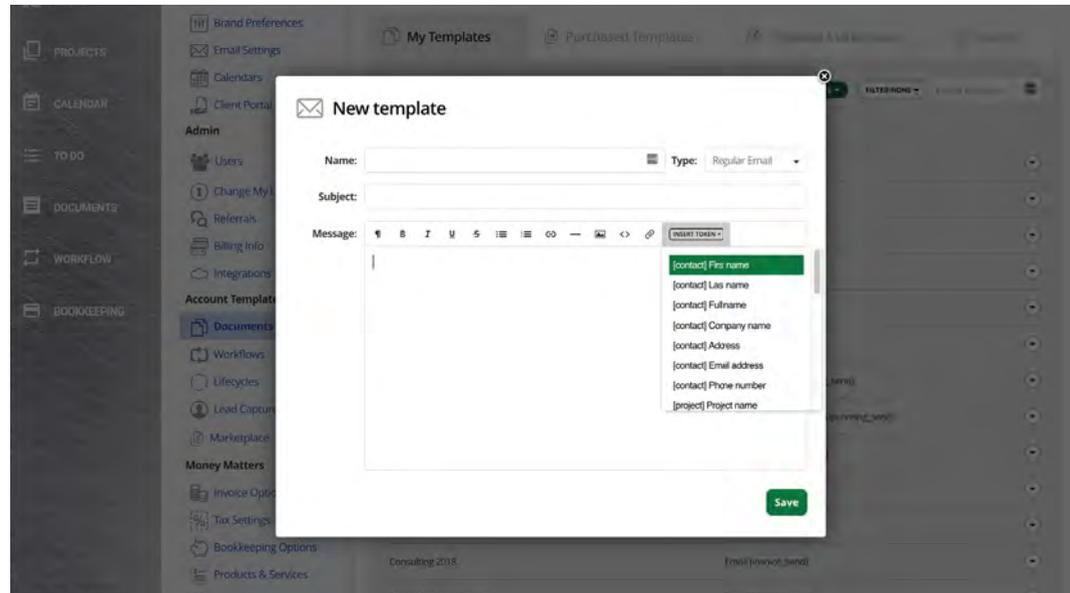
Here are some of my favorite features.

## 17hats // Customer Relationship Management

You have clients who pay you, right? You have invoices and contracts, right? If you work for free, stop reading, I am not talking to you.

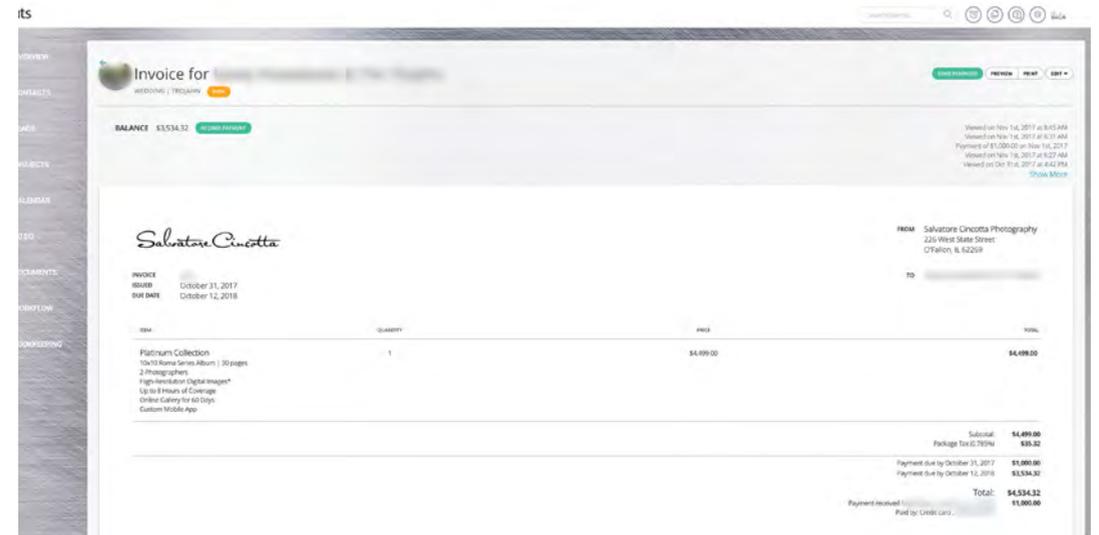
If you want to give your clients a big-business feel with downhome personalization, 17hats is the tool to use. We have been using this tool for over five years. The company is responsive and the product is robust. 17hats helps us manage the chaos. If you are a small business owner, you understand chaos. We live it every day. A tool that can help me stay organized and ensure my clients are not getting lost in the shuffle ensures a smooth ride.

Here are some of my favorite features.



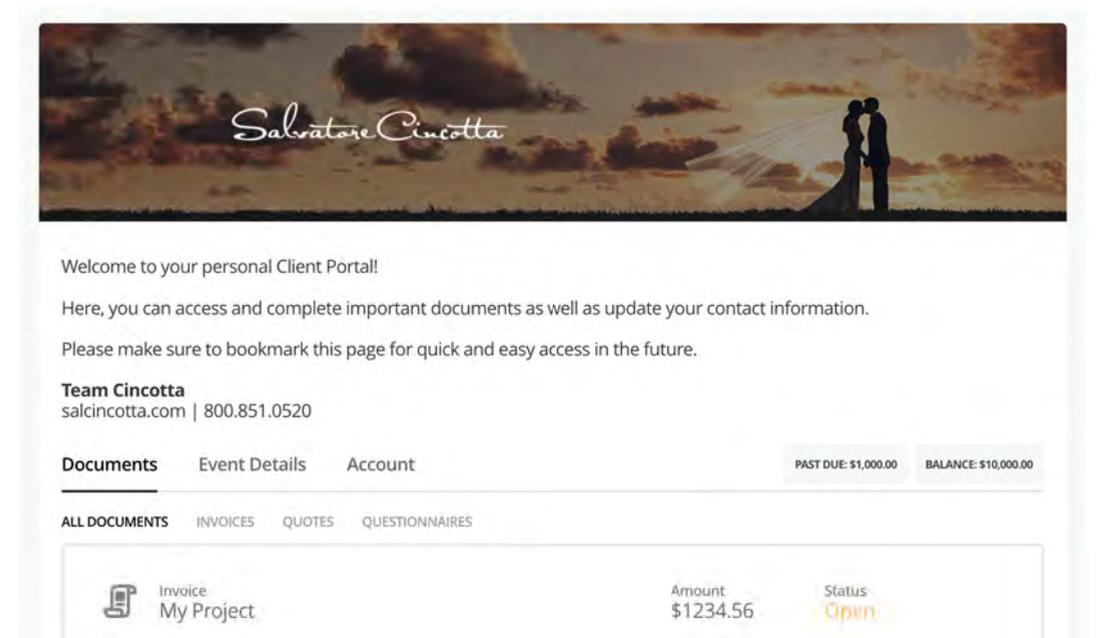
## Automation

Automation tools ensure every client a consistent experience. Imagine automating custom emails or getting reminders sent to you to perform certain tasks, like scheduling a phone call with the bride to review her timeline of her wedding day for any last-minute changes. Imagine a reminder to send your clients a thank-you gift after the shoot.



## Invoicing

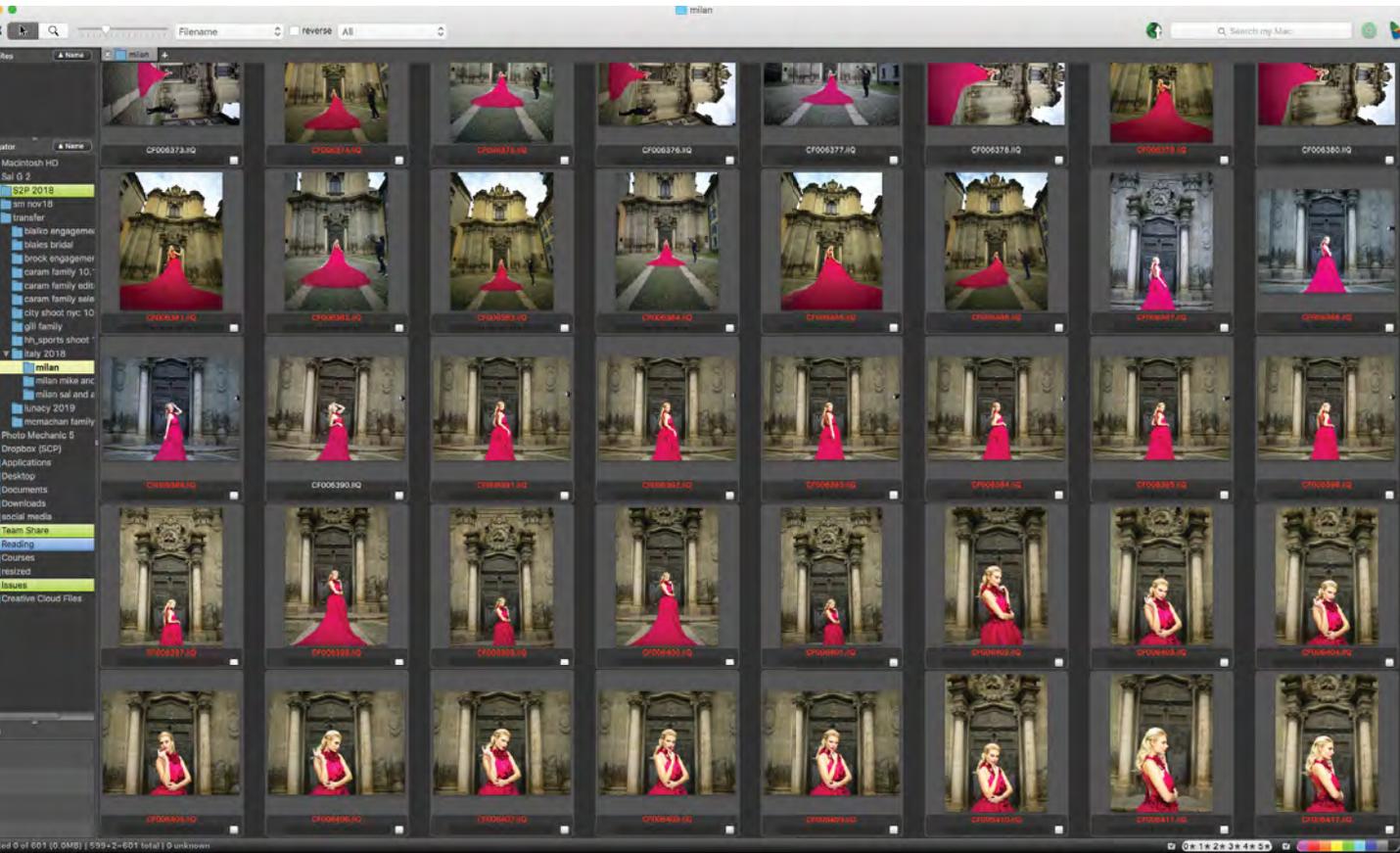
Stop chasing clients down for money. Talk about amateur hour. The invoicing system gives you a hands-off experience. Set automatic reminders that go out when invoices are late. Without money, we can't run our business. The tool makes it simple.



## Client Portal

This is a great new feature that I already love. Clients would constantly email us asking how much they owe, can they make payments, etc. It was taking us time in email and tons of round-trip emails and phone calls to walk them through it. Now with client portals, they can self-service with their own dashboard containing all the details of their account.

To learn more, visit [www.17hats.com](http://www.17hats.com).



### Photo Mechanic 5

For culling images, Lightroom is just not the right tool for the job. It is bloated and slow. If you want to waste hours waiting for your images to render so you can see clearly if eyes are closed, use Lightroom. It's like watching paint dry.

Photo Mechanic is the fastest selection tool I have used. There is not much else to say. The tool is self-explanatory. You click on a folder with your images and they are immediately available and fully visible. Buy this tool. The time you save rendering images will pay for it 10 times over.

To learn more, visit [www.camerabits.com](http://www.camerabits.com).

### NeoFinder // Hard Drive Media Management

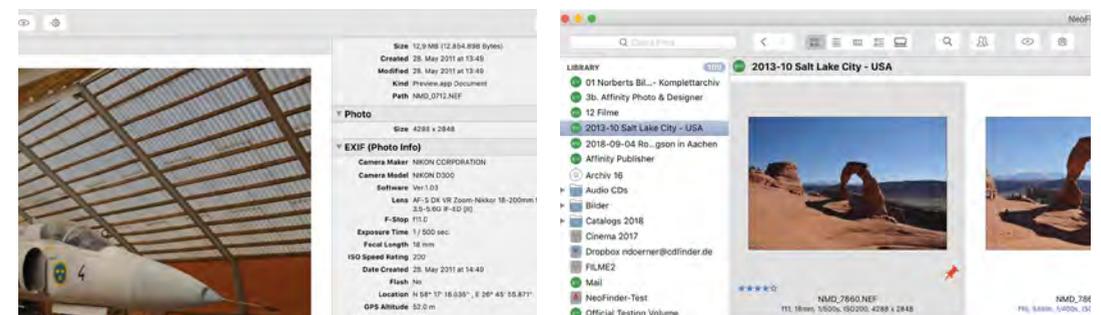
Have you ever had a client call you four years later looking for an image? If you haven't, you will. And if you are not organized, you will spend hours if not days plugging in hard drives trying to find it.

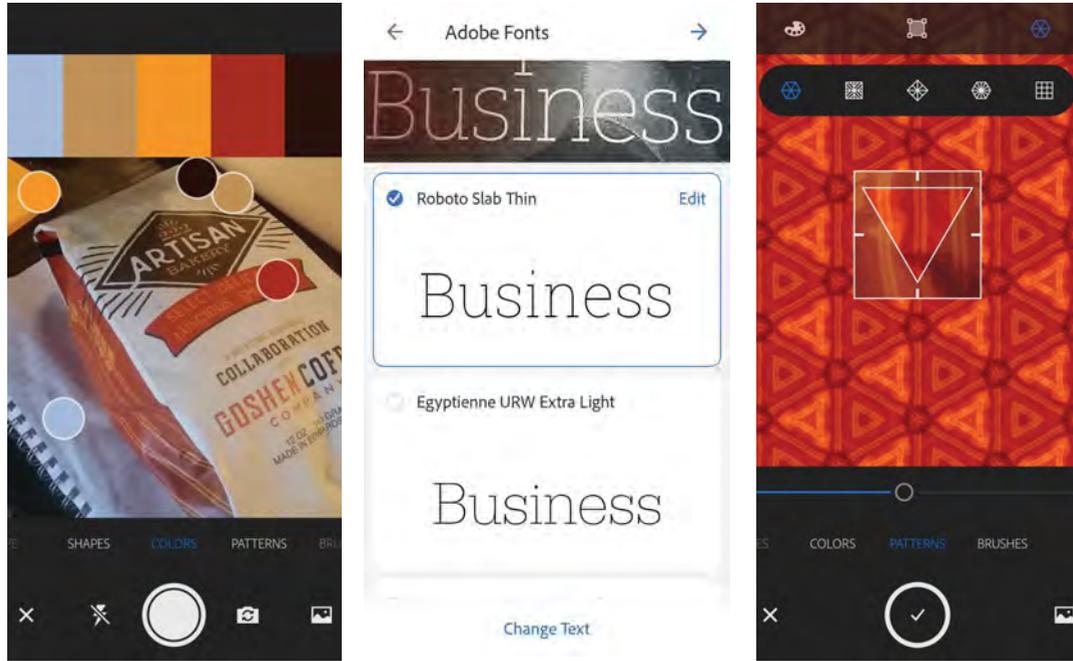
NeoFinder was built to save you time. It is a cataloging tool like no other. When your hard drive is full, you catalog the drive using the tool by clicking a few buttons. That's it. Now unplug your hard drive, turn off the power and store it someplace safe.

Now, when the client comes back to you, all you have to do is open the tool, type in the client name and, within seconds, it will tell you what hard drive it's on.

You expect it to be more complicated than this, but it is that simple. This tool has singlehandedly saved me hours of my life looking for client images for their albums or holiday orders.

To learn more, visit <http://www.cdfinder.de/index.html>.





### Adobe Capture // Asset Creation

Imagine using your mobile camera to capture new patterns, vectors, fonts and color palettes. And then imagine it seamlessly making its way back to Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. If this tool sounds too good to be true, it isn't.

I use this tool constantly to capture the world around me and integrate it with my Adobe Cloud apps to ensure my creative team and my personal computer are all in sync with the new concepts I see in the world around me.

To learn more, visit <https://www.adobe.com/products/capture.html>. ■



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

[salcincotta.com](http://salcincotta.com)

# westcott RAPIDBOX SWITCH

*“Having the right tool for the job is critical to creating the perfect image. Knowing that I can easily switch between light sources and modifiers by simply changing inserts, now that's true power and control!”*

SAL CINCOTTA



PHOTO © SAL CINCOTTA

## How does Sal Switch?

Sal Cincotta switches light inserts on his Rapid Box Switch between studio strobe when he wants more power and speedlights when on location.

The new Switch Series for Rapid Box and Beauty Dish offers 13 interchangeable light mount inserts for 9 versatile light modifiers. Pair with new egg crate grids for total lighting control like never before.

*When will you make the Switch?*

**FJWESTCOTT.COM/SWITCH**



**SAL CINCOTTA**  
TOP PRO PHOTOGRAPHER

Switch patent pending. ©F.J. Westcott Co. All rights reserved.

HOW TO FILM YOUR OWN  
**PROMO  
VIDEO**

with Christine Yodsukar





Back in 2012, we produced our first promo video after attending a conference and seeing that other “rock star” studios had created them. The immediate results after we released that video on our website and Facebook were astounding. We went from getting inquiries that wanted to know if we had ever shot in a dark reception to inquiries saying they knew we were the wedding photographers for them—and what could they do to book us right away? The stark contrast between inquiries before and after releasing our promo video was jaw-dropping. We were amazed that one video had the power to change our inquiry and booking rates. Since then, we’ve seen the same thing happen for other studios when they release their promo video as well. (See that first promo video at [vimeo.com/40055225](https://vimeo.com/40055225).)

You always have the option to hire a professional videography team to produce your promo video from end to end. A good team will create a pretty video for you, but a great team will ask you the right questions, build ideas for you and create something that builds a relationship between you and your ideal customer. Today, you are going to become your own great video team that will create a piece of marketing magic for your studio.

There are two main components to producing an effective promo video for your photography business. You’ll want to think about story and technique. Both are extremely important on their own, but together they become much more powerful.





Image © Christine Yousukkar



# STORY



Image © Christine Yousukkar

The story of your promo video is the part that makes your prospective clients feel something when they watch it. It creates an emotional bond between you and them—before they’ve even met you.

The first thing you want to do is figure out that one thing that makes you different from the other photography studios your prospective clients are looking at. Use those differences to highlight your personality. In our first promo video, we made it clear that we were a husband and wife photo and cinema duo. At that time in our area, we were the only ones who could say that. Other studios were either photo or cinema, and most spouses involved in the business were second shooters rather than full-blown leads like Rich and myself. We knew that our clients loved this about us, but it was only after working with us at their wedding that they really got it. By highlighting that aspect of our operation in our video, couples understood it from the get-go. It helped them make the decision.

The next piece to creating the story for your promo video lies in your “why.” Figure out your why, and feature that in your video. Make your why your overall theme of the video, and you will notice that clients come to you already emotionally attached. Our relationship makes us excited about celebrating other people’s relationships. Our why was: “We love capturing love and we are passionate about people being passionate.” In the video, we talked about our relationship, how we met and what we love about one another. It drove home the fact that this is the reason our couples stories mean the world to us. Not only did it give prospective couples an intimate look at who Rich and I were at the time, but it also made them think about what was special to them about their relationship. When couples filled out the contact form on our website, they included detailed stories about their relationship and how it coincided with ours. They felt close to us because we shared our why. That inspired them to share their own why for getting married.

Imagine an avatar for your ideal client and add that avatar’s characteristics to the video to attract them. In other words, what gets your client excited? How can you include it in your video? Our promo video opens with a silly introduction of Rich and myself. We detail Rich’s mad love for Chipotle burritos, and we see that I may have an unhealthy obsession with platforms and stilettos. Aside from giving more information about who we were as people then, we wanted to call out characteristics of our ideal client so anyone watching the video would immediately know if they were our people. Our ideal couple had at least one person who was a foodie and at least one person who shared my shoe obsession. We even had one client who had a personal connection to Chipotle and kept Rich supplied with free burritos for years.

One other important characteristic of our client avatar that we included was dogs. Dog people love dog people, and we made that clear in the video. Not surprisingly, many of our inquiry forms that came in talked about dogs. Calling out those avatar characteristics works.



Images © Christine Yodsukar

# TECHNIQUE

Now that we have the story basics down, let's get technical. Video is a much different beast than photography. Although the transition may seem like an easy one, video has so many more moving parts. Here are the basics.

Set your camera to 24 frames per second. If you think of a movie like a flipbook, the number of pages you have in the book is equal to the number of frames you have in a second. Why 24 frames per second? It has become the industry standard to achieve that "cinematic" look. Next, set your shutter speed to 1/50th of a second. This also helps you achieve the cinematic look. If your shutter speed is faster than that, you can experience a flicker from any lights other than the sun as well as a completely different feel when watching it.

You might want to think about adding ND filters if you want your aperture to be wide open while filming. The filters darken the exposure, allowing you to use a shallow depth of field. If you want a deeper depth of field, ND filters may not be necessary.

Put your camera on a tripod. You are going to be filming yourself just like we did when we made our promo video in 2012, and you can't be both behind the camera and in front of it at the same time. A tripod will be your best friend. One of the key tools in video production is a solid tripod with a fluid head. A fluid head gives you smooth tilt and pan movements versus a normal ball head, which locks a camera in place. To automate a tilt up/down movement in your video, keep your camera slightly off balance on your fluid head so that when you let go of it, the camera tilts smoothly up or down, depending on what you're going for. Once you've got your camera set, run into frame and perform your action while your fluid head takes care of the camera movement.

Another way to add camera movement into your video if you need to film by yourself is by placing a slider unevenly so that when you let go of the camera, gravity slowly pulls your camera in the opposite direction. This adds additional production value into your video, and also keeps your audience completely oblivious to the fact that you shot it by yourself.

Camera-movement plugins offer another way to add additional movement into your scenes in post-production. After you've shot your scenes, if they seem too static, adding a simple camera-movement plugin to your clips will give your video a bit more life and make it look like you had a camera crew.



Images © Christine Yodsukar

behindtheshutter.com



Image © Christine Yodsukar



Image © Christine Yodsukar

Plan your promo video with story and technique in mind. Don't just jump into it without this important pre-production phase. This could mark a huge shift in your career. Make it count. ■

**sm** **LEARN MORE.**  
 Click here or check us out at  
[youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine](https://youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine)



Christine hails from Boston and currently splits her live/work/play time between Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon, and the rest of the world. Along with her husband and business partner, she took her wedding business from \$100 weddings to a six-figure income in three years. She's passionate about sharing her knowledge and can be seen frequently on WeTV as a wedding photography expert.

[theyodsukars.com](https://theyodsukars.com)

ImagePROGRAF



ImagePROGRAF



# OBSESSED

## "Twin Flames"

Justin Aversano, Photographer

*Justin Aversano is an artist and curator working within the New York art scene. He organizes shows and public art exhibitions around the country. He is also the owner and operator of Brooklyn Lightroom, a printing, scanning, and photography studio.*

### On Twin Flames:

"I started a series of 100 twin portraits to pay respect to my fraternal twin, to understand who I am through other twins. A healthy obsession that keeps me motivated in finishing what I started and doing it for the right intention, to feel complete in my immersion into the story and to create a large body of work to share."



### On Obsession:

"When you're an artist, you obsess over the minute details because you want the piece to be perfect to your own standards. When I'm printing 100 pictures, I want to make sure that I can print all 100 without any clogs, without any banding, without any problems. I want it to be perfect from 0 to 100."

### Why I Print:

"When you're holding the print, there is a great satisfaction in seeing something you made in your hands. I put the pieces in different order to see if there is a dialogue between images and where they should be displayed when I have editions of the prints. I believe in this project and I know that when I print and exhibit it, I will recoup all the money I spent, gain income and create new projects."



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CRAFTING THE **PERFECT**  
*client experience*

with Michael Anthony



In this article, I look at the parts of the client experience that make the biggest difference in your business. It shouldn't come as a surprise that customer experience is tied directly to your bottom line. But do you know how important it really is? How do you grow a business where you automate much of the customer experience?

The customer experience is made up of many different parts. The most basic thing to understand is that it is the totality of all of your client's interactions with your brand, starting from the moment they find you and visit your website, to the final delivery of their album. If you are a portrait photographer, those processes can be fairly quick, but wedding photographers will likely be with their clients for a year or more. Throughout that entire process, there are many different interactions that clients will have with your brand. One hiccup in any of those processes can affect the overall client experience and cost you future revenue.



## WHAT ARE CLIENTS REALLY BUYING FROM US?

A common misconception is that clients are coming to us to purchase images. Not true. Customers have an unlimited number of options to choose from. Don't believe me? Have a friend go on Facebook and ask for a photographer recommendation. If you are in a major metro area, you will likely get over a hundred responses.

If the field is so stacked, how are you going to stand out in that market? The answer is by providing more than just imagery. Overwhelm your clients with an experience they can't stop talking about.

The experience your clients have is synonymous with your brand. Giving your clients a negative experience, whether it's late delivery or being so slammed that you lose track of production, can lose you referrals.

Let's take a look at the factors that go into crafting the perfect client experience.



## IMAGERY

There are likely hundreds of photographers in your area, so what are you going to do to stand out? If a client searches for a popular wedding venue in your area, are they going to find your work or your competitors'? Having unique imagery is key to getting noticed. Your style doesn't have to be dark and dramatic or bright and airy, but something about it has to make clients feel that they have not seen any other work like it.

If you can't look objectively at your own portfolio, ask a former client what it was about your work that they found intriguing enough to reach out to you. And that should be a question that you ask new clients as well.

Are you doing your best to make your clients look flattering with the right lighting and posing? Are you showing them that you are professional in all areas of photography?

Clients are becoming better at judging a professional photographer's portfolio, so we have to continuously do more to stand out. Are your images telling a story? It's not enough to just have pretty photos. You need images that convey emotion. While we don't all agree on a single style of photography, one thing that everyone can agree on is that photos that tell a story can affect us deeply and leave a lasting impression.

Our cinematic style of imagery is unique to the way we see the world, but your style may be 100% different. Follow the above advice no matter what style you shoot, and you will begin to attract a client who shares your same vision of the world.

The goal is to create imagery that exceeds your client's expectations.

And speaking of exceeding your client's expectations, is your editing consistent every time you deliver a set of images? Can you provide the same turnaround time in July as you can in January? If you are struggling in that department, it's time to outsource your editing. We turned to Evolve Edits' premier program, and it changed our business forever. Quick turnaround time became a competitive advantage. I was able to spend that extra 15 to 20 hours a week on building relationships.

In 2015, we started outsourcing our Signature Edits, and as of 2018, Evolve handles our entire backend process. I shoot the weddings, train staff, do the marketing, and I let the editors edit. I can't stress the importance enough of becoming a manager in your business rather than a technician. (For an in-depth look at the differences between the roles in your company—manager, entrepreneur, technician—read the book *The E-Myth Revisited*.)

## BRANDING

Is your branding consistent? Does your logo communicate the desired message to your demographic? Make no mistake about it: A logo is about communication. If you bought your logo from someone who doesn't understand your demographic but just asked you some basic questions, you did it all wrong. Your logo needs to appeal to your demographic, and it usually takes a professional to understand how to communicate that message. Let the editors edit and the designers design. Your job as a business owner is to manage.

One of the things that brands like Gucci, Starbucks, Coca-Cola, Nike, Under Armour, Chanel and McDonald's all have in common is that they spent big money to research their demographics before hiring a marketing firm to create their logo. There is a clear and concise message that all of their logos send to their clientele. Your logo will become the flag of your business, so invest in it.



Image © Michael Anthony

## WEBSITE OPTIMIZATION

Your website is your digital storefront. There is no excuse for a poorly designed website. It must showcase your work and make it easy for clients to book. It's better to have multiple images on your homepage rather than a single image. It shows the consistency in your portfolio without visitors having to click multiple times.

Make it easy for your clients to book with you or make an inquiry. Keep it to two clicks or less. The more clicking they have to do, the less time they will stay on your website, which is bad for SEO.

## LEAD INTAKE

Is your lead intake consistent? Are you using tools like 17hats or Tave to keep track of your clients? What about the initial email you send them? Does it have a price sheet? If it does, then you are likely encouraging window-shopping. The goal of your email response is to get your clients to a consultation. If you are trying to qualify your clients before meeting them, give them a starting price. Just keep in mind that if you do this, research has shown that clients believe they are going to pay the lowest number they see, so make sure that number is realistic.

## CALLS OR EMAILS?

We always try to get ahold of our leads on the phone. Millennials don't like answering their phone, but when we do get ahold of them, it's much easier to convey the value in a consultation. Try to book them for that consult by explaining to them the process of what you will go over. In essence, you are selling them on the idea of coming in to meet you. That way, you can properly manage their expectations and make sure they understand your expectations of them. This is the first step in creating happy clients. You wind up with angry clients when you don't meet their expectations or mismanage them.



Image © Michael Anthony

## VISION BOARDS

We started doing vision boards earlier this year to hone our wedding-day coverage to a client's individual tastes. Every client has their own tastes, and having a guide of some sort helps you better manage their expectations and set yourself up for a successful viewing session.

We use Pinterest to do this because of the SEO benefit and because it provides our clients a simple place to put images. If you are hesitant to use Pinterest, ask them to send you images.

An important thing to take away from the vision board process is that you don't want your clients to think that it is a shot list. Tell them you are using the board to get an overall aesthetic rather than copying the images directly. Manage their expectations.



Image © Michael Anthony

## SHOOT PROCESS

The shoot itself should come natural to many of you, but aside from what we talked about in imagery, how do you ensure your clients are enjoying the shooting experience?

You need a consistent, repeatable process. When we shoot, we vary our focal length and orientation to create different compositions of the same pose. Next we add a motion pose, then we do a wide creative. We repeat that with every background we shoot. Call it mundane, but it is consistent, and that is key to providing a good client experience.



Image © Michael Anthony



Image © Michael Anthony

## DELIVERABLES

A tight delivery process ensures a good client experience because delivery is the easiest thing to mess up and it's the last process in the client experience.

If you are new to in-person sales (IPS), you will find that they make it easy to stay on top of your clients' orders. If you don't have the infrastructure in place, in about a year, you will be drowning in your own success. It's easy to miss an order, edit, deadline or product type. Create a spreadsheet to track production and look into N-Vu as a solution for your clients. N-Vu offers built-in ordering and tracking in the near future. There isn't a better tool than N-Vu.

Set your clients' expectations appropriately. You must get this right, or you will face backlash almost immediately. Tell them all of their products or services will take two to three weeks longer than they actually will. When you deliver early, you set yourself up for happy clients. And if you nail that last piece of the client experience, you will have a mobile sales force that will be more than happy to refer you. ■



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

[michaelanthonyphotography.com](http://michaelanthonyphotography.com)

# G2

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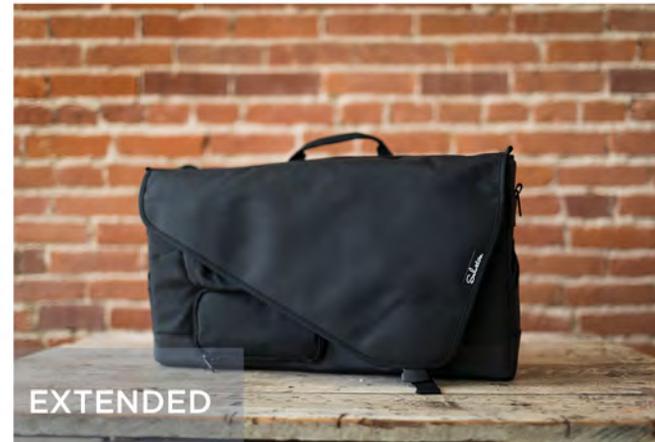
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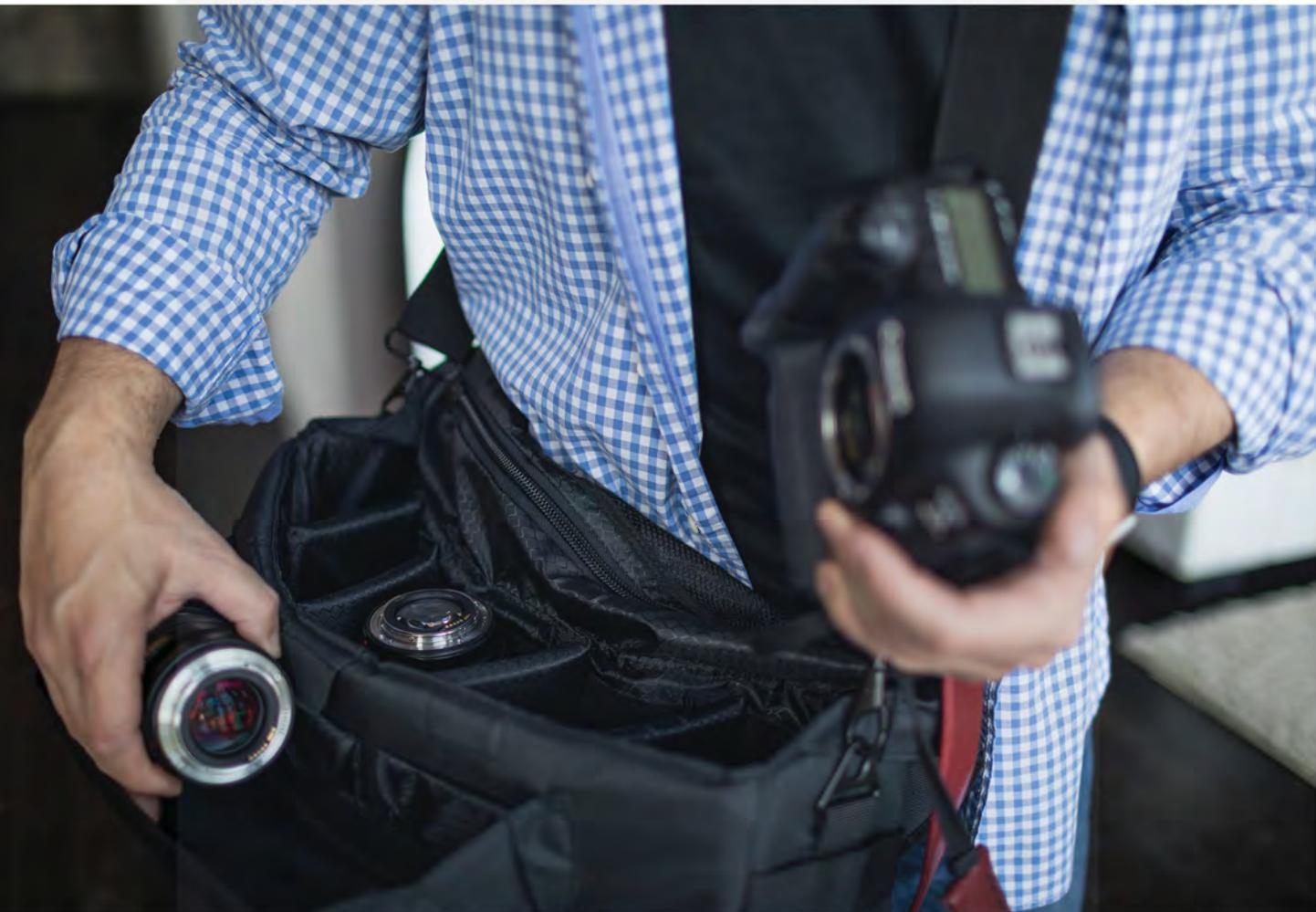
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# PERFECTING YOUR **DIGITAL** — WORKFLOW —

with Vanessa Joy





**"It's digital.  
You can't even tell."**

I remember the switch from film to digital like it was yesterday. We had to convince our clients that shooting with digital didn't sacrifice quality. We'd have them look at wedding albums with film and digital images and ask if they could pick out which was which. I recall being proud when they thought a digital image was a film one.

And look where we are now. I'm about to write an article about your workflow...and it's going to be all digital. If I wrote this 15 years ago, a computer wouldn't even have come into the equation.

But what does that mean for you? Has life gotten easier? Nope. It has gotten harder. You have more to do and more possible ways to do it (i.e., screw it up). Clients are more demanding than ever (I actually had one the other day who, after I gave her 10 preview pictures, asked for more before the proofs were ready). Marketing is a constant effort. So how do you keep up and keep your sanity?

## CLIENTS COME FIRST

Client experience should be your number-one concern. What does their journey look and feel like throughout their time with you? Are there parts of your relationship where there's dead air? Are they waiting too long for images or products?

It can be easy to forget what photography looks like from the client's perspective when we're knee deep in business tasks. Whatever workflow decisions you make, keep their experience in mind. Always communicate the process with them and send reminders (I do mine via 17hats) so they know you have them in the forefront of your mind.





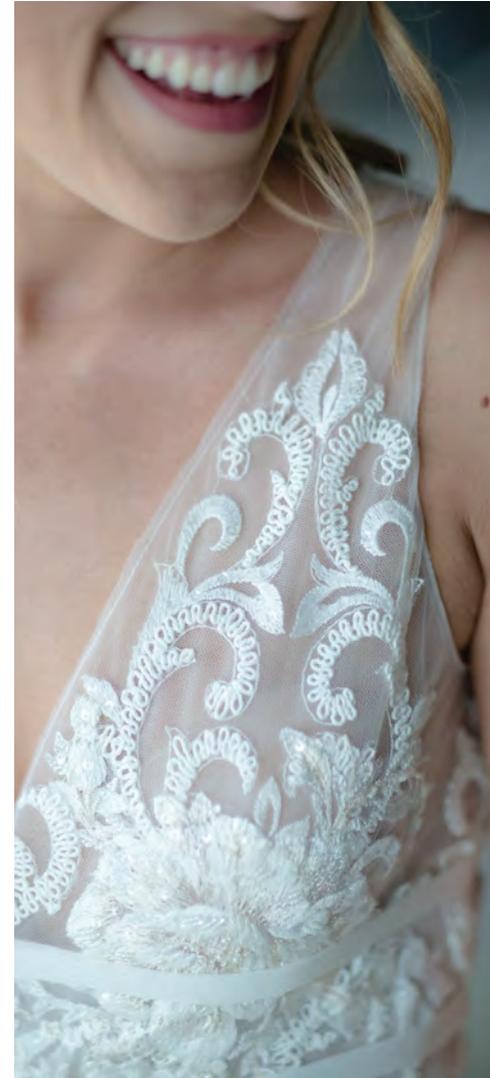
Image © Vanessa Joy

## PUT MARKETING IN YOUR WORKFLOW

One of the biggest mistakes I see photographers make in their workflow is forgetting that marketing needs to be included. You may bitch about the constant demands of social media marketing, but be happy about it. You have a free, open forum to market your business indefinitely. Use it.

Think about how you share images with other vendors. At what point do you select images for your blog, Instagram, Pinterest and Facebook? If you're an event photographer, when and how do you communicate with the venue about sharing an album of images for their sales room?

I use Instagram for a lot of communication with the venue. It tends to be a lower barrier to entry in getting contact information. I send photos that night that I've done for a same-day edit (see my checklist at [www.breatheyourpassion.com/sde](http://www.breatheyourpassion.com/sde)), and build a relationship from there. When the proofs are complete, I pick all of the favorites and we submit to publications via Two Bright Lights. Whatever you decide to do, make sure it's a staple in your workflow or you'll find it easily slipping away from you.



Images © Vanessa Joy

## GET HELP WHERE YOU NEED IT

Thankfully, with the onset of digital photography, there's also been an explosion of companies that help photographers with it. I've found my happy place with Freedom Edits ([www.freedomedits.com/vanessajoy](http://www.freedomedits.com/vanessajoy) gets you \$50 to try them out). They cull my images, process them according to my style and upload them to my online galleries. It's super fast, too.

I cannot imagine going back to having to cull and edit my photos anymore. The drudgery would kill my creativity and limit the number of jobs I could take on and the amount of money I could make.

It's the same thing with album designs. While I love using Fundy Designer for my designs, I commission an incredible graphic designer to put together my predesigns. It helps my album sales tremendously, and I'm incredibly inspired to see how someone else sees my imagery and tells the story of a wedding day.



## STREAMLINE YOUR PROCESSES

As much as I'd like to think I can roll over, snap some pics and sign autographs all day, that's just not realistic. I recently saw a beautiful meme of a ballerina's feet. One foot was wildly beautiful, perfectly en pointe in her pretty pink ballet slipper. The other foot was in the same pointed position but without the ballet shoe. You could see broken toes, cut-up toenails and bandages everywhere. The message with it was: "Everyone wants the success, but they don't want the work." Amen, ballerina. Amen.

Just because you're going to live and breathe photography doesn't mean that you can't be smart about the work you have to do. Here's a list of my favorite three digital tools that help me manage the tasks that I personally have to do.

**IFTTT** is an app that fulfills commands based on cause and effect scenarios. If I post on Instagram, it automatically posts the photo (not the link) on Twitter. If it's going to rain today, it sends a reminder to my phone for me to take my umbrella in the morning.

**Captio** lets you email yourself in one tap. It's perfect for people like me who use their inbox as a task list.

**Later** is useful to my social media manager, who loves it. It's primarily focused on Instagram (which is great because so am I), but also posts to Facebook and Pinterest and others. The best part is that the articles these guys send to their mailing list are fantastic. I get so much education from them on social media trends and tips. I'm never going to leave them.

Here are my top three photo workflow tools:

**Photo Mechanic** is the fastest culling and renaming tool ever. It flows effortlessly and makes it possible for me to quickly find my favorite photos the night of a wedding for the same-day edit.

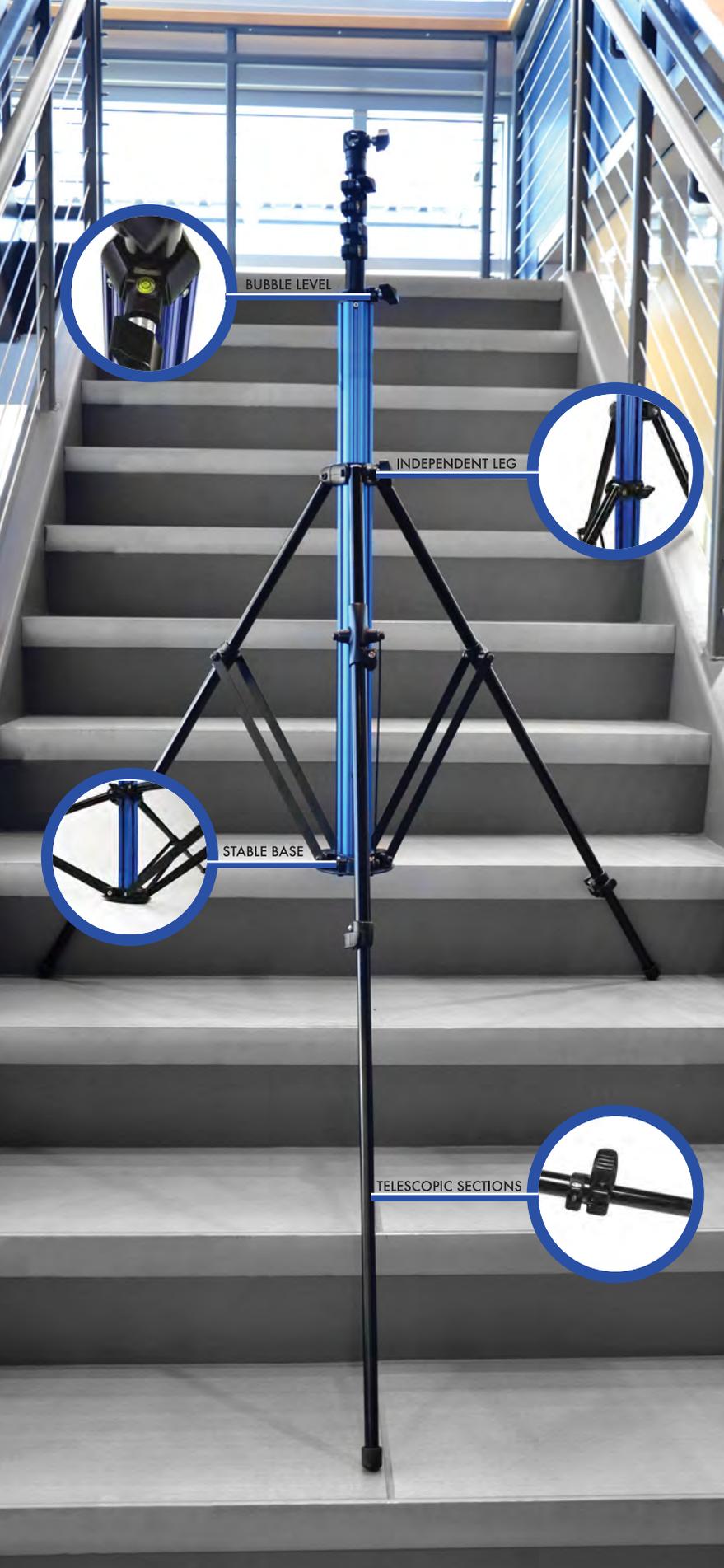
**Blogstomp** is part of my same-day edit display. I've gotten away from logo-ing my images for social media. Using a digital picture frame, I display perfectly logoed images from the wedding day. That's brand recognition all night long.

**Fundy Design Suite** is helpful during the sales session. Although I don't do the initial design, I sit with my clients in the album sales session and completely finish their album design right in front of them. We make whatever changes they want and it's done by the end of a two-hour sales session. And since I started using these tools, my clients have been tripling the size of their albums this year.





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I hope this gives you some perspective for your digital workflow. It's taken a long time from film to mastering this, and I want it to take you much less time—that is, until everything is virtual/augmented reality and it all changes again. ■



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.

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THE  
**BUSINESS CORNER**

# Your Dream Studio: Digital Product Pricing Strategies

with Jeff & Lori Poole



## WORKING DIGITAL PRODUCTS INTO YOUR PRICE LIST

For the past two months in The Business Corner, we've been building your price list from the ground up by first determining a retail value for each product you sell. In October, we began establishing prices for products based on your time invested and the hard costs to produce each product—essentially using cost-based pricing as a foundation (October 2018, “Your Dream Studio: Understanding Cost of Sale and Markup”). Last month, we looked at alternatives to the cost-based pricing model, examining products and situations for which cost-based pricing doesn't work (November 2018, “Your Dream Studio: Strategies Beyond Cost-Based Pricing”). One product we briefly discussed last month that breaks the cost-based mold is digital files. For this month's theme of digital strategies, let's further explore how to price and sell digital files.



## THE DIGITAL DEBATE

Whether or not to sell/include digital files has been a hotly debated topic for the past decade, and will likely continue. In an age when everyone has a phone in their pocket, our clients are becoming increasingly digitally savvy. They are used to owning every photo they take in digital format. They demand shareability. They understand filters, presets and other basics of retouching. On the other hand, many clients do not understand the amount of post-production that can go into a photograph. It's not as simple as snap, then filter. Clients want the files. Do we appease them?

On one side of the debate are those who want to service client demand. Many photographers feel that if they do not offer files, their clients will shop elsewhere. Many view files as simply another product to be sold. Some photographers point out that prints 8x10 and smaller are often not profitable—so why not let the client pay for the file and make their own prints?

On the other side of the debate are those who recognize the potential threat that digital files pose to print sales. If a client is able to make their own prints from professional files, this can kill the sale of printed products. Many photographers are also concerned about the poor print quality a client may receive from a consumer lab, reflecting poorly on the photographer's work.

There is validity on both sides of the argument. There is also a ton of gray in this black-versus-white debate. Gauge your own stance by asking yourself these questions:

- Do you want clients sharing their images on social media? Why or why not?
- Do you care if clients retouch or add filters to their images?
- What are your concerns with clients printing their images? Quality? Loss of sale? Both?
- Is there a set of rules or compromises you can create that would make you comfortable with clients printing their images?



## CONTROLLING YOUR DIGITAL COSTS

Of course, there are many variables in the situation above. The most important is the amount of time spent retouching. Many photographers opt not to retouch their digital files at all, instead offering them to their clients as “digital negatives” or “digital proofs” rather than finished artwork. Retouching can be used as leverage to encourage print purchases. For images that are printed, keep time costs under control by aiming for five minutes or less for most images. Check out the bonus video that accompanies this article for tips on keeping your retouching time down. Of course, exceptions to this five-minute rule apply. If your specialty is digital composites and fantasy artwork, it’s obviously going to take you more than five minutes. And that’s fine—as long as you’re charging accordingly.

To reclaim even more of your time, consider outsourcing. Jeff and I have been clients of Evolve Edits for quite some time. (Full disclosure: There is a relationship between Evolve Edits and *Shutter Magazine*.) Evolve does all of our color corrections, and sometimes culling and/or composite retouching. The amount of time we save is worth way more than the cost for their services. We simply work the costs into our cost-of-sale calculation. We then reinvest the time gained into marketing, shooting and other moneymaking activities.

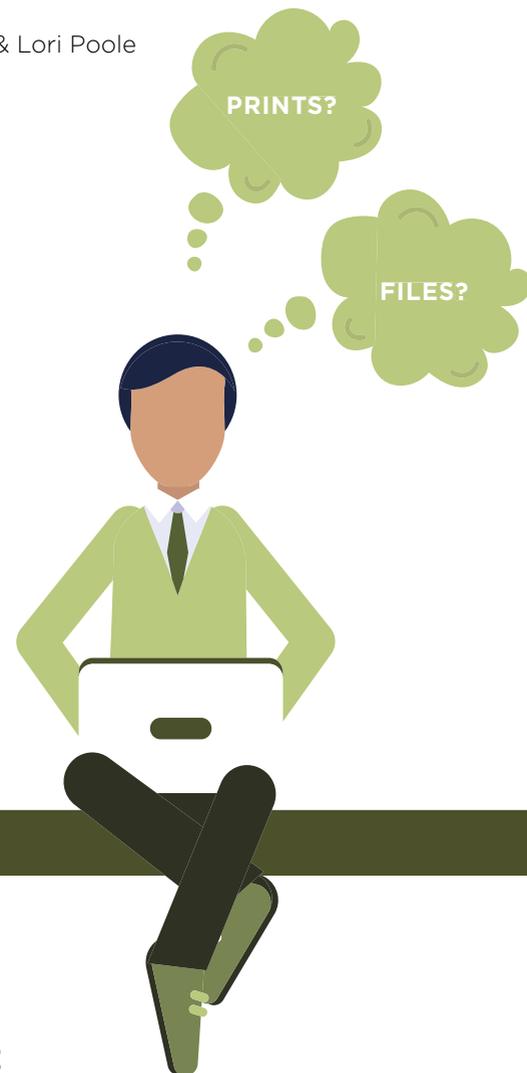
## “DIGITAL FILES DON’T COST ME ANYTHING”—AND OTHER MYTHS

While it may not seem immediately obvious, digital files have a cost associated with them. Remember that cost-based pricing includes your time to create that product. With digital files, you have to download the images, cull, color correct, crop...maybe even retouch. How much time do you spend retouching your images? Are you retouching every image before the client sees them? To remain efficient, it is important to keep your retouching time under control.

To put it in actual numbers: Let’s say you spend 30 minutes retouching an image and your time is worth \$25 an hour. Half an hour, at \$25 per hour, is \$12.50 in time-cost. For a 25% cost of sale, you would need to charge a minimum of \$50 per image for every image in the proof set. If you are proofing 50 images, that would come out to \$2,500 for the set, simply to account for your time. And even if the client wants only 10 images, you still have to charge the \$2,500 because you’ve already spent the time retouching all 50. You can see how this can get out of hand quickly.

If you are shooting a session and delivering all the retouched files for \$200, that should tell you your files are worth more. We often hear photographers say, “I don’t have to charge for my time because I just retouch on the weekends/while my kids are sleeping/etc.” This is another myth. Incidentally, these are often the same photographers who spend all their time editing for very little profit. Time is money. To retouch 50 files at half an hour apiece is 25 hours worth of work—not including shooting the session. That’s nearly a full workweek. \$200 is not sustainable for that amount of work.





## CONSIDERATIONS BEYOND COST OF SALE

As we discussed in last month's article, digital files require other considerations when coming up with a retail price. The biggest is the lost opportunity to sell prints. If you assume that a client will not purchase a print once they have the file, you need to charge at least as much for the file as you would for the print.

Further, if you assume that a client who has all of the files will not buy any printed products, you need to price the full set of files around the price of your target sale. If your target sale is \$2,000, the full set of files à la carte should be around \$2,000.

Selling individual files à la carte is a surefire way to kill a sale. While we have not yet covered sales systems and strategies (stay tuned for February's Sales & Marketing issue), you don't want clients to purchase just their favorite handful of images at a price well below your target average. The full set of files should be the only digital option on your à la carte menu. Lower quantities of files may be offered within packages or package add-ons, but not à la carte.

Beyond these basic tenets, you can get creative. Perhaps the complete set of files is sold at a lower price once a minimum print purchase is reached. This will help satisfy those photographers who want their clients to have at least some professionally printed products.

## OTHER SOLUTIONS TO THE DIGITAL DILEMMA

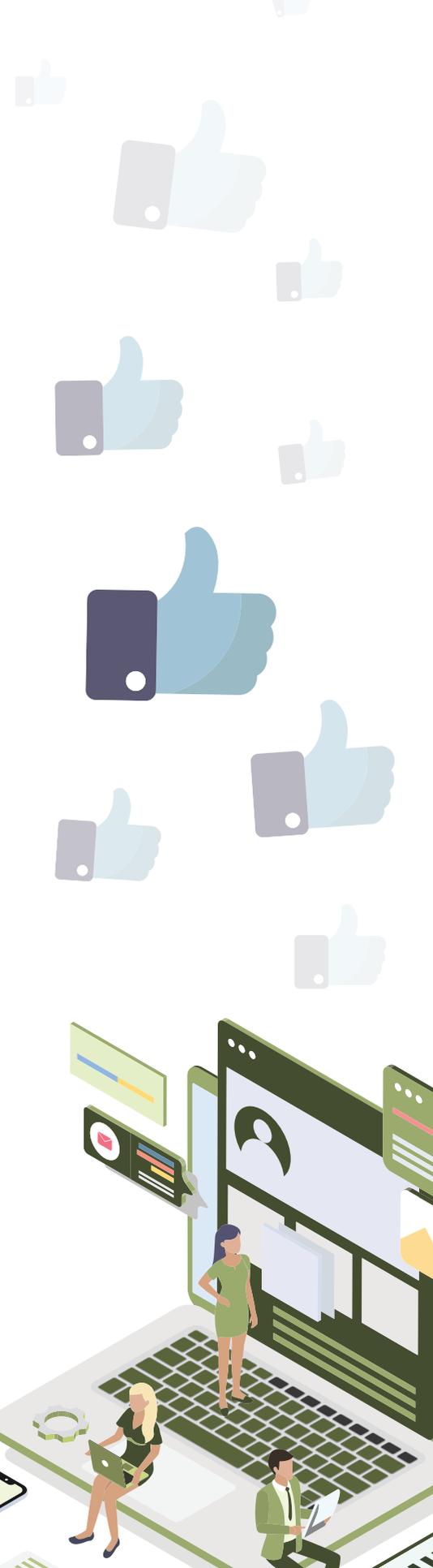
If you're contemplating offering a digital option to your clients, you have more options available than just "to sell or not to sell." There's a sweet spot out there to fit your comfort level of offering files, while also fulfilling your client's desires. Here are just a few ideas.

### Client desire: social sharing

If your client's primary motivation is to share their images online, simply offering low-resolution watermarked files can be a great compromise. Offer the files within a mobile app for extra wow factor. Downsize your files so they are no longer printable, and add a (somewhat) discreet watermark to the image. Now when clients post your images, you may even earn referrals. You may specify to your client whether they are permitted to crop, retouch or add filters to the image. Consider how your client can best gain access to these files. Do they purchase them? Is it a package add-on? Is a sharable file included with each print purchase? Make their desire for files work for you.

### Client desire: inexpensive reprints

If your client wants to make their own prints, consider the pros, cons and compromises discussed earlier in this article. My favorite compromise is offering files that are printable only up to 8x10. Jeff and I sell our individual files at approximately triple the price of an 8x10 print. If the client is willing to pay that and I don't have to sell them unprofitable gift prints, it's win/win. But we specify in the client's print license that they may be printed up to only 8x10, and we downsize the file so anything larger will be pixelated. We strongly encourage our clients to order their reprints from mpix.com, which is the consumer division of our pro lab, Miller's. This way, we ensure they are getting quality reprints.

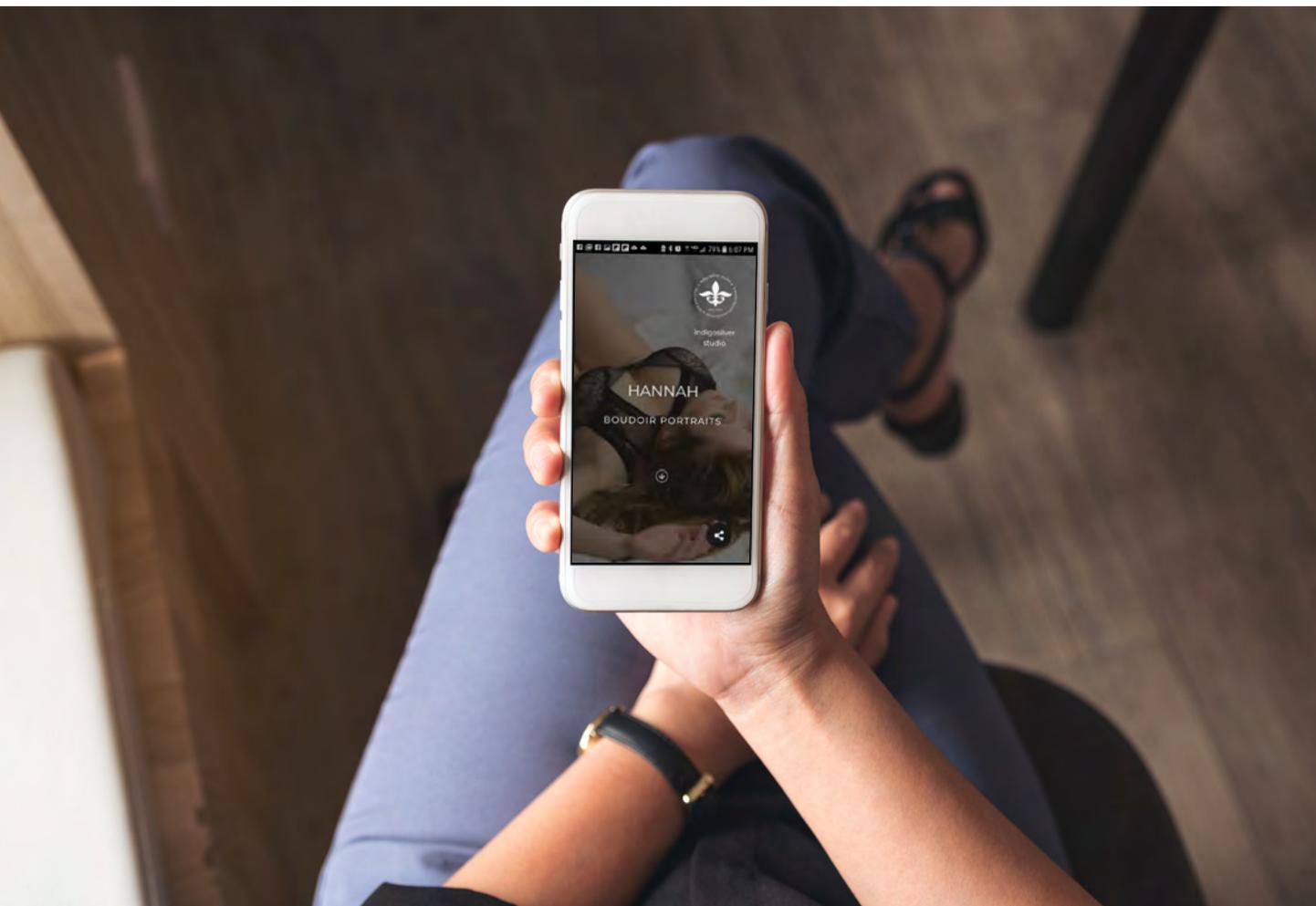




**Client desire: “just to have them”**

Offer low-resolution social share files or medium files printable up to 8x10. Invest in a good backup system, and then guarantee your clients that you will always preserve the full resolution files of any product they order in case the products need to be replaced or they want future reorders. At this point, you’ve allowed them to “just have” the files in a format that will suit the majority of their needs, and you’ve also alleviated their archiving concerns. And you’ve done so in a way that only preserves the products they order now, which encourages purchases now.

*Archiving the images clients purchase in print encourages print sales over digital.*



### YOUR DREAM STUDIO CHECKPOINT: PRODUCT LINEUP COMPLETE

You should now have a complete list of all the products you sell, and you should have prices established for each item. Your product prices should have a foundation of cost-based pricing (see October's Business Corner), with additional strategies for demand-based pricing (November). Finally, your digital products should now round out your product lineup (December).

Financially, you have been working on tracking and controlling your expenses (September), allowing yourself to keep more and more of every dollar you take. You've decided where you want to be along the volume/margin spectrum (July), and you've come up with an annual plan that fits your business model and your financial goals (August).

You are now ready to begin building your sales systems, marketing plan and seasonal calendar. Join us next month at The Business Corner as we begin putting together all your hard work into the bigger picture. ■

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### CREATIVE SOLUTION: THE MOBILE APP

By now, hopefully your wheels are turning about how to incorporate digital files into your product lineup. As an example of how you can put some of the ideas we've discussed into a product, let's look at the mobile app. The mobile app is essentially a collection of digital files the client can access from their mobile device.

In our studio, Jeff and I offer mobile apps with low-resolution watermarked files that are not printable. We include the app as a bonus with either of our top two print collections. In our second-highest collection, the app contains 10 images that have already been purchased in a printed product. This ensures zero additional retouching time for the images in the app, and prevents the app from cannibalizing print sales. In our highest collection, the app includes all of their purchased images (not just 10).

Including the app in the top two collections helps push the client into at least the second-highest collection. The greater quantity of images encourages them to upgrade to the top collection. We are leveraging the client's desire for shareable files to encourage their purchase of printed products.



Just a few years after Jeff and Lori found themselves struggling to survive while living in the basement of their studio, back in 2012, they are the proud owners of a brand-new home on the coast of North Carolina. The owners of Wilmington's Indigosilver Studio offer boutique boudoir portraiture and wedding photography. They are also the founders of The Shoot Space, their educational resource for photographers. Their *Shutter Magazine* column, The Business Corner, is dedicated to helping you grow your photography business.

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# Beautiful

YOUR BRIDES USING BRUSHES IN LIGHTROOM CLASSIC

with Dustin Lucas



There are lots of opinions on what's beautiful and natural, and how to make brides look their best. Posing and focal lengths are vital while shooting because they can set up an image nicely for touchup work in post-production. Focal lengths and taking a tight getting-ready portrait of the bride becomes a science. Just pull out your 70–200 lens and walk backward until your back hits a wall, zoom in, open up your aperture and fire. We work with a 100mm 2.8L macro lens, which allows us to get close and not distort the face. Typically for portraits, you want to stay at 85mm above and compose the image to accentuate their face.

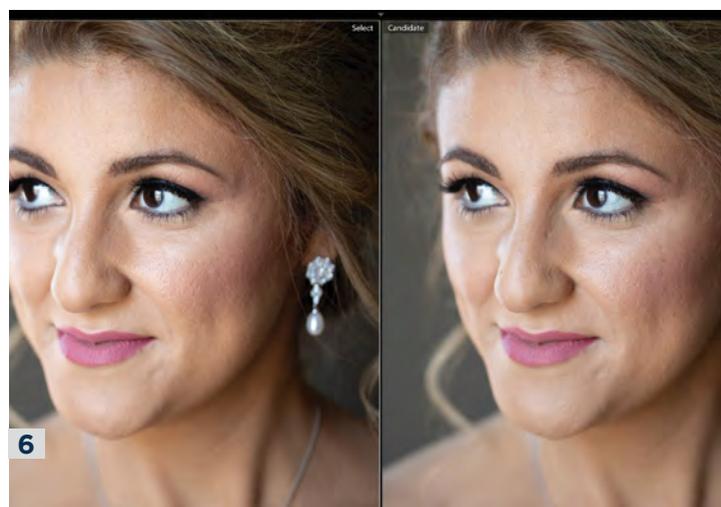
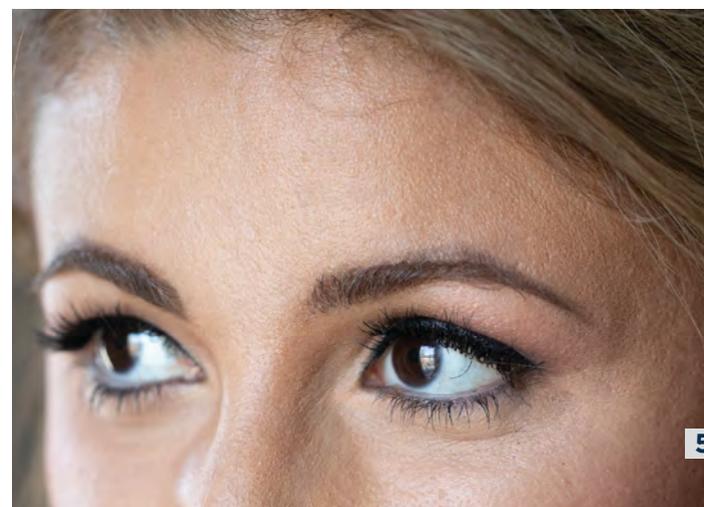
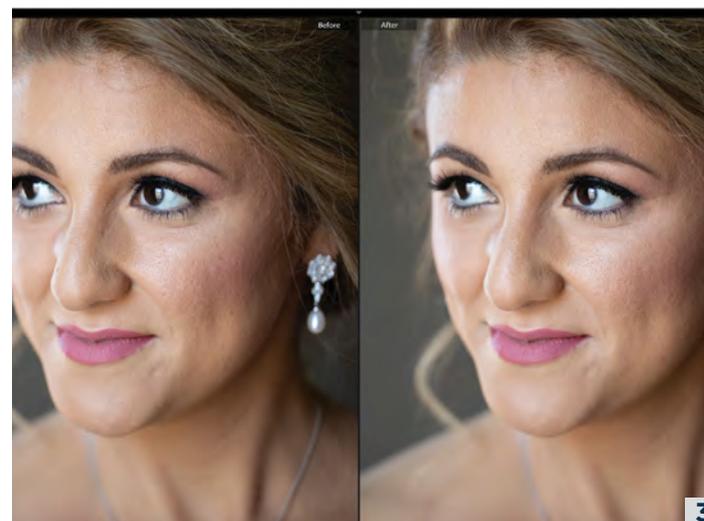
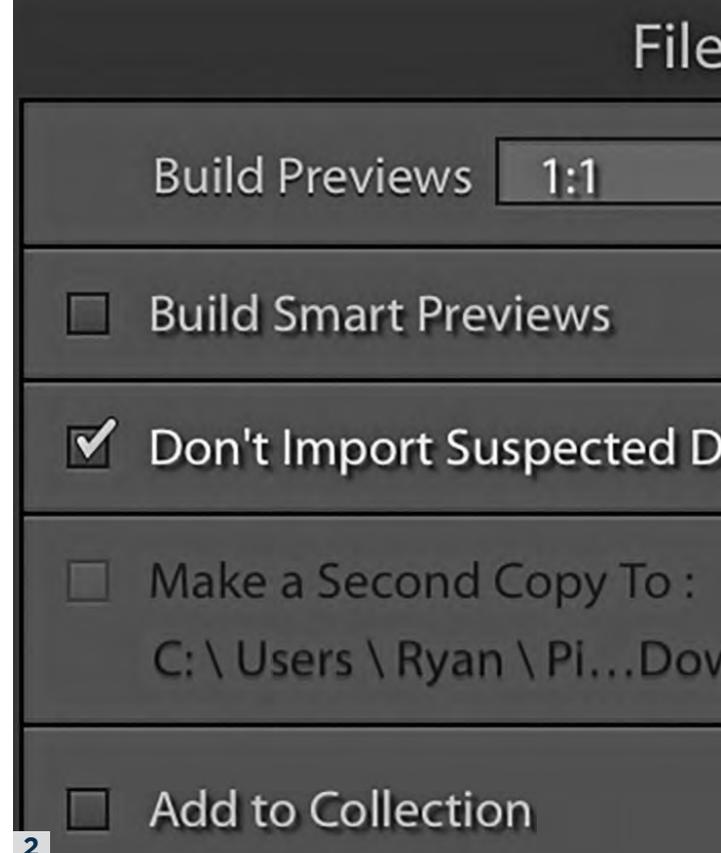
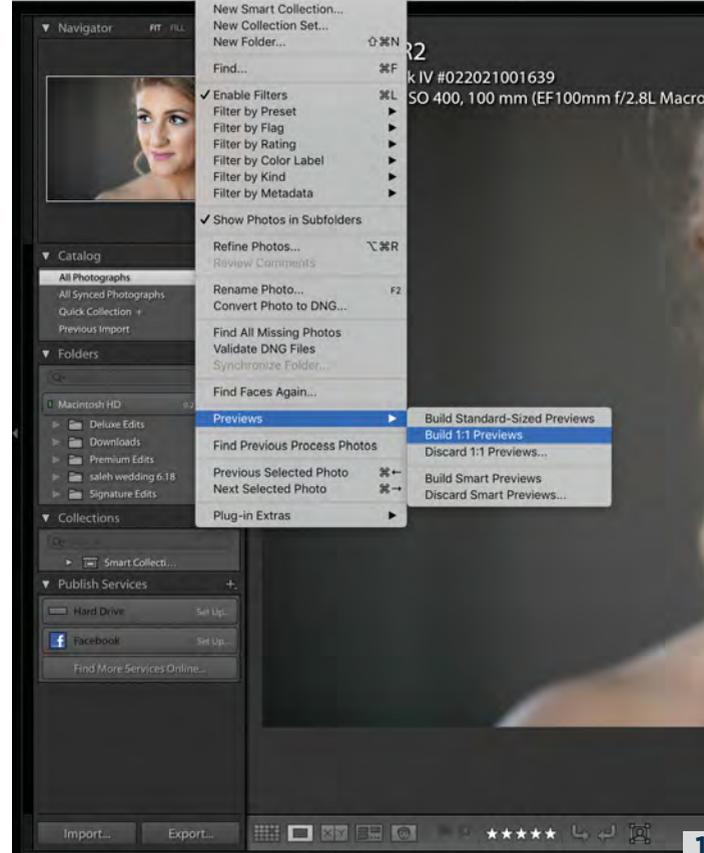
This isn't an article about shooting. We are going to dive into touching up skin in Lightroom Classic. No, we aren't going into Photoshop and won't have frequency separation or the ability to recreate pores after we soften. Let's focus on Lightroom and what's already at our disposal. Trust Lightroom—it makes editing simple.

### HEAL THE SKIN WITH BRUSHES

Order of Develop adjustments for post-production are crucial in Lightroom since we all know it will be slow at times. Adobe recommends editing your images in this order: Apply the Heal/Clone tool, enable lens corrections and the Transform tool, adjust in the basic panel for color and toning (if the image is shot poorly you can fix this first), mask areas with local adjustments/brushes and, lastly, apply sharpening and noise reduction in the details panel. We have a well-balanced image out of camera for color and light, so let's strike the Q key to open the Heal/Clone tool. We are manipulating pixels, so build a 1:1 preview, work from RAWs and toggle 1:1 view. Build that 1:1 preview in the file menu bar or simply zoom to 1:1, and it will build automatically. (1) I build at import so I can quickly start editing. (2) In the navigator panel, click 1:1 and toggle the Z key to zoom to fit the image.

With the Heal/Clone tool open, we will need to toggle these options to deal with skin blemishes. Hold Shift and strike the T key to quickly toggle these tools. Hold the space bar and click and drag the image zoomed at 1:1. These shortcuts are simple and save so much time. You can change the size of the brush multiple ways: Use the square-bracket keys, hold Option and Command, click and drag the brush or, if you are using a touchpad, scroll up with two fingers to increase brush size and down to decrease. I am doing this without a mouse. Editing should be fast, simple and mobile. (3)

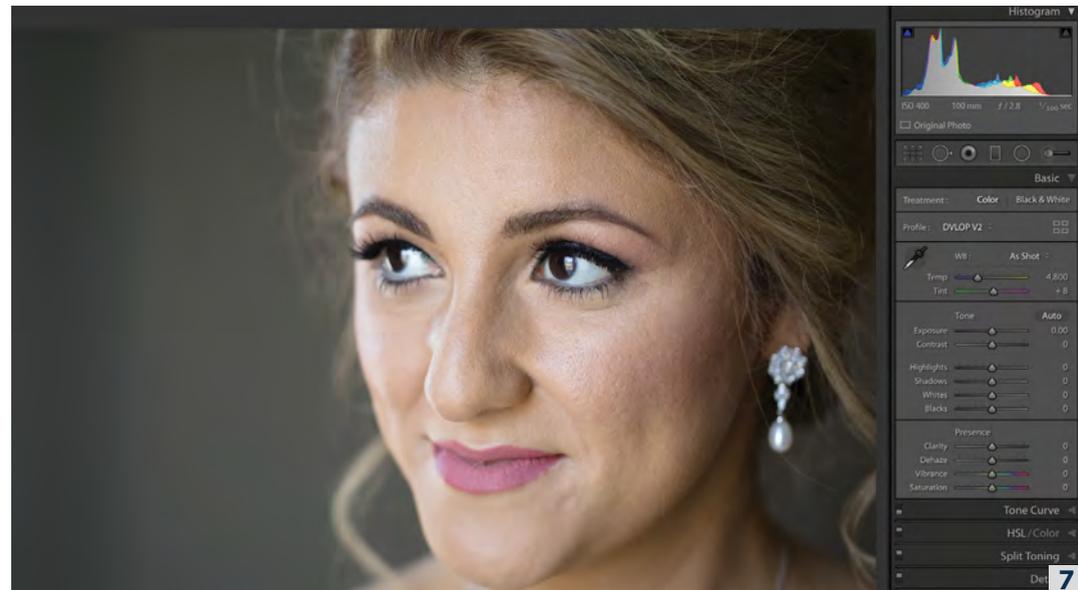
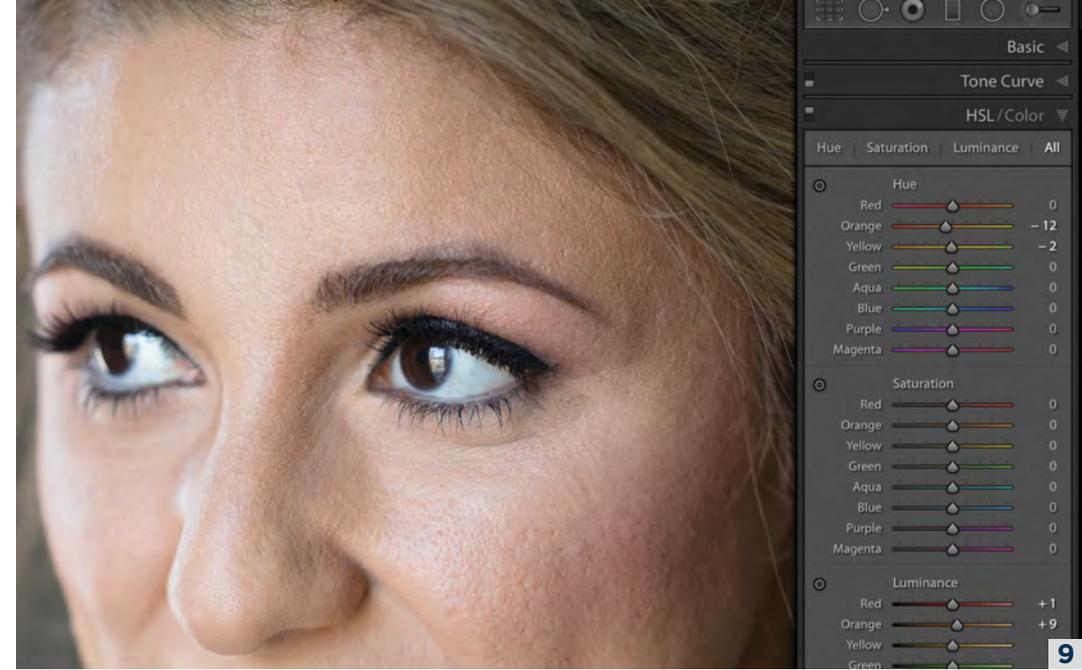
After removing the major blemishes, I use the Visual Spots option in this tool to fix unwanted spots on the skin and any dust sensor spots. (4) This basically inverts the image, converting it to monochromatic (black and white) so you can view white spots where you will apply the Heal/Clone brush. Toggle the A key to turn this on and off to work faster. The last thing we want to do is remove beauty or birth marks. Doing that typically gets you into trouble unless the bride requests it. I turn Tool Overlay to Never so I can hide all the outlined work and focus on the skin. (5) Strike the back slash (\) key to toggle before and after previews to check your work. My last changes after I am happy with the skin is to remove veins in the eyes and stray hairs on the face. That was pretty easy. (6)



## CORRECT THE COLOR & TONE

For corrective adjustments, I focus on the face for temperature, tint and exposure. Adjusting Color Profile is helpful. Adobe Color is too saturated and has a slightly harsh contrast. (7) You can explore the included color profiles or buy third-party prebuilt ones. Find one that you like and apply it in the Develop module before making any other corrective or creative adjustments. (8) Next, I correct the color and light with white balance and exposure. To fine-tune color, I use the target adjustment tools for HSL, especially when I want to reduce redness or orange skin tones or brighten these colors.

Hold Shift, Option and Command while striking the H, S, or L key to open this tool. Click and drag up to increase sliders or down to decrease. (9) This is a time-saving tool that grabs only the colors in the area I am clicking. Hue adds some green undertones for red skin to balance it out; saturation pulls out orange tones; and luminance brightens the face. (10) We can even adjust the lipstick here, but this tool adjusts color in the entire image. We can control areas of the image with Local Adjustments. (11ab)

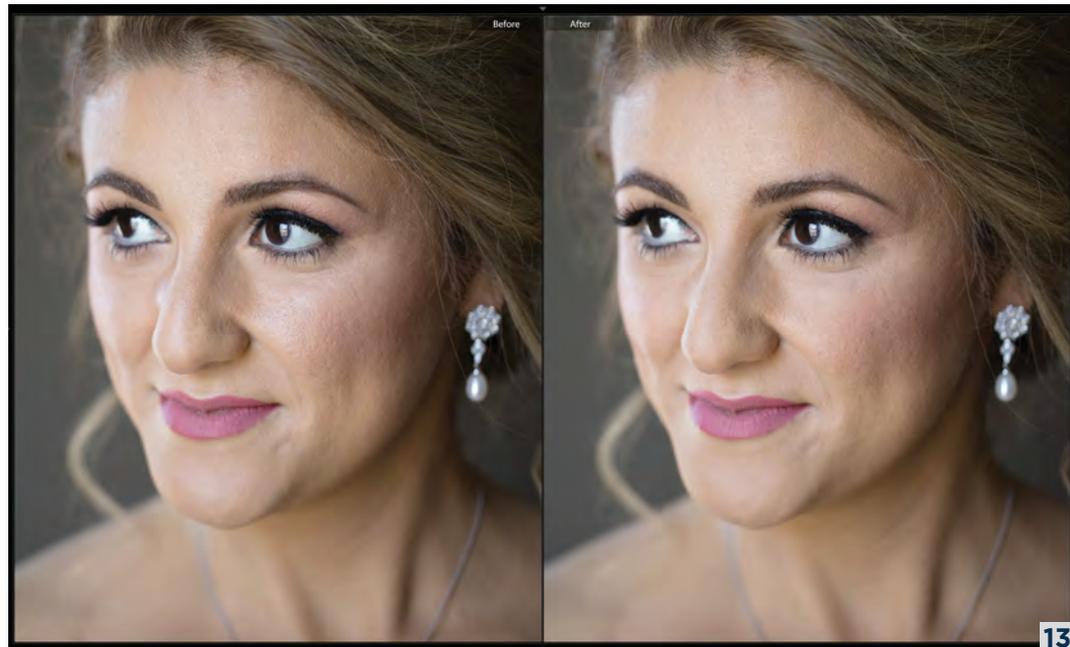


## LOCAL ADJUSTMENT BRUSH WORK

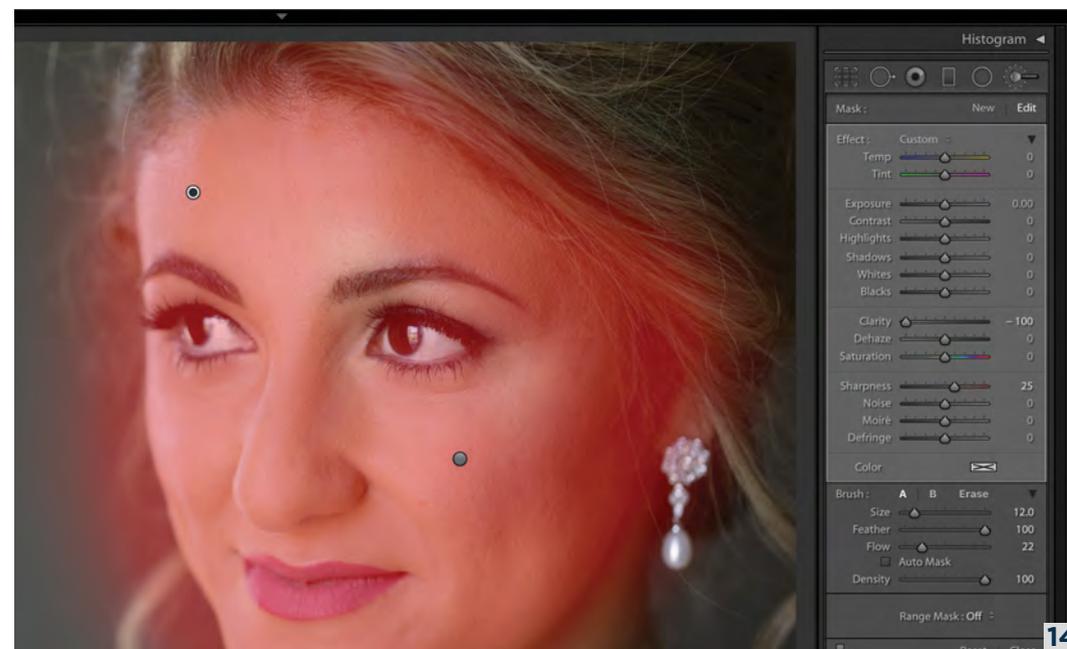
Hot Spots can be such a pain to deal with in post. Use the Heal/Clone tool again to replace areas of the skin and use the opacity slider to blend. Brush over an area with the heal tab selected, click and drag the source selection to a closely matched part of the skin and lower the opacity slider to blend the healed area. (12) This isn't a perfect tool, so you have to finesse the opacity and feathering to make this look right. Nonetheless, it's a great tool for fixing hotspots. (13)



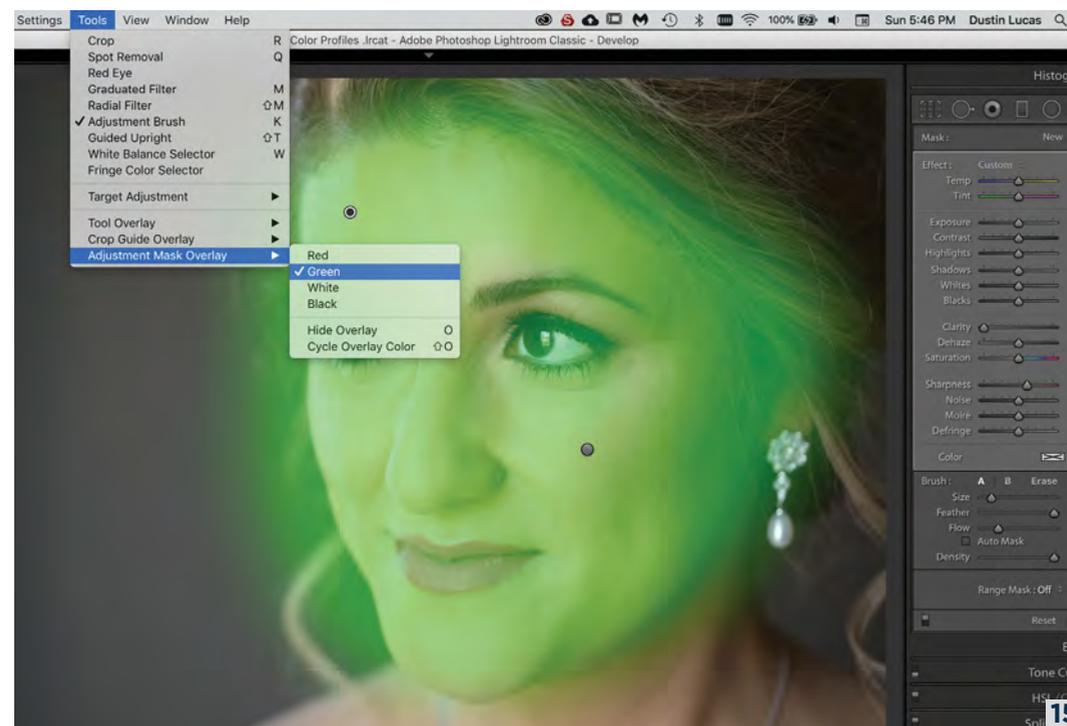
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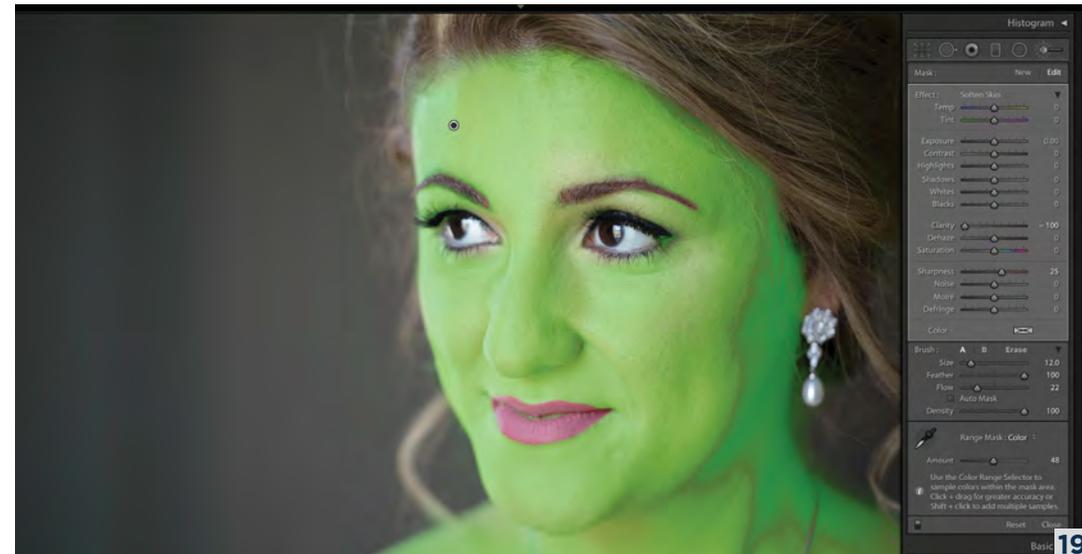
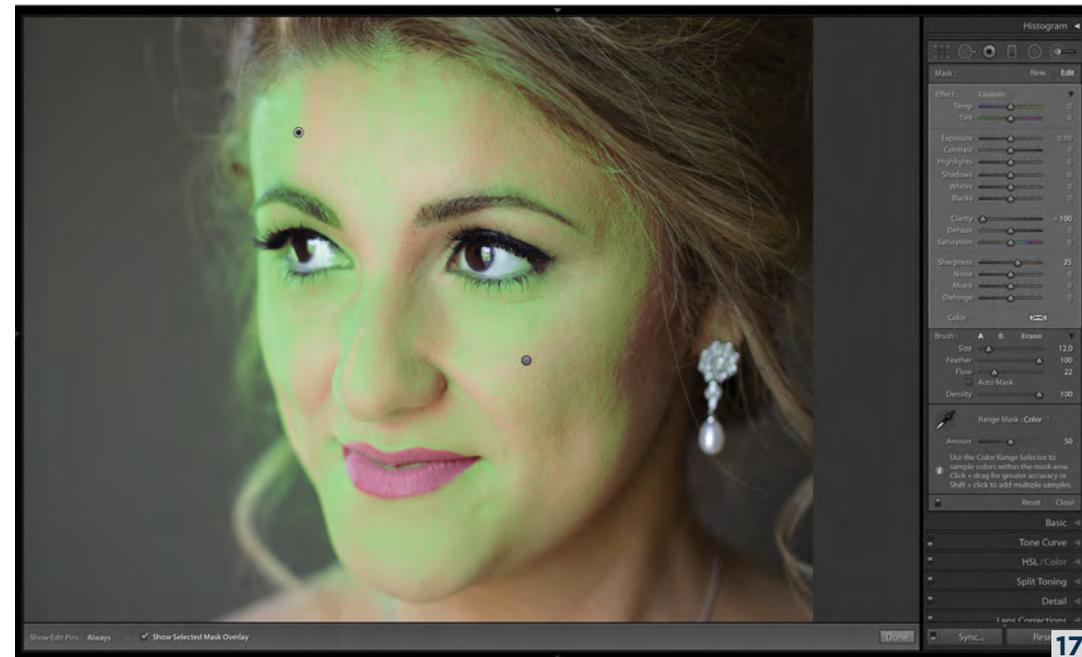
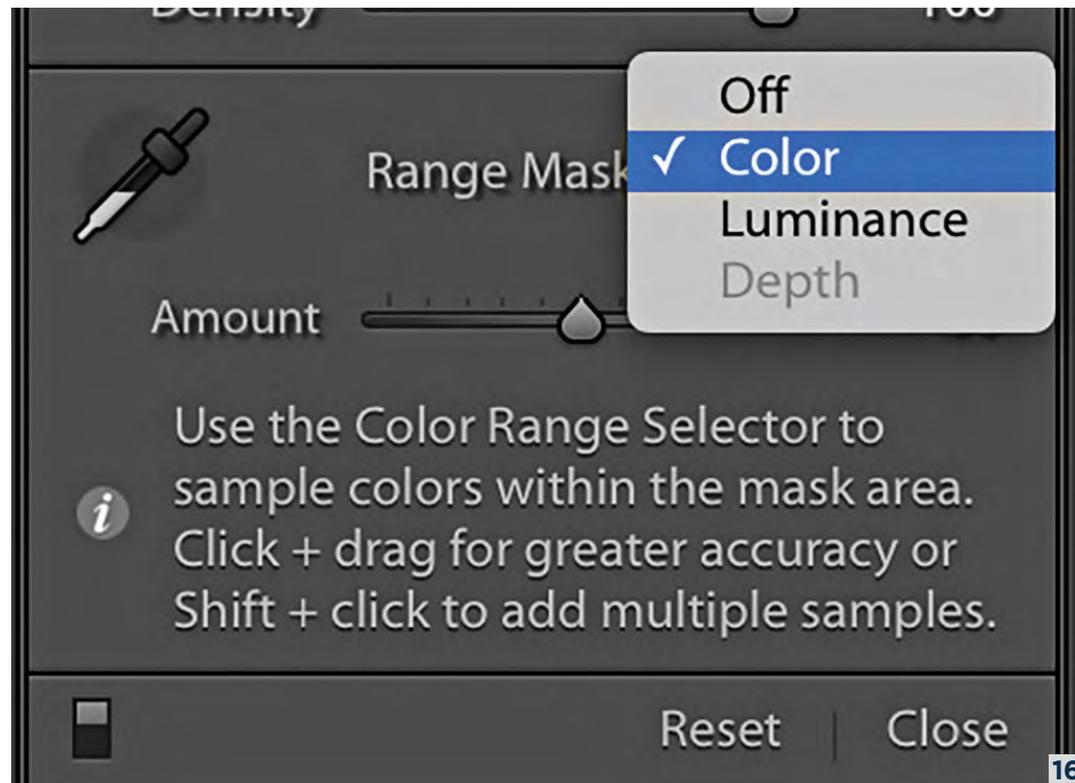
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15

Next, we want to brush on some softening to reduce harsh tones and make our bride's skin look its best. Access the Adjustment Brush by striking the K key. When you want to paint in an area that has a consistent tonal or color range, use Range Masking within the Adjustment Tool. Paint over the area with a medium brush. Strike the O key to see the mask. (14) I like to change the mask color to green for skin. Go to Tools in the menu bar at the top of the screen, hover your cursor over Adjust Mask Overlay and click green. (15)

Click Off in the Range Mask section at the bottom of the Adjustment Tool panel. For skin, choose Color to mask only skin tone colors. (16) Select a color or range of colors by selecting the eyedropper and clicking on the brightest part of the skin. The mask gets refined pretty close to where we want it but we need to expand our selection. (17) Holding the Shift key while clicking on the shadows of the face expands our mask for the skin tones. (18) In doing this, the subject's hair is being softened as well; we can remove this easily by removing the mask from this area. Click back in the space where we grabbed the eyedropper so we can select the brush. Hold Option and click to paint out the unwanted areas with the erase brush, including the eyes, eyebrows, lips and hair. This is useful for all the Local Adjustment tools. (19)

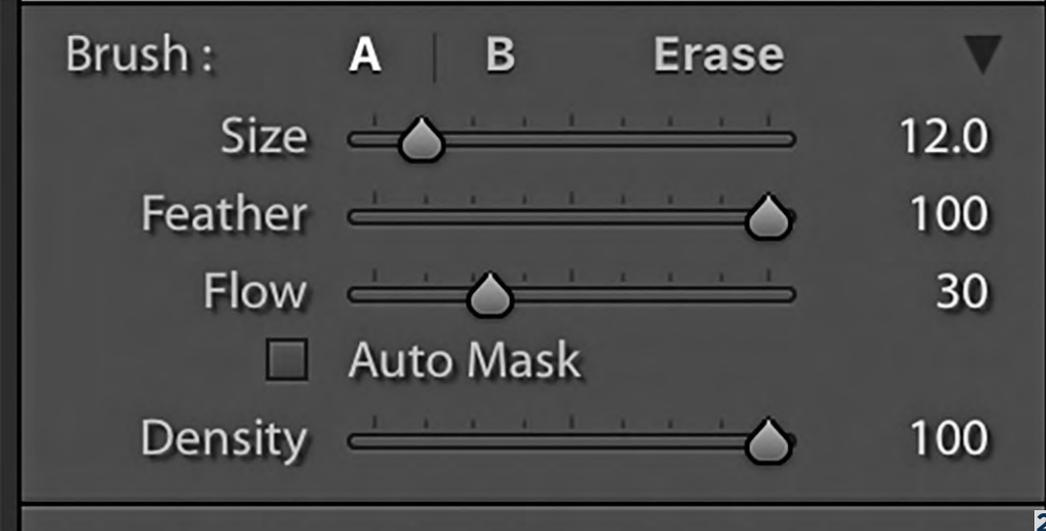


The last thing to do is to apply skin softening by either choosing a prebuilt effect or manually adjusting the sliders. For realistic skin softening, we want to lower the clarity settings into the negative values and increase the sharpening to keep details intact. I start with -50 clarity and +25 Sharpening and increase as needed. Lowering the highlights and lifting the shadows evens out the skin. (20) We can dodge and burn to exaggerate the lighting on the face. Here is what I like to do with the lighting.

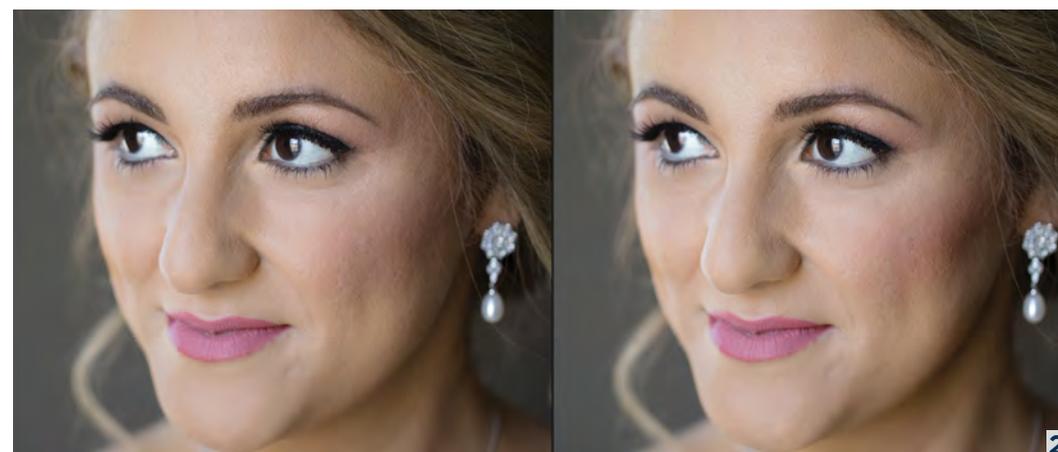
Create a new adjustment brush, lower exposure and click in the Color section below Defringe. Choose something close to the skin tone where the lighting blew out the colors on the edge of the bride's face. Start with subtle adjustments so we can build up if needed. (21) The same goes for dodge and burn to accentuate the highlights and shadows on the face. I want to deepen the tonal range with a controlled technique of dropping shadows and blacks to burn and lift highlights and whites to dodge. Once you paint in the burn adjustments, lessen the effect and duplicate the pin by right-clicking on it. Apply a different adjustment to control the lighting on the face.

Start with a feathered brush and set the flow to around 30. (22) With a small brush, paint in an area, increase the brush size to almost double, paint again and repeat one more time. This creates a natural blended look, a subtle approach to dodge and burn. You can increase this effect by lifting the flow in the brush settings before painting more. Lastly, by painting a new mask with clarity, you can dial in some creativity. Add some clarity to enhance your beauty portrait. Let's not forget about the eyes. (23)

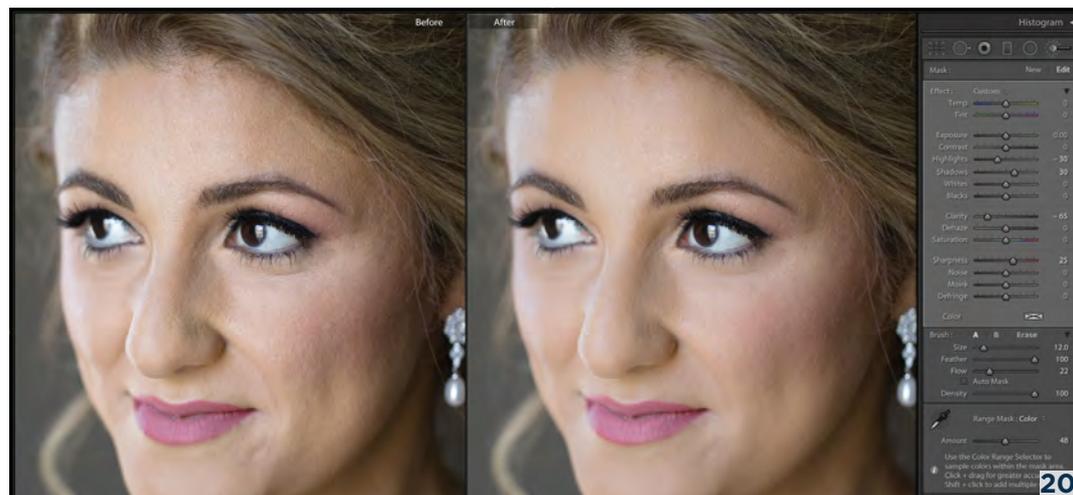
Enhancing and sharpening the eyes is vital to a portrait. I use the prebuilt preset Iris Enhance to paint on the iris and increase exposure as needed. Since I've already cloned the veins, we can apply some sharpening, clarity and drop noise to sharpen the eyes. (24) We can now paint in some saturation, highlights and whites for the lips. (25)



22



23



20



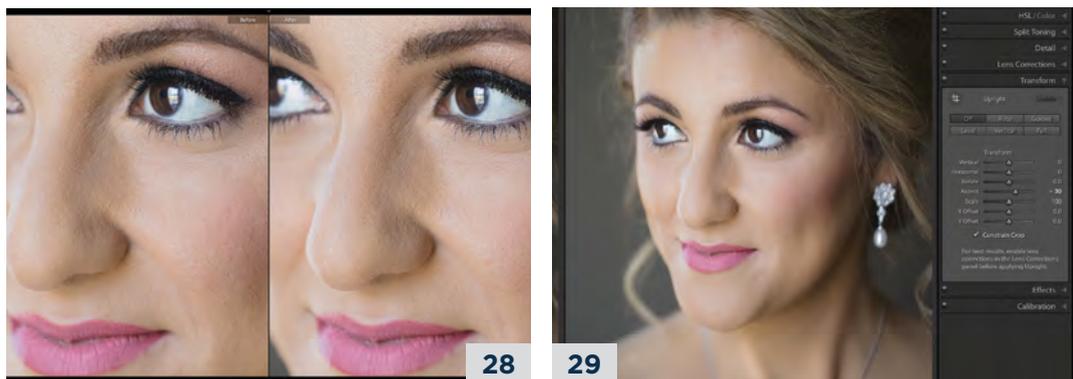
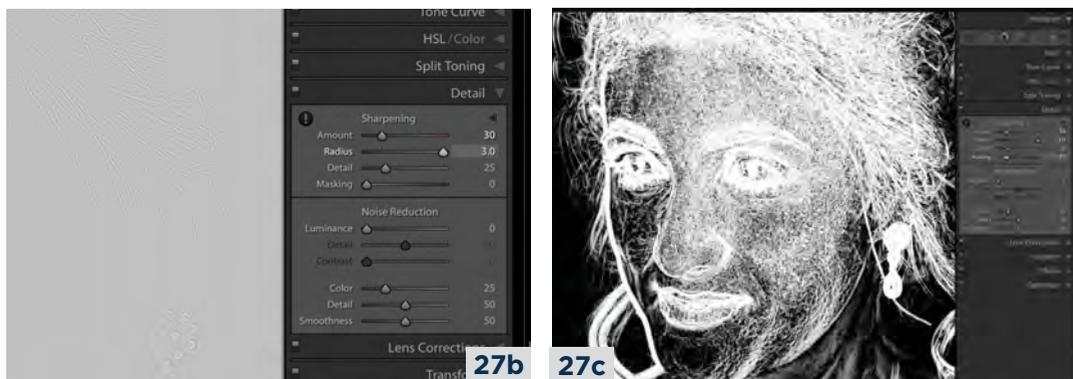
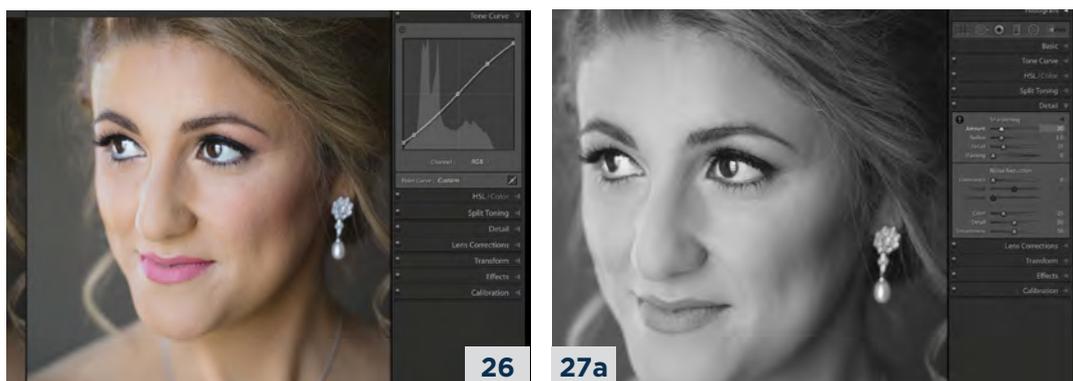
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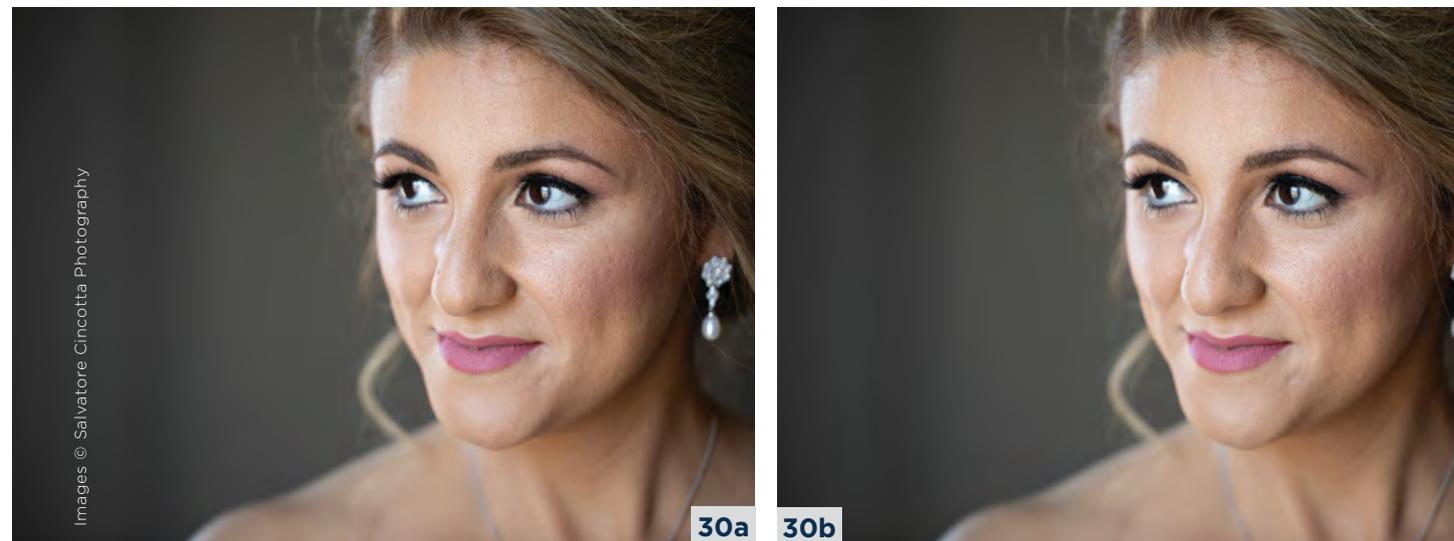


25



### ATTENTION TO DETAILS

This is where I like to add some creative tonal shifts with the Tone Curve panel. I limit the black levels and flatten these tones and the whites. Then I create a subtle S-curve to bring in some dimension. There are tons of ways to apply tonal effects to the entire image. Find one that fits your taste or brand. (26) Let's move into the Details panel and apply some global sharpening. Press Option while moving the Sharpen sliders to dial in your details. (27abc) This is an important final touch. (28)



I stay away from Liquify and body shaping unless requested by the client, but you can thin the face/body quite simply in Lightroom. Use the Transform tool with the Aspect slider moved to the right to thin the face. Check Constrain Crop before you start moving these sliders to reduce white edges. This adjustment is subjective and needs to be thought through. (29)

Now we have quite a nice portrait done all in Lightroom. (30ab)

### THE RESULTS

A lot of this is typically done in Photoshop by most retouchers, but you have flexibility in touching up your portraits. Don't be afraid to push the limits of Lightroom. Get to know the brush settings and hotkeys. Knowing how and when to use these tools will save you a ton of time by helping you edit efficiently and avoiding having to rework. Results are everything, and your client won't care what programs you use. ■



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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## 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.

Congratulations to all our featured artists. Be inspired and create something that is *you*.

**Sal Cincotta**, *Editor-in-chief*



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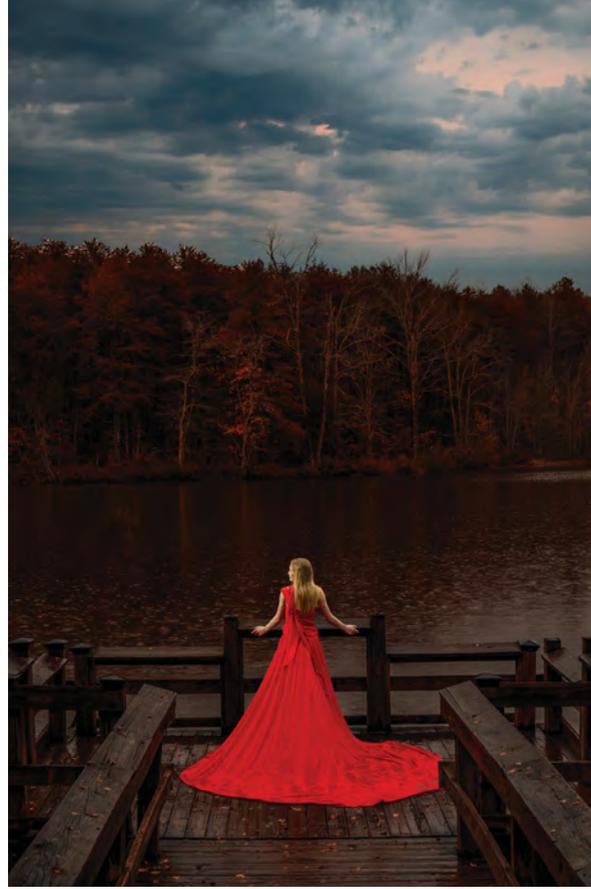


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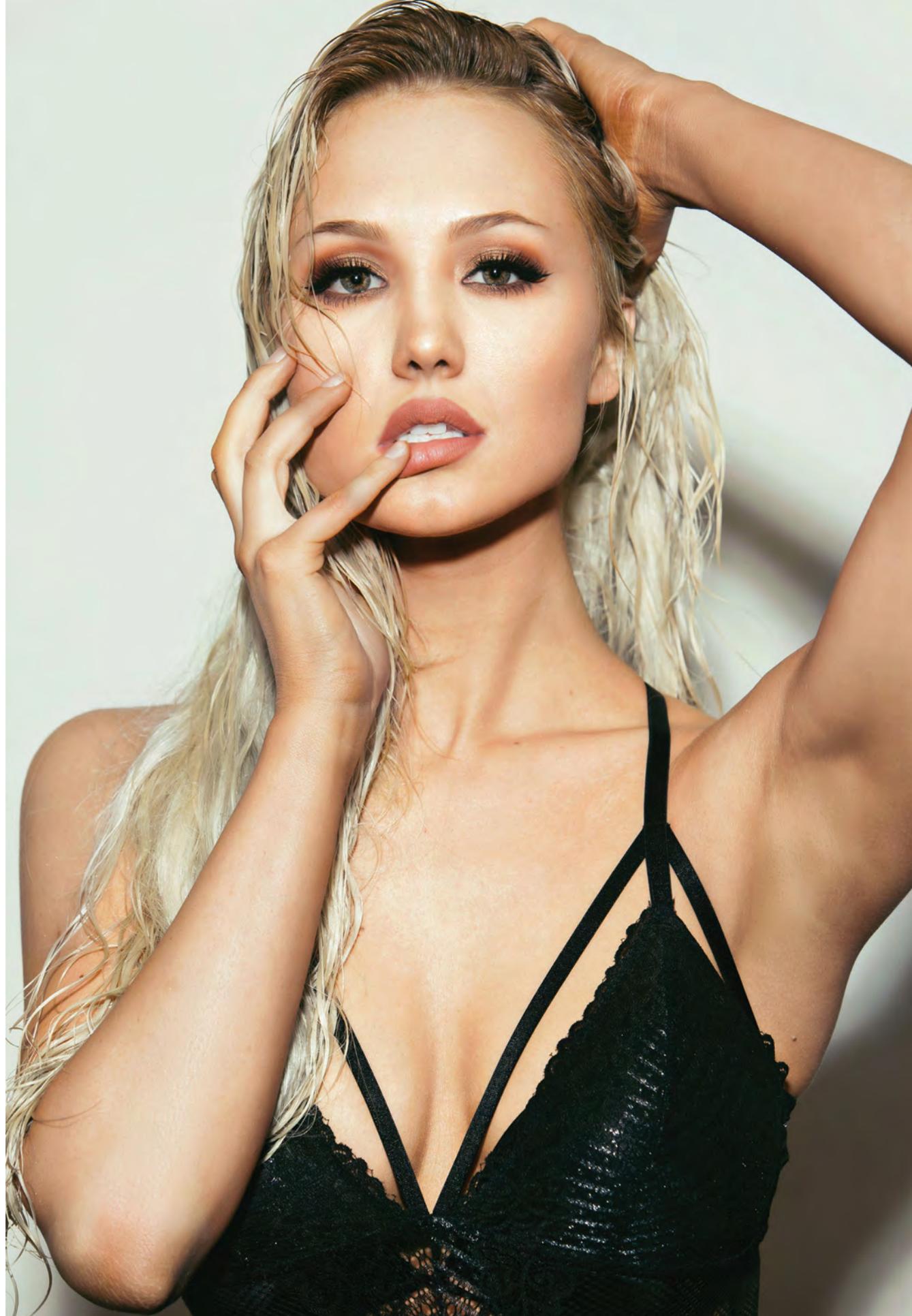




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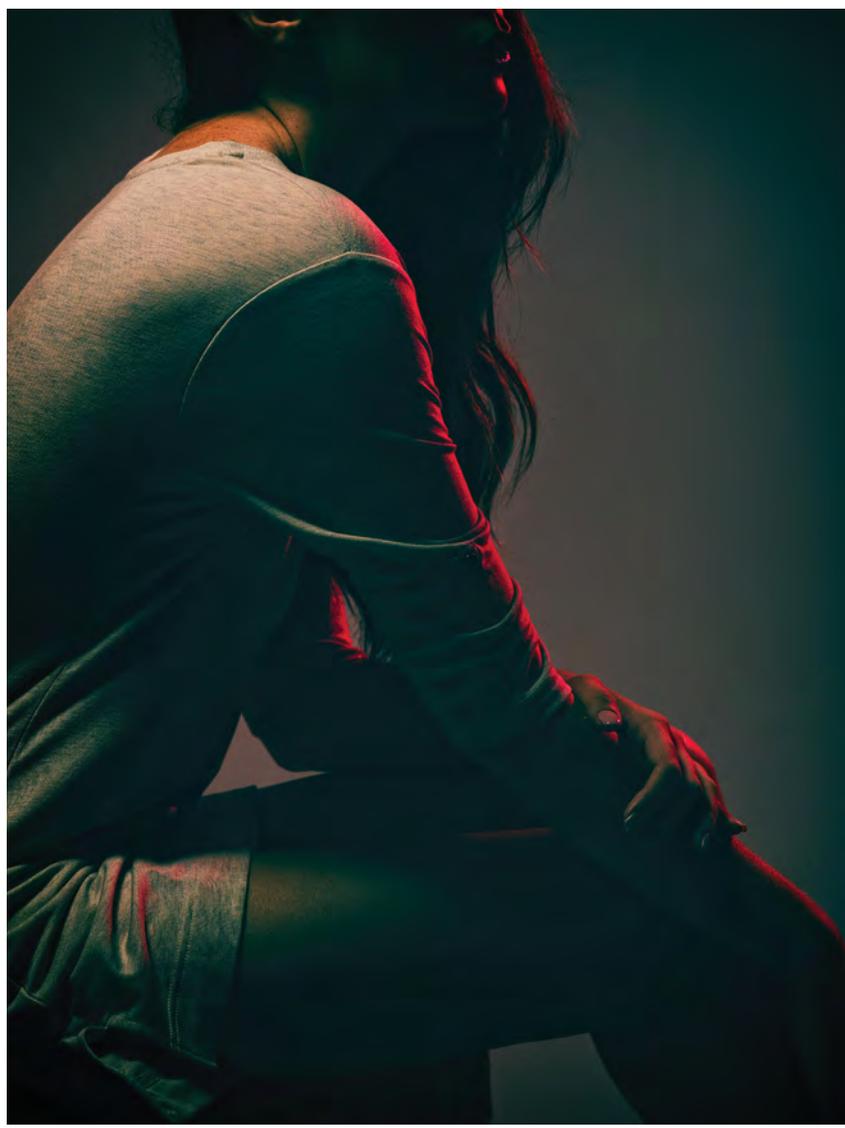


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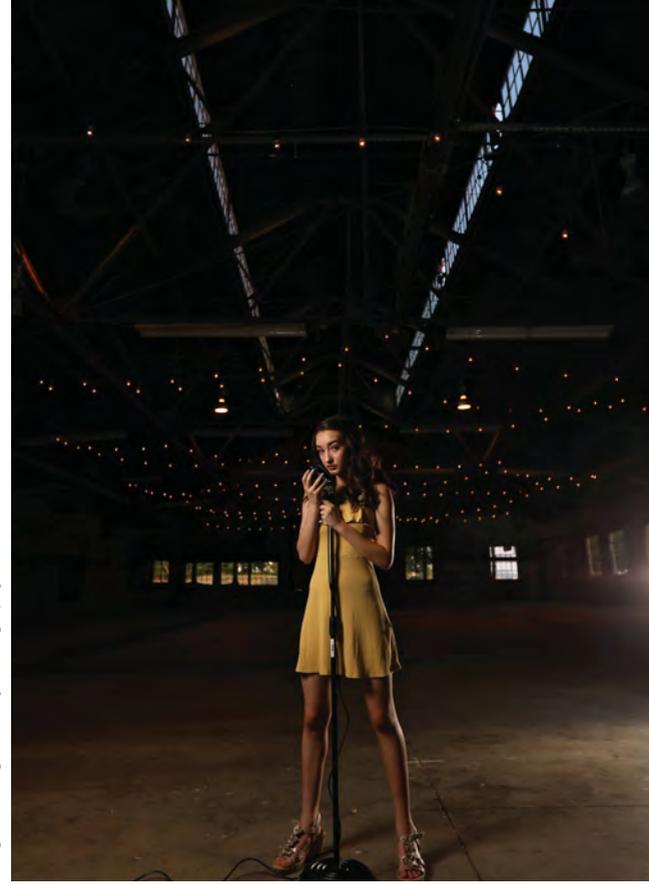


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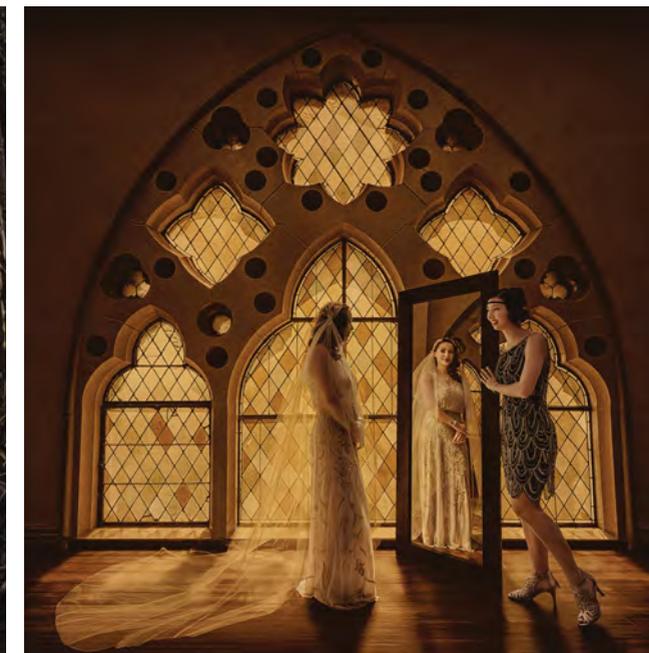
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# 7 WAYS TO STRETCH

YOUR CREATIVE MUSCLE

with Scott Detweiler





Photographers sometimes forget they are artists, either because we don't feel we utilize some of those traditional and messy tools or we have not undergone that specific type of schooling. We might merely see our job as documenting what we see around us. But as artists, we need to feed that creative side of our brain from time to time, or we fall into a rut. That feeling of world-weariness, or ennui, that I discussed in a previous article can get to all of us from time to time. It can feel as if you are no longer making progress or your work is no longer exciting. That might mean it is time to feed the artistic side of your brain and take a break from your typical work. It's time to stretch your creativity to keep yourself fresh and excited about what you do.

Let's discuss what you typically deliver to clients. Because everyone with a cellphone is now literally a photographer, we continually need to differentiate ourselves from the pack. The following creative exercises can unlock doors that may lead to unique products and offerings that differentiate you from the competition and the gaggle of neighbors with nice cameras.

## FIGURE DRAWING

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Before you leap to conclusions about how hard this is, I know this is something you can do. The human ability to see a form that is not correct is also what helps us be better artists. We already know when something looks a little off. It's known as the "uncanny valley." Humans can tell when a figure is not entirely human looking. When it is close but not quite right, our little neck hairs get a workout.

When I took my first figure drawing class back in college, the beautiful young models often resembled some sort of alien when I was done with my daily sketches. As the semester progressed, I finally figured out how to make it all work well enough that I even discovered a sketching style that spoke to me, and eventually the figure was no longer the primary concern. So, in one short semester, I went from drawing forms that made people cringe to art that is actually hanging on the wall of our home. I married one of those young models, and 26 years later, she still models for me. My sketches are much better, even if I can't draw her like the top artists in the class. Another unexpected benefit from this was a much better understanding of posing. We take our knowledge of anatomy for granted. Figure drawing classes focus on how best to show off the human form. That relates well to photography, especially when you consider nontraditional poses like bodyscapes.





## PAINTING

Much like drawing, the basics of painting can be picked up quickly with regular practice. The cost of entry is a bit higher than drawing, depending on the type of paint you choose. Each medium requires different skills. Oil and watercolor opened doors for my photography that I didn't expect. There is a lifetime of mastery, but you can get to a passable artistic skill faster than you might expect, especially when you let the base of the photo do most of the work. What this means is I can now offer "artist embellished" portraits where the additional paint is applied to the printed canvas on various details, highlights, background elements and borders. Some vendors offer similar services, but I find that doing it myself feeds my creative needs.

This also works for shooting landscapes. Painting yields some compositional rigor that photographers don't get as part of their typical learn-on-the-go attitude. This makes it worthwhile to take a painting class. It affected me so much that I am now teaching a class on composition at ShutterFest again this year. Learning composition in painting can translate well in photography.

## MIXED MEDIA

Once you let your hair down and get past painting on your own prints and canvases, you can really go nuts and start to attach objects like keys, necklaces and old book covers to these prints, and then paint over that in layers with plaster, paint, concrete, what have you. Starting out with a canvas or even a wood print also adds a lot to these compositions. Mixed-media pieces can become grand works of art and fetch astounding fees once you find a consistent style that brings people to your door.

These are so unique and interesting that they seem to attract collectors more than just about any other treatment of photography I have encountered. Don't think this is beyond your skill set. I guarantee that if you did 10 mixed-media pieces, you would come up with something cool, and those wanting that type of art would find you. Even if you can't paint a human in a way that doesn't make children cry, you can still use those skills to slap paint down like a pro on one of these mixed-media works with some level of competency.



Images © Scott Detweiler



## WEIRD PROJECTS

This year, I started a series of doll photo manipulations. It was a bizarre idea, and the results were creepy yet fascinating. The uncanny valley became obvious. Many of the works come across as fun or just plain uncomfortable. Regardless, it was a fun and out-there idea that people liked. I have had several commissions for this type of image, and it all stemmed from trying to do something weird and stretching my creative mind.

## DESIGNING SETS

There are a lot of amazing muslin backgrounds available for the studio. These hand-painted pieces of cloth are used in formal portraits. There is a lot to be said for creating scenes. Christmas is an obvious one: Put up a tree and hire a jolly fellow to be a prop for your clients. Other sets can be a basement, garage or even the outdoors. Anyone can find a little place in the woods where they set up a scene to offer as a limited-time opportunity.



## HEADRESSES & WARDROBE

I started collecting fancy headdresses and other fun wardrobe pieces. These items are usually supplied by the client, but my stash of items has saved the day. A beautiful fur can lead to a lot of fantastic boudoir photos, but not a lot of people have a fur or think to bring it with them to the session. A fur from a second-hand shop can pay for itself quickly. Renaissance-style dresses purchased online invite creative lighting that can open doors to new clients and creative outlets. I also create my own wardrobe pieces with my trusty glue gun.

## BODYPAINING

In the past few years, I've started getting into bodypainting. If you have attended my conceptual sessions at ShutterFest, you have seen some of the fantastic images these paints can create. My good friend Otto helped me get started, and I have since developed my own style. This is another area I never intended to monetize, but sure enough, I have boudoir clients who arrange all-day sessions that include body paint. These are some of the more attention-grabbing pieces I've shot. Clients often order these images printed very large. I had no idea what I was doing initially, but I just kept at it and learned as I went.





Image © Scott Detweiler

I hope some of these ideas strike home and you take the time to pick up another artistic hobby and see how it can translate into your photography. Some of these ideas renewed my interest in portraits when I was feeling drained. Some of them turned into new sources of revenue and products that I never could have anticipated. ■



Scott is a conceptual portrait photographer based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Along with his original approach to portraits, he excels at fashion and boudoir, and is an amateur body painter. When he is not shooting, Scott turns his studio into a classroom where he holds workshops on lighting, conceptual work and boudoir. Follow him on Instagram @sedetweiler and visit his website at [www.sedetweiler.com](http://www.sedetweiler.com). [sedetweiler.com](http://sedetweiler.com)



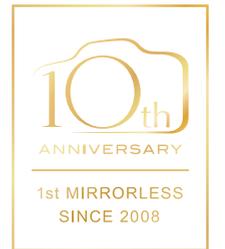
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# MOVIE MAGIC:

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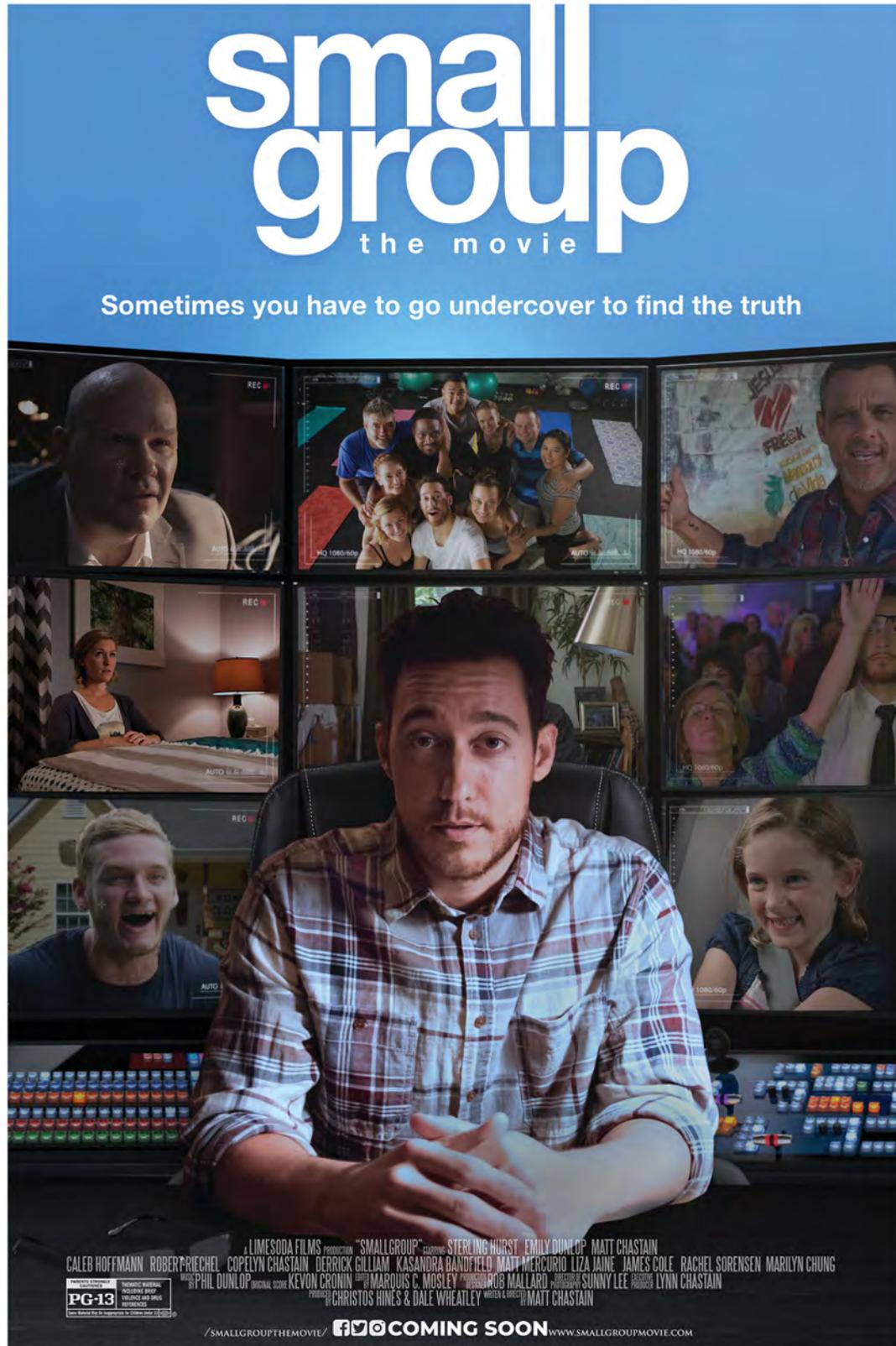
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# THE

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# SILVER SCREEN

with Phillip Blume



I wrote my first article for *Shutter Magazine* in August 2013. Always the optimist, I titled it “Change the World.” Now more than ever, I know that it’s possible. *Shutter* was a smaller digital-only publication then, but I hoped to inspire as many photographers as possible with the story of my first attempted film project.

In 2011, my wife and I took a big risk. We emptied our savings to fund the film project. We’d just experienced a loss in our lives, and we needed to step back from taking pretty wedding pictures for a while. Instead, we turned our cameras toward kids fighting to survive in one of the world’s most violent slums. The result was our low-budget documentary *Lost Boys of Paradise*, which raised money for the nonprofit Engadi Ministries, with which we still work.

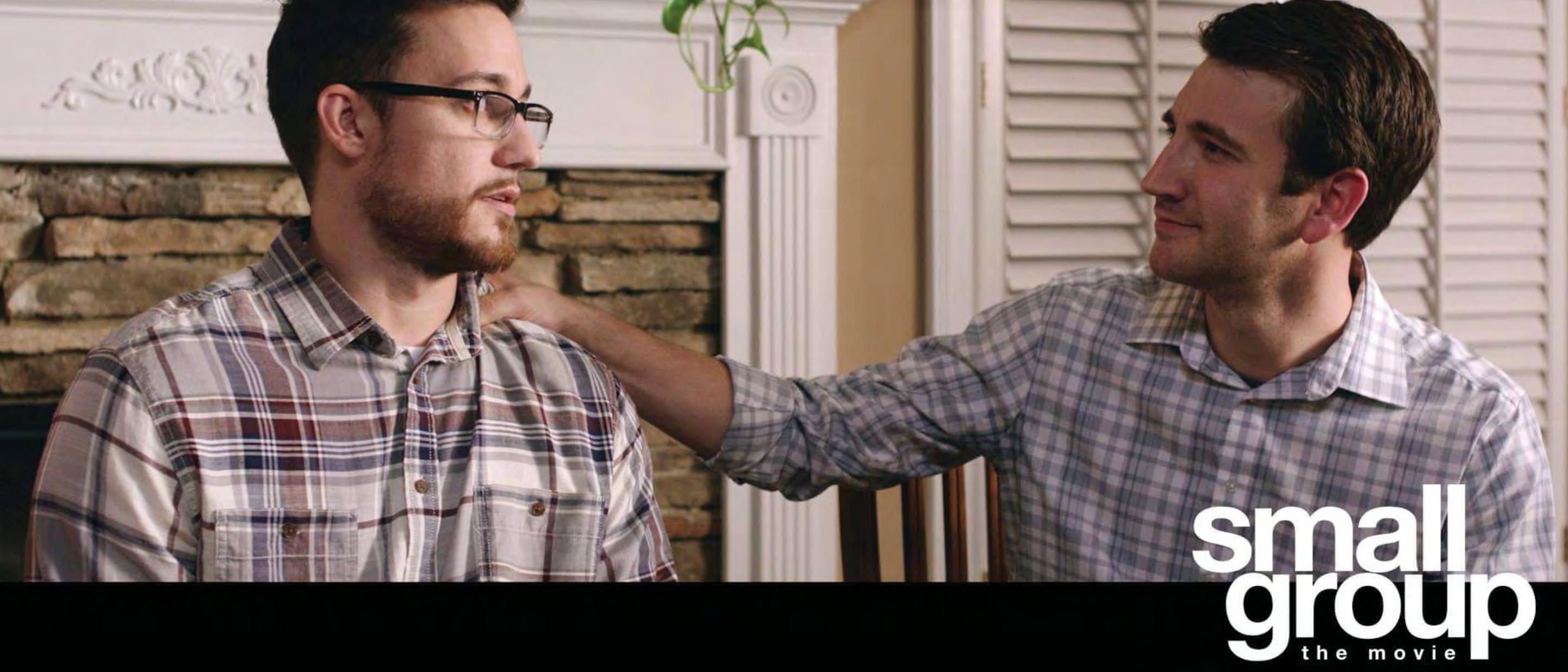
So the risk paid off, right? But not how you might think.

Things change. Today, after five years writing for *Shutter* (now a premier photo industry publication), our tiny 2011 video project has led to something bigger than I could have imagined. Our professional life has come full circle—almost miraculously so. Because now you are part of this story, too.

Yeah, you read that right. Just last month, a new movie hit theaters: *Small Group*, a feature film inspired partly by our low-budget personal project from years ago.

Believe in the power of personal projects. We were broke and broken when we began ours. Yet from those ashes, our small-town studio has risen to contribute cinematography (and even my big-screen acting debut) to a theatrical motion picture. I want to show you how to walk a similar path. If you want to make waves, you can.

It all starts with a blind risk. You can’t know your future, but you can take actions that will determine it. Creativity transforms lives. With your help, we can transform lives today. Let me explain.



## HOLLYWOOD DOESN'T COME KNOCKING. YOU MUST DO IT.

The photo above is like a spooky mirror. When I see this production still from the set of *Small Group*, I imagine it as a scene in *Back to the Future*. It's as if I'm time traveler Marty McFly interacting with a version of myself from seven years ago.

In at least one respect, the journey of *Small Group*'s lead character is my own. I was honored that director Matt Chastain invited me to take part.

On the right side of the frame is the real me, Phillip Blume, playing the role of a smug, deeply religious small group leader. On the left side of the frame is Sterling Hurst in the role of Cooper, the movie's documentary filmmaker and protagonist. As you watch the plot unfold, you see Cooper travel to Guatemala and document an inspirational organization called Engadi that serves children in one of the world's most violent slums. Sound familiar?

It's not accurate to call *Small Group* a biopic. This entirely fictional off-the-wall script is not my life story. It's the brainchild of Matt Chastain. (Watch a clip and bonus features at [theblumes.co/small-group-movie-go-see-big-screen-debut-theater-near](http://theblumes.co/small-group-movie-go-see-big-screen-debut-theater-near) and the theatrical trailer at [smallgroupmovie.com](http://smallgroupmovie.com).)

Our original documentary had no big theatrical release. We showed it at churches, universities and film festivals. I made phone calls and knocked on countless doors to make it happen. We did whatever we could just to share the story and impact lives.

So how do we photographers get our personal projects noticed? How do we reach audiences with our stories? First, never wait to be discovered. Take your story to the world.

When you pursue your passions with conviction, your efforts create results you may not see for years to come. Before I ever met Matt, he happened to see a screening of *Lost Boys of Paradise*. It was the story of Engadi's mission, not our amateur filmmaking, that inspired Matt.



## A FAMILIAR FACE. A UNIQUE SCREENPLAY.

Amazingly, Matt recognized the primary subject in our film, Engadi's founder, the Guatemalan-born missionary Nathan Hardeman. Matt and Nathan had joined the same church small group together years before, when Nathan moved to the U.S. to attend college.

Fast-forward to 2014, when Matt completed his first draft for *Small Group*. Producer Christos Hines said it was excellent. So excellent, in fact, that within just four months of developing the final script with producer Dale Wheatley, they were able to raise over \$1 million from investors to jumpstart production.

As a photographer, you know the most impactful element in art is story. In Matt's experience, church small groups were ripe for storytelling. Inside the intimate meetings, outside formal church walls, emotions get raw, humor gets edgier and people get authentic.

We didn't want to be part of a stereotypical and cheesy faith-based film. Matt's script was hilarious, honest and even inappropriate. Imagine if more photographers and filmmakers approached our subjects this way. Yes, we as artists need strong opinions; otherwise, we have nothing to say. But imagine how much better our stories will be if we make art that considers other viewpoints, too.

Matt avoided hiring known Christian actors who could be relied on to make faith-based films more marketable. Instead, he built a cast and crew around talent suited to the story, regardless of their portfolio.

You may recognize lead Emily Dunlop from her appearance in YouTube Originals' *Cobra Kai*. Nelson Bonilla, who plays the director of Engadi, is a badass killer in *Ozark* and also appears in Oscar-promising *First Man*. Our lighting tech did great work with Tom Hanks on *Sully*, and the set designer did *American Made* with Tom Cruise.

To raise the stakes higher, the plot has lead character Cooper infiltrating the church to create an undercover documentary that reveals the dark underbelly of evangelical Christian culture. In some respects, he succeeds. *Small Group* doesn't pull many punches when addressing the modern church's shortcomings.

As one critic wrote, "*Small Group* balances hilarious true insights into Christian subculture with an intense reflection on the human condition.... [Y]ou'll see yourself and your friends, the good, the bad, and the funny, in Matt Chastain's ridiculously beautiful film."

But even with a story worth telling, how do first-time filmmakers like us get on big screens?



## THEATERS ON DEMAND

Don't fool yourself into thinking we had a Rolodex to raise \$20 million for a wide release. We didn't. Getting your movie on big screens is harder than ever because distributors are no longer willing to fund risky films in the volatile age of MoviePass and Netflix. The movie industry is evolving fast and unpredictably.

But can you imagine a future where theaters stream crowd-funded films nationwide by popular demand?

The future is now. For *Small Group*, we opted for a limited release that would propel the film in our Atlanta home market. We released it in Texas, Alabama and other states to many sold-out shows. But that's not how the strategy ends.

Technology now allows you to request some indie movies at your favorite theater. As a result, *Small Group* is being requested and shown to audiences in Phoenix, Orlando, Oklahoma City and many more cities around the country.

How do you see it in your city? Distribution partners like Gathr Films have a model called Theatrical on Demand. Visit the *Small Group* movie website to try it out. Click to request a screening at your local theater (if it's not already in your city). Pick the date and time, then invite your friends. If enough tickets are reserved to cover the cost, the movie will be delivered and the screening is on.



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## TAKE YOUR SMALL GROUP TO SEE *SMALL GROUP*

*Small Group* is a movie within a movie. It's not our 2011 documentary. It's a new 2018 Hollywood film in select theaters everywhere. But the plot follows a filmmaker who turns his camera on our real Blume Photography nonprofit partner Engadi.

I couldn't be prouder of *Small Group*—both as a cinematographer (you'll see our work in the Guatemala scenes) and now as an "actor."

We're most excited that *Small Group* allows you to join us in healing Guatemala's violent slums. The better *Small Group* does in theaters, the more we can help children amid gang violence, thanks to generous pledges from producers. Your ticket will change lives.

So take your small group to see *Small Group* as a reminder of the power you have as a visual storyteller. ■



Phillip and Eileen Blume are award-winning photographers just crazy enough to believe art can change the world. Having transformed their small-town home studio into a top brand, they now work with clients worldwide. The Blumes specialize in wedding and fashion photography, and continue to focus on what matters most to them: charitable projects that include adoption advocacy and documentary filmmaking to benefit children living in extreme poverty. Phillip is a monthly contributor to *Shutter Magazine*, and together the Blumes speak at numerous top industry events, have appeared on CreativeLIVE and have shared their inspiring vision of more meaningful photography from the TEDx stage. They are owners of three photography brands, including a newborn studio, and are the proud founders of ComeUnity Workshops for photographers who seek balance. They live with their children in rural Georgia.

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2 SECRETS TO SUCCESS IN PHOTOGRAPHY:

# YOUR SKILL SET

&

# RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

with Skip Cohen

It's been over six years since I wrote my first article for *Shutter Magazine*. During that time, I've covered virtually every important building block in establishing a successful photography business. I've also taught at every ShutterFest except this year's. I've spoken with thousands of photographers and listened to their challenges.

I'm still amazed that so many photographers are clueless about the two most important ingredients to their success: building relationships and fine-tuning their skill set. Great photographers need both. Neither of them ever stops being important. Year after year, I hear photographers say, "If only I had the money for better gear."

Put a dozen new photographers in a room, and you'll hear the new-gear argument along with "If I only had a nice studio" and the complaint about all the Uncle Harrys who often have better gear than they do.

I don't want to dwell on the challenge, but for years, we heard the industry battle it out over Canon versus Nikon. It's like the arguments when I was a teenager over Ford versus Chevy.

Today you've got so much to choose from, especially in mirrorless. My favorite is Panasonic's Lumix line, but you've also got five other manufacturers to choose from. The argument over product lines was never a relevant issue. While there's no question about great gear making your life easier, great images come from a great skill set.

Vince Laforet is one of my heroes. Years ago at a workshop, he talked about never having the right gear when he first started. He looked at the audience at one of Skip's Summer School sessions and said, "You know what you do when you don't have a long enough lens? You move in closer."

Then there's Joe Buissink, who talks about the gear fever he had when he started out. He decided he needed to invest in an expensive tilt/shift lens. All it did was tie up his cash flow; after it sat on the shelf for a few years, he sold it at a loss.

Having the very best camera gear won't make you a great artist any more than owning a new Porsche will make you a racecar driver.

There's no question that technology keeps changing and gear keeps getting better. But you've got to keep practicing so you can take on any challenge with whatever gear you've got. You need to produce results that exceed client expectations.

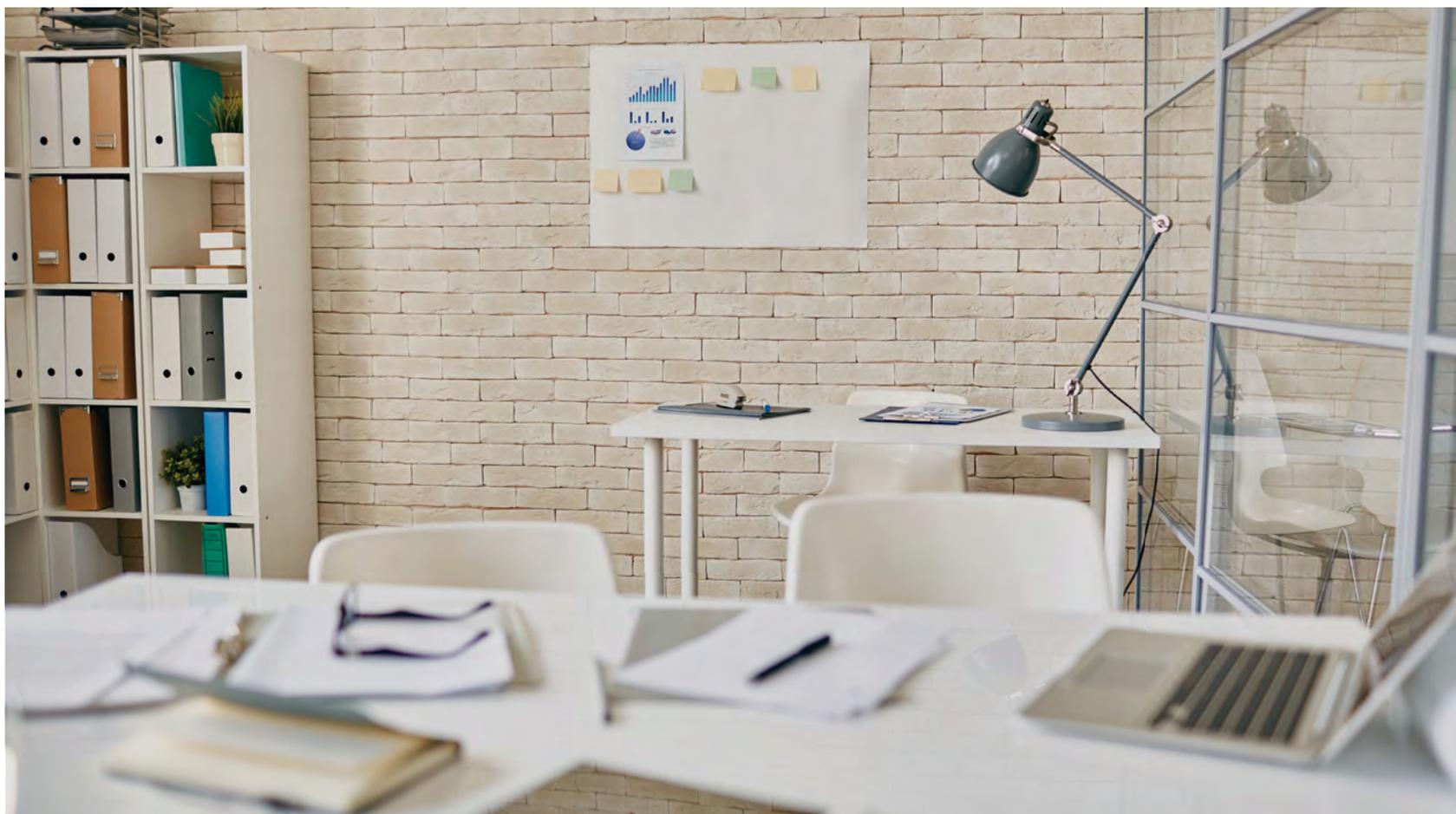


## UPGRADING YOUR GEAR

I'm talking primarily about new-gear fever suffered by artists who believe their gear is at fault for their business failures. New gear is always fun, especially if it's enhancing your ability to cover an event better and expand the parameters of what you can photograph.

But too often, like Joe Buissink in his younger days, photographers tie up cash flow with big-ticket purchases when there are alternatives like these:

- **Rental houses:** Before you shell out the money for a piece of gear, rent it first. Confirm whether or not it needs to be in your camera bag.
- **Lease vs. purchase:** Leasing new gear gives you a chance to use somebody else's assets without depleting yours. It's another good alternative and always worth checking out if you've decided the new gear is a must-have.
- **Partnerships:** Over the past year, I've heard some great stories about photographers sharing space, and the same applies to equipment. Equipment includes everything from cameras and lenses to large-format printers. I wrote about this in a recent article.





## RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

One of my favorite books on marketing is *UnMarketing*, by Scott Stratten. The newest edition is out and includes coauthor Allison Stratten. The subtitle of the earlier edition is *Stop Marketing. Start Engaging*. The new edition has that crossed out and these words written under them: *Everything Has Changed and Nothing Is Different*. The book is a great read, and I recommend you hit Amazon and order it. It should be in every business owner's library.

You'll meet a lot of photographers whose foundation for success is rooted in relationship building. Angela Carson is an old friend and an outstanding children and family photographer from Detroit. I did a podcast with her several years ago when the economy was in shambles. Detroit was one of the hardest-hit areas of the country, but Angela's business was strong.

In the podcast, she revealed that her secret was to keep in touch with her clients all year long. She's worked hard and with total sincerity to weave herself into the fabric of their families.



## FINE-TUNING YOUR SKILL SET

Photography is a career where you never stop learning. Technology and consumer trends never slow down. You have to take advantage of every opportunity to raise the bar on your skill set. That means attending workshops and conventions, watching online programs and following the blogs of those artists you admire the most.

Years ago, I heard Michele Celentano speak at a conference. She had 75 photographers in the room, most of them relatively new. She told them, "Twenty years ago, I was sitting right where you are now and wondering how long it would be before my work didn't suck."

Today, Michele is one of the finest family portrait artists in the world, and she's never stopped expanding her skill set. Her passion is the family side of the business, but there's nothing she can't shoot. She got that reputation by taking every workshop she could and building a network of friends and associates who helped her grow.

Attend conferences like ShutterFest where you can take hands-on shooting workshops with your peers and some of the most exceptional imaging educators. Take classes outside your expertise, because growth happens only outside your comfort zone.

Angela knew she needed x number of sittings a year, and approximately 65% of her clients were repeat business. She made it a point to track birthdays, anniversaries and special occasions in their lives. She also made it important to know about new babies, graduations and even family members who passed away.

Sure, it was a means to keeping her business healthy, but there isn't an insincere bone in Angela's body. Her love for photography isn't about her business as much as it is her love for people and her passion to please—in other words, exceeding client expectations.

She's worked for years to make herself habit-forming, building a business of loyal clients. Her success is tied to relationship building and an unstoppable skill set. Strong relationships are an essential component of every success story. Each relationship becomes a necessary network contact. It's not just about your clients, but your associates, opinion leaders in your community and the vendors whose products and services you use.



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In the old days before the Internet, we all collected business cards and stored them in our Rolodex alphabetically or according to industry or service. The process was the same: come home from a convention, sort your collected business cards and then put them into storage.

Social media changed all that. The Internet gave us the ability to keep in touch more often and to know exactly what was going in people's lives. Privacy as we used to know it went up in smoke, but at the same time, we had an opportunity to share more and expand the definition of friendships. You no longer had to wait to catch up with somebody you wanted to meet at the next convention. In the same respect, you had a chance to keep in touch with your target audience. Whether through your blog, Instagram, Pinterest, Facebook or Facebook forums, social media is one of your greatest tools for building your business and brand awareness.





It's December, and the year is quickly coming to a close, but a new year and tradeshow season are right around the corner. The first quarter of the new year is referred to as the slow season, but if you do things right, it should be anything but quiet.

Use this month to send your personal holiday card out to your clients. Use your blog to share content to help your readership with picture-taking tips through the holidays. Use December to exceed client expectations by sending holiday orders out on time. Then, take the time leading up to New Year's to do a little dreaming about how you want 2019 to look, and plan accordingly.

Plan your schedule so you can attend every possible conference/convention you can in 2019. Follow your favorite photographers on their blogs and YouTube. Think about your business and where your biggest weaknesses are, and figure out how to turn them from liabilities into assets. ■

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

## DIGITAL STRATEGIES

As a composite photographer, lighting is everything! When I place my model in their environment, the lighting is what makes it believable. If the lighting is wrong it just won't work. With my Paul C. Buff, Inc. Einsteins™ and my Cyber Commander™, I'm able to dial the lighting in just right without ever having to touch the lights. When your lights are ten feet in the air, the last thing you want to do is bring them down to adjust them half a stop. This saves me time and in turn allows me to focus more on my passion. Throw in the Vagabond Mini™, and I can take my set up anywhere my creativity takes me!



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**DIVER:** TFC Kirk L.



## EQUIPMENT USED



### Einstein™ E640 Flash Unit

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- Color consistency +/- 50K at any power
- Adjustable in precise 1/10 f-stops

### Cyber Commander™ Wireless Remote

- Allows for wireless triggering of flash units
- Adjust the outputs of both the flash and modeling light

### Vagabond Mini™ Lithium

- Built-in battery power source for operating AC powered studio flash units in the field.



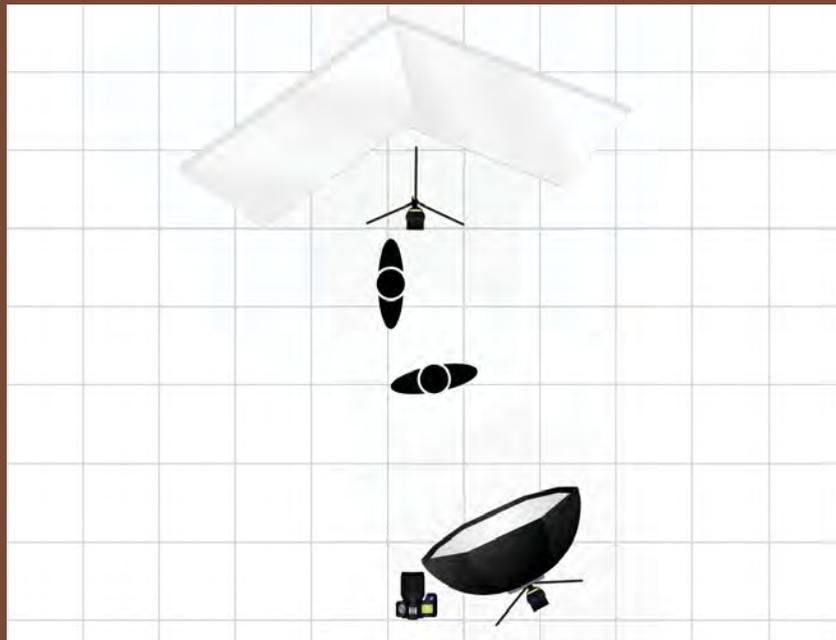
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# final inspiration

photographer | salvatore cincotta  
image title | by my side



exposure | f2.8 @ 1/100, ISO 400  
lighting | profoto a1 with westcott rapid box switch octa  
| profoto a1 with cto gel on background  
location | missouri athletic club | st. louis, mo  
gear | canon 5d mark iv  
| canon 24-70mm f2.8L





# Buy a Profoto A1 and get an extra battery for free

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