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SAL CINCOTTA & VANNESA JOY

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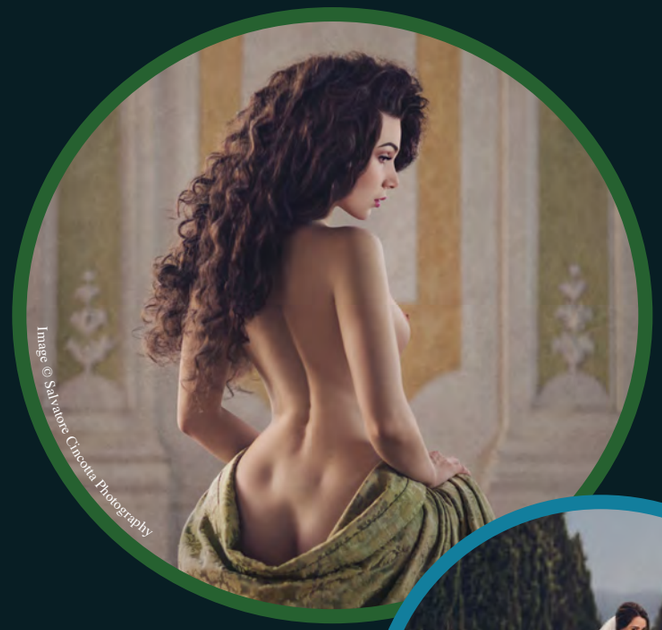

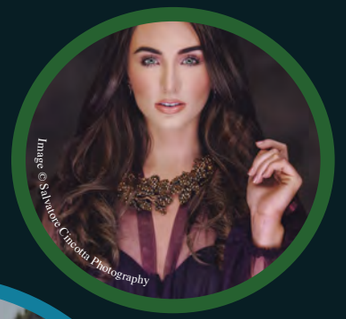

shutter magazine

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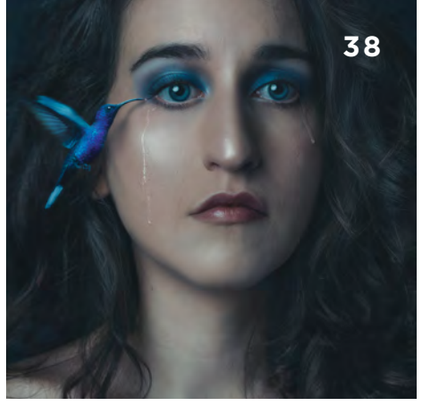

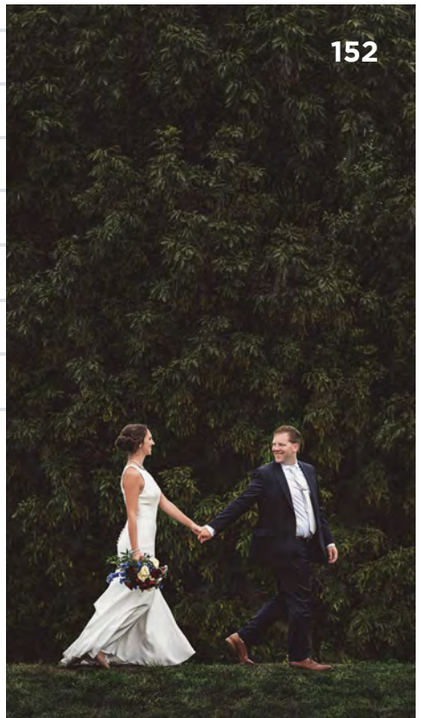

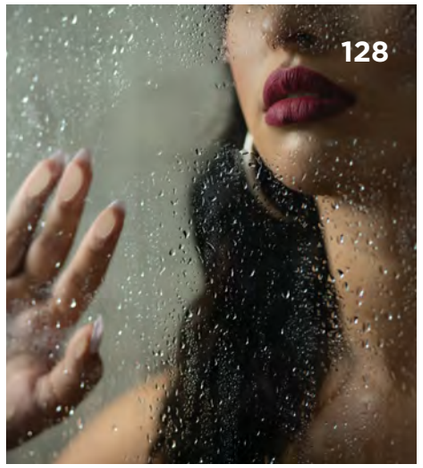

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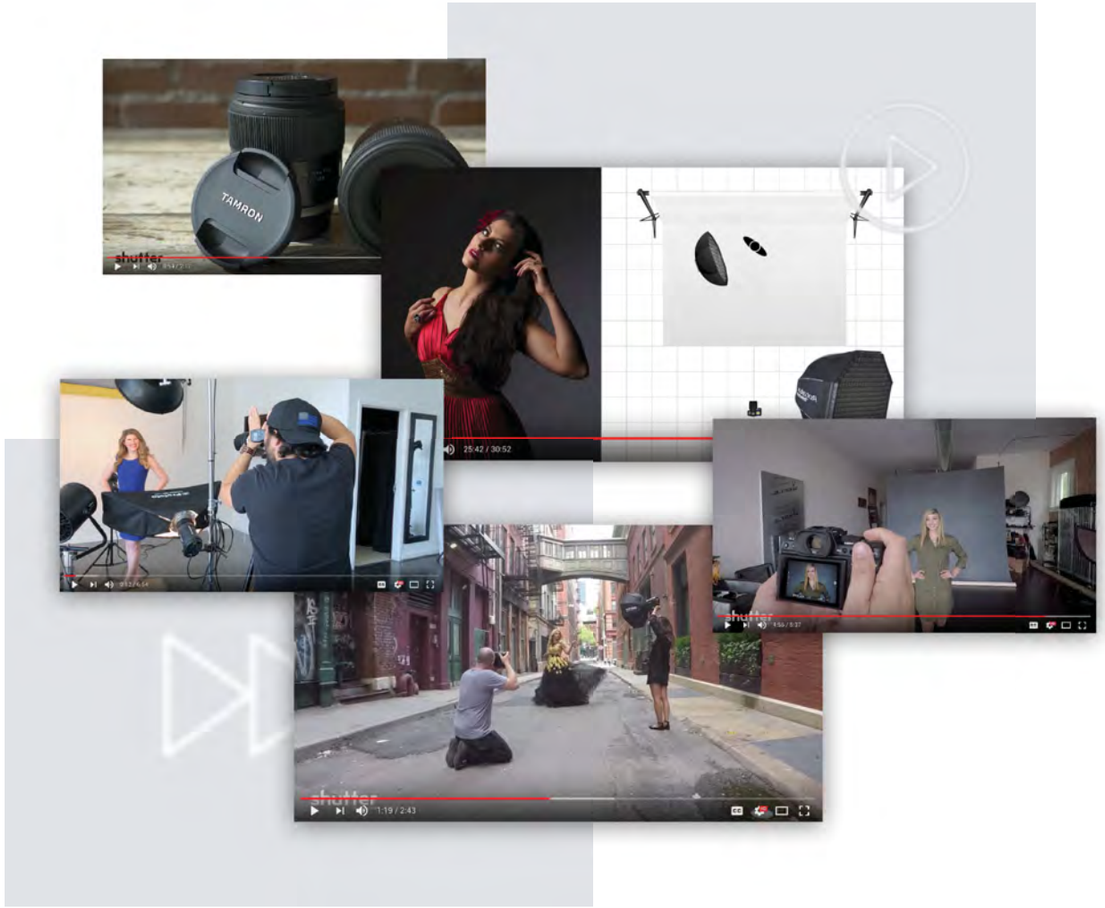

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MISSION **STATEMENT**

Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter* uses the latest technologies to deliver information in a way that is relevant to our audience.

Our experienced contributors help us create a sense of community and have established the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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THE **COVER**

TITLE: scared of freedom
PHOTOGRAPHER: ivana desančić
CAMERA: sony a7r III
LENS: zeiss 55mm f/1.8
EXPOSURE: f/10 @ 1/250 iso 100
LIGHTING: profoto d1 + 3ft profoto octabox
MODEL: amber frid

LAUNCH **POINT**

A message from the publisher

We must add the finishing touches to our images for them to stand out. **Post-Production** and how you apply it will make the difference between a *good* image and a *great* image.

- Sal Cincotta

ABOUT THE IMAGE: I'm often struggling with overthinking and anxiety, professionally and personally. No matter how hard I try to get rid of it, that feeling always lingers and I can't be free. With this photo I wanted to represent the feeling of being scared to let go of your negative thoughts, even though there is so much more to see around you. That is why the model is vulnerable, curled up in the chair, not wanting to look at the opportunities around her. I tend to use universal symbols that can be understood by most people, for instance, in this photo, birds and open sky represent freedom. Birds are so close to her, representing the ability to be free if you only reached out and tried, but it's hard to conquer your fears and doubts.

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5 TIPS TO BRING *Body Positivity* INTO YOUR SESSIONS

with **Suma Jane Dark**

1. WORK WITH DIVERSE MODELS

If you want clients of all shapes and sizes to feel confident working with you, they need to first see that you have an active interest in welcoming them into your studio. It is very intimidating for a plus-size client to reach out to a photographer, no matter how beautiful their work is, if the photographer's entire portfolio consists of only one body type again and again. What's more, working with models will help you to become more adept at working with larger bodies before offering your skills to paying clients. When a photographer isn't comfortable working with people of size, believe me, it really shows, and the results can range from awkward to devastating.

If you yourself aren't a part of the plus-size community, you might not know where to look to find plus-size models. Facebook is a great way to connect with new communities—look for local pages related to plus-size interests and ask their moderators if you can post that you're looking for a few people of size for test shoots. Instagram is a great way to find influencers in your area. Influencers always need fresh content, and those with smaller accounts will often be interested in TFP work. The bonus when working with influencers, much like professional models, is that they generally know a lot about posing already and will have the confidence to give you feedback as you go.

Image © Suma Jane Dark

And while we are on the subject of feedback—humble yourself and ask for it. Ask your models what their favorite photos are and why. Ask them which ones they like the least and why. You will learn more from this than you can imagine. Be gracious always.

Image © Suma Jane Dark

Image © Suma Jane Dark

2. FORGET "FLATTERING" POSES

There are so many tutorials out there that will teach you all kinds of rules and tips for shooting larger clients. Forget about almost all of them. These rules and tips generally treat plus-size bodies as problems that we need to solve through our lighting and posing. This just isn't so. People know what their bodies look like. Our job isn't to disguise, but rather to celebrate our clients. Don't hide tummies behind blankets, don't shoot entire sessions from a ladder, don't make nine out of ten photos closeups. Fat people are just like everyone else. We want to see our legs elongated. We want to see our necks looking elegant. We want detail shots of our hands. We want the same cool photos that everyone else gets.

Choose lighting that shows off our unique shapes. One of my biggest pet peeves in photographs of plus-size people is that the photographer has chosen to construct a body shape through lighting that clearly does not exist. The result is uncomfortable. See your subject as themselves. See their body as it is. Have them move and bend and stretch, and learn what beautiful lines and shapes the body before you can create. You don't need to make an hourglass out of an apple.

Nobody has flaws, just insecurities. Let your client tell you what those are, and work accordingly. Be considerate of the person before you, and avoid projecting your own biases through what you choose to shoot or not shoot. Believe me, folks will notice what you're avoiding shooting, and it doesn't feel good.

3. CHECK YOUR OWN BIASES

Do you bristle when I use the word "fat"? We're all brought up in a size-obsessed, body-negative culture. It's hard to unlearn those lifelong messages about what is beautiful and what is not. But "fat" is not a bad word, it's just a descriptor, and being fat doesn't make anyone less beautiful. Does that statement sit uncomfortably for you? That's OK. Growth isn't comfortable, but it is necessary.

Beauty is a living thing—it is fluid, it is moving, it is always shifting and morphing, and it takes up residence in everyone. Our job as artists is to find the particular form it's taken in the person before us and reflect it back to them. If you struggle to find beauty outside of what you've been brought up to believe is attractive, flood your social media with body positive influencers. Go on a deep dive into body positive theory on Google. Find some kickass podcasts.

Image © Suma Jane Dark

Spend some time really examining and breaking apart what you believe about bodies and value. It is impossible to celebrate the beauty in another if you yourself cannot see it. If you don't find larger bodies to be beautiful and valuable, you won't be able to bring out the magic from your larger clients. Once you see all bodies as equally valid and lovely, everything else will naturally flow.

Image © Suma Jane Dark

Image © Suma Jane Dark

4. KEEP IT POSITIVE

Check your websites and client magazines for any wording about “flaws,” “extra weight,” “problem areas,” and phrases of the sort. There’s just no need for any of that. Resist the urge to discuss dieting, weight loss, or anything that isn’t totally weight neutral in your studio. If a client brings it up, gently steer the conversation back to something more productive and positive. Without meaning to, these phrases and conversations can bring up feelings of shame for people of all sizes. Shame does not a great session make.

Anecdotally, my larger clients actually tend to be my most confident clients. They’re often excited, comfortable, and ready for anything. When your marketing materials or studio atmosphere take the attitude that we all de facto hate ourselves, it only undermines confidence in clients who are already feeling great. It also helps to normalize all kinds of toxic attitudes about beauty, which let’s be honest, are just real bummers. Let’s move beyond them!

Image © Suma Jane Dark

5. KEEP ACCESSIBILITY IN MIND

It's very important in my studio that all of my furniture be able to support a variety of weights. My partner and I have made several adjustments to some of the antique pieces of my set to ensure that they are usable for everyone. Keep an eye on things like the width between the arms on chairs, the weight limit for couches, and the ease with which clients can move around your studio.

Likewise, give clients a heads up about stairs, whether or not there is air conditioning, and any other important factors about your space. Encourage your clients to be open about any adjustments they might need to help support them in different poses—these can be positioning pillows, helping to lift legs, etc. All bodies are unique and will have their own needs; you don't have to anticipate everything. A little mindfulness goes a long way. If you aren't sure if a client will be able to comfortably do a pose, just ask them. Encourage people to advocate for themselves, and don't assume someone's physical ability based just on their size. Like with everything else on this list, if you're new to the world of body positivity, it's OK—just stay open. Your whole world is about to get so much more beautiful, and your clients are going to be over the moon. ■

Suma Jane Dark is a body positive boudoir and fashion photographer based out of Portland, OR. The heart of their work is focused on visualizing a world of inclusive beauty. They have been a body positive activist for over a decade. They love dogs, road trips, and all competitive cooking shows.

sumajanedark.com

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Rey Benasfre shared a photo in Level Up with Sal Cincotta
July 2 at 2:59 PM

My phone died right before this came up. Had the chance to watch the replay and just now and wanted to say THANK YOU Sal Cincotta for the free look and advice! I definitely didn't take it the wrong way, it was very valuable stuff I didn't realize! Making changes tonight, probably just gonna take out the video and gallery altogether.

The Level Up webinars and this group have been super valuable for me this past month. Well worth the price of admission and I'm so glad I made the decision to sign up on day 1. Looking forward to the next month!

• What is the purpose of the video?
• Slow and boring – is that the goal?

Like Comment

Jill Flynn is with Timothy Flynn.
November 14 at 11:43 AM

Finally had a moment to watch / listen / soak in / take notes on the Black Friday Webinar - and I AM SO EXCITED!! ThANK YOU!

Yvonne Overstreet I am truly appreciating LEVEL UP!

THANK YOU to EVERYONE who submitted their sites. I learned so much from the critiques of all the sites. I was extremely hesitant to submit my website since it needs A LOT of work. I'm here to grow as a business person so I put my resistance on a shelf and submitted. After all a website is a key tool to running a successful photography business. I am putting my all into this! In putting my all, I have to woman up and face what's wrong to grow.

As I watched I took plenty notes to update my site to make it work as the business tool it is meant to be. To my surprise and gratitude my site was critiqued. Thank you Sal and in Snoop Dogg fashion "I thank myself for setting aside my fear of receiving a public critique!"

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levelupsal.com/sign-up/

FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED

with **Sal Cincotta**

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

It is so important that, as artists, we finish our final images before delivering to our clients. The images we create are more than just a snapshot in time; they are truly a representation of how we see the world around us. These images will live on for generations to come. Shouldn't we polish them before we deliver them to our clients?

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Now, in the world of post-production, we tend to see two camps. There's that of purists, who believe in just delivering images as they were captured, reminiscent of the days of film before we had Photoshop. And then there are those on the other end of the spectrum who believe in using software to shape, alter, and polish their images before presenting to their clients. I'd like to think I live somewhere in the middle, which I am sure many of you can relate to.

What I would like to do here is explore how the right amount of post-production can help you and your business stand out.

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

First, let's start with this idea of being a "purist." I love when I run into these people. "Not me, bro. I'm straight out of camera," they claim. They go on, "It's like the days of film—you didn't have all this photoshopping, you had to get it right in camera." Really? You do realize that even in the days of film, they were implementing post-production strategies, right? This is usually where I start scratching my head and question intelligence levels. Don't get me wrong—if you are all about minimal retouching, I support you. I believe we all need to find our style and create a consistent brand, but please, know what you are talking about.

Even in the days of glass plate negatives, altering a photo was a thing. Darkroom techniques included dodging, burning, masking, skin smoothing, toning, body shaping and more. The "skinny" tool existed long before Photoshop. So, it's laughable when people believe they are delivering on this nostalgic concept. Add to that the silly idea that in the world of digital, "straight out of camera" is delivering a real and natural image. I'm trying to be nice here, but for crying out loud, get your head out of your you-know-where. If you are using a camera, applying a camera profile, etc., you are altering the image. The difference is, instead of using Photoshop, you are allowing the camera's processor and software to do the editing for you. But make no mistake, you are in fact manipulating the image.

Now, look, I'm saying all this to drive a single point home. We had to finish what we start. As photographers, as artists, we have a vision before we click the button. I am of the mindset that we need to use the tools available to us to create and finalize the image we see in our mind's eye.

The single most important piece of advice I can give you regarding your images is to finish what you started. Post-production is without a doubt how my photography studio has stood out in a crowded market. You don't have to shoot like me or edit like me, that's not the point. The point is we must deliver a polished final image to our client. If we do not, we run the risk of our images looking and feeling like everyone else's.

Here is my philosophy:

SOFTWARE IS A TOOL

It's as simple as that. Photoshop, Lightroom, Capture One, and others—these are all tools. No different than a hammer in your garage. And just like a hammer, each can be used to build something or destroy something.

To ignore the tool is to ignore progress. I don't believe we can truly do our jobs without software. Photoshop, actions, presets, brushes, etc. are all there to make us more efficient. They are not meant to be one-click solutions to finishing our images.

Software is a large piece of the puzzle. Driving this home, your camera choice, your lens choice, your lighting choices, and your post-production choices all work cohesively to deliver on your final vision. Can you really do your job without all the pieces?

POST-PRODUCTION IS A SPICE

Season to taste. If you cook, you know what I am referring to here. As a cook, you can pick any recipe and tweak it to your personal preferences. A little bit more of this, a little less of that. The next thing you know, you have created your own masterpiece. Is photography any different? I say, no.

I'm not here to tell you how much is too much or not enough. I am driving the point home, aggressively I might add, that we must finish what we started. I want you to realize something. The images you place on your site or your social media, the ones you print for your sales room—these images are a reflection of how you see the world and of your brand. This is what people are hiring you for.

Be consistent with your application. Some will love your work, and some will hate it. Who cares? Focus on the people who gravitate to your work. A consistent portfolio will make it that much easier to find them.

SEE THE FINAL IMAGE BEFORE YOU CLICK

Over the years, I have come to realize that the more work I do before the shoot, the easier post-production becomes. I'm not saying I know what it will look like every single time I take an image. However, what I like to do is try to see the final image in my head. Is it a high-contrast shot? Will it look better in black and white or in color? I know this sounds like a trivial thing, but it can make a huge difference to start thinking this way.

This doesn’t only apply to color toning. If you think about the final image, you will also start to see details that can't easily be fixed in post-production. I start to look a lot closer at hand placement, hair (have you ever had to edit hair? It can be a nightmare), bad makeup, etc.

Looking for what is wrong before you take the image can save you hours of time in post-production. Spend the ten seconds before you click looking at the details and thinking about the final shot. You will thank me.

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

FINALIZE TO YOUR SPECIFIC BRAND AND VISION

This is all about you and your brand. Find your style. This is so important. Over the years, we have put a lot of energy into our style. Love or hate my work, you know it when you see it. Mission accomplished. Look, I can't expect everyone to love my work, but trying to be everything to everyone is just not a realistic goal. Instead, my mindset is to create an image that people are passionate about, one that brides and teens love. They don't like it—they love it. If you can do that consistently, then you will stand out in the world of photography. Your clients will find you, and they won't haggle with you over $50.

When it's all said and done, use the tools available to you to finish the image you started. Just like a carpenter might use finishing nails and trim to dress up their final project, we need to use the tools available to us to complete our final vision. ■

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

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You read that right. Sorry to break the news to you, but prior to the digital revolution, you do realize most photographers would ship their film off to a lab that would control color correction along with many other facets of post-production?

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THE POST-PRODUCTION EDITION

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Image © Brandon S. Hunter

5 STEPS TO ENHANCE YOUR

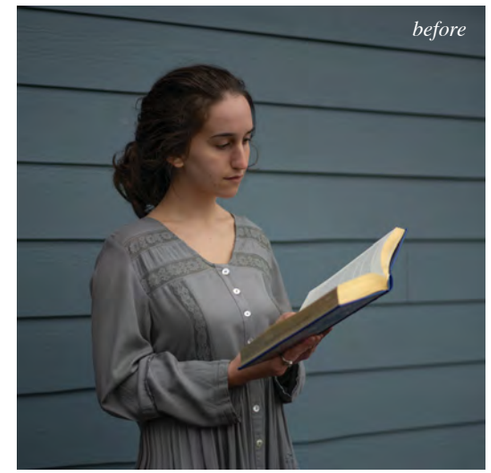
POST-PRODUCTION

with **Ivana Desančić**

Image © Ivana Desančić

Image © Ivana Desančić

I am well aware that post-production can be intimidating and sometimes even overwhelming. That is exactly how I felt at the beginning, when I first started learning about Photoshop and practicing my skills. On the other hand, it is a great tool for unlocking your creativity and bringing your photography to the next level. After I realized the difference post-production can make, I never looked back, and spent days exploring new ways to improve my work and my skills. Still, all those skills can be futile if you do not think about the post-production process before you even take the photo. That is why the next section is an extremely important step in my creative process.

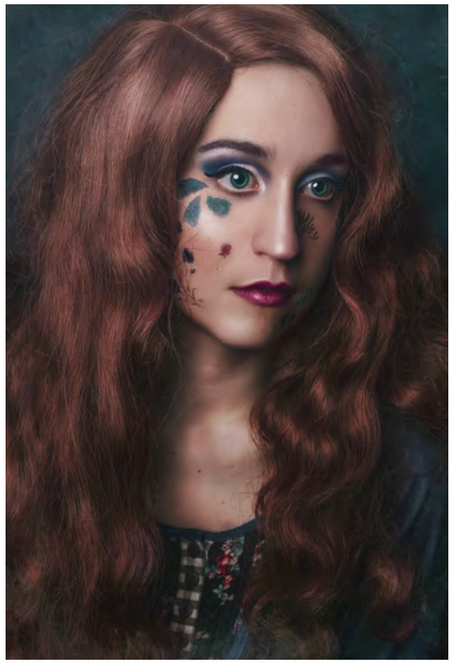


Images © Ivana Desančić

1. THINKING BEFOREHAND

Whenever an idea pops up into my head, I write it down or sketch it. My work usually involves compositing, so if I have props that match my vision, I will photograph everything under the same lighting conditions and same perspective. Sometimes, my ideas involve wild animals or other elements that I am not able to photograph in person or under the same conditions. In those cases, I will go through Adobe Stock, looking for images that could suit my idea.

I cannot stress enough how important it is to pay attention to perspective and lighting conditions. If those things do not match, your composite will not look realistic. After I am satisfied with all the conditions and I have enough photos that I can work with (I usually take around 150, even though I'm going for one final photo), I move on to the post-production process. Note, it is a good idea to create a consistent workflow that you will follow almost every time you edit. That way, you can streamline your post-production process, and be more effective and more confident in achieving good results every time.



Images © Ivana Desančić

2. ADOBE CAMERA RAW AND FIRST STEPS IN PHOTOSHOP

After I have chosen the image I like the most, with the most suitable pose, facial expression and light, I open it in Adobe Camera Raw, where I work on some basic adjustments, such as brightness, contrast, shadows, temperature, etc. I would always make sure that in the "Lens Correction" tab, your options for "Remove Chromatic Aberration" and "Enable Profile Corrections" are checked. That will remove all the distortion your lens could create. These are the only steps I use Adobe Camera Raw for—everything else is done after I open the photo in Photoshop.

I always start by duplicating the original layer, because that allows me to correct any mistakes I might make while editing. It is always a good idea to break up your editing into smaller steps and create a new layer for each step you take, since that way your editing will be non-destructive. Moving on, I open the Filter drop-down menu and select Liquify. That opens a new window, where I can reshape my subject if needed and work on hair volume. Then, I move on to retouching, where I start with the Frequency Separation technique. That allows me to work on texture and colors on separate layers. On the high-frequency layer (texture), I work on blemish removal, and on the low-frequency layer (colors and tone) I use the Lasso tool to select different areas on my subject's face and body, and blur them out with Gaussian Blur to soften the transition between high lights and shadows.

Image © Ivana Desančić

Image © Ivana Desančić

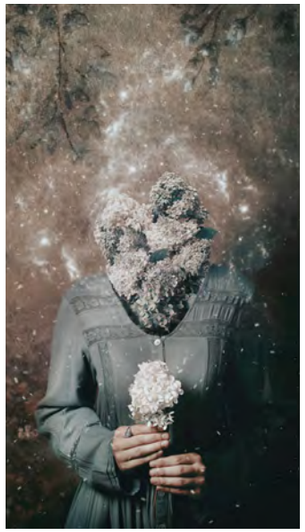
Images © Ivana Desančić

3. COMPOSITING

My compositing always starts with cutting out the photographed props or animals and moving them onto the main photo. After I put them in the right position, I start working on shadows to make the composition realistic. In the beginning, this was the hardest part for me. It took a lot of trial and error to figure out what details to look for and how to draw realistic shadows. The way that works best for me is to select the Eyedropper tool and take a color sample of one of the existing shadows in the photo. That way, I can make sure that the shadow I am drawing will match the colors of the existing shadows.

I draw the shadows using the Brush tool, set at 100% Opacity, and a really low Flow, usually around 5%. I split the shadow into a couple of layers, making sure that it is fading out toward the edges, giving the object of the shadow a 3D feel. In order to make sure that the light of the composited images matches perfectly, I adjust highlights and shadows using Levels and Curves. The next step is working on matching the color tones. I usually do it with different color adjustment layers, such as Selective Color, Curves, and Color Balance.

This is the longest part of my editing process, because all these steps are crucial, and I have to go through each of them every time I am compositing in order to achieve the most realistic results. Compositing is also my favorite phase of post-production, since it lets my limitless imagination run free, and it gives me an opportunity to create things that would not be possible otherwise.



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4. DODGING AND BURNING, AND COLOR TONING

There are so many ways to dodge and burn in Photoshop. One of them is using the Dodge and Burn tool, but that tool cannot be used on an empty layer, making it destructive editing. That is why my favorite technique is to just open a new layer, set the blend mode to Overlay or Soft Light, and paint the highlights with a white brush and the shadows with a black brush set at 100% Opacity and Flow around 5%. On most occasions, I use the Dodge and Burn tool three times during my editing workflow, since my style involves exaggerated highlights and shadows. That also contributes to the painterly feel of my photos. Another possible technique is to use the Curves layer, bring the brightness up or down (depending on whether you are working with highlights or shadows), convert the layer mask to black, and then paint with a white brush with really low Flow over the areas you want to enhance.

Color toning is probably the most fun part about editing, at least in my case. I also believe that it is a crucial step if you want to enhance your photos. There is so much you can do with colors. You can change the entire mood of the photo just by using color adjustment layers. Since there are so many color adjustment layers, you can explore each of them and see which ones work best for you. The ones that suit me the most are Selective Color, Color Balance, Curves, and Gradients. When I decide on the mood I am going for, I go through each of those color adjustment layers and tweak the colors until I am satisfied with them. One of the best pieces of advice I can give while working with colors is to take frequent breaks—your eyes can get tired and accustomed to everything on your screen, which increases your chances of overlooking mistakes, such as improper skin tone. Ten-to-fifteen-minute breaks are more than enough for your eyes to rest and come back with fresh perspective.

Image © Ivana Desančić

Image © Ivana Desančić

5. FINISHING TOUCHES

After I think that I am done editing my photo, I leave it for a couple of days, and then come back to see if I might have missed something. People have a tendency to overlook small mistakes and details in the first day of editing—you saw the photo so many times that your brain is expecting to see the same things over and over again. Coming back allows you to have a fresh perspective and see what else needs to be fixed. That usually includes more work with light and colors, and possibly adding or taking things away. In my case, I know I am done editing when all the additional adjustments I make don't contribute to the quality of the photo. That is when I move on to my final layer, which is Sharpening.

Again, like many other things in Photoshop, there are different ways to sharpen. My favorite one is to create a new layer, open the Image drop-down menu and select Apply Image. Then, I desaturate that layer and change the blend mode to Soft Light, and after that, I open the Filter drop-down menu and select Other/High Pass. You can set the value according to your taste, but I usually go for somewhere between 2 and 4.

That sums up my editing workflow. Remember, there are so many techniques you can use, you just need to figure out which ones work best for your editing style. I hope you enjoy your editing as much as I do. ■

Ivana Desančić is a twenty-year-old, self-taught Fine Art photographer located in Asheville, North Carolina. Her biggest passion is bringing her imagination to life by using her camera and Photoshop.

Instagram.com/ivanadesancic/

7 TIPS FOR MAKING COMPOSITING EASIER

with **Ben Shirk**

Image © Shirk Photography

I love compositing, and it's pretty much what I've built my entire business around. I've become known as one of the top studios in the nation for creative composites. Seniors travel from every corner of the US to my studio, I create composites nearly every day, and I'm very fast.

One of the comments I get most often from photographers on my social media posts is, "How long did that take?" That's somewhat of a trick question, because I've been compositing for a while now. I create thousands of composites a year and have everything set up to make what I do fast and easy. Don't get me wrong—just because I can create something quickly doesn't mean that it isn't quality. I pride myself in realizing super creative, personalized images for my clients, but because I have taken the time to set up a system, I can create amazing images quite quickly. Whether you are a high-volume photographer or a boutique studio, here are some of my top recommendations that anyone can do to help streamline their compositing.

Image © Shirk Photography

1. FIND A BACKGROUND

Yes, the first step to make compositing easy and fast is to find a background before you photograph your subject. Knowing your background will allow you to take into account all of the variables in a scene. If you know the variables, then you can photograph your subject appropriately so that they "belong" in the scene much better. If you are just starting out or just want to save some time, then consider a stock image or template. Creating a background from scratch can be a fun challenge, but it can certainly take a great deal of time.

Images © Shirk Photography

after

Image © Shirk Photography

2. LIGHT YOUR SUBJECT APPROPRIATELY

One of the most difficult things to change in post is the light on your subject. It can take huge amounts of time to dodge and burn areas to match, and heavy dodging or burning seldom looks good. Look at your background before you start. What direction is the light coming from? Is it from directly above, behind, to the left? How bright is the light? Are there multiple sources? Now that you know what light is in your scene, you can light your subject similarly. Many of my athletic composites are darker night scenes with stadium-like lighting, so I use studio lights to make them look dramatic and tough. However if your background is soft, natural light, then photograph your subject using soft, natural light.

Images © Shirk Photography

Images © Shirk Photography

3. HIDE YOUR SUBJECT'S FEET

One of the most difficult things in compositing is connecting your subject to the ground. Finding a way to hide your subject's feet can be a huge time-saver. One of the easiest ways to put someone into a scene is to use a close-up shot and add the appropriate background behind them. By cropping in, you don't have to draw shadows around their feet, and it will save you tons of time and frustration, especially if you are newer to compositing. When your subject is not connected to the ground, it will also give you a great deal of flexibility in the angle and perspective of the scene. When I build templates for others to use, I often spend a lot of time trying to incorporate some feature that will allow part or all of the subject's feet to be hidden, making it easier for the user. However, for many of my personal projects, I love the challenge of trying to incorporate the whole subject.

Image © Shirk Photography

4. MAKE YOUR EXTRACTIONS EASY

The industry standard for nearly instant extractions is green screen. The benefit of using a green screen is that there are actions and plugins that take the work out of extractions and make it simple and easy to extract a subject. Quick extractions allow you to get right to the fun part—the art. Don't have a studio? No problem. Green screen doesn't have to be just in studio—there are portable, pop-up green screens that can easily go with you on location.

Image © Shirk Photography

Images © Shirk Photography

5. AUTOMATE THINGS THAT YOU DO REGULARLY WITH ACTIONS

If you do the same thing multiple times, it is easy to record the steps in your actions pallet so that you can simply hit play the next time. For example, say that each time you go to create a composite, you create a new document, fill the background with black, create a four-pixel white border, and add your logo. That can all be an action completed in a single click. There are also lots of actions you can find online to help with toning, detail enhancement, and color—these can help make your retouching and blending process more efficient.

Images © Shirk Photography

6. USE YOUR KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS AND QUICK KEYS

Instead of taking lots of time navigating through the different menus and dropdowns, learn the faster way. Quick keys can do all kinds of things—for example, (B) brings up your brush tool and (E) brings up your eraser tool. You should also memorize most of your keyboard shortcuts, like cut and paste (ctrl/cmd C and ctrl/cmd V) and Transform (ctrl/cmd T). There are many others that you should add to your repertoire as well. If it's an item that you use often and you don't know the keyboard shortcut, you can find the button sequence listed alongside the actual command in the Photoshop menu. Once you find it, use the keyboard shortcut keys instead of the menu so that your fingers begin to remember the sequence. Even saving a few seconds each time can make a big difference in your production time.

Images © Shirk Photography

7. ABOVE ALL, KNOW HOW TO USE YOUR COMPUTER PROGRAM

The majority of compositors use Photoshop. Knowing the controls and options will allow you to focus on the artwork instead of stumbling around looking for a filter or tool. Yes, being comfortable and knowing Photoshop well will take some time and effort. But seriously, since when was anything worthwhile easy to do? Shut off Dancing with the Stars and The Voice and instead spend some time playing around in Photoshop. Make yourself better. Get comfortable using layers and the variety of tools Photoshop offers. If you want to increase your Photoshop skills, it is fairly easy to find tutorials on the internet that you can learn from. If you learn better in person, then consider some hands-on training at a workshop. ■

Ben Shirk is an internationally award-winning professional photographer specializing in athletes and seniors with activities and unique interests. Growing up in a log cabin in Wilton, Iowa he spent his days exploring the woods, swimming in rivers and developing his imagination. Today, his stunning images are known worldwide for their creativity and depth of storytelling, and he travels the world photographing and teaching photography. Ben currently holds many International, National and State Photography Titles for his unique images, and operates one of the top senior studios in the nation.

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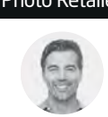

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Efficiency in Photoshop

with **Dave Cross**

Ask some people how they suggest being more efficient in Photoshop, and they'll answer, "Use Actions." Although Actions are a great way of automating your work (and we'll talk about a "different" way to think of Actions later), there are some additional ways that you can give your Photoshop efficiency a boost.

KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Many people cringe at the idea of having to memorize multiple keyboard shortcuts in every program they use. There's no question that this can be very challenging, so here are a couple of strategies to help make implementing Photoshop keyboard shortcuts more manageable.

START WITH TOOL SHORTCUTS

Every tool in Photoshop has a single letter you can tap to activate the tool. No multiple keys to remember ("Is it Shift or Alt?"), just tap a single letter on your keyboard, and that tool is ready to use. Many of the shortcuts make perfect sense, such as M for Marquee, C for Crop, T for Type and B for Brush. Others are a bit more of a stretch, such as V for the Mo*V*e tool or W for the Quick Selection tool (since it shares the same slot as the Magic *W*and). Some others make no real sense at all, making us feel that Adobe was running out of letters and just assigned them to random tools as there was nothing else available.

Learning and remembering these single-letter shortcuts should be easier than trying to recall multi-key shortcuts (more on that later), but it will still take a while. In fact, it's worth saying that learning/memorizing shortcuts will probably slow you down before it speeds up your work. But stick with it—it is such an incredible time-saver to tap a letter to activate a tool. Never again do you have to leave your workspace, moving your mouse all the way over to the Toolbar, just to return to the same position you were in a moment ago.

One important note to add: there are many cases where multiple tools share the same single letter, such as J, which functions for the Healing Brush, the Spot Healing Brush, the Patch Tool, the Content-Aware Move Tool and the Red Eye Tool. If you tap the letter and the "wrong" tool is activated, hold down Shift and the letter (so in this example Shift-J), and each time you tap the shortcuts, it will toggle through the tools that share that letter.

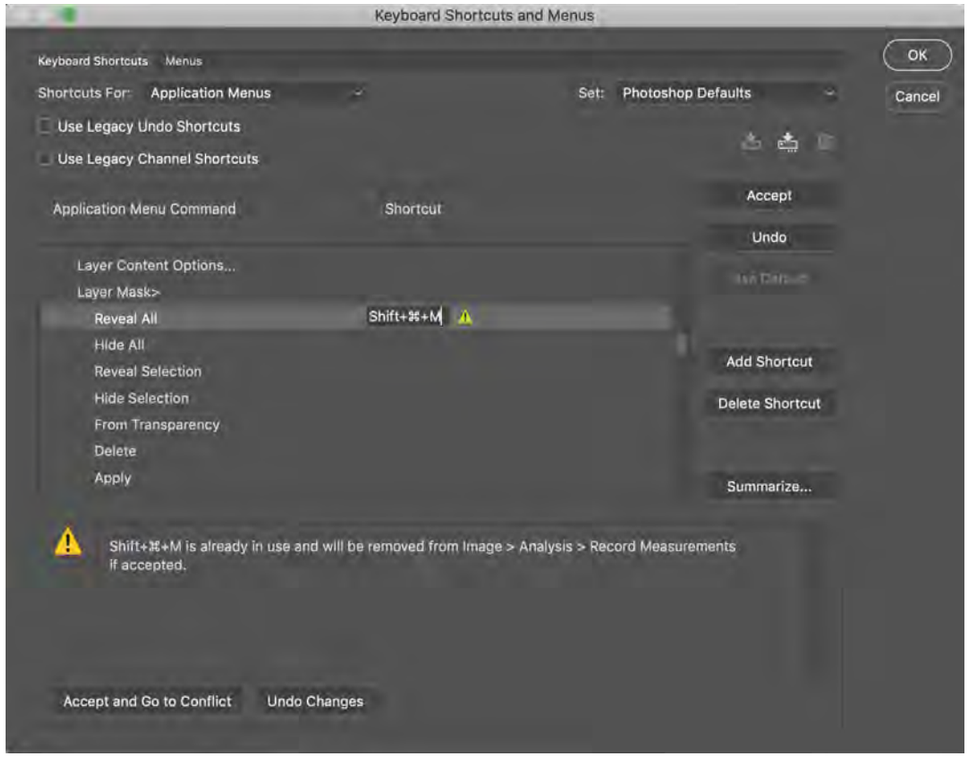
Although they're not tools, here are more single-tap shortcuts that are great time-savers:

- Tap D to reset the Foreground and Background Colors to the Default.
- Tap X to swap the Foreground and Background Colors.
- Tap Q to enter Quick Mask mode (tap Q again to return to regular view).
- With the Brush tool, tap "]" to make the brush size bigger and "[" to make the brush smaller.
- In Photoshop 2020, press the left and right arrow keys to rotate the current brush.
- With the Move tool active, tap a number to change the opacity of the current layer. For example, tap 5 for 50%, 2 for 20%, and so on. Tap 0 for 100%.
- With a painting tool active, tap a number to change the opacity of the current tool.

MAKE YOUR OWN SHORTCUT

Although just about every conceivable combination of keys has already been used as a Photoshop shortcut, it's very likely that you will find that a function you use all the time does not have a shortcut. Luckily, you can re-allocate an existing shortcut and apply it to the function you want. As we'll see, it's very simple to do, and well worth it, as it's easier to remember a shortcut that you allocated rather than one that was assigned by someone at Adobe.

To reassign a shortcut to the function you want, use Edit>Keyboard Shortcuts. Let's say that we wanted to add a shortcut for adding a Layer Mask. Click on Layer, and scroll down until you see Layer Mask>Reveal All. Click on the space to the right of that function and enter the shortcut you want to use, for example Shift-Command-M (PC: Shift-Control-M). A warning will tell you that this shortcut is already in use, in this example for something called Record Measurements. Assuming that is something you'll never use, click the Accept button, and from now on you can press Shift-Command-M (PC: Shift-Control-M) to add a Layer Mask. (Custom shortcuts will remain active unless you reset the keyboard shortcuts back to the default settings).



Hint: In some cases, the shortcut you want to use is already in use by a function that you use on occasion. In those circumstances, you'll have to decide which function you use more often, and allocate the shortcut to that function.

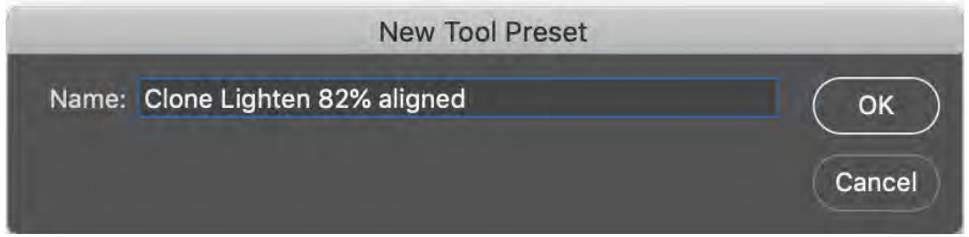
PRESETS

There are plenty of places in Photoshop where you can save time by creating and then using your own presets. With very few exceptions, a preset should be considered as a starting point: you don't have to stick with the results of that preset, but rather you can continue to tweak the settings if necessary. Here are some examples of presets in Photoshop.

TOOL PRESETS

One of the keys to using tools in Photoshop is to make sure the settings in the Options Bar are appropriate for whatever you are planning to do with a tool. Rather than constantly switching settings back and forth, you can create Tool Presets, and then choose between the presets to quickly change to tool settings.

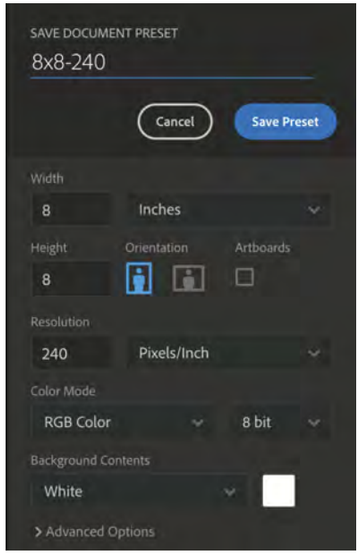
To create a Tool Preset, enter all the settings in the Options Bar, and then click beside the tool icon in the Options Bar to open the Tool Presets Picker. Then, click on the New button, name your preset, and you're good to go. From then on, choose your Tool Preset from the picker or the Tool Preset Panel, and all the tool settings will be changed automatically.



Hint: Create a Tool Preset for the "normal" settings for a tool, such as Normal Blend mode at 100% Opacity for brush-related tools

ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

For commonly used settings (such as an S-Curve with a Curve adjustment layer), use the flyout menu in the Properties panel to Save Curves Preset. From then on, instead of creating an S-Curve manually, you can choose your preset from the Preset menu. Once you have chosen the preset, you can still tweak the results on an image-by-image basis.

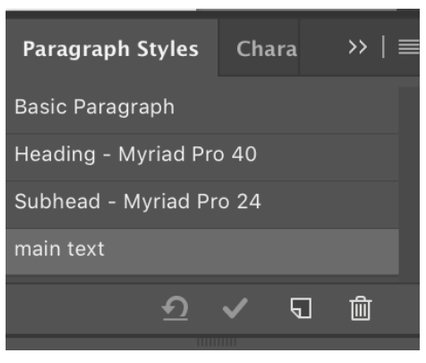


NEW DOCUMENT

Are you working on a project where you need a bunch of new documents at an unusual size? Rather than entering in those numbers every time, make a New Document Preset that can include not only the dimensions but also the Resolution, Color Mode, Bit Depth, Background Contents, and Color Profile.

FILTERS

Unfortunately, not many filters have presets, but be sure to take advantage of saving presets in the handful of filters that offer that option.



CHARACTER AND PARAGRAPH STYLES

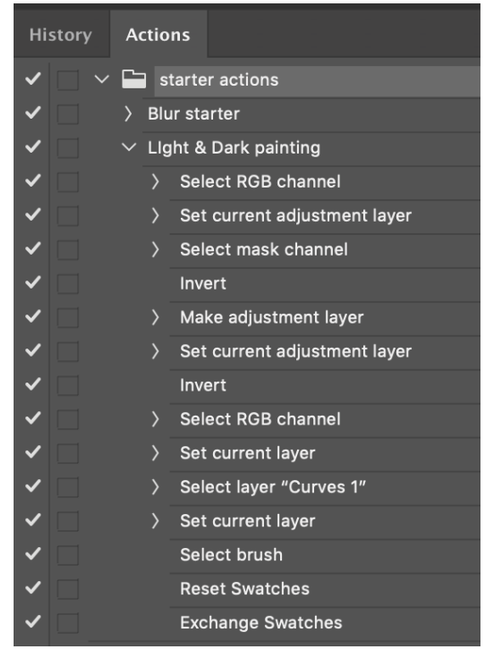
When you're working with type and want consistency in the font, size, etc., consider creating Character and Paragraph styles. Then, you can click to apply a style to existing type.

Note: Unlike other presets that are application-wide, Character and Paragraph style are document-specific, but can be loaded from one document to another.

ACTIONS

Automating your work with Actions can save you a lot of time, especially if you think of them a little differently. An action lets you "record" a series of operations that, when played back, run much faster than you could ever accomplish manually. But rather than using them only for complete start-to-finish operations, creating what we'll call Starter Actions can be even more effective.

Imagine that you have a series of photos where you want to use two Curves adjustment layers (and their associated masks) to paint in light and shadow. For each photo, you'd have to add the first Curves adjustment layer, make the adjustment to lighten the image, invert the mask to black, add the second Curves adjustment layer, make the adjustment to darken the image, invert the mask to black, activate the Brush tool, make white your Foreground color, and then paint where you want to reveal the adjustment layer. Of course, since each photo is different, you would not be able to record the complete operation—but you certainly could record the steps that are the same for each photo.



In this case, that would mean making a new Action and clicking record, followed by adding the first Curves adjustment layer, making the adjustment to lighten the image, inverting the mask to black, adding the second Curves adjustment layer, making the adjustment to darken the image, inverting the mask to black, activating the Brush tool, and making white your Foreground color. Then, you'd stop recording. Now for each photo, you could run this Starter Action, and very quickly you'd be ready to paint with light or dark simply by choosing the appropriate Curves adjustment layer. And just like presets, the Curves adjustment layers that were added in this Action can still be edited.

Of course, one of the keys to working more efficiently is to start implementing strategies like these in your work. As mentioned, it might initially slow you down to remember to use keyboard shortcuts, save presets or record Actions, but it's well worth that investment in time. Before you know it, you'll have already seen some major improvements to your efficiency in Photoshop. ■

For over 30 years Dave Cross has been helping photographers and creative professionals get the most out of their Adobe software. He has a Bachelor of Education, is an Adobe Certified Instructor and is a Certified Technical Trainer. Dave has taught for Adobe, at Photoshop World, the Texas School of Photography, ShutterFest, Adobe MAX, Imaging USA and at numerous corporate locations. In 2009 Dave was inducted into the Photoshop Hall of Fame, and in 2016, 2017 and 2019 was named an Adobe MAX Master Instructor.

davecrossworkshops.com

SHOULD YOU SWITCH TO CAPTURE ONE FROM LIGHTROOM?

with **Vanessa Joy**

Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

If you're a professional photographer, you've likely heard of Lightroom—you've likely used Lightroom pretty much your entire photography career. Adobe, to say the least, has a monopoly, or at least a very strong leg up on the editing and post-production part of the photography industry. There have been other contenders, things like Corral or Aperture, but they just don't even compare to what Lightroom has to offer. But did you know that you actually have another choice?

Capture One has been around for quite some time, and it's partnered with Phase One—you know, those super-expensive cameras that probably none of us will ever be able to afford or find a very practical way to use even if we could. They're great, don't get me wrong—that's not where I'm going here. I'm simply saying that it's a $50,000 camera, so you can expect pretty high-end things from that company. Their editing (and really, originally tethering) program is called Capture One. Now, I haven't used this for very long, it's only been about six months, but what I can tell you is that once I saw the difference between Lightroom and Capture One, I just wasn't satisfied in Lightroom anymore.

Here are some of the advantages that I've noticed about Capture One over Lightroom.

Image © Vanessa Joy

1. TOOLS

The tools can be customized in a workspace much like you'd expect any editing program to have, but the tools in Capture One, specifically Capture One version 20, are just outstanding. There's something extra special about the way that it handles RAW files. My favorite tool, that I noticed the biggest difference in, is the high dynamic range tab. Now, you basically have this in Lightroom, where you're controlling or saving the detail and the highlights and shadows, and of course your whites and blacks as well. But I have not seen highlights being pulled back, especially on a wedding dress, in the same way that Capture One does it—a nondestructive way that doesn't make skin tones look muddy, as I feel that Lightroom does. You can also bring back an extraordinary amount of detail in the shadows, and I don't see this same power on pulling back shadow details in Lightroom.

There are also other tools that Capture One has that simply do not exist in Lightroom, like the levels tab. The tool is pretty much exactly the same as you see in Photoshop, but it's in Capture One, so you don't have to go into Photoshop if you like using levels to control the exposure and tonality of your image.

Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

2. LAYERS

You can use up to 16 layers in Capture One. Now, from what I know, you can't export those layers separately, but it's still great to be able to work with that many layers, especially when you're working with local adjustments like dodging and burning or highlighting color in one area using the brush and eraser tool. You actually have masking capabilities, including automasking to really help cut out and define certain parts of the image. It's also very helpful when you, say, want to take the red or orange tones out of the skin, but don't want to take the red or orange tones out of the entire photo.

Image © Vanessa Joy

3. COLOR CONTROL

Being married to a videographer, I've looked at the color controls inside of Adobe Premier and Final Cut Pro. It's interesting how different those color controls are when editing video versus editing photos, or at least until now. Capture One's color editing tools are very much similar to what they look like in a video editing program. You've got dials and ways to color balance based on shadows, midtones, and highlights, and you can control the intensity, saturation, and color throughout each of them separately. Version 20 of Capture One has a basic color editor that's extremely similar to the HSL tool in Lightroom, adjusting your hue saturation and lightness based on color that you choose or pull from a certain part of the photograph, but it goes even further into an advanced color editor that can help you adjust the smoothness, hue lightness, and saturation all based on a color wheel and being able to drag and refine your selection within that wheel. Double up the color controls you have with the layers that I mentioned previously, and it's going to drastically reduce the amount of time that you would ever need to go into Photoshop.

Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

4. SKIN TONE TOOL

This is probably one of the best features in Capture One, because it takes something that I would normally do in Photoshop and lets me do it in my basic post-production software. The skin tone tool allows you to select the skin and then even out the uniformity in color, hue and saturation so that you're not dealing with, let's say, a very red-looking hand next to a very normal-looking face skin tone. It also helps with things like blotchiness and shadows—really with anything that you would want to do to the skin except for a full retouching. I suppose you could do a lot of retouching using the local adjusting in the layers and reduce the smoothness and clarity on skin tones and underneath the eye, maybe bumping up the brightness. There are always little tricks to do a little bit of retouching in places like Lightroom and Capture One instead of having to do it in Photoshop, but having a specific skin tool tab is extremely useful.

5. PROCESSING POWER

I'm not going to claim to know all of the backend tech and details as to how RAW files get converted to JPEGs when passed through Lightroom or Capture One. I simply don't know it at all. However, when I compare exported RAW files from Capture One and Lightroom using the exact same settings, there is a lot more detail and it's a bigger image file when exporting from Capture One. Now, maybe there's user error in there somewhere in terms of dealing with the file size. I'm not going to claim that this is truly scientific or that I've analyzed a ton of different files, but overall I have noticed the final export quality to be light years better in Capture One versus Lightroom. Definitely give it a try for yourself. See what you come up with, and let me know. I'm curious if you'll notice a difference as well.

If you've never given Capture One a try, I do suggest trying version 20. Version 20, which they just released in December, has really created a better user experience for people coming from Lightroom. A lot more of the tools are very familiar, as is the placement. You can always customize your workspace and put your tools on the right or the left or the bottom—whatever it is that you want to do.

Moving from Lightroom to Capture One is not the easiest thing in the world, don't get me wrong. Personally, I took a two-day class at Digital Transitions in New York City to really familiarize myself with Capture One, but ever since then, I've had no problems pulling photos in and messing with them, editing them and exporting them, and being completely happy with the result. The only problem I encountered when editing my photos in Capture One is that I had so much power that it was difficult to not use it, and then I would end up over-editing my photos because of it and going a little bit outside my typical style. After all, with great power comes great responsibility, so don't accidentally over-edit your photos if you decide to try to harness the power of Capture One.

If you have a minute, jump over to Behind the Shutter's YouTube and take a look at the video that I made for this article. Tell me in the comments below what you were using for editing and if you would ever consider switching to Capture One. I want to know what you're using, I want to know your fears, and I want to know if you've given it a try. ■

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

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POST-PRODUCTION

WORKFLOW

For Wedding Photographers

with **Michael Anthony**

I have to admit, when I heard that February would be the post-production edition of Shutter Magazine, I was pretty excited to write this article. Post-production is the special sauce that takes your good images to great ones. It is the magic that can make your style unique to you, and much like photography itself, it can be a language that is understood by those who see your work often and love what you do.

Post-production is also, however, probably costing you more money than it's making you. Don't stop reading—this isn't an article that is trying to convince you to outsource your post-production. It's an article to explain how inefficiency in post-production is costing you serious money, and I am going to show you the process for creating an efficient workflow for yourself. I will say, though, that I am of the strong belief that once you are shooting more than 25 weddings a year, it's time to send your post-production to someone else. However, most photographers are still shooting under that number, and today I want to show you a process that will work to kick some of your inefficient habits.

1. CHOOSING YOUR POST-PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT

I am a big believer that your computer choice is a very important one in your business. An efficient computer and storage will help you to process images quickly. If you process 100,000 images per year, saving five seconds on each image will save you 138 hours a year. That is literally three work weeks of your life back. Don't be cheap on your computer, but also don't overspend. The components that will speed up your workflow will be your processor, working hard drive, RAM, and (moving forward) GPU.

There are hundreds of YouTube videos out there reviewing computer parts, but suffice to say, you can build a decent PC for less than $2,000 that will take full advantage of Adobe's suite of editing products. If you have a little more budget, then I recommend an iMac or iMac Pro.

The most important element here is that you will want a working drive that is large enough to fit at least four weddings at a time. I recommend a 2TB SSD drive. This will be the drive that you work off of before offloading images onto an external HDD or NAS server that is set up in RAID 1.

When a job is shot, that same night you will want to download your images and back them up.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

2. ORGANIZATION

Organization is the key component to an efficient workflow. File structure, naming conventions, and color labels must be consistent, and you have to commit to following a process that works the same for every client. Once you download your images, sort them into the following file structure by keeping a template of this folder on your working drive at all times. This is your naming convention:

yymmdd_jobtypeletter_Groomslastname (i.e. 200115_W_Smith)
00_RAWS
01_Selected RAWS
02_Edits
    01_Digital Negatives
    02_Creative Edits
03_Catalog
04_Print Order
05_Album
    01_Album Selects
    02_Design File
    03_Final Spreads

This folder structure will keep your images organized. Even if right now you know where everything is, trust me from experience, it will make your life hell when you have employees hunting down old images to finalize a client's album five years after their wedding.

Download all of your images into the RAWS Folder, and immediately copy that entire master folder over to your external HDD. We are essentially going to work on the job on your working drive, and when it's finished, we are going to load folders 1-5 onto the external HDD before we remove the job completely from your working drive.

3. CULLING

This is another massive timesaver. If you are culling in Lightroom, stop today. Download a program called Photo Mechanic by Camera Bits. Photo Mechanic instantly loads the images built in JPEG preview, which allows you to cull substantially faster.

Culling should not be a precise task. You will cull images out later. You should be able to cull about 100 images a minute. I recommend keeping a timer to help track your pace until you get to that number. At that pace, you should be able to cull a 3,000-image wedding in less than half an hour.

Lastly, you will want to cull images "in" rather than cull "out." Again, don't be precise during this process—be efficient. Tag images you want to keep with 1, and images you want to use as creatives or album edits with 2.

Once you are done tagging, move these images into folder 01.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

4. COLOR CORRECTION

You have two choices for color correction: Lightroom and Capture One. Lightroom is much faster for wedding photographers. I know my seasoned vets will tell me that "Lightroom" and "faster" is an oxymoron, but it really isn't slow if you have the right computer setup and you utilize its tools correctly.

There are a few things that I need you to understand as a wedding photographer. The first is that "done" is better than "perfect." If you are obsessing over your color temp or exposure, then you are shooting the images wrong. You may not want to hear that, but at the end of the day, you should be using lighting to get as close to the final product as possible.

The second thing I need you to commit to is to not use local adjustments during your editing process. Do local adjustments make an image look better? Sure. Do your clients notice? I promise you they don't, if you are shooting correctly. You know what they do notice? Your promised two-week turn-around time pushing three months during busy season. That, I promise they notice.

If you are getting offended right now, stop. I am bringing you advice from a studio that currently shoots 140+ weddings a year. While I outsource our imagery to Evolve, they handle our color correction the exact same way. I have not done local adjustments to my deliverable, color-corrected images since 2012. I have a near five-figure revenue average, and my team photographers are at three times the national average. You do not need to obsess over every image to be a great photographer. But guess what, knowing that I can't fix it in post has caused me to become a much better photographer and understand how to use light to create a more natural effect than local adjustments could ever give you when processing hundreds of images.

Now, that being said, our business model has taught our clients that we will do advanced editing to their images, but only the ones that will be part of their album story.

The issue with local adjustments is that any movement in a composition will require specific placement of that adjustment. This means you cannot edit a batch of images exactly the same way. So, rather than use that graduated filter, get your flash off camera and make that light in real time instead.

Also, make sure that you are shooting with the correct white balance in camera or using a color checker passport to get the correct white balance during the next steps.

Next, there are a couple of tools that will speed your workflow up in Lightroom. The first is the "Match Total Exposures" button, which can be found in the develop module under the settings menu. This will allow you to highlight a group of images that have slightly different exposures and match them all up. The tool works almost flawlessly once you learn how to use it.

After applying your import preset to the images, you then will go through groups and correct white balance and exposure. We use an import preset that we created called "Crisp" as a starting point for all of our images.

For egregious missteps in my shooting or circumstances beyond my control, I will make corrections to the highlights and shadows sliders accordingly. As I go through my stack of images, I use the "Match Total Exposures" Key to get through them quickly.

It takes me about two to three hours to finish color corrections on a stack of 800 images. We don't crop or straighten our color-corrected images in post—add another 90 minutes to that time if you choose to do so (but I highly recommend using the grid lines in your camera to shoot straight and get your final composition in camera.)

Once these images are ready for export, rename them and run them through a portraiture batch to soften your clients' skin a bit. I recommend doing this at the end of your work day.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

5. CREATIVES

The creatives are where we give you leeway to let loose a bit. I recommend trying to keep your total to less than 50 images. These images will get localized adjustments and go through a Photoshop process for dodging and burning or filters if you choose. I recommend creating actions that boost your color, sharpen the image, and give you the ability to do a quick dodge and burn. You have to limit this time to less than two minutes per image, and once again, time yourself. The statement image of the entire set should be the only one that gets additional editing time. For us, that would not exceed 30 minutes when we were doing it ourselves in-house. Export this batch once you are finished.

6. FINALIZE YOUR PRODUCTION

This is an easy one. I recommend, rather than making a single large catalog, that you export each job as its own individual catalog and place it in folder 3. Finalize all of your exports and then back up your images by uploading to your client gallery software and backing up the entire finalized gallery to your external HDD.

If you do all of this correctly, you should have your actual working time down to under six hours per job. That leaves you plenty of time to work on the actual business itself.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

SCALING YOUR BUSINESS

It's important to document your entire process so that anybody who comes to work for you can pick up any part of it immediately; however, I can tell you firsthand that our success has been directly related to making a conscious decision back in 2012 to begin outsourcing our work to Evolve. At the time, the $199/month fee was a lot of money to my growing business, but looking back, that decision helped me to grow the business by taking the time to do the marketing that I wouldn't have otherwise had the time to do. Once you get over that 25-weddings-a-year mark, it makes a lot of sense for you to seriously look at outsourcing your jobs to a company that can guarantee you fast turnaround and consistent results. But until you reach that point, you have a good foundation above for getting to where you need to be from a time and efficiency standpoint. ■

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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine

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

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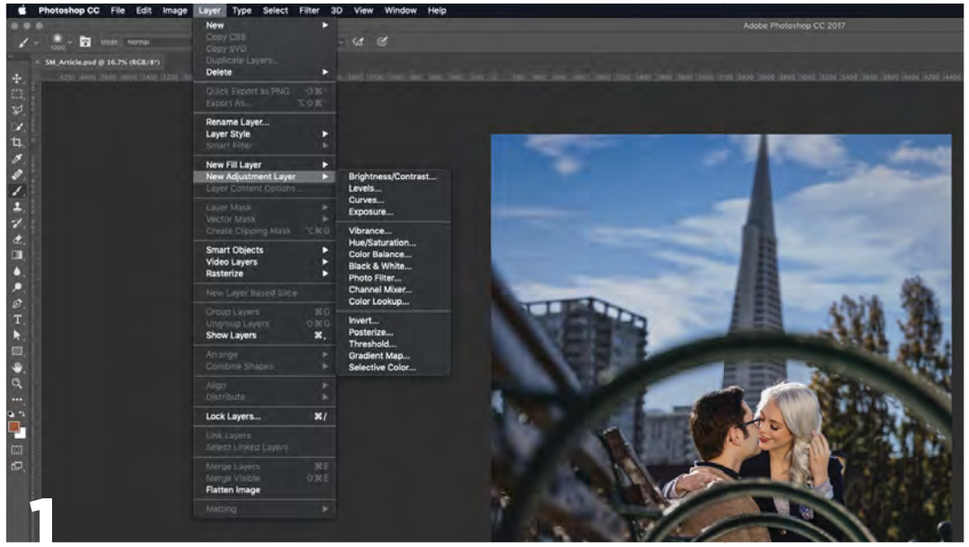
3

QUICK WAYS TO CREATIVELY TONE YOUR IMAGES WITH ADJUSTMENT LAYERS

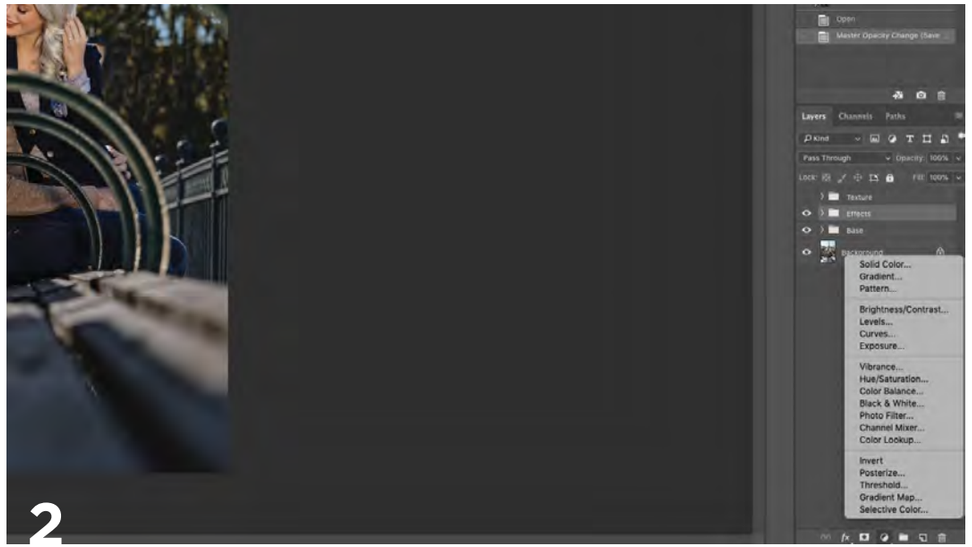
with **Payton Hediger**

Between all the tools, filters, layers, and even 3D capabilities, Photoshop can be an intimidating program to approach for those new to photo editing. However, Photoshop offers plenty of powerful tools that can transform your images quickly and effectively. Here, we will focus on three different methods for utilizing adjustment layers to create fun and beautiful toning for your images.

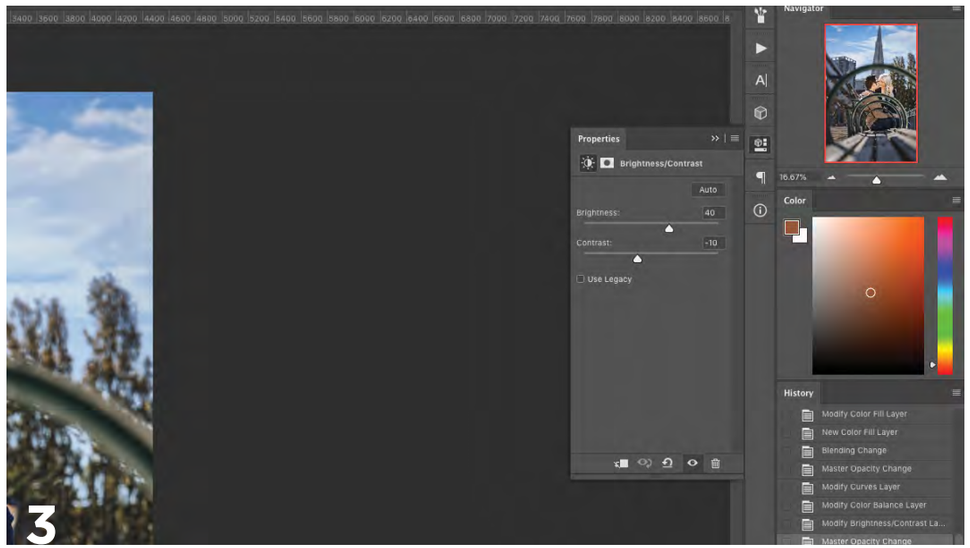
Adjustment layers are a great place to start when experimenting with toning. They offer you a ton of flexibility, and they're non-destructive. Simply put, these layers can be added, deleted, modified and shuffled around without damaging or losing any information in your image. All the adjustments made to these layers can be modified on the fly without having to erase or delete and re-create the layer. Adjustment layers exist in two separate locations. In the top left of your screen, under the "Layer" dropdown menu, you will find the "New Adjustment Layer" options. (1)



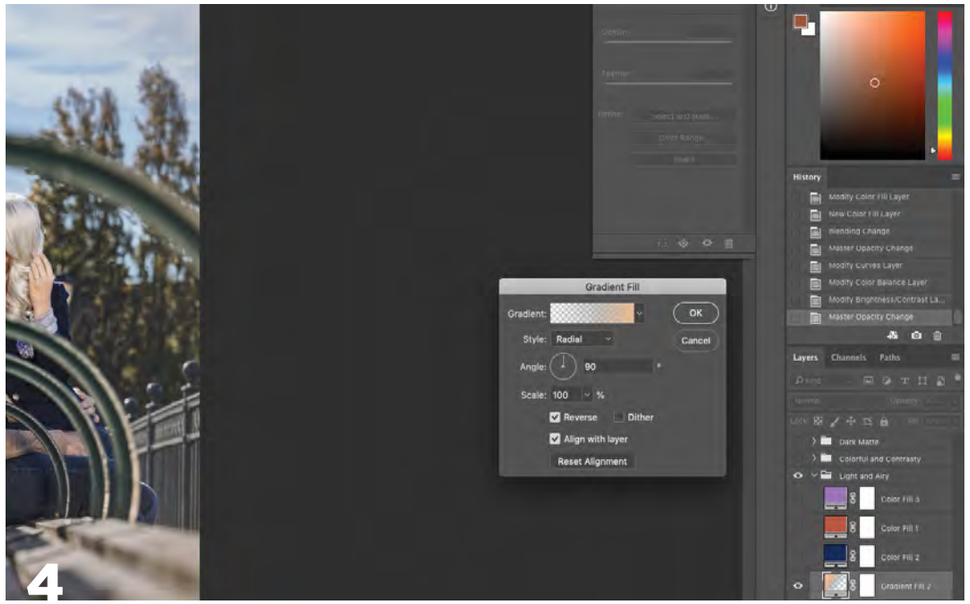
Note, this location is missing several adjustment layers that we'll be using, such as "Solid Color" and "Gradient." This menu option is not to be confused with the similarly named "Adjustments" menu under the "Image" dropdown menu. The "Adjustments" menu offers many of the same options, but these are applied destructively and cannot be adjusted on the fly without your layer having been converted to a smart object first. This makes them a bit more of a hassle and a little less versatile compared to an actual adjustment layer. The second, and in my opinion more efficient, location is actually in your Layers Panel. It's the middle, half-grey, half-white circle at the bottom of your the panel. (2) This location has the "Solid Color" and "Gradient" options, which we will be using later. More than just providing you with three great toning options, I hope to be able to provide you with the tools to create your own toning styles that will help to bring your vision to life.



For the Light and Airy toning style, I would like to create a bright, somewhat milky look while trying to avoid unnecessarily blowing out any highlights. To start, we really need to pump up the brightness. Now, there are several different ways to do this within your adjustment layer options, such as Curves, Levels and Exposure, but we're going to use Brightness/Contrast to kick this off. This is by far one of the simplest adjustment layers, with only two sliders. And as the name implies, those two sliders are Brightness and Contrast. To get that bright, milky look, we need to reduce the contrast as well as boost the brightness. So, in your Properties panel (3), adjust the contrast to -10 and the brightness to 50. I would recommend getting all the adjustment layers in place before experimenting, as each individual layer may not make visual sense on its own, but they should come together at the end. Also, keep in mind that the order you apply these layers in will make a difference.

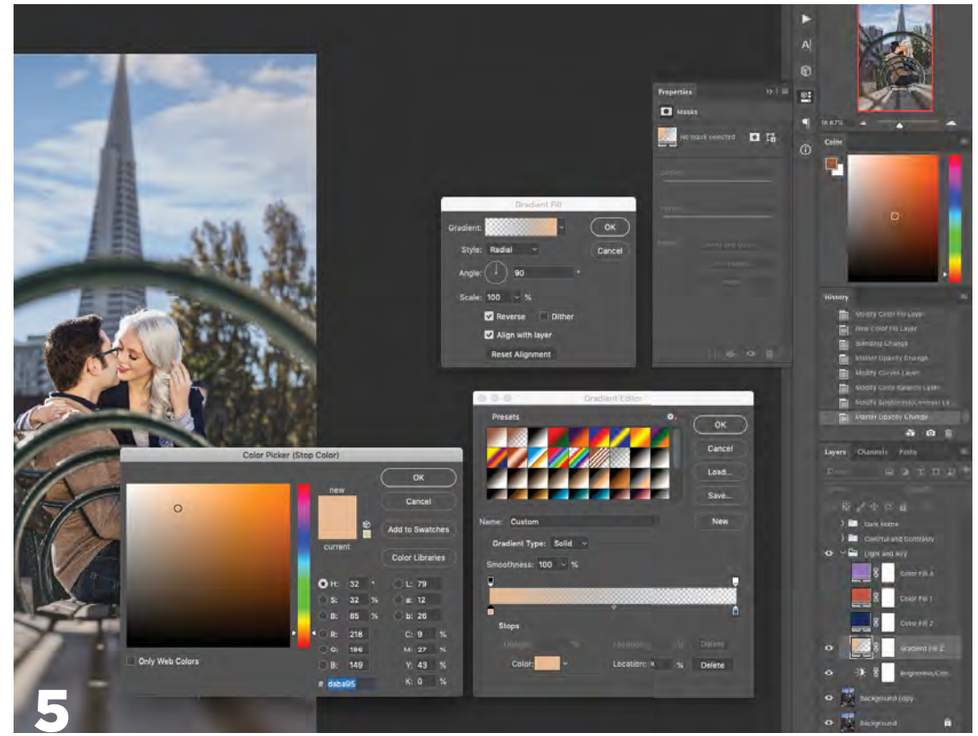


Next up will be a Gradient adjustment layer. We'll be using this layer to create a bright vignette around the edges of the frame. Of course, this can also be used to make a dark or even a color vignette around your frame instead. In your Properties panel, set the "Style" to "Radial." This will automatically apply the center of the radial gradient to the center of the image. So, if your subject is off center, go ahead and adjust the position of the center of this radial gradient. You can only adjust the position of your "Style" gradient while in the Properties panel, be it Linear, Radial or something else. In this case, I'll also need to select the "Reverse" option, so that the opaque portion of the gradient is to the outside of the frame. You can also adjust the scale of the gradient in this menu if that's necessary for your image. (4)



4

Now, we'll need to pick the color of the vignette. While still in the Properties panel, click the Gradient Editor. There should be two keys already applied for the beginning and end colors. Directly above the color keys are opacity keys. You should notice that the left side has full color at 100% opacity, while the right side has no color and zero opacity. The key locations can be adjusted freely for both opacity and color. You can also add additional color and opacity keys by simply clicking on the top or bottom of the gradient. In this case, we're just going to change the colors. If you click on a color key, the "Color" option in the bottom left of the Gradient panel will become visible. Click on it to change the color. (5) In this case, I wanted a bright, warm color (#daba95). Once confirmed, you can do the same thing for the right-side key color, which I'll make a dark blue (#405f86). (6) Confirm the color, the Gradient Editor, and the Properties panel by clicking "OK" on all three panels. There's no need to adjust the blending mode here, as we want to brighten and push back the detail around the edges of the frame, so Normal will work fine. So, the only remaining step is to bring the opacity of the Gradient Adjustment Layer down to 20%. You can find this option in the top right of the Layers panel. (7)



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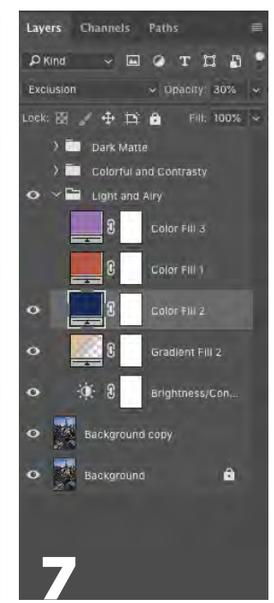

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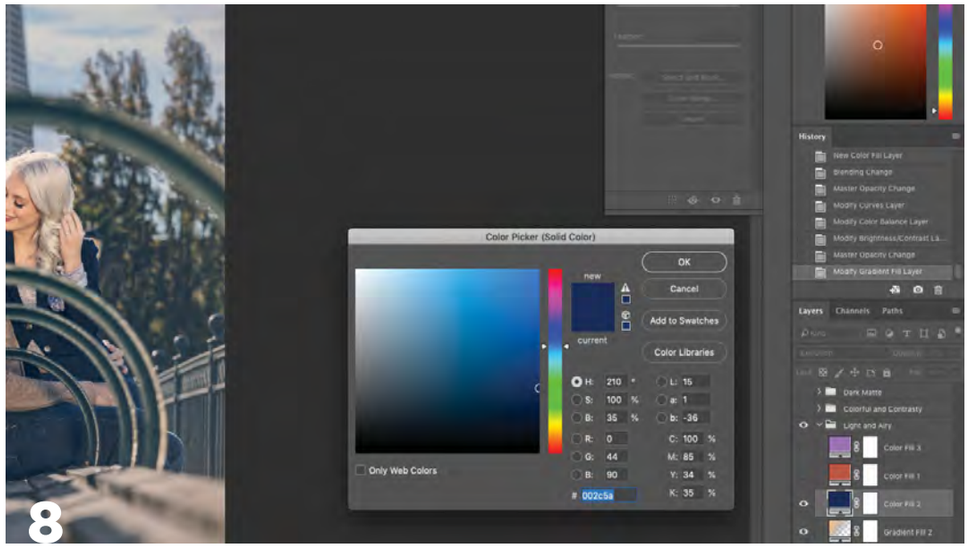
Next, we need to add some fun color to this image through Solid Color adjustment layers. While we'll be using three of the same type of adjustment layer, each will add its own unique flavor via blending modes. Go ahead and apply your first Solid Color adjustment layer, which only has a Color Picker option. For this, I've chosen (#002c5a). (8) In the top left of the Layers panel, change the blending mode from Normal to Exclusion. Exclusion is a unique blending mode that, in this instance, will add a matte finish and apply a cool tone to the image's shadows. In the top right of the Layers panel, change the Opacity to 30%. (9) Apply a second Solid Color adjustment layer. This time, we'll use a warm color (#a25849). (10) We will be applying warmth primarily to the midtones via the Soft Light blending mode at 25% opacity. (11) We'll need one last Solid Color adjustment layer to finish out the Light and Airy toning style. Once applied, select (#9871d3) as your color. (12) You will want to change the blending mode to Screen with an opacity of 5%. (13) This may not seem like a lot, but we really just want to add a hint of color here to balance out the image and add a bit more brightness and milkiness to this toning style. Overall, the Solid Color adjustment layers are simple but super powerful, because there are so many combinations of colors, blending modes and opacities. You can quite literally create a whole new toning style by just stacking different Solid Color adjustment layers on top of one another.



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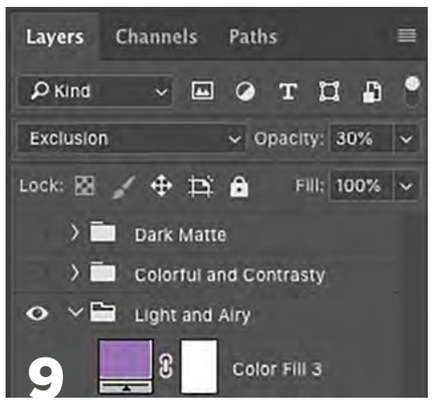

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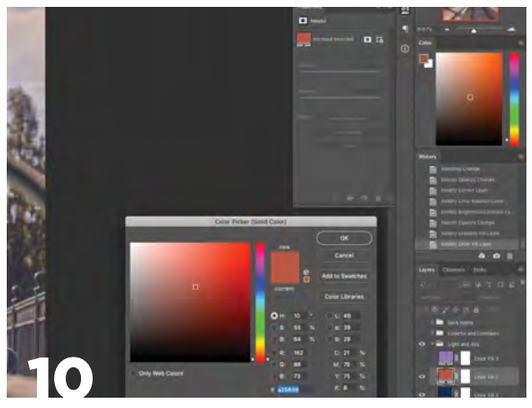
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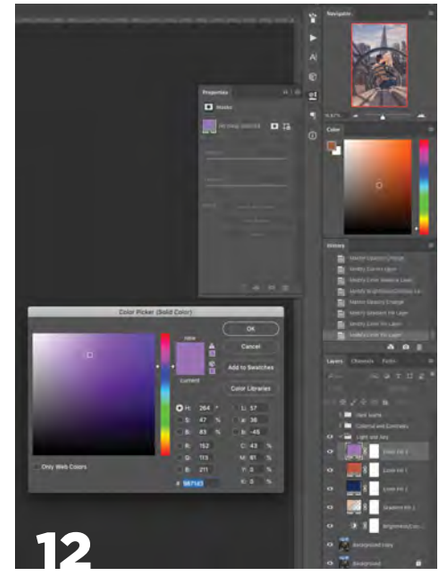
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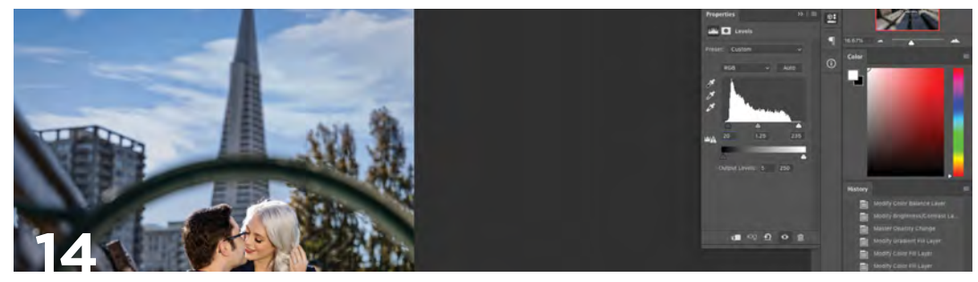
13

For those of you who would rather see all the details pop in your image, the Colorful and Contrasty toning style should be right up your alley. The goal here is to really get the highlight details to stand out from the shadow details, while still making sure that the shadows don't block up and the highlights don't blow out. For contrasty toning, this is always a bit of a challenge. But I have a little trick that might help you out, starting with the first adjustment layer: Levels. Levels and Curves are very similar in the results that they produce. More or less, they're the same tool shown two different ways. If you're more familiar with Curves, you can use them instead of Levels, and vice versa. On the surface, these look like they just control contrast, but both Levels and Curves provide you the option to adjust color as well via channels. However, I would recommend Solid Color and altering the blending modes to get the color toning you're after, as the color adjustments through Levels and Curves can get a bit complicated. For now, we're just going to stick with contrast adjustments here in RGB mode. In the Layers Properties panel, you should see a histogram, and just below that three numbers. From left to right, those three numbers represent shadows, midtones and highlights. I'm using 10, 1.25 and 235. While these three numbers offer the ability to add contrast, the two output values below them offer the ability to reduce it. Adding a subtle amount of output can be a great trick to help reduce any blocked-up blacks or blown-out highlights without killing the contrast you've just added. I'm using 5 and 250 for my black and white point values, respectively. (14)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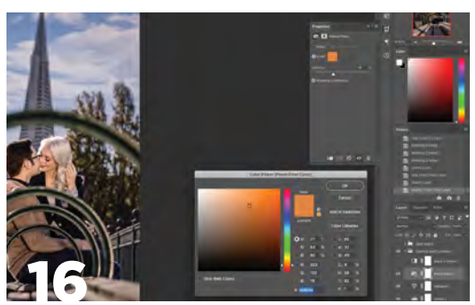
Next, add a Vibrancy adjustment layer. This offers two sliders—a vibrancy slider and a saturation slider. Simply put, vibrancy tries to stay away from skin tones so that you can boost the color in an image without making skin orange. Saturation, on the other hand, adjusts all the colors equivalently. With the added contrast from the Levels layer, the couple's skin tones have become a little too warm. I'm going to use this adjustment layer to reduce the saturation to -10 and then raise the Vibrancy to 50. Effectively, this diminishes the warm tones of the couple's skin while boosting the color throughout the rest of the image. (15)

15

This image was taken during the middle of the day, so I'd like to see it made a little warmer. For this, we will be using the Photo Filter adjustment layer. Within this adjustment layer, you have several pre-built filters you can use as well as a custom color option, a density slider, and an option to preserve luminosity. The first pre-made Photo Filter option was alright, but I wanted a bit more magenta in the color. So, I've decided to go with a custom color for this (#cb854c). (16) The Density slider is kind of like a cross between the Soft Light and Color Blending modes. You won't be able to get entirely monochromatic with this like you can with the Color Blending mode on a Solid Color adjustment layer, but it will add more of the selected color to your image in comparison to the Soft Light blending mode. This can be really helpful—Density isn't a blending mode option, so if you need an in-between option, Photo Filter can fill the gap. The Preserve Luminosity option just makes sure that the brightness goes unaffected no matter how dark or bright of a color you have chosen.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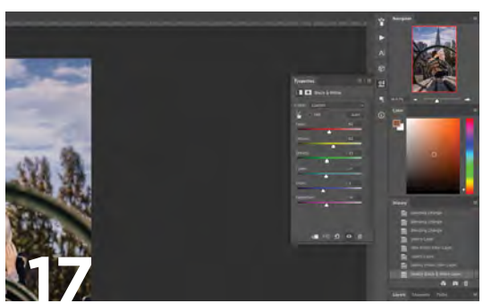
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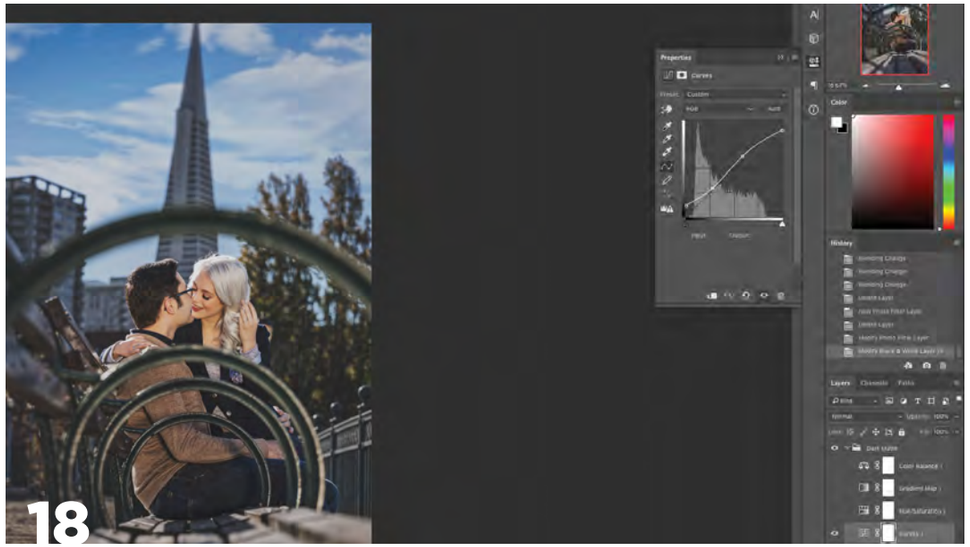
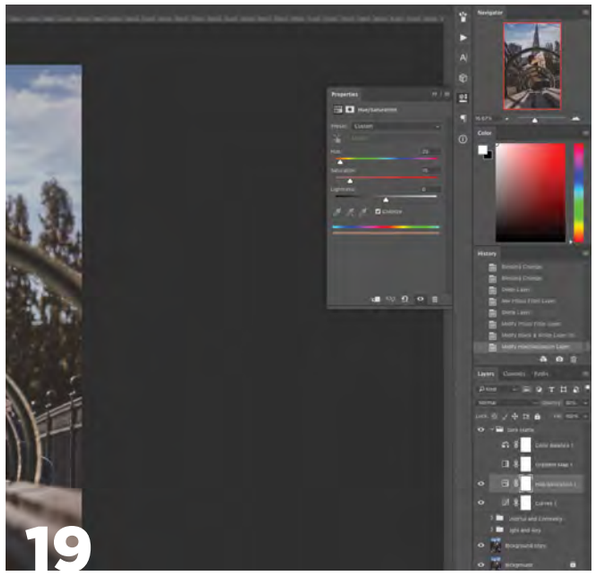
When it comes to contrasty toning, you really want to be able to control which parts of your image are affected to make sure that the intended areas are standing out. The Black and White adjustment layer offers that ability. When set to the Luminosity blending mode, you end up with similar luminosity sliders to what you might see in Lightroom as part of the HSL panel. This allows you to control the luminosity via a specific color range. This is going to be more of a unique setting per image, but this adjustment layer also offers an Auto feature to help get you started. For this image, lifting the colors associated with skin tones (red and yellow) while lowering the other values helped make the couple pop. (17) In all, we've created a very contrasty toning style that allows us to control specific ranges of the histogram so that we can still maintain detail from the black point all the way to the white point.


18

One of my personal favorite styles is the very moody, dark matte toning style. For this, we'll start off with a Curves adjustment layer. When it's created, you will have two points and a straight line between them. Where Levels separates the Input and Output values, Curves combines them. But otherwise, they're very similar, as I previously mentioned. The black point is the bottom left key on the histogram in the Curves Properties panel. Keep in mind that input will add contrast, while output will reduce it. So, for this black point, we want to leave the input at 0 and adjust the output to 30. For the White point in the top right, we'll adjust the output to 230 and leave the input at 255. Now, this is really what makes the matte look. But, you can still make adjustments between these two points to add midtone contrast or adjust the overall exposure. In this case, we're going to add two points. Click on the line that goes between the black and white points, and this will create a new key. For the first of the two points, enter 70 for the input and 75 for the output. For the second new point, enter 150 for the input and 160 for the output. You should end up with four keys that look like this. (18)

Personally, I think desaturation and matte go hand in hand, so the next step is to slightly desaturate the image by adding a Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. This is a great tool that has a lot of versatility. Beyond the Master Hue/Sat/Lightness options, you also have the ability to change these same values for specific color ranges, though we're going to use this a little differently. I want to add color to this for a bit of a sepia tone. To do this, select the Colorize option. This look can also be achieved similarly with a Solid Color adjustment layer set to the Color Blending mode. I've chosen values of Hue: 20, Saturation: 15 and Lightness: 0. (19) I generally shy away from the Lightness setting within Hue/Saturation, as it moves the entire histogram one direction or the other, and I find that this is generally a negative impact to the image. There are a lot of other, better ways of adjusting exposure/brightness, such as the Brightness/Contrast adjustment layer. From here, adjust the opacity of the Hue/Saturation layer in the top right of the Layers panel to 30%.(20)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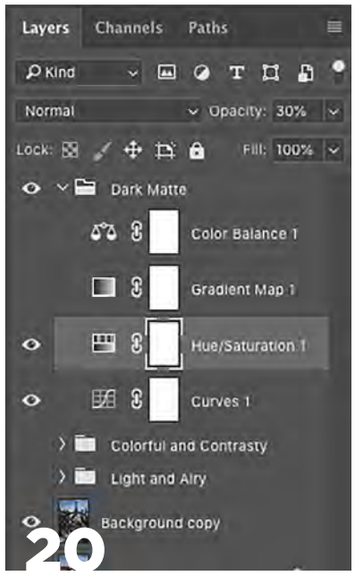
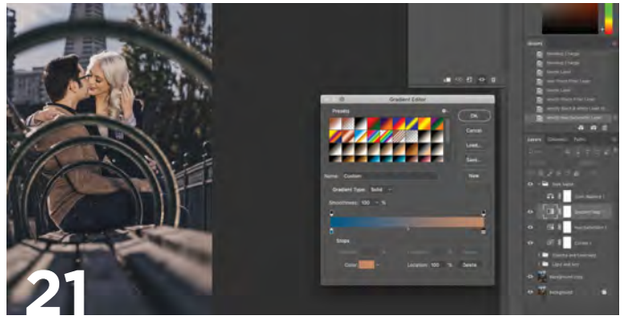
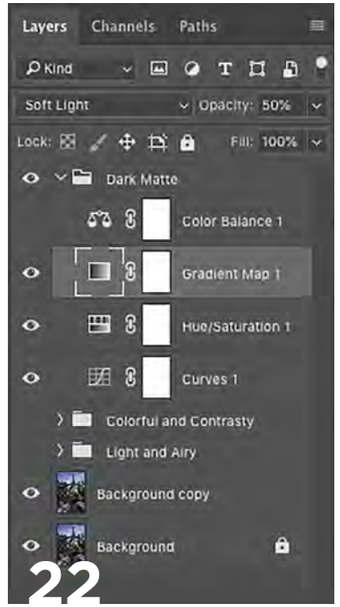


20

Next up, we have a Gradient Map adjustment layer to do some slight split toning by adding some cooler tones to the shadows and warmer tones to the highlights. The Gradient Map maps out the color values to the histogram, so that the far left point represents your black point and the far right point represents the white point. To achieve the look we're after, we need to add blue to the shadow side and orange to the white side. In the Gradient Map Properties panel, click on the Gradient itself. This will take you to the Gradient Editor. (21) This is the same kind of Gradient Editor as the Gradient adjustment layer uses. Your color and opacity points all work the same.


21

Let's start by making the left point (#335980) and the right point (#b2896b). Once you confirm your colors, go back to the Layers panel and change the blending mode to Soft Light and the opacity to 50%. (22) Given that I'm using Soft Light here, you have to keep in mind that this blending mode affects color and contrast. To avoid contrast adjustments, make sure to pick colors that are close to the 50% black value in the Color Picker, as highlighted here. (23) Lastly, let's alter the color a bit in this image for a more overall neutral white balance. Add a Color Balance adjustment layer. This adjustment layer allows you to change the color balance for three specific ranges of the histogram: shadows, midtones and highlights. This is something that is likely to be a little more image-specific, and you can fine tune the values to your taste. I've altered the midtones here to values of -5 (cyan/red), -5 (magenta/green) and -10 (yellow/blue), with the Preserve Luminosity option checked.

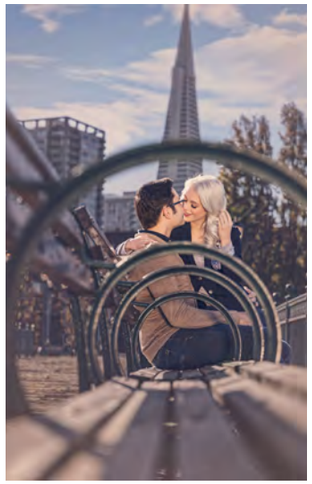


22

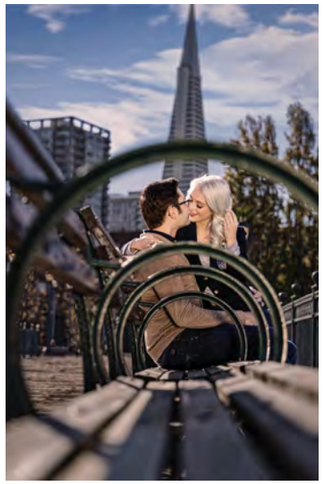
23

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Light and Airy



Colorful and Contrasty



Dark Matte

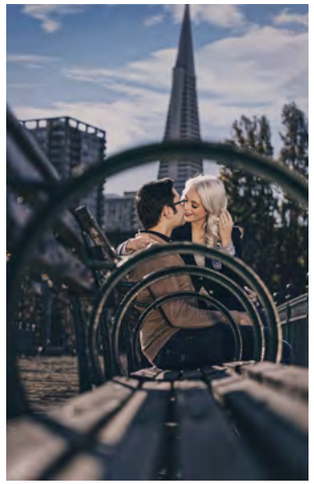


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

I'm sure that through creating these three toning styles or variations of them, you've discovered just how versatile and powerful the Adjustment Layers are. I encourage you to play around and experiment with the options that each Adjustment Layer provides and combine them with different blending modes and different opacities. Beyond what we've covered here, each Adjustment layer also contains a layer mask, which can be useful for localized adjustments. But that's for another time. In the meantime, I hope this has inspired you to want to create even more fun and beautiful toning styles that fit your brand or your mood. ■

Payton Hediger has been a post-production artist and Photoshop wizard for nearly a decade, and an art director overseeing the Evolve Edits creative department for the last four years. Heavily involved in the post-production of competition images submitted to the likes of WPPI, PPA, SWPP, Shutterfest Image Comp, One Eyeland and many others, he's added a little dash of magic to hundreds of meriting images for photographers across the globe.

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RETOUCHING *Responsibly*

with **Scott Detweiler**

Image © Scott Detweiler

Model - Jennifer Raelynn

Image © Scott Detweiler

My wife couldn't watch me edit photos of her. She told me that it reminded her of how much older she was getting. As I would work on a picture, she would point out marks she wanted me to remove, or tell me how to handle things that the tiny amount of makeup she wore didn't cover. For her, even though she had great skin and an athletic body, it was a process she didn't enjoy watching, but she did love the resulting images. Now, this happened years ago, and it was an excellent lesson for me in terms of thinking about how clients would potentially look at their resulting images. It also created a set of guidelines I now use when retouching, and I wanted to pass those on to you, so you can avoid the same pitfalls I did.

Image © Scott Detweiler

NEVER SHOW A CLIENT A BEFORE-AND-AFTER FOR COMPARISON

In line with my wife not wanting to watch the editing process unfold on her portraits, I don't want clients to see the original images and how they vary from the delivered finals. In many cases, it might just be some minor skin retouching, while in other cases, it might be much more extreme. But regardless of the level of editing, no good can come from the client being offered the chance to compare the two. Let me say that again—there is zero gain that can come from letting someone see both at the same time. In cases where I am working on an artistic image, I will often handle the skin retouching before I start the creative aspects of the piece. In this situation, I have no regrets in showing the before-and-after because, in those cases, the retouching phase is complete and should be identical.

PRE-CONSULT, AND ASK QUESTIONS UPFRONT

I think it is essential to know what a client hates most about their body. Of course, you can request this information in a much more gentle way, such as, "What do you hate about your body?" :) Every female client I have ever had the pleasure of shooting has a great list of things. Knowing them before you start your photo session can be a lifesaver, literally.

Let me tell you a story about the time I dodged the biggest bullet I will probably ever encounter. Many years ago, I was at a massive group photoshoot. Late in the day, I met a heavyset (probably around 300 pounds), beautiful young woman who had been sitting in the lobby each time I had passed through that area. As the long day was coming to a close, she asked me if I would take a few minutes and spend some time with her, as she loved my style and had wanted to work with me. I agreed, and I asked her if there was anything she was self-conscious about, and she pointed out a few things, and I thought about my posing and lighting to minimize those elements. I delivered the images a few weeks later, and she loved them and was delighted with how she looked in them. All good!

Fast forward a few years, to when I was speaking at a state conference, and someone came up to me afterward and indicated we had met a few years ago at that very same photoshoot. We talked for a while, and then he said something quite odd: "You are one brave soul, I gotta give ya that!" Now, this took me aback, and I had to ask what he meant by that statement. He told me a story about the heavyset young woman and how she had tried to commit suicide just a few weeks prior to the photoshoot, and her therapist had told her to do some modeling because she was a beautiful woman, and it would make her feel pretty. At the end of the day, I was the only person who took the time to photographer her.

For weeks, I reflected on this entire sequence of events and all of the possible pitfalls that might have occurred. What if I had told her I was too tired, given it was the end of a long day, and no one had bothered to pay attention to her? What if I had not asked her about the things she was self-conscious about? What if I hadn't posed and lit to avoid the items on her list, and she'd hated the images? What if I had retouched her pictures in a way that made her feel worse about herself? In the end, I got fortunate by unknowingly walking into a situation where someone's life was literally hanging in the balance. She loved her photos, and the story has the happiest of endings.

There are a few things I want you to keep in mind about the retouching aspects in this story, since that is our focus. Her weight was not something she was concerned about, and I was thinking of that as I did my post-production. I was also mindful of her weight during my posing and lighting, so it was not going to be a problem. However, I think this is a trap that many fall into, as everyone knows what their body looks like, and when you alter it, you seem to be pointing out things you feel are imperfect.

So, when you make someone look notably thinner, it's basically like saying to them, "I thought you were fat, so I fixed it." Same for when you change a nose shape, etc. People will notice, and they can take that change personally if they also feel it is a fault and you just verified it. This is probably the single biggest lesson I can teach you, so be careful about what you choose to alter in your imagery.

Model - April Berry

Image © Scott Detweiler

Image © Scott Detweiler

WHAT IS SAFE TO CHANGE DURING RETOUCHING?

For starters, I have a rule that if it is something that will be gone in a few weeks, I will go ahead and remove it. Pimples, rashes, and red skin from shaving are all safe. I will also fix areas of the body that are caused when a strap or something is digging into the body as the result of a pose or perhaps improperly sized apparel. After that, I often feel the best answer is to ask the client. In so doing, they are permitting you to alter their appearance, and since they expect it, there will be no psychological damage.

Photoshop allows us to create images that can please the world, and just like special effects in movies, they can help to complete the vision we have in our heads. However, just like Spiderman learned, with great power comes great responsibility. Your goal is to keep your clients happy not only with beautiful imagery, but by helping them maintain a healthy and happy self-image. ■

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.
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Seeing beyond

A POST-PRODUCTION WORKFLOW FOR SAME-DAY SALES

with **Lori Poole**

Image © Indigosilver Studio

Many successful photographers will tell you that in-person sales (IPS) is the key to higher sales in the portrait business. Clients are never more excited about their images than the first time they see them. The in-person meeting allows the photographer to demonstrate the value of printed products, and to help the client choose product options that best suit their needs.

Image © Indigosilver Studio

IPS = RACE CAR. SAME DAY SALES = NOS

The success of IPS can be amplified, unlocking even bigger IPS averages, by conducting the sale on the same day as the portrait session. Last year, I switched from IPS that occurs a week or even a few days after the session to IPS the same day as the session. This instantly boosted my boudoir portrait sales by over $500, with no changes in my pricing. My theory is that it capitalizes even further on the excitement and the experience of the portrait session.

In addition to increased averages, same-day sales benefits you, the photographer, by keeping your workflow on track. Most of us creatives wait until the deadline to get anything done, so why not set your "download and edit" deadline to be right after the shoot? Let's be honest, there's no real reason you need two weeks to proof a set of images, other than the fact that life and work get in the way. So don't let them. Get it done now. Keep your to-do list and your stress level to a minimum.

Same-day sales also improve the experience for your client. They give the client the near-instant gratification of seeing their images the same day they were created. They decrease the turnaround time between the shoot and the order delivery, which may even allow you to serve last-minute clients that your competitors turned away. They remove the requirement that your client come back to the studio for an additional appointment. All of this adds up to happy clients who will sing your praises and send you referrals.

Once I tell photographers all the benefits of same-day sales, the next question they ask is, "How does it work? How do you get the images ready so quickly?" It's important to note that you do not need a team or an assistant to accomplish same-day sales. With the exception of hair and makeup styling (for which I subcontract a licensed hair and makeup artist), I complete this entire workflow on my own. If you do have an assistant, your same-day sales will be that much easier!

First, I'll share what a typical shoot-and-sales day looks like, so you have a frame of reference for timing. Then I will share with you some tips for crushing a same-day sales workflow.

WHAT DOES A TYPICAL SHOOT/SALES DAY LOOK LIKE?

Here's what my boudoir session days look like:

9:00-11:00: Client in hair and makeup
11:00-1:00: Boudoir Session
1:00-3:30: Client leaves for lunch. I download, cull & process, and prepare for IPS (and scarf lunch at my desk)
3:30-5:00: Client returns for IPS

As you can see, I have a limited amount of time to process the images and get them ready for sales. For boudoir sessions, I do a minimal amount of Photoshop work that adds about 30 minutes to my workflow—essentially, using Liquify to smooth bulges in the skin created by the elastic in lingerie. Non-boudoir sessions, therefore, can actually be completed in less time than shown above. Here are my top five tips for speeding up your workflow for same-day sales.

Good posing, lighting, and background control creates images that need little post-production.

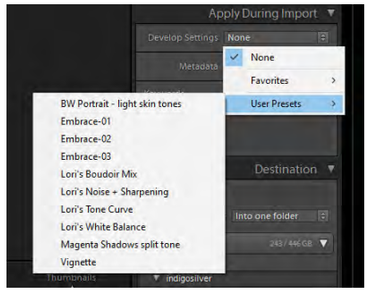
Image © Indigosilver Studio

1. GET IT RIGHT IN CAMERA

I know you've heard this soapbox speech before. But it's important to note that same-day sales are probably not a realistic option for photographers who require a lot of Photoshop to produce their final product. For example, fantasy composites are not a good candidate for same-day sales. The obvious aside, a quick workflow depends on solid photography. That means that the photographer should be paying attention to light quality, exposure, posing, and background distractions before clicking the shutter.

Technology can be your friend here. If updating your gear allows you to achieve a more consistent exposure, if it keeps you from blowing out your highlights due to increased dynamic range, or if eye-focus allows you to nail more shots, it's worth considering an upgrade.

Whether from improved photographic skills or upgraded gear, stronger images in camera will require less post-production, thus making same-day sales easier to achieve.



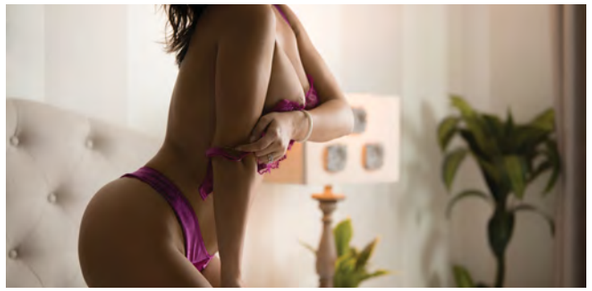


Image © Indigosilver Studio

Develop presets can be added to your images upon import, reducing post-production time.

2. MAKE USE OF IMPORT PRESETS

The more you can automate your post-production workflow, the faster it will be.

As you grow to define and create your style, you'll likely apply some of the same edits to every image to achieve that style. For example, for my editing style, I apply the following stylistic adjustments to every image: White Balance, Tone Curve, Vignette, Noise Removal, and Sharpen. Since these adjustments are applied to every image, I can actually create an import preset to apply them to the images as they are imported into Lightroom. This drastically reduces my processing time.

The remaining tweaks for correcting the image, such as Exposure, Highlights, Shadows, and Crop, will be hand-adjusted per image after the images are culled. However, even applying the stylistic adjustments upon import saves time.

To figure out which adjustments you can apply upon import to achieve your signature style, start with a pen and paper. For the next several shoots, write down every adjustment you make. Do you see any patterns? Any adjustments that you are doing consistently should be considered for an import preset. While it may seem like a hassle to take notes while you edit, taking the time to do this now will save you time on every shoot in the future.

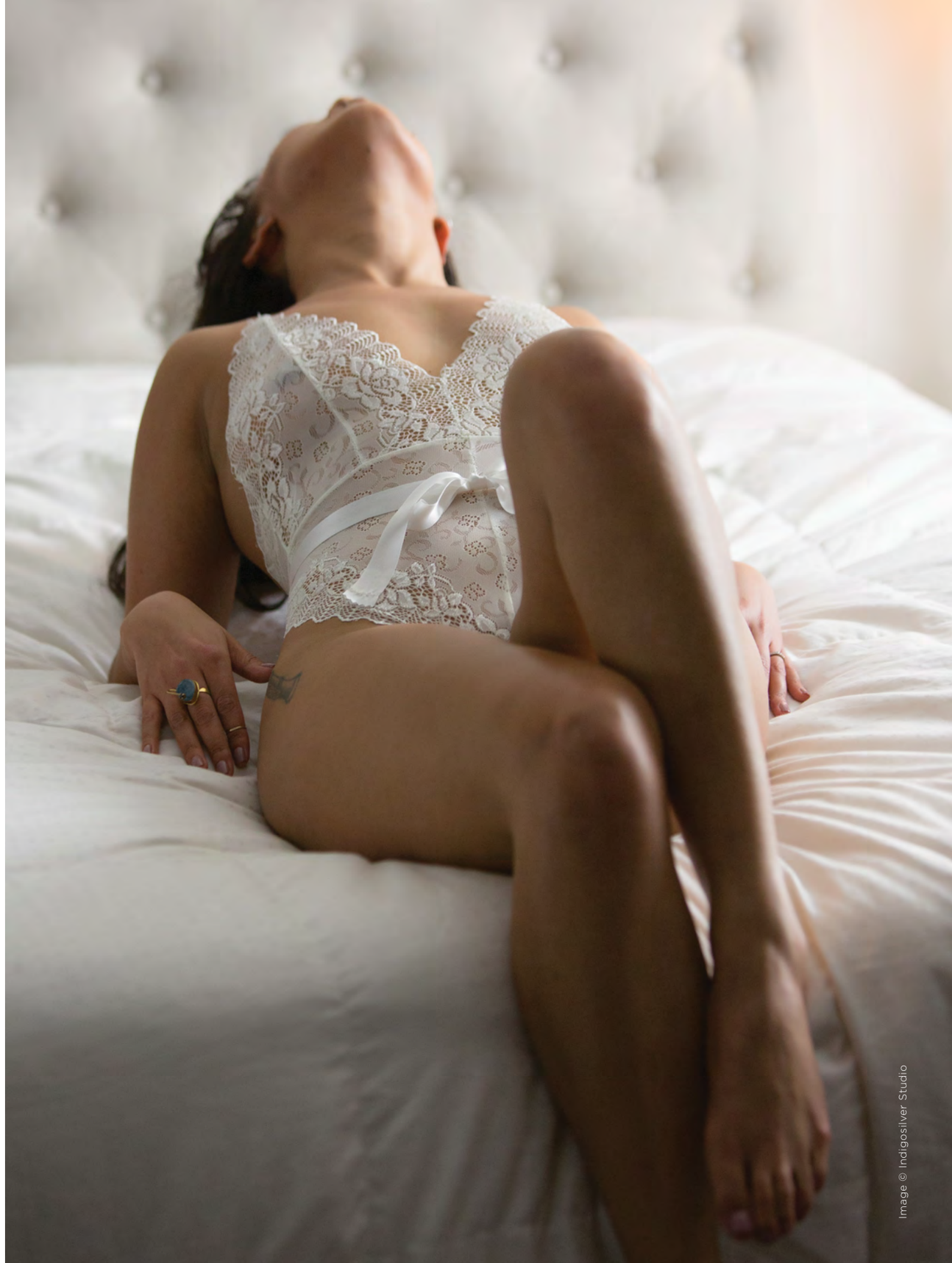


Image © Indigosilver Studio

Culling in means saying "Yes" to four images, rather than saying "No" to seven images.

3. CULL IN, NOT OUT

Once your images are imported (using your preset, of course), the next step is to cull. Do not do any further correctional or stylistic adjustments until your cull is complete. Jumping back and forth between culling and editing slows down both processes.

Many photographers struggle with indecisiveness while culling. They are hesitant to make image choices for their clients. It's important to remember that you are the artist, and effective sales rely on your ability to cull shrewdly, decisively and quickly.

Here is my favorite technique for efficient culling: In Grid mode, select all images that are similar in pose and crop. Switch to Survey mode (keyboard shortcut "N"), to view just those images on the screen. Mark only the best one to three images with a Pick flag ("P"). Revert to Grid mode, then move on to the next set. This process of keeping only the best images is referred to as "culling in." This is in contrast to rejecting the weakest images one by one until you run out of reasons to keep rejecting ("culling out"). Because culling in requires only one to three decisions, it is much faster and more decisive than culling out. You'll also find that your entire proof set becomes stronger when you keep fewer, but better, images.

Continue culling until you finish the set and have reached your target number of proofs. Then proceed to apply any final corrections in exposure or crop.

4. SKIN-RETOUCHING FILTER

At this point, your images should be proof-quality, and ready to show your client. As a matter of fact, if you would like to reduce your post-processing time and get your client back sooner, you can skip this tip altogether. I prefer to put an extra bit of polish on my images, particularly for boudoir, when I know clients can be extra critical of themselves. This finishing touch can be provided by a skin-retouching filter to even out skin tone and smooth skin texture. I run the Imagenomic Portraiture plugin for Lightroom as a batch on my entire proof set. This process can take 20-30 minutes when run at the highest quality. However, the software runs unattended once started, which allows me a quick break to have lunch at my desk. The resulting images not only make a better first impression during IPS, but they also reduce my retouching time once the order has been placed.

A progression of images from raw to complete. 1) Straight out of camera with no adjustments. 2) Import Presets applied to raw image. 3) Imagenomic Portraiture applied to soften skin. The client will see the image in this state for in-person sales. 4) Final retouched image. Retouching is completed after the client places her order.

Image © Indigosilver Studio

5. REPEAT AFTER ME: NO PHOTOSHOP!

OK, I know, I already admitted that I spend about 20 minutes doing a quick Liquify as needed for lingerie elastic in boudoir portraits. It's a special exception, one I don't make for any other form of photography. What I do not do is a full retouch. Wrinkles, blemishes and other flaws are all left alone for same-day sales. First, there simply isn't time to fully retouch your entire proof set if you're doing same-day sales. And second, time is money. Even if you're not doing same-day sales, it doesn't make sense to retouch images the client isn't going to buy.

I actually explain this to my clients at the beginning of each IPS: that the images have not yet been retouched, only color-corrected, and that that's because it doesn't make sense for me to devote that time to images they may not purchase. They understand. They say it makes sense. And I assure them that any image they order in a printed product will get the full retouch that they see in my portfolio. And then we begin the sales process.

Before Liquify

The only Photoshop my images get before same-day sales is quick Liquify to fix issues created by the elastic in lingerie. Blemishes, fine lines, stray hairs, and other forms of retouching are saved until the client orders the image.

After Liquify

Images © Indigosilver Studio

Image © Indigosilver Studio

AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM FOR SAME-DAY SALES SUCCESS

As in all aspects of running a photography business, success relies on creating an efficient system. Get the images right in camera to reduce the need for post-production. Automate what you can. Use technology to your advantage. And find a system that is based on speed. Do all of these things, and you can easily shrink your post-production to a timeframe that allows you to conduct same-day sales. ■

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.

indigosilverstudio.com

Image © Jessica Briggs Lucas

5

REASONS TO BUILD CUSTOM

LIGHTROOM PROFILES

with **Dustin Lucas**

When it comes to editing creatives, I want to work in Lightroom so I can quickly apply different styles to my images with a single click. Beyond applying just a preset, you have the ability to add a more creative shift to your images using profiles. Applying a profile is the newest way to shift your corrected image to the next level without requiring you to re-edit—it's the one-click solution you've been waiting for. Here is why I use profiles and how they've transformed my editing workflow.

1) Profiles are simple to use, and building one is as easy as saving a preset in Lightroom. 2) Using custom profiles is the most efficient way for me to choose what creative look I want. 3) When it's all said and done, quality cannot be compromised, and you want to work with the best tool. 4) I can build multiple profiles to offer a wide variety of styles to a single image. 5) With a busy workload, I have to rely on a convenient workflow and work in one place for my editing.

1. SIMPLE – BUILDING A CUSTOM PROFILE IS EASY

Let's dive into how simple it is to build a custom profile for Lightroom. First, we need to open a RAW file into Adobe Camera Raw and apply some develop settings.(1) Now, you have to keep in mind, we will be applying this to an already-edited image with a custom white balance and exposure. I always leave these untouched for building profiles. If you are editing with a creative preset already, that would be fine to apply as well.(2) One additional thing to remember is that the following modules do not save in the profile: Detail, Lens Correction, Calibration and Transform.

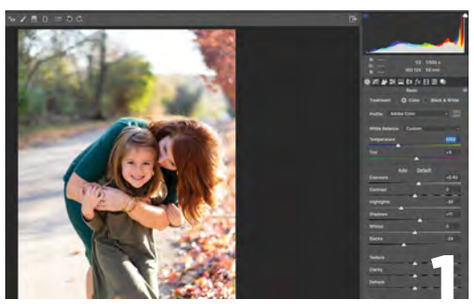
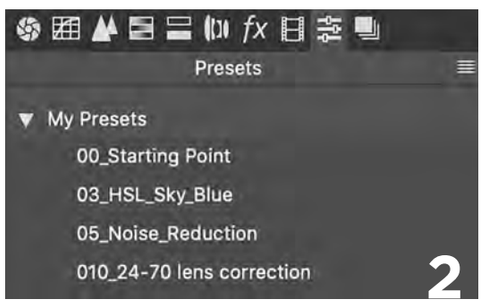
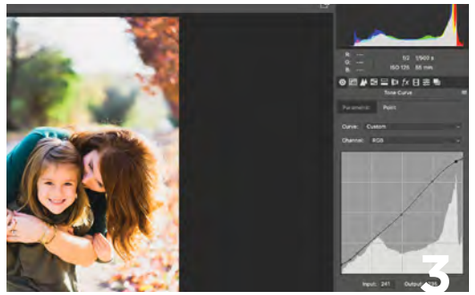
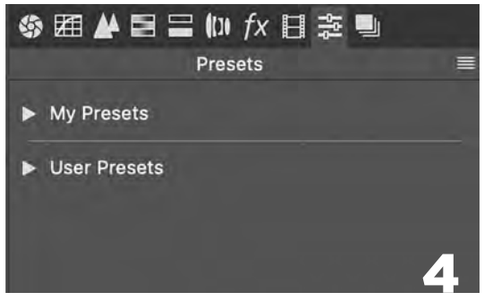


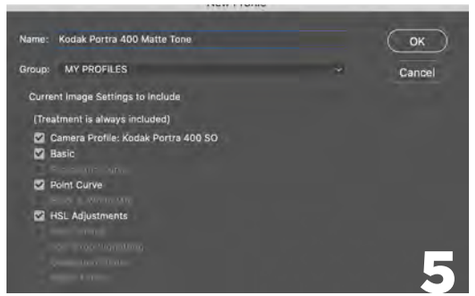
Image © Jessica Briggs Lucas

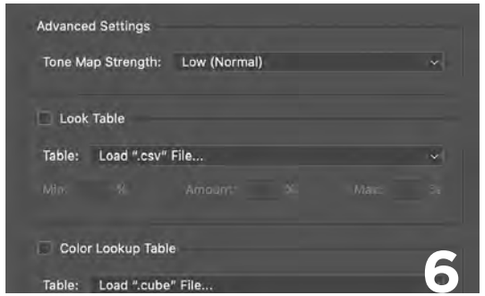


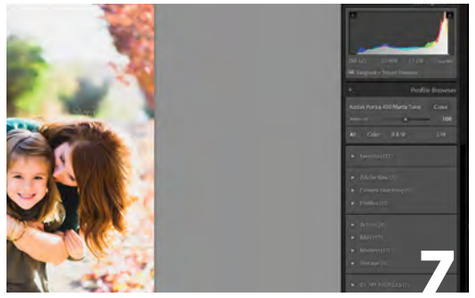
For example, I use a custom Kodak Portra 400 film-style look that I'd like to tweak the tone curve of for a flatter look.(3) Once I apply the preset, I'll need to adjust a few things first to ensure my custom profile saves everything I need. When you are ready to save the profile, you will need to go to the Presets tab, hold option, and click on the New Preset icon in the lower right corner.(4) The New Profile dialog box pops up for you to Name and choose the Group to add the profile.(5) All the other settings below will automatically select what you need.(6) Once you click OK to save the profile, you can relaunch Lightroom, and then you're ready to go.



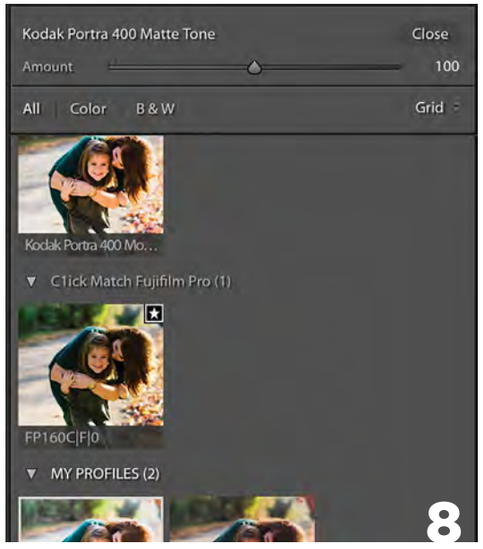








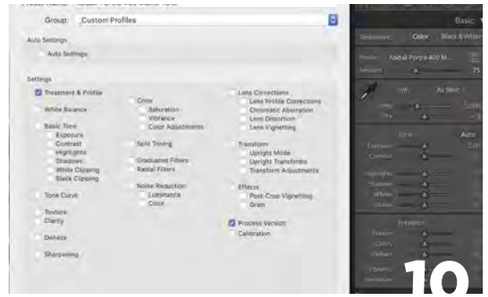
Once you find the image you want to edit, navigate into the Profile Browser to apply the new custom profile we built.(7) You can instantly see how it's gonna look by hovering over each listed name. You can even change the view mode to grid to see thumbnails of each profile applied.(8)

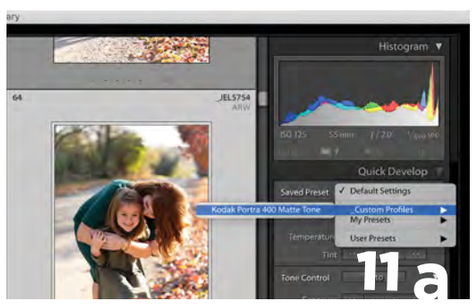


2. EFFICIENT – MAKE CREATIVE EDITING FASTER

Working in Lightroom with Custom Profiles massively cuts my editing time down and allows me to focus on more important things in my business. Being creative doesn't mean I lose efficiency, and with custom profiles, I can quickly choose what I need to apply. To take this a step further, I can create a preset with this profile to apply to multiple images at once.(9) First, apply your profile, adjust the Amount slider to the value you want, and hold shift and command while striking the "N" key.(10) Then, you can name the preset, store in a custom group, select only Treatment & Profile, and click Create. Now you'll be able to select multiple images in grid mode, drop down the Quick Develop module, and choose the new preset to instantly apply the profile.(11ab)

This is the level of efficiency I expect when working in Lightroom—I always want to work smarter, not harder. With this type of workflow, you have endless combinations of presets and profiles to apply. Make your life easier by building custom profiles now.

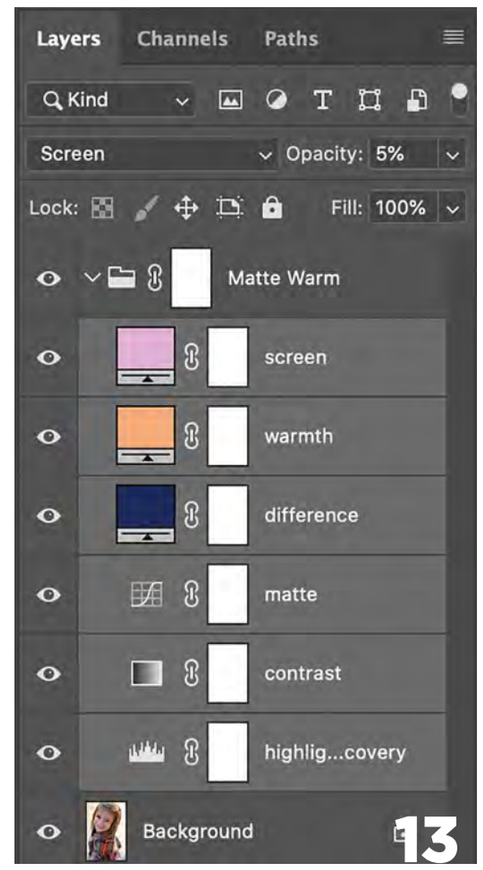


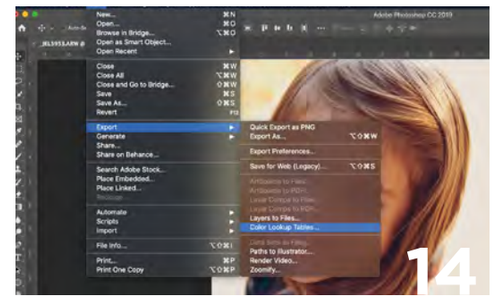


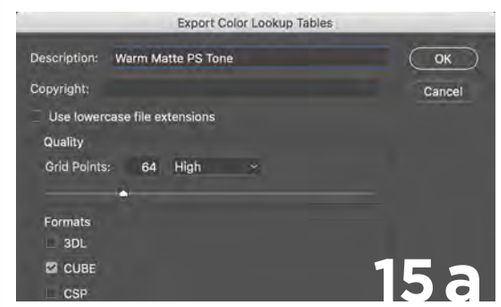
Images © Jessica Briggs Lucas

3. QUALITY – WORK WITH THE BEST TOOL

With creative editing in Lightroom, you want to ensure quality is not compromised in the end. Many of you might have actions in Photoshop that you use because you like those tools better. Luckily, you can convert actions into LUTs in Photoshop so as to not compromise any aspects of your image. Open an image into Photoshop, and apply an action to get started.(12) Now, keep in mind, only adjustment layers will save, so you will need to ditch an image layer. First, select all the adjustment layers you want to export.(13) Then, go into the top menu bar, and select Export>Color Lookup Tables.(14) You will need to name this file and leave everything else as is. Choose to name and save it in a convenient location.(15)







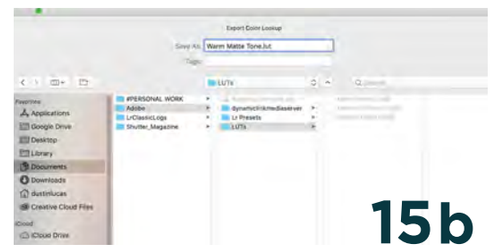


Image © Jessica Briggs Lucas

Once this is completed, open an unedited image into Adobe Camera Raw and go to the Presets tab to save a new profile.(16) After you name and choose which group to add the profile to, check the Color Lookup Table box to choose the correct table we created earlier, and look for the .CUBE file.(17) Then, you can relaunch Lightroom and apply your new preset. Exporting LUTs from Photoshop into Lightroom Profiles makes it so you don't compromise image integrity. It also saves you on all those actions you have not been using.(18)

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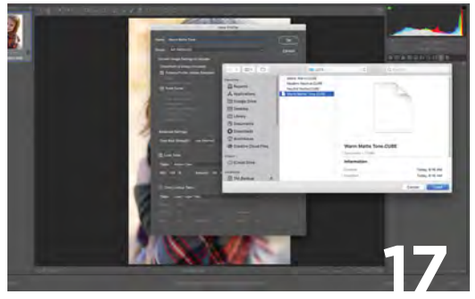
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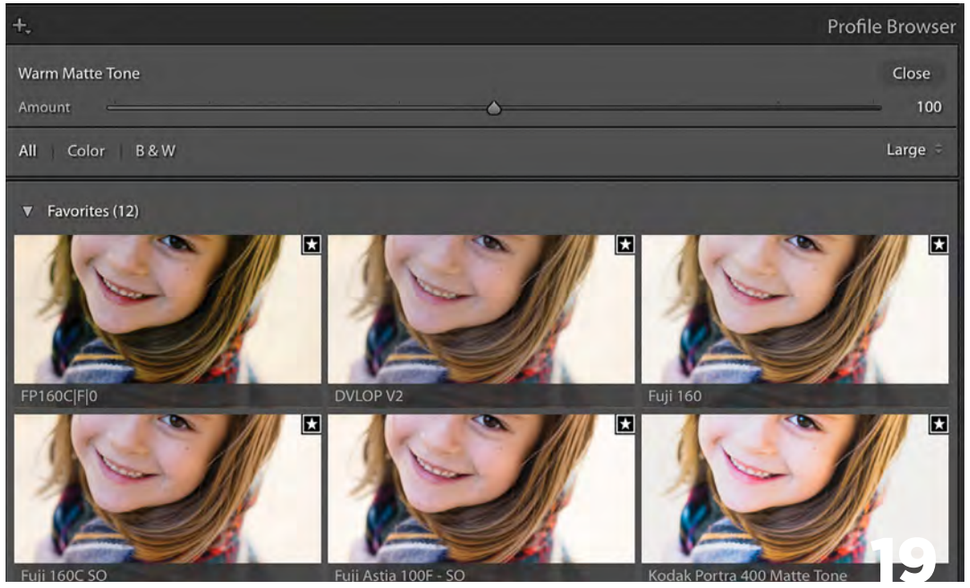
4. VARIETY – APPLY MULTIPLE STYLES

When I edit for corrective aspects in Lightroom, I want consistency across my images, mainly in the skin tones. My client should not shift from scene to scene, even when the color of light does. For my creative edits, I work to be cohesive, so there is some variety, but I am not confusing the client, and am always sticking to my brand. Having the ability to group, manage and apply custom profiles makes this possible.(19) Seeing what the profile looks like on an image and adjusting the Amount are huge positives. This is a completely new option, as most sliders pertain to a single adjustment.(20)

The Amount slider allows you to tone back on some images while amplifying on others to push for more cohesiveness. In Lightroom, you can create virtual copies as well, so you can keep spare copies of your color-corrected files, black & whites, etc. You can select all images in grid mode, then hold command while striking the apostrophe key to duplicate all your files instantly.(21) Next, you can apply any profiles you want in order to start adding a variety of creative styles to your images. You can offer this as a luxury service for top packages so your client can feel like they are getting a full service. Better for you to convert and control edits instead of them doing it.(22)



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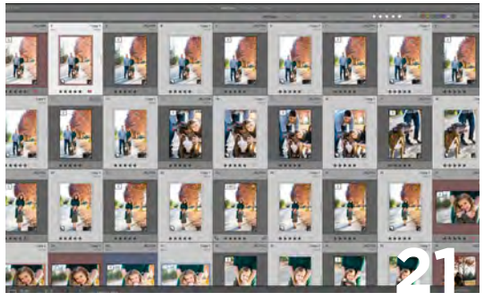
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5. CONVENIENT – ONE PLACE FOR EDITING

In the end, I want to work in a single place for all my editing, and Lightroom makes this so convenient. The ability to take actions from Photoshop and apply them as a Profile in Lightroom is huge for my workflow. Beyond that, I can instantly apply them to multiple images with a single click. Then, I will refine each scene with the Amount slider if the effect is too heavy. With the convenience of editing, I do not have to compromise on quality—this is what custom profiles allows me to do.(23ab)

If I haven't convinced you to try this out in Lightroom, I don't know a better way to spell it out for you. Building custom profiles is simple and efficient, and it gives you quality, variety, and the convenience of working in a single program. There's no better time than now to start building your arsenal of profiles to get ready for busy season. ■

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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.

evolveedits.com

OUTSOURCING

POST-PRODUCTION TO ENHANCE THE THE CLIENT EXPERIENCE

with **Lora & Isaac Skelton**

Image © Lora & Isaac

Image © Lora & Isaac

With 2019 wrapped up, we recently sat down and reflected on how things have changed for us over the past two-and-a-half years from when we started our business. It's funny—we used to think that the only way to have a successful photography business was to be the best photographers we could be. We thought that as long as my photography skills grew, so would the business. It's funny to look back and think about that time, because we now realize how much more goes into it. Just like any other business, there is so much more than just the end product in photography. In our profession, it is easy to get caught up with the end product, because that is how we show all our effort. That is what our clients and the public see. When any type of art is involved, most individuals see that end product as the most important aspect. They assume (like we did) that if the end result is something incredible, the money will flow. However, there is so much more that goes into bringing in money and building a business. Don't get it wrong—the end product is important. You aren't going to be able to run a successful business, charging top dollar, if your photos look like you just asked some stranger to snap a photo on your phone while on vacation. But that end product is just a small drop in the bucket.

Over the last two-and-a-half years, we have built a luxury brand in a small market. We are by far the most expensive photography option in our area—I am talking three to ten times more expensive than others. To be honest, we don't think we are five times better than the other photographers in our town, and we don't think our end product is five times better than their products either. However, we are able to charge ten times what they are, and still fill our calendar, because of the time we have spent making sure from start to finish that our clients are getting an incredible experience.

One of the biggest factors allowing us to provide a better client experience is our post-production workflow. Having a solid post-production workflow is key to providing an experience that your competition can't match. For us, we focus on two key areas with post-production: time and quality. We want to make sure our clients are getting their photos in both a timely matter and at the highest quality possible. It doesn't do you any favors to turn around the photos next day if the editing is sloppy and looks like you didn't even try. You also aren't giving your clients a top-quality experience by spending months and months editing photos to "perfection" if it means your clients are waiting so long to see the photos that they forgot they even did the shoot.

Image © Lora & Isaac

TIME

I am going to start with timely delivery. This is huge. We live in a time where consumers are not going to wait long for what they've purchased. We are spoiled by Amazon Prime deliveries and UberEats. We want it, and we want it now. You may have been told that "they can wait" or "they want quality so they have to wait for it," but that is not true. They can have their cake and eat it too! They can book a luxury photographer and get photos back fast, all without compromising their experience or the quality of the post-production. Our turnaround time used to be an average of 30 days from the shoot/wedding to the clients preview. We've now trimmed that down to an average of 7 days.

The how and why is simple. How? Outsourcing our culling and the entire post-production process. We do not touch a single image anymore. We shoot the session, immediately upload our raw files to Evolve Edits, and wait to get the photos back. Why? Because our clients are excited to get their images back, and there's not a single reason I can think of to punish that excitement. They just got married, went on a seven-day honeymoon, then landed back in Minnesota to find out they're already invited into our studio to view all of their photos? That's insane! They are so thrilled and immediately happy at how quickly we could turn them around. There's no better way to start a sale than to start it a week or two after the shoot. That's an incredible experience, if you ask me.

QUALITY

Now for the quality portion. Our business is centered around providing our clients with impactful images that they'll want to proudly display in their homes as works of art. We are able to book top-paying clients because we provide images that no other photographer in our area does. We can do sky swaps, slimming and trimming things that they didn't know could be slimmed or trimmed, and the removal of scars, cellulite, imperfections, and fly-always. We like to make them feel flawless. The ability to make your clients feel like they have never felt before directly impacts your sales. Sure, you might be able to do that yourself, but how much time are you spending each week or even each day on retouching? Three hours per day? Six hours per day? What could you do with that time instead? My guess is your time would be much better spent marketing, networking, and more importantly shooting! Plus, let's be honest, there are very few of us out there who are better at editing than someone whose full-time job is to edit photos, and who is regularly editing images for some of the top photographers in the world.

Image © Lora & Isaac

Sure, some of you love to edit, but that's just not us. We used to edit for hours per day and was fine with it. But once you look at your queue and you are sitting on six weddings, ten engagement sessions and five family sessions, then you start to feel like it's a daunting chore that has to be done. Plus, while you have all those to edit, you are still shooting, adding more to your plate. For us, it got to a point where our business couldn't grow because we were so backlogged on editing that we couldn't take on more shoots. At this point, burnout is inevitable. You are going to kill yourself up late at the computer trying to wrap editing up just so you can start again tomorrow trying to get your head above water before the next wave of a busy week comes.

Image © Lora & Isaac

Before we outsourced editing, we told our clients it would be four to six weeks for their photos. Guess what? At four weeks, we would get an email asking if photos were done. If we didn't reply within twelve hours, they would call, text or email, asking if we got their first email about their photos. Multiply that by how many clients you have a year, and it gets exhausting. Now we can tell them to expect two weeks for their photos to be done. Then, seven days later, we blow their minds when they get an email saying their images are ready. We are no longer pushing back deadlines, but instead cutting every single timeline in half. Do you have any idea how clients react to that? They are waiting until that two-week mark to follow up, and before they can even think, *Wonder if my photos are almost done?*, we have exceeded their expectations, and they never complain.

Outsourcing your editing can be a scary task. But trust us, your clients will thank you, your family will thank you, and your business will grow. Get excited! This is revolutionary for your business. Just remember—your business will grow if and only if you use that time wisely. Don't think that just because you started outsourcing editing means you can now take two or three hours per day to nap and watch TV. There are so many important things you should be doing for your business now that you have freed up some time, but that is for a different article. ■

Minnesota-based wedding photographers, Lora and Isaac travel the world, documenting couples on the most important day of their lives. As a husband-and-wife team, Lora and Isaac understand the importance of connection with your wedding photographer, which is why they strive to make sure each and every couple has an unforgettable experience leading up to their wedding day. Their main goals are to provide an unmatched client experience from start to finish, and to create images that are unique and will fill the walls of their clients' homes for generations to come.

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Sal Cincotta, *Publisher*

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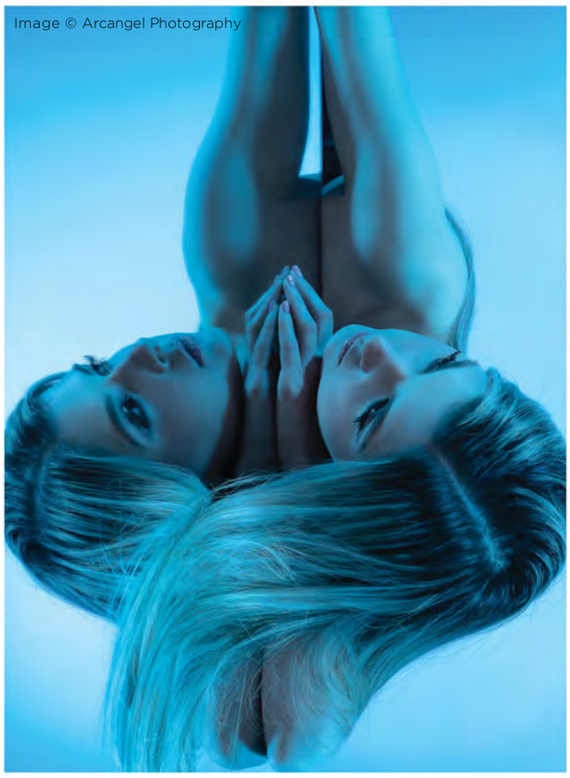

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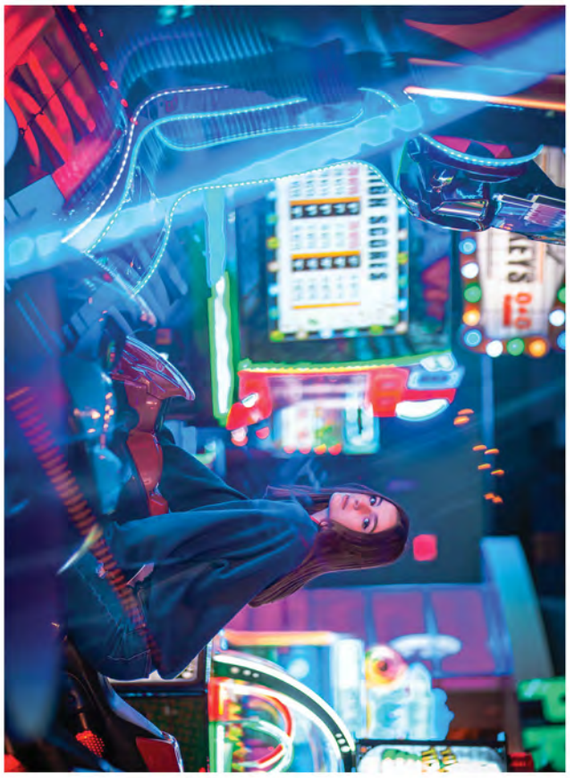

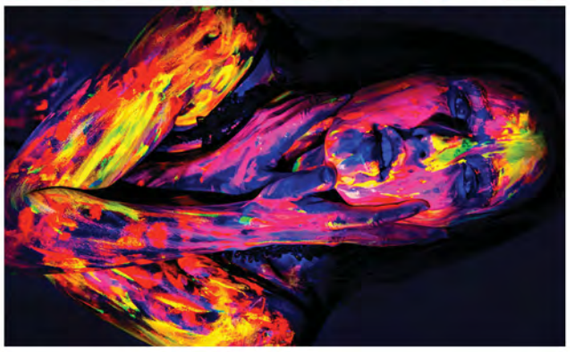

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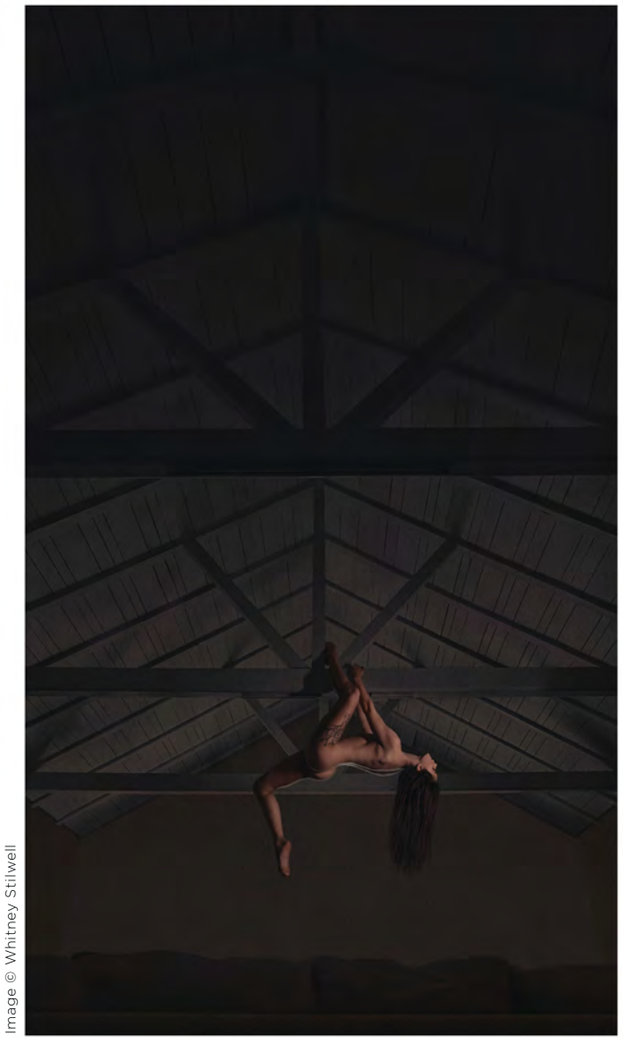

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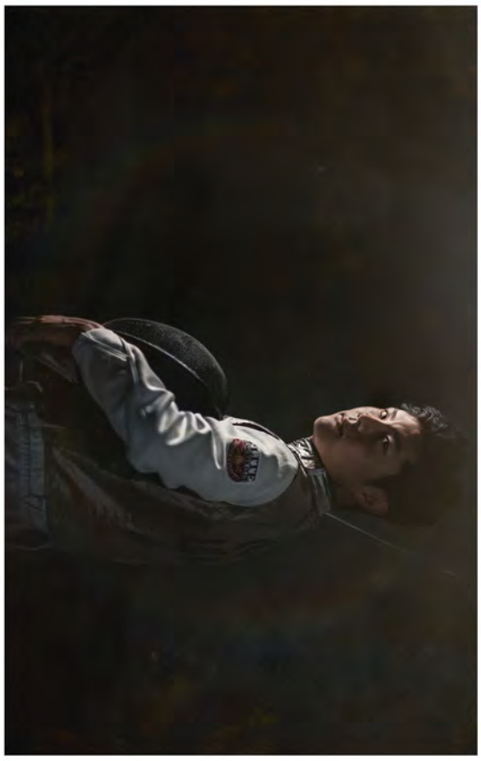
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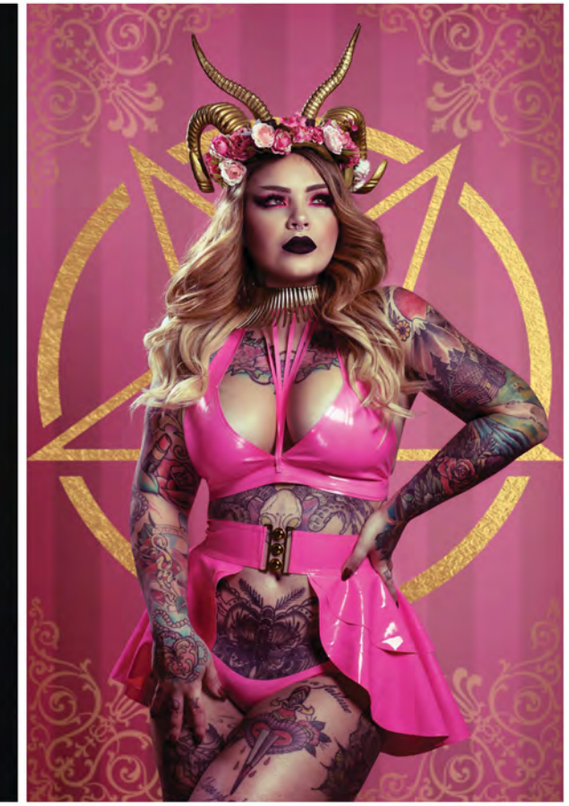

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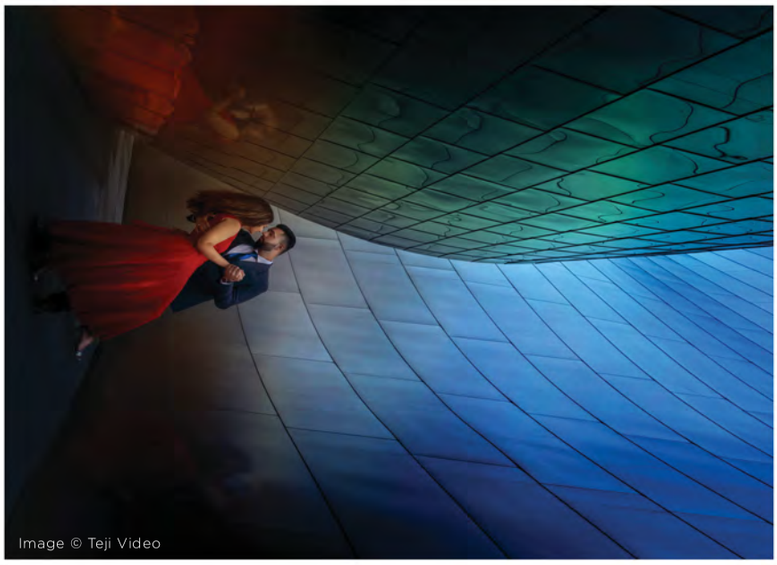

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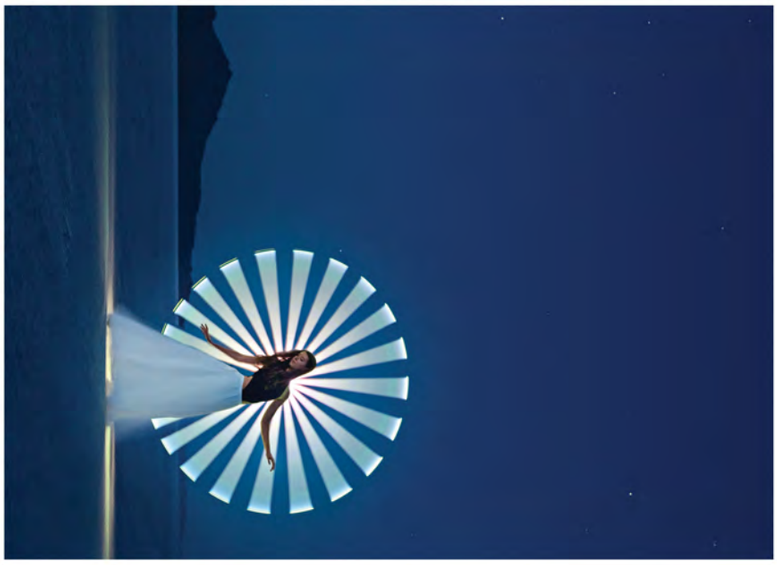

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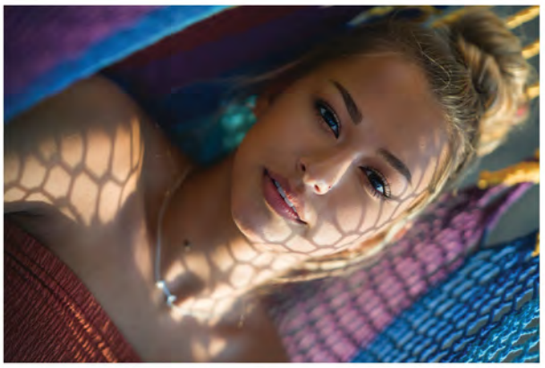

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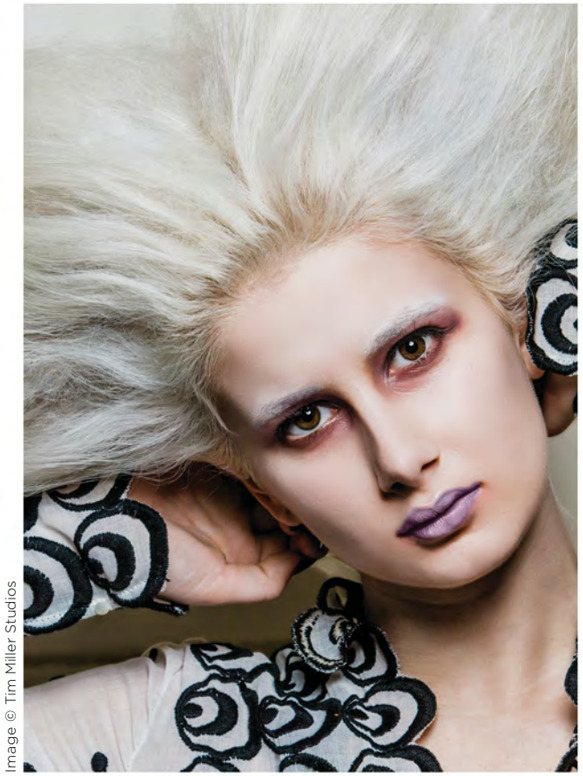

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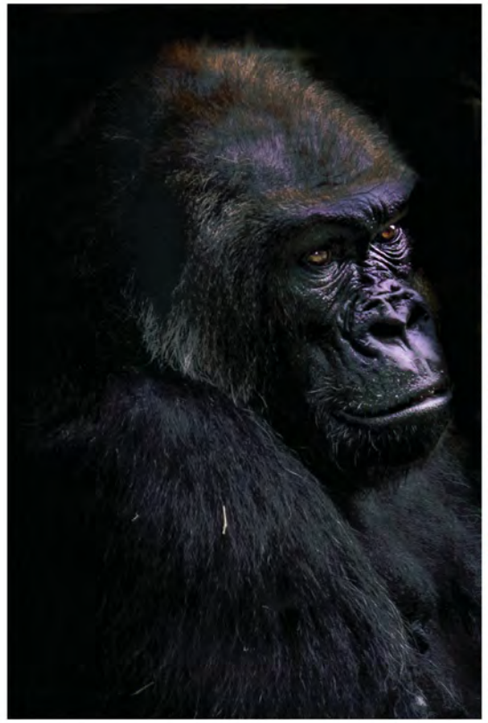

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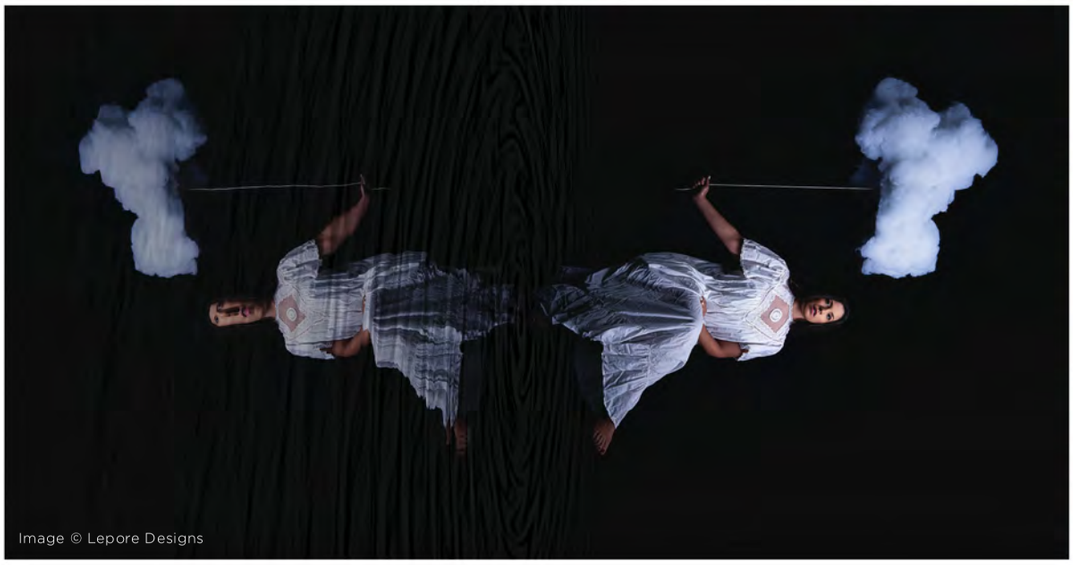

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8 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN BUYING A STROBE

with **Michael Corsentino**

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Choosing the right strobe for your needs is not only a question of budget but how you intend to use the strobe. The criteria and features desirable for studio strobes differ from those designed for location use, and vice versa. That said, strobes designed for location use can be used in the studio, and studio strobes can in some cases be used on location. So, if you can only budget for one type of strobe, don't worry. Keep in mind that every strobe involves a series of compromises, and there is no one strobe that does everything and does it well. That's why there are portable strobes designed for location work and larger, more powerful strobes intended for studio work. Each has its pluses, minuses and place. Below are the eight most important things to consider when you're in the market for a strobe.

1. EXPOSURE MODES

Manual vs. Automatic vs. TTL. Actually, it's really not that complicated. Strobes are typically available in either manual or semi-automatic models. Fully manual strobes are mostly legacy models at this point, but don't underestimate the value and power of manual exposure. In fact, if you're operating on a tight budget, manual strobes are the way to go. The caveat with manual is that you'll forgo many of the modern-day amenities available with semi-automatic models. Manual couldn't be easier—it simply comes down to dialing in more or less power to suit the exposure. Semi-Automatic strobes offer a wide variety of useful exposure modes, from manual to TTL and High Speed Sync. TTL is invaluable for fast-paced work where the distance from the strobe to the subject is rapidly changing. TTL calculates the exposure for you and allows you to season to taste as desired. High Speed Sync allows shutter speeds beyond your camera's maximum flash sync speed for easier balancing of ambient and flash. The best semi-automatic strobes allow a TTL exposure to be switched over to manual for fine-tuning on the fly—very cool. Given my druthers, I'd opt for a fully loaded, wireless, semi-automatic model with full manual control override any day of the week.

2. SIZE & WEIGHT

Size matters! Sorry I couldn't help myself. All kidding aside, the size and weight of each strobe in your kit matters a great deal and dictates how they're best used. Large, heavy strobes are best confined to the studio. If the studio makes up the majority of your work, that's fine, but if location work is in the mix, you'll also want a good set of light-weight, compact strobes. And when I say light-weight, I mean really light-weight. Size and weight issues become even more critical when air travel is involved. For air travel, you'll want the lightest, most compact strobes possible, along with the right amount of power. Keep in mind, domestic over-weight fees are high, but the international fees are exorbitant. I learned this the hard way checking cameras and lenses overhead on various legs during a trip through Turkey. I took a major shellacking at every stop. Even some battery-operated strobes, which claim to be portable, aren't ideal for extended location use. Will your strobe be boomed? Will it be held overhead by an assistant? What kind of stand will you need to bring with you to support it? These are important questions to ask. For location work and travel, I use a 500-watt second pack and head combo with a head under two pounds. Choose the lightest, most compact strobe with the appropriate power for your needs that you can afford.

3. MAXIMUM/MINIUM OUTPUT

The maximum power output a strobe is able to deliver is just as important as its minimum power setting. This may seem counterintuitive, but the minimum power setting becomes a very important consideration in the studio when strobes are often used in close proximity to a subject. Too much power, and you'll end up with overexposed images, using f-stops much smaller than desired, sheets of neutral density gel, or moving the back further and changing the quality of light. For this reason, when you're choosing a strobe, look for those with a wide f-stop exposure range. Ideally, you'll want one or more strobes, which will provide enough power when heavy lifting like overpowering the sun is called for, as well as the ability to be dialed way down for low-power applications like wide-aperture studio portraits, a kiss of fill light, etc. At the top end, I'd recommend 500-1,000 watt seconds, with a low setting in the 30-50 watt second range. Let's get low—real low.

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4. POWER SOURCE

How strobes are powered is another important consideration. Mains or battery power—which one is right for you? If you work exclusively in the studio, strobes that use mains power are likely to be a good fit and less expensive than battery-powered models. Desired power output also plays a role in your choice. Battery-operated strobes typically max out between 500 and 1,200 watt seconds. If you need higher-powered strobes, which is often the case in the studio, mains power is your only option. If your work is more location-oriented and 500 to 1,200 watt seconds of strobe output is enough light for what you typically shoot, then battery power is the way to go without a doubt. If your work is a mix of both location and studio, two or three battery-operated, 500-watt-second strobes are a great option. I worked with this setup for years. Keep in mind, with today's high-quality sensors, higher ISOs can be used to make up the difference when using lower-powered strobes without sacrificing image quality.

5. DIGITAL VS. ANALOG

Strobes are available in two flavors: digital and analog. Both have their strengths and weaknesses. Digital strobes are a more recent development, and many offer conveniences such as a digital interface, High Speed Sync, TTL metering, light weight, wireless triggering, precise power control, and the control of groups of lights either together or individually from the camera position. Analog packs and heads, on the other hand, are old school and manual-only, offer no HHS or TTL, are typically heavier, and offer only wireless on/off trigging when used in combination with a set of pocket wizards or the like. With analog packs, power adjustments need to be made at the pack, which involves more walking back and forth absent an assistant. When are analog packs a good fit? When you want to save money. If you're comfortable with a handheld flash meter and working manually, you can save a bundle buying legacy strobes on the used market. In the studio, I use fully manual analog pack and head systems almost exclusively. They're built like tanks and would cost tens of thousands of dollars to replace with their digital counterparts.

6. MODELING LIGHT

Most modern-day strobes include a modeling light—either incandescent or, more recently, LED. Modeling lights serve a number of important functions. They allow photographers to see where the light from their strobe is falling with continuous light, assess catch light placement in a subject's eyes, and judge the quality of light from the modifier being used, all prior to firing the strobe. LED modeling lights can also do double duty as continuous light sources for video and still applications or mixing strobe and constant light for special effects such as dragging the shutter to create light trails. Most ideal are LED modeling lights that include user-adjustable color temperature, allowing either tungsten or daylight balance to be dialed in as needed. Keep in mind, with battery-operated strobes, LED modeling lights and similar need to be used sparingly as they'll quickly drain battery power.

7. RECYCLE SPEED

The length of time it takes for a flash to recover after it fires, then fully recharge and fire again is referred to as its "recycle" speed. The faster the recycle speed, the faster a photographer can shoot without outrunning the strobe and ending up with underexposed misfires. A fast recycle speed is important for those shooting fashion, sports, dancers, weddings—essentially any fast-moving subject matter. Recycle speed matters less so for those who are shooting portraits, still lifes, and static product photography. This is another feature where you get what you pay for. Pricier strobes typically offer faster recycle speeds as an amenity. Even if you don't think you need fast recycle, once you experience it, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it. How fast is fast enough? It really just comes down to what you're shooting and the way you like to work. My advice is to get a strobe with the fastest recycle you can afford.

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8. FLASH DURATION

When a flash is fired, the length of time the flash tube remains illuminated at its brightest output is known as "flash duration." Flash tubes operate on bell curves during which they ramp up, fully illuminate at the top, and fall off, dimming at the bottom of the curve. How quickly this happens impacts a strobe's ability to freeze motion. This is a critical feature for those shooting dancers, sports, beverage work, scientific applications, etc. Basically, anything where tack-sharp motion freezing via strobe is called for requires a strobe with a very fast flash duration. In many cases, the faster the flash duration possible, the more expensive the pack and compatible heads will be. That said, there are value propositions out there for those in need of this feature. Those offer very fast flash durations without breaking the bank—the Paul. C. Buff Einstein comes to mind. ■

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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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