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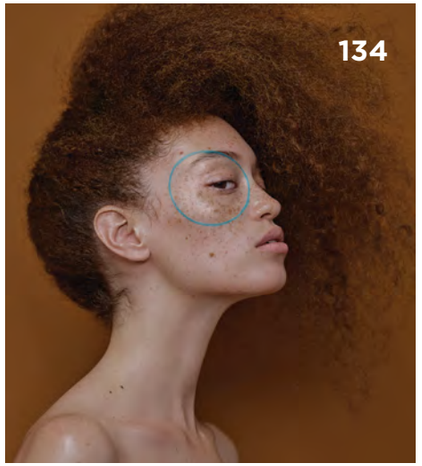

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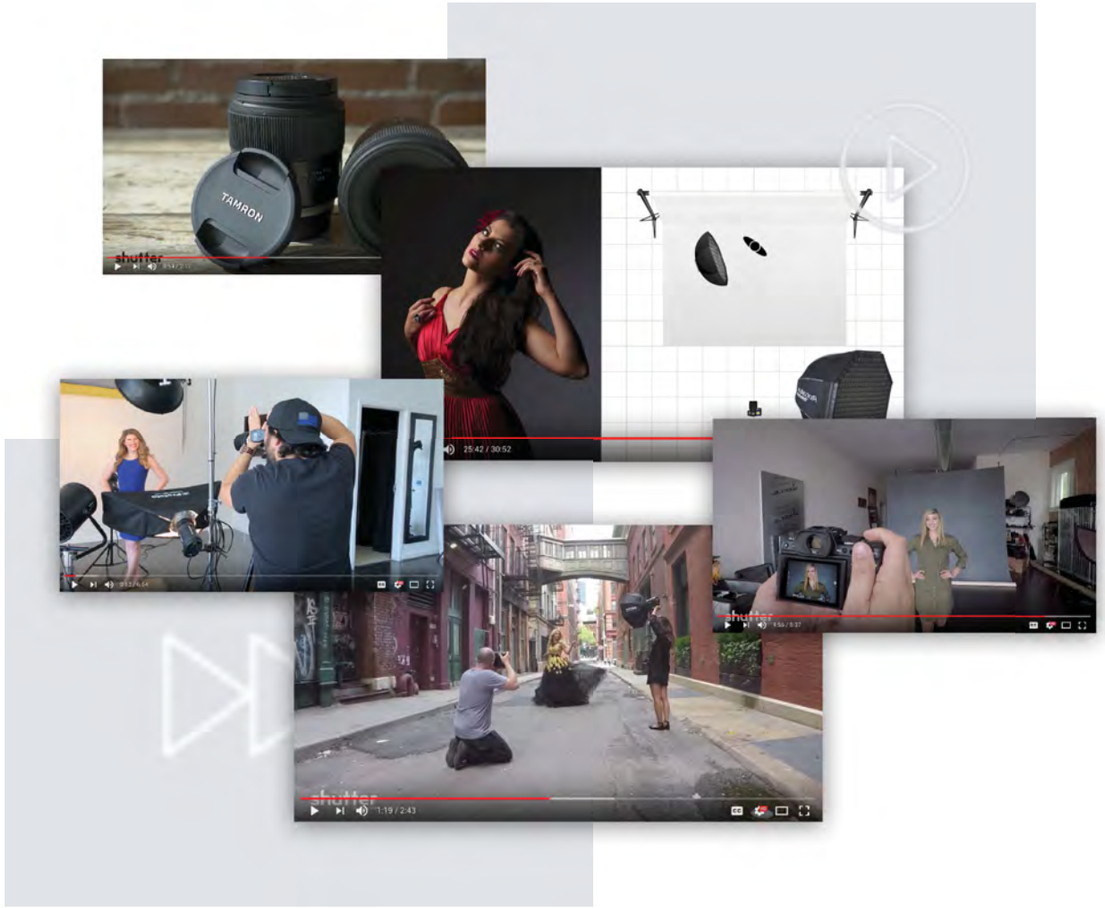

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MISSION **STATEMENT**

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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EXPOSURE: f1.2 @ 1/100 iso 100
LIGHTING: profoto a1 fired into a reflector

LAUNCH **POINT**

A message from the publisher

New year, new opportunity.

Beauty comes in all shapes and sizes, As creators, we have an incredibly unique opportunity to show the *beauty* deep within all our subjects.

This month is focused on finding and shooting *beauty*.

- Sal Cincotta

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken in an old Venetian Palace. The intricate details in the walls and decor was breathtaking and we wanted to find a way to incorporate it all into one delicate and feminine portrait, but not your typical beauty portrait. We knew we wanted a nude, photographed from behind, that showed off the curves of our model and the dimples in her lower back—something artistic that didn't actually reveal anything.

We wanted the light to mimic the soft window light that was leaking in behind her (there were windows on both sides of where she was positioned on the wall). So we fired an Profoto A1 into a silver reflector off to the side (camera right) to create nice soft light and still give dimension.

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2020 BLAST OFF:

STEP UP YOUR WEDDING GAME

with **Michael Anthony**

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

2020 is upon us, and every year you should investigate ways in which you can improve your craft. As we move more and more into booking Gen Z clients, we have noticed that quality is something that is becoming more and more important to our clients. Quality can come in many forms: business, client experience, etc. What I want to focus on today is artistry, and what you can look to do to up your photography game for your clients starting this January. Let's look at some of the significant skillsets and go over the trends that we are noticing in our business today.

LIGHTING

Our industry has gone through a lighting renaissance in the last three years. The reason for this is that flash has become accessible to everybody, whereas in the past, only the most expensive options could help you set your work apart.

With that evolution, more people in the industry stepped up to share their techniques and tricks, and as a result, the industry has become much better versed in lighting as a whole.

That leaves minimal area for you to use to differentiate yourself. While in 2015, you could find a fantastic place, underexpose your background, and add a little flash, today, that will come across as just more of the same to your potential clientele.

So your 2020 plan is to up your light control and be more intricate in your details. Here are a few things that you can do to stand out.

Multi-Light Setups:
By adding a second light to your setup, you can create a three-dimensional scene that will allow your subjects to stand out. This multi-point lighting will give your photos a unique look that your competitors probably are not delivering.

One of my favorite multi-point light setups is to cross-light my subjects, allowing separation from the background and a little bit of rim light at the same time. If your shot is too broad, you will need to remove your second light (alternately, you can use the sun as a second light source).

Light Control:
You should also start paying attention to methods for controlling the lighting that you are using. In a studio, we have the luxury of using flags and broad modifiers, but in environmental portraiture, that is not usually the case.

When shooting weddings, few tools are as useful as a grid. With the Profoto A1, the grid attachments make it incredibly easy to add a layer of control to your flash. The grid will narrow the spread of the light significantly, allowing you to control where you want it to go while preserving the integrity of a room or space. The grids are very small—easy to carry and attach to your light in seconds.

LIGHT MODIFIERS

Another way you can step up your light game is with your use of modifiers. As far as soft light modifiers, my favorite mechanism remains the Profoto OCF system. These soft boxes are very easy to set up, and they can break down flat and be stuffed into a camera bag.

Another commonly used modifier is spheres, by Profoto. I want to stress that placing a sphere on your flash outdoors *does not make your light softer*. Other than reducing the specularity of your light slightly, all it does is eat up your power.

These tools should be used for spreading light omnidirectionally, which is useful when creating fill light in a room.

Lastly, the use of flash gels has gained a lot of popularity over the last couple of years. Instead of the usual "trick shots" that impress photographers, use your flash gels to add a little bit of ambiance to a dull room.

Pay real attention to lighting because, over the next few years, it will be more and more important for setting yourself apart.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

POSING

While lighting has grown in popularity, it seems that the use of posing has regressed a bit as an industry. Posing is not gear-centric, it's people-centric, which makes it inherently less "sexy" to learn. But at the end of the day, it will make or break your client's satisfaction. Honestly, when clients refer to "lighting," they are usually referring to an editing style of bright or dark, but when a client says they don't like their photos, it's really because the posing was terrible.

Posing is where I would want to focus my action plan every year, whether that be posing for storytelling to get more playful and fun shots, or directing better to make a full editorial spread.

With posing, I recommend sticking to your foundations. I laid out my full foundational posing in my March and April 2016 articles in Shutter. Once you understand the foundations, then you can move on to what I call systematic posing.

Systematic posing is the art of sticking to a formula during a shoot so that you are delivering consistent results from client to client. For me, systematic posing looks something like this:

-Pick a location
-Set up an Editorial Pose
-Set up a Motion Pose
-Set up a Cinematic Creative
-Move to the next location

During this process, I am shooting different focal lengths and orientations, which allows me to deliver a ton of proofs for my clients. More importantly, it enables me to create a system for my photographers to follow so that *they* are getting consistent results for my clients as well.

You should develop your own system based on how your sales model works. Because we intend to sell a digital collection and large prints as part of a package, it's essential to create a large number of proofs. On the other hand, for our boudoir brand Marilyn Lou Boudoir, we aim to deliver a small number of fully edited tests to our clients, and for this model, our systematic posing is a single shot per pose in a vertical and then a horizontal variation. This allows me to fill album spreads.

Posing will be different depending on your market and where you live; however, one thing remains the case no matter what—the story needs to be central to your posing. When you pose with the story in mind, it shows your thoughtfulness to your craft as a photographer.

BUSINESS

I know that I promised you an article about artistry, but let's be honest, there is an artistry to business for sure. This is a fragile business—much, much more so than many other industries. The reason for that is because it is a highly competitive field with little to no barrier to entry and a consumer that is inundated daily with good professional photography. In short, it's hard to impress people these days.

But that doesn't mean you can't make a fantastic living doing this. I would argue quite the contrary, but you have to be excellent at communicating with a clientele that values quality.

This means that you have to work on creating a fantastic experience for your clients. How can you create that fantastic experience? Let's start with the basics:

-Be responsive
-Be informative
-Be genuine
-Put their experience above your short-term business gratification

Growing from zero income to a seven-figure business doesn't happen overnight, but for us, it happened much quicker than for most. I don't do any crazy marketing that you don't do, but aside from being persistent, I have always worked to treat my clients like absolute gold. If they are not a good fit, we are not afraid to let them go. You have to make sure that you are doing what you can to build a mobile salesforce of clients showing off the fantastic work that you have done for them.

Image © Michael Anthony Photography

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PRODUCTS

Every year, it's an excellent time to evaluate your product line and make changes where you can. Whether that be with albums or printed products, use this time to revamp your offerings and make sure that you are creating the items that your clients care about most. Heading to bridal shows soon? Maybe think about having new samples for your upcoming shows that your competitors don't have. Do what you can to stand out and be different in a place where your competitors are. That difference is ultimately what will earn you new business. ■

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

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5 Must-Have MODIFIERS

with **Michael Corsentino**

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When it comes to crafting killer quality of light, it's all about modifiers. These light-shaping tools come in a variety of shapes, sizes and interior finishes. When attached to the front of strobes, modifiers help control the quality, shape, direction, spread, and amount of contrast, as well as how quickly the light falls off. While some have more versatility than others, there is no one-size-fits-all modifier. Each has its own unique characteristics, and each produces a different set of results.

That said, one modifier, even one of those more single-purpose in nature, can itself be modified in myriad ways, allowing you produce a wide range of lighting effects using just one tool. Interior and exterior diffusion fabric can be added or removed, honeycomb or egg crate grids can be applied, silver or white interior fabrics can in many cases be swapped, and the light's direction and distance relative to the subject allow for endless variations using a single modifier.

As your resident lighting nerd, I'm often asked for purchasing advice by those in the market for modifiers. There are so many different modifiers out there to choose from that it can be dizzying for novice or even more experienced photographers. Which modifiers do you really need, and why?

Below are the five modifiers I couldn't live without, the five I keep coming back to over and over again—in short, they are my five must-have modifiers. These are the modifiers I use on a daily basis and always recommend when asked. I've chosen this group based on their differences, their versatility, and the variety of disparate looks they're able to help me create. Don't feel like you need all five at once. Take your time, pick one or two up, and get to know each one inside and out before moving on to the next. This way, you'll be getting the most out of each tool.

1. BEAUTY DISH

Despite its name, this modifier is well suited for a variety of applications, from fashion, to portrait, to editorial and of course beauty work! The beauty dish is a best-of-both-worlds modifier, providing a perfect balance between medium-soft light, sparkly contrast, and gradual fall off. These qualities are achieved via the diffusor found at the center of the reflector and the shape and depth of the modifier. The center diffusor covers the strobe, reducing its hot spot and bouncing light out into the rest of the modifier interior. Beauty dishes are available from most manufactures in a variety of sizes, shapes and interior finishes. My must-have beauty dish is the Mola 22" Demi with the white interior. This wonderful, multi-purpose tool sports a unique, undulating design, which produces light like no other beauty dish I've used. Use it alone or in combination with reflectors or additional fill/accent lights for Clamshell light or Rembrandt light, for 3/4-length, full-figure, portrait and fashion work—you name it!

2. LARGE OCTABANK

The bigger the light, the softer the light. This is why, when you're after soft light, it's hard to beat a jumbo octabank. For best results, you'll want to do two things: 1) place your light and jumbo octabank as close to your subject as possible without them being in the picture, and 2) place your subject just behind the back edge, off the modifier. This is known as feathering the light—your subject is illuminated by the light, leaving the back edge of the modifier rather than the harsher light at the center of the octabank. My favorite octabank for this application is the Elinchrom 75" Octa, pictured here. It's also unique and especially well suited for creating soft light due to the indirect orientation of the strobe when attached. This means that the strobe points into the octabank rather than out toward the surface of the octabank and the subject. This heightens the softness of the light and reduces the occurrence of a hot spot. Here, again, a removable diffusion panel allows options via control over the degree of softness or hardness. As mentioned above, distance also plays a key role. I've used this exceptional modifier for both single subjects and groups, to great effect.

Large Octabank

Large Octabank

Images © Michael Corsentino

Convertible Umbrella

Image © Michael Corsentino

3. CONVERTIBLE UMBRELLA

If I had to recommend only one modifier, the convertible umbrella would be the one. Truly a jack of all trades, this inexpensive and often unfairly maligned tool does it all. Use it as a shoot-through umbrella for medium-soft looks, a bounce back for more diffused results, bare for a contrasty, hard light, or with front-facing diffusion fabric to create a super soft, ad hoc octabank. The most useful models come with tons of options, including different interior finishes, window cutouts, and front diffusion fabric. I've used convertible umbrellas for just about everything under the sun. They can be used in front of, from the side or even above your subjects, with exceptional results. The one gripe people have about umbrellas is the lack of control they provide with respect to light spill and spread, so you need to know that going in. That said, for the money and versatility, pick up one or more convertible umbrellas, and the world will be your oyster. I favor a fully loaded, medium-sized convertible umbrella between 40" and 50" for best all-around use.

4. STRIPBOX

Another unique, must-have lighting tool, the stripbox confines light into a narrow column of illumination, allowing for more precise control over where a strobe's light begins and ends. Stripboxes can be used vertically or horizontally for a wide variety of effects. Combined with egg crate grids of varying degrees, stripboxes provide even more control over light shape and spread. Look for stripboxes with interior and exterior diffusion fabric panels for the most versatility. My go-to stripboxes are the silver interior Elinchrom Rotalux 14" x 35" and 20" x 51" models.

Stripbox

Image © Michael Corsentino

Small Deep Octa

Image © Michael Corsentino

5. SMALL DEEP OCTA

The Elinchrom 27.5 Deep Octa is my top pick for on-the-go location work. It's super portable, small enough to travel with, lightweight, and part of Elinchrom's Rotalux series, which means setup and takedown are about as fast as it gets via a spring-loaded internal frame. This is the perfect modifier for flexible, fast-moving location work. I've used this small deep octa for fashion on the streets of New York, seniors portraits in Florida, and just about everything in between. Lightweight enough to operate via a light-duty, boom, or paint pole, this silver interior modifier can create a variety of looks, from soft to crispy hard. Two layers of interior and exterior diffusion fabric provide endless variations, from soft to specular. Despite its small size and a deep shape that increases the speed of light fall off, with the right distance, this modifier can be used for anything from tight portraits to full-length framing. It's a winner in every respect.

Beauty dish

Convertible Umbrella

Images © Michael Corsentino

Well there you have it! Those are my five must-have modifiers. Are there other worthwhile modifiers from other brands? Of course there are. These are just the brands and tools I use, so I can attest to their build quality and results. Get what works for your budget and needs. Light is light, so use the brand and tools that fit your needs, and forget the rest. Until next time, have fun, swing for the fences, and remember to tag me on social so I can see what you're up to! ■

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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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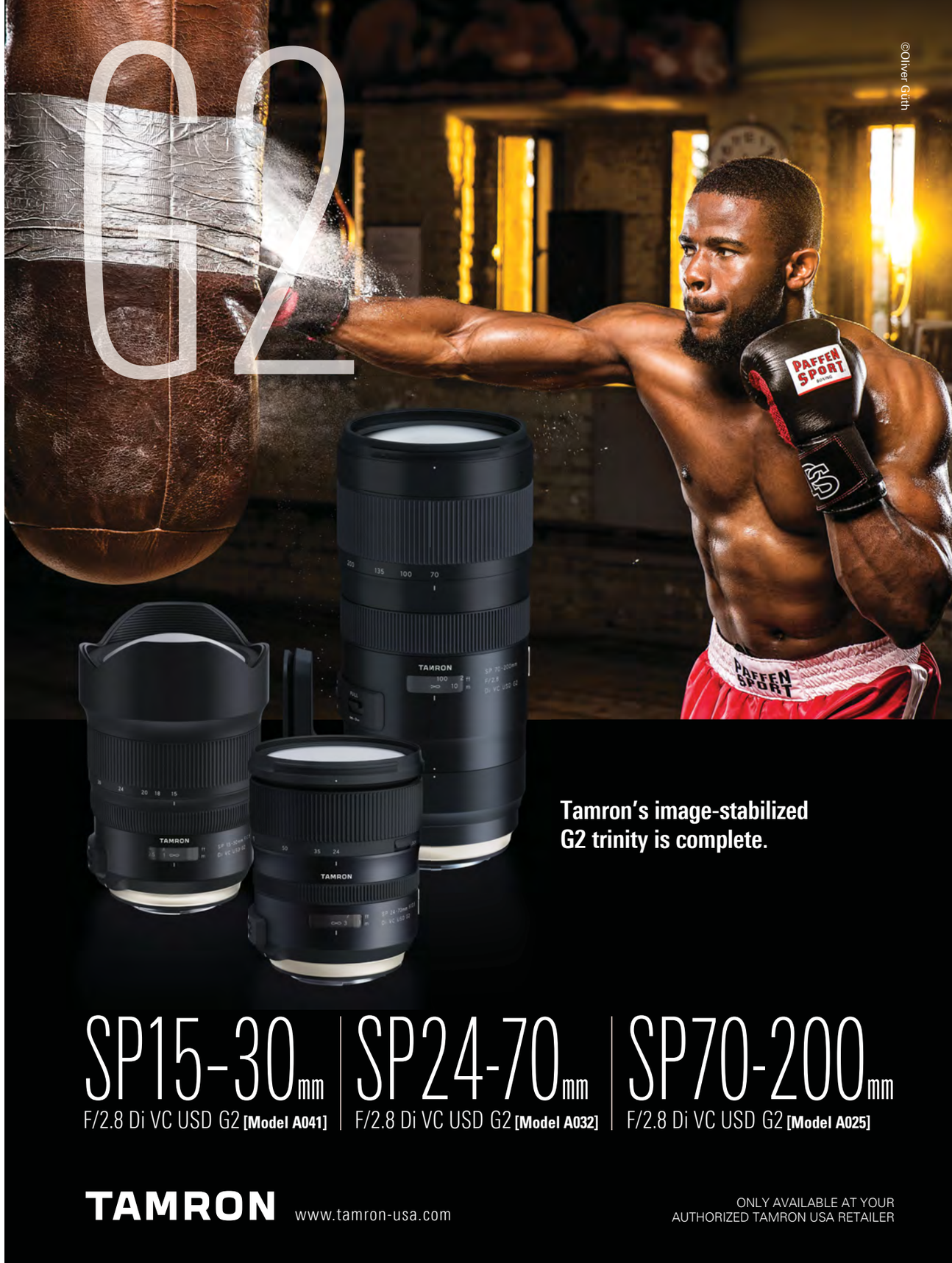

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3 Overlooked Posing Secrets

with **Vanessa Joy**

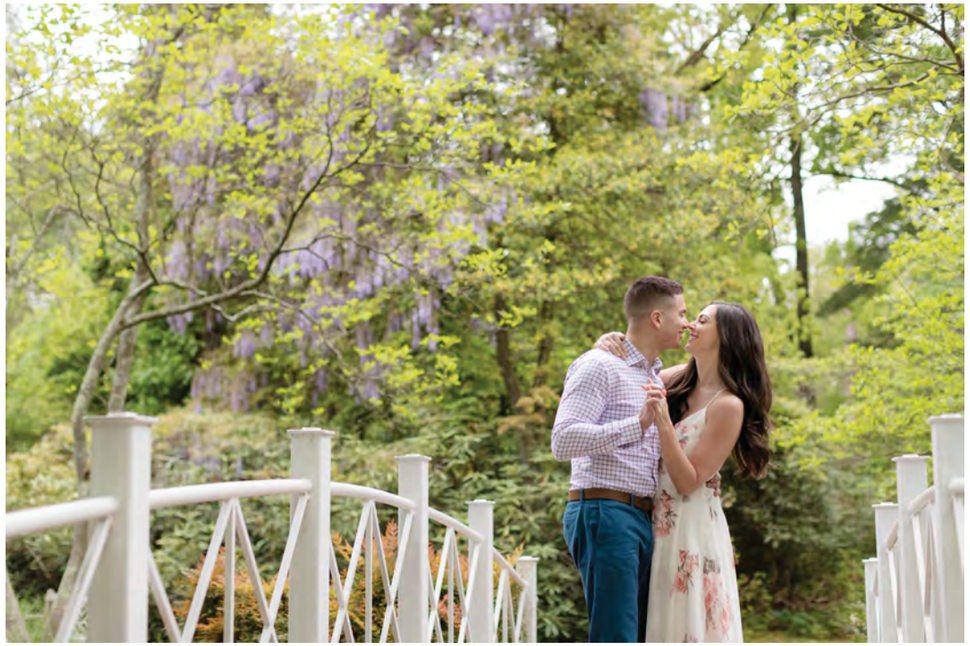
Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

Wedding photographers really do have an awesome job. We get to use our creativity, and at the same time create a lasting record of the bride and groom's special day that they and their loved ones can enjoy for years to come. Of course, there are challenges too. Over the years that I've spent in the wedding photography business, I've found that one of the biggest obstacles we photographers come up against is time—or rather, the lack of it. Sometimes it's hard to get the bride, groom, and wedding party on the same page in the little amount of time we have for each specific stage of the shoot.

One thing really helps me to work around this issue: I make use of a workflow that allows me to quickly position the bride and groom in various poses and get the shots I need in just a few minutes. I can get a ton of great pictures, and at the same time catch up if I'm running behind for any reason, or if I just have a really tight time frame to work with.

In this article, I'm going to share with you three often-overlooked posing secrets that can really help you to save time during your shoot, and still give the bride and groom their money's worth with memorable and elegant pictures.



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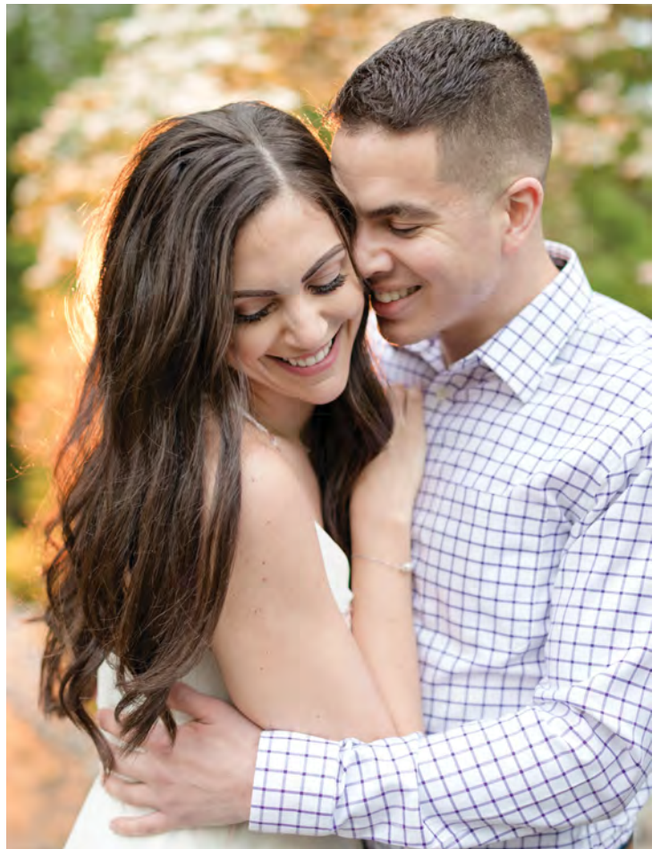
1. START WITH THE TYPICAL POSE

My first tip is to start with the traditional (some would say a little boring) couple pose as a base for the rest of your shots. You know which one I'm talking about: the bride and groom are facing the camera, she has her hand on his chest, he has one arm around her waist and one hand in his pocket. Even if you use a variation of this pose, the basic position and framing should remain about the same.

A lot of times, I'll use my Canon 50mm 2.5 for this shot, with an ISO of 50 and a shutter speed of 1/200. Nothing too fancy. The great thing about starting with a traditional shot like this is that right off the bat, you'll be bound to please the, well, *traditionalists* in the wedding party (whether they are the parents, other relatives, or anyone else). However, you'll also be able to use this pose as a jumping-off point for more creative camera work. This leads to our second posing secret:

Image © Vanessa Joy



2. ONCE YOU'RE SET UP, KEEP YOUR CLIENTS IN PLACE

Instead of moving the bride and groom around, keep them in position, but start adding variations in pose and angle to your starting point. Here are a couple of pointers on how you can make this happen:

• Have them interact with each other.
Make them comfortable! Joke around with them, and have them look at each other and converse in a relaxed way. As they're doing so, take shots from different angles to capture the bride's facial expressions as well as the groom's. I like using a shutter speed of at least 1/250 for this part of the shoot, since they'll be moving around a lot and you'll need to freeze that action.

• Focus on details.
As you continue to work your way around the couple and take those differently angled pictures, try to hone in on specific, photogenic details. For example, the bride's dress may be a great focal point for one shot, the bride and/or groom's ring could be another, and of course, facial expressions and reactions almost always make for great pictures.

Then, you can easily transition to individual shots of the bride and groom. For this part, I like to switch to a 135 lens with an ISO of 100 (if I can get that low) and a shutter speed of at least 1/400 when working with a long lens. I back up a little bit, and have the couple remain a few steps apart so that I can easily get solo shots of the bride and groom, and then shots with one in the foreground.

I like to have fun with this part. There are so many cute wrinkles that you can add to these shots (metaphorically, of course). For instance:

- Have the couple look at each other
- Have one of them come up behind the other and give them a big hug (maybe a love bite on the neck, too)
- Have the bride take hold of her dress at waist-height with both hands for a "feisty" pose
- Have the groom kiss the bride on the nose

Really, the possibilities are limitless. So to recap, within just a few minutes, you've been able to accomplish the following:

- Take a picture of the couple in a typical pose
- Capture an array of variations on that traditional pose
- Snap individual shots of the bride and groom, and several variations on those shots

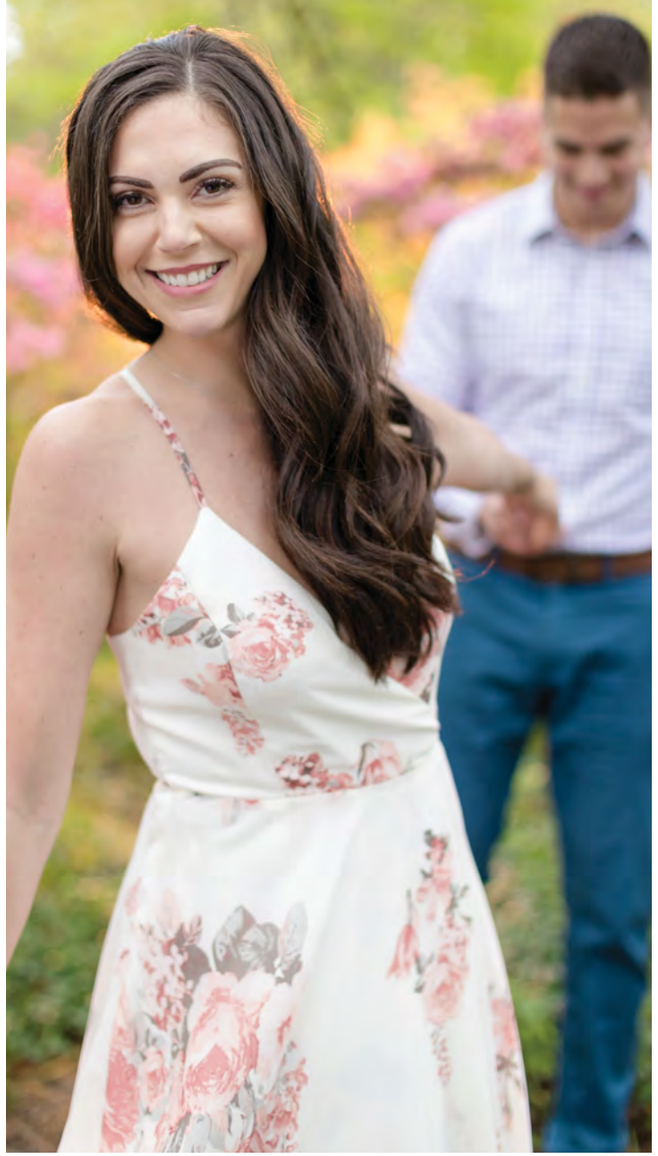
That's amazing for just a few minutes of work, right? It really all comes down to planning and execution, which is a great segue to our final posing secret:

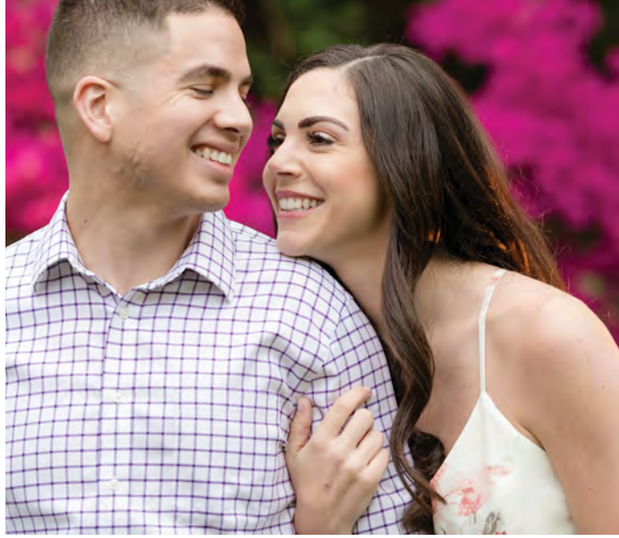
3. SET UP YOUR OWN FLOW

Each photographer is different, and each has their own style and method to get the work done. You should not only find a way to capture as many important shots in a short time frame as possible, you should find a way that's comfortable for you. After all, you're the one who's going to be working that process when you're under the gun.

For example, maybe you'll want to start with the individual shots first, and then transition to couple shots. There's nothing wrong with that! The key is to find a method that allows you to quickly get the bride and groom on the same page, and then have your lenses lined up so that you can seamlessly switch back and forth between them. It's also helpful to have a go-to set of poses or way of working that avoids drawing posing-blanks in front of your clients (a nightmare).

Image © Vanessa Joy





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Creativity on demand can be super difficult, especially in a fast-paced, high-pressure scenario with a ridiculously long list of photos for the time given. Not to mention that somehow, everything always runs late, and it's always the photography that has to make up for it. In my experience, a workflow similar to the one outlined above will save you a lot of time, and will make your job a lot less stressful. It will also help you to capture some amazing pictures that might have otherwise been missed because of a time crunch. If you'd like to explore some other awesome tips to make your photoshoot a smashing success, check out www.SpeedPosing.com. ■

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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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THE **BEAUTY** OF CALLING THE SHOTS

THE **UPS** AND **DOWNS** OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

with **Sal Cincotta**

Image by Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Being an entrepreneur is not for everyone. After 14 years of being a full-time working professional photographer, this is reality talking. For many of us, we love the comfort and security of knowing there will be a paycheck each and every week. Show up, do our jobs, and we will be paid. Don't get me wrong, I come from that world. I worked in corporate America for 10+ years. I loved knowing that every two weeks, my bank account would be refreshed, but when it came to personal satisfaction, I was miserable.

After 14 years of doing this, I have experienced many ups and downs. Today, of course, I know I made the right decision, but 10 years ago, during the struggle, I wasn't so sure. So, if you are considering quitting your job to pursue a full-time career in photography, here are some things to consider when you weigh the pros and cons.

Just know, I highly recommend it. There is nothing more challenging or rewarding.

HAVE A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK

You are not going to be able to do this alone. If you do not have a strong support network, you will fail or worse, you will be fighting an uphill battle the entire way. Ultimately, this will make the journey quite miserable for you. And there is nothing worse than working your ass off and feeling like you are all alone on this journey.

Early on, I thought I had all the support of friends and family, only to find out and realize that these people were not believers, they were just riding my coat tails. I have always said, there are two types of people in this world: those who will stay in the trenches with you when you need them most, and those who will hit you over the head with a shovel to get out and save themselves.

Sadly, early on, I was surrounded by the latter. Worst of all, I didn't see it until it was too late.

Today, with lots of experience under my belt, I can smell this a mile away. I can tell you that you need to be ready to cut these people from your life and your business very quickly. Surround yourself with like-minded people. Now, be very careful with this piece of advice. I am not advocating surrounding yourself with an echo chamber that tells you that everything you do and say is pure genius.

Instead, surround yourself with people who share the same goals and objectives. People who will push you and challenge you to be better. People who will call you out on your bullshit, not to hurt you, but to make you and the team better. Today, I have honest people in my inner circle. And while yes, it can be exhausting as the owner of a company to have to debate every idea you have, I can tell you, the end result is usually spot on, and you'll have more skin in the game from your team, who will stand with you in the trenches.

SAVE MORE THAN YOU THINK YOU NEED

I screwed this one up royally. When I first quit my corporate job, I really thought I had more than enough saved. Well, within three months, I realized I was about to be out of money, and bankruptcy would be close behind. Again, today, I am fortunate that day never came for me. However, this is a huge misstep for almost every entrepreneur.

My advice? Make sure you have at least six months of bills covered. Step back, and put a spreadsheet together of all your expenses. Make sure you have six months' reserve in the bank. This will ensure that even if you do nothing for half a year, you will not have the pressure of paying bills nagging at you. Why is this so important? Because you have to focus on one thing: growing the business and bringing in new revenue.

Now, if you are smart, you will start building your book of business way before you punch out of that corporate job you have. Spend time and energy on marketing and ensure your calendar is starting to fill up. In my opinion, I would recommend you have at least 30 to 60 days of shoots booked out. This is a sure sign that your marketing plan will work and that you know how to bring in business. The worst thing you could do is stash six months of money in the bank and then burn through that trying to figure out marketing. Use your time before quitting to get your marketing and business plan in order. This is crucial to your success.

BE CONFIDENT IN YOUR VISION

This is your business. Your company. Your future. You must be confident in your vision. You cannot build your company on someone else's vision. Think about it. As a photographer, when clients come to me with their Pinterest vision boards, I typically hand them back. Why? Not because I am trying to be obnoxious, but because that was not my idea. I can't execute on someone else's vision any more than another photographer can execute on mine.

You are the CEO of your company. This is one of the tasks of all CEOs. Set the direction for the company. Your job is to set your creative vision for your brand and push that forward. If you need to adjust your vision, you will know when the time is right. What we can't do is abandon or change that vision every time there is a little hiccup or someone on our team doesn't agree with or understand it.

This is why you need a strong support network. Think of your network as a board of trustees. They should believe in you and your vision and support you in them. Allowing someone to alter your vision is a sign of no confidence to me. It means you don't believe in your own vision and can't see the path to success. And if you don't believe in your vision, why should your team? Can you see how this quickly becomes cancer to your organization?

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cirrotta Photography

BLOCK OUT THE NOISE. TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

Listen to me when I tell you this. Cut it out, paste it to a mirror, highlight it. The amount of people who told me "it couldn't be done" would shock you. Instead of allowing that to instill doubt, I used it as fuel to fire up me and my team. To that point, there is no one on my team, at least not for long, who shares the belief it can't be done. Why? Because these doubting toms must go! Their infectious thoughts will spread like wildfire through the organization and start creating fear and doubt within others.

Remember this: If it were easy, everyone would do it. That is more than just a saying. It is reality. How can anyone share your vision when most people are so small-minded that they can't relate to your desire to work for yourself? "Why?" they will ask. Most are paralyzed by fear. Do you really believe they can share your big-vision dreams? Most can't. And you need to block this out or it will distract you.

Noise comes from a lot of places. Your competitors. Your family. Your friends. It can be a distraction, without a doubt, but you must be focused and committed to your dreams. Many times, the doubt comes in a very veiled way. Most people are masking their own insecurities, using phrases like, "We are just worried for you," "I'm just asking questions," etc., when what they really mean is, "Hey, I'm too chicken shit to do what you are doing."

I would respect people more if they were more transparent, but they are not and never will be. Your competitors are the worst. They are so fearful of losing what they have that rather than competing with you, they will say stupid shit to get you off your game. I have experienced this repeatedly with my local St. Louis photographers, who take petty and childish shots at me by blocking me from local photography groups, spreading rumors with no facts or altered context, or just trolling us online. The funny thing is, none of this impacts my business. Instead, it just ensures they stay lost in this vicious cycle of hate and are completely distracted from achieving their own success because they are too obsessed with mine. When this starts happening to you, celebrate. It means you are doing something right.

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

There was a three-year window where the business was growing so fast that we could not keep up. I'm not talking about 10-percent growth. The business was doubling and tripling in size, revenue, and scope. The one thing I wish we had done more of? Celebrate those victories more.

Take time to celebrate and enjoy the wins, no matter how large or small. Celebration doesn't have to be a two-week cruise. It can be as simple as dinner with the team. It is so important to your mental health and that of your team to celebrate the wins. I have found that celebrating throughout the year based on real victories keeps the team's minds in the right place. They learn the simple mindset of work hard, play hard.

The key to all this is defining success. What does success look like? Is it winning a big account? Is it hitting financial goals? During the year, we celebrate when we hit certain growth goals, and the team is always aware of those goals. This ensures we are all marching to the same beat.

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

When it comes to end of year, we celebrate baller style with a Christmas party that makes some weddings look tame. I love giving my employees a taste of the finer things in life. We fly in a chef, a sommelier, a pastry chef, and décor that is out of this world. We treat our team to an eight-course, wine-paired meal, overnight accommodations, and a morning brunch the next day. This is no cheap event, but the team understands that this event is tied to working their asses off all year.

Find a way to celebrate those victories, keep yourself and your team motivated, and keep crushing your goals! You got this. ■

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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THE BEAUTY EDITION

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THE KEY TO BASIC BEAUTY LIGHTING

with **David Byrd**

Image © Reality Reimagined

Image © Reality Reimagined

Let's talk about the word "beauty" for a second to get our journey off on the right path.

The definition: "A combination of qualities, such as shape, color, or form, that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight." Seems pretty straightforward—we see something beautiful, and we admire it because of those elements mentioned above.

As a photographer, ask yourself this question: how often do you break down a session into those key elements? Our creative path is usually inspired by other images we see, images that evoke the desired adjective of "beautiful" and also conjure the phrase, "I want to shoot something like this too!" You get all the necessary components together and start photographing. But are you replicating what you saw as your inspiration, or are you returning to the basics of beauty—the definition of the word?

SHAPE

To define shape, we can of course think about the pose of the subject, but the lighting pattern that we choose can alter that pose and create an interesting new result or something that doesn't hit the trifecta of what a beautiful image is. A common lighting pattern to use in beauty imagery is Butterfly Lighting. This involves using one light source that is placed directly in front of your subject, then raised up into the air, so it is slightly above your subject's head. Now the light has to be tilted downward, at a 45-degree angle, so a wealth of light will actually fall on your subject. Because the light is in front of your subject, higher than them and tilted down toward them, it will cause shadows to form under all of the protruding elements of their body. This creates shape and helps to sculpt your subject. It also evokes a feeling, more so than just a flat light pointed directly at your subject with no elevation or tilt.

The butterfly moniker derives from the shapes caused by the shadows the light produces, specifically under the nose of a human subject. The shape of that shadow resembles a butterfly and evokes that sense of beauty, adding a touch of drama to the image. Their jawline will also gain a significant shadow, helping to define and sculpt your subject.

In the first reference image of our model Kiarra, you can see that the shadow under the jawline is strong, and this helps to frame her face and give it shape. The shadow under her nose is not as strong, because I had her turn her head slightly away from the light and therefore it fell off a bit.

This first image is a decently dramatic beauty image with a lot of great, defined shadow—my preference for any beauty work that I create as a photographer. This can be achieved with one light source; in the case of this image, I am using a single strobe with a 47-inch octabox attached to the front of the light. The diffusion provided by the octabox gives the light a softer quality and controls the direction of the light, and that is the key. You can produce similar results with a continuous light source like an LED or a lamp if you don't yet have your first strobe or flash unit. However, the control of the light will vary, and that is why modifiers are absolutely essential in sculpting light to help define shape.

SHADOW PROBLEMS

I love introducing shadows into any image, as they define shape and create mood, but they can also produce some major issues when it comes to retouching the image in Photoshop. The first area where butterfly lighting can cause an issue is with the subject's eyes. If their eyebrow ridge is too pronounced or if they have large, heavy eyelashes, then the light coming from above will cause too much shadow to fall into the eyes, and you'll lose too much detail. It can be recovered in Photoshop, but to varying levels of success, making it sometimes too risky for the shoot. This is where you need to introduce a second element to the lighting setup: a reflector or eye lighter.

In this second reference image of Kiarra, I have placed an eye lighter directly in front of her, just out of view of the bottom of the frame. This U-shaped device is essentially just a reflector, and the shape helps to "point" light back toward your subject. If it were flat, then a lot of reflected light would be lost out to the sides; the curve helps shape the light back toward your subject. As you can see in the image, the shadows are reduced significantly under her jawline and around the other areas of her body. They are not eliminated, but rather reduced to a point where we can see more detail and the image becomes brighter, which changes the emotion. I also chose to use the soft white material for the eye lighter, rather than the silver material indicative of a typical reflector. The white material reflects a softer light into the scene and doesn't cause as many specular highlights as a silver piece of material can.

This effect can be produced by other methods beyond using an eye lighter. You can set an actual reflector under your subject, place a small table in front of them with a piece of white poster board, or even bring in another light source, down low and pointed up toward them (the mirror opposite of your main light) to create a lighting pattern called Clamshell Lighting. As long as the light being directed into the shadows is minor compared to the power of light from above, and you'll gently fill in the areas of the subject where detail may be lost.

Image © Reality Reimagined

COLOR

As you've noticed by now in the images, color plays a large part in associating the word "beauty" with the image. I chose to have Kiarra wear an oversized sweater because the temperatures in Phoenix have dropped a bit, and it's quite cold (for us) in the mornings and evenings now. When she arrived on set, she had a maroon sweater and I made a choice as an artist to choose a background that stayed in that same color family.

I challenge you again—do you think about the colors of the clothing and the background you photograph your subject against? Do you think about the color harmony you are introducing into the image with those choices? There is no right or wrong answer to this question, and your choices are your own. However, making strong choices about associated colors is just as vital as the camera, the lighting, and anything else that goes into this beauty image.

I could have chosen a gray paper to photograph her against, something so neutral that her sweater would become vibrant and draw focus. I asked myself, "What feeling does that evoke in this image—will it be too bland?" I then looked at the color wheel and looked at the opposite color of red and immediately declined, because those two colors are often associated with the winter holidays.

Her sweater is maroon, though, and not a base red color. Maroon is created by red inching ever closer to the blue side of the spectrum. So, I considered in my mind's eye what a blue paper would look like behind her. My assumption was that the image would become too "busy" and the viewer's focus would be torn between looking at the model, the maroon sweater and all of that blue pushing against it. Blue is my favorite color though, so it was hard to not try setting it up.

In the end, I chose a deeper red paper for the background because I trusted that with all of the red of the scene being in play, the viewer would then take in Kiarra's face and pose faster than they would from the other choices.

Image © Reality Reimagined

FORM

This final element of the definition of beauty is the perhaps the most vital—and, I would wager, usually where most of us struggle with our photography. There are so many rules about what is proper for a good pose, especially in the world of beauty imagery. Don't show the back of the hand—no wait, don't show the palm of the hand. Okay, fine...don't show their hands at all, but you need to be able to see their hands. You should be able to see all five fingers on both hands, not just the leading one. One shoulder should be higher than the other and the lower one should connect to the hip that is popped.

I've heard so many theories of what is "right," and they can conflict quite a bit. Rather than trying to remember an entire library of "do's and don'ts" for every shot that I take, I fall back to feeling. I guide the model to a feeling and give them a subject to connect with and convey their emotions to. This of course adds to my workflow in the session, but it also helps the model connect to the shoot and sets a goal that we both have to achieve. By the end of our session together, the model feels a sense of achievement rather than just being told, "Okay, do your poses 'n stuff and I'll just take a bunch of pictures."

A source of pride that I take in my work as a photographer comes from this collaboration. Many times in my travels, I have had models (both new and professionally signed talent) tell me, "I love the way you direct on set—it gives me a path to follow."

When the right feeling is found and the model evokes it, I take a brief moment to stop and evaluate the image in front of me. When you do this, minor things suddenly begin to jump out at you. You can only see four fingers instead of five. Their palm is turned too flat toward the camera, and a minor rotation of the wrist will lessen it and create more mood. Follow your feelings in the image making, and the model will do the same.

With that being said, if you have the chance to work with a professional model who is signed with an agency, then you can expect that they will have a library of poses that they will flow through during the session. Explain the lighting pattern you have chosen, the color choices you have made, and the feelings you want to capture. They will know how to play to the light, how to secure the right poses to create the emotion, and you can sit back and just worry about the camera, the lights, the Photoshop work, the deadlines, etc.

FINAL THOUGHTS

In this last example, I introduced a third light source by placing another strobe above Kiarra's head, using a 27-inch beauty dish that was positioned so that most of the light would fall behind her and illuminate the background. The rim of light that fell onto her head helped separate her a bit from the now brighter background, and I had her alter her pose to add to that effect.

I also brought in two V-flats to the scene and placed them as barriers on either side of her. This has the effect of pushing any available light from the strobes back into the scene, to further soften the shadows and illuminate the subject. V-flats are wonderful tools to have in your kit as a photographer and are relatively inexpensive. They can block light in outdoor scenes or guide light strategically back into your image. Reflectors can do the same job, and depending on the material used, you'll get a wonderful variety of results.

Images © Reality Reimagined

Beauty imagery always relies upon those core elements in the definition—shape, color, and form—to create a foundation that, with a bit of guidance from you, will make a beautiful picture. ■

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David is an award winning photographer, Photoshop artist and an educator who specializes in unique portrait and photomanipulation art. Through his brand Reality Reimagined, his artwork spans the genres of fantasy, glamour, fashion and all the stories found therein. In 2018 he received the Grand Award from the Shutterfest image competition and is currently nominated for a Grand Imaging Award through Professional Photographers of America. The center of his universe is his wonderful wife Bethany, who reminds him to never be afraid to fly. Together they have traveled the world and continue to explore all the possibilities of Reality Reimagined and the imagination it is based on.

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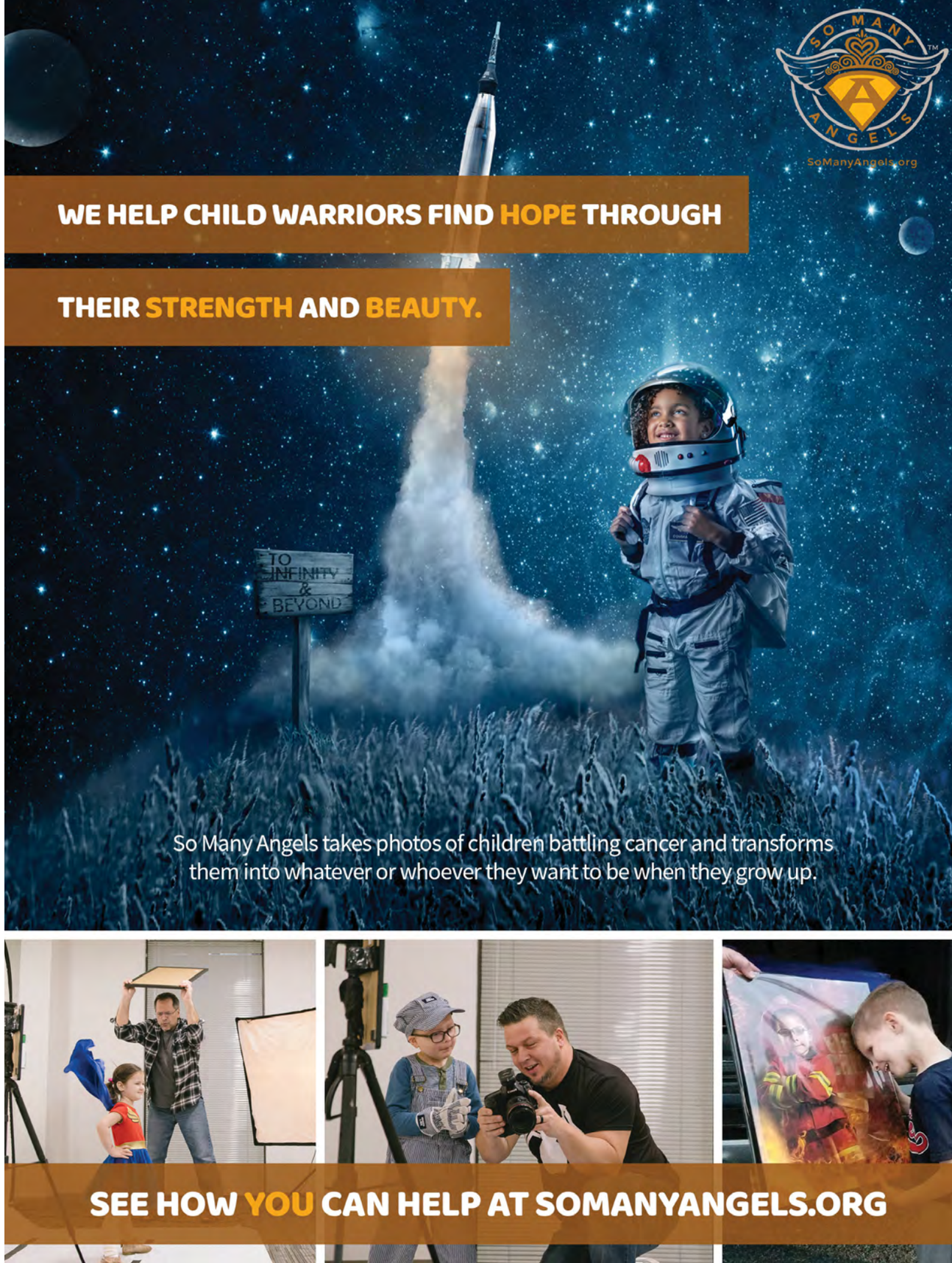


RUNNING A SUCCESSFUL *Boudoir* BUSINESS

with **Matt Mathews**

Image © Matt Mathews

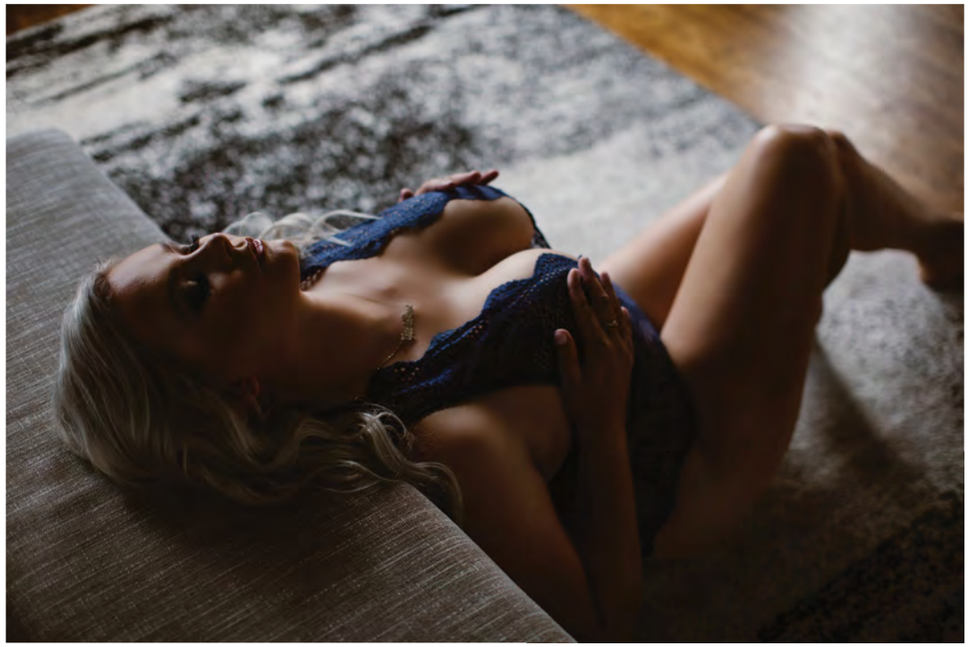
Image © Matt Mathews

Image © Matt Mathews

I've always been a person who followed my gut. My mom always told me, "Follow your gut feeling. Your heart will always lead you to hurt." So, I did just that. In 2012, I dropped out of nursing school halfway through the program, because my gut told me I was meant to do more with my life. I was meant to inspire people, I was meant to do something more than wipe ass and give bed baths, so I decided it was time for me to make a change.

I left nursing school not sure where to begin next. I was starting my business as a wedding photographer at the time, and things were going well—I was making money, making my schedule, and not having to listen to a boss (I was always bad with authority). I wanted to do things on my terms, and not working in a germ-riddled hospital was also a plus. I remember walking out of school that day and thinking, "Wow, I've just ruined my life. I have no college education and no backup plan. What if this doesn't work out?" I had two options: I could hustle my ass off and make this dream a reality, or I could fail and depend on other people for my livelihood. The latter was not an option.

Can you guess what I did? I worked my ass off to build an incredible and successful wedding business. I was published in some of the largest wedding magazines in the country, such as Southern Bride and many more. I had some pretty wonderful experiences as a wedding photographer, but something was still missing. I hated being just another check off a bride's list. I hated working every weekend for someone who didn't value my art or my time. I was meant for more than that. My art was more valuable than anyone was giving me credit for. So, I began shooting boudoir. My business as a boudoir photographer skyrocketed as I had never dreamed it could have. I began booking sessions months in advance, making way more money than I could have ever imagined making as a wedding photographer, and I was changing women's lives. I was doing so much more than I could have in my previous line of shooting. For once in my life, I was happy!



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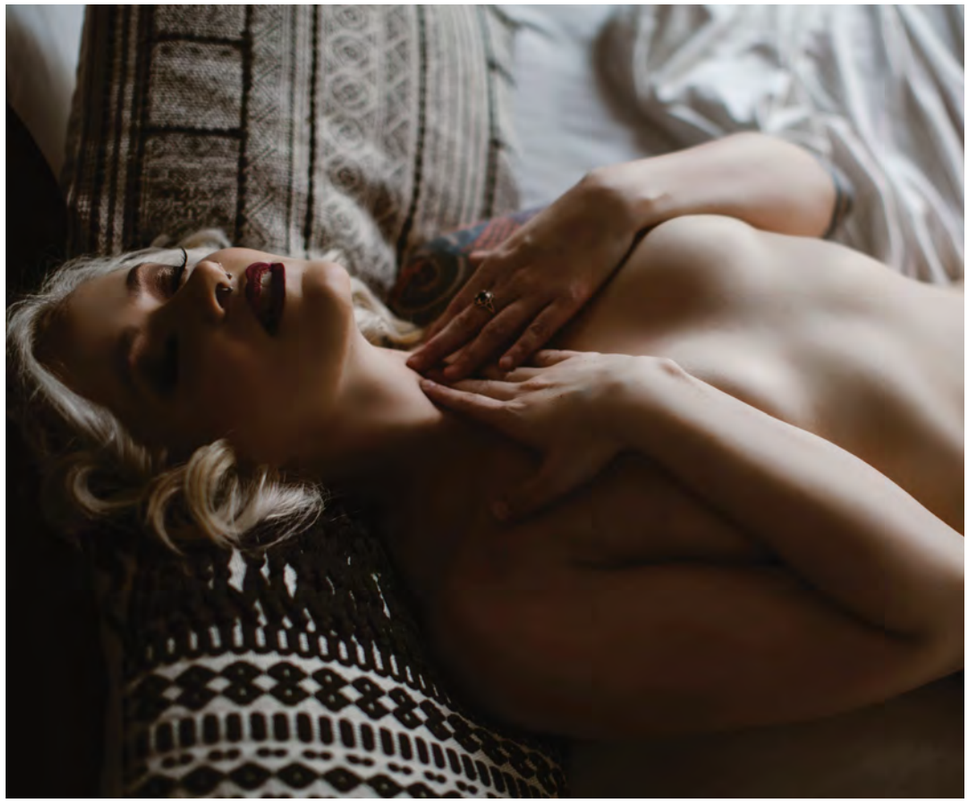

Image © Matt Mathews

About a year into my boudoir photography business, I was being asked to teach from all over, to host workshops, to speak at events, and so I went with it. I taught my first boudoir workshop in Atlanta, GA in 2015. Here we are almost five years later, and I've traveled across the country to speak, teach and inspire. But how did I get here? I'll tell you one thing—it wasn't easy. If it were easy, everyone would be doing it. I also listened to my momma (that's the Southern way of saying mom) and I followed my gut. I listened to that gut feeling I had, and I made the dream a reality. Now, I don't say that lightly...it takes a lot of work, determination and willpower to make something like this become a reality. but you can do it if you want it bad enough.

Have you ever wanted something so bad that you could taste it? Maybe you dreamed about it over and over. Maybe people have told you that you will never make it. I'm here to tell you to follow that dream, chase it, tackle it to the ground, and make it yours. Don't ever allow someone or something to stand in the way of living your dream. You are more powerful than you ever thought you could be. Stop getting in your way.

Now, with that being said, I would like to give you my five tips to creating and running a successful business. Settle in and take notes.

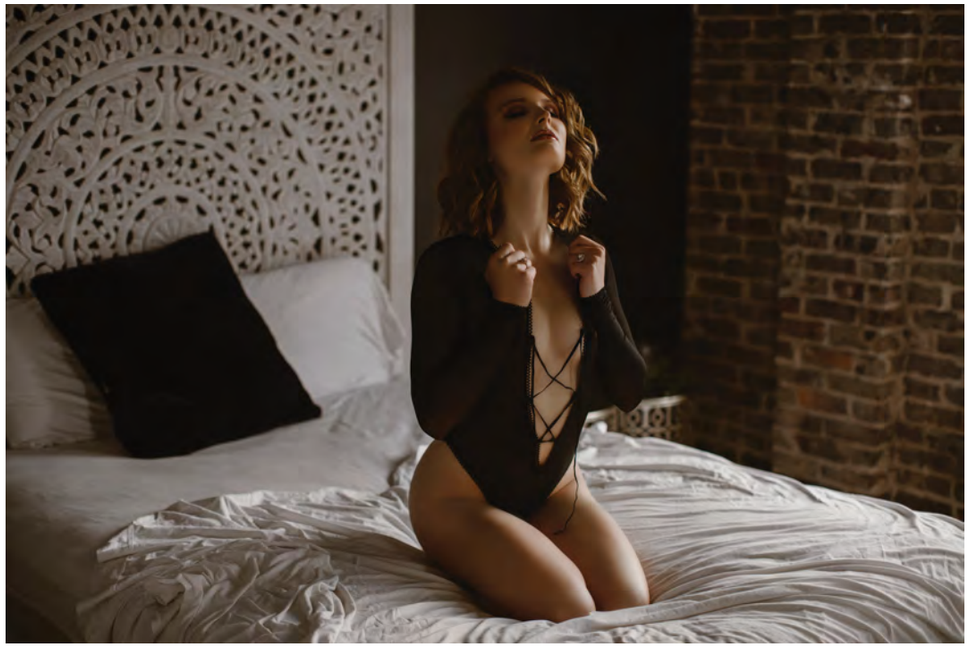

Image © Matt Mathews

1. GET ORGANIZED

Have you ever been on the hunt for something and can't find it? What about a deadline that you missed because you couldn't keep up or stay on track? I always tell students and other entrepreneurs that organization is key to a healthy business. Start with keeping a calendar. Write everything in this calendar—every appointment, every shoot, every meeting. Write it all down so you can keep up with it.

2. CREATE GOALS

When doing anything in life, whether becoming a photographer, a lawyer, or a chef, creating goals is important. Start with a small, easily attainable goal, and go from there. Once you can reach that small goal, then you can build and reach for larger ones.

Images © Matt Mathews

Images © Matt Mathews

3. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

The phrase "community over competition" is there for a reason. Don't be that person who thinks everyone is copying them or stealing their ideas, because guess what? That just makes you look like a whiner. Surround yourself with like-minded people who want to see you succeed. Having a community of supportive people is crucial when it comes to starting or running your own business. It gets lonely. I remember when I started my business, I would talk to my other photography friends—we would FaceTime all day as we edited and talked about life. Why? Because we don't have co-workers like other people, and having that relationship with others is so important in this business.

Image © Matt Mathews

4. LEARN AND UNDERSTAND WHERE YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Everyone has something they are great at, something that makes them an expert in their field, but no business owner is an expert at everything. There is always something to learn and grow in. The day you quit learning and quit attempting to better yourself is the day your business dies. While you may have to play a lot of different roles in your business, don't put so much pressure on yourself. Learn what you are great at and learn the things you can work on. Once you know that, you can then focus your attention there to better yourself.

Image © Matt Mathews

5. LEARN FROM YOUR FAILURES

I can say that I've learned more from failing than I have ever learned from winning. When you fail at something, it doesn't mean that your dream is over. It only means that you learned what to fix on the next go around so that you don't fail again. We never question our mistakes when we win. Why? Because we did it right, or at least we believe we did. However, when we fail, we question everything. Why did I fail? What caused me to fail? What steps did I take wrong? Take those questions and learn from them.

Remember that no dream is too big. If you believe it, you can achieve it. I know, how cliché is that? But I promise you that if a gay kid from the trailer park can make it to where I have, I know for a fact that you can too. Get out of your way. Allow yourself to dream, to live, to fail, to learn from those failures and to be a better person than you were yesterday. ■

Hi there, I'm Matt Mathews, an award-winning photographer, author, podcast host, and educator. Being a photographer wasn't my life goal, but rather something that fell into my lap. I've been so grateful to have an incredible platform on which to share my voice and my story. I not only empower women through the art of boudoir photography—my goal is to empower and inspire all humans to learn the art of self-worth.

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5 INGREDIENTS FOR A CREATIVE STYLIZED SHOOT

with **Brandon S. Hunter**

There is a recipe in everything we do as human beings, one that incites some type of emotional response no matter where we are and what we are doing. It involves the senses—whether a single one or multiple at the same time.

In the artistic realm, part of the goal is to generate a response based on a recipe that engages sight. This requires a process that will make your vision come to life—from formulation to actualization in creating images that inspire and elicit joy when viewed.

The creative process and the steps we take to achieve a goal are similar across many genres. In this case, they are similar to the process of a chef who specializes in a specific set of culinary delights. This is how I approach creating my images, whether in studio or out on location.

There is more than one recipe, of course, but I will go over the 5 key steps that structure how I approach creating my own imagery.

There are several factors to take into account: Location, Lighting, Color, Material, Makeup, Subject, Editing, and most of all, Mood. For me, the approach is fairly simple, and relatively organic. It's organic because I do not particularly use measurements or the classic light patterns as we understand them. What motivates you? What inspires you to create? For me, the biggest influencers are Color and Material.

With those as a base, let's take a look at a common recipe for creating the imagery I produce:

1. BASE—SUBJECT AND LOCATION

It's important to know the subject before you start to put your vision together. Why? Because it is the foundation to creating your image, much like a chef whose dish begins with poultry, beef or fish. You need to understand what you are working with in order to begin. I like a dramatically elegant feel, so it is important for me to know first whether I will be shooting outside or inside. If inside, will it be in studio, where I will have to build creativity from a blank canvas, or at a location, where I will have to play off the environment provided? I start by deciding whether this will be a beauty image, a portrait, or an editorial set—whether I will focus on details, on a specific subject, or on trying to tell a story.

Image © Brandon S. Hunter

Image © Brandon S. Hunter

2. INGREDIENTS—ITEMS, MATERIALS, AND PROPS

Once you have your base, it's time to enhance. This can be as simple as a scarf, a piece of jewelry, or a makeup concept for beauty. In portraiture, it is the environment and subject matter. What is your focus in the portrait? I focus on making the person look regal, so paying attention to the outfits and dresses is key. With bridals, I showcase the dress or a fashion image. With editorials on location, you look at the environment to guide your vision. Sometimes, this has to be done on the fly, like in this image.

After driving into an abandoned nursery for a photowalk, some people left, because all they saw was junk. What I saw was this lone doorway standing there with shredded plastic. I knew I had a male model with pants and a jacket, and a female model, along with a vintage wedding dress that was part of the available wardrobe.

Next came the placement of the models and the light. Thinking about the angle and distance of the shot can change the whole scene. By shooting low and through tall grass, you kind of get a Gone with the Wind feel. In the studio, it's a bit different—you need to add ingredients. Last year, I conducted a two-day workshop on lighting. The first day focused on studio lighting, and the last segment involved building a set from a few pieces of fabric and some wooden barrels. Some of the attendees didn't understand what I was doing. As I was setting up the shot, one attendee told me, "I ain't shooting that crap." When everything was set and I took the sample shot, you bet your ass he picked up that camera.

3. SPICE — MOOD, EXPRESSION, AND COLOR

With the main parts of your vision beginning to bring it all together, here is where you can start to enhance it, where it elevates to that next level. The expression has to work with the concept. For me, I want to convey sensuality, power, and elegance, and not necessarily intense, but passionate emotions in my imagery. When I started, the common theme was that you have to see the eyes. Why? Because that's the only way to express connection? Not always—a model looking away or with their eyes covered can show expression with proper and intentional posing. Hand placement, facial expression and body angles can all convey something different with a subtle change. Especially in beauty photography, a slight parting of the lips can turn a pouting look into a sensual, powerful one. A model looking down one side of her body gives a sense of self-awareness, peace and tranquility. I look at bone structure—angles can be powerful. The collar bone, shoulders, chin and cheekbones all play a part. The sharper the angle, the more impact in the final image. In my portraiture and editorials, I will find a way to add movement. Whether it is small or grand, on the subject or part of the background, that is a much-required touch. Without that in the previous image, we'd have a whole different feel.

Image © Brandon S. Hunter

Image © Brandon S. Hunter

4. TEMPERATURE — LIGHTING

Lighting—it is key. Do me a favor: repeat that, and then repeat it again, about 10 more times. No matter how well planned or thought through the vision is, lighting will make or break your image. There are so many ways to light a photograph, and nowadays, you are not reinventing the wheel but rather tweaking it to suit your style and vision. From loop light, to Rembrandt, split, broad, short, feathered, or hard light, it's all a starting point for how you want to light your image, and then you can tweak it from there.

I generally like to feather no matter the setup or base technique. I tend to stick with a darker color pallet, one that is contrasty, yet soft. I like to open up the shadows in a multiple-light setup, which generally means I'm using three lights and sometimes a v-flat or bounce card. This is where the feathering comes in. My favorite tool is a three-foot-deep octa pointed straight down in front of the subject with a white bounce card or reflector underneath for my creative beauty. The reflector will be flat, with a slight angle at best. The idea is that I am lighting with all fall off. If you don't understand what I mean by fall off, consider it using the edge of the light instead of the light being dead on. Better yet, think of fanning yourself. The farther away your hand is from your face, the softer (less powerful) the breeze.

I will then add some fill and rim light to the image, though not too strong. I am just trying to create some separation using a strip box as a backlight and a large white umbrella for fill to achieve dimension in the shadows.

When it comes to both portraiture and editorials in studio, I will use the same setup the majority of the time. And I use this thought process in my portraiture as well. One will be directional, one will be fill, and one will highlight or edge the subject. I use the term directional because I believe that describes more of what I am using the key light for. Most photographers put the light source at a 45-degree angle left or right in an octa or umbrella and just throw it at the subject, and that's their key light. I want to carve out the face using shadows that are deep, not hard. The key here is subject placement. It is a game of inches, and you have to direct them to get the desired effect. One inch in the wrong direction with this approach could make the image useless.

Images © Brandon S. Hunter

5. PRESENTATION — FINAL EDIT

The final edit ties it all together like a garnishment, a finishing touch. Let me just say—I hate to edit. I am by no means a Photoshop expert, and I always want to do the least amount of editing possible. This is why the first four steps are critical, and especially lighting. With that being said, editing is what takes your image to that final level. The edit is a mark of your brand as well. I tend to do subtle edits, building them up to create a major impact. I use both Lightroom and Photoshop to complete my images. ■

Brandon Hunter is a creative portrait and wedding photographer located in the heart of Washington D.C. Brandon first picked up a camera in October 2011. He absolutely loved photographing the dramatic environmental portrait and wedding imagery that you see in his portfolio. He also loved adding a fashion flare, whether for weddings, portraits, or even a creative beauty image. For the last few years, Brandon has found that this passion has placed him in a position to help other photographers.

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5 WAYS TO USE A STRIP BOX

with **Amber Jones**

Image © Amber Jones

Image © Amber Jones

I love my stripboxes. My go-to's are the Profoto D2 line and the Profoto 1x6 RFI stripboxes with grids. I use these light modifiers for my maternity, fitness and boudoir clients, because of the control and impact they have when shaping light. You can also use them to help create gorgeous directional light that focuses on drama. And who doesn't enjoy an excellent dramatic photograph?

TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHING BODIES

1. Drinking lots of water gives the skin a supple and pleasant glow.
2. Use loose clothing to avoid impression lines from underwear, socks, bras, pants, etc.
3. Coconut oil or baby oil (unscented) will give the skin a subtle glow.
4. To create a workout/sweat look, rub oil onto the skin and then spray water over it for a beaded effect.
5. Don't be a creep—this goes for both male and female photographers. You are photographing people in a vulnerable state, either fully nude or partially clothed. No one wants to feel objectified or uncomfortable.

Image © Amber Jones

My typical camera settings are between f/9 and f/14, ISO 100, with shutter speed 1/160.
The light is typically at 3/4 power.
Camera used: Sony a9
Lenses used: Sony 85mm 1.8 (the majority of the time) and Sony Zeiss 35mm 1.4
A tip for beginners—using the modeling light on your flash unit will help you to see the direction of the light.

1. BODYSCAPE (1 LIGHT)

The classic, sexy, appealing bodyscape—my clients come to me for these photographs because they are alluring and sensual without being overtly sexual.

For this set, you will need a bed or table for your client to lie on. I always have them start lying on their stomach, with their hair pulled forward and off their back. They will need to lie as close to the edge of the bed as possible, so the light is only a hand's width away from them.

I like to make sure to put the light is a few inches above their bum and angled slightly down, so I have room to photoshop out the soft box in post.

I like to use a regular light stand, putting a black board or popup background in front of the stand to create a pure black background.

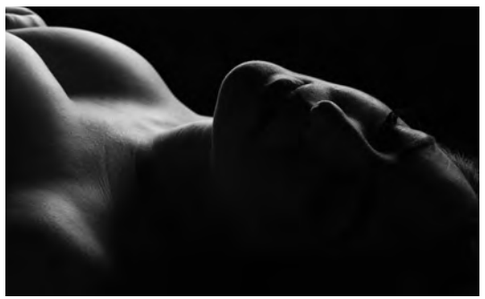
Then, I ask the subject to move their shoulder blades to create beautiful shadows as well as to push their bum in the air and tip it toward the camera.

My trainer always tells me, when I am working my shoulders, to bring my shoulder blades together in the back like I am going to pinch a pencil between them. Giving your client prompts like this helps them visualize what you want them to do.

Image © Amber Jones

After I photograph their back, I ask them to turn over (I turn around to give them privacy). Then, I ask them to bend the knee that is closest to me to keep the nether region a bit more private.

For ladies who prefer not to have their nipples showing, I ask them to place their hands on their chest, with their nipples touching their wrists. Placing their wrists over their chest gives them privacy and still allows them to get those gorgeous ab shots.



Images © Amber Jones

An excellent prompt for when you are photographing the abdomen is asking them to take a deep breath in or asking them to pull their tummy in and up (this brings out the ribs and creates beautiful shadows).

Do a full shot from mid-thigh to neck, then do detail shots of the abs, arms, chest, collarbone, neck and face.

2. THE MIRROR (1 LIGHT)

Using a mirror in the background is about adding dimension. By creating a reflection, you are adding more interest to the photograph as well.

Place the light behind and slightly to the side of the subject to skim the light across their body. Have them push their booty back and turn it toward you, so you see a highlight on both sides of the butt cheek. Ask them to put their weight on the leg closest to the camera, and it will make their bum appear larger. Then have them switch the weight. Also, have them tip their chin to the ceiling to get their hair to look longer.

Wardobe Options for This Setup:

1. Nude
2. Implied nude
3. Bra and panties
4. Workout pants and no top
5. Bodysuit

Image © Amber Jones

Image © Amber Jones

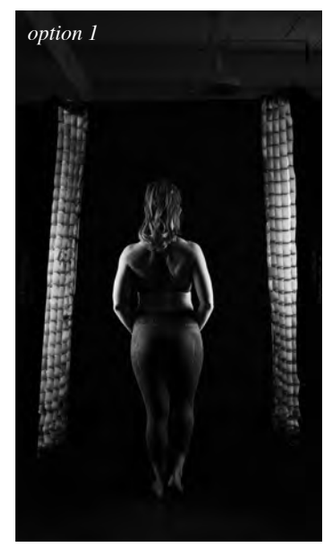
3. STANDING (1 LIGHT)

The idea here is the same as with the mirror, but now we are only focusing on the subject. Photograph their side, back, stomach, chest, collarbone and shoulders. Have them face you and then away from you. Ask them to change their position to give you different shapes.

This Method Is Great for Clients Who:

1. are pregnant and want to do a fine art nude (pregnant bellies look best when Mom is standing).
2. want to show off their long, gorgeous hair
3. are looking for fitness shots
4. are looking for boudoir shots

Images © Amber Jones



4. STANDING (2 LIGHTS)

Let's call this one variety.

Here are some combinations you can create with two gridded stripboxes:

1. A light on either side of your subject, lit from the back at a 45-degree angle to the client.
2. One light angled at your client from the front and one from behind.

one light on the side and one above

one light on the side and one above

Image © Amber Jones

5. STANDING (2 LIGHTS, VERSION #2)

This variation involves one light from the side and one from above. I only use this setup for fitness, and specifically on men. I don't prefer this light setup with female subjects.

I use a boom to place the stripbox above the client, raising it a foot or so above their head. I then set the other stripbox behind and angled at 45 degrees toward them to recreate a rim light.

I didn't provide light diagrams, because so much about style is tweaking the light to what you specifically love. Don't limit yourself to two strip boxes either. An octa, a sizeable soft box, or a large umbrella for fill with two stripboxes can all look amazing.

You can use smaller stripboxes, but you will get much more light fall off, and it may not give you the same feeling when using them with a standing subject.

Put these techniques into action, and you will add variety to your work and create beautiful, timeless art for your clients. Since adding the bodyscapes to my business, my sales have increased by 35 percent, with more and more clients now buying wall art. ■

Amber Jones is a wedding and boudoir photographer based in West Hartford, Connecticut. She has worked professionally since getting her photography degree from San Jose State University in California, and built her business from scratch after moving to the East Coast in 2010.

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GETTING STARTED IN *Boudoir*

with **Scott Detweiler**

Model - April Berry

Image © Scott Detweiler

Model - Jennifer Raelynn

Image © Scott Detweiler

So, you would like to branch out into the boudoir market and are wondering how to get started? Here are some tips and observations from what I have learned over the years that might help you achieve your goal. In many ways, I had to unlearn some things in order to shoot intimate images that clients enjoyed, and I wanted to share a few of those with you here.

SATISFYING TO SHOOT

Unlike with most types of photography, it is incredible to behold as you watch a woman gain self-confidence and leave the studio with her head held high. Boudoir, when done correctly, is empowering, more so than most other types of photography I have shot. Sure, you can get that feeling with some different genres, but in my opinion, it is most noticeable here. I am also a firm believer in not wrecking the mood by dealing with money at the end of a session. All of the ugly business stuff is handled days before the session—unless you are doing same-day, in-person sales, I am not a fan of talking business. Just let her leave the studio feeling like a queen so she can go tell all of her friends about her fantastic experience.

Model - Jennifer Raelynn

Image © Scott Detweiler

SIMPLE TO RETOUCH

Unlike most of the content that I seek to create, I find boudoir is probably the easiest to retouch. After all, most professional photographers already know how to retouch skin (or at least know who to call to get it done correctly). So, aside from skin, there isn't really much in the way of the artistic process that needs to be done to make a great image. Sure, there are exceptions, and products like hand-painted canvases do have a place in this industry, but in general, once you can handle the skin retouching, the rest is pretty much done in-camera.

Model - Jennifer Raelynn

Image © Scott Detweiler

CLIENT EXPERIENCE IS KEY

I have heard from a few wedding photographers that the experience of the event is actually more important than the images. While I initially thought this was poor advice, I have since seen it in action. The experience of the client is something that does more for them than the photos, at least initially. Now, don't get me wrong—the images can't be a steaming pile of portraiture. You still have to produce quality work. However, the experience is something that should not be minimized! I feel an equal balance is ideal here, so I no longer think that marvelous photos are enough on their own. I know many profitable photographers with excellent reputations who don't focus on the imagery as much as they focus on the client experience, and this produces great results for their business. Most of them will tell you they are not the greatest photographers, but they are better than average. Now, if you can produce both fantastic client experiences and astounding imagery, then you should be at the top of the food chain (and the price point chain). Boudoir and weddings are similar in this respect—don't just focus on the images, but rather balance them with the client experience. Especially if you are just starting out and are not super strong with lighting and posing, make up for it with the experience where you can. Wine and grapes or cheese while hair and makeup are being done, and other little touches to make them feel like queens for a day, will go a long way to winning their repeat business.

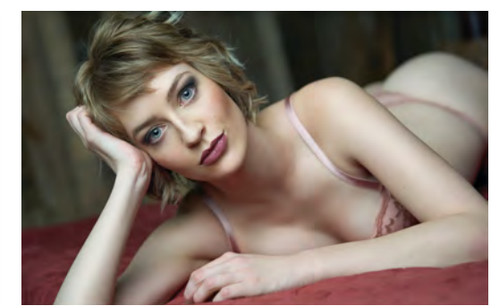
HARDER TO LIGHT

Lighting and posing are probably the two biggest challenges in this genre. Usually, those new to photography tend to use as much natural light as possible, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. Light passing through soft sheers or creating interesting shadows across the scene can be incredibly lovely. However, lighting the human form in a flattering way is probably a few hundred pages of learning and experience. Each body type has a flattering pose and ideal way to light it, and this combination is really where most of the challenge will lie. The best method to get past this is practice as well as reading and taking classes. This is not a quick learning curve, it is one that will take many sessions to discover and years to master. So, practice as much as you can, and experiment with different lighting and posing combinations. Of course, things get a bit easier when you are not a slave to the sun and can take clients anytime you want.

POSE VARIETY

One of the hardest parts of boudoir in my mind is the art of posing. Some of the best advice I have received in this area comes from the fantastic Jennifer Rozenbaum. She has the client transition from pose to pose using a flow, which she often jokingly refers to as her "rotisserie chicken method." By doing this, she has removed the "hmm, what should I do now" creative block that can happen when you are in the middle of a session. You can create your own flow by either piecing together your favorite poses or just starting in a simple sitting position and moving to the next primary pose. The obvious goal is to get as many unique and sellable images as possible from each individual pose. I also like to work on both the short and broad sides of the light, so I can get everything from dark and moody to bright, yet flattering.

Model - Rachel Moehr



Images © Scott Detweiler

CROPPING IS SUBJECTIVE

One of the fundamental things I had to unlearn was how to crop boudoir. We all have learned that it is a poor choice to crop below a major joint or other places where cropping is just considered bad practice. However, in boudoir, I feel that many of those common-sense rules no longer apply (e.g., we all know she has an elbow, so I am just gonna go ahead and chop that off.) I have made some images that feature details or positions of the pose I love while cropping like a mad man. I would say that you need to have an open mind here, and crop as necessary to create a great piece of art. Don't try to apply conventional portrait cropping if you feel it is cramping your style and creativity. If the client looks fabulous, then you have done it correctly.

Model - Victoria Doir

Model - Rachel Moehr

Images © Scott Detweiler

FIND A MUSE

Probably the most significant restraint to getting into the boudoir market is a portfolio. Now, most people will try to reach out to those pretty ladies they think would be fun to shoot and might really do well on social media. However, also consider your target market. If you feel you can better connect with a different age range or perhaps another level of fitness, I think you will find that you attract the type of client you choose to feature. Once you have your market figured out, do a model call and see if you can build out a portfolio that looks like the clientele you wish to attract. People buy what they can relate to, so keep that in mind as you choose your muses.

AVOID NUDES INITIALLY

Another area that comes up fairly often is that of artistic nudes. Until you have a solid understanding and confidence with your posing and lighting, I would tell you to keep away from nudes for a while. I also find this to be a polarizing topic with potential clients, and not offering them is often considered a positive with new clients looking for a photographer they can trust. Nudes can often put a damper on the fantastic mood we are trying to create, especially if they are awkward, and the images on the back of the camera are not flattering. I am a big fan of showing the client the back of the camera when I capture a fantastic shot. This is a huge confidence boost and can really kick more life into a session. Just like my advice above, find someone who trusts you, and schedule some practice sessions. Even if they are only for practice, when you do this correctly, you will see them really take on a new level of confidence. I also find that nudes can be something where you let your artistic spirit run wild, especially with things like bodyscapes. We often spray water and glycerin on the skin to give it a wet look, and sometimes we go way overboard there and play with making rivulets in the water with the fingernails. There's lots of creative fun to be had here when you are comfortable with the lighting and posing aspects required.

WORK THE DETAILS

Another aspect of these types of sessions that I think is often underserved is the capturing of details. Those cute bows on the sides of the panties or the lace across the top of the bra cup can make for some stunning macro work, which can be perfect for a book background or even wall art. When taking the time to capture a great pose, take a moment and see if some details can also be picked up for later use. These have been great additions to clients' sets, and I feel they are often overlooked in favor of shooting the entire body.

Image © Scott Detweiler

STYLING AND SETS

Even an average photographer can look like a rock star with a great set and amazing styling. So, if you are better than average, these things can elevate you to the level of imagery that scores well in print competitions and sells at a level to justify that expensive yacht you keep badgering your spouse about. Having something beyond what is normal and expected for sets and styling is also going to turn heads and bring in clients who are seeking something beyond a typical Motel 6 type of setting. Not that there is anything wrong with renting a room to photograph clients, but perhaps pre-book a few and justify a nice bed and breakfast or amazing suite at some posh place. These offerings pay for themselves and also pull you away from the pack of people who might be on equal footing with you photography-wise. I also find this level of the product tends to attract clients who really appreciate fine photography as opposed to those seeking a bargain. Focusing on the set, styling, and other details is much more critical than the post-production. The more fantastic the setting and styling, the more you should be able to charge, and the more unique your offering becomes.

ShutterFest frequently offers several formal and informal boudoir sessions for students during the event. I would make it a point to attend a few of these and ask a lot of questions. ■

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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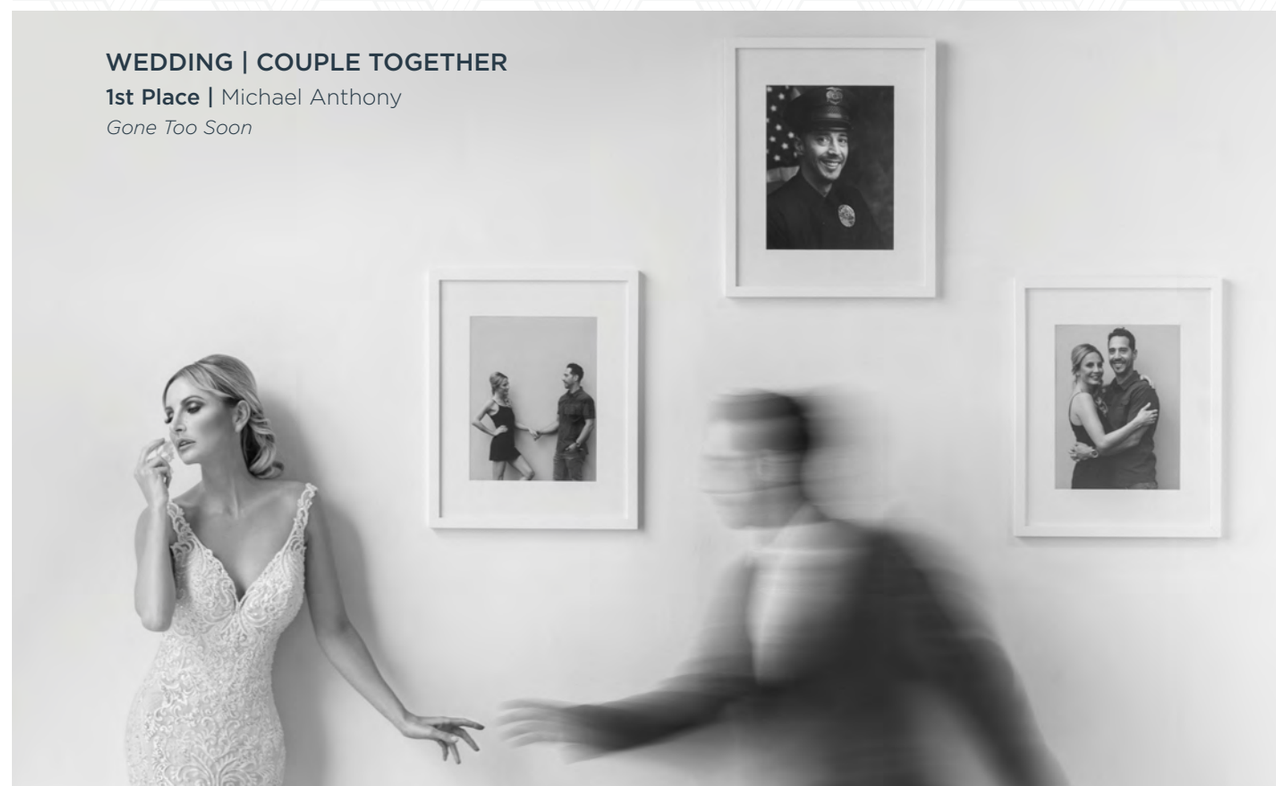

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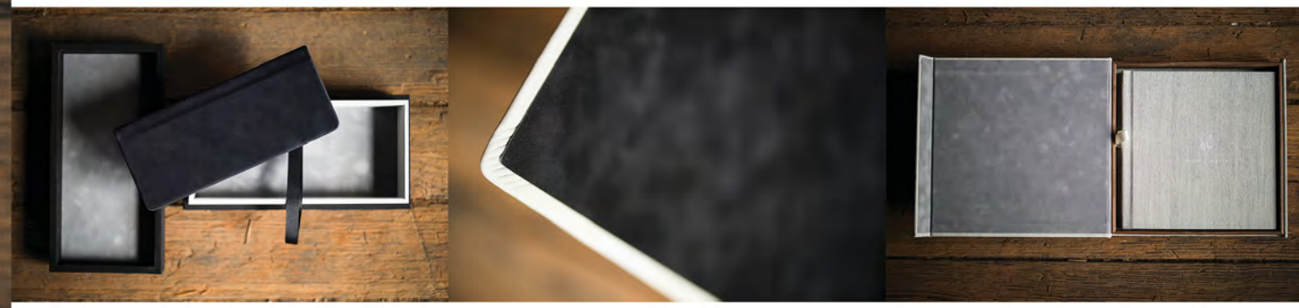

CRUSHED VELVET LINER

PLEATED CORNERS

PICTURE-PERFECT
Beauty Images

with **Jeff Rojas**

Image © Jeff Rojas

Image © Jeff Rojas

Image © Jeff Rojas

Over the last few years of my career, I've had the pleasure of seeing my work featured in *Elle*, *Esquire*, and other magazines across the globe. It's been a rewarding experience that has provided me with a great marketing outlet to create more perceived value for my photography business. It's also allowed me to have a reason to reach out to new commercial clients that I otherwise would not have had access to.

Shooting beauty photography shouldn't be inherently tricky. Still, every day, I see photographers struggle to nail what I would consider a traditional beauty image—something worthy of a beauty campaign that you'd see in stores like Sephora or Mac. Whether you're a photographer interested in beauty and fashion photography or just want to learn new creative skills to take your portraiture from boring to "wow," below, you'll find 5 secrets to help you create picture-perfect beauty images.

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Image © Jeff Rojas

TIP 1: LESS IS MORE

By definition, commercial beauty photography is photography that is used to sell skincare or hair products, and/or jewelry. In the same respect that fashion photographers focus on photographing clothing, beauty photographers should stay focused on selling beauty products and accessories.

I believe it's crucial to focus on subtly showcasing one of the following: makeup, skincare products, hair products or jewelry.

It's easy to want to make a bold statement piece, with big hair and lots of makeup, but rarely does it ever work to create a cohesive piece that looks worthy of a makeup or hair campaign. And let's be clear—I've been there. Several years ago, after shooting fashion for a few years, I hired a commercial photographer to comb through my portfolio and critique it. His exact words were, "I'd start over."

I cannot convey how heartbreaking that felt, but I took it with an open mind and an open heart. I asked why. He imparted this advice to me, and it's something that I'll in turn give to you:

"You will rarely see bold makeup, bold hair, bold lighting, and bold clothing executed well. In most cases, it just looks like a jumbled mess."

My point is, focus on something you want to showcase, and go all in. Focusing on bold hair? Showcase that hair in a beautiful and daring style, but maybe opt for a more natural makeup look.

Subtlety is the key to success.

I encourage you to Google beauty photographers, and you'll start learning to appreciate my sentiment.

TIP 2: MAKE IT BELIEVABLE

If you've never heard me say it before, let me go on the record: I hate retouching. I do. It's not my forte. It's tedious, it's tiring, and I take no pleasure in hours of staring at a screen. So I outsource everything (consider this a shameless plug for Evolve Edits).

What I ask of my retouchers is simple: Give me something that's clean, but that looks believable. I want to eliminate blemishes while retaining as much skin texture as possible. Doing so ensures a natural look that doesn't appear over-processed, one that helps sell the makeup and skincare product used to create the image. If my audience can tell that it's been overly processed, then I didn't do my job as a commercial beauty photographer.

Also, an important side note: I'm not going to get on a moral high-horse here, but many companies are starting to use "unedited" photos of their models, claiming the images are entirely photoshop-free. I can guarantee two things to you: 1) They are using models with clean, clear skin, more than likely young and blemish-free, and 2) They're using softer light sources to eliminate contrast and therefore reduce the focus on any blemishes the model does have.

TIP 3: SHOOT WITH A PLAN IN MIND

If you work together with any creative, I promise you that they'll try to take over the shoot. Save yourself the hassle and disagreements. Shoot with a plan in mind.

I live by the adage, "If you fail to plan, you plan to fail." This is true in photography as well. You should always start with a concept in mind. If you want to shoot crazy hair, be sure that it's outlined in a mood board. That ensures that your hair stylist, makeup artist and such are all on the same page.

A mood board is a series of images that convey the concept that you have in mind using six to eight pictures.

TIP 4: THE MODEL MAKES THE IMAGE

The model makes the image, plain and simple. Most, if not all, of the models I use in my work come from some of the most prestigious modeling agencies around the world. If you look at your portfolio and judge it against those of any of the top global photographers, and you feel like you're lighting and editing match, but something isn't quite right, I can almost guarantee it's the model.

Image © Jeff Rojas

Image © Jeff Rojas

If you live in a small city and don't have access to a modeling agency, here's what I encourage you to do:

1. Head over to Instagram
2. Search for "Hashtag:Model:Your City" For example, #MODELNYC

What you'll likely find is an assortment of aspiring models of all ages interested in modeling, and you, my friend, are a photographer. It's time to reach into your heart, put away your fear, and humbly ask to work for them.

TIP 5: FOCUS ON THE DETAILS

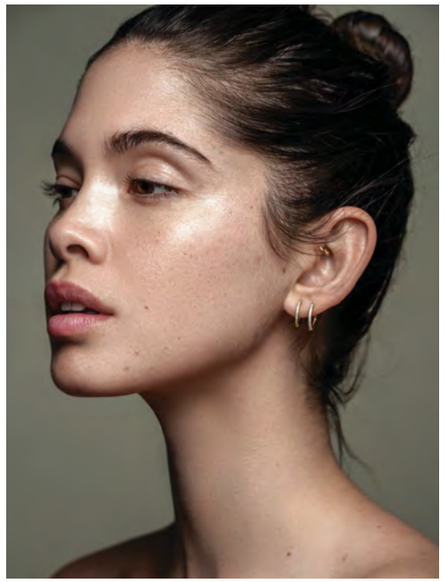

Image © Jeff Rojas

Focusing on the details sounds like a simple concept, but it's often ignored during a photoshoot, because photographers are usually distracted by capturing a pretty face. Focus on the details.

If your makeup artist is using beautiful eye shadow, crop in. If your makeup artist is using beautiful lipstick, crop in on the lips. Don't be afraid to try a tighter crop. You're not shooting a portrait; you're shooting beauty. One of the things that makes photography so wonderful is that there's no wrong answer when trying something new. As a beauty photographer, I think that it's important to capture those details and textures in a way that helps the viewer understand what they're looking at.

If you're not sure where to start, here's a game I love to play on set. Try a new lens you're not used to using or one that will help you look at the scene from an entirely new perspective. One of my favorite lenses is a 90mm macro lens that allows me to get in closer to my subject and focus on small details, in a way a regular portrait lens would not. ■

Jeff Rojas is a photographer and author based in New York City. His primary body of work includes portrait and fashion photography that has been seen in the pages of *Elle* and *Esquire*. Jeff is also a photography instructor whose teaching credits include CreativeLive, WPPI, the PhotoPlus Expo, Imaging USA and APA.

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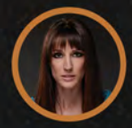

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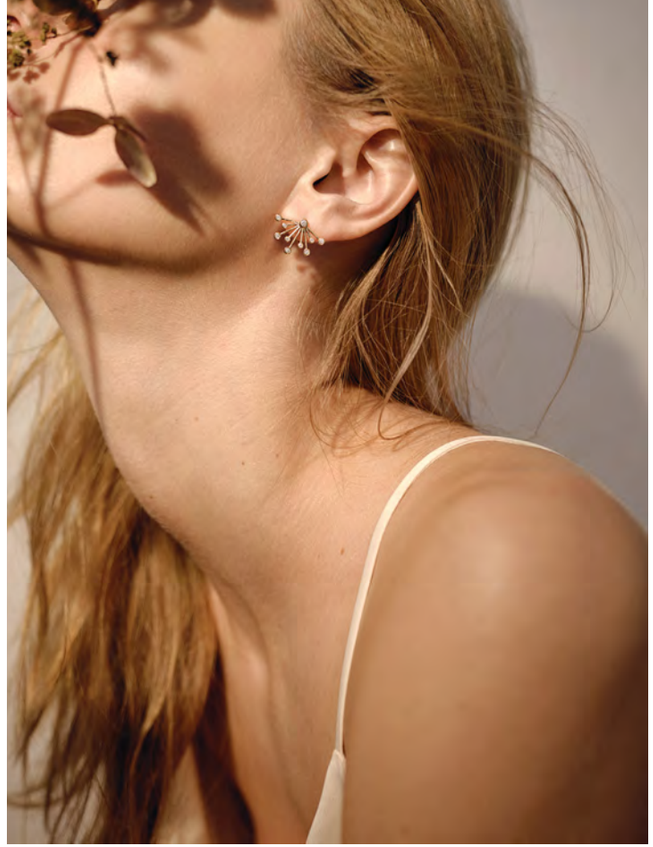
5

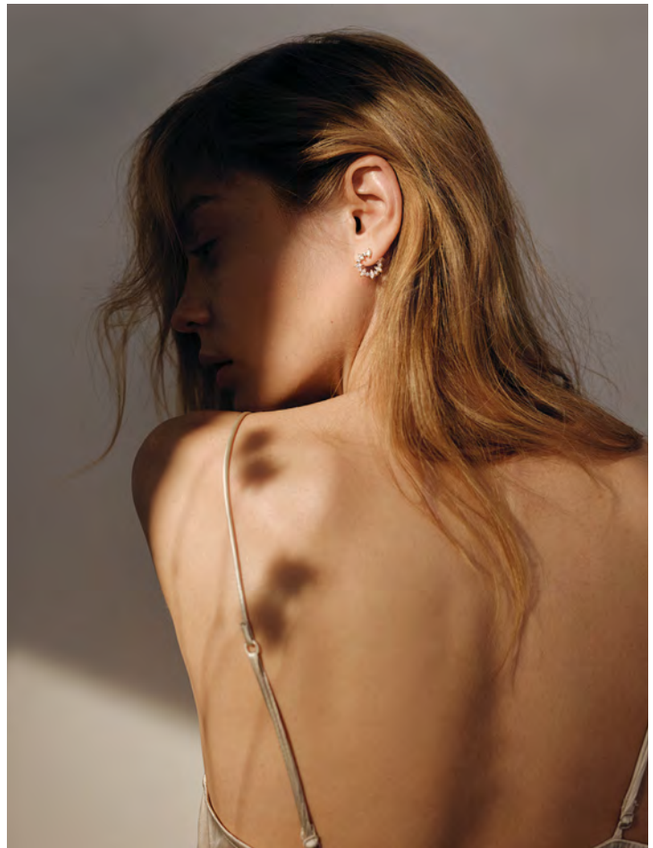
TIPS FOR A SUCCESFUL BEAUTY SHOOT

with **Kristina Varaksina**

TIP 1. BREAK DOWN THE ASSIGNMENT

There are editorial beauty shoots, and there are commercial beauty shoots. They have different goals and different target audiences, and therefore they should look different. If your assignment comes from a client such as a skincare, makeup, hair or jewelry brand, you need to check their objectives. What is the product or products they are featuring, and what kind of images are they expecting to get? Catalog shots can be quite different from social media shots. For example, on social media, images tend to be more approachable, the emotions more candid and spontaneous, whereas in catalogs and on brands' websites, the images traditionally look more polished, carefully constructed and with no accidental elements. Editorial assignments are usually very different, because they put an idea, a story first, and the products and accessories just become tools that help the story to be told. So when you think of your lighting, composition and model direction, you should always keep in mind what exactly you are featuring and what story you are telling.





Images © Kristina Varaksina

Image © Kristina Varaksina

TIP 2. KNOW YOUR TEAM

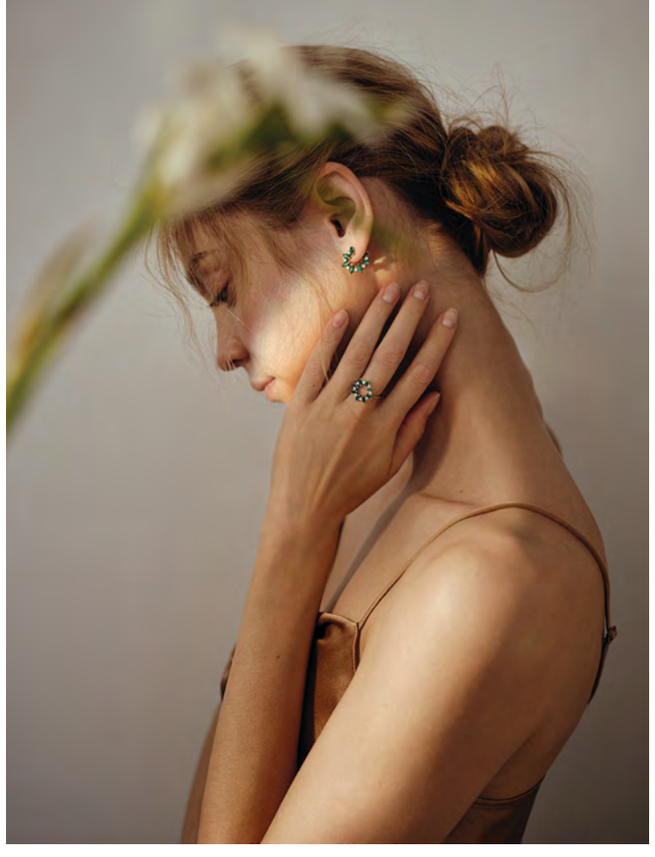
Your team, as well as your model, make up 80 percent of your shoot's success. When you know your assignment and your goals, you have to start thinking of the creative components. Knowing the type of story you want to tell, you need to be very precise with your choice of model, hair and makeup people, wardrobe stylist, and prop stylist in some cases. Every creative person has their own style, things they are into, things they are good at, and also limitations. For example, in my beauty photography, I really like fresh and real-looking skin. As such, I prefer working with makeup artists who do not put foundation on the skin. I always say to them, let me deal with blemishes and other skin imperfections later on in post—focus on preserving the real skin texture, the natural glow and your creative ideas. Some makeup artists like putting a lot of product on the skin, so for many of my shoots, I would not pick them.

Knowing your light, you can also communicate to your makeup artist if you would like the skin to be more matte or more dewy. If you are adding color to your light, make sure your team is aware of that. And it's important that they can listen to, take direction from, and co-create with you. You are not just a person who presses a shutter release button—you are fully responsible for the outcome of the shoot, so it's important that you are in control of all the elements, and that you don't let the rest of the crew "just do their thing." On my shoots, I generally prefer to work with the same people, because we understand each other very well. I'm also very particular with hair styling. People often do not realize how much hair can tell us about a person, about the mood and the story of the shoot. Badly done hair can ruin a shoot, and the worst thing is that you can't do much about it in post. There's a lot you or your retoucher can do with the makeup in post-production, but there's not much you can do to fix the hair. Make sure to discuss all the details and go over the references with your team before the shoot.

TIP 3. DIRECTION ON SET — STAY IN CONTROL

When you are on set, and you know the mood you are going for and what you'd like to feature, your first tool to help you accomplish that is, of course, your lighting. Quite often, you get an art direction with lighting references from a client or an art director, so you can adjust that to what you feel will be right to achieve the goals of the assignment. For example, if the assignment is to feature fresh and dewy skin, and the client wants moody lighting, you might need to adjust that to more of a high-key approach, because the viewer might not see the fresh, glowing skin in the deep shadows.

Once you know your lighting, you need to make sure that the directions you give to your model help convey the same story—moody, happy, mysterious, sensual, playful, etc.—as your lighting. How much should your model move to create the mood you are going for? Should they be looking at the camera and interacting with the viewer? How tight is your crop? Beauty photography can range from portrait-like framing to macro beauty, where you can only see one eye or just the lips or half of the face. The model, of course, should be aware of the framing. You also have to specify if you would like to see the hands in the shot, and what role they will play. Typically, for a beauty editorial, you wouldn't want to choose too many shots with hands in them, maybe just a couple. But if you are shooting jewelry like rings or bracelets, the hands will play a crucial role—make sure you have a good amount of references, so that the hand gestures do not repeat in every single shot. I also like to go with the model's personality. I know that some gestures will not look natural with certain models, but will work great with others.



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TIP 4. TAKE BREAKS

It's important that you take breaks often enough to let your team touch up makeup and hair and make other adjustments. Beauty photography is extremely honest—you can't get away with a lot of things you'd normally be able to get away with in fashion photography, for example. Every detail matters, from the direction of the hairs in the eyebrows to the placement of every single curl or a fly-away of the model's hair. Another reason to take breaks is to let your model's face rest. Faces get tired much faster than you would think. After some camera clicks, you often start noticing that your model's face gets a bit frozen, or the eyes lose their spark, or the lips become too tense. The models themselves may not feel tired yet, but certain parts of their face might start "giving up." It is important that your pictures look as engaging as possible, and therefore you should give your models breaks, so they can regain energy and translate it to the camera.

Images © Kristina Varaksina

TIP 5. THE IMPORTANCE OF POST-PRODUCTION

The first time you create your image is when you first think about it—in your head, you imagine the mood, the light, the model's expression, maybe even the makeup and hair. The second time you create the same image is, of course, when you shoot it. You may get better ideas, or your team may come up with something, or often the model does something you didn't expect, and you think, "This is it." And the third time you create the image is when you work on it in post. That's why I love playing around with pictures myself before handing them over to a retoucher. You can change contrast, which will affect the mood (the light will essentially become softer or harder), and you can change colors. I always mess with the color of the background just to see what happens—what if something else works much better?

You can play around with the colors of makeup, even shift the focus from one area of the face to another. But of course, you should be confident in your retouching skills before you make big changes, because the key is that it has to look natural. For example, if you don't know how to work with skin texture, it's better to leave it as it is. The result will always look more "expensive" than overly retouched skin. The same applies to makeup. You have to know makeup application rules to be able to retouch it well. If you are not sure about your skin and hair retouching skills, then better to leave it to professionals. But you should definitely play with color and contrast—the global adjustments, as they are called. To become better at post-production and creative decisions on tonal and color grading, you can simply look at all the latest campaigns and editorials on models.com and analyze what might have been done to those images, and how that changed the character of the shots. In the end, it all comes back to the initial goal of the shoot. ■

Russian-born Kristina Varaksina has resided in the USA since 2010 and currently lives and works between New York and London. Varaksina's focus is to capture human emotion and the psychological impressions of her subjects' minds—permitting the characters to project their internal reality. She is keen to explore a female perspective in the works she undertakes, revealing connections between women's psyches and the external world.

kristinavaraksina.com

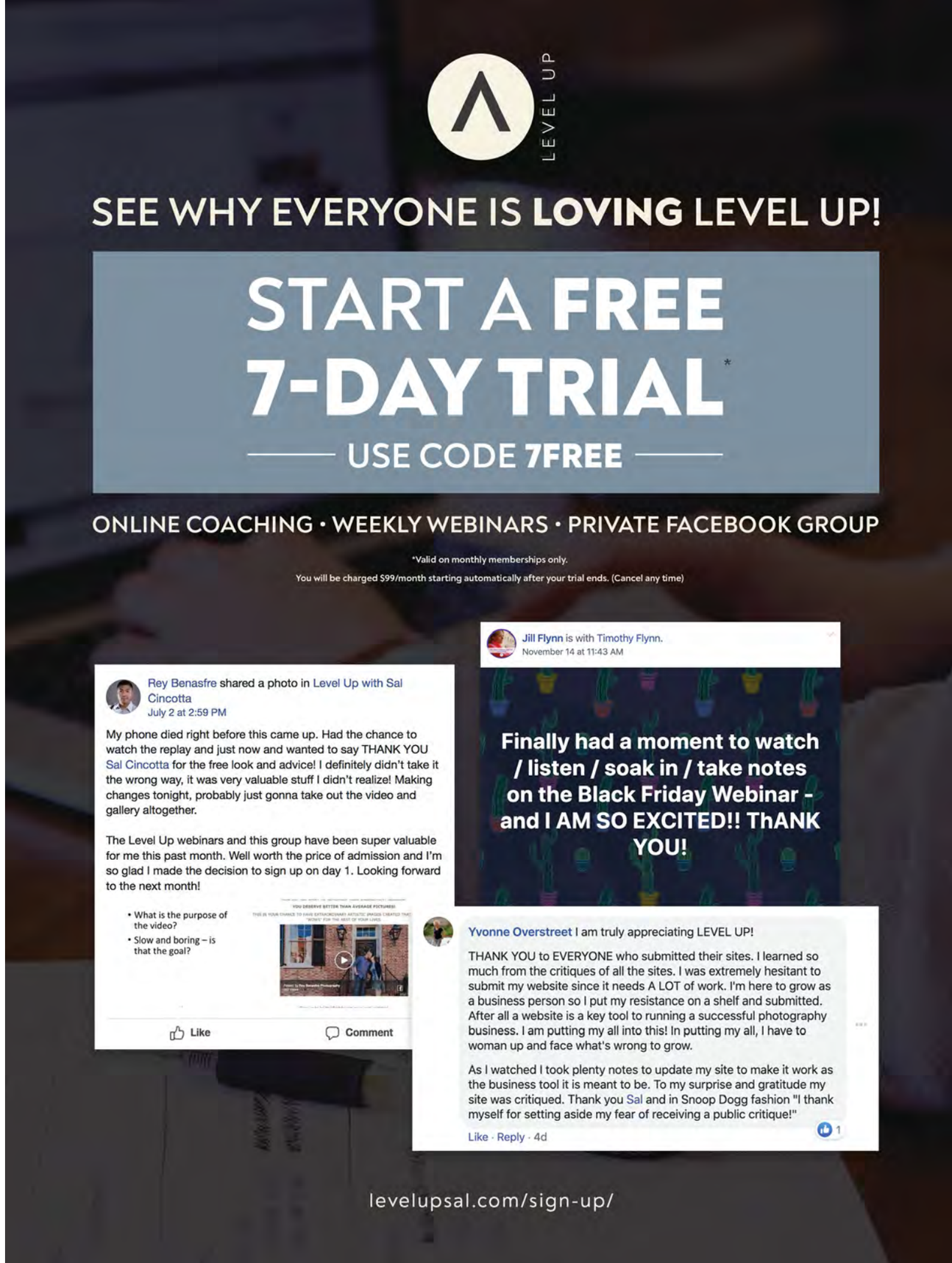


Image © Shannon K Dougherty

FINDING YOUR PASSION EVEN WHEN YOU'RE BURNT OUT

with **Shannon K Dougherty**

I want to start off with a personal story. In 2018, I was booking new and exciting clients. Referrals were coming in from past clients and friends. I should've been ecstatic about this, right? Well, I definitely was happy to have clients coming in the door, but something was missing. I realized I wasn't shooting enough for myself. 2018 was the year of burnout for me. This lasted into early 2019, and I'm talking about major burnout. I just lost my drive and passion for photography. I was never going to give it up, but what could I do for myself to relight that fire?

Creatively, I needed to start planning more photoshoots for myself. Not only was this burnout affecting my business, it was affecting my mood in my day-to-day life. I needed to make a change, and fast.

Images © Shannon K Dougherty

Image © Shannon K Dougherty

TAKING CONTROL OF THE BURNOUT

That was the point when I decided to plan at least one or two creative shoots a month for myself and my soul. When I did that, something changed. I felt more excited. I wanted to run into my studio every morning and just create. After that, I was giving even more to my clients in their sessions and as a whole. I had re-lit that fire I had for photography and creativity.

It's easy to lose ourselves in client work and tell ourselves we don't have the time or energy to shoot anything for ourselves. I'm here to tell you: shoot for yourself. Collaborate, get weird, or just do something outside of your comfort zone.

I like to call these creative photoshoots "Passion Projects." It's important to me to still give the same care and attention to a creative photoshoot as I would with any client, but there is something freeing about there being less pressure. This should be something fun and for your soul, so do not get too stressed over it.

I'm going to start by explaining what my Passion Project was and how it's benefited me. Next, I will explain what you can do to start your own.

I started really thinking about doing a photoshoot project for myself the last few months of 2018. I wanted to work on something that would be important to me creatively. Black & white photography was my first love when I started shooting. I was obsessed with the contrasts and tons of monochromatic images. I wanted to go back to the feeling I got when I stripped down my work and just had minimalistic imagery. Right before I started this project, I'd been using a lot of props, wardrobe and locations in my work. As much fun as that can be, I needed to prevent the burnout and step back from that.

This black & white Passion Project was done mostly in my studio. It was one friend or model, sometimes a makeup artist or hairstylist, and simple wardrobe. Another purpose for me in doing this was to get back to what I really loved when shooting by having a raw connection with the person in front of my camera.

Originally, this project was only going to be one or two people, but it has since turned into close to 100 (and counting). I've even added this element to my client work sometimes, with clients loving these images of themselves.

HOW CAN YOU GET STARTED WITH YOUR OWN PASSION PROJECT?

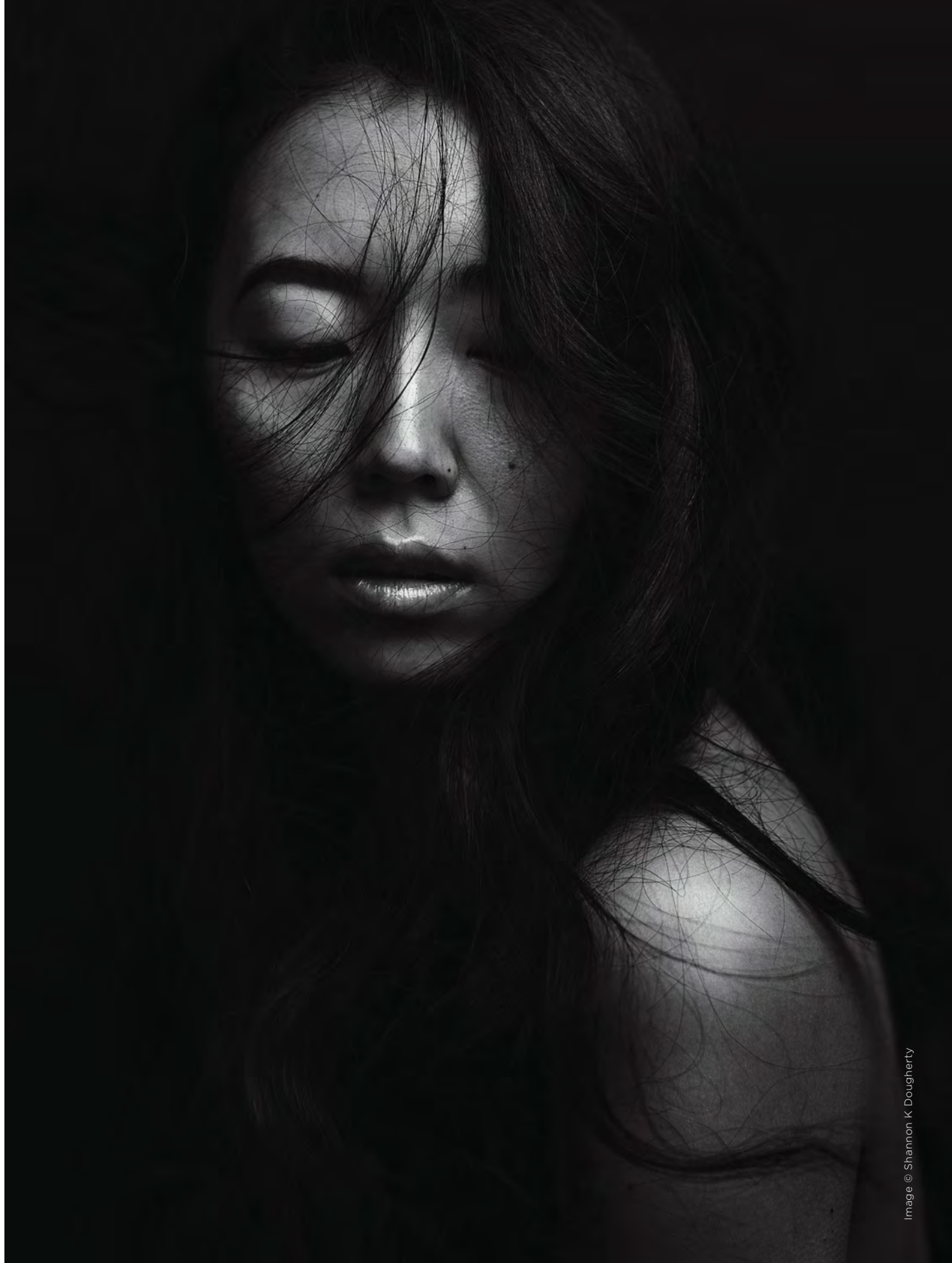
Sometimes, I want to work on something that I can't really do with a regular client, whether that's a themed shoot or wild makeup or something else, so planning with models or friends is the perfect opportunity to play. Personally, I've never had someone tell me "no" to playing dress up and getting their makeup done. It's just too much fun.

Use this as an opportunity to collaborate with local hairstylists, makeup artists, models, and boutiques. A good way to find out who is around you is by doing a local Google search or using the tags or places search option on Instagram. I have made lifelong connections doing this. It never hurts to ask someone if they want to work on a project with you. Making these connections can help you down the road if you're ever in need of staff for your studio or commercial shoots. I make sure to compensate whom I'm working with, either in payment or by trading services. Offering your team images to use for their marketing is huge. It's basically free marketing. Please always credit your team, too—you're all working hard!

Be clear with your team about your vision. For example, I will pull up a Pinterest board or explain my notes in detail to my team the day of the shoot so we are all on the same page. Sometimes, I'll start a group chat or email beforehand so we can all discuss our ideas together. If I need to meet with a new collaborator in person in advance, I always make sure it's in a fun environment like a coffeeshop, a bar, or even an arcade. The point is to keep this enjoyable for yourself so it doesn't end up feeling like a normal meeting with a client (unless you always meet your clients in an arcade—then keep doing that!).

Now that you've done all the planning and gotten a team together, just go shoot. It's really as simple as that. There is no need to put pressure on yourself at all. Some of my favorite creative shoots with a team were when we all just relaxed and went with the flow.

For me, editing burnout is also a thing if it becomes too monotonous. I have to take the time to get out of the post-production doldrums as well. I might be one of the rare people on this planet who does retouching when they want to relax. Do you ever find yourself stuck in the same routine in Lightroom or Photoshop? Take this time to start a new workflow. It's not a complicated process to make presets, so don't let that intimidate you. Open up your editing software and get playing. The past few years of doing this, I've learned so much in the editing process that has made my workflow for client work more efficient and more enjoyable. This had been an invaluable part of my post-production flow.



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WHAT POSITIVES HAPPEN WITH CREATIVE PROJECTS?

So let's go back to my story about my black & white photo Passion Project. What have been the benefits to me from doing this?

1. I'm happier.
I've taken the time to remind myself why I love photography again. It's not just about clients in the door sometimes. Deep down, we are artists, and we should get to be that and let creative ideas flow.

2. I'm more driven.
Taking the time to do things for myself creatively has made me more driven in my business. I've been able to share, teach and help others, whether my clients or students.

3. My business has benefited—a lot.
I am more present and enthusiastic in my sessions. I feel more excited for my clients coming to the studio. I no longer feel like I am stuck in the same routine, and I have grown in my work, which has made my clients ecstatic with their sessions.

Image © Shannon K Dougherty

DON'T LET BURNOUT STOP YOU FROM REACHING YOUR FULL POTENTIAL

Also, know that you don't even have to have a team. Grab a friend or a family member, or use yourself, and just shoot. You need to feed your creative soul! Now is the time to grab a coffee or cocktail and jot down all the exciting creative ideas you have and get shooting!

One thing to keep in mind is to not let this overwhelm you. The point of creative projects is to shoot something you want and let the creativity flow. If it starts to feel too overwhelming and more of a chore than a fun opportunity, then step back and find out where the feeling of it being too much might be coming from. Don't forget, shooting for yourself should be fun and a way to create all the little things you want to do, not something that becomes an even bigger headache for you. ■

Shannon K Dougherty is an internationally published portrait and fashion photographer based in St. Louis, Missouri. Starting in the mediums of painting and drawing, she soon turned her interest to photography. She currently works at her studio in St. Louis but loves to travel for assignments.
shannonkdougherty.com

POSING TIPS FOR POWERFUL BOUDOIR IMAGES

with Lori Poole

Image © Indigosilver Studio

POSING RULES 1.0

We've all heard the basic posing rules for portraiture: the S Curve, the C curve, the I pose, the blade of the hand, pushing the hips away from the camera, and turning the body three-quarters instead of photographing straight on. These are all great posing techniques, and these rules exist for a reason. Posing rules are designed to help you flatter your portrait clients when converting their three-dimensional selves to a two-dimensional medium. If you haven't heard of the rules I just listed, definitely invest some time into learning them.

Image © Indigosilver Studio

POSING RULES 2.0: THE BOUDOIR EDITION

In my experience, boudoir photography adds a whole new set of rules. Why? First, the nature of boudoir photography often means that neither you nor your clients can rely on savvy wardrobe choices to help flatter problem areas. When a client is dressed in lingerie, little can be hidden. Second, many boudoir clients are seeking a boudoir experience to change how they view themselves and how they feel about their so-called problem areas. As a broad generalization, women want to see how their unique bodies (which may or may not adhere to traditional beauty standards) can be seen as beautiful, sexy and desirable. This means that as boudoir photographers, we work with clients in little or no clothing and must use careful posing and lighting to highlight their best features and prove to them that they are, in fact, beautiful.

Image © Indigosilver Studio

I'm not going to give you 10 poses to memorize, or give you different posing ideas for different body types. While these kinds of tips are certainly helpful in expanding your posing repertoire, they don't help you understand how to flatter the female body. Instead, I'm going to give you my favorite posing tweaks to help you learn to think critically about ways to make any body look longer, curvier, and more feminine.

When I'm about to pose a client, my thought process includes asking myself the following questions:

1. What is the general concept of the pose?
2. What are the legs doing?
3. What are the hands doing?
4. Is the back arched?
5. Where is the head pointed?
6. What is the facial expression I want to see?

I coach my client through the answers to those questions sequentially to create a dynamic and flattering pose. Read on to discover the little tweaks I use throughout each step to bring the pose to life.

RULES ONLY GO SO FAR

It's important to note that my client base is 100-percent female-identifying. Therefore, this article addresses feminine norms with broad generalizations. For example, women generally aspire to an hourglass shape, regardless of size. That means fuller bust and booty with a smaller waist. While I recognize the individuality of every woman in my studio, understanding these norms informs my "why" and my personal style of posing. Discussing the exceptions to these norms, considerations for alternate genders/identifications, or how to work with these norms while also remaining body-positive (which my studio is) is beyond the scope of these basic posing tips.

TIP 1 — POSE CONCEPT: BE LITERAL

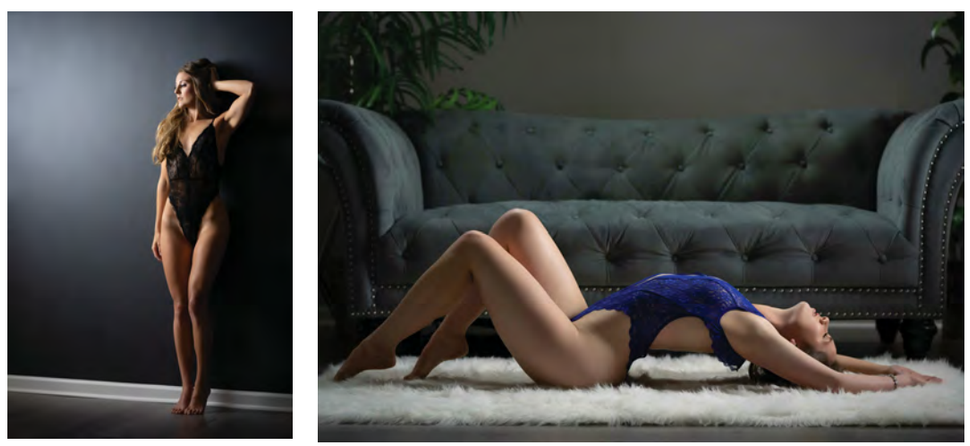
At the heart of boudoir, we are trying to create flattering and beautiful images of someone's body. This is different than most portraiture, where the face is the most important element. That means that we need to have a concept for what the body is doing, or what body part we want to feature. The most successful pose starts with a clear vision. This means you, the photographer, need to control every aspect of the pose.

Think literal. Start with, "Is she sitting, lying down, or standing?" Don't start with, "I envision her being seductive on the bed." What does that even mean? If you do not have concrete details in your head, you will struggle to direct your client or bring the image together. Other items to consider: Is this a portrait of her whole self, or are you highlighting a specific body part? Consider how lighting will interact with the pose. Is the light skimming across her body to show musculature or contour? Or is the light flooding through the image to hide surface texture like cellulite or wrinkles? Once you have your general concept ready, you can work through refining the pose by using the tweaks below.

TIP 2—LEGS: ELONGATE

Many boudoir images can be quickly improved by some quick tweaks to elongate the legs. By keeping legs elongated, we are maintaining proper leg-to-torso proportions, which helps prevent the client from looking squatty. To elongate the legs, first make sure the legs are not overly bent, shortening the distance between the feet and the torso. However, we don't want straight legs either. The old adage of "If it bends, bend it" still applies.

Once you find the sweet spot of "not too bent, not too straight" for the legs, your next step will be to point the toes. Pointing the toes adds an additional six inches or so of length to the leg. It also engages the calf muscles, which help create a more shapely leg. Finally, the toe point creates more energy to the pose so that it does not feel flat and lifeless.



Images © Indigosilver Studio

The legs should be elongated, and the toes pointed, whenever possible.

TIP 3—HANDS: GIVE THEM A TASK

In most poses, the pose will look the most natural if the hands are given a task to do. Keep it simple. Run her fingers through her hair. Trail her hands over a body part—leg, bust, neck. Tug on a bra strap. Push the underwear down. Hand on hip. Fingermouthing (yes, this is a real term). As with all portraiture, mind your basic rules: wrist bent, fingers relaxed, no doll hands, no claws.

Images © Indigosilver Studio

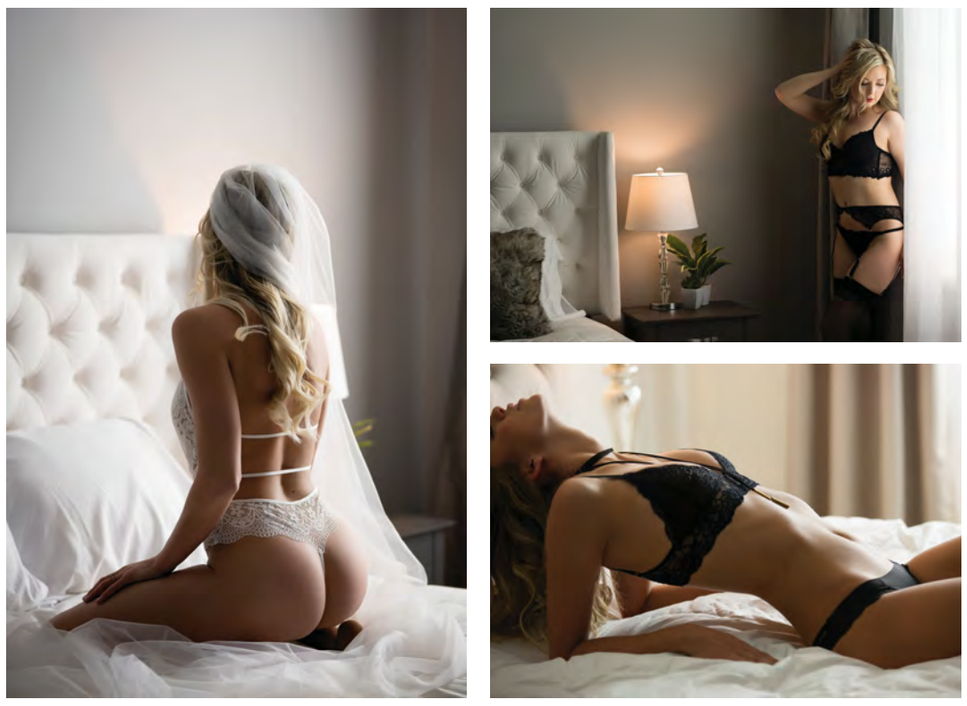
Giving the hands a task keeps a pose natural and fluid.

TIP 4—ARCH THAT BACK

With very few exceptions, nearly every boudoir pose involves arching the back to create a pleasing curve through the torso. Arching the back is the quintessential tweak that brings a pose to life. This exaggeration of posture changes a pose from flat and static to dynamic.

A proper arch helps create the illusion of an hourglass figure. Arching lifts and enhances the bustline, tightens the waist, and pushes the hips back. Pushing the hips back creates a better curve on the outside of the hip and makes the booty rounder and fuller. The same pose without arching the back creates a silhouette that is boxy and shapeless, and the image itself will often lack vibrancy and life.

Back arching is not just for standing or upright poses—my clients are instructed on various ways to arch, whether they are standing, sitting, kneeling, lying on their back, or lying on their stomach.



Images © Indigosilver Studio

Whether the client is sitting, standing, or lying down, a proper arch adds oomph to the pose.

Image © Indigosilver Studio

When shooting from the direction of the client's head, be sure to have her tip her chin up to capture more of her face.

TIP 5—HEAD: ELONGATE THE NECK

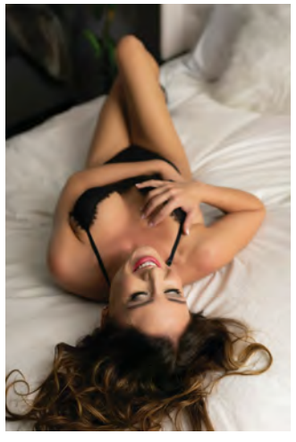
My first consideration for head placement always involves lighting. Short light is my favorite facial lighting, which means I am almost always directing my client's face toward the light. Beyond that, I am looking for ways to elongate the neck and slim the jawline. Coach your client to jut her chin forward to lengthen and define. I also make sure that when she arches her back, she doesn't shrug her shoulders up. The shoulders are pushed back down to keep the neck long.

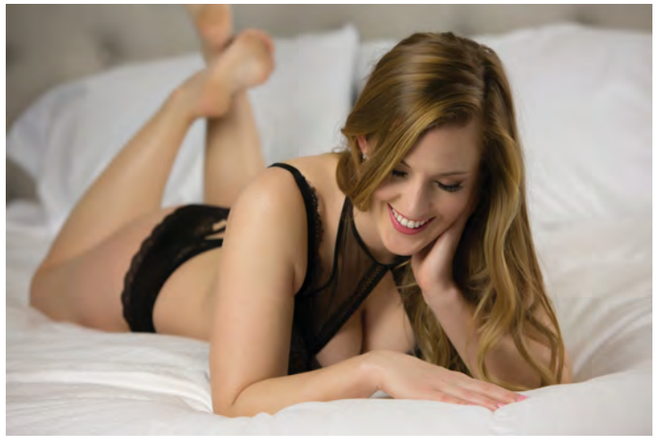
If your client is lying down, have her lift her chin upward. One, it keeps her from tucking her chin and creating an unsightly jawline. Two, it elongates the neck. Three, it tends to enhance the silhouette created by the back arch. This rule is especially important if you are shooting from an angle at the top of your client's head. Rather than shooting the top of her head, have her lift her chin up to get more of her face.

TIP 6 — EXPRESSION: BE LITERAL (AGAIN)

When I tell my clients that they do not have to practice facial expressions before their shoots, it comes as a huge relief! Instead, I coach each client through very literal and concrete instructions on what to do with her facial features. I may have her look down with her eyes and part her lips. If she's struggling with having a relaxed mouth, I will coach her to take a deep breath in and out. I make sure she isn't pursing or duck-lipping. Alternatively, I may have her look directly into the lens and smile. If her smile falls flat, I encourage her to smile bigger … bigger … c'mon girl, bigger! Usually, at that point, she will smile naturally or laugh.

Be careful not to direct your client to "be sexy," "flirt with the camera," or "think about your boyfriend." For one thing, most people are not professional actors, and they do not know how to portray these emotions on command. Second, it's a bit heteronormative and presumptuous to assume that all women have boyfriends, are interested in men, and/or are trying to portray their sexuality through their images. Instead, use more literal posing direction. Expression is always the last step in the process. Natural expressions are often fleeting, and can become forced quickly if held for too long.





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Great expressions are fleeting. Be sure to have the entire pose (and your camera) ready before asking the client to emote.

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT

The easiest way to coach a pose is to demonstrate it yourself, while talking through what you are doing. That might sound something like this: "OK Lindsay, we're going to start by lying across the bed, like *this*. With your legs, you're going to have them bent *here* and *here*, and you're going to point your toes like *this*. Your hands are going to go *there* and *there*. Make sure they're just a little bent, and keep your fingers relaxed but not too straight. Then you're going to arch your back by lifting your chest up like *this*. Chin way, way up, eyes down, lips parted. Now you try." Notice how I basically walked through the framework created by the six questions asked earlier in the article, and refined using the six tweaks outlined herein.

Before getting your client into a complex pose, make sure your lighting and camera settings are ready. Many of these poses are uncomfortable to hold for longer than a few seconds.

As your client attempts the pose, walk her through the same framework: basic pose, legs, hands, arch, head, expression. At each step, affirm that she has done it correctly—a simple "yes" or "good" goes a long way to reassure your client throughout a very foreign-feeling pose. At the completion of the final step—the expression—you're ready to click the shutter for an image that wows! ■

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

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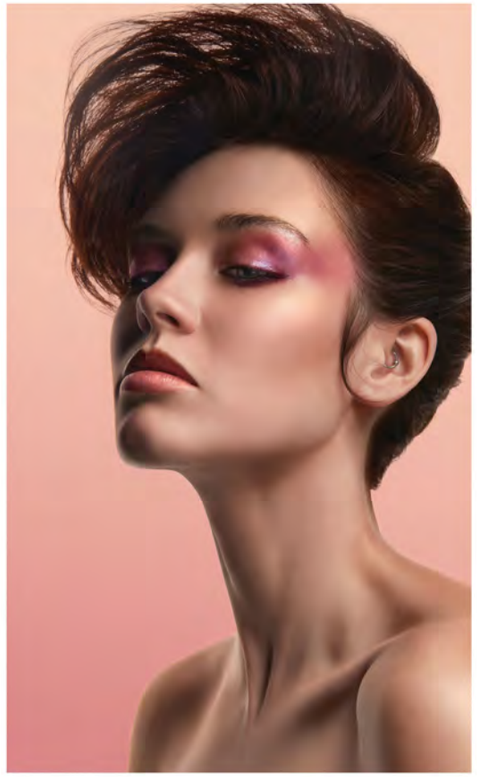

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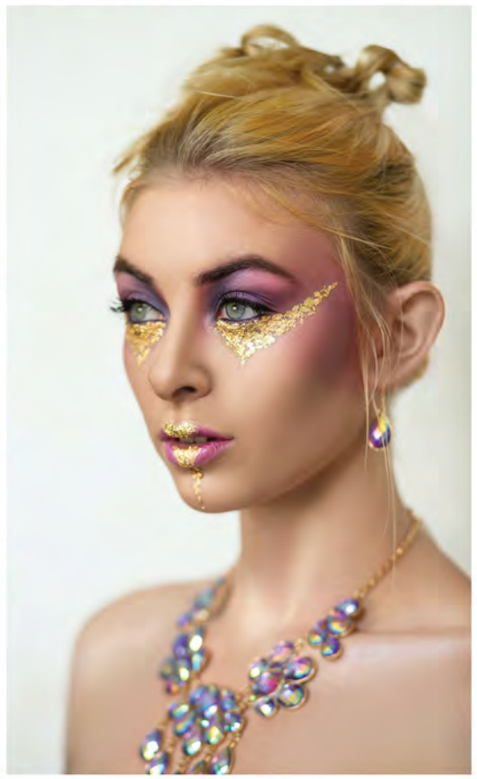

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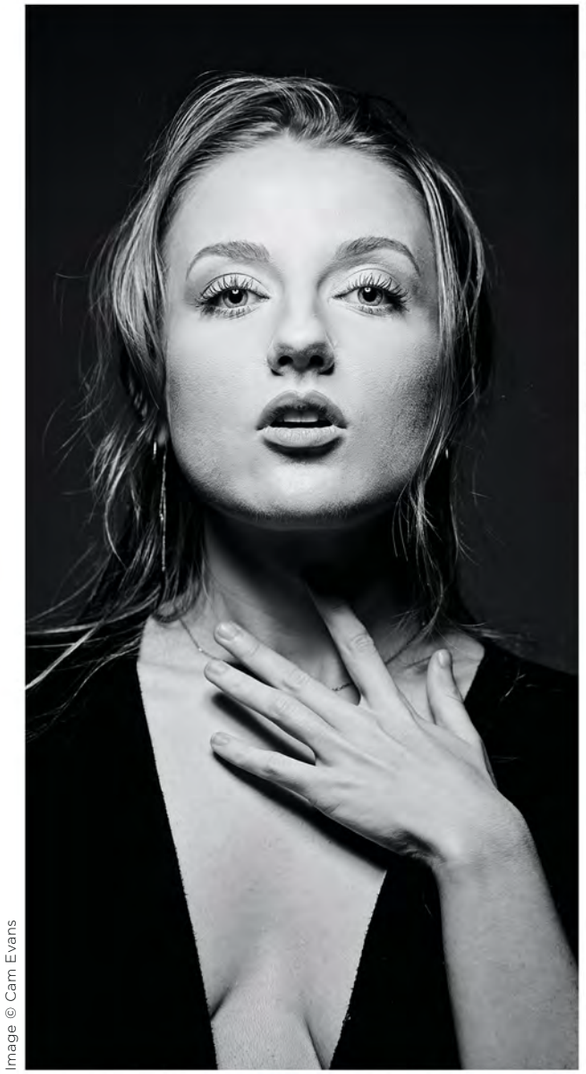

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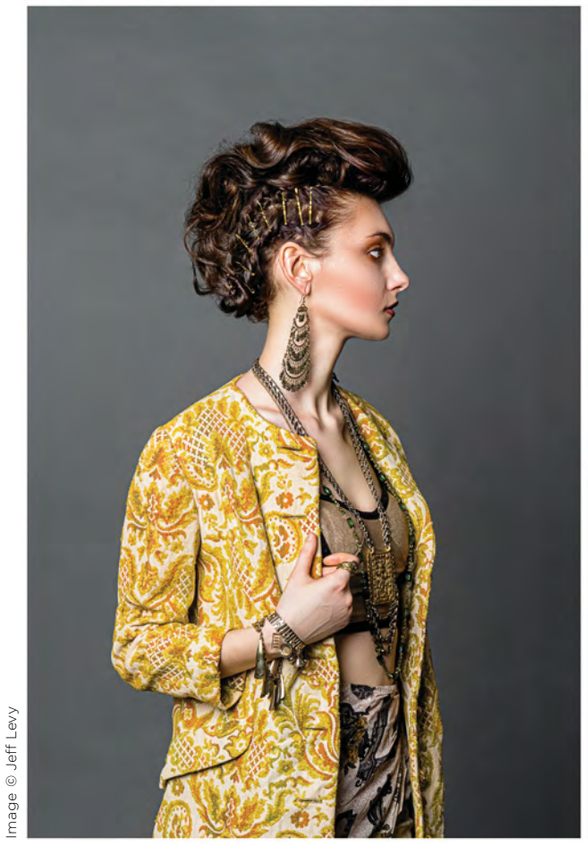

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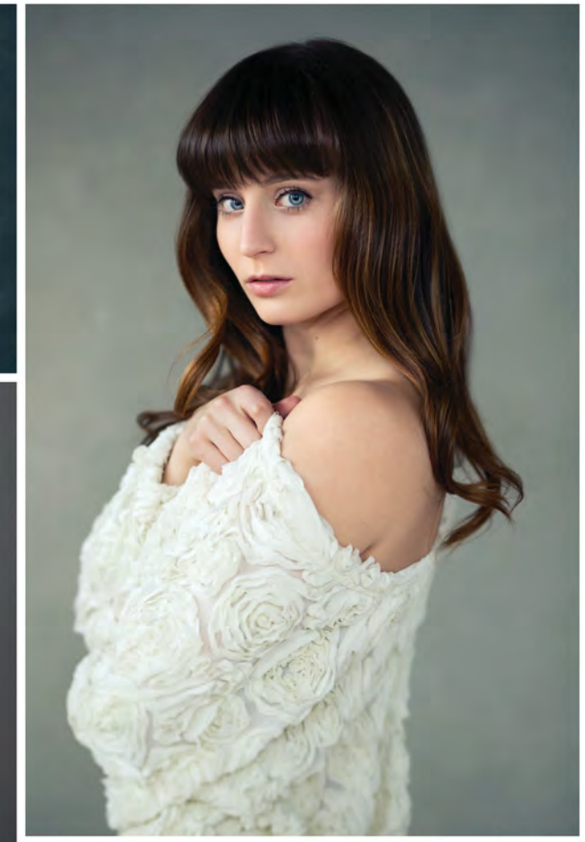

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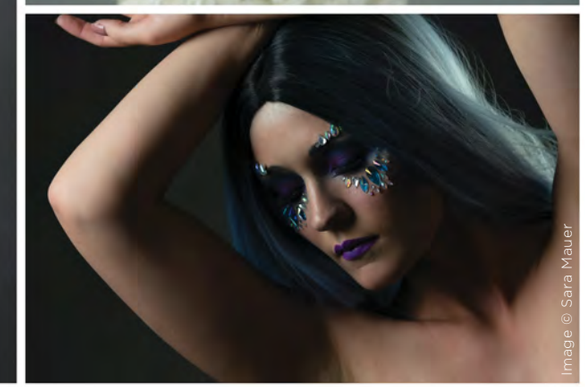

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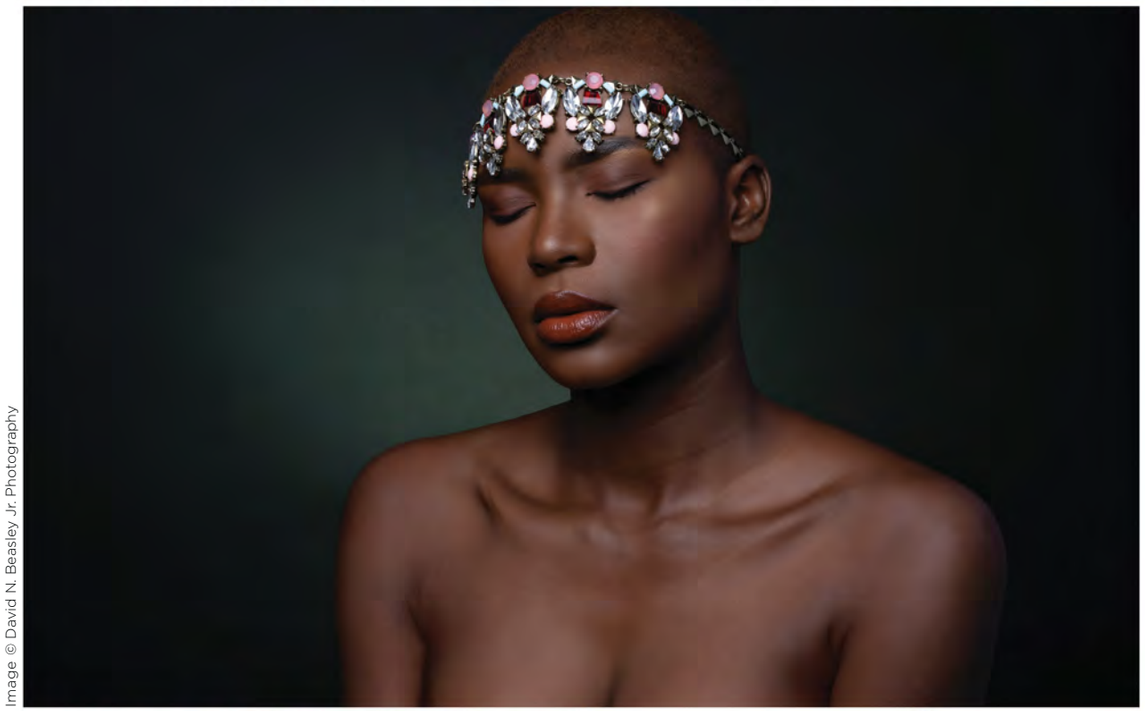

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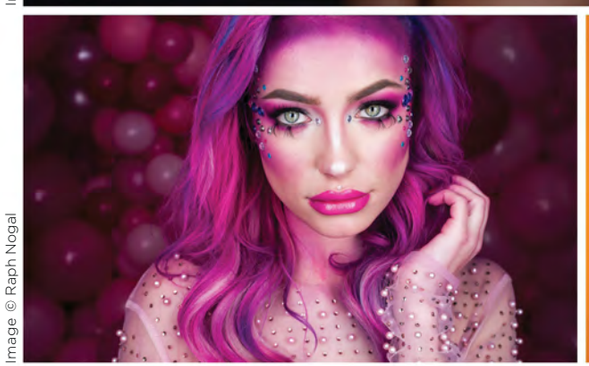

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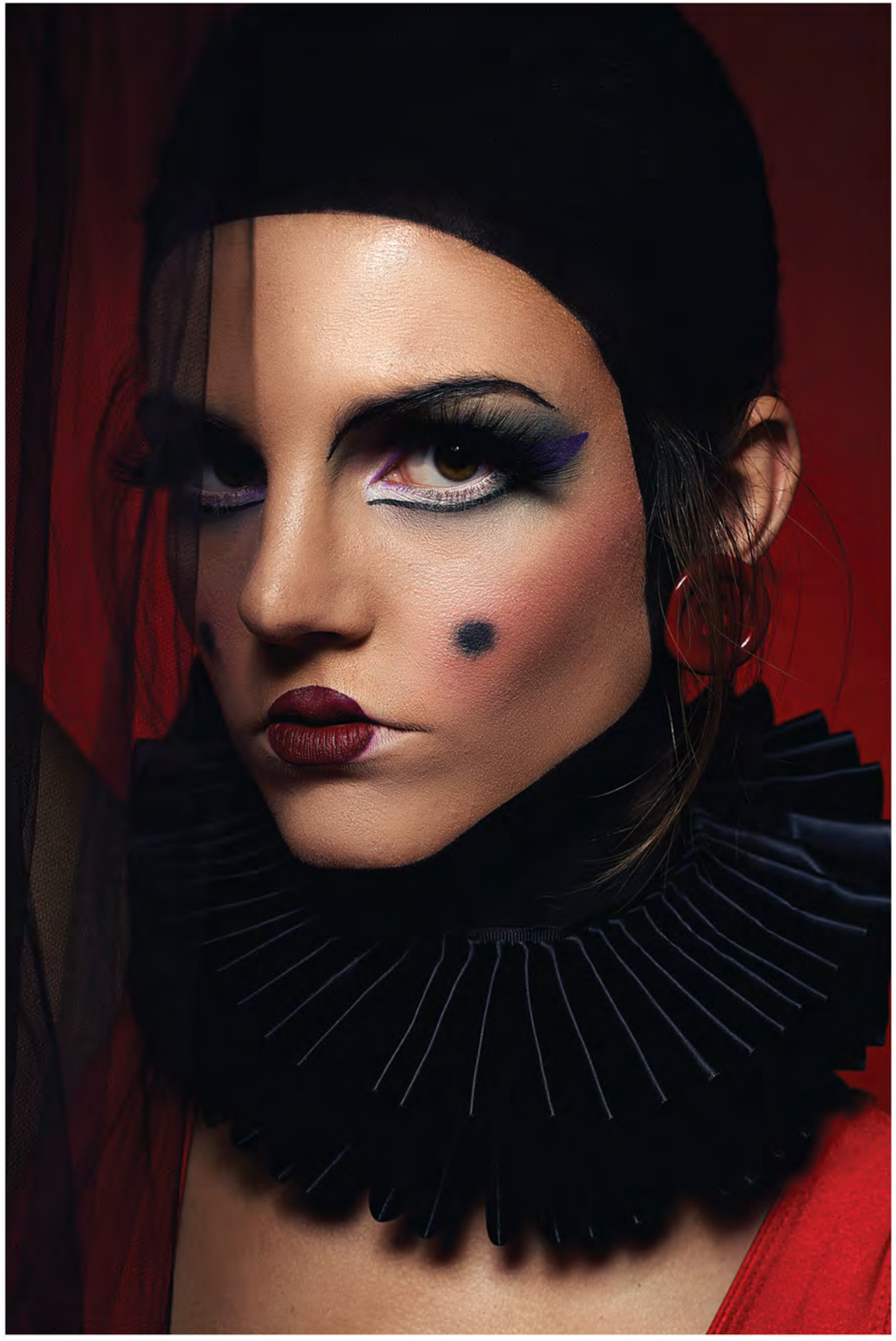

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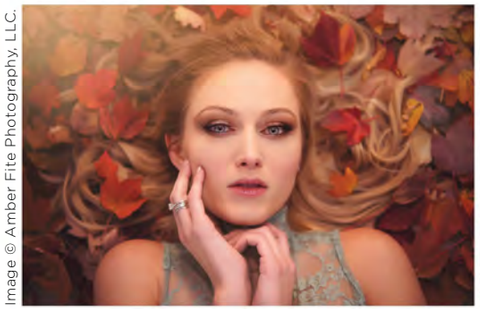

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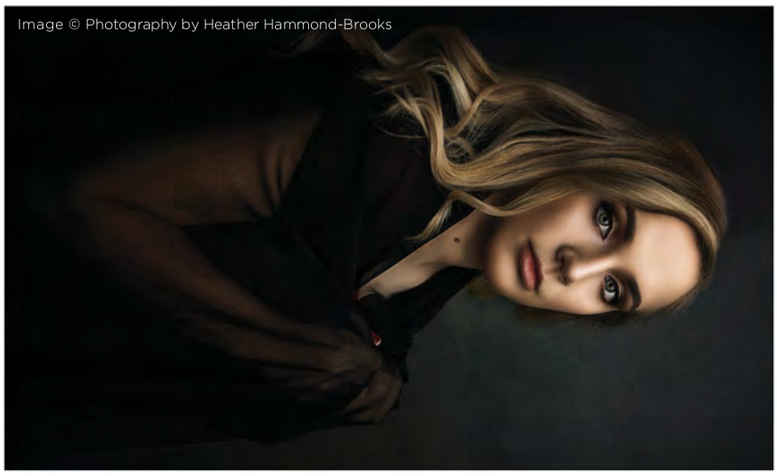

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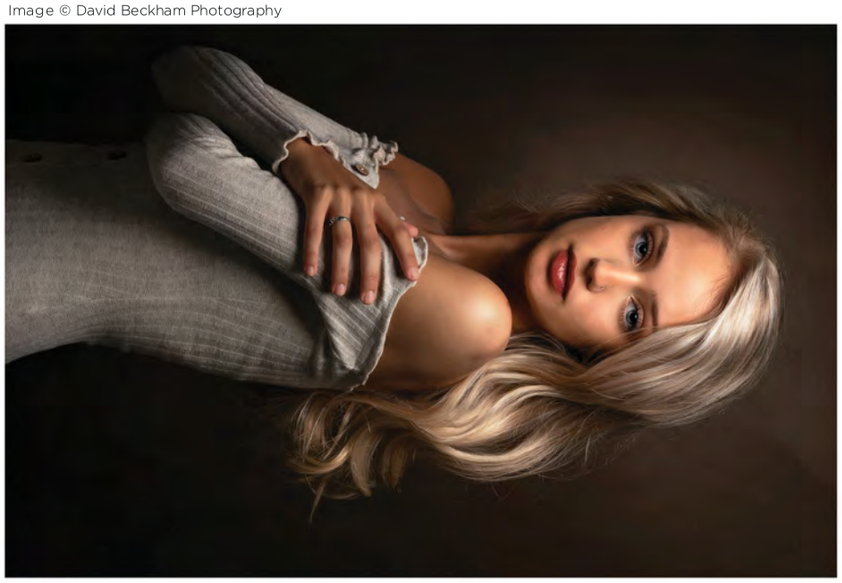

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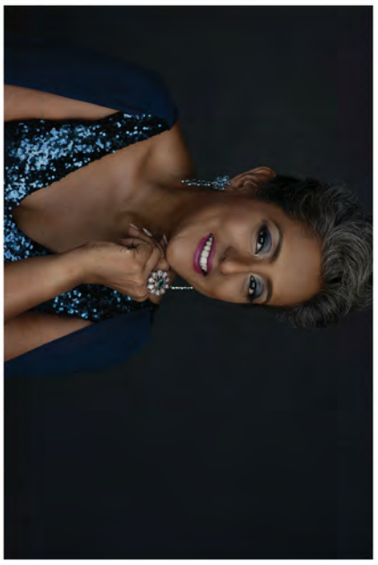

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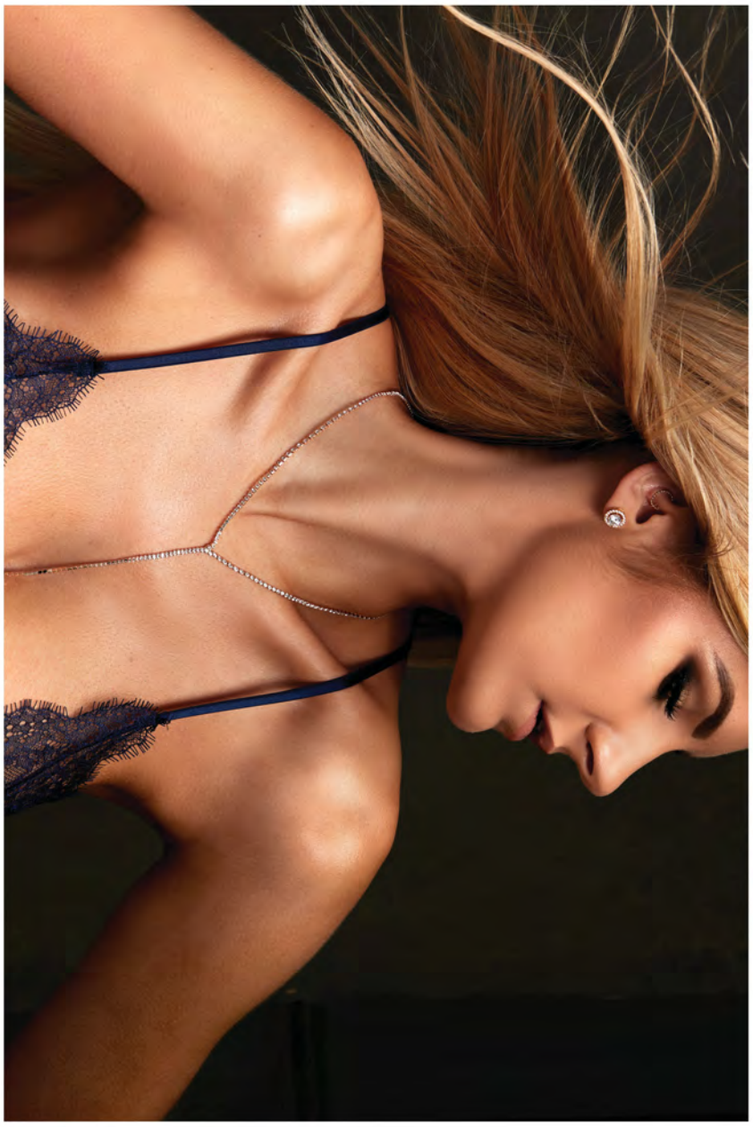

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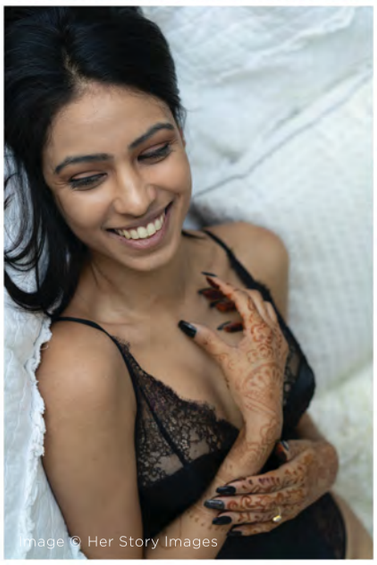

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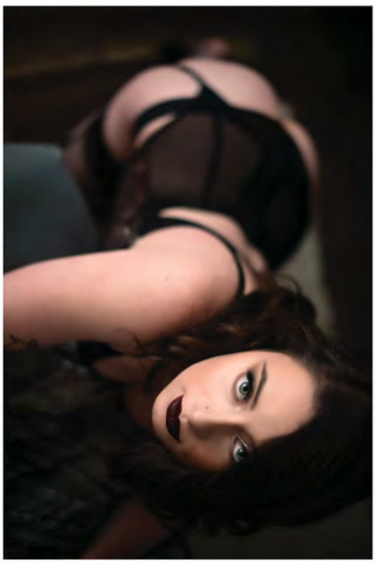

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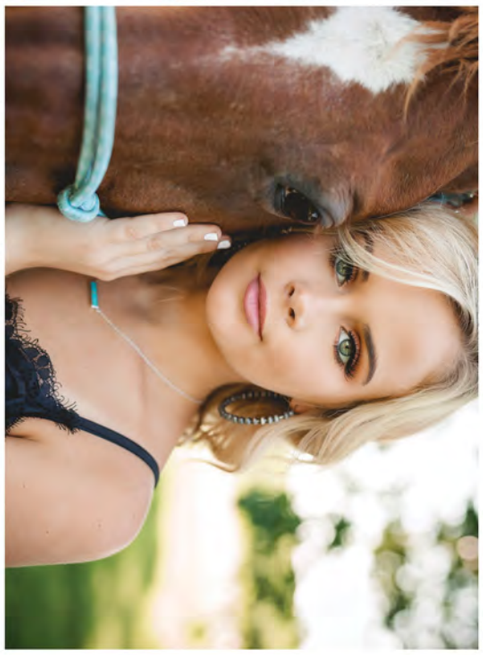
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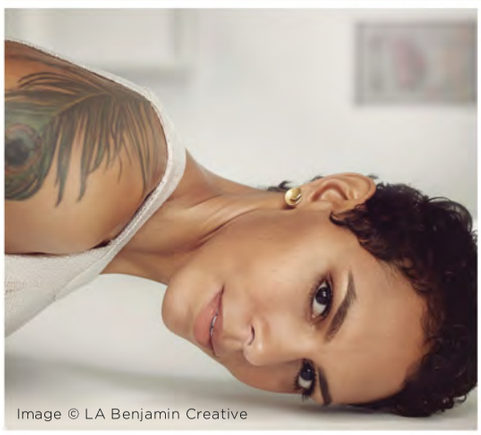
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THE POST-PRODUCTION EDITION

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THE TOP 5 WAYS TO PREPARE FOR UPGRADING TO

LIGHTROOM CLASSIC V9

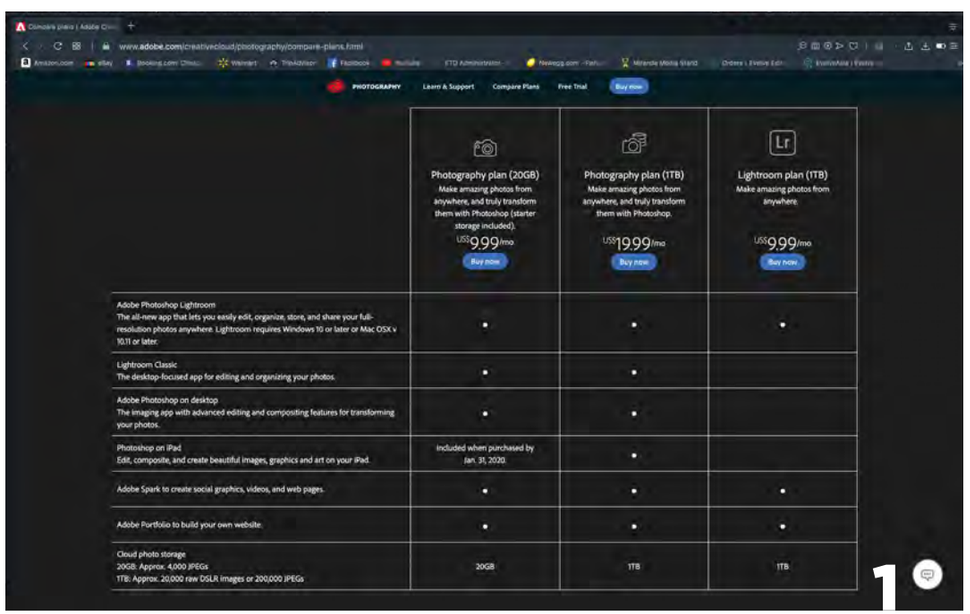
with **Dustin Lucas**

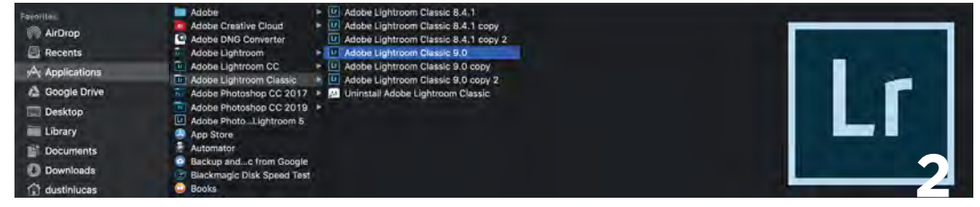
For wedding photographers using Lightroom, it is no secret that Adobe likes to launch new versions in the middle of our busiest season. What are we supposed to do—drop everything we're working on and upgrade? Well, it's not so simple for most users to jump to the next version, because things change. Upgrading can set back your post-production workflow, adding pain to your already-busy schedule of editing and meeting client delivery deadlines. So what is the answer? Wait until next year, or upgrade? To help you decide, let's jump into the top five ways to prepare for upgrading to Lightroom Classic v9, so you can understand what you'll gain and lose in comparison to the older versions. Upgrading from an entirely different version of the Lightroom app to Classic can be daunting, but it doesn't have to be, as we will dive into the best and easiest ways to get you set up.

You'll want to import your Develop Presets—not to worry, those will likely still work! For users transitioning from Lightroom 6/CC 2015 or earlier, though, you will experience the massive change with the Camera Calibration panel in Develop with Camera Process and Profiles. Lightroom has added quite a few new sliders and now lets you rearrange panels in Develop as well. We will also revisit Preferences and the new GPU Acceleration settings. Ready to get started?

1. UPGRADING FROM OLDER VERSIONS

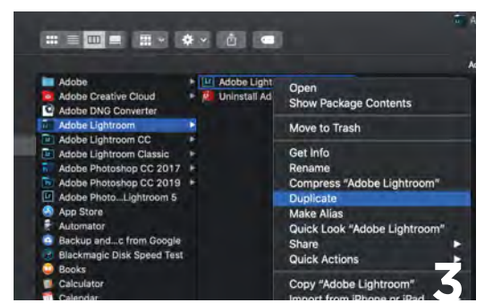
For Mac and PC users, there are different challenges with installing software tied to your Operating System. I will focus on using Mac OSX 10.14.6 and how to prepare for upgrading from Lightroom CC 2015.14 (or Lightroom 6, for those of you with a standalone version). Now, many users have been upset about the transition to a subscription-based pricing structure, but I gotta be honest and say just get Adobe Creative Cloud, Photographer Plan. (1) Stop converting new camera RAW files to DNGs so you can work in an older version—that is just backward, in my opinion. And here's a tip: when you upgrade Lightroom, duplicate the old version first so you can keep previous versions. (2)

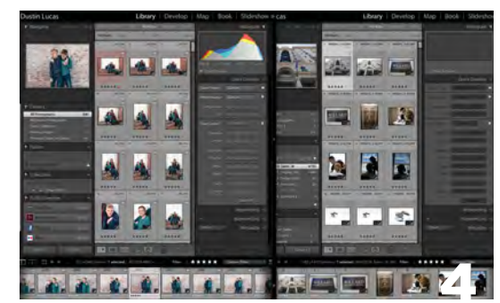


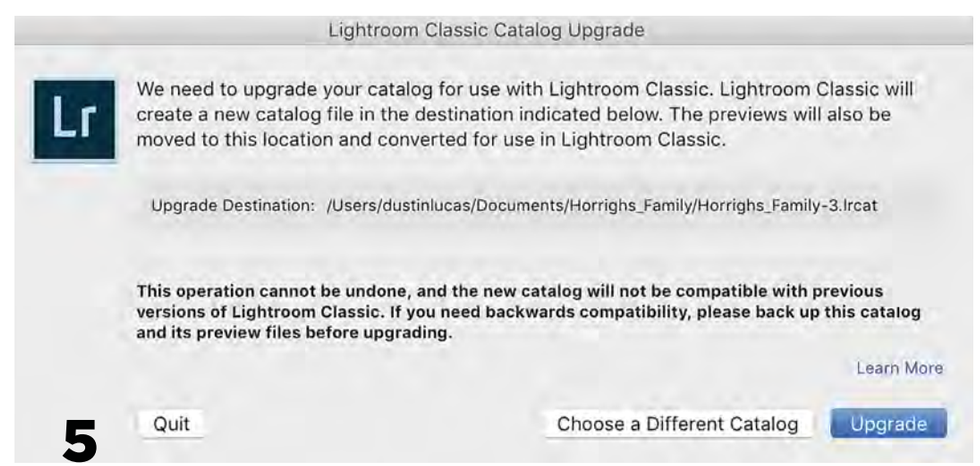


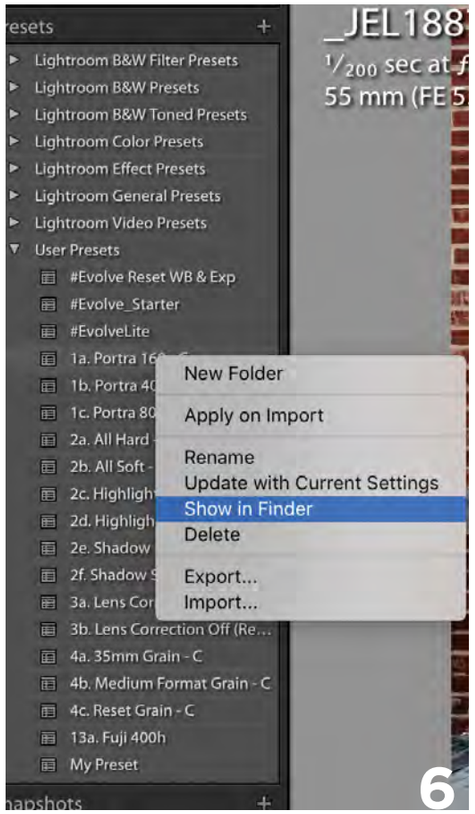
Open up Finder and go to Applications to find the Adobe Lightroom app. Then, right click the app file and choose Duplicate to create an actual copy. (3) This is not an alias or shortcut; you've created a completely separate app and can open both Lightroom apps at the same time. That means you can run two different catalogs simultaneously—pretty cool! (4) You might be wondering why this is important to do before upgrading to Lightroom Classic. It's necessary because, in the event that during the installation process you do not get an option to keep older versions, this will serve as a backup. I found this out the hard way going from Lightroom Classic v8.4.1 to v9.0. All the catalogs I created in v8.4.1 had to be upgraded, causing a huge mess, as I share hundreds of catalogs a week with clients. (5) Many users will just upgrade the catalog and be done with it, but this is an important step so you can keep an archive of catalogs in previous versions.

Once you've upgraded to Lightroom Classic v9, you will notice a lot of changes. Let's get started in navigating them. We'll begin by importing all your Develop Presets.





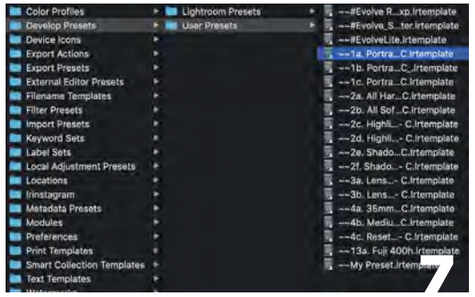


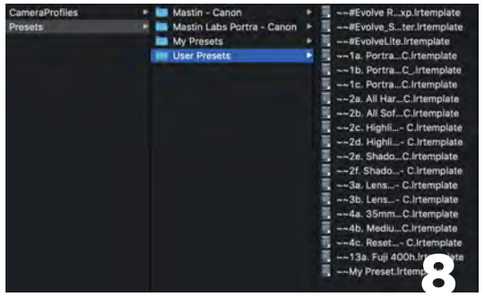


2. IMPORTING DEVELOP PRESETS

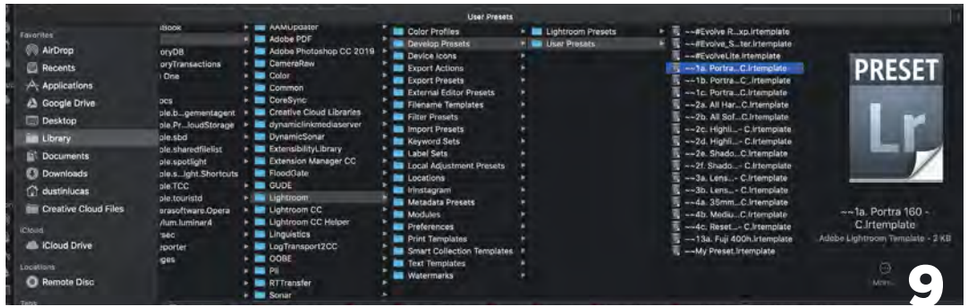
Now, whether you've built presets or bought third-party ones, you will want to know things like what Process Version, Profile, and Develop Sliders are being applied, and so forth. If you are transitioning from an older version of Lightroom than v8, you will need to convert files from the .lrtemplate format to the .xmp format. Not to worry, as Lightroom will perform this conversion for you—there are just a few steps to doing it.

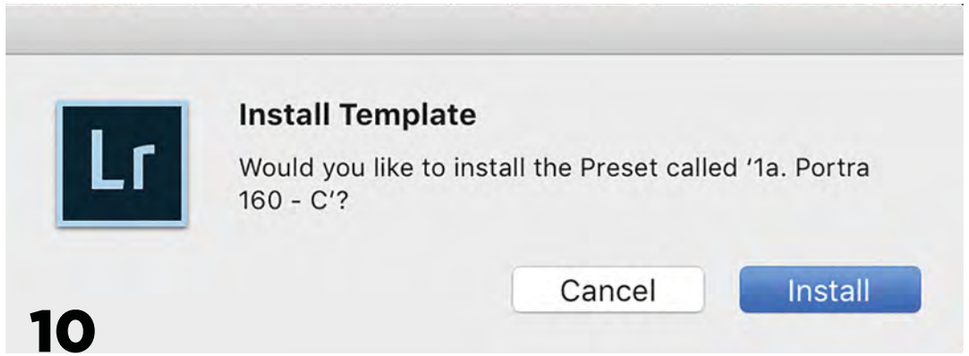
Open a Lightroom catalog, go to the Develop module, drop down the Presets panel on the left, and right click on one of them. Then, you need to click the option Show in Finder in order to access the preset files in the user Library. (6) You can now copy all the Preset Groups if you've made custom ones, or just copy the User Preset folder to paste in a folder on your desktop. (7) I do this so I don't have to mess with those files when importing, as sometimes they'll disappear on me during the process. This is a simple but effective trick to save backups of your presets as well. (8)

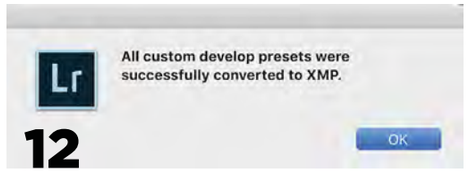




Now, we will need to open the new Lightroom Classic v9 catalog to get started on import and converting presets. Go back into Finder and navigate to the backup folder of presets on your desktop. Start by selecting one of the .lrtemplate files, and drag and drop it into the Lightroom Classic icon in your Apple Dock. (9) This quite literally means select the file, click and drag it to the icon in the dock, and release. If you do this right, you will get a popup on screen confirming you want to Install Template. (10) Typically, the installed preset will be ready to use in the Develop module and will show up already at this point. (11) If it doesn't, you will need to close Lightroom Classic and relaunch it. To verify the preset was installed and converted, you will get a popup that says, "All custom develop presets were successfully converted into .xmp." (12)





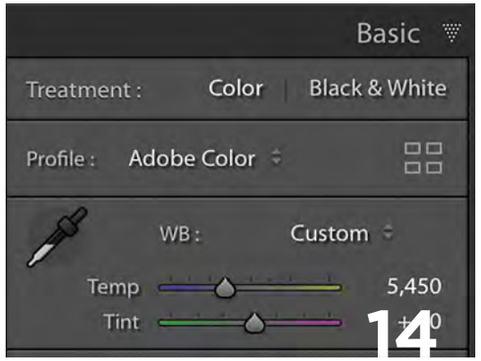


There are alternatives, like exporting presets individually; however, this can take a while with multiple presets. I like to make things as easy as possible, and knowing how to navigate my user Library, I like to use a different trick. In Library, you can copy the folder of presets from Lightroom>Develop Presets and paste them into Camera Raw>Settings. Then, open Lightroom Classic and you will find your presets already installed. Make your life easier by copying and pasting! (13)

We are now ready to see what has changed with Camera Calibration Process & Profiles.

3. PROCESS & PROFILES

The first thing you'll notice at the top of the Basic Panel underneath Treatment is the Profile Browser. It makes absolute sense to have this accessible at the top now instead of buried in the Camera Calibration panel at the bottom. When it comes to editing, you always apply Profile first before editing color and tone settings. (14) With the Profile Browser, you have a simple way to preview the profiles and manage them. This is a massive overhaul feature you get in Lightroom Classic, one that makes it worth transitioning. (15) Installing these is as easy as it was for Develop Presets. Find all of the .dcp files in Finder, then copy and paste them into CameraRaw>Camera Profiles. If you installed them in a previous version of Lightroom, you should be all set.



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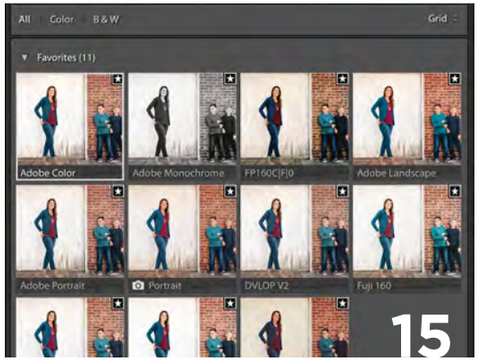

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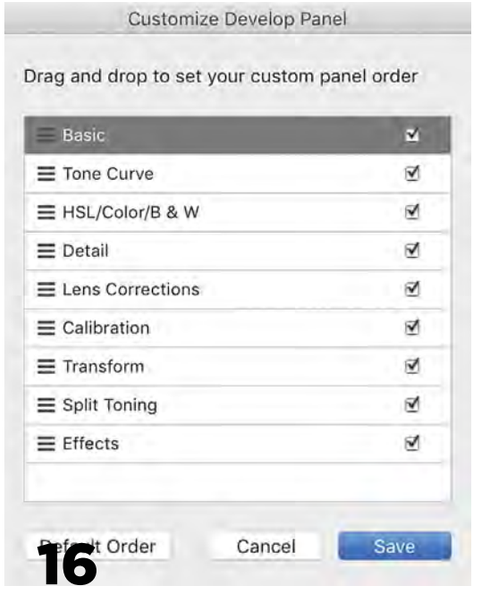

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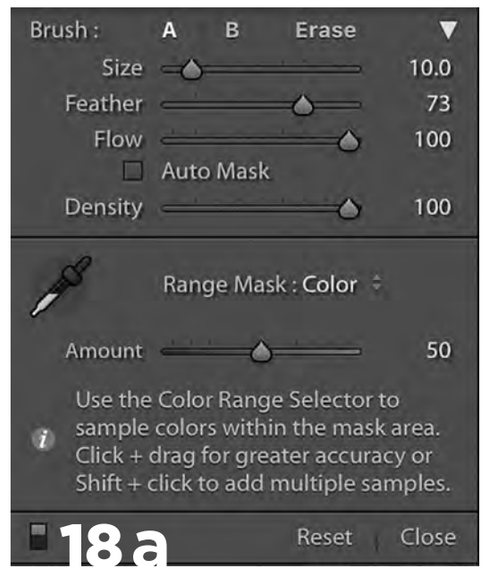
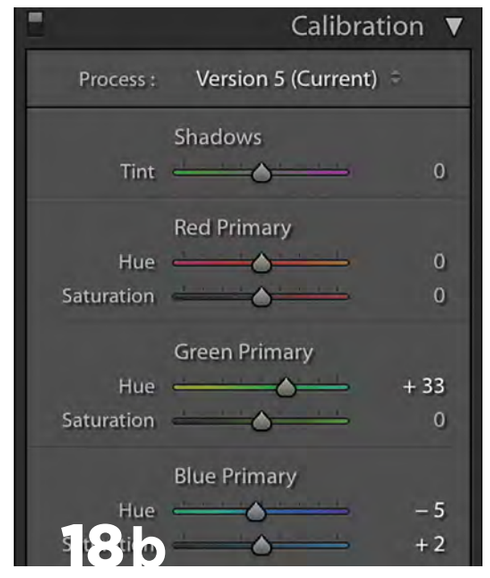
The Calibration panel is located at the bottom still; however, you can customize these panels to remove or rearrange them. This is really convenient in order to be able to finally customize your Lightroom Develop panels to align with your specific editing process. (16) Process Versions 1 & 2 emulate the older 2010 version. This gave you sliders like Recovery, Fill Light and Brightness, which all had their place prior to 2012 launching. (17) This started with Version 3, and you can take full advantage of Lightroom Classic remaining in the current Version 5. I recommend this version so that you can have the opportunity to use Range Masking for the local adjustment brushes. (18)

Let's look at the additional editing sliders added to Develop as well.

17



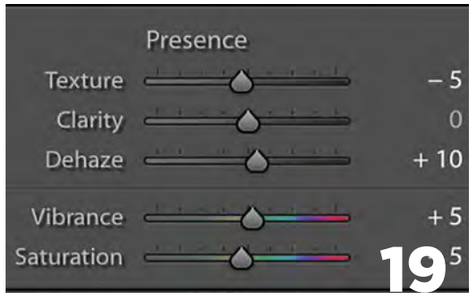
18 a



18 b

4. NEW DEVELOP FEATURES

In the Basic Panel, the Presence section got quite an overhaul, adding Texture and Dehaze to the group.(19) Texture is a really interesting slider, as it applies a similar effect like Photoshop has for High Pass sharpening. It really grabs the edges of the subject, allowing you to only affect sharpness, while the Clarity slider adds a mid-tone adjustment. (20ab) Also, its ability to soften the skin is so much better than that of Clarity. This has been added to the adjustment brush as well, so you can mask it on the skin only. This is a game-changer in terms of touching up skin in Lightroom. (21)



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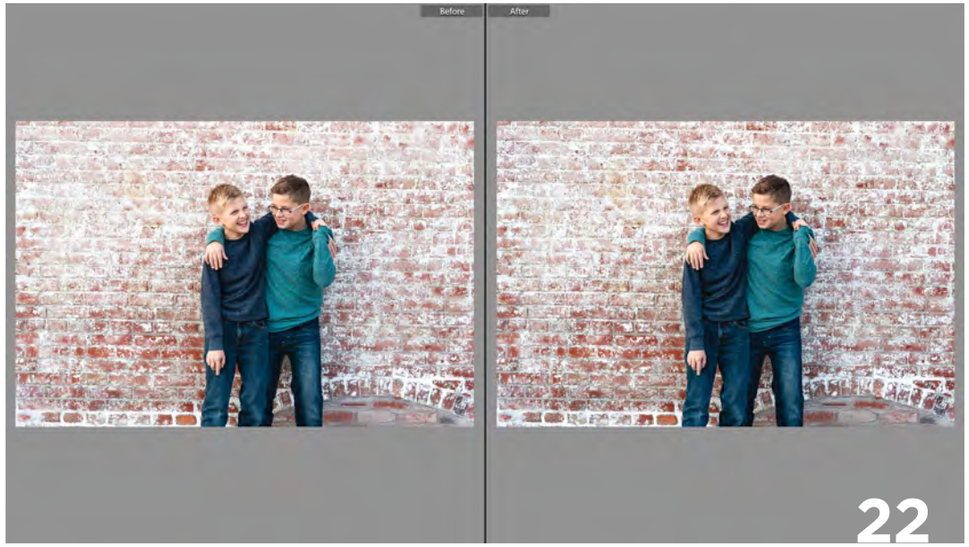
Dehaze has moved from the Effects panel to offer an alternative to the contrast slider. This is used to adjust toning in the shadows and blacks. You can think of it as a dark-tone contrast slider, as it does not adjust highlights or whites. When using it, you have to be careful to not turn the skin too orange. (22ab)



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One of the more useful tools is the Range Masking feature. Using local adjustments, you can paint on an effect, select Color or Luminance, and specify where you'd like the effect to apply. This works really well for color such as skin tones, blue skies, green grass, white dresses, etc. You can use this with the adjustment brush, as well as with graduated and radial filters. (23)

Custom profiles have really helped step up my creative workflow as well. This feature lets you non-destructively apply toning effects to your images without any of your sliders being adjusted. (24ab) That is pretty awesome for Lightroom users. To read more on this, you can check out my May 2019 Shutter Mag article, "Photoshop to Lightroom: How to Turn Custom LUTs Into Color Profiles."

Let's wrap up with Lightroom Preferences & the new GPU Acceleration options.

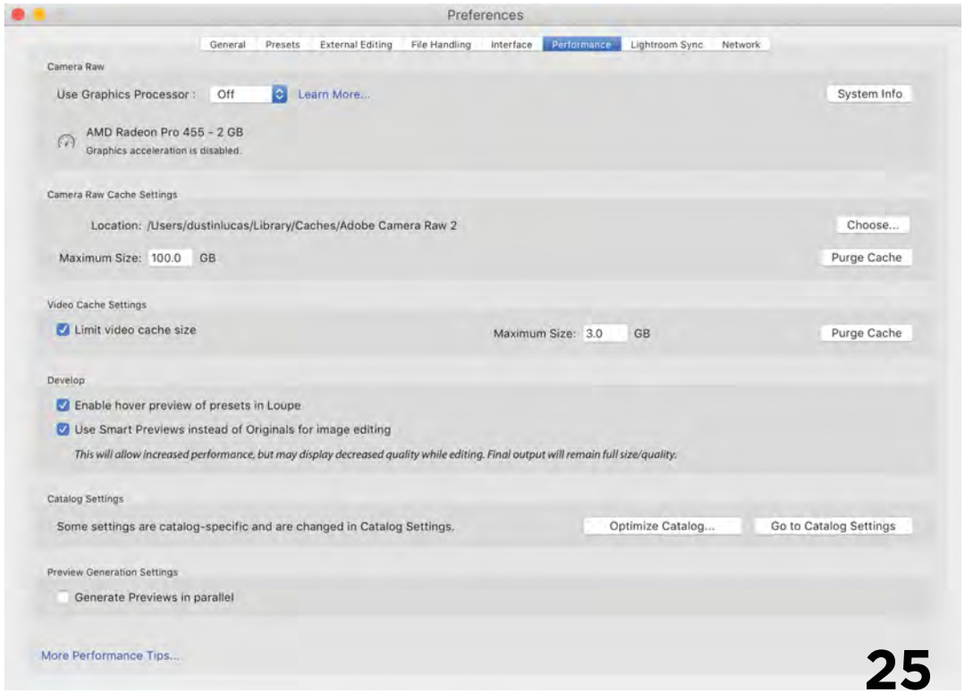
24 a

24 b

5. PERFORMANCE PREFERENCES & GPU ACCELERATION

For my Mac workstation and editing workflow, I am still building Smart Previews at import and staying connected to my RAW files. This lets me fly through editing while having the ability to zoom in to 1:1 with more advanced tools. At the end of the day, you want the ability to work fast with the accuracy needed with RAW files. Here are my preferences to use as a guideline for working this way.

Open Lightroom Preferences from the File menu-bar at the top, or hold command while striking the comma key. You will want to choose the Performance tab and check the box "Use Smart Previews instead of Originals for image editing." It is very important to choose this option so you can experience the performance of Smart Previews. Also, I like to set the Camera Raw Cache Settings to 100.0 GB and the Graphics Processor to Off for the moment. Then, I will go to Catalog Settings to customize the Standard Preview Size and Quality. Typically, I set both to the lowest settings to reduce time spent with Lightroom constantly updating Standard Previews. Keep in mind, this task is running all the time and may be the cause of your catalog running slower. (25)



25

Let's jump into the GPU Acceleration and the enhancements Adobe has made for users wanting to take advantage of their GPU. The biggest increase in performance I am getting is with local adjustments like the Adjustment brush, and Graduated and Radial filters. When I toggle the Use Graphics Processor setting to Custom from Off, the brush applies the effect slightly more smoothly, but not enough to keep this turned on. Cycling through images in Develop is still better with the Off setting applied. Better luck in the future, Adobe—we are still waiting!

THE RESULTS

Now you are fully equipped to upgrade with confidence, and for wedding photographers, you can breathe easy as you made it through the busy season. Again, prepare for the nuances before upgrading to Lightroom Classic V9 so it's an easier transition. If you are coming from Lightroom 5 or 6, you have a lot to look forward to. At least you can stop converting your RAW files to DNG, which is a huge waste of time. Don't be afraid to import your old presets and profiles; use my copy-and-paste method in Finder to make it simple. There are many new features and sliders for editing, as well as new ways to process your files, and I implore you to try them out!

I think it is safe, for a majority of users, to turn off the Graphics Processor users, and try my preference settings. Stay tuned for more articles on Lightroom this year, and always remember: work smarter, not harder. ■

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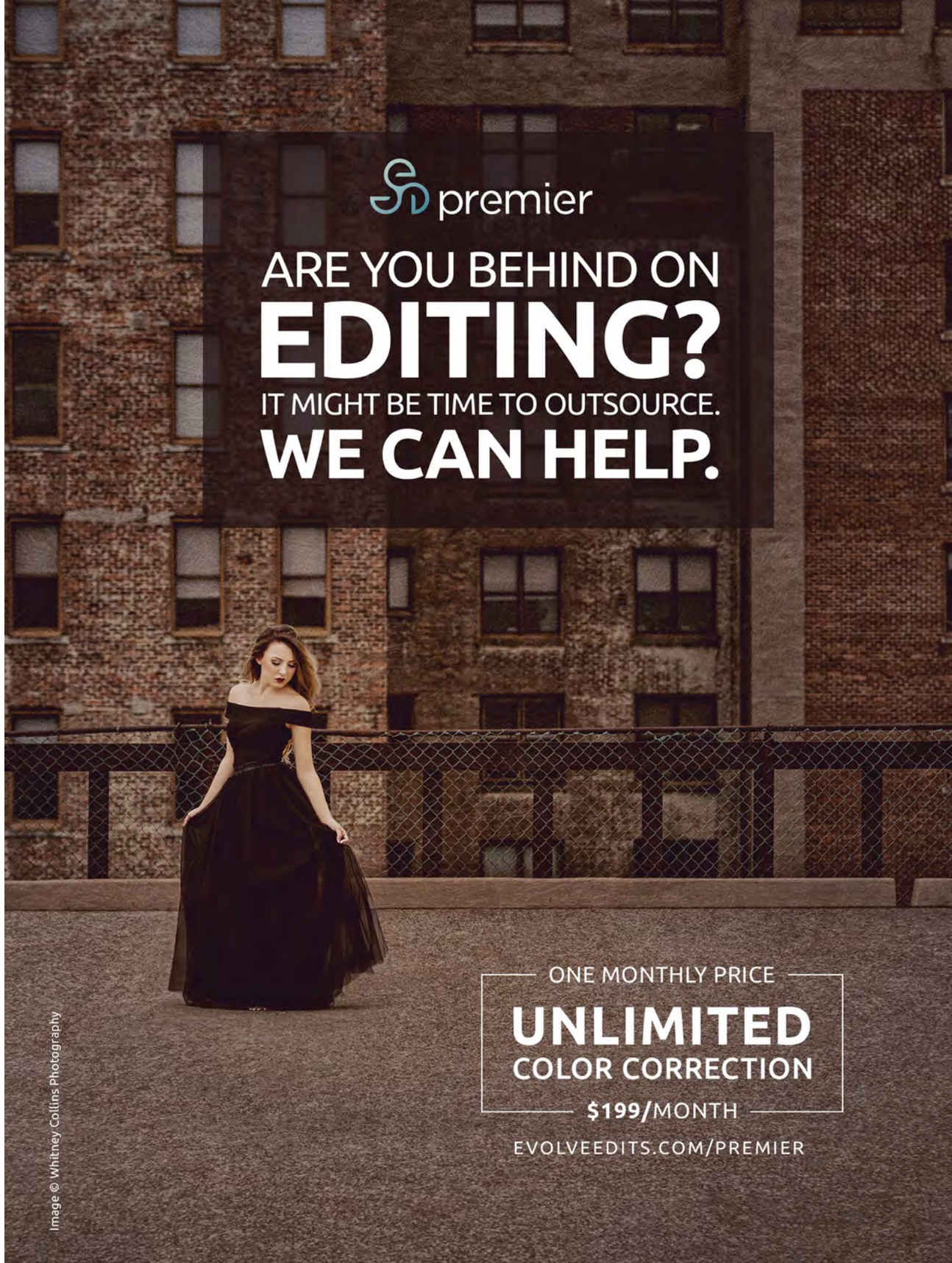
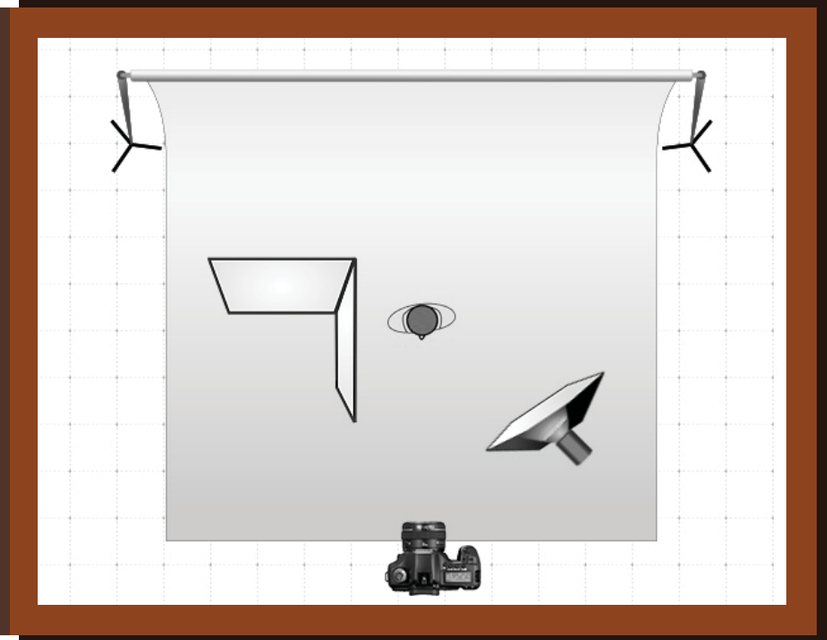
Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his master of fine arts degree, a career opportunity opened once he began working with Evolve Edits. Through teaching photography classes and writing about photography, Dustin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

evolveedits.com



final inspiration

photographer	matt mathews | mattmathewsphotography.com
image title	a phoenix from the ashes



exposure	f/ 5.6 @ 1/160 iso 200
lighting	one profoto b1 in a 5 ft octabox camera right
location	matt mathews photography, birmingham al
gear	canon 5d mk III 50mm 1.2 lens profoto b1 5 ft octabox white v flat

Image © Matt Mathews

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