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july 2016

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THE ANNIVERSARY EDITION



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Sabratore Cincotta
BEHIND THE SHUTTER

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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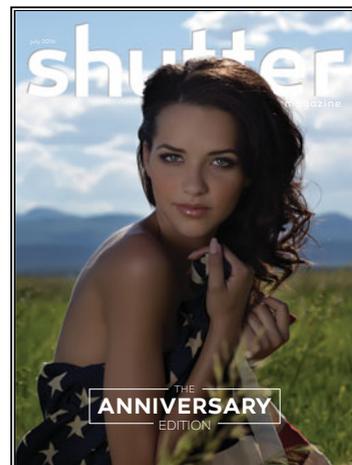
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THE COVER

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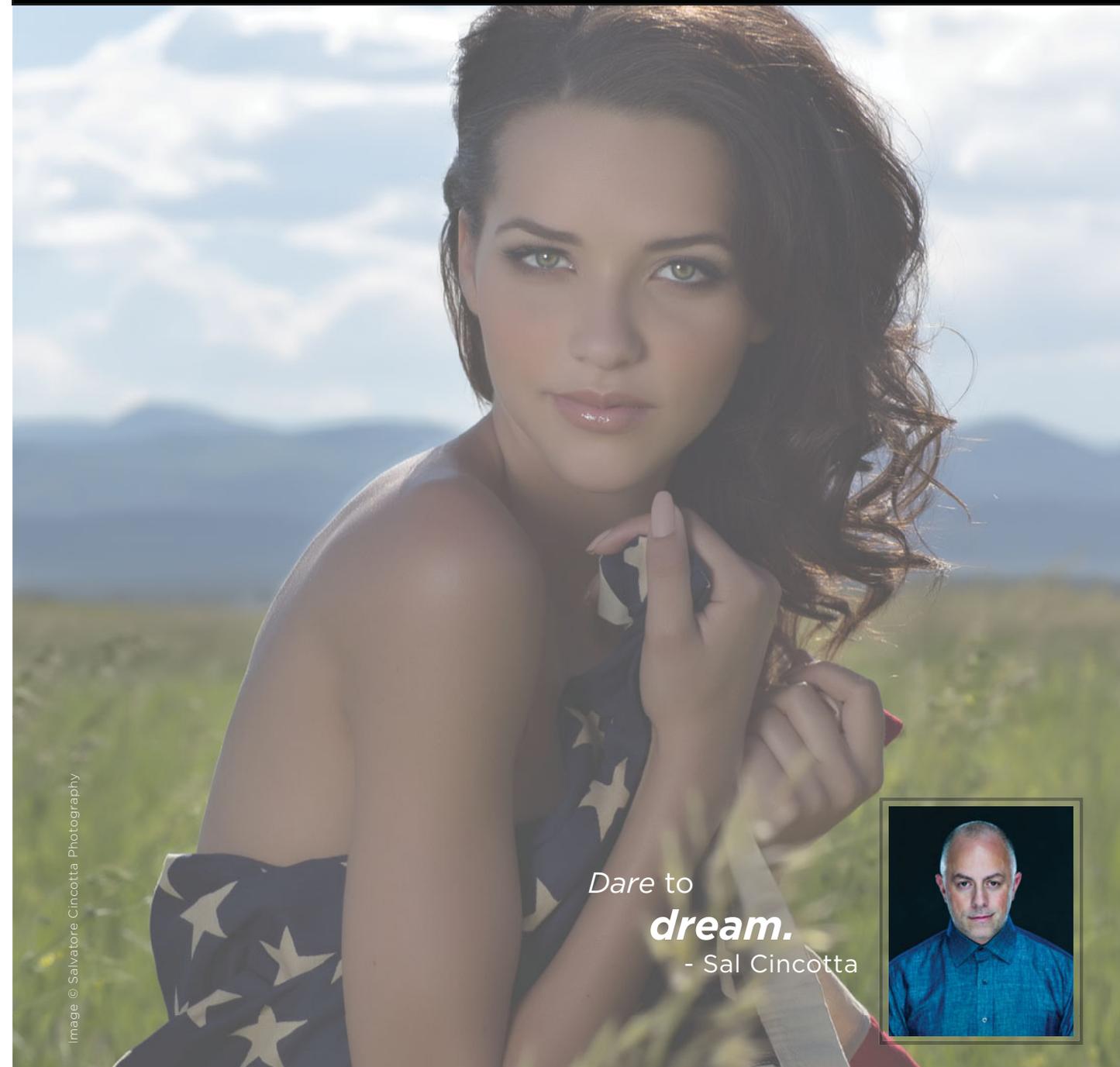
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LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief



LIGHTING IN MOTION

THE ART OF LIGHTING DANCERS

with Craig LaMere



One of the things about photography I love the most are the millions of genres and subjects there are to capture. My interests vary a lot. To get an idea of how varied they are, all you have to do is take a look at my music play list at any given time. You will find Tool, Journey, Metallica, DMX, Frank Sinatra and Pearl Jam all occupying the same space. My shooting interests are just as wide. I love seniors, fashion and portraits as much as I love boudoir, weddings and families. Each genre comes with its own set of challenges.

This month, I look at one genre I can't get enough of: dance.

CHOOSING THE BEST SHOOTING OPTIONS

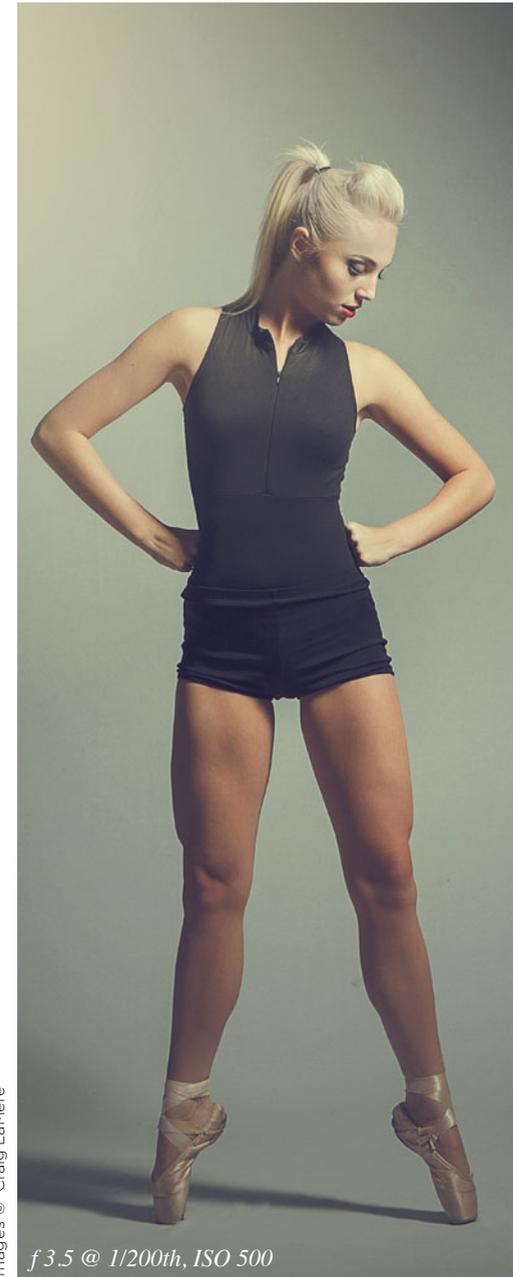
When I shoot dancers, my first three thoughts are: How are we going to pose the subjects? What is our light source going to be? What mod do I want to use? The way you pose your dancer determines how you conduct the rest of the shoot. Are they going to stand still, or are you going to let them cut a little rug?



Images © Craig LaMere

SHOOTING STATIC DANCERS

If you are going to shoot more static poses or if your subject is going to move and pause, you can approach the shoot in more of a portrait mindset. Shooting a portrait session is far easier to control due to limited variances. You pretty much place your subject, pose your subject, meter for the highlight and shoot. The choice of modifier you use for a portrait session is not limited, so you have full control.



Images © Craig LaMere



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SHOOTING MOVING DANCERS

If you want to capture your dancers' movement in studio, that is a whole other ballgame. You have quite a few decisions to make because you have to account for anticipated movement. You don't know for sure where the light is going to fall on your subject like you do in a portrait session, so you have to guess where your subject is going to be in relation to your light. And because of the movement, you have to be really choosy for your modifier. You have to decide if you want light all over to make the image light and airy, or if you want more directional light to add drama and power to the image. This decision determines the light source you use.



Image © Craig LaMere



Image © Craig LaMere



SHOOTING WITH BIG MODS

If you want light, airy images in studio, the choice of mod is a pretty simple one. Go with a large source like a 4x6 softbox or a 70-inch parabolic with either butterfly or loop light position to get the most coverage. Either setup is foolproof. With butterfly, you bring the light source behind and above you at 45 degrees down. If you have lower ceilings, this setup might be a little flat because you can't get the light high enough to make your pattern. In this case, bring the light to the right or left, and do a loop light pattern. Loop light gives you the dimension and depth you need.

SHOOTING FOR CONTRAST

If you want to shoot with more contrast with more dramatic lighting, shoot either beauty dish with a grid or a strip with a grid. Keep in mind that when you move to a light source with more contrast, especially with a grid, you have to be mindful of where the light is going to fall with the movement of your dancer. It's easy to clip or miss them altogether. This is why I recommend using a loop light pattern with the main light source. If you need fill light, use a second light source instead of a reflector or V-flat, since the main light source will not put out enough light because of its distance to the subject.

For fill, I find the best solution is to put a second light with a 4x7 or 3x4 box behind and above you. All I'm trying to do is send a huge wall of light at the subject. I usually meter the fill at a stop and a half lower than the main. That pretty much gives you enough light in the shadows so you can pull any info out that you need.

SHOOTING CONSTANT LIGHTS

Another light source I use to shoot dancers is continuous florescent lights. The thing that is so nice with the constants when shooting moving dancers is that you get what you see. There are no surprises, and you can shoot as fast as your camera can fire, which is a huge plus when shooting dancers.

The downside of shooting constants is, like always, the power issue. That's huge because of the combination in camera settings you need to make it work. Because of the power of constants, you have to shoot at a higher ISO. I shoot at about 400 to 500 ISO when I'm shooting my constants in a portrait session, but I have to go way higher when using them for dance because, unlike in portraiture, you have to shoot at a higher speed to freeze action. That magic number is 1/500 or higher.

To freeze action without flash outside, you need to be around 1/500 or higher. Because I treat constants exactly the way I shoot natural light, the rules are the same. I have to get my shutter speed to 1/500 or more. To do this, I usually have to push the ISO to 1000 so I can shoot at f2.8–f3.2. When I am shooting dancers like this, I always use my 24–70 2.8G at 24mm–60mm when I'm at f2.8–f3.2. Your images will be in focus and sharp because you don't have depth-of-field issues like you would if you were shooting at 135mm–200mm at those f-stops.

Shooting with this setup allows you to rapid-fire your camera and give yourself the most opportunities to capture that perfect moment. But if you are a strobe user, there is a better way.



f 6.3 @ 1/250th, ISO 100

Image © Craig LaMere

PERFECT TIMING VS. RAPID FIRE

I'll bet most strobe shooters who are trying to capture movement do it one frame at a time. They set up their lights, tell the client to move or jump, and then try to hit the shutter button at the perfect time. Everyone gets lucky every once in awhile, and sometimes you get the perfect image in the first few attempts. This method takes a little while, which can be hard on your client.

Then one day on YouTube, I saw this strobe flashing like a machine gun on a fashion shoot. I was so sad watching the video because I was thinking I would have to sell all my strobes to get the ones I just saw—I had to be able to do that. I'd usually unload a bunch of heads on eBay and get the new ones, but on second thought, that would have meant a loss of money. I decided to call the manufacturer of the strobes I was using at the time. I told a rep about what I had seen, and asked if my heads would do that. They said it was just a matter of the heads being at a power level where they can recycle as fast as the body can shoot.

With that info in hand, I went to work. Finding the recycle time was just one part of the equation. The other parts that go into the recipe are the f-stop and the ISO and lens combination in relation to the power output of the strobe. At the time, my fastest body would shoot at about 10 frames a second, so the goal was to find the place in the strobe's power that would allow for that recycle time.

The power setting that would recycle fast enough was about a quarter power on a 600ws head. Most studio shooting is done at ISO 100 and at about 1/160 shutter speed, but because of the low power, your images will be way too dark at any f-stop past f2. The issue with f2 is that the room for error is very small. To fix the aperture issue, we have to shoot at a higher f-stop, which means we have to move the ISO up.

But as you move the ISO up, you start to deal with the noise in your images. It's not a huge issue if you are shooting on white, but it can be a mess if you are shooting in a dark location. I found that if I move my ISO to 400, I can meter at f3.2–f4. That might seem like a pretty open area, but that is where lens choice and focal length come into play. Shooting a 200mm at f3.2 and shooting a 24mm at f3.2 gives you different results. My Nikon 24–70 2.8G is the perfect fit for this setup. I like the zoom because you can move in and out as you need to. With the wide focal length, you won't have depth-of-field concerns, and every part of the image you shoot at f3.2 to f4 will be sharp.



f4.0 @ 1/250th, ISO 400

Image © Craig LaMere

If you have never tried this method, try it out for your next dance shoot. A faster body will give you the most opportunities to capture that perfect moment in time that your dancer will love. ■

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



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5 Ways to Improve Client Relationships

with Vanessa Joy

If we've learned anything about our industry in the past 10 years, it's that advertising doesn't work the same anymore, but relationships still do. Why? Because people ultimately don't change. Humans thrive off the feel-good energy that good relationships create. Building relationships with your clients will bring more people in your door—and happy people at that—than advertising ever could.

One of my favorite books is *The Five Love Languages*. It breaks down the ways humans can practically communicate and receive love. Everyone has a tendency to give or receive love in one or two (or, hey, maybe all five) of these love languages, and your clients are no different. I'm not saying you need to know the love language of all your clients. But a great way to make sure you communicate your appreciation for them is to implement at least three of the five love languages as a regular practice in your business.

I've taken the five love languages explored in the book (words of affirmation, acts of service, quality time, gifts and physical touch), and translated them into ideas we can apply to our photography businesses.



Words of Affirmation

I tend to have a tough time with this one in my home. I'm like Will Smith in the movie *Hancock*, where he stutters as he tries to say, "Good job" to a police officer. This might be the simplest thing we can do in our businesses, but it's the one that benefits our photography the most.

When you're photographing a client, genuinely compliment them on something. It's a confidence boost for your client to hear they look good, or that they're listening to your posing directions really well, and it directly affects how they look on camera. Confidence is a key aspect of modeling, and you can help your clients get there by speaking to this love language.





Acts of Service

Photographers tend to easily do this on a shoot, whether you're a wedding photographer being the hotel maid by cleaning up the room before it's photographed or being the hair stylist for a senior shoot. A lot of that extra work that we put into our job the day-of tends to go unnoticed, so if you want to speak to this love language, try the following.

Set up a few email automations in your client management system—like Tave, 17Hats or Sprout Studio—that give your clients something more, something unexpected. I send my clients timing guidelines right around the time they're planning their hair and makeup schedule, ideas for them to be comfortable in their wedding shoes once it gets closer to the big day and other helpful advice that a wedding photographer typically wouldn't provide. This shows that I go above and beyond, but also helps me communicate with them easily and more often.



Image © Vanessa Joy

Quality Time

This can be one of the toughest to implement because it requires something that most business owners don't have enough of: time. Your clients probably won't have much of it either, so my idea here is to offer quality time with your clients, but also give them the option of a faster experience.

Six to eight weeks before every wedding, I ask my brides to fill out their online questionnaire, and then offer to meet up for coffee near my studio to go over their schedule or do a call instead. Nine times out of 10, they don't have the time to drive to me, so they take me up on the phone call or video chat. It's a win-win.

I have seen photographers attempt this by taking clients out to dinner after an engagement shoot. I think that idea is great, but it does take more time and money that you may not have. Or worse, I've heard clients speaking about photographers they met with who insisted the clients join them for dinner after the engagement session, and the clients didn't book because they weren't interested in spending the extra time. To each her own, but make sure your clients aren't feeling pressured either way.



Gifts

This one is already pretty popular in the photographer community, so I'll just give you a few ideas for gifts to give your clients—perhaps when they book with you or when you give them their final product.

- Present a bottle of wine in a custom wine box from Photo Flash Drive.
- I give away the book *10 Great Dates Before You Say 'I Do'*.
- I like the photo lockets from Chasing Locketts and luggage tags from Miller's Lab.
- How about a gift card for the movies or a restaurant?
- A Starbucks gift card is always appreciated.
- Chocolates and sweets are easy.
- A honeymoon tote bag with your logo on it would be cool.
- Boxfox makes awesome custom gift boxes.

The best thing about a gift is that it really doesn't matter if it's worth \$5 or \$500. Communication through the gifting love language is more about the thought behind the gift than the gift itself. It's the idea that you were thinking about them when they weren't there, and went so far as to surprise them—that really brings it home.



Physical Touch

This is another area where I'm not the best in the world. Maybe it's because I scored 96% male-minded on a personality test once or I'm just inherently shy, but it's really amazing how far a hug goes. Truthfully, Americans really are the worst at this. In many countries, you greet perfect strangers with a hug and kiss, but stay culturally appropriate when you show affection.

If you want to immediately relax your clients and make them feel like you're their best friend in the world, just skip the handshake when they come in for a consultation and go right for the hug. As long as you go for it with a huge smile, like it's the most natural thing in the world, you can't go wrong. It'll instantly disarm them and make for a much better consultation, session or wedding day—for both of you.

If you have the time, check out the book *The Five Love Languages*. Its suggestions will create happier clients who will make your job more pleasant, give you more referrals and make you more money. ■



Image © Vanessa Joy

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Images © Vanessa Joy

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

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BUILDING BLOCKS

PICKING LOW-HANGING FRUIT

with Skip Cohen

It was back in my Hasselblad days when I first heard the expression *low-hanging fruit*. Low-hanging fruit refers to those things you can do quickly and easily for a positive impact on your business.

For over a year, I've written article after article meant to be building blocks for a successful photography business. Well, we're already halfway through 2016, and it's time to get you thinking about some of that low-hanging fruit out there to help you build a strong second half for your business.

1 OWN YOUR ZIP CODE

Knock on the doors, literally, of 20 businesses within a mile or two of your home base. Introduce yourself to Realtors, attorneys, doctors, etc. It doesn't matter what your specialty is. Say something like, "Hi, I'm [your name here]. I just want to introduce myself. My specialty is wedding photography, but that doesn't mean I can't help you with any of your photographic needs. I love living in this area, and I'm here to help any time."

2 CALL YOUR LAB

You need new products and ideas for promotions. There's nothing easier than a phone call to your lab with the question, "What's new?" Good labs are creating new products all the time, and you don't need to wait until the next convention to find out what they are.

3 PICK UP THE PHONE

Contact 10 clients from last year. This is relationship building, which is nothing more than keeping in touch. Become a part of your clients' lives—not in a hard-sell way, but as a relationship.

4 BUILD A STASH

This is about your blog, making it more effective. Sit down and come up with 10 topics for blog posts, and then over the next couple of weeks, write them up. That will give you 10 posts to help make posting more consistent.

Stuck on ideas for posts? Try some of these. Give your readers picture-taking tips to help make their images better. Tips on posing, moving in closer, backgrounds, storytelling, locations for great pictures in your community, flash on or flash off, and depth of field. There are so many things you do every day that will be helpful to your readership.

5 CHANGE YOUR 'ABOUT' PAGE PHOTO

It's bizarre to me that so many of you are professional photographers yet share a horrible or irrelevant headshot of yourself on your website's About page. My favorite shot is one of the photographer working with a client. This shot is taken off the right shoulder of the photographer from slightly behind, with the subject in the background just outside the depth of field. Plant the seed that you're a photographer.

6 VISIT YOUTUBE

YouTube is loaded with great content from virtually every iconic photographer in the industry. Just hit the search box and start typing in names, starting with Sal Cincotta. With Sal, you'll find video after video to help you raise the bar in your business and technique.

7 COME UP WITH A SPECIAL PROJECT

Special projects in photography all tie back to keeping your battery charged when it comes to the passion that got you into the business in the first place. Just to start, pick a subject or technique you love, and then start building images around it. Your primary business may not be what you started out wanting to photograph for a living, but that doesn't mean you can't keep the passion for the craft alive by focusing on subjects you're passionate about.

As you start to build a theme of images, use them in your blog to share ideas on creativity. Remember, your website is about what you sell, but your blog is about your heart.

8 LOOK FOR IMAGES FOR THIS YEAR'S HOLIDAY CARD

It's never too early, and no photographer should ever use a store-bought card. That means now is the time to be thinking about your December card and looking for an image to use. Don't forget about images for your thank-you notes and stationery as well.

9 VISIT A FEW WEBSITES

Every photographer you admire has a website. Take the time to visit each one and look at their galleries. Here are some iconic names to Google: Mary Ellen Mark, Joe McNally, Howard Schatz, Gregory Heisler, Peter Hurley, Seth Resnick, Matthew Jordan Smith and John Sexton.

10 REVIEW YOUR GALLERIES

Styles change, your skill set changes and consumer trends change—let's get your galleries cleaned up. For the most part, this is just house-cleaning, and requires you to delete any image that isn't better than what Uncle Harry could get. Show only your very best work.

11 PHONE A FRIEND

A healthy network doesn't happen by accident. It takes work. Pick six people to call this week who are in your network but who you haven't talked with in a month or more.

12 WRITE A LETTER TO PAST CLIENTS

Whatever your specialty, there's at least one associated type of photography that you can easily expand into. Weddings, babies, children, family and pets are all connected. Expand your services, and then send a personalized letter to your past clients announcing it.

13 ADD-ON SALES

Your core product might be photographs, but you've got a full selection of associated products. One great example is picture frames. Another is presentation boxes and image storage. Most of you tend to stay focused on albums, but there's so much more to offer. Looking for more ideas? Wander over to PhotoFlashDrive.com.

14 SCHEDULE AN OPEN HOUSE

So what if you work out of your home? That doesn't mean you can't remind people what you do for a living. In fact, my guess is that 50 percent of the photographers in the portrait-social categories are part time and work out of their home.

Ever been to a gallery opening? Typically it's an evening of wine and cheese and a chance to meet the artist and see their work. Find a small, fun restaurant or other venue. Rent a few easels to show off your work. Send out an upscale-looking invitation and then be there to meet and greet members of the community.

You don't have to do this alone. Bring in another photographer or other vendors looking to reach the same target audience. Cohost with a florist.

15 SHARE YOUR IMAGES WITH VENDORS

I watched a video by Bob Davis recently and loved something he does after each wedding. He "blesses" each vendor with images of their services at his weddings. He sends images to the florist, caterer, entertainment, etc. after the event. The only thing he asks is that the images always have his photo credit.

16 SET UP A NETWORKING LUNCHEON

Pick an inexpensive restaurant with a private room. Send out invitations to everybody associated with your specialty. For wedding photographers, it would be florists, wedding planners, spas, tux shops, bridal stores, travel agents, caterers, bakers, limo companies, musician agents and venues. For pet photographers, it would be animal clinics, pet stores, pet food/product reps, etc. Children's photographers would seek restaurants that cater to kids, toy stores, children's entertainment companies and clothing stores.

The purpose of the meeting is just to talk about your businesses and meet each other. Imagine the power of the network you can build sitting between a florist and a caterer over lunch.

17 BE A LUNCH SLUT

Yes, I did just write that, but only because I consider myself to be the biggest lunch slut in photography! I'm constantly meeting new photographers and business owners over lunch. It's such an easy way to build a relationship with somebody new, and there are few things more effective in getting to know somebody.

Start by picking up the phone and inviting one of your competitors to lunch. Many of you need to stop acting like your competitors are your enemies. There are so many things you can do together to help strengthen both your businesses.

18 TAKE THE DAY OFF

What could be easier? Many of you have become so obsessed worrying about your business that you've reached the point of diminishing returns and are about to crash and burn. Learn to recognize the signs of burnout and then take action. Step away from the business and clear your head. You'll be amazed what new ideas you'll come up with when you've recharged your batteries.

There you have it, 18 ideas to help you build stronger brand recognition; many of them, you can be doing at the same time. You're part of an amazing industry, but building your skill set is only one of the ingredients for success. You've also got to build relationships with your vendors, clients and community. ■

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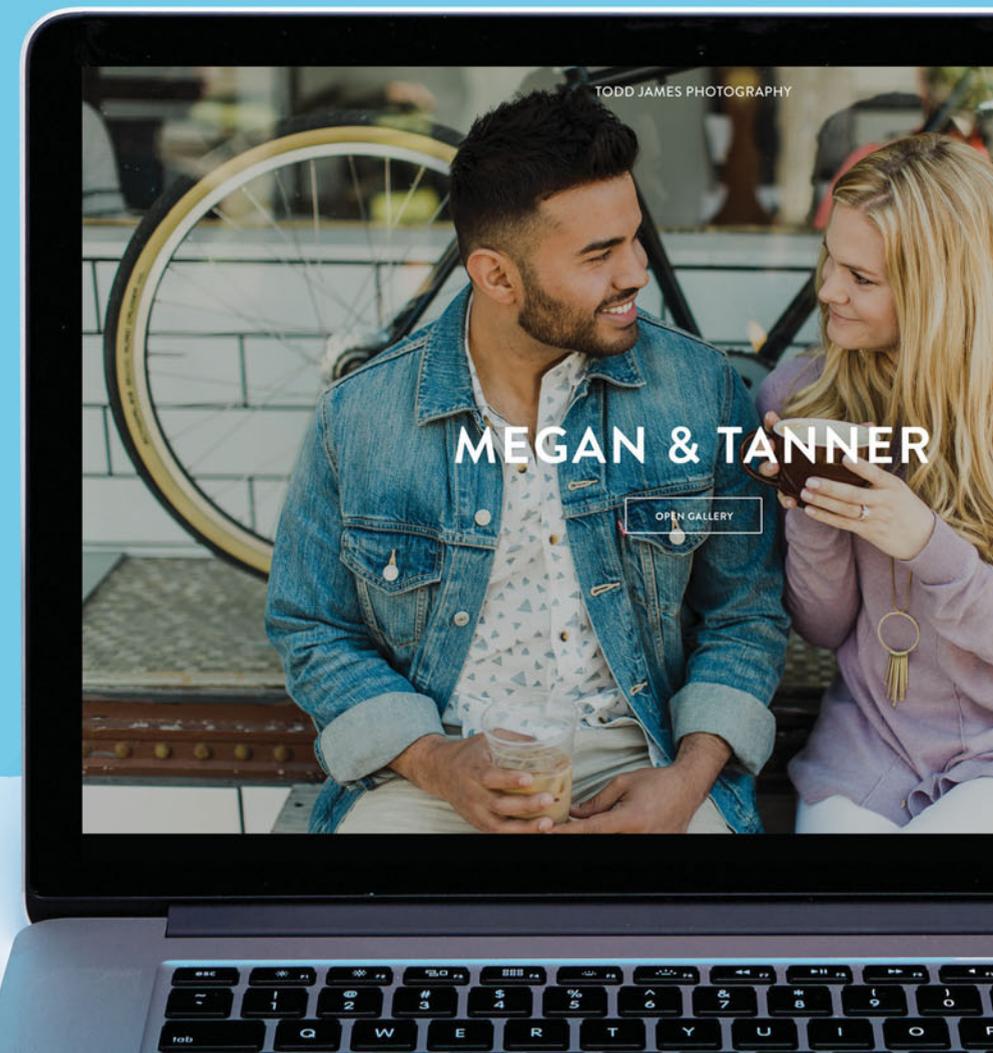


Skip Cohen is president and founder of Marketing Essentials International, a consulting firm specializing in projects dedicated to photographic education, marketing and social media support across a variety of marketing and business platforms. He founded SkipCohenUniversity.com in January 2013. He's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

101

with Joe Switzer

Over the years, we have found a combination of both artificial and natural light is best. Letting each shoot and situation tell us what to do has been the best approach. Our style is quick, with limited time to film each scene. This month, I show you how to light both weddings and corporate events. The goal is for you to achieve consistent, beautiful lighting with some epic flare. Here are the Top 5 must-knows about lighting the Switzerfilm way.

5 Working with different lighting temperatures in the same room

If you film or photograph weddings, this is something you'll run into consistently. On a typical wedding day, when you walk into the bridal suite, there can be three or four different-colored lights in the room—lights on the ceiling, lights on the walls, some window light and a bulb light from the makeup artist blasting on the face of the bride.

When we were first getting started, we would just film and hope we could change the color in post. That approach didn't work. The color of our videos was inconsistent and unflattering. To avoid trying to match up all the different lights, we have learned to always move our subject. In almost 100 percent of all situations, there is always a window with some natural light.

We arrive early and work with the makeup artists to help them bring their equipment to the light. More

often than not, the hair and makeup professionals are happy to work with us. After we get our main subject near the window light, we turn off all other lights. This allows us to keep our subjects bright and the background darker. Natural light looks beautiful, and you don't have to mess with any artificial lights in tight spaces.

Avoid filming with different lights on in a room. Find a way to get to the natural light and turn all the other lights off when you can. If the hair and makeup artists need a light on, it's okay to have one light on for the rest of the room to keep everyone happy, but less is best in these situations. A good rule of thumb is to take the bride to a window and turn off all the lights. In extreme situations, we have changed rooms or moved the bride or groom to the hotel lobby. Take action and get rid of all the mixed lighting.



Image © Joe Switzer

4 Wedding reception light

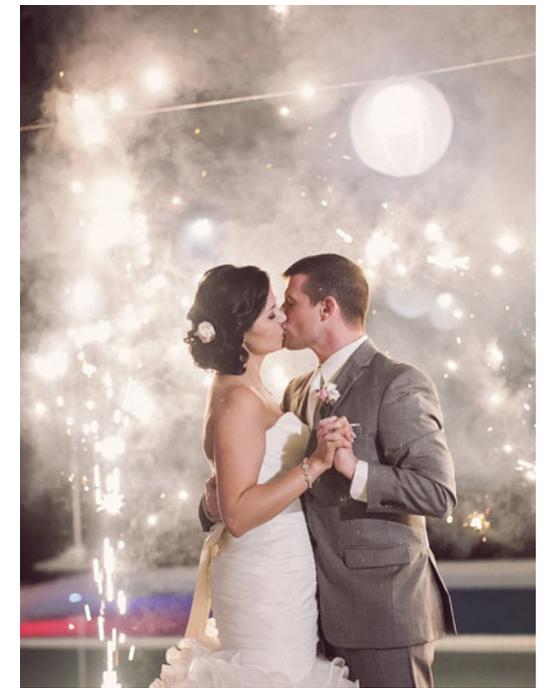
What do you do when the DJ turns on his blue, green and red lights? You could do nothing, and have a bride with a red or blue face for all the reception video shots. That's not an option. You could ask the DJ to turn off his lights. That's not going to happen without a fight. Adjusting the settings in your camera for five or 10 minutes that you don't have won't help much.

Receptions are dark, so you have no natural light to work with. The only solution in these situations is to have your own lights ready to go. We've tried a half dozen different lights. Our vision for artificial lighting was something small and powerful. This wasn't really possible until LED lighting technology became available.

For 100 percent of all our artificial light solutions, we use Fiilex lights. The model we use is the S282 Mini All-Weather Interview Kit. This light is portable, bright, water-resistant and small. We can quickly

adjust color temperatures and change the brightness. Our photographers are ecstatic when we turn on these lights. The lights have a barn door, so we can control the size of the light. This works wonderfully for dances and speeches because the reception venue theme and look remain the same and the subject is in beautiful light.

The next time a DJ uses his rainbow lights on the dance floor, you won't have to worry if you have the Fiilex light setup. Your light will overpower his, and you'll have the consistent beautiful light you want. For our shoots, we carry two lights and stands with a set of extra batteries. We want to be portable and never worry about plugging into an outlet. If the reception is outside on a beach and it's raining, the Fiilex lights are weather-resistant and the batteries last for hours. No more struggles with wedding reception lighting. Make it easy on yourself and go get a Fiilex S282 kit.



Images © Joe Switzer

3 Lighting etiquette

It's likely you've worked with a photographer or filmmaker who had no clue about what's right or wrong at a wedding reception or other event. Remember that planners, designers and coordinators have worked a year or more on these events. They have themes, colors and details that are important to your client. Those clients have spent the majority of their budget on that, not your video services. You could be ruining the ambiance of the party with your oversize video lights if you're not careful.

This is not always about what you want or need. It's about the team you're working with and the client. Take a step back and realize that what you shine at the reception can do damage if it's too much. Keeping lighting to a minimum has worked well for us. For the major events like first dance or a speech, we crank the brightness higher. When nothing is happening, we turn the lights off.

Put the lights in a low-traffic place so people don't notice or trip on your expensive gear. The ultimate goal is to not ruin the mood of the room or moments with your dorky video light. Good common light etiquette goes a long way, and you'll get referrals from planners, DJ's and other photographers when you show your team-player attitude.



Image © Joe Switzer

2 Looking for the light

I'm always looking for light in every scene. My first step is to look at the ground and then factor in the sky. Ultimately, your camera will show you what looks good. Over time, you'll get more comfortable finding light more quickly. When I'm looking for the perfect light positioning, I use edges of lights that a building might cast in a city. In a park, a shade tree gives a beautiful light flare when shooting a subject in motion. If I'm shooting into the light, it's a given that a Ronin-M or track should be used.

The look of sun flare and motion look epic. Have your camera set to manual so you can control the exposure. If you're filming into the sun on AV or auto mode, it will change the exposure and take away your sun flare. On just about every video shoot, we walk on set and ask, "Where do you want us?" Before you answer that question, let the light tell you what to do.

For close-ups of people, I look for shade so they're not squinting. The same can be said for interviews. When we're filming adventure or action, we want all the sun flare we can get. It's easy to forget about background lighting like bokeh, which is the out-of-focus background light. The lens and background you choose determine how your bokeh looks.

One of our favorite lenses for this is the 85mm, but as long as you have a long lens or a lens with a lower aperture option, you'll be able to maximize bokeh. The most typical example of good bokeh is candlelight. On our recent shoot inside a spa, we were able to position the subject where the background had all the candlelight, which maximized the bokeh.

Always be thinking about how to maximize your natural light and background light to get the results you're looking for.



Image © Joe Switzer



Images © Joe Switzer

1 Controlling the schedule

We always try to schedule our filmmaking around the “magic light” times. That means early or late in the evening.

A good example of this is the workflow and scheduling of our most recent photo and video shoot in Pennsylvania. During the heat of the day, we filmed inside or in shade. Most of the shots were outside hotels, in spas and by pools, on golf courses and beauty shots. For lighting to look dreamy outside, it’s crucial to get your scheduled shoots during the first two hours in the morning and the last two hours of sunlight in the evening.

Mornings worked well for golfing because the grass sparkled with dew in the rising sun. It has a glistening effect, and looks incredible in wide shots. Sometimes you get those puffy white clouds and sunshine that

can look great at high noon. Always work with your client to get the most of your weather and natural light conditions.

Design the schedule in your favor. When you run into rain or extreme weather conditions, you can go to your backup plan for inside or under cover. Don’t let your corporate clients or wedding couples determine the schedule. Plan for lighting success with a good game plan to take advantage of weather, sunrises and sunsets.

On your next shoot, don’t settle for average lighting. Move your subjects, turn lights off, have your artificial mobile lights charged and ready. Take control of the schedule and look for those shadows and sun flare. Move quickly, and remember: No matter what situation you face, you can always find good light. ■



Images © Joe Switzer

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

switzerfilm.com

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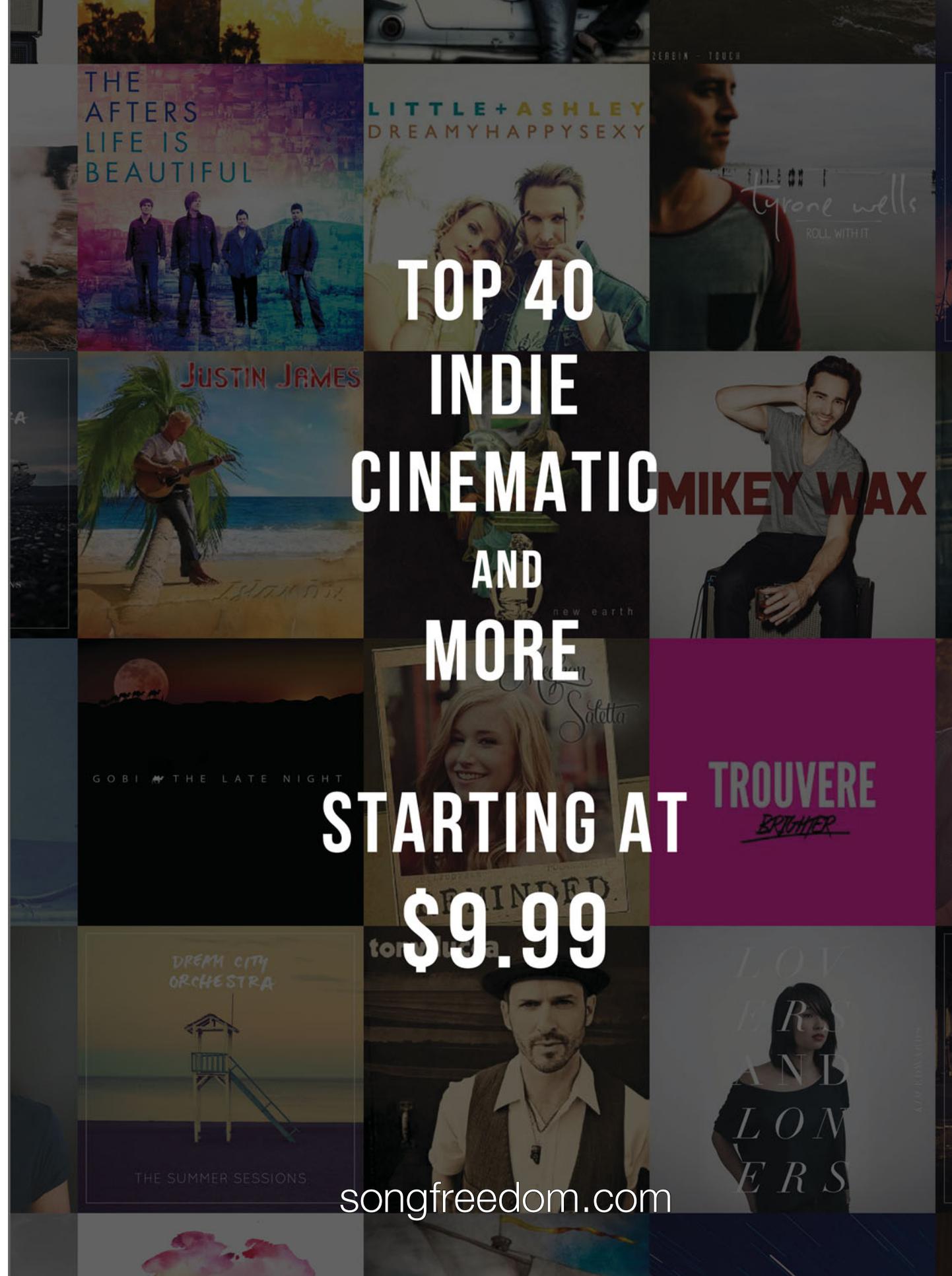
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FIVE TIPS FOR
DEFINING
YOUR
STYLE

with Sal Cincotta

Stop copying other photographers.

Want to define your style? Allow me to tell you the surefire way not to: Copy what other photographers are doing. Sure, you love their work, you are a fan even. Nothing wrong with that. One thing missing: vision. You can copy their work, but you will forever be chasing their work.

This is the way they see the world. It is their vision. When you copy someone else, it never feels right because you don't really see it.

There is nothing wrong with looking to other photographers for inspiration. We all need some inspiration, and it's always inspiring to see how other photographers see the world. It's truly incredible: You can take 10 photographers, put them in the same room with the same camera, lens and light, and you will get 10 completely different images. That is awesome. But imagine if you were to try to copy another photographer in any given situation. It will always lack something and fall short of an incredible image.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Experiment and get uncomfortable.

It's easy to do what you have always done. It's predictable. You know you are going to get something that historically has worked for you. Maybe you are a veteran or a newbie still trying to figure out off-camera flash or how to use the settings on your camera. This piece of advice holds true for everyone.

The best way to find your style is to get out there and try something new. As a 10-year vet myself, I am constantly trying to push myself and try something that's new and refreshing. It is easy to get stale as an artist. Inspiration, which we will talk about next, becomes crucial in this journey to continue to grow.

The way I like to experiment is to try something new or different every time I shoot. Different doesn't mean reinventing the wheel. Different can be as simple as a tweak to something you have been doing for years.

I like to challenge myself and my team to push the limits of our creativity. We might walk into a wedding and I will issue a challenge. Today, it's all about reflections. Or it's all about geometric shapes or patterns. This forces me to look for repeating patterns, or triangles, or reflections in windows, tables, puddles, etc. This is an incredible way to get yourself to "see" things that you might not ordinarily be unaware of. Try it, and I promise you will see the difference.

Look to Hollywood and art museums for inspiration.

I always look to Hollywood for inspiration. I find it's much easier than looking at other photographers. Instead of trying to copy a Hollywood director, I try to incorporate his vision into my work. It's incredible what you will see if you are looking for it. Composition, tone, editing and lighting are all on display in an incredible way.

There are two movies I love and that never get old. *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* is visually breathtaking. The composition alone is mind-blowing. If you have not seen this movie, rent it and watch it with the volume off. Don't engross yourself in the storyline. Just watch and absorb.

Another great film is the miniseries *John Adams* starring Paul Giamatti. This is yet another example of incredible visual stimulation. This winner of 13 Emmy Awards is something worth watching for sure—and you'll even learn something about one of our presidents.

The key here is to watch how Hollywood is telling stories and to figure out how you can incorporate these techniques into your own storytelling.

For more great inspiration, head to your local art museum. I started doing this a few years ago. Every part of the painting is put to use. There is no wasted space. They had to tell a story on their canvas. In that story, they would tell substories as well. If you have a chance, sit there and just let your eye wander through a painting, and you will be amazed at what you find. Look for your primary element. Look for the secondary element. Look for that tertiary element if it exists.

Painters are incredible storytellers. The storytelling is not just about the subject they choose, but the use of color, composition, lighting, etc. Want to learn about portraits? Check out a guy named Rembrandt. He was a true master. I was at the National Gallery in London and had the honor of staring at some of his amazing work for hours.

Show your clients *your* style.

It becomes harder and harder to find your style when you are afraid to showcase it to your clients. Why? Based on my conversations with photographers, it appears you are afraid of the rejection. Instead, artists seek approval. It's an artificial security blanket that becomes a vicious circle. You lack confidence because you are not shooting true to the way you see the world. You are trying to deliver something that your clients like or want instead of being confident and showing them your true colors.

This was probably one of the toughest things for me to learn. I was so busy trying to make everyone happy that I lost sight of what I wanted to do and why I got into photography in the first place. And the funniest part of the whole thing is that once I started showing clients my style, basically the way I see the world, I started getting better clients. I started booking clients who valued the way I saw the world. And with that, I started making more money because I could charge more. And then my confidence grew with every shoot because of the positive feedback I was getting.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



EMBRACE the way you
see the **world.**

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Shoot for you.

Stop trying to be everything to everyone. Shoot for you. Embrace the way you see the world. You will never please everyone, and that's okay. Let it go. Here is what I can tell you: If you try to make everyone happy, you will make no one happy, including yourself. If you are like me, you got into photography because you loved it. I have seen so many photographers resent the business side of photography because they are no longer doing what they love.

It doesn't have to be that way. Embrace who you are as a photographer, and you will attract clients who love your work and will let you do your thing. When you get to that point, you will have more confidence, and with that confidence comes a new love for what you do.

Over the last few years, I have become extremely comfortable and confident in my work and my ability to create art for my clients. I am happy with what I am charging for my work, and I feel like I have the best job in the world. I get paid to do what I love every single day.

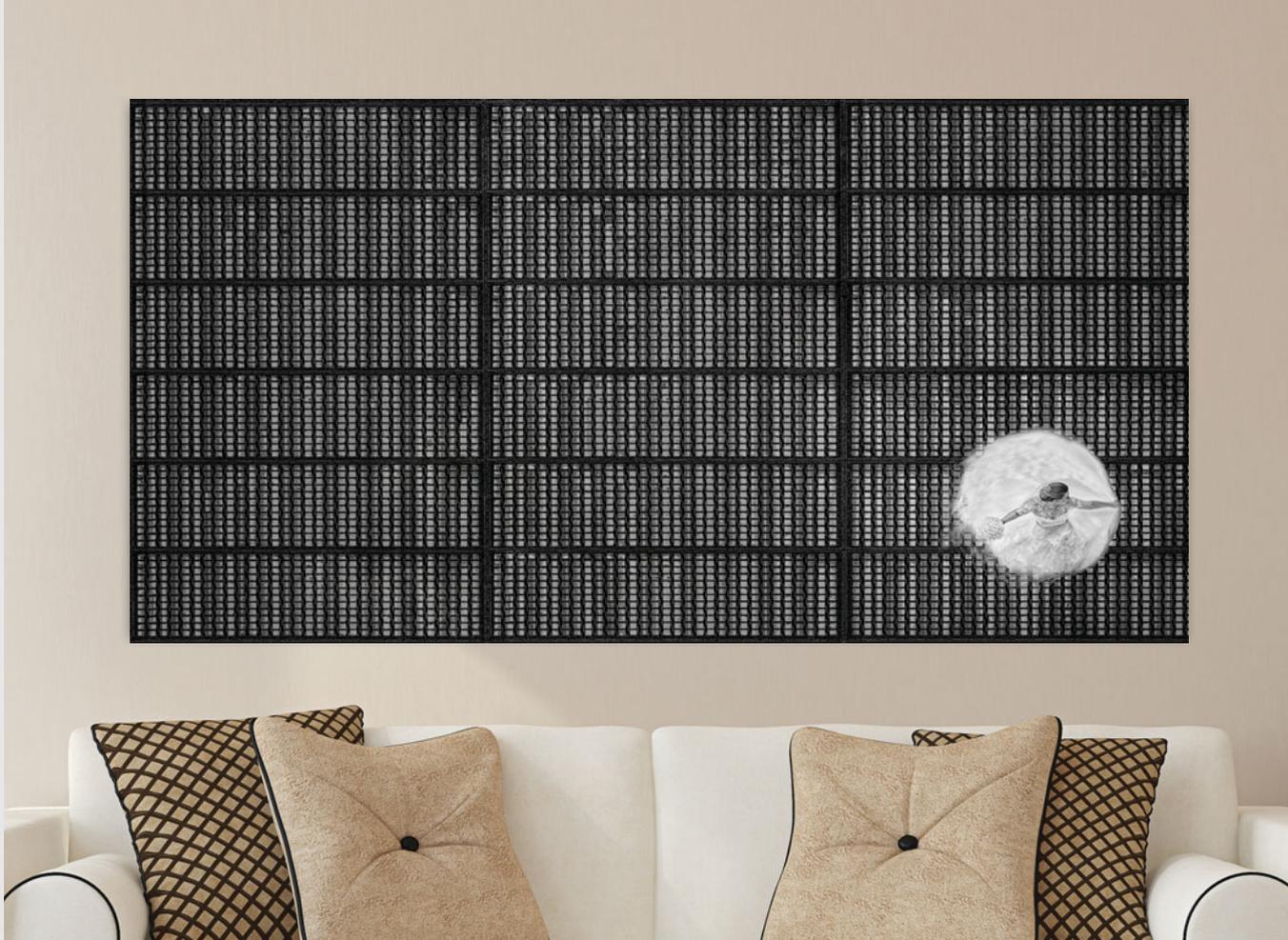
Chase your dreams and don't ever give up. ■

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

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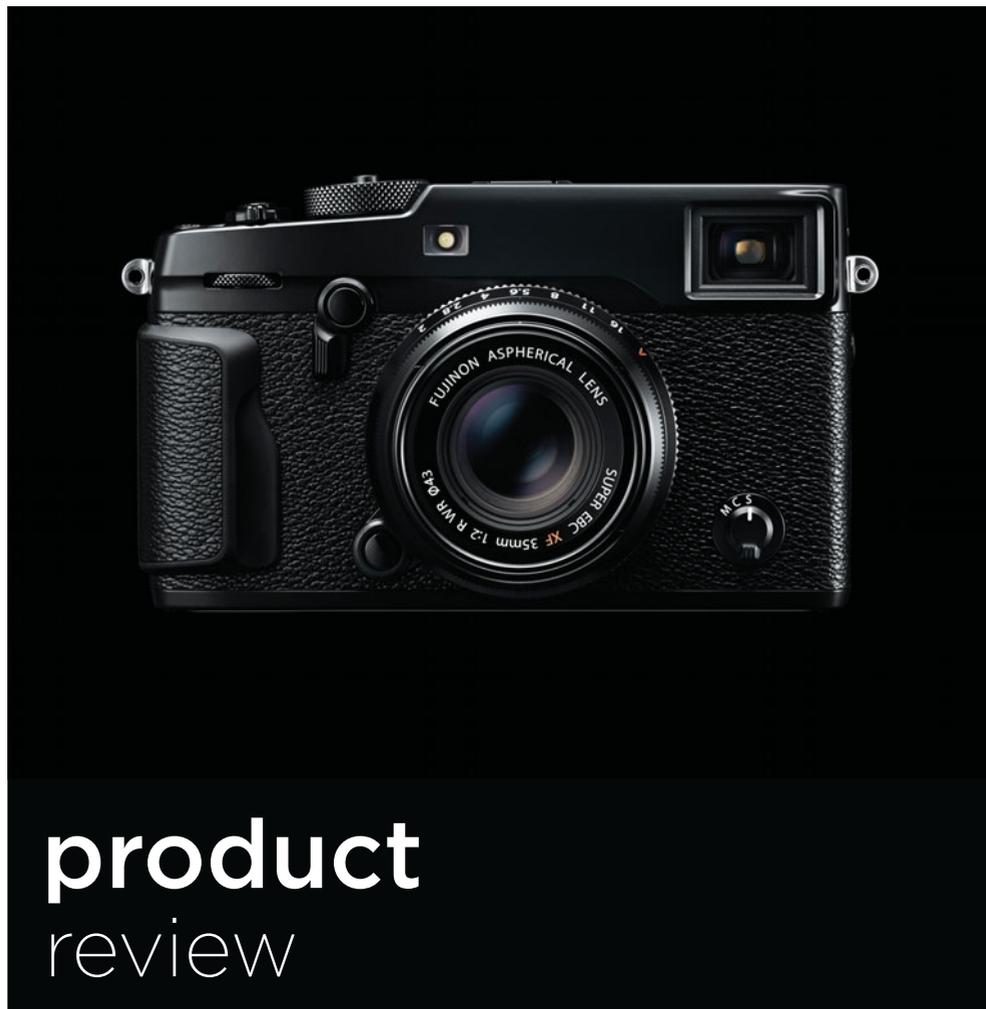
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FUJIFILM with *Salvatore Cincotta*

FUJIFILM



Why Fujifilm?

The Fujifilm X-Pro2 is my go-to travel camera. It offers incredible control in a compact form factor. There is no sacrifice of power and control with the X-Pro2. We have all been there: We create these incredible images and they take months to see the light of day. Why? Because it can be a pain in the ass to get them off the camera, into our editing software, processed and rendered out. I don't know about you, but I am the worst.

With the FujiFilm remote software, I can download images to my phone right from the camera. I get to edit and post my images in damn near real time for my friends and family to enjoy. What's the point of taking great pictures if you don't do anything with them?

Something else I love about the X-Pro2 is its portability. It's lightweight and powerful. This is the camera in my bag when I travel.

Interchangeable lenses, lightweight, 24MP Raw files, built-in wireless and 77 selectable focus points are just some of the reasons I am in love with the X-Pro2. Not only is it an incredible image creator, it is also rugged and weather-resistant for all types of challenging conditions.

The X-Pro2 is the only interchangeable-lens camera in the world featuring the Hybrid Viewfinder system, which incorporates both optical and electric viewfinders. With key functions located on the right side of the camera body, all main controls can be accessed without taking your eye from the viewfinder, allowing for a smoother workflow and improved output. Now with 77 selectable focusing points, the new Focus Lever on the back of the camera can be moved like a joystick in eight directions to instantly move the focus area.

It pairs perfectly with Fujifilm's FUJINON lens lineup, and the X Series mirrorless lens selection stands at 21 and counting. Check out Fujifilm's Professional Rental Program to test out the incredible X-Pro2 firsthand at FujifilmProRental.com.



For more information, visit fujifilmusa.com



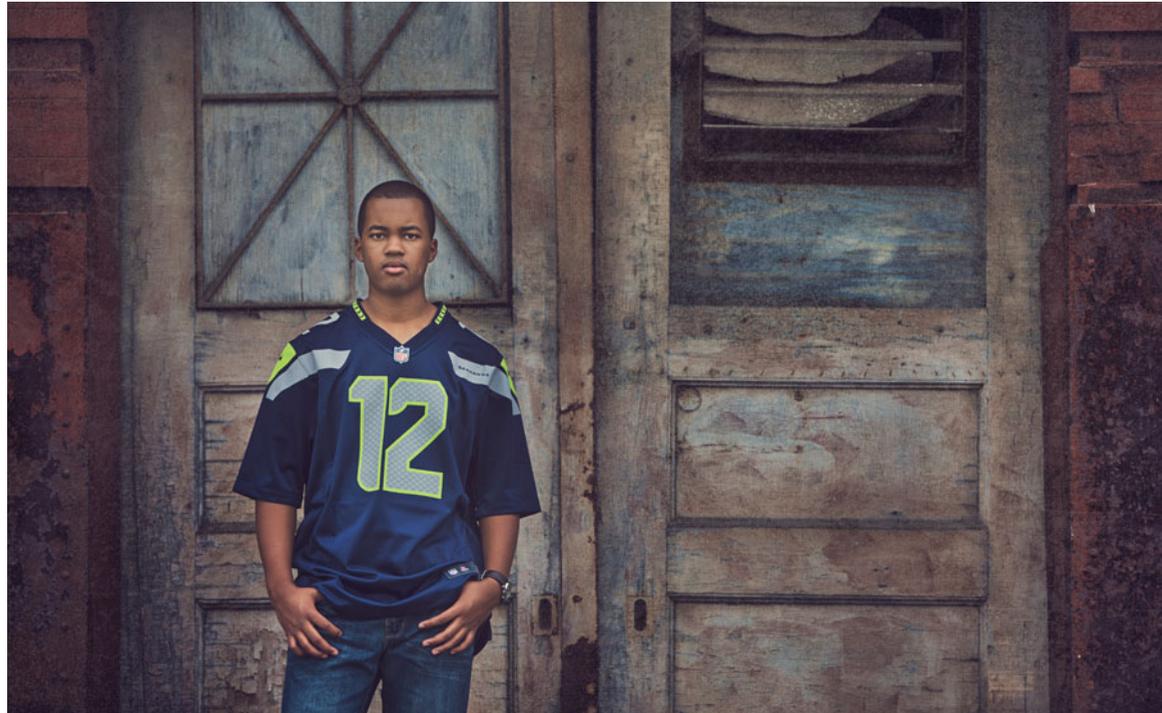
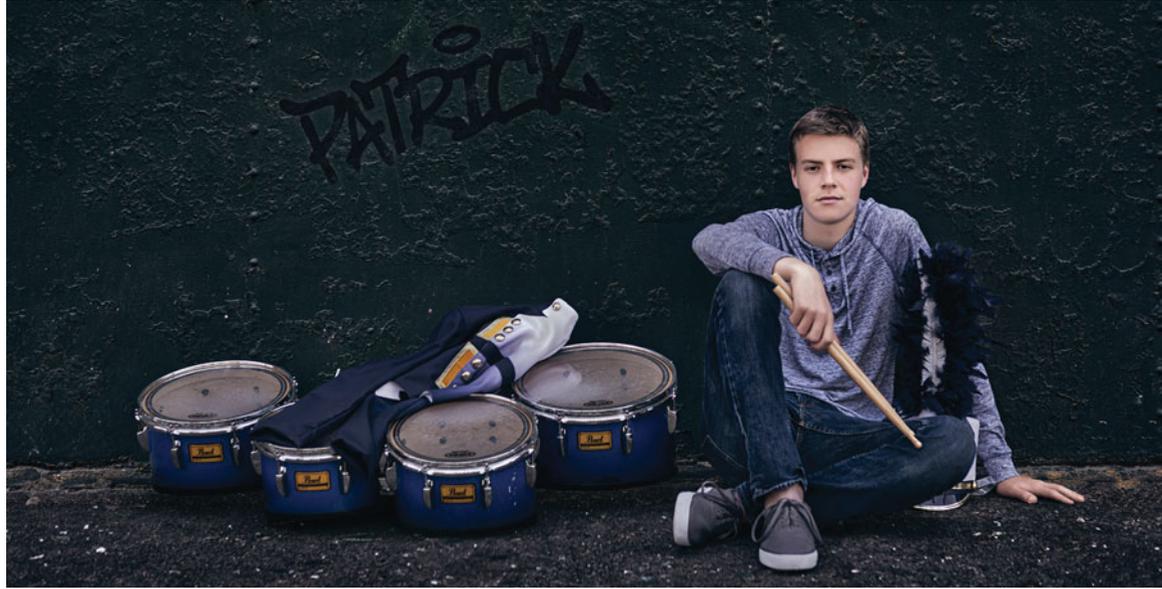
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HOW I PLANNED THE SHOT

BUSY-SEASON WORKFLOW

with Alissa Zimmerman

Summertime is prime time for on-location shooting at Salvatore Cincotta Photography. We're based in the Midwest, which means unpredictable weather on a daily basis. We schedule senior shoots, engagements, families and headshots back to back and have come up with a seamless process to ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible. Having the right workflow in place from the beginning takes your studio to the next level, allowing you the time to focus on giving your clients the best possible experience instead of having to worry about the details on the back end, especially when things go wrong (and they always will).



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

The scheduling.

With our crazy schedule, I like to choose two days per week to block off for shooting during busy season. We have set up a workflow that allows us to book five sessions per day; senior and engagement sessions last one and a half to two hours, and families and headshots last about an hour. It's extremely important to allow enough time for travel and food, and for any unforeseen errors in the day (clients running late, traffic, etc.).

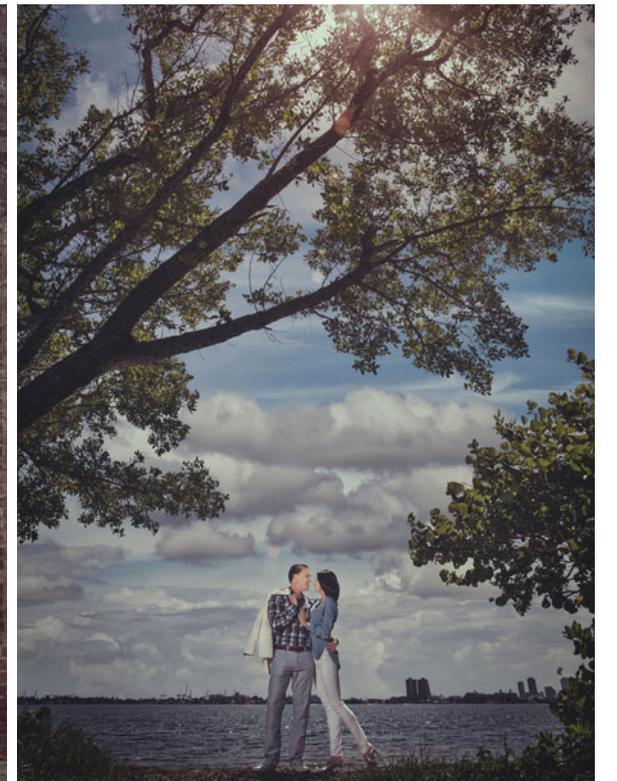
I start the booking session from the last time slot of the day and work forward as the bookings come in. This means we can use the first part of the day to get work done in the office and not throw a wrench in the schedule by booking a session mid-day. I also know Sal is not a morning person, so we make it so he doesn't have to be anywhere first thing in the morning.

Our normal time slots for a shoot day are as follows:

- 9:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m. | Senior Session
- 11:00 a.m.–11:30 a.m. | Lunch
- 12:00 p.m.–2:00 p.m. | Senior Session
- 2:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m. | Senior or Engagement Session
- 5:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. | Family Session or Headshot
- 6:30 p.m.–8:30 p.m. | Engagement Session



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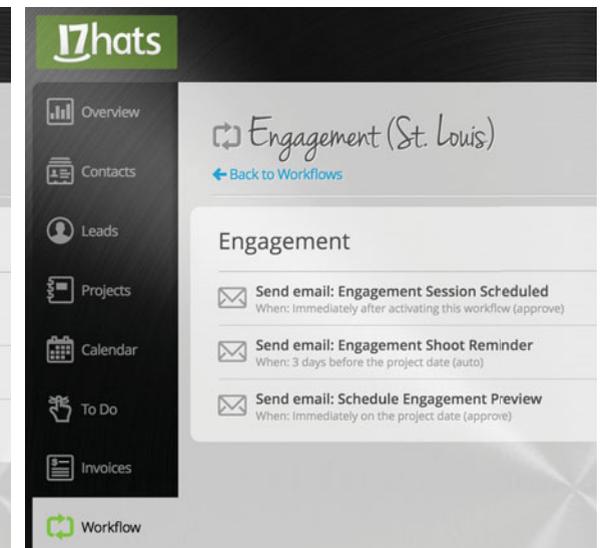
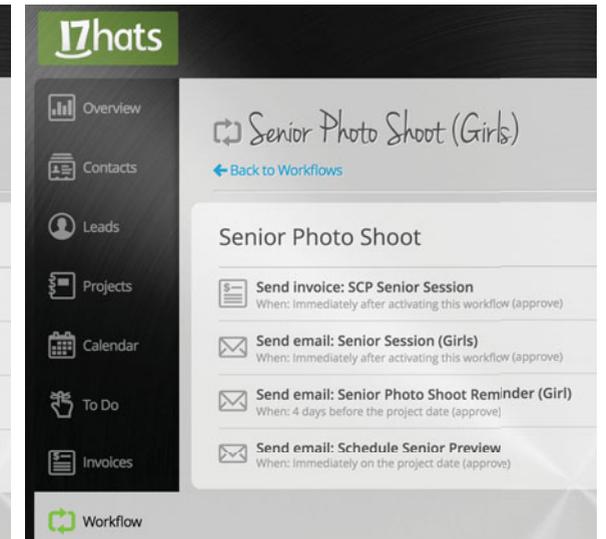
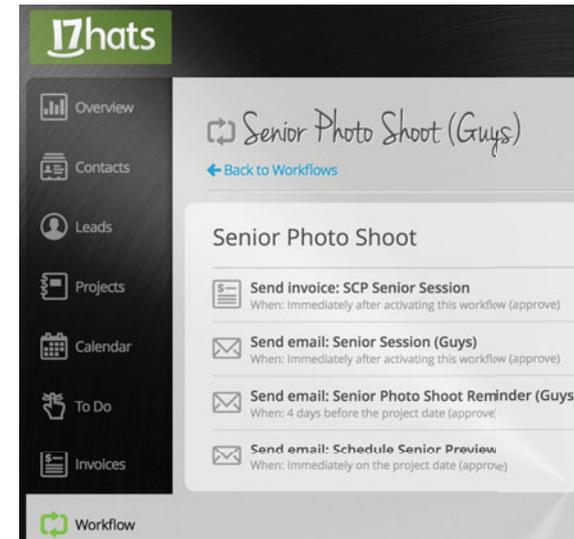


The back end.

17hats has been a game-changer for our studio. Having the ability to set up workflows for each type of shoot and customize each step of the process to send out auto reminders, follow-up emails and internal reminders to schedule previews is invaluable to our company. With this program, I feel confident knowing everything is getting done on the admin side of my job, and I can enjoy my time assisting on photo shoots and providing our clients the best experience possible.

I have set up specific workflows for each type of client who comes through our studio. It makes life so much easier when you take the time in the beginning to set up these workflows so you don't have to waste time later tweaking them each time they go out. I have each workflow customized for senior sessions for boys, senior sessions for girls, engagement sessions in St. Louis, destination engagement sessions, etc. Having your workflows set up this specifically helps tremendously in the long run because the language is completely different in the emails going out and you don't have to worry about setting everything up as auto-send.

TEMPLATE NAME	WORKFLOW ITEMS (TOTAL NUMBER)	CALENDAR NAME	DATE ADDED OR UPDATED (IF AVAILABLE)
Wedding	16	Internal	May 11th, 2016
Preview Reminder	0	Preview	Mar 7th, 2015
Portrait Workflow	3	Shoots	Jun 20th, 2016
Senior Photo Shoot (Girls)	4	Shoots	Jun 20th, 2016
Engagement (St. Louis)	3	Shoots	Jun 20th, 2016
Order Checklist	13	Internal	Apr 29th, 2016
Senior Photo Shoot (Guys)	4	Shoots	Jun 20th, 2016
Engagement (Destination)	3	Shoots	Jun 20th, 2016



The shoot.

During the shoot, you should be focused on getting the shots that matter, then get creative. For senior sessions, we know exactly what types of shots sell. Mom and Dad always buy the tight headshot as a 16x24 canvas of their son or daughter. Always. We know engagement session clients always buy the big signature edit type shots as a 20x30 acrylic and a 15x30 pano, so we choose scenes that lend to these types of shots.

Sal has a rhythm he works through, his progression, for each outfit and each scene. Tight, middle, wide. All of which are shot using a 70–200mm lens. Take it a step further and bust out an 11–24mm lens for a super wide shot—this shot makes for a great signature edit, your wow image from the session. Take it another step further, and put on an 85mm 1.2 lens for the tighter headshots to give you a stunning portrait with incredible depth of field.

Choosing the right locations for each outfit plays a huge part as well. We have specific parts of St. Louis we scout and try to stick within during each session. It makes no sense to waste time driving all around town when you can stay in one area and knock out all the scenes. All you have to do is change your perspective or the parts of each location you shoot in to give your portfolio some variety. We shoot in the same 20 to 25 locations in our area, and our work never looks the same.



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Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



The obstacles.

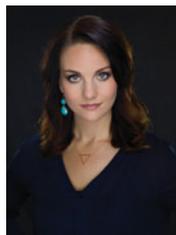
Obstacles are inevitable. What can go wrong will go wrong, especially when you're planning a day of back-to-back shoots. You just have to be able to adjust and make sure you're not killing the experience for your clients.

Tell your clients your process for inclement weather from the get-go. This way they are not surprised or angry if bad weather is predicted and you have to reschedule your shoots. Here's our initial booking email outlining our process:

Because our sessions are outdoors and our goal is to provide the best and most unique experience possible, we are limited in regards to the weather. In order to create the best images possible, we may reschedule your session due to heat, cold, wind, rain, etc. Be prepared if there is more than a 50% chance for inclement weather or if heat is expected in excess of 95 degrees; you will receive a call or email the night before to possibly reschedule. The shoot is not officially canceled until you have heard from us—hopefully we will have great weather!

Knowing what to say and what not to say to clients is the most beneficial knowledge you can have. As you run into obstacles along the way, document them. Work through the issue and evaluate what you did right and what you did wrong in handling the situation. Create a process to avoid the issue in the future.

Efficiency is key in planning full days of photo shoots. Being organized and detailed in your process takes time to set up in the beginning, but will make your life so much easier and stress-free in the long run. ■



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

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YOU

CAN'T

DO IT ALL

with Blair Phillips



Photography generally begins as a fun and carefree hobby that is manageable all by yourself. You photograph a subject and have what seems like infinite amounts of time to edit the images. You care little about how long sales appointments take. The phone may ring a couple of times a day. You think to yourself, I should have started this a long time ago. Good images partnered with great marketing begins to make your phone ring more, sessions start feeling like work and editing piles up on your desk.

Welcome to the photography business. You are most likely going to learn that you need help. You can run the rat race of thinking you can do everything all by yourself. If you choose that route, just know that you will begin to enjoy photography less and less with each passing year.

There are several types of help and employees. One of the most popular these days is outsourcing. Outsourcing is one of the hardest things for some photographers to do. We feel like no one can do things as good as we can. Not only are there tons of outsourcing companies out there, but they can often do it better and way more cost-effective than us.

The best way to find out where you need help is to evaluate your strengths and weaknesses. Keep doing the things you enjoy and are the best at yourself. Pass along the tasks that you struggle with and dread every day. If you are in need of help in certain areas, search the Internet for a company that can help you remotely before you add someone to your payroll. Contract labor is another great alternative if you only need help with certain events from time to time. It's like having an employee on call.

The hardest thing in beginning with employees is where and how to find the right fit. You may be spending a large part of your life with this person, so you need to find someone like-minded. One of the first things people do when looking for help is to ask people they know. Look elsewhere first. The problem with hiring people you know is that they come into the business with some existing comfort. If they are running a few minutes late, they may feel like it's not that big of a deal. People who have no previous relationship with you will look at you more as a boss than a friend.

Waiters and waitresses can turn into great employees in the photography industry. Pay attention to your server when you are out to eat. They generally possess great customer service skills. You can train most people to do nearly anything, but great people skills are hard to teach. Someone either has it or they don't. If you meet the right person, ask them to come help you for a weeklong project. This way, if they do not mesh well with your business, there are no hard feelings.

A cardinal sin for any business with employees is lack of an employee handbook of policies and procedures. I spent years just figuring things out along the way. Once an unfavorable action is displayed with no consequence, it will likely continue. There has to be consequences put into place for things that are unacceptable. It is your name on the line when things are poorly executed. We all get too busy to deal with some issues that arise. With employees, you must address issues as soon as they appear. If not, it will make for a miserable work environment. There can be growing resentment to the point that you will not even want to be there yourself. You also have to lead by being a good example. Employees will have much more motivation if they see your day-to-day dedication the business. They need the feeling that you are building a business together.



There have to be rules, procedures and consequences. There can also be fun and happy times. I love setting goals for employees. These goals need to be realistic and attainable. There should be a really nice reward once that goal is met. We run our business with the mentality of when we are doing well, you will be doing well. When we have jobs that go exceptionally well, I share with employees. This could be as simple as treating everyone to lunch one day, or sharing a piece of the profits. A happy employee is crucial to continued growth. An unhappy employee is toxic for you, your business and everyone involved in the business. Take the time to show people how much you appreciate them.

You may not see the benefits of having an employee immediately. Your workload will almost double when you first hire someone. You must take the time to show them exactly what you expect and how you want things done. They will not just automatically know what to do. Don't let them bite off too much at one time. Do a little training at a time to ensure they understand how to execute a task. An employee is an investment and an asset to your company. They need to be given the proper tools and training so they can do the job to the best of their abilities. I have found that having employees write down the steps needed to properly execute tasks makes them more easily repeatable. Supplying an employee with the proper tools sets an environment for them to be confident and happy.



Images © Blair Phillips

Once an employee has been with you for a length of time and understands the scope of your business, have a brief meeting with them on improvement—not on how they can improve, but ask for input from their perspective on how things could run more efficiently. They see it, live it and do it on a daily basis. Their ideas on the simplest things could save you tons of time and money. Employees who feel as though their opinion is valuable have tons of morale and generally never disappoint you.

On the rare occasion that someone begins showing their heart isn't with you any longer and they need to move on, handle the situation with caution. Always take the high road, and never say anything out of character. You want to be able to go anywhere and run into anyone without being uncomfortable or ashamed. Even if the other person is completely in the wrong, turn it into a positive situation and reflect on all the good things they did while they were with you. Elaborating on the negatives serves no purpose other than regret in an hour or two. You want this person to hopefully continue to say nice things about you and your business once they leave. They will talk to people about their experience, especially if it ends in a shouting match.



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This world is filled with far too many problems to continue to create more of our own. Treat people with respect, and you may get a little in return. If not, who cares. In order to grow, you must rely on other people to help take you there. You will hit a few bumps along the way with employees, maybe lose a few, but when you find the right one, it is worth every gray hair earned along the way. With employees, it is not about finding the person with the best skill set, but rather a friendly person you can train for those skills. You can't teach people to be friendly—they have to already have that. ■

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

blairphillipsphotography.com





TURNING THE **ORDINARY** INTO THE **EXTRAORDINARY**

TRANSFORMING BAD LOCATIONS INTO **GOLD**

with Michael Anthony

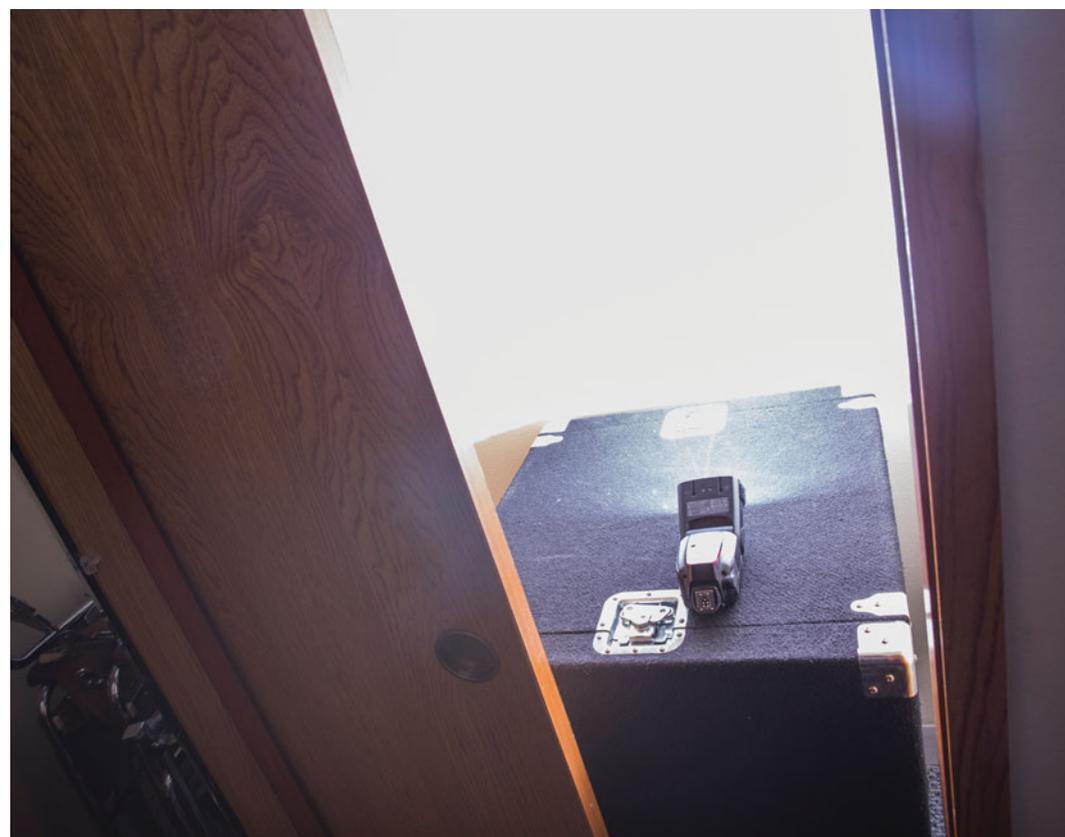
Wedding photographers don't have the luxury of controlling all aspects of where we work. Of all the photography genres (aside from pure photojournalism), we often have to work in some of the worst lighting and locations imaginable. We don't have control over the quality or color of light. On top of all of that, you are working with a bride and groom who have spent up to 18 months planning this very important date, and they have chosen you to document it all. That's a lot of pressure.

I am not going to sugarcoat it for you. Despite all of the above challenges, if you do not perform on a client's wedding day, the fault will rest on you alone in the eyes of your clients. Perception is reality: You are showing them beautiful photos in your portfolio, so their expectation is that you will create beautiful photos for them on their wedding date.

That brings us to the challenge: How do you create amazing photos for your brides and grooms, despite not being able to control your environment? You have to think outside the box and adopt a MacGyver mindset. Everything in your room or environment can be used as an element to make beautiful images. When you are dealing with a bad location, you can start by taking your subject out of that environment. Here are some common ways to do that.



Image © Michael Anthony



Images © Michael Anthony

| Use Light to Remove Your Subject From the Distractions |

This image was photographed using a single speedlight placed inside a closet. The church lady was rushing us to get the bride out of the dressing room, and gave us five minutes to make this shot happen. We were able to complete it in less than two minutes because the elements of the photograph were very simple. By bouncing the speedlight off the wall in the closet, we were able to create soft light on the bride. I had Jennifer give the veil some motion, which made this image look like it was created from an open window.

We did not move any of the elements you see in the before image to create this final shot. By just using light where you want it, you can hide elements of an image that are not conducive to your final result.

| Add Light to Commonly Found Light Fixtures to Create Beautiful Images |

In this image, we placed the bride under a sconce light. The light on the bride's face, though, was competing with the actual light source, and was obviously darker, making the light source the brightest part of the image, rather than my bride. I had my assistant use a Westcott Ice Light with a CTO gel to match the ambient light from the lamp, and we used barn doors to concentrate the light on the bride. I had the bride wrap herself in her veil to bring attention to her face, and I turned her body away from the light but her face back into it. This allowed the texture on the veil to show through, and it also lit the short side of the bride's face. We took two images, and in the final image, we removed the light trail from the Ice Light.



| Use All of the Elements of Your Environment |

The trick to getting water or smoke to look great on camera is to get your light source behind it. We originally were going to use a can of fog to get this shot, but it was a bit too windy. There was a barbecue close by creating a ton of smoke. I placed the groom with his back to the sun, and the sun spilled some light rays through the smoke. We placed a Profoto B1 with a 2-foot Octa box camera left, and took a low angle with our Canon 11-24mm F/4.0L lens to accentuate height and give him a powerful appearance. You can see in the final shot how all of the elements came together to create a unique and dynamic image.



Image © Michael Anthony

Image © Michael Anthony

| Use Abstract Elements to Create Interesting Images |

This was a technique I first wrote about back in the 2015 wedding addition, but here we are doing it with lights rather than glass. When we got to this location, the room had very little for us to work with. I noticed the table had a decoration that featured small orange bulbs. I thought that I would be able to use those bulbs to create an interesting foreground element. I placed a CTO gelled flash on the ground pointing upward at the wall to give the groom some separation from the wall. Finally, I placed a gridded flash directly at the groom's face. We gridded the flash to keep light from spilling onto the wall and washing out the light created from the background light.

When shooting through objects, it's important to make sure the object you are using as your foreground element is not too bright, or it will detract from your subject.

We keep two sets of battery-operated string lights in our bags: one cooler-toned color and another warmer-toned color. You can get these on Amazon for less than \$10, and you can use them for both shoot-through elements and backgrounds for your ring shots and other macro images. Experiment with shooting through water, smoke and glass for different effects.



Image © Michael Anthony

Images © Michael Anthony

Image © Michael Anthony

| Simple Setups for Ring Shots |

I used to stress out about finding the perfect photograph of the wedding rings when I started shooting weddings. Today, we typically photograph ring shots in less than two minutes. A ring shot comprises light, a background and a setting.

I usually start with a background for a ring shot. I look for anything that creates good bokeh. Jewelry or anything sparkly is our best option. From there, I look for a setting to place the rings. I look for a reflection or another sparkly surface, such as a bride's shoes, purses or, in this case, a glass table (granite works great as well). In this image, we used the decorative pinecones on the center of the couple's table as a background. Wherever you are right now, look around—I guarantee you will find a surface that will make for a good ring shot.



| Camera Settings |

Camera settings are extremely important. I usually photograph ring shots at f/8 to f/11. This is crucial to getting that ring tack sharp. Even shooting at F/5.6 leaves me with a lack of good focus. When you shoot at such small apertures, you rarely have enough quality light to get a good exposure. Enter the Ice Light, one of my favorite tools for bridal prep. You can also use standard video lights. Place your lights on either side of the rings, and make sure the light is hitting some of that sparkly background. Experiment with different compositions to get the best result.

Remember, as wedding photographers, it's always going to be up to us to perform on the day of the wedding. If you consistently show creative imagery in your portfolio, your clientele expects you to provide similar results. Bad lighting is not an excuse that will fly with your clients. Take extra care to make sure you are able to deliver on your client's expectations.

Understanding how to push your surroundings to the limit requires you to have an extensive knowledge of light—how it behaves and how you can manipulate it to meet your creative goals. You also have to understand how your camera settings influence the final image. For instance, in our shoot-through technique, shooting at a wider aperture produces better results than shooting at F/11. This is because the bokeh at F/2.0 is a lot more pleasing to the eye as a foreground element when the aperture is wide open.

As with most things in photography, the best way to get better is by practicing until you have a solid grasp of the foundations of a good image. From there, you will naturally see the potential in new locations, and you will be able to push them to their maximum potential. ■



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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PRINT YOUR PORTFOLIO

SOFT-PROOFING IN LIGHTROOM CC

with Dustin Lucas

For photographic artists, the importance of capturing and editing images can be a distant second to making a print. The nostalgic feeling of holding a print dates back to the time when photographs were considered precious objects. Maybe they still are to some. In a digital world, that feeling of intangibility is more obvious than ever.

From a digital image perspective, we must consider the difference between what we see on screen and what to expect on paper. This process is called proofing, and it can mean all the difference in how your print looks. If this is all new to you and your kneejerk reaction is to click Print and hope for the best, soft-proofing is a great place to start. Even better, Lightroom CC offers user-friendly soft-proofing capabilities that are a great first step to closing that variation between viewing on monitor and holding the print.

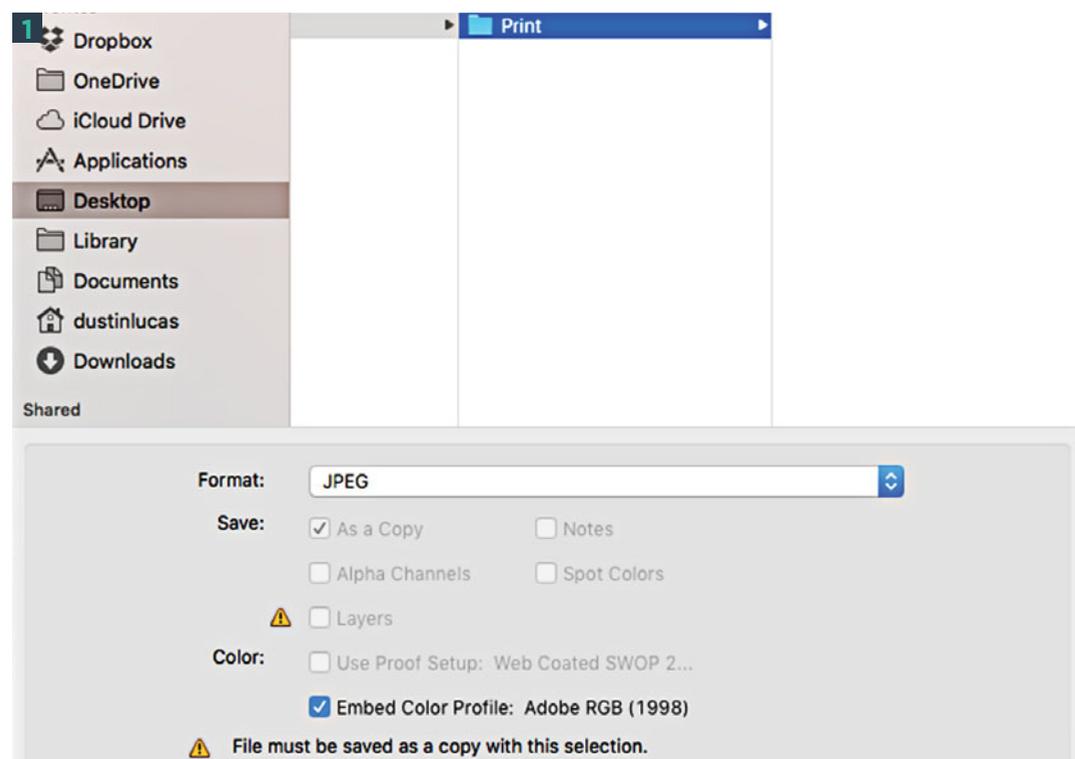
Color Management

There are a few things to consider when making prints. First, you need to refer to your lab or personal printer settings. This is crucial. No need to waste time and energy creating settings out of thin air if your lab has them posted on its website.

Calibrate your monitor at the very least—this is vital. If you are printing yourself, look into a calibration system for your monitor and printer. If you are venturing in this direction, do some research on color spectrometers. These devices can lessen the gap between what is on screen versus what is printed. If you are looking for an entry-level system, check out the X-Rite ColorMunki Photo device. It’s fast and user-friendly.

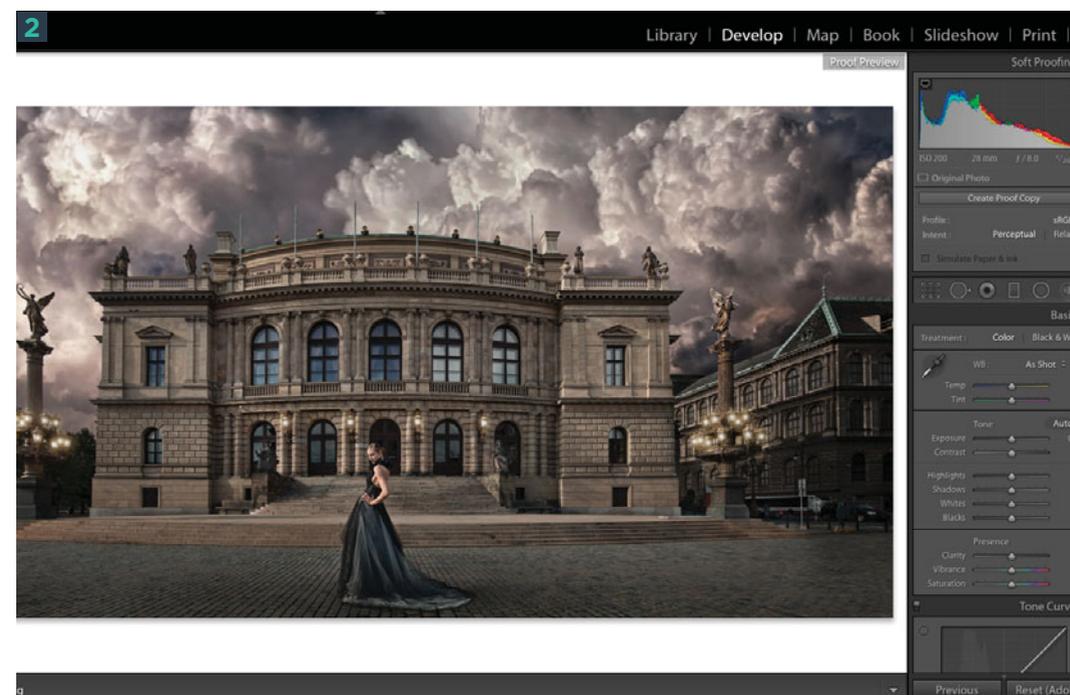
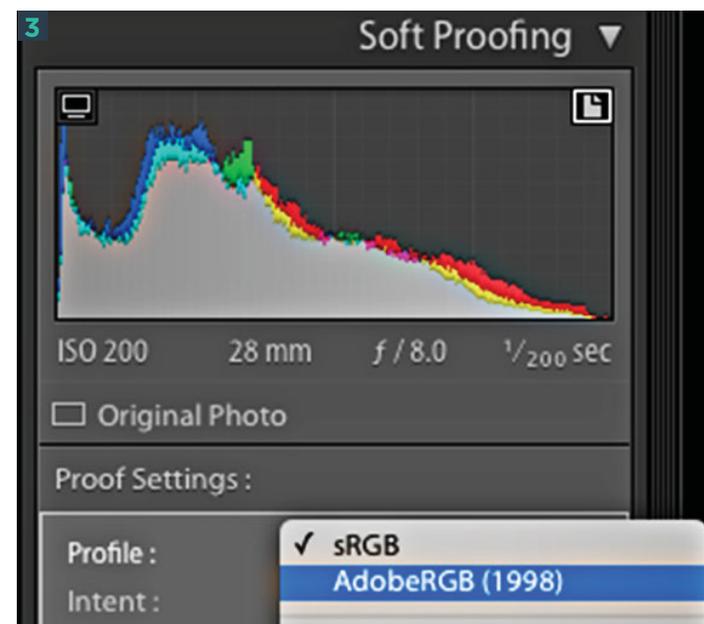
Color management can be daunting. This term refers to the collaboration between your camera, monitor and printer. Aren’t they all supposed to be in sRGB? What’s the big deal? sRGB refers to the color space. This is the most widely accepted color gamut, and it’s all about output. Like I said earlier, start by figuring out where you want to print. For a more in-depth look at color space, check out my article “Color Space and Your Photography” from the June 2014 issue of *Shutter*.

From capture, this image had a native color space, meaning it hadn’t been converted yet. After the Raw was processed and exported as an image file, color space was assigned. Knowing that I was going to further edit the image, I converted it to Adobe 1998. I processed it in Photoshop and saved it as a JPEG. (Image 1) This is my normal workflow. Normally I’d print in Photoshop since I was already there, but I want to keep everything in my Lightroom Catalog for organization purposes.



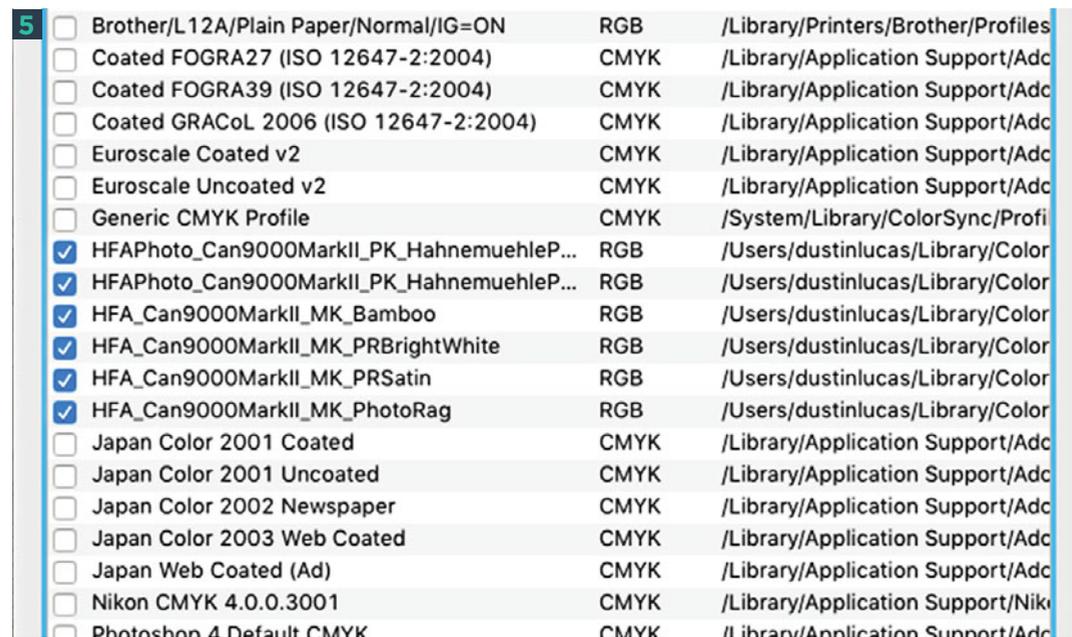
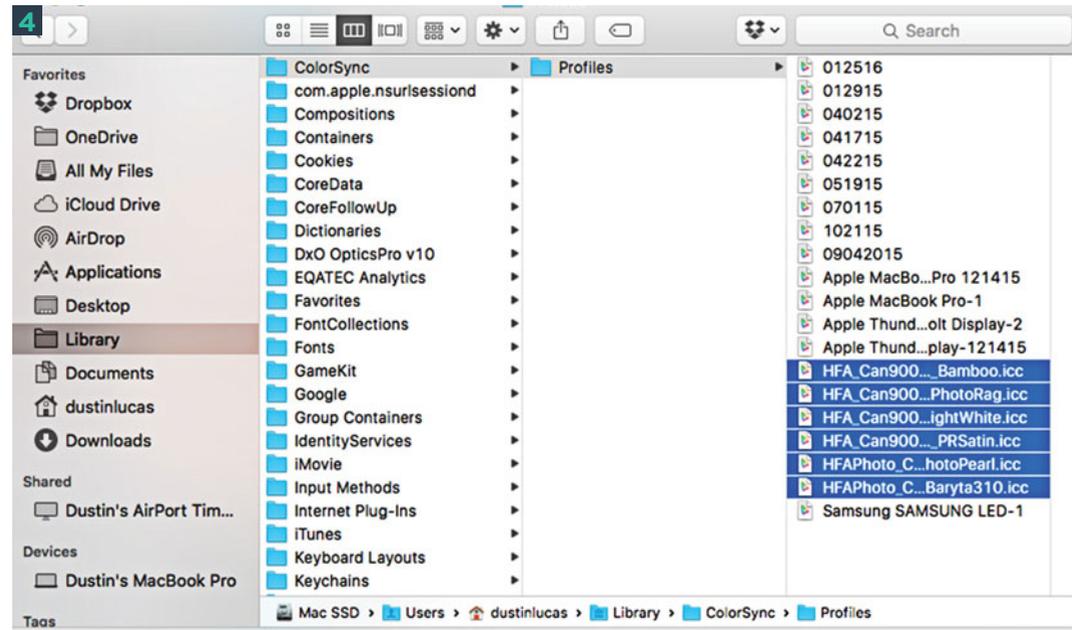
ICC Profiles

I have imported my JPEG image into Lightroom and am ready to begin soft-proofing. Soft-proofing can be used in the Develop Module by striking the “S” key. (Image 2) As you see, the default settings are set to Profile: sRGB and Intent: Perceptual. From here, we need to make a virtual copy by holding Command and striking the apostrophe key; or just click Create Proof Copy. This allows us to edit the image for the paper media we want to print onto. We need to install some paper profiles. (Image 3)



If you own a photo printer, go to your paper media’s website and download the ICC profiles according to the printer model. I went to Hahnemühle’s website and downloaded a few of my favorites. Once they are downloaded and unpackaged, we need to install them. Mac users need to navigate to Library > ColorSync > Profiles and save all the ICC profiles here. Then close and reopen your Lightroom catalog. (Image 4)

When you click on the current sRGB profile, a list will appear; choose Other. From here, you can select all the profiles you want to use while proofing. Now we can jump into soft-proofing. (Image 5)

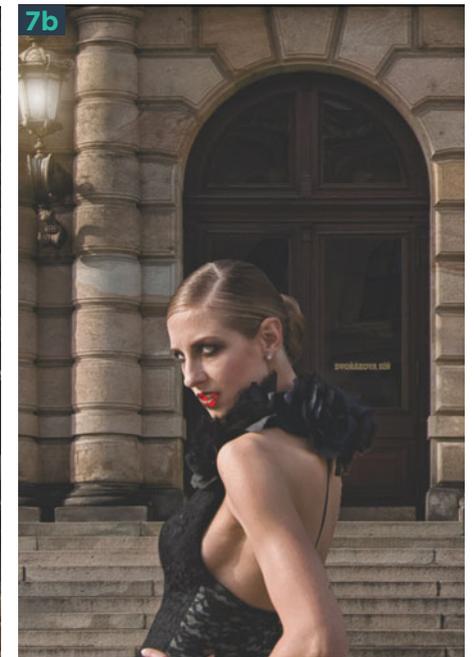
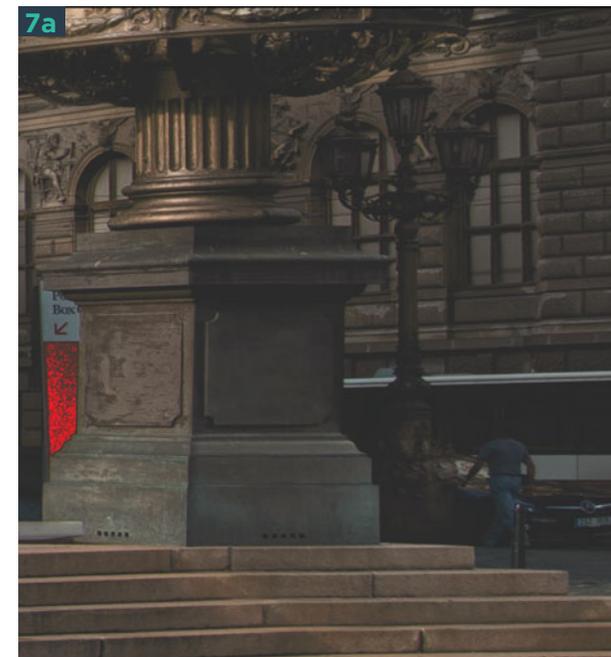


Lightroom Soft Proofing

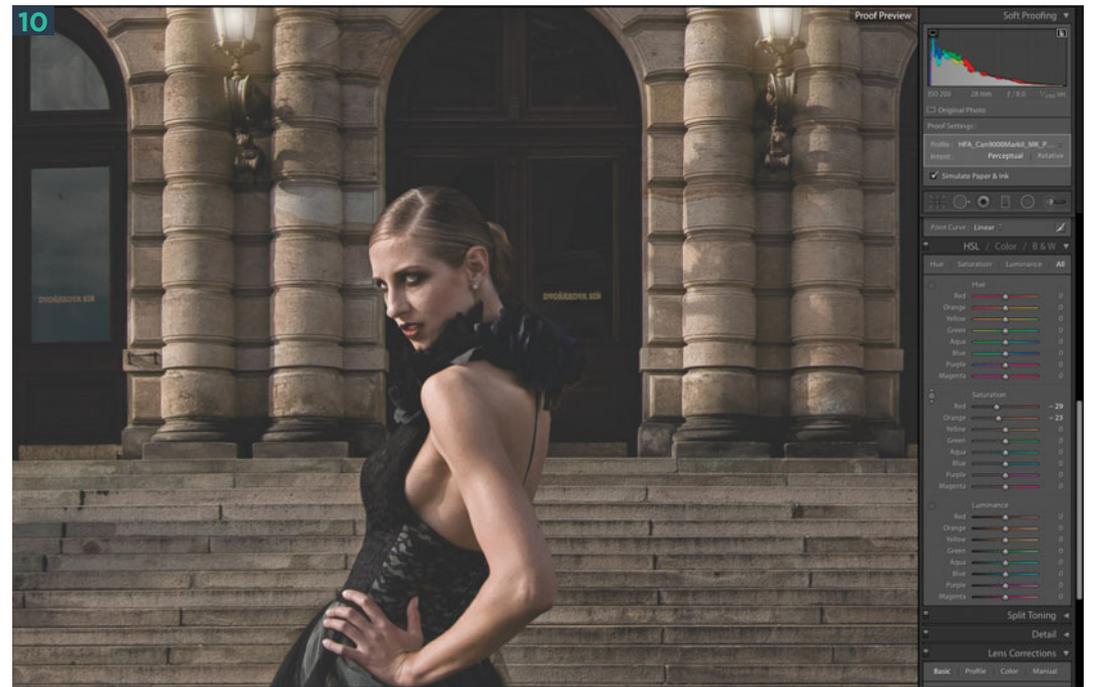
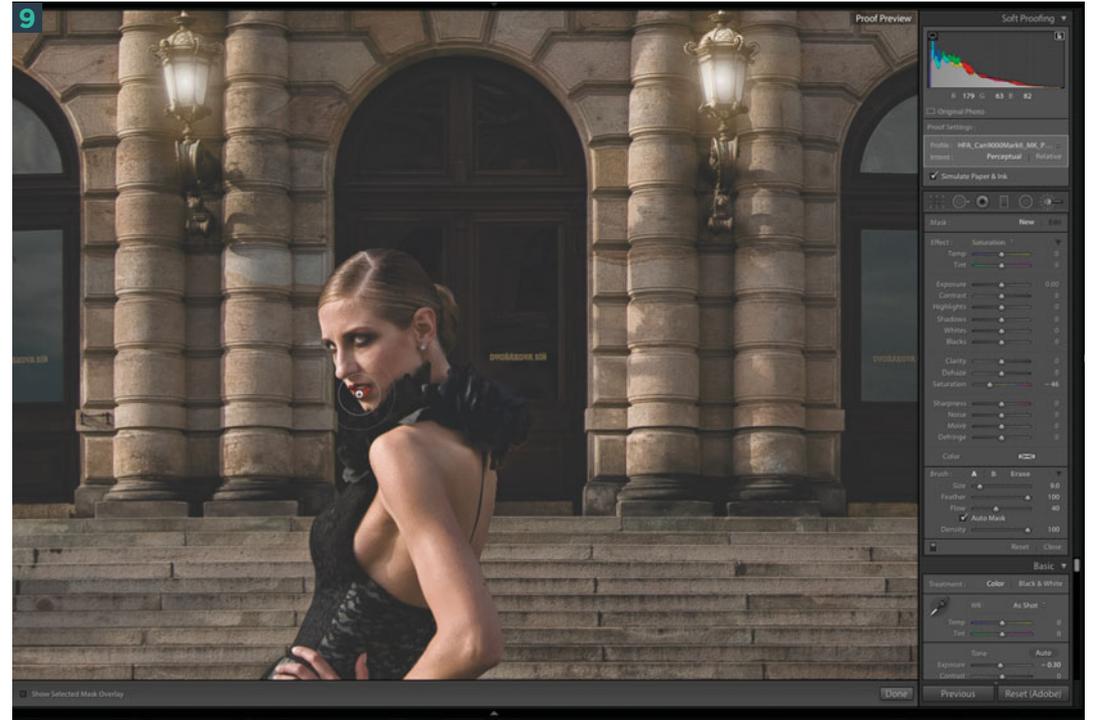
After changing the profile to Photo Rag, you can see a real difference in the tonality of the image. Remember, we are looking at a soft proof on a calibrated monitor; this is not an actual representation of what will be seen in print. This should give you an idea of the flatter tones, and you can adjust accordingly. Fortunately for this image, the fine-art toning lends itself to the matte finish. (Image 6)

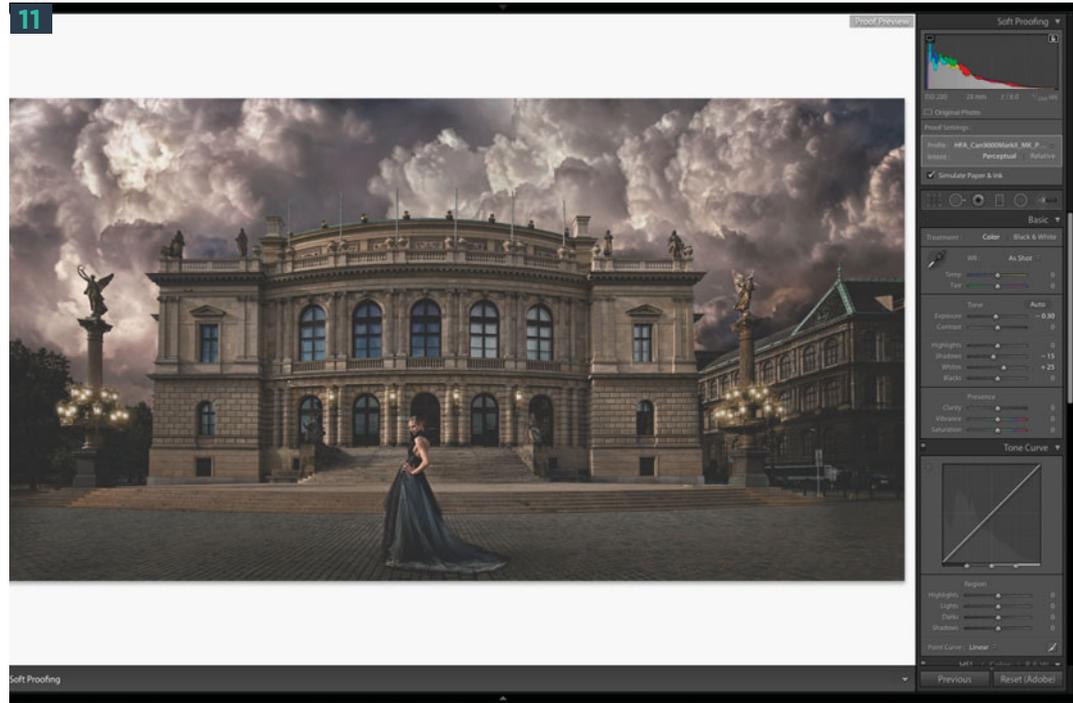


Gamut Warning is a common tool for proofing an image. With it, we can review what colors are out of range, so to speak. To view the Destination Gamut Warning, hold Shift and strike the “S” key. The problematic areas will highlight in red. (Image 7) As you can see in this image, we have very few areas to be concerned about. I can drop the exposure a touch and lift the white point. (Image 8)

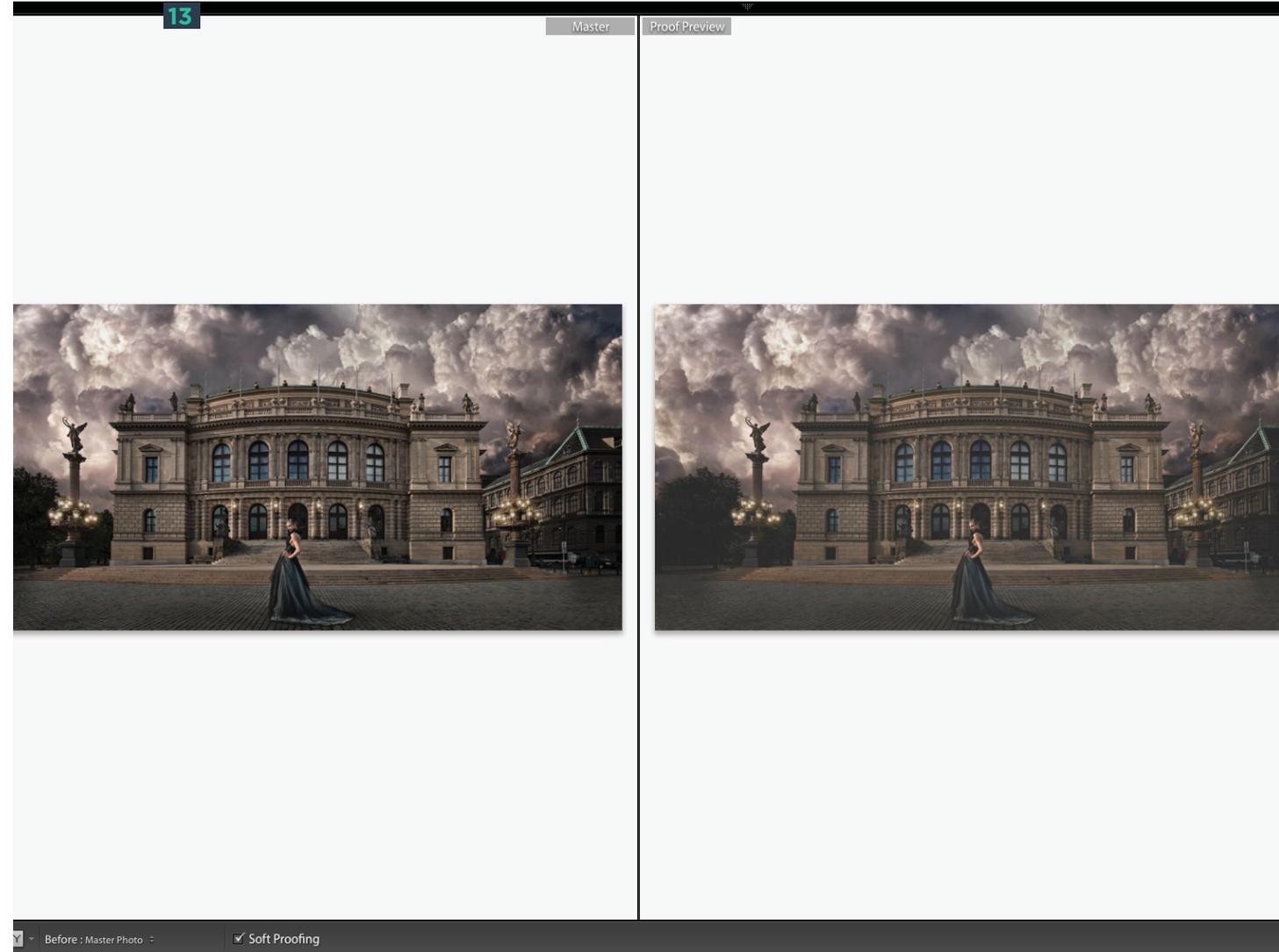
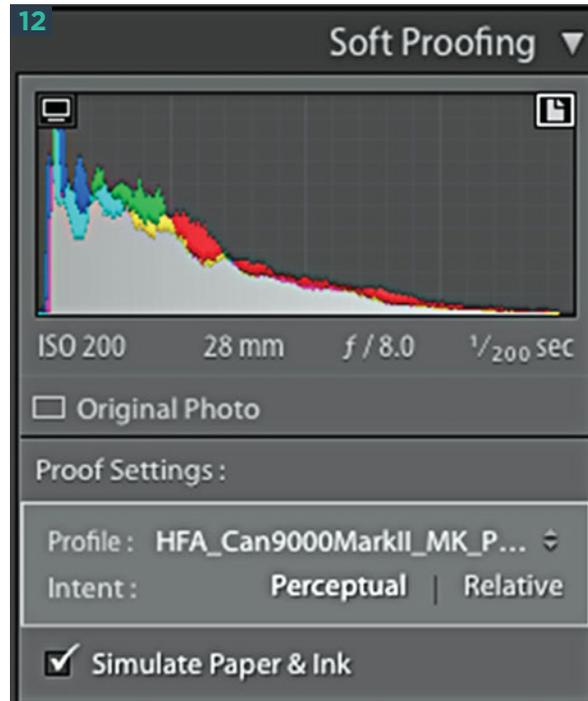


We can adjust the HSL, Tone Curve and Exposure to reduce the out-of-gamut colors. You can quickly fix these issues using the Target Adjustment tool for saturation, but remember that this affects the entire image. (Image 9) This is where the Local Adjustment Brushes help to lower the saturation in specific areas. (Image 10) For this image, I am not too concerned with these issues. I can drop the exposure a touch and lift the white point to reduce the gamut warning.





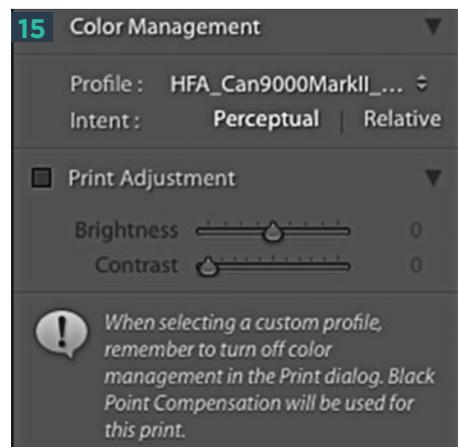
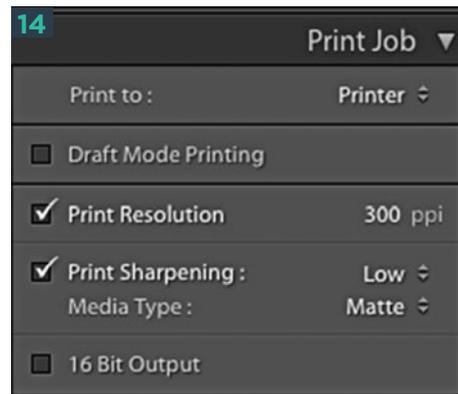
When reviewing the image in Proof Preview, I like to reveal only the right panel. (Image 11) Viewing the Proof Matte Color as Paper White along with checking the option Simulate Paper & Ink gives you an idea of how the print will look. (Image 12) If you are viewing on a noncalibrated monitor, your print will usually be much darker because the screen brightness is hiked up. Photo paper is also a lot less luminous than your backlit screen. To compare the Master and Proof Preview, strike the “D” key. (Image 13)



Lightroom Print Module

The Print Module is also user-friendly. I start in the lower left panel with Page Setup to adjust the orientation of the paper and image. Then you can select the specific printer settings for quality and paper type. On the right-hand panel, the category Print Job allows you to fine-tune your image with Print Resolution, Sharpening and Color Management. (Image 14)

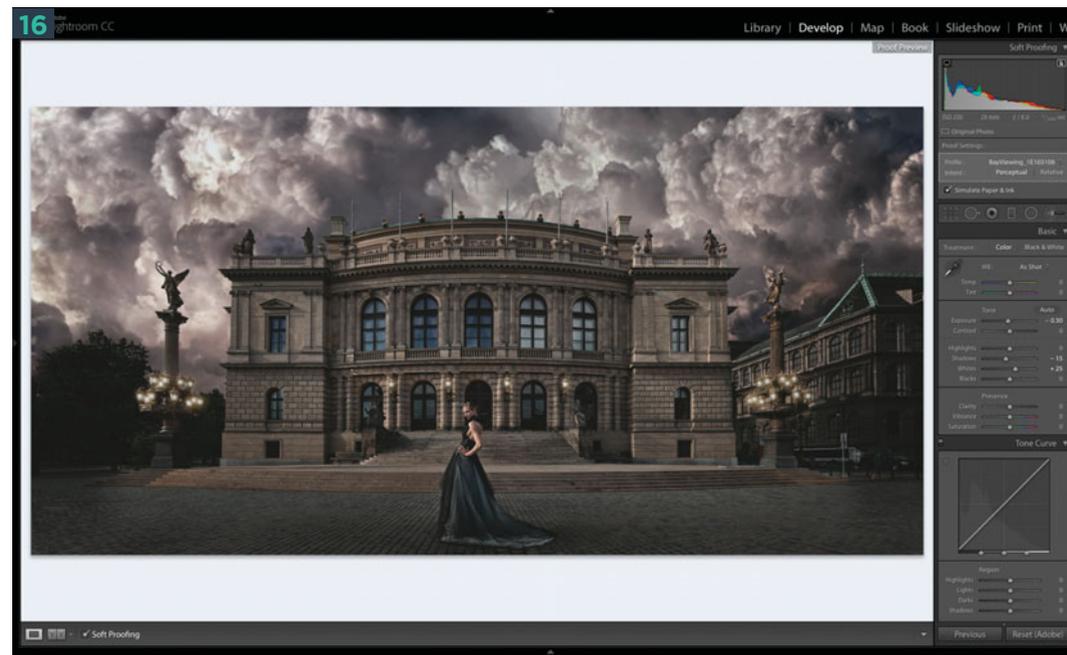
I usually resize my images at 300ppi and leave the print resolution the same. Print sharpening is a preset-driven version of output sharpening with options for amount and media type. I usually turn this off because I work with input and output sharpening in Photoshop. Under Color Management, you can select the profile used for soft-proofing. This ICC profile controls the color gamut for your print and paper. Select this instead of allowing the printer to manage color. That's it—you're ready to print! (Image 15)



Labs: Bay Photo

When working with photo labs, it's best to review their recommended settings before sending off your images. Most labs are hesitant to offer downloadable ICC profiles for their printers and paper media because of the massive variation and combinations of papers and printers they use. So how can you soft-proof with a lab?

Some labs, like Bay Photo, offer a soft-proof ICC profile. You can access this on their site and install it just the same as the Hahnemühle profiles. Take this profile with a grain of salt. It's a vague profile, and does not reflect what your print will look like. Hahnemühle offers a Pro version of its ROES software that allows the lab to color-correct your images based on its equipment. It's always worth having some proofs made to see how far off your monitor is from theirs. (Image 16)



Conclusion

The most important thing is to get your monitor calibrated. If you aren't investing in a photo printer, you won't need the X-Rite ColorMunki Photo, but pick up something comparable. Once your screen is a little more tamed in terms of color and brightness, you can begin soft-proofing. Soft-proofing is a great starting point for getting your monitor and prints in sync.

If you have been editing and printing, reediting and reprinting, it may save you some headache in the long run. Sending some proof prints to the photo lab helps you see where you land. Don't waste your money hoping they get it right. ■



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

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It's all about the glass. You know at this point to invest in the glass, the one thing that will last. Cameras upgrade every few years, but I have been using the same glass for five-plus years. As a wedding and portrait photographer, I typically max out at about 200mm. I have often wanted something more in my bag, something a little longer. Let's be honest, we all want longer. Unfortunately, since we are talking about photography, that length comes with tradeoffs: price and weight.

Sigma has brought the heat with its 150–600 S lens. This lens is great for sports, landscapes and wildlife. If you are looking to close the gap on your subject, this is the lens for you.

All things considered, it's incredibly lightweight for a 600mm lens. While tagged for sports photography, don't underestimate it for some portrait work. While not the same look and feel of a 2.8 lens, the compression is ideal for some interesting portraits.

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- + Tips on how to close a wedding client.
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GOT MORE QUESTIONS?

Every month we will have a call for questions on our Facebook page and Sal will answer them with real-world advice.





PORTRAIT SALES:

Which Model Is Right for You?

with Lori Nordstrom

Just a couple of years ago, I would have fought for my stance that in-person product sales are the only way to make a profit in photography. Heck, there was even research to back me up! The PPA Benchmark Survey has concluded that photographers doing in-person sales of prints and other portrait products were making more money than those who were selling online or selling digital files only. With the cold hard facts in black and white, how could you argue?

While I still believe that selling products to clients in person (rather than online) is the most profitable across the board, there are many ways to do in-person sales and present images to the client for selection. I've also found that other models of conducting sales can certainly create a nice profitable income. Photographers choose different models for different reasons.

SPEC DISPLAYS

Years ago, we were taught to print our favorite portraits on spec to display on easels so clients saw them when they walked back through the door for their sale. Seeing the portraits in person made it hard to turn down the pieces. In the film days, we printed negatives to slides, scanned the negatives or had the option to print proofs of the images to present to the client. Printing proofs for selection became very popular in the 1990s.

Some photographers are returning to this sales approach. Proofs are printed and then reviewed with the photographer for the sale. The proofs may be taken home and are discounted based on the sale amount, and are given away free if the client reaches the sales goal. Some photographers send the proofs home with the client for review and selection for a specified amount of time. Clients pay a deposit to take the proofs with them, and if they keep the proofs, they are paid for. If they bring them back, the deposit goes toward their final order.



“REVEAL WALL”

In both of these circumstances, the photographer believes the proofs have enough value that either the client will meet the minimum order to get their proofs for free, or will love the proofs so much that they will want to keep them and order more. Photographer Sue Bryce (www.suebryce.com) takes this idea to the next level and presents a collection of larger prints displayed in portrait mats on shelves for the client to view. Sue calls this the “reveal wall,” and many photographers have adopted it. The purchased matted prints go into an image box that the client can take home immediately after the sale. Some photographers claim to have doubled or even tripled their returns with this method.



PROJECTION SALES

Once photography went digital, image projection sales were all the rave. Projection allows the photographer to show the actual size of the portrait on the wall. In fact, I was told when I converted to a 100 percent digital studio in late 2000, “Don’t go digital unless you buy a projector for sales.” I did, and never looked back.

Many classic portrait studios still use projection to help their clients through their order. Some photographers do the sale themselves, feeling that this gives them one more touch point with the client. Others have a dedicated salesperson so they can concentrate on photography.

One such studio is Kimberly Wylie Photography (www.kimberlywylie.com) in Dallas, Texas. Wylie’s business partner, Jessica Sikes, handles all client communication and sales, allowing Wylie to focus on creating.

“Having someone else do your sales gives them the freedom to brag on you as the most amazing photographer ever, giving you a more exclusive and expert status,” says Wylie. “It also benefits your clients, who are able to talk more freely about their likes and dislikes regarding your images. Overall, having Jessica has increased our sales dramatically over the years.”

ONLINE SALES

Other photographers choose methods that better fit their lifestyle. Audrey Woulard, who specializes in tweens and teens, chose online sales for her business to accommodate her family.

“Online sales help ensure that I maintain the ever elusive home/life balance,” Woulard says.

Her most popular products are prints and albums, which her clients view in an online gallery, and then email or call in their order. One of the keys to making online sales work is to prepare your clients and put strict guidelines into place, she says. Her family comes first, and bending policies for clients might mean sacrificing precious family time. If clients don’t place their order on time, they lose the privilege to place an order at all. While it sounds harsh, Woulard explains that she works with clients who love their images, and simply love working with her.

“Clients will always do business with someone they like and respect,” she says. “If your product blows their mind, you will not only build client loyalty, but you will build valid, vetted word-of-mouth.”

DIGITAL FILES ONLY

A sales model that has been debated since digital imagery came on the scene is to sell digital files only. The industry dubs this “shoot and burn,” meaning the images are photographed and then burned to a DVD or thumb drive. Clients own the files and do with them what they please.

This model is usually equated with part-time photographers, or those who don’t need to support their families with their photography business. Prices are typically low due to the sheer number of photographers who have adopted this model, creating big competition based on price. Most photographers who do it spend hours at the computer editing and retouching their files, making this model a low dollar-for-hour model.

One photographer who stands out from the crowd is boudoir shooter Mistie Simone (www.littleblackdressboudoir.com). Simone defies the masses by not only charging a lot for her digital files, but by spending almost no additional time on sales. Simone does immediate (in-person) sales after the session and markets herself as a “Photoshop Free” studio. When asked about the fact that she doesn’t retouch any files, Simone replied, “I tell them that they don’t need it. I know with proper lighting, a great-fitting wardrobe and beautiful posing, they will look amazing.” Clients take home their images following the sale that same day, which gives Simone more time for shooting, and allows her to be more profitable with digital-only sales.

I myself am a fan of immediate sales, and have been doing this with my portrait events since 2002. Unlike Simone, I retouch and finish the ordered images, but immediate sales cut down so much on workflow. Cutting out the workflow that traditionally happens between the session and the client viewing can make most photography events and sessions much more profitable. In 2009, I started offering this option for my regular client sessions (not just events), and it has been a very popular choice. Clients appreciate not having to make a second appointment for the sale, and I save that time as well. Clients trust me to finish their order beautifully, and I enjoy not having to touch the images that haven’t been ordered. The time saved is immense, thus raising profitability.



ALL-INCLUSIVE PACKAGES

Kirstie Marie Photography (www.kirstiemarie.com) calls her packages, which start at \$1,495, “all inclusive.” She structured them to be more like a wedding photographer’s packages than a portrait photographer’s. Marie has never photographed weddings and has no desire to, but she says the way their packages are laid out just made more sense for her clients’ needs.

“Understanding the needs of your clients will make a big difference in your sales,” she says. “You have to be really passionate about what you do, including the way you sell and what you sell.”

Marie includes a boxed proof set and digital files in all of her packages. She posts her starting package on her website so there are no surprises or disappointment when a potential client calls. Because she knows what the client will be spending before the session, Marie does not feel the need to meet with clients in person for the sale. Images go into an online shopping gallery where clients can choose additional prints to purchase. I love Marie’s wording. She sells digital files, but instead of promoting a digital package, she promotes an all-inclusive package that comes across as much more upscale. Her pricing is high-end for a digital photographer, and I love that she also provides a printed image of each file for her clients, even in her bottom package.



Image © Lori Nordstrom

There are many methods of presenting client images and conducting portrait sales, and photographers will defend their own method when it's working for them. When I asked photographers for their tips for others wanting to try a new model, there were common threads: Plan and prepare your clients for what to expect; put guidelines in place for both yourself and your client; and be passionate and positive about what you are offering.

The more confident you are in how and what you are selling, the easier it will be for your clients to make their decisions, which is what we all want in the end. You are the only one who can decide what method is best for you, your business and your clients. ■

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

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FOUR WAYS
to
[SPARK]
Your Creativity
with Melanie Anderson

In this edition of *Shutter Magazine*, I discuss four ways to spark creativity in your work. This topic seems fitting for the anniversary edition—what better time to reenergize and get creative. I find many times throughout the year that I become stagnant. I am a portrait photographer, and tend to photograph the same way in the same locations over and over again.

At the end of senior season, after photographing 100 of them throughout the summer, or after several volume sports jobs, I am tired, uninspired, burned out. I need to seek ways to find that spark again. It's important as a creative soul to stay creative. We need to constantly push ourselves to change things up a bit.

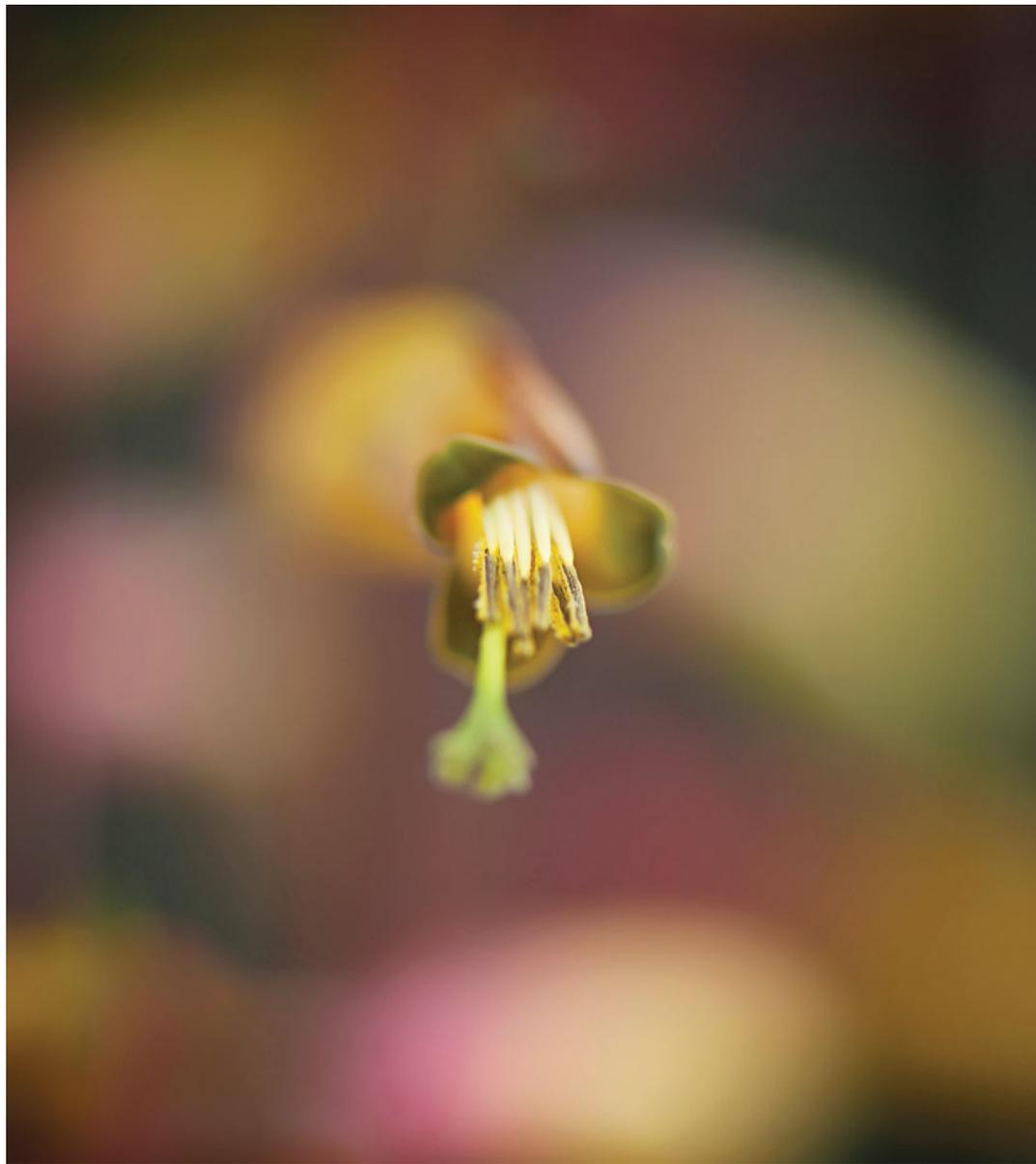


Image © Melanie Anderson

1. Macro Photography

I have recently fallen in love with macro photography through the eyes of my 18-year-old daughter, Emily, who's been drawn to this genre. We enjoy going to botanical gardens where we find unique plants and flowers. We could spend an entire day there exploring and enjoying the beauty of nature. Macro photography insists that you slow down, be patient, create differently. Although this style of photography does not currently bring in studio revenue, we've discussed ways Emily could create a boutique product to offer clients. We enjoy the one-on-one time, and I get to see beauty through her eyes. This sparks creativity in me.

Equipment:

Nikon D4

Macro Lens Sigma 105

50mm 1.8

Tripod

Light source



Image © Melanie Anderson

2. Creative/Fashion

I arrange a few creative shoots a year. They usually involve professional hair and makeup to enhance the overall feeling of the images. These are the images I use for print competition. I push my lighting, my posing and my style farther than I would if I were doing this for a paying client. I crank the music and move the lights around to showcase different features, providing shadows and depth in areas where I would tend to use flat lighting. I find the moments leading up to these shoots a bit stressful, organizing the details and not being completely sure what I want to create. But once I get in the mode, and a camera in my hand, I begin to see things differently. Again, these are not images or sessions that bring my studio tremendous profits, but they do allow me to push my boundaries, test new lighting and explore for fun. I enjoy having a team around me to feed ideas and provide additional inspiration. Unveiling the final creation is inspirational and makes me proud of my accomplishments.

Equipment:

- Nikon D4
- 85 1.4
- 24-70 2.8
- Ringlights
- Strobes
- PocketWizards



3. Solitude

Some of my most favorite time is in solitude on location. Most people would consider me an extrovert, and for the most part, I agree. But I need my quiet time: time to refocus, regroup, reenergize. This is during day trips to the beach, a hike or just driving around. It's a time to find peace, slow down, recharge my batteries. I often create just using my phone so I don't have to carry around heavy equipment. I love that I can take a photo with the simple push of a button, then go into my apps and add contrast, texture, vignette, HDR, lens blur, convert to black and white, and more. I also love the ability to upload to social media so quickly, which provides instant gratification and a sense of accomplishment.

Some of my favorite creative apps are Snapseed, Picfx and Mextures. In some cases, I have found these images to be of high enough quality for print competitions. I probably shouldn't tell you this, but I've even merited with some of my iPhone images. Those iPhone advertisements saying "Shot on the iPhone 6" and the like are real. The quality these technologies provide is worthy and easy to use when you don't want to lug around your equipment. Now, this doesn't mean you should shoot your portrait clients with your iPhone, but don't throw out the idea of posting or submitting a beautiful image just because it was taken on one.

Equipment:

iPhone

Various apps



Image © Melanie Anderson



Images © Melanie Anderson



Image © Melanie Anderson



Image © Melanie Anderson

4. Black & White

My love for black and white is deep. The simplicity of taking out colors in skin, hair and clothing allows the emotion, relationship and connections that are so greatly displayed in these images to shine through. Not only do these images make you stop and admire the connection, they are also timeless and make for wonderful boudoir, maternity, newborn, engagement and wedding portraits. I use Nik filters to convert my images to black and white, and love the Silver Efex version. With the click of a button and custom sliders, you can create one-of-a-kind versions of black-and-white artistry. In print competition, an image I think is just okay turns out to be award-winning once converted to black and white.

Equipment:
Nik filters

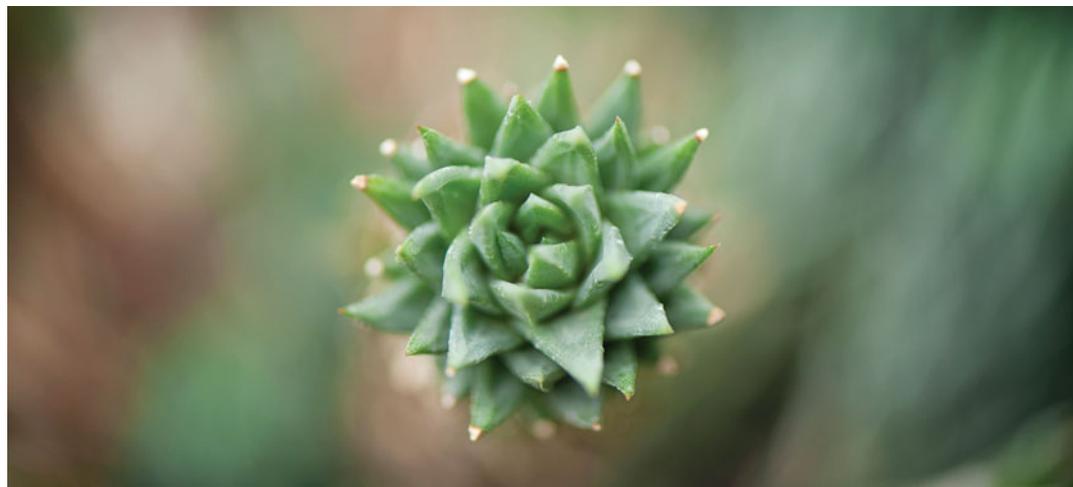


Image © Melanie Anderson

Take time to create for yourself. Find ways to spend time experimenting with new lighting techniques, new poses and new lenses. We need peace in our lives. When chaos takes over, my stress levels rise, my blood pressure increases and my brain becomes foggy. It's hard to create. Get away before you get to that point. This could be for 30 minutes, a few hours, a couple of days. Whatever it takes to get yourself back on track and ready to create again. Don't be surprised if you need to do this often. The busier we get, the more we need to find solitude to stay inspired.

Action items:

1. Get out and create.
2. Try out new lenses, rent if needed. Get up close and personal.
3. Download the apps Snapseed, Picfx and Mextures.
4. Take some time for yourself. Schedule it into your calendar if you need to.
5. Download the trial version of Nik filters. ■

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Melanie Anderson is an award-winning photographer and wife to her husband of 20 years, Bill, and a mother to their four children, Sarah, Emily, Kayla and Billy. Anderson Photographs is located in the Arts & Entertainment District of downtown Hagerstown, Maryland. Melanie is a Certified Professional Photographer who received her Photographic Craftsman degree in February 2015. Melanie is passionate about one-on-one mentoring and works diligently to provide educational resources and workshops to fellow photographers through Anderson Education. Learn more at AndersonPhotographs.com.

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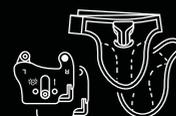
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BUILDING A
BUSINESS
THAT SUPPORTS YOUR
DREAMS

with Phillip Blume

REDEFINE YOUR DREAMS AS “VISION”

There’s a problem with the word *dreams*, and we hit on it above. Dreams mean different things to different people. There’s the literal act of dreaming when asleep. Then there are “pipe dreams,” those I-wish-they-would-come-true dreams we read about in fairy tales. But it’s misleading when a story suggests you must wait for a prince or fairy godmother to come along before your dreams can become reality. It paints you as helpless. The dreams I’m talking about are goals you feel you must achieve, and they require some serious hustle and hard work. You are going to make them happen!

So let’s talk about vision. Vision is clearer, more resolute, and sometimes you will even have to lay aside many of your more erratic daydreams to stay focused on your greater vision. In his popular TED Talk “The Golden Circle,” Simon Sinek brilliantly illuminates the one simple reason certain businesses and individuals (his examples are Apple, Martin Luther King and the Wright brothers) are able to achieve remarkable success over their competitors, despite their competitors having better access to the same resources. What is the “it” factor they share? Is there something that all remarkable people and businesses have in common that helps them rise above the fray?

Yes, and the answer is vision. Now I admit, vision still may sound intangible to you right now. “Great, so I need vision. But how do I get it?” Hang with me. Defining your personal vision will take a little time and concerted effort. But at least it doesn’t require you to wait around helplessly for inspiration or a fairy godmother. There are steps you can take now to figure it out.



Images © Phillip Blume



Image © Phillip Blume

WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU?

As it turns out, the idea of vision is hard to put our fingers on for biological reasons. We humans make all our decisions (including business ones) in our limbic brain, the emotional part that has no capacity for language. It’s why entrepreneurs often make the decision to “go with our gut” even when it flies in the face of our analytical brain—all the data and well-intentioned advice of others be damned.

In the end, *vision* is a word that means “your most closely held beliefs and convictions.” Our Vision Statement for Blume Photography is this: “We believe life is sacred and that people’s lives are eternally significant. Therefore, we want to celebrate life [our wedding portraiture] and restore lives where they’re being destroyed [our pro bono projects] through the power of visual art and to God’s glory.”

Everything we do flows out of this vision. And we constantly have to reassess our business to make sure we don’t get sidetracked by projects or methods that could undermine that single-minded purpose. We simply won’t accept more than 25 weddings a year, won’t schedule during important family events and never miss the summer day camp where Eileen and I for years have been counselors. To do so would undermine our investment in the lives of our children and community. We also believe people were designed to need a minimum one day of rest per week, so we honor that day in order to maintain our physical and spiritual health, even if we have to schedule it outside our usual Sunday routine.

Staying true to your values in this way can make a lot of business decisions much easier, but it’s not all about what you say no to. More important is what you say yes to.



Images © Laura Yang

WHEN YOUR DREAMS BECOME REALITY

When Eileen and I took the time to define our shared vision, the result was a new plan for our life and business. We realized we needed to be true to who we are and what we believe in—not work our whole lives away in the hope that we might someday earn the extra time to do what matters to us. It wasn't the most logical decision. If you know our story, you know our journey began with emptying our savings to make a documentary about children in Guatemala's slums.

More recently, we returned from China where we completed a long journey to adopt our sweet little boy and bring him home to his forever family. Now, instead of our business existing in a box outside of our "real life," we see work and life as inextricably intertwined. We were able to build our portfolio while visiting sites around China, like the Great Wall. We were blessed to have our friend, the talented photographer Laura Yang, travel with us as both a kid-wrangler and documentarian of this historic time for our family. Her photos are a priceless treasure for us and, simultaneously, speak to our clients about the high value of photography in our lives. They see us walking our talk.

We have found that a supportive community has grown up around us and our business as we have become clearer about our convictions. That is partly because, just as we ultimately make decisions that "feel right," consumers also make purchasing decisions with the emotional part of their brain.

To put it simply: Customers don't buy products, they buy an experience. They buy you. Clients choose the photographer they feel a connection with, not the one with better photos on his website. Knowing this, you should feel freer than ever to pursue your vision, be an open book about who you are and rest assured that doing so will help you find better clients than ever before. They will be clients who share your dreams.



Images © Laura Yang

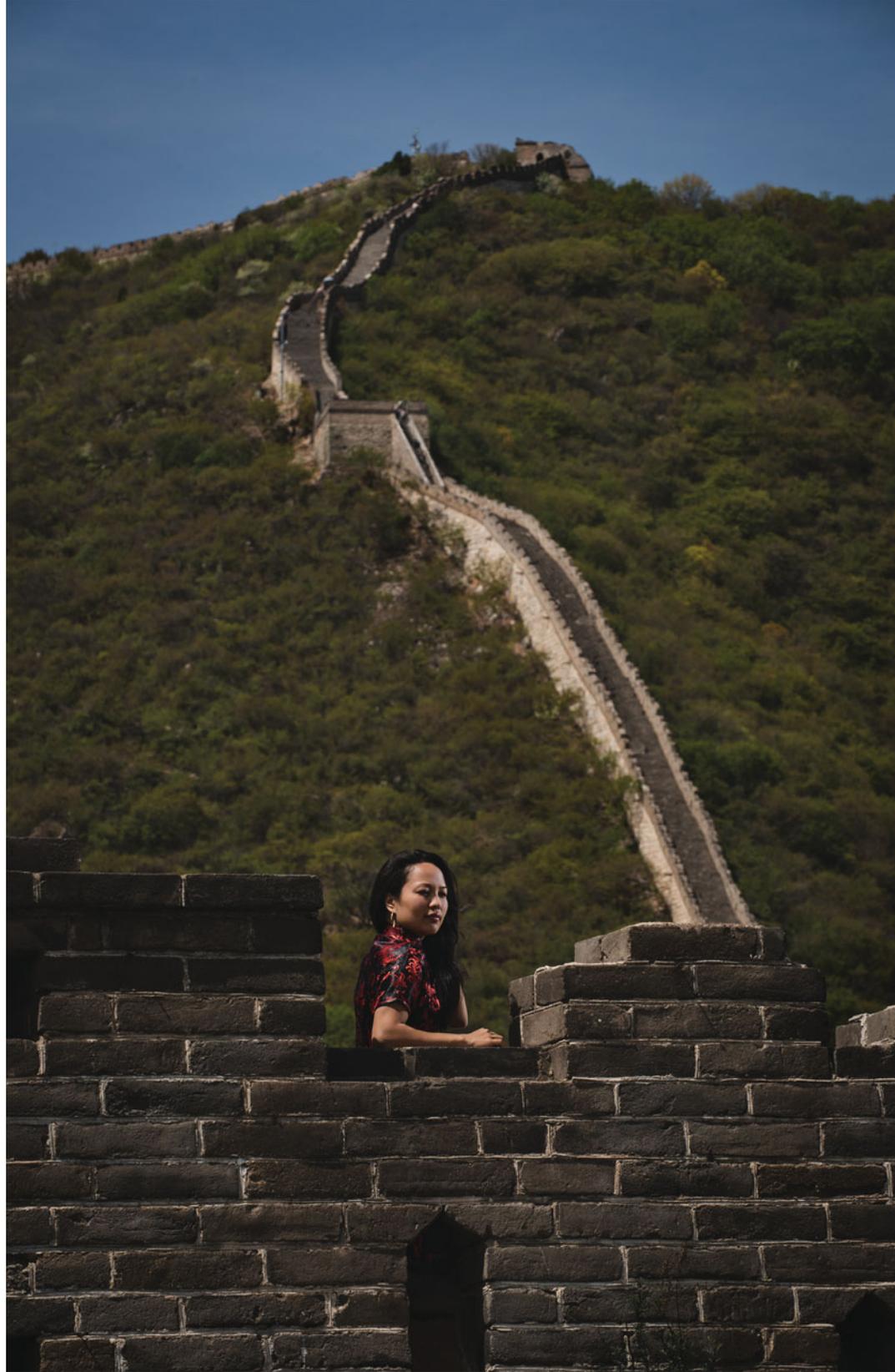


Image © Phillip Blume



Image © Phillip Blume

In next month's issue, I give you the four practical, time-saving changes we built into our studio's workflow that allow us to follow our dreams every day. ■

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

Wedding photographers are visual storytellers, capturing the moments throughout a couple's special day. We all take pictures of the bride and groom getting ready, as well as during the ceremony, family formals, fun bridal party shots and, of course, all the goings-on at the reception. But what are we doing to create something unique for our clients and for ourselves?

FASHION SETS US APART

We began photographing weddings in 2003. At that time, weddings were more traditional. Digital photography was relatively new, and contemporary wedding storytelling was in its infancy. We could not see ourselves being cookie-cutter, taking traditional, cliché pictures.

We wanted to be different. We wanted our work to stand out creatively. We checked out every form of wedding-related inspiration, and we felt so much of what was being done looked the same. Fortunately, an out-of-the-box bride came in and wanted her wedding to be photographed like an editorial layout from *Vanity Fair*. No photographer in our city would do it, so we were able to grab it.

She tore out pages from all of her favorite magazines (pre-Pinterest) for us to use as inspiration. We studied the pictures and implemented fashion photography into their wedding. From that experience forward, we decided to incorporate fashion-style imagery into all our weddings.



Image © Marc Anthony Photography

GET INSPIRED

Create an inspiration library on your favorite electronic device. Every time you see a photograph you find interesting, put it in your library. Over time, you will collect a number of images and have lots of great inspiration at your fingertips.

The best source of fashion photography is in magazines like *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Rolling Stone* and our favorite, *Vanity Fair*. This will take you out of the wedding world and put a fresh perspective on poses, expressions, lighting and settings. Stylists and fashion photographers look at the world in a different way. Take their lead and incorporate elements of their vision into your own wedding photography.

We have also gathered ideas and inspirations from movies, television shows and even music videos. If you see a great visual scene or composition from something you are watching, pause and take a photo for your inspiration library. Another good source of inspiration is the work of fashion photographers like Annie Leibovitz and Herb Ritts. Who better to inspire you than a photographer you admire?



Image © Marc Anthony Photography

TAKE A CLOSE LOOK

When you are looking at inspiration photographs, take a really close look at each image and analyze all of the details: wardrobe, lighting, posing, expressions and setting. Here are a few key things to keep in mind when creating fashionable imagery.

- Where are the models' eyes looking? Are they looking down, away or directly into the camera lens?
- What is the expression of the models? Pleasant, laughing, somber, pouty or sensual?
- How is the image lit? Natural and/or strobe lighting? Direct, bounced or diffused light? When you look at an inspiration image, analyze the lighting and try to recreate it.
- Look at the pose, the hands and arms, if models are standing or sitting, and posture. Pay close attention to fingers and wrists.
- What is the setting and theme? Indoor, outdoor, formal, casual, opera house or garage?
- Critique the image. Do you like how it's photographed? Do you like the composition? What about the details? Is there anything you would like to see different?

Going through this process and analyzing all of the images in your inspiration library is a great learning experience. Over time, you will likely start doing this automatically to all the imagery you see. Take everything you see and learn from your fashion inspiration imagery, and put it to use in your own shoots.



Images © Marc Anthony Photography

DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE GROOM

So often at weddings the focus is on the bride, but the groom is important too. Women are usually the focus in many of the ads we see due to the simple fact that they are the main readers of most fashion magazines. Look at *Esquire* and *GQ*, our favorite men's magazines, for inspiration.

Grooms want to look stylish, sophisticated and suave. By analyzing men's fashion magazines, we gained a lot of insight into posing and lighting men. To recreate the feel of men's fashion, think stoic expressions, a relaxed pose with hands in pockets up to the thumb and a nice bend in the elbow. All of this combined with a sharp tuxedo or suit will portray him as a *GQ* model every time.

DON'T SMILE

Once you start looking at fashion photographs, you will notice the common factors. The first is expression. Most models do not have big smiles. They look pleasant with a closed mouth, serious or pouty. This goes for male and female models. When working with a couple, tell them what type of expression you are looking for. Photograph several different expressions so you can select the best one.



Images © Marc Anthony Photography



STRIKE A POSE

When posed together, models are typically not engaging with each other. They have their own pose and space. There is not much touching and virtually no romance in this style of fashionable posing. Each person looks somewhat stoic and appears to have their own thoughts. When posing your couples, keep a little space between them or a slight overlap, and give each person a unique pose.

Keep an eye out for hand and arm placement. Think about how they are positioned on a mannequin and try to emulate that. There is always air between the body and arms in fashion photographs. Hands for grooms look best in pockets, while brides should have a slight break in their wrist with lightly placed fingers.

When you include the bouquet in a shot, have the bride hold it down or away from her body at an angle. This looks less bridal and more fashionable. Always direct couples where to look and what mood to portray.

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Details are very important. Keep an eye out for the placement of the veil. Think about the length and style and what it can add to a shot. Also check that necklaces, earrings, ties and boutonnieres are straight. Take a look at the pocket square, whether it is showing too little or too much. Do you want the groom's jacket buttoned or opened? All of these details will be noticed by you and especially your client in the final photographs.

PREP YOUR CLIENT AND GET THE SHOTS

When we first began incorporating fashion imagery into our weddings, we told a client that our plan was to capture at least one signature image from her wedding. We said, "This will be the one photograph that will make everyone go, 'Wow!'" To make this happen, set aside about 10 minutes in the timeline when you are working with the couple so you can create this image. Clients who want something unique will make the time for you.

On wedding day, the clock is always ticking, regardless of how well you planned the timeline. If you have a plan in mind, you will be able to make the most of every situation and capture amazing images. Think about the location and where you plan to shoot. If you haven't been to a location before, check it out in advance so you're prepared.

Choose the perfect spot, pose your couple and be sure that they are lit just right. Compose and frame your shot to look interesting, like your inspiration images. Photograph a couple with a variety of expressions and adjust their poses. Voilà! You have the shot, and most likely more than one good one. Since everything is set up, take a few shots of the bride and groom individually.

While you are working with a couple, remember to be confident and don't overshoot. In a just few minutes, you will have captured fashion-inspired images.





Image © Marc Anthony Photography

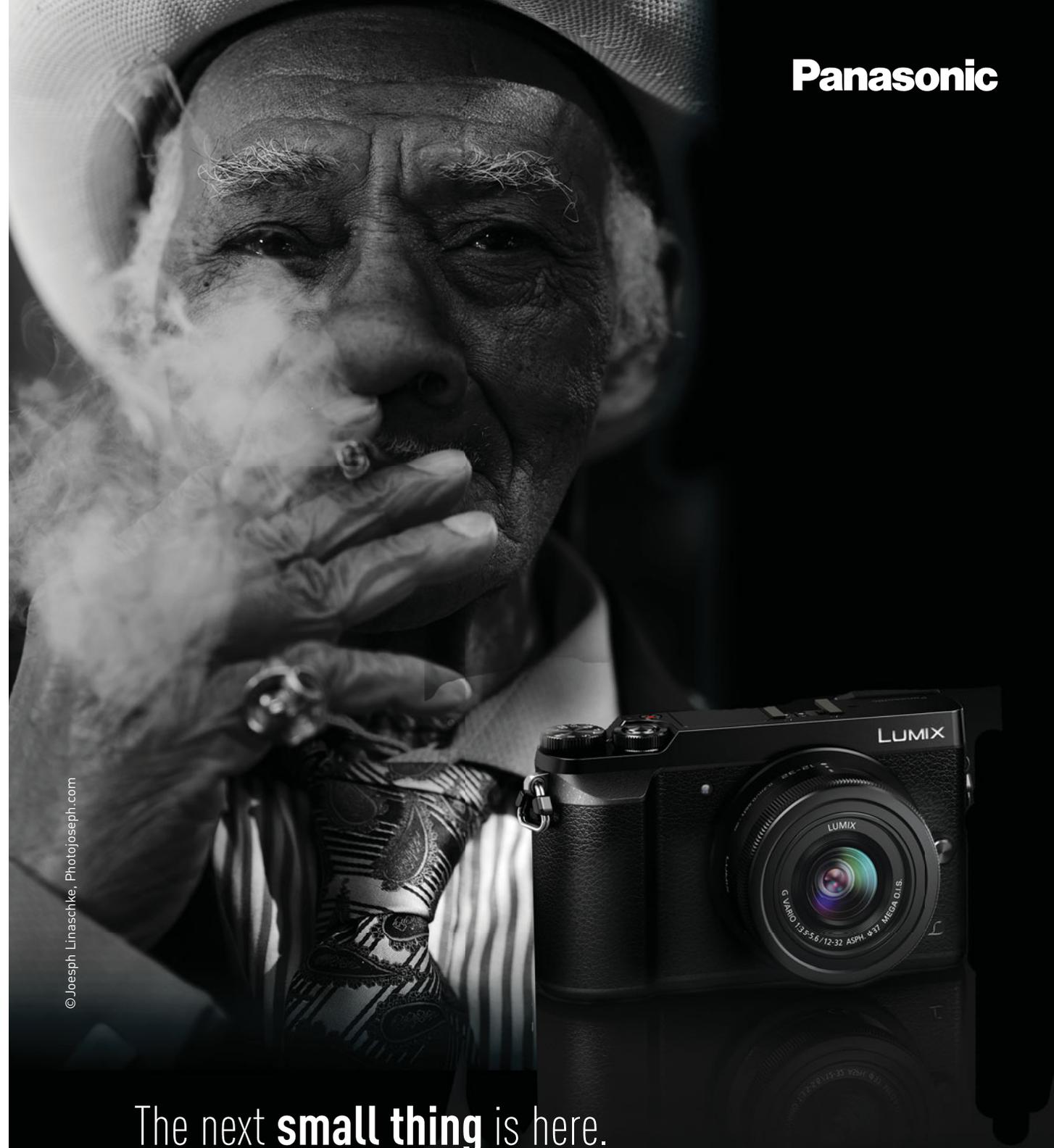
Creating something artistic and original for every couple is pleasing to clients and fulfilling to you as an artist. The next time your client is looking for inspiration, tell her to forget wedding pins and blogs, and direct her to fashion magazines. It is something both you and your clients will enjoy collaborating on. After the wedding, your couples will have unique images not found anywhere else, and soon your portfolio will be filled with fashion-style imagery that will get you noticed. ■



Marc and Tony are recognized internationally as one of the top wedding and portrait photography teams. Their images have been featured in *People*, *Us Weekly* and *Hello!*, as well as industry publications and books. Photographer Marc and creative director Tony combine their singular talents to tell award-winning visual stories. The pair fuse classic elements and modern style with inspirations from vintage fashion and contemporary glamour in their timeless images.

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INSPIRATIONS

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

Sal Cincotta
Editor-in-chief

best of anniversary edition





Image © Sherry Rust



Image © Torres Garcia Foto



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Image © Josh Bennett



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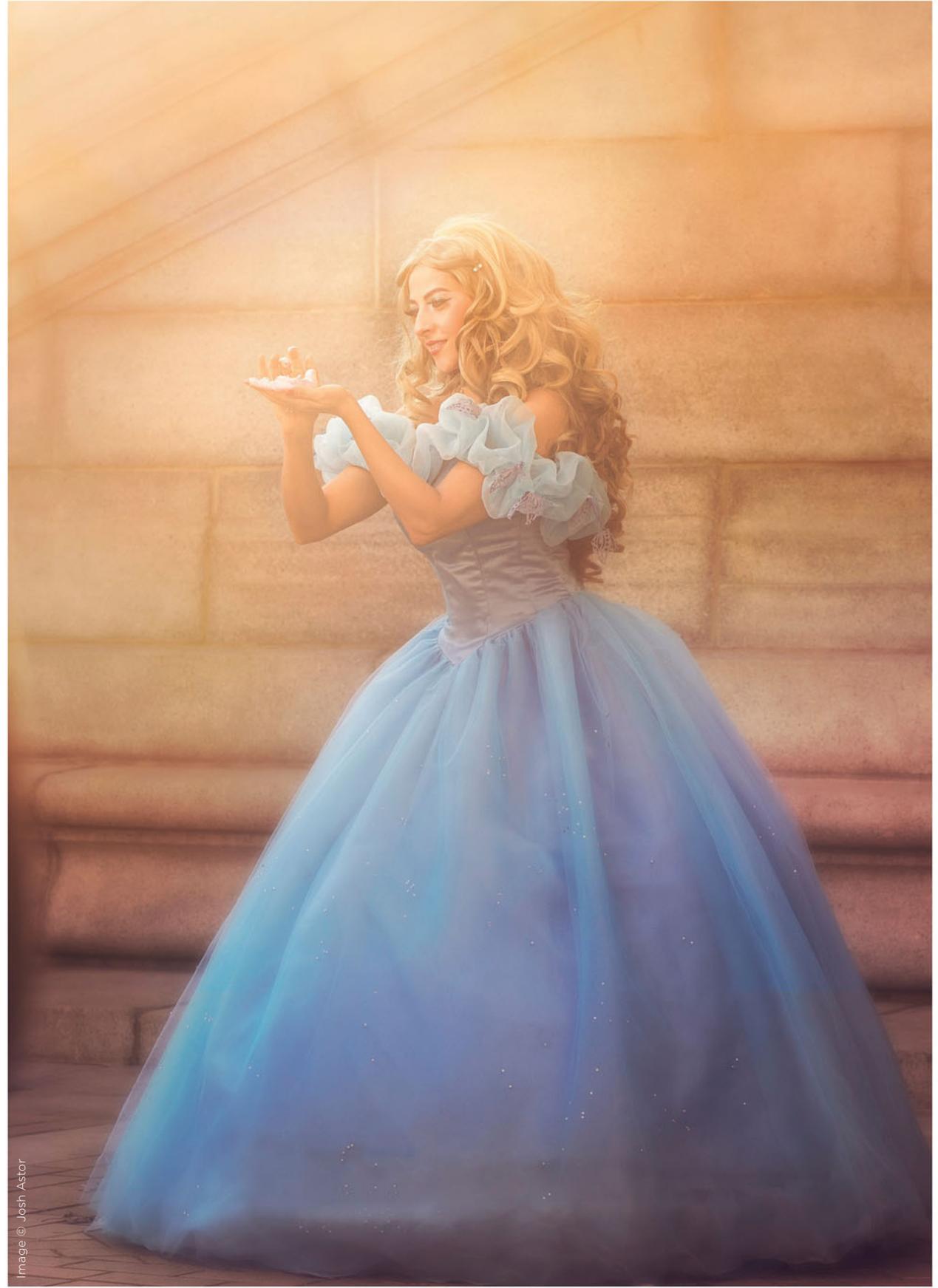


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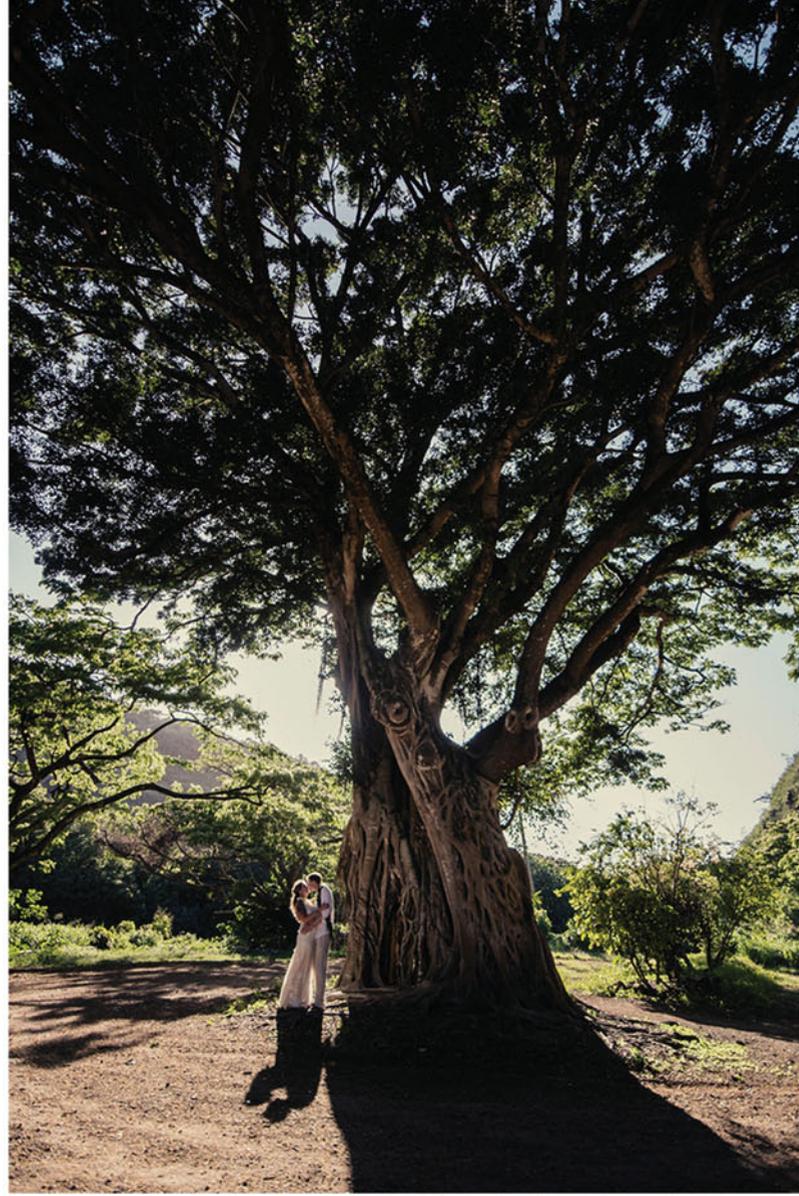


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with Michael Corentino



If you're like me, you're a visual person and probably have childlike appreciation of the world around you. You're excited by the wealth of visual content that surrounds you. Magazine covers, movie posters, movies, television, DVD and album art, advertising campaigns, online images and retail signage all provide a never-ending supply of inspiration. It's all around us. This work is being produced by some of the best photographers, stylists, hair and makeup artists, and models working today. These creative teams know their stuff, and are an amazing resource for both technical and creative inspiration.

If the above description sounds like you, then you've probably found yourself on more than one occasion standing in front of an amazing image slack-jawed and asking yourself, "How the hell did they do that?"

Deconstructing and attempting to recreate the lighting used in the images you've seen is one of the best ways I know to keep learning and growing technically and creatively. So what do I mean by "deconstructing" the light? It's actually really simple. Each image has a series of telltale signals and clues that provide insight into their creation and a general roadmap for recreation. Figuring out what to look for to unlock the lighting secrets behind images is easy once you know how.

I look at it like a fun puzzle-solving creative habit that encourages practice. Sleuthing the clues behind the images you love will help you develop a visual vocabulary you can use not only to reverse-engineer images but also to bolster your own lighting skills. This way you can emulate and incorporate exciting new styles into your image making.

The beautiful thing about inspiration is that it sets you up for investigation and discovery. While at the outset your main goal might be to recreate what you've seen, in the end the process generally leads you in other new and unexpected directions. You're essentially riffing on an idea. So you follow the inspiration, but then allow yourself the creative freedom and open mind to explore other directions based on that inspiration. That's when the magic happens.

When you're deconstructing light, you're trying to figure out the tools, techniques and lighting arrangements used to create the effects you love. You're looking for signals from the shadows—are they hard or soft? This tells you things about the modifiers used and the distance the lights are placed from the subjects. If the light is hard, with rapid, crisp transitions from highlight to shadow, it's a safe bet a reflector, grid spot or bare strobe was used. It's also probable the light may have been placed at a considerable distance from the subject (this isn't always so, but it's a good rule of thumb in most cases). On the other hand, if the light is soft, you're likely dealing with a diffused source, such as a softbox or diffusion panel that's been placed close to the subjects. This creates soft light with gradual, diffuse transitions between the shadows and highlights.

In addition to the quality of the shadows, you'll want to pay attention to the direction, angle and depth of the shadows. This dictates light placement, angle and height. They'll also provide clear-cut clues about what lighting pattern was used—Paramount, Rembrandt, split, broad, short, etc. Next are the catchlights in the subject's eyes, which provide clues about the types of modifiers used and number of lights employed. So you can see with a little knowhow and a bit of educated guesswork, you can get a pretty good idea how the images you love were created.

The image that inspired this particular shoot was one I saw traipsing around Las Vegas during last year's WPPI. It was a promotional image for the tribute act The Australian Bee Gees Show. Check out the video. (I love the Bee Gees, but I'd never heard of this show.) The image spoke to me and stopped me in my tracks. Enter my trusty iPhone—or, as I like to call it, my "inspiration catcher." I have an entire library of drool-worthy images that I've captured on the go. It's an amazing tool and a great habit to get into. I photograph magazine covers in the supermarket, ads on walls, movie posters, ads in magazines, signage, movie and TV screens, you name it. If it visually excites me, I'm grabbing it with my iPhone.

I really like the "deconstructing the light" format, so hopefully, if you guys are up for it, this will become a semi-regular feature for my lighting column. This shoot is the perfect place to get started because it is super easy, involves minimal gear and yields killer results. Using the guidelines above, I looked at the light in the image that inspired this shoot (again, check out the video to see that), and slowly broke down the various qualities of light to make an educated guess about how it was executed.

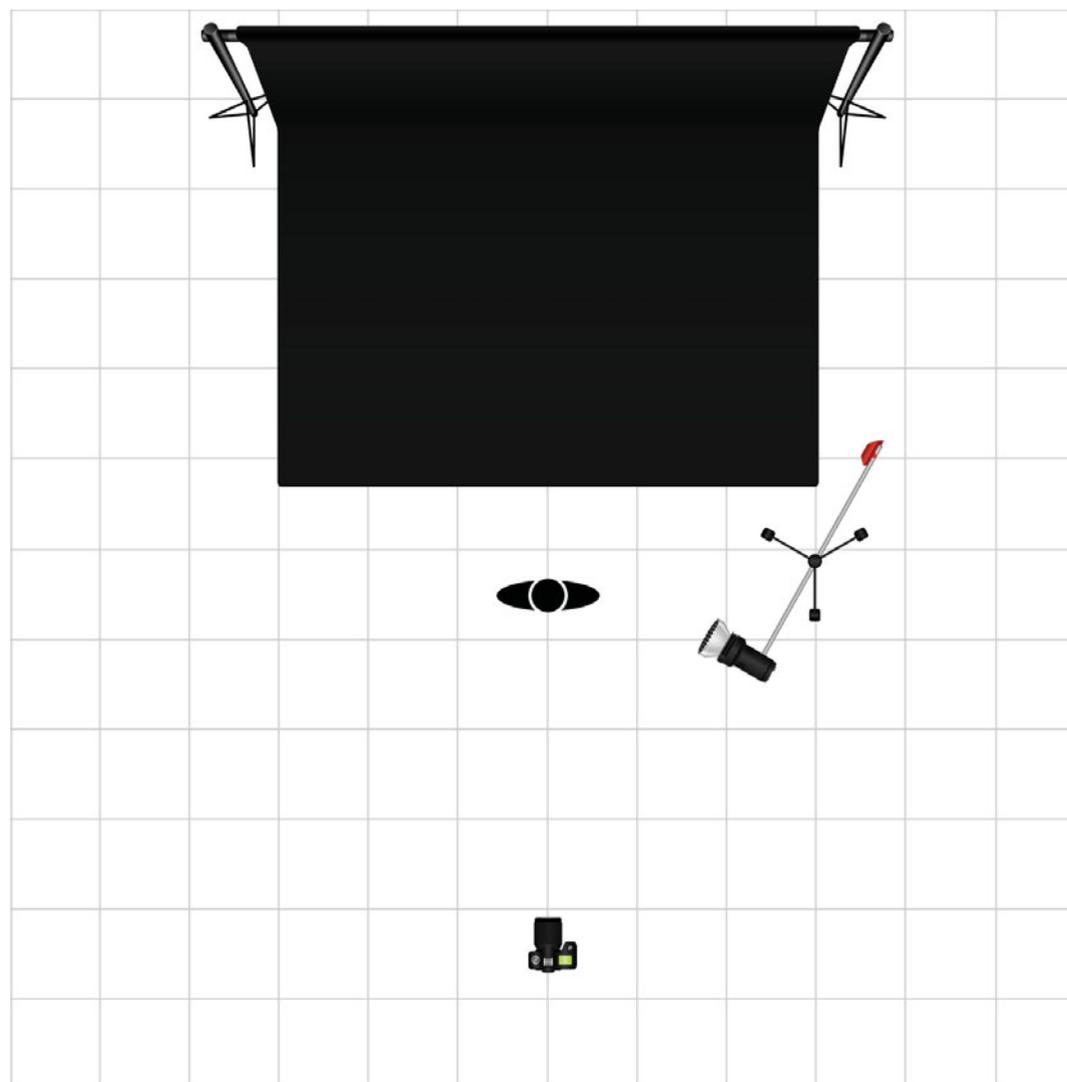


For the final retouched composite, I opted for two band members lit from the right and two lit from the left. To break up the right-facing/left-facing pattern being created, add visual tension and maintain focus on the band's lead singer, I chose one of the captures of her looking directly into the camera. My final camera settings were as follows: ISO 100, F/16, 1/125 sec.

Image © Michael Corsentino

First of all, it was clear the image was produced using one light. It looked to me like a series of captures was made, one for each band member, and later those images were composited together onto one canvas to create the final image with the entire band. You could get close to the original final image with one capture, but it would require significantly more gear, a very small aperture (due to the staggered group pose), potentially requiring a more powerful strobe, and you'd also be looking into only one vantage point. This would present a problem. Looking at the group in the original image, I could tell that the band member in the center had been photographed from a position much lower than the rest of the band, who'd been shot from high above eye level.

I kept it simple and followed my gut about how the image was originally created. That meant using only one light, a 500WS strobe. This is a tool many of you have, so it's something you definitely can try too. Next, I looked at the light coverage. It was clear that the illumination on the subjects was a very tightly confined pool of light, which meant one thing: grid. The other clue was the transition of the shadows to highlights, which was crisp and rapid. This was a clear indication that the source was a small point light source (undiffused strobe), creating hard light. I wasn't sure what degree or kind of grid was used—grid spot or soft egg crate—but I was at least on the right path to get started. I ended up getting lucky, and the 20-degree grid spot I started with was the right tool for the job. The next clue came from looking at the shadows, their quality and direction, and what was happening with the catchlights in the eyes of the subjects. This gave me the clues I needed to properly place my light in relationship to my subject. When doing this, consider the direction, angle and height of the light.



Images lit from the right and left use exactly the same Rembrandt light setup. When subjects turned toward the key, it created a Rembrandt lighting pattern, while split light was created when they faced the camera position. This was a way to create a look with one light and one lighting setup.

Image © Michael Corsentino

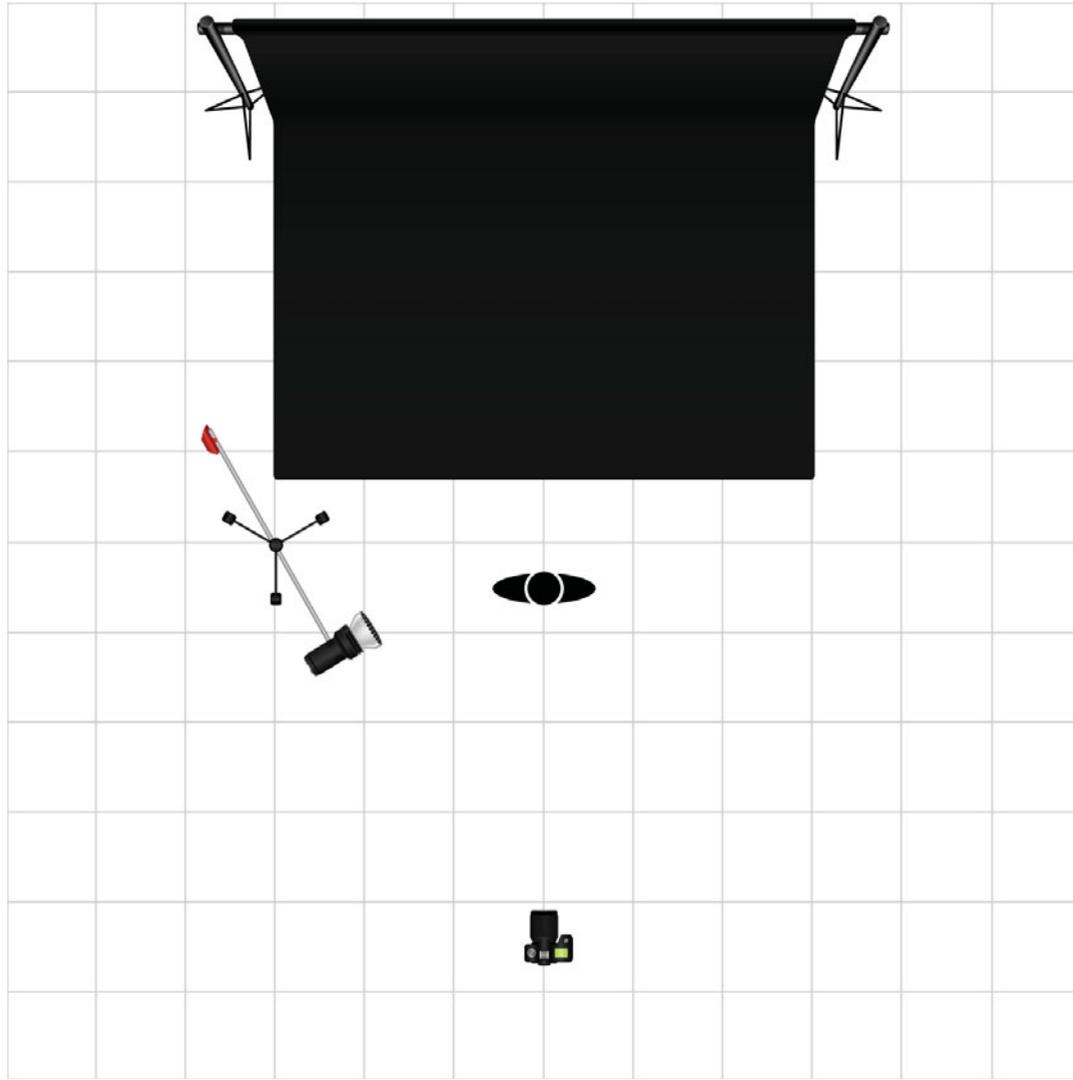


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After metering and shooting the images lit with the keylight on the right, duplicating the same from the left was easy. Before moving the setup, I measured the distance between the keylight and subject, and replicated it when I moved the keylight to the left. This made switching from one orientation to the other quick and easy.

I needed to capture separate images of each subject lit from both the right and left side to keep my options open when compositing in post. I wasn't sure who would look better lit from the left or right, etc., or how the images would eventually lay out, so having options was essential. I also wanted to be able to transition quickly from one setup to the next, again using only one light. To do this, I metered the first setup, lit from the right, and shot everyone assembly-line style. Next, I used a measuring tape to determine the distance of the keylight from my subject position. I rotated the keylight from one side to the other, using the measuring tape to match the distance. Then it was simply a matter of a few captures and keylight position adjustments to create matching shadows. In a matter of minutes, I set about capturing each band member lit from the left.

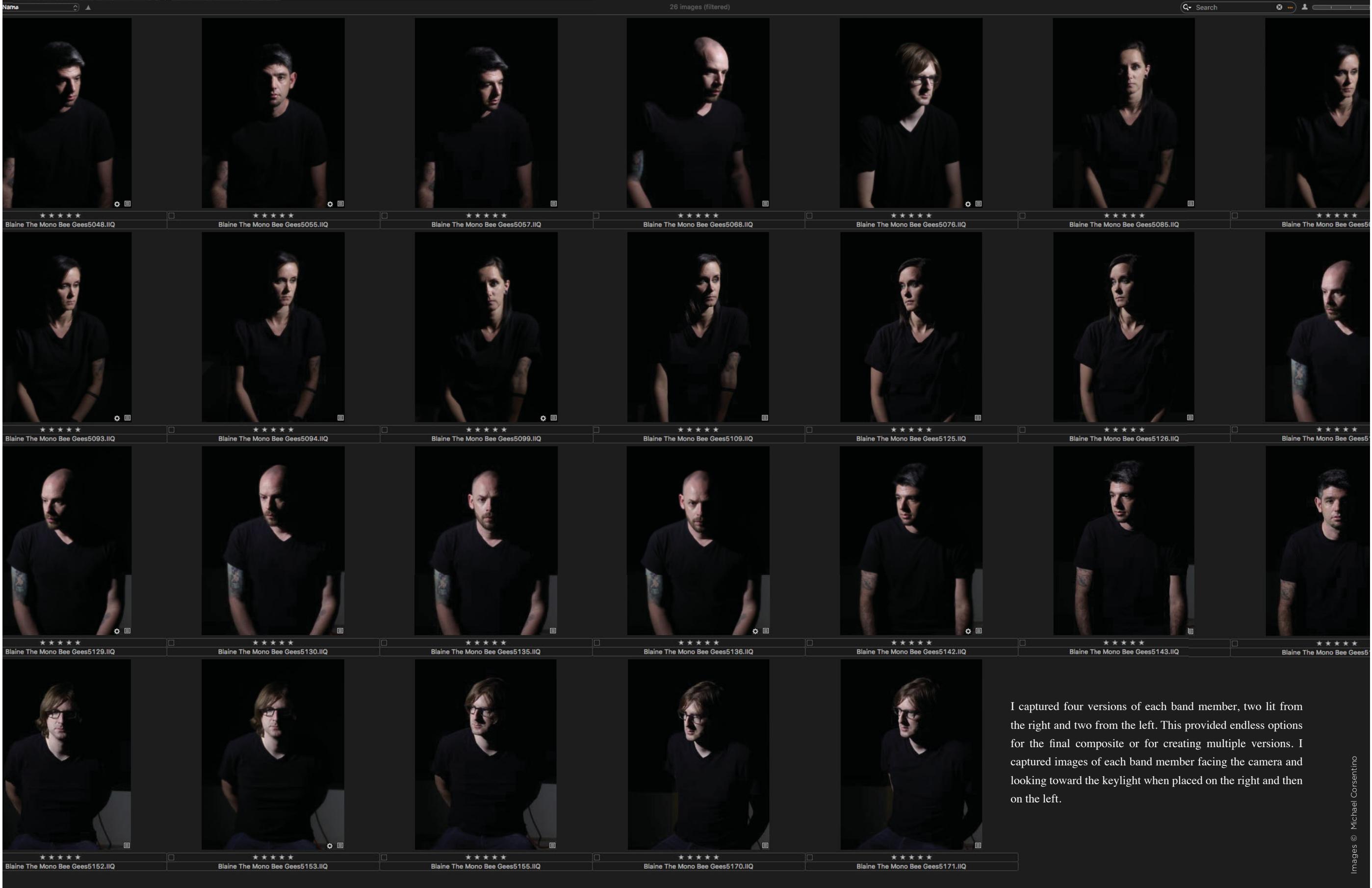


Unretouched with the keylight left.



Unretouched with the keylight left.

Images © Michael Corsentino



I captured four versions of each band member, two lit from the right and two from the left. This provided endless options for the final composite or for creating multiple versions. I captured images of each band member facing the camera and looking toward the keylight when placed on the right and then on the left.



Images © Michael Corsentino

Unretouched select with the key light right.

Unretouched select with the key light right.

This is an easy one to try for yourself, so I hope you give it a shot. Using the tips above, start getting into the habit of analyzing and deconstructing the images you love. If you do, you'll be rocking some awesome new lighting techniques in no time. ■

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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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ENGAGEMENT SESSION
SUCCESS

with Leonardo Volturo

If you think the sole purpose of an engagement session is to get to know your clients, think again. If this is how you present it to your clients, stop. If you're not doing engagement sessions, you should. There is so much more to an engagement session than simply "getting to know each other." They're a great source of additional income beyond the wedding-day coverage. This month, we explore the why, when, where and how behind successful engagement sessions and sales.

THE WHY

There are three reasons we include the engagement session in all our packages.

1. We want them to get comfortable being in front of our cameras. From the very beginning and throughout the engagement session, we're coaching our clients, directing them and setting all of us up for success and a great experience. We're giving them tips and tricks along with the typical posing, stressing all of the small details and ensuring everything is perfect with their positioning, hair, clothing, etc. This shows them that we know what we're doing, that we have control, and allows them to relax and just enjoy each other and the session.
2. Everyone knows what to expect when the wedding day arrives. By the time the engagement session is over, you have established a relationship. You're not just some random person showing up on their wedding day. You've gotten comfortable with each other. They are excited to see you, and have told everyone about you. Their family has most likely heard about you and the experience they've had with you so far. They've also seen the pictures. So on the wedding day, we often hear, "I feel like I already know you" and, "I can't wait to see the amazing images from today."
3. We want to give our clients diversity in their images and the art work for their home so that everything isn't only from the wedding day. This last point is key as it's the basis for your sale. You are doing a post-sale for your engagement sessions, right? What you don't want to do is include an engagement session and just hand over the files or even charge à la carte for the session and give the files. That significantly limits your bottom line. If you include the session and hand over the files, you make nothing extra. If you charge for the session and hand over the files, you're capping your profit. Offer superior products at the post-sale to get the most out of your clients and sessions.



THE WHEN

There is a rhyme and reason to when you schedule your engagement sessions. If you're in a location that has distinct seasons, offer to do the engagement in a different season than the wedding. This way you'll not only have diversity in the wardrobe and location, but in the season as well. Think winter or fall engagement for a summer wedding.

If you're like me and do most of your sessions in a place like South Florida, where we have only two seasons—hot and hotter—the two-season thing isn't going to fly. So we do the session during a time with the least amount of humidity.

We also don't do our sessions close to the wedding, when the couples are dealing with stress and payouts. We aim for six months before the wedding, unless that falls in summer—then, depending on when the wedding is, we'll either shoot before or after summer. Nobody wants uncomfortably hot and sweaty couples. Just give yourself enough buffer for your clients to spread out their spending.



Image © Leonardo Volturo



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Image © Leonardo Volturo



Image © Leonardo Volturo

THE WHERE

We choose locations that offer us the ability to capture a variety of looks and to create diverse images that our clients are going to want for their home. We don't normally let our clients choose locations. We've seen poor suggestions that didn't lend well to great images, sales or experience. We take the lead, directing them and making suggestions based on what we know works, tied in with their personalities. We want locations that lend to interesting portraits and impactful landscape-based images. Feel out your clients. Are they more into a park setting, architecture or urban settings?

We never plan an entire session at the beach. There is nothing we dislike more. It's extremely limiting. If clients insist on the beach, we always set expectations and let them know about issues with beaches being crowded and having limited options. If you're going to do some beach shots, find a strong primary location like a museum, botanical gardens and downtown urban areas.

Location ties in with wardrobe and styling. We're very hands-on. Along with diversity in wedding and engagement session locations, you'll want two outfits to add another layer. Go for something casual and then something dressy. Keep the locations in mind, and advise clients on colors that contrast, not blend in. Our clients go as far as sending us photos while they're out shopping. We encourage them to send us whatever outfits they're thinking of wearing so we can ensure a major element of the shoot is on point.

Now that you're scheduled, you've got your location and wardrobe, it's time to move on to...

THE HOW

Having a rhythm and being confident throughout your sessions is crucial. You never want to look confused or unsure of yourself, or be fumbling with your gear. You also don't want your clients standing around wondering what to do or if they look good. This is probably their first time being professionally photographed, and they may be uncomfortable and wondering if they look good, or what you're doing, or what's happening next.

Keep talking throughout the shoot. Don't get lost behind your camera, taking a bunch of photos and then flipping through them all.

When we start our sessions, we always give our clients some general coaching at the beginning. We show them how to stand, position their heads, let them know what we need them to do so they look their best. Then we do a warm-up to get them loose and comfortable. We start with a basic pose, get them interacting with each other while we shoot from a distance (70–200 lens), and continually talk to them as I'm shooting. You need to multitask here to keep them comfortable and get them warmed up. Compliments are good, and if you've got some good images, show them to build their confidence.

Once everyone is warmed up and we've got a good rhythm going with some tight and mid portraits, we'll move on to some more creative scene-based and off-camera flash images. We photograph these with a 16–35 and Profoto B1's and B2's; sometimes a 70–200, depending on the scene. We go for dramatic shots with fashion-style posing, and capture a beautiful landscape that our clients are going to want large in their home.



Image © Leonardo Volturo



Image © Leonardo Volturo

Remember, aside from getting your couples comfortable and familiar with how you work, it's important to provide them a lot of options from their session. Having a great variety of scenes, poses and expressions—including big impact images, and the close-ups for Mom and Dad—are the necessary elements for a successful shoot and sale.

For more insight into “the how,” check out the attached video. ■

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

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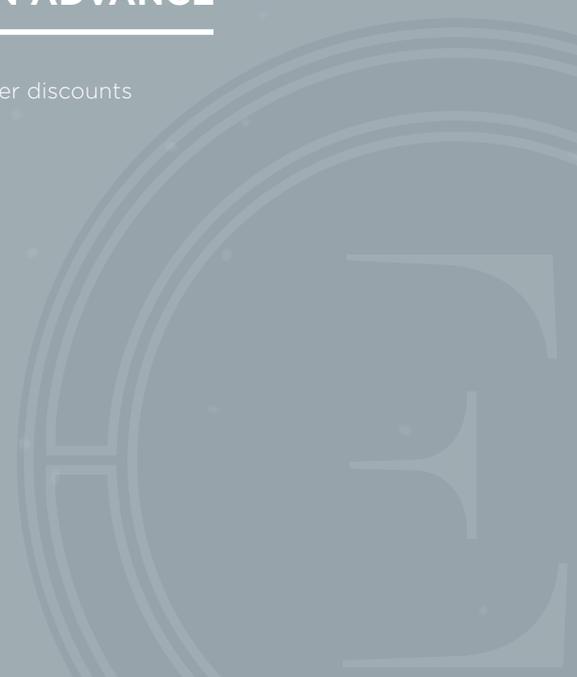
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