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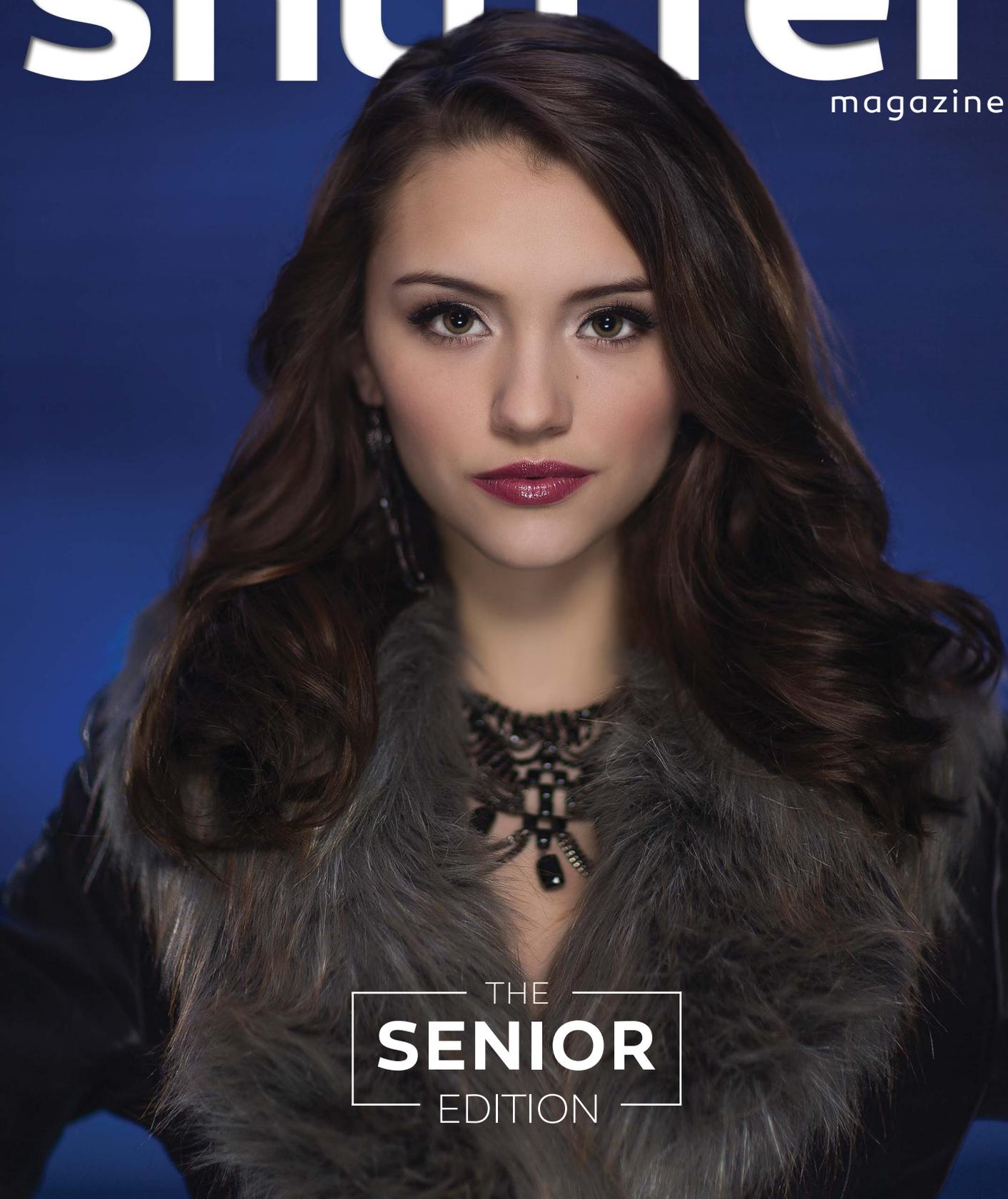


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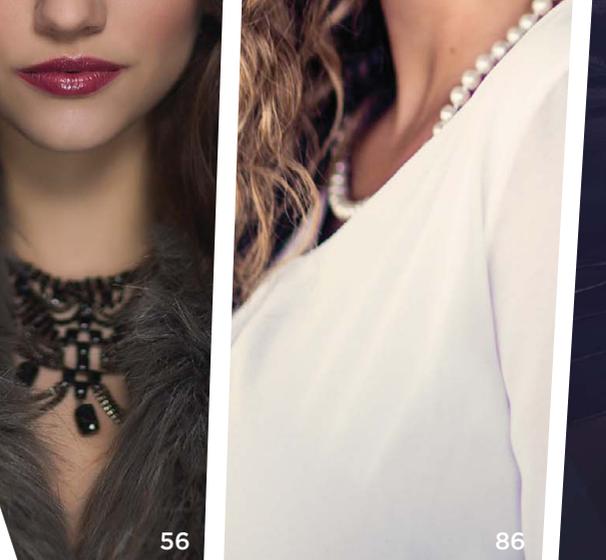
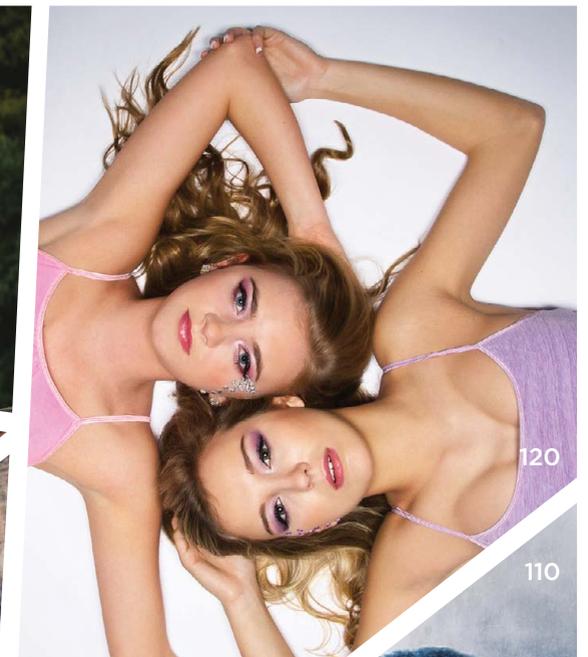
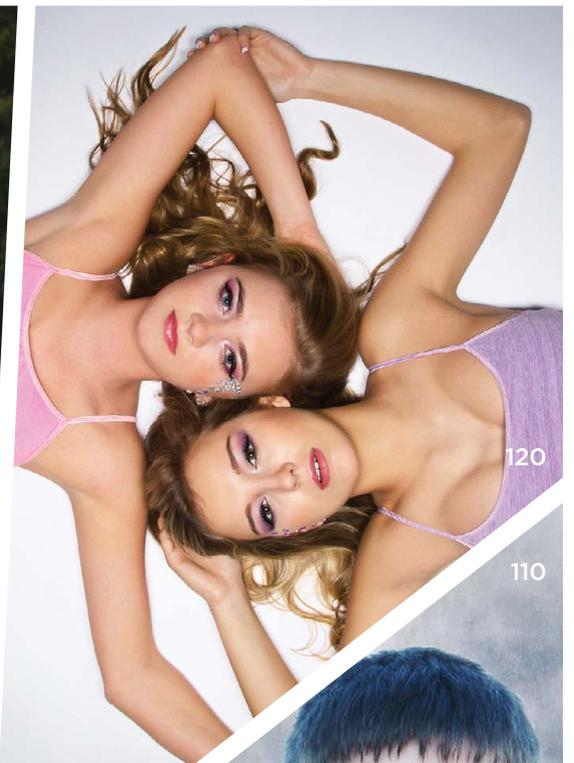


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Salvatore Cincotta
BEHIND THE SHUTTER

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Shutter Magazine is about photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter* uses the latest technologies to deliver information in a way that is relevant to our audience. Our experienced contributors help us create a sense of community, and have established the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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THE COVER

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LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

*It's all about the **experience.***
- Sal Cincotta



MAKING IT WORK:
ADAPT & DELIVER
with Leonardo Volturo



Have you ever had a wedding that totally didn't go according to plan? If you haven't, you will. We do everything in our power to set and manage expectations, create and stick to a timeline, and make it through the day with as few hiccups as possible. Sometimes things totally go awry, and we all need to be prepared, be able to adapt, and still deliver on the quality and experience our clients are expecting.

Let's look at one of our latest weddings as an example of the unexpected things that can go wrong during a wedding day and how we adapted and made it work.

Typically, our clients book us six months to a year or more in advance. From the very beginning, we are involved in the planning process. We send out a questionnaire and build a timeline. This lets them know what to expect and helps them coordinate with other vendors like hair and makeup for start and end times. That's where this wedding went wrong.



Images © Leonardo Volturo

THE MEETING

To reiterate something that I've said previously: I know a lot of photographers like to just go with the flow and work off a schedule created by someone else. We don't leave our fate in anyone else's hands. Other people don't know how we work, what we need to deliver or what our clients are expecting. Because we want to control our own destiny, we establish our timeline with our clients from the very beginning, stressing its importance in allowing us to deliver what they've seen and what they've hired us to produce.

The originating issue we had with the clients for this particular wedding was that they hired us at the last minute. For the first time, we were forced to create our timeline just two weeks before the wedding. Being booked so late in the game, everything had already been scheduled without our input.

When we first sat down to go over the timeline, we immediately checked the sunset time and saw that, based on the schedule they put together, they would be having their ceremony outdoors, in the dark. While that can be an issue in and of itself if you don't know your lighting, we could have dealt with that using multiple strobes or speedlights. But our couple was against doing a first look, which would have allowed us to knock out the creative and family pics before the ceremony. So they had to quickly make a decision to start the ceremony earlier. I had a feeling this wasn't going to work out because invitations had already gone out and most ceremonies don't start on time as it is.

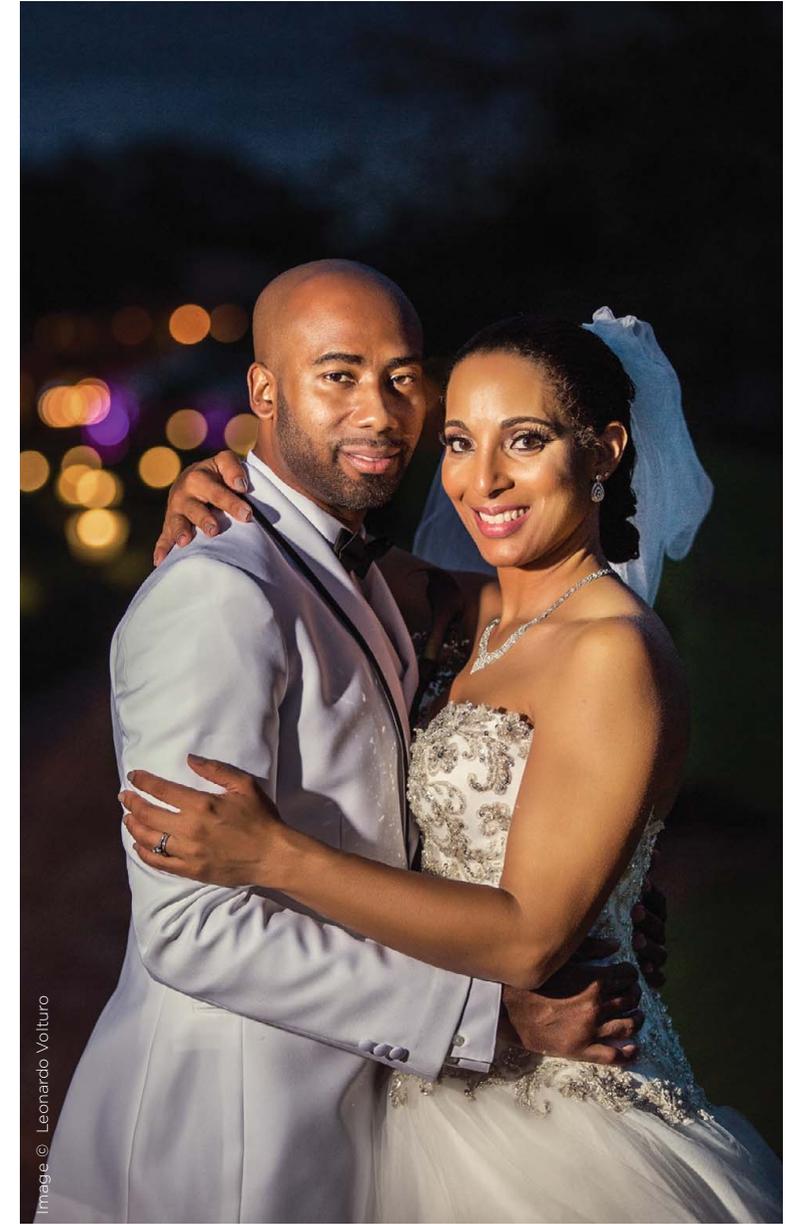


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THE CEREMONY & CREATIVES

It turned out that my feeling was correct. As we were standing out there with all the guests, there was no bridal party or bride coming down the aisle. Our ceremony was not going to start on time. We had to start figuring out how we were going to get all the images we needed while we were losing light. The answer was to quickly blow through family pictures, do whatever creatives with the couple we could before the reception started, and then pull them back out during the reception to do some night shots. That plan quickly died once we saw the rain clouds coming in, and we got off only two family shots before everyone ran for cover.

On to Plan C.

Fortunately, the rain subsided a bit, so we started shooting again, but by that time all of the family and bridal party had scattered and were doing their own thing, so instead we did the creative portraits of the bride and groom with the little light we had left. We typically schedule an hour or so for creatives. Now we had only a few minutes, so it was definitely a high-pressure situation. We had to think quickly and decide what shots were most important while spending minimal time setting them up and moving locations. We ran around with one Profoto B1, and were able to use the cloudy sky and ambient lighting from the venue to create some killer shots for our clients in what could have been a really bad situation.



Image © Leonardo Volturo

FAMILY PHOTOS

It's now pitch black out, the reception is in full swing and we haven't done the family photos. The reception was also outdoors, so we're not bouncing any light here. The next questions are: Where are we taking the photos? How are we lighting them? How are we getting everyone we need?

Adapt and make it work. We found a spot just outside the tent with a pretty good background that we could light up a bit and avoid the common mistake I see of a bright subject in pitch blackness. We grabbed a couple of Profoto B2's, threw them up on stands and gridded them to focus the light. We got our settings dialed in and tested everything before assembling any of the family or bridal party. This is key because it's during the reception and dinner, so you want to move people in and out as quickly as possible.

We'd previously identified a couple of people to help us grab who we need and run through our list. This can be the wedding planner or a member of the wedding party from each side.



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In the end, we were able to knock out some killer portraits, get through all of the family photos and end up with some cool nighttime closing shots. All without anyone knowing what was going on on our end, and making the experience as smooth as any other day, like nothing happened.

Be prepared, know your gear, adapt and get it done. ■

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Leonardo Volturo is an international award-winning wedding and portrait photographer, writer and educator. He started his career almost 20 years ago in New York City before taking on Miami, and now heads up Studio C for Salvatore Cincotta. Leonardo is known not only for his outstanding wedding imagery, but also for his passion for the industry and educating others in business, marketing, sales and lighting.
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5

Must-Have
Time Savers
for
Business & Life

with Vanessa Joy





Image © Vanessa Joy

It's one of my favorite oxymorons: Technology is full of ways to make our lives better, but somehow it's ended up making them more complex. If the tech revolution was supposed to help us out by automating tasks and doing what we couldn't before, then why are so many of us more time-deprived than ever?

I think we tend to find ways to do things faster only to fill that newly found time with more to-do's and deadlines. While the point of this article is to give you some of the newest ways to make your life easier and save you time, I want to also challenge you to fill that saved time. But don't fill it with work. Fill it with life.

1 - A Book a Day

I pride myself on being a book nerd. And not the cool kind—no, the business and sci-fi kind. You usually won't find me reading books that relax me or are in any way inapplicable to business or life. But books take way too long to read.

Over the past five years or so, Audible has been my best friend, allowing me to get ready in the morning and drive while listening to some of my favorite books (get the whole list of my favorite reads at BreatheYourPassion.com). It's been so effective that I managed to learn Portuguese in just three months!

Blinkist has taken book reading to the next level. Blinkist is that friend you had in high school who read all the books and gave you Cliff's Notes. It's your news-junkie buddy who keeps you up to date on current events. Blinkist.com takes popular books and summarizes them into bullet points and/or audio blips that promise to give you all the meat from a book in 15 minutes or less. A book a day? Yes, please.



Image © Vanessa Joy

2- Instagram Scheduling

It's finally here! For so long, people have been using services like Hootsuite and Everypost to schedule all of their social media ahead of time, but then had to remember to live-post on their Instagram. Not anymore. Now we can tap into the media outlet without actually having to open the app. Amen!

You can schedule your Instagram posts along with your other social media through services like Hootsuite. I use Grum.co because it's much less expensive than Hootsuite, but I'm sure more and more social media management apps with Instagram integration will pop up by the time you read this article. Find what works for you, and finally be able to schedule out all of your social media posts in one place.

3 - Remote Access

I'm a huge traveler. In fact, I'm writing this article in a café in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, where I'm spending six weeks with my family. While I'm here, I'm not missing anything in my studio. Truth be told, I'd never have to set another foot in my studio except to grab camera gear if I didn't want to.

There is no longer a reason for photographers to be glued to their studios if they're not shooting. Going back to the studio for photos and files should be a thing of the past for you. It doesn't matter what you use—Google Drive (my file hub), Dropbox, iCloud, or SmugMug.com—to eliminate the need to drive back to your studio because you need access to something you don't have at home.

Other than cloud-based file storage, consider a remote access system so you can securely hack your way into your home or studio computer from anywhere in the world. LogMeIn.com is my service of choice. I use it to grab a random file I saved on my desktop, and do my QuickBooks accounting from halfway around the world. Having constant access to all your files saves time and peace of mind.



Image © Vanessa Joy

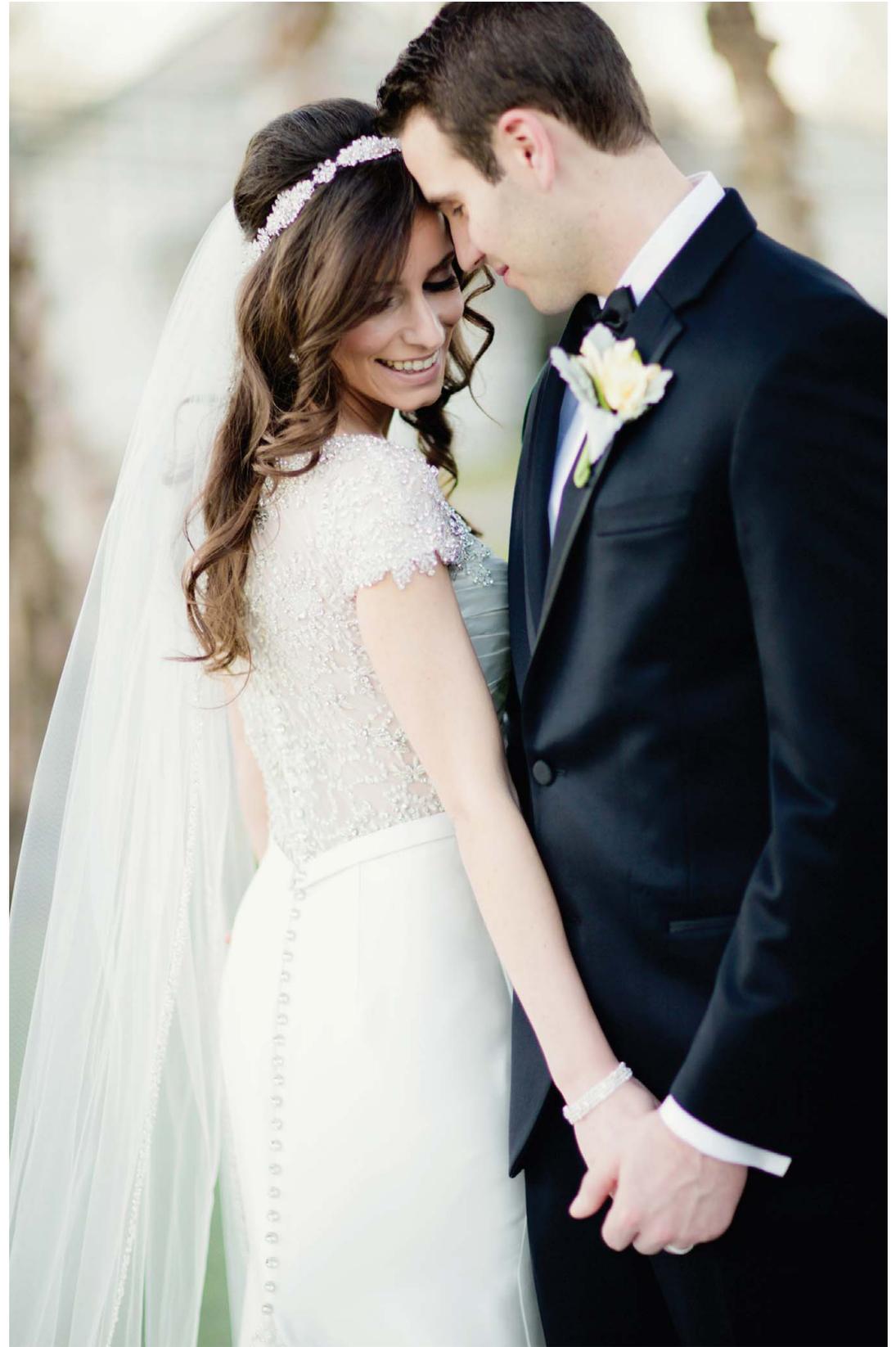


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4 - Meal Planning

Time wasted at home is just as bad as wasting time at work. Not only because one ultimately affects the other, but also because they both affect your quality of life. It's amazing to me when I see people with a business that runs as smooth as silk, but you take one step into their home, and it's no wonder they're going gray early.

There are endless ways to bring the organization and efficiency that your business has into your home. One of my favorites is meal planning and grocery shopping. A trip to the grocery store is a hassle, especially if you have children, and researching recipes can be such a chore. Not to mention the amount of food I buy and then throw out because I overbought, which drives me crazy.

In most areas, there is now either a delivery grocery service like Fresh Direct or Amazon Fresh, or a store-pickup service like Peapod.com. These services can save you time and money by letting you sort products by unit price or what's on sale. No longer do you have to scour the aisles for specials and best bulk price. It's all only a click away.

To tackle meal planning, I like TheFresh20.com, which specializes in five-day dinner plans (or lunch too if you'd like) for four. You only need to buy 20 fresh ingredients to make all five healthy meals, and it organizes the meals efficiently so you can prepare parts of meals all at once for faster cooking time and no food waste. You can choose between Classic, Gluten Free and Vegetarian plans that take the prep and thinking out of meal planning and leave you with delicious, healthy results.



Image © Vanessa Joy

5 - Doctor on Demand

Finally, an app that brings healthcare into the 21st century. Most business owners can't fathom wasting time taking a sick day, so it's infuriating that we have to waste time going to the doctor. Can we please go back to house calls instead of waiting for hours in a waiting room full of sick people? Why, yes, yes we can.

For a small fee—ironically one that's less expensive than my health insurance's copay—you can video chat with a doctor who can call in a prescription for you at your local pharmacy if needed. You can find everything from pediatric care to general medicine and even mental healthcare on Doctor on Demand. No more struggling to get a doctor's appointment, dragging yourself to the car and spending hours in an office you never wanted to visit. The doctor is now making house calls.



Images © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

So have you thought about it? What you wanted to fill your life with once you've found the extra free time? Maybe you're behind on work and do need to use it to catch up. But if you're not, and this truly is newfound time, what will you do with it? Take a look at this video for inspiration from others on what to do if you had just a half hour more free time a day. ■

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

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ADVANCED POSING FOR
**WEDDING
PHOTOGRAPHERS**

PART 1
with Michael Anthony

Wedding photography is a delicate art that requires a combination of many different photographic disciplines. Our job is to best communicate a story that helps clients emotionally connect with memories of the day for the rest of their lives.

Of all of these art forms, the one that takes the longest to master is posing. Posing is often learned after lighting technique and composition rules. To create a good pose, you have to apply those other techniques within a set of rules that differs for males, females, couples and groups.

Most posing guides focus on a certain set of poses. The problem is that a pose has to suit the shape of a particular individual, their attire, the light, the composition and the environment. To truly understand posing, you cannot simply copy poses from a book or website. Just as with composition, posing can be broken down into a set of rules and ideologies that can be broken down even further for different scenarios.

The first rule of posing: It's all about communication.

If you take nothing else from this article, understand that posing is first and foremost about communicating with a viewer. Something as simple as an expression can change the communication of a photograph to the viewer from happy to sad. While it may sound cliché, to truly understand how posing is about communication, think about how filmmakers use music to influence viewers' emotion in a sequence. The same rules apply to a pose. When you change a few elements in a photograph, you can change the communication of an image completely.

In the rest of this multipart article, I am going to show you some of the rules and ideologies that will allow you to communicate with the viewers of your images. As an artist, the pose is your strongest element in creating a complete image.

POSING THE FEMALE FORM

Every wedding photographer starts here since weddings focus heavily on bridal photography. The concepts we will talk about, though, are most certainly applicable to all aspects of photographing women. We will break down a pose piece by piece so that you are able to learn how to approach posing one step at a time. Before you begin arranging your subject, there are a couple of things you need to consider.

Direction of the light

It is important to understand fully what direction your light source is coming from. Even when photographing in open shade, you will have a direction of light that will be apparent in your images. It's up to you to discover that direction of light, and place your subject so that the light complements the subject and the pose. Keep in mind the type of light you are working with so that you know how to use it (a hard light source such as the sun won't always be the most flattering light to place on a subject's face, for example). You can modify the light with tools such as reflectors and off-camera flash to get the look of your choice.

Background and composition

These elements are extremely important. We want to minimize distractions in your image. Your pose needs to suit the mood of the image. For instance, if I am taking a photo of a dramatic scene slightly underexposed with off-camera flash, I am not going to have the couple smiling into the camera, or off into a light source. The scene will not match and not communicate my story effectively.

WITH WOMEN, THE GOAL IS TO EMPHASIZE CURVES AND SHAPE

As we begin our foundation for a good pose, we have to understand that the goal of posing women is to emphasize their S-curve. Every time we position a woman into a pose, the ultimate goal is to further exaggerate her natural shape. You can see how this ties directly into composition, and we will use light to place further emphasis on her curves.

START BY TURNING THE BODY AWAY FROM THE SOURCE OF LIGHT

To start, we will almost always turn the body away from the source of the light. While you may have heard this technique before, let me break down why we do this.

By placing the body away from the light, we are using shadow to carve shape into the body. The light falling on her gives texture to her attire, but, most importantly, leaves the short side of her body in light and the broad side in shadow. So as the light falls across her, we get dimension in her body and curves, and make her look thinner at the same time. Use this technique for all body types; the dimension it creates allows for further emphasis of her curves.



Client body angled into the light source.



Client body angled away from the light source.

Images © Michael Anthony

NEXT, FOCUS ON THE LOWER HALF BY SHIFTING WEIGHT

I always start the basic foundation of a pose the same way. I have the subject point a toe toward the camera, and then shift her weight to one leg.

Remember, posing is about communication. Shifting the weight in her hip away from the camera causes her backside to appear smaller. We use this technique when photographing the majority of our clients, but when posing boudoir, fitness modeling or other types of intimate portraiture, we often shift weight into the camera to create a stronger curve or place more emphasis on a particular area of the body.

In order to increase the hourglass shape of our client, we can then turn the clients front knee over the back knee, which will add curves to the hips and help to accentuate the most flattering parts of her.



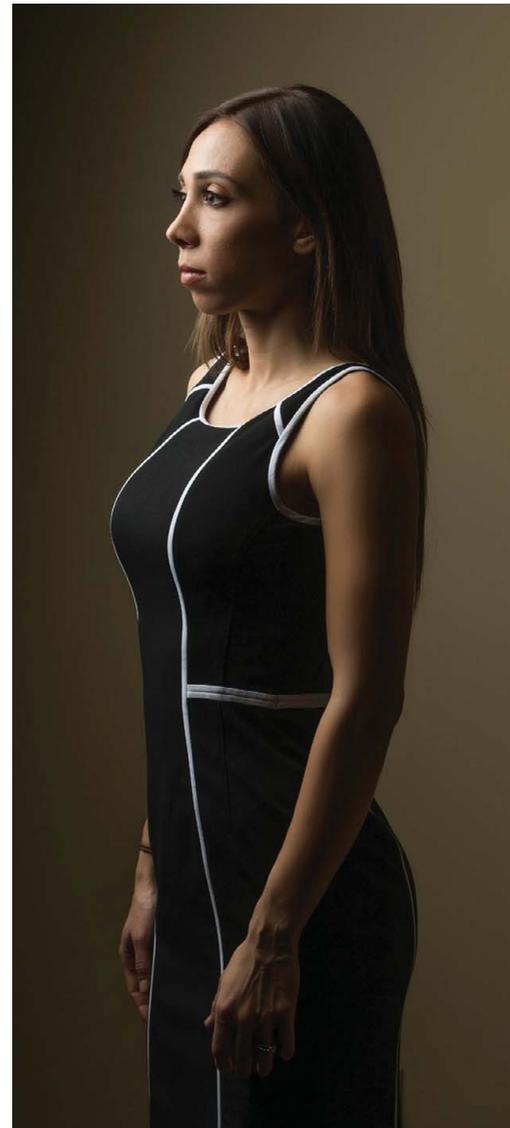
Client facing forward, one toe pointed at camera.



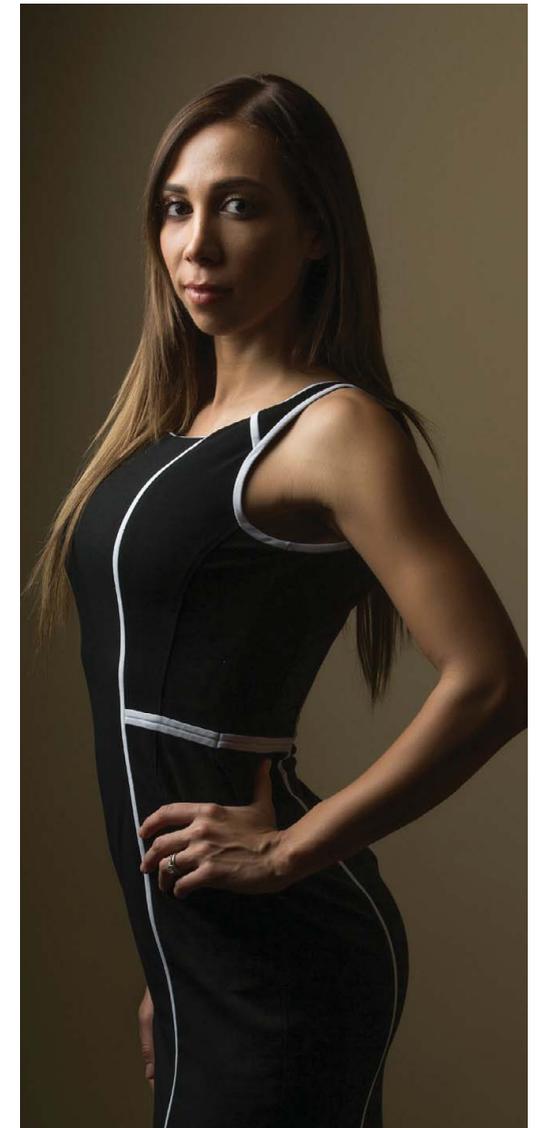
Client facing forward, one toe pointed at camera, weight shifted to one leg.

SPINE

Correct posing of the spine is essential for a solid foundation pose. The lumbar spine on a female should almost always be arched to further showcase her natural curve and make the chest fuller. I often instruct women to bring their shoulder blades together, which makes the chest appear more full. After they arch their spine, I ask them to take a breath. This helps push the natural arch in her back even further while placing the spine into the best possible position.



Client standing normally.



Client with shoulder blades together and an arched spine.

ARMS AND HANDS

Arms and hands can be hard to pose. In wedding photography, we often get lucky with this because our brides have a bouquet, dress or veil to work with.

The first rule to understand when posing arms and hands is that they should never be hanging flat next to the body.

The second rule is that generally you want to leave space between the elbows and the waist if the arms are posed close to the side. Doing so shows the subject's waist, eliminating the boxy look that happens when that area is covered by the arms.

With most female hands, we want an elegant and dainty appearance. Of course, these are general rules that may be broken once you understand them.

Ask your subject to turn the wrist upward and relax her middle, ring and pinkie fingers, while keeping slight tension in the index finger. You should get a look similar to that below.



Client arms flat next to the body.



Client arms spaced away from body.



Images © Michael Anthony



Image © Michael Anthony

The goal in posing the hands is to complement the overall pose and surroundings.

For a shortcut, all you have to do is give them something to do. Have them hold onto something. This is often necessary to add context to a composition. A bride may hold her veil or bouquet, or the lapel on the groom's jacket.

For women, generally we want to see the side of the hand. When you have the back of the hand to the camera, you are projecting a more masculine appearance. When you pose the palm of the hand toward the camera, you are projecting a powerful and almost aggressive message to the viewer.

Use the arms and hands to create compositional elements such as triangles or leading lines. The arms can be used to bring the attention of the viewer ultimately where it needs to go, which is usually the faces.

POSING THE FACE AND EXPRESSION

Next to the hands, this can be one of the hardest elements to master. The goal of all posing is to communicate intention, and the face of your subject can be one of the most crucial elements in accomplishing this.

In foundation posing, turn your subject's face back toward the light, which casts the light onto the short side of the face. Short side light almost always looks best on a female. Just be careful not to cast too much of a shadow on the short side; using a reflector can help to fill the shadows. Here is an example of short side light versus broad side light.



Client facing away from light.



Client facing light.

Images © Michael Anthony

POSING THE EYES

For women, we often like the eyes to appear larger. If you have your subject lean into the camera when posing the hips and legs, you may be shooting slightly down on them. If you have them tilt the chin down, the eyes appear larger. If they tilt their head slightly up, the eyes appear smaller.

When you have a subject tilt her head down or to the side, make sure the tip of her nose does not pass her lips or cheekbone, which makes the nose appear larger.

The white part of the eye is called the sclera. We don't want to see more sclera on one side or the other of the eye. When she's turning her head a particular way, ask her to keep her eyes centered over her nose if you are seeing too much of the sclera.

Finally, we want to see light in the eyes. This is something we often forget. Make sure that both eyes are well lit, and that you are getting a good triangle of light on a subject's face.

POSING THE EXPRESSION

When posing the expression of a subject, you are able to influence the communication of your photograph. By just asking a subject to smile, you get cheese. In order to get genuine expression out of clients, you have to inject emotion into your story. Laughter can often be the best medicine, but be careful when cracking jokes so you don't capture an unflattering image. I will ask a subject to fake a laugh. They look at me like I am crazy, but when I insist they do it, the real laugh that follows the fake one always gives us a great expression.

If you are looking to create an expression that is more alluring or emotional, ask the subject to breathe through her lips, which will cause natural separation between the lips and create a distinct look that blends well with a more edgy or dramatic portrait.





Image © Michael Anthony

There are many different methods and ideologies about posing. These are all general rules. In order to create aesthetically pleasing poses, you have to understand the foundations. If your images are not looking the way you want, it is likely because you are missing some foundational elements of posing and lighting.

In the next two articles, we will look at posing basics for men and couples. ■

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

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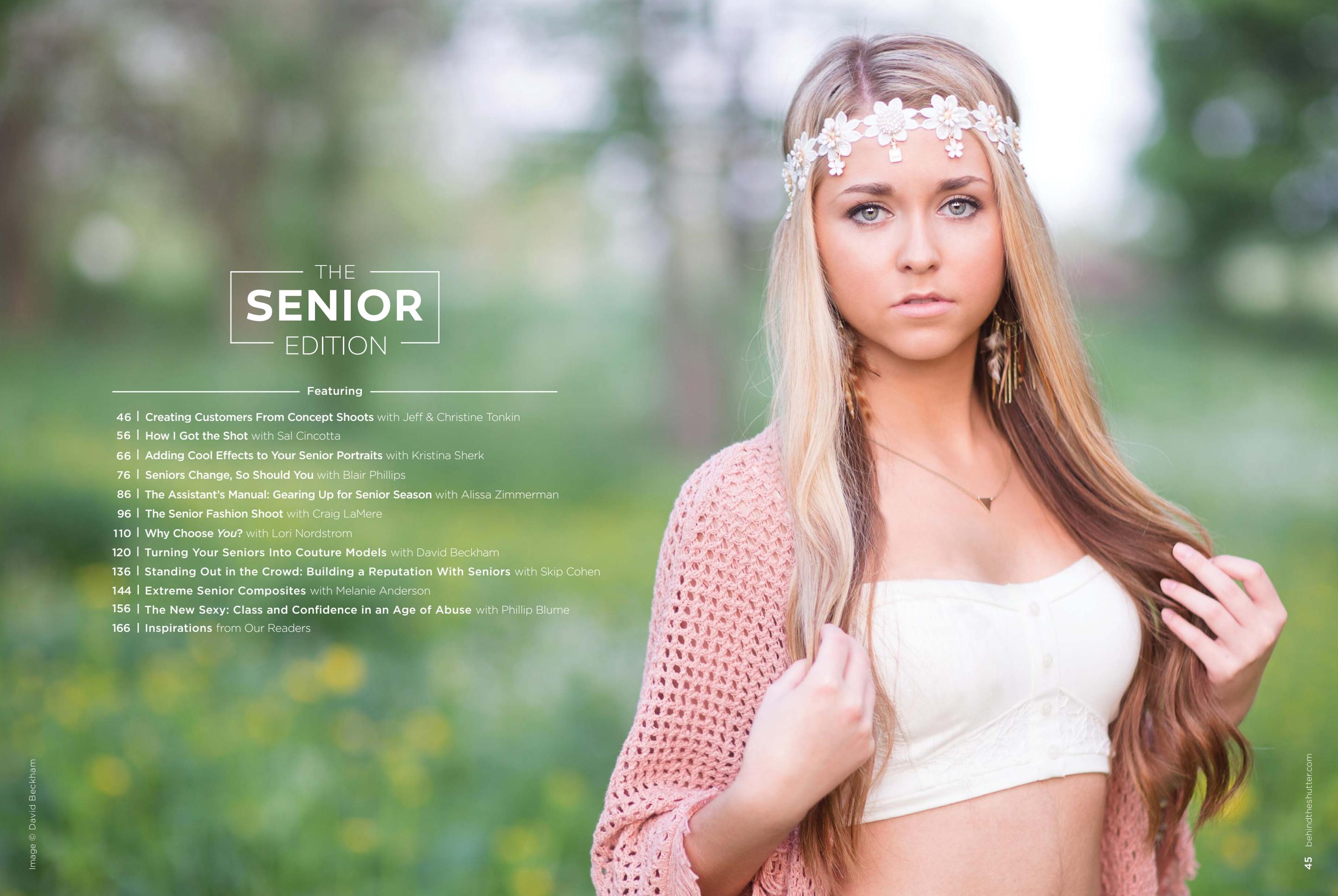
We pride ourselves on seeing what you see—the depth, the resonance, the poignancy, the humor, the irony and the we-know-it-when-you-see-it intangibles. Jen Hillenga has seen enough to know that the craftspeople at AdoramaPix see things with the same passion she does. Look closer at AdoramaPix.

AdoramaPix Ambassadors are envoys of what makes the art of photography special and what keeps us constantly striving for perfection.

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THE
SENIOR
EDITION

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A woman with long, flowing red hair is swimming underwater. She is wearing a purple mermaid tail with a scale-like texture. Her hair is blowing in the water, and she has a serene expression. The background is a deep blue, with light filtering through the water, creating a dreamy atmosphere. Bubbles are visible around her.

CREATING CUSTOMERS FROM CONCEPT SESSIONS

WITH JEFF & CHRISTINE TONKIN

Any photographer can set up and shoot a concept session, but sessions don't guarantee referrals or produce clients who actually book a senior session. Why is that? What is the secret to making your creatively styled shoots more than just a fun time? What are the keys to turning them into valuable referrals and new revenues?

ENTICE YOUR FUTURE CLIENTS

The phone rings. An email dings. Your next client makes contact with your business. What can you say that will pique their interest and book their session? Here's what we say: "Book with us now and, in addition to your personalized senior session, you can be part of our popular DigiSmiles Summer Promotional Shoots and not pay an additional session fee." This creates interest and urgency.



INVOLVE YOUR CLIENT

When your clients invest their time and creativity into the experience, they feel a sense of belonging and ownership, which is a powerful tool that you should be capitalizing on. The secret to getting your clients to talk nonstop to their friends about their creative shoot is involvement from both the clients and their parents. When we say involvement, we mean a lot of it. Give the seniors creative freedom to bring their own personality into the session, and then guide them to the final look that will best match your vision. Together, decide what is needed for their wardrobe and start the fun planning process. Seniors who aren't part of the creative process have nothing invested. If the senior shows up on the day of the shoot with only the props and costumes you have provided, she is simply modeling for you and the images will not portray her personality. Your goal is to create ownership for the client so she will share what she is involved in and excited about.



We believe the moms are truly something special. They value the time, energy and hours of work invested in the shoot because they were part of the creative process. While the seniors might be enjoying the experience, when you get the moms excited about it, watch out! Let's be honest. Sometimes the very excited teens do get a bit distracted with teen life and forget about their commitments. Bringing the moms onboard creates a project they can do together as they enter their senior year. The moms help them stay on task. They are so excited to be doing something fun and creative with their son or daughter that they usually do not mind contributing their time and effort. Occasionally, you will get a highly valuable mom with creative talents just waiting to be unleashed. Encourage her to participate. When they see how much time and energy you are putting into this fun shoot, it drives them to also want to help. The value of the shoot increases for them because they see your efforts and are part of your final concept. So now you have them involved, but this alone will not get you more than a couple new referrals booking with you.

INVITE THE EARLY BIRDS

Every year we invite seniors who book their session date eight to 12 months in advance to participate in at least one of our three concept sessions in the summer prior to their senior school year. Then we have them come to the studio for a preplanning meeting where they get to know our vision and us. They sort of become part of our team. After clients decide on a creative session, we encourage them to help design individual looks within that main theme or choose one of our preconceived ideas. For example, we wanted to shoot a vintage-circus theme, so we asked our clients which character style they wanted to portray. We took their creative interests and ideas, and tweaked them to fit the overall vision that we wanted in our final images.

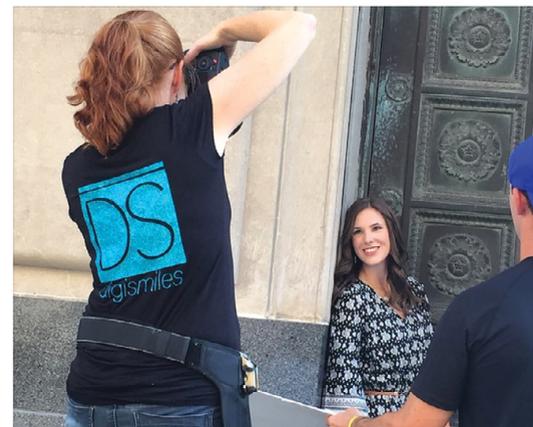
INFILTRATE THE MEDIA

Thank goodness for social media. Every time your client does something for the shoot with you, encourage them to put it out there on social media. Whether you are costume shopping, wardrobe fitting or assembling props, the senior and her mom need to be asked to infiltrate social media about the exciting experience they are having with you. Don't be afraid to point out when an interesting opportunity for behind-the-scenes video or photo is about to happen so they can capture and share it. We have learned to be extremely specific about what should be included in their post so that it will promote your brand. If they share a fun video or behind-the-scenes photo with no mention of your brand or company name, that brings no branding or referrals to your company. For building hype and for your brand to grow, it is not too pushy to ask the client and a parent to type a fun comment about what they are doing in that moment and include your full company name while tagging your photography business. An effective post might read: "Look what we are doing today! Having a blast assembling props for my upcoming underwater photo shoot with DigiSmiles Splash Week."

Who doesn't want a sneak peek? Motivate your client to promote your company by offering a sneak-peek photo on social media if they have promoted your themed session multiple times. Even though you will post for your own followers, it is so much more effective for your clients to post their experience. Think about it. You want the friends of your clients to see why they should hire you for their senior portrait experience. The combined reach of your business posts along with your client's posts has a much better chance to attract new clients. Betting on one client to promote you to their one friend will get you worse odds than a Vegas casino. At least half of our clients say they heard about us through multiple friends on multiple social media outlets.

You've already shared your behind-the-scenes pictures, so now release the final edited images with your branded watermark while you have the attention of your new followers. You need to release images while the fire is hot. Don't wait too long, because you'll lose the hype you worked hard to create. Once you release the watermarked images, ask your client to repost with a blurb about their experience.

Infiltrate as many media outlets as you can. Your local newspaper is probably searching for its next great story. Reach out and invite them to visit your destination to write an article on your unique senior sessions that set you apart from other senior portrait studios. Ask the reporter when the digital article will be published so you can share the link to their site and warn followers to not throw out that newspaper in their driveway next week.



INTEGRATE YOUR BRAND

One of the best investments we made in our brand was a company shirt with our large logo on the back. Before we had company shirts, all our behind-the-scenes pics taken by clients showed our backs and their senior getting photographed, but nothing revealed the photographer's identity. The shirts ensured that anyone glancing at behind-the-scenes pics would easily see that DigiSmiles was in action. In order to get that social media sneak peek, we ask the client to include our shirt logo in their behind-the-scenes photo.

In an effort to tie our brand together with the positive experiences clients will want to connect with, we started creatively naming each concept session. Our underwater photography sessions we started last summer are called "Splash Week" and our circus shoot was called "Under the Big Top." Our fashion shoot featuring a newspaper dress, trash bag dress and a window screen dress was called "Alternative Couture." Naming the sessions created unique and memorable marketing taglines that supplemented our brand. It is also important to get yourself in the "selfie" photos with your client so their friends see how much camaraderie is generated. Yes, they will buy prints, but don't lose sight of the fact that they are really paying for your "services." Your services include everything positive that comes out of the experience for your seniors and their parents.



INCORPORATE VIDEO

Get real. Get over yourself. Get in front of your camera and push Record. Incorporate video into your marketing. For seniors, being personal, fun and spontaneous is much more relatable than producing a professional video message. You will want to have a parent, a friend of the client or your assistant record video during your concept session. We also use videos to announce our upcoming themed sessions, which is what starts building hype and attracts new followers. After we did this for the first time, the people who watched our video told us they loved it because they felt like they got to know us, and related to our goofiness. Be creative. When announcing our upcoming Splash Week promo shoot from our office, we wore swim goggles in our video. Silly? Yes. Memorable? Absolutely. Effective? Without a doubt!

Many of us creative artists think really big and have great ideas just waiting to be brought to life in the form of a concept shoot. Your time is valuable, and creating customers from your concept sessions usually requires a significant investment of your time and money. Don't wait. Start generating hype, gaining followers and driving revenues by booking referrals from your concept sessions. ■



Jeff and Christine Tonkin own DigiSmiles Photography in Humble, Texas, specializing exclusively in high school senior photography. They followed their passion to shoot seniors only, and took their part-time hobby to a thriving full-time business. Their conceptual photo shoots have become the centerpiece of their senior business, attracting clients who often book with them up to a year in advance.

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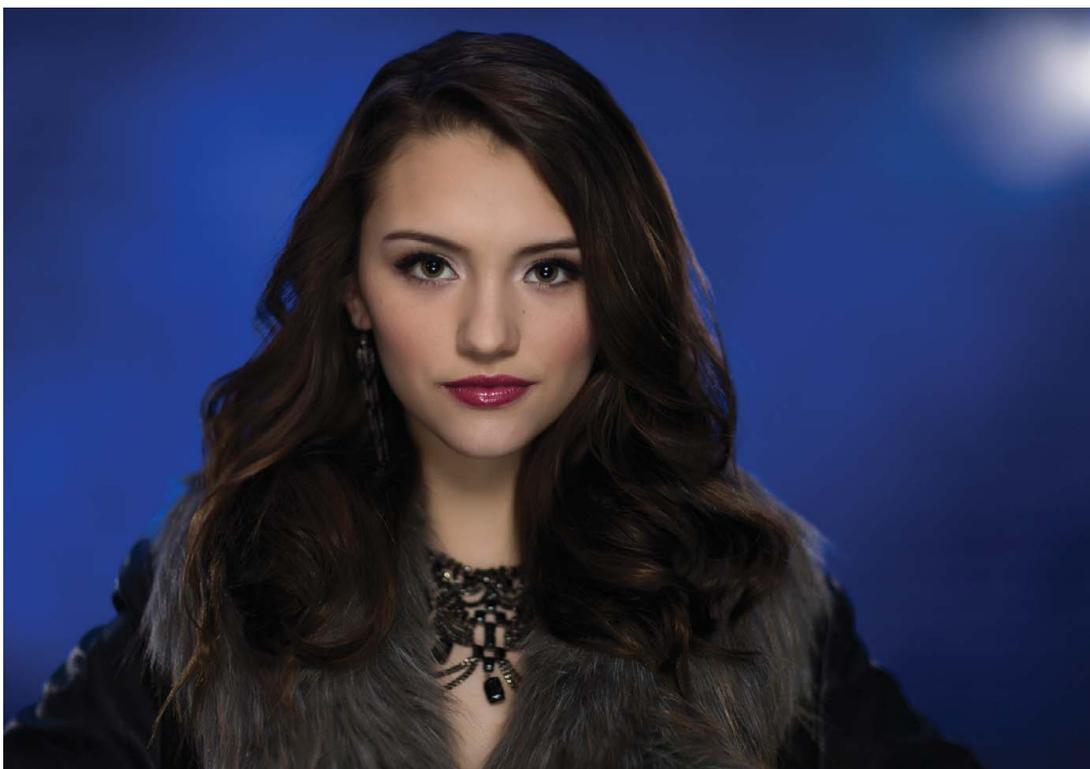


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

It's senior month here at *Shutter Magazine*, so it's time to get your butts in gear if you are going to have any success this year. For this month's cover, we tapped into the always beautiful Maddi. We worked with her on a previous project, and I knew I wanted to work with her again. Seniors 2016 it is!

Winters are cold here in O'Fallon, Illinois. So, what do you do? Not shoot? Come on. It's time to make it happen. Can't just sit there complaining about the weather. I know, more than most, that shooting indoors is not always the most creative environment, but there's a ton of ways to create unique sessions in-studio. Lighting, props, backdrops and gels all lend themselves to creating unique and memorable portraits.

Seniors are a blast to work with, but it can be intimidating working with teens. Will you pass the cool test? At the end of the day, just be you. Have fun, and remember: Every teen everywhere in the world is going through an identity crisis of some sort and just wants to look great and fit in. That being said, if you create something amazing for them, including the experience, they will be forever loyal and tell every person they know on the planet.

Concept.

It was cold here, so we decided on an indoor shoot. But indoors can be so boring, especially for a senior. How can we jazz it up a little? I remembered seeing something on Facebook about this can of "atmosphere" that creates instant and lasting fog. In addition, we wanted to use some gels to create mood.

The original concept was for Maddi to be wrapped in a fake fur. We bought one online, and once we put it on her, we quickly realized how bad it would photograph. That's the thing sometimes, isn't it? What you see in your mind and what the camera sees are often different things, and we have to be able to adjust. It seems like every single month, no matter how much prep time goes into the shoot, something inevitably goes wrong.

#pivot

We have to adjust. The adjustment here was to get a black leather jacket and clip the fur to the jacket to look like a fur collar. Problem solved.

Another part of the concept for this shoot was the fog. This was new for me. I had never really photographed fog. We bought cans of Atmosphere Aerosol for about \$12 each. You have got to check this stuff out. Just Google them. They're super easy to use and they add depth and mood.

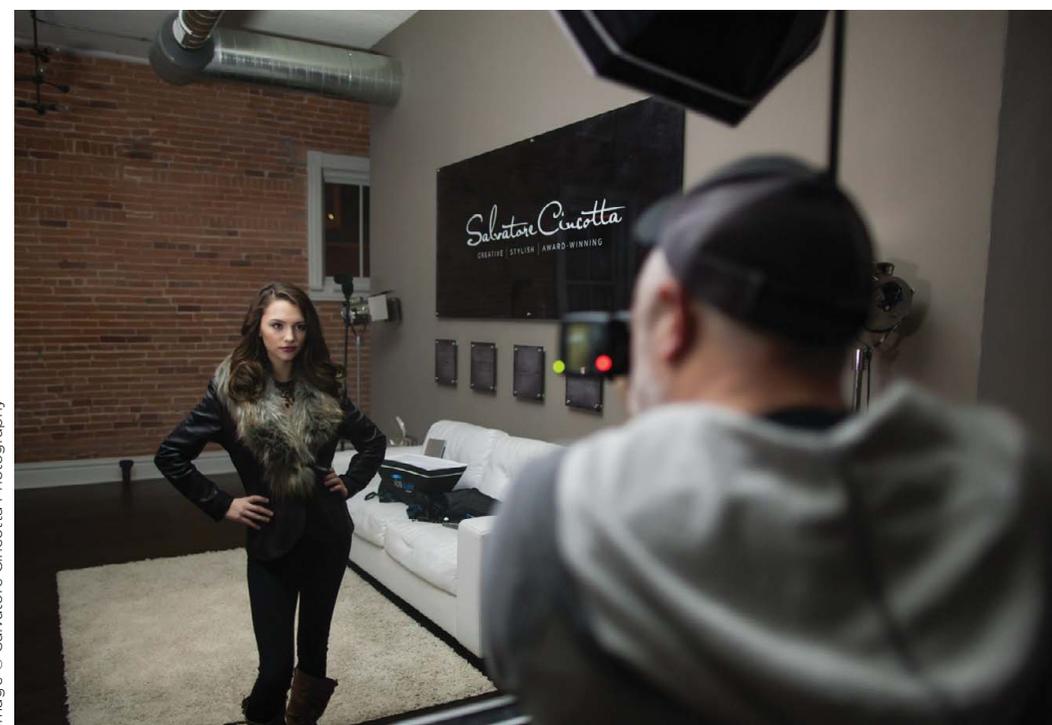


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Now, the challenge here was lighting the fog. It's easy, like everything else, once you figure it out. Originally we had the light firing into the brick wall and sprayed the Atmosphere behind the model. So the light was hitting the wall and not hitting the fog. After that, we moved the light to right behind the model, firing it into the wall from about 10 feet away. In that 10-foot gap, we sprayed the Atmosphere. This allowed the light from the Speedlites to hit the fog and light it up on its way to the wall.

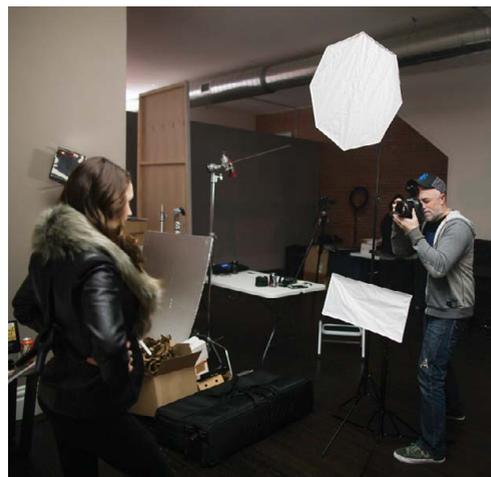
Location.

Rather than shooting on a backdrop, we used the brick wall in our studio for some texture.

This year, the plan is for us to shoot more of our seniors in-studio to allow for the variations in temperature here in the Midwest. The summer months are brutal, forcing us to cancel shoots almost daily when the heat index reaches 100 to 115 degrees. No one wants to shoot in that heat for two or three hours. Working in the heat for 10 hours straight takes its toll. So this year, I have committed to working more indoors and getting more creative with lighting, posing and backgrounds to create unique looks for Salvatore Cincotta Photography.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Lighting & Backdrop.

This month, we decided to use Canon Speedlites in our studio on a brick wall. This was a five-light setup. All Speedlites were in manual mode.

Main lights were a clamshell setup with Canon Speedlites in their own group. The light modifiers were the Westcott octa and Westcott strip boxes. These things are super light and super portable. They're the perfect accessory for your Speedlites.

On the backside, there were three Speedlites. We gridded two lights with MagMod grids hitting Maddi from behind and providing some nice edge light for separation. We gridded the final light with a gel to provide the color. We fired it into the wall, lighting up both the wall and the Atmosphere.

All Speedlites were in their own control groups. Group A was the main lights. Group B was the edge lights. Group C was the wall light. If you don't understand the value of groups with your lighting setups, I highly suggest you grab that manual that came with your Speedlites and get your learn on. Seriously. The number of photographers who just put a flash on their camera and slam light into the scene is mindboggling. Spend a little time and practice. Your photography will immediately jump leaps and bounds.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Gear.

Canon 600 Speedlites
Canon ST-E3-RT Transmitter
Westcott Strip Rapid Box
Westcott Octa Rapid Box
MagMod Gels

Canon 1Dx
Canon 85mm 1.2
1/200th @ f1.2, ISO 100

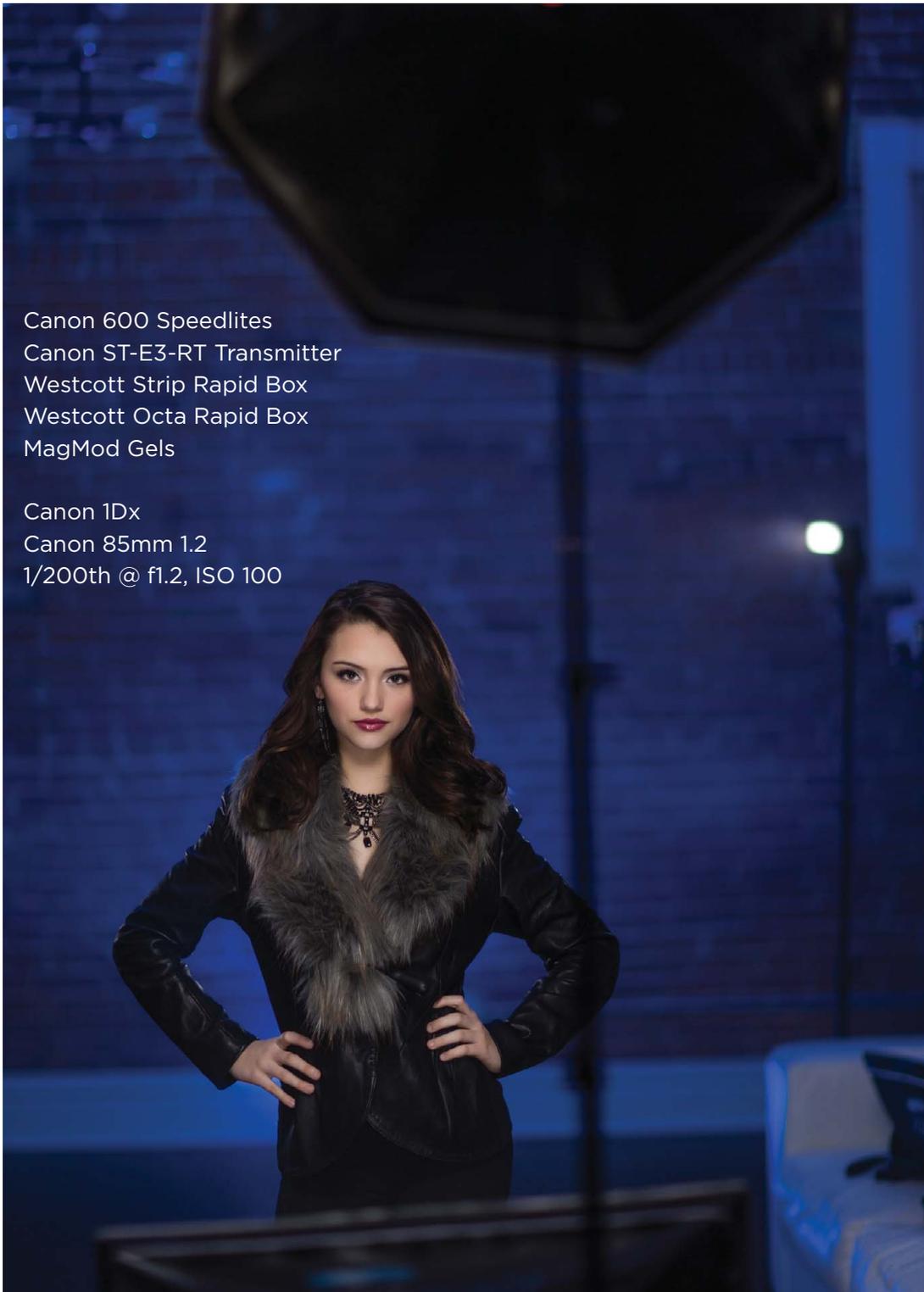


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Closing Thoughts.

Shooting indoors doesn't have to be boring. There are lots of options for you and your clients. The key to all this is ensuring you are challenging yourself to do something different. There are lots of options out there for lighting, modifiers and backgrounds, and the combinations of these tools in creating your own unique look and feel are limited only by your imagination.

Seniors are an incredibly fun and profitable sector. Stop convincing yourself that senior photography won't work in your market. It will. Every teen wants to look and feel beautiful. Create an amazing experience for your clients, and the financial rewards will follow.

And your seniors will eventually become your brides. This year, we are photographing two of our seniors who are now getting married. Talk about slam-dunk marketing. It's a no-brainer for you and your business—and working with seniors is some of the most fun I have every year.

Get out there and give it a try. ■

Want to see how we edited the shot? Sign up to be an Elite+ member today. Get the printed magazine and access to behind-the-scenes videos like this at www.behindtheshutter.com/shutter-magazine.

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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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ADDING COOL EFFECTS TO YOUR SENIOR PORTRAITS

with Kristina Sherk

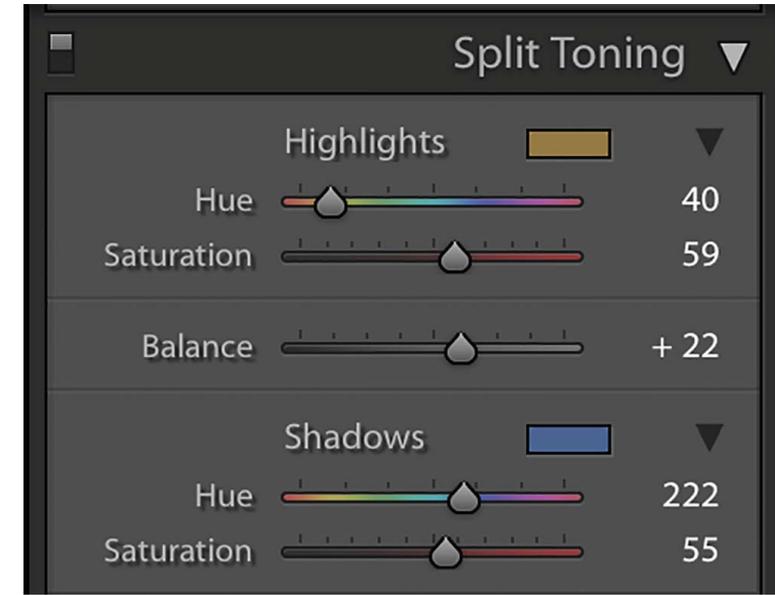
Senior portraits can provide one of the most lucrative and reliable forms of income. It's also helpful that every year there's a new crop that need their photos done. Thus, setting your images apart from the rest of the photographers in your market is essential. The more creative and unique your images are, the more sought after you'll be.

While I do most of my facial retouching using my Lightroom portrait retouching brush MegaPack, there are a few other Lightroom tools to help you make your images stand out from the crowd.

Check out this senior portrait I did a few years ago. I want to pump it up and give it a cross-processed look.



Image © Kristina Sherk



Before we get started adding our effect, let's decrease the image's original color saturation, just slightly. This helps the effect that we add to shine out and not get muddled by the original colors in the image. I decreased my image's saturation by -35 .

One of the easiest ways to add an awesome look to your images is to use the split-toning window in Lightroom, one of the program's most underused features.

As you can see from the screen grab above, I added a hue of 40 and a saturation of 59 to the highlights. Then I tweaked the balance between the highlights and shadows by dragging the balance slider to $+22$. This ensures that only the top 40% of the highlighted tones in the image receive the warmer color treatment.

The darkest 60% of the image will receive the bluish tint that I am adding to the shadow areas. I added a hue of 222 and brought the saturation up to 55.

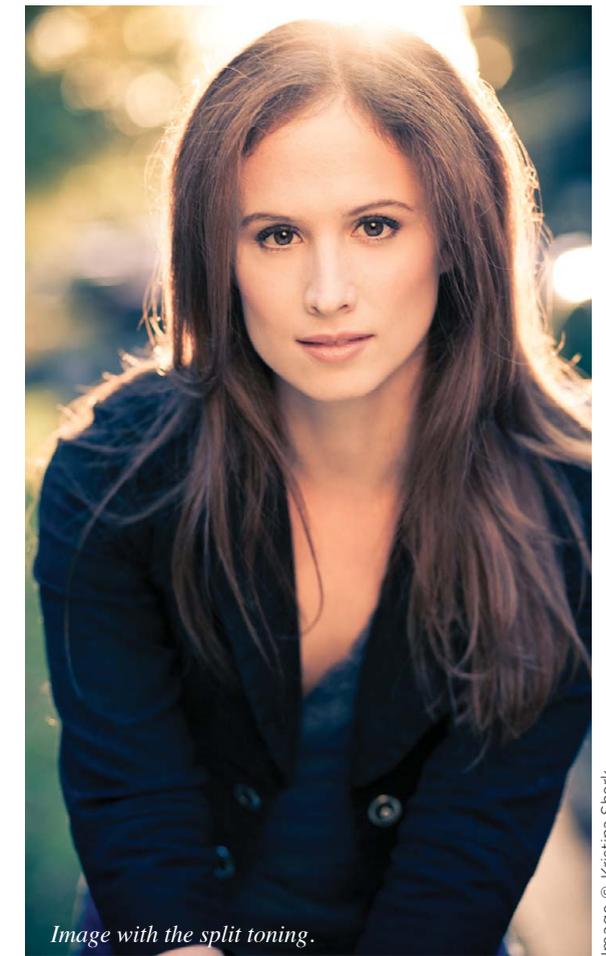


Image with the split toning.

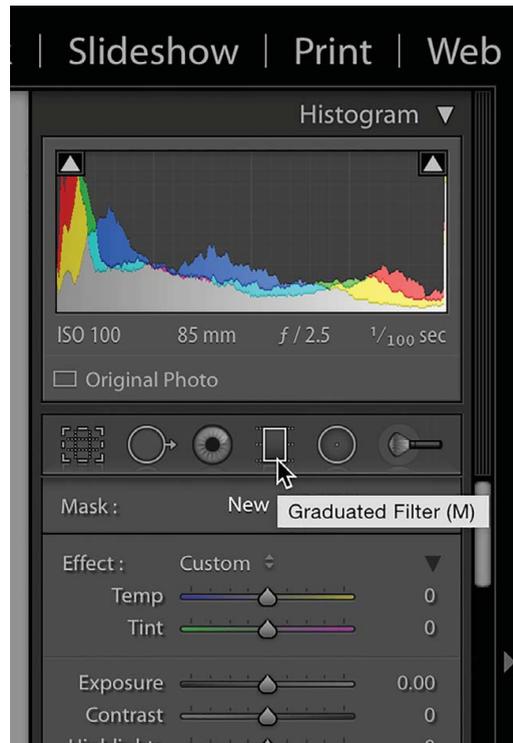
Image © Kristina Sherk

I'm sure you're thinking, "Yes, this looks nice, but I've seen that before." But fear not, young Jedi. It's a good thing I'm not finished yet. Let's move on to our next step.

I want to add even more of a rad, color-toned look to this image, so we're going to call on my next favorite tool, the gradient slider. But I'm not going to use it in the typical way you've seen this tool used in the past.

Let's use it to add two color washes. The two gradients that we're going to add will meet in the middle of the image to split it. So let's get started adding a warm color overlay to the top portion of the image, and a cool color overlay to the bottom.

Our first step is to activate the gradient tool by clicking this button within your tools area, pictured in the screengrab to the right (or simply tap the "M" key).



We need to change just two things. Increase the exposure to 0.40, and add a slight yellow tinge to the entire gradient using the color swatch box at the bottom of your gradient tool window.

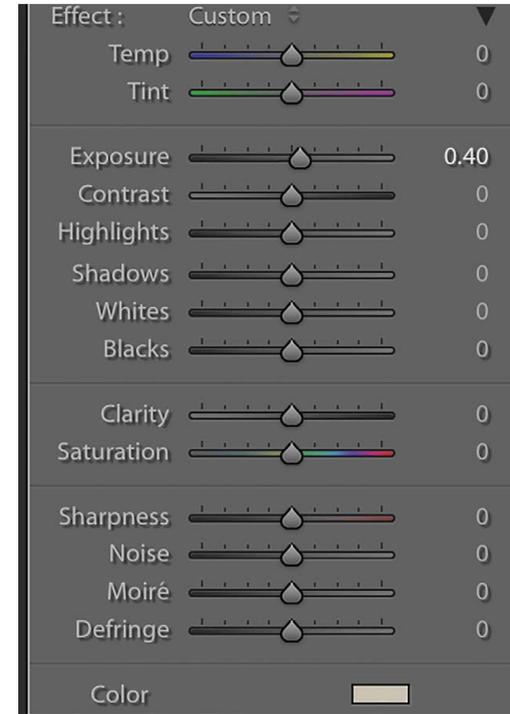
To add a color overlay to your gradient, come down to the white box with the X in it at the bottom right of your gradient tool window and click on it.



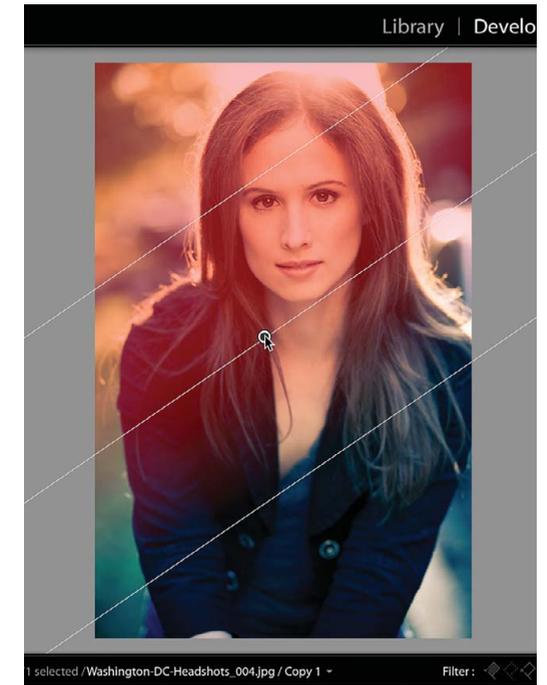
You will be greeted with a lovely fly-out window with the color spectrum, a hue value in the lower left corner and a saturation slider in the lower right corner. Find a hue of 41 and increase the saturation to 14%.

Here's what the settings look like for your color selection fly-out window.

Click the X in the upper left corner to close the box. Here's what your overall settings should look like for your first gradient tool. See how the color box now has a slight yellow tinge to it?

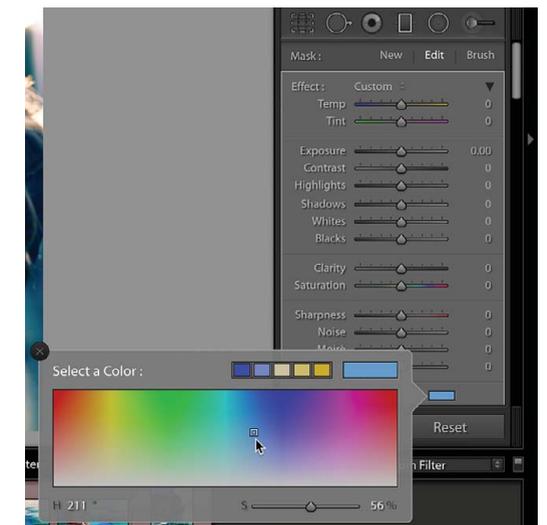


Now it's time to add this gradient to your image. Start at the top left corner of your image, and click and drag for your first gradient tool. See how the color box now has a slight yellow tinge to it?

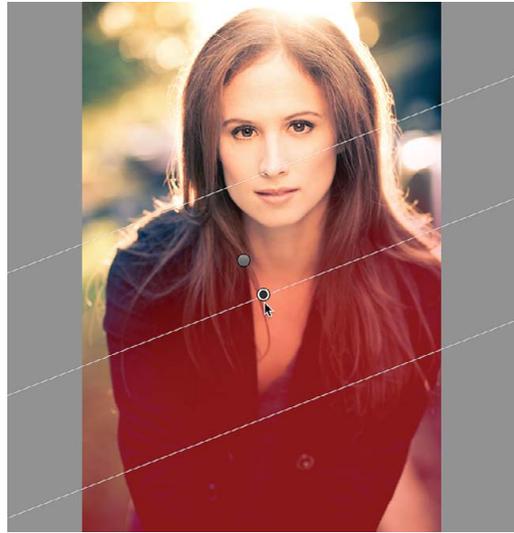


Now, let's create our second gradient. At the top of your gradient window, you have the option to create a new mask. Click the word 'New' to create a second gradient.

Now, the only change we are going to make to this second gradient is to add another color overlay to it. Scroll down to the color box again and click on it. This time, we'll add a hue of 211 and a saturation of 56%. Minimize the box just like before, and we're ready to add our second gradient.



Next, just as we dragged the first gradient from the upper left-hand corner of the image into the middle, we'll do the opposite for this gradient. Start by clicking in the bottom right-hand corner of the frame and dragging until we reach the absolute middle of the frame, once again. Here's what this gradient should look like.



Here's what the image looks like now. There's definitely some more flair and style in this version.

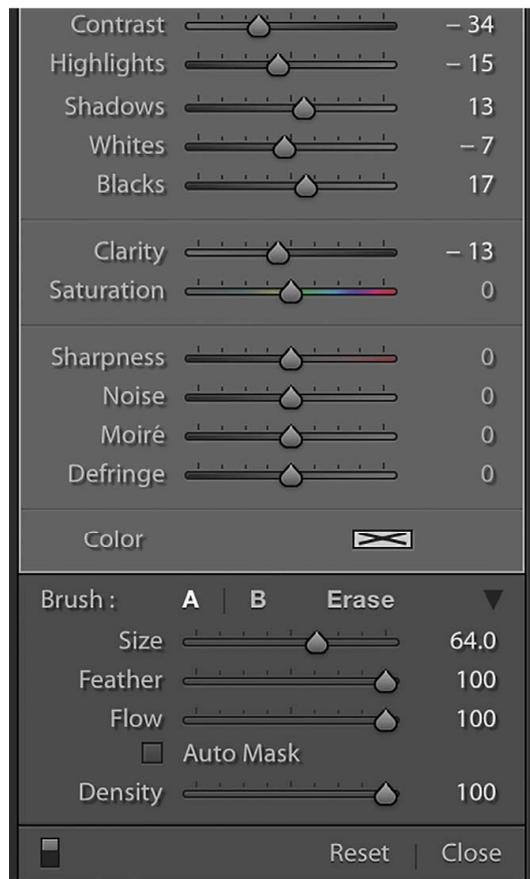


There's one last step I'd like to add to make this image even snazzier. I'm going to add the illusion of lens flare. (You may have seen my YouTube video on this.)

Start by clicking on the adjustment brush icon (or simply hit the "K" key). The adjustment brush icon is located two tools to the right of the gradient tool in Lightroom.

Before we start with the actual adjustments, scroll down to the brush attributes and make sure your brush is extremely large. For this image, my brush size was 64 pixels. My feather, flow and density were all at 100. Oh, and make sure auto-mask is unchecked for this step.

Now, let's scroll back up to change the effects of the brush. Take a look at the brush settings in the screen grab below and copy those same settings for your brush.



Lastly, I'll take my big soft brush and paint the upper left corner of my frame. This will make the image look like there's lens flare in it.

And you're done. Here is the before and after.



I'd be remiss if I didn't remind you to save anything cool that you create in Lightroom as a preset. It's an easy way to be able to recreate the awesome effects you make and apply them to new work down the line. One small warning, though: Presets do not record brush strokes, so if you want to create the lens flare look and add it to a preset, you can easily create the same look and feel you got using the adjustment brush by replacing it with a radial filter. You just use the same settings that I added to my Adjustment brush tool, but add them to the Radial Filter tool (Shift + M) instead.

I'm sitting here cooped up inside during the Blizzard of 2016, trying out my new Senior Portrait Cool Effect preset. I tried it out on another image from my recent Mermaid Portfolio Workshop trip to the Bahamas (shout-out to mermaid Ashley Soltis for her awesome underwater modeling/mermaid-ing). Here's what I created with just one click using the preset I created of this effect. ■



Images © Kristina Sherk

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Kristina studied digital art and photography at Elon University in North Carolina. She then interned and assisted for DC-based photographer John Harrington, where she learned the business behind the art. Starting as a photographer before transitioning into photo retouching nine years ago has helped her to not only understand her role as a retoucher, but also understand the aim and vision of the photographers she works with, consistently making sure to stay within their photography styles (in other words, 'she speaks camera'). Her clients hail from all over the world and include National Public Radio, Sports Illustrated, Time, Inc., XM Satellite Radio, onOne Software, Cotton Inc. and Hasselblad USA.

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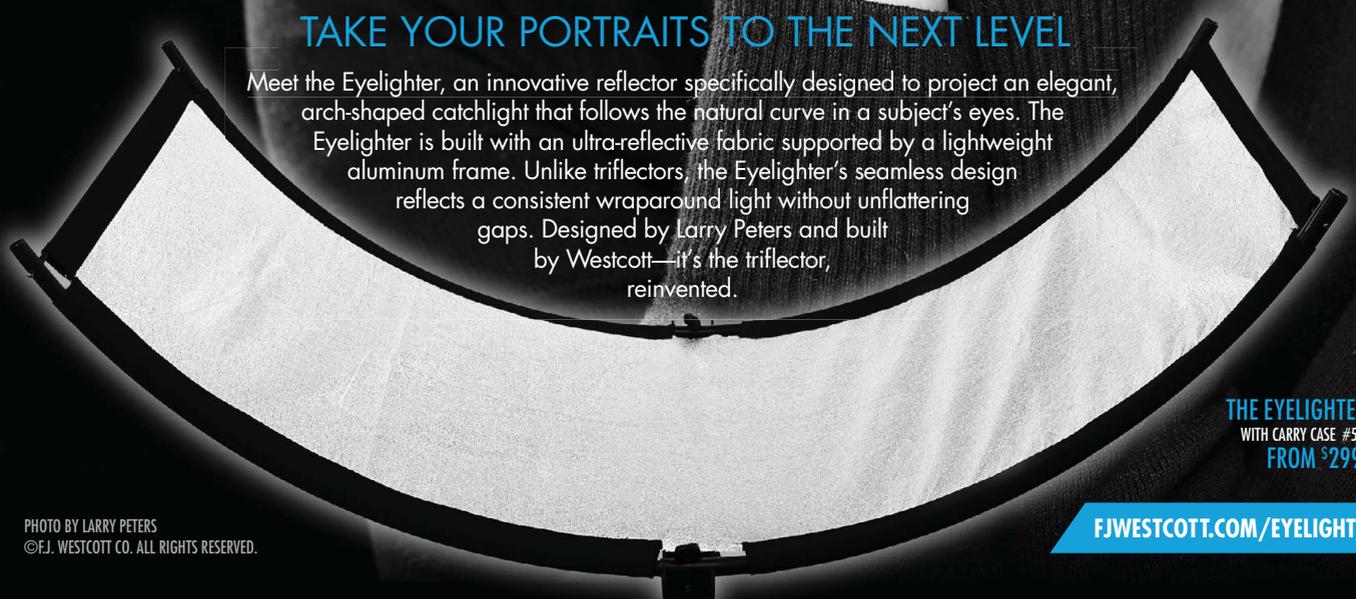
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Image © Blair Phillips

Seniors Change— So Should You

with Blair Phillips

Keeping track of trends among high school seniors can be a daunting task. What one likes today may become outdated overnight. The senior market is like the music industry. You hear a new song that sits atop the charts for a couple of weeks and you fall in love with it. When it comes on the radio, you turn it up and bob your head. A few weeks pass, it's oversaturated the market, and now you're sick of it. The artists are constantly in the studio working on new music. We are much the same. If we do not change with the needs and wants of high school seniors, they will simply go elsewhere. It is an uphill battle that keeps us on our toes.



Equipment

Some photographers are convinced that continually purchasing new equipment will automatically make their photography much better. That is definitely the case. The smallest and most simple change can sometimes yield the most success. I have always used softboxes for my outdoor lighting. They give me the look that is the most appealing to me. Even though what I am doing is working really well for my seniors, it is time for a change. I am going to add in and sometimes replace my softbox with a 7-foot umbrella. The umbrella may present a challenge if the wind is blowing, but it will provide me the opportunity to create a different look. A beauty dish or rapid box may be the change you are looking for.



Images © Blair Phillips

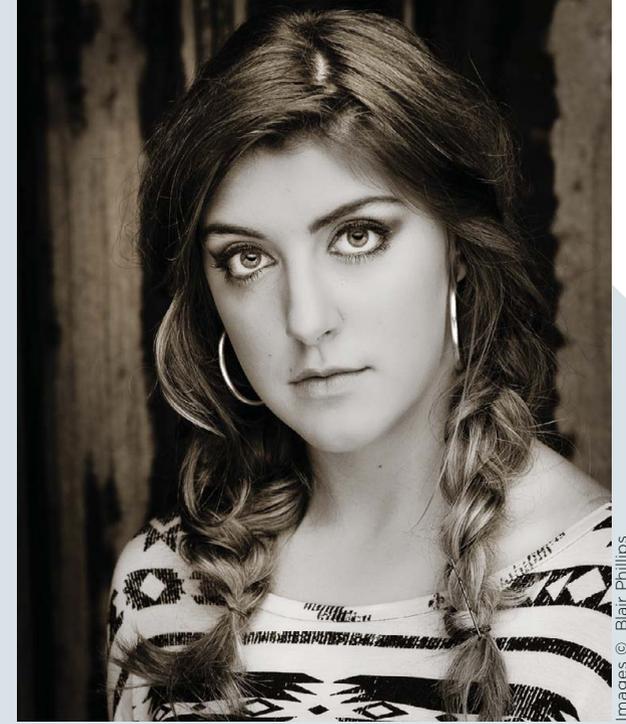


Image © Blair Phillips

Hair & Makeup

High school seniors have been a huge part of our business for the past 11 years. I like to look back on how my senior images have progressed. Our images have recently been overhauled by adding hair and makeup. When a senior has hair and makeup professionally done for their session, everyone becomes instantly inspired. I got tired of suggesting hair and makeup and no one showing up with it done.

We interviewed several stylists. Once we found the right fit, we gave her a trial run and the rest is history. The stylist communicates directly with the senior before the session to discuss details and share examples. Most of the online images seniors fall in love with have some form of hair and makeup done. Adding them has made my job a lot easier and much more enjoyable.



Practice, Experiment, Grow

You deserve a day off every now and then. You should take a day at least every three months to do creative thinking and testing. Professional athletes train nearly every day of the year. Professional photographers just go to work and shoot away most days. In order to do your best work and make sure your changes are for the better, you must make time for practice.

We are all guilty of repeating what we know we can execute. If you make a change to your schedule and give yourself opportunities to try new things, you will love what you do even more. Your high school senior market deserves and expects new things. The reason you may not have the success you want, or you are no longer excited to shoot, is a result of doing repetitive photography. You may have become more of a programmable machine and less of an artist.

Go to your schedule right now and mark off some time to try three new things. Out of those three, one is sure to make the cut.



Image © Blair Phillips

Social Media

High school seniors are being taught to become more and more independent. My district issues laptops to all high schoolers. All of their work is completed and turned into teachers online. Maintaining your social media probably feels like a part-time job. If it does not feel that way, it should. Seniors are constantly on social media. Constantly updating and sharing images should be a part of your daily workflow.

I share nearly everything I do on social media. I want everyone to see that I am always busy. It helps validate you as a working photographer. I have changed the way I post to social media. Client images used to be the only thing I wanted to share. I made the decision to become a lot more personal with my posts. Giving clients a window into my character has become really important to me. If you don't want people to see certain things that go on in your personal life, don't post them. Don't be afraid to get a little personal.

Going Their Own Way

An additional change you can make is based around freedom. With seniors becoming more and more independent, they are enjoying more freedoms. Another change we have noticed in seniors is that they want to have their own look. We used to get seniors who wanted everything to look like their friends' images.

Many photographers base their senior sessions around outfit changes. This can be discouraging to seniors. Outlining your sessions around time frames allows them to bring as many outfits as they want. Express to them prior to the session that you have two hours of shooting time and they will sacrifice camera time with outfit changes. Create outlines for your sessions instead that get your point across in a more positive way.



Images © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips

Change, But How Quickly?

Senior images have changed greatly in the past several years. The locations have become more outlandish and adventurous. Lighting has advanced a ton. Posing has become more fluid and creative. The sheer needs of our clients have become more involved. Change is a good thing, but too much change can be bad.

Let changes happen subtly, in small increments. Ask seniors what they like and dislike. You can learn so much by simply talking. Instead of being a chameleon and trying to blend in with the current trends, I want to add a whole new look to my photography lineup. Clean, simple, safe and classic is where I am taking my senior images this year. I am going to focus on all the details needed to truly elevate the quality of images we create.

It is easy to get wrapped up in quantity and variety when working with seniors. Sink or swim? That is the most important question you can ask yourself this time of year. Change with the times, or the times will change without you. Everything on this earth will continue to change. You need to be the change you would like to see in your life. ■

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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.

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GEARING UP FOR SENIOR SEASON

with **Alissa Zimmerman**

It's that time of year again. The weather is starting to warm up (finally), the sun is starting to stay out a little longer each night and that pretty little lie known as the "slow season" for photographers is nothing but a distant memory as you scratch your head wondering how life went into overdrive over the months of December, January and February, leaving you with no time to actually experience this photographer's fairytale.

Well, I'm here to break the news to you: It's time to wake up and get out of hibernation. If you are reading this article, that means it is March. Which means you're already late. Use this article as a foundation to put together a plan for the senior season ahead.

What is the first step in putting together an action plan for your business? For us at Salvatore Cincotta Photography, it's taking a half day and doing a SWOT analysis for that part of the business to determine what we did right, what we did wrong and what new things we can implement into the experience to make things better. We typically do our SWOT analysis in December before the start of the new year so we can go in ready to take action.

The SWOT Analysis

Strengths.

What were your strengths from the year? These are the things you did right for your clients and for your business.

Weaknesses.

Interestingly enough, this is the part of the exercise that we spend the most time on. Our team is all wired in a very similar way. We focus the majority of our energy on the weaknesses and how we can make ourselves stronger in those areas versus dwelling on our strengths and how great we are.

Opportunities.

Invest plenty of time in this part. Do your research. What opportunities lie ahead for you and your business over the next year? How will you take advantage of those opportunities?

Threats.

Constantly stay on top of this. What is it that's holding you and your business back from success?

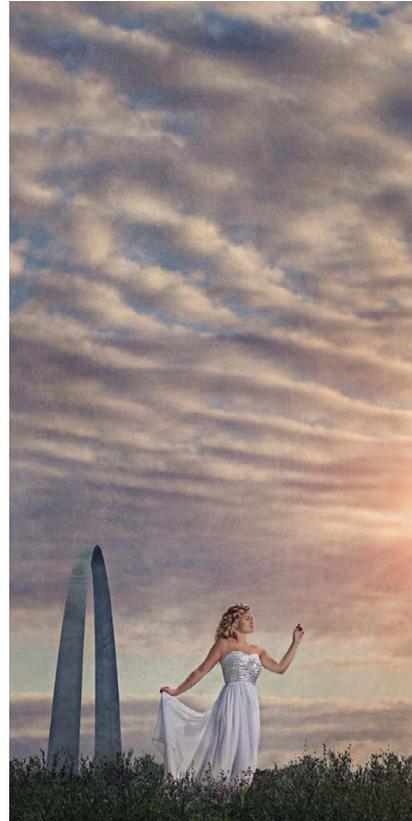


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

The Client Experience

The client experience is everything for your brand. What is your client going to walk away with and remember most from the time spent with you and your business? We have worked really hard to fine-tune our experience, giving seniors in our market no excuse to go anywhere else. This experience isn't just the day of the shoot. It starts from the moment the phone rings or email hits your inbox to the final follow-up call after they've received all of their product. Sometimes the experience goes on even past this, to that moment your senior becomes a bride and cannot even dream of having anyone else shoot her wedding because she had such an incredible time with you back in high school. The experience is everything.

Step One.

The initial phone call or email is your moment to shine and sell yourself and the experience you will be able to provide that no one else can. You want to be bubbly and relatable, and communicate everything very clearly so there is no confusion later down the road. Sal taught me a trick when I first started working for Team Cincotta: If you actually smile while you're on the phone with someone, your voice will sound much more kind.

Step Two.

After the session is booked, use this time to be the trusted adviser. In most cases, you'll be working with the senior's mom, who may or may not have ever been through this process with another child. It's okay to overcommunicate. Your clients are going to want to know what to wear, where to shoot, how to do their hair and makeup, etc. We send inspiration boards with predesigned outfits to our seniors before the shoot as well as recommendations for local hair and makeup artists, and explain to them how much more they will love their pictures if they have a professional making them look their absolute best.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Step Three.

Before the shoot starts, have your client bring in around 10 of her favorite outfits. Sal and I walk through all of the outfits together (in front of the client, usually while she is wrapping up hair and makeup at our studio) so they can watch our thought process and see how we mix and match their clothes, shoes and jewelry and end up with outfits they never would have put together on their own.

Step Four.

On the shoot, it's so important to just be yourself and have fun. As an assistant, I take time in the beginning to find some common ground with our senior so he/she can open up and talk a little bit about something other than the fact they're going to have a camera in their face for the next two hours or so. As with any other shoot, make sure your client is relaxed, confident and having a good time. That's all that matters. Call your senior out if her expression or pose is too stiff, and build trust from the beginning so she is comfortable enough with you to tell you when she feels awkward at any time.

Step Five.

Bring your client in for the preview session. This is your chance to wow them. We run our senior previews the same way we do a wedding preview: Clients walk into our preview room with their Signature edit up on the TV to get them excited for the rest of the pictures. We show a quick Photodex ProShow Web slideshow of our favorite images, then get to the selection process. Set the tone for the slideshow with upbeat and fun music. Stay away from anything slow or depressing. You want to evoke happy emotions during this step of the process.

Step Six.

You're not done after the sale. Presentation is key in delivering a product to a client who has just spent a lot of money with your studio. Can you imagine going into Louis Vuitton and spending way too much money on a purse to have it just sloppily handed over to you? Of course not. Take the time to invest in good-quality packaging. Brand the heck out of everything you do, as well. We brand our bags and thank-you notes, and have metal tags with our logo cut out that goes on the outside of the wrapped boxes with ribbon slid through it.

Step Seven.

After clients receive their products, follow up. This is the time to get real-life feedback on what you did right, what you did wrong and how you can improve with each client moving forward. Take advantage of this, but, most importantly, listen to your clients' needs and adapt to make your business better and better every day.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

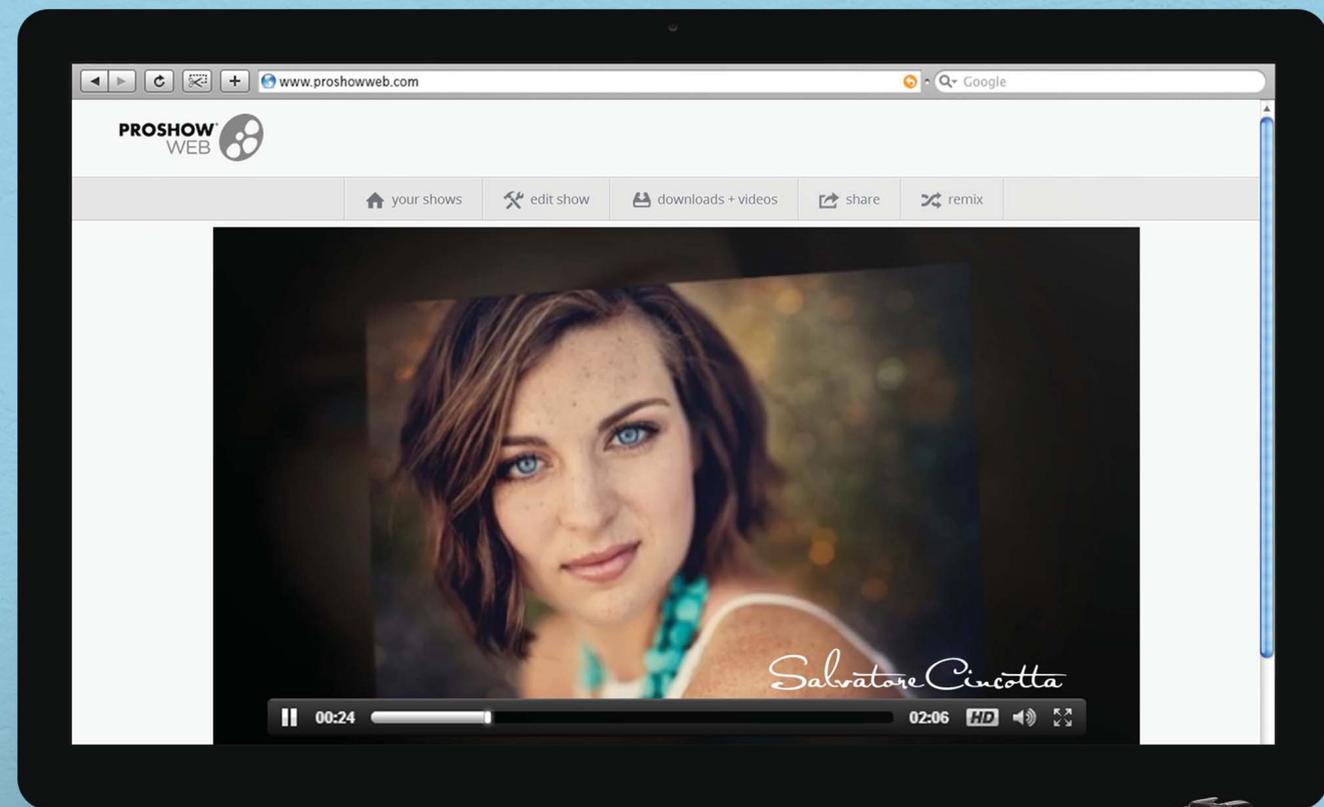
Now that you know how we've built our success over the years, carve out a day and put your own plan of attack together. Reflect back on the experience you're providing for your clients to make sure you're sticking true to what your brand is all about. Be the brand you want to be, and don't let anyone or anything come in the way of achieving success. ■



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, Shutter Network 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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THE SENIOR
FASHION SHOOT

with Craig LaMere



Image © Craig LaMere

IMAGE-DRIVEN SHOTS AND EXPERIENCED-BASED SHOTS

These are the two basic types of shoots, in my experience. Image-based shoots are family sessions or business headshots. The images produced are the payoff. The images are where the satisfaction of the shoot comes from. Experience-based shoots, on the other hand, are not so much about the images. The images are a byproduct of the shoot. The images trigger the memory of the day and all that went into creating the images. That describes our senior fashion shoots.



Image © Craig LaMere

I have been shooting high school seniors my whole career, which started about six years ago. When I began, I was still coaching high school football, and my first clients were my players. To be honest, if it were not for my players, instead of writing this article, I probably would be asking you if you want to supersize your fries. But as luck would have it, their parents were nice enough to book me to shoot their kids' images. As I started getting more of my players, I began to book shoots for their girlfriends. Then, once I shot the girlfriends, I started to book the friends of the girlfriends—and so on and so on.

Seniors have always been my biggest business here in Idaho. They're also my favorite to shoot. Each one is different and every shoot is pretty much dictated by their personality and styles. The studio shoots as many girl seniors as guys, and every type of both: sports kids, band kids, outdoor kids, dancers and more. In order to be a very successful senior studio, you have to be versatile. You have to be able to shoot what the kids think is cool, but still be able to produce images Mom and Dad are going to love.

We have many options for our high school seniors. This month, I talk about one of the most fun options we offer our high school senior girls: our fashion session.

The idea of the fashion session came from shooting senior girls in their prom dresses. For most of the senior girl session, I would shoot the girls in their favorite prom dress. I used beauty dishes and harder light, and posed them dramatically. The girls really love the process. In the viewing sessions, the fashion prom dress images were some of their favorites. That's when the wheels started to spin a little, and I decided we should see about taking it to another level. I decided to offer the whole fashion experience from start to finish. And with that, the fashion option was born.

BUILDING THE EXPERIENCE

There are three parts to my fashion session: getting the wardrobe together, hair and makeup, and the shoot itself.

WARDROBE

Since I'm a photography studio and not a designer studio, I had to find the wardrobe for the shoots. I've always used three sources: thrift stores, vintage stores and designers.

THRIFT STORES

Thrift stores are pretty hit and miss. Your selections are limited by what is on the racks. They carry so many different categories of merchandise that the fashion selections are limited. I think of thrift store shopping like panning for gold or diving for sunken treasure. You may go a long time before you hit gold, but when you do, it makes all the work worth it.

VINTAGE STORES & SPECIALTY BOUTIQUES

Vintage stores are a great resource, especially if you're looking for period wardrobe. One thing that is nice about vintage stores over thrift stores is that they are more focused, so finding exactly what you are looking for is much easier. The other thing I like about vintage stores is that I am often able to make a sweet deal with the owner of the store, whereby I can actually rent or borrow clothes, which I won't need after a shoot. I offer the owner images in exchange.

DESIGNERS

I search out new and hungry designers both in my area and on the Internet. You would be super surprised at how eager new designers are to have their garments shot. The best way I have found to work with them is to reach out with a short email that gets right to the point. I direct them to my website or include images of my style. I have found some really cool people to work with this way.



HAIR & MAKEUP

A few days before the fashion session, if my stylist has not already met the senior, we schedule a quick consult. My stylist takes a look at her hair and assesses what we can and can't do with it. We also get an idea of her skin type and facial structure. We find out how mild to wild she wants to go with her look. Most of the time, the client just tells us to do what we want. After the consult, my stylist and I start to work on the look we want to do.

I have to give a word of caution to you if you do not have a hair and makeup person you work with regularly and you are going to take on these shoots. You have to make sure they understand what your timeline is and make them adhere to it, or they will run you so far behind that you will want to pull your hair out.

If you can have only hair or makeup, choose hair. If you have the most killer makeup in the world and just okay hair, your look will be okay, but if you have just okay makeup and crazy awesome hair, your images will be super sweet in the end.

THE SHOOT

We have the girls come in pretty early and they go right into hair and makeup. The moms love it as much as the girls do as the transformation plays out. It's cool to see how excited the moms get.

After the hair and makeup are done, we go right into the shooting bay. The wardrobe dictates the look we use for the drop. We usually do two looks. We shoot one clean on white, and the other look we match to wardrobe colors and use hand-painted muslins. The lighting is more hard and specular. To shape the light, I use mostly beauty dishes, grids and strip lights. I tend to use broad light a lot. The posing is very edgy and deliberate: 90-degree angles, locked knees and attitude.



Images © Craig LaMere



Image © Craig LaMere



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CONCLUSION

To be a successful senior shooter, you have to be able to change with the times and be versatile in what you offer. Seniors are looking for the experience, not the product. They are looking for something different, something unique. Fashion shoots are the way to go. ■

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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.
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product review

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Why Sunrise Albums?

Albums are the cornerstone of what we deliver at Salvatore Cincotta Photography. Clients can't possibly put every image you make of them on the wall. Albums provide the perfect balance. They can neatly tell the story of their day or their session. It's about documenting and delivering their memories in a way that is easily accessible and, most importantly, tactile.

There are many album companies out there to choose from, with the gamut of price points and quality. Bay Photo's Sunrise Albums could be the perfect product for your clients. They're not meant to replace your traditional wedding album offerings; they're more of a companion or add-on book for parents.

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For more information, visit bayphoto.com



Image © Lori Nordstrom

WHY CHOOSE YOU?

with Lori Nordstrom

Most photographers (and other small business owners) spend a lot of time stressing about marketing. But more important than any marketing campaign, mailing, blog, advertising or even networking you can do is the message you are communicating through those forms of marketing. For your marketing to be effective, you must first differentiate yourself and establish value for the service you offer and the products you are creating.

With high school seniors, this can seem a daunting task. Seniors are constantly taking and sharing photos. Social media has taught them that their photos can make them feel great for a while, but the next one should be posted quickly before the hype wears off. Photography has become a commodity, so how does a photographer stand out from the crowd? How do we entice clients to choose our business instead of asking their neighbor or best friend or a teacher to snap some photos for them?

There are really only two clear-cut answers: We have to be the cheapest, or we have to be different.

In his book *Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable*, Seth Godin writes, "The current marketing 'rules' will ultimately lead to failure. In a crowded marketplace, fitting in is failing. In a busy marketplace, not standing out is the same as being invisible." The photography industry is certainly a crowded and busy marketplace, and many photographers are finding themselves struggling to be seen.

Here are a few things you can incorporate into your business to give you that competitive advantage you're looking for.



Image © Lori Nordstrom

EXPERIENCE

The experience you give your client throughout the process of working with you should be memorable. I like to say, let's give them a STAR experience, which stands for "something they'll always remember." What can you do that's so special that your clients will leave talking about it?

High school seniors want to feel like supermodels and rock stars, even if it's only for a day. The ability to make even the ordinary senior feel extraordinary is something we should all strive for. Little extras can make all the difference.

Create an experience they will never forget:

- Have a chalkboard sign waiting for them outside with their name and a welcome greeting.
- Reserve a parking space for them. Be there when they arrive to help carry in clothes and accessories. Stock the dressing area with all the necessities and a few treats.
- Send out an information worksheet before the session to find out students' favorite candy, drink and music so that you can have it all ready and waiting.
- Personalize their bag with their name, and have extra waters and snacks on hand for Mom or other guests. Add video to your senior sessions for another tip on the rock-star scale.
- Offer hair, makeup and styling.



Image © Lori Nordstrom



Images © Lori Nordstrom

PRODUCT

Do you have a unique product that no one else in your area offers? There are many ways to make your product line stand out. If everyone is selling digital files, start communicating the value of wall portraits and heirloom albums. One studio owner I know offers only canvas gallery wrapped portrait wall groupings. Another delivers everything that leaves her studio in a white matte and black frame.

The key is to look for things that aren't being offered. Look for the hole in your market. If no one is offering custom albums, you've got a new high-end product to offer that will also make you stand out. Incorporate video fusion into your sessions, and look for other products that you can create a demand for at a higher price point because no one else is doing them. Walk the trade shows with eyes open to new and exciting things to bring to your market.

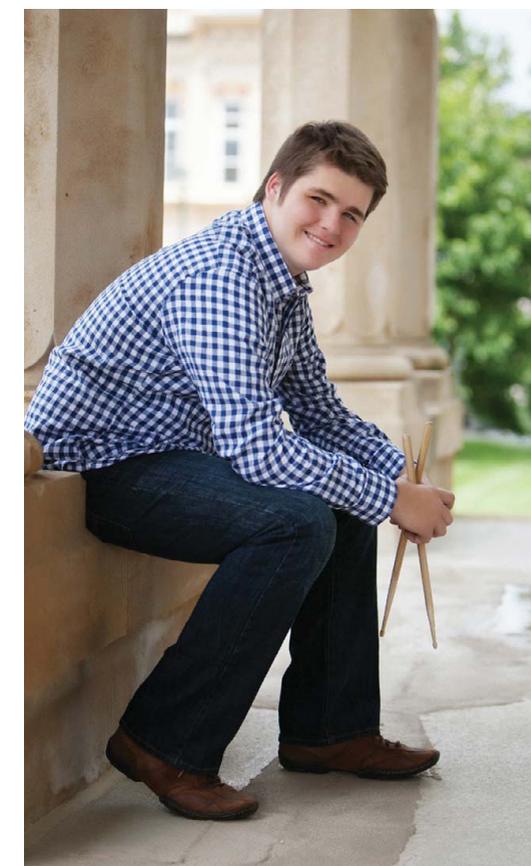
SERVICE

What services can you offer your client to set your business apart? How about starting with a Skype call so that you can get to know each other before the day of the session? Ask the senior about what she's most excited about and what she might be nervous about regarding her session. Use these tools during the session time, and even in the sale. For example, if she's worried that her smile will look fake, tell her how natural her smile looks during the session, and comment again on that during the sale.

In addition to a Skype or FaceTime call with the senior, set up a consultation time with Mom. This can be done over the phone or in person. The consultation is a value-added service that will pay dividends to you in the long run. During the consultation, find out more about the senior. Ask about their personality and interests. Be interested and really listen. Make suggestions for products that you are excited for them to have.

As an extra, you could offer to go to the client's home to help with wardrobe choices. You could help choose personal props to make the session more unique to each senior. Why not offer to go back to the home for the sale, or even to install the final portraits that are ordered?

You could offer delivery of all final products as another added service. Set the atmosphere and unveil the portraits as a special event in and of itself.



Images © Lori Nordstrom

— — — — — **NICHE/SPECIALIZE/BE THE EXPERT**

When you position yourself as the expert, you attract clients who are excited about your specialty. You can be the expert by choosing a unique thing, and really digging into your niche. “Niche your niche,” as the saying goes. The more defined you get in what you do, the more you stand out as the best in that one thing.

Some examples are specializing in senior girls—no boys allowed!—or band geeks. I know a senior photographer who specializes in high school seniors with special needs. Guess who everyone from her area and even from hours away goes to when they have a child with special needs who is graduating? You guessed it. Why go anywhere else? How can you get very specific about your target client?



Image © Lori Nordstrom

— — — — — **GUARANTEE**

Is there a guarantee you can offer that is so outrageous that it would attract people to you? A guarantee has the ability to take away all doubt and fear from your clients’ minds. Statistics show that while offering an outrageous guarantee seems risky, the return on that risk is high. The right clients will be impressed by your offer and attracted to you, and will be much less likely to complain. It’s also been shown that companies with guarantees have more loyal customers.

— — — — — **VALUE MESSAGE**

Once you’ve defined some of the things that set you apart, start crafting a message that communicates the value of your uniqueness. You should be able to describe in a sentence what makes your business special, but be able to expand on that based on the needs of the client. Consumers want to know “what’s in it for them.”



Image © Lori Nordstrom

— — — — — **BE YOU**

More than anything, as you’re building on what makes you different, realize that it all comes from you and who you are. The things that are important to you and the people you want to spend time with should shape your business. In the end, clients aren’t choosing you based on your photography, they’re choosing you based on who you are and how you present yourself. When you can project your own personality into all that you do, it will show up in your marketing, in your client communications and even in your final product.



Image © Lori Nordstrom

Once you have nailed down your uniqueness, you can communicate that difference to your marketplace. Stand out as a business that specializes in just the thing your target client needs. Use your uniqueness in your marketing, when choosing other vendors to partner with and in all client interaction for success in attracting the right 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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with David Beckham

In 2008, I opened my studio full time and was doing every kind of photography I could get to make ends meet. At first, I thought it was unfortunate that I was located within 20 miles of two legends of senior photography and pioneers of the industry, Kent Smith and Larry Peters. I needed to find a way to separate myself from them and go after a specific client instead of “every” senior. My first thought was to go after them on price, offer the same things they do but do it for less money. Okay, that was a fail. And that was exactly what every other new photographer was doing.

I already knew I had the gifts I needed to create quality art. I just needed to get away from trying to compete, and trust that my work could stand for itself. My focus changed to becoming the Fashion Senior Photographer. Now I shoot only seniors and fashion/portfolio work. I have never been busier, and my clients come with a yearning to do something unique. As it turns out, being located near the giants of the industry was a blessing. They had already established an environment of spending more for quality photography. Now that my work has proven to be a desirable product, I am able to charge the prices that allow me to enjoy every minute of running my own business.

Let’s look at 11 ways to bring editorial and fashion photography into your clients’ senior portrait experience.

EXPRESSIONS

Sure, smiles sell photographs and you will include those in their packages, but not smiling brings a whole different feel. Kat's eyes open more and her lips are fuller, making for a captivating look. Fuzzy hoods always work, too!



Image © David Beckham

LOOKING AWAY

Fashion photography sells a product. Typically in ads, you don't see the model's face directly because they want you to focus on what she is wearing. In senior photography, no matter which direction your client is looking, the photo is about her. Looking away creates that fashion feel and generates some mystery in the story you are telling. Aubrey's pose has her looking down and away. The wildflowers theme has been our most popular senior request, and the top-selling targe print.



Image © David Beckham

STRIPES

This year's stripes theme has been fantastic and award-winning. I wanted bold and unforgettable looks. I wanted striking poses that expressed femininity without being too sexy. Jessie was perfect for this. Purchasing the socks and the hats as props for the models to wear is a minimal expense. And the models have a blast being a part of it. Stripes have exploded into multiple publications, and everyone's asking for them, from seniors to models of all ages. This summer, I'll be doing a show at a gallery in the Columbus, Ohio, arts district. Stripes have helped define my brand as artistic and fashion-oriented. Find something that works for you. It doesn't have to be stripes, but do something totally different and put your work out there.



Image © David Beckham

MOTION

Make a few shots fun for them. In this shot, Kelsey is walking on air at a terrific downtown location. Her outfit is stylish and fun. The pose flatters her body, and her face was a blast to photograph. In this shot, I used an off-camera flash to capture the mood. Simple spins can get that flowy motion, and allow you to capture real laughter, too.

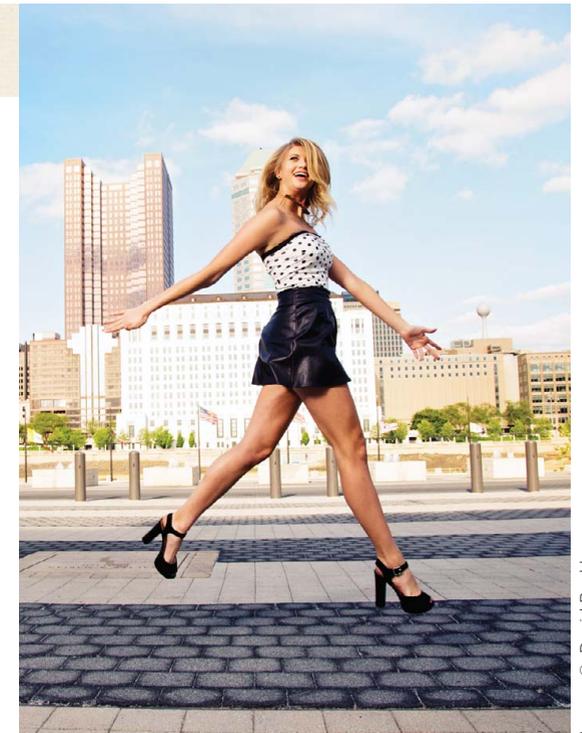


Image © David Beckham



Image © David Beckham

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

For this graffiti shoot, I asked the models to wear combat boots and whatever else they wanted. Four different girls, four different looks. We went to a cool location that none of the other 100-plus photographers in Columbus know about. I get asked all the time where these locations are, and I respond on my posts, "It's a secret." When they ask me privately, I say the same thing. The Graffiti Session extra is a big draw for my clients. This is real graffiti, real art. The art changes all the time, and 95 percent of it contains zero vulgarity. You have to seek out locations like this and take advantage of those opportunities.



Image © David Beckham

FASHION TRENDS

Using a fashion trend guarantees that you aren't doing the same old thing. It could be one item like the combat boots, or a style like boho or retro. In the last couple of years, kimonos, high-waisted shorts, and maxi dresses and skirts have been hot. This shoot included rompers. Having eight different girls wearing them in different ways opens up style ideas for future clients. The group shooting also generates a great sense of belonging, of being a part of something special. These kinds of opportunities can be a big draw for many high school clients and future senior models.

BE EXOTIC

Marissa is an incredible dancer and looks stunning in her stripes and high-waisted shorts. The socks over her pointe shoes added the exotic factor I was looking for, and she was all for trying something spectacular. We used vogue expressions and poses that show off her body. This style grabs your attention and is anything but the usual senior portraiture.



Image © David Beckham

BE GLAMOUROUS

Sometimes I shoot for the sole purpose of creating. I let my MUA go crazy on Karissa and Maddi, whom we shot from a beauty perspective. The lighting and poses helped set the mood. The shoot flowed with countless, gorgeous images.

BE AMBIGUOUS

Lauren had just purchased an adorable spring dress in her favorite color. But it was January and it had just snowed. So we added the sweater, looped the cute infinity scarf loosely around her neck, put on some above-the-knee boots that I found for \$15 online, and we were set to shoot. The location has natural leading lines, and her pose is flirty, fun and perfect.

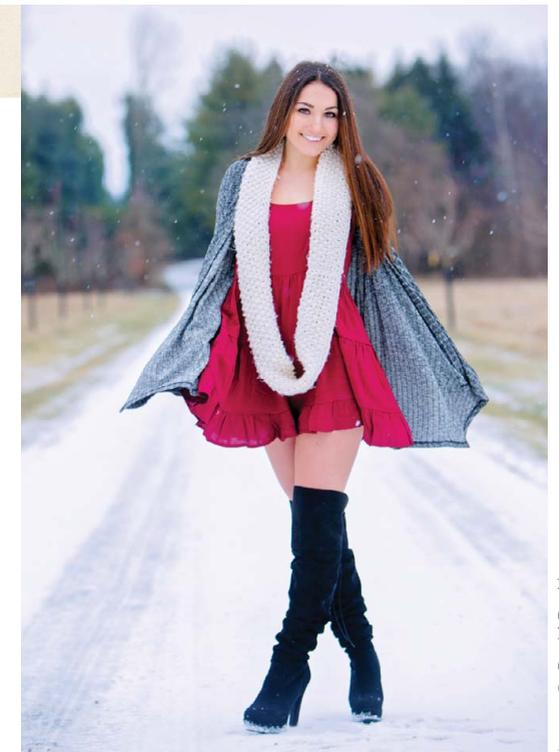


Image © David Beckham



Images © David Beckham

BE BOLD

Who wears pants to a prom? Okay, maybe not to prom, but I have partnered with many boutiques and clothing stores. Sometimes we shoot in their shop and sometimes I take the clothes to a location or back to my studio. Morgan is sitting in the window of Be Social, a prom and pageant shop in Gahanna, Ohio. This shot has multiple fashion elements. Her expressionless face is looking away, a pose that is edgy and works only with a few body types and with a cool fashion. The shop has great window light. What the shadows conceal is just as relevant to the image as what you see.

Prom gowns are Be Social's forte, and Aubrey rocks them. I brought two lights to the shop for this shoot. The lighting, pose and point of view are elements of fashion photography. And this senior loves it.



Image © David Beckham

WEAR WHAT'S HOT

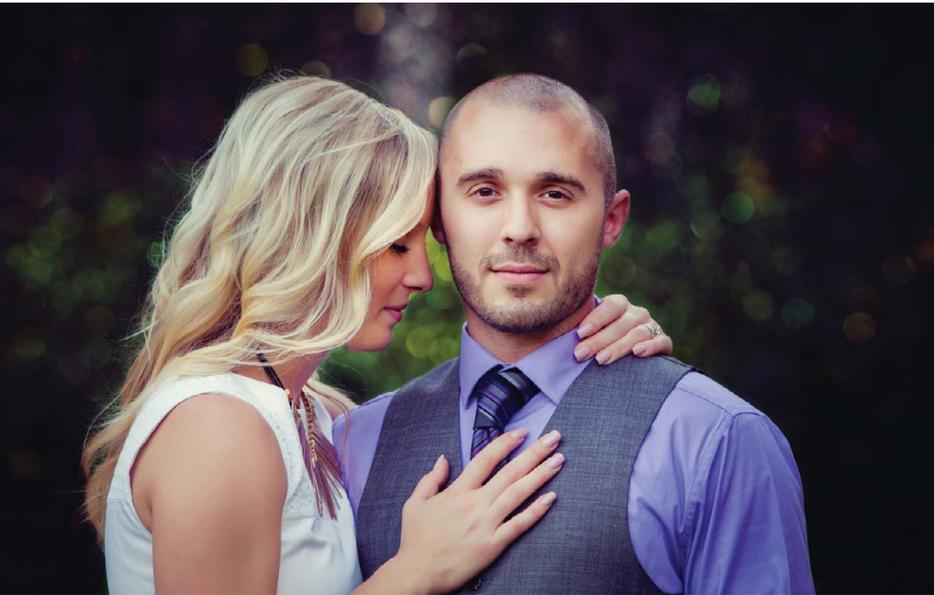
Blanket scarves are a thing in the Midwest this season. Kamryn wore hers with a T-shirt dress (also fresh), clunky heels and knee-high socks — which totally reflects her style. ■



David Beckham has been in business since 2001 and opened a studio in Pickerington, Ohio, in 2008. He photographs over 110 seniors a year. David offers photography workshops, and will be speaking at ShutterFest 2016. davidbeckhamphotography.com

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Q+A

WITH Salvatore Cincotta

- + The best way to maximize attention to your local senior business.
- + The most effective way to market to potential clients.
- + Communicating your value to senior clients.
- + Senior rep programs and alternatives.
- + How to bring senior portraits to your area.
- + Determining your target client.
- + Setting yourself apart from other senior photographers.
- + How to connect with your senior clients.
- + How to attract clients in new areas.



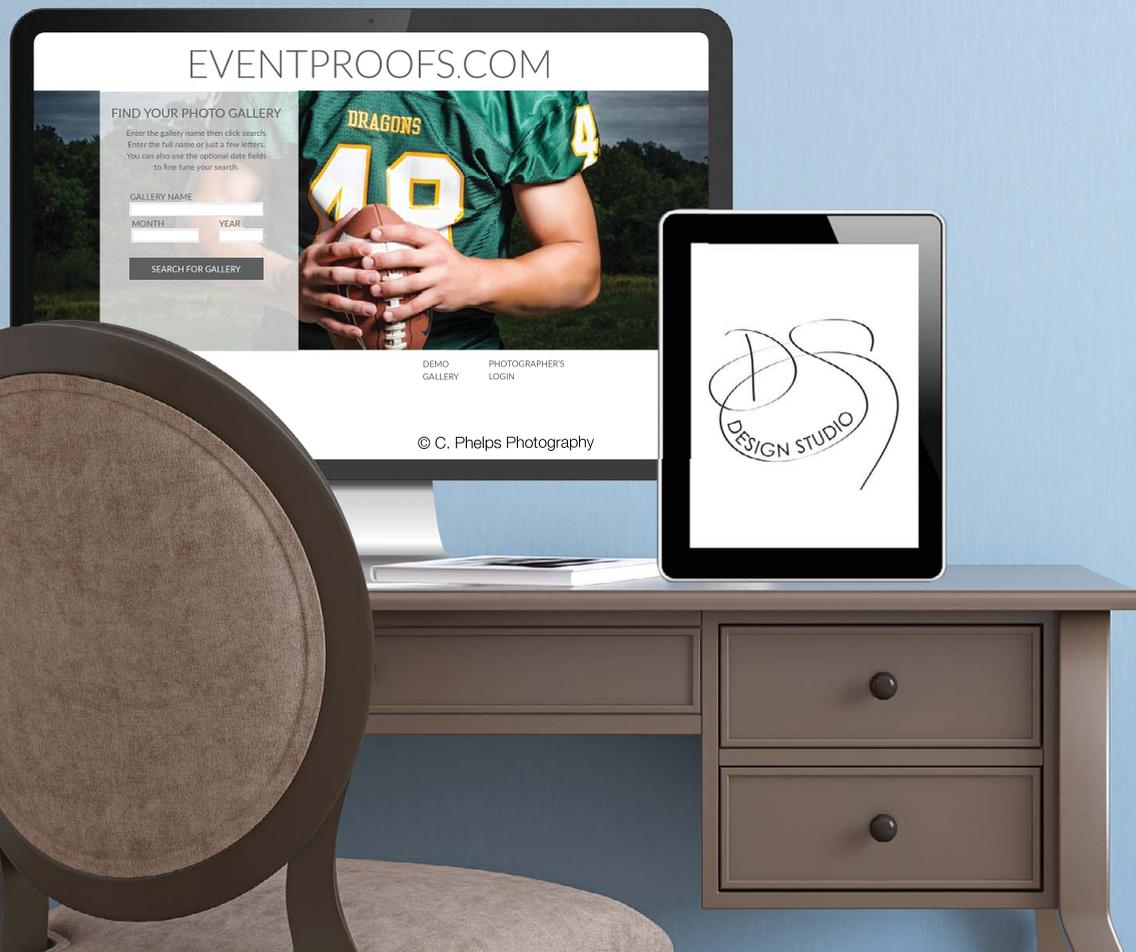
GOT MORE QUESTIONS?

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



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BUILDING BLOCKS

STAND OUT IN THE CROWD: BUILDING A REPUTATION WITH SENIORS

with Skip Cohen

Over the past few years, the senior market has become one of the most competitive in professional photography. It also might well be the most fun, but only if you're doing it right.

When I had my senior headshot taken 40-plus years ago, there was nothing fun about the experience. We marched in one at a time, sat down, the photographer clicked the shutter, and a few weeks later, an envelope showed up with proofs with all the fanfare of a root canal.

Everybody had the same pose, and often the same outfit. The girls had the standard black shroud over their shoulders, and that was it. It was good enough for the yearbook and wallets to hand out to friends.

Today, if you're doing it right, a senior session is more like a fashion shoot than a headshot for the yearbook. In fact, the fun of a senior session, at least for those students working with photographers who are doing it right, is the experience just as much as the end results.

That means you've got to make yourself stand out from the crowd.

- **For most students, this is their first one-on-one experience working with a professional photographer.** This is their first time flying solo. It's up to you to create an experience. Plus, remember that students become adults who get married, and you never know where the relationship might go in the future.
- **Work to build trust.** Just like a good engagement session, great senior images are all about trust between the photographer and the student. You've got to invest some time in getting to know your client. Ask them questions about their friends, hobbies and thoughts on their future. Just listen. As they're talking, look for that sparkle in their eyes whenever they hit a sweet spot about something they love to do, a great friend or experience they've had.
- **Make it fun.** There are few groups of young adults with more esteem problems than seniors. They're old enough to drive, but they're still dependent on Mom and Dad. They still live at home and might still be wearing braces, have complexion and/or weight challenges. They are still trying to define their role in the world. You've got to be a buddy, one of the adults in their lives who's there just to listen—and create great images.
- **Bring in the props.** Once you get beyond that one shot the yearbook needs or Mom has requested, the sky's the limit. Bring in their hobbies. Give them a chance to express themselves. Capture images that look more like a Hollywood portfolio than headshots for the yearbook.
- **Think about your product line.** For my generation, the product line didn't need to be anything more than a bunch of wallets, a few 5x7s and at least one 8x10. Today, you've got the whole presentation gamut to offer. Slide shows with both still images and hybrid, including video, help tell the story. Prints on virtually anything, including wood, metal and canvas, need to be in your offerings. Be creative with your options for every client. This is a young, contemporary audience, so you need to pay attention to what's hot and what's not.



THINKING ABOUT SOME OF THE GREAT SENIOR ARTISTS

Larry Peters is a legend in the senior market. Every time I'd see him at a trade show or convention, I'd check to see what his going rate was. One year, I was astounded when he said he was charging \$5,000 a session. I asked how many sessions he was booking at that price. His reply: "Not very many, but it sure makes my \$1,000 price point look good!"

But it's not about pricing. Larry is one of the finest photographers in the world, and nothing could be more important than the senior in front of his camera at any given moment. His seniors know they're important because Larry's done such a great job building trust and a reputation for quality and service.

Whatever is important to that senior, Larry is going to do his best to capture the image. Over the years, this has included images underwater, on the football field, on a motorcycle or with pets, including horses. Nothing is out of the range of possibilities for Larry.

Years ago, I interviewed another legendary senior photographer, Kirk Voclair, for a magazine article. He talked about how he stays very selective in his images. Rather than giving the senior and her family dozens of images, all with just a varying collection of expressions, he starts talking with his subject. He's looking for that spark that comes when they talk about something or someone special.

In addition to the images themselves, he uses YouTube to post videos of many of his sessions. He produces a short video for each client that captures the experience of their session, complete with some of their favorite music.

SENIOR SHOOTERS WEIGH IN

I contacted a few well-known senior photographers and asked them two simple questions: “What advice would you give a young photographer today just starting out in the senior market?” and, “What makes your work different?”

Larry Peters

Larry and I have been friends going back to my Hasselblad days, and I’ve already told you a little about him. He has two studios in Ohio, and shoots up to 600 seniors each year.

For several years now, the senior market has taken the direction of on-location work. There’s not as much work done in the studio anymore. Regardless of what was going on in the market, I’ve always tried to make my work different and not do what’s normally done. So that’s exactly why I’ve been doing more studio work, because it’s different. Years ago, everything was in the studio and I was outdoors. Now, I’m back inside. You need to make yourself different.

Lori Nordstrom

Many of you have met and talked with Lori at ShutterFest. She’s also got an article on seniors in this issue. Lori, who’s based in Iowa, has worked hard to establish a reputation based on the experience, not just the finished product.

With seniors, you’re really marketing to two people. You have to have the personality to stand out from everybody else, but you also have to appeal to Mom. We have to create a unique and exciting experience and, at the same time, make sure we educate Mom on why she should be spending money with our studio and the value of our work.

Fuzzy Duenkel

I’ve known Fuzzy for years. One of my favorite magazine covers ever is one he shot close to 20 years ago, a portrait of a senior girl with half her face covered by her violin. It was an amazing image that I’ve never forgotten. His senior business is relatively small, which gives him a chance to spend more time with each senior. He might spend six hours with one senior, which a lot of photographers today would think is crazy. Fuzzy is all about quality and whatever it takes to capture the right image.

When I started out shooting seniors, there were only three photographers in our town. Today there are more than 70. That difference makes it difficult for me to offer advice on how new senior photographers can succeed because the challenges are vastly different than when I started.

In the past, we could afford to be weak in one or more areas and still make a good living. But to make a living, now more than ever, today’s photographer must excel in all aspects of the business, including marketing, shooting, selling, and service. And yet it’s good to have one facet you’re known for. My strongest suit is the lighting. It’s become my signature, and it helps my work stand out. The look and feel of what I do is still focused on the quality of every image, because in the end, that’s what lasts the longest.

Melanie Anderson

Melanie, who’s based in Maryland, was digging out from Winter Storm Jonas when I caught up with her. Seniors are an important part of her business.

Be persistent. You’ve got to think outside the box. Everybody in the community thinks they’re a senior photographer. You’ve got to make your work different, starting with your lens choice. You need a prime lens. My go-to is an 85mm f1.4, and I shoot it at f1.4, wide open. That narrow depth of field has become part of my signature.

When it comes to marketing, be active in social media and document your sessions on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter. Let your target audience see the fun your clients are having with you. I use video too. It allows me to showcase what makes my work different. Even if you’re only shooting video on your phone, posting 15 seconds of the fun you’re having on Instagram goes a long way. Lastly, don’t worry about what everybody else is doing. Work to develop your own style.



The senior market continues to evolve, but one thing that will never change is the importance of building trust with your clients and giving them an experience. It's got to be fun for them and for you—and, in the end, keep Mom happy.

Remember, 98 percent of the decisions to hire a professional photographer are made by women, so listen more than you talk, and work to exceed client expectations. In other words, make yourself habit-forming. ■

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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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EXTREME

senior composites

with Melanie Anderson

What is an extreme senior shoot? For our studio, it means photographing a senior with a unique style and feel. The focus can be athletics, vehicles, instruments, hunting, inspirational, etc. There's usually intense light that adds a dramatic appeal to the overall concept.

We want to create a custom piece that represents a hobby or interest. This process starts with the first call into the studio. When a parent contacts us for information, we immediately begin asking about the senior. What school do they attend? Do they play sports or an instrument? We find out what their interests are. We ask how they heard about our studio, and schedule the session accordingly. If they are a referral from a senior who already had an extreme session, we discuss that creation. We explain that this is an "add-on" to their senior session. We charge an additional \$49 and schedule an additional 30 minutes for their session. We discuss ideas and pricing. We want to educate the client on the cost and the process. We want all "props" relating to the specific interest. We want to get them involved and excited about their session.

PRESHOOT

When the senior and parents arrive at our studio, we begin unpacking. We have lots to discuss before I actually begin photographing. We lay out all the clothes, then discuss the extreme portion. I take them to my extreme wall. This wall is decorated with several 16x24 and larger wall portraits. We have several samples for inspiration. My main goal in doing this is to show them the size they are purchasing and discuss the style. If my client is drawn to a composite style, then I am only photographing one image. If my client is drawn to a montage style, then I am photographing several images and blending them together. We showcase samples that display one sport or many sports. This begins the process of building ideas. I photograph with intention. Once we determine the style, I know exactly what we will create. I'm sure to review pricing again to ensure we are all on the same page. (See the video for wall displays and further explanation.)

We photograph the extreme portion last. I want to keep the excitement throughout the session and end with the most creative piece. We often add eye black or spray them down for a more intense effect.

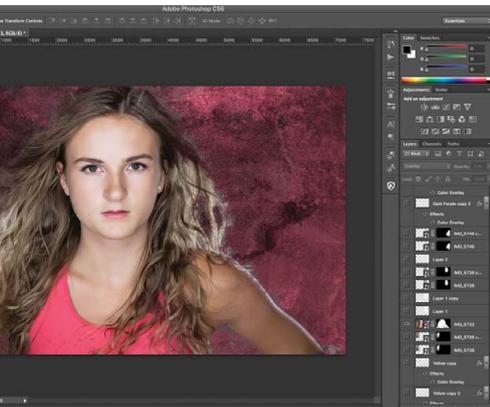
PRICING

Our prices start at \$450 for 16x24. Most clients purchase this size because it fits on most walls and has great impact. Our creation fee is \$250, which includes the design fee. Putting all the elements together can take some time to ensure that each piece is a one of a kind. I love displaying these on metals—Miller's lab offers two styles, a thicker metal with more of a matte finish and a thinner standout style with a more glossy finish. I show them both options, along with the choice of canvas or framed. Most of our clients choose the metal, which adds to the extreme element of the entire piece. The finish cost is \$250. This gives a total of \$998 for a 16x24 extreme finished piece.

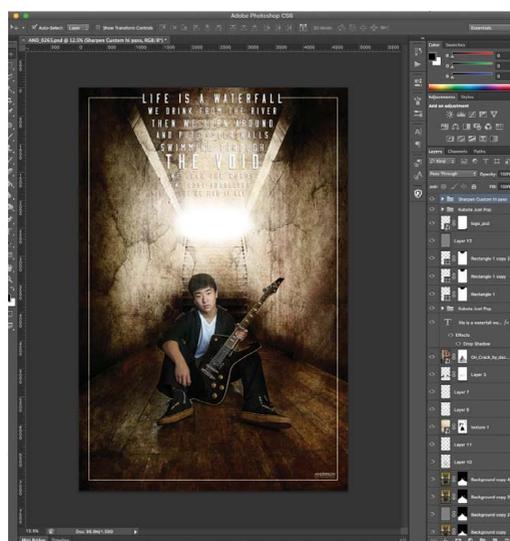




THE SHOOT

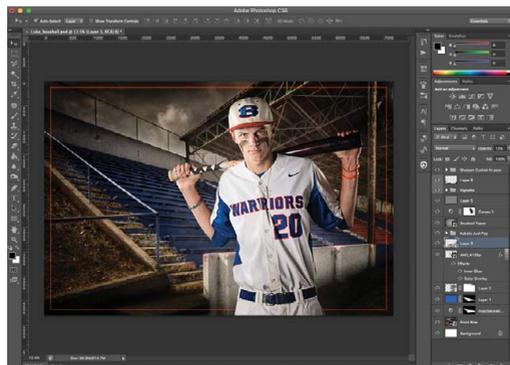
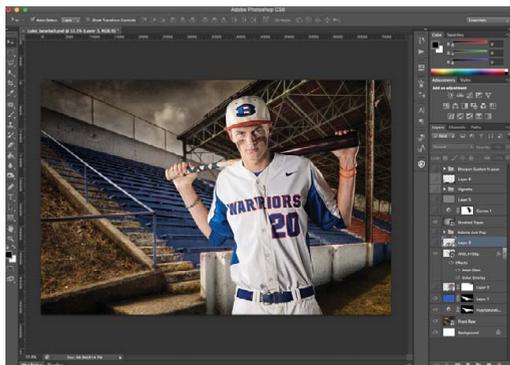
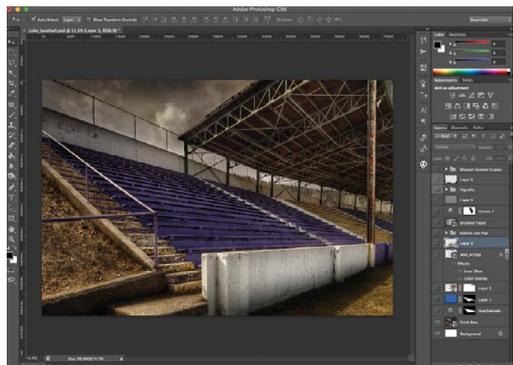


I typically use either ring lights or strobes. Let's discuss the difference. I use three ring lights when photographing stills. I do a tight headshot, serious and intense, with the main light directly in front of my client and two lights behind them at an angle. I am looking for separation from my background and intense rim light on hair, shoulders and arms. I then move my main light to my right side so I can shoot three-quarter. I basically have them spin in a circle with different poses, capturing many different looks with props. My goal is to have four to six great images to blend into one piece. If my client is looking for a composite, I take one three-quarter pose using the ring lights.



Should my client wish to demonstrate movement within the images, I use my strobes. I need to capture the action, so I need the ability to stop motion. Only strobes can provide this. I pose them similarly, starting with a serious and intense tight shot, then have them circle around for me to get several different poses and angles. We finish by moving lights back a bit and giving them the room to swing a bat or lacrosse stick, or catch a football while landing on a beanbag. This can take several attempts to ensure the intensity in the expression is there.

We photograph these either on a white, gray or black backdrop. We can easily extract (we use Rebooku for that service) or blend the images with texture. I am more concerned with the lighting of my subject in these cases than the backdrop.



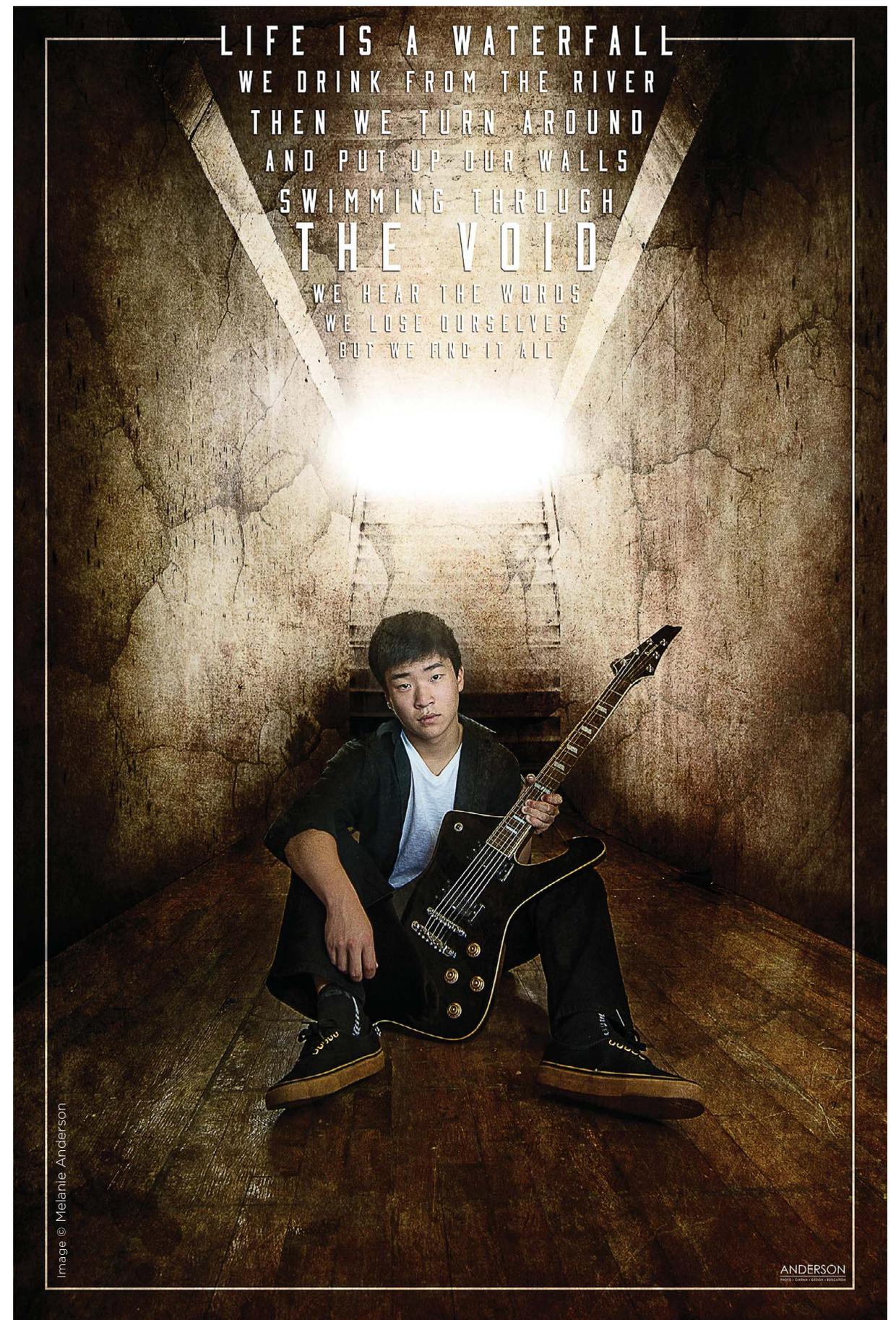


ORDER SESSION

We like to have our clients come back to the studio within a week or two to view and order their portraits. We have their extreme piece completed at that time. This is the only time we pre-edit anything. We do this so they can view the final product and make any needed changes on the spot. Remember, we have already presold the piece, so creating it in time for the order session is a great way to keep our workflow on track.

The creation of these pieces is done by our senior designer, Karissa. We discuss the ideas with her, and then she works her magic. We use Woody Walters actions and designs, and Mark Bryant Streetscapes. The ability to utilize incredible products and pieces that are already created is a huge time saver for us. We integrate those within textures we have created and/or additions we have purchased through iStock.

We have several tutorials on how to create these on our education site, and are happy to assist you with ideas.



MARKETING

As for marketing of our extreme product line, we have several displays at the mall. We use social media and always post behind-the-scenes photos and videos during the session. We want to create an excitement about these pieces. During the initial phone conversation, we mention this as an option and direct them to our website, where they can view samples.

You can view behind-the-scenes videos of extreme seniors on Anderson Photographs' YouTube page. Be sure to make it to ShutterFest to see this process in action. I will teach you everything you need to know about photographing, marketing and selling extreme seniors.

Equipment:

Ring lights for still shots
Strobes for moving shots
PocketWizards
Nikon 24-70 lens
Nikon D4

Action Plans:

Create a portfolio.

Contact local seniors and invite them in for a photo shoot.

Create several images that can be blended together for a montage, or one killer image that can be used for a composite.

Add extreme senior pieces to your product line. ■



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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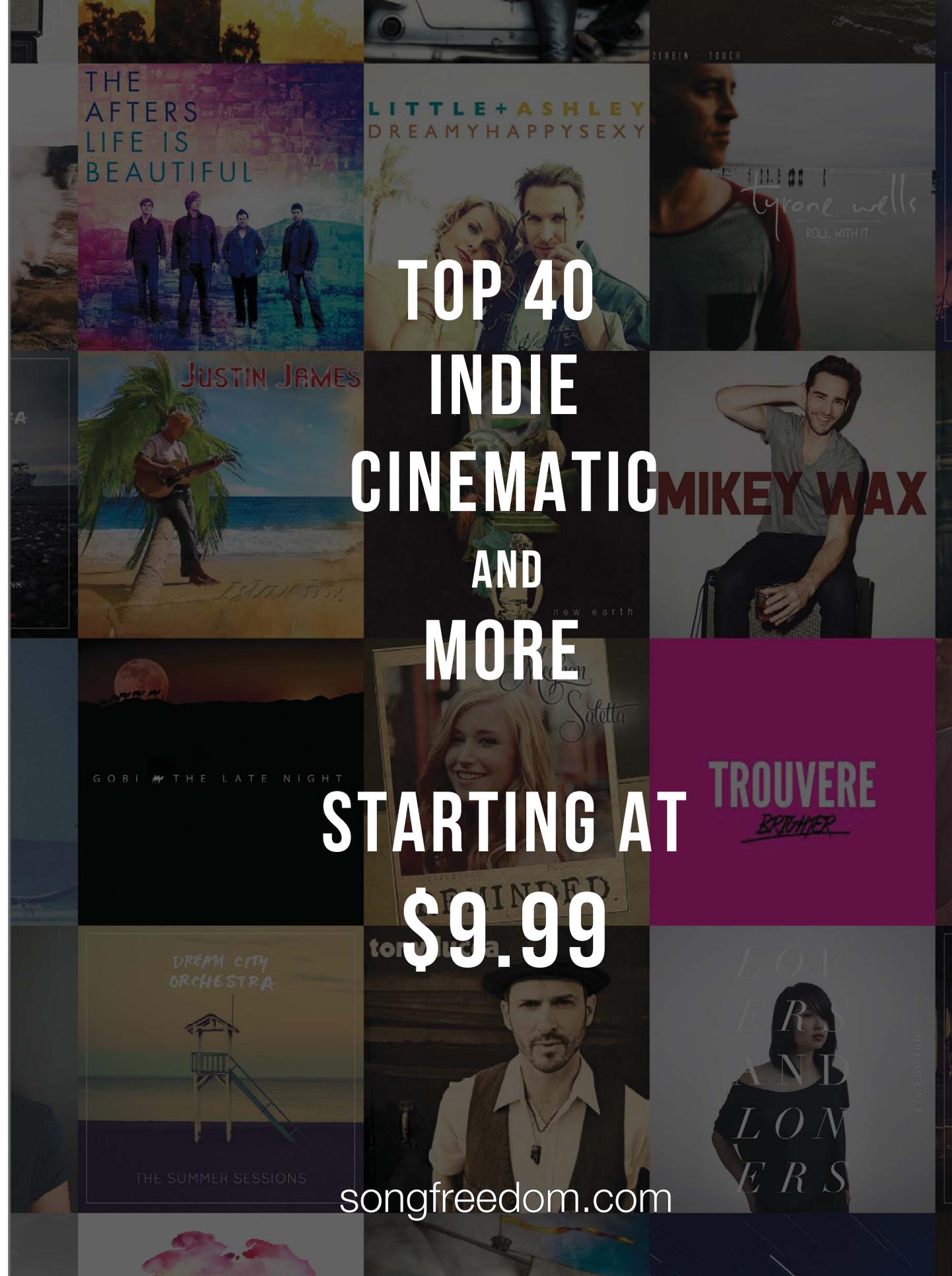
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A young woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white lace dress, is performing a yoga pose on a dark, textured rock ledge. She is standing on her right leg, with her left leg bent and foot resting on her right thigh. Her arms are raised and extended outwards, palms facing up. The background is a dense forest of trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and green. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

THE NEW SEXY: Class & Confidence

In an Age of Abuse

with Phillip Blume

She's a very young mother. Her youthful face would make an attractive addition to any senior portrait photographer's portfolio. If only her eyes weren't so sad. They reveal a darker history. This girl has neither the years nor experience you'd expect from a mother of six children. Then again, she's more experienced in life's hard knocks than most of us can imagine.

Here in Guatemala's slums—where I'm working at the time of this writing with our studio's nonprofit partner, Engadi Ministries International—we refer to this girl's victimization as the "Leah syndrome." It's a common tale, a true societal disease. Leah was Jacob's unwanted, unloved wife in the Book of Genesis. After she bears Jacob his first son, she hopes that maybe now her husband will love her. He doesn't. Later, she bears him a second and third son, thinking that surely now her husband will feel affection for her. He doesn't. And he won't.

The cycle played out like that for this Guatemalan girl, who sits beside me now in her cinderblock shanty. But in her case, the children at her feet represent at least four fathers. None of them is in the picture now.

What does this scene have to do with our senior portrait businesses? I came here with my camera hoping to convince girls in her situation of their true value. I want to dispel the lies this slum culture engrains into girls and boys alike: *You're worthless. Your body is just an object. You don't deserve love.*

Sound familiar? Aren't these some of the same lies our high school seniors, especially girls, wrestle with daily? That very thought should give us pause. More than ever before, I realize I need to stop and ask myself some tough questions about the clients I serve. Sure, I'm helping overseas, but am I using my camera to dispel lies and stereotypes at home, in my own culture? Or am I, as a product of my culture, guilty of objectifying young girls through my lens?

I warned you, the questions are tough. But before we're tempted to retreat, let's at least consider a few practical ways we as senior photographers can begin to redefine "sexy." After all, no matter your personal opinion, the issue isn't going away. The results of careless dealings with young clients include loss of business reputation, a possible sexual harassment lawsuit, and—worse, in my opinion—harm to the young people we serve.

Here are four simple things you can do to both improve your business and protect your senior clients in this brave new world.



Invite a Chaperone

In today's world of helicopter parenting, I'm always surprised when a 16-year-old calls our studio to book her own shoot. Yet it's happening more and more. In cases when it seems a parent or guardian isn't part of the process, be sure to bring them onboard.

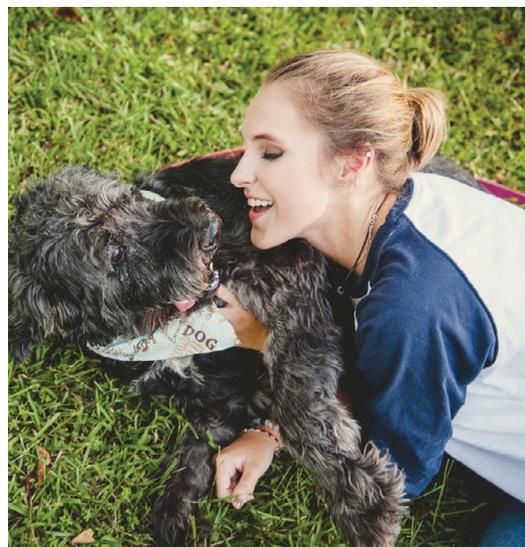
First, there is little doubt about who will be footing the bill for your services—and you can be darn sure it isn't coming out of any teenage girl's allowance. Those who hold the purse strings need to be invested emotionally in your product. Make a clear distinction between your subject and client. Of course you want to create a great experience for your senior subjects, who will become your direct marketers to their friends, your future subjects. But even if your brand becomes an object of intense desire among their friends, the buck stops with your actual client: Mom. What are you doing to earn her trust and enthusiasm?

The first thing you should do is make a personal phone call. Our contact form requires a phone number; so, even if I've responded already to an online inquiry, I call to make the human connection. Although I don't find a preshoot consultation necessary for my senior sessions, I casually offer one at our studio anyway. The offer puts parents' minds at ease, assuring them

I'm a legitimate business and not some creeper working out of my car. It also plants a seed, setting the expectation that they eventually will visit the studio to make purchasing decisions.

Legally, I need a guardian's signature for the minor child's contract and model release if I ever hope to promote my work. But I also want a parent there during the shoot for other reasons. Having a third party there significantly reduces the risk of misinterpreted actions or allegations between you and your young subject. I love seeing how consistently moms pull out their phones during a shoot to post their experience online or to call a girlfriend and describe the scene.

"Oh, your girls would love this," we overheard one mom raving into her phone. "They've got all the lights and everything. This is the real deal!" When she sees her son coming out of his shell, or her daughter dolled up and confident in front of our impressive-looking strobes, she begins to feel as proud as her child does. That's the experience, and it sells even better than "sexy." Just wait till Mom finally sees your impressive photos—she's already sold on the emotions behind them.



Images © Phillip Blume

Watch Your Language

Once you have Mom or Dad on set, watch your mouth. I'm not referring to profanity (although you may want to hold your tongue there, too). What matters most is the tone and context of your conversation with a younger subject. Are you directing her respectfully?

I've stood aghast at the cringe-inducing lines from some photographers: "Oh yeah, *just like that!* You know what *I like,*" one photographer practically groaned as he posed his teenage subject during a conference. Even if you're going for "sultry," you'll never "create the mood" that way. Sure, there's a place among peers where off-color comments may be acceptable. I can safely compliment a bride's form-fitting dress and direct her to "lean the goods toward camera" and jokingly say, "Yup, your husband is gonna love that one!" Intimacy makes sense in that context. But there's a better way to communicate the same direction to seniors and younger models.

Spare the kids—and yourself—some embarrassment by using phrases that may be outside your usual repertoire. Instead of, "Show off those legs, honey!" why not try an equally complimentary (but less "fleshy") "Perfect—yes, your leg there creates a really nice long line." Now you're speaking a professional jargon that maintains a comfortable distance between you and the subject.

As the photographer, verbally take yourself out of the equation. Instead of, "Look *at me* with those sexy eyes," use "Look *into the lens*" and safer phrases like *flirtatious eyes* and *intense stare*. The right kind of physical compliments can make any subject feel more confident in front of the camera. But with seniors, I make a point to narrow my compliments to "gorgeous hair," "bright eyes," "smiles that light up a room," or even "great bone structure"—never "fit bodies," "great legs," or "luscious lips." In this simple way, you help a senior express strength rather than submission, and to feel attractive rather than dirty. off those legs, honey!" why not try an equally complimentary (but less "fleshy"), "Perfect – yes, your leg there creates a really nice long line!" Now your speaking a professional, technical jargon that maintains a comfortable distance between you and the subject.

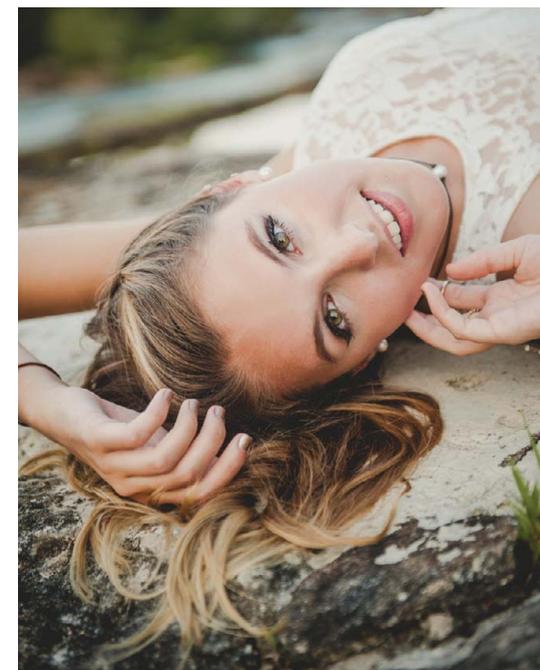


Image © Phillip Blume

Encourage Character

We've focused on how to approach a young person's physicality with tact. There's no denying the fact that, at the most superficial level, we are in the business of showing off physical beauty. But aren't we as artists capable of showing something deeper?

I'm awestruck at how beautiful my own two daughters are growing up to be. They're only three and five years old now (which probably makes me extra sensitive about the topic of protecting girls), but they already take after their gorgeous mother. Still, when I tell them, "I love you"—about 100 times a day—I make a point to encourage their character above their looks. I can't resist telling them how pretty they look when they descend our stairs, batting their eyelashes, in yet another dress-up gown. But I spend more time on compliments like, "Your such a sweet girl" and, "Thank you for being a great big helper! You're so thoughtful." Aren't these the messages we want our kids to absorb as they mature?

We have found ways to encourage character by offering educational "scholarships" as part of our senior program. We take the time to learn about our seniors' interests through a simple questionnaire, and then incorporate those interests (not just their pretty faces) into their shoots. We take every opportunity to show sincere interest in their life ambitions. In our work, we have the rare opportunity to be adults who instill character into young people, because, sadly, many parents aren't even doing that.



Image © Phillip Blume

Embrace Modesty

Embrace modesty for an immodestly successful business. Does the word *modesty* conjure visions of scowling parents and nuns? I can relate. *Modesty* doesn't sound fun. But that just goes to show how limited our perception can be. We too often base our values on perception alone. It's time to adopt thoughtful values that consider and protect others.

After all, what value is there in oversexualizing a high school photo shoot? Yes, the reasons for doing so are clear. It's what many clients want. I was shocked when a photographer sought my advice in an unusual predicament: A mother wanted to book him to photograph her minor daughter's boudoir session. (Yeah, you heard that right.) The mother was willing to sign her consent. My advice, or course, is to run as fast and far as possible from that situation.

There's no denying it: Many of these kids have grown into some hot bodies. They're suddenly subject to impulses they themselves don't understand, and they haven't had time to develop boundaries. Every other company out there is taking advantage of this fact, manipulating that teenage angst in every advertisement. Sex sells. And that's where I draw the line.



Images © Phillip Blume

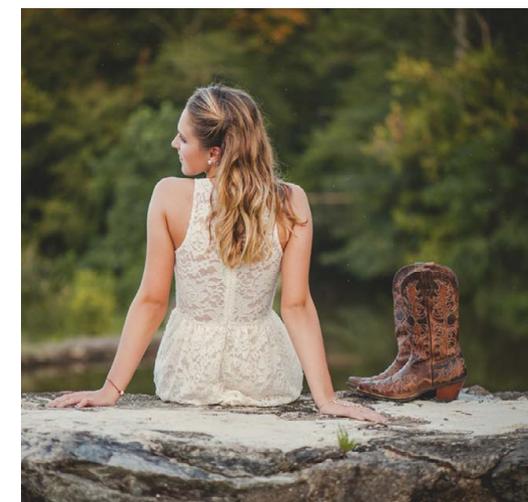
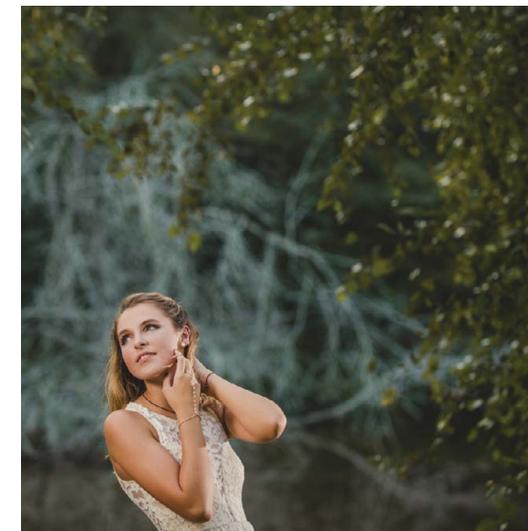




Image © Phillip Blume

The abuses that wreaked havoc on a young Guatemalan girl aren't limited to third-world countries. Human trafficking and sexual abuse thrive right here under our noses in the U.S. and other developed nations. It all takes place against a media culture that relentlessly aims to hypersexualize youth.

I'm grateful for the many senior photographers I've seen promote their business as a force for good that's aimed at building young people's confidence and character. It's a movement that deserves our combined efforts. Let's create images that scream "class" and give seniors an experience that makes them a star instead of a commodity. ■

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Phillip Blume is an international award-winning photographer and, with his wife, Eileen, cofounder of Blume Photography Studios and Come-Unity 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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Inspiration can come when you least expect it. As photographers, we are visual artists. We express ourselves through our camera and the images we create. Inspirations represents a sampling of our industry and the vision of professional photographers from around the world. Congratulations to all our featured artists. Be inspired and create something that is you.

Sal Cincotta
Editor-in-chief

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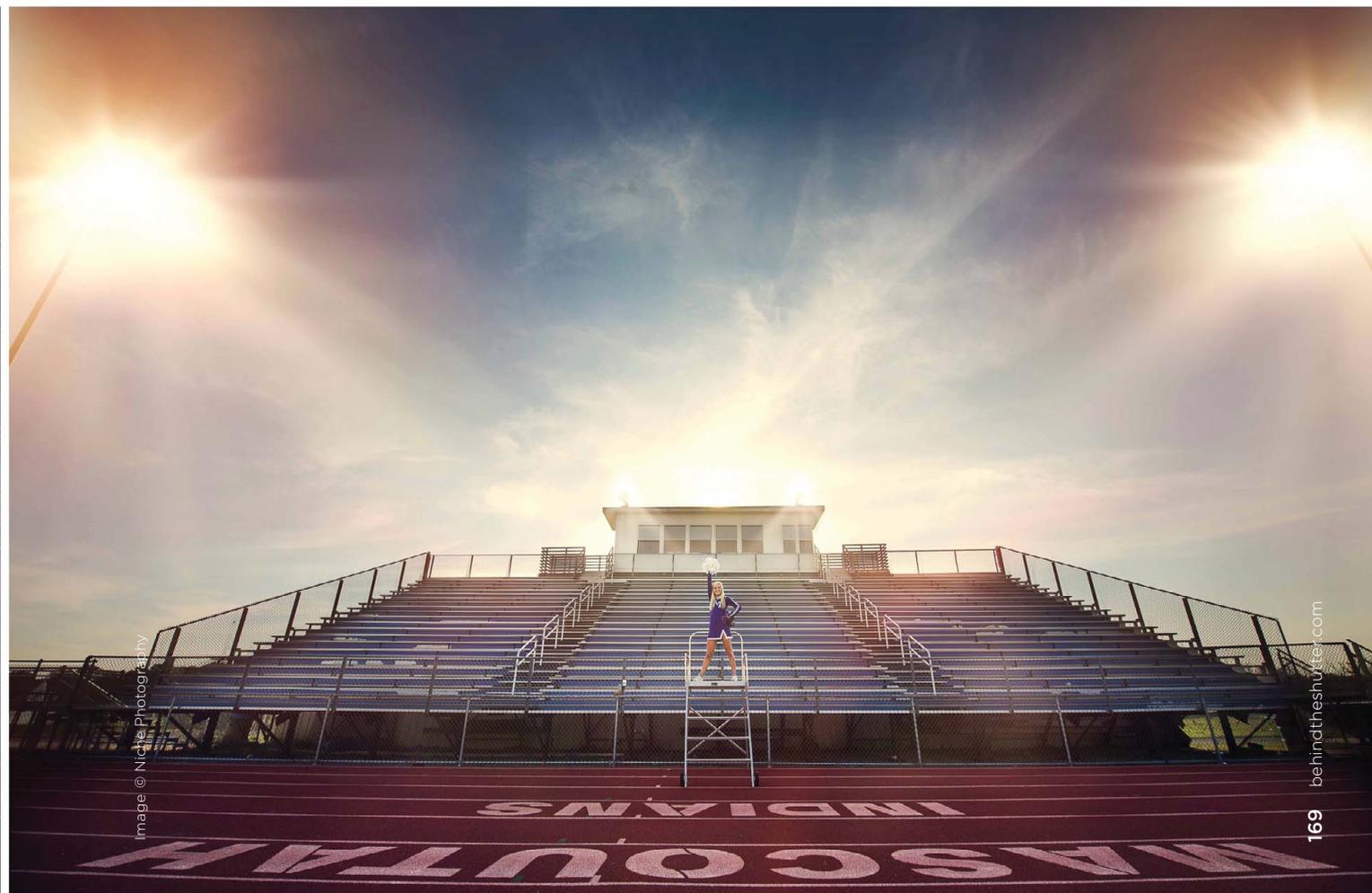


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WORKING WITH NIK COLLECTION IN PHOTOSHOP

with Dustin Lucas

As a photographer and editor, it is always good to try out new plugin software to integrate into your workflow. I have been using the Nik software for what seems like forever. Silver Efex Pro has been my go-to effects plugin. After Google bought the software, I was worried it would become ancient history for Photoshop users.

The entire Nik Collection goes for \$149. It's a no-brainer. Google that shit and buy it right now. This includes Analog Efex Pro 2, Color Efex Pro 4, Dfine 2, HDR Efex Pro 2, Sharpener Pro 3: Raw Presharpener and Output Sharpener, Silver Efex Pro 4 and Viveza 2. You get all the programs Nik offers as well as full capabilities in Aperture, Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop.

Let's skip Lightroom and move right into Photoshop. Open an image in Photoshop. From the menu bar, choose Filter > Nik Collection to reveal all the plugins to choose from. They are listed in alphabetical order. Let's discuss them in groups based on their functionality. Analog Efex Pro 2, HDR Efex Pro 2 and Viveza 2 are all about creative effects. Color and Silver Efex Pro 4 give you a huge advantage for your daily workflow and your creative edge. Last but not least, Dfine 2, Sharpener Pro 3: Raw Presharpener and Output Sharpener provide attention to detail.

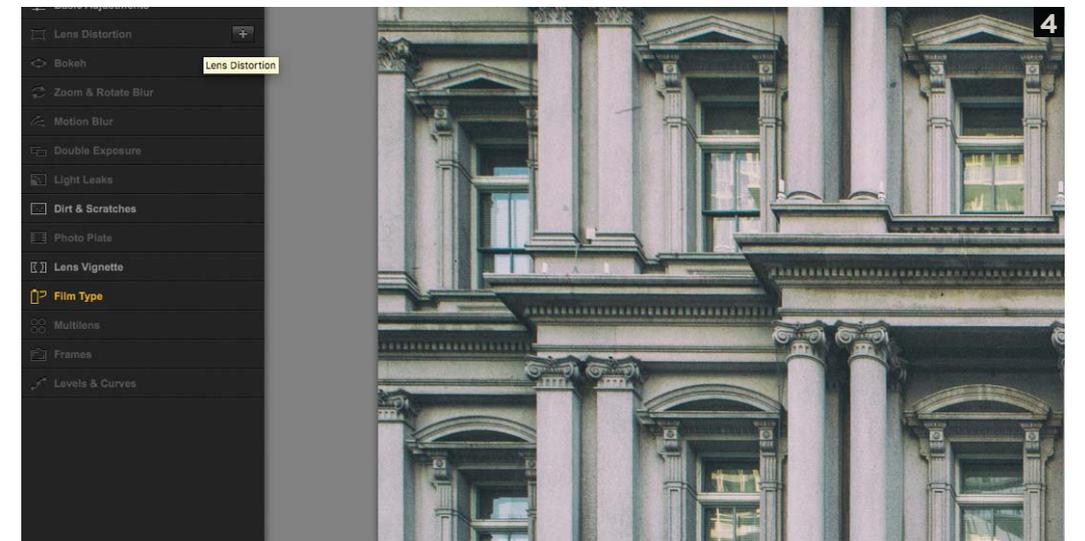
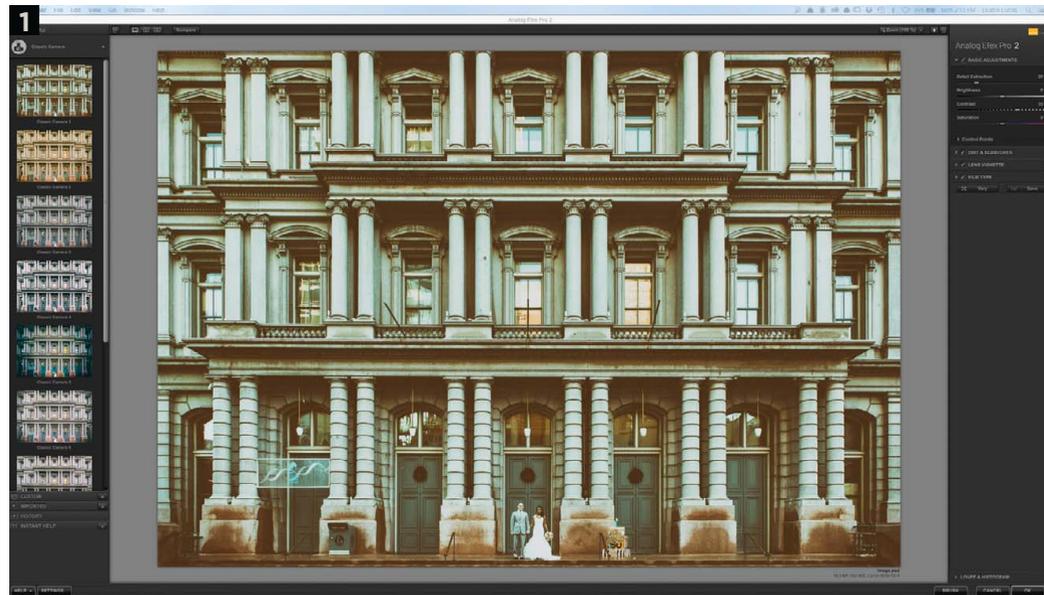


Image © Salvatore Cincocta Photography

Creative Effects

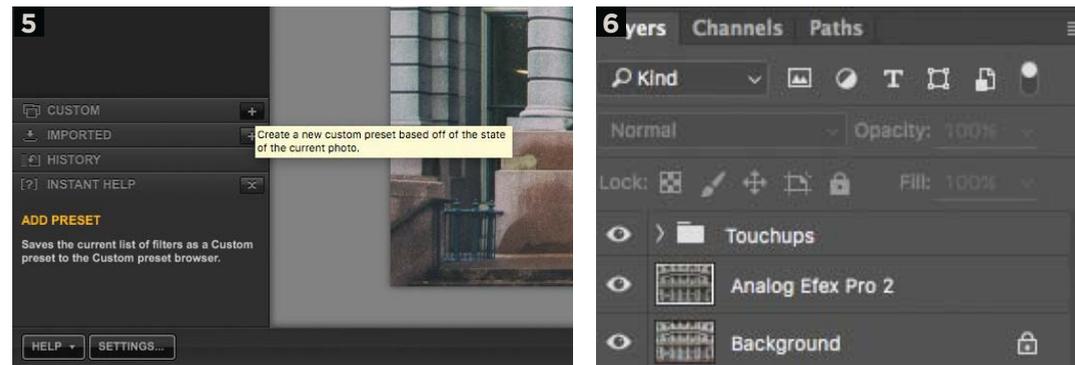
Analog Efex Pro 2 is exactly what it sounds like—and more. After opening this plugin, we are thrown right into the effects capabilities of this software. Classic Camera is the default preset applied, and we can cycle through the other options. (1) Let's take a step back and get a feel for the program before we get overwhelmed. To give you a little background in the structure of this software, it is made up of individual tools listed here. (2) Customization is really useful here because there are a lot of effects that are not useful to a professional photographer.

Start with the camera section and select the arrow on the right to begin with a preset. We can remove and add tools to suit the image. For this image, the subjects are close to the edge and may become problematic when working with many of the older analog effects. Meaning the edges are usually soft and vignettes take effect. On the left panel, start with Classic Camera (looks like waist-level camera) and select Classic Camera 3. (3) On the right panel, you will notice specific tools have been added. Drop these tools down to tweak your image. To add tools to this panel, click back on Classic Camera at the top on the left-hand panel and select Camera Kit at the bottom. (4)



From here, you can hover over a tool and click the “+” symbol. (5) Once you develop a solid tool collection, create a preset for later use. On the left-hand adjustment panel, select “+” in the Custom section. (6) Once you are satisfied, click “Ok” and, depending on your settings, a new layer is added for you to further mask the effect. (7)

Local adjustments are called Control Points in the Nik Collection. A newer program utilizing this feature is Viveza 2. This allows users to be selective with adjustments similar to Lightroom. Click on Add Control Point to begin, or hold Shift + Command and strike “A.” Navigate your cursor to an area in the image you wish to specifically edit and click. (8)

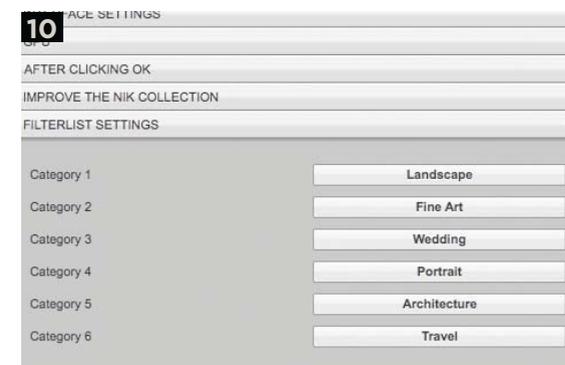


From here, you can adjust the size of the area being affected by sliding the bar with the black dot. Basic adjustments start out with Brightness, Contrast, Saturation and Structure. Expand them by striking “E.” Adjust the entire image by adding Levels and Curves. I can see this being useful for burning down background and creating a control point to drive attention to the subject. (9)



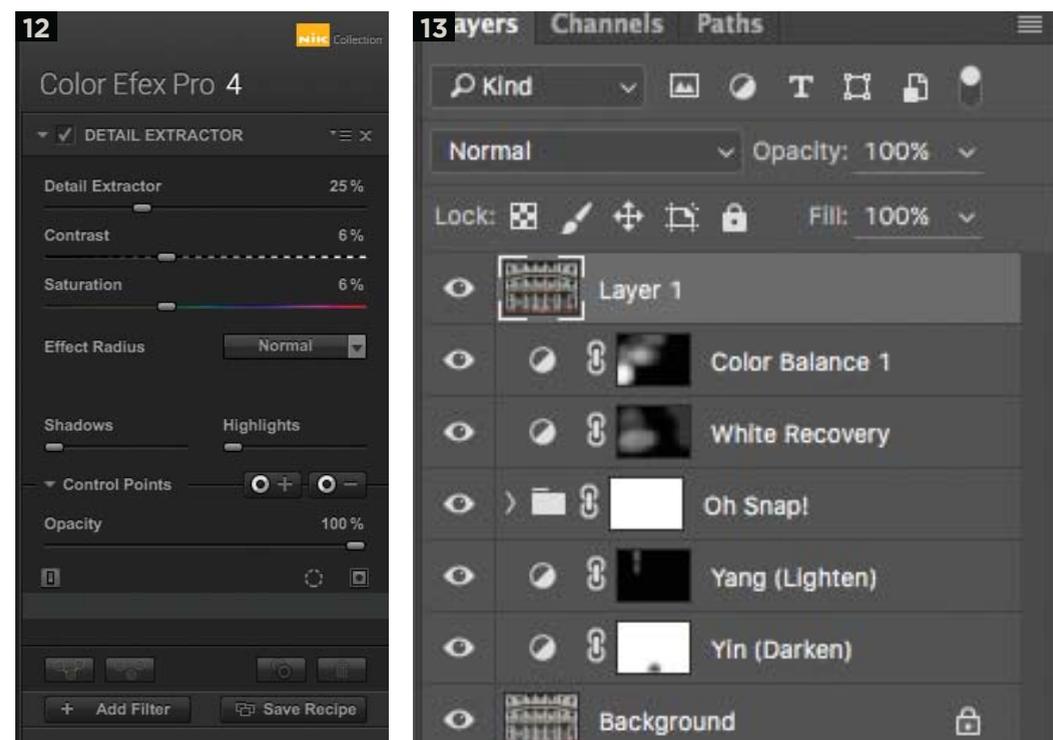
High dynamic range editing was a huge trend a few years ago when Adobe added a new functionality for its users. It was a chance to bridge that gap between the limited range of recording stops of lights with a camera and what humans can see. I have always been fascinated looking at a scene, photographing it and trying to edit based on what I remember or thought I saw. HDR Efex Pro 2 has given users a great balance of presets and customization for this type of effect.

HDR Efex Pro 2 gives you 28 presets to begin with, and from there, you can adjust with the standard tools in the right-hand panel. (10) Tone Compression, Tonality and Color are the fundamental tools for adjusting the HDR effect. Dial in settings with sliders, much like in Adobe Camera Raw, with the ease of clicking and dragging. Control Points are utilized by Nik to act as a masking option within the plugin. Since we can't choose to create a new layer once finished with HDR Efex Pro 2, users are forced to use the control points to mask out the subject or they can create a new image layer. I suggest creating a new layer first in Photoshop by holding Shift + Option + Command and striking “E.” This combines all your current layers into a new layer at the top of your panel. (11) Now, open HDR Efex Pro 2. I use the next two plugins, Color and Silver Efex Pro 4, for creative toning.



Color vs. B&W

Color Efex Pro 4 is set up similarly to HDR EP2, and becomes way more useful for the everyday application. Tools are listed in the left panel and, based on your category, they are narrowed down by All, Favorites, Landscape, Nature, Wedding, Portrait, Architecture and Travel. (12) At the bottom, you can select settings to change the filter lists. (13) Click on All at the Top, and we can begin starring tools that sound appealing. I do this so that you can select Favorites to filter the tools for later use. (14)

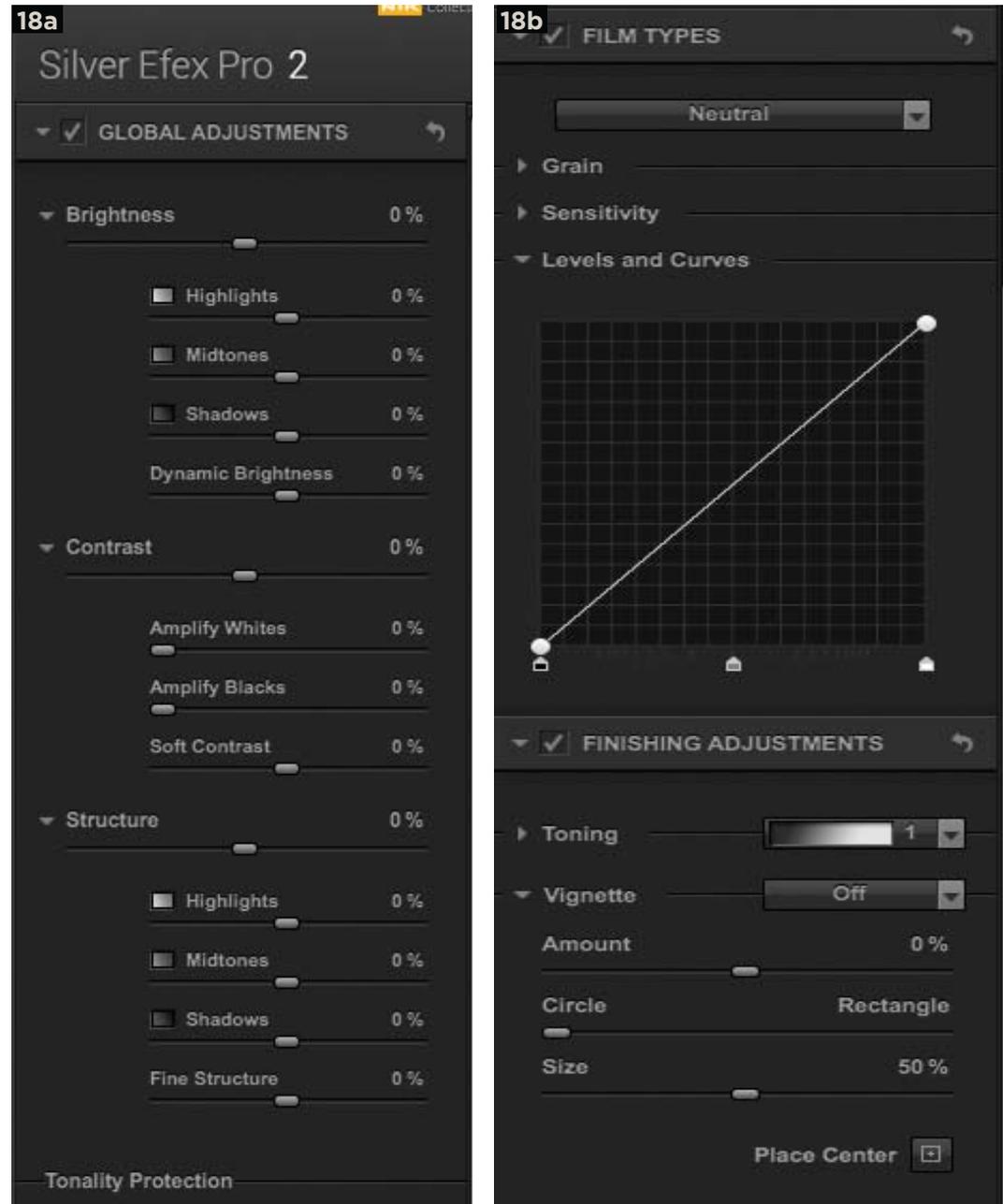


Let's click on Detail Extractor and check out the right-hand panel. You can customize your tool with sliders and dropdown presets. Control points are here as well; I pass on this feature of Nik to mask later in Photoshop. (15a) My favorite feature, Add Filter, allows us to build a tool set. I like to add Bleach Bypass, Foliage, Tonal Contrast and White Neutralizer. These tools are adjusted for each image, and, depending on the look and feel you want, they can provide quite an enhancement to the original. Like presets, Nik allows users to create Recipes to quickly recall the tool set just created. (15b)

Nik's Silver Efex Pro 4 has received the most attention due to its incredible darkroom-like effects that give users the nostalgic look of black-and-white prints. This plugin set the bar for digital black-and-white post-production. Silver EP2 is set up very simply. The left-hand panel has the Preset Library to allow users to select and adjust according to their taste. (16) Select All to star your favorite presets for quick use later. The right panel lists the stationary adjustment tools, including Global & Stationary adjustments, Color Filter, Film Types and Finishing. These drop down and allow users to slide effects. (17)



Start with 000 Neutral in the preset library to begin at a base level to get a feel for the adjustment settings. Brightness, Contrast and Structure can get very complex and give you the ability to adjust for the histogram. For example, white and black point, highlights, midtones, shadows, etc. can be adjusted for advanced toning. Then drop down to the File Types section and apply your favorite film. This is where Nik really separated itself from film preset predecessors. You can choose by ISO for your grain preference and film brand for tone. (18a) Finishing adjustments for toning like selenium, cyanotype and sepia are popular choices. Vignetting, Burn Edges and Image Borders all emulate analog effects for your black-and-white image. This can give your image a nostalgic print look. (18b)

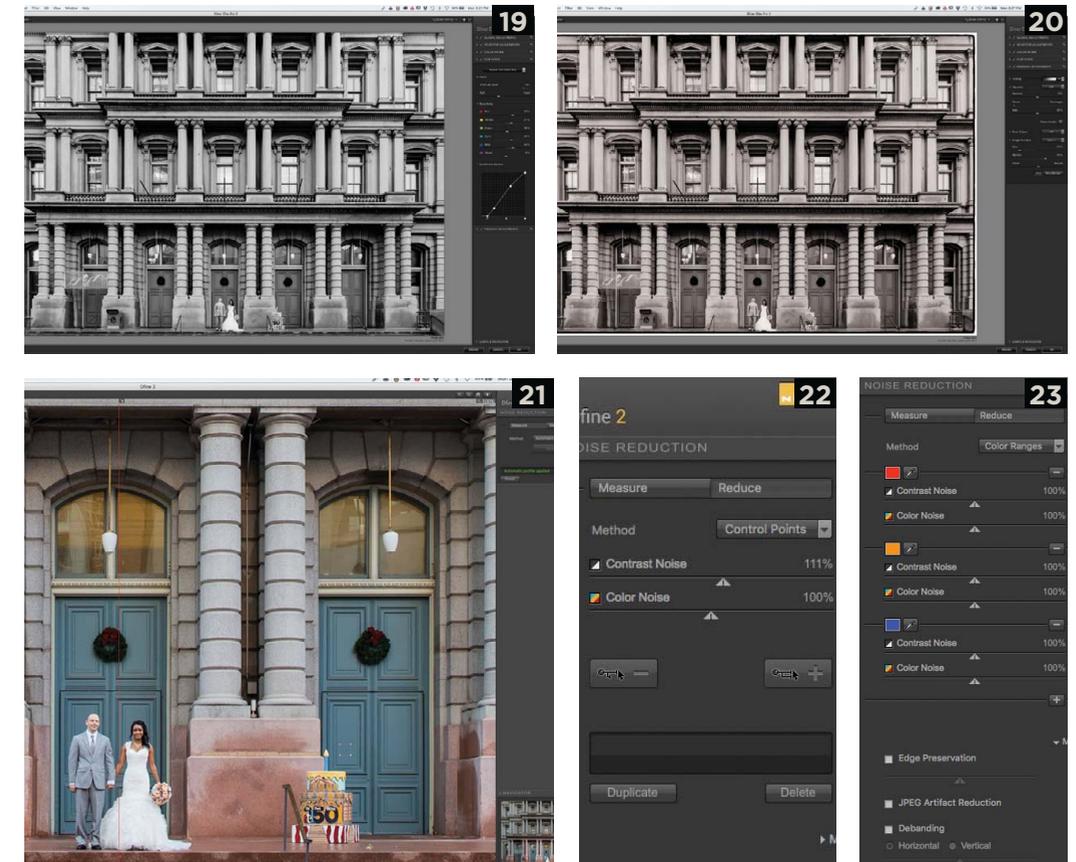


Attention to Detail

Nik Dfine 2 is noise reduction software that should be run prior to sharpening. If you're using Lightroom or ACR to run noise reduction when exporting Raw files into Photoshop, that is fine as long as you understand when to sharpen. After opening the plugin, you can see the automatic noise reduction setting applied. (19) Change the method to manual and move from Measure to Reduce. We can begin to improve the effect by using different methods. (20) Before getting too crazy with adjustments, check out my previous article from May 2015, "Silence the Noise."

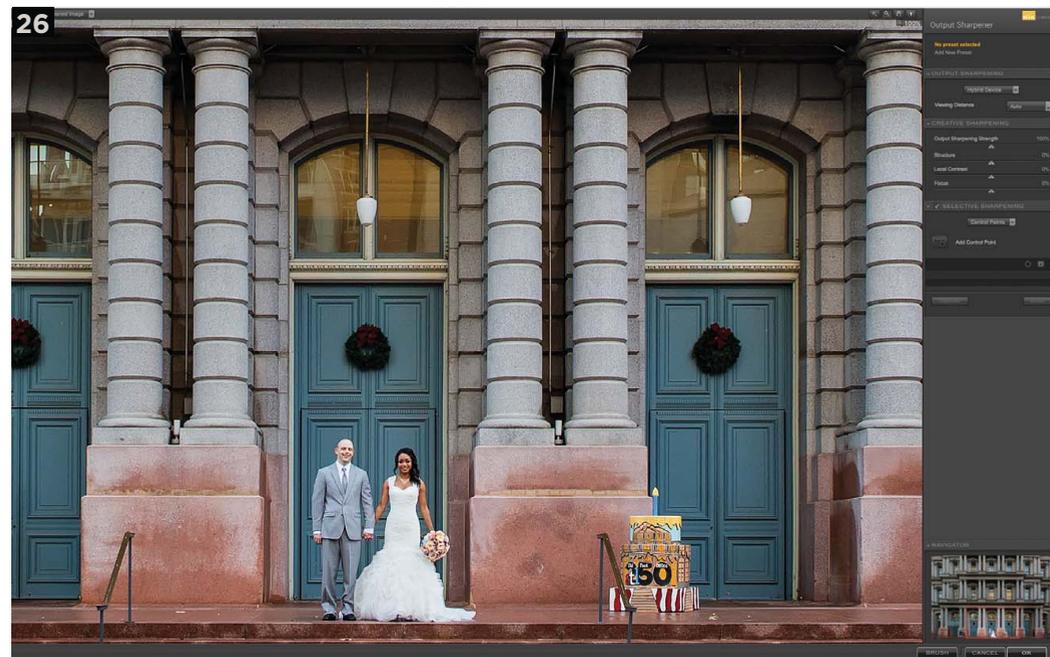
Control points simplify the settings for contrast and color noise. (21) Changing the method to color ranges allows you to specifically color-pick areas on the image to adjust contrast and color noise. (22) Farther down, you can fix Edge Preservation, Jpeg Artifact Reduction and Debanding. Remember, if you applied grain from a previous Nik plugin, you may begin removing it with noise reduction.

Sharpener Pro 3 has a Presharpener and an Output Sharpening feature. Before adjusting these settings, you need to have an understanding of these two forms of sharpening. Check out my November 2014 article, "Attention to Detail," for more. Much like Dfine, after opening the image, you can really see a difference with settings automatically applied. (23)



Presharpener has an adaptability option for high-ISO images so it doesn't sharpen the noise. There are slider adjustments for adaptive, area and edge sharpening. (24) Control points and color range are also adjustable.

Output Sharpener is a great tool that allows users to design their image specifically for either print or online. Before opening this plugin, you want to have the cropping, resizing and noise reduction completed. Also, flatten the image and save a specific version based on the output. Open the plugin, and you will notice the automatic sharpening effect applied. (25) Adaptive sharpening allows a softer focused image to be sharper, and can really improve the quality. It defaults at 50% and usually doesn't need to be increased. Creative and selective sharpening can add an extra push to your image as well. (26)



The Results

Nik has a lot to offer your standard and creative workflow. Using Photoshop, you can really speed up processing by building specific actions for the creative toning, color and black-and-white enhancements, as well as the detail work. I regularly use a specific set of plugin settings. There is no reason to hand-touch each image needing the same treatment. For more extensive editing, spend the time getting to know adjustments and how they work. Sometimes you can save a bad shot.

Nik Collection will be worth it for you, even if you only utilize Color and Silver EP 4 and the Detail plugins like Dfine 2 and Sharpener Pro 3. ■



Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his master in 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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PORTRAIT LIGHTING with LEDs

What You Need to Know

with Michael Correntino

When it comes to learning about light—how to control it and how to see it—nothing beats constant light sources. That’s why strobes have modeling lights. I’m a big strobe guy, so that’s become my comfort zone.

Constant lights are nothing to sneeze at. Back in the day, I was particularly fond of Westcott’s Spiderlites. I love their luscious, soft fluorescent light, and learned a lot using them. Time marches on and so does technology. These days, there are so many interesting and compelling tools besides constant lights. One is LED lights. I recently had an opportunity to test out Manfrotto’s new line of LEDs, and came away with a renewed appreciation for what’s possible with these lightweight, portable, durable and versatile lighting tools.

When I first started working with these LEDs, I looked at them through the prism of a strobe user, which wasn’t entirely fair. Once I stopped wanting them to be strobes and gave them their fair shake as constant lights, everything got a lot easier. Keep in mind that they’re different tools with different capabilities and uses, and neither is mutually exclusive.

At the end of the day, light is light. There are some clear advantages and disadvantages with every lighting system.



Image © Michael Corsentino

LED lights are great tools for learning about light and how to control it. Because they're a constant light source, what you see with your eyes and through the camera is what you get.

The Benefits of Constant Light

I call constant light “what you see is what you get” lighting. Because the light source is always on, unlike flash, seeing exactly what you’re getting with your lighting couldn’t be simpler. Constant lights are great for anyone who wants to learn lighting. Compared to flash, constant lights are also considerably less distracting and invasive—there’s no jarring flash popping every other minute. This makes them perfect for use with newborns, children, pets and anyone unaccustomed to being professionally lit and photographed.

With constant lights, people basically forget that they’re being lit. This results in much more relaxed subjects and images. Many constant-light systems are also cool to the touch, another advantage when working with toddlers and children. There are also times you may want to combine constant lights and strobes for some really fun and creative effects with gels. Since there’s virtually no heat, LEDs work particularly well for this.

One technique involves using a strobe to freeze the action and a constant light source such as an LED to introduce color and motion. This is achieved by using a slower shutter speed, aka “dragging the shutter,” to capture the constant light source motion and color. Try this technique out sometime, I’m sure you’ll love it. Suffice it say to say, when it comes to gels, LEDs provide a lot of flexibility technically and creatively.

The Disadvantages of Constant Light

There are no 100-percent-perfect solutions. Constant lights in general don’t have as much power as strobes. However, as ISO ratings continue to climb and performance continues to improve, this is becoming less and less of an issue.

Constant lights aren’t going to be your first choice for freezing action. This is better left to strobes, hands down. The way constant lights interact with the human eye is also a stumbling block for some people. Since they are always on, constant lights give the iris time to adjust to the light and therefore contract. Some find these smaller irises objectionable. This has never really bothered me that much. Another thing to keep in kind is the reduced range of light modifiers you’ll have at your disposal. For me, the benefits outweigh any negatives.

Pay special attention to Sara’s irises. Because of the way the eye works with constant light, they’re smaller than they would be with strobe. For some, this is a deal breaker, but I’ve never found it that objectionable.



Image © Michael Corsentino



Images © Michael Corsentino

Keeping shoots fun and engaging is the key to great images. I make sure the environment on set is light and open to experimentation. Encouraging your subjects to be playful is especially useful for relaxing people who are stiff or unaccustomed to being photographed.



Unlike strobes, the lower power output of LEDs necessitates the use of higher shutter speeds, higher ISO settings and/or the use of wider apertures to avoid motion blur—unless, of course, that's the effect you want.



Images © Michael Corsentino

Ganging up several LEDs helps provide a wider, longer area of coverage. This is a useful technique due to the rapid fall-off inherent in LED fixtures. In this image, I'm using two staggered LED lights camera left to illuminate Sara's face and body, and one camera right as an accent light.

Why LEDs?

There are numerous constant light systems to choose from: tungsten, HMI, fluorescent and LED, to name a few. Each has its own pluses and minuses, running the gamut from pricing to features to benefits. So why choose LED? Again, what you see is what you get, and they differ from other constant light sources in some important ways. They have no internal filament like a traditional lightbulb. This makes them extremely durable. They rely solely on the movement of electrons housed in a semiconductor material. This makes them more efficient, durable, versatile, and longer lasting than the average bulb. LEDs are energy efficient, typically requiring only 30 to 60 milliwatts to operate. They are shockproof, providing considerably more durability compared to filament-based lamps. Their lower power consumption makes them the perfect fit for battery operation, and many are available with optional battery capabilities.

The lower power output of LED lights and their lack of heat makes them the perfect tool to use when working with plastic gels. Gels work counterintuitively, and one might assume that the more light you put through a gel the bigger the effect or the higher the intensity of the color produced. Actually, exactly the opposite is true. Gels work best with less light. I know this is a strange concept to grasp, but trust me, the less light you use with gels, the more saturated the colors you get.



Cross light helps create dimension. Here I've got one LED light acting as a keylight, one below it for fill, and one behind my subject as an accent light.



Images © Michael Corsentino

Final Impressions

After working with LEDs on several test projects, my impressions are as follows. Every light source has certain characteristics and qualities. LEDs have a particularly quick light fall-off “envelope.” This means the farther away you place them, the less light will reach your subject. This is true of every light source, but with LEDs, it’s dramatic. They’re best used close to your subject. This works perfectly for portraits, beauty and some fashion applications, but they wouldn’t be my first choice for group shots.

Good lighting instruments are all about consistent color across their power range. With LED lights, this is indicated by their CRI rating; in this case, the higher the number, the better the consistency.

Other features worth looking for and investing in are bicolor capabilities. Bicolor LED lights allow you to dial in either daylight or tungsten color balance. Next is Bluetooth control. The Manfrotto LEDs I’ve been working with have both of these super useful features. Bicolor gives you twice the utility for each fixture, and Bluetooth allows you to control the LED lights remotely from any iOS device, which is pretty sweet. Bicolor operation is another one of those features that distinguishes LEDs from other constant light sources and strobes.

With the convergence of still and video, having a few LED lights in your kit is a good long-term investment. They can do double duty for both still and video, and they offer a great way to learn lighting. ■

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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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BEHIND THE VIDEO SHOOT:
FILMMAKING IN
**EXTREME
CONDITIONS**

with Joe Switzer

Behind the scenes of our Pennsylvania blizzard shoot.



We're taking you behind the scenes on our Pennsylvania shoot in the Laurel Highlands. The shoot took place in the most intense, epic, challenging and extreme environmental conditions we have ever faced. This storm goes down in the history books as Winter Storm Jonas. Jonas produced 32 inches of snow in the area we filmed. In this article, I show you how to face down the perfect storm.

The video gear used for the shoot was a Sony A7s, Sony A7R2, GoPro Hero 4, GoPro attachments and a handful of both Sony and Canon lenses: 50mm, 55mm, 100mm macro, 16-35mm, 10-18mm, 14mm and 200mm. Other video tools included a tripod, monopod, track, Ronin-M and a DJI Phantom 3.

Surprisingly, all the equipment held up and functioned rather well. The Sony cameras were a little difficult to use with gloves on, so we had to have one glove on and one glove off most of the time. This allowed us to go through menu settings, focus with the lens and press Record.

A few times during the peak of the storm, our Sony A7s menu quit. We weren't able to scroll and change the frame rates. The camera still focused and recorded, so we were just stuck with whatever the settings were. All the snow made it nearly impossible to change lenses. I just stuck with a wide lens, and the other filmmaker, Kristin, used the 50mm.

There was just no way to change lenses and not get the sensor or inside of the lenses wet with snow. Kristin focused on close-ups using a tripod and monopod. I used handheld with my wide lens during the blizzard. When the storm was over, I was able to turn on the Ronin-M and get all the motion video. Using handheld was a first for me—as many of you know, I'm not a fan of that technique. Even though we wanted to use the DJI Phantom in the snowstorm, we waited until we had light snow showers. At the top of the mountains, the outside temperature was near zero, and not one battery gave us any trouble except the Sony batteries. We use the dual battery pack that allows us to shoot with two Sony batteries, so even when one would drain quickly, we were still fine. The GoPro cameras are of course made for storms like this and did really well. We put them on helmets, skis, snowboards, snowmobiles and even the sled dogs. As extreme as the conditions were, our gear did not let us down.

Next, let's go behind the scenes on our two-day shoot in Pennsylvania.

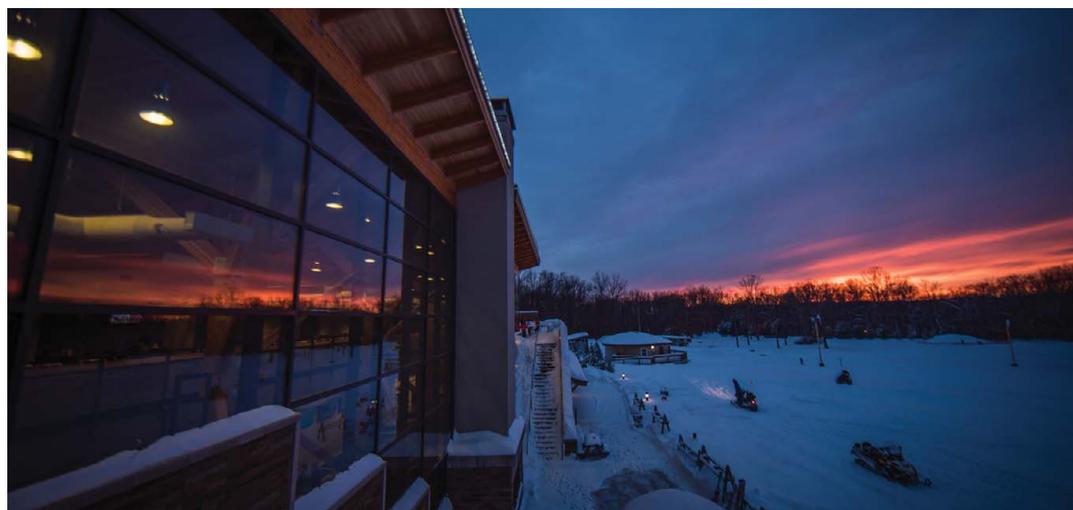


Image © Joe Switzer



DAY 1

It was the middle of the blizzard. Snow was dumping up to 2 inches an hour on us. Our mission was to film dog sledding, tubing, skiers, animals and the beauty of the resort in the wintry weather.

First up that day was the dog sledding. We wanted to film the dogs getting their gear on and lined up on the sled. Normally we divide and have one filmmaker get track/tripod/monopod shots, and the other uses the Ronin-M for motion. With snow waist deep and still coming down hard, we couldn't use the Ronin or track. The track was frozen and the snow would've eventually ruined and frozen the Ronin. We had to film the first scene with a monopod and handheld.



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Image © Joe Switzer



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The reason for the handheld was because of the difficulty setting up a tripod in the snow and all the dogs moving around. Minutes after we started, our LCD screens went black from the cold, or perhaps the snow did something to it. We had to film the majority of the scene looking in the viewfinders.

When something like this happens, don't worry about fixing it. Just keep getting your shots and worry about fixing your gear later. Sony A7s cameras allow you to record and zoom focus at the same time. This function was clutch for the conditions, and we used it all day for the skiers, animals and establishing shots.

One of my favorite things to film is animals. Filming them in the snow was a first for me. We were dressed plenty warm, which allowed us to be patient and wait to get the look we wanted, which was the white tiger charging us.

The final scene of the day was the ski area. The top three tools for this were a simple clamp mount for the snowmobile, a sticky on a ski and the Rhino GoPro 360 swivel mount on a drone. We mostly focused on the snowmobile since the skiers and tubers couldn't move much in the knee-deep snow.

When we were about finished with the GoPro shots, the snow started to dissipate. This gave us a chance to launch the drone. Charles King was our pilot and photographer. Fortunately, the light snow showers didn't impact the drone. The biggest struggle we encountered was operating the drone with gloves on. Charles had a tough time feeling his fingers to operate the remote. We also had to clear a launching pad by shoveling snow off a patch of concrete. Next time, we'll have someone assisting the drone operator by handing them gloves and hand warmers when they need them.



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DAY 2

We wanted to focus on aerials, time-lapses, unique resort activities and motion on the slopes. This wouldn't have been possible without help from Britton Wasmer and his partner in crime, Mark, who flew in to help. Mark and his friends were the talent for the video, and they also helped us film.

We started at the top of the mountain for drone and time-lapses. The sun was being stubborn about coming out, and the wind chill factor was in the negatives. With no communication (my iPhone was frozen), our teams were able to divide and concur. It's so important that everyone on your team can separate and handle themselves independently. We filmed festivals, ice carving, sleigh rides, snow boarding and skiing, time-lapses, GoPro point of view, more snowmobiles and aerials of all the scenes. We did all this with little communication. The teams just rolled with it.

Whenever you're planning your shoots, get ready for when things do not go perfect. Know that your batteries, schedule and techniques will fail. You will have to adjust. So roll with it. We had other issues that day with GoPro attachments not sticking, but electrical tape fixed that. The weather was so cold that we went through about eight batteries, but we had 15 extras charged and ready. Everything we carried with us was on our hip or in our hands, which allowed us to film anything quickly. We used the Ronin-M without a stand or calibration. Its battery lasted all day, and, even after crashing with it on one of my skis, it performed flawlessly.



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FINAL THOUGHTS

Know your situation and prepare. Pay attention to weather conditions, especially in winter. Think about where your shoot is and how you can make it easy on yourself to get places and follow through with results. Pay the extra money to stay as close as possible to your shoot. Driving 50 miles in a blizzard doesn't make any sense. Wear layers of clothing and boots. You can always take a layer off, but if you're underdressed, your day is over before it begins. We dressed like we were going on a skiing trip, and the goggles helped us with all the wind and snow.

Pack light and have all the video gear you need with you. You might not be able to get to your lens bag all day. Have your video gear on your hip or in a bag that attaches to you. Charge your batteries, format your cards, have your lenses and sensors cleaned before the shoot. Prepare yourself so you start the day running and not assembling, charging, formatting or looking for your tools.

Your success depends on how ready you are to seize the day. You should use this mindset on all your shoots, especially when conditions are unfavorable. You will eventually be presented one of Mother Nature's extreme weather situations. Things will go wrong no matter how much you prepare. React and roll with it. Think quickly and enjoy the challenge. This was the most extreme shoot we've faced. This is why I'm in this game. I hope to have a chance to attack another situation like this again. ■

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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

final inspiration

photographer salvatore cincotta
image title fierce
exposure f2.8 @ 1/200th, ISO 50
lighting profoto b1
location st. louis, mo
gear canon 1dx, 70-200mm



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