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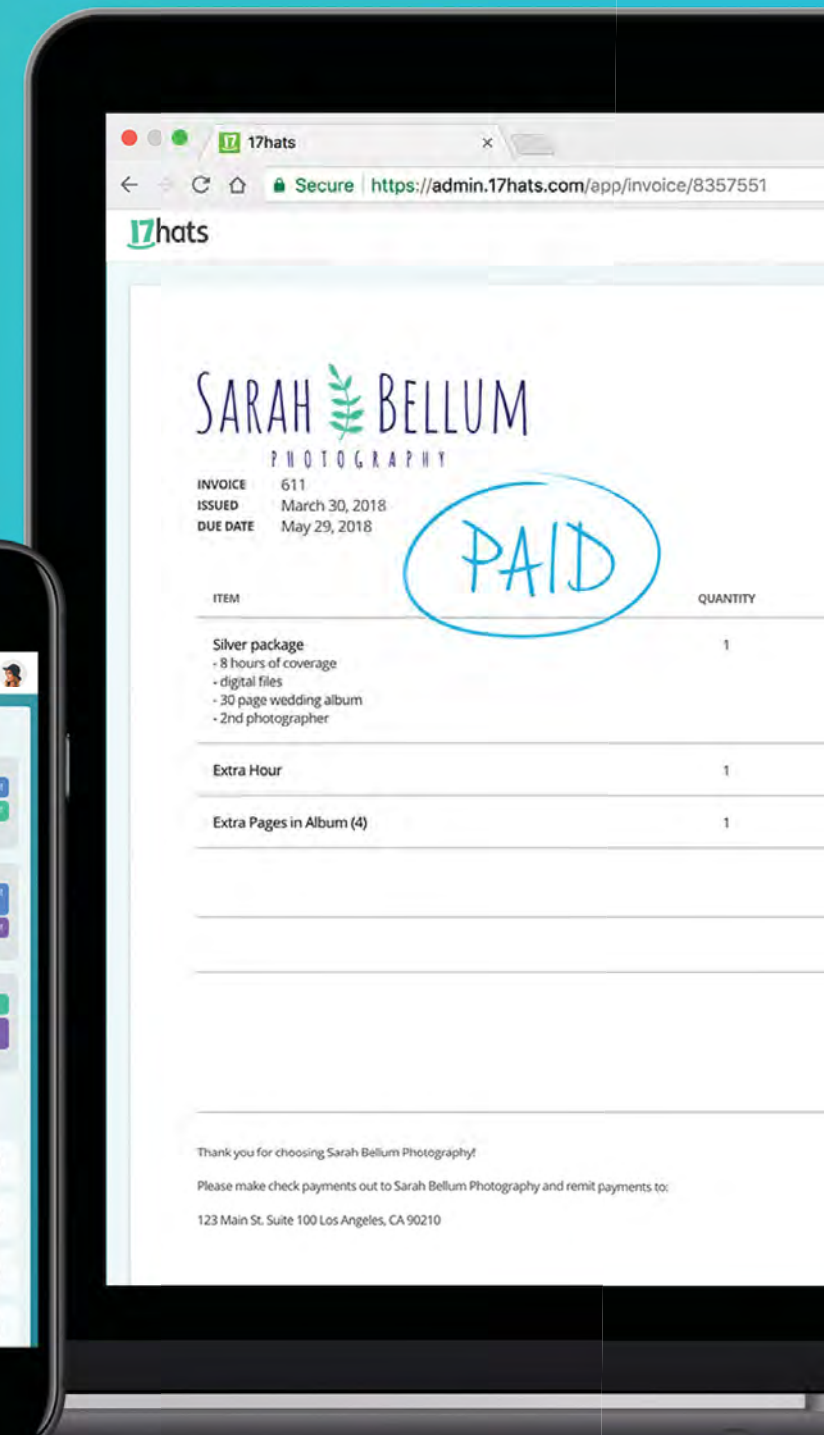
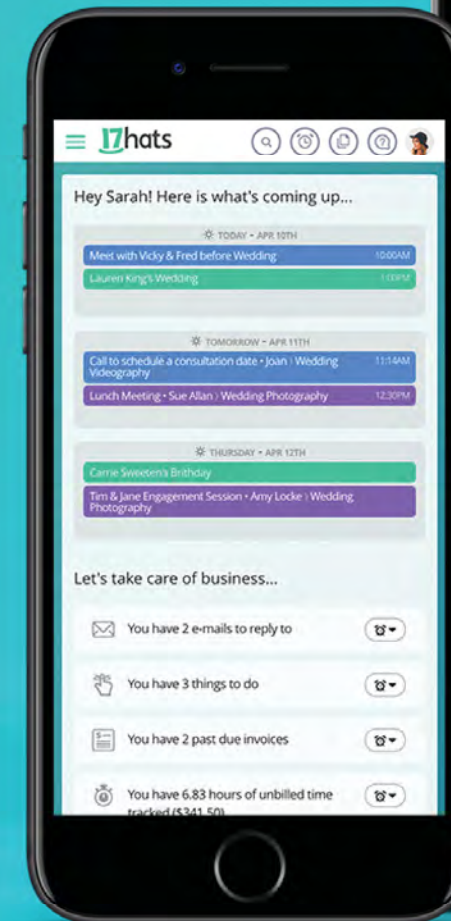
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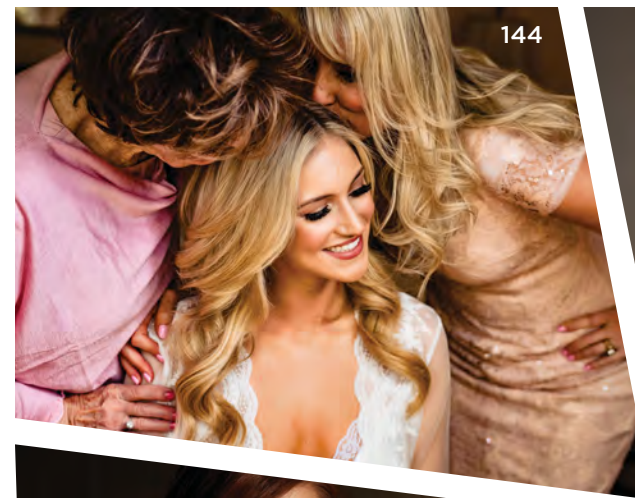


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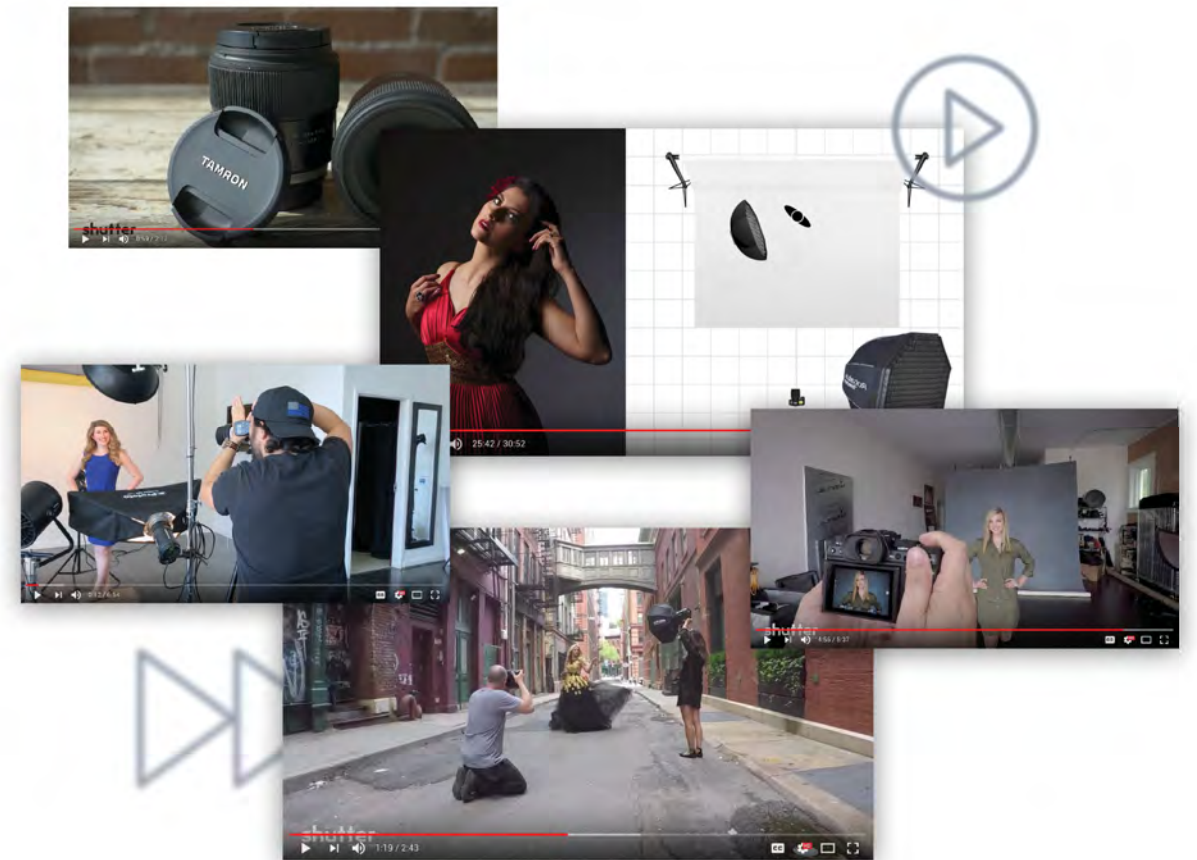
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Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter* uses the latest technologies to deliver information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

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sal Cincotta | salcincotta.com

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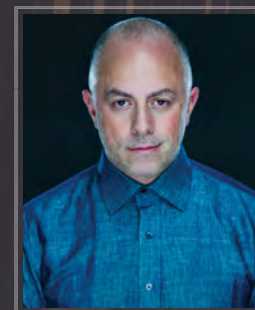
EXPOSURE: f5.0 @ 1/80, ISO 1600

LIGHTING: Profoto A1, off-camera left

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken in March 2018 at the Hotel Colonnade in Coral Gables, Florida.

LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief



For me, building a **sustainable photography business** starts with **weddings**.

Every year, there are over **2 million weddings** in the United States.

How will you engage with this market?

- Sal Cincotta

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LOOKING UP

AND
LOOKING DOWN

HOW WE CAN
BETTER THE
PHOTOGRAPHY
INDUSTRY
with Vanessa Joy

I’m on an airplane leaving Las Vegas right now after speaking at the Mobile Beat DJ convention. Planes *from* Las Vegas are not the same as planes *to* Las Vegas. They’re much rowdier on the way there, but when I’m flying out of Sin City, I can usually get work done.

A speaker colleague of mine, Alan Berg, is here on the plane, and we’re talking about the speaking world. He’s invited me to check out the National Speakers Association (NSA). He says it’s the most open and welcoming community he’s a part of. As a speaker, he’s part of a lot of communities and has been to a lot of conventions. He says people at the NSA conventions are often looking for ways they can give rather than take.

I smile when he tells me this. I want to be part of a community like that. My smile fades a little when I compare it to the photography world. In that community, I still see the bigger guys complain about the newbies, or the less successful throw a jealous eye toward the more successful.

If you’ve been around long enough in this industry, you know how we’ve fought to build community instead of competition. Thankfully, it has gotten a lot better lately. It is nothing like when I walked into my first local photography meeting 18 years ago. It was like walking into a boys’ club where they measured themselves by sharing how many weddings they had booked for that year. Whoever had the most won, even if he wasn’t charging very much for them.

This made me start thinking about business and life—in and out of the photography world. I’m accustomed to writing an article with five tips to maximize your studio’s revenue, or about branding (like I do in my eBook *9 Secret Ways to Brand Your Business*, available free at BreatheYourPassion.com). But not today. Today I’m going to give you something better.





THE GIFT OF SIGHT

It’s ironic how blind photographers can be. It’s easy to sit in our little self-employed bubble and not see the bigger picture. We often don’t notice that we’re looking at the world through social media glasses. I’m guilty myself of looking at the successes of others and thinking, “Why not me?” or seeing people trying to grab a piece of me and thinking, “I don’t have the time for this right now.” I think to some extent it’s a natural reaction, but that doesn’t mean it has to be your reaction.

After talking to Alan about the speaking community, and recently seeing a fellow photographer complain about new photographers bringing down the industry, I’ve realized there are two ways people tend to look at the world: We either look up or we look down.

It’s not whether we gaze up or down that matters. It’s how we look up or down that makes all the difference in the world.



Images © Vanessa Joy

Images © Vanessa Joy



LOOKING DOWN

My Uber driver today asked me why I enjoy public speaking. I responded with the proverb about teaching a man to fish versus just giving him a fish. I love to give my listeners the tools to better themselves and their business and watch them grow. I find joy in teaching others to fish.

When you look down at those below you, you have a choice. You can either bring yourself down by thinking negatively about them or you can bring them up by helping them.

This isn't a lot to ask. In fact, it will only benefit you and the industry. Raise the bar by encouraging them to charge more and helping them better their photography so that they're worth it. If you don't, who else will? If you do the opposite, you only bring down your own morale.

LOOKING UP

Rarely do I get involved in online arguments. If you've ever seen me go tit for tat on social media, I'm likely to be defending a friend of mine or fighting against the way leaders in our industry are scrutinized. I'm extremely defensive of my friends and fellow speakers.

You can choose how you look at those above you. Not many successful photographers got to where they are by lying, cheating and stealing. They have expertise that you can learn from. Most of them are willing to share tips that'll revolutionize the way you run your business. Are they perfect? No way. Do they have to charge you for their time and wisdom? Sometimes, yes. They have to put food on their table too. So stop waiting for the other shoe to drop and pay attention to what got them where they are instead.

This isn't a lot to ask. I'm not telling you to take financial advice from a broke person or ask an obese person how to run a marathon. I'm saying that you can learn photography and business from someone who is successful in photography and business, regardless of whether you agree with everything he or she does. After all, the only person you'll agree with 100 percent of the time is yourself.





THE SHUTTERFEST COMMUNITY

You’re reading this shortly after our little community gathering at ShutterFest. If you didn’t go, chances are you’ll want to after you hear about the community Sal has built there. It’s open. It’s honest. Most of all, it’s welcoming. Everyone there is looking up and down in a way that builds up other photographers. We don’t tolerate anything else. It’s pretty amazing. It’s part of why ShutterFest is the fastest-growing photography conference.

Here is a challenge for you. Look up and look down with proactive intention instead of negative reaction. Look down to find where you can reach out a hand to pull people up. Look up to find a hand reaching down for you. Judge less; give more. Help shape the photography industry so that when it’s explained to outsiders, it makes them smile and wish they were a part of it. ■



LEARN MORE.
Click here or check us out at
youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

3 PERSONALITY TYPES IN THE WORLD OF BUSINESS REFERRALS

with Scott Detweiler

AS ANY GEEK CAN TELL YOU,

the entire world can be broken down and referenced within the confines of the *Star Wars* saga. Therefore, young Padawan, the practice of professional mingling, aka networking, is covered. There are lots of stories about people meeting and finding significant business relationships, but this road is treacherous and filled with people who wield deadly laser swords. Here are the three personality types you will encounter while milling about looking for that ideal relationship.



HAN SOLO

OUT FOR THEMSELVES
TALKS A LOT (ABOUT THEMSELVES)
ANNOYING
EASY TO IDENTIFY

The first is the swashbuckling Han Solo character. He is there to find business for himself and has little to no interest in what you do or what you are saying. He doesn't make much of a secret about it, either. Han won't often let you get a word in edgewise, and if he does, it is just another talking point so he can tell you about himself: "OK, enough about me. Why don't you tell me what you think about me?"

These people are annoying, but luckily they are easy to identify. Most of the Han Solo types are business-to-consumer salespeople who attend business-to-business networking functions. They view the meeting like a wolf stalking a pack of deer. Of course, there are always exceptions, but they are hard to locate amid the sea of people who play this part flawlessly.



DARTH VADER

ONE-SIDED PARTNER
PROMISES A LOT
NEVER DELIVERS

The second type of person you will encounter is similar to Han, but much more common and insidious: Darth Vader. Darth promises much to those who do his bidding. If you help him with his cause, he'll claim the rewards will be beyond your imagination and might even come in the form of uber-valuable exposure.

The problem is that Darth never really keeps his part of the bargain. I once gave five leads to a professional networker in one of the high-power networking groups in my town. He closed four of them, reaping him thousands of dollars in commissions. But in all of his travels over the course of the year, he apparently never came across a company that needed a photo or might be interested in getting better headshots for their business.

Come on, Darth—toss me a bone here, you jerk. Instead, he has now alienated me as a lead generator where such a small amount of effort would have been sufficient to keep me placated. Sure, he might have a close and trusted partnership with another photographer (not like this is a rare business), but it's no less frustrating. This is something we must all deal with at some point, weighing the ramifications of helping someone like this.



LUKE SKYWALKER

ASKS QUESTIONS
LOOKS OUT FOR THEIR NETWORK
SHARES LEADS

The third personality is the fabled Luke Skywalker. Luke watches his own back but also looks out for his friends. He asks additional questions for the benefit of his network. These tidbits of information are unimportant to him, but he knows they may reveal a need outside of his realm.

A great time to ask these questions is in the small talk at the end of the sales call when you are asking polite questions about that enormous fish hanging on the wall: “Hey, great fish. Do you drug-test your employees?” OK, maybe that example sucks, but you get the idea. You can always tell them you just met with a groovy company that does this “great thingy/service” really well, and you thought you would ask a few questions. I do this for my professional recruiter, computer networking partner, logo apparel maker, fish taxidermist and laser-sword maker.

MAY THE LEAD BE WITH YOU

If someone gives me a lead, in my mind, I owe them, and I will do my best to give them something to keep them energized (or at the very least buy them a martini if I cannot produce a lead). Everyone gets something out of this relationship. Now, if I have multiple partners who offer competing services, then I have to weigh the value of the additional eyes on the street and then award the lead where it is most needed. I always try to trade a lead for one given.

The large man in black plastic armor who was formerly my computer networking partner was awarded no fewer than 10 customers from me last year, yet never gave me a single lead. He told me that he is too busy thinking about his own business to remember to ask questions. Of course, I have since given my business to another firm that offered me a lead without knowing my current frustrations. That told me I had found a potential Luke here among the endless galaxy of evildoers.

In the end, it boils down to developing a core group of Luke characters who share freely and trust each other. Keep in mind those questions that can point out potential leads for your partners. Being a good networker isn’t that hard, but it does take patience to find those who use the power of the Force for good and not for evil. ■



Scott is a conceptual portrait photographer based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Along with his original approach to portraiture, he excels at fashion, boudoir and occasionally weddings. When he’s not shooting, Scott turns his studio into a classroom where he holds workshops on subjects like lighting, conceptual work and boudoir.
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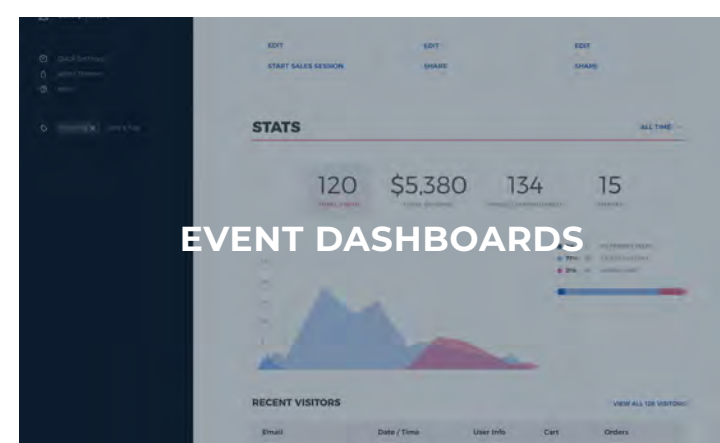
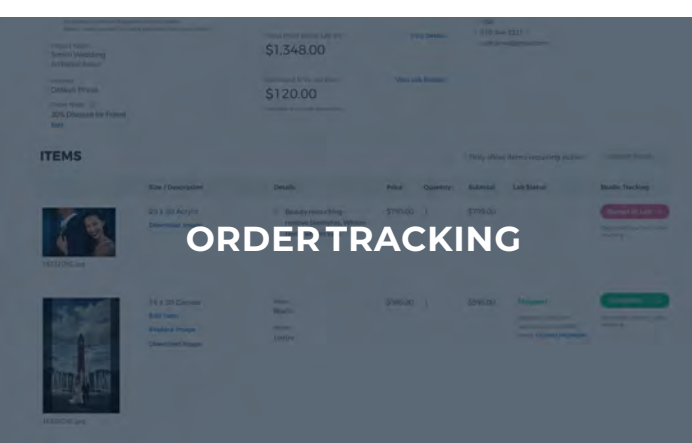
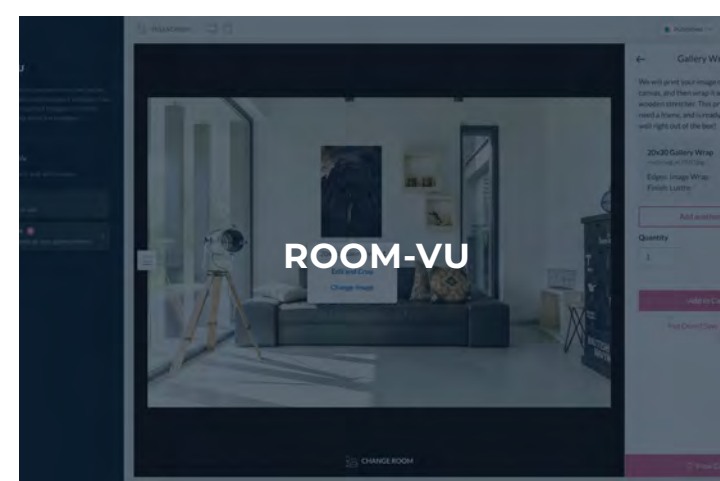
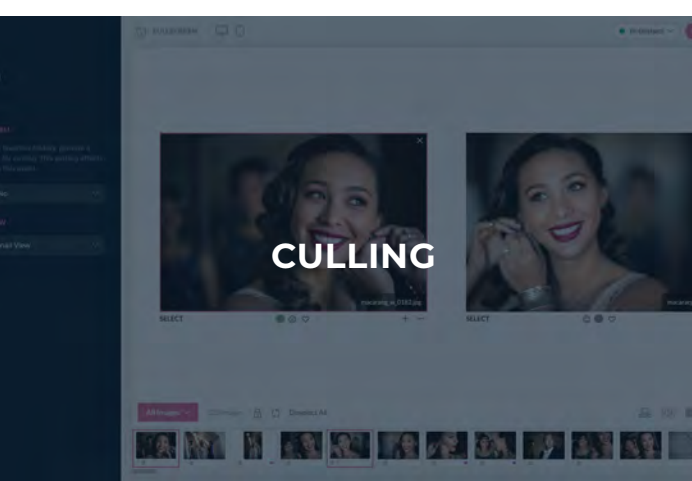
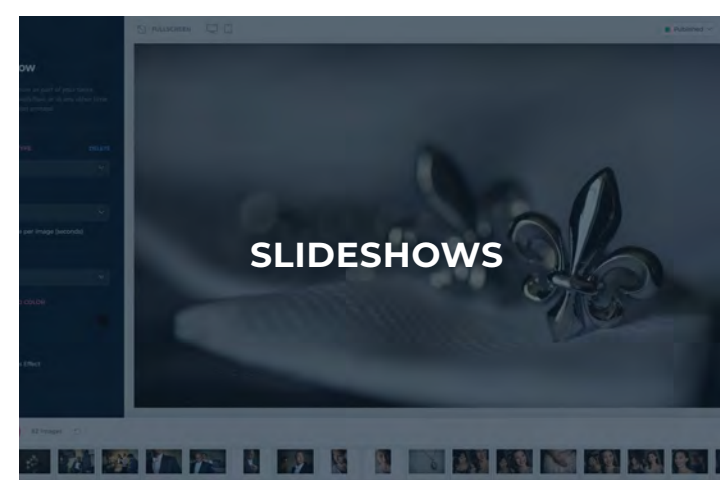
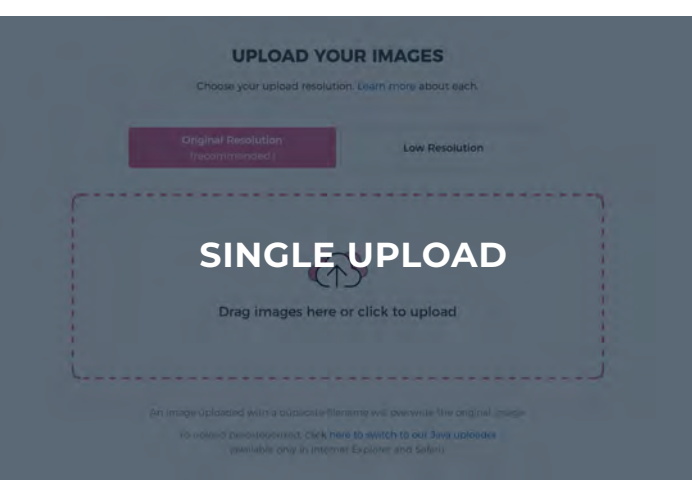
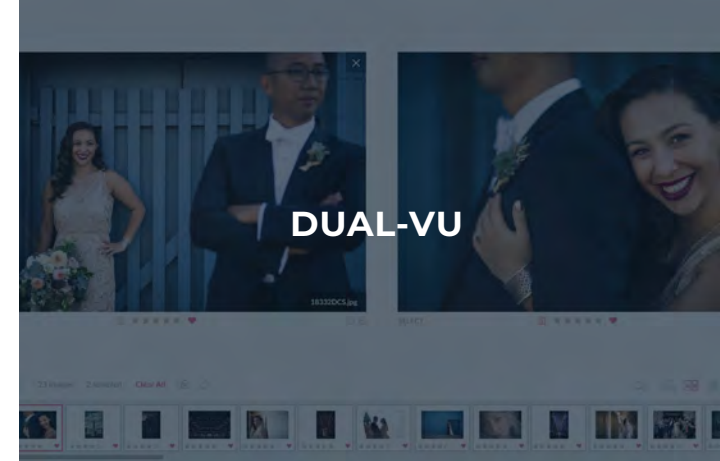
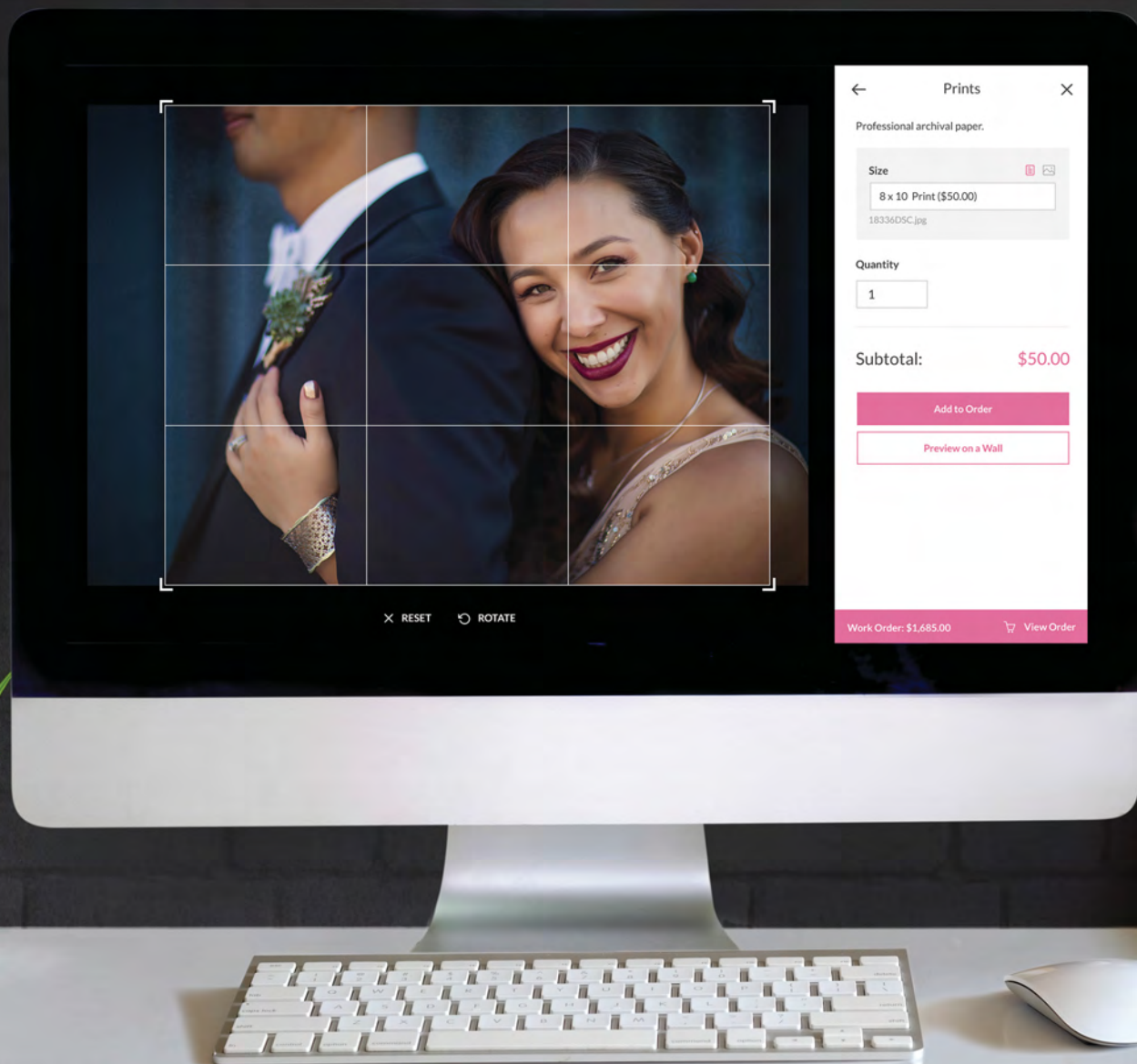
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Black Swan

CREATIVE | FASHION



1st Place | Tim Miller
Gateway Elegance



2nd Place | Casey Dittmer
Desert Diva



3rd Place | Lisa Jones
Lilly

CREATIVE | ILLUSTRATIVE



1st Place | David Byrd
Valkyrie of Vengeance: The Edge of Purpose



2nd Place | David Byrd
Defender of Eternia



3rd Place | Scott Detweiler
Painted Fates

CREATIVE | LANDSCAPE



1st Place | Ben Kopilow
Phoenix



2nd Place | Ryan Brown
Motion in the Ocean



3rd Place | Ryan Brown
Morning Catch

FIRST TIMER | GENERAL



1st Place | Diana Halstead
~Flight~



2nd Place | Danny Dong
The Momement I Am Waiting For



3rd Place | Melissa Kelly
Easy Rider

PHOTOJOURNALISM | NON-WEDDING



1st Place | Ruben Gorjian
Young Cuban fighters



2nd Place | Krzysztof Przybylski
Doctor



3rd Place | Keri Lloyd
Sands of Time

PHOTOJOURNALISM | WEDDING



1st Place | Joey Thomas
My Last Wish



2nd Place | Raph Nogal
Sure, have a seat

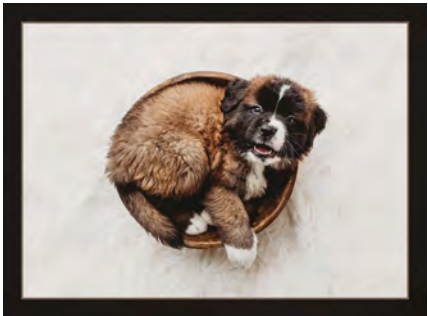


3rd Place | Rocco Ancora
Out of body experience

PORTRAIT | ANIMALS



1st Place | Casey Dittmer
Thor's Treats



2nd Place | Chassey Kallman
Furry Smile



3rd Place | Travis Patenaude
The Hunter and The Hunted

PORTRAIT | BEAUTY



1st Place | Bambi Cantrell Smith
FLOWER POWER



2nd Place | Emmalee Schaumburg
Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder



3rd Place | Michael Anthony
Grace in Motion

PORTRAIT | CHILDREN



1st Place | Emily Robinson
Return to Sender



2nd Place | Danielle Swyear
Silent Night



3rd Place | Betsy Snyder
Dancing with Nature

PORTRAIT | ENGAGEMENT



1st Place | Michael Anthony
Forever with You

PORTRAIT | GROUP OR FAMILY

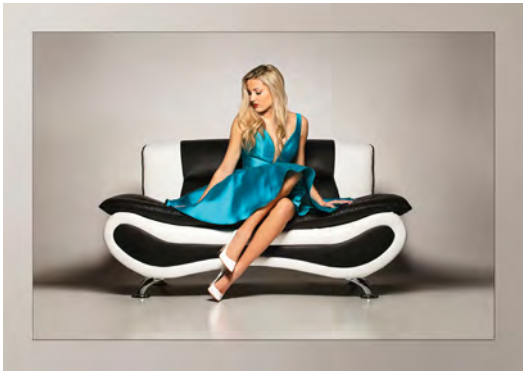


1st Place | David Beckham
Spring Sunset

PORTRAIT | HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS/TEENS



1st Place | Garon Cooper
VIP



2nd Place | David Beckham
Can't Sit Still



3rd Place | Rick Law
With The Greatest of Ease

PORTRAIT | INDIVIDUAL



1st Place | Michael Anthony
Into the Fjord



2nd Place | Dave White
Waiting for a Challenge



3rd Place | Casey Dittmer
Renaissance Woman

PORTRAIT | NEWBORN



1st Place | Dena Howard
Circle of Life



2nd Place | Maya Lay
Flower Child



3rd Place | Erica Stoker
Garden of Eden

WEDDING | BRIDAL PARTY/FRIENDS



1st Place | Neville Simpson
Fathers' Blessing



2nd Place | Rocco Ancora
Untitled



3rd Place | Michael Anthony
Best Day Ever

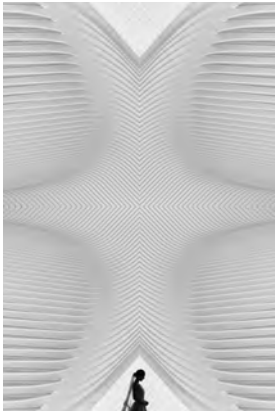
WEDDING | BRIDE OR GROOM ALONE



1st Place | Danny Dong
Here Comes the Bride



2nd Place | Michael Anthony
Reign



3rd Place | Rocco Ancora
Untitled

WEDDING | COUPLE TOGETHER



1st Place | Rocco Ancora
Untitled



2nd Place | Michael Anthony
The Eternal City



3rd Place | Michael Anthony
Waiting for You

WEDDING | DETAILS



1st Place | Rocco Ancora
Untitled



2nd Place | Eileen Blume
If the Ring Fits



3rd Place | Michael Anthony
Hanging on a Wire

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TOP 5 REASONS TO USE ON1 PHOTO RAW 2018 IN YOUR WEDDING WORKFLOW

with **Dustin Lucas**

During wedding season, I need to feel good about my post-production workflow. (1) That starts with ingesting the files from the memory cards stacked on my desk. Then adding keywords and metadata, culling and sorting images, renaming and tagging images, editing, posting to social media, etc. Revitalizing your workflow is a necessary part of being a photographer. This industry is all about adapt or die. You are probably thinking, OK, tell me something I don't already know. I am here to get you back on track for the year.

Those who long for Lightroom like myself but have been looking for a better all-in-one solution need to add ON1 Photo RAW 2018 to their arsenal. Why should you switch this close to wedding season? My answer always comes down to time: the time it takes to finish shooting a job, time to fully process edits, time the client wants their images, time I get with my family, time to sleep. I want to keep my processing time at a minimum without my clients seeing a drop in quality.

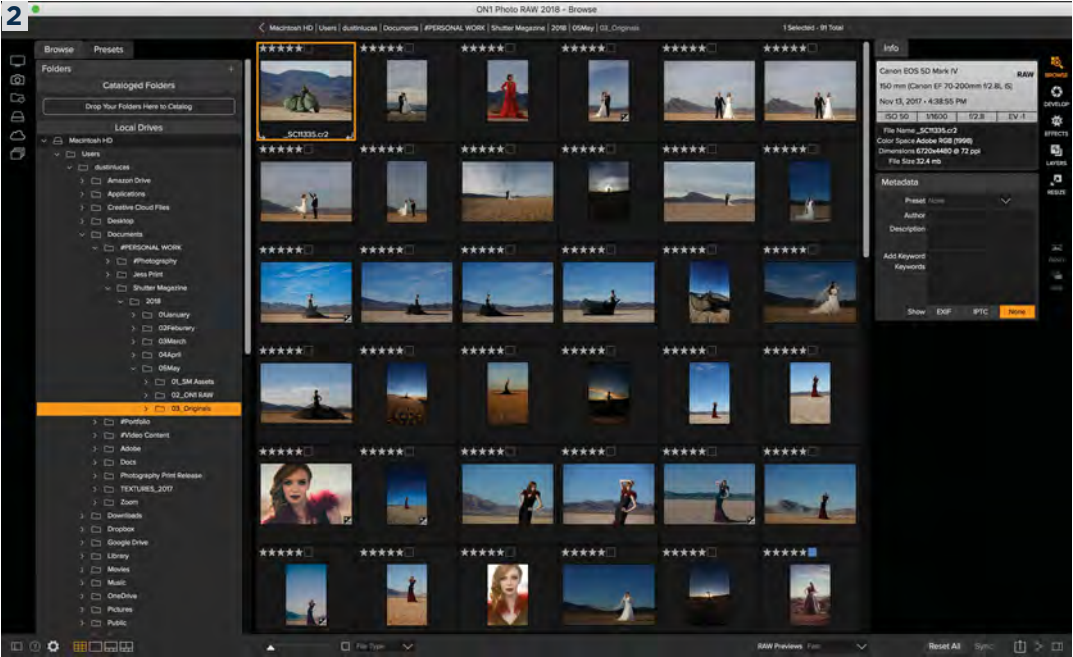
It all starts with gaining back time because I can access my images immediately with ON1 Photo RAW's Browse module.

1



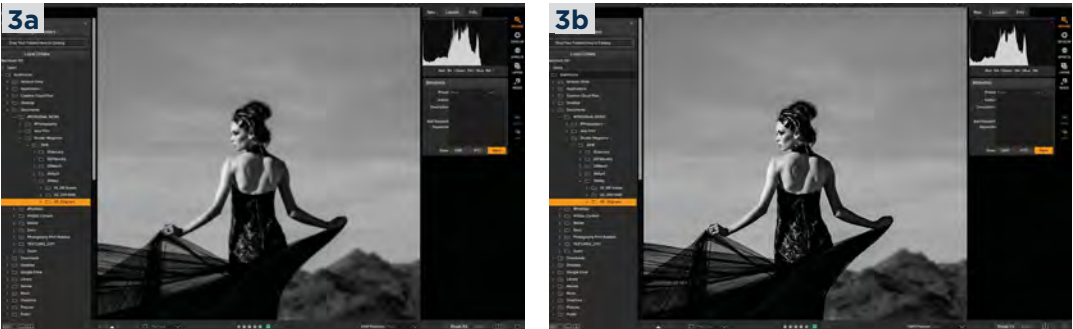
1. IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO YOUR IMAGES WITH BROWSE

Forget about catalogs, sessions or any other file management or Raw processing software that makes you wait for images to import and build previews. ON1 Photo RAW gives you instant access to your files through the Browse module. For those of you who use Photo Mechanic to cull images, this feature will come in handy. You want to see the image, zoom in, tag with five stars and move on. (2)



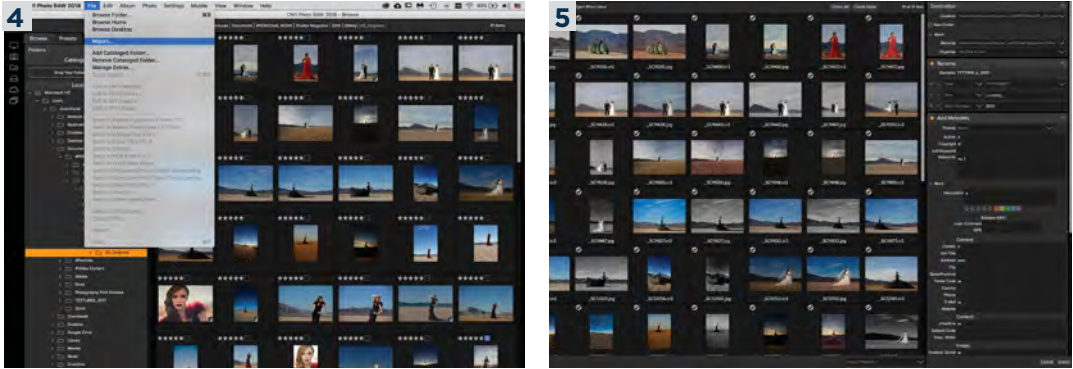
This Browse module removes the lag with large Raw files loading and wait times for previews to render like in Lightroom. One drawback is the ability to prebuild large previews for selecting; this feature in Lightroom would be a much-needed upgrade for a future ON1 Photo RAW version. Not to worry: You can cycle image to image instantly, and a 100% preview loads in less than half a second, even on my laptop. (3ab)

The Browse module makes your photography ready to preview and edit faster than ever before. If you need support for a complete file management workflow and ingesting directly from your memory cards, check out ON1 Photo RAW 2018.1.1.

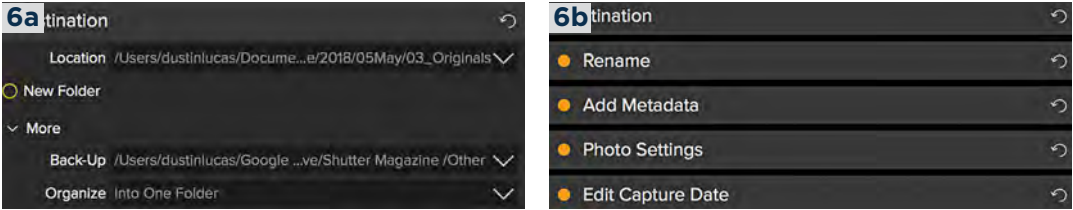


2. BETTER MANAGEMENT FOR YOUR FILES WITH SMART IMPORT

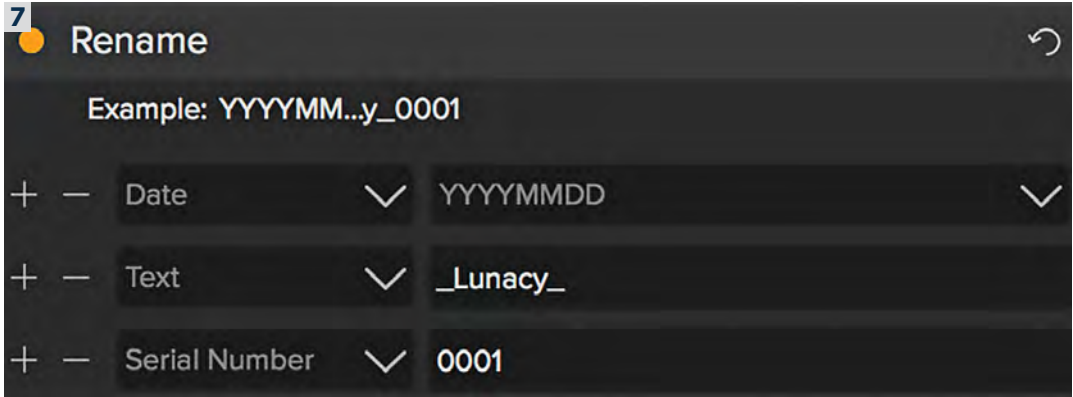
Now with ON1 Photo RAW 2018.1.1, you can import files directly from your memory cards or hard drives into a catalog folder or subfolders to better manage your files. While in the Browse module, you can navigate to the menu bar to File < Import to open the Smart Import dialog box. (4) All the right tools are at your fingertips, customizable to fit your needs. (5)



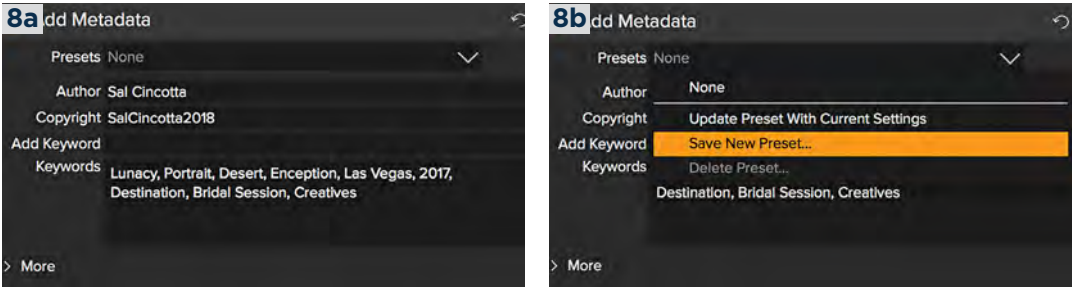
When it comes to importing files, you must set a working and backup destination separately. This is key to a failsafe file management workflow. All the essential options to do this are listed under the Destination panel at the top where file handling should live. (6ab)



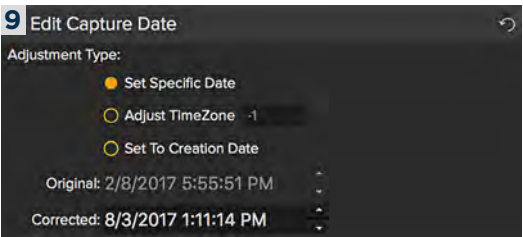
Along with designating where your files save, you can choose to Rename, Add Metadata, Apply Develop Presets or Edit Capture Time. Renaming is something I typically do after culling, but here is an option to quickly ingest and rename all in one fell swoop. (7)



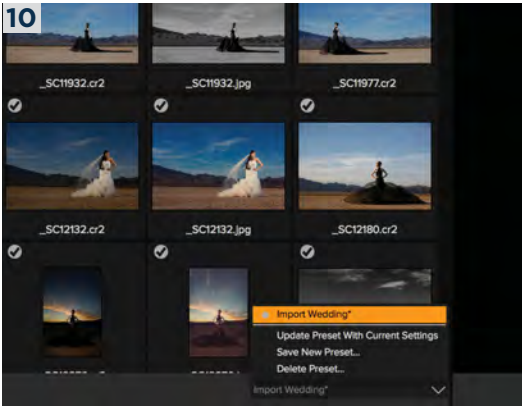
As many of you have grown accustomed to adding metadata to your images like copyright, keywords, tags and personal info, you can quickly fill in the fields you always use and save a preset for later use. I find it very useful when shooting the same locations or types of events to quickly apply a metadata preset to all images when importing. Along with metadata presets, you can choose develop presets from the Photo Settings panel. (8ab)



I can also change the Capture Time immediately to get my images properly ordered during import. This option allows you to set a specific date, adjust for time zone changes and set creation date. Much like renaming, this feature becomes useful while culling images between multiple cameras. Being able to sort by Capture Time while browsing images is crucial to choosing the best shot between all cameras through the entire wedding day. (9)

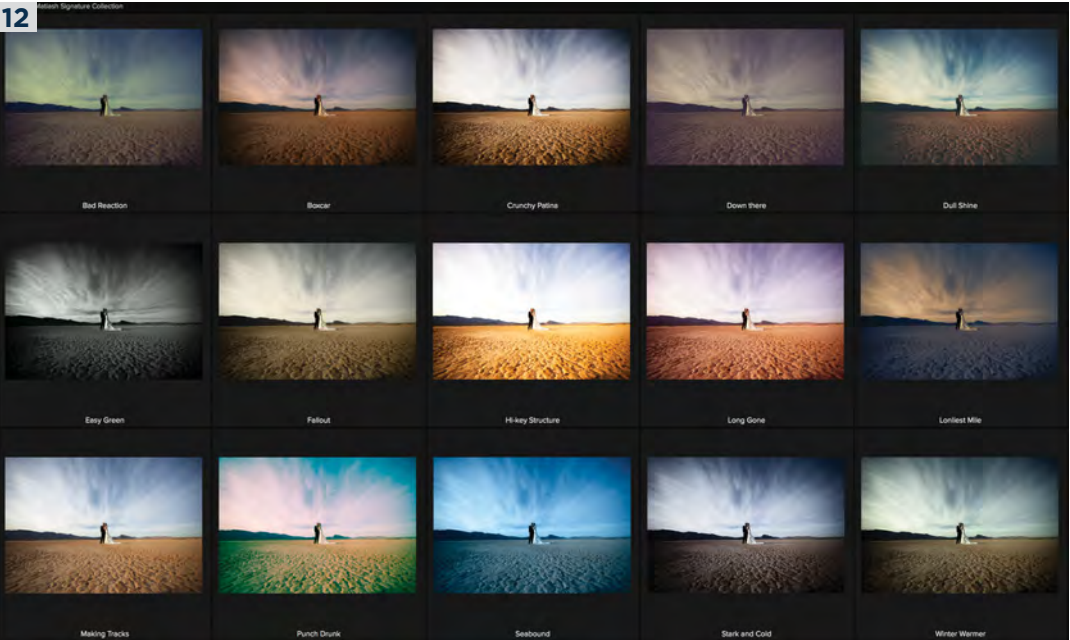
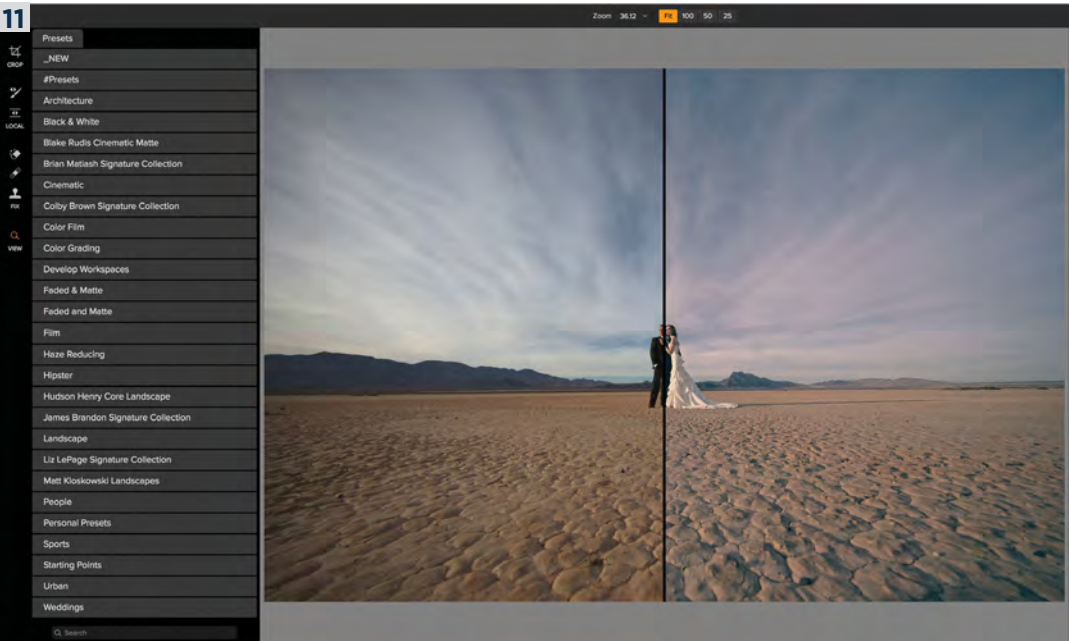


Another massive time saver is the Import Preset option at the bottom of the Import module. This allows you to globally apply all your latest settings for destination, backup, renaming protocol, metadata, develop presets and edit capture time. Once you set universal metadata and settings for every photo you take, this can be a game changer for you. This feature will make things even easier when you enter Browse and Develop later. (10)



3. SIMPLIFY YOUR EDITING WITH DEVELOP AND EFFECTS PRESETS

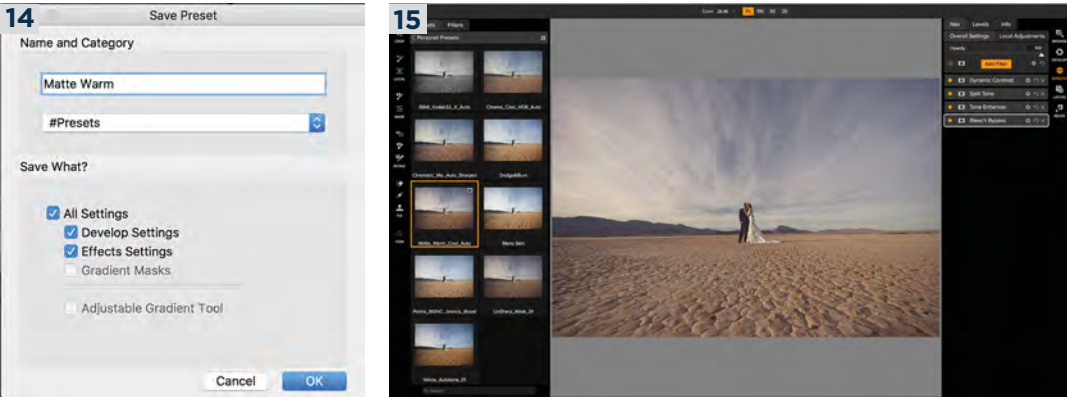
Like many Lightroom users, I rely heavily on presets to squeeze out as much efficiency as possible for thousands of images. Custom building a develop preset is a great way to do this because you can apply starting settings to all images to begin editing them to a more color-corrected proof level. (11) You can also apply more creative toning effects by saving Develop and Effects. Unlike auto features, which I steer away from because they tend to edit for the histogram, presets can start your images on the right path. (12)



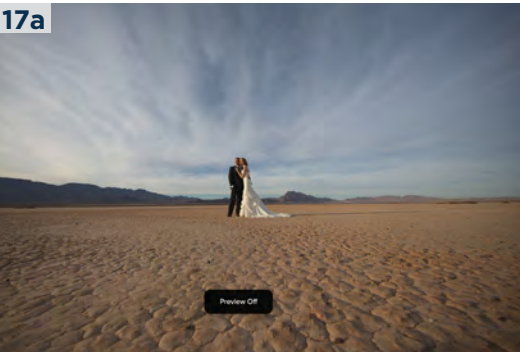
Creating presets could not be easier to set up than applying a few tonal filters like curves, contrast, black-and-white point and structure, tweaking the settings to a medium amount and clicking the save preset button. You can choose to keep Develop and Effects adjustments depending on what settings you’ve applied. These presets can range from simple basic import settings to images that push the envelope. It’s all up to your taste and style. (13)



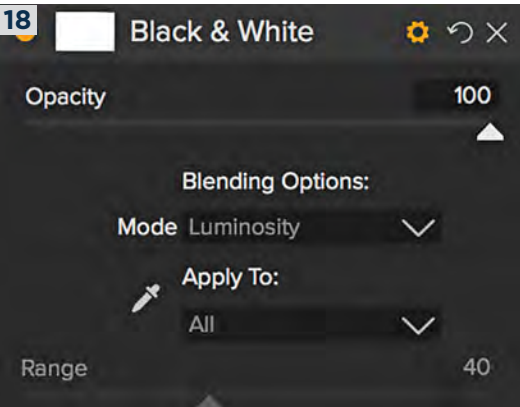
What I really like about ON1 Photo RAW 2018 is its ability to incorporate the Effects filters because there is so much you can do with any image. (14) For example, I create a simple Matte Warm filter by applying these filters. In the Develop module, I like to add +10 to black point and –10 to whites to flatten the image a touch. Occasionally I drop the contrast slider 10 or 15 points to even out the tonality of the image. For images where the subject is full body or farther from the camera, I throw in some structure for some bite. Turning on some sharpening and lens correction adds a light touch for a more polished image. Now we can dive into some useful Effects filters. (15)



I tend to use the Vintage filter to apply a color tone to the image while simultaneously desaturating and adding grain if I feel the need to push a gritty style. Then I add another Sharpening filter to push the High Pass look to bring attention to the details. (16) With Tone Enhancer, I can control the heavy tonal range, incorporating the basic develop module settings along with a curves option. This becomes increasingly useful for a standardized level of matte tone and adjusting the specific image in Develop. Now we have a nice warming matte-toned preset ready to save. (17ab)



It’s simple to build off of this and make a black-and-white preset. Add a black-and-white Effects filter and toggle through the different prebuilt options. I love ON1 Photo RAW’s ability to see these options in real time on my image before I click to choose. This saves me time choosing the right fit. Another toning trick is to apply a black-and-white filter and change the blending mode to Luminosity, which can add a simple shift in the image. The time you take to experiment and build presets, the better off you’ll be when it comes to editing large batches of images efficiently. (18)

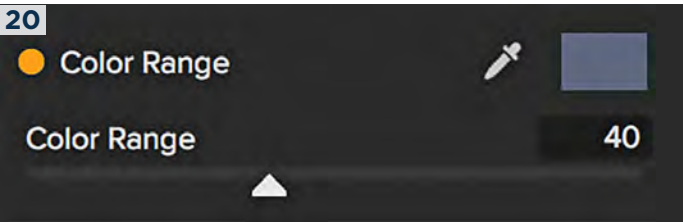


4. IT’S ALL IN THE DETAILS WITH MASKING

Whether you are working with Develop local adjustments or Effects filters, you will want to use masking to your advantage. With Local Adjustments, you can easily push the vibrance and details of the sky, and mask out the person and ground even easier than with the Adjustable Gradient tool. Using the gradient requires you to paint out the subject from the mask. Instead, we can double-click the mask to see the different options below. (19)



Color Range is the perfect option for this because the sky is typically blue, so we can select this color to determine our mask’s range. (20)



You’ll notice the ground is picking up these blue tones as well, and if your subject is wearing something with a similar color, you’ll have to manually paint them out. Now we can click the View Mask button to see how to eliminate the unwanted areas. (21)



Use the Color Range slider first; it has the greatest control, and when we slide it to the left, you’ll see more of the image fall into black, meaning it will be masked out. As we settle with 20, you’ll notice a very distracting halo where the sky and mountains meet. (22)



It's helpful to understand the Mask tools when we need to feather our mask to remove harsh edges. We can pull out the darker tones by sliding the farthest to the left under levels. This tool allows you to limit the shadows and midtones and highlight tonal ranges in the mask. Now we are ready to apply a prebuild setting like detail, HDR or even a customized preset. (23)



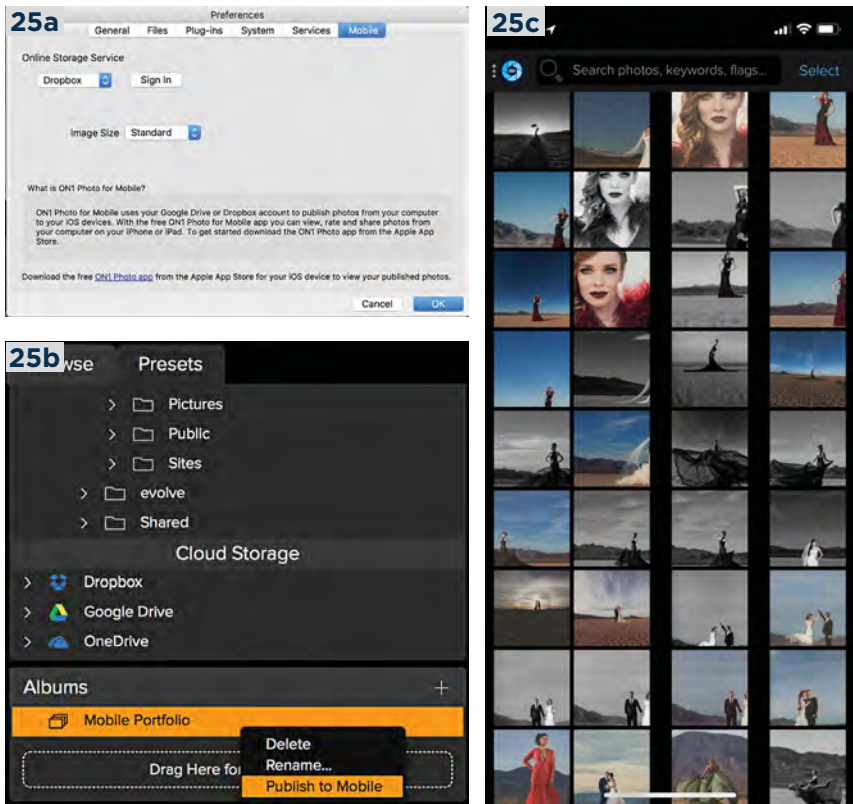
The same goes for Effects filters. You can dial in the details and keep the skin tones smooth. I like to add the Skin Retouching effect and use a combination of Skin Color Range and Mask Color Range to quickly isolate the skin tones. Of course, you will get only so far with the sliders and need to paint out the other areas. Take some time to learn the masking tools so you can quickly navigate to the best tool for the job. (24)



5. CONSTANT ACCESS TO YOUR IMAGES WITH ON1 PHOTO FOR MOBILE

I am not a versatile photographer in the mobile market, nor am I overly proficient with social media marketing. The lack of social media postings and mobility is tied to imagery or a lack thereof. If you have content you love, nothing's stopping you from posting highlights from every event you shoot as a teaser for your client, or just getting new portfolio shots on your website, blog and Instagram.

ON1 Photo for Mobile gives you full syncability with your images on your computer and mobile devices. This allows you to rate, tag and edit photos in real time whenever and wherever you want. For many of us, life gets in the way of work, and that's OK because you can cull on your iPad. These tags and ratings will sync to your ON1 account. I can't do that; I have to edit with headphones on and stick to the script. (25abc)



THE RESULTS

When it’s wedding season, you’ve got to deliver images to your clients as quickly as possible. Saving a fraction of a second per image could mean the difference between wrapping up a wedding in two hours rather than four. That is huge. ■



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

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FIVE WAYS TO UP

YOUR WEDDING GAME

with Sal Cincotta





Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

I love wedding photography. It is my passion. Every week, every month, every year, there are new couples getting married who want us to document their big day. In the United States, there are over 2 million weddings a year. There’s no shortage of opportunities for you to get started in or expand your wedding business. The real question is, how do you up your game and charge a premium for your services? How do you and your studio stand out from the never-ending barrage of competitors in your market?

Here are some tips and tricks to getting the attention of couples and standing out from the crowd. Anything you can do to maintain an edge will translate into happier clients and bigger sales.

Over my career, I have watched trends come and go, and that likely won’t change. One thing I have learned, however, is that there is a formula to a successful wedding day.

Here’s what I do to make sure my couples are happy and that I’m building a portfolio of work that will lead more clients to my doorstep.

The Beauty Portrait

I have never met a bride who didn’t want to be beautiful on her wedding day. This is their day. Our job is to capture that beauty no matter where we are. Ugly hotel room or not, you’d better leave that scene with a beauty shot of the bride.

Earlier in my career, I would always forget this shot. I don’t know why, but I did. I would push it off till later in the day during creatives. One problem is that at that point, the bride’s makeup is not as fresh—and in St. Louis, where we are based, the heat index in the summer is north of triple digits.

Your best bet is to take these images when you are with the bride and she is fresh and ready to go, preferably in a nice temperature-controlled room. I use window light, flash, constant lights—whatever I need to get a great portrait. Usually, this is shot with an 85mm lens and lighting that is somewhat flat to evenly light the skin.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

The Badass Groom

All too often, photographers tend to pay very little attention to the groom, or most of the shots are of him and his boys being goofy. I find that while this may showcase the flow of the day, very rarely do the bride and groom order large prints of these to hang in their home or for their albums.

Think about how the images will be used. The mother of the groom wants something showcasing her baby boy for her desk at work. The bride wants the same thing. You know what they don’t want? The groom shotgunning a beer with his boys.

For the groom, I like to take more chances where I can, maybe some directional light or a lower angle. And of course, the pose should be masculine: arms crossed, mean muggin’ and looking away from camera. This becomes their hero shot. Every bride wants to be beautiful and most grooms want to be a badass.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



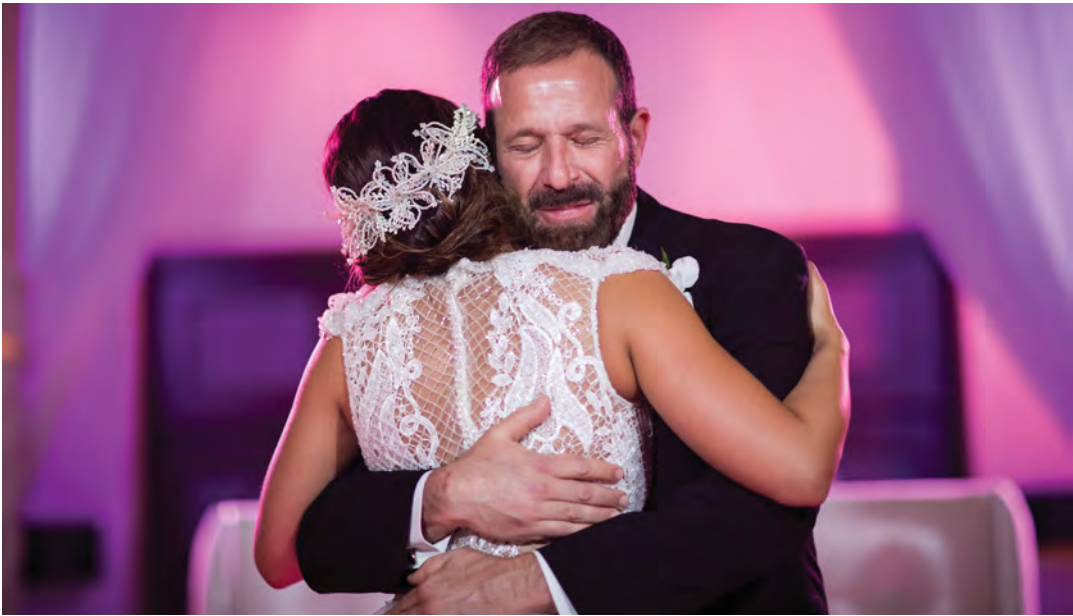
Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Find Emotion

There is emotion throughout the wedding day. That emotion gives you the perfect blend of coverage. Mind you, I am not a photojournalist. Those guys are like ninjas looking for and anticipating the shot. If you are like me, you get caught up in the moments, as a spectator. I often find myself laughing and then thinking, shit, I should have taken a picture of that! Or am I the only one that happens to?

The point is, we have to realize we are part of a special event and we should be looking for moments throughout the day where people are laughing, crying, yelling or otherwise just letting their guard down.

This is not something I am able to do myself. I rely on Alissa, my second shooter, to anticipate those moments while I am busy talking with clients and setting up my next shot. This tag-team approach works well for us, ensuring we capture lots of candid moments throughout the day. While clients love these images and put them in their albums, they very rarely enlarge them for wall portraits. Let’s look at that next.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography





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The Signature Shot

This is my bread and butter. You go to my website, you go to bridal shows, and this is what you see. This is what draws people into my studio. And this is what people spend money on. So you’d better believe this is something I spend a lot of time crafting on the wedding day.

Think cinematic. Think Hollywood movie. Think fantasy. This is that one shot people will put on their walls and look at for years and generations to come. Make time for this shot, and nail it. This is a defining shot for our studio. This is what represents our brand.

This shot should look a little surreal. The pose and lighting should be dramatic. You want to create something for them that looks and feels like effort was put into it, not like a shot one of their friends could pull off.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

The Final Shot

This is something new for me. I just started this in 2018, and so far the results have been incredible. By the end of the night, you are exhausted and you get a little lazy. We have all been there. Dancing pictures, cake cut, flower toss, check, check, check, good night. This year, I wanted to shake that mindset and force myself to do something more creative, a sort of sign-off-for-the-night type of shot. Maybe it's the closing shot of their album.

Spend a little time while everyone is eating dinner to scope out the venue. After all, they chose the venue for a reason. Not only will the couple love the shot, but the venue will love it as well.

We are only at the start of wedding season, and this strategy has been paying dividends significantly, with two new venues adding us to their preferred vendor list once they saw our images. ■



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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product
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with *Salvatore Cincotta*



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Something we have to be thinking about at all times is how we can differentiate our brands from the competition. What unique products can we offer that people are willing to spend money on? This is that product. I added this sleek wood photo presentation set to our product offerings recently, and the client response has ensured it remains on my price list.

I like to print my own fine-art prints, which gives me complete control and is something I can do quickly and inexpensively. The boxes come with slip-in mats, making it simple and easy to add your clients’ images to deliver along with your digital images. It provides the perfect blended product for your clients: You are putting something tangible in their hands while giving them those digital files they crave. And best of all, it’s completely branded to you and your studio.

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OCE

for the

**NATURAL-LIGHT
PHOTOGRAHER**

with Christine Yodsukar



Image © Christine Yodsukar

There are some insanely stunning portfolios by self-proclaimed “natural-light wedding photographers,” but what happens when the reception rolls around and the only light available is from the tungsten uplights lining the ballroom walls? And what happens when the sun goes down and your couple’s portraits are scheduled for after dark?

Not only is off-camera flash an invaluable tool for any wedding photographer, but done right, no one will notice you used artificial light. Your photos can still be bright and beautiful. Here’s how we used this amazing tool in our own luxury wedding photography business, which has taken us all around the states photographing some of the most stunning weddings.



Image © Christine Yodsukar

WHAT IS NATURAL LIGHT?

First things first, what does being a natural-light wedding photographer actually mean? This is someone who uses only available light, like the sun, to photograph couples. Popular natural-light education tells us to put the sun behind our subject and expose for the face. This can lead to a style of photography referred to as “bright and airy.”

It is beautiful. It can, however, limit the photographer, and when we have clients paying us to deliver on the most special day of their lives, we can’t knock it out of the park only until the sun goes down. We must master all kinds of lighting in any scenario and be able to deliver anytime, anywhere.

OFF-CAMERA FLASH BASICS

If you've seen or read any of my content on lighting, you know I like to keep things simple. It starts with an understanding of the basics of off-camera flash.

At its most basic, there are two types of portrait lighting: the keylight and hair light. Your keylight lights your subject's face or the part of your subject you want the viewer's eye to go to. When a natural-light photographer puts the sun behind the subject's head and exposes for the face, this is not keylight. With OCF, you place a light on a stand somewhere in front of your subject.

Your hair light separates your subject from the background. This is what natural-light photographers create when they put the sun behind their subject. Though it's not always necessary, the hair light can add so much depth to your photograph, and you can create it relatively easily.

MY GEAR

Now that you understand the basics of portrait lighting, you need to know what gear to add to your bag. You will need either a speedlight or a studio strobe, a trigger to send the light's signal to your camera and a receiver.

A speedlight is a compact flash that fits into the hotshoe on top of your camera. It can also be placed on a light stand off camera. Be careful when choosing your speedlight, because some are not powerful enough to overpower the sun, which is very important. Studio strobes are more powerful lights that are bigger and require a battery pack or can be plugged in. Some strobes have the battery pack built in, while others have it as a separate piece. If you are just getting started, use a speedlight whenever you can, because it is generally smaller and easier to use, especially if you are working alone.

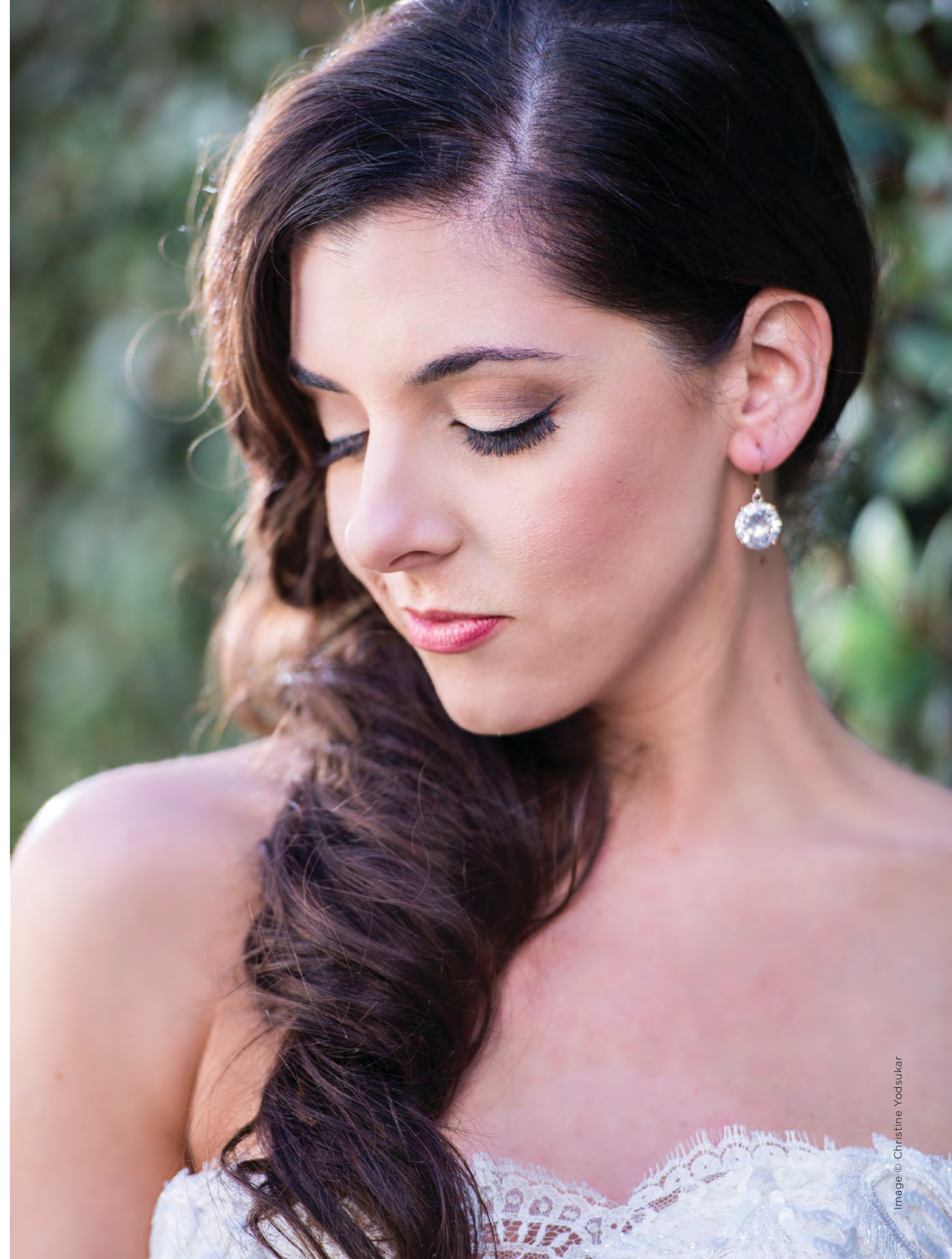




Image © Christine Yodsukar

MAKING OCF LOOK NATURAL

I love creating photographs that look like I used only natural light, when in fact I used off-camera flash. The first step is choosing the location. For an outdoor photograph, I look at the scenery around me and pick a spot that looks like a nice frame around my couple or that is just jaw-dropping. For indoor photographs, I look for ambient light that I can use to frame my couple, like lamps and sconces, or beautiful stained-glass windows.

GET YOUR EXPOSURE

Next up, I find my correct exposure. Unlike the way a natural-light photographer exposes for the face, I expose my outdoor photos for the sky. Point your camera into the sky and get the correct exposure by adjusting your ISO and F-stop. Because you are using artificial light, your shutter speed can only go to a finite setting determined by your specific camera, generally in the 1/200 to 1/250 range. For indoor portraits, I expose for the ambient light.



Images © Christine Yodsukar

START WITH THE HAIR LIGHT

Normally, the hair light is not the first light to be added to a photograph. But when you are using the sun as your hair light, you want to find the perfect spot to achieve that halo-like glowing hair. After I find my location and get my exposure, I place my clients with their back to the sun, making sure the sun is falling on their head and back. This separates them from the background for that natural-light look.

ADD YOUR KEYLIGHT

My keylight is the first light I add to my portrait. I position it 45 degrees in front of my couple. This shapes the body in a beautiful and flattering way, and gives me definition. If you want a more dramatic look, drop your ISO and bring your light farther to the side of your subject to darken your background more. This creates more of a contrast between the ambient light and the OCF, and the dramatic angle of the lighting gives a whole new feeling to your images.

MAKE THE SUN

If you are in a situation where you are technically in daylight but you have no sun to use as a hair light, you can create your own beautiful sunlight with OCF. Place a second light behind your couple and out of your frame. For a midday look, place your light as high as possible pointing down. For a sunset look, place the light on a level closer to the subject’s height so the light comes at them from the same angle a sunset would. When recreating the sun, place an orange CTO gel on your light to give it that warm, sunny hue.



INDOOR AND NIGHTTIME HAIR LIGHT

Using a hair light indoors can be a stunning way to seperate your couple from the background and to also add depth to your portrait. You can use the same technique as the sun you created by placing the light out of frame, but you can also place the light directly behind your subject. This illuminates their whole bodies, creating a magical portrait.





RECEPTIONS

Last but not least, use OCF to your advantage during receptions. Even though our “stage” is much larger than it is when we shoot portraits, we still use the exact same lighting techniques. The only difference is that we place our lighting strategically in the ballroom so we can use it to capture the special dances, toasts and cake cutting with no need to adjust. Place two lights at opposite corners of the dancefloor or ballroom, facing one another and crossing over the center of the dancefloor. With this placement, each light will act as either a keylight or a hair light, depending on your positioning.

Image © Christine Yodsukar



RECEPTION DETAILS

Once you have photographing people down, you will be a rock star when it comes time to shoot the reception details. You can use one light, your keylight, the same way you did to photograph portraits. Place the light at 45 degrees in front of the detail for every single piece. If you want to create softer light, move your light source closer to the detail, and if you want harsher light, move the light source farther away.

Off-camera flash can be a daunting tool to use, but with a little practice, you can achieve any look you desire, even that of natural light. ■



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

When I started my photography business five years ago, I poured all my time and money into educating myself on the ergonomics of the camera, learning and practicing the basics of exposure, composition, lighting, posing, etc. We need to know all these things as a foundation for creating high-quality, aesthetically pleasing images.

I used this basic skill set as a jumping-off point for starting my career and defining my identity and style in the wedding photography market. Like most of us, I started out practicing with models, working to create beautiful and creative wedding-themed portraits, with a focus on composition, posing and lighting until I had a portfolio to show. As my style evolved, so did my primary focus.

I soon noticed my work lacked one key element: emotion. I was happy with how my images looked, but just wasn't thrilled about how they made me feel. There was no "moment."

I didn't want to just be a portrait photographer who happened to be at a wedding. I wanted to be a storyteller who captures the essence of people to tell the story of who they are in this time of their lives in an emotionally impactful way. Only recently have I evolved my approach from just finding the perfect light and artistic, beautiful compositions; now I find or create environments where authentic moments can take place.

Through research and practice, I have developed a handful of methods to achieve emotional impact in my work.



Image © Brian MacStay



Images © Brian MacStay

DEVELOP A RAPPORT

Get to know your clients and their families intimately. The more comfortable they feel with you, the more they will allow you into their personal space where those emotional moments happen.

Get as much face time with your clients and their family as you can. My best work comes from weddings where I have done an engagement shoot with my couple before the wedding. I include these shoots with all of my wedding collections for a good reason. The time with them is invaluable for socializing, getting to know them—and, most importantly, gaining their trust. This trust is what will get me access to the heartwarming moments and stories I want to tell on their wedding day.

Image © Brian MacStay

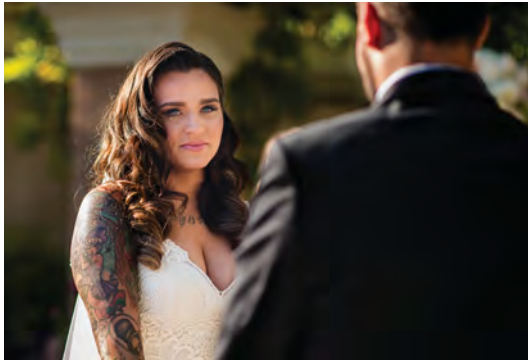


MAKE THE MOMENTS HAPPEN

My engagement sessions and time alone with the couple during their wedding day is my opportunity to encourage them to bring out their genuine emotions that showcase the best of their personalities. Two things work best for almost any couple. Point out that this is obviously an uncomfortable process (especially initially), and then, yes, put them in an uncomfortable situation and laugh about it with them.

Most people have never done a photo shoot before. They don't know what to do or how to act in front of a camera. If you haven't done it yourself, try it. It's intimidating! The best thing to do is acknowledge that they aren't alone in feeling uncomfortable, but do it in a fun and humorous way. I tell my couples that I know it's weird and awkward that the two of them are kissing or cuddling with a big bald guy taking pictures of them in a random field on the side of the road while people are walking and driving by. We have a good laugh about it, and everyone's guard comes down.

Once we have relaxed and had a bit of a laugh, face them toward each other and tell them to get their faces almost touching. Ask them to do something such as rub noses like cats or bump hips like they are bumping each other over. It's not the silly action or uncomfortable thing you are looking to photograph—what you want are their reactions and laughter at the ridiculousness of what they are being asked to do. Let's face it: Uncomfortable laughter between two people whose faces are mashed together looks like love. It just does.



Images © Brian MacStay

ANTICIPATE THE MOMENT

I know it's cliché to say “shoot from the heart,” but that really is a great way to anticipate a poignant or memorable moment that's about to take place. Once you have been a photographer long enough, you can anticipate when moments are about to take place. We know they are going to kiss after they say, “I do.” They are going to turn around and face their guests after the ceremony. The bride's mom is going to be emotive when you ask to take a photo with her daughter right after she is done getting into her wedding dress. Listen intently to conversations taking place around you. Be quiet, be ready and be close.

GET CLOSE AND GO WIDE

Robert Capa, a famous wartime photographer who founded Magnum Photos in 1947, once said, “If your photographs aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough.” I took that to heart, swapped out my 70–200mm for my 24mm or 35mm, and practiced getting close—really close. If you don’t have the benefit of isolation from the compression of a long lens, you need to get a lot closer to eliminate any surrounding distractions to the moment you are trying to isolate.

I love how emotional an image feels when I have captured it from only a couple of feet away with a wide-angle lens. These shots give me a sense of presence, a sense that I was actually there, that I was a part of it.

Don’t be shy. Take advantage of the rapport you’ve built with your clients to be up close and personal with them during their most tender moments. They will thank you for it later.



Images © Brian MacStay



Image © Brian MacStay

BE SMALL, INVISIBLE

In order to get close, you need to get small or disappear altogether.

I’ve been told I am a fairly intimidating presence when people first meet me. I am, after all, a big bald guy wearing black with a camera strap that looks like a gun holster. (Yes, Hold Fast makes not only great camera straps, but great conversation starters.) Despite this, I have learned to make myself unobtrusive.

I use two techniques for disappearing in front of people and being able to shoot them from a couple of feet away without them even noticing.

HOW TO DISAPPEAR (ALMOST) COMPLETELY

First, don’t hunt for moments. Wait for them. Charging at people with a camera only causes them to be that stiff, wide-eyed person who is now thinking about how they are going to look in a photograph instead of being present in the moment.

Second, find a way to disappear yet still be present. Try this technique at your next wedding. It works. Don’t be the photographer for a moment. Just be a silent presence. Find a group of people having a good time. Maybe someone is telling a joke. Walk up to the group with your cameras down at your side. Smile at everyone, let them acknowledge you are there. Someone may even engage you in conversation. Wait a couple of beats as they all go back to the joke. Then start shooting.

Most people will not notice you are there anymore. You are free to capture the moments taking place from close up. Obviously they know you are the photographer, but they see you aren’t a “threat.” Once you walk up and establish your presence, everyone goes back to what they were doing. So, shoot on!

SHOOT LONG TO ISOLATE THE MOMENT

Sometimes getting close is not an option or the best solution for capturing the moment. A long lens can be a great tool for reaching across a dancefloor or down the aisle during a church ceremony, where being close would be too much of a distraction. Sometimes it's best to use a long lens when you want to compress a scene and need to eliminate all other distracting elements, taking away from your ability to be in the moment when viewing the photograph.

REMOVE THE COLOR

Another method for maximizing the emotional impact of your images is to remove distracting elements that take away from the moment, such as color. Color can be part of telling the story in an image, but it can also be a distraction in certain circumstances.

There is an image I love of the father of the bride hugging the father of the groom after their two children just got married. One of them is crying. Next to them is a giant orange construction pylon. In color, it's distracting and takes your eyes away from the moment. In black and white it disappears, and the focus is now on the emotional moment.

Other distractions from your moment might be colorful cars in the background or busy, loud clothing — anything that can take the focus away from the emotional impact of your image. This isn't true for all emotionally impactful images, but if color doesn't help tell the story of the photo, you may consider removing it altogether.





Image © Brian MacStay

I love the challenge of creating emotionally expressive moments at weddings and engagement shoots. The challenge keeps me moving, sharp and emotionally involved with my clients and the people they love.

Delivering these moments to them, and showing future potential clients these emotional images (not just beautiful portraits), helps sell you as a well-rounded storyteller. Anytime you can evoke an emotion when someone looks at your images is another step toward setting you apart from your competition. In a world where everyone with a camera and a website is a photographer, we can use any edge we can get. ■



Brian MacStay spent the first part of his carrier as a marketing consultant managing multimillion-dollar books for Fortune 500 insurance companies in California and Colorado. Today, he and his wife and three kids live in the San Francisco Bay Area, where Brian runs a thriving, award-winning wedding and event photography studio.
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WEDDINGS
— IN A —
\$ 2 0 0 0
MARKET

with Jeff & Lori Poole

Image © Indigosilver studio



“I can’t charge *that* in my market.”

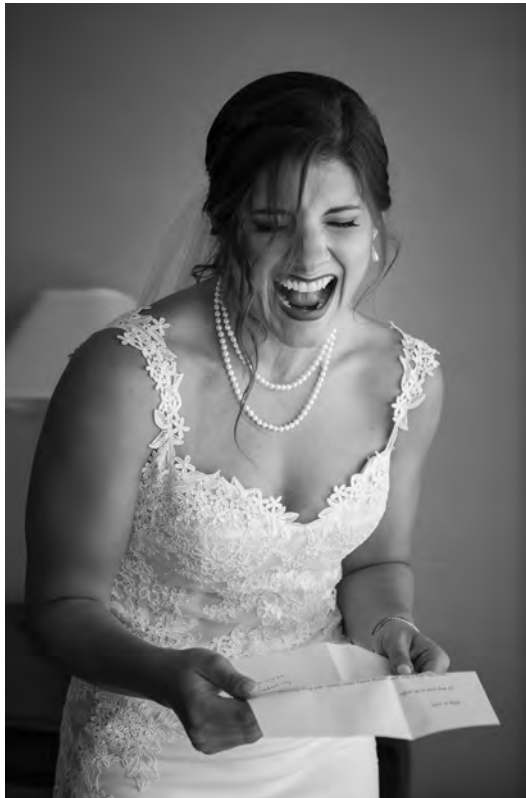
We hear that a lot. Jeff and I coach photographers on pricing for profit, and the most common objection we get is that the market will not allow photographers to price themselves appropriately. Many photographers struggle to make ends meet in a market where prices are low and competition is fierce.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The photography market has changed drastically in the past decade. Digital has lowered the barrier to entry, and many of us (Jeff and I included) jumped into photography because we liked to create. Most of us did not become photographers because we wanted to run a business per se. So we learned to shoot, light and pose, and in so doing, we’ve created an entire generation of business owners who don’t know how to run a business. We priced ourselves low, telling ourselves we’d raise our prices later. And the next photographers priced themselves lower.

In many markets, wedding photography has become a commodity. A commodity is an item or service for which the market will accept only a specific price. Most of us know the current price of a gallon of gas, and we would not go to a gas station that charges a dollar more per gallon, no matter how much better the station claims their gas is. Quality is perceived to be the same, and the distinguishing factor is price alone.

If the market accepts only a certain price and that price is not profitable, how do we succeed?



Images © Indigosilver studio

STEP 1: EVALUATE YOUR MARKET

It’s important to understand your market. Don’t just assume you know what people are willing to pay. Do your research. What does The Knot say people should pay in your area? (It’s usually low.) What are your competitors charging? When clients turn you down for price, what price were they willing to accept?

Hint: Ask them.

What ads are your potential clients seeing? Equally important, what are clients receiving for that price? In our market, the average wedding photographer charges \$1,500 to \$2,500 for wedding day coverage and files with print release. In other markets, the prices may be higher or lower, files may or may not be included, and other services or products may be standard.

It’s also crucial to understand whether you are even in a commodity market. There are still many markets where cheapest is not best. In Southern California and New York City, for example, photographers are not taken seriously if their prices are not high enough.

What is the standard in your market?

STEP 2: CREATE AN ENTRY COMMISSION BASED ON COMMODITY PRICING

As we mentioned above, the commodity price in our market is roughly \$2,000 for coverage and files. As a strategic starting point, we have chosen coverage and files to be valued at \$2,900. We are a bit higher than average, but still with a starting price in the \$2,000s. Psychologically, we are in the \$2,000 bracket. We include six hours of coverage with one photographer and digital files that are printable up to 8x10.

There are limits to what we offer: It is not all-day coverage, it’s not two photographers and it’s not full-resolution files. We essentially offer the bare minimum that the commodity pricing requires, with some value-added incentives that cost us little. This gives us room to upsell later.

In their first round of photographer shopping, most couples ask about price. They want to know if they are barking up the right tree before committing to a consultation. The entry-level price helps you get through the first round, ensuring that you do not scare them away with a high entry price. This is the “foot in the door” technique.

wedding day coverage

coverage options



every commission includes

- wedding registry
- online hosting with shopping cart for 60 days
- discounted gift prints (from the wedding day)
- custom usb with keepsake box
- digital files with printing rights up to 8x10



associate commission
(with Chris or Fernando)

6 hours	\$2100
8 hours	\$2400
10 hours	\$2700

signature commission
(with Jeff or Lori)

6 hours	\$2900
8 hours	\$3200
10 hours	\$3500

every signature commission includes

\$200 engagement credit | timeline consultation | in studio premiere | \$250 album credit

www.indigosilverstudio.com

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STEP 3: MAKE IT EASY FOR THE CLIENT TO BOOK

With traditional wedding packages, you are asking your prospective client to answer all of the following questions:

- Do they want to book you?
- How many hours of coverage do they want?
- Do they want a second photographer?
- Do they want an album?
- Do they want rehearsal dinner coverage?
- Engagement?
- Bridal?
- Boudoir?
- Day-after session?
- And finally, what is their budget for all of the above?

That’s a lot to decide all at once. Instead, try asking them: “Am I within your budget? If so, would you like to book me? You’ve got from now until your wedding to decide everything else.”

Doesn’t that sound easier, less stressful? Consider offering a flat retainer fee rather than a percentage of the total booking, because they don’t have to decide everything now. In our studio, \$750 and a signed contract means you’ve got Indigosilver Studio on your wedding day. Of course, we introduce them to the major add-on options: more hours, second photographer, album and additional portrait sessions. We don’t overwhelm them with every possible upgrade. Remember, we want to make the decision to book simple.

Some clients add options at booking. Others wait. Either choice is OK.

engagement sessions

engagement session investment



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STEP 4: BUILD A SYSTEM FOR UPSELLING USING INCENTIVES AND TOUCHPOINTS

Congratulations! Your client has booked you for your baseline commission. Now, how do you get them to buy more? If you never see your clients again until the wedding day, you probably will not upsell them. It’s important to have scheduled meetings with them between now and the wedding. These are called touchpoints.

At the bare minimum, require your clients to meet with you four months prior to the wedding to discuss their wedding day timeline. We all know that clients are notoriously bad at planning too little time for photography. The timeline consultation assures the client that there’ll be adequate time to create the images they’ve envisioned.

Most clients happily accept the help, but if they say they’re too busy, I encourage you to insist. This touchpoint usually guarantees the client will add more hours to their commission (six is never enough!). They may also add an additional photographer. Finally, this touchpoint allows you to show them the latest album samples, help them find other vendors, talk about add-on portrait sessions, educate them through stories—you’re essentially growing their trust in you and exposing them to the value of the services and products you offer. You’ll repeat this touchpoint one month before the wedding as a final consultation.

Touchpoints are about pressure and buyer’s remorse. We’ve already talked about how removing the pressure to decide everything at the consultation makes it easier for your client to book you. A second advantage is that if your clients are given the opportunity to make smaller purchases over time, they will often spend more than if you ask them to pony up the dough all at once. It’s much easier to buy an engagement session here, a wall portrait there, and so forth, than it is to sign on the dotted line for \$6,000 of wedding coverage right off the bat. Money spent is money forgotten. Clients are much less likely to experience buyer’s remorse when they had the chance to warm up to and see the value in each purchase. This does not mean you are tricking your clients. It simply means you are giving them the time and opportunity to see the importance of your products and services.

It’s important for your clients to build trust in you and desire for your products over time. They also need both a means and a reason to buy more than the base commission.

TOUCHPOINT OPPORTUNITIES:

- Consultation & booking
- Timeline planning consultation
- Final consultation
- Image premiere
- Portrait consultation (engagement/bridal/boudoir/day-after)
- Portrait shoot
- Portrait sales
- Album design consultation

UPSELL INCENTIVES AND METHODS:

- Album credit
- Engagement session credit
- Pull-through to larger portrait sessions
- Tiered options (good/better/best)
- Quantity and variety of options (you can’t upsell if there is only one choice)
- Payment plans

In addition to touchpoints, which provide the opportunity for upselling, you need incentives, which provide the means. You can’t simply hope your clients buy more. You need to give them a reason to do so. One of the most powerful incentives is a credit toward an upgrade that expires at a set time. We offer every client a \$250 wedding album credit that expires the night of their image premiere. The expiration date requires the couple to commit to the purchase before their wedding imagery has gone stale. If we do not sell an album by then, odds are we will not sell it. The client simply needs a deadline by which to decide.

Our albums start at \$1,500. The credit is not insignificant, but it by no means pays for the album. Our albums are structured as a microcosm of this pricing system. We start with a base price for the smallest album with the least number of pages. We use the credit incentive to encourage commitment. We then use educational selling, touchpoints and a rock-solid design system to encourage upgrades via additional pages, upgrades in size, upgrades in cover options and even upgrades in quantity in the form of parent albums. We also allow clients to spread their payments over time through payment plans. A wedding album sale alone can easily add \$3,000 or more to a wedding commission.



Image © Indigosilver studio



RESULTS: PROFITABLE WEDDINGS ABOVE THE MARKET AVERAGE

At this point, if you’ve built your sales system correctly, you’ve booked a client at or near the market average. You’ve then built their trust and educated them on your value with touchpoints, and provided them the opportunity to upgrade their commission along the way.





Image © Indigosilver studio

Clients shop commodities when they don't understand the value of what you do. Selling over time removes the pressure on the client to decide everything upfront and allows you time to educate your client and demonstrate value, earning you bigger wedding averages—and clients who hug you on the way out the door. ■



LEARN MORE.
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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

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product review

Panasonic with *Salvatore Cincotta*



Why the LUMIX GX9?

What is the best camera? “The one that is in your hands” is how the saying goes. We are all a little guilty of not having anything more than our iPhones with us most of the time. I know when I am not working, the last thing I want to do is lug my monster DSLR around. It’s just not practical. Size and weight matter, but with that comes the need for some power. Sure, I want to have a camera with me when I am heading out or just to do some street shooting, but I don’t want to be obvious either. A solution is Panasonic’s GX9 mirrorless camera.

This little bad boy has an incredible 20MP sensor behind it and 4K video with Panasonic’s five-axis DUAL I.S., making handheld shots super stable.

Having a chance to play with this in the field has allowed me to do some cool stuff without having to lug a ton of gear around. It’s small in size, but meaty in functionality.

Watch the video to check it out in action.

The specs:

- 20.3 MP high-resolution MOS Sensor with Tuned Three-Dimensional Color Control to detect hue, saturation and brightness for optimal results
- Five-Axis Dual I.S. combines an O.I.S. (Optical Image Stabilizer, two-axis) and a I.B.I.S. (In-Body Image Stabilizer, five-axis); five-axis Dual I.S. enables up to four-stop-slower shutter speeds
- Live View Finder 2,760K-dot high-resolution LRV tilts up approximately 80 degrees with nearly 100% color reproduction; 1.39x/0.7x (35mm camera equivalent) magnification and 100% field of view
- 49 Focus Points plus Custom Multi-AF mode quickly and freely selects focus blocks via the touch-enabled LCD screen
- 4K 30p video, 4K Live Crop and 4K PHOTO burst with a new Light Composition mode to capture perfect moments



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10

MUST-HAVE SHOTS

— ON A —

WEDDING DAY

with Phillip Blume



I answered her, and my heart broke. I saw the disappointment on her face.

“I’m sorry. No, we didn’t take any full-length bridal shots of your daughter alone. But look. Here are several good full-length images of the bride and groom together,” I said, trying to lighten the mood. I mean, is a solo bridal shot really such a big deal?

Yes, often it is a big deal. Getting those must-have shots is a skill we, the Blumes, have learned the hard way over many years and hundreds of weddings. If you want to succeed in this industry, it’s all about surpassing clients’ expectations.

But I messed up. As a result, I broke a chain, a chain I didn’t even know existed: four generations of full-length wedding-day bridal portraits that hang side by side in that family’s home. True, no one had told me. But they also weren’t wrong to expect a full-length photo of the bride.

It’s too easy to let our ego get the better of us.

“My clients should know my style and what they’re getting.”

“I shoot what inspires me. I don’t accept a shot list.”

“They hired me for my creativity, not for standard shots anyone can take.”

“The bride and groom are my clients, not the mom.”

Thankfully, this particular mother-of-the-bride was gracious. She recognized the high level of service we provided and even appreciated our nontraditional style. But I know she still felt disappointed. So did I.

(And by the way, if you’re not as sensitive to the intangible, consider this: She also left our studio without purchasing the giant bridal portrait she’d already budgeted for.)

I’d like to spare you disappointment. So here’s my Top 10 List of must-have shots every wedding photographer should remember—and how to make them great.



10. IMPORTANT DETAILS

If you asked me what our style at The Blumes is all about, I’d say it’s about people, not things. But you better believe we’ve taught ourselves to get fantastic detail shots, too. Even if you don’t specialize in product photography, don’t neglect this skill set.

I never feel the need to shoot a catalogue of details. Early on, I felt obliged to photograph every tube of lipstick and gift bag. I just didn’t know what was expected, and I didn’t want to miss anything. Now I don’t waste my time on most objects. But I know how to find important story elements.

Start before you pick up your camera. Send your clients a survey that asks about any personal details, and guide them to what you’re looking for: “Will you have any meaningful items we should know about? Something borrowed or blue? An heirloom veil or jewelry? Personalized cufflinks or wedding gifts to each other? (Email me separately if it’s a secret.)”

I ask the bride to have these objects with her while she’s getting ready, and I photograph them first when I arrive. It also gives me time to build a comfort level with the bridal party before I stick a camera in their faces.

When the answer is “No, we’re not concerned with details,” then I’m free to focus more on portraits without disappointing anyone. But I always get a few shots of the wedding rings and dress before they’re wearing them. For close-ups, a specialty lens (like a 105mm macro) is worth the investment.

And we all know the value of detail shots for vendors, right? It’s cliché but true: If you take the time to share reception details with the florist and planner, you’ll be one of the few who actually does. Brownie points. You don’t have to shoot everything, but shoot it well. Use a long lens (85mm or higher) and off-camera flash set at 90 degrees to the table/centerpiece, and you’ll blow them away.

Your wedding albums will suddenly be easier to design too. Your clients spend a lot of time and money coordinating their details—now your book benefits from their styling, tying the photos together. Take advantage of it.

9. PUTTING ON THE DRESS

I’ve had several brides tell me, “I don’t want a photo of the dress before I put it on. It always looks kinda spooky.” Have you heard that? They’ve likely seen too many backlit dresses in front of hotel windows on Pinterest shot at wide angles like a hovering ghost. There’s a right and wrong way to shoot the dress.

Why not humanize your dress images? We ask the bride to approach her dress alone, then touch it and take a moment to soak in the memory of it so when she’s 80 years old she can remember how it felt. Voilà—emotional images that mean something to your bride.

Next we avoid awkwardness by asking in our survey, “Who will be helping you into your dress?” Traditionally it’s Mom. But sometimes the bride just wants her sisters or bridesmaids to do it. We gather the right people and get a series of storytelling images. Never hesitate to tell your clients where to put on the dress. We always move brides into window light, and have even walked to other rooms or buildings for a better dressing environment. Clients rely on our expertise.

Get in close for every helping hand and button, but avoid unflattering close-ups of arms in the foreground. Now twirl around for the reaction shot of everyone’s face.



Image © Blume Photography

8. FIRST LOOK WITH FATHER

Some dads show emotion. Others don’t. Either way, if the bride plans this traditional moment, you can bet it’s important to them both. Get it right.

It’s wonderful when two photographers can cover dual reactions. Just be sure you observe the 180-degree rule: both of you on the same side of the action so a photographer is never in the background. Or if I’m alone, I get Dad’s reaction first. If he’s the type to hide his emotions, this is the millisecond when his expression is authentic before he starts to suppress it. Then I can turn to the bride for her reaction, then the wide shot as they come together. This all takes less than a minute—make sure it’s part of your schedule, not happening randomly when you’re on a potty break.



Images © Blume Photography



7. BRIDAL PARTY SOLOS

Let’s assume you’re always taking bridal party portraits already. Do you know how quick and easy it is to get a single headshot and “buddy shot” with every single member? It doesn’t matter if there are 20 bridesmaids. It’s fast.

You’ve just finished a lined-up pose with bouquets in hand. Now ask everyone to space out to an arm’s length between them. All you have to do is walk down the line snapping a sassy personality-filled portrait of each bridesmaid. It’s that fast, and you’ve provided a great service: individualized attention for all those potential clients. Additionally, our couples often like an extra *Brady Bunch*-style spread in their albums, a grid with all these fun, expressive shots.

Even if they don’t tell you, most brides and grooms want a buddy shot alone with each member of their bridal party, too—something to include in a thank-you note later. So now invite the line of bridesmaids to join the bride one at a time. A quick snap each, and you’re done. If there are siblings or roommates, knock those out now, too. Just be ready to capture all their inside jokes and antics together.



6. COUPLE PORTRAIT SOLOS

Now you’ll begin to notice a pattern (and I’ve already described the heartache you can cause by leaving out this particular shot). When you have your couple together for portraits, don’t forget that they are also individuals. If the groom pretends to be too humble to want an individual portrait, remind him he will want a timeless portrait of his bride as they grow old together. So will she of him. And so will their parents.

Let the bride spin in her dress like she’s a 6-year-old girl playing dress-up. Get those full-length shots that highlights the front and back of her dress. Let him go *GQ* for a minute, looking off into the light while pretending to fasten his watch, then turning to stare you down in camera. Boom. You got it.

5. THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

We always get our couple tucked away an hour before the ceremony, when guests start to arrive. So there’s a lot of waiting around, but it’s not break time.

You’ll want to begin with guest arrival photos (or have your second shooter do it). These are some of the best interactions of the day—even better than the reception, when you likely have better lighting and friends are greeting each other for the first time in a while.

Closer to ceremony time, though, when more people are already seated, return to the bridal room. A lot of meaningful moments take place as the big moment draws near. This is when I see parents finally overcome with emotion, or a bridal party gather around their friends to pray for them before they begin their marriage. You can plan your ceremony shots later. This is more important.

4. COMING DOWN THE AISLE

This may be the single most anticipated image your bride has had in the back of her mind for years: “How will he look at me when I’m coming down the aisle?” I don’t leave this to chance. Before the ceremony, this is what I tell our grooms: “When she’s walking down the aisle, don’t get distracted. Don’t take your eyes off her. She needs to see how excited you are. So mouth, ‘You’re beautiful’ or ‘I love you.’ It’s all you. Just don’t freeze or forget.”

And you thought great wedding photography was candid? No. A good wedding photographer is a master director. Follow her down that aisle (at least briefly—I don’t care what the church lady said) and get his reaction over her shoulder.



Image © Blume Photography



Image © Blume Photography

3. THE KISS

I almost never see the kiss coming. It’s my bane. Officiants think of so many new, cutesy, original ways to say, “You may now kiss your bride.” I can’t stand it. But I know this. Without the kiss shot, my ceremony images are incomplete. So I run like crazy to get all my desired angles early in the ceremony. Then I’m back at the center aisle for that clear shot well before it happens.



Image © Blume Photography

2. FAMILY FORMALS

Candid shots are what we're about. But family formals matter. They are the genealogy that generations of people will have to trace their family tree. No pressure.

There's a simple art to doing family formals faster. Start with the largest group first—say, the entire extended family. Make sure everyone is turned toward the bride and groom, squeezed in, faces visible. Snap it a few times to make sure eyes are open. Now thank the family and release the extended family to leave (not hang around).

Now you have a much quieter, saner room in which to finish immediate family photos. Finish her side with just her parents, but don't let them go. Instead, add his parents as well. After that, bring in the rest of his family as her parents leave. Easy.

For big groups (especially in the dark), remember that one light can cover everyone as long as you set it far enough away and angle it slightly toward the far side of the group.

1. FIRST-DANCE CLOSE-UPS

So the venue is all lit up and looks awesome, and you can't stop reshooting that epic wide shot of the first dance. Get the wide shot, then get close. Those tender moments during a dance are priceless. But they're hard to capture in the dim light while they're moving. These aren't posed photos, so you need to shoot a lot to get a few good ones.



Image © Blume Photography



BONUS: GRAND EXIT

Know how your couple is exiting. Will they have sparklers? Great, you have some additional ambient light to play with. Bubbles? You better plan to backlight those suckers if you want to see them well. But don't make exits harder than they need to be. Shoot at a higher aperture than usual to be sure you get them in focus as they run at you. This is also the rare time when a direct flash is good, but even better if you set it to -1 or -2 compensation. They'll show up well enough, but use your available light or backlighting strobes to create more ambiance.

A wedding is not that complex. Even though it's a fast-moving live event, a lot is predictable—especially if you ask the right questions (and make the right suggestions) ahead of time. I have to reassure myself of this fact when I get butterflies before every wedding I shoot.

Know the schedule. Know your must-have shots. Once you get those in the bag, you're on your way to satisfying your client and you'll have what you need to fill a wedding book. You'll feel more free and confident to do the creative signature images that help you stand out from the crowd. ■



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

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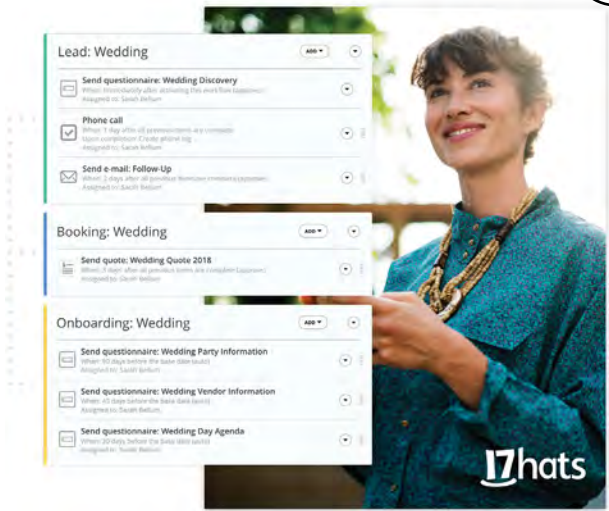
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4





Documenting Reality:

THE ART OF STORYTELLING IN WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

with Michael Anthony



Image © Michael Anthony

Wedding photography has been a passion of mine since I first got behind the camera seven years ago. I was initially attracted to the art of storytelling in wedding photography because it allowed us to capture fleeting heartfelt moments. I appreciated the challenge and the feeling of satisfaction that would ultimately come when I was able to capture an authentic, emotional moment.

While I do not know what the exact reason is that I am drawn to the excitement of documenting moments on a wedding day, if I had to guess, it would be because emotional moments are rare and happen in an instant, and capturing one with good lighting and composition requires planning, execution and a bit of luck.

I can't teach you to be more lucky, but with a refined skill set in planning and execution, luck will strike much more often than you might think. This month I am going to teach you how to get ready for it.



Image © Michael Anthony

THE IMPORTANCE OF STORYTELLING

A wedding is a day filled with emotional moments. Have you ever walked into a room full of bridesmaids who were awkwardly quiet? While you can't see emotion itself, emotion influences behavior. The behavior of those bridesmaids suggests an emotion of anticipation, which is common on a wedding day. Our job as storytellers is to read behavior and interpret it as the correct emotion in the very instant it happens, and translate that into a two-dimensional image.

In other words, our images should help a viewer who was not at an event feel the emotions that the subjects are displaying through their behavior, and help the subjects themselves relive that moment when they look back at their imagery.

This is my three-year anniversary of writing for *Shutter Magazine*. In the past three years, the style that our studio has become known for is epic, cinematic imagery that enhances the reality our couple was experiencing when the image was captured. Portraits are no doubt important in the sales process, but being a good portrait-wedding photographer isn't enough. Many moments on a wedding day include people who will not be around forever, and when those people are gone, the stories you tell through imagery will be some of the last things remaining of those people. Understand that what we do is important, and give every event your best effort.

While I love seeing beautiful portraits of couples in an amazing environment, as a community, we have been overemphasizing the importance of those images, and in a sense undermining the most crucial part of a wedding day, which is reality.

That being said, I have never lost sight of the importance of capturing moments, and through mediums such as *Shutter*, I want to help more photographers understand the importance and benefits of storytelling and also give them the techniques to get better at it.

THE THREE ELEMENTS OF GOOD STORYTELLING

Light

Light is the essential ingredient in capturing moments. Without light, we don't have an image, and without good light, we have a mediocre one at best. So what makes good light?

Lighting is not just about where light is; it's also about the absence of light in a composition. By using both highlights and shadows, we are able to tell better stories, create more dimension and hide distracting elements in an image while at the same time directing viewers to our subjects.

In documentary photography, you can use both natural and artificial light, but it's crucial to understand how to use artificial light quickly and efficiently. In documentary wedding photography, we are not able to influence many moments, so getting to our shot as fast as possible could mean creating a great moment or missing it because your flash wasn't ready or didn't go off.

There is much debate over how much money to spend on certain types of lights. In the end, it doesn't matter. Buy what works for your budget and your skill set. But here's a tip on gear that will instantly make you a better photographer.

Get yourself a voice-activated light stand (VAL). This isn't some crazy new light from your favorite manufacturer. It's actually a human, a fancy word for an assistant. Having an assistant on the wedding day has taken our work to the next level. I am now able to get lights into places in a fraction of a second that otherwise would have been impossible.

Bring a VAL to your next wedding, and within an hour, you will see how useful it is to have a competent individual helping you capture that next moment, especially when you are trying to capture fast-moving action like dancing shots during a reception.



Images © Michael Anthony



Composition

Composition is critical for good photography. Without composition, your frame is a garbled mess of elements with no cohesion or direction. Composition is a difficult skill to learn. Sometimes we educators make it even more difficult. We use a set of prewritten rules to teach it. That’s not necessarily a bad thing, because beginners should always be familiar with a basic set of rules.

What will set you apart is creative interpretation of the rules to create a composition that is meticulously planned. During a processional at a ceremony, you don’t have time to meticulously plan anything, so you have to rely on instinct to create better images. As an athlete and police officer, my instructors and coaches always told us that practice doesn’t make perfect, but perfect practice is the only thing that makes perfect. This is because when emotions are heightened, you go back to your training.

Shutter speed is one of the first things we learn in controlling exposure. After a year or two of experience, did you ever have a situation that required an almost instantaneous change in exposure? What was the first thing you did? If you are like I was, you probably mashed that shutter dial one way or the other, whether or not the shutter speed was the best choice to adjust in that moment.

So how do you practice composition? The thing that helped me the most was to practice shooting everything at f/8 or higher. Doing so forces your brain to use other methods to clean up a clunky composition. I’ve used this technique in my live-day wedding photography as well. I rarely shoot a wider aperture than f/5.6 these days for documentary work because I prefer to layer stories together. Once you start practicing this, you will see that there are infinitely more possibilities when you allow your backgrounds to add to your story instead of hiding them away.

Moment

If you have heard me talk about these three elements of impactful storytelling before, then you know I believe this is by far the most important one to document. The reason is that you have control over the first two, but this one is something that happens when it happens, and that means you have to constantly be ready for it. Remember earlier when I told you that you have to sometimes get lucky? Well, if you are ready for the moment by lining up your composition and your lighting prior to the moment happening, you are increasing your opportunities to capture valuable moments.

Documenting moments boils down to three things:

- Anticipation: Anticipate moments before they happen so you have the best possible chance of capturing the right moment.
- Be patient: Once you line up your composition and lighting, you will be ready to capture the moments you are anticipating. They won’t always come, so don’t get discouraged if you are all set up and your moment doesn’t quite line up with your composition. Shoot the moment instead because a good moment trumps both good light and composition.
- Shoot through the moments: When a moment happens, we are instinctively unable to perceive and react to something in the amount of times it takes for a moment to happen. Expression can change in a fraction of a second. Reaction involves both perception and the time to act. If you try to time a perfect moment with a series of four to five shots, you will likely miss it, but if you shoot through a moment 20 to 25 times, you increase your chances of capturing the best possible composition and expressions. This is very different from “spray and pray”; it’s a methodical technique that is guaranteed to give you better results. Just be thankful we are shooting with digital cameras. Because of the Sony A9’s stellar autofocus and lightning-fast 20FPS, it’s not uncommon for us to shoot up to 10,000 images on a wedding day, and I know many documentary wedding photographers who shoot double that.



TECHNIQUES FOR BECOMING A BETTER STORYTELLER

Layer Your Stories Together

Use multiple subjects in your shot, people and things (dress, details, etc.), to lay out a composition that will help tell multiple stories. By doing so, you are able to showcase many different elements.

Shoot in Sequences

This is more for the album, but shoot multiple frames in the same composition while your subjects are in motion, and then place them together on a page to tell a story.

Use Back-Button Focus (or Continuous Spot for Sony Shooters)

Back-button focus works by separating your trigger finger from your focusing mechanism. This allows you to line up your composition and focus, and wait for your shot. As long as you turn off your half-press shutter focus, you will be able to wait for your composition, and when the moment is right, you can fire away without reconfirming your focus, which will likely be in a different place.

Get Close and Use a 24–35mm Lens

This may be one of the most impactful factors on your images. By being close to your subjects with a 35mm lens, you can isolate them but still showcase the energy and environment around them. This is important to delivering context, because if you are shooting across the room with a 70–200mm lens, it’s hard to showcase why people are expressing certain emotions because there are no supporting elements in your frame.

Robert Capa, the famous war photojournalist, said it best: “If your photos are not good enough, you are not close enough.”

With a 35mm lens, think about being a little farther than a handshake’s distance from your subjects. Because you are getting close to them, you need to prepare them for how you work from the very beginning. I often tell my clients that within 10 minutes of me being there, they will forget about me. You often have to coach your subjects like this because of their tendency to look at the camera whenever it’s pointed at them. Once they understand to forget about you, your images will always be much better.



Images © Michael Anthony





Image © Michael Anthony

The *Shutter* community has allowed me to connect with so many of you all over the world. If you have enjoyed any of the articles we have written in the past, please help me stress the importance of wedding storytelling to the photography community.

There is no right way to photograph a wedding, but there are essential skills every wedding photographer should have when documenting reality. That starts with understanding the importance of what we do for our clients on the most special day of their lives. ■



LEARN MORE.
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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

michaelanthonyphotography.com

©Erik Valind Focal length: 60mm Exposure: F/2.8, 1/100th sec, ISO 200

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Why the Tamron SP 85mm F/1.8 Lens?

The number-one lens for portraits is the 85mm, in my book. It is a must-have in your bag and one I use on almost every single shoot. Fast glass does not have to break the bank, and the Tamron 85mm 1.8 gives you the speed and low-light performance you need at a price point your wallet can afford.

The lens has a nice bokeh, and it’s sharp and well built. But at the end of the day, it’s all about the results. Let’s check out what this thing can do.

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INSPIRATIONS

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

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

Sal Cincotta, *Editor-in-chief*

BEST WEDDING IMAGE



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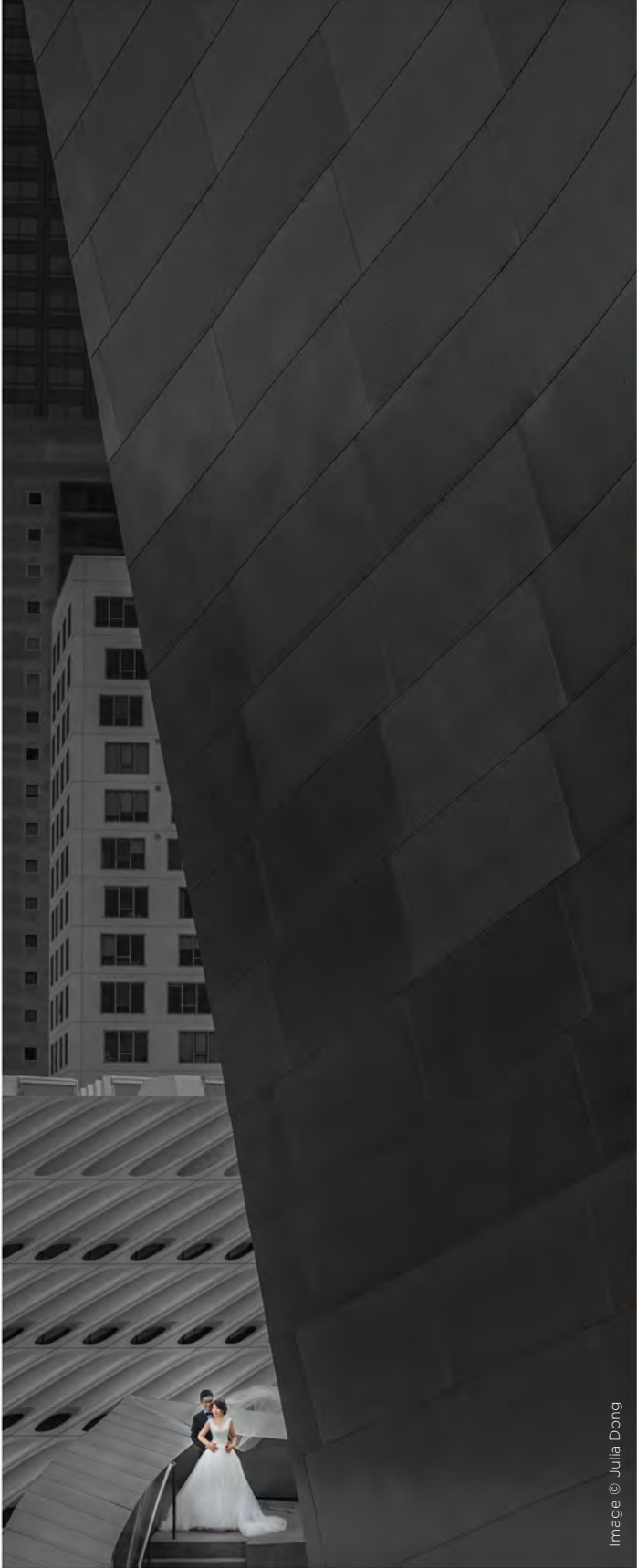


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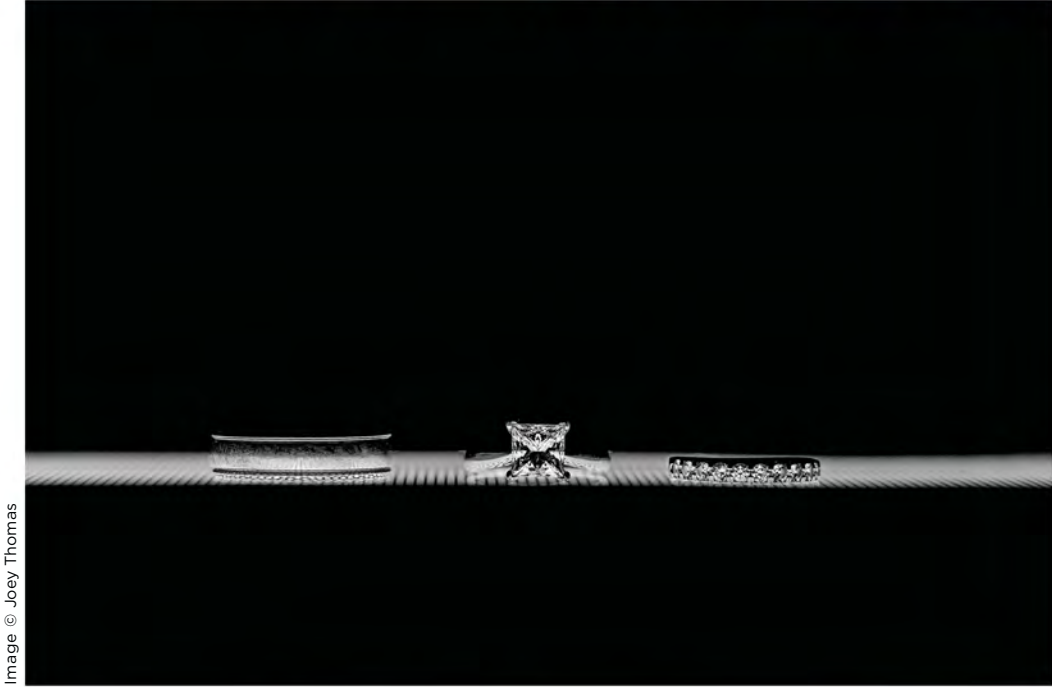


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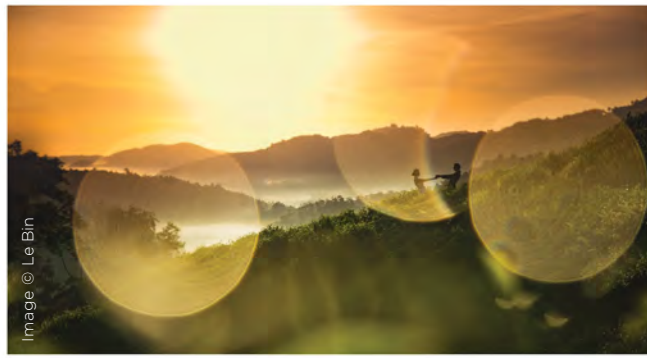
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THE
CHILDREN
EDITION



Image © Michael Corsentino

SLASH OF LIGHT

CREATING DRAMA WITH GOBOS
with Michael Corsentino



Image © Michael Corsentino

INSPIRATION

The most exciting kinds of artificial lighting are those that mimic natural light. It’s not easy to recreate nature’s subtle, atmospheric qualities. Beginners make the common mistake of throwing way too much light at what they’re shooting. Whether you’re shooting people or products, less is more. The more focused the lighting, the more interesting and visually compelling it becomes. If there’s light everywhere, there’s no direction for the viewer’s eye to follow. If there’s a scarcity of light, the areas that are illuminated become the focal point. We see this kind of subtle light in nature.

Lighting geeks like me love nothing more than watching the way sunlight behaves as it streams through a narrow opening, moves across the sky or scatters into beams of light as it breaks through clouds or strikes the leaves of a tree overhead. It results in unique shapes and patterns. These magic lighting moments give me pause and remind me how powerful light and shadow can be in creating mood and atmosphere.

In photography, we recreate these effects using tools known as “go-betweens,” aka “gobos.” These are typically a piece of wood or metal with a series of shapes and/or patterns cut into it. A gobo goes between the light and the subject to cast a shape or pattern onto it. There are also constant lights and strobe modifiers with built-in mechanisms that allow shapes to be created with light and also permit the definition of those shapes to be varied as desired.

CONCEPT

The concept for this “Slash of Light” shoot was the result of a collaboration between local model Laurel Mona and me. We connected via Facebook, where I always post new work, which is a great way to cultivate new relationships with creatives interested in collaborating. Laurel sent over a series of sample images of concepts she was interested in shooting. Several of the images reminded me of a concept I’d been wanting to shoot that was inspired by the striking patterns and shapes created every day on my walls by the afternoon sun streaming through my windows.

This warm, defined, dramatic light changes its shape and angle with each passing hour. We settled on this concept, and over the next few days, Laurel followed up with multiple wardrobe and accessory options. Nailing down many elements before the shoot helps assure everybody is on the same page and working toward the same creative goal.

Styling is a big part of the equation. Ideally, the colors of the background, wardrobe, and hair and makeup should work together to support the overall look and feel of the concept. We chose a warm-toned wardrobe and accessories to help accentuate her auburn hair, a mottled-gold background and the look of afternoon sunlight.



Image © Michael Corsentino

FRESNEL LIGHTING

One of the best tools for creating shapes with light is Profoto’s Pro Zoom Spot. With this focusable Fresnel and a strobe, you can create a beam of light that you can adjust from zoom to spot and soft to sharp.

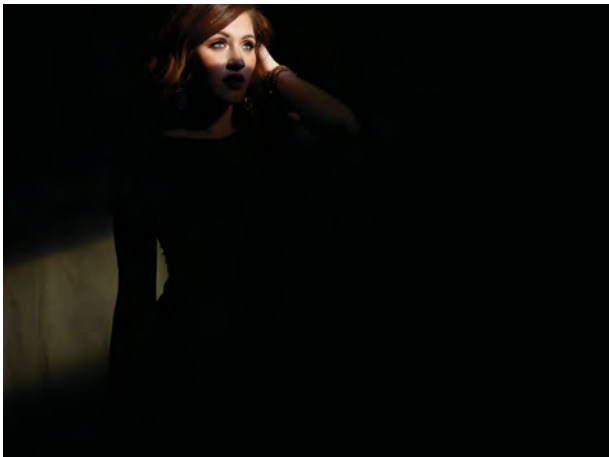
Popular Fresnel models are available from Bowens, Elinchrom and several other manufacturers. What differentiates the Pro Zoom Spot from the crowd is its four built-in user-adjustable blades that can create an endless variety of shapes. When you combine this shape-making capability with the Fresnel’s ability to create anything from soft edges all the way to super-crisp shapes, things get really exciting. The Pro Zoom Spot acted as my keylight and is responsible for the slash of light you’re seeing in these images.

The new model, with its built-in 4,800-watt-second strobe, wouldn’t make sense for me at its prohibitive price tag of \$10,000. But the legacy model I use, to which you add your own Profoto Pro Head, can be found on eBay for around \$400.

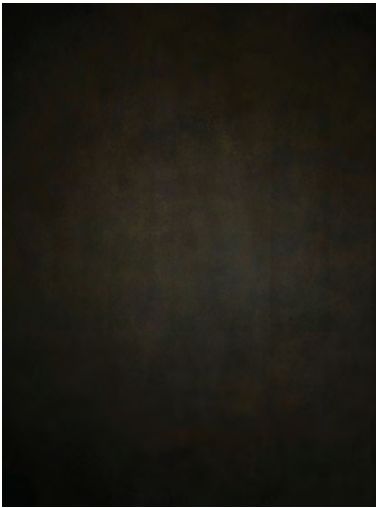
I have seen people get close to this effect using a speedlight. In this method, a cardboard tube is attached to the speedlight. At the front of the tube, two strips of gaff tape are used to create a rectangular shape with the light when the flash is fired. Lastolite makes a set of gobos with which you can create shapes and patterns with speedlights. You won’t achieve the same degree of crispness on the edges of the shape, but they offer a cool, inexpensive way to get close.



The Profoto Pro Zoom Spot served as my keylight. This focusable Fresnel, which has internal blades to customize the shape of the light, is hard to beat when crisp edges are called for.



In this image, only the keylight is firing. Note how areas outside its beam fall into complete blackness, lacking any detail or separation. For this reason, I added two fill lights, one for the background and one for the model’s body.



Here I’ve turned off the key and fill lights on the model’s body, which is now illuminated only by the background light. It’s much easier to assess the adjustments needed when you craft your lighting one light at a time.



The addition of a fill light to illuminate the background provides the necessary light for subtle separation between the model and background. Note how dark the model’s body is and how little detail there is. I corrected it in the final lighting setup by adding a second fill light.

The shape created by the Pro Zoom Spot was confined and hard-edged, with no falloff to illuminate Laurel’s body or the background. This resulted in a flat look that lacked separation, layering and dimension. So I added two fill lights, one at a time, to better judge their contribution.

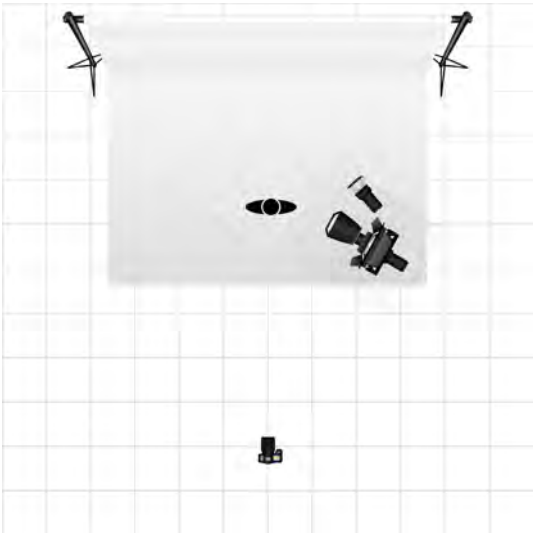
These additions needed to be extremely low-key or I’d risk destroying the subtle effect created by the keylight. I needed a kiss of light on the backdrop to create separation and bring in its gold tones, and an equally low level of light on Laurel’s body to provide detail and avoid everything falling into black.

To illuminate the background, I used a Profoto B1 500-watt-second strobe with a 20-degree grid spot. This created a subtle circle of light on the background, providing the separation needed to create more depth in the images.

To add detail to Laurel’s body, I added a second Profoto B1 500-watt-second strobe modified with an Elinchrom 14 x 35 strip box. I varied the strip box’s height and horizontal and vertical orientation for ground and standing poses and positioned the fill lights. For the tighter portraits, I used the gridded strobe camera left as a hair light and angled the strip box slightly toward the backdrop to maintain separation.



Image © Michael Corsentino



I used this setup for the majority of the standing and ground poses. The exception was for the tightly framed portraits (reference Lighting Diagram 2). Both the key and strip box were raised and lowered as needed for standing and ground poses. During ground poses, I switched the strip box to a horizontal orientation.



Image © Michael Corsentino

For ground poses, I lowered the keylight and fill lights. I switched the strip box illuminating the model's body from a vertical to a horizontal orientation.



Images © Michael Corsentino



Image © Michael Corsentino



For the series of tightly framed portraits, I moved the gridded strobe to the opposite side and used it as a hair light. To maintain subtle illumination on the background, I simply angled the fill light with the strip box slightly toward it.



Image © Michael Corsentino

Images © Michael Corsentino



RETOUCHING

Word to the wise: This is not a forgiving style of lighting like clamshell, which we might use when shooting beauty and portrait work. This light has much harder qualities that accentuate every line and blemish. Expect retouching to be more laborious and time consuming, but the payoff is beautiful, dramatic images. For retouching, I used my go-to Beauty Retouch Panel by Retouching Academy, an inexpensive Photoshop plugin that takes care of many of the repetitive tasks required in retouching.

POST AND TAG ME

Whether you’re using a Pro Zoom Spot, a speedlight with a cardboard tube or a set of gobos, this style of lighting is a great way to amp up your photography and create dramatic, compelling images.

Post your images on Facebook and tag me. I can’t wait to see what you create. See you next month. ■

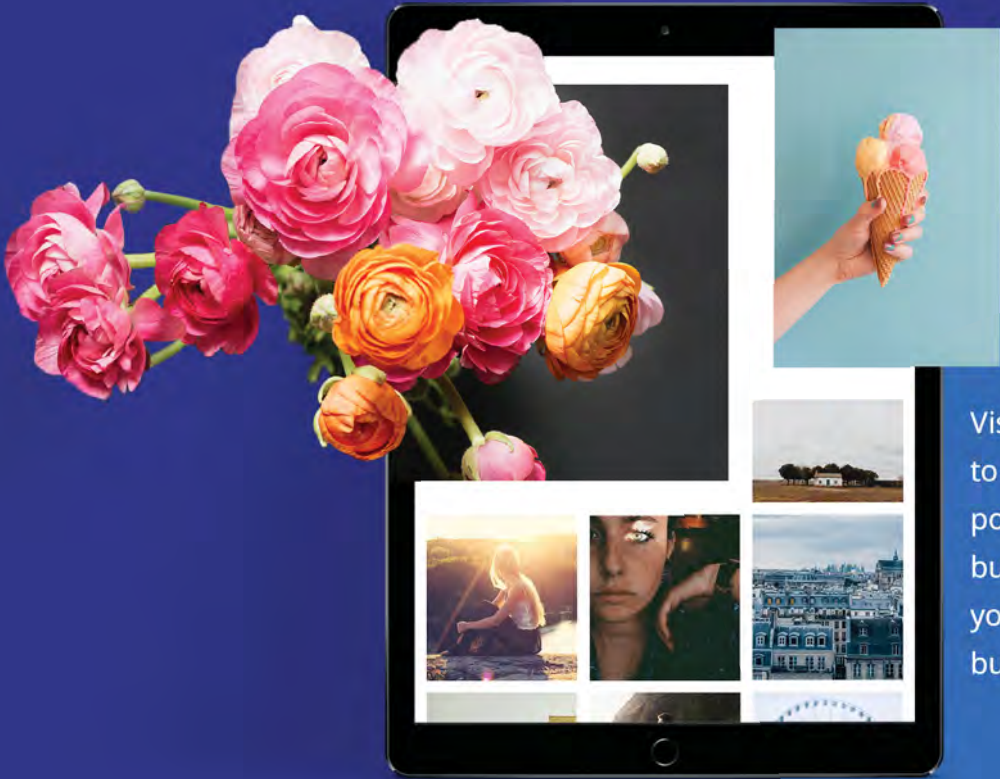
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Michael Corsentino is an Orlando, Florida-based editorial fashion and portrait photographer. In addition to his busy shooting schedule, Michael is a passionate educator, teaching workshops domestically and internationally. He is an author of two books, writes a monthly lighting column for *Shutter Magazine* and is a regular contributor to *Photoshop User* magazine and *JointheBreed.com*.
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SO YOU WANT TO WRITE YOUR OWN BOOK

with Skip Cohen

Sooner or later, many of you will start dreaming of publishing your own book someday. Your images look terrific and your skill set keeps growing. Your friends and family love your photographs, and somewhere along the line, you’re going to decide being an author is the next accolade you want on your journey.

This month, I’m writing about writing your own book, and next month I’ll write about being a public speaker. They’re both outstanding goals, but they also have the same potential to disrupt your focus on building your business. They’re an ego and energy drain—and if not done right, they have the potential to undermine just about everything you’ve worked so hard to build.

Be cautious in your approach and make sure you’re ready for either or both. Halfway through accomplishing either one, you’re going to step under the “be careful what you wish for” umbrella. For most of us, being an author or a speaker is about fame, not fortune.

This month, let’s start with that book that’s been burning a hole through your soul for so long. Thanks to ePublishing, it’s easier than ever to publish your own work, but there’s one factor that’s stood the test of time since Shakespeare: Will people want to read it?

There’s a series of questions you’ve got to be able to answer the right way before you start to chase a goal like this.



WHAT’S YOUR TOPIC?

This is more than just figuring out what you want to write about. It’s understanding what people want to read. It starts with understanding what’s missing in an industry filled with self-proclaimed experts. Then you need to understand how to expand your reach so your target audience is aware of your work.

ARE YOU AN EXPERT ON THE TOPIC?

It seems so basic, but just being a good photographer isn’t enough for a great book. You’ve got to be considered one of the best in your specialty. You’ve got to have images people want to see and a reputation for being able to teach and share. People have to be excited to want to invest both their money and time in reading what you publish.

CAN YOU WRITE?

Most of the best-selling books in our industry have been written by the artists themselves, with no ghost writer. You can hire a writer and start dictating, but there needs to be collaboration.

I cowrote all six of my books with other photographers. While most of the written words were mine, the concepts around technique and creativity belonged to my coauthors. I spent countless hours watching Don Blair, Bambi Cantrell and Joe Buissink teach workshops, and then put it all down on paper.

Going Pro was different because my coauthor, Scott Bourne, is a wonderfully talented writer as well as photographer. We both chose topics we wanted in the book, and then wrote our own sections where we each felt a level of expertise.

DO YOU HAVE THE TIME?

A deadline is critical, whether for your own eBook or when you’re working for a publisher. In fact, deadlines are usually tied directly to some event that’s critical to the launch of a new book. That means during the process of becoming an author, you’re going to have to step away from your business and just write, without interruption from clients, friends, kids or your significant other. You need time to lock yourself up and focus on one thing: your book.

SELF-PUBLISH OR WORK WITH A PUBLISHER?

Having done both, it’s a topic that deserves its own article, but for now, it’s just something to think about. There are some terrific publishers in photography. The advantage is being able to get fast global distribution. They have reach and access to markets most of you don’t. On the other hand, you give up profit.

It might be your book, but you can’t do it by yourself. I heard Guy Kawasaki speak just after he published *APE: Author, Publisher, Entrepreneur—How to Publish a Book* with his coauthor Shawn Welch. He shared two brilliant pieces of advice right upfront: Have a professional artist design your cover and get a good editor. A good cover is obvious, but not everyone understands the need for a great editor.

A great editor goes far beyond fixing grammar, spelling and punctuation. You need somebody to question what you’ve written. You need an editor who examines everything you’re suggesting to your readers and makes sure it’s understandable. A great editor does all of that, and helps you enhance what you’ve written, makes your book more enjoyable to read.

CAN YOU BRING SOME PARTNERS INTO THE CONTENT?

Back in the 1990s, Irving Penn created one of the most beautiful books ever published. It was called *Passage*, and it was stunning. It won several awards for production value.

Sadly, it was introduced at a time when the market just wasn’t buying tabletop books. I got a call at Hasselblad one day from the publisher. They were “remaindering” approximately 10,000 books at an absurd price, around \$10 a book. They just hadn’t sold. Because Penn shot most of his work with Hasselblad, I bought a thousand books, and for years we gave them out as gifts.

Irving Penn was one of the finest photographers in the world. He passed away in 2009. The quality and production values of the book mirrored his incredible eye as a photographer and an artist, but here’s what he missed. It would have been a stronger book with just a few pages in the back of the book containing information about the gear used in each image. If he had shared a little more technical information, the book would have held a place under the educational umbrella.

If you’re serious about doing your own book someday, think through some of the partners who might want to be involved in promoting your work because of the way it shows their products in action. You know how to focus your camera—so focus your efforts on building relationships with the vendors whose products and services you use. Then, as your work on the book progresses, keep them in the loop.

One of the books I coauthored with Bambi Cantrell was purchased by Canon one year, one copy for each member of its sales force. Don Blair’s book, *Body Parts*, is still used to teach tips on classic portraiture. For a long time, it was recommended reading for PPA Certification.



WHAT IF YOU'RE NOT READY YET?

Here's where special projects and your blog come into play. Use your blog to create interest in your work, while at the same time fine-tuning your writing skills.

Every photographer should have a special project. Pick the subject matter and stay focused on your artistic passion. Maybe it'll become a book or a gallery exhibit, but the point is, for now, you're building a collection of images, with only one goal: pushing your creativity to the max and smiling with every click of the shutter. ■



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

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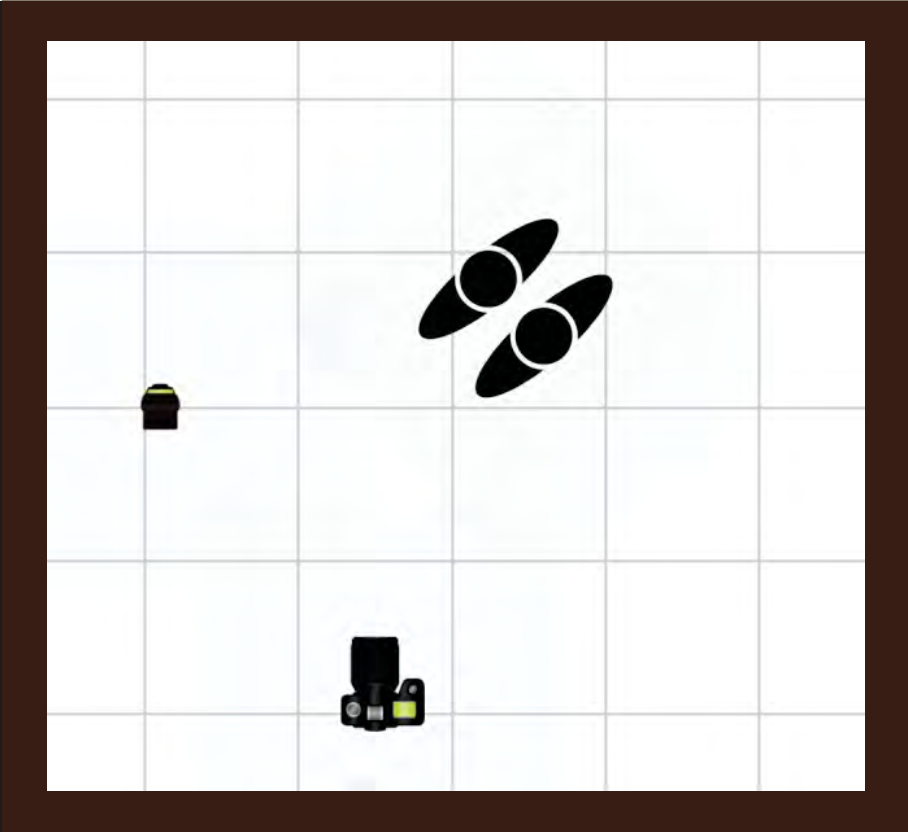
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