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ALISON CONKLIN



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X-E3

october 2017

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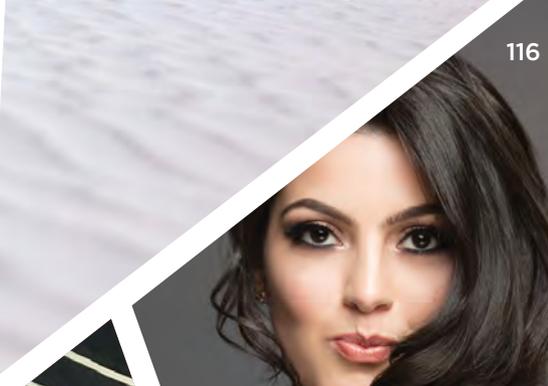
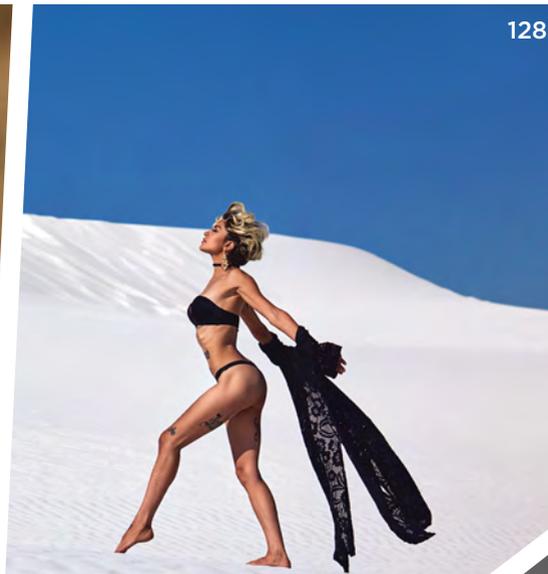
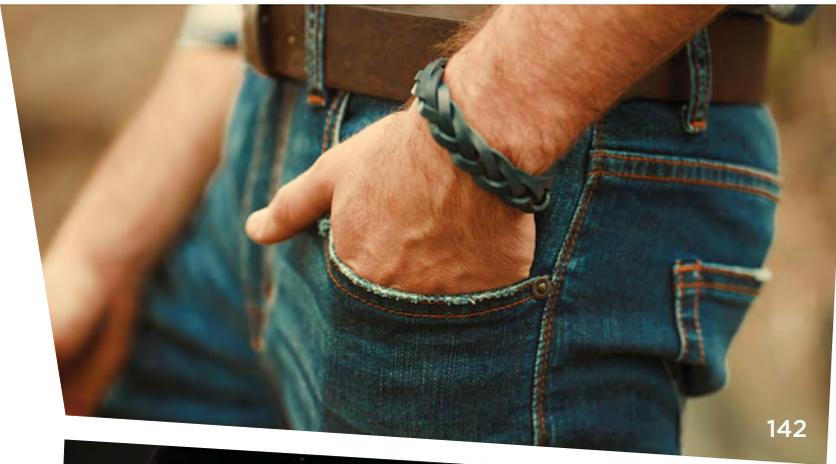
"17hats has been a complete game-changer for our business. The ability to streamline and automate our workflows allows me to focus on shooting and the experience I provide for my clients while 17hats handles the rest." - **Sal Cincotta**



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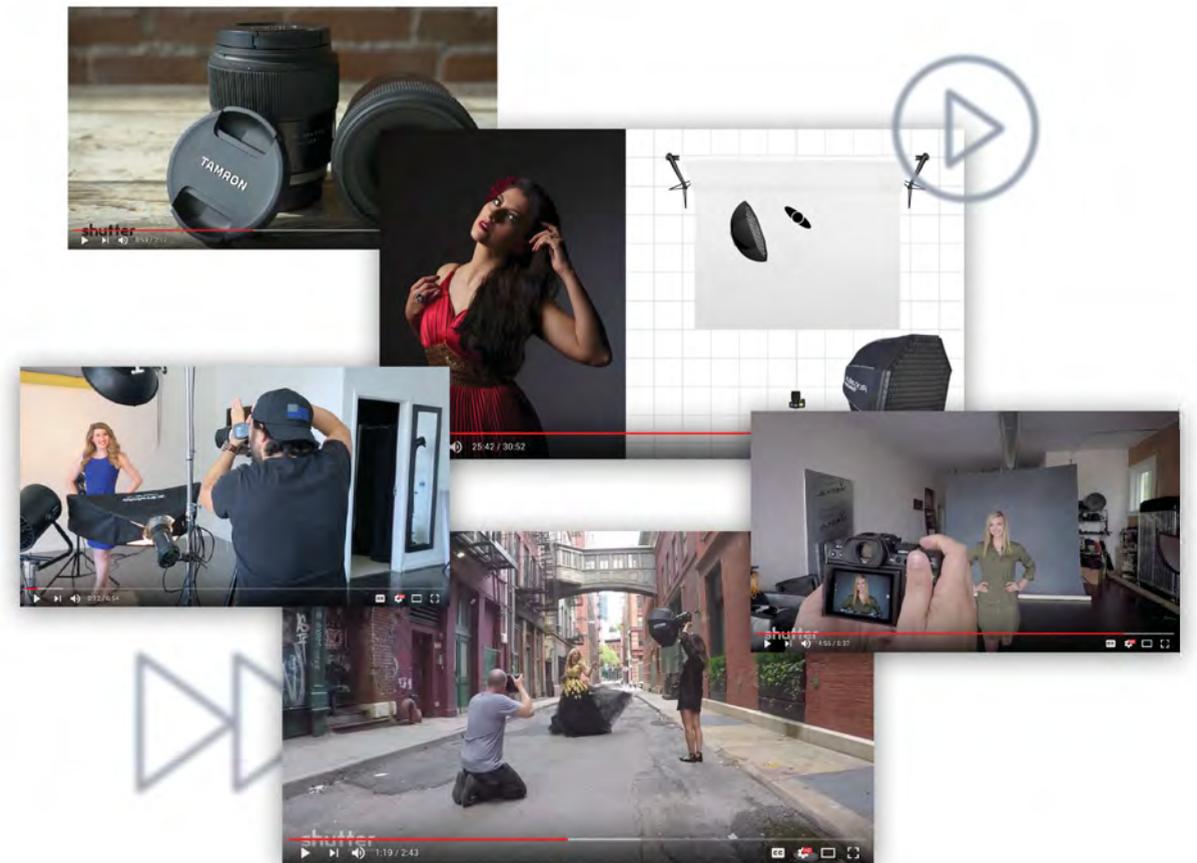
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MISSION STATEMENT

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

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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THE COVER

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LENS: Canon 24-70mm 2.8
EXPOSURE: f2.8 @ 1/250, ISO 800
ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken by Fernando Decillis, October 2016.

LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

*There are endless opportunities
in working with
small and medium businesses
in your local market.*
- Sal Cincotta



Image © Fernando Decillis Photography

EMAIL MARKETING FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS:

EMAIL SEQUENCES THAT INCREASE PORTRAIT PROFIT\$

with Phillip Blume



Can emails really drive print sales and increase your bottom line? If so, are you confused why your sales emails seem to go unanswered?

Most photographers, especially shoot-and-burners, already use email to deliver online photo galleries to clients. For them, email is simply the easiest way to deliver final image downloads and essentially close the photographer-client transaction. Email delivery today is what burning photos onto CD's used to be, hence the *burn* in *shoot-and-burn*. It feels clean and done. But is it smart?

This one-way airtight system is where most of us begin our professional journey. Sadly, it's also where most businesses suffocate and die, having to close their doors within their first five years.

As educators and coaches in this industry, my wife Eileen and I want more for our students—longevity and stability—so their lives can be more than a constant struggle. So ask yourself: Instead of closing doors to my clients, what if I used email to keep the client-photographer transaction open? Wouldn't you want to keep the door open if your clients were prepared to send you more money throughout the year, and they only needed a strategically timed email to remind them about it?

Below is our 11-email chain for post-portrait sales. Only members of our ComeUnity online family usually get this much info, and space is limited in my print articles. But Eileen and I also love the *Shutter* community, and believe in helping photographers build their business. So make the most of it. We also invite you to take a deeper look at our "Top 5 Email-Writing Secrets" and other sequences at www.blumephotography.com/5-email-sequence-secrets.



Image © Blume Photography

INSIDE OUR EMAIL SEQUENCE

There are many reasons why clients may not be ordering from your online galleries. It's usually our own fault. We make online sales sterile and robotic. Think about it. You put your product online, then you send a link and hope people might click. Then you quit. The "luxury experience" that accompanies studio in-person sales is gone. We've left out the human touch.

If you owned a physical retail store, you would never stand for that. If your employee failed to greet your customers, answer their questions or show them samples, you would fire the lazy employee. Yet that's what we do online. Eileen and I have unique email sequences for every type of client: headshots, newborns, family portraits, seniors, mini sessions, engagements and more. You'll get a sense of how these sequences work by studying this 11-email chain for post-portrait sales.



Image © Blume Photography

EMAIL #1: THE TEASER

The teaser offers your first sneak peek to a client. Immediately after every portrait session, this email does the important job of establishing trust between you and the client. The email can say something like, “Your session is over and paid for, but I haven’t stopped working for you! Yes, I’ll continue to communicate with you as I make progress, even before you ask for an update.”

In sales psychology, trust is the number-one feeling you need to instill in your customer to make the sale. That starts here. Photographers have it pretty easy. Our product, family portraiture, is extremely personal. We don’t have to do a lot to convince our customer about the worth of the product. It already holds value. Just don’t give too much of it away yet.



Image © Blume Photography

Keep the teaser brief, just one image. It should build anticipation, not substitute for the full experience you will provide later when you reveal the gallery. In this email, explain that you’re in the process of preparing the images for the big reveal. Offer two or three dates/times for the client’s online reveal, and ask her to reply to schedule. This does not mean that we are going to have an in-person sales meeting. I know that’s not what you want. This is about online sales.



Image © Blume Photography

EMAIL #2: CONFIRMATION

One day before your client’s reveal (which is basically when their online gallery goes live), send an email confirming the date and time of the reveal. Include a simple but complete menu of all prints and artwork items you offer.

You aren’t asking them to buy anything yet, but you are warming them up to the idea that they should consider purchasing options. Include some kind of sale or bundled special that is good during their reveal time only. A deadline is the only way to get people to act within a timeframe that works for your studio. You need to be efficient, placing your orders on time and in bulk when possible.

Through this process, we are holding our clients’ hands and walking them through an experience, just as if we were about to perform an in-person sales meeting.

In-person sales can be highly profitable when done right. The year Eileen and I began doing in-person sales, our income doubled and we cut the number of sessions we were photographing in half. Let’s apply those principles online. With email sequencing, our profits remain high even with long-distance clients. Meeting in person is no longer a necessity.

In this confirmation email, we remind our clients of our Skype handle. The plan is to connect via Skype for their reveal and speak for only 15 minutes face-to-face, when we introduce them to their online gallery and how to use it.

This Skype chat also gives you the chance to send a link to an emotive slideshow, and even watch their on-screen reactions as they watch it. (Those reactions keep me motivated!) We use both Animoto and SmartSlides, depending on the client type. No matter what mood you find them in, this shows them the sentimental value your images hold.

If you’re high-volume without time for Skype chats, you can easily record one generic video that explains the gallery and the slideshow link.

EMAIL #3: GALLERY INVITATION

In the moments before we send email number three, we've had our brief Skype chat with the client. Or we include a generic intro video at the top of email number three.

Whether by Skype or recorded video, the most important bits of info you will share are these: a firsthand look at artwork samples (a beautifully mounted canvas or framed print, or perhaps coffee table books, depending on what you offer); and another link to the same menu and reveal specials that you already provided in email two.

The gallery invitation email guides your clients in how to narrow down favorite images. It helps them choose images to order. Clients will understand your studio's expectations, and you're not put in the awkward place of requesting sales directly or demanding a minimum purchase, as some studios do. In ShootProof, "favoriting" is simple: The client simply clicks a star icon or other custom labels you set up.

Finally, email three must emphasize the deadline. At our studio, portrait galleries are free for five days. The reveal special pricing is available for the first three days only.

This is important: We do not make digital downloads available inside the gallery during this time. In fact, our portrait sessions do not include free digitals, although they can be either purchased or received as a free gift with certain artwork purchases. In the case of weddings, yes, the digitals are included but still not available for download. And we have great wedding post-sales. Digital images will be mailed on a custom USB drive, or made available for download inside the gallery only after the order deadline has expired.



Image © Blume Photography

EMAIL #4: SELECTION

The next day, clients receive an email that thoughtfully asks if they've made progress in the selection process. This email restates the sales specials that are about to expire. Because we use 17Hats, we are now able to include simple "push to purchase" buttons in the email that make it easy to purchase one of our three most popular packages immediately.



Images © Blume Photography





Image © Blume Photography

EMAIL #5: BONUS

With this email, we begin to open up the gallery to extended family and friends. Conveniently, we have collected an entire list of email addresses during the sneak-peek process, so we can email them directly. If you're wondering how we managed to do this, take a look at any recent sneak peek at www.blumephotography.com/blog.

The important thing is to give everyone an incentive to view the gallery right away. For portrait sessions, we offer family and friends a free Web-size image download to draw them in, then 20 percent off any order for a limited time.

EMAIL #6: RECEIPT

This one simply keeps your studio running smoothly and prevents mistakes that cost money. The receipt includes thumbnails of ordered images. It sets expectations for album proofing and shipping times.

EMAIL #7: SURVEY

A survey is the single most valuable tool most small businesses overlook. Businesses avoid surveys because they don't want to hear negative feedback. But think of it as constructive criticism. Just by sending a survey, even customers who had a mediocre experience begin to see you care about improvement. You'll learn how to improve, but you'll also get good reviews you can use for marketing. Surveys let you know exactly which clients you should follow up with for email number eight.

EMAIL #8: REVIEW

Clearly, you don't need to send this email to everyone. But because the survey helped you identify your happiest clients, you should politely ask for a review on your preferred websites, which increases your demand.

EMAIL #9: HOLIDAY CARDS

Always stay calendar-current. When holiday season comes around, we email the appropriate card designs to all our past clients that show their photo in the template. It's great for extra Christmas cash. Remember that all clients, not just your winter ones, need cards.



Images © Blume Photography

EMAIL #10: FIRST ANNIVERSARY

In the case of weddings, consider sending this email to the groom. You may help him out of a pickle if you get him thinking about a sentimental anniversary gift for his bride. We offer a limited-time free 5x7 print to get him into the gallery, which he can use inside an anniversary card. Once in, it's 50 percent off his order. No excuses! And whichever images he chooses, I know what to use as an anniversary post for our couple.

EMAIL #11: END-OF-YEAR PORTRAIT CONTEST

As many of you know (and I hope imitate), our biggest marketing push of the year is practically free to us. It's a large-print giveaway, and it revolves around a "Favorite Images of the Year" blog post where clients get their friends to vote. The whole push is fueled by this final email, which leads to a new crop of clients next year.



Image © Blume Photography

TRAGEDY AVERTED

What do you achieve by all this? First, your clients feel well served. With minimal automated effort on your part, you create a full-service experience. When you treat another human helpfully, that person naturally feels inclined to repay the kindness. And your client is much more likely to buy from you if she feels she is repaying your kindness, rather than paying only for images and the minimum effort you took to drop them from a camera onto a website.

Make sure your clients do more than see their galleries and then go away feeling satisfied. When you consider their bare walls, their growing families and humans' short memories, low print sales is a tragedy for both you and your clients. ■

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



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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— CREATING —
EDITORIAL-STYLE LIGHTING
—
FOR BRIDAL SESSIONS

with **Michael Anthony**

I have always been attracted to the work of Annie Leibovitz, Mark Seliger and other modern fashion/editorial photographers. A long time ago, I decided to incorporate some of the inspiration they have given me into my wedding photography. Everyone who follows this type of work knows that creating studio editorials can be a big production. Getting the best results requires complex lighting setups, large modifiers and a set with either a regal feel or an industrial look. We don't usually get all that at the local banquet hall.



We started incorporating bridal sessions two years ago to offer our couples something a little bit outside the norm so they could take advantage of everything in our skillset. I encourage our brides to take advantage of this service, but with 50 MPhoto weddings per year, we definitely were feeling the pinch of the extra time involved driving through L.A. traffic for these shoots.

There are other benefits as well. Not many photographers have a studio, which limits your competition. It's comforting for clients to be in the studio because they can connect with you without worrying about everyone watching them.

After watching Mark Seliger's Oscar portraits, I asked my wife, Jen, what she thought about offering this to our clients. It would allow us to do more than one shoot a day, offer a style of portrait that is truly unique and give clients excellent images for their album. We posted a test on Instagram to see if our clients would be interested in this, and it received an overwhelmingly positive response.

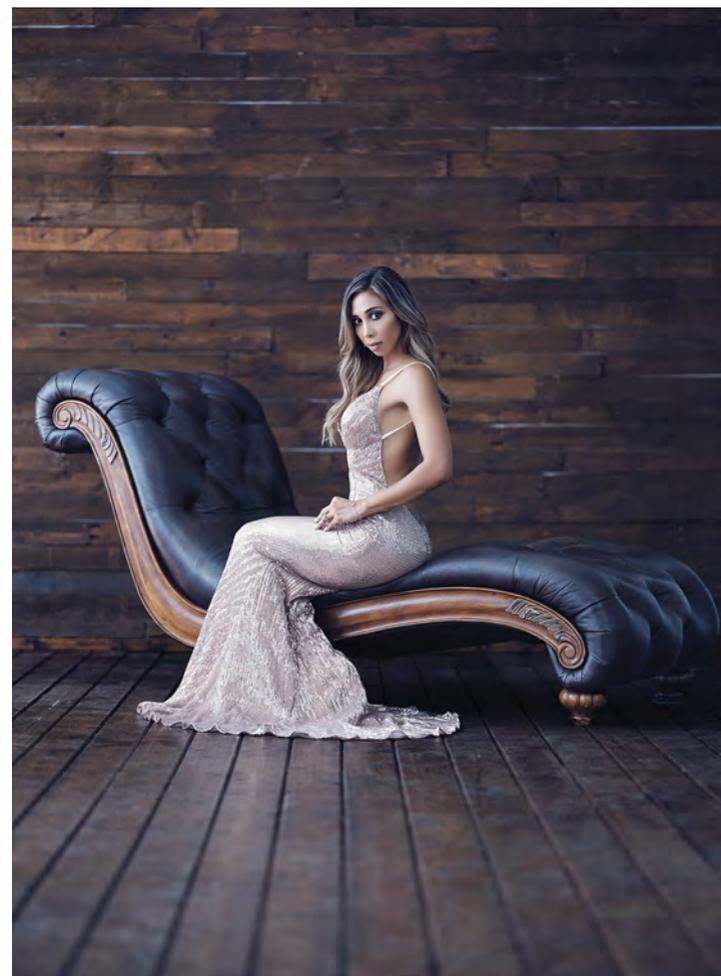
In most large cities, there are numerous options for studio rentals. If you have a studio, it should be large and comfortable, with climate control and good seating.

The next challenge was recreating the Old Hollywood feel of these images through lighting. These editorial shoots usually have beautiful soft lighting coming from either a single or multiple directions.

I wanted lighting that could be created with just a few flashes and DIY modifiers so that anyone reading this can take advantage of what we are teaching.

For these setups, we are using two V-flats, which can be constructed easily at home. We also need a white ceiling for this to work; otherwise, you will want to invest in an umbrella. We used the Profoto B1 and D2 monolights, but this lighting can be accomplished using speedlights or other monolights as well.

We chose V-flats because lighting in this type of portrait is soft and large, almost like a window, but controlled so that it doesn't spill into the areas of an image where you don't want it.



SETUP 1: KEY AND FILL

For this setup, we are using two light sources: a main and a fill. The first step before turning on your flash is to measure your ambient light. We opted for ambient light three stops darker to reduce contrast. We don't want to underexpose the light too much, or the image will look washed out and have transitions that are not smooth between highlight and shadow. We used a light meter to get all of our light dialed in.

Next, we added a large V-flat to the left side of the image, where we would be positioning Jen. We opened the V-flat and positioned it so that we didn't have too much light spill on the background.

Next, we wanted to fill in the shadows on the right side of the frame, so we added a second V-flat behind my position. This time, we metered the fill light to one stop less bright than the main light. This allowed there to be a gradual transition from highlight to shadow. When adding fill light to any scene, it is important to make sure the shape of the light is the same as the main light, which is why we used a second V-flat; if spill is not a concern, you can also fire the light into the corner of the room.

It was important to me to make sure the background of the image remained dark so the viewer's eye went where we wanted it to go. To control light spill, you can use direction, grids or distance. With V-flats, we used direction of light to push it as much as possible off the background.



Image © Michael Anthony

SETUP 2: INCREASE SHADOWS WITH A LIGHT CUTTER

Highlights and shadows are noticeable in editorials. The great thing about V-flats, if constructed correctly, is that you have a white and black side to them, which we will talk about in a second.

With this setup, we kept the same lighting ratio but removed the fill light.

Next, I positioned the keylight off to the left a little bit more to create direction in the light. When doing this with no fill light, it is essential that you keep your subject's nose pointed toward the light source in order to avoid unnecessary shadows in the wrong parts of the face.



Image © Michael Anthony

To create separation from the background, I added a light over the head of the subject bounced off the white ceiling. With this setup, I prefer an umbrella, which wraps light around the edges of the subject. For this shoot, I wanted to show that this could be accomplished with easy modifiers. Profoto makes an amazing deep white umbrella that works perfectly for this.

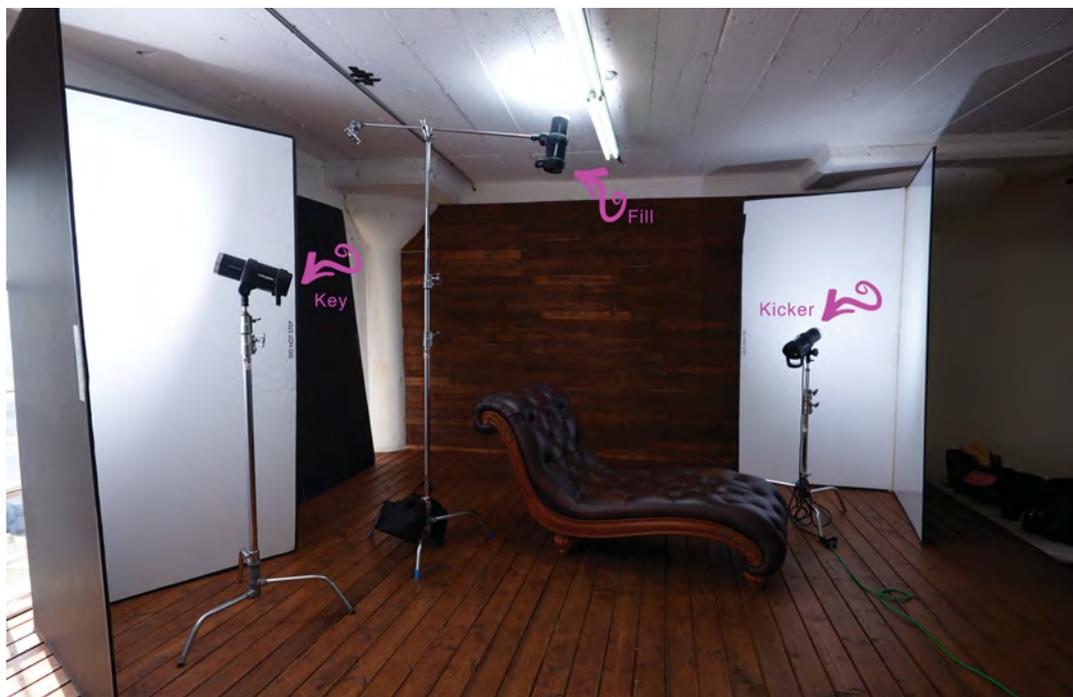
Last, to add the shadow to the right side of Jen, we added a black V-flat opposite the keylight, which cut out any light that would have reflected and spilled onto her because black absorbs light.

There are several reasons to do this. Adding shadow opposite the light increases texture. It can have a slimming effect on your clients. This type of side lighting can accentuate skin texture, so be careful with the type of portrait you are using it for.



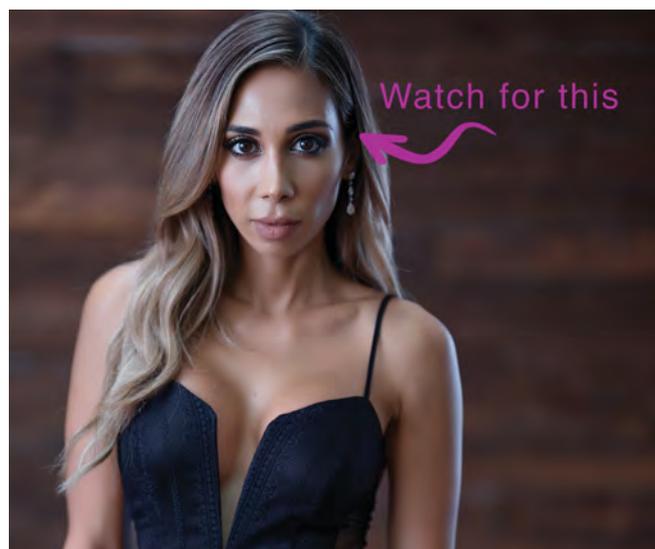
SETUP 3: KEY, KICKER AND TOP FILL

For this setup, we used the same lighting as in Setup 2, except we got rid of the light cutter and added a light through a V-flat opposite the keylight. We positioned the keylight at a 45-degree angle to our model so that we could wrap the light around her.



When adding a kicker light, there is always a chance of bad light spilling onto the face. The key to getting this right with females is to keep the kicker light off the face—because if it spills over, the light will make the face look larger. (With male subjects, this is a good thing.) In this image, the top light adds separation and fills the shadows created where the two side lights meet on the subject.

The second light adds separation and creates a three-dimensional quality of light.



Images © Michael Anthony



Image © Michael Anthony

POSING EXPRESSION FOR EDITORIAL BRIDAL IMAGES

Editorial-style portraits always have a bit of fashion flair to them. If you are shooting models, it will seem like second nature for them to pose accordingly, but with your regular clients who don't have modeling experience, it is easy to make them feel uncomfortable; if that happens, your photos will suffer. Your goal, of course, is to make any bride look beautiful, so pay attention to your interactions.

On the flip side, if you ask them to give you a cheesy smile, then you are circling back to 1985, and that's how you kill this trend of studio bridal sessions instead of reviving it.

You have to be diligent about coaching their pose, giving constant direction. Here are a few things I look for when posing expression.

I often have my subjects squint slightly. It has to be very subtle. This makes the subject look confident and gives the images a fashion feel. It is easy to accomplish this when you have a rapport with your client in the studio, where they don't have to worry about others watching them.

Exhale through your lips. The goal here is twofold. When exhaling, they have to first inhale, and that makes the chest look full and gives the shoulders good posture. It gives the lips a slight part, which, when coupled with the eye cue I gave above, has very good results.

You have to be meticulous with hair and other details. Dress position and hair placement matter. Adding a bit of motion looks great as well. Try using a fan on the hair.

I'm trying to make studio bridal sessions popular again, but I don't think doing traditional photography in a studio is the way to do it. Using a bit of fashion flair and great lighting, we will be able to make this trend stick and use it to create beautiful images for our clients. ■



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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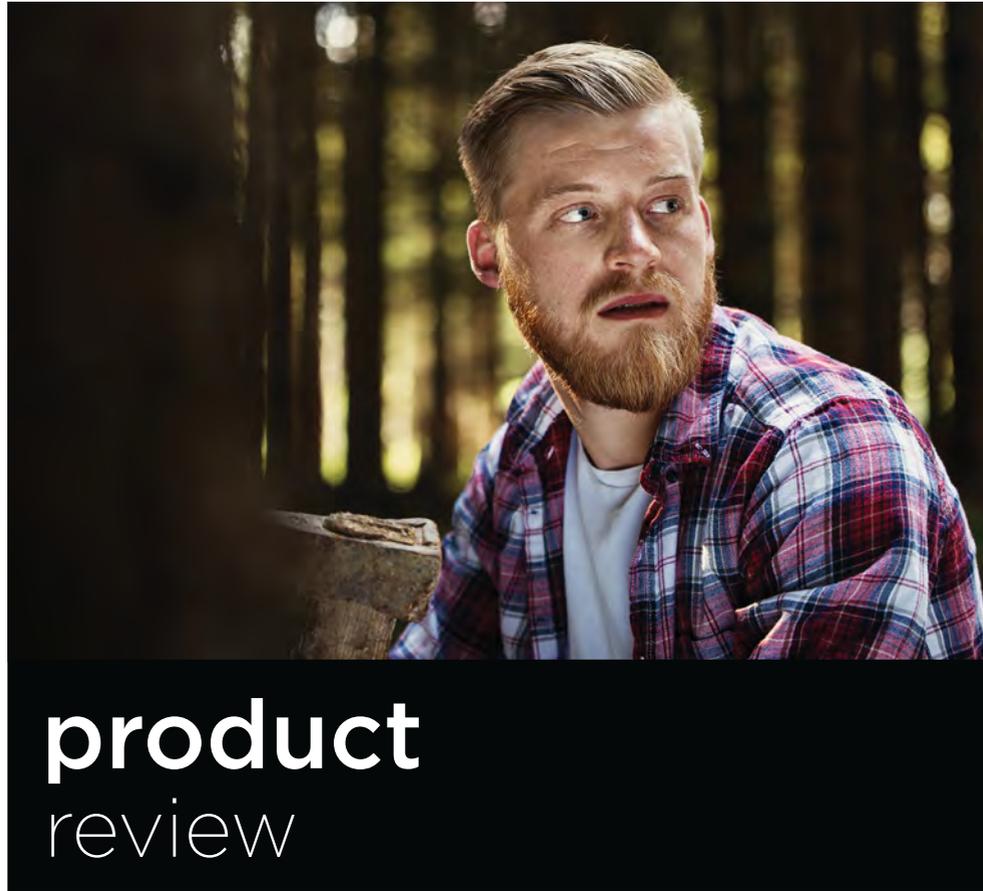


Image © Philip Ruopp

product
review

TAMRON with *Salvatore Cincotta*

TAMRON



Why Tamron SP 24-70mm F/2.8 Zoom Lens?

If you are looking for a cost-effective, fast-performing lens, the new Tamron 24-70 f/2.8 zoom is a great all-arounder. There is no substitute for speed. Investing in a f2.8 lens is a must for any photographer working events, weddings or portraits. It gives you that extra stop or two of light needed to work in low-light situations. More importantly, it gives you shallow depth of field, so your subject pops off the background.

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THE
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COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY:

HOW TO GET YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR

with **Audrey Woulard**



Seeing our work published is a goal for many of us. In the commercial world, the competition is steep. Your voice is your images, and it is important to speak to potential advertisers through your portfolio.

So, how do you get your foot in the door? First, let's define what commercial work is. If you haven't worked commercially, it's likely unclear to you how to approach the actual work and pricing. Defining it can help clear things up.

Commercial photographers capture images that will be used to make their client money. If Procter & Gamble hires a photographer to produce images for its latest Tide campaign about how its product gets whites whiter, then the photographer must create images that convey that message. This is usually the highest-paid type of commercial work. The finished works are tear sheets. You find the images in magazines and on signs and websites. Commercial photographers are paid each time their images are used for an agreed amount of time.



Images © Audrey Woulard

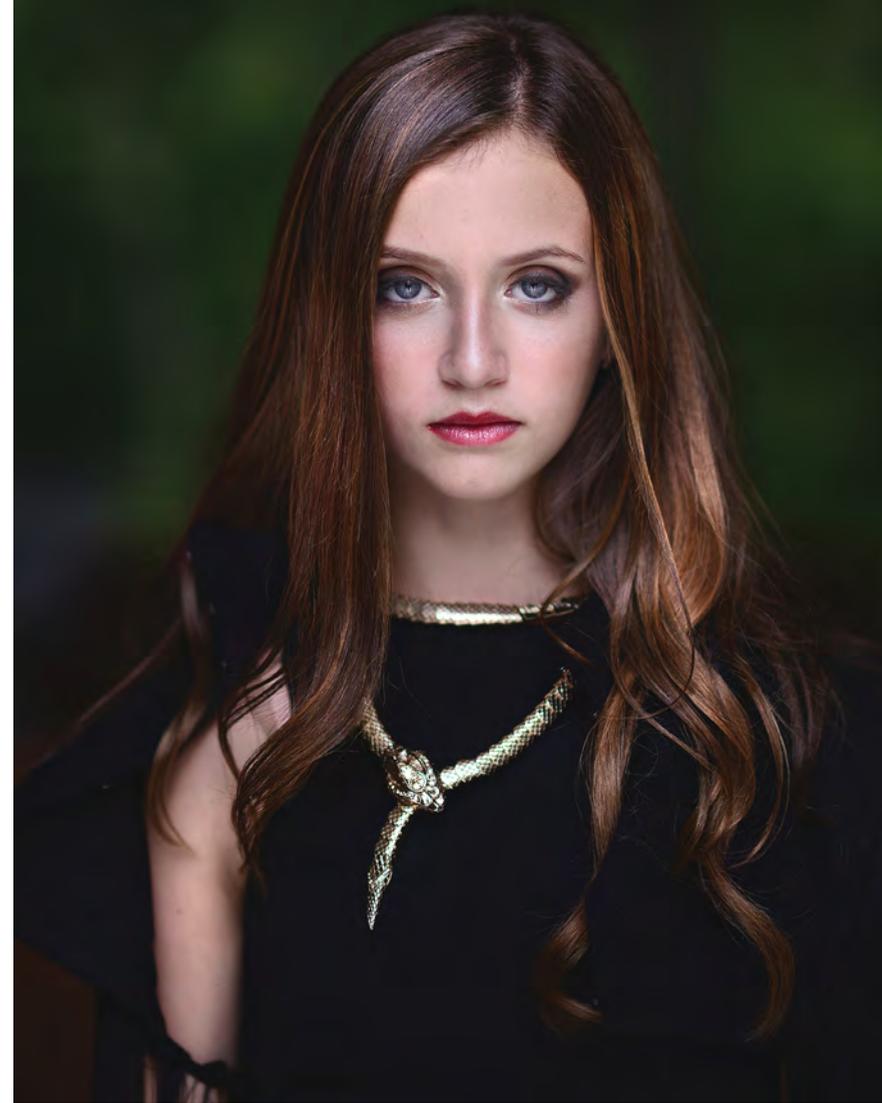


Image © Audrey Woulard

A photographer may also be contacted by a business to take pictures of its products that will be used for websites, brochures or some other form of collateral. This subgenre of commercial photography is called product photography.

The most prominent commercial work is editorial. Editorial photography includes those images that are used to illustrate a story in a magazine. If *Parents* magazine features a story about picky eaters, it asks photographers for pictures of kids eating, kids protesting their meal or other images to help convey the story.

Editorial photography is the lowest paid. One of the reasons for this is the photographer is granted photo credit. If you ever look at a magazine article, it will state the author, and then it will say "Photography by Jane Doe." Why do photographers do editorial work if there is so little money in it? Because advertising agencies and creative directors find a lot of their talent looking at editorial articles.

It is important to note that there is a big difference between commercial images and portrait images. Advertising agencies do not want to sift through a photographer's gallery that's full of portrait work.

So what should you do first?

Find your voice and what you're good at capturing. Your portfolio should be consistent. That doesn't mean you have to photograph all the same subjects. It means you should be able to tell the same story with any subject.

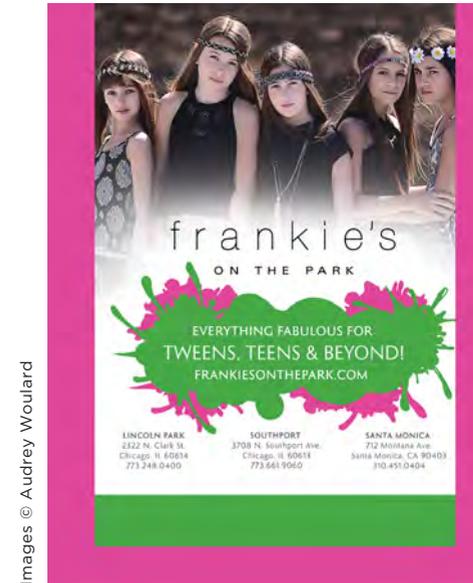
Advertising companies hire photographers based on their vision. You must have the ability to convey the same look and vision with any subject. For example, I exclusively photograph people under 18. I do not photograph anything else. Why would Iams pet food company hire me for its biggest ad campaign if I have never photographed an animal? The ad agency hired me based on how I use light, and wanted me to design a modern set with strategic splashes of color. Those elements were consistent in my work with kids, and they wanted that look with animals. Having a substantial portfolio of 12 to 15 strong images is your first step.

If you are a DIY type, pick up a copy of the latest edition of *Photographer's Market*. This massive resource is updated every year. *2018 Photographer's Market* was released in September. It has listings for hundreds of agencies and publications, and includes contact info, type of publication and imagery desired. Just look out for occasional outdated information.



Images © Audrey Woulard

Create a large postcard with four to five of your best commercial images and your contact information. If you've already done a commercial assignment, include one tear sheet on that card.



Images © Audrey Woulard



Pick up a few magazines that you would love to see your work published in. In the front of every magazine, you will see the photo editors' names listed on the masthead. Because photo editors are always looking for new talent, they expect emails from photographers.

Before you email a photo editor, make sure that your style of photography fits with the images featured in the magazine. In your email, show that you read their magazine and that you're knowledgeable about their style, and that you'd love to shoot any upcoming editorials. If the photo editor likes your work, you may not receive a response until they have an article that fits their criteria. When they need certain images, the photo editor will usually send out a mass email to those they add to their list asking for individual images. If they love your work, they may contact you to shoot specifically for an article.

Remember, editorial work is key to getting your foot in the door with the major advertisers. Editorial work is the grassroots marketing of the commercial world.

Send your postcard directly to the creative director of every agency you want to work with. If they like you, the creative director will place your information in their file. Creative directors receive a lot of direct mail. Most mailed submissions go unnoticed. So how do you gain their attention? Send it via FedEx. That envelope will spark their attention, and they will most definitely open it.



Image © Audrey Woulard

Don't shy away from opening an online gallery with many of the free websites, such as Workbook, 500px and Flickr. Advertising agencies are always combing through those websites. Again, you want to make sure you have a cohesive gallery and that you're showing your best commercial-style images.



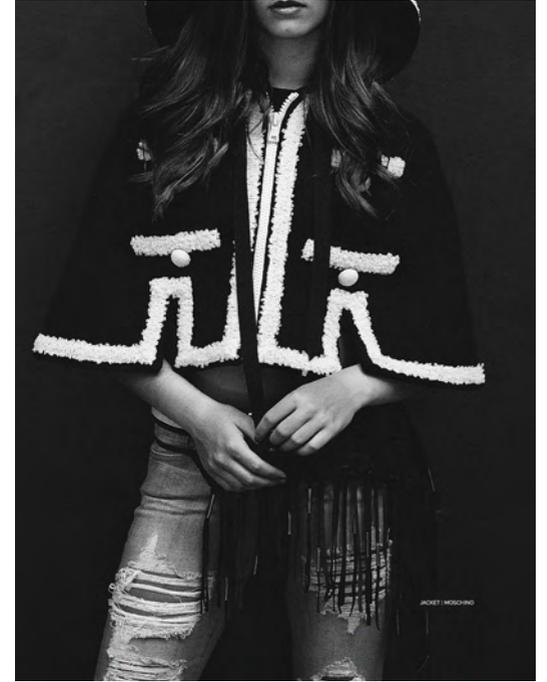
Image © Audrey Woulard



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The last thing you can do is seek the help of a photography agent, also known as a representative. It's not easy. A photography rep acts as a liaison between photographers and advertising agencies. The rep finds the photographer work and negotiates all terms and payment on your behalf. Reps work for you, and will always work hard because they take 20 percent of your earnings.

Agents are skilled at recognizing talent that sells. If you feel you have what it takes, seek out reps who have no more than one other photographer in each of the genres you're interested in. The smaller reps manage only one photographer per genre, while bigger agencies take on two to three photographers per genre.

There are only two ways to get in front of a photographer rep. You can email them with a link to your commercial photography website, or you can send in a physical portfolio for them to review. If you send your physical portfolio, include a self-addressed envelope/box so they can send it back to you.

If you contact agencies that do not represent another photographer who specializes in the work you do, your chances are higher that they will contact you for a meeting. If you're unsure where to find photography reps, visit Workbook.com and search for "artist representatives."

Let me reiterate a few things. If you're serious about venturing into the commercial world, it takes work. You have to market yourself, and there are no shortcuts. Those who do the work will be rewarded. Do not turn away from editorial work because the pay is meager. Make sure the editorial work you agree to do is legit. The idea behind editorial work is to be seen by those who could grant you a high-paying commercial contract.

With a solid commercial portfolio and a determination to follow through with everything you need to do, you can achieve your goals. ■



Audrey Woulard is a portrait and commercial photographer specializing in tween portraiture who works out of a natural-light loft in the Loop of downtown Chicago. She is an industry speaker and educator, traveling the world to share her knowledge with other photographers.
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DELMONICO
STEAKHOUSE

A COMMERCIAL SHOOT

with Sal Cincotta

This month we dive into running and producing a commercial shoot for one of our clients: Delmonico Steakhouse in Las Vegas. Photographers have more access to this type of work than you might expect. Any client walking in the door for a headshot is a commercial client. Think of headshots as the gateway drug for a more in-depth relationship and project delivery.

Make no mistake, this is tough work, not merely something we show up and shoot. Unlike headshots, it requires a ton of preparation to understand what the client's needs are, and how the imagery, video and other assets we create will be used. I get pretty specific about a project's goals and objectives with the client so we are all in sync. There is nothing worse than getting to the end of a job to find a client who's unhappy with the results. This should rarely be the case, and can happen only if there is no communication between teams. Communication is the key to success.

I have worked on many commercial projects. The ones that go sideways are the ones where the key stakeholders either were not involved or had very little to say about the requirements. Be cautious here. This will bite you in the ass, I guarantee it. I know because I have had it happen multiple times. The only way to prevent it is to ensure you have all the stakeholders approve the project scope. Find out who owns final approval. And if there is someone on that list who has not been part of the planning or who has not approved the scope of the project, insist they approve it before moving forward.

Since we have adopted this strategy, we have had almost no issues with final deliverables. Everyone is in sync. They understand that when they change scope, it will cost more money. No one gets to say, "Oh, I didn't know." Yes, you did know. You approved and signed off on it.

Now, let's look at the scope of this project. Our main goal was to create imagery, still and moving, to be used in social media and web assets to promote the restaurant, its team and its amazing food. Our job, as the creative team, is to make their restaurant stand out.

So, let's get started.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

PART 1
HEADSHOTS

PHOTOGRAPHING COMMERCIAL HEADSHOTS

A headshot is a headshot, right? No, not at all. Don't get me wrong, there is a place for a headshot on a white background, but at a certain point, they all start looking the same and rarely stand out from anyone else's. This presents us with all sorts of issues. What is our value proposition? Is it that our white background is better than the one you get at the mall?

I am just not a fan of this style of headshot. My style is more lifestyle and environmental. And for this project, the goal was to showcase staff in their own environments. We had the chef staff, we had the sommeliers and we had the front of house. I wanted to light and showcase each of these groups in their own unique way. Now do you understand why I am not a fan of a plain white background? This ensures I get the client a unique set of images that will be used in marketing—things like social media, marketing brochures and magazine ads.

REQUIREMENTS

The final shots needed to showcase the personalities of the staff in their environments. Other than that, we didn't have a bunch of technical requirements. This is where the client is trusting you to do your thing. Understanding how they will be used is important. I don't want to waste time and resources shooting for the sake of shooting. I want a clear shot list, a list of who is being shot, where we're doing it, how the images are being used—this helps you shoot efficiently.

We delivered a final fully edited image of each employee and group.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge was timing. Remember, this was a working and active restaurant. Coordinating call times with staff and having a production schedule that you stick to is key. We had three locations: the kitchen, the wine wall and the front of house. We had to be set up and dialed in with lighting before anyone arrived to each scene. This allowed us to get people in and out and then get them back to their work. Don't forget, these people have real work to do.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

GEAR

Camera

For the portraits, we used the Canon 5DM4, alternating between the 35mm 1.4 and the 85mm 1.2.

Lighting

We used the Profoto B1 and B2 in combination. For lighting modifiers, we used their gel kits for colored lighting and their portable beauty dish for the keylight.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

FINAL RESULTS

When it was all said and done, we got the team a plethora of shots for their use. The client was extremely happy with the results. The boring white background headshots have a place in our offerings, but I don't think this is it. I love the environmental nature of these shots and the use of gels to give them a unique look and feel.



PART 2

PRODUCT SHOTS

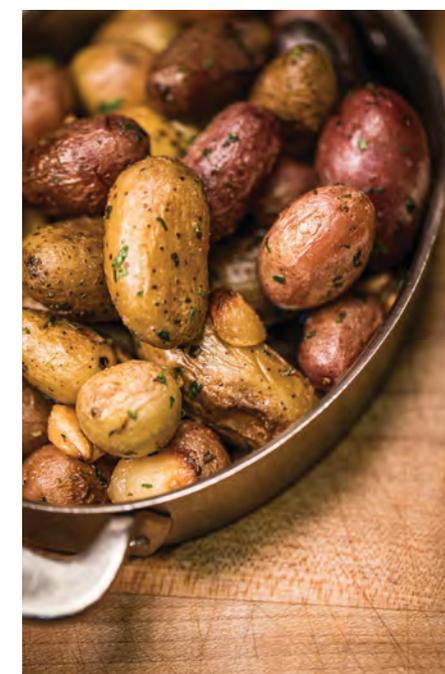


GETTING PRODUCT SHOTS FOR COMMERCIAL USE

In this case, the product is the food. We need hero shots of the food. Now, I will confess, I am not a food photographer by trade—there are incredibly talented people who can make food look like art. My job was to make real plates look appetizing. Again, understanding the requirements on a project like this is paramount. The images would be used in both ad space and (most importantly) social media posts, blog posts and ads on Facebook and Instagram.

I left out the negative space so I could add copy as needed. You will see the progression of some of the shots as I was working. Initially, I left some of the food on the plate, but as I was shooting and seeing the results, I adjusted and started laying the food on the cutting board underneath. I felt this would give the company more space to work with.

Prior to the shoot, we worked with the team at Delmonico to determine what exactly we needed to photograph. We were not going to photograph the entire menu. Again, getting in sync with your client is so important. Everyone understood the primary shot list, and we then created a nice-to-have list. If we had time, we would shoot the remaining items. This took a lot of pressure off the production team because we had clear marching orders. In addition, I had someone on my team managing the kitchen and the next plates. She would check off each plate as we shot it to keep us on track.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



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REQUIREMENTS

The task at hand was to photograph some of their signature plates for social media and other marketing efforts. We wanted to light the product well and make it look appetizing. The final image should make you want to eat at the restaurant. It's a far cry from food photos on Chinese takeout menus.

It sounds easy enough, but the challenges were not so easy to deal with.





Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

CHALLENGES

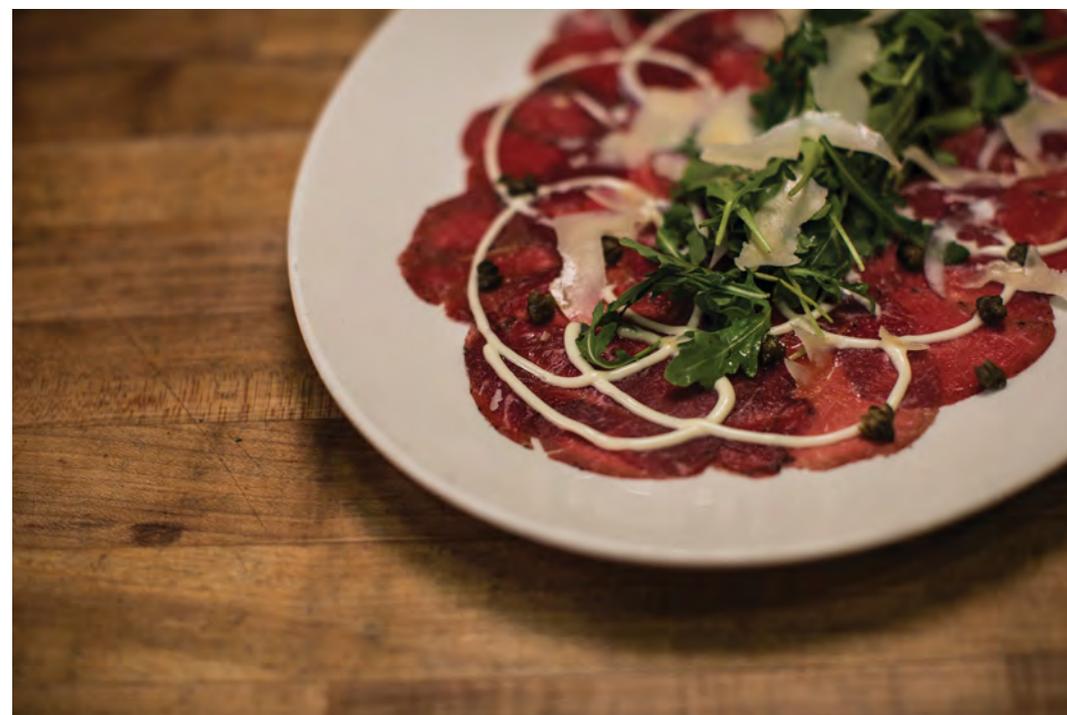
First, we had a location issue. The room they had set aside for us was covered with white linens. The tabletops underneath were ugly. So, where were we going to set up to shoot? Remember, I have to make this look appetizing, and it's not like I am in my studio and have access to props.

We found a large cutting board, but it was in the kitchen during dinner service. Not only that, but the area we had was right next to a 400-degree oven.

I shot for an hour and a half to two hours, which kicked my ass. I was dripping and physically exhausted from the pace we were working at in that heat. Every time they opened that oven, it felt like a piece of my body was melting.

Lighting also presented some challenges. We were in a part of the kitchen where the lighting was not very useful for what we were trying to accomplish, so we had to bring in a small light source that would give us a consistent look and feel.

The final challenge was not gaining 20 pounds during that part of the night. The food did not go to waste. We put dish after dish in the backroom for us to eat once we were done, and eat we did!



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

GEAR

Camera

Canon 5DM4 with my Canon 100mm, 50mm, and 35mm lenses

Lighting

Westcott Flex Panels 1x1 X-Bracket Set

We used two of these, one as the main light clamped above and one for directional light from the side. I cannot say enough great things about these lights. They're light and powerful, and the quality of light is stellar. They allowed us to shoot quickly and control the look and feel in real time. Depending on the dish and the shadows being cast, I was moving the light in real time to get the desired look and feel. This would have taken 10x longer using flash, and it would have been disruptive in the kitchen.

FINAL RESULTS

I love the shots we got. They were professionally lit, with great quality and shallow depth of field by design. They gave the client what they needed to market and advertise on social media and get people excited about coming into the restaurant.

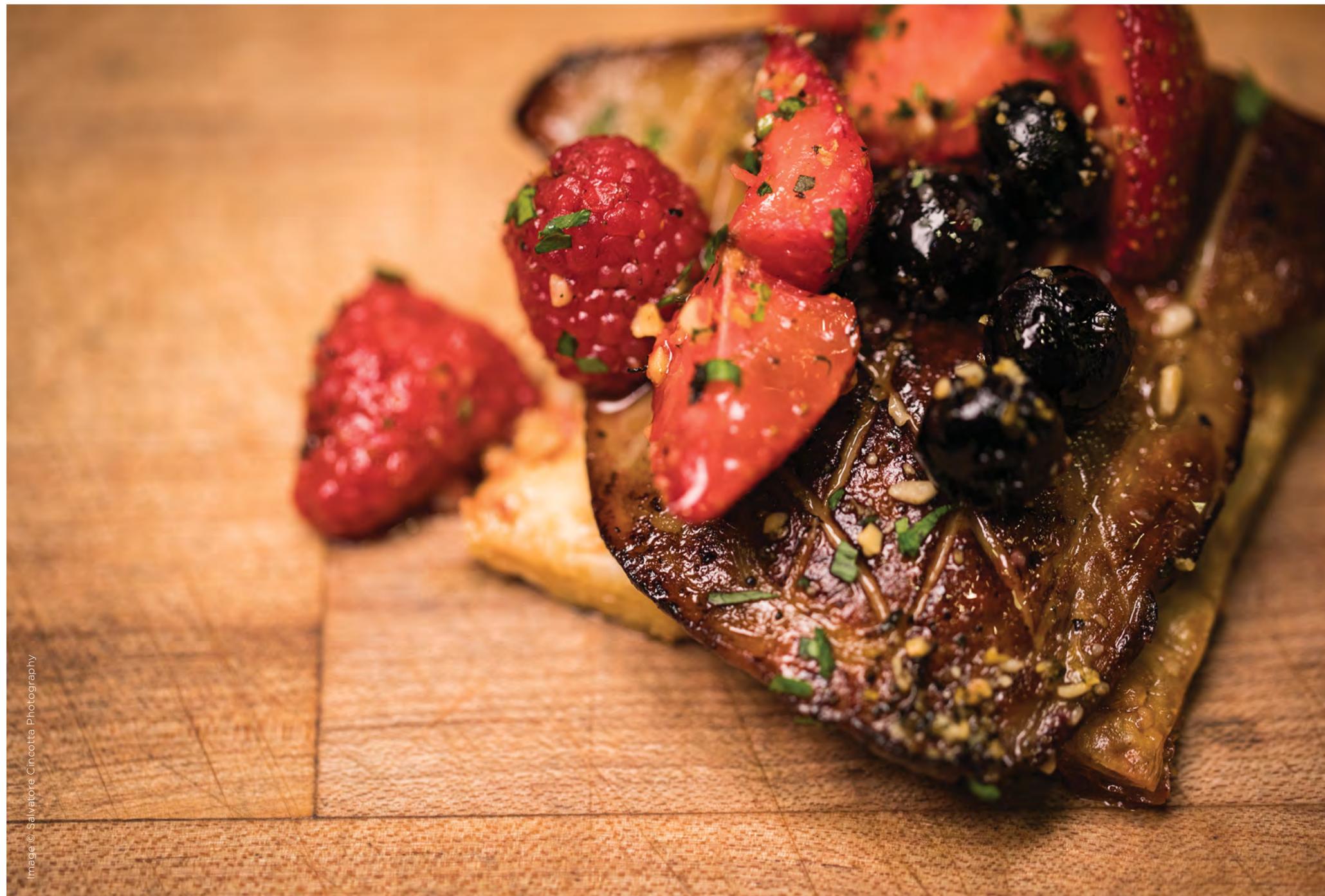


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PART 3

THE VIDEO



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

PRODUCING A PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

If you have never looked at video services for your business, you may want to start considering it. Here is why. First, there is a huge segment of the small business market not being serviced. Big production houses are focused on six-figure jobs. They are not playing in the small-budget world. Mind you, a small budget doesn't mean cheap. It means it's not six figures. That being said, I am ok producing a film for \$5,000 to \$10,000. You might want to cut your teeth by offering these kinds of services for smaller businesses in your area.

Secondly, and most importantly, video is the new world order. You have to showcase your business visually. This can be as simple as a talking head explaining your product or service to something more elaborate and scripted tied to a campaign. The bottom line is that companies need these services, and demand will only increase down the road. Video is no longer only for companies running TV commercials. In fact, more video is being consumed on social media than on TV. It's not uncommon for major companies to create video campaigns that never see broadcast TV. The same will hold true for small and medium businesses around the world.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

REQUIREMENTS

The goal of the video was to showcase the restaurant, and the process and quality ingredients that go into making the food. We wanted to do something a little different. Most restaurants want to show the final product and start the story there. I felt the better story was behind the scenes—everything that goes into producing the meal, from sourcing ingredients to how they are prepared and then, of course, close the scene with the final meal being dropped.

We wrote the script and set up the shot list. We worked closely with the client to ensure the language we chose and the shot list all made sense to the restaurant and the brand. The worst thing you can do is put together a script that doesn't match the voice of the brand. This can be disastrous for any brand, but it's more important in the small and medium business space. Larger companies have plenty of resources to put into these details, but smaller companies are trusting you. Ultimately, they don't know what they don't know, and that's where we come in. They expect us to guide them through this process.

Final delivery of this video is for their website and social channels.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

CHALLENGES

We had a very tight schedule to produce this. This is a working kitchen. We could not interfere with dinner service. The shot list was very strategic. Run-and-gun shooting was not going to work for a project like this. Every shot had to be perfectly measured and thought out.

Some scenes needed to be during dinner service to show the hustle of the kitchen. This was another limitation for us. For these scenes, we needed to have a very small footprint.

Lighting in some areas was also going to be a challenge for the video team, but we had to make sure we were balancing the look and feel of the kitchen rather than making it look like we were slamming artificial light in there.

GEAR

There's no doubt that gear was going to play a very important role in this shoot. Gear was a challenge because we had to fly with it and because we had to keep it small for the busy kitchen.

Lighting

Westcott Flex Panels 1x1 X-Bracket Set

Camera

Panasonic GH5

We shot 4K footage using vlog to get the most data possible. In addition, we recorded to the Atomos Ninja so we could shoot in an uncompressed format, giving us the most dynamic range possible for grading the final footage.

Lenses

I am a Canon still shooter, so I love using their glass to get that shallow depth of field and control the look and feel of the final film. We used the Metabones adapter, which allows you to use Canon glass on your Panasonic GH5. I used my entire range of Canon Prime glass: 100mm, 85mm, 50mm, 35mm, 24mm.

Stabilization

The DJI Ronin is the perfect tool for the job. I have wasted money on several other stabilizers. Do yourself a favor and invest in the right tool the first time. Almost every scene with motion was filmed with this. It's small, compact and easy to use in tight spaces.



FINAL RESULTS

The final results tell a great story of the restaurant. We made it stand out in Las Vegas's crowded marketplace. When you watch this video, you will get hungry. If you do, I did my job!

WRAPPING IT ALL UP

This was an incredibly fun project. We had to push ourselves during all facets of the creative process. We had to be extremely organized and deliberate in our actions. And most importantly, we had to deliver a final product we could be proud of.

We had allowed for three days to complete this entire project, but because we managed to stay ahead of schedule, we wrapped it up in two. It was perfect. It gave the client confidence that working with me and my team was professional and well worth the investment.

You never want your clients to feel you have no idea what you are doing. That will not help you or your business grow.

Again, there is an incredible amount of opportunity out there to service the small and medium business markets. It's not going to be handed to you. You need to get out there and grab it. ■



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

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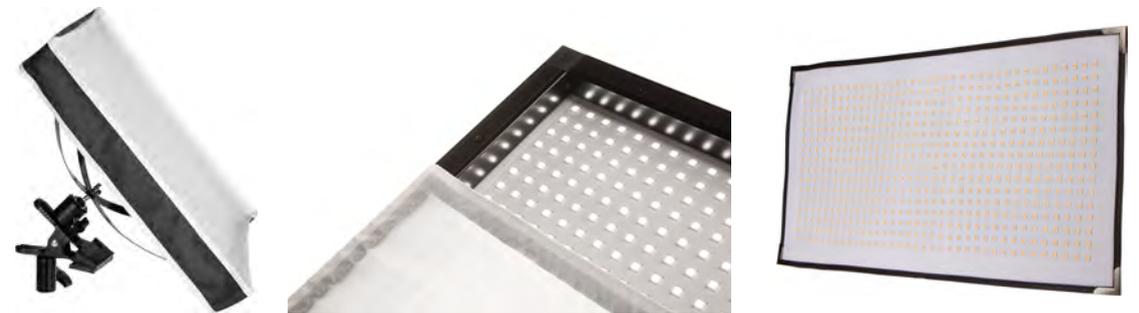


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Why Westcott Flex LED Mats?

I love Flex lights. They are easy to use, very powerful, cost-effective, they throw great light and they're extremely portable.

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Over the years I've been using these, power has never been an issue. The output has always been more than enough to light almost every situation I encounter.

They are not just for video. Read my article on commercial shoots in this issue, where I talk about how we used two of the 1x1 Flex Panels to light some food photography.

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MOODY ONE- LIGHT MALE PORTRAITS

with Michael Corsentino

A focusable continuous-light Fresnel and gobo set of louvered blinds creates a dramatic patterned effect. A silver reflector placed opposite the keylight adds a subtle fill light on the shadowed side of the model.

It never ceases to amaze me what's possible with just one light, whether it's a strobe or constant, plus a little know-how and creativity. A recent assignment I shot for one of Orlando's top modeling agencies is a perfect example of the magic you can create with one light.

I'd been asked to shoot promotional images of Kino, a newly signed model. The agency wanted dramatic edgy shots that highlighted his chiseled features and ripped physique. It was the perfect assignment for a couple of cool one-light setups.

WORKING WITH MODELING AGENCIES

One of the first things I do when I'm shooting for a modeling agency is ask what they need for that particular model. Does the model have an exciting portfolio? If so, I review it carefully because there's no use creating something that's already been done. I find out the creative direction and mood they're after—edgy, soft, a mixture or anything in between. It's different for every model, so get a creative brief so you can more easily formulate a plan and avoid any misunderstandings.

I inquire about the model's experience, strengths and weaknesses so I know what to expect in their ability to move, be evocative on camera and take direction. The more information I have going in, the better equipped I am to produce a series of winning images for the agency.

CONCEPTUALIZING THE SHOOT

Since the requested direction was dramatic, I chose a black backdrop, retro '70s styling, an edgy black-and-white conversion and two light sources: a strobe with an octabank to illuminate Kino from above and an LED Fresnel constant light shot through a gobo of louvered blinds to create a dramatic side-lit patterned effect.

STYLING WITHOUT A STYLIST

Model tests don't normally include a styling budget. At best, there's a hair and makeup artist, and even that is on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes the models handle those tasks themselves to save money. Absent a professional stylist, the model and I work together to develop a concept. The direction for the styling is also based on input from the modeling agency, which is serving as the client and sometimes creative director.

Alexis, the owner of Modern Muse Models, wanted something cool and edgy for Kino, whom she had just signed. I explained to Kino that my concept for his test shoot was two looks, both retro '70s inspired, both dramatic, shot on a black background and each with a different edgy lighting style. For wardrobe, I asked Kino if he owned a trench coat, pea coat or leather waist coat. This was a no-go, but he did say he would be happy to pick something up and return it later. This is exactly what a stylist does, FYI. I'd been wanting to shoot a model in a retro brown pleather '70s waist coat with wide lapels for a while, and asked Kino to see what he could find at vintage clothing stores. This would be the perfect look for what I had in mind, so I had my fingers crossed. Soon Kino sent pictures of the jacket he'd sourced, which was exactly what I had envisioned.

The jacket would be our main attraction, along with accessories I pulled from my own collection—jewelry, sunglasses and hats. It's always a good idea to have a collection of your own that you can pull from. We ended up using only the jewelry.

WHY ONE LIGHT?

There's a lot you can do with multiple lights, so why would I use only one light? In nature, you have only one light, the sun. If you're a lighting geek like me, you've been stopped in your tracks by naturally occurring window light, the light from an overhead bulb on a face, a car's headlights casting a beam of light through a set of blinds. It doesn't get simpler than one light. The magic lies in what you do with that light. Creating drama with one light lessens the variables, focuses the viewer's interest and allows you to concentrate on being creative rather than fussing with too much equipment.



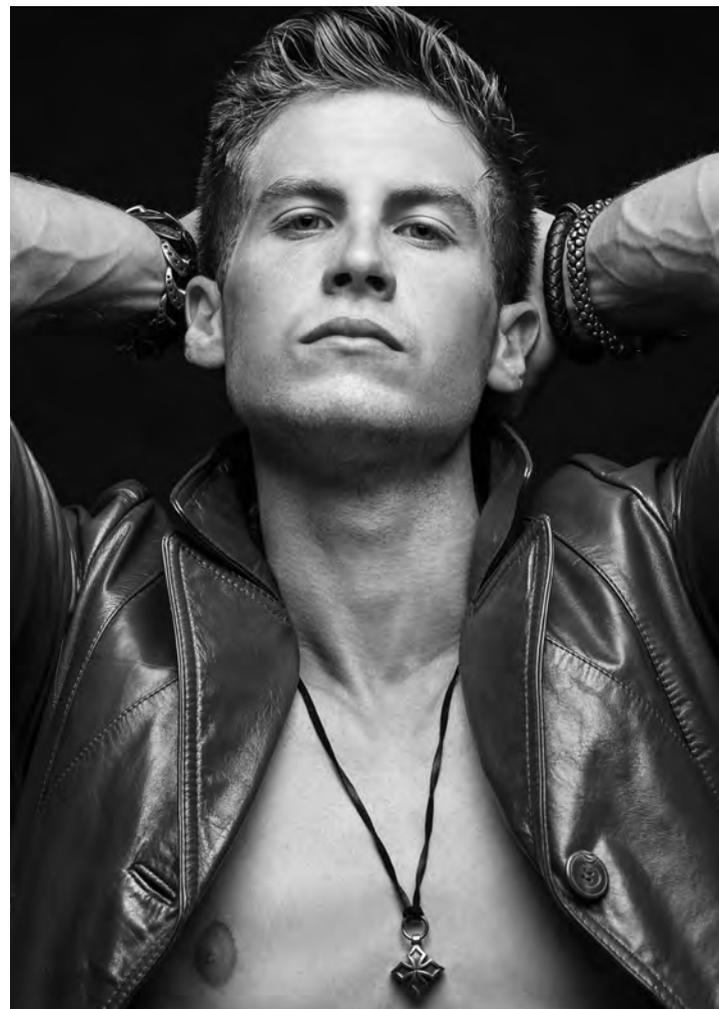
Communication between the photographer and the model/creative team before the shoot helps keep everyone on the same page and avoids unwanted surprises. Here, model Kino sends an image of the wardrobe he's sourced for the shoot.

GEAR

Here's what I used for the black background on both looks.

- 2 Kupo Master 40" Riser C-Stands With Sliding Leg (Silver, 10.6') MFR KS703512
- 2 Kupo 2-1/2" Grip Heads With Big Handle (Chrome-Plated Finish) MFR KG203012
- 2 Kupo 20" Grip Arms With Big Handle MFR KG203212

LOOK 1



While often neglected as a lighting pattern, when done correctly, illumination from above creates a compelling effect.

LOOK 1

Not all light comes from 45 degrees to the side and 45 degrees from above. The sun or an overhead light bulb comes from above, just like the lighting I created for this first look. Top light, or light placed directly above your subject, is the hugely underrated lonely stepchild of lighting patterns. I can't say enough good things about this simple setup and the results it produces.

A few tips: You'll want to place your subject just behind the back edge of the octabank to work with the most pleasing part of the light (known as feathered light). Slightly angle the modifier toward the background to create more catchlights in the eyes. Direct the subject to ever so slightly raise the chin to get more light on the face. I love the dramatic shadowed look this lighting technique creates.



Images © Michael Corsentino

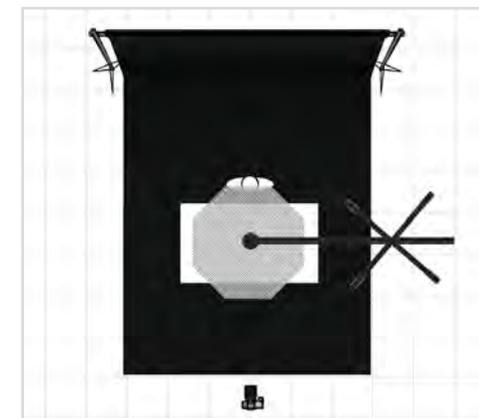
The simple combination of a strobe placed above the model, using a medium octabank pitched slightly toward the backdrop, and a ground-based white-faced reflector, creates the winning effect in the first look.

The 7B pack required only 50 percent of its power to provide enough light for an f16 stop. This lighting style could just as easily have been accomplished using a 500-watt second mono-block strobe. While I have Profoto 500-watt second mono-blocks in my lighting arsenal, I prefer the Profoto Pro Heads when I'm using a boom arm. Their light weight and compact form factor makes them much easier to counterweight and work with. While not digital, with the power pack situated at the base of the Manfrotto wind-up stand, adjusting the power is as simple as dialing the power knob up or down.

LOOK 1 GEAR

Here is a list of the equipment used for Look #1:

- Profoto 7B-1200
- Profoto Head Extension Cable 16' (5m) MFR 303518
- Profoto Pro-B Head
- Elinchrom Rotalux Softbox Octa (53") MFR EL26184
- Manfrotto 387XBU Black Steel Super Wind-Up Stand - 12' (3.6m) MFR # 387XBU
- Manfrotto 025BSL Super Boom, Black - 8.8' (2.7 m) MFR 025BSL
- Sekonic L-758DR DigitalMaster Flash Meter



An overhead view illustrates the model's position relative to the octabank. Note that the model is placed slightly behind the modifier so he's illuminated by the softer, or "feathered," area of light. The octabank is pitched slightly toward the background to capture more catchlights in the model's eyes and a subtle vignette lighting effect on the background. A ground-based white reflector fills in the shadows created by the keylight and illuminates the model's figure and clothing.

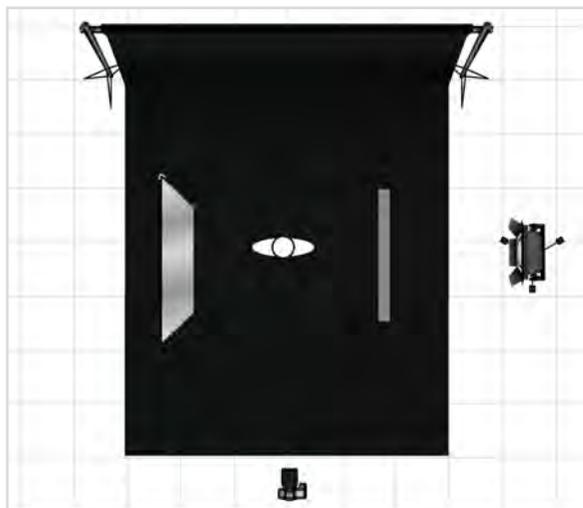


Images © Michael Corsentino

Placing a gobo, in this case a set of louvered blinds, between a focusable continuous-light Fresnel and model creates a dramatic patterned lighting effect. A silver reflector placed opposite the keylight provides a subtle fill light on the shadowed side of the model.

LOOK 2

For the second look, I chose another simple but effective technique: the use of a focusable constant light and a set of louvered blinds to cast a patterned shadow on the model. This can be any sort of pattern or shape, and is known as a gobo. It goes between the light and subject to create a unique shadowed pattern. I chose the focusable Fresnel over a strobe because it allowed me to control the sharpness of the shadows created by the Fresnel. As this is a much lower-powered source, I needed to boost my ISO to 800, use a shutter speed of 1/125 and open up my lens from f16 with strobe to f5. I used the Fresnel's focus knob, distance from the blinds and barn doors to fine-tune the lighting effect.



LOOK 2 GEAR

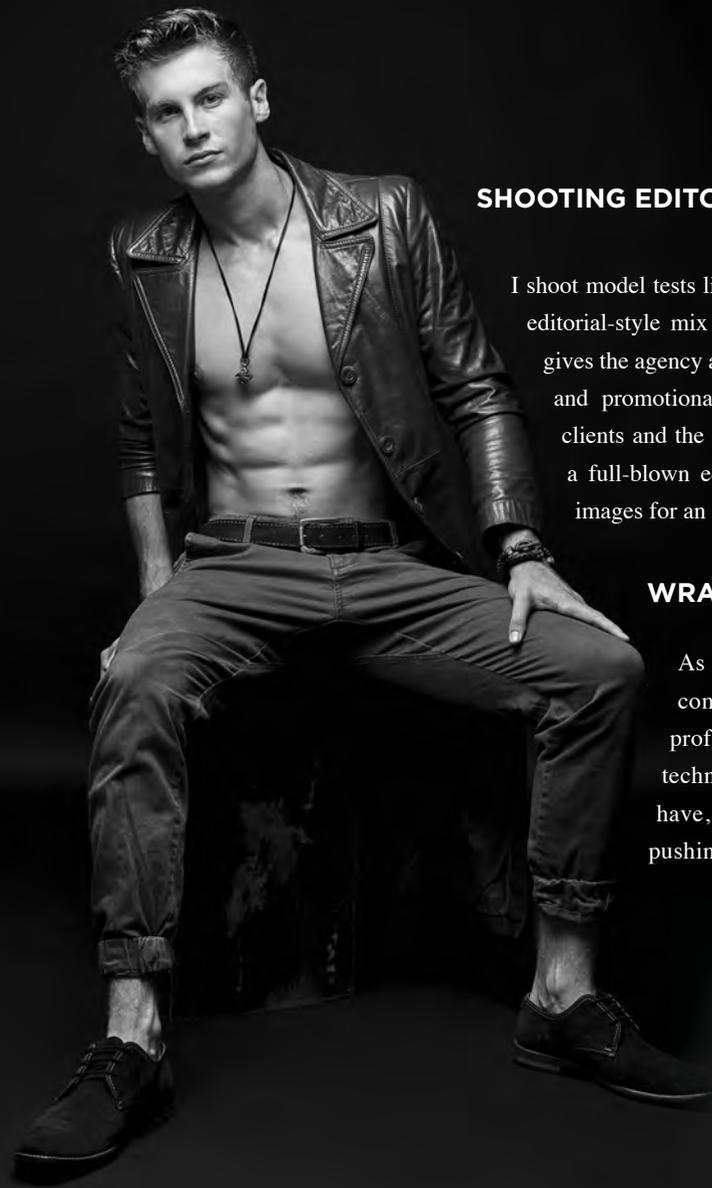
Here's my equipment list for this look:

- Lupolux DayLED 1000
- 1 Kupo 40" Riser C-Stand Turtle Base Kit MFR KS704712 to support the blinds
- 1 Kupo Master 40" Riser C-Stand With Sliding Leg MFR KS703512 to support the Lupolux
- Louvered-blinds gobo
- Sekonic L-758DR DigitalMaster Flash Meter

Placing a gobo between a focusable continuous-light Fresnel and model creates a dramatic patterned lighting effect. A silver reflector placed opposite the keylight provides a subtle fill light on the shadowed side of the model.

LOOK 2





SHOOTING EDITORIALY

I shoot model tests like any commercial job. I capture an editorial-style mix of images from wide to tight. This gives the agency and the model options for comp cards and promotional materials, and provides potential clients and the agency a look at what I can do with a full-blown editorial. I also end up with enough images for an editorial for my portfolio.

WRAP-UP

As you can see, you don't need complicated setups to produce professional results. Focus on the techniques, not the gear. Use what you have, get creative, have fun and keep pushing the envelope. ■

Image © Michael Corsentino

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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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5 STEPS
TO EASY
**HEAD
SHOTS**

with Vanessa Joy

Headshots are becoming higher in demand with the rise of social media. In the age of startups, more and more people need to have a professional photo that represents them and their brand. If you're not taking advantage of this exploding market in photography, I highly suggest you start. If you're not sure where to start, www.headshot-bootcamp.com might be just the thing for you.

There are five steps to creating easy headshots that I implement in every single session that comes through my door at www.nj-headshots.com. Whether or not you have a studio, you can take these are steps to create the best possible headshot for every client.



Images © Vanessa Joy

1. NOT ALL HEADSHOTS ARE CREATED EQUAL

Whenever a new client walks in, one of the first things I ask is what they do for a living and what they'll be using the headshot for. Other than reading their personality in general, this is crucial to how I photograph them, light them and work with their expression.

If a lawyer comes in, I'll typically make her appear more powerful, maybe even a little intimidating. If an actor comes in, I'll likely want to give him one "commercial" happy photo, and another "character" style showing off more personality. What they do and how they use the photo impacts what kind of photo I'll take. It's the first thing to address before touching on the rest of the four steps to easy headshots.



Images © Vanessa Joy

2. MODIFY YOUR LIGHT

Anytime you're using strobes, you have the unique advantage of shaping the light to anything you want. When photographing headshots, I'm looking for a soft, even light to complement skin tones and hide blemishes.

My go-to is the Profoto 3x4 softbox. It provides a soft, double-diffused light that is ideal if I need to step back for a three-quarter or full-length shot. I like having the large white diffuser double as a reflector when I turn off one of the lights for a more dramatic, angular look. I use a butterfly setup: two lights on my subject and a third light bringing up the background.

Next to that, I love my Profoto beauty dish for a clamshell setup. I rarely use this setup for the average headshot, but I do whip it out when I have an actor come in. I like using it with a darker background, which I achieve by toning down the power of my background light or turning it off completely.



Profoto 3x4 Softbox



Profoto OCF Beauty Dish

3. SET YOUR EXPOSURE

Because I'm in a studio with powerful lights (three Profoto D1's), I shoot all my headshots at ISO 50. My shutter is at 160 and my aperture is usually set to 3.2 because I like the eyes to be in focus, but don't really need every pore to be (and my clients appreciate that).



Images © Vanessa Joy

I manually set my white balance to the color of my lights (5600K) and start my two front lights' power at the lowest setting, 4.0 on the D1 and my background at 7.0, so that it goes completely white. I start off at the lowest setting for the main lights so I can slowly manipulate them to where I want them to be.

My lights are set up first in an even butterfly position. They are at about a 45-degree angle to the subject, at an even distance. This casts an even light on them, which I'll end up changing depending on which is their good side.



Image © Vanessa Joy

4. POSE THEM ON THEIR GOOD SIDE

Everyone has a good side. If you're lucky, you've got two. After I chat with my client about what they do and have an idea of how I want to photograph them, I still need to determine their best side.

Because I'm tethering during my shoot, clients can collaborate with me on this, which I love. It makes them feel like they're part of the process, and it's fun to let them know which is their better side. I have them look at the camera dead on, then turn their head a little to the left and then a little to the right. We end up with three pictures to look at side-by-side. Most of the time we agree on the better side.



Images © Vanessa Joy

After that, I pose them in a relaxed stance with their feet in skateboard position and hands in their pockets, on their hips or folded. My goal is for them to feel comfortable standing in front of my camera, and then work on their head position afterward.

Talking to my clients during the shoot is key to making them feel more comfortable. As I'm tilting and turning their head and making them do weird things like stick their chin out (not up, not down, but pushed forward), they need constant feedback to let them know how they're doing. Always keep feedback positive and encouraging.



Images © Vanessa Joy

5. CUT THE POST

My favorite part about headshots is the post-processing work. Why? Because there practically isn't any.

Tethering allows my clients to pick their pictures on the spot, eliminating the proofing process. After they leave, I export the pictures from Lightroom, applying only lens corrections (which is actually auto-applied upon import) and maybe adjusting the contrast or exposure slightly. Then I send the pictures to my editors for basic retouching like shine removal, skin smoothing and slimming the face. A few hours later, the images are ready to deliver to my clients. Done and done.

Don't forget to check out the video for a few more headshot tips. If you've never given headshots a try, now might be the time to get your foot in the door. ■



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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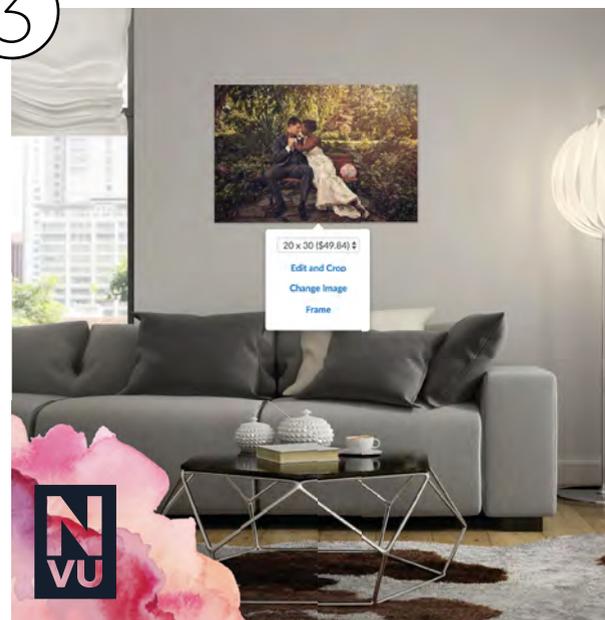
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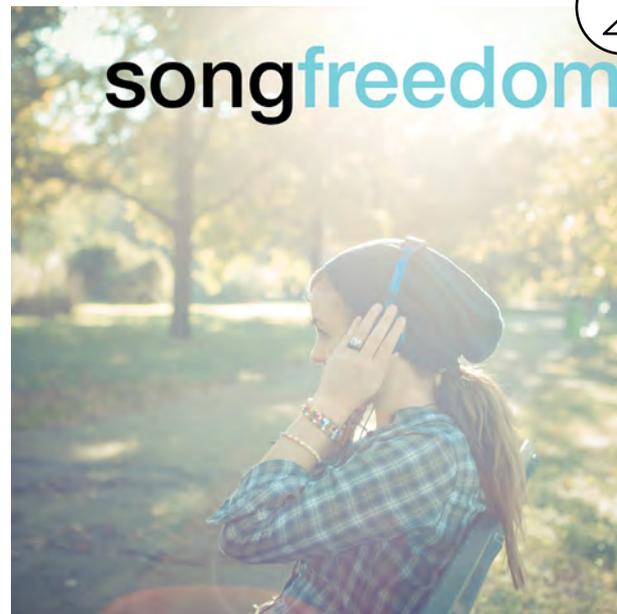
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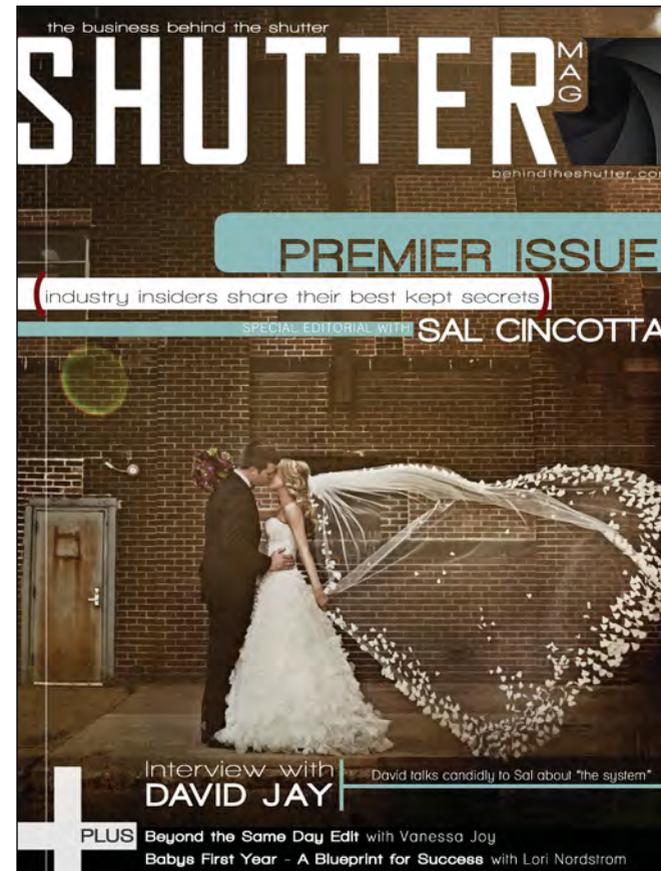
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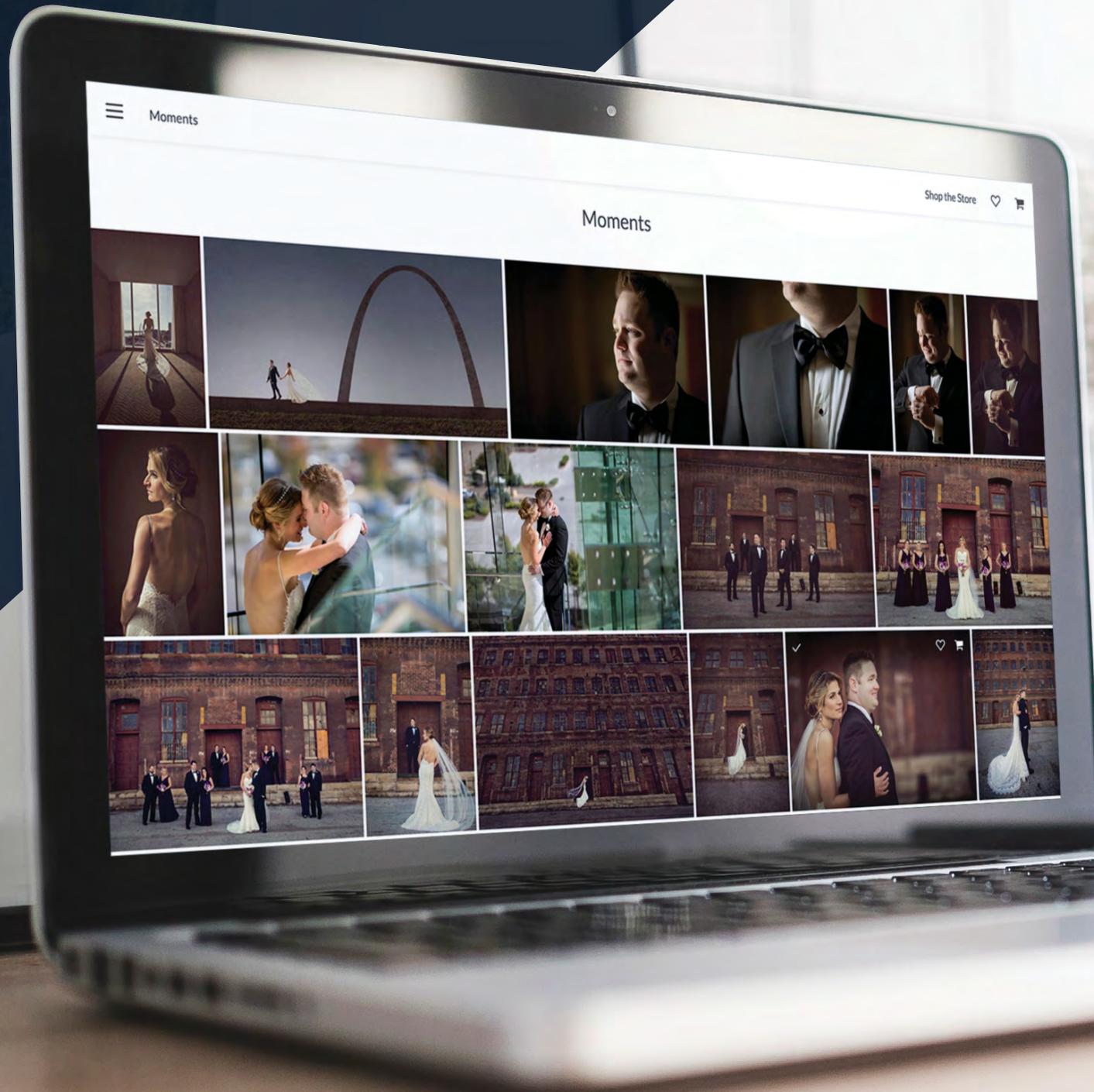
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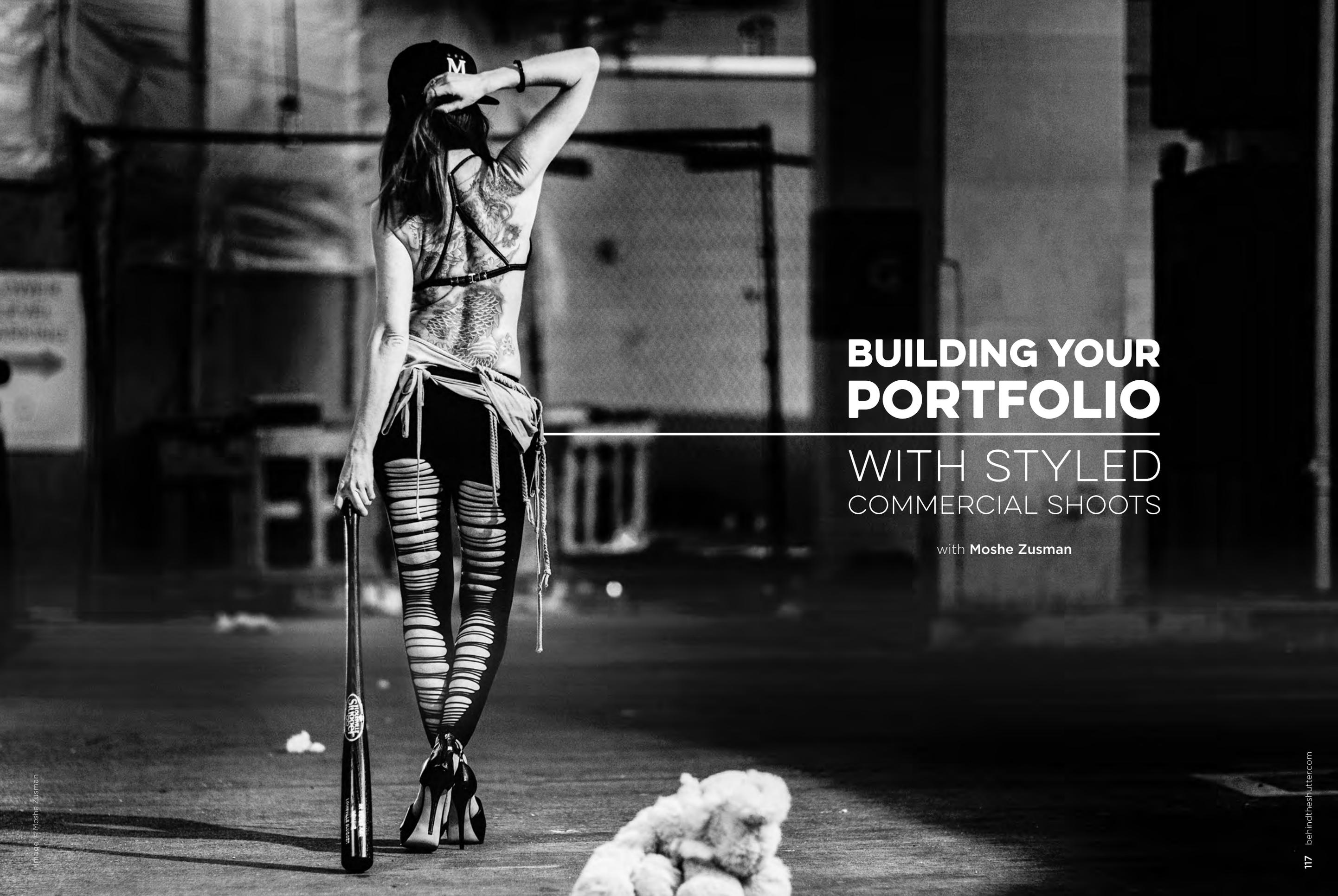
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BUILDING YOUR PORTFOLIO

WITH STYLED COMMERCIAL SHOOTS

with Moshe Zusman

When I started moving from wedding photography to studio work, one of the appealing aspects was expanding my creativity. As a wedding photographer you're creative, but you're limited to the wedding world. As much as you may want to go outside the box, you're still photographing a wedding.



Images © Moshe Zusman

Once I moved to studio photography as my main source of income, I realized I was still in the same boat, just in a different-themed boat. Instead of being boxed into weddings, I was boxed into headshots and standard commercial shoots. In order to exercise creativity, which is so important to any photographer's career, I had to arrange shoots of my own.

I got burned out in wedding photography because I couldn't be as creative as I wanted to be. I didn't want the same thing to happen with my studio work. So I made a rule for myself that I had to do one creative shoot a week. It may seem overly ambitious, but I figured if I aimed high, I'd still do at least two a month, and that was ok with me.

In addition to fueling my creativity, I wanted to partner with more colleagues. One of the biggest mistakes I see photographers make is thinking they have to design everything on their own when they put together a styled shoot. Not true. The more people you bring into the shoot, the less work you have to do as the photographer and the more relationships you build. Arranging commercial-style creative shoots opens doors to actually getting paid for them. Studio photographers are blessed with a plethora of commercial clients, so the more you can do to get your foot in the door with companies, the better.



Image © Moshe Zusman



When working with other artists—hair, makeup, visual stylists, wardrobe designers and creative directors—make them feel free to talk about their ideas. It can be counterintuitive to what you're used to, but pulling from other creatives' minds helps you and the shoot grow creatively. When I start collaborating on a shoot, I ask the other contributors to send me their ideas and create mood boards. It's not about copying exact images, it's about pulling favorite parts of images like the posing from one, the wardrobe from another and the mood from yet another to create something unique.

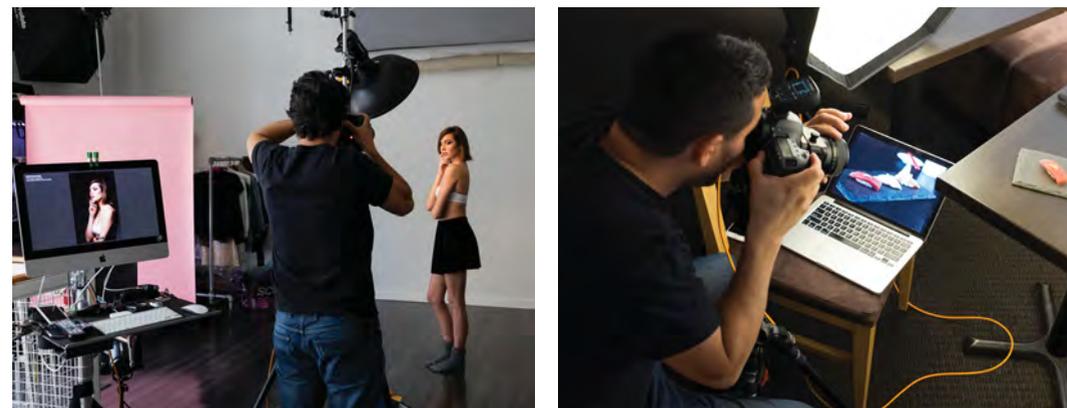
I get inspiration from their ideas and then think about how to execute them with lighting design and inject my own creativity from magazines and other fashion photography sources. It could be as basic as seeing something on TV and sending my stylist a screen shot and rolling from there. All of the collaborated inspiration gives me ideas for lighting, composition and lens choices that best represent the team's ideas.



Images © Moshe Zusman

It's also important that your shoots aren't just about photographing different faces, or you'll get burned out because they'll all look the same. Find one or two models you like to work with and create different concepts for them to build a diverse portfolio. That makes you and your collaborators come up with unique ideas. Ask people you know to work alongside you, and eventually, when you consistently come up with unique ideas, most outside collaborators will be itching to work with you free of charge since they love the opportunity to be creative as well.

I tether as we shoot. This allows the others involved to easily give direction along the way. Photographers are used to directing everything, but trust me: When you let others around you do their job, it's less work for you and it gets better results. Welcome ideas, direction, poses and feedback while you're shooting.



Another benefit to organizing creative commercial shoots like this, which I touched on earlier, is that it can lead to more paid work. In addition to connecting with the network of people that you're working with on the shoot, you want to maximize the exposure of it on social media and other publishing outlets. Be careful with this. During the shoot, have everyone do behind-the-scenes Instagram stories and such, but be patient with the final images. You don't have a bride sitting by her computer waiting anxiously for you to email her the images from her special day. Take the extra time to cull down the best of the best images (either on site with all of the contributors, or later with fewer cooks in the kitchen) and get them retouched to perfection. After you have the final images, write the metadata on them so you have valuable and relevant keywords and copyright information to better your SEO and protect your work once they're posted online.



Images © Moshe Zusman

When you have your final images in hand, promote them like crazy. Don't just post them willy nilly. Be more targeted. If you're looking to submit the images to magazines, don't post anything online since they always prefer fresh content that no one has seen before. If you want the images to post online, go for blogs and outlets that have a similar style and perhaps even advertisers (like clothing and makeup brands) that were used in the shoot. Sometimes this can take months, so, again, be patient. It doesn't have the same short shelf life that weddings do.



Images © Moshe Zusman

If you want to publish the images on your own, do your best to promote the images wherever you can, like on a blog (with a nicely written SEO-friendly article) or on social media with appropriate tags and hashtags. Publications big and small look on Instagram under specific hashtags and tags for content to post on their outlets, so don't be afraid to @tag publications in the description as well as in the photo.

Posts like these on Instagram, if they become popular, will keep getting engagement even months after posting, like the posts here.

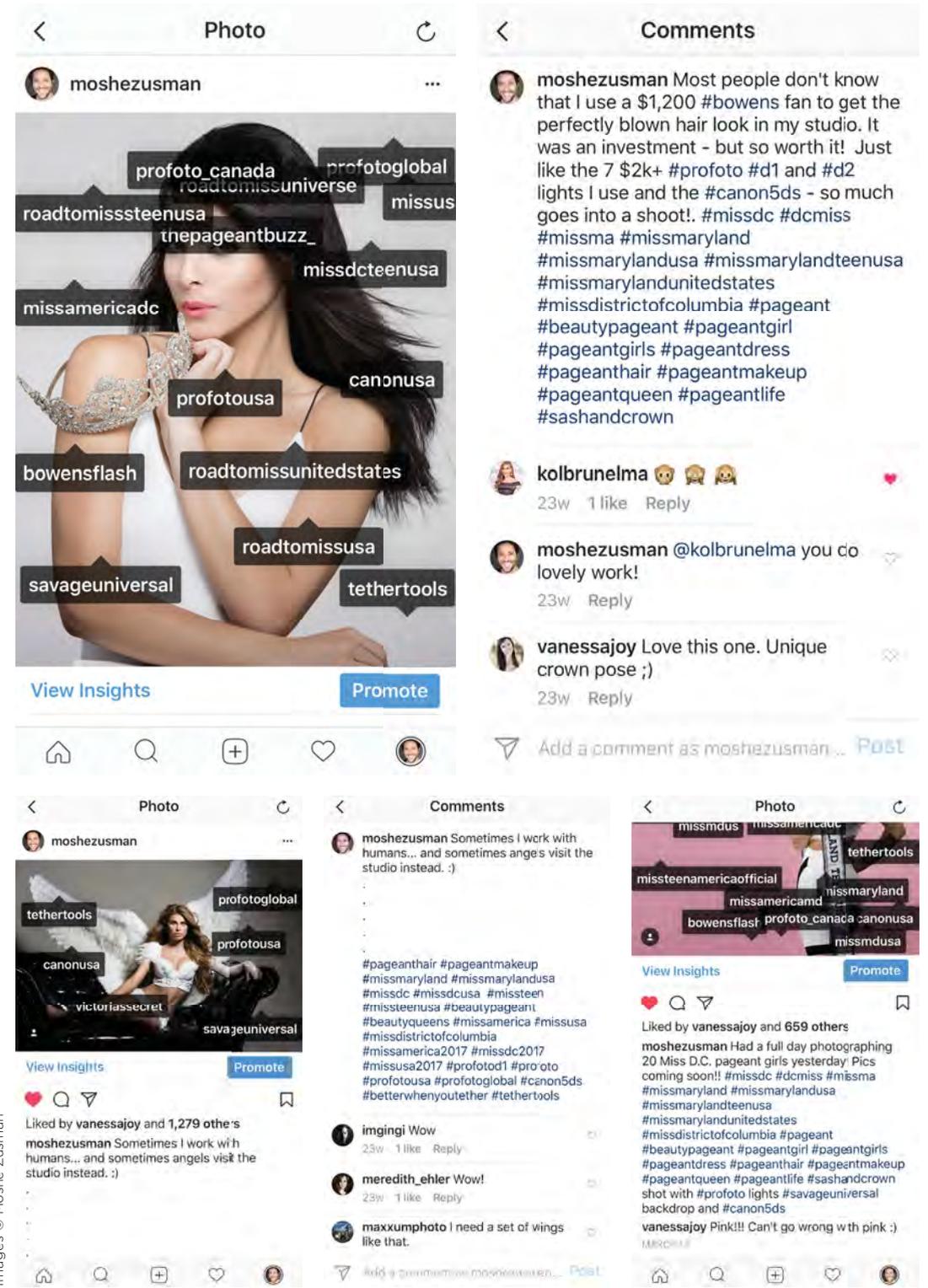




Image © Moshe Zusman

It's up to you to decide how much time you want to invest in being creative. I'd say it pays tenfold both in preventing burnout and in the exposure and paid jobs that come from it. Some of my biggest clients and jobs came through creative unpaid shoots like these. Don't be afraid of doing creative shoots that don't have a return on the investment right upfront. Your efforts will likely come back to you in the long run. ■

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Moshe Zusman is recognized for his innovative, bold use of light and color with a distinctly modern edge. The Washington, D.C.-based Moshe has been shooting for more than a decade, and specializes in weddings, portraits, headshots and events. He has been featured at numerous workshops and conferences, including WPPI, PhotoPlus Expo, Imaging USA and ShutterFest, and also hosts his own workshops at his D.C. studio.

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EDITORIAL

GLAMOUR

WITH AN INDIE TWIST

with Nino Batista



Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/2.2 @ 1/2000, ISO 100

If you've never been to White Sands National Monument in the gorgeous state of New Mexico in the American Southwest, you have truly missed out on an experience. It's my favorite of the Southwest's long list of travel hot spots, better even than the Grand Canyon, Death Valley, Carlsbad Caverns, the Valley of Fire and the Las Vegas Strip. This 275-square-mile patch of white gypsum in the desert sent my brain reeling with excitement and possibilities. So when an opportunity came along to produce a photography art book that needed one specific theme, I knew where I wanted it to be: White Sands, New Mexico.



*Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/4.5 @ 1/4000, ISO 100*

Image © Nino Batista



*Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/3.2 @ 1/4000, ISO 100*

Image © Nino Batista

I gravitate toward simple textures, shapes and colors in my work. If I am given the choice between two pieces of wardrobe, I almost always pick the neutral and simple items above highly textured, patterned, colorful garments. Playing with geometry in interesting ways is one of my key interests in framing a model in a scene, often so subtly that only I know it's happening. In the case of White Sands, I saw what amounted to an endless sea of gently undulating white cycloramic wall—and I knew I had to go see it.

Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/2.2 @1/2000, ISO 100



During a trip to El Paso for a workshop I was giving in early 2016, my host and team planned my very first excursion to White Sands. I was so eager to go create the first part of the project that I ended up scheduling seven or eight models for the day, sourced from towns in New Mexico and West Texas. Arriving at White Sands after the two-hour drive from El Paso, it was exactly what I knew it be: mind-boggling. It was like visiting another planet, perhaps another dimension. It was better than I thought it would be. I was as giddy as a little kid to get shooting. I wasn't the first to shoot here, not by a long shot, but I knew I would be coming back to this place again and again.

Unbelievably, a freak sandstorm cropped up during load in, and quickly became concerning enough for us to cancel for the day. Piercing gypsum particles and random chunks of nature pelted us for a good 20 minutes before we accepted the fact that it was starting to really hurt and that our equipment was also bearing the brunt. The decision was made, and about 16 of us hurriedly packed up everything and left in a mild panic.

Driving back to El Paso was a near-death experience as well, as the wind storm continued well outside the parameters of the white gypsum, rocking our vehicle side to side on the freeway (all while dodging massive tumbleweeds and other debris). I left with a newfound respect and healthy fear of the New Mexico desert. This was not a place to be trifled with.



Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/2.2 @1/2000, ISO 100

Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/4.5 @1/4000, ISO 100



Shaken but undeterred, we returned less than 48 hours later, but with far less modeling talent onboard due to scheduling challenges. I accepted that the first phase of the project would be significantly truncated, and that was ok. The good news was that White Sands was more glorious than ever that day, replete with cloudless electric-blue skies and a fresh smoothing over of the dunes thanks to the wind the previous couple of days.

Now on the dunes without fear of being stripped to the bone by high-velocity gypsum, I was finally able to snap test shots. It became immediately apparent that my usual second-nature outdoor shooting approaches didn't apply at White Sands National Monument. Everything from white balance to overall exposure was far different than I expected, so I had to do more experimenting. And never mind the gigantic white reflector that reached for miles in every direction. This was going to be tricky, I thought.

Gear-wise, I knew what I wanted to work with, and it was a moderately controversial point among some of my peers there that weekend: I was bound and determined to use my 85mm to capture most of the project. Some of my associates strongly suggested I employ far wider focal lengths to capture the environment, but I was hell bent on seeing how I could make my favorite focal length work.

I didn't go all that way to White Sands to capture images that looked shot at a beach or some other generic location near my house. I knew I had to showcase the location as much as I could while still working with my preferred approach to capturing portraits. This was not a time for me to experiment with 14mm primes or anything similar. I knew what I wanted to do.

The terrain looks appealing, simple and gentle when you first start to wander around. It becomes evident very quickly how hard it is getting around the location with equipment in tow. Thirty-foot dunes of pure gypsum cause you to slip and slide (and sink!) far more than usual sand, and the dry air can cause you to gasp for air if you're from the coast like I am.

I was breathing hard from climbing dunes with gear, and had boots and jeans filled with gypsum, all within 15 minutes of shooting. You fall down a lot on dunes that flow like water under your feet. More than once I found myself on the ground laughing at the challenges of the environment.

Did I mention the never-ending gentle breeze that works to smooth out and effectively erase your footprints within minutes? After you've summited two or three large dunes, you find you have no idea what direction you came from if you don't pay attention. Have people died in White Sands after getting lost? "Absolutely," the very nice woman at the visitor center told us as we were headed out that day.

The brightness of the sun at White Sands during a cloudless day was staggering. Since you're squinting like mad, you assume it is as bright as a usual summer day at the beach, but that is a mistake. It's far brighter than any beach I've experienced. I used a 0.9 neutral-density filter to control the light enough to use apertures wider than f/2.8, even at ISO50 and 1/8,000th shutter speed.

About 30 minutes into this ordeal, I became concerned that I wasn't going to get any shots I liked because I was so distracted by the enigma of the lighting and difficulty of the terrain. There are hotter deserts and more dangerous locations, of course. But what started as inspiration quickly became frustration as my first few sets left me feeling flat.

I paused to review what I had and to give myself a pep talk about how I didn't come all the way out there, get run off by a sandstorm and return within two days again just to give up.

Eventually I found a decent groove, and began to understand what the environment was giving me to work with. Essentially, any direction "worked." I stopped thinking so much about the composition process. If I climbed a dune and it looked great but I found I could not get the model in a spot I liked, we just moved 25 feet in any direction and tried again. After a while, what felt limiting at first became hugely liberating—everything seemed to work. No, not every single frame snapped, but every angle and every experiment led to results I was enjoying as long as I didn't overthink things.

I went into a sort of organic mode of shooting, with little regard to anything technical after I dialed in settings on the camera that seemed to work. One key thing was that my gut instinct to shoot about two-thirds to a whole stop underexposed ended up being crucial in post-processing. The pure white gypsum is so bright, it can easily become overexposed into a giant hot spot in a heartbeat, especially if you're focused on proper exposure of your subject. Shooting under allowed me to retain the details and texture of the gypsum on most of my shots, and a little noodling in Capture One Pro later on gave the shots the final pop of contrast and color I wanted.



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Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/2.8 @ 1/1600, ISO 100



Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/3.2 @ 1/1600, ISO 100

Images © Nino Batista

Camera: Canon EOS 6D
Lens: Canon 85mm f/1.8
Exposure: f/2.8 @ 1/500, ISO 50



Image © Nino Batista

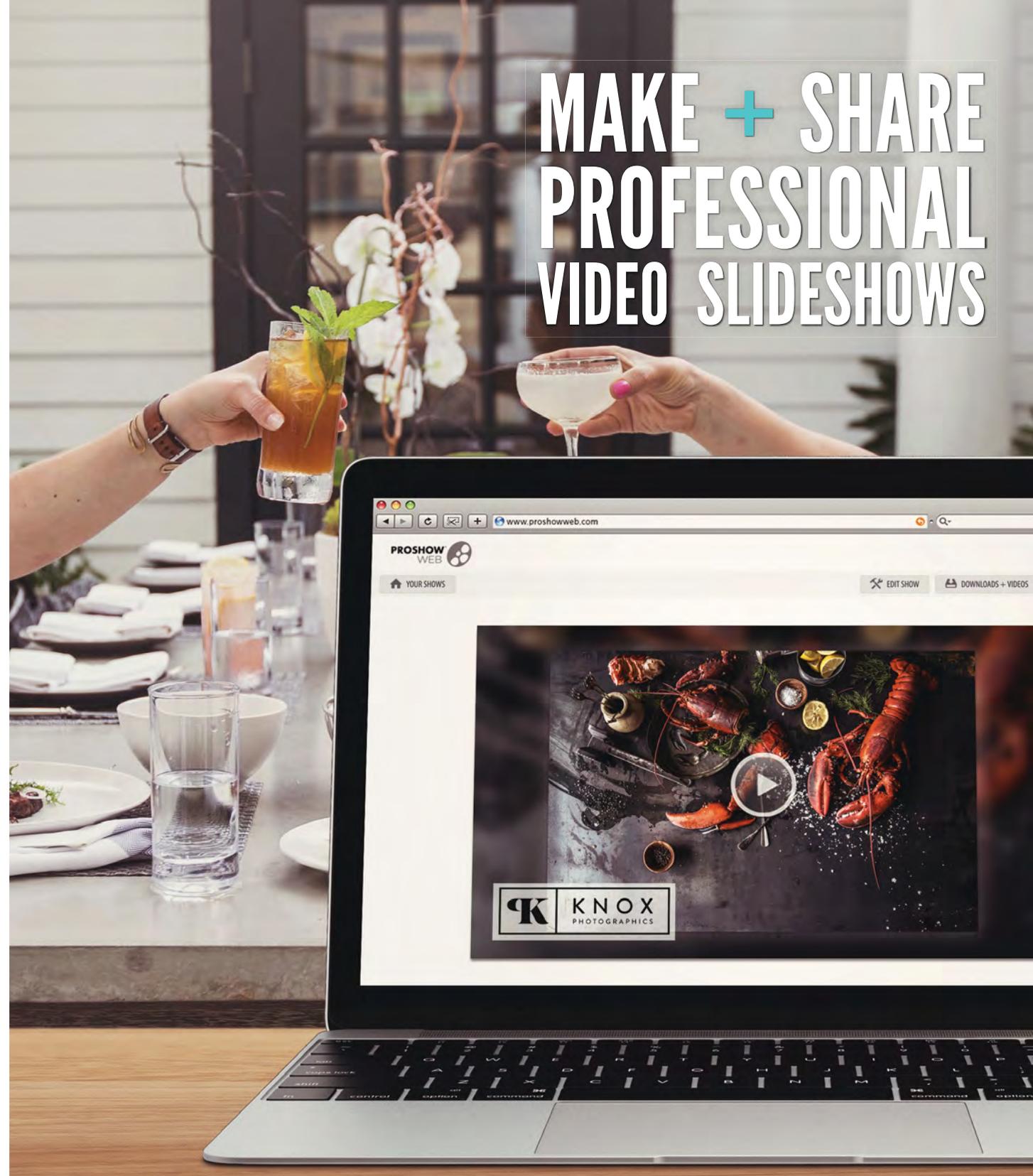
I imagine I could have simply driven down to South Padre here on the Texas coast and put together a series of editorial images, but what's the challenge in that? The book project remains incomplete as of September 2017. While I did return to White Sands again earlier this year (no sandstorms this time!) I knew I needed a third visit to finish the project I had envisioned.

The nine images in this article are part of the 75 final images that will appear in my book. I plan to return in fall 2017 or winter 2018. ■



Nino Batista is a commercial glamour and exotic automotive photographer based in Texas. His work is regularly published in lifestyle and men's publications all over the world, and he is regarded as one of the premier glamour photography and retouching educators in the United States. Nino is a senior writer at FStoppers.com.
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FROM — PORTRAITS — TO ADS:

HOW PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHERS
CAN MAKE THE TRANSITION TO
PHOTOGRAPHING AD CAMPAIGNS

with Jeff Rojas

Enter “how to become a commercial photographer” into Google, and most of the results are subpar at best. Most commercial photographers say they just fell into it, while others are much more secretive. As a photographer who’s worked alongside some amazing advertising agencies and brands, I’m going to tell you how to start and why it’s not as glamorous as you might think.

Let’s start with this statistic: The total digital ad spend in the U.S. for 2016, according to eMarketer.com, was \$192.02 billion.



Image © Jeff Rojas

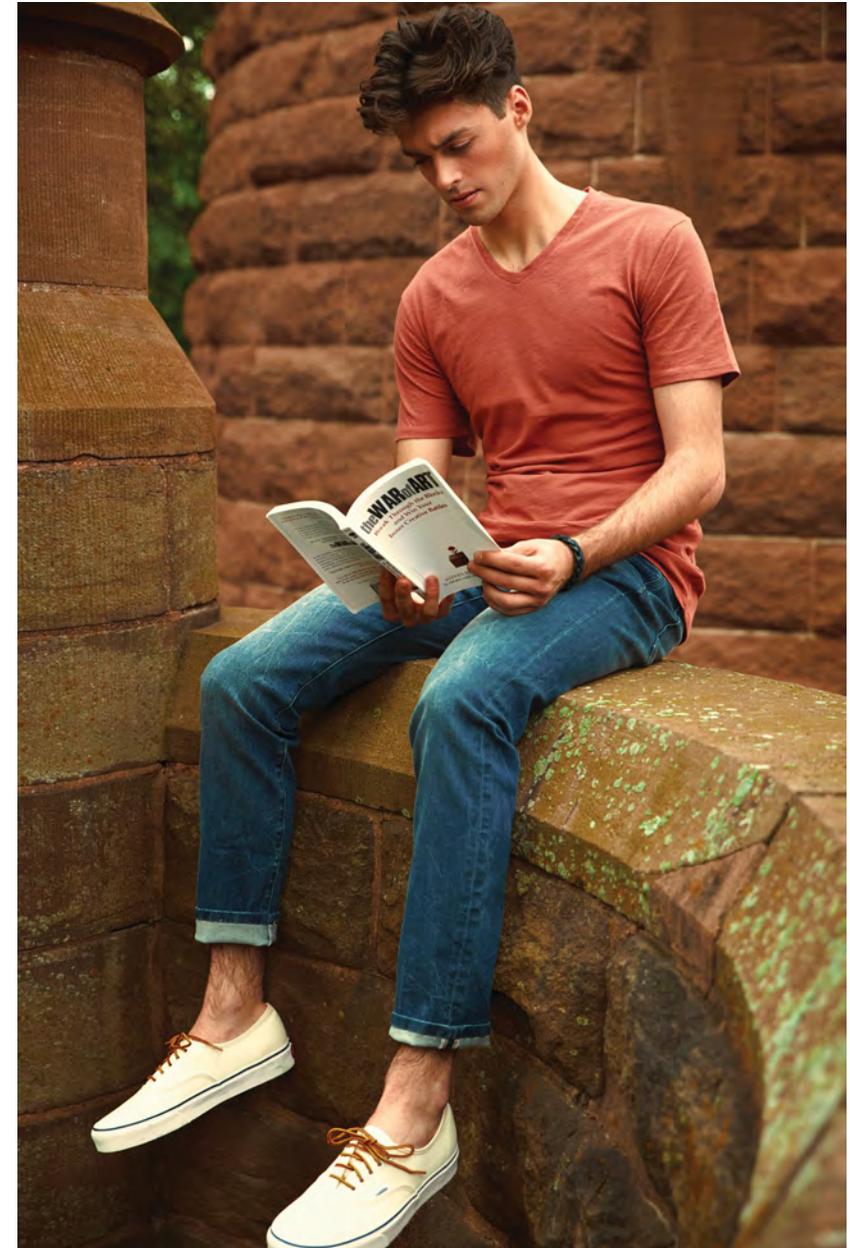


Image © Jeff Rojas

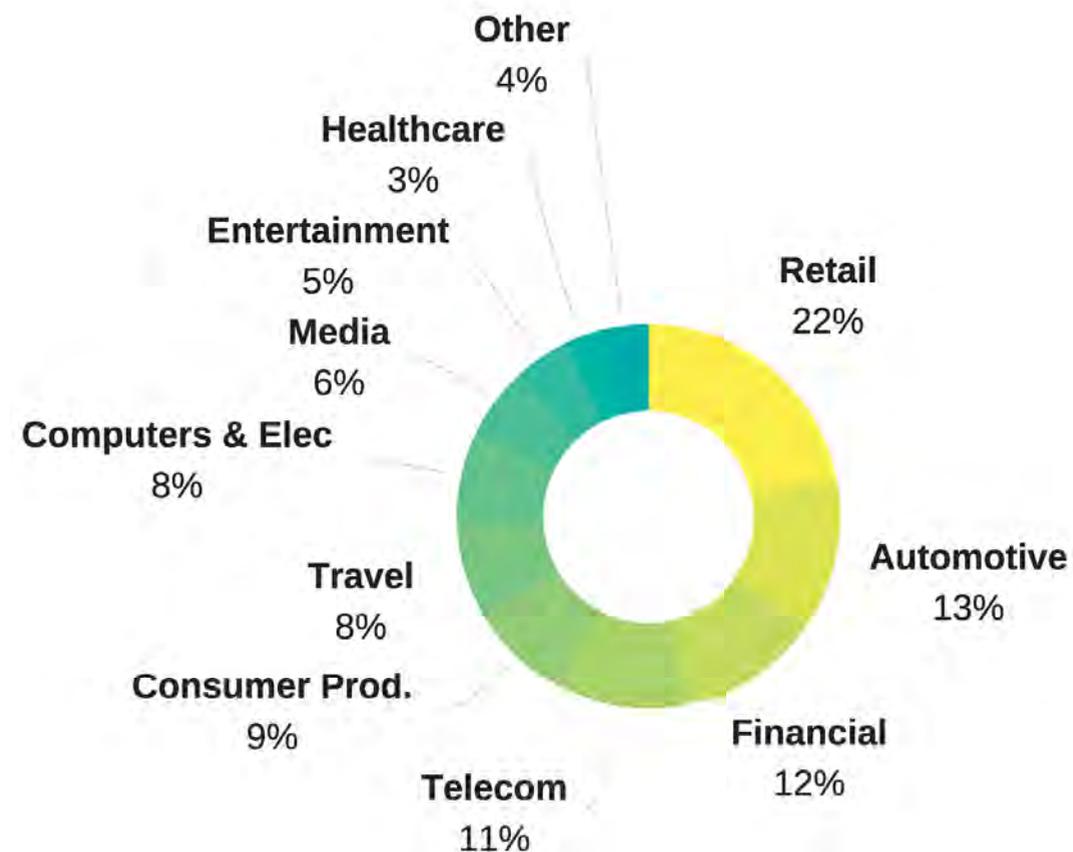
Ad spend is what companies allot for their marketing objectives. It includes digital banners, videos, sponsorships, classifieds, Facebook campaigns and commercials. If you’re interested in becoming a commercial photographer, then you probably want a piece of that nearly \$2 billion.

It’s important to clarify what a commercial photographer does. Most photographers who want to dive into it focus solely on fashion. While fashion photography is a subcategory of commercial photography, it’s not your only option. Commercial photographers produce images used in advertising, product placement or merchandising. If you’re using your images to sell a product or service, you’re a commercial photographer, plain and simple.



BUILDING A PORTFOLIO OF MARKETABLE WORK

Let's put that nearly \$2 billion ad spend into perspective and break it down by industry. Take a look at the pie chart below.



Every one of those industries needs either still images or video to market themselves. As the consumer market changes, these industries need to create content to adapt to the needs of their audience. Photographers provide that content.

There's a wide variety of options you have when choosing a niche. You can become a fashion photographer, food photographer or lifestyle photographer, and there are so many industries you can focus on. Separate yourself from the flock. Become a specialist in a unique area. Demonstrate your value by offering something no one else does.

Let's say you primarily photograph newborns. Think of how many different products are sold on the newborn market: diapers, car seats, baby carriers, teething rings, highchairs, bath products. If photographing newborns is your expertise, you can easily create a portfolio of marketable images that sell those products. Your keen eye for detail will separate you from the generalist commercial photographer who has never photographed newborns.

IMPORTANT: Portrait photography is not commercial photography. The standards of award-winning imagery don't always coincide with those of the commercial portrait realm. When clients look to hire a commercial photographer for an assignment, they're not looking just at your artistic expertise—they're even more interested in your ability to get a job done. Your clients' biggest concern is that your images sell their products and services. Learn the rules so you can break them masterfully.

STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD

So how do I separate myself from the masses? I realize the value in separating myself from everyone else while drawing attention to myself. That's exactly what companies try to do with their marketing dollars: create compelling ads so consumers are focused on them and no one else.

I'm not just a content creator; I'm also a marketing consultant. I consult with marketing agencies to create a content marketing strategy based around a product they want to sell. Then I produce the images. Not only am I paid to create the images, but I'm paid to come up with the ideas and marketing strategies behind them.

In the fast-paced world of digital technology, we are constantly bombarded with ads. Assuming you're reading this article in its physical format, you've skimmed through the magazine and have seen several ads. If any of those images made you stop and look, the photographer did her job. If you passed an ad without giving it a second glance, then a company lost money.

The commercial photographer's job is to make people want to buy the product you're marketing. Fashion photography sells clothing. Food photography sells food. A great car ad should make you Google whether or not you can afford that car. That's what a great commercial photographer does.

When you're trying to create your first commercial photography portfolio, keep that in mind. Let's say you wanted to photograph an automotive portfolio. You'd photograph not just a pullback shot of the car, but also key details. You would showcase the gauges, interior and cockpit, or use leading lines to accentuate the car's shape. You'd shoot any accessories in a complementary way and include all of those images in your portfolio. Always remember that the marketing company is going to use your work to sell the car online. I don't care if you're photographing lipstick or a bridal dress for a marketing campaign—focus on the product you're selling, not just the model in the image.

Find a niche that you're passionate about. If you're interested only in photographing fashion because of the pretty models involved, you're going to miss key details that your client needs to market their products. It'll be a short-lived career.



LANDING YOUR FIRST COMMERCIAL GIG

Landing your first commercial gig isn't as difficult as it might seem. It's simple: Shoot good work. Put it in front of the right person who makes hiring decisions. Put in a bid that falls into their budget. Pitch a mood board. Shoot the job. It's more complicated than that and there's a ton of emails and phone calls involved, but that's essentially how it's done.

When I say good work, I mean great work. Shoot a body of work that shows you're capable of doing the job. With looming deadlines and tight budgets, art directors don't want to take a chance on someone who might not get the job done. Again, include detail shots in your portfolio. They demonstrate your attention to detail.

TURNING PASSIVE MARKETING INTO ACTIVE MARKETING

I've found that the easiest passive way to reach brands is by simply shooting work consistently and using social media to post my work. To maximize my effort, I've also started to tag their brands in my images, and use their marketing hashtags to join marketing campaigns they're running. This shows that I'm actively engaged with their brands—but in a way that takes a couple of quick keystrokes and not much real effort.

For the newborn market, tag the car seats, baby strollers or whatever your client's selling. Brands will want to repost your images, and this is where things can get dicey. You can request payment to license the image, but most brands will tell you they don't have the money and simply are sharing to give you exposure, even though they're using your image to market their product. Worse, some brands will repost your images without your permission and without crediting you. That's copyright infringement, but choose your battles.

Social media marketers work in the marketing department. You know who else works in the marketing department? Marketing directors. Art directors. Photo editors. The list goes on. This is your opportunity to turn a potentially adverse situation into a business opportunity.

Here's the usual conversation:

Company: *We love the photo you tagged us in. May we share it on our account? We'll obviously provide you with a photo credit.*

You: *Thanks so much for reaching out and for the kinds words! I usually charge \$X for social media usage of my imagery. If you'd like to license them, please PayPal me at _____.*

Company: *Hi, _____! We don't pay for Instagram shares as it's not in our budget, but we do always give proper credit.*

And then the conversation is over—unless you start a back-and-forth argument with them, which I never advise doing. Rather than leaving the conversation without a phone number, name or email to pitch your portfolio to, turn it into a marketing opportunity.

Follow up the above conversation with something like:

You: *That's completely understandable. I know that social media marketing budgets are getting smaller and smaller these days. While I can't afford to give you images for free, I have an amazing gallery of images I can send you if you'd like to license them in bulk.*

I think they complement the marketing you guys are doing these days. If you like them, I'd be willing to work something out with you. What email can I send them to, no strings attached?

Do you see what I did there? I turned a polite “no” into a warm business lead. I also took that opportunity to acknowledge their fears and what they were trying to accomplish. There's no better way to get companies to hire you than to get them on your side.

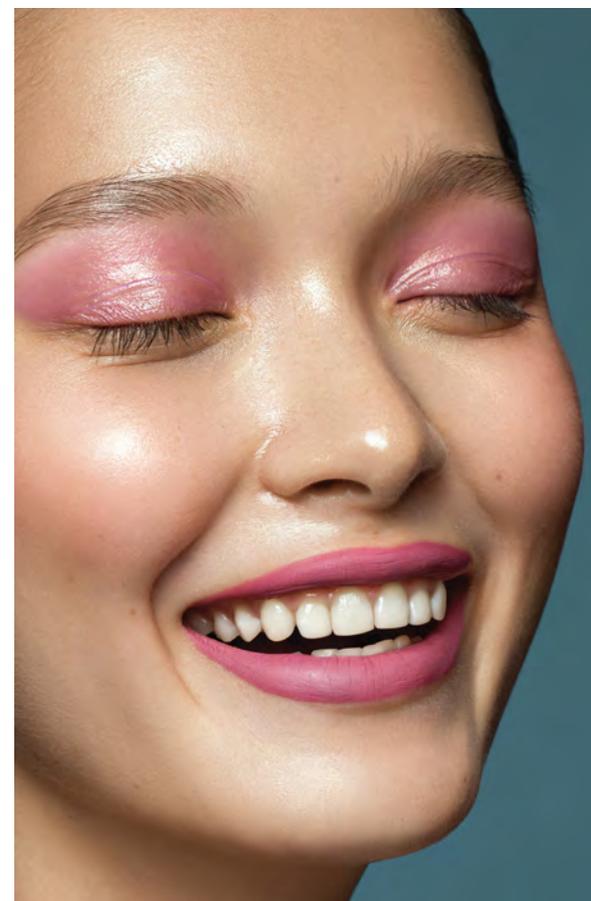


Image © Jeff Rojas

After social media, you should join sites like FoundArtists.com that allow advertising agencies to connect with photographers. You can set up an online portfolio on the platform, and set up regular mailers the site sends to advertising agencies on your behalf. Your contact information and portfolio will appear among a large group of photographers, but if you're diversifying your portfolio with solid and sellable work, you shouldn't have any issue booking assignments. Again, it's a passive way of earning income, but it allows you to market your business while you're running day-to-day operations.

BIG-DOLLAR JOBS: FEW AND FAR BETWEEN

“Things aren't what they used to be.” That was what my first photography mentor uttered after I asked about how to become a commercial photographer. “People no longer make \$10,000 to \$15,000 day rates like the used to.” Those words always echo in my ears when I'm booking an assignment. My mentor was right: There are very few photographers making those day rates today. The top 20 photographers in the world are rumored to make six-figure day rates, but they're not shooting every single day.

I've had a couple of bids in the \$30,000 to \$50,000 range over the past few years, but those have been few and far between. The highest assignment I've bid on was around \$150,000. These figures are intended to cover expenses, talent, assistants, etc. That's not what you're taking home at the end of the day. Most photographers reading this will likely not reach those heights. Commercial photography is either feast or famine. You might get a really good gig one month and then go without work for three. There will be great years and terrible ones. You're at the mercy of the economy and ad spend, so don't expect miracles.

Subsidize your income through portraiture so you can maintain your overhead, lifestyle and the work you choose—until you are booked so solid and consistently that portraiture isn't even a second thought.

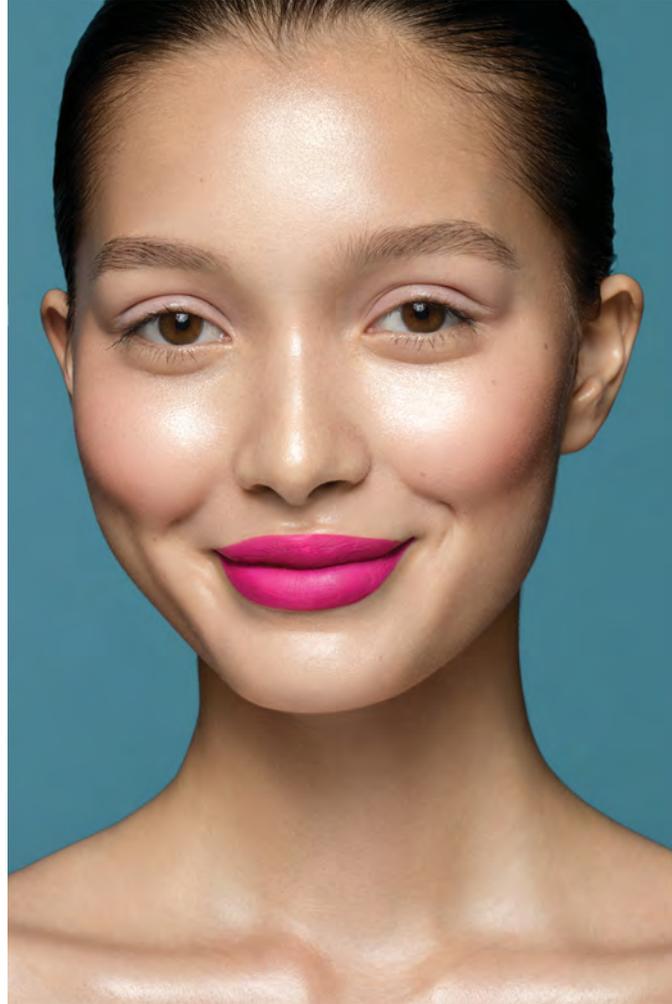


Image © Jeff Rojas

My last advice is to save during times of feast so you can ride out times of famine. I've seen too many photographers throw in the towel because they just couldn't manage the game of commercial photography. With the right effort, anything is possible. ■

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



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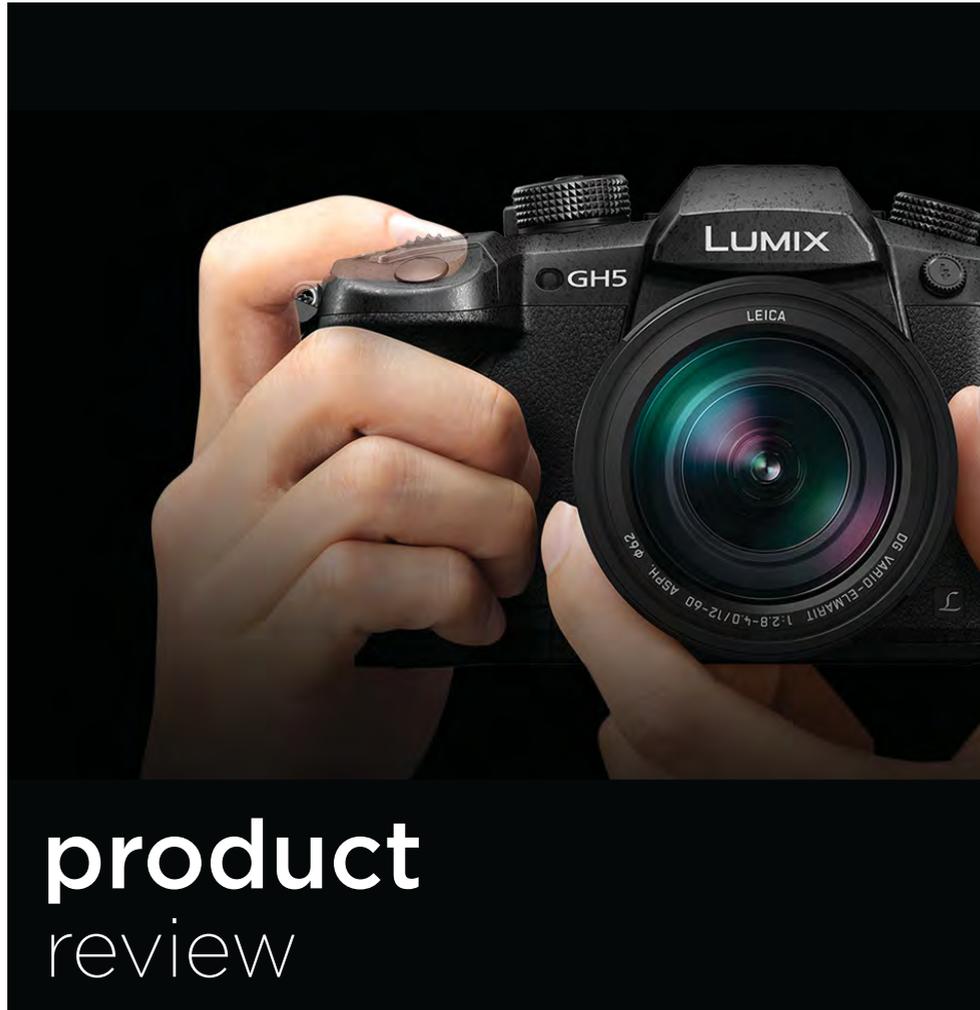
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Panasonic with *Salvatore Cincotta*

Why the GH5?

As many of you already know, I am a huge fan of the Panasonic GH series, and have been onboard since the GH3. I love the quality and price point of the video that comes off these cameras. It's incredible. The recently released GH5 is already a workhorse in our studio. Check it out in action in my article this month about my commercial shoot at Delmonico Steakhouse.

I love when manufacturers continue to push their product in between releases through firmware updates. This keeps the product fresh and relevant, and kindles even more loyalty to the brand.

Here are the details of Panasonic's free new firmware upgrade.

LUMIX Tether USB PC Tethering

This allows you to shoot tethered to a PC and control the camera and see the results on a larger screen. This is perfect for commercial work or other studio work where seeing the results and details is crucial.

Improved Auto Tracking Focus

This is a huge one. Auto focus on both video and photo has been improved, especially in low light conditions. In video, the tracking has been improved as well.

Bluetooth Remote Control With Image App

The Bluetooth Remote Control function can be used with Image App.

4:2:2 10bit

4:2:2 10-bit ALL-Intra video recording mode is added to 4K/FHD video recording.

For more information on the firmware upgrade, visit http://www.panasonic.com/global/consumer/lumix/gh5_firmware.html.



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STORYTELLING

IN COMMERCIAL
& EDITORIAL
PHOTOGRAPHY

with Fernando Decillis and Kimberly R. Fulton





Images © Fernando Decillis



Images © Fernando Decillis

Every time I look at a project, I ask myself, "What's the story?" In commercial photography, a team of creatives conceives stories around a concept to sell a product. In editorial photography, the subject is the story, and I collaborate with a writer and photo editor to illustrate that person's story.

Then there are personal projects, where I have the opportunity to mix those worlds together. Whether my job is to adapt a story into an image for a client, magazine or myself, or to simply photograph what or who is there, my process involves an interplay of three equally weighted components that make an image work: light, subject and context.



Image © Fernando Decillis

LIGHT

Light can transform spaces, faces and even color. Our ability to perceive color and visual form are born out of light. When shooting on location, I use a mix of natural and artificial light. A sea that looks green at sunset may be blue in the light of day.

The picture of the divers at night and the picture of the castaway on the sea were shot at the same location at different times, and the light completely changed the environment. Light changes what a picture can accomplish. A stout face with a protruding nose may realize the humanity of its unique curves and lines in a dark room with only the soft light of a bedside table. A flash of sunlight from a tin pan on the face of a farmer giving directions could be the element that burns an image into your mind for months.

The light is part of the story a space tells. I look for windows, lamps, reflections, light filtering through trees or clouds, all of which help me tell the story.



SUBJECT

The stories I tell are usually based on people or characters. They're not always pretty, but subjects can inject profound beauty into our work. Most people I photograph are not models; they're real people who aren't accustomed to sitting in front of a professional photographer with lights and assistants. I find an essential quality in each person I photograph, something I can relate to in each person. If I am able to empathize with my subject, I can more easily make that person comfortable in front of my lens.

Sometimes it's as easy as realizing that someone is nervous, and providing a distraction. A simple strategy I use is to ask subjects to fix their collar, reapply lipstick or identify a strange noise. Just being aware of our surroundings together can create the connection that helps the person in front of the camera to relax. Someone who is at ease is much more likely to give you their best.

I once made a whole series of pictures while driving through the Colombian countryside asking people for directions. My assistant and I turned off our cellphones and drove from Bogotá to a national park eight hours away. As locals gave us directions, I covertly took their picture. The black-and-white photo of the farmer is from that series. An awareness of our surroundings—by both photographer and subject—creates the connection that helps the person in front of the camera to relax.

The locals we shot were mostly unaware of the camera. Someone who is at ease is much more likely to give you their natural self. An unguarded presence shows up better on camera. There are also times when I take pictures of people who are on-camera professionals. Since I know those subjects will show up and look great on camera, I have a chance to focus more on the context around them.



Image © Fernando Decillis



Images © Fernando Decillis



Image © Fernando Decillis

CONTEXT

Context is a subject's story, the overarching theme or reason for the picture. Context is created with a mixture of light, location, props, clothing, and subjects' facial expressions and actions. Having a vision for the story keeps me focused on the end goal. If I stick to the narrative, it's easier to come up with ideas and direction for the subject.

When the narrative is clear, the people I am shooting have an easier time improvising. There are creative contributions coming from so many people on each shoot. There are creative directors, art directors, stylists, clients, photo editors, writers, talent and the subjects themselves—they all create context for the subject. In the end, my goal is to make a memorable image. I want to make images interesting enough that people want to spend time looking around to make sure they didn't miss something. I want to make images that people want to read like chapters of books.



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The way we tell stories about the human experience is continually evolving. Time continues to move forward and change us all. There is something about the human condition that makes us yearn to preserve the flagship moments in our lives, beacons of hope or maybe catharsis.

I shoot for catharsis in my personal images. The assignments with all the stylistic prescriptions are practice. I'm practicing telling stories about real people leading real lives. ■



Fernando Decillis is an Atlanta-based photographer who specializes in advertising, portraits and entertainment. He has worked internationally on campaigns for Coca-Cola, Reebok, Wild Turkey Bourbon and many more. His work has been featured on CNN and in *Adweek*, *Smithsonian Magazine* and *Time*. Fernando was named Advertising Photographer of the Year in 2015 at the International Photography Awards.

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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*



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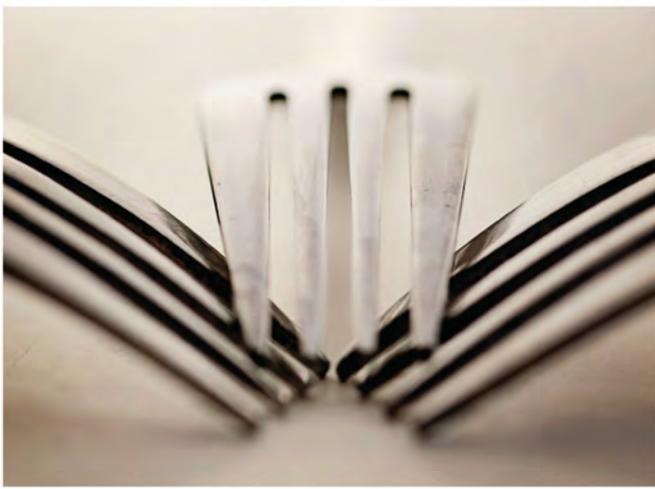


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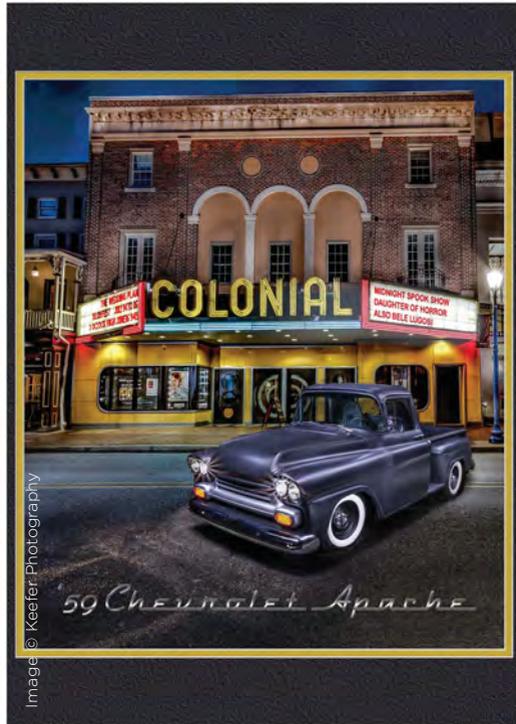


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NEXT MONTH
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THE
BRANDING
EDITION

BUILDING BLOCKS

DOWN TO THE WIRE: 16 LAST-MINUTE IDEAS FOR YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS

with **Skip Cohen**

"Things may come to those who wait, but only the things left by those who hustle."

- Unknown



It's October, and we're down to the wire as we wrap up 2017. We've got around 60 days to make a difference. Here are some last-minute things you can do that will impact your business.

- 1 Opportunities to Say Thanks:** Thanksgiving and the December holidays are the perfect time to do something special for those vendors or clients who have been helpful to you. Think about unique ways to thank venue sales managers and clients who've referred business to you. It can be as simple as a holiday card with a sappy handwritten message to a wine and cheese basket, flowers or even lunch.
- 2 Holiday Cards:** As I've written in the past, no professional photographer should ever send a store-bought holiday card. Put your card together now so you can get it out in time for the holidays. Use one of your favorite images for the front. On the back, put your contact information in the center at the bottom, just like a Hallmark card. Check out Marathon Press for your printing needs.
- 3 Clean Up Your Database:** Designing a holiday card won't do you much good if your database isn't up to date. You need accurate addresses to get your cards in the mail, so start cleaning it up a little each day. Remember, this isn't just a database of past clients, but opinion leaders in the community, nonprofit organizations you work with, vendors and businesses important to you.
- 4 Talk With an Accountant:** Don't wait until April to find out if you made any money this year. Look at your earnings and expenses year to date. If your earnings are high, this might be the perfect time to purchase some larger-ticket items to offset some of your taxes.



5 Conventions and Workshops: For the most part, the last big convention of the year nationally is PPE in NYC at the end of this month. If you're going, then plan your trip. What gear do you need? Who do you want to catch up to at the convention? Are there workshops you need to attend to build your skillset? Remember to never eat alone—don't wait until you're in NYC to make dinner reservations. Check with friends who are going and those people you'd like to get time with, and set up at least one evening in advance.

6 Holiday Celebrations: Whether you fly solo in your business or you've got a small staff, there are people you want to thank for their help. If you've got a team, think about how you want to celebrate the December holidays and year's end.

7 Promotions: Even if you haven't done any planning for the fourth quarter, here's your last chance to put something together for your target audience, but don't just promote to have something out there. Think through what you'd like to do. Next, define the audience. Keep it straightforward and decide how best to contact the consumers you want to target.

One of my favorite promotions is the "day-in-the-life" concept. Create a small album of images of kids, for example. You don't have to spend the entire day with them, but a four-hour on-location shoot is enough to tell their story and create a great gift for Grandma.

8 Be the Photography Expert: Write a series of short, helpful posts about taking better family pictures over the holidays. One of the fundamental elements of a successful blog is about helping people. Help them capture better photos.

There are things you do every day that you never think about. Share these tips and position yourself as being the photographic resource for the community. In a way, this is about giving back. Here's an easy list of topics to start.

1. Posing tips: Let's get rid of firing-squad lineups. Show examples of how to pose subjects, just a few easy ones positioning the faces in triangles like you do with every grouping.
2. What you see is what you get: Remind your audience about composition and to not be afraid to move in closer—fill the frame.
3. Fill flash: Even with a cellphone, it makes a difference.
4. Storytelling: Help them with the concept of capturing more than one image to tell their story.
5. Lighting: Help them understand the challenge with backlighting and to make the appropriate changes for a better image.
6. Thanksgiving: One of my favorites is to remind people to get the family shot before the table looks like a war zone.
7. Details: It's part of storytelling, but you've got the ability to help your audience think through their images.



- 9 Holiday Contests on Your Blog:** There's nothing wrong with creating a contest for your readers and the community. Make the grand prize something more than just a portrait sitting. Talk with your lab about a new product to launch in a contest format that might be part of your product line or something you want to include later on.
- 10 Partnerships:** Look for a partner or two to cross-promote your products and services over the holidays. It's a little late if you don't have the relationships established already, but even if it's something you launch in the new year, it'll pay off in building your business.
- 11 Throwback Thursday:** Too many of you have missed the opportunity to use this as a marketing tool. With the holidays, odds are you've got older images that bring back memories. This goes back to the topic of blog content. It's an excellent way to remind Mom of the importance of photographs and how fast the kids are growing up.
- 12 Gift Ideas:** Put together a list of the hottest photography products of the year. Don't worry about overstating it. This isn't Letterman's old Top Ten, just you planting ideas for great gifts this holiday season. Remember always to show the item you talk about. Since a picture's worth a thousand words, don't waste text describing an idea if you can plant the seed with a photograph.
- 13 Publicity:** Nobody can talk about your business like you can, but you've got to get the word out with short publicity releases. Check back to the September 2015 issue of *Shutter Magazine*. I included a template you're welcome to plagiarize. November and December are the perfect times to share stories about new things you're doing, community involvement and nonprofit events.
- 14 Who's Shooting the Kiwanis Holiday Party?** Whether Kiwanis, Rotary, Exchange Club, the Chamber of Commerce or dozens of other community groups, odds are they're having a holiday party. The window is closing fast, and if you don't ask, you'll never know. Whether it's coverage of the event in a photojournalistic style or portraits of each guest, you're the best one to suggest something a little different this year.
- 15 Kids and the Classroom:** In the same way your blog is going to help Mom, visiting local schools and doing a short presentation on posing and composition might be just the thing a teacher is looking for to add to the holiday curriculum. Every kid today is taking and sharing pictures. If we've learned nothing else over the years from television advertising, we all know the way to get to Mom and Dad is through their kids. I wouldn't go younger than fourth or fifth grade, and right up to high school seniors.
- 16 A Way to Say Thanks:** Dean Collins used to contact the president or CEO of companies he'd worked with to offer a gift of a family holiday portrait sitting. Let's say you photographed the annual report for a company in your community. What a great way to say thanks by offering a holiday portrait to the company's senior executive.



It might be October, but the two typically biggest months of the year are coming. If you've been putting off holiday marketing ideas, there's plenty you can still do to add a little spark to the holiday season. Just stop procrastinating and do it already! ■

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Skip Cohen is president and founder of Marketing Essentials International, a consulting firm specializing in projects dedicated to photographic education, marketing and social media support across a variety of marketing and business platforms. He founded SkipCohenUniversity.com in January 2013. He's been actively involved in the 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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HIGH DYNAMIC RANGE EDITING

with **Dustin Lucas**

Whether you are a huge advocate of or are appalled by high-dynamic-range (HDR) photography, we can all agree that it looks Photoshopped. Even the term *Photoshopped* starts to sound bad because we equate it with an image looking fake. If the camera didn't expose the image that way, we should just let it be natural, right? I'm not going to go down that rabbit hole—let's focus on the task at hand.

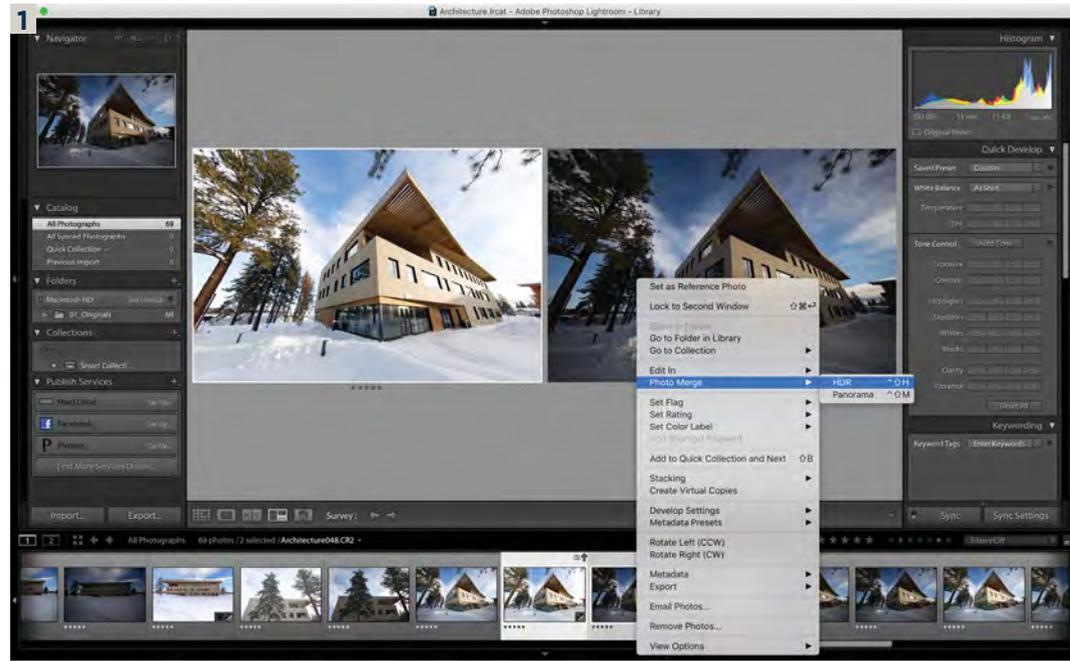
A commercial or editorial client will likely require editing images for a greater dynamic range. In that case, you will want to know what your editing options are after the shoot. Ideally, you want to work with a tripod to give yourself the most flexibility in stopping down your aperture, staying at a low ISO and taking long exposures. Long exposure sometimes removes your option to shoot handheld.

If you are unable to bracket multiple exposures, expanding the dynamic range in post-production becomes limited and can result in a low-quality image. On the other hand, working from one exposure reduces the risk of ghosting and chromatic aberration, as opposed to merging multiple exposures with HDR software. Let's look at some options for multiple exposures and how we can merge these files.



MULTIPLE EXPOSURES WITH LIGHTROOM HDR MERGE

In Adobe Lightroom, the Photo Merge to HDR option is quick and allows a lot of fine-tuning options. Select the two images you want to combine. Right-click, hover over Photo Merge and select HDR; or simply hold Control while striking the “H” key. (1)



As it’s creating an HDR preview, you’ll notice the options on the right side of the screen. Auto Align and Auto Tone are checked as default preferences, which is fine. When unchecking Auto Tone, you’ll notice the image get quite darker, losing its dynamic range. Let’s leave this checked and examine areas of the photo where “deghost” issues are happening. (2a)



Deghosting is the effect when merged areas combine from your bracketed exposures, rendering translucent and unnatural information. The effect makes it look like information in the image is partially erased. It’s like when you remove Chromatic Aberration and the leftover area turns white or transparent. Without being able to zoom into our image, we have to determine this with the overlay tool to identify what amount of deghosting is appropriate. (2b)



A good place to look for this effect is in a photo where obvious movement would occur between exposures. Clouds in the sky or tree limbs, for example, are the first areas to get corrected. If we strike the “O” key, the deghosting overlay shows us in red what’s being corrected with each stage, from low to medium to high. (3abc)



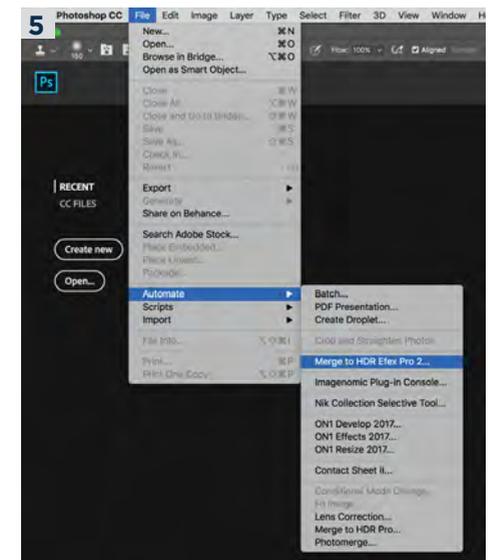
Due to the amount of tree branches in the image, I will choose medium. Remember, you do not get to readjust deghosting like the toning option applied with Auto Tone. It’s important to choose the right setting before merging. The result is a merged DNG file that we have flexibility in editing. (4)



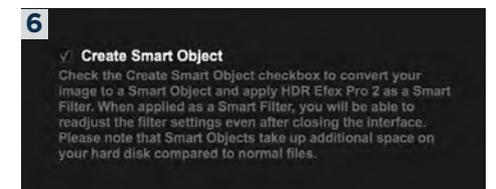
MULTIPLE EXPOSURES WITH NIK MERGE TO HDR EFEX PRO 2

Now that we have our first HDR merged file, let’s compare it to some third-party plugins to see some tone mapping options. I am a long-time fan of the Nik Collection. If you haven’t done so yet, try it free. Just keep in mind that it’s discontinued, meaning it will probably not be compatible with future updates to Photoshop.

Let’s move on to the important topic at hand, merge to HDR. Access this feature of the Nik Collection by opening Photoshop. Choose File in the menu bar, click Automate and select Merge to HDR Efex Pro 2. (5)



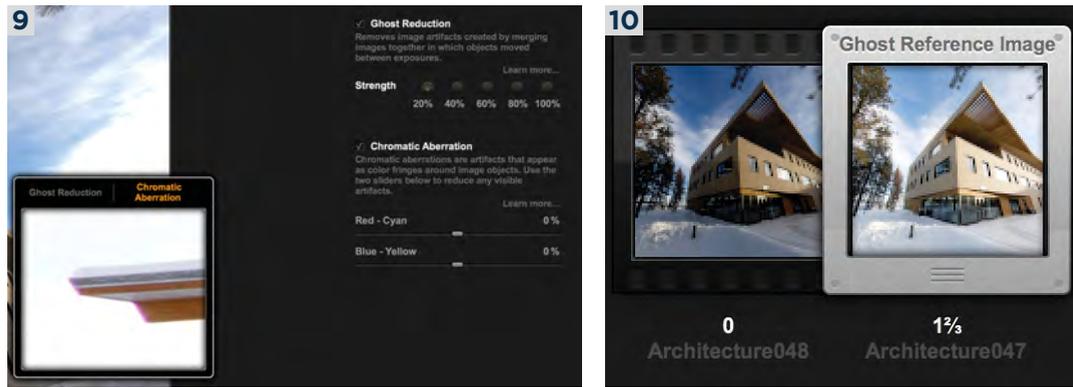
In the first dialog box, we can choose our multiple exposures and create a Smart Object. The advantage to doing so is that you can revisit the setting made in this plugin much like a nondestructive edit. To save space, have more access to editing and gain performance, uncheck this box and live with your decisions. Let’s leave it checked for now, and proceed to the Tone Mapping and editing features of this plugin. (6)



What I already like better than Lightroom Merge to HDR is the ability to zoom in and actually examine areas for ghosting and chromatic aberration. This tells you what to adjust. (7) Let's start by lowering the Ghost Reduction strength to 20%. On the left side of the image, the edge of the tree is awkwardly splitting at the edges. This is due to movement between the shots. The auto-aligning of the images can't line this up. (8)



At the top, choose the Ghost Reference image. The first image seems to have the best results when comparing the tree to the limbs at the top right of the image. I do not want distracting halos. The trees in the background get very muddy, so I'll stick with the second image and deal with any additional ghosting in Photoshop. (9) Chromatic Aberration isn't bad, just a little spot on the building to the right. I'll leave this at 0 for now, and fix it manually later. (10)



Once we merge files, we have a lot of options. Presets on the left can be selected, tweaked to perfection on the right and custom-saved for later use. The default settings are a great place to start, because a lot of the presets start to look hyperstylized. (11)



My goal is to push the dynamic range as well as the details in this image. Nik HDR Efex Pro 2 is detailed-oriented and the interface is simple to use with sliders. Start on the right side panel and work your way down. Tone Compression adjusts the dynamic range in our merged images. We can move this to the right to add and to the left to reduce this effect, getting us closer to the original exposure. (12)

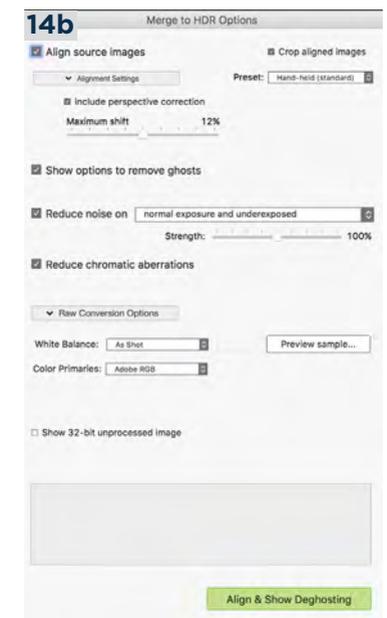


I like the more realistic approach to adjusting the HDR Method, including the Depth, Detail and Drama. Let's move down to the Tonality section. Here we have some familiar tools with which we can adjust exposure, contrast, shadows, highlights and structure. Structure is a great option that brings in some fine details and overall grit. Once we make some final touches, we are ready to open it in Photoshop. (13)

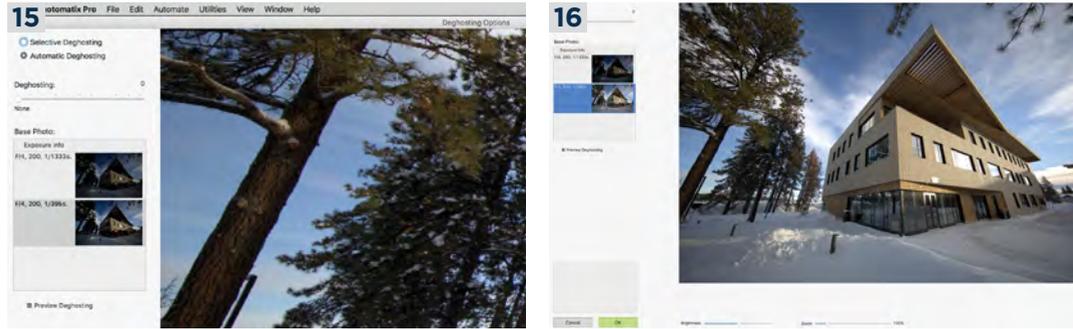


MULTIPLE EXPOSURES WITH PHOTOMATIX PRO 6

This is hailed as one of the best merge HDR programs, so I would be crazy not to demo it. Of course, I am using a trial version, so we'll end up with a watermark in the end. But we can get a solid comparison for the results sections. After we open an image, we have quite a few options to choose for alignment and crop. I am going to leave all of these at their default settings and move on to the Ghost Reduction tool. (14ab)



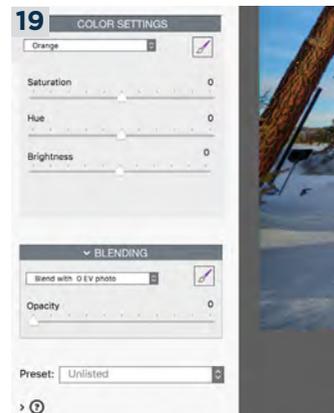
On the left-hand side, I can choose the base for reference when adding Ghost Reduction. When we zoom into the image, it gets fragmented and pixelated, which makes it hard to review. (15) The areas in my previous merge do not seem affected, so I can leave the Ghost Reduction turned off. This must be a better alignment tool, because there were certainly issues with the tree on the left. Click OK, and let's move to the Toning section to fine-tune our image. (16)



This section looks similar to Nik HDR, but it's a bit more limited. There are presets or styles you can preapply to get your image close to perfect. Realistic seems to be the way to go for me as I dial in some settings on the left. (17) At the top there is an HDR section with a dropdown menu. Currently it's set to Tone Balancer under the preset we selected. If we change this to Details Enhancer, our image immediately changes. (18) In order to maintain the same look from our preset, we have to work in this HDR panel.



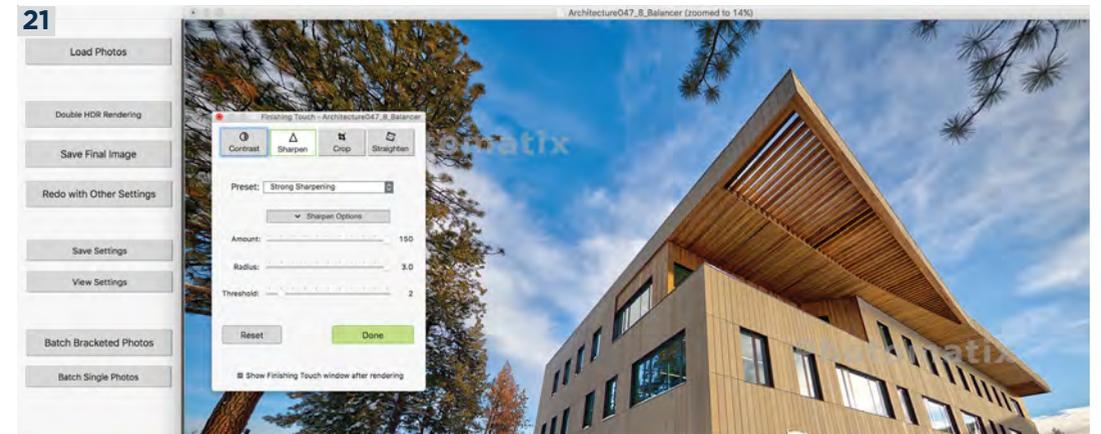
Much like Nik HDR, we have the Strength setting to allow more dynamic range in the merged images. This setting can take this image from a realistic edit to an overly processed one. I am happy with the Realistic preset overall, but might need Lighting and Brightness Boost to extend the shadows a bit further. Color Settings allow you to manipulate individual colors much like HSL. I recommend making these adjustments in Photoshop so you can work in a nondestructive environment. Blending allows you to brush in specific exposures, but this tool is a bit clunky. It doesn't allow you to view the mask or tell you where you've painted. I recommend blending layers in Photoshop, where you have more control with layer masks. (19)



Now we are ready to click Finish and put on our final touches. The Straighten tool allows you to transform the image to correct the leaning-building effect caused by the wide-angle focal length. The peak of the roof falls outside our canvas area, which we can fix in Photoshop as well. (20)



You have options to push the Contrast and Sharpening further with a tone curve and unsharpened mask tool. The last step is to save our image. (21)

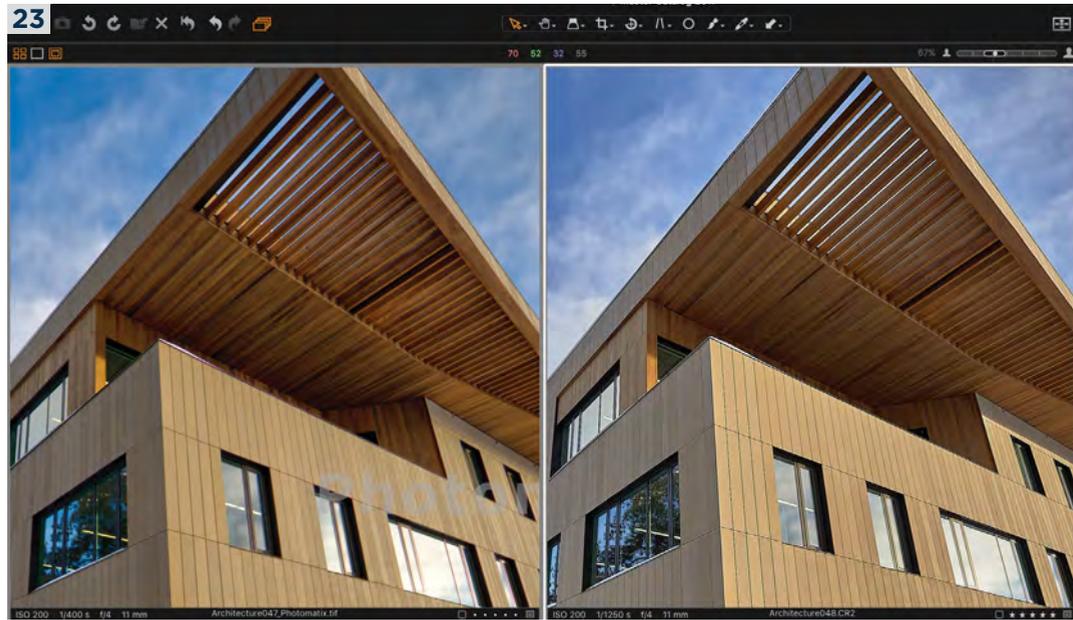


WORKING FROM SINGLE EXPOSURES

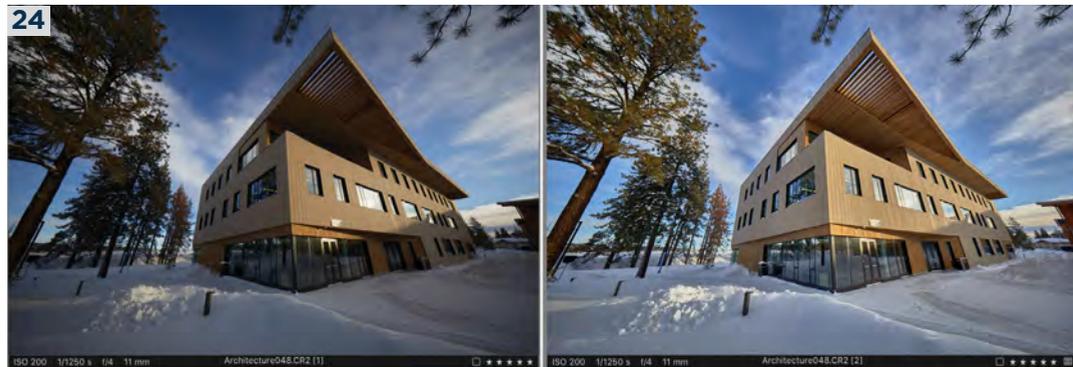
Now that we've merged bracketed exposures, was it worth all that trouble considering the dynamic range produced in modern-day digital cameras? We can test this on the Canon 5D Mark IV in Capture One Pro 10. Open the darker exposure into Capture One and start matching the dynamic range with the merged images. (22)



After a few minutes in Capture One, I can get the image pretty close to the Photomatix edit, but the shadows still look better in the merged edit. (23)



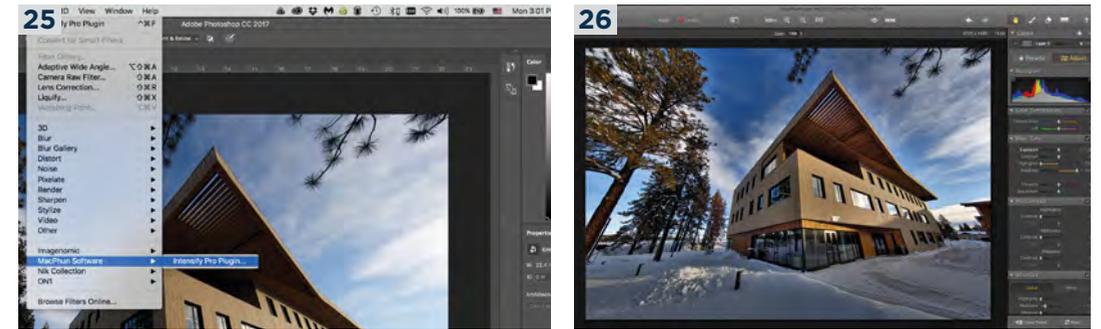
I have a lot of flexibility with Capture One in the High Dynamic Range panel, but where this program excels is in the Levels and Curves tool. I can push the RGB curve to give the image color contrast with a simple S-curve. Now my image looks much closer to the Photomatix color tone. With the Levels tool, I open up shadows while adding back in the dark tone contrast to keep the image from looking flat. Last but not least, my Clarity tool comes to the rescue to push this image to the limits of sharpness. Overall, I am very happy with a single-exposure edit in Capture One. (24)



Another amazing tool for single-image HDR toning is Macphun's Intensify plugin. You can do a fully nondestructive edit with this plugin working with Photoshop Smart Objects. Once we check this option in the Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) window, we can apply the Intensify tool as a Smart filter. This allows us to save and make further adjustments in ACR and Intensify. Let me show you exactly what we can do with these two tools.

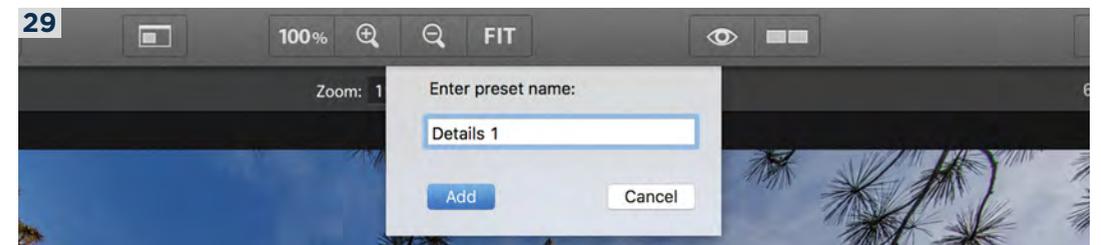
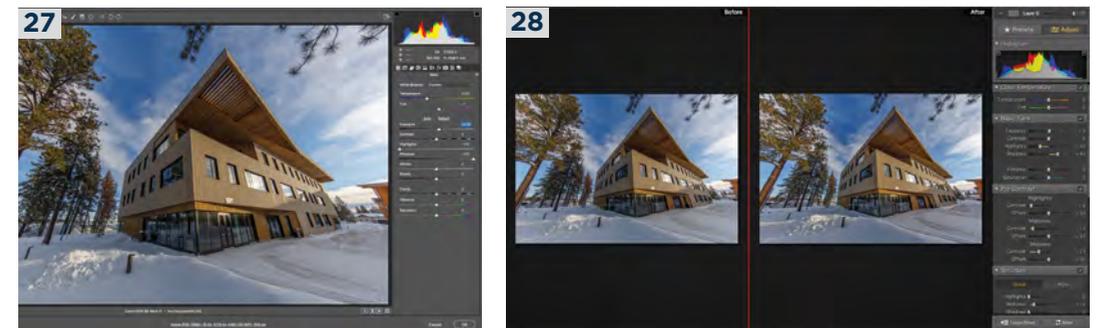
If we leave all the sliders in ACR at the default and open as a Smart Object directly into Photoshop, we can apply the Intensify tool as a filter. (25)

Using presets is a great way to enhance your image efficiently. You can star your favorites as I have here. Starting with the Pro Quality, we can use the Adjust panel to pull out details in the shadows. (26)



You'll notice this image needs some advanced recovery that the Adjust panel isn't able to do. Not to worry: We can reset our shadows and exposure settings and click Apply. Once we are back in Photoshop, double-click the image thumbnail on the Layers panel. This opens the image back into ACR, where you make those advanced recovery adjustments. (27)

After we extend the dynamic range of the image in ACR by lifting the exposure a half stop, open up the shadows all the way and drop the highlights down. Click Open. Exit the ACR menu, and our edit goes directly into Intensify at the default settings. Remember this for the future. If you make custom tweaks to a preset or image, you can always save presets for later use. (28) It's as simple as clicking the Create Preset button and naming your custom-adjusted image. (29)

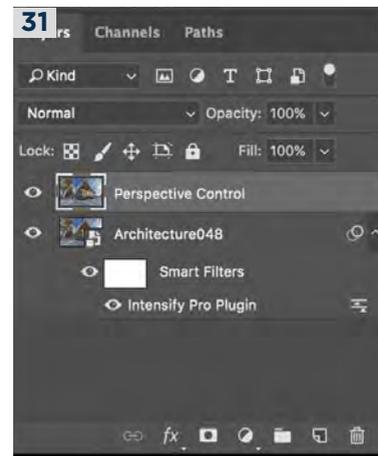


FINAL TOUCHES AND TIPS

Whether I am merging images or working one exposure in a plugin, I still apply my final touches in Photoshop. First, I need to fix this leaning-building effect. I start by adding grid lines to my image—one for the vertical and one to line up the corners of the building. (30)



Here is where working with Smart Object layers and Smart filters becomes a hassle. If I skew my image with the Transform tool, I have to go back into Intensify. This is a huge time suck, and I can't afford to toggle back and forth. Instead, we can duplicate our Smart Object layer and rasterize it. This allows us to manipulate the pixels more fluidly. (31)



To fix the vertical lines leaning to the left, I use a combination of the Perspective, Skew and Free Transform tools. If I start with the Skew tool and drag the lower left corner to the left, I can fix the leaning-left issue. (32) Now I have issues with the other walls converging, or “keystoning.” This can be quickly fixed with the Perspective Transform tool. (33)

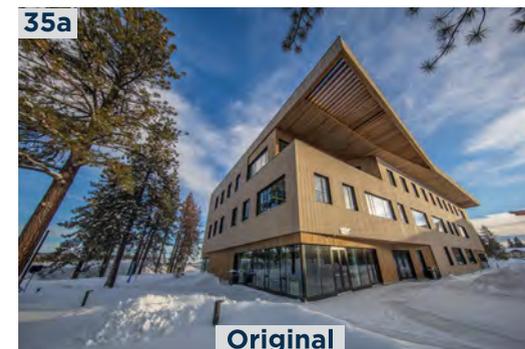


Now we will quickly realize the real estate on both sides of the image has become less and less as we fix the skewed building. This requires some content-aware fill and cloning. (34) Then you are done.



THE RESULTS

Merging images in the ACR engine through Lightroom seems like the go-to workflow for most. This was simple to do and the result is a fully flexible DNG file. I was impressed by the tonal quality rendered after the merge. With some final tweaks, we have a deliverable image. Comparing Lightroom to Nik HDR Efex Pro 2 was not an even matchup because of the fine-tuned adjustments in the Nik software. The result in Nik was a bit over the top. We can start to see the abilities of this program with the multiple stops of light. (35ab)



A better contender for Nik is the Macphun Intensify plugin. The biggest difference is the lack of HDR merge capabilities in Intensify. It's my go-to for a single exposure. I don't lose much detail in the shadows and highlights. Use both of these plugins so you have full nondestructive capabilities in Photoshop with Smart Objects. (36ab)



Photomatix seemed to be the most hands-off in terms of merging images and making images look presentable. This renders a clean, realistic HDR merge. It's a top-quality program for HDR merge. (37)



In the end, the Capture One edit was a solid single-exposure experiment, but we can't really compare it with Nik, Intensify or Photomatix. (38)



From these results, you can see how you can push an underexposed image in Intensify without needing to shoot bracketed exposures. A project might require two exposures where you have to expose for the brightest and darkest areas of a scene. In that case, I recommend working with Photomatix for the most efficient and realistic rendering. You can try all these programs for free and see for yourself. (39) ■



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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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