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september 2016

# shutter

magazine



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EDITION



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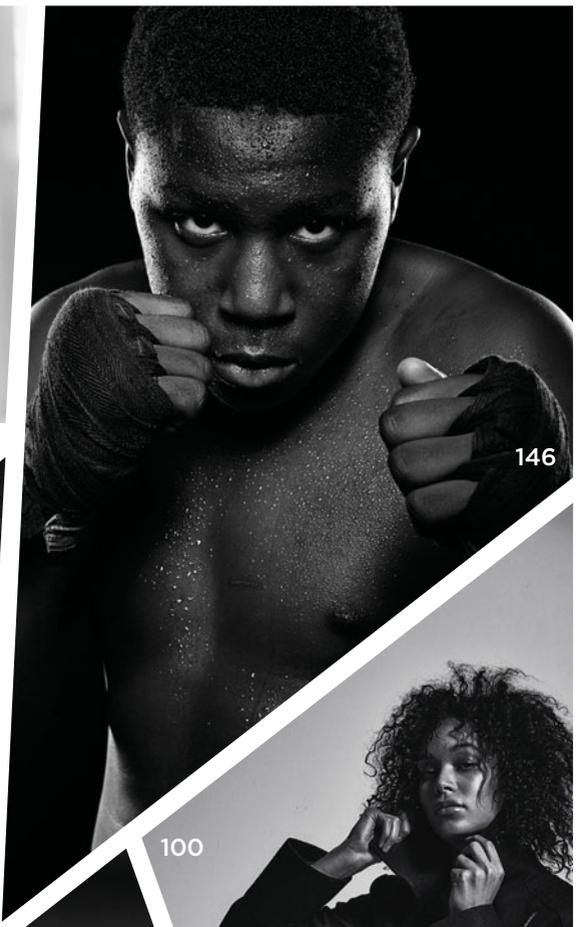


SEPTEMBER 2016 | ISSUE 048

# shutter

magazine

- 12 | 14 Avoidable Challenges in Professional Photography – Skip Cohen
- 20 | How to Maximize Your Second Shooter on a Wedding Day – Alissa Zimmerman
- 34 | Learning to Light for Black & White – Jeff Rojas
- 48 | Building Something Bigger Than You – Sal Cincotta
- 60 | The Art of Street Shooting – Ryan Brown
- 72 | How to “Black & White” Your Photos for Higher Profits – Phillip Blume
- 84 | Creating Black-and-White Landscapes in Adobe Lightroom – Kristina Sherk
- 100 | When Is Black & White Not So Black & White? – Craig LaMere
- 112 | From Capture to Black & White – Dustin Lucas
- 128 | Inspirations – Our Readers
- 146 | Fight Night: Lighting Athletes – Michael Corsentino
- 158 | Sustaining Growth and Freedom With a Hybrid Studio – Blair Phillips
- 168 | Creative Subjectivity: Rules to Follow Before You Break Them – Vanessa Joy
- 180 | Turning the Ordinary Into Extraordinary: Night Photography – Michael Anthony
- 194 | Photographing Senior Musicians and Artists – Melanie Anderson



84

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*Sabratore Cincotta*  
BEHIND THE SHUTTER

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

*Shutter Magazine:* By photographers, for photographers.

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## THE COVER

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Sal Cincotta | [salcincotta.com](http://salcincotta.com)

**CAMERA:** Phase One IQ3

**LENS:** Schneider 80mm Blue Line

**EXPOSURE:** f9.0 @ 1/200th, ISO 200

**LOCATION:** O'Fallon, Illinois

**RETOUCHING:** SharkPixel | Kristina Sherk

**LIGHTING:** Profoto B1 with 8" Octa Softbox | Westcott Eyelighter

**ABOUT THE IMAGE:** This image was taken at our studio in O'Fallon, Illinois in August 2016. Special thanks to Otto Ott for body paint.

# LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief



The world  
looks better in  
**black and white.**  
- Sal Cincotta



# BUILDING BLOCKS

## 14 AVOIDABLE CHALLENGES IN PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY

with Skip Cohen

I've contributed to every issue of *Shutter Magazine*, and not once have I resorted to a rant, at least not here in print. Well, it's time to share some of my top pet peeves.

### **Headshots that Uncle Harry could capture.**

This is right at the top of the list. You're a professional photographer or, at the very least, aspiring to be one. Your goal is to get people to hire you because of your skill set. Remember that old expression: "You never get a second chance to make a first impression."

In regards to your headshot, get rid of that poorly lit portrait. Throw away selfies that a teenager would use. Trade in horrible portraiture for a well-lit and posed professional-looking headshot.

Even better, get a shot of you working. Put a camera in your hand. Have an associate photograph you from the side and slightly behind you as you're working a subject. That will capture an image of you working, with your subject in the background and slightly out of focus.

You're not going to impress anybody with a bad headshot.

### **Doesn't anybody proofread anymore?**

I get that you're an artist. You didn't go to school to be a writer, but that doesn't mean you have to sound like a moron. I've received email blasts from photographers and couldn't understand what they were talking about.

You've got a few options. If you really can write but are just too rushed, take the time to read what you've written out loud. Then read it to somebody else. There's very little I ever write that my wife, Sheila, doesn't take a look at for me.

Here are two other options: Check out Grammarly.com. I love it. It won't catch everything you're trying to say, but proofreading out loud together with Grammarly will help you dramatically. The other option, especially for those who truly hate to write but are trying to maintain a blog, is to hire somebody to write for you. Wander into a local high school and find yourself an "A" English student.

### **Stop being a gear hound.**

Great gear doesn't make great artists anymore than owning a Porsche makes someone a great driver. Stop buying gear. Instead, learn every feature of what you already own. And, if you just can't resist the urge or there's something out there you truly need, rent equipment before you invest.

Every professional photographer who's been in business for five years or more has a story about something they bought that they just didn't need. What they did need at the time of purchase was cash flow. Instead, they tied up money in equipment that was rarely used and later traded in or sold at a loss.

As Vincent Laforet once said in a program at Skip's Summer School: "When I didn't have a long enough lens, I learned to move in closer." Don't be a slave to your gear.

### **You've got a phone—why keep the number a mystery?**

This is right at the top of the list. I'm so tired of photographers who have a contact page but force potential clients into an email template form. Communicating by email is fine, but we're an instant-gratification society, and you've got a phone. Give consumers a way to talk to you. The only thing stronger than meeting with a client in person is talking to them directly.

There's no such thing as too much information on your contact page. And, for those of you who work out of your home, I understand not wanting to share your address. That's fine, but give potential clients a phone number and your personal email address.

### **How long would you be willing to wait?**

Think about those templates for email communication. Ever filled one out and then waited days for the company to get back to you? By the time they got back to you, more than likely you had lost interest.

If you're going to offer an email system on your website, then at least respond within a couple of hours. In the wedding business, you'll find that the first photographer to respond to a client has a better chance of actually booking that event.

### **Got a listening disorder?**

You've got two ears and one mouth, so listen twice as much as you talk. Not meeting the mindset of a client, especially brides, is one of the top complaints. That means you've got to listen to your clients and, if you don't understand something, ask for clarification.



**“There isn’t time to blog more often.”**

If you can’t post twice a week, then give up your blog until you get more organized. Your website is about what you sell, but your blog is about your heart. It’s an opportunity for you to be helpful to your readers and share content they’re interested in hearing. When you post to your blog every full moon at best, you’re not building readerships; there’s no activity being directed to your business, and people might start to wonder if you’re still in business.

The number-one key to success with a blog is consistency.

**Think quality, not quantity.**

When it comes to your galleries, pretend it’s the old days, and you’re showing work in a printed portfolio. At best, you might have had 20 to 30 images. So many of you think you need to show everything you’ve photographed.

I’ve visited galleries with hundreds, even thousands of images, and most of them were mediocre. If the image isn’t better than what Uncle Harry could capture, don’t show it. Less is more. If it’s not a “wow” print, don’t share it. (A “wow” print is an image so good, it’s the only one you’d have to show to get hired.)

**“I’m a natural light specialist.”**

Come on—if you’re an artist saying that, you might get a client to believe it, but the rest of us know you’re afraid of studio lighting and took a shortcut on the way to starting your career. We all love natural light, but the key to calling yourself a professional is understanding how to create outstanding images in any situation. That means you need to know how to light and pose your subjects with and without natural light.

**“I can’t afford backup gear.”**

Well, then stop calling yourself a professional. Sooner or later, something is going to fail, and the challenge of being a professional is having enough depth in your gear to handle those short-term emergencies. That means going on assignment with no less than one backup camera body, an extra lens or two, and additional lighting.

**“Yeah, I took all of those images.”**

Building images for your portfolio with models is a terrific way to both practice and show your clients you know what you’re doing. But standing behind instructors at workshops and shooting over their shoulder and then calling it your work is bogus. It’s the instructor’s image, not yours. If you can’t duplicate the technique later, you’re in trouble.

**“Let it go, let it go!”**

If you’ve got kids, you know the song from *Frozen*, but if you’re obsessed with battling it out in online forums, maybe you need to sing it more often yourself. I see it all the time.

Here’s the scenario. Somebody posts an image somebody doesn’t like in a Facebook forum, and you get sucked into the battle. Suddenly you’re contributing to a thread of comments that’s completely off track. At some point, your blood pressure is up, you’re aggravated and you’ve done nothing but waste your time and everybody else’s.

Don’t take on trolls. Stay out of arguments that are none of your business. If somebody has already written what you were going to say, then simply shut up. Time is your most important commodity. As Winston Churchill wrote: “If you throw stones at every barking dog along the way, you’ll never reach your destination.”

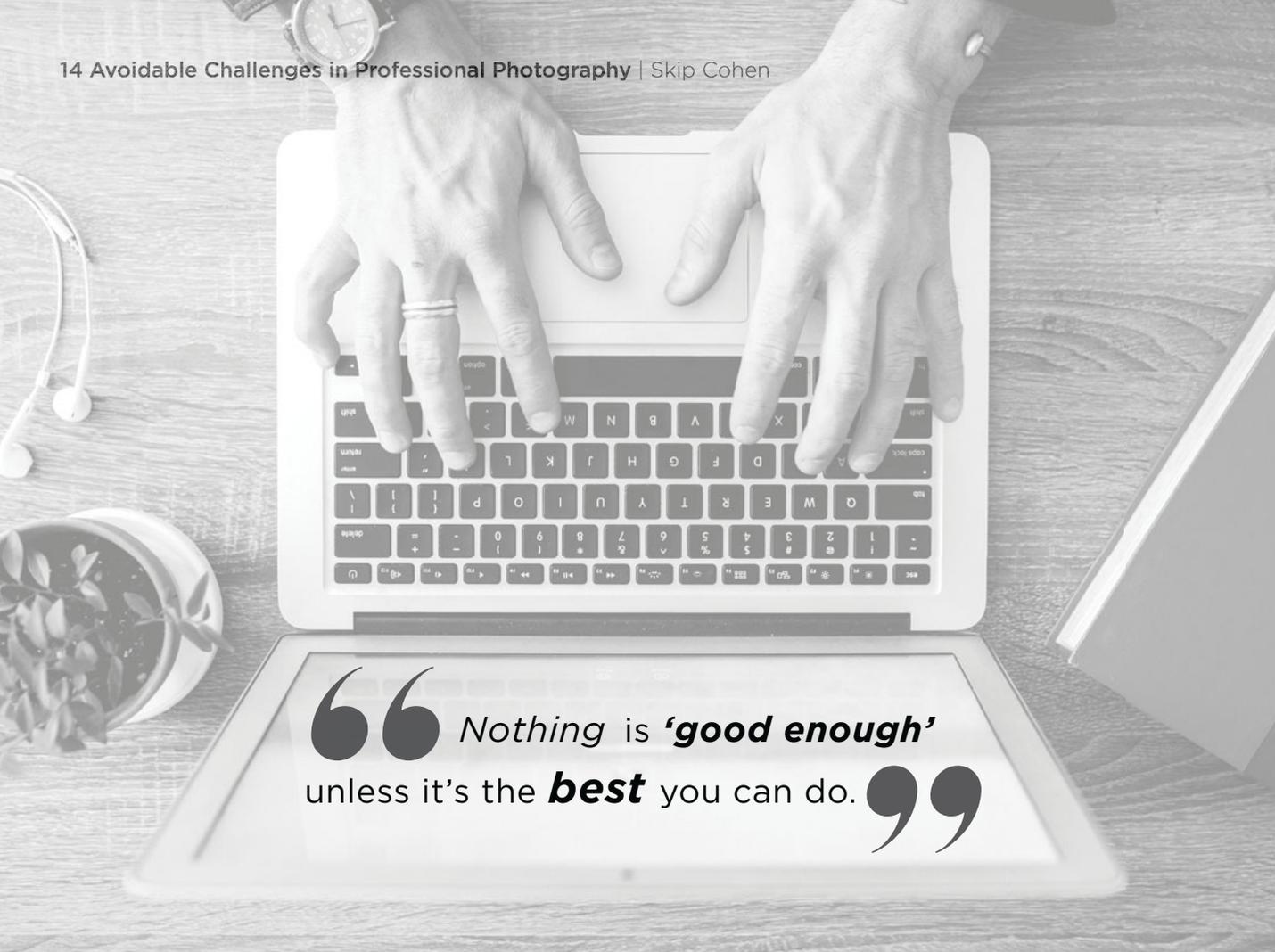
**I heard it through the grapevine.**

Stay out of the rumor mill. If you have a question about somebody and it’s not public knowledge, pick up the phone and call them directly. Don’t spread rumors. I’ve seen companies lose sales because some idiot said they were going out of business. I’ve seen talented photographers simply withdraw because a troll started a vicious rumor. Don’t spread bad news unless it’s somehow helpful to people and obviously true.

Most important of all, remember whom you’re talking to. Over and over again, I’ve seen artists in hot water because they shredded somebody and didn’t realize the person they were talking to was the shredder’s employer, best friend, etc.

**“That’s good enough.”**

Never compromise on the quality of anything you do. Nothing is “good enough” unless it’s the very best you can do. From images to marketing campaigns to your relationships—it takes such a small investment to do things right and be the very best. You’ve got a choice in how you want to be perceived, and being the King or Queen of Mediocrity shouldn’t be on the list.



“ Nothing is ‘good enough’ unless it’s the **best** you can do. ”

There it is, gang, my Top 14 Pet Peeves in professional photography. All of them are fixable and avoidable. They all fall under one main category: Pay attention to the rules of engagement. ■

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

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How to

# Maximize

## Your Second Shooter on a Wedding Day

with **Alissa Zimmerman**

Having a consistent and well-trained second shooter on a wedding day plays a huge part in the success of your process and quality of your imagery. Maximizing that extra body during each part of the day allows you to focus on your workflow and take time to let your creativity flow.

The 80/20 rule is something Sal teaches constantly. Wedding photographers should understand and implement the rule. Create a workflow that allows you to focus 80 percent on capturing the must-have shots. If time allows, the other 20 percent of your time can be spent more creatively, trying new techniques and getting shots a little more outside the box, allowing you to focus on unique images for your portfolio.

## GROOM PREP

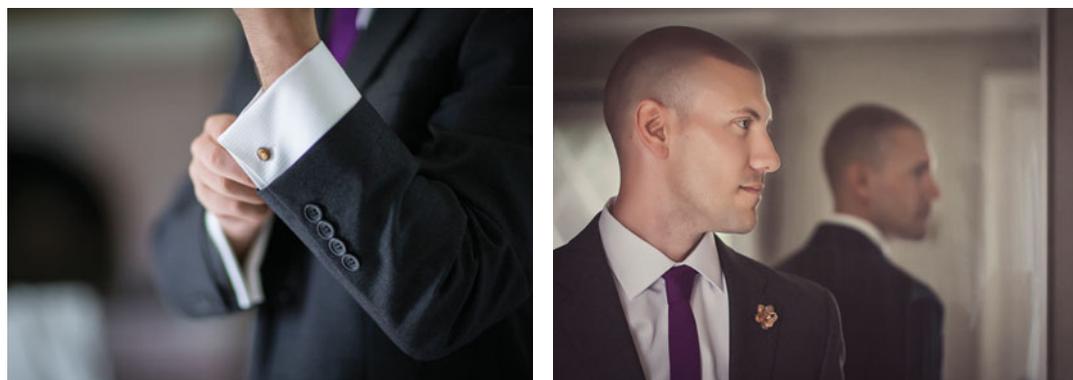
We find that starting our wedding timelines with the groom and his groomsmen getting ready allows for a more relaxed flow throughout the rest of the day. We need only about 30 minutes with the guys before we head off to the girls.

Walking into a room full of rowdy guys can be intimidating. This is the first interaction you have with the bridal party, so it's important to establish your roles immediately.

After you've established who you are, have your second shooter work with the groom or best man to gather his details for you. The upside of working with a rowdy group of guys is the endless opportunities for candid shots your second shooter can capture while you are taking the isolated shots of his details.

Once the details are photographed, it's time to get your groom dressed. Never work with the same focal length in your lens choice between primary and second shooter. Remember, the images coming off your second shooter's camera should always complement the primary. If you are shooting wide to get all the groomsmen in the shots, your second should be shooting tight, getting close-up shots of hands or over-the-shoulder images of the best man or dad helping the groom with his details (cufflinks, watch, tie).

Don't leave the room until you've taken an isolated groom portrait. This is where your second shooter can do one of two things, depending on your situation. If the room is tight and there are a lot of distractions around where you have the portrait staged, your second shooter may not have a good complementary wide-angle shot. Your second shooter puts the camera down and goes into assistant mode—fixing details on the groom to make sure your tight portraits look perfect. If you are working in a room that lends to two well-composed images, stick to the normal primary/secondary tight and wide shot balance.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

## BRIDE PREP

Just like the groom prep, when you walk into the room where the bride is getting ready, your job as the primary photographer is to introduce yourself to the bridesmaids and family, and establish a relationship right away. Introduce your second shooter to the maid of honor so the two can gather details while you chit-chat with the bride for a bit. Get her comfortable by letting her know you're ready to create some incredible images.

Once all of the bride's details have been gathered, start shooting and send your second shooter to capture the candid moments with the bride and her friends, finishing up makeup, etc. This is also a good time to capture the group shot of the girls in their robes or matching t-shirts before sending them off to get in their dresses.

Use your second shooter to keep things moving while you're shooting the details so you don't get behind on the timeline. If makeup is running late, have your second shooter work with the makeup artists on a realistic ETA so you can adjust accordingly. If the bride wants everyone in the background of the "getting ready" shots but no one is dressed, use your second shooter to stress the sense of urgency for them to get in their dresses or they won't be in the photos. Having your second shooter handle all of this allows you to focus on getting the creative shots of the bride's details (the things she spent a lot of money on), and then go right into the bride getting into her dress without having to sit around and wait.

The same getting-dressed process applies for bride prep—while you are shooting wide, your second should be shooting tight (and vice versa).

For the bridal portrait, the process is also the same. Nailing this shot has a little more weight tied to it than the groom portrait because of all the details that go into making sure your bride looks perfect. Your second shooter should be in assistant mode first for these shots—make sure the veil is laying perfectly, sweep away any hairs in her face and make sure there are no wrinkles in her dress.

Get the shot right for the primary, and if there's time and a well-composed shot for the second shooter, hop in and get additional images to complement the scene. I like to shoot tight shots of the veil or the dress, or the bride holding her hands in front showing off her ring.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

## CEREMONY

Before the ceremony, we allow at least 30 minutes to get to the venue or church to reserve our spot (claim a seat with our camera bag about halfway up the aisle), take the detail shots and get dialed in on each other before people start arriving. The beginning of the ceremony is a bit of a scramble for must-have shots, so it's important that you and your second understand your roles and work as a team to ensure none of these unrepeatable shots are missed.

Primary shots:

- Bridal party walking down the aisle (mid-shot, depending on the venue).
- Flower girl(s) and ring bearer(s) walking down the aisle (mid or tight shot).
- Bride and father entering the ceremony (wide, dramatic shot).
- Bride and father walking down the aisle (from the side; tight shot).
- Bride and father walking to the altar (from behind; wide, dramatic shot).
- Secondary shots:
  - Groom's expression as he sees his bride for the first time (mid or tight shot).

As you can see, there is a lot of pressure on the primary photographer to get the main shots from the opening of the ceremony. The one shot that cannot be guaranteed from the primary is the groom's expression as he sees his bride for the first time. That's where the second shooter plays a crucial role.

The second most important shot from the ceremony is the first kiss. Train your second shooter to shoot wide for this so you can focus on getting the tight shot (this is the one the bride and groom typically like the most, but it's important to walk away with both). To this day, Sal and I post up in the middle of the aisle as we wait for the first kiss to be announced. I get the shot dialed in and show him for approval. Once we're ready to go, I don't change my settings until after I have captured the first kiss.

After the bride and groom exit the building and the guests are being escorted out, your second shooter should grab your camera bag and head to the altar for family pictures. Your second shooter's job is to set up your camera and flash while you are capturing the bride and groom's exit. Once you come back in from that, get dialed in on your second shooter so you're ready to go as soon as the bride and groom and their families are back in the building. Family pictures should take no longer than 30 minutes if done correctly. Use your second shooter as an assistant here, making sure everyone is where he or she needs to be so you can work through your progression as efficiently as possible.

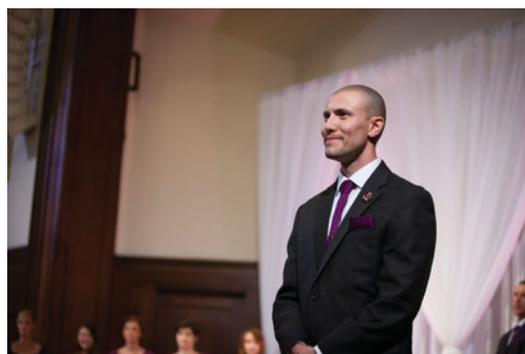


## CREATIVES

There are two roles for your second shooter during the creative portion of the wedding day: assistant and photographer. We start our creatives by taking the individual portraits of the bride and groom with each of their bridesmaids and groomsmen. During this time, your second shooter can either help with the details or focus on capturing candid moments of the bridal party.

Once you start working on the groups (all of the girls alone, all of the guys alone and the full group shot), you and your second should be working with the normal primary/secondary tight and wide shot balance again. As the primary, make sure you set up your second shooter for success. Have your group all look in different directions for a more editorial group shot. When you give this direction, tell the bride and groom to kiss so that your second shooter can get an isolated shot of the kiss.

During the creatives with just the bride and groom, have your second shooter go back in assistant mode so you can get a few signature shots using off-camera flash. Have your second shooter make sure every detail is perfect on the bride and groom, then ask your second to hold the flash for the shot. If you're able to get a signature shot without off-camera flash, have your second shooter perfect the details, then hop in and start shooting with you. (Make sure your second shooter is right next to you—do not have her take shots from the side unless they are specific tight shots of flowers or isolated expressions.)





Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

## RECEPTION

Help your second shooter throughout the reception, especially if it isn't your regular second. If this person is not familiar with on-camera flash, set up their camera for them so they don't go into panic mode and miss the shots.

Always play it safe and ensure you're in control of your own destiny. Receptions are where the magic happens for vendors and where you have the opportunity to build vendor relationships that could be the source of new business. Get to the reception with plenty of time before guests are allowed to enter the room so you can get shots of the empty room. Know your strengths and understand the shots you'll need to send to vendors after the wedding—shots that showcase their work, ones they will want to post online with your photo credit.

Have your second shooter stage the gear, get your lighting set up for the night and help get everyone out of the room for that one big room shot. If there is enough down time, this is a good opportunity to challenge your second shooter to see the world a little differently—push each other by creating competitions to see who can make the centerpieces look more interesting. This keeps the night fun in an otherwise slow part of the day.

Once the bride and groom are announced, the rest is all about the tight and wide balance between the primary and second shooter.

Work as a team and communicate constantly throughout the day. Maximize your second shooter so you can put together a process that allows you to focus on your job and create the best images and experience possible for your clients.

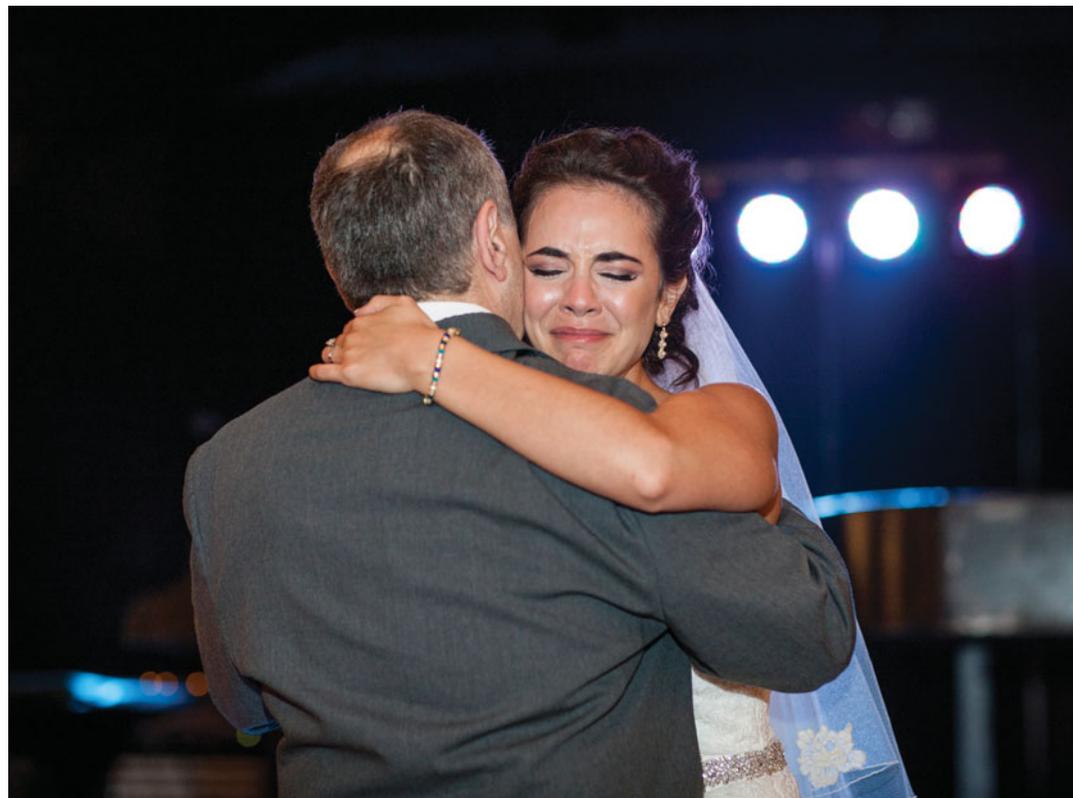


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Alissa Zimmerman graduated with a degree in television production and has been a part of the Salvatore Cincotta team since 2011. Today she is behind the camera regularly as Sal's second shooter and as the executive producer and camera operator for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

[salcincotta.com](http://salcincotta.com)

# Tailored Boxes for Prints & Flash



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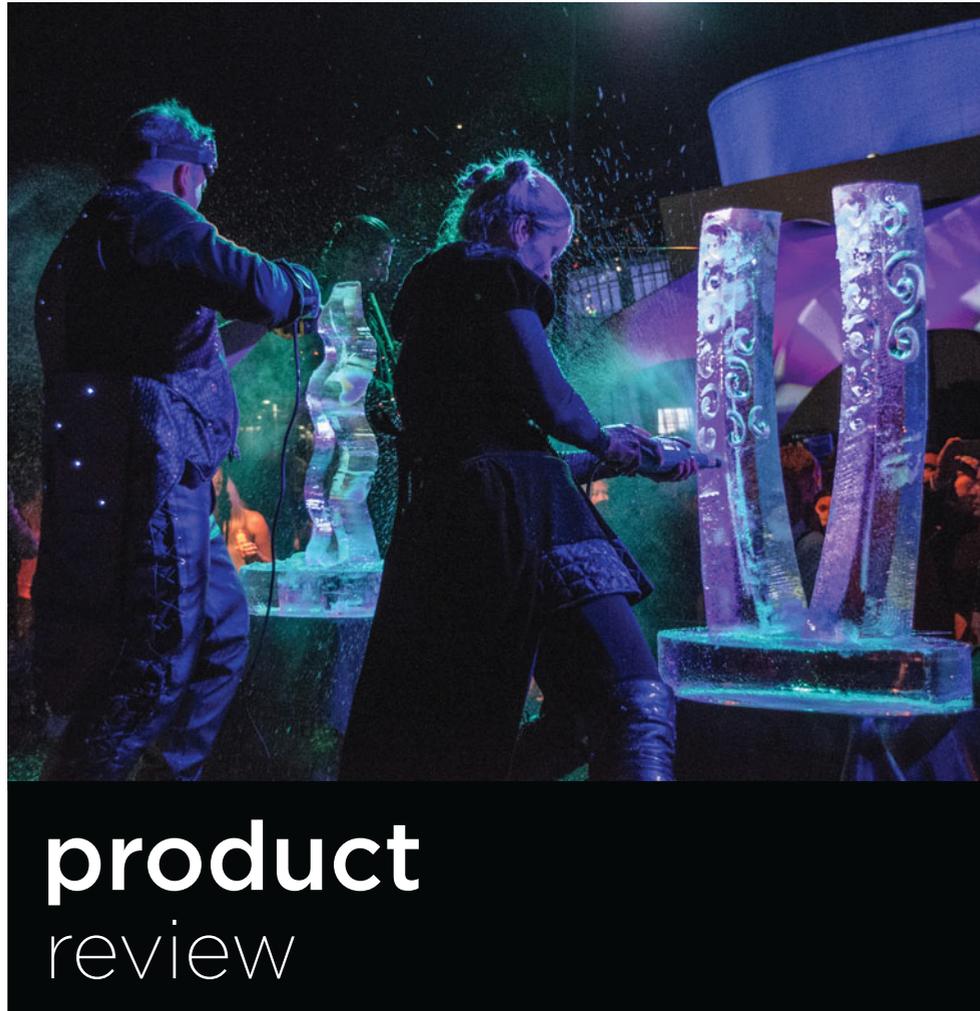
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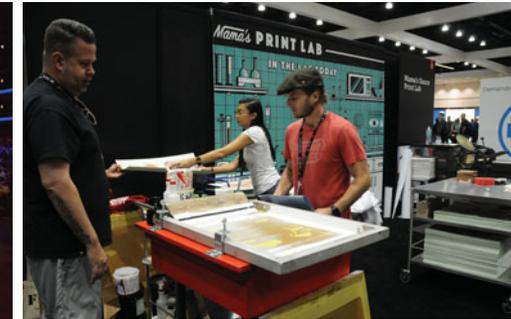


product  
review



THE CREATIVITY CONFERENCE

with *Salvatore Cincotta*



## Why Adobe Max?

Many photographers are unaware that Adobe has its very own conference called Adobe MAX. Last year I attended my first one, and I was blown away. Everything Adobe. Complete focus on the platform from all sorts of perspectives. Everything from basic how-to to more advanced workflow and best practices.

This year, I have been invited to speak at the conference, and I am honored and excited to get a chance to speak to creatives from multiple industries.

We have to invest in our education. Photographers tend to focus on topics like lighting and posing. But there is so much that happens in our world after the click. Adobe is the dominant force in post-production workflow. Using these tools effectively and efficiently can save us hours upon hours of time. This is the place to be to learn more about the platform.

### What is MAX?

MAX is a five-day creativity conference sponsored by Adobe.

MAX brings together over 9,000 of the world's top creatives—it's the fastest-growing creativity conference.

MAX features over 200 sessions and labs taught by Adobe product experts as well as top designers, illustrators, web and app developers, photographers and video professionals.

MAX includes keynote sessions where you can hear about industry trends and Adobe's product plans; a variety of networking events; and a community pavilion with partner booths, maker fair experiences and a chance to talk with the Adobe product teams.

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THE  
**BLACK & WHITE**  
EDITION

Featuring

- 34 | **Learning to Light for Black & White** with Jeff Rojas
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- 128 | **Inspirations** from Our Readers



Image © Jeff Rojas

Fig. 1.1

LEARNING TO

# LIGHT

FOR BLACK & WHITE  
with Jeff Rojas

A quick search on Google reveals hundreds of tutorials explaining different ways to convert your vibrant color images to beautiful black and white. What most of those tutorials fail to mention is that the key to creating compelling black-and-white images happens long before post-production. It starts with lighting.

## ■ ■ DECONSTRUCTING A BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPH

No two black-and-white images are created the same way. Don't believe me? Try downloading any toning preset for Adobe Lightroom or Capture One, and use it on images with different lighting and exposure. Even when you're using the same settings, you'll quickly see that the results are different. Why? Because you haven't taken into account that the black-and-white preset you're using has a fixed formula. It's not accounting for the exposure, highlights and shadows of the image. Presets aren't intuitive. It's still up to you to tweak that preset to create your ideal black-and-white image.

In theory, if you wanted seamless black-and-white toning across all of your images, you'd have to use the same lighting, exposure and contrast, but for most of us, that's simply not practical. Being aware of those discrepancies between images allows you to selectively adjust them to be more in sync with one another. Take the images in Figures 1.2 and 1.3. The image in Figure 1.2 is photographed using an octabox in a controlled studio environment, while the image in Figure 1.3 is photographed using unmodified available light. Even though the intensity, quality and direction of the light is quite different, the tones in the images are similar. That's simply because I'm very aware of how each of those lighting elements affects my final image. I can better control my settings and direction of light to accommodate for those variables so that my final images are more aligned with one another.



Fig. 1.2

Image © Jeff Rojas



Fig. 1.3

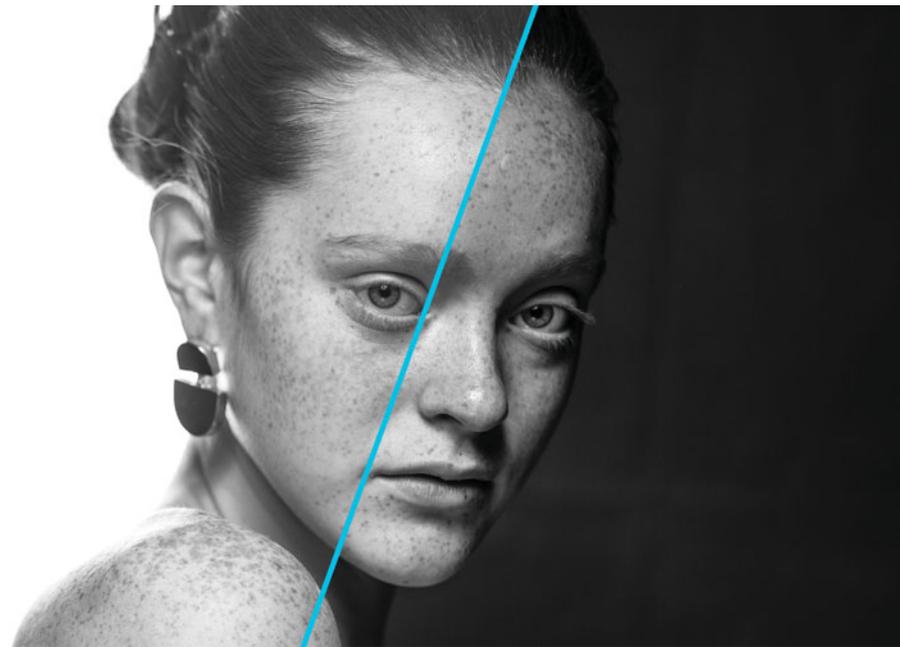
Image © Jeff Rojas



If you're deeply enamored by black-and-white images like I am, don't focus solely on toning. Pay close attention to how the light affects the overall visual contrast and mood of the image. You'd be surprised how that mindset changes your overall view of how the final image was created. Look at Figures 1.5 and 1.7. The image in Figure 1.5 is high key and Figure 1.7 is dramatic, but both use the exact same main light and reflector to light the subject. Both have the same preset in post-production, as you can see in Figure 1.6. The only difference between the two images is the inclusion of the background light facing the camera, which you can see in Figure 1.4.



So why is that important to know? Remember that the only variable I changed between Figures 1.4 and 1.5 was the inclusion of the background light, which directly affects the way our eyes view the final image. That's the impact that light plays in creating black-and-white images. It influences how our minds perceive contrast and toning, long before we adjust the final toning.



Images © Jeff Rojas



Images © Jeff Rojas

## ■ ■ WHY LIGHT MATTERS IN BLACK & WHITE PHOTOGRAPHY

The most boring topic for new photographers studying light is the characteristics of light. While I could literally write a book about it, I'd rather you have a working knowledge of how light works and learn to master it, through practice, than have a theoretical understanding without practice. Keep it simple. There are four main characteristics of light: quantity, quality, color and direction. Some of those characteristics overlap, but to keep it simple, let's discuss them separately.

Remember that when you're shooting black-and-white, you're effectively photographing grayscale, which is a range of gray shades from pure white to pure black. That's true whether you're delivering your images in print or digitally. Understanding how light affects contrast, or the difference between light and dark tones in your image, becomes evidently more important.

### ■ ■ QUANTITY

Quantity refers to the intensity of light you're introduced to, whether natural or artificial. It's a term used to determine how much light you have in your image. By introducing more lights into your image, you're affecting the overall contrast. For example, if you've created well-defined shadows with one light, adding a second light to the shadow areas reduces the overall shadows, and influences the perceived contrast of the final image, as we see in Figure 1.5.

Remember that contrast is the difference between the highlights and shadows of your image. If your goal is to photograph a dramatic black-and-white portrait (like the image in Figure 1.8), you'll need more contrast. Adversely, the less of a difference between your highlights and shadows, the flatter your image will be. Images with similar tones (flat images) aren't bad. If you study the histogram (Figure 1.10) of the image in Figure 1.9, you can see that there aren't very many pure whites or pure blacks. The small blue dots represent the pure blacks in the image, and red dots represent pure white parts (there aren't any). The range of tones are much closer together compared to the histogram of the image in Figure 1.1.

When you photograph a subject in flat light, you have to create that contrast in post-production for a more dramatic lighting. While that sounds practical, you may have a difficult time replicating the tones you would achieve photographing more contrast in-camera, especially if you haven't accounted for the quality of light.



## ■ ■ QUALITY

Because there isn't a quantitative way to score light quality, we discuss how "hard" or "soft" it is. You'll know that you're working with hard light when your images have well-defined shadows and lots of overall contrast. The shadows in soft images transition to areas of light without definitive lines of shadow. Always remember: Shadows are created by the absence of light.

If your image looks flat, you'll have to use less light, use a different modifier or reposition your light to create more contrast.

## ■ ■ COLOR TEMPERATURE

Light has a temperature. While color does not play a factor in your black-and-white conversions, it's still a characteristic of light that you should know. All light is not equal. A candle produces warm light, while a fluorescent bulb emanates cool light. Similarly, the color of light outdoors shifts depending on the time of day, weather conditions and a variety of other factors. Light is measured on the Kelvin scale, which is a standardization of color.

### Quick Tip:

Because color doesn't play a factor in your black-and-white images, change your picture profile (or style) on your camera to monochrome if you're shooting Raw. This allows you to see your tone and contrast right on the back of your camera, and makes it easier to see the overall position of light.

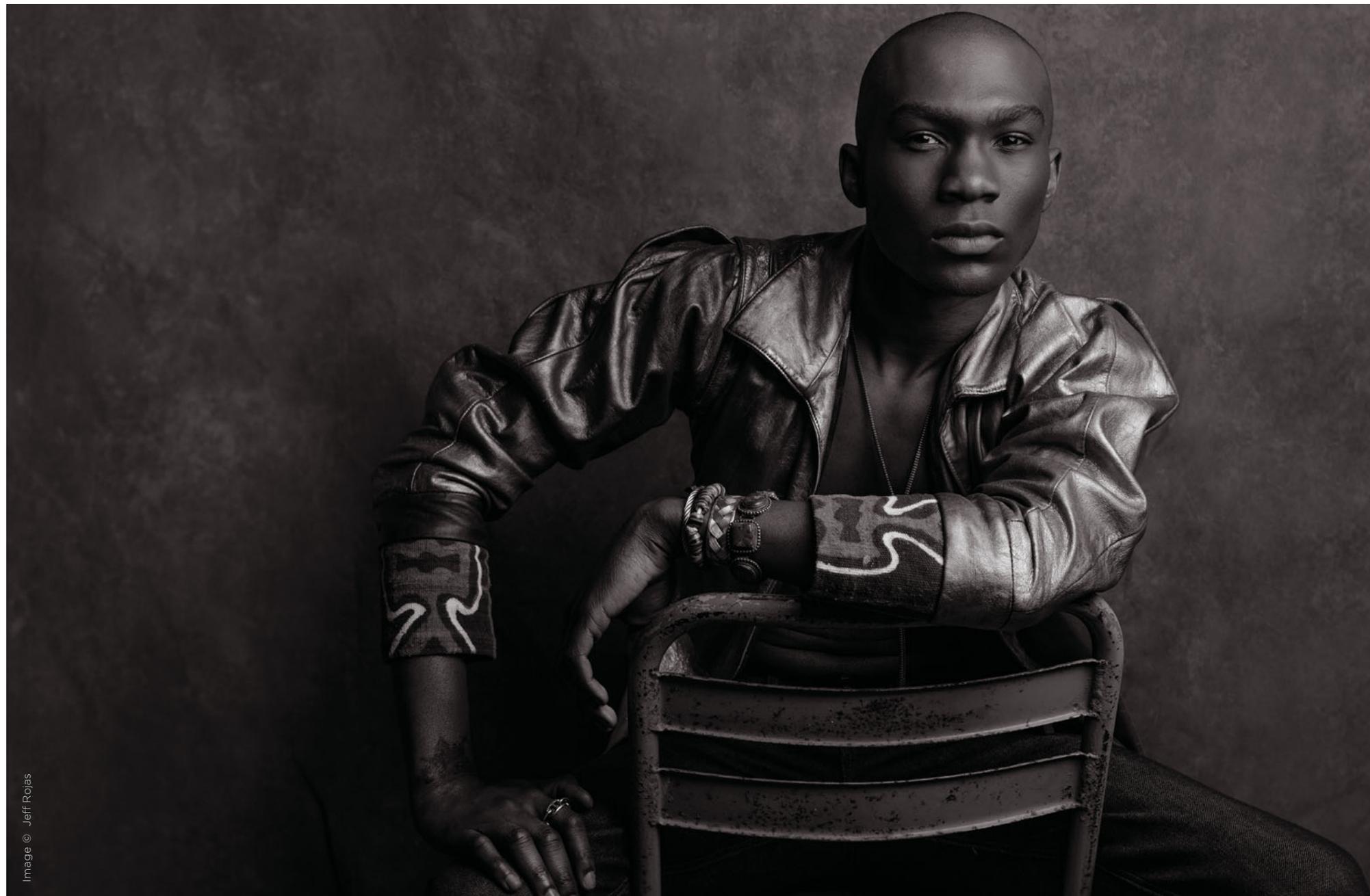
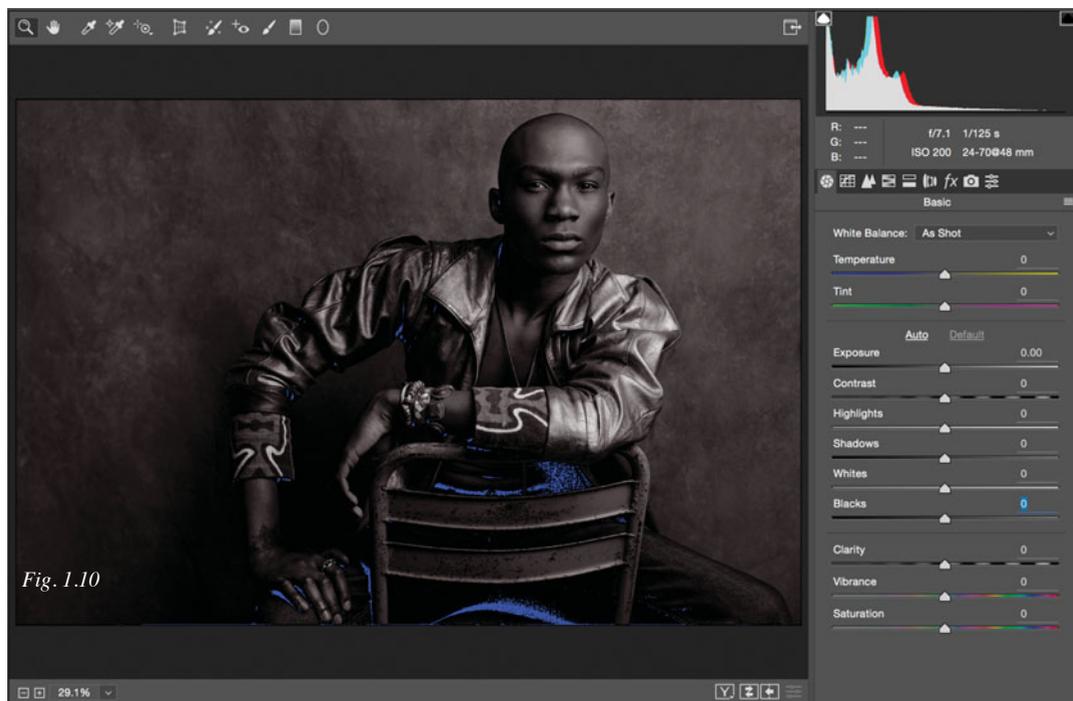


Fig. 1.9



## DIRECTION

The direction of light refers to where the light is coming from. It influences the shape of the light in your scene. The direction of light changes the overall pattern of light.

Position the light high and to the side at a 45-degree angle, and you'll create traditional Rembrandt light (my favorite form of light), like in the image in Figure 1.10. Reposition that same light to the side of the subject, and you'll have split light, like in the image in Figure 1.8. Each position of light influences the overall contrast of the subject's face and affects the mood and tone of your image.

Remember that before you ever convert your images to black and white, you should be aware of how lighting influences the final output of the image so you achieve the results you were hoping for. ■



Jeff Rojas is an American photographer and author based in New York City. His primary body of work is his portrait and fashion photography that has been published in both *Elle* and *Esquire*. Jeff is a heralded photography instructor at platforms like CreativeLive, WPPI, the Photo Plus Expo, Imaging USA and APA.

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© Thomas Kethner Focal length: 85mm Exposure: F/1.8 1/640 sec

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## product review

**TAMRON®** with *Salvatore Cincotta*

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Nothing is more frustrating than working with glass at f/4 or slower in a low-light place like a church or reception hall. It might seem like a small thing, but this can cost you a stop to two of light. That loss of light translates into higher ISO or slower shutter speeds, introducing a host of other issues.

I am a huge believer in prime lenses. Yes, I have to change lenses more often, but the results speak for themselves in sharper images.

I love this focal length from Tamron. 90mm @ f2.8 with macro capabilities is a must in your bag. As a wedding photographer, I use my macro lens at every single event. This helps produce tight detailed images of all the gorgeous details from your client's special day. Also, people underutilize this type of lens for beauty work. Imagine this tight gorgeous shot of a senior or bride focused on the eye or lips, etc.

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- Compatibility with TAMRON TAP-in Console so you can update firmware, customize autofocus positions and adjust the mechanical setup and preferences of the 90mm lens.



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Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

BUILDING SOMETHING

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# BIGGER

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THAN YOURSELF

with **Sal Cincotta**

As photographers/creatives, we have a habit of thinking very small. We see the world through our cameras. This is a great strategy when the world we live in is about creating art, but it's a horrible strategy when we are trying to create, run and sustain a successful business.

This month, I talk about something you may not be thinking about. The thought of building something that is bigger than us is rarely something most creatives think about. They are thinking about their next job. This shortsighted vision will cripple you in the long term. While you are an artist and a creative, you are also an entrepreneur. If you want to survive—and the odds are already stacked against you, with 70 percent of most businesses failing in the first 10 years—you need to start thinking about building something bigger than you, something that will stand the test of time.

### Ask yourself this simple question.

The first thing you need to do is ask yourself a simple yet perplexing question: Why? Why do you do what you do? Why did you choose the profession you are in? It might be for the love of art. It might be a hobby turned career. It might be something you just fell into. It could also be, worst-case scenario, just something you are doing to make money.

Keep in mind that we could be talking about photography or that desk job of yours. Why? Why are you doing what you are doing? I left a very comfortable career at Microsoft, complete with stock options, incredible benefits, great work-life balance (okay, that's a complete lie), etc. You get the gist. I left all this. Why? To pursue my dreams, to do what I love. That's it.

Notice there is nothing very complicated in my answer. I am not doing this for the money. I am not doing this for any of a plethora of other reasons. It was very simple: Life is too short not to do what you love every single day. Now, let's not get all crazy here. I am not suggesting we don't need money, or that I am not motivated by the spoils of money. That's a side effect of all the hard work. More on that below.

So, the challenge for you is to figure out why. The answer to this will be the driving force behind everything you do. When things get tough, this will keep you going. When everyone around you thinks you are batshit crazy for chasing your dreams, this will be your resolve.



### Stop apologizing.

We have to stop this very nasty habit we have as creatives. Stop apologizing for wanting to make money for your services. It's okay. I give you permission to want to make money. Anyone making you feel bad about that, cut them from your life and business. They are cancer. We live in a world of commerce. Everything costs money. This nonsense about "money can't buy you happiness" is bullshit spoken by people with no money. Money may not buy you happiness, but it can sure numb the pain. The bottom line is we all have crap we have to deal with in life. Trivializing the fruit of your labor is a copout for most people who don't like being challenged.

Here is what I want you to do. I want you to challenge yourself to be the best. Be the best at whatever you do. You don't have to be an entrepreneur. Be the best dishwasher. Be the best toilet scrubber. Be the best at whatever you do. Being the best is always thought of in some glamorous way. We watch the Olympics and see the success of a Michael Phelps and glamorize him. He isn't apologizing for making money. He isn't apologizing for getting \$10 million a year for being on the cover of a Wheaties box. He works his ass off. That's the dirty part. That's the part no one sees.

You too bust your ass to be successful. Stop apologizing or feeling ashamed of what you charge. Charge what you are worth. Our studio is by far one of the most expensive in our area. I have had people tell me point blank, "Wow, you are very expensive." Yes, yes I am. I am okay with that. I also think we are one of the best. I work hard at my craft. I continuously study, invest in equipment, practice, etc.

With success comes more money. Is it my "why"? No, but it sure is a nice side effect.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

“Hey, dumbass,  
you know **why** they selected **someone else?**  
Just quite possibly because **you suck.**”



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

### Be competitive.

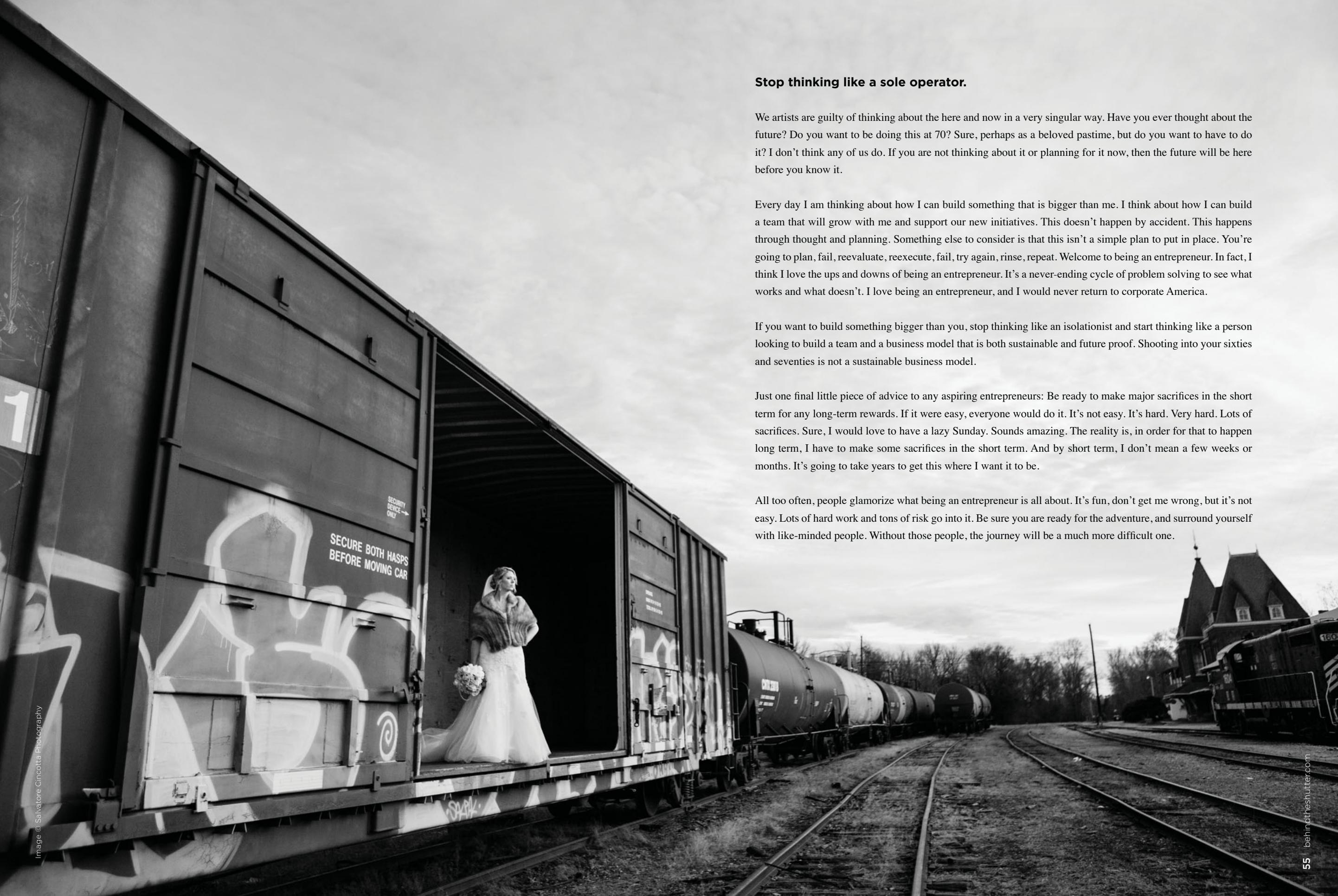
The number of business people these days who are just straight-up pansies is incredible. You don't deserve success. You are not guaranteed success. You are not entitled to success. We all have an opportunity to chase success. It's what makes this country great. I love when I see photographers get upset because a client chose someone else to shoot their family pictures or wedding. They straight-up get offended. What's even more laughable is they take to the photography groups and bitch about it.

Hey, dumbass, you know why they selected someone else? Just quite possibly because you suck. There, I said it. Someone had to. It's not me, it's you. Accept it. You, somehow, some way, made it easy for them to select someone else. You, and no one else. More than likely you stopped being competitive somewhere along the line. We are in business. Wake up!

Something else to keep in mind, which is true of any corporate job too, is when you miss out on that raise or promotion. Why? Did you make it impossible for them to ignore you? Or was it someone else's fault you missed out on it? Be kickass at your job, and the results speak for themselves.

You want to be a successful photographer? Then put your big boy pants on and let's get to it. Welcome to one of the most competitive fields on the planet. Your competition is literally everywhere. Every person with a camera or a phone now thinks they can do what we do. I say, good for them. How about this for an analogy: Just because you went to Sports Authority after watching the NBA Playoffs doesn't make you the next competitor to LeBron James. You know why? Because he is a fierce competitor. He is going to school you. He is practicing longer and harder than you. He wants it more than you do. Let me guess, you took a picture of your niece at the playground, and so now you are a "family photographer"?

You want this? You want a career as a professional photographer? Then you need to eat, breathe, sleep photography. Learn about flash. Learn about the behaviors of light. Become an expert at posing different body types. Read. Read everything. Practice. Shoot something every day. Not for you? Then sit down and stop wondering why you are getting your ass handed to you week in and week out or why your business is struggling. The answers should be obvious.



## Stop thinking like a sole operator.

We artists are guilty of thinking about the here and now in a very singular way. Have you ever thought about the future? Do you want to be doing this at 70? Sure, perhaps as a beloved pastime, but do you want to have to do it? I don't think any of us do. If you are not thinking about it or planning for it now, then the future will be here before you know it.

Every day I am thinking about how I can build something that is bigger than me. I think about how I can build a team that will grow with me and support our new initiatives. This doesn't happen by accident. This happens through thought and planning. Something else to consider is that this isn't a simple plan to put in place. You're going to plan, fail, reevaluate, reexecute, fail, try again, rinse, repeat. Welcome to being an entrepreneur. In fact, I think I love the ups and downs of being an entrepreneur. It's a never-ending cycle of problem solving to see what works and what doesn't. I love being an entrepreneur, and I would never return to corporate America.

If you want to build something bigger than you, stop thinking like an isolationist and start thinking like a person looking to build a team and a business model that is both sustainable and future proof. Shooting into your sixties and seventies is not a sustainable business model.

Just one final little piece of advice to any aspiring entrepreneurs: Be ready to make major sacrifices in the short term for any long-term rewards. If it were easy, everyone would do it. It's not easy. It's hard. Very hard. Lots of sacrifices. Sure, I would love to have a lazy Sunday. Sounds amazing. The reality is, in order for that to happen long term, I have to make some sacrifices in the short term. And by short term, I don't mean a few weeks or months. It's going to take years to get this where I want it to be.

All too often, people glamorize what being an entrepreneur is all about. It's fun, don't get me wrong, but it's not easy. Lots of hard work and tons of risk go into it. Be sure you are ready for the adventure, and surround yourself with like-minded people. Without those people, the journey will be a much more difficult one.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



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### What is your exit strategy?

This sounds crazy to even think about. “Sal, you want me to think about selling my business?” Yes, I do. Even if you never sell it, thinking about what that exit strategy might be will force you to think about the big picture and to stop running your business like a mom-and-pop shop. Ninety percent or more of you probably don’t have a business plan. Your financials are a mess, with personal and business mixed together, you aren’t incorporated, you aren’t following GAAP (if you don’t know what that is, there is another issue altogether) and you don’t have a Plan B if something were to happen to you. How will your business survive?

Being a photographer and an entrepreneur is without a doubt one of the most rewarding jobs or careers I could have ever asked for. I love what I do. I love it every single day. For all the ups and downs, I just can’t get enough of it. All that being said, there will come a day I can’t hustle the way I do every day. I will need to either exit the business by selling it or ensure the business can operate without me being 100 percent involved. I have to build a team around me. I have to think about this now. Many of you are so engrossed in the now, you forget to think about the future.

I hope this lights a fire under you, and gets you to see the work that goes into building something great. We each have our own definition of success. No one’s definition is right or wrong. It’s your definition to have and hold, but don’t forget that it all starts with one simple question: Why?

Get out there and kick some ass. ■

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

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THE ART OF STREET SHOOTING

with Ryan Brown

Street photography is the most exciting genre I've ever shot. In my debut article for *Shutter*, I look at the history and some of the basics of this ever-evolving art form.

## HISTORY

Street photography is one of the earliest and broadest styles of photography. It's also known as documentary, photojournalism and reportage. One pioneer of the form, Eugène Atget, is known for his Parisian street scenes shot with a large-format camera in the late 1800s. Because of the nature of the equipment, the exposures were long, which created wispy scenes that rarely included people.

Fast-forward to the early 1900s, when shooters like Dorothea Lange and Walker Evans were hired by the Farm Security Administration (FSA) to document the effects of the Depression and Dust Bowl on landowners and farmers. This brought the idea of photojournalism into the public eye.

Around the same time, Henri Cartier-Bresson started getting noticed. Cartier-Bresson was known for his dynamic compositions and the idea of the "decisive moment." This idea holds that an image is created at the height of the action, so it encompasses the story of an event in one image. Cartier-Bresson would later become known as the father of modern photojournalism, and founded one of the most prestigious agencies in the world, Magnum Photos.

## INSPIRATIONS

The history of street photography is my greatest inspiration. On my shelf sit books from all the greats: Cartier-Bresson, Atget, Robert Capa, Robert Frank and Elliott Erwitt. Everyone had their own vision. Erwitt documented people in an almost comical style. Cartier-Bresson used action and composition. Looking through their images helps me form my own style.

Black-and-white photography is another inspiration of mine. When you strip the color from an image, you are left with raw emotion. Color can be a distraction. Taking away this distraction allows you to see the story of an image a little more clearly. Today there are some great color street photographers, like Constantine Manos.

Inspiration starts with you. What gets you going? What do you see that makes your heart start pumping? Here are some resources to get you started.

- The Leica Blog
- Magnum Photos

And some of my personal favorite street photographers right now:

- Zack Arias
- Thomas Leuthard
- Valerie Jardin

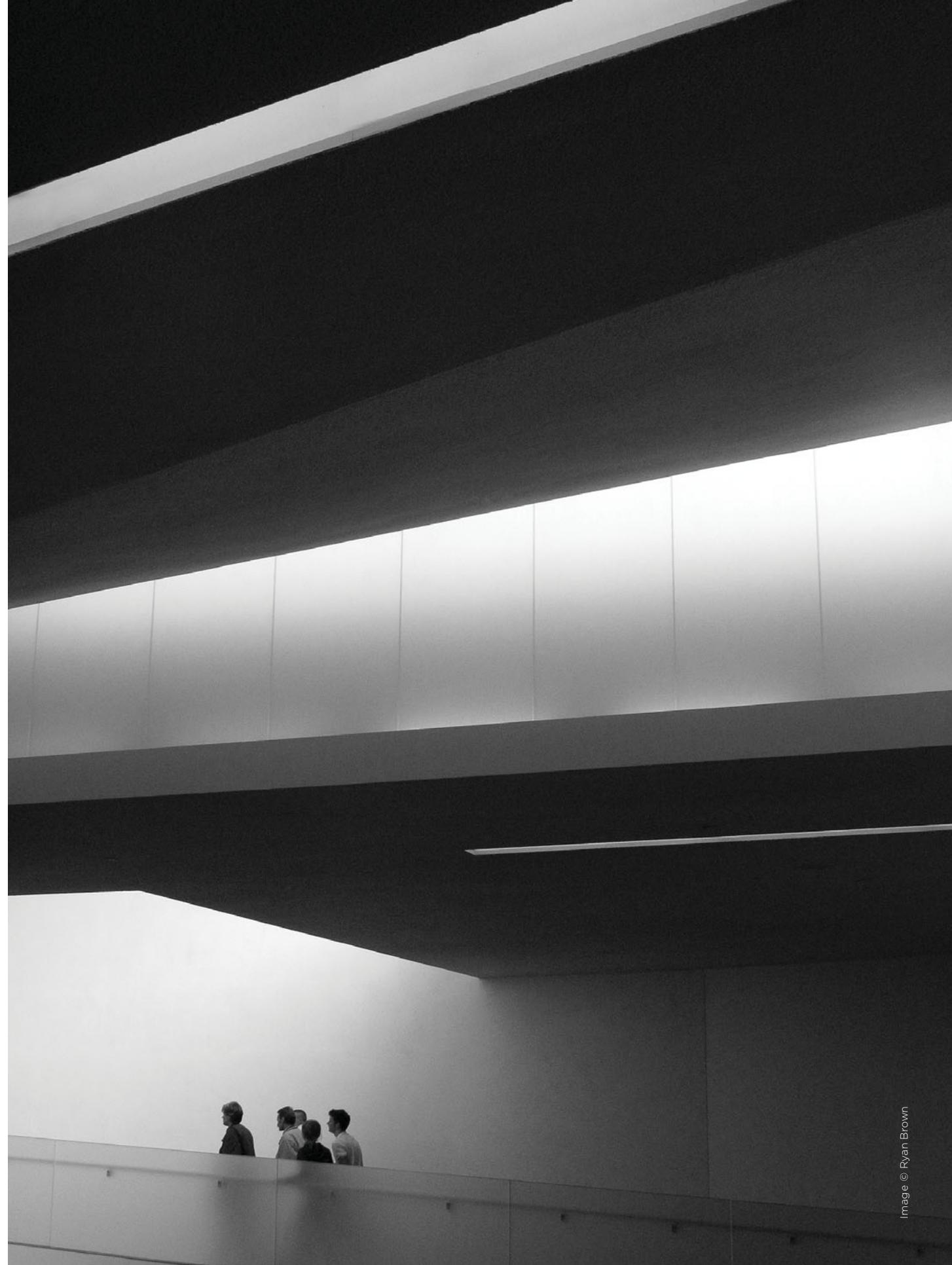




Image © Ryan Brown

## EQUIPMENT

Equipment choices are seemingly endless: small to large, high resolution, medium resolution, mirrorless cameras, single lens reflex cameras. When I set out walking in various cities, my preference was for smaller cameras with a prime lens. Historically, the camera of choice has been the Leica rangefinder system with a lens slightly wider than normal.

“Normal” is defined as a lens that you put up to your eye, take it away, and everything appears the same size. The normal lens is calculated by measuring the diagonal dimension of the film or sensor plane. To give you an idea, in a full-frame camera, the sensor size is identical to a 35mm negative at 24x36mm. The diagonal is close to 50mm (a little less, actually), so 50mm becomes the normal lens or the separation of wide angle and telephoto. Street photographers historically have relied on the 35mm lens as their workhorse.

My equipment for street photography is the Sony A7R II mirrorless full-frame camera and the Sigma 35mm f/1.4 lens with the Sigma MC-11 adapter. The adapter lets me add the Canon-mount Sigma lens to the Sony FE camera mount. The Sony is a small mirrorless camera that is full frame, high resolution and really great at high ISOs. This combination allows me to push street photography to around the clock. Low light is not a problem, especially with the 1.4 f-stop. I usually go out with the camera and one lens. I have always thought that if you fumble with two cameras or changing lenses, you will miss something.

Other great focal lengths for street photography are 28mm and a small 24–70mm lens. It’s all about capturing what you can with what you have. The best camera is always the one that is with you. Some street photographers build their entire brand off of iPhone photography. Anything is possible.

## TECHNIQUE

Technique varies depending on what type of street photography you're aiming for. I have a dynamic composition style. I keep my camera on Raw but the color tone set to monochrome. The Sony does a great in-camera black and white. Even though I might not always use it in black and white, I can see it immediately as monochrome.

There is only one camera on the market that saves a black-and-white Raw file, and it's not the camera I own. With the Sony, I always have a color file to work from in the computer. Since I am photographing in black and white, you need to learn to visualize in black and white. I see tones and tonal value differences.

I like to use Ansel Adams's Zone System as my basis for black and white. If you visualize the tones while photographing, it's easier to create a dynamic black and white. In the images here, you will see I have dark tones and light tones. I direct the viewer where I want by putting some sort of value difference where I want their attention. Another technique I use is to find a repeating pattern. If you find a repeating pattern and then a subject that breaks up that pattern, the images become more striking.

As for actual technique, if I am photographing people, I like to shoot from the hip. If my ISO is adjusted higher, I can go with a higher shutter speed and a narrower f-stop. This means that when shooting from the hip, I have a better chance of getting sharp keepers while not alerting the subject to the fact that I am photographing them.





## SOFTWARE

My software of choice for black-and-white images is Nik's Silver Efex Pro. This Google product is a great black-and-white conversion system. I use the plugin for Photoshop that they offer instead of the standalone program.

When adjusting an image, whether color or black and white, it is imperative that you start with a calibrated display. If you want full creative control, you need to know what you are looking at. Once my display is calibrated, I bring the image into Photoshop.

Since street photography is a form of journalism, I believe digital manipulation is unethical. I limit my street photography adjustments to contrast, exposure, saturation, dodging and burning, and that is it. I need to tell the real story, and adding or taking away objects is deceiving.

Inside the Nik program, you have several adjustments. I adjust a neutral monochrome image without any toning. I add a bit of structure (midtone contrast) to the image when it is called for, and take advantage of the control points in the system. The control points allow me to set a point in the images and adjust a small portion of them. If an area needs darkened a bit, this is the perfect way to do that.

Street photography is what you make of it. For me, it is a creative way to find striking compositions in everyday life, no matter where I am. It's also a way for me to study and be inspired by the history of our industry.

Just remember that whatever you do in photography, you and your images are not defined by the camera or the lens. You are defined by the person who is behind the viewfinder. Make your own way. Make your own style. Be you. ■

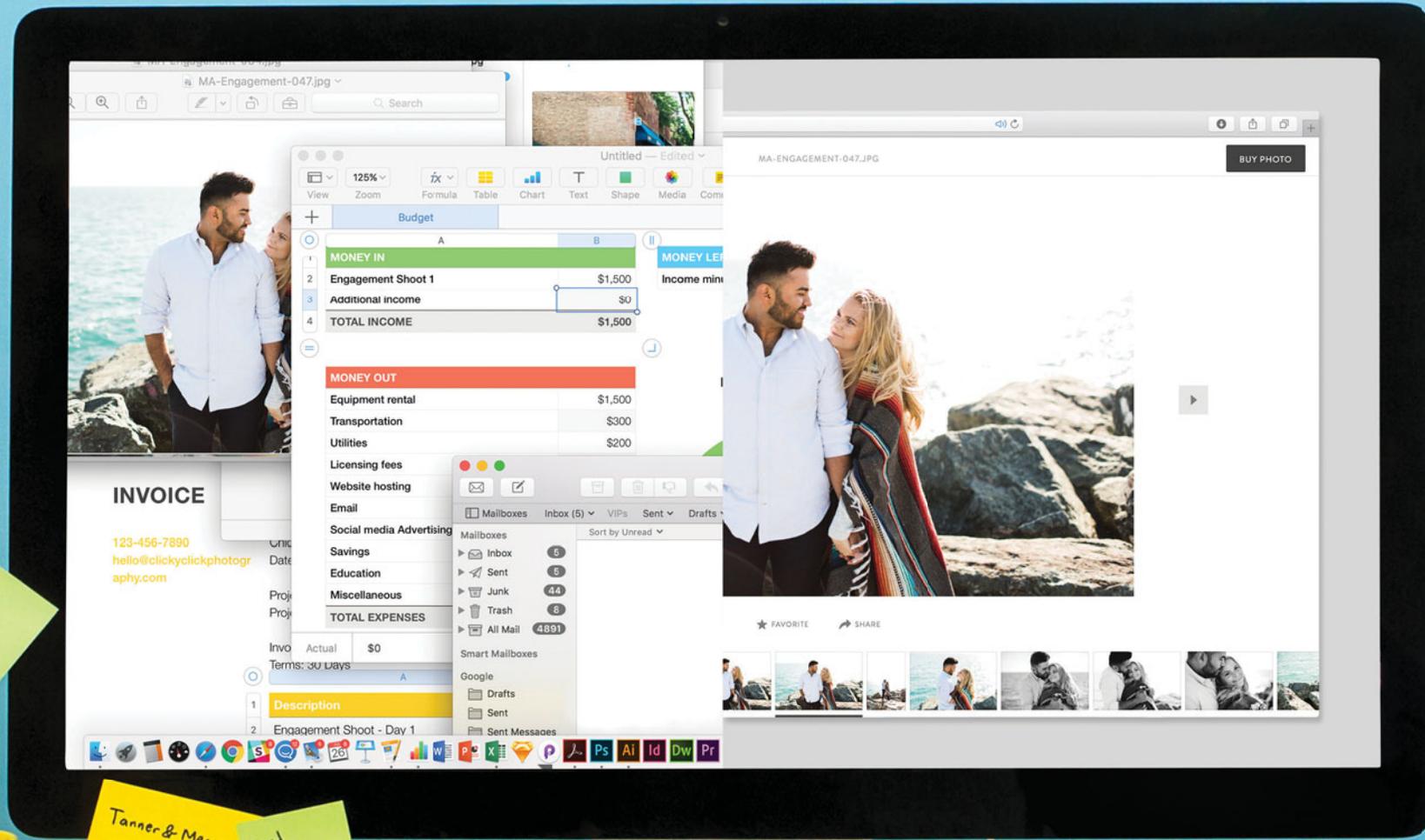


Ryan Brown is a travel photographer out of Kansas City who holds a bachelor's degree in photography with an emphasis in digital imaging and a minor in business administration. He is a PPA Certified Master Photographer and an Approved International Juror of Photography. [theimagejournal.com](http://theimagejournal.com)

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HOW TO  
**BLACK & WHITE**  
YOUR PHOTOS FOR  
**HIGHER PROFITS**

with Phillip Blume



Do you see the world in black and white? No one does. So why does black-and-white photography stir up such an emotional response? No other technique or trend is its equal. Is our obsession purely nostalgic? Sure, the early history of photography was written in black and white due to technological constraints. Yet, even today, a century since we learned to capture color and decades since the advent of digital color spaces (CMYK, sRGB, AdobeRGB, ICC), black and white remains timeless. How can you use this to your advantage?

For any photographer who wants to create more impactful work, understanding black and white’s appeal is important: When and how should you use it? But for a professional photographer like myself, harnessing this genre’s appeal can also mean a significant increase in annual revenue.

So if you want to convert your black-and-white photography to green (or whatever color your national currency may be), read on. The first step is to shift our syntax. Let’s make *black-and-white* a verb.

## ‘BLACK-AND-WHITE’ IS A VERB

It seems odd that simply draining the color from an image creates a new experience for the viewer. Yet it’s undeniable. It’s one thing to desaturate an image. It’s quite another to black-and-white it. When I use *black-and-white* as a verb, I have in mind a strategic, three-step process that communicates something to my client. The *something* I ultimately communicate is *value*.

Artists are communicators first and foremost. Let’s utilize this skill more in our businesses. An artist’s personal message is often provocative and must not be compromised. But as professionals as well, we have another important goal: to communicate something our clients will actually value and pay for. With that in mind, my process of black-and-whiting involves the following:

- Identify images whose value will increase in black and white.
- Convert images to black and white by a method that reflects our brand.
- Deliver black-and-white images via a method that protects our brand.



## #1: IDENTIFY BLACK-AND-WHITE IMAGES THAT DEFINE YOUR BRAND

To identify images whose value will increase in black and white, we first consider a shortlist of criteria that help reinforce our brand message. I'll list those criteria below, but your criteria may be different because your brand is unique. Use our list as a model, but plan to adapt it.

In addition to our best-known signature brand, Blume Photography, my wife and I own a distinct associate brand, Eve & Ever Photography, which differs from our studio in several ways. I'll mention a few of those differences later. But with Blume Photography, we've chosen to communicate a consistent brand message defined by certain words: *luxury, fresh, fun* and *real*.

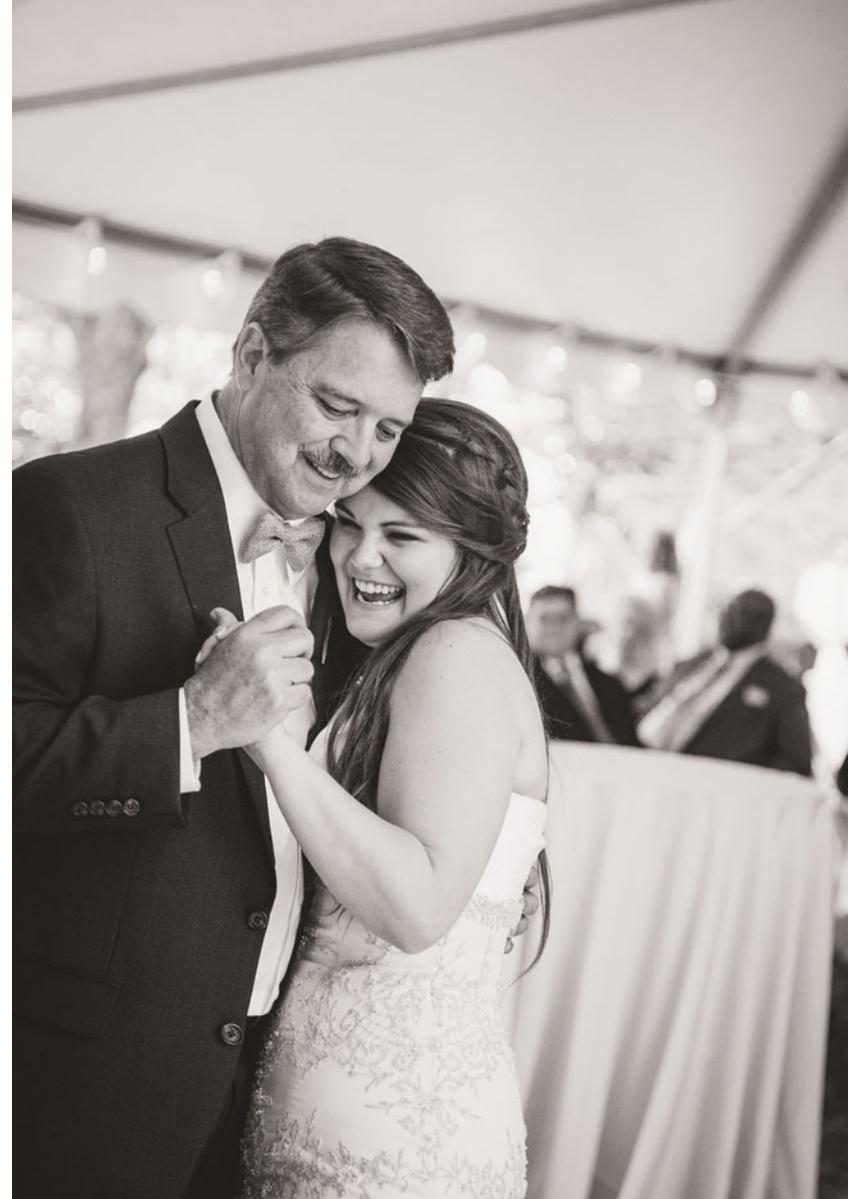
So here's our selection process. As soon as we receive our outsourced, color-corrected images from Evolve Edits, we scroll through the images in Adobe Lightroom looking for strong black-and-white candidates. We then apply our favorite black-and-white preset (visit [blumephotography.com/blog](http://blumephotography.com/blog) to download our free custom "Blume B/W" preset) to approximately 5 percent of our images, but only to images that meet these criteria:

- **Expresses a strong emotion.** This usually relates to our subjects' facial expressions—whether the expression is a bride's wild laughter or her father's contorted attempt to hold back tears before he walks her down the aisle. Because our brand highlights both "fun" and "real" emotions in a photojournalistic style, black and white allows us to intensify the viewer's focus on these "brand values," blocking out even the distractions of color and environment to clarify our message.

- **Feels nostalgic.** Like any skilled photographer, we're constantly "chasing the light" during photo shoots and wedding days. Beyond natural light, though, our brand is built on the use of shapely off-camera lighting as well. The result for our brand is a portfolio of images that display the high-contrast feel of Old Hollywood. Because we want to communicate "luxury," images lit this way are great candidates for black and white. The images stand out from the competition, and our clientele naturally make the association between this look and the historic value of old cinema. Basically, it visually reinforces the same message we speak to them again and again: Your images will be as important to your grandchildren as they are to you.

- **Fails to meet our color quality controls.** Sometimes black-and-whiting just comes down to hiding mistakes. We would never deliver an image that is out of focus, poorly lit or without meaning. But often you create great images in environments where you couldn't control the ugly, mixed lighting. (You can get only so many conflicting light sources on a run-and-gun wedding day.) In cases like these—even though our brand highlights "fresh" bright colors—black and white allows us to "mask" these mixed-tone messes that threaten to undermine the otherwise carefully curated, consistent tone of our brand.

In all, our black-and-white selection process takes only 15 minutes or so. But it plays a crucial role as one of many personal touches that give our finished work a recognizable style. Ultimately, it gives our couples the benefit of consistency and originality they expect when they invest in a higher-end photography experience.



## #2: CONVERT IMAGES TO REFLECT YOUR BRAND

Like every facet of your personal style, your method for converting images to black and white will develop with experience. I define “personal style,” which contributes to your overall brand, as habits you settle into after you experiment a lot and find what you like. At the same time, you want to be thoughtful about your techniques, not settle into poor habits out of laziness, which is a real temptation.

We developed our custom black-and-white conversion with minor tweaks over several years. It's nothing magical, but it does enhance our brand by giving our images a beautiful film-like look that far surpasses a basic desaturation effect.

Instead of detailing our editing techniques here, we've decided to let you download our Blume Black-and-White preset as a free gift. If you use Lightroom, enjoy this. Use it “as is” if you like, but also take time to investigate our included edits—reverse-engineer how we create our signature mood and film-like look.

Download it now while it's available at [www.blumephotography.com/blog](http://www.blumephotography.com/blog).

## #3: DELIVER BLACK-AND-WHITE IMAGES TO PROTECT YOUR BRAND

Contrary to popular belief, the quality of one's photography is not usually the determining factor behind a successful photography businesses. Customer service and experience is. The way you present and deliver black-and-white images can add value to your service just as much as the steps you took to create them.

The options for presenting your finished images are countless. So, again, make certain your chosen method protects your brand. Consider these possibilities.

- **Provide black-and-white originals only.** By educating our clients early on (through literature and carefully scripted consultations), we earn a good deal of trust from them. Our couples view us as experts and have faith in our creative choices. This pays dividends when we ask couples to hike to a strange portrait location on their wedding day. It also helps in post-processing. For our Blume Photography brand, the black-and-white selections we make are delivered to the couple as black and white only. We do not include color versions of these photos; we believed these images to be better in black and white. So this is how they're presented, both during our in-person ordering sessions and on the custom USB drive our couples receive.

A knee-jerk reaction to business strategies like this—which limit options for clients—is to consider them drawbacks. In reality, high-end clients perceive higher value when they are served by an expert who asks them to make only the most necessary choice. Remember this: The more choices you leave to a customer, the more likely she is to retreat from a purchasing decision.

- **Both color and black-and-white options.** A more common option for delivering black and white is to provide your client both color and black-and-white versions of every photo. This assures your client does not convert your images on her own, in a style that may misrepresent your brand. On the other hand, it may create the impression that you simply pasted a common black-and-white filter to your images, that your black-and-white images are nothing special. So this may undermine your ability to educate your client about the time and care you put into editing, affecting the client experience. Still, this option isn't a nonstarter. If your business plan is geared more toward speed and ease than luxury, it may be a successful option. Just pitch it right: that you go above and beyond to make sure your client has everything she needs to suit her preferences.

- **Allow your client to choose.** As mentioned above, our associate brand, Eve & Ever, is geared toward a slightly different clientele than Blume Photography. We seek to meet different needs and expectations. We've found the best way to deliver images to our associate clients is via ShootProof galleries, whose settings give us the option to put black-and-white editing in clients' hands. This option essentially marries photo editing technology with our best online sales tool—and it guarantees our clients get black-and-white versions that look classy, while we remain hands-off.





Image © Phillip Blume

I imagine a visitor to our planet would be shocked to learn that humanity sees beauty in photos stripped of their beautiful colors. But it's for good reason that formal art programs initiate new photographers with an intro to black-and-white photography. Simplicity is foundational to art. It allows your artwork to say what you want it to say without distraction. Run your business the way you make your art (without distraction and true to brand), and success will follow.

Learn more and download the Blume Black-and-White preset as a free gift at [www.blumephotography.com](http://www.blumephotography.com). ■

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

[blumephotography.com](http://blumephotography.com)



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

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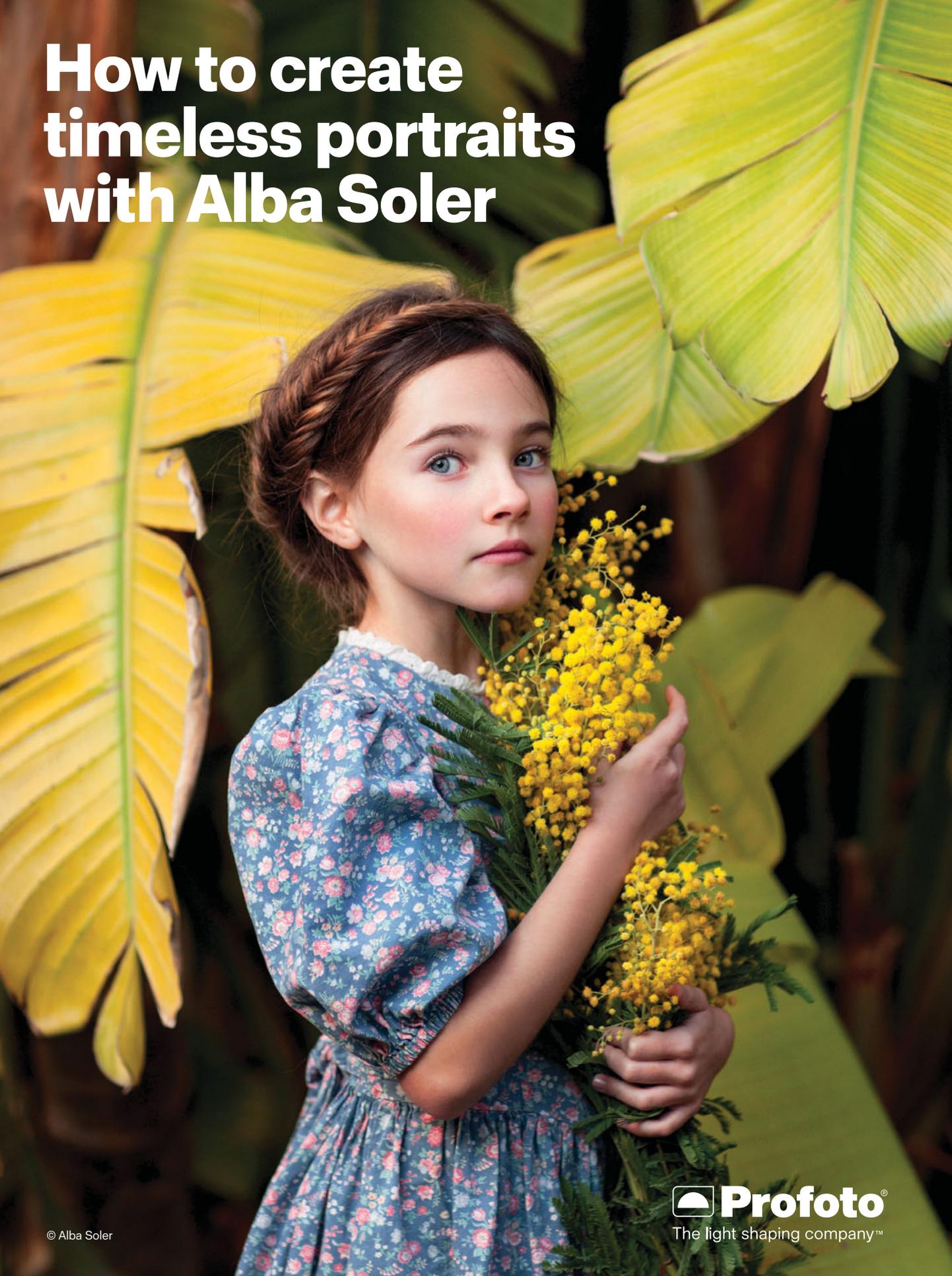
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# How to create timeless portraits with Alba Soler



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# How to create timeless portraits with Alba Soler

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# Alba Soler captures timeless portraits with the OCF Beauty Dish

**Ever since Alba started to photograph, she has been experimenting with light shaping. Aiming for, and achieving, a crispy beauty light that captivates the eyes of the viewer. Already an accustomed user of the classic Profoto Softlight Reflector, Alba set out to try the new OCF Beauty Dish.**

Specializing in shooting children portraiture on-location, Alba needs to be able to move around and to be adaptable. This means that even though Alba plans her setups well ahead, there always has to be room for improvisation.

“Children move, a lot,” Alba says. “It makes no sense for me to prepare a lighting set-up that is not able to move as quickly as the inspiration, the child and the flow move.”

Using the Profoto B2 Off-Camera Flash with an OCF Beauty Dish White she could pose the model independently of the ambient light and still light her face properly. She placed the flash a bit to the side and above the model, creating a favorable light.

“The new OCF Beauty Dish has the same quality of light as the classic Softlight Reflector. The only difference is that it is more practical to bring on-location. It is easy to transport when it is folded, and it is

easy to carry once assembled. That is very important for me as I’m changing places all the time during the photo shoot.”

“My main goal is to tell timeless stories where you can feel the magic in them, but still be able to relate to the subject. The aesthetic is creamy yet crispy, whimsical and, at the same time, realistic.”

The image has to convey a story the beholder can believe in, Alba explains, and therefore the light has to be believable. This does not necessary mean that the light has to be subtle. Light can have strong presence in the picture, as long as it is justified. That is one of the reasons Alba prefers the OCF Beauty Dish.

“Despite of its name it can be very versatile. I use the OCF Beauty Dish White for an even, creamy light. With the OCF Beauty Dish Silver I focus the light on the subject for more dramatic scenes.”

Alba encourages everyone that is considering

shooting with the OCF Beauty Dish to enjoy the quality of light it creates on your subject’s skin, when the OCF Beauty Dish is positioned close up.

“But don’t stop there, experiment with it, take advantage of its portability and bring it with you everywhere!”

---

#### **The gear**

1 x B2 Off-Camera Flash

1 x OCF Beauty Dish White 2’

1 x OCF Speedring

1 x Air Remote TTL-C

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# Off-camera. On to light shaping.

## **B2 Off-Camera Flash**

To shoot with the B2 is to shoot with all options at hand.

Put the B2 head on your camera bracket, the B2 pack on your belt and keep moving. Or put everything on a stand and go off-camera.

Shoot with TTL. Or shoot in Hybrid Mode and switch from TTL to manual mode while the settings remain.

Use it as a subtle fill light. Or crank up the power and take full control of the ambient light. Connect one or two flash heads. Use only the B2. Or sync it with one or several other B1 Off-Camera Flashes.

Shoot with a bare head. Or choose from the widest assortment of Light Shaping Tools available and shape the B2's already beautiful light into any light you can imagine.

## **OCF Beauty Dish**

The OCF Beauty Dish is a collapsible and more portable version of the classic Profoto Softlight Reflector.

It creates a creamy yet crisp light, often referred to as a "beauty light." When it comes to bringing out the beauty of your subjects, it is second to none.

Since it is tailor-made for on-location photography, the OCF Beauty Dish is compact, lightweight and easy to use. High-quality fabrics and patent-pending design allows you to snap it onto the speedring without having to bend and fumble with the rods.

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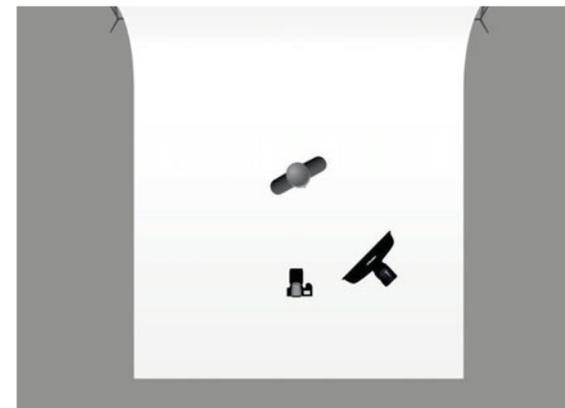
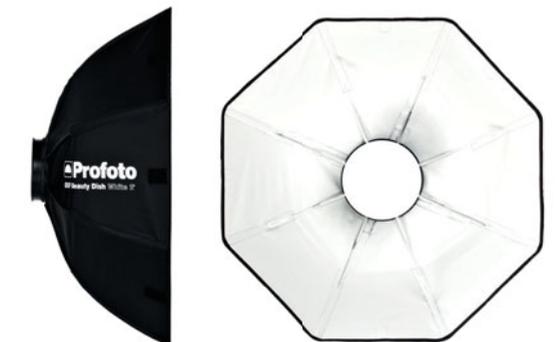
### **Photographer**

© Alba Soler  
[www.albasoler.es](http://www.albasoler.es)

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### **Location**

Valencia Botanical  
Garden, Spain



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Image © Kristina Sherk

CREATING BLACK-AND-WHITE

## LANDSCAPES IN ADOBE LIGHTROOM

with Kristina Sherk

I've always loved black-and-white photography. It's such a beautiful medium, ranging from bold and full of contrast to quiet and soft. Most things look good in black and white, especially landscapes. I love the calm I feel when looking at a black-and-white image. This month, I share with you how to create stunning B&W landscapes in Adobe Lightroom.

Creating a black-and-white landscape lets you get artistic with all the control you have over every facet of the photograph. That's why we have all chosen this profession—the artistic fun side. It's always good to take a step out of our routines and photograph things we love. It's a great reboot for the creative eye. I love to travel and photograph landscapes, urban and rural. The world has so much to offer, and every environment is unique.

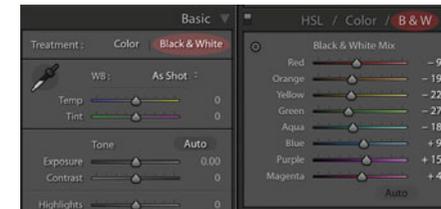
A lot of vibrant colors can be distracting in an image. Have you ever found yourself photographing the landscape in front of you because you absolutely love the texture of the rocks and movement of the water, but when you look at the image on your monitor, they feel like afterthoughts to all of the color in the shot? Convert your image to black and white and make a few minor tweaks, and suddenly the most important part of your image isn't the colors in it, but the shapes and textures.

Here is an image where, in the color version, your eyes are drawn to the blue sky and water in the background, then to the moss on the rocks. Then, when you look at the B&W version, your eyes are drawn to the water's movement between the rocks, the texture of the rocks and shapes of the mountains against the dark of the sky. The photo has become about the texture, shapes and forms, and not about the colors at all.



Images © Kristina Sherk

When you are creating a black-and-white image in Lightroom, it's important to make the transition using the Black & White color mode and not just drag the Saturation slider to -100. You can do this in the Basic Tab by choosing Black & White as the Treatment, or you can use the HSL/Color/B&W Tab and choose B&W. The reason behind this is that you want to have control of how light or dark a specific color in your image is after you turn it black and white. When you convert to black and white using the Treatment or Black & White Mix, you still have complete control over the luminance of each of the colors within the original file.



**Right:** Converted by pushing Saturation Slider to -100.



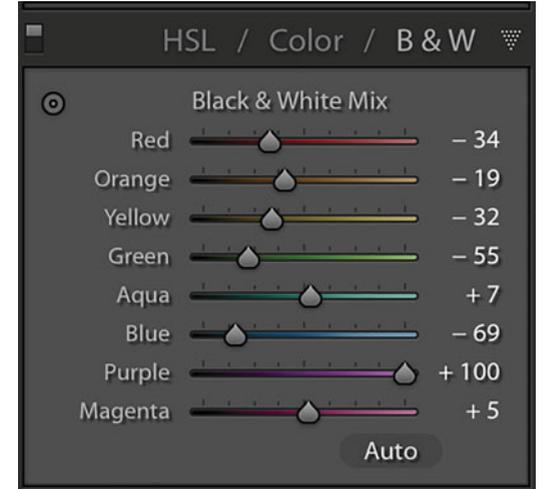
**Below:** Converted with Color mode and adjusted with Black and White Mix.



Images © Kristina Sherk



Once you are familiar with converting the image to B&W, you can start to play around with the luminance sliders. Here is where it gets fun. The possibilities are never-ending. You can create limitless versions of one image, and each one will look different. You can adjust the luminosity of the colors within the image and take it to a light and bright place or give it a dark and moody appearance. Below, you'll see the original shot plus the two black-and-white versions with their different luminance color value settings.



The versatility of B&W and B&W-toned images is wonderful. What do we mean by toned? Those are images that have colored overlay, such as sepia and cyanotype. Sometimes I find that I love an image that I have taken, but the colors are too distracting.

I know what you're thinking: Convert the image to B&W to remove the distraction of the colors. That usually gets me started in the right direction. But sometimes you come across an image that, even after being converted to B&W, still doesn't have that certain flavor. The colors are no longer distracting, but the image is missing that pizzazz I'm looking for. In that case, I might use a color overlay to get the image to sing.

In this image of the adult zebra and foal, the colors were a bit distracting, so I turned it black and white. It was still missing the right mood, so I added some warmth to the shot, and that's when the image began to shine. I created the warming effect by adding the same color to both the highlights and the shadows in the Split Toning tab, and used the settings below.



Split Toning

Highlights	
Hue	54
Saturation	9

Balance: 0

Shadows	
Hue	56
Saturation	11



Images © Kristina Sherk



Image © Kristina Sherk

Not every image will look good in black and white. An image that is monochromatic or doesn't have a lot of contrast may not look as good as an image with a lot of different colors, especially complementary colors (colors on opposing sides of the color wheel, like blue and orange or red and green).

If you find yourself in a predicament with a monochromatic image that you really love, there are tools you can use in Lightroom to spruce it up. Say you have a photograph with a bright sky—using a graduated filter, you can darken the sky and add contrast to bring out details in the clouds.

Split toning is a great tool. Some images look marvelous with a bit of subtle color added to create color contrast between the image's brighter and darker tones. In your Split Toning tab, you can quickly add two colors over your image to "colorize" it. You choose a color to add to the highlights, and another color to add to the shadows. Split toning usually uses two complementary colors, but you should play around with it and see what you can come up with. This is why split toning works well for black-and-white photography.

This shot of a lone giraffe has great potential for black and white, but the sky is a little bright. My solution was to use one of my Sharkpixel Globe Trotter Presets ([www.sharkpixel.com/store](http://www.sharkpixel.com/store)). The nice thing about these travel presets is they incorporate graduated filters that can take your landscape imagery to incredible new places.

I went through the presets and applied them to the color version of the image until I found one with the right look, then switched it from color to B&W. The split toning from my preset stayed on the shot, giving it just the right amount of color. The last thing I did was go to my HSL/Color/B&W tab to tweak the luminance, and customize the preset to the shot. I decreased the red and yellow values to darken the sky, and increased the orange values to lighten the grass. Then I was left with a great shot that showed off the stark contrast between the sky and earth.





Image © Kristina Sherk

“You don’t  
**take a photograph,  
you make it.**”  
-Ansel Adams

As you can see, B&W landscapes are extremely versatile. You can have fun playing with the settings to tweak the image and get the look you are going for.

The masters of B&W photography, like Ansel Adams, have taught us that B&W photography is all about tone, contrast and shape. It’s important to think in those terms when photographing a landscape, whether or not you are thinking about converting to B&W.

“You don’t take a photograph, you make it,” Adams once said. That was true in his day, and will continue to be true as long as photographers are photographing.

There is beauty to be captured everywhere in the world, and B&W photography is making its comeback as photographers remember the value and artistic side of B&W imagery. I hope next time you’re looking at a landscape in your Lightroom Catalog, you convert to B&W. You never know what you might come up with. The possibilities are endless. ■

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

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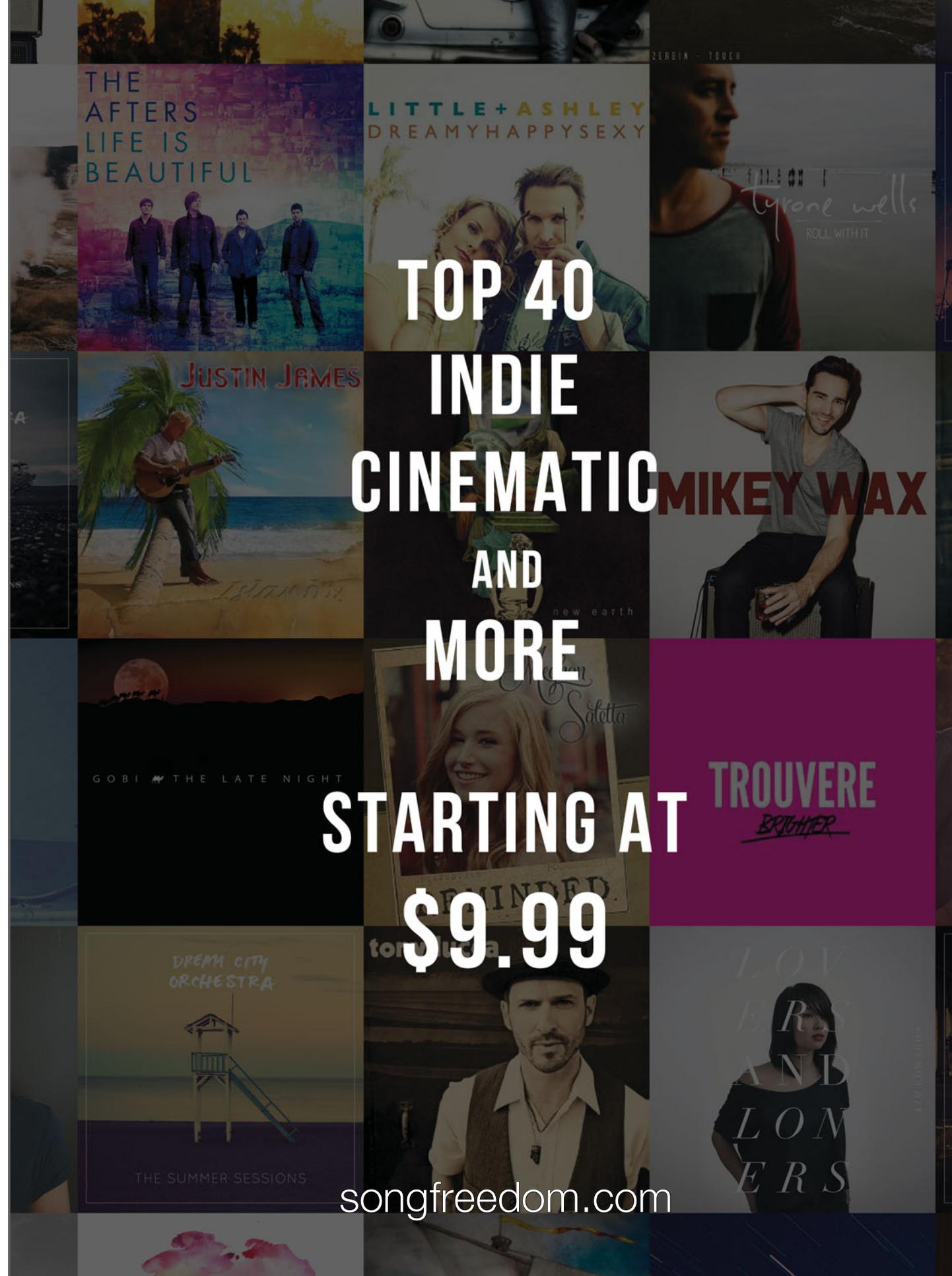
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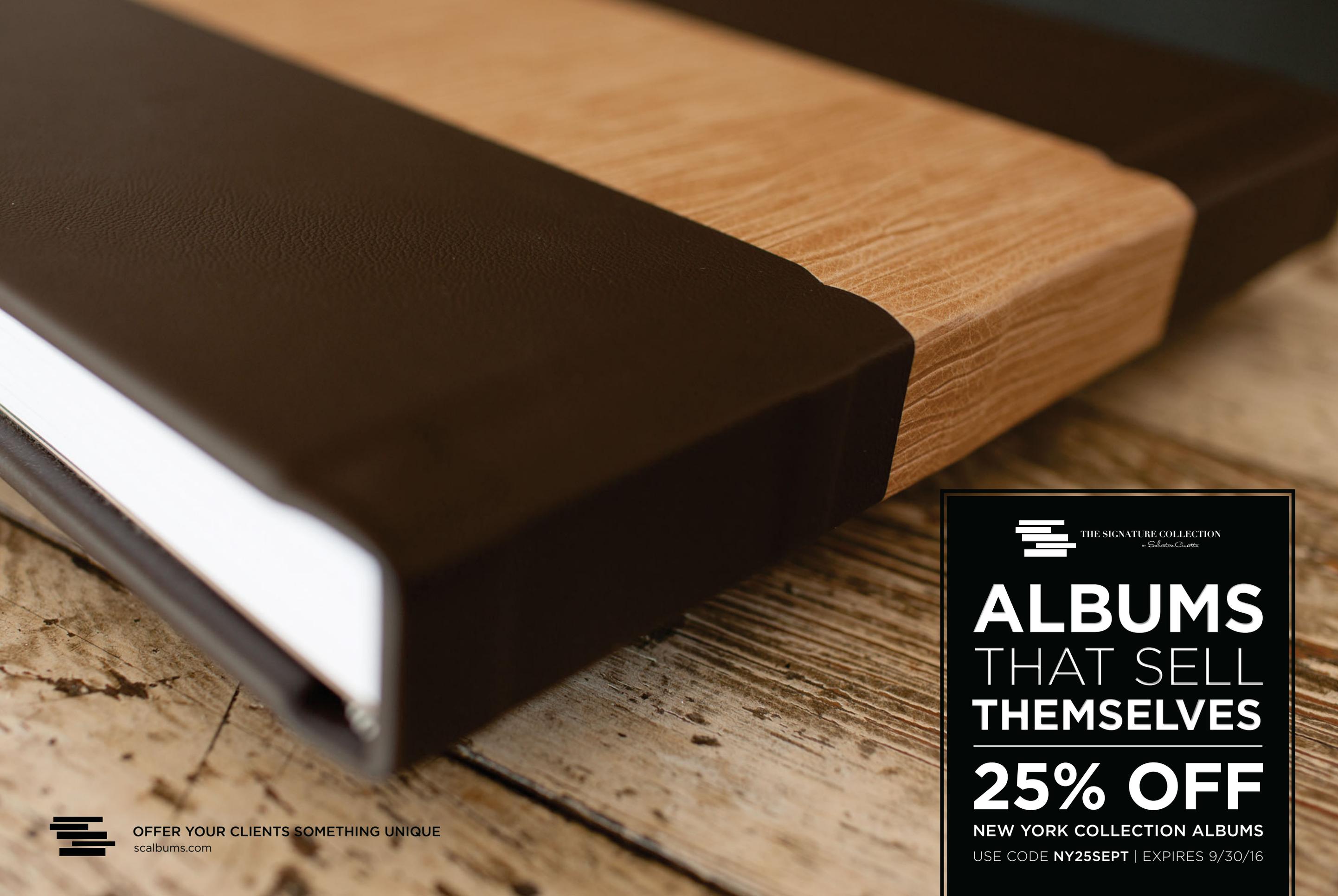
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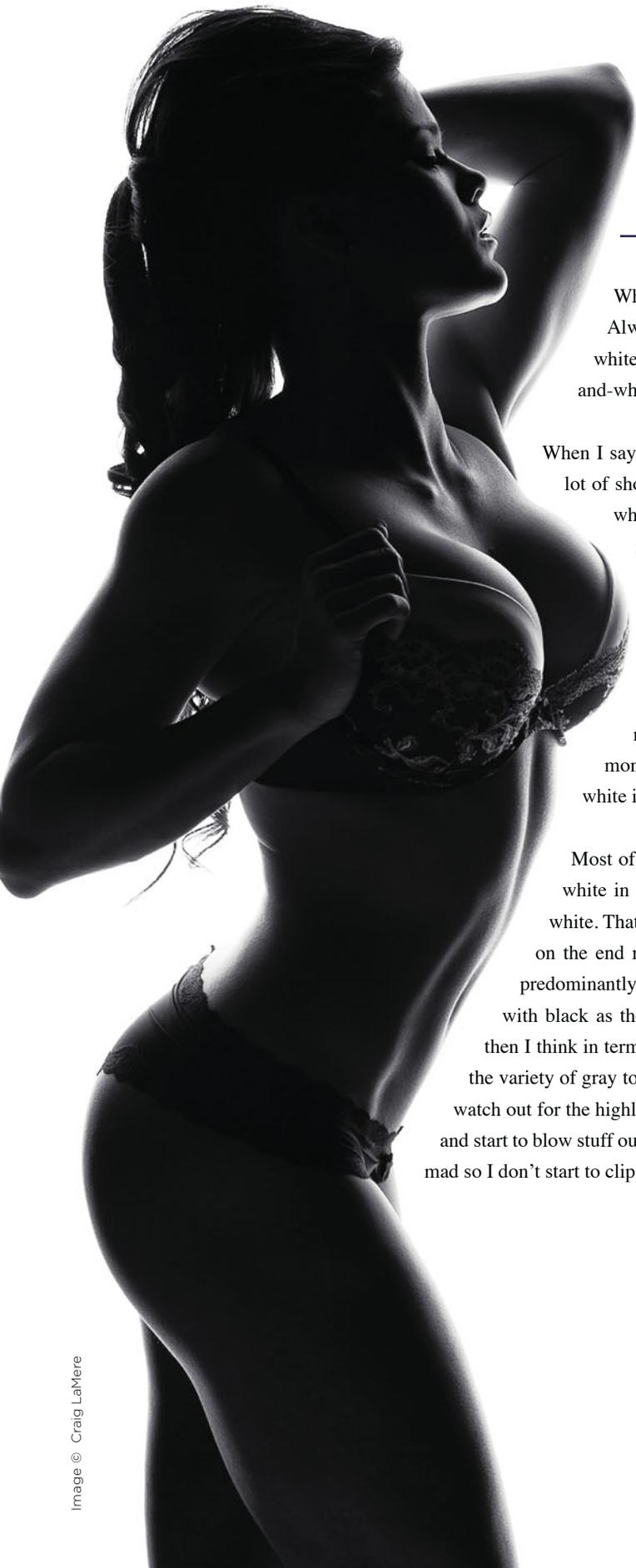
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WHEN IS **BLACK & WHITE**

**NOT SO BLACK & WHITE?**

with **Craig LaMere**





When is black and white not black and white? Answer: Always. A lot of shooters oversimplify the black-and-white imagery they create. Because of this, a lot of black-and-white images are pretty average in quality.

When I say “oversimplify,” I guess a better way to put it is a lot of shooters are very lazy in their approach to black and white. Most new shooters think of black-and-white images as nothing more than desaturated color images, which is not the case.

For me to create a killer black and white, there are a number of factors I take into consideration that help me create a by-design black and white rather than just desaturating a color image. This month, I show you how to create even better black-and-white images.

Most of the time when people are shooting for black-and-white in studio, that is the order they think in: black, then white. That is fine, but there is a better way to think depending on the end result you want. If my final image is going to be predominantly white, then I think in terms of white as the main with black as the secondary. If black is going to be predominant, then I think in terms of black as the main, white as the secondary and the variety of gray tones as the filler on both. When white is the main, I watch out for the highlights since it is easy to let them get away from you and start to blow stuff out. When black is the main, I watch the shadows like mad so I don’t start to clip or, worse, start to blend into the background.

## WHITE & BLACK, NOT BLACK & WHITE



Image © Craig LaMere

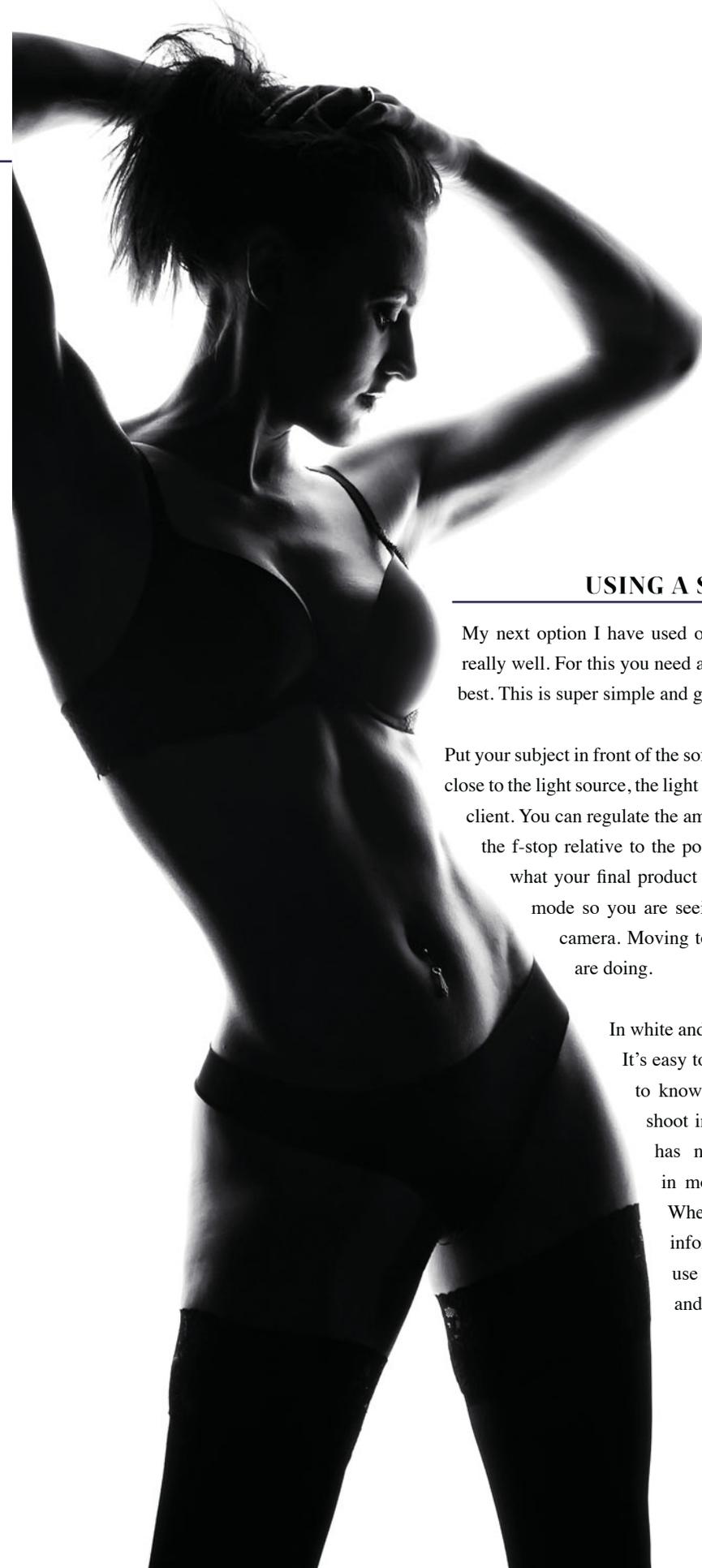
Let’s say I’m going to shoot an image on one of the white walls in my studio. I have a couple of decisions to make that will affect my image greatly. Some of the decisions are what I consider to be my universal decisions. These universal decisions are ones I make with every image. One way to think of these choices is that they are the main ingredients in a dish: focal length, crop (is the image a full length? half? tight headshot?) and f-stop. Once I have the fundamentals of the image worked out, I begin to think in terms of the final look. If I want a bright white image, there are three shooting options I typically use.

## HIGH KEY



Image © Craig LaMere

My least favorite option—and the most boring one—is to light the wall up and then shoot my subject. This method is traditional high key. You take a couple of lights, one on each side of your background, and try to evenly light the drop, which is a pain in the ass. You have to get the perfect spread of light. The only way I know to get even f-stop across the drop is to meter. You have to meter all over the drop to make sure you do not have hot spots. If you are not a light meter user, this is not good for you at all. Another downside is that you need at least three heads to shoot this way.



## USING A SOFTBOX AS A BACKDROP

My next option I have used only for creating silhouettes, and it works really well. For this you need at least a 3x4 softbox; a 4x6 softbox works best. This is super simple and gives you killer results.

Put your subject in front of the softbox and shoot. Because your subject is so close to the light source, the light softly wraps and fills in any spaces on your client. You can regulate the amount of detail in your subject by adjusting the f-stop relative to the power of the strobe. To get the best idea of what your final product will look like, turn your camera to mono mode so you are seeing black and white on the back of your camera. Moving to mono lets you see what your highlights are doing.

In white and black, you have to watch your highlights. It's easy to blow stuff out. The most important thing to know when shooting in mono is you have to shoot in Raw. If you shoot in JPEG, your image has no color information. When you shoot in mono and Raw, it displays only in mono. When you open the files later, all the color information will be there. I'm sure you could use this method in conjunction with a keylight and get sweet results.

## DISTANCE TO CREATE LIGHT

The third option is the one I use the most because it is the most versatile. I place my subject very close to my drop and use either a wide light source or a narrow harder light source. My two go-to modifiers when shooting strobes for white and black are my 28-inch Mola Setti and my barn doors.

The key to getting a white background using one light is distance. The closer your subject and your light are to the drop, the whiter it is going to be. The farther away you get, the more gray your image will be. What I like about this method is I have a ton of control. If I put the mod straight on, I get more flat high key, and if I move the mod, I get nice directional light, and can use the shadow as part of my image. The difference in the two modifiers is that the beauty dish gives more even soft light and the barn doors give more directional, harder light.



Images © Craig LaMere

## BLACK AND WHITE



Image © Craig LaMere

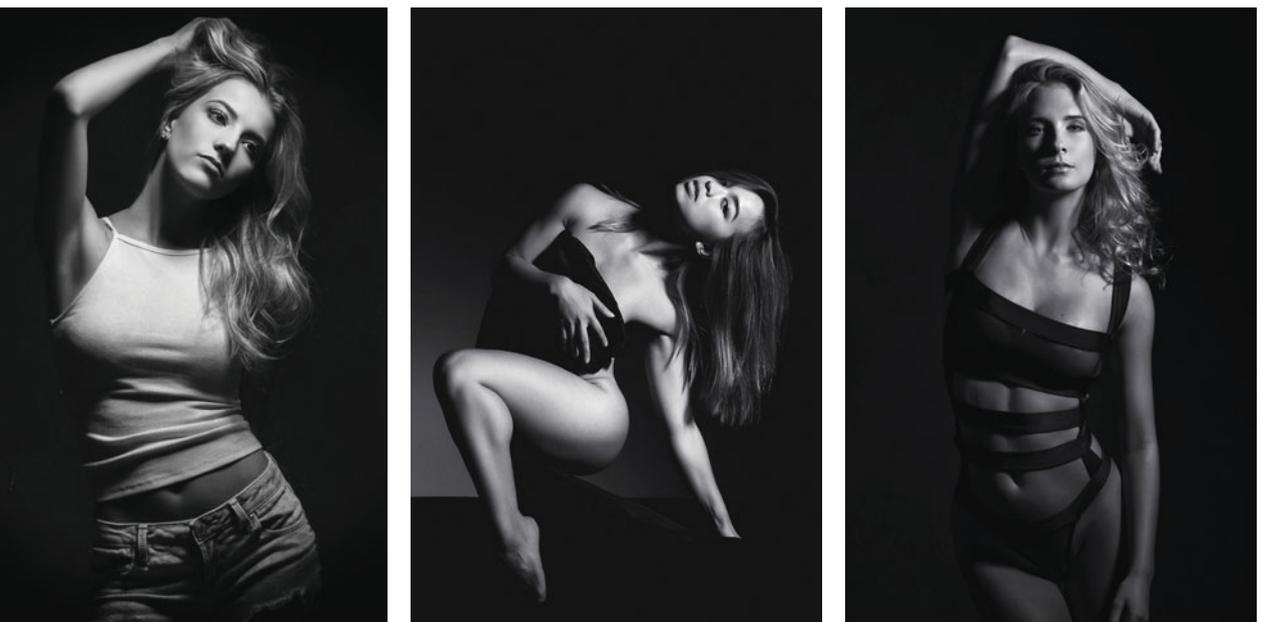
Shooting for black and white is a little simpler to me because it is way easier to manage shadows and the darkness of the background than it is to manage the white scenario. When shooting primarily black in the studio, I use one of three setups. Each is easy, and each gives you very different looks.



Image © Craig LaMere

## DISTANCE TO CONTROL LIGHT

All the walls in my studio are white, so it's easy to get the spill from any lights I shoot to get to the wall and boost the ambient. So when I want a very dark image but I want more of a dark gray background, I don't use any drops. I use distance from the wall to determine the light and darkness in the image. When shooting like this, I use strip lights or small softboxes to control the amount of light reaching the walls. I bring the light across instead of shooting at the subject to try to control the amount of light that becomes your ambient. I never use a second light with the setup, but if I need a little more detail, I use a white or silver reflector.



Images © Craig LaMere

## MUSLIN VS. SEAMLESS

If I want a pure black background, I shoot using a black drop. A lot of people like to shoot on black seamless paper. I'm not a huge fan of seamless. The main reason is I don't have a backdrop system, so I have to take the paper up and down every time I shoot. I'm pretty much a one-man show, so that is a big pain in the butt; most of the time I tear it or put a crease in it, and then have to cut it and start over.

My solution is to use unpainted black muslin, which I also used for my hand-painted drops. It is light because it has not been painted. You can fold and store it easily, and you just hang it, spray it with water and boom—a wrinkle-free drop in less than five minutes.

Another reason I like muslin is because of its ability to suck up light. Unless you are right next to the fabric, you are not going to get any reflection or hot spot from the drop; this allows you to be creative and shoot multiple lights a lot easier than on other drops.



Image © Craig LaMere



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Thinking in terms of black and white and white and black has helped me create better images. Separating the two has helped me identify issues faster and see the final image in my head better. I hope some of these tips will help you take your black and white or white and black images to another level. ■

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

TO **BLACK & WHITE**

with Dustin Lucas



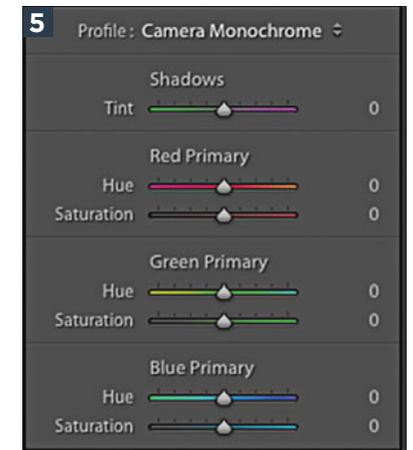
When I began doing photography in school, I was using a manual 35mm camera with black-and-white film. Nothing out of the ordinary for most students taking their first photography class: You are fixed focus with a 50mm lens and have to process your own film.

Over the past decade, the transition from analog to digital has made a significant impact. It made perfect sense to buy a digital SLR, and I did not resist the change. I loved shooting black-and-white film, and have always been interested in recreating that grainy, rich-toned print in my digital images. With Lightroom CC and the Nik Silver Efex Pro 2 plugin, I can get back some of that analog black and white.

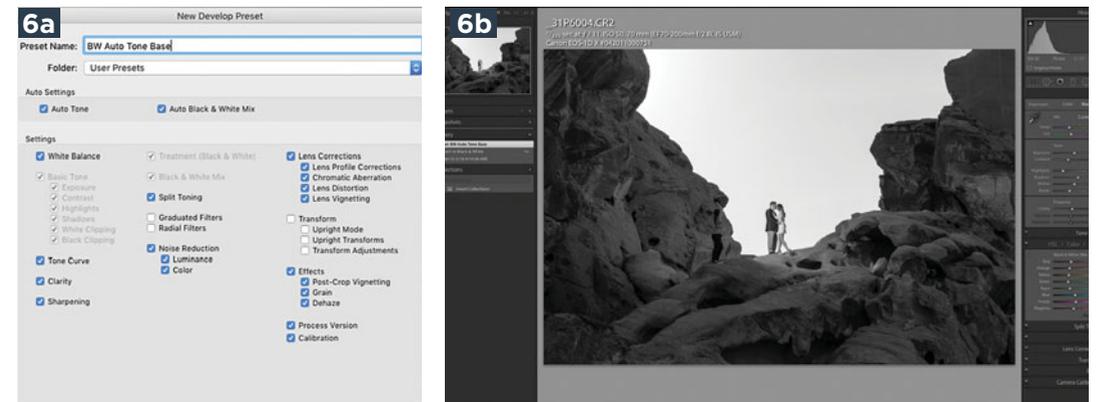
Making a great black-and-white image isn't always about post-processing. You need to shoot for it. Most DSLR cameras allow users to shoot in Raw + JPEG mode, and you can set the JPEG file to record in black and white so you can review in camera how the tonality compares.

If you have a spare DSLR lying around, you can always send it off to get the image sensor converted to infrared. IR conversions are popular with low-end backup cameras. It allows you to get in-camera monochromatic or hyper-stylized color imagery. Otherwise, you can always wish for a Leica monochromatic camera, though most of us don't have 7K to blow. For now, we can stick with a color Raw file and import it into Lightroom CC to see what Adobe has to offer.

Another quick way to convert your images to black and white is to change your camera profile to Camera Monochrome. (Image 5) Typically, this is set to Adobe Standard, and changing it can alter the appearance of your image. For color portraits, I use Camera Neutral and build up my contrast. Applying Camera Monochrome turns off the Black and White Mix panel, so if you are interested in a quicker global option to convert your images, this is a great option. This profile mimics how your camera would photograph in monochrome in camera. As you can see, this is camera-manufacturer specific. Canon does not offer this profile, so we will stick with the other methods.

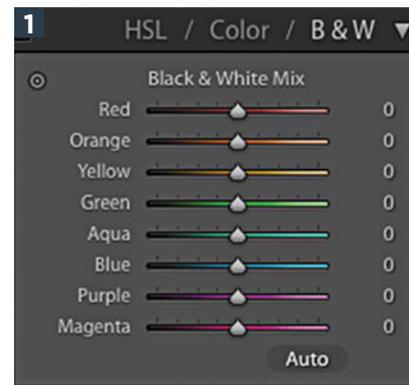


To make converting even more efficient, and to develop settings custom-adjusted per image, we can build a preset to apply before we even start editing this image. When saving a Develop Preset, check the Auto Black and White Mix option and Auto Tone to convert; this gets the image already looking pretty good. (Image 6a) In order to view these options in the New Develop Preset dialog box, you must be working on an image that was already converted to black and white. Once the preset is saved, you can apply it globally to any color or black-and-white images. (Image 7)



## CONVERTING TO BLACK & WHITE

After opening the image in the Develop module, we can convert to black and white a few different ways. My first instinct is to strike the “V” key to instantly convert the image and start working in the Basic Panel for exposure, contrast and recovery.



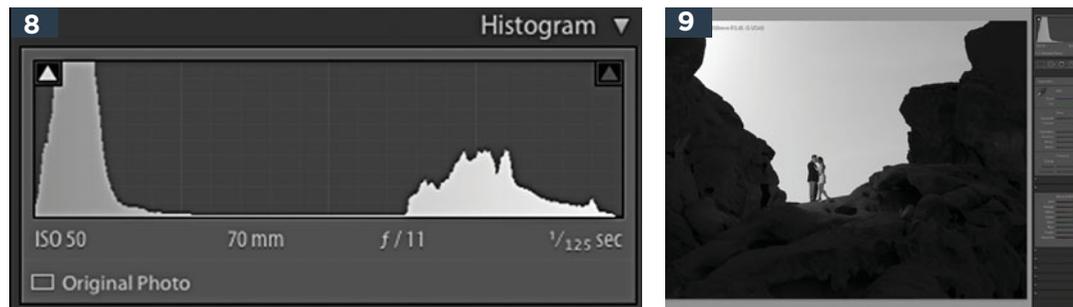
When converting your image, you can use the black-and-white mixing adjustments in the HSL panel. (Image 1) You are basically narrowing down this panel to Luminance or Black and White Mix. This tool gives you a lot of flexibility in customizing the color tones in the image and adjusting the light and darkness for these values. (Image 2) It's a much better option than dropping your Saturation slider to -100; you can see the difference. (Image 3) It also allows you to choose parts of the image to affect with the target adjustment tool. It is as easy as clicking on a specific area and dragging your cursor up or down to adjust. (Image 4)



## BLACK-AND-WHITE DENSITY TONING

In black-and-white photography, it's all about the toning. As we have seen with just simply converting our digital color images to monochrome, they are in need of some work. Let's start by talking about density of your images' tonal range. This relates to film in that the more density in your negative the better, meaning good contrast from the blackest point to the dark and light midtones as well as clean whites. The term *flat negative* means a more limited range of density, requiring a lot of additional work in the darkroom with contrast filters.

So what does this have to do with Lightroom and making black-and-white images? Well, the wider range of contrast is directly related to your histogram and applies the same way. (Image 8) Density can be measured by where the edges of your histogram end. The left side is absolute black and the right is for white tones. You can quickly adjust this by holding Shift while double-clicking "whites" and "blacks" in the Basic panel. (Image 9) Remember that when making this adjustment, it accounts for the total image, not just your subject's skin tones. The best practice for using these sliders in determining your tonal range is to first adjust exposure for your subject, then apply the black-and-white point slider for density. That is pretty simple. (Image 10)



Lightroom has other great settings to choose from. Clarity is a fantastic tool to add contrast to your midtones. (Image 11) This is huge for black-and-white photography. Take into account the effect it will have on your subject; adding this may make your landscape look epic, but it will darken the contours on the face and can look unflattering for the skin. A good rule of thumb is to leave the black-and-white point sliders at zero while adjusting things like clarity, contrast and tone curve. (Image 12)



The Contrast slider is a simple tool but is not very flexible in how it adjusts the image tonally. What I mean by tonally is that you have four areas of tone in Lightroom: highlights, lights, darks and shadows. These can all be adjusted in the Tone Curve panel—take advantage of this. (Image 13) You have the ability to apply the default S-curve contrast effect in two forms: mediums and strong. Click on Point Curve, and the dropdown options appear. (Image 14) Custom Point Curve is an option that's quite popular with film presets, allowing black-and-white point adjustments to be combined with the tonal sliders mentioned above. (Image 15)



A great process to start with is desaturating your image by pulling the Saturation slider to -100 and applying the Strong Contrast Point Curve in the Tone Curves panel. (Image 16ab) Adding some grain in the Effects panel can start to make the image look more like a conventional black-and-white image. (Image 17) To go further in this direction, use the Nik plugin Silver Efex Pro 2 to take a great shot to the next level.



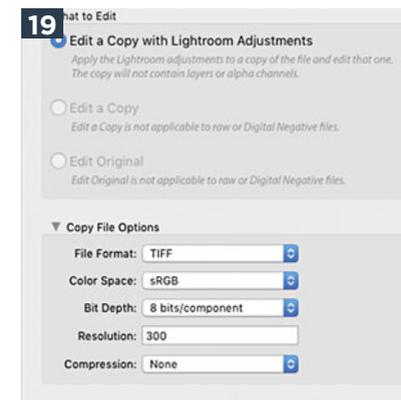
## SILVER EFEX PRO 2 PLUGIN

For those of you who have not ventured into Lightroom CC plugins, I highly recommend doing so. This integration of Lightroom and the Nik software is a great option for users, especially now that Nik offers its full suite completely free. (Image 18)



Let's open our edited image in Silver EP2. Select your image in Develop mode, navigate to the menu bar and choose Photo < Edit in < Silver EP2. You immediately get a dialog box asking you to save a copy. Keep the image at default settings, but change Resolution to 300. If you plan to edit this image further in Photoshop, you can choose Color Space: Adobe 1998, but it's just as easy to edit entirely in Photoshop if you want to go that route. Bit Depth can be changed to 8 bits if your computer is lacking in hardware to speed up the process. (Image 19)

Click Edit. Immediately your image is converted to black and white and looks pretty neutral. (Image 20) In my March 2016 article, "Google That Sh\*t – Working With Nik Collection in Photoshop," I go more in depth into how this program is laid out. Check it out to get a better understanding of how to use Silver EP2. For now, I am going to use my custom preset Dustin B&W I to quickly show off the abilities of this software. (Image 21)



I spend the majority of my time fine-tuning in the Global Adjustments panel with Brightness, Contrast and Structure. Brightness allows you to adjust for highlights, midtones and shadows. It helps to have the histogram preset for adjusting this and contrast. As you can see, there is a gap between the right edge showing the white point is not to the edge of the clipping, meaning the image is slightly dull in the whites. Take some time to dial in these adjustments, and then let's move on to Structure. (Image 22)

Similar to Clarity in Lightroom, Structure can have a negative impact on your subject's skin. Zoom in to review before saving your image. Unfortunately, this is a destructive edit, so no going back after it's done. As we slide the Structure slider into the positives, you can see the sharpening and midtone contrast boost, similar to Clarity. The contours of the couple become well-defined, and removing this effect makes our image softer. (Image 22ab) This adjustment can add a crisp look to your overall midtones and provide some tonal definition to your subject. Just be aware of the grittiness of your subject's skin—brides don't enjoy looking at the highly defined flaws in their skin.

For the rest of the adjustments, I tend not to add any film emulation or color filters. On occasion, I add some lens fall-off to create a quick vignette effect. This is for quick proofing, and for when I am not custom dodging and burning later. (Image 23)





## THE RESULTS

We have converted our color image to black and white, and now have numerous options to dial in our toning and overall style. It all starts with a great shot, preferably one with high contrast. Then we can convert the image, and it won't need as much work tonally. However, density is key, and dialing this in can make your black-and-white images pop.

Remember that a lot of these tools look great for the scene, but don't always favor the subject. It's all about their skin. Whether you are using automated presets or editing each image in Silver EP2, play around with the tools and develop your own style. ■

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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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## INSPIRATIONS

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

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

**Sal Cincotta**, *Editor-in-chief*

BEST BLACK & WHITE IMAGE

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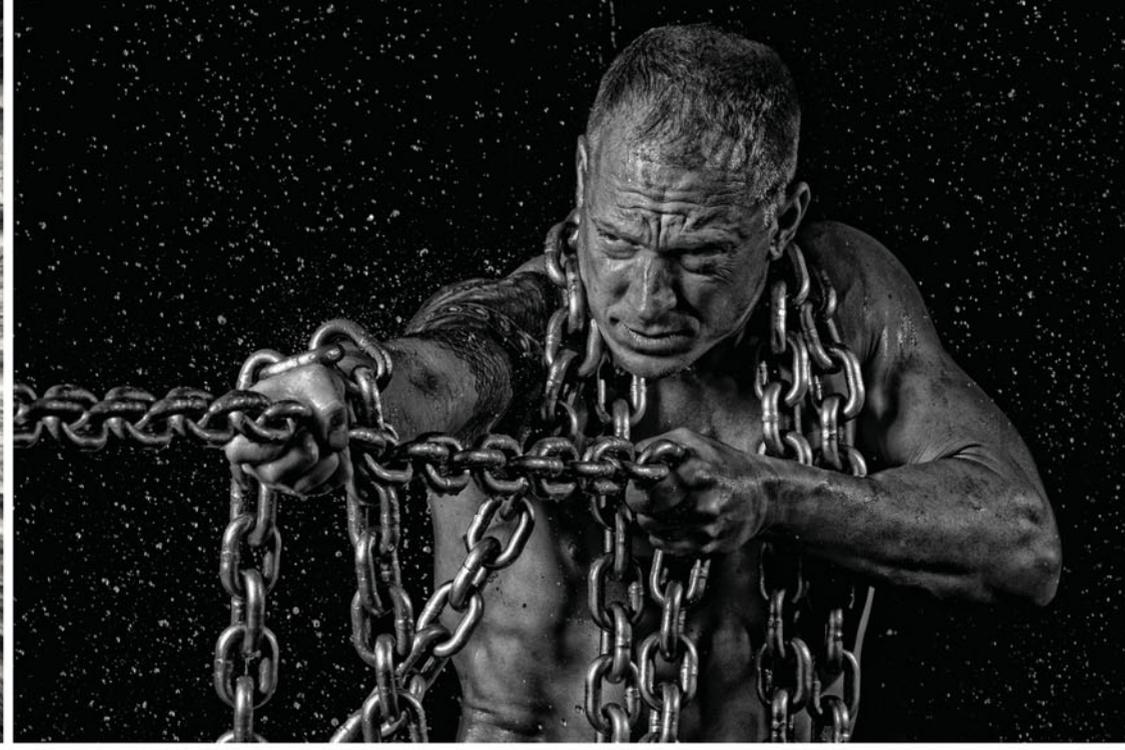


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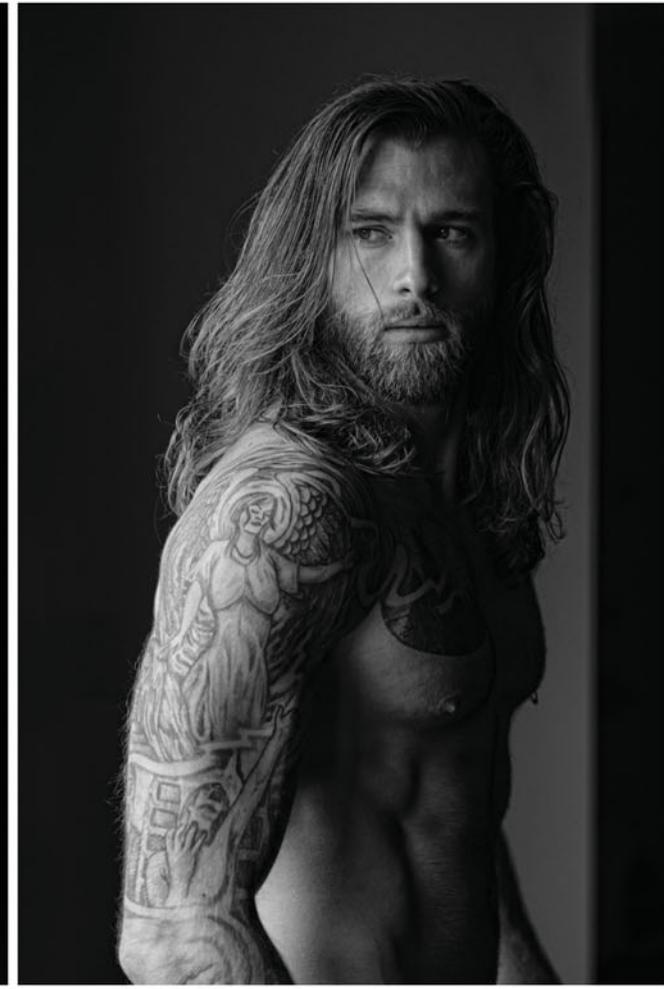




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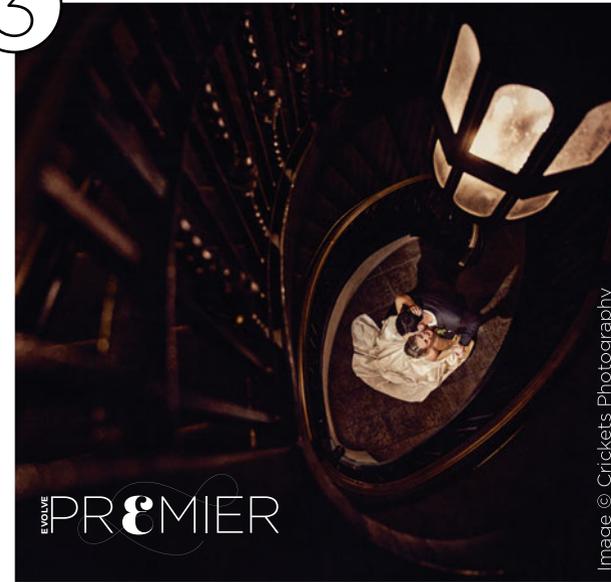


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*This image, shot at the end of the night almost as an afterthought, turned out to be my favorite from the entire shoot. The intensity of the expression, use of water spray to simulate sweat, moody color grading and dramatic lighting all come together to create a final I'm very happy with.*

Image © Michael Corsetino

# LIGHTING ATHLETES

with Michael Corsetino

You can't underestimate the power of planning. Being deliberate with your ideas, concepts and shoot plans pays massive dividends every time. Take time before your shoots to think about what you want to accomplish with your lighting. Make a detailed plan for the tools, techniques and logistics you'll need to realize your vision. If you don't, I guarantee the results will not be as strong as they could be.

If you want to take your photography to the next level, you need to understand that there are no one-size-fits-all lighting solutions. Each decision you make, each tool you use, each technique you employ results in a different end product and tells a different story. My first step is always research. What does the client want? What look is called for? What's been done before? What tools and techniques will I need to pull it off? Next, it's simply a matter of creating a roadmap to get there.

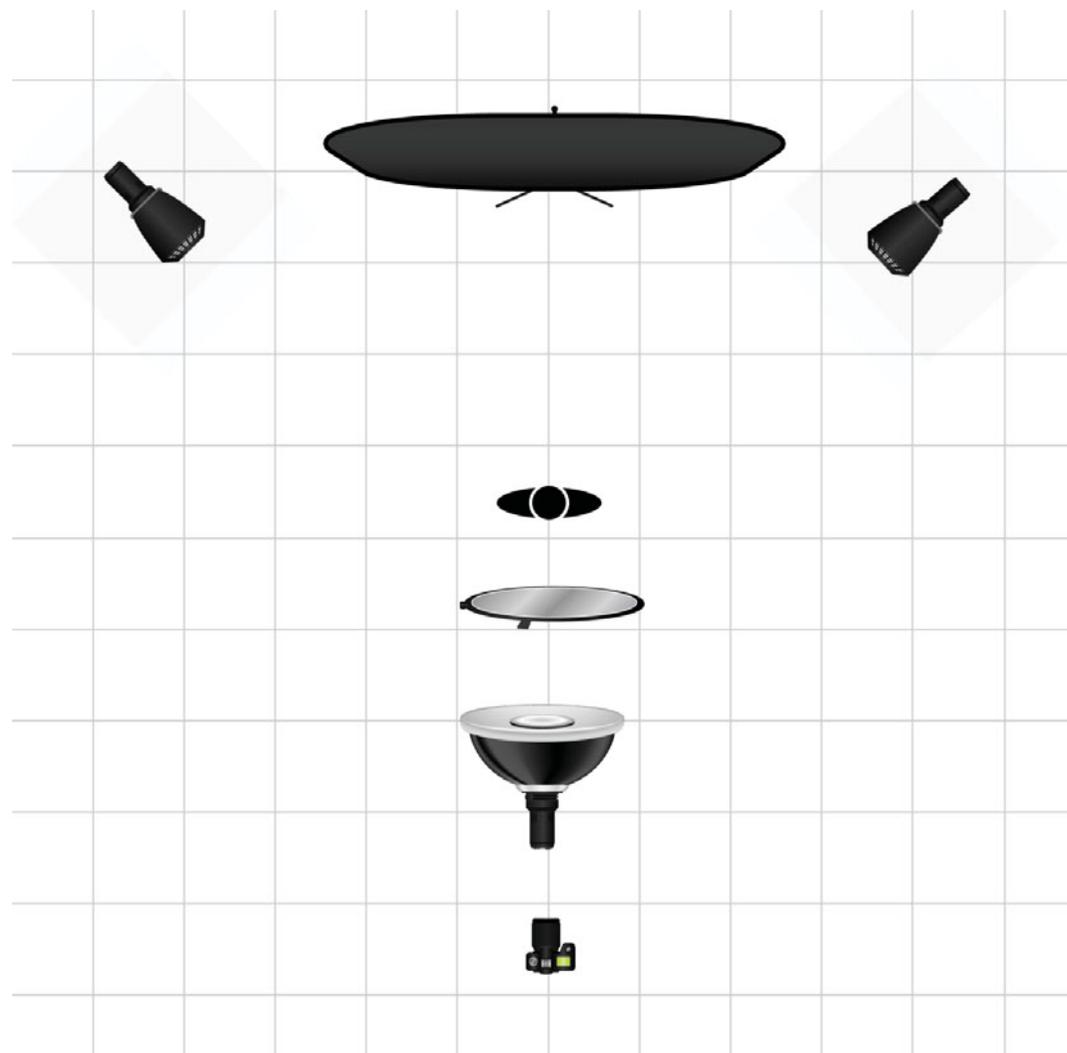
These fighter portraits are no different. Clearly they required a completely different visual treatment than a corporate headshot, beauty image or fashion editorial would. After deciding on a visual approach, I figure out which tools I need, which ones I have on hand and which I might need to rent or borrow. I formulate a logistics plan about how many assistants I'll need, how they'll be getting to the location and back, who'll be helping with load in, set up and load out, and which assistants have the skills that match the tasks I need. This way, I know how to delegate so the shoot runs smoothly.

## EXPECTATIONS

Planning for your locations is equally important. Will you need a permit? Is your liability insurance current, and has your carrier been alerted about the shoot location and date? Are you planning to forgo a permit and shoot guerilla style? If so, what's your backup plan in case that doesn't work out? If there's a point person in charge of the location—like the gym owner, in this case—have you set realistic expectations for them? Do they understand how long it will take to set up and break down, or how much time the shoot will take and how things will progress during the shoot? Do you have a clear understanding of what their expectations of you are?

If you've made promises, such as files and prints for access, follow through. This way, the next photographer is treated as well as you've been treated. If you're shooting for your book and it's not a job or assignment, don't worry. You'd be surprised how many places will grant you access if you simply ask. Things like files and prints or the promise of a free shoot go a long way toward greasing the wheels.

The goal of this series of fighter portraits, shot on location at Gym Rat Boxing in Orlando, Florida, was to create images for the fighters and their promoters to use for promotions. I wanted to create lighting that accentuated how fierce these fighters are, a dramatic overall mood and feeling. This goal dictated the choices I made for the design of the portraits and the lighting plan.



*This simple three-light setup yields awesome results, but your success or failure lies in the details. Check out the four “Dialing In the Lights With Assistant” figures, the two “Finessing the Catchlight” figures and the “BTS” image for more details.*



*Lighting diagrams are great, but this BTS image tells the whole story. Here you can see my entire location setup—the heights, angles and placement of each light and fill reflector, and tethered shooting setup.*

## LIGHT, GEAR, TECHNIQUES

I decided on a classic three-point light sports look, used frequently for athletes, combined with a reflector to open up the shadows from the keylight; a black background for drama; and color grading based on an image I found during my research and fell in love with.

For the key, I used a 1200WS head modified with a Mola Softlights silver interior Demi beauty dish. The choice of the silver interior beauty dish was made to boost contrast, produce a cold-toned light and create harder-edged transitions between the shadows and highlights than a white reflector could. To reduce light spill, produce a faster fall-off of light and confine that keylight to a very tight pool of light, I added a Mola 20-degree black grid spot to the front of the beauty dish. I placed the keylight in front of the subject (at the 12 o'clock position), angled down approximately 45 degrees and 5 feet away. It was essentially a classic Paramount lighting pattern. Below the keylight and just above the subject's torso, I placed a Sunbounce Micro Mini reflector with silver fabric. This helped open up shadows cast from the key below the fighter's chins and eye sockets.

To create the rim light on the left and right side of each of the fighters, I used two 500WS strobes, each fitted with an Elinchrom Rotalux 14x35-inch softbox and a Lighttools ez[Pop] 30-degree soft egg crate grid. This combination created a narrow shaft of light on each side of the subject. All lights were triggered using Pocket Wizard Plus III transmitters. Lights were measured using a Sekonic L-758 DR flash meter.

For the black background, I chose something easy to transport, set up and breakdown: a Lastolite white/black 5x6-foot collapsible backdrop and its companion magnetic stand.

Light stands were all Kupo Grip. I used one High Overhead Roller Stand and Baby Boom Arm for the keylight and two Master C-Stands for the kicker lights. For my tethering platform, I used a Runway Stand Base, a 20-inch C-Stand Riser Column and a Nine-Volt DigiPlate laptop platform. I captured the session using my Phase One DF+, IQ250 digital back and Schneider Kreuznach 80mmLS f/2.8 lens mounted on a Gitzo Series 5 Systematic 6X Carbon Fiber Tripod, with a Manfrotto MHXPRO-3W 3-Way Pan/Tilt Head (my absolute favorite tripod head).

I'm a big believer in making lists, assembling all your gear beforehand and testing everything to make sure all systems are go. I call this "pre-fighting your gear." The last thing you want is to show up for your shoot and realize you're missing one essential component or that one link in the technical chain of command is broken. The smallest technical hiccup can prevent your shoot from even getting started.



*Pay special attention to what's happening with the catchlights in your subject's eyes when using this lighting setup. Catchlights can disappear quickly with slight posing changes or different subject heights.*



*Shoot tethered so you can carefully check captures, and have an assistant standing by to adjust the keylight (for different poses and subject heights) to assure you've nailed the catchlights.*

Images © Michael Corsentino



*Step 1: I always use an assistant as a stand-in to set up my lighting before any subjects step in front of my camera. I start by dialing in only the kicker lights.*



*Step 2: Add the keylight, assessing as you add. Here you can see that there's unwanted light on both sides of my assistant Jesse's nose.*



*Step 3: Fine-tune the lights. In this image, I'm closer to the desired look, but I still need to adjust the camera-right kicker light to eliminate the light on the right side of Jesse's nose.*



*Step 4: Here you see the final lighting setup with temporary color grading applied. Notice the absence of any light on the tip of my assistant's nose. This is the goal.*

Images © Michael Corsentino

## LIGHT METERING

You'll more than likely be tight on time, especially on location, where you'll either be chasing the light or watching the clock. So having mechanisms in place that get you up and shooting in a hurry are key. First and foremost, learn how to use a light meter. I covered this topic extensively in previous columns and their companion videos. There's no faster way to ensure your first exposure will be perfect than using a handheld meter. That means no endless chimping and wasted time fiddling with lights. Get your reading, make your first capture, season to taste, and boom—you're off to the races. That's how I roll.

Leave equipment assembled as much as possible. Setup time was limited for this shoot, so I left both softboxes assembled and fitted with their grids instead of packing for travel and unpacking them during setup.

## STAND-INS, TETHERING, AND SETTINGS

Another key time saver is to use one of your assistants (whoever most closely matches the height and skin tone of your subjects) to stand in and help you get your lighting dialed in. This way, when your subjects step in front of your camera, you're ready to go and at ease, a confident leader more focused on getting what you need from them than trying to solve lighting issues. Shooting tethered is another must, so find a way. It helps you see exactly what's going on, and provides instant feedback for your subjects and clients. Subjects are excited to see proof they're in the steady hands of a pro.

Dialing in the lights for this look takes time, so don't get frustrated. The kickers take extra finessing to find the sweet spot where there's a slash of rim light but no unwanted light on the tip of the nose. Again, this is where using an assistant as a stand-in is invaluable. It's all about the placement, height and angle of the kickers. You'll have to play with this to get it just right, so expect it.

Likewise, the keylight and fill reflector height will each need adjusting based on different subject heights and poses. You'll need to have an assistant on hand to anticipate and make these changes on the fly so everything runs as smoothly as possible.

By following all of these guidelines, you'll be able to concentrate on getting the expressions you want out of your subjects. They aren't used to being in front of a camera. It's your job to put them at ease and elicit the mood and feeling you're after. If they're fighters, it's a good bet they want to look like badasses. As crazy as it sounds, they'll probably need help figuring out how to do that. I coached each fighter to assume the stance they use for their leading hand and to look at me as though I were their opponent. Boom—enter fierce fighters! The change was instantaneous.



Image © Michael Corsentino

*Here is one of the three final selections straight out of the camera.*



Image © Michael Corsentino

*This is the same image after color grading has been applied using Capture One Pro 9 levels and curves. The same color grading was applied to all the retouched finals.*



Image © Michael Corsentino

Final color-graded and retouched image. Note that the retouching is purposely light to avoid overly softening these tough fighters.

The settings for the finals were as follows: f/11, 1/125 sec, 100 ISO. Color grading was done in Capture One Pro 9, and each image was retouched in Photoshop CC2015.5 using Retouching Academy's Beauty Retouch Panel. I took special care not to overdue the retouching and make these tough guys look too pretty.

Don't be intimidated by the gear used to produce this shoot. I could have come pretty close using speedlights. Use what you have and shoot as much as you can. I can't wait to see what you come up with. ■

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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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with Blair Phillips



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When we started building our photography business 12 years ago, the market was completely different. I remember assuming that once you were established, you never had to worry about making a living. That was then and this is now. With this industry changing daily, you embrace change, continue to find your niche or hang the camera on the wall. The toughest part of this business is not really knowing what the next year has in store. I have found photography to be more enjoyable now that I have learned to forecast revenue, giving me more of a financial guarantee from year to year.

Just a few short years ago, we accidentally stumbled into a whole new market. This market is not for the unmotivated or lazy. It began with a few high school athletes who were fed up with their sports pictures. A few of the guys who came in wanted a more current-style picture to commemorate all their hard work on the field. I met them at the school, took a second to add some really good lighting and created an image that their parents can be proud of.

Seeing how they reacted sparked an idea that I should do the whole team. The parents got onboard and went to bat for us. The rest is history. That led to us photographing all of the sports for the school, then all the high school sports in two counties. The signed contracts gave my business the confidence in knowing there was a guaranteed range of money coming in next year.



Image © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips

We formed a whole different division within our company to handle the volume business. We already had a very good name in our community. Our reputation comes with a price tag in my market. To be competitive in volume photography, I knew I was going to need similar prices as the other volume companies. This is the main reason we formed the division. We did not want to damage our brand at the studio by offering the same quality in the studio that we do at schools. We did not want a big disconnect in differentiating the two. We used our existing company name but added “Schools Division” to it.

In studio portraiture, you’re unlikely to see all your clients year after year. This leaves you with the feeling of having to dig for business month after month. We have no problems having two businesses and brands under one roof.

Even though the prices of our volume work versus our portrait work are vastly different, the quality of the images is exactly the same. Most volume photographers shoot their images with entry-level cameras and equipment. I am probably one of the few who uses full-frame sensor cameras. Some may consider that overkill, but I consider it an absolute necessity.

When it comes to printing, I spare no expense either. All of my sports and school volume goes through my normal professional printing lab. For lighting, volume photography is generally flat and lacks appeal. We’re all used to seeing a couple of umbrellas in front of the subject and a hair light. We always create a ratio of lighting on our subjects. Flat lighting is never welcomed or executed under our business and brand. These types of images fall under something of an obligatory sale during a child’s life. Volume photographers have come to understand this, and the lack of effort shows. Adding a higher quality of printing, posing and customer service will raise your averages. This will also get parents on your side, and they must be happy.

Once we got a taste of volume photography by photographing sports, we wanted more. I never imagined having the desire or ability to photograph underclass and seniors for the yearbook. That would mean I would have to photograph 1,000 students in a very short time at the school. The earning potential outweighed the fear of being able to execute all of those images. The thought of several hundred students bringing me an order form with payment enclosed was a great motivator.

The first step is to have dynamite customer service. It has to be phenomenal, or they will move on with someone else. You need access to skilled customer service people you can train to be button pushers. You can train nearly anyone to push a button, but it is much harder to train someone to have great people skills. All of the lights and equipment are already set up and never change throughout a shoot.

Our volume business is only as good as the employees we grow. A sure way to maintain great employees and a rock-solid work environment is to pay your staff really well. You cannot do it all by yourself. You will hit some bumps along the way. You will make mistakes. It is how you handle and learn from those mistakes that determines if you will make it in the volume world.

Volume photography is a repeatable business model, but it can be taken away in the blink of an eye. There are always other companies trying to snatch it away from you. For this reason, communication with all of your jobs must remain open and constant. Tell clients that if things are not going perfectly, they should give you the opportunity to correct it. The office staff are the gateway to securing and maintaining these jobs. Swing by from time to time with a small gift or treat to show your continued appreciation. They will remember this and continue wanting to help you, should you need anything.

With online tutorials, classes and camera clubs, nearly anyone can buy a camera and create a decent-looking outdoor portrait. The volume business is the exact opposite. Not everyone has the ability, aptitude, equipment or ability to do it. There’s way less competition than in the custom portrait world.

Schools provide you access to hundreds of paying students in front of your cameras. Sometimes this may happen multiple times a year. These are students you really did not have to do a ton of marketing for. The school provides you the footprint, electricity and often people to help manage a crowd.

The least you can do is share some of your profits. The area you live in determines the commission rate you will be expected to pay to the school. Survey the competition and ask what the school has received in the past. I never get involved in a commission rate war with other companies. This does nothing but mess up the market. One of the most important things you can do to retain a school is to deliver its commission check as soon as you are finished processing everything. They do not like to wait for their money. Picture commission may be the only extra revenue a school receives.

Another key is not to drag your feet on processing everything and getting the finished product back to the school. Turnaround times need to be expressed up front with a very attainable time frame. You would much rather deliver early than late. Express your promise and make good on that promise, with no excuses. The school will have to answer to lots of parents when something is not right with their pictures, and schools desperately want to avoid that.



Image © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips

I never imagined having a hybrid studio that mixes two totally different ends of the spectrum, but we are living proof that it can be done. It is allowing us much more freedom than we have ever had. Sustaining growth is very appealing to me these days, so we will continue the climb with both business models. ■

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

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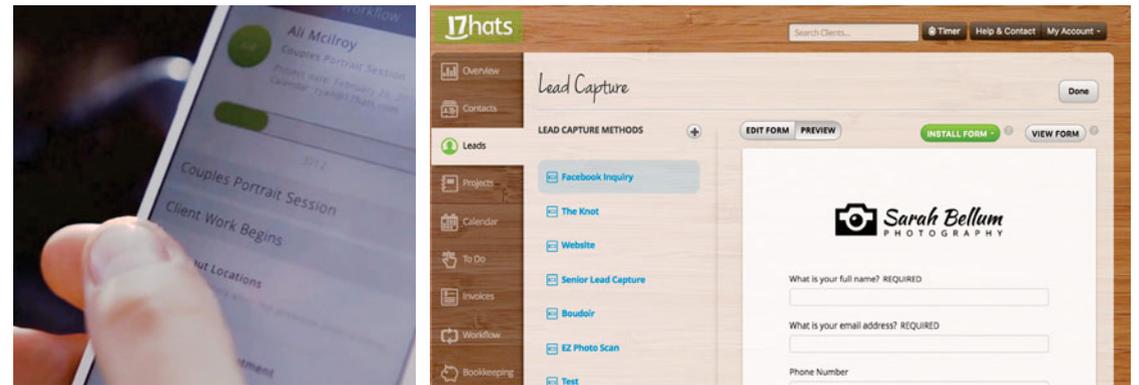
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# product review

**17hats** with *Salvatore Cincotta*



## Why 17hats?

Running a business is no easy task. At times, you can feel like you are all alone. The photography is the easy part. The rest, well, that just falls into an “everything else.” We all need help. 17hats is a tool that helps my studio stay on point with clients. Contracts. Payments. Anniversaries. Reminders. Calendaring. Automation. 17hats is one of the most powerful tools on the market. It’s our secret weapon in so many ways. My business is founded on the client experience. 17hats helps ensure we have our client data in order, and allows us to easily create a custom workflow that meets our business needs.

Whether you’re just starting out or have more clients than you can handle, we have a plan that’s a perfect fit for you. There’s no better time to get started, because 17hats is now FREE for life. That’s right, get started with your first three projects for free and upgrade any time you need more. Head on over to 17hats.com to get started today!

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CREATIVE

SUBJECTIVITY

RULES TO FOLLOW BEFORE YOU BREAK THEM

WITH VANESSA JOY



“Art is subjective” is one of the most irritating clichés I know. It doesn’t help anyone. It doesn’t help beginner artists grow. It can be an excuse for artists refusing to take creative criticism. Art is a finely tuned combination of rules and broken rules that come together in a perfect harmony to create something beautiful. In order to break the rules, you need to know them first.

## RULES OF COMPOSITION

The rule of thirds is often the first composition rule a photographer learns. It comes out when a teacher or mentor is trying to get the student to stop putting the subject in the middle of the frame on every frame. The rule of thirds tells us that placing the subject of our photo in one of the thirds (right, left, upper or lower) of the picture is more pleasing to the eye than having it go straight through the middle. The picture below follows the rule of thirds because the rings are placed in the lower right third of the image.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

Sometimes you can break this rule, like in the photo above, and place the subject in the center. This usually works nicely with square images, which we see so much of now thanks to Instagram.

When you do this, it helps to have leading lines that tell viewers’ eyes where they should travel. In this case, the pews make for a good leading line up into the chuppah.

## RULES OF EXPOSURE

Understanding exposure is another concept we learn early on, and we often learn it by looking at a histogram. A histogram shows us, on a graph, what our exposure looks like with the lights all the way to the right and the darks to the left.

Ideally, you'll want to make sure that nothing is completely black and nothing is completely white, especially a sky or a bride's dress, for example. An image like the one below would be considered to have correct exposure.



Image © Vanessa Joy

Sometimes you'll want to break this rule to hide ugly backgrounds or just for aesthetic purposes, like in the picture below. I wanted a lot of negative space and a high key look, so I put the bride and her mother in front of the window and blew out the background by upping my exposure.



Image © Vanessa Joy

## RULES OF COLOR

One of the most difficult things to master is consistent color. If you're a wedding photographer, especially, you're taking pictures in every lighting scenario possible and somehow are expected to pull them all together to sit cohesively in a wedding album.

The first part of color you'll probably want to tackle is white balance. White balance is ideally not too cold (blue, like the picture on the left), or too warm (yellow, like the picture on the right). It should be in the Goldilocks Zone of "just right" in the middle, like in the center picture below.



I wish I could tell you that blue and yellow are the only colors you have to worry about, but we have the rest of the rainbow to contend with. I'll summarize this section by saying this: If you're going to break this rule by straying from the "just right" true-to-color middle ground, do so by giving all of your pictures the same color shift "error" so they're consistent. I've seen photography brands do this very well, and, even though it's "incorrect" from a photography standpoint, it does a heck of a good job attracting clientele.

## RULES OF FOCUS

This may seem like a no-brainer: Pictures should be in focus and not blurry. However, there are varying degrees of just how much should be in focus, if anything at all. Some people like to shoot wide open because they like a very fine point of focus. Some say that everything should be in focus. I tend to fall between the two, and believe it depends on the situation.

When I'm photographing groups or landscapes, I want a larger plane of focus, so I often shoot above 4.0, as in the image below.



Image © Vanessa Joy

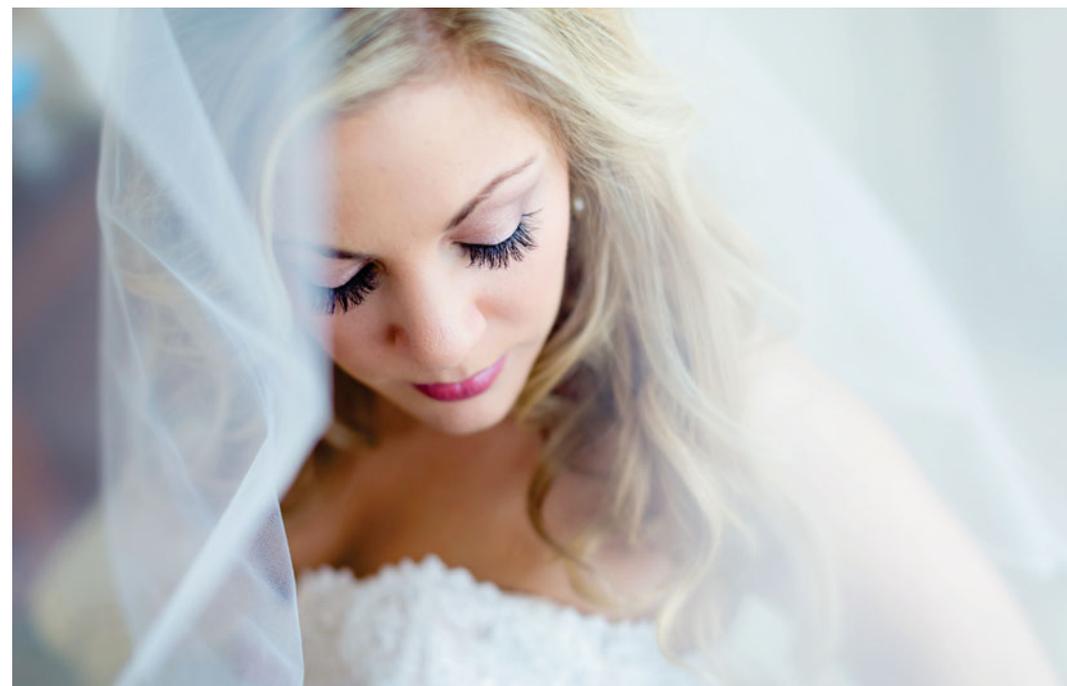


Image © Vanessa Joy

If I'm photographing a single subject, I have a little more creative freedom in my focus, and typically set my aperture to 3.2 or lower. In the picture above, I'm focusing solely on the bride's eyelashes, and shot at  $f/2$ .

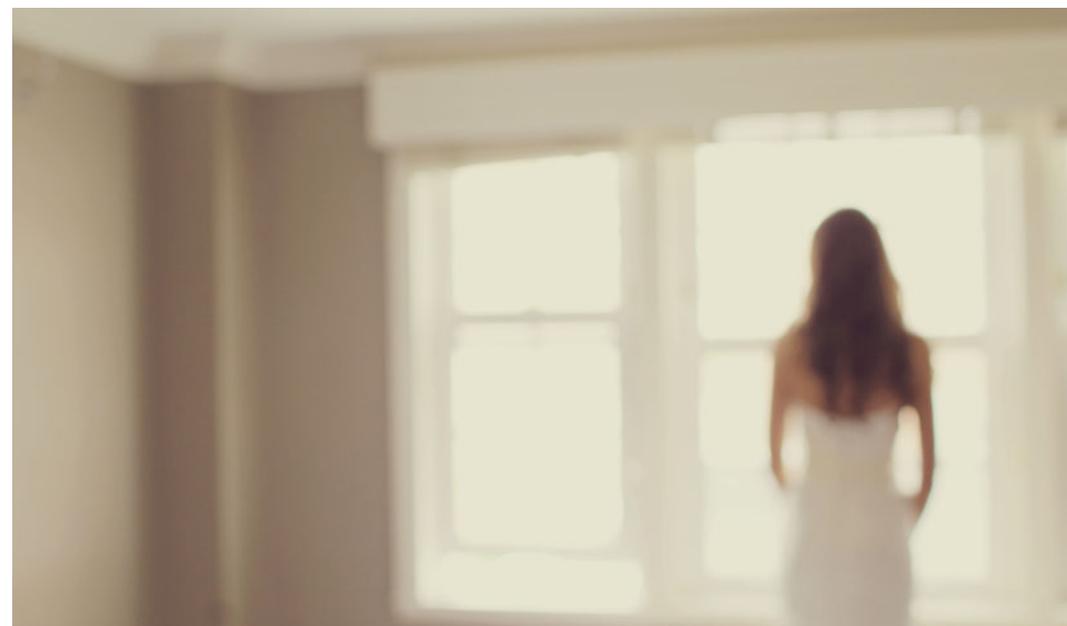


Image © Vanessa Joy

And then, of course, you can take creative license from there and decide if you want anything to be in focus at all. One of my favorite pictures is one that has absolutely nothing in focus, as you can see above.

If I'm going to apply any rule to focusing, I would say that all of your subjects that are looking at the camera should be in focus (unless they are intentionally background for your true subjects). And when you blow up a picture for print, it had better be in focus.

## RULES OF POSING

There are endless rules to posing. I could write a whole book on it. If we're going to stick to one of the basics, let's go with group posing (which I'll be teaching extensively at Lunacy in November). One of the basic rules is to pose "eyes to mouth" with a couple, and in triangle formations with three or more subjects.

In this picture, you can see that the groom's mouth is almost lined up with the bride's eyes, fulfilling the "eyes to mouth" rule.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

In this image, I've placed the bridesmaids so that their heights vary, going up and down, and their heads make triangles. The three girls on the left make a sort of triangle, as do the three on the right, and the bride with each girl on either side of her as well.

Depending on people's height, this may be difficult, but I'll talk more about how to overcome that at Lunacy. Breaking this rule can be done awkwardly, like when you have a group of people placed with all the tall people on one side and all the short people on the other—almost like they're falling down a hill, as in the picture on the next page.



Image © Vanessa Joy

This rule is harder to break artistically, but is sometimes broken for logistics. In the picture above, the bride needed to be in the middle of her parents, so there was no way around the slanted pose.

Once you know the rules and can recognize photos that keep or break them, you'll break them with intention and the outcome will hopefully be creative and unique. If you break them without knowing them first, the outcome will tend to be sloppy and look more like a mistake (especially if combined!) than creativity.

Art can be subjective in many ways, but the best artists know the rules and break them with an objective for doing so. ■

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

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TURNING THE ORDINARY INTO EXTRAORDINARY:

# NIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHY

with Michael Anthony



I open most of my articles for *Shutter Magazine* by reminding readers that wedding photography is the most difficult genre to shoot. You are expected to know how to be a portrait, product, event and fashion photographer all rolled into one, not to mention a counselor, psychiatrist and coordinator.

In addition, your clients expect you to be able to do this under what is often the worst set of lighting circumstances possible, with minimal equipment. It's no wonder I've heard prominent portrait photographers say they would rather stick needles in their eyes than become a wedding photographer. Nonetheless, if it is in your blood, as it is mine, you can't see yourself doing any other type of work.

When we get late into a wedding day, we often face terrible lighting for the reception, and lighting an indoor event is a whole different challenge than dealing with harsh light throughout the day. That can be your opportunity to stand out. One of the ways we do that is to take our couple out right before we leave for a night portrait.

Doing a small session at night with your couple accomplishes a few things. First, it gives the couple a much-needed break from the commotion of the reception. It also gives you the opportunity to create more dazzling work for their walls. It gives you a minute before you leave to verify with the couple that you got every picture they want. Most importantly, it gives me the ability to close out their wedding album with an amazing photo and end the night with an incredible experience.

## PLAN OUT YOUR TIME

The first step in making sure you are able to create these images for your couples is to plan the timeline. Nobody has learned the importance of properly planning a timeline better than me in the past year—not doing so last year almost caused chaos with our 100-plus wedding schedule.

You don't want to be fighting coordinators for 15 minutes of portrait time with your clients. Talk to them early and remind them of their investment in remarkable imagery with you. Since this usually takes place at the end of the night, it is imperative that you plan out your timeline so your night session doesn't interfere with the cake cutting, bouquet/garter toss, etc.

Plan your timeline before the coordinator does, and make sure the coordinator has the timeline before their first meeting with the couple. It's best to have a phone conversation with the coordinator so they don't feel like you are infringing on their responsibilities.

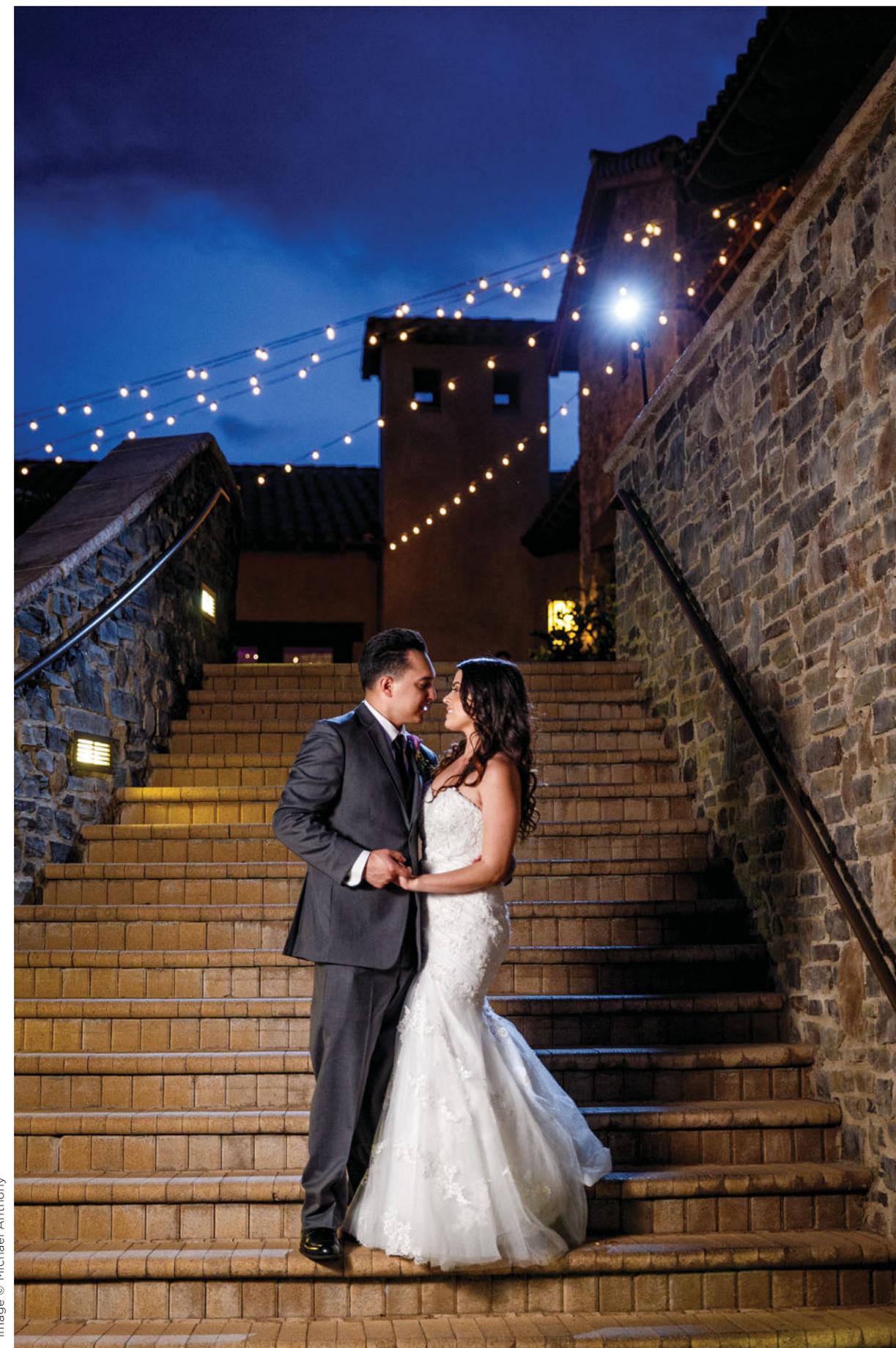


Image © Michael Anthony



## GET COMFORTABLE WITH LIGHTING AND GEAR

If you've read my articles, you know I am a big proponent of creative light. In order to do this correctly, you will need a variety of tools. While you can use natural light even at nighttime, which I will show you later in this article, you cannot rely on it as a keylight source because you don't know where it will be available. Here are some of the tools I recommend having on the wedding day.

### Video Lights

#### *Ice Light or Yongnuo Light Wand*

I have invested in multiple Ice Lights, an incredible tool. I love that they can be modified with barn doors to create beautiful images. The Ice Light is sold as a portable window because it creates softer light than a traditional video light. I recently picked up the Yongnuo Light Wand. I usually stay away from Yongnuo reverse-engineered products because of their terrible build quality. The Light Wand, however, is not reverse-engineered, and has features that are completely unique to it. I have found the build quality to be acceptable and, for \$75, you can buy six of them for the price of a single Ice Light.

#### *Rotolight NEO*

I bought the Rotolight NEO, my newest tool, for our video work. I fell in love with these lights right away because they offer adjustable color temperature without the need for attachments. The light quality is more specular, creating shine on oily faces, which you get after a long night of dancing. In a wider shot, this isn't noticeable. The lights are AA-battery powered, so you will be able to quickly change out a set.

### Flash Systems

#### *Speedlights*

We are Canon shooters, and have been using the 600EX-RT system since its inception a long time ago. If you are shooting Nikon, Sony or another system, I have heard good things about the Phottix Mitros system. It's important to use a radio system rather than the optical slaves built into your flash, which can cause havoc during a reception because of all the lights used by the DJ and guests' cameras. We modify these lights with the MagMod system as well as the Westcott Duo Rapid Box.

## FIND YOUR BACKGROUND

Think of shooting at night the same way as shooting in the studio. You are essentially creating the entire scene yourself. Find locations with ambient lighting. Maybe you can incorporate a building into your image that has ambient light coming from windows or porch lights. Light a fountain with a speedlight or video light. The trick here is to create some dynamic lighting so that you are able show off the scene—otherwise, you may as well have photographed the couple in a closet. If there is no other background available, buy a \$10 set of string lights on Amazon to shoot through.

Image © Michael Anthony





Image © Michael Anthony

Image © Michael Anthony

## LIGHT YOUR COUPLE

When lighting your couple at nighttime, the contrast and shadows will be very prominent because of the lack of ambient light. It is important to use a modifier if you can to soften the shadows—otherwise, the harsh light on your couple will be unflattering. Also, because the subject will fade into darkness, I always use a backlight on our couple to separate them from the background. I often use only a backlight if I cannot find any ambient light to use as a background. A simple backlit shot is very easy to use as the final spread in an album. Just make sure you shoot a variety of vertical and horizontal images so you have a variety to choose from.

## LONG EXPOSURES

You can make a dynamic image with a long exposure. While it's not always my cup of tea, it can be helpful when shooting at night to have ambient light available. These techniques take a long time to master, and you will not nail it if you do it for the first time at a wedding. When shooting a long exposure, your couple has to remain still, so I recommend having them sit down and embrace in order to keep them from moving while you take your shot. Limit the shutter to less than 1.5 seconds to avoid motion blur, and then you can use techniques like light painting to get a great final shot. In addition, you can shoot two images and create a composite if you have a tripod and a few extra minutes with your couple. Remember, flash will freeze motion, so use that to your advantage if you want a shot of the couple standing up.



Image © Michael Anthony

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

When you do this consistently, you are able to sell it as another unique service to your clients. They likely won't see many similar examples in your competitors' portfolios.

Remember, the law of supply and demand dictates that originality is concurrent with a higher price point. In a landscape of ever-improving competition, you have to look to the things that will make your work stand out. Post-production, lighting and your creative landscape all make you stand out from the crowd. Keep sharpening your skills so you are never left in the dust. ■

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

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PHOTOGRAPHING SENIOR

# MUSICIANS & ARTISTS

with **Melanie Anderson**

---

This week, I'm in Nashville filming and teaching. As I was deciding on my topic for this month's article, I couldn't help but think about the musicians and that this town is just flowing with creatives. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to photograph many musicians and artists. This month, I dive into marketing and selling, locations and lighting.

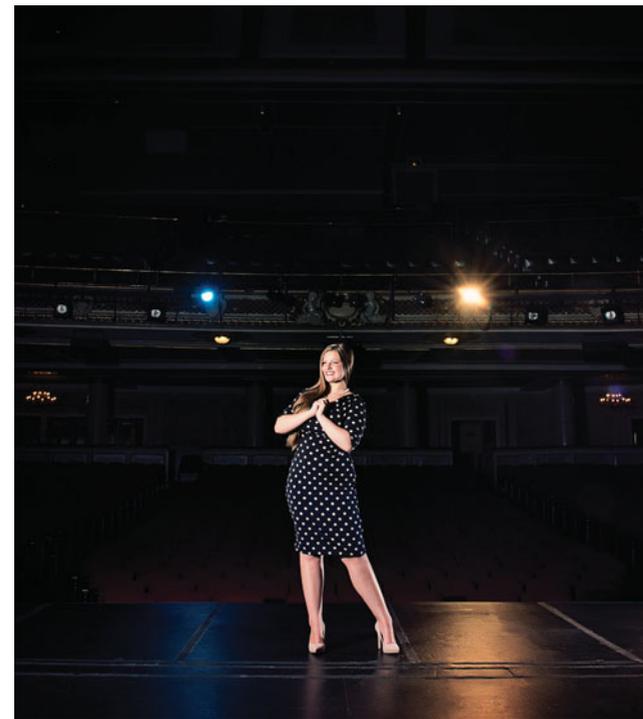




Images © Melanie Anderson

### LOCATIONS

My studio is located in the Arts and Entertainment District of Hagerstown, Maryland. I am surrounded by brick walls, alleyways and stairwells. My studio is directly across from the Maryland Theatre and a performing arts high school. Due to the location, we photograph with an urban flare. When not traveling, you will see me around town all day long photographing. Due to my relationship with the Maryland Theatre, we are able to photograph inside pretty much anytime. Many of the seniors I photograph are musicians who love being photographed onstage. You will also see that I use the theater as a background occasionally, most recently for prom pictures.



Images © Melanie Anderson

### LIGHTING & EQUIPMENT

I use a Nikon D4 with either an 85 1.4 or 24-70 2.8 lens. When photographing outside, I typically use a reflector along with the ambient light. When I photograph on the stage of the theater, I use an AlienBees strobe and softbox with a 24-70 or wider lens. The theater is very dark, and I need the power of the strobe to give the effect I am looking for. I like photographing them with the theater seats and lights in the background, with me onstage in the far back to give an artistic feel, instead of them onstage in front of the theater curtain. You can view a few behind-the-scenes videos of the making of the portraits on our YouTube channel.

## SALES & MARKETING

We are known in our community for our extreme sports images, and we use a similar setup when we shoot the high school band. It's pretty much the same options, but instead of sporting equipment, they are photographed with their instruments. I have a wall in my studio with about a dozen samples of extreme montages and collages. We sell these as 16x24 and typically on metal. The metal finish gives the artwork an added effect that is like none other.

Before I begin the senior session, I take the senior and parents to this wall and discuss the fees that are involved. I want to know if this creation is within their budget before I shoot. We review all the options and make a plan from there. If the extreme piece is not within their budget, I show them images of seniors photographed along the brick walls, in the alcoves and on stairways. Whatever their budget is, I want to spend it wisely. I do not want to spend time photographing and creating an epic piece only to find they are unable to or not interested in buying. Educate and sell before the photographing starts. It's vital to your in-person sales. Be sure to print samples for your business; remember, you sell what you show and you show what you want to sell.

Not only do we photograph athletes and musicians, but creatives too. Two years ago, we photographed a senior girl who wanted to become a makeup artist. She was heavily into *The Walking Dead*, and asked if we would create an extreme piece for her. I photographed her yearbook and casual photos one day, and then a few days later, we took her and her friends to a vacant warehouse. I had her prepare all of them ahead of time so that our time together was seamless. I photographed them individually and as a group. You can find our behind-the-scenes of this on our YouTube page.



Image © Melanie Anderson



Images © Melanie Anderson

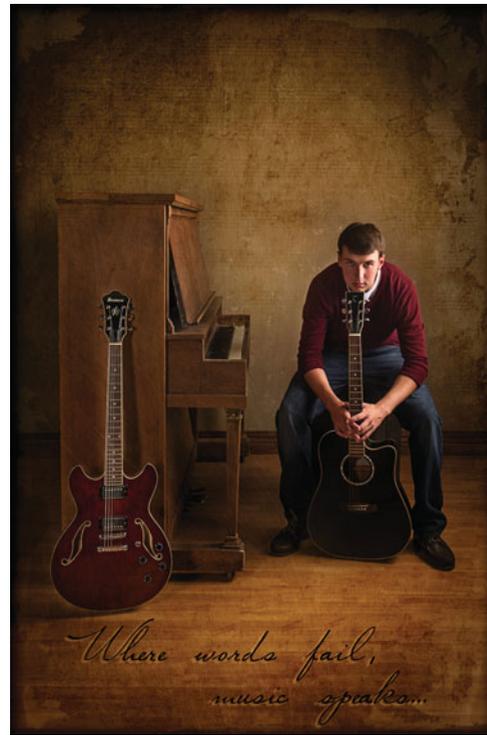
## CREATIVITY

When photographing musicians and artists, think about the unique angles, ways that you can add sunrays and bokeh effects.

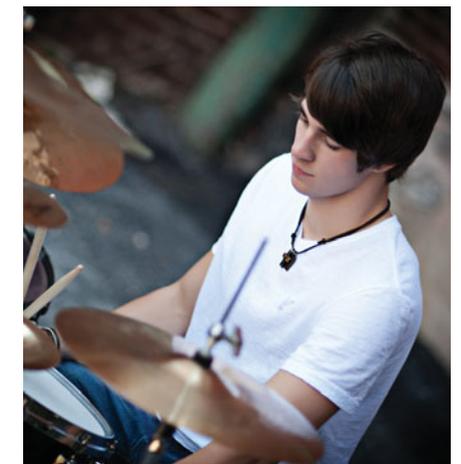
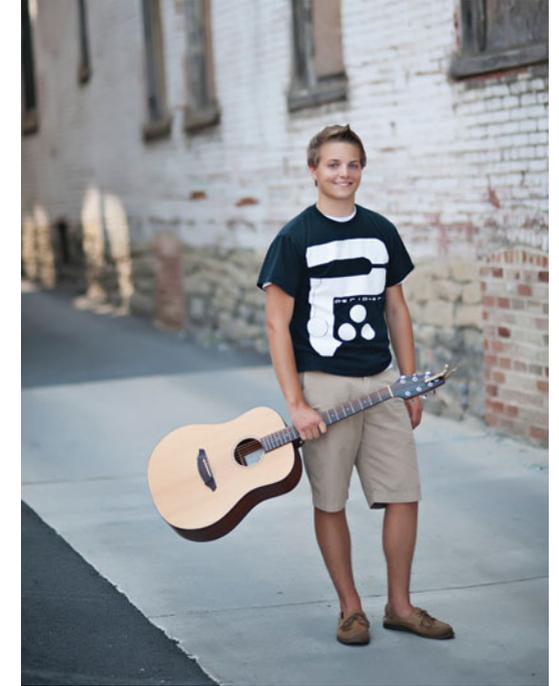
Including quotes, verses and music lines is another way to personalize their creation. We don't create just a standard senior with an instrument shot; we still photograph in an urban, artsy or musical setting.

We often sell these in metal, but wrapped canvas can add a classy feel for classical instruments and metal for guitar, drums, etc.

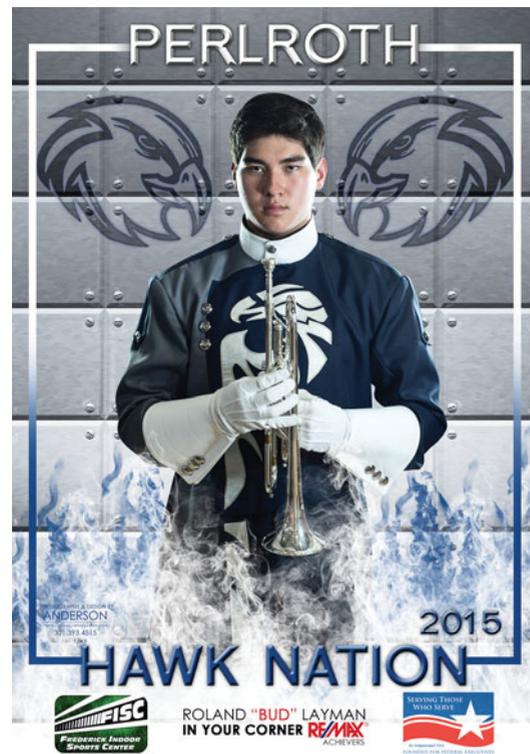
The performing arts high school across from me showcases a new production every year. Last year, they asked us to create headshots of all their students, approximately 80. We created tight black-and-white headshots for the playbill and posted them on social media for all to enjoy. I used three ringlights with a background and my 24-70 lens set at F4, 1/160 and 200 ISO. We moved through these headshots very quickly. You can find a live video from this day showing the setup on our Facebook page.



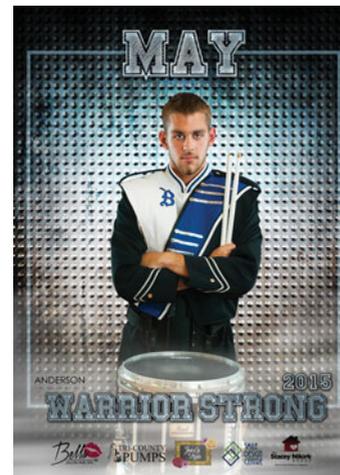
Images © Melanie Anderson



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**VOLUME**

Within our volume business, we photograph the high school band for group and senior banners. We line them up either before or after the fall sports teams, and create a unique product for them to showcase at games and events, both at home and away. The seniors get to keep their individual banner at the end of the year as a thank-you for their time and talent. We are able to donate these as a result of sponsors that offset our expenses. These banners are a huge part of the word-of-mouth at my studio. Whenever I ask how a new client heard about us, the number-one response is, "You are everywhere" These banners play a huge part in that.



Image © Melanie Anderson

### ACTION PLANS

*Find a theater and offer to take their headshots.*

*Post a call to action for musicians and create something epic.*

*Educate your clients on pricing and creation.*

*Contact the band director at a high school and offer to take their extreme pictures.*

*Print samples to showcase. ■*

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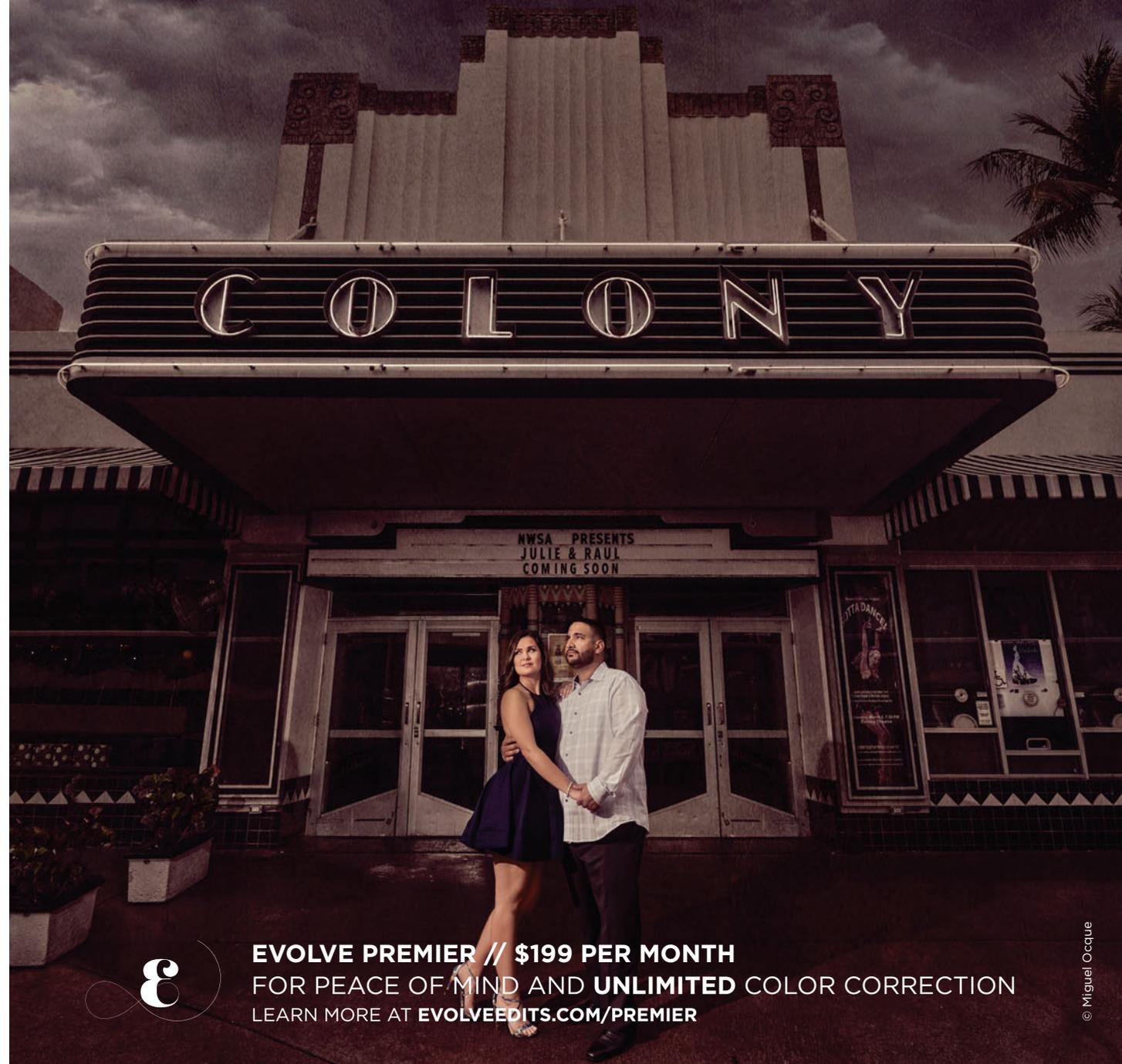
Melanie Anderson is an award-winning photographer and wife to her husband of 20 years, Bill, and a mother to their four children, Sarah, Emily, Kayla and Billy. Anderson Photographs is located in the Arts & Entertainment District of downtown Hagerstown, Maryland. Melanie is a Certified Professional Photographer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

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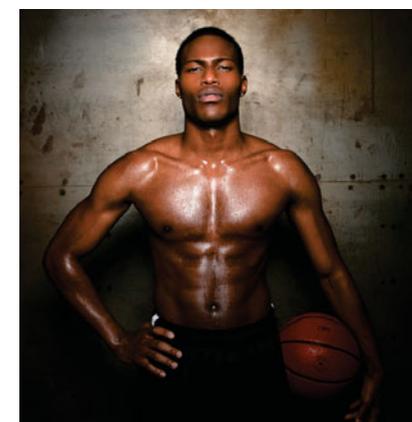
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# final inspiration

photographer salvatore cincotta  
image title balance  
exposure f2.8 @ 1/125th, ISO 100  
lighting natural light  
location st. louis, mo  
gear canon 1dx, 70-200mm





# Light shaping by Joe McNally

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