

the business behind the shutter | NOVEMBER 2013

SHUTTER

MAGAZINE

CLASSIC
HOLLYWOOD
GLAMOUR
LIGHTING

WITH

MICHAEL CORSENTINO

PLUS + INTRODUCING
+ **the BUZZ**
+ INDUSTRY NEWS
with Sal Cincotta

CHANGE THE WORLD
WHILE GROWING YOUR
BUSINESS
PART 2
with Phillip Blume

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+ feature articles from Sal Cincotta, Skip Cohen & more!



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CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR LIGHTING

WITH MICHAEL CORSENTINO

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Phillip Blume

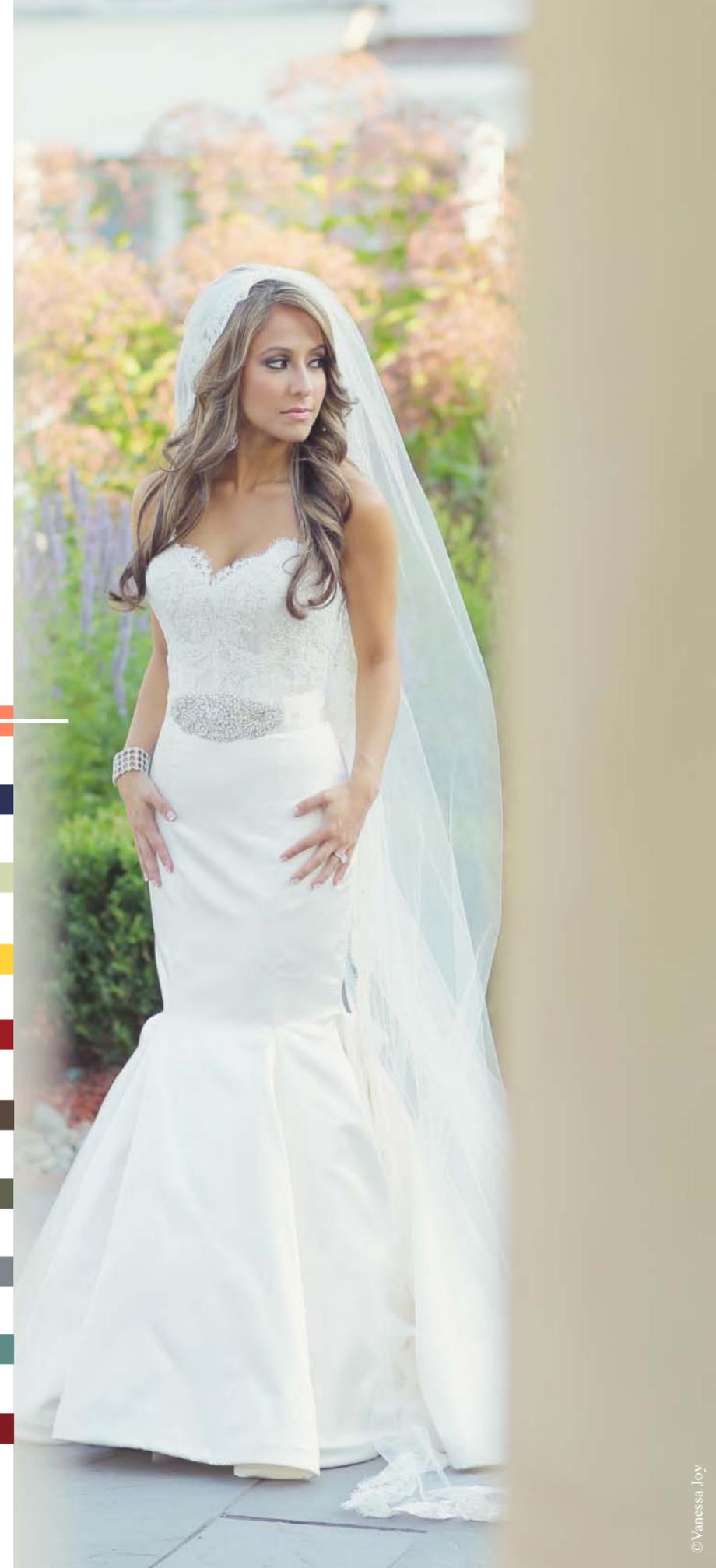
PICTURE PERFECT
Roberto Valenzuela

Q&A
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THE BUZZ | INDUSTRY NEWS
Sal Cincotta

THE CHALLENGE *WINNER*

Design: Jenny Grumbling
Copy Editor: Tom O'Connell



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LAUNCH POINT



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Get out there

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JUST A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENTLY



WITH **SAL CINCOTTA**

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LOCATION
LOCATION
LOCATION

WITH BLAIR PHILLIPS



BY BLAIR PHILLIPS

Scouting, accessing & owning location photography

Shooting on location is easier and less expensive than building and maintaining a studio, but it comes with a unique set of challenges that can be easy to overlook. With so many rogue photographers hitting the streets these days, accessing a location on private property has become harder. So many before us have not followed the proper channels to secure locations, and property owners are on edge and not interested in the liability. It's easy to get caught up in the moment of an awesome location and completely forget about the plethora of things that need to be done so you're not booted from a property. I have locations all over town. Here's exactly how I access them with zero problems. A lot of this I learned the hard way.

SCOUTING MISSION

The best way to find potential locations is to simply ride around and scout. Take an afternoon off and hit the streets. Look for areas that completely fit your style and brand. It is most profitable to find locations that are close to each other. I have all my locations laid out in a circle in my town. Secure locations that are not so obvious so you can keep them to yourself. Once you secure a location, visit it throughout the day so you know where the sun falls. Certain times of the day will be more appealing than others. Bring an iPod dock and play some music to help lighten the mood. Music makes everything better. Take several test shots around the perimeter to find the best lighting. With any public property, there is no way to claim a location as your own. Be prepared to find other photographers following your lead once you start shooting at a new location.

LOCATIONS

SAFETY FIRST

Photographers are drawn to locations that have an element of neglect. If you find a location you are in love with, take a stroll around the block. You really need to be aware of your surroundings. Ask area people if it's safe to bring clients. You can quickly get at the honest truth this way. If they tell you not to be there after dark, scout other areas.

GEAR

Pack a first-aid kit with your photo gear. I never know when something as simple as a Band-Aid for a blister can be a session's saving grace. A portable changing room is a very inexpensive piece of equipment that can ease awkward moments. It's safer and easier than for seniors to change clothes in their vehicle.

BACKUP PLAN

Have you ever had a large family meet you at a remote location only to realize that you have forgotten a vital piece of equipment? I began keeping an extra media card in my vehicle for this very reason. I forgot to grab a card one day, and it made for a long trip back to the studio while the family sat and waited. There is always a spare now. What if you get to the location and your camera decides to go crazy and stop working? Always keep a spare with you.

LIABILITY

You don't need to live in constant fear, but you always need to be aware of things that can go wrong, exposing you and your business to risk. If a location poses a safety risk, simply move somewhere else. I was shooting a bridal party in a field with tall grass that had fire-ant beds everywhere. During my safety check, I was immediately covered with fire ants that bit me all over my legs. Just imagine if that had happened to the entire wedding party!

LOCATION



LOCATION

PROPERTY ACCESS

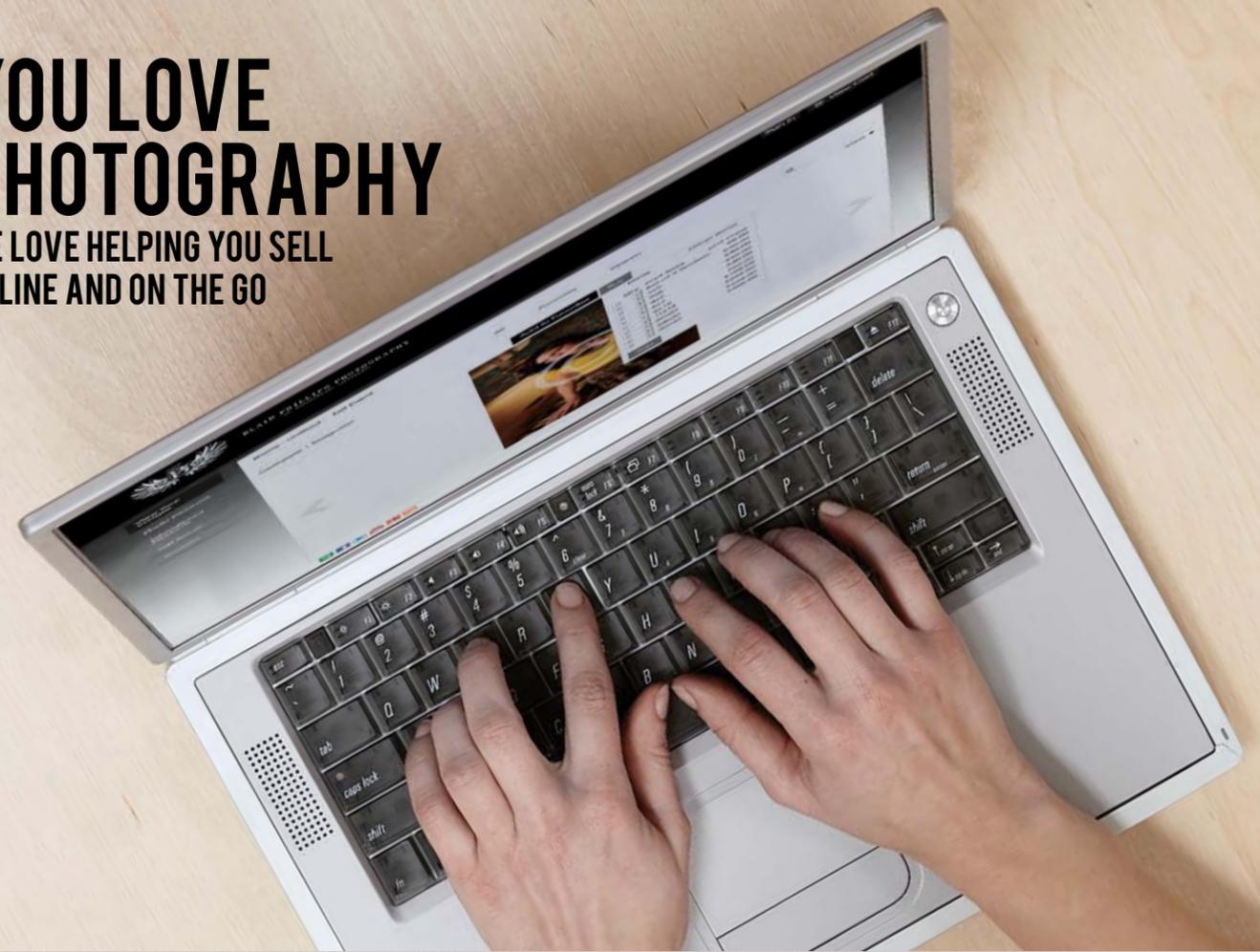
Nothing looks worse than someone interrupting your senior session to tell you to get lost. It's not only embarrassing, but looks very unprofessional. When I find a location on private property I want to use, I follow a few steps. I canvas the area and find out who owns the property. I explain to the owner what I want to do, and show examples of my work. One of the most important things a property owner wants to hear is that you run a successful business and have liability insurance. This gives you validity in their eyes. Not all people will listen to you, and may not be in love with the idea. If you are persistent, you will be able to access locations all over town. If there is more than one owner, make sure they're both on board.

Locations are advantageous due to their low overhead, but keep in mind that your time has to be accounted for when shooting locations. If you are going to drive all over the countryside, make sure you are getting paid what you are worth. Some land owners ask for compensation; when they do, I always offer free photo services. If they want money, I move on to another location. ■



SHUTTER
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- + Photo Plus Expo 2013 recap-- Sal's favorites from the show
- + WPPI 2014: Registration is now open! Don't miss: what's changing with Print Competition this year!
- + Fisheye Connect acquisition-- Sal tells all
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NOVEMBER INDUSTRY NEWS
with Salvatore Cincotta

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NOVEMBER

9 BEGINNING WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

WITH BROOKS INSTITUTE // VENTURA, CALIFORNIA

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WITH NICHOLAS PAPPAGALLO // TEMPE, AZ

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11&12 THE BUSINESS OF PHOTOGRAPHY//AN INTENSIVE WORKSHOP

WITH JASON ATEN // SAN FRANCISCO, CA

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17 CREATIVE EDGE SAFARI// A NATURE WORKSHOP

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PHOTOSHOP

MASKING

WITH DAMIAN BATTINELLI



BY DAMIAN BATTINELLI

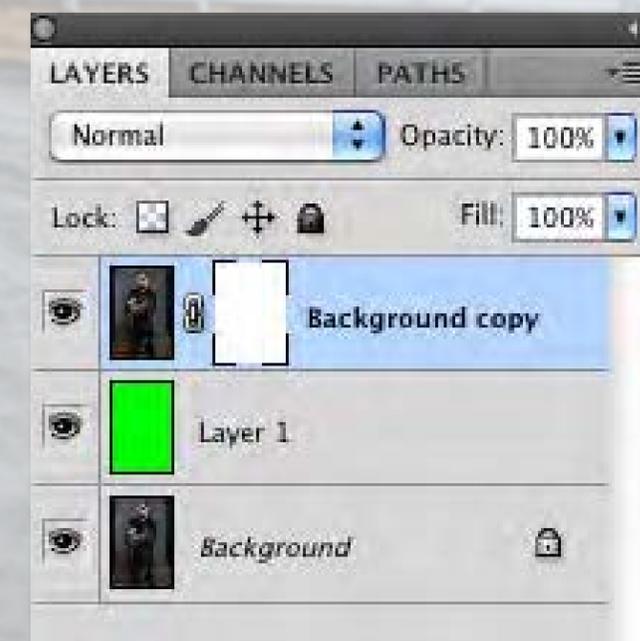
Remember that time you worked on that one image in PhotoShop for hours and hours, eventually erased too much, and then went as far back as your history would allow, and you had to start all over again because you just couldn't go back far enough, exceeding the limits of the Eraser tool? Oh, it hasn't happened yet? Well, it will! The Eraser can ruin your image by destroying pixels without allowing you to save your changes and fix them later. A layer mask offers a nondestructive option.

HOW IT WORKS

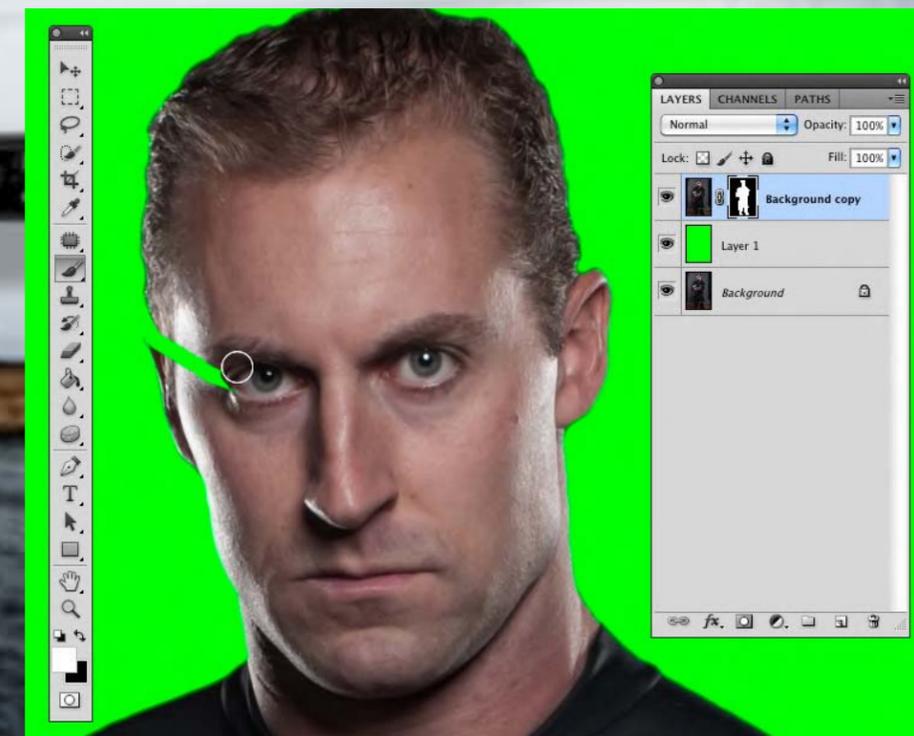
Think of a layer mask as a potential window to the layer below it. To add a layer mask to your background layer, you make a copy or convert the background layer to a smart object by right-clicking over it and choosing Convert to Smart Object. You'll notice an icon at the bottom of your layers panel that looks like a square with a white circle in it. Click that icon to add a mask. The mask appears white, but does not hide the layer it's on.



A layer mask is used by brushing either white or black over the mask. White hides and black reveals, so you'll always be able to go back and forth for as long as you need to. Again, it's nondestructive. It may seem like you're erasing, but you're only hiding. If you don't select the layer mask, you'll be brushing on your image and not the mask. The keyboard shortcut to toggle between white and black is V. You'll be able to save your image with all its layers, which you can revert back to at a later time when you're satisfied before you flatten your image.



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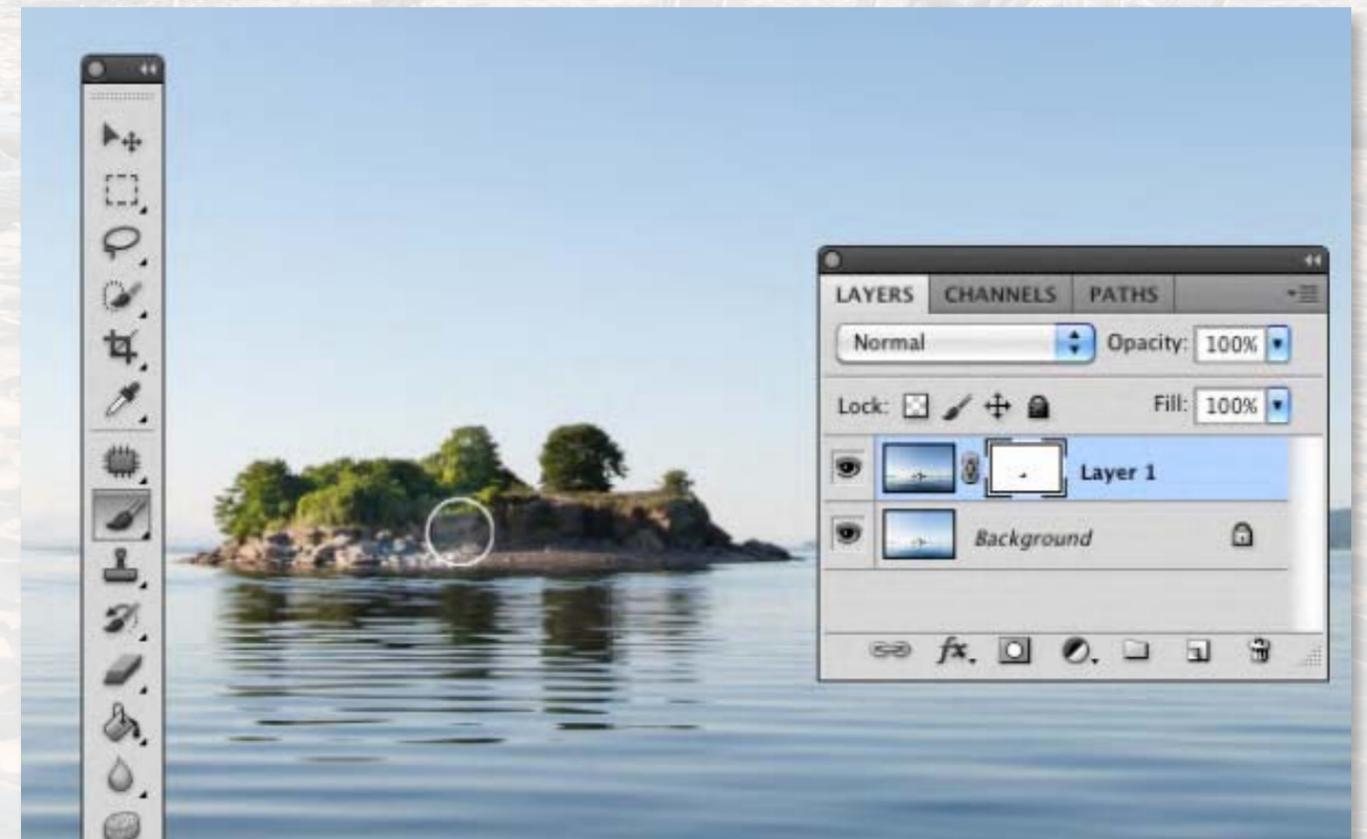
HOW I USE IT (AND WHY IT'S BETTER)

I use a layer mask for all my composites (Figure 3). I photograph the subject separately from the background, usually in a studio. I then remove the subject using the selection tools. Using a layer mask, I can remove the subject with surgical precision. I can easily and accurately clean up the edges of subjects so they look like they were in the shot to begin with. If I make a mistake and brush out too much, not to worry: I simply brush it back in using white.

Another example is having an awesome landscape image but the sky is just too boring. With a layer mask, I can easily replace the sky with a more interesting one. I'll place in a new sky as a layer that I've previously prepared to fit over my "old" sky in my original image. I position it where I want it, and turn off that layer. With the selection tools, I select the sky of my original image, turn back on the new sky layer and, with the original sky selected, I click the Layer Mask button. The original sky is instantly replaced with the new, more interesting one.



My final example is using a mask to lighten, darken or bring attention to a certain part of my image. Having two or more exposures of the same image is key. I do this either by creating them in camera using a tripod or in postproduction, with something like Lightroom. I layer the different exposures and brush in or out what I'm trying to create. Here, I wanted to keep the exposure of the sky and water, but bring in better detail of the island. By layering the darker exposure on top, I'm able to brush out the island to reveal the exposure I like, which is underneath. I did this to draw more attention to the island.



HISTORY STATES

Remember, the Eraser is a destructive tool. The only way to go back is to undo or click back in your history panel, but you'll be able to do that only so many times since PhotoShop uses what it calls "history states."

If you find your computer is running slowly, you can edit your History States. Reducing the amount of states you want PhotoShop to remember gives you more memory to work with. Using the Brush tool requires less memory, another bonus for layer masks. Go to your menu bar and choose Photoshop > Preferences > Performance. Under History & Cache, change History States to a lesser amount.

Once you've mastered the use of layer masks, you'll be able to put them to use in a way that works for you. Replace a skyline, remove something or someone from an image, or brighten or darken an area of interest. These are just a few examples of what you can safely accomplish using layer masks. ■

Optimize Cache Levels and Tile Size for documents that are:

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 Big and Flat
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 Cache Levels:
 Cache Tile Size:

! Set Cache Levels to 2 or higher for optimum GPU performance.



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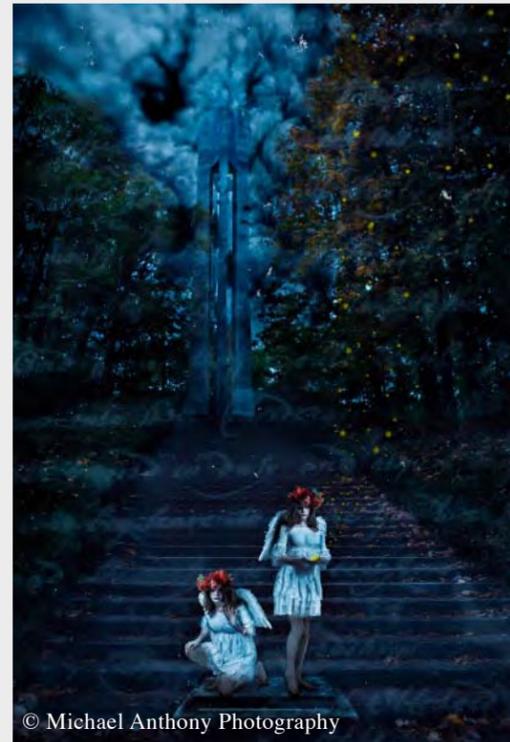
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A romantic couple in formal wedding attire stands in a desert landscape. The man is in a dark suit and the woman is in a long, white, textured gown. They are embracing and looking at each other. In the background, a line of wind turbines stretches across a hazy, mountainous horizon under a cloudy sky. The overall mood is serene and picturesque.

**PICTURE
PERFECT**
— C R I T I Q U E —

WITH ROBERTO VALENZUELA



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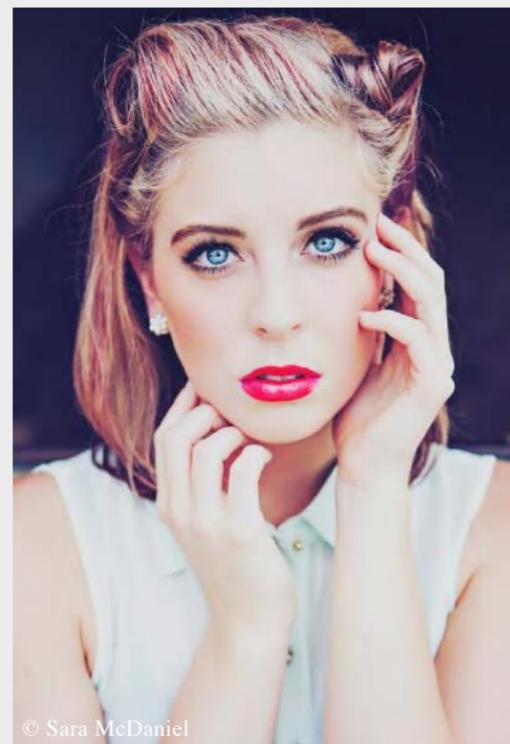
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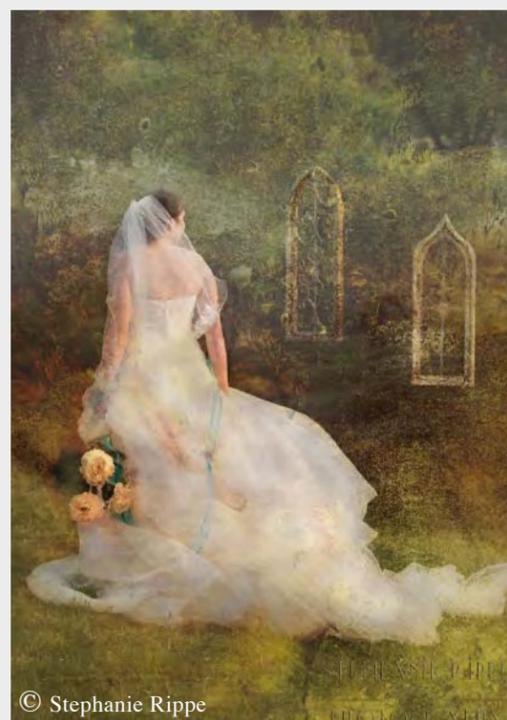
BY ROBERTO VALENZUELA



© Derik Le Photography



© Sara McDaniel



© Stephanie Rippe

I have always been an advocate for the invaluable educational opportunity that image critique can bring. **I think it's one of the very best ways to understand your work.** Having your photos critiqued can bring to the surface both weaknesses and strengths you might not even know are there. Equipped with this knowledge, you can work on those aspects that need fine-tuning. Most of the issues with images fall into four main categories: technical, location, background and pose/expression.

Every month, I will critique five images chosen by Shutter from reader entries.

The best part is that I will critique them on video, and use PhotoShop to draw callouts to show you where the issues lie. It'll be as if we were sitting in the same room going over your images together. I love this industry, and I have dedicated many years to pushing my fellow photographer friends to invest in their education and prioritize their skills and mastery of the art. ■

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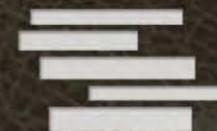
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MOMFIRST

BUSINESS PLANNING

with KRISTY DICKERSON

BY KRISTY DICKERSON



In September, we talked about having the right personality for owning a business, and in October, we talked about financials for starting a business. In this month's "Mom First," I'm tackling business plans. Planning and striving for goals can only help your business succeed. Although this series focuses on photographer moms, the tips here can be used by anyone.

Back in college, I had to create a business plan for a management class. I haphazardly did what I needed to do for the grade, thinking I'd never have to do that again. Little did I know, it would be one of the most important things in my business. I'd guess that at least 80 percent of photographers do not even have a business plan. It is the paradox of being an artist, of not following through on the business aspects. Artists are not wired for making business decisions.

CONSIDER YOUR GOALS

Photographers get into photography because it's their passion. The trick is to turn that passion into profitability. How do you define business success in relation to home life? Do you want to work 40 hours a week? Do you want to be able to not put your kids in daycare? Do you want to work part time? What is the financial end goal? What is the return on investment? A business plan is necessary even more for stay-at-home photographer moms. With young kids, your life and schedule change often. Your plan will have to constantly evolve as you find your niche in the market or further define your brand.

The more thorough and complete you can make your plan, the better. It's no small task. Make small goals to break it up so that you're not taking on all the sections of your plan at once, which can lead to your throwing in the towel altogether.

The seven main sections of a business plan are the executive summary, company description, products/services, market analysis, strategy and implementation, organization and management team, and financial plan and projections.



The more thorough
and complete
you can make your plan,
the better.
It's no small task.

Let's take a look at each of them.

ONE | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

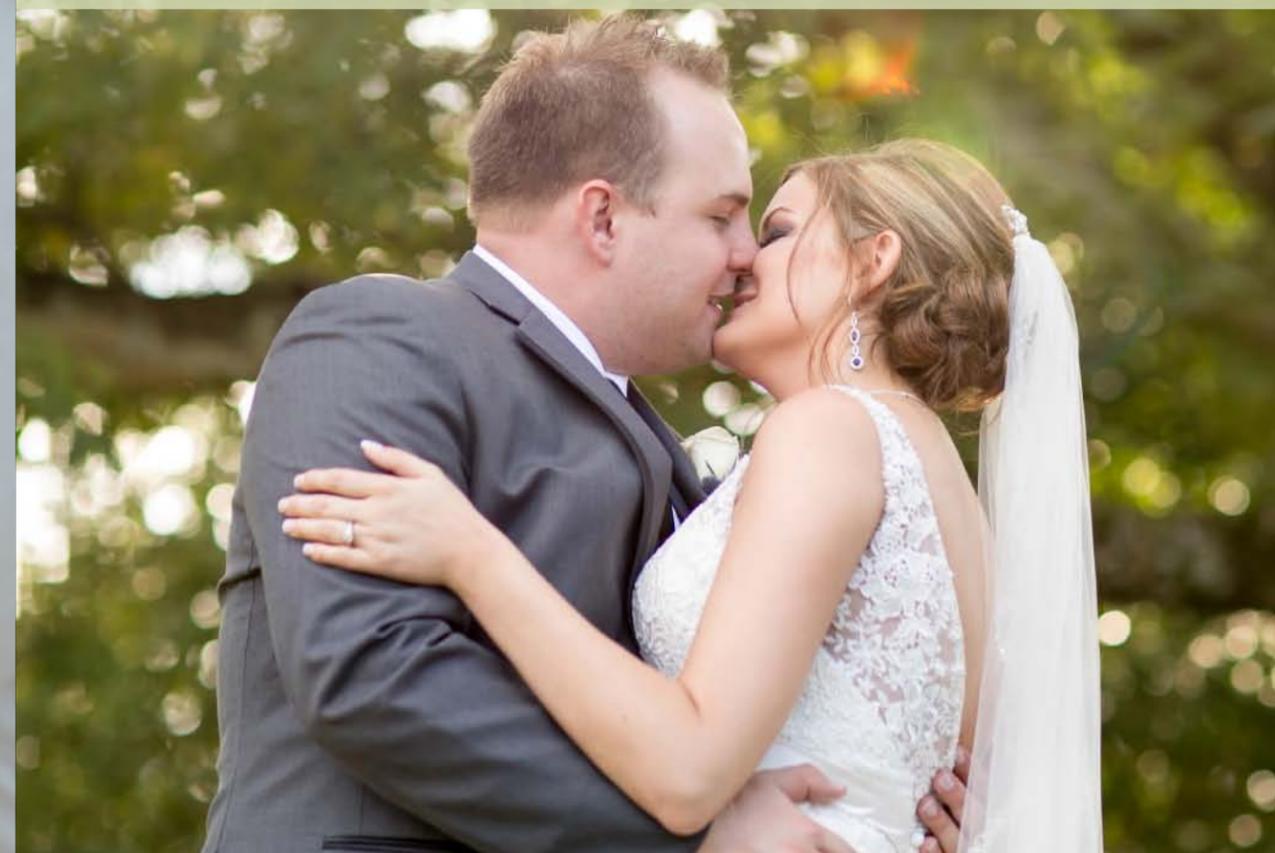
State your photography business name, what type of photography you will be offering and what type of products you will be selling. This is also where your mission statement goes. The summary is an overview of your business. I should be able to read this section alone and feel like I have a good grasp of your direction and the products and services you offer.

TWO | COMPANY DESCRIPTION

Did you establish an LLC, corporation or sole proprietorship? What types of photography and products will you be offering, and what clients will you serve? Provide a history of the company if there is one; if not, give a history of yourself and why you went into business. Identify your suppliers for products and services, an overview of growth strategy, as well as short-term and long-term goals. This section is an overview of all the other sections. It explains who you are, how you operate and what your goals are.

THREE | PRODUCTS/SERVICES

Expand on the type of photography and products you will be offering. State your suppliers and the revenue you expect to gain from each product. This is a time-consuming but important step. It can help you understand why you are offering certain products, your markup and how clients benefit. Add pictures of your products, which can help you decide what products and services to offer. This changes every year, so look at it on a regular basis.



FOUR | MARKET ANALYSIS

This is where you analyze your customers and competition. Start by determining who your customer is. Are you a family portrait photographer, with a consumer who is a female between the ages of 25 and 40 with an income of \$150,000-plus? Or are you a commercial photographer whose customers are small businesses needing headshots and branding materials? Provide as much market research as possible on your demographic. Then go through and list all your current competitors in your market space. Highlight both their strength and weaknesses.

FIVE | STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

How will you be marketing to your clients? You offer amazing photography, but how will you get hired if no one knows about it? Describe in detail your sales and marketing strategy, including promotions. For any paid marketing, what's the cost, distribution, message and end goal?

SIX | ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT TEAM

This is where you list anyone who is involved in the company, including their name, position, main responsibilities and past experience that will help the company. Also list any advisors, along with mentors, accountants, lawyers—anyone who will be a part of your organization.

SEVEN | FINANCIAL PLAN AND PROJECTIONS

If you have been in business a year or more, this should include past income statements, balance sheets, forecast data and cash-flow statements. If you are just starting a photography business, this is where you start. This is the single most important section, and also the section that makes every photographer want to cringe and run away. You may need help. If you have been in business for a while, set up a meeting with your accountant to go over some of these items.





For more guidance, look to resources from organizations such as the U.S. Small Business Association, and services like LivePlan.com, which walks you through the process of setting up a business plan. Running a business is tough, and running a business from home is a constant balancing act. A business plan that clearly defines your purpose and goals helps position you and your business for success.

*If you have questions,
feel free to connect with me via Facebook or Twitter.
And follow my daily life behind the scenes on Instagram! ■*



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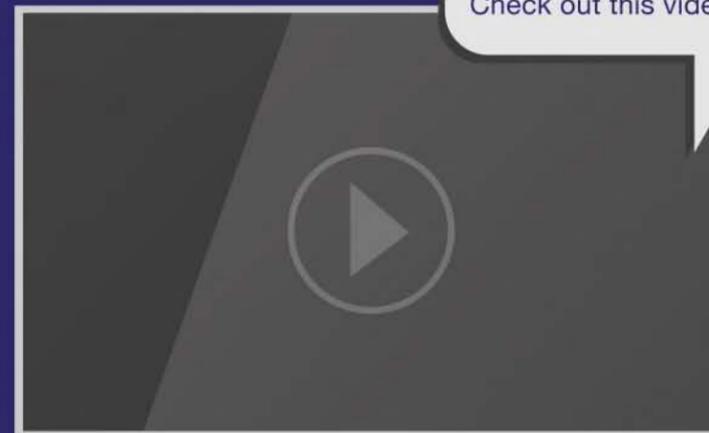
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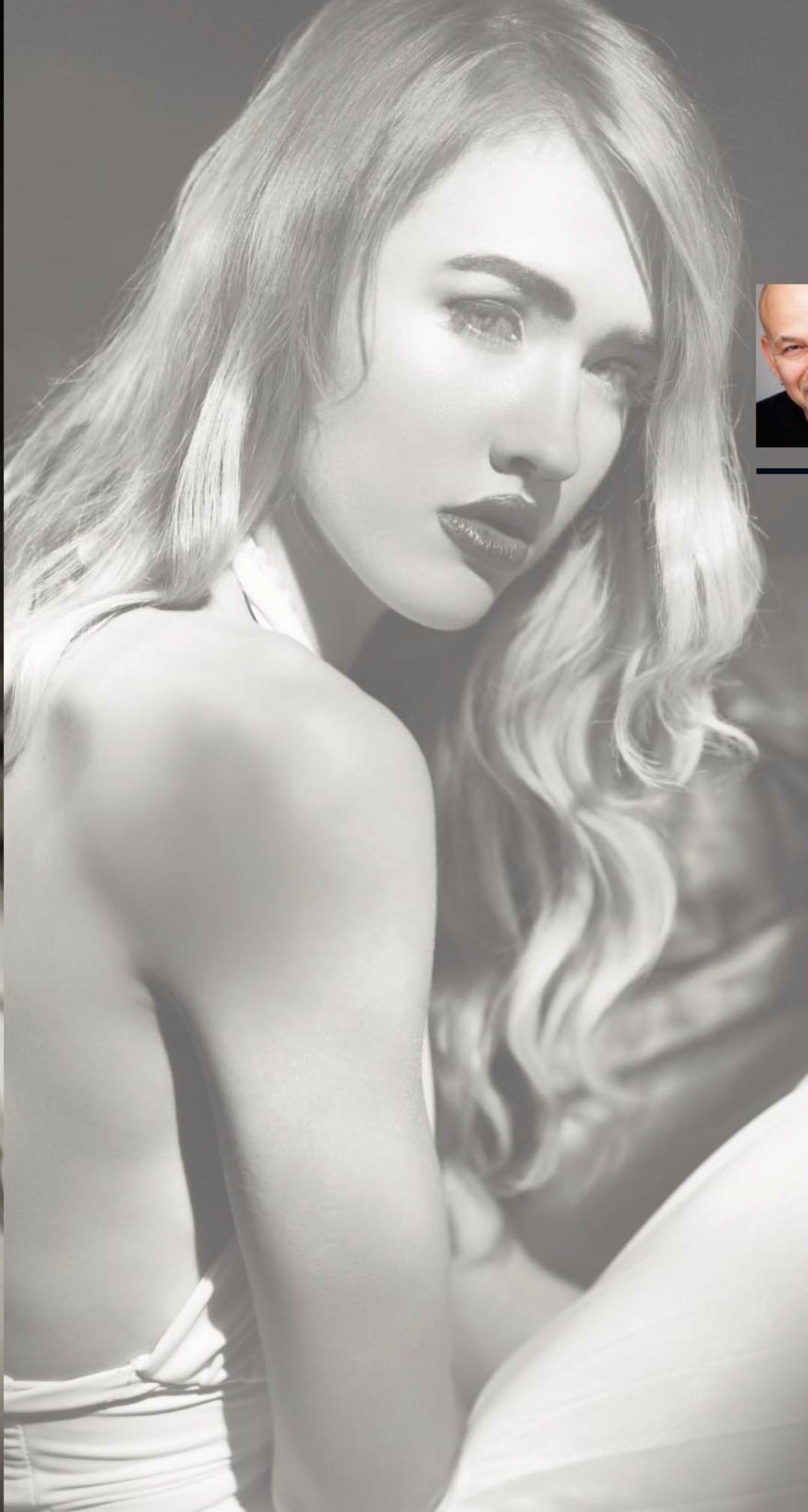
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CLASSIC HOLLYWOOD GLAMOUR LIGHTING

WITH MICHAEL CORSENTINO





BY
Michael Corentino

If you love light as much as I do, then the classic Hollywood glamour portraits of the 1930s and 40s are probably already on your radar. This month's article is all about re-creating that classic vintage style—with a few modern twists.

This style of lighting doesn't shy away from shadows, but relishes sharp transitions from highlight to shadow. Rapid falloff and deep shadows are two of its hallmarks, typically created using a two- to three-point lighting pattern, a key light, an accent light and a background light. We'll use many standard lighting guidelines—facing the key and accent light at each other, sandwiching the light, lighting in a wedge formation, the use of a background light for separation—but change how the light is shaped and controlled, as well as the quality and source of the light. Check out this month's video and lighting diagram for more on this.

Historically, Hollywood glamour portraits in the tradition of George Hurrell—arguably the originator of this style in the 1930s—were produced using tungsten-balanced constant-light sources, typically Fresnels, in black and white. Technology has come a long way since then, and given us white balance presets, control over color temperature in post and exponentially more constant light-source options.

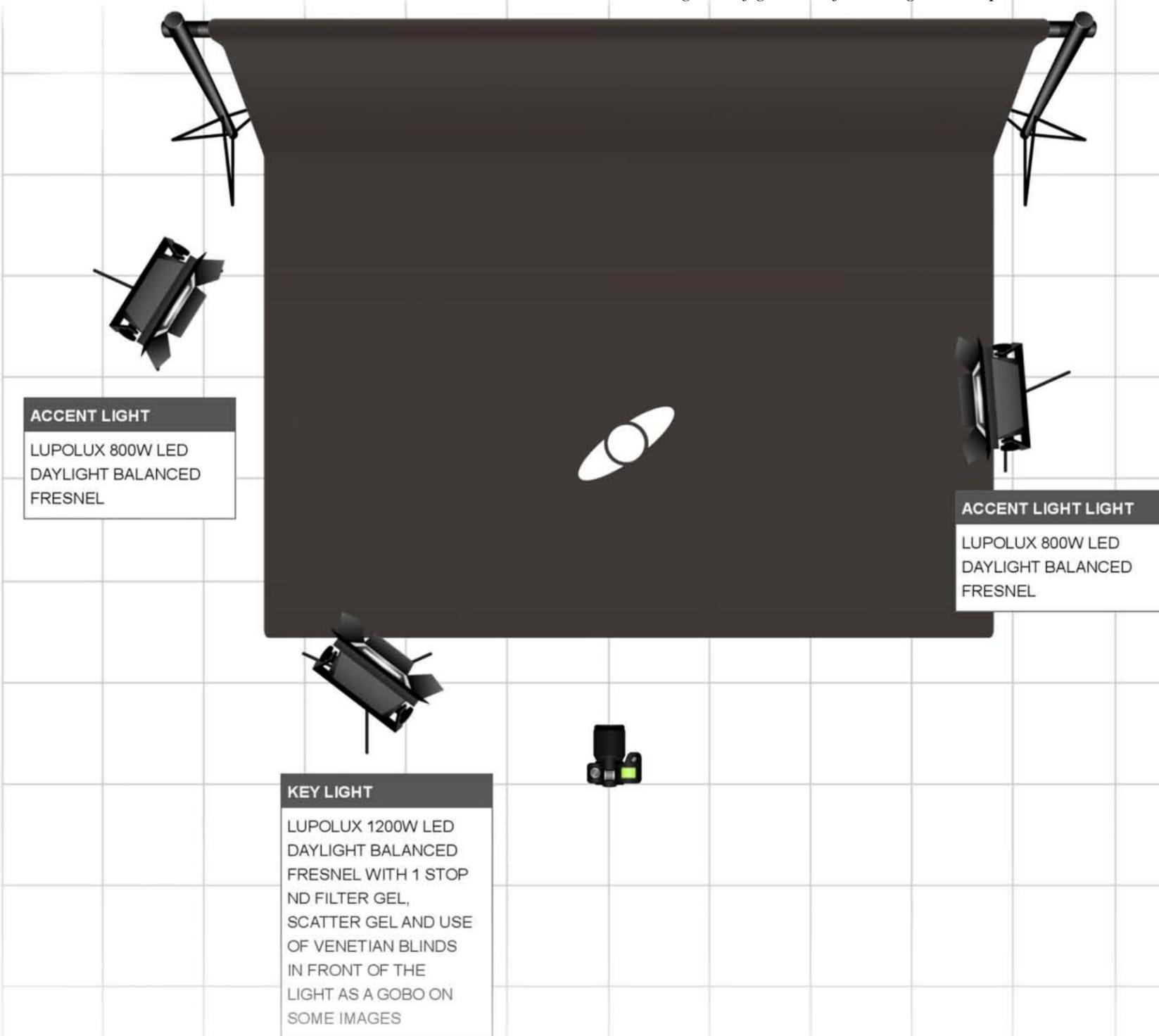


THE SETUP

For this shoot, I chose three Italian-made Lupolux LED daylight-balanced Fresnels, two 800s and a 1200. Fresnels have a built-in lens element in front of the light source and a control dial on the back. This is used to move the light source closer or farther away from the lens, thereby focusing the beam of light anywhere from hard and tight to diffuse and broad. Coupled with the Fresnel's main partner in crime, barn doors, you have no shortage of options. These are used to shape the light's beam and control its spill.

One of the great things about working with constant light sources is that what you see is what you get. This makes for an intuitive lighting experience. In terms of the quality of light, whether focused hard or soft, the Lupolux LEDs have a creaminess akin to fluorescent light sources that is perfect for glamour lighting. Fresnel LEDs like these have a hot-light look but operate nearly cool to the touch. That means no chance of burns for the photographer or talent, and reduced studio temperature, always a good thing. Because they're daylight-balanced at 5600K, they provide the flexibility for use with other daylight sources, and there are no tungsten color-cast issues to correct later while editing.

I use the three light configuration for background separation.



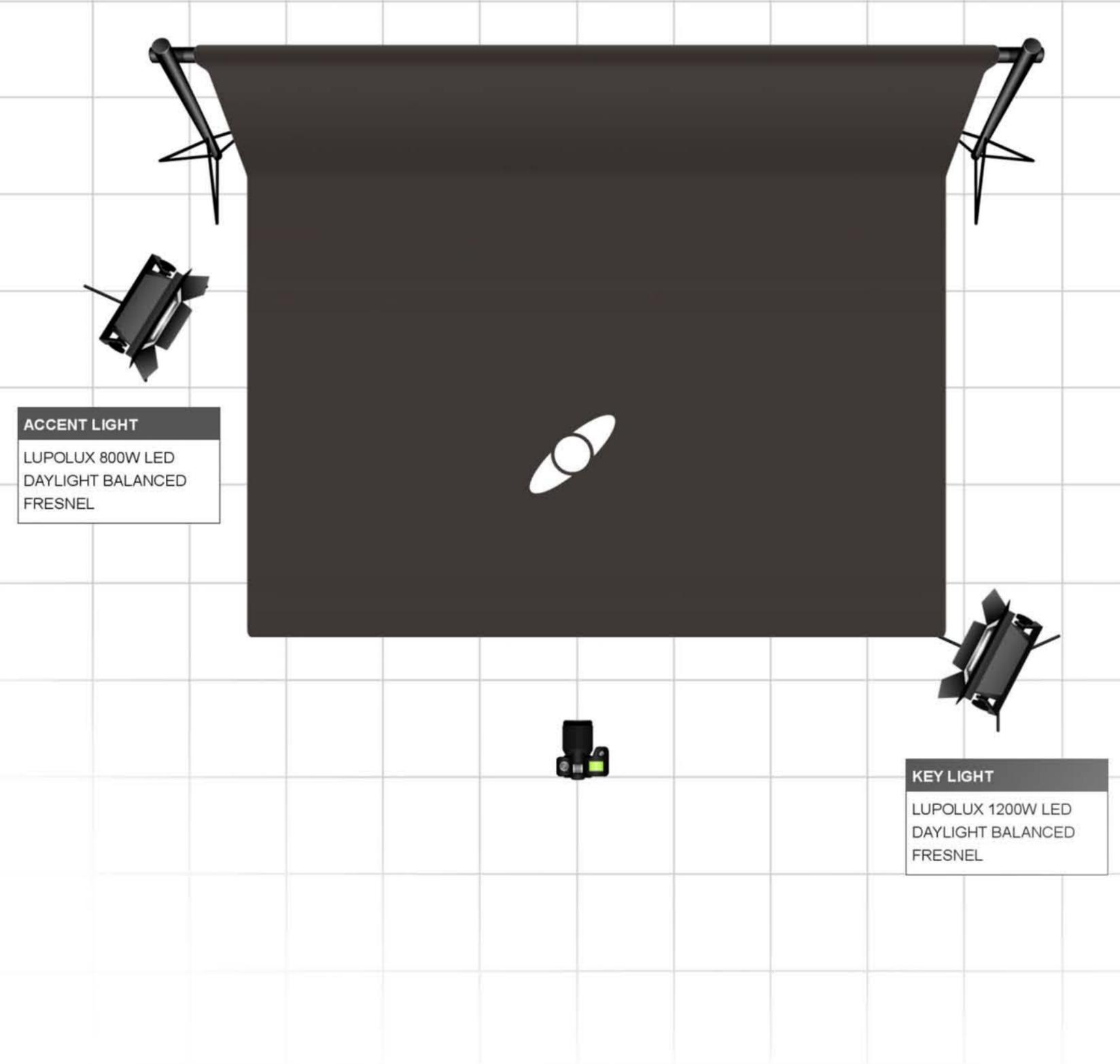
Knowing my captures were destined for a black-and-white treatment was important not only for the lighting but for the makeup and wardrobe choices as well. In black and white, colors become shades of gray, reds turn into blacks, etc. This impacts many aspects of the shoot, such as your MUA's choice of lipstick color. We wanted the dark lips typical for the period and portrait style, so red was the obvious choice. Supertalented H/MUA Annie Radigan and I consulted about these and other considerations as we planned our strategy for top Wilhelmina model Makaila Nichols' hair and makeup. Annie chose a soft white powder base in keeping with the style, which added a softer contrast to the hard lighting style. For the hair, Annie's expertly executed deep wave won the day with a soft, flowing quality.

A useful technique for proofing the images in black and white as you're shooting them is to select an in-camera black-and-white preset. You can also shoot tethered into Lightroom or Capture One Pro, and apply a black-and-white develop preset during import. Both of these techniques can help you track how things are playing out in black and white. I'll still end up using Nik Software's Silver Efex Pro 2 in post to create the silver black-and-white style I'm after for these images. In either scenario, as long as you're shooting raw, you're not locked into the black and white used for proofing. You can use your preferred black-and-white conversion software in post to create the perfect look for your finals.



Achieving polished lighting effects is all about knowing how and when to position, shape and modify your sources. Given that these lights have no dimmer, I needed to use distance and sheets of neutral-density gel to control the intensity of the light. A full stop of neutral density helped tame the key light (Lupolux 1200). I also used a scatter gel on the key light to create a dappled and more natural-looking light. I used barn doors on each light and manipulated them as needed to control where the light was. To create a moody noir feeling and a sense of environment, I also used a set of blinds as a gobo (go between). I suspended the blinds on a C-stand with an extension arm. With my key light placed in front of it, it cast a dramatic striped pattern easily identifiable as interior blinds. I often face the key light and accent light toward each other, creating a kind of light sandwich. I switched between this and a wedge pattern for the key and accent lights, using both equally for variety.

Remember, once your lights are dialed in to perfection, you can achieve completely different looks without ever touching a single light. How? Simply change your position. I switched to an angle to the side of the area I'd initially set up my lights for, and was able to get an entirely different quality of light. This angle also let me create flare from the accent light, giving the images a cool, modern Hollywood twist.



GO GUERRILLA

Photo shoots are as much about lighting as they are about budgets and resources. While I absolutely love working with stylists, they weren't in the budget for this shoot. Rates for stylists pulling and transporting a range of clothing options can easily reach into the thousands of dollars. We had to get creative, to go guerrilla! We've all done it in our photography, shooting at a location we know is kind of on the edge of what's permissible, but it looks so cool. Don't ask permission or beg for forgiveness. So why not approach other aspects of the production the same way when you need to? That's exactly what we did. We had several options to choose from: find a stylist willing to work in trade for images, partner with a shop or designer, buy and return the clothes, or the outright purchase and inventory of the clothing for use now and in the future.

We were looking for slinky, silky, glamorous and sumptuous garments to fit the look we wanted. My first thought was an elegant, body-hugging, long white gown.

Having a trusted creative team that can work in concert pulling together the disparate elements necessary to take a shoot from concept to reality is invaluable. Annie and Makaila hit the streets in search of our classic look, while I flew back from NYC for the shoot. Sending cellphone pictures of styling options makes remote collaboration a snap. With luck on our side and Halloween right around the corner, a pop-up costume shop provided the perfect wardrobe solution! One Marilyn Monroe Halloween dress later and a selection of cool costume bling and accessories, and we were ready to rock Hollywood glamour. The price point for the dress was a ridiculously low \$20, so an outright buy didn't take a second thought. ■

There are always ways
around budgetary
and other constraints.

Don't give up.

**Think creatively
and have fun.**

See you next month.



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PART 2 of 2

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You could say
we jumped
out of the frying pan
& into the fire.

But it **lit a flame**
in our hearts that
no one can extinguish.



BY PHILLIP BLUME

In late 2011, wedding bookings were dramatically down for me and my wife, Eileen. Our response? Not a rational marketing choice. It was a matter of priorities. We decided to take the extra time and dip into our savings to help an unknown organization working with children in Guatemala City's most violent slum, the ironically named Paradise. We began discussing the value of personal projects in Part 1 of this article (in the August issue of *Shutter*).

For Eileen and me, the aim is to maintain a holistic view of life and work. We don't live for photography. But photography is a powerful tool to celebrate life, and even to reclaim lives that are being destroyed. We want to do more important things than just earn money. But let's face it: A starving artist can't feed the hungry. So let's look at the big picture. We've already covered the background: the need for photographers to use their skills for good. We decided there is no middle ground, not if you truly want to succeed at both work and life. We must consider taking the plunge into personal projects. Now let's look at the foreground: the nitty-gritty details of how personal projects can work for you.

The foreground

What are the upfront, visible benefits of a personal project? How can "charity" work for your business?

Don't feel guilty if the thought occurred to you, "So what's in it for me?" You're entirely justified in asking. Clearly, there is a spiritual reward: a unique sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in service. But to suggest you might actually gain financially as a result of pouring your time and resources into people who cannot repay you (at least not with money)—well, that's counterintuitive at best.

Eileen and I didn't make the connection at first. Although we dedicated our studio to charitable work as a matter of principle, the potential to leverage personal projects to strengthen our brand and market effectively soon hit us like a ton of cha-ching. Truly, no good deed need go unrewarded in our industry, especially considering the unique power of visual media. Even the most humble do-gooder must admit that more money means more ways to change the world. Here's how.

1 | Build skill and confidence

One of the biggest sins photographers commit early in their career is to use a paid gig as a personal classroom. On location with your client or at the wedding is never the right place to test new gear or techniques. At best, you come across as frustrated or inept; at worst, you miss moments and lose credibility, joining the infamous ranks of undesirable photographers. On the other hand, when you volunteer your services to an organization or cause, expectations are a blank slate. You're flexible to experiment without the risk of failure. You can stretch the limits of your style since no client has paid you to duplicate a certain look. The end product is a gift of your own design, and it will be appreciated no matter what.

An important rule of thumb: When you start a personal project, set expectations low. Eileen and I did a better job of this than we intended in the case of our Guatemala video project. When we heard about an unknown organization housing and educating slum kids, we made the leap to help them the only way we knew: by sharing their story.

We were clear with the organization: "We are donating our time. We'll do our best to produce a four-minute video you can use online, but we have never worked with video. We can't guarantee the quality or a timeline for the finished product. Interested?" Up to that point, we'd never so much as shot video on a smartphone. Nothing! But the organization was struggling financially, and grateful for our offer. We were honest with our "client" and ourselves about the limits. The rewards came back in spades, both for us and the organization.

As we met the boys and saw firsthand how their lives were being changed, we caught a vision that altered the course of the entire project. Their story was inspiring, yet it was going unsung—and we wanted to sing it from the rooftops! Instead of a four-minute video, the project evolved into a feature-length documentary film, *Lost Boys of Paradise*, which is helping kids escape the slums in favor of safe homes and education. It has been screened in over 20 states from coast to coast, at film festivals, universities, churches and theaters. We've shared the project at WPPI in Las Vegas, on CreativeLIVE and on NBC. If we'd known all that beforehand, I doubt we would have had the nerve to tackle a project of this scale. It would have seemed too ambitious. Instead, we took on a low-pressure personal project that resulted in a whole new skill set and the confidence to know we are capable of bigger things than we realized.



2 | Strengthen your credibility

Eileen and I soon incorporated our new video skills into our business, offering wedding cinematography. We were amazed how many couples began inquiring about video services just because they heard about our charitable project. With only our personal work to show, we have proved to them we can create a high-quality product they want. Beyond its marketing value, our personal project has prepared us to deliver to paying clients. The opportunity exists because our personal work indicates to them we bring passion and creativity to everything we do.

More couples are now looking for a photography/video one-stop shop, yet fewer than 25 percent of photographers offer video services. New skills set you apart, putting you at the top of the food chain. Meanwhile, our photography clients are thrilled to work with “filmmakers” and “humanitarians.” Add to the mix our new status as “international” photographers, and now you’ve got brand credibility that money can’t buy.

3 | Establish your value

We never press the subject, but our personal work almost always comes up in conversation—especially since our *Lost Boys of Paradise* poster sits framed in our consultation area. There’s no doubt that it increases the perceived value of our work, which is crucial if you are going to offer services at a premium price. People feel better about spending money when they know it will go to good use. In fact, consumers show greater satisfaction and loyalty for brands that share their values. They’re more likely to feel their purchase is a donation rather than a required fee. As a result, your services and products feel more like luxurious value-adds, not highly priced snapshots. In our experience, that translates into more grateful, less demanding, more deeply satisfied clients—clients who bring you up in conversation with their friends.

When we show up to weddings now, we invariably meet total strangers who ask us about our projects: Didn’t you just get back from South America? How was it? Last weekend it was a friend of the bride’s mother: Your work is amazing. I heard all about what you’re doing for those orphans in . . . where was it? Well, I’ve been to your website a hundred times. I’m just so proud of all the success you’re having. You deserve it. In a sense, you become a status symbol rather than a salesperson.



4 | Broaden your networks

As wedding photographers, Eileen and I love how inexpensively we can market ourselves within the wedding industry—through vendor partnerships, social media, client word-of-mouth and more. But what about all the potential fans out there who don't float in our circles? Sure, they know people who are getting married, but they never enter the wedding world. My barber is a good example. I can talk with him about shooting weddings, and he'll change the subject. He's not interested, and I'm probably the fifth wedding photographer to have sat in his chair that day. But when I spoke to him about our personal work, he was intrigued. He wanted to get involved, and even helped sponsor a screening of our film at a local theater. The poster (and our logo) went up on his door, as well as on the doors of coffee shops, bike shops, a pool supply store and a Chick-fil-A. Talk about networking! Potential clients saw us everywhere they went. They brought their friends to screenings and proudly introduced us. Some even went to Guatemala to get involved directly. Everywhere we go, we make lasting friendships that benefit our business, enhance our lives and continue to change the world.

5 | Create new opportunities

It should come as no surprise. As word spreads about your charitable work, you'll receive plenty of requests from other nonprofit organizations. You cannot accept them all. But together we can do a lot. And remember, "nonprofit" doesn't mean unprofitable. Early next year, we plan to begin work on a new project in Africa; then another for a boys' home in South Carolina. There is no shortage of need. Fortunately, there also is no shortage of inspiring people with amazing stories worth telling. As a photographer, you are a visual storyteller. If you aren't confident in your skill level, what better way to test yourself and improve? Remember, it's low-pressure, and you can only grow. We haven't even mentioned all the methods for reaching your ideal clients through local charities, or how personal projects help spark your inspiration and creativity, improving your entire body of work!

Finally, could your personal project take you overseas? Update your blog and social media with every step of the process. Let people get involved from the start. We also use targeted Facebook ads to promote our "limited availability" and book paid sessions while we're in a foreign country. Try it out! It's great when you can book a portrait shoot or wedding at a destination you're visiting anyway.



The whole picture

It's a statistic that blew me away as a photojournalism student. A scientific study showed that only 17 percent of readers take notice of even the most important front-page news story that runs without a photograph. However, if that same story runs with an image, its readership suddenly soars to nearly 80 percent. We are visual creatures trapped in a verbal world. As photographers, you possess a truly rare gift. By tapping into your existing talents in new ways, the positive effects on your business and on the world are limitless.

The charities and people we help are the true heroes.

But to them, you are the one with superpowers. ■



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FIGHTING BACK

AGAINST
FAKE,
INACCURATE
OR
MISLEADING
ONLINE
REVIEWS

with Sal Cincotta

BY **Sal Cincotta**

Customer service is the lifeblood of any business, and every business screws up once in a while. It's the nature of the beast. As I always say, though, it's not screw-ups that define your business—it's how you deal with them.

We recently had a 9:30 reservation at a very nice restaurant in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. We got there around 9:15, and were told our table would be ready shortly, so we went to the bar. Well, 9:30 came and went, and we were still not seated. I was getting antsy. Around 9:45, the manager came over to apologize for the delay. Then he offered to pick up our bar tab. We were blown away by the service. And that's not the end of it. When we were finally seated, our waiter also apologized by bringing us extra appetizers on the house. Again, wow! This was incredible service. They knew they screwed up, and were going out of their way to make it right. At the end of the meal, to thank us again for being so patient, they gave us free dessert!

This is a case of great service, without a doubt an attempt to proactively deal with a potentially explosive situation that could have tarnished the overall experience and thus any review we might write online.

But what happens if you rectify a situation like this, or there's no situation in the first place, and you get slammed on social media anyway? Do we just sit idly by? I say hell no!

When we screw up as a company, we do everything in our power to make it right. But in the world I live in, the customer is not always right. Sorry. I said it. But you were thinking it. People are freaking crazy. You make a small mistake, and they want you to pay for it with your first born. I had a client try to get an \$800 engagement order for free because I promised it would be ready on the seventh and it wasn't ready until the eighth. I thought he was putting me on and starting laughing, but then he said, and I quote, "Well, when McDonald's screws up your order, they give it to you for free."

Ninety-nine percent of the people you deal with will appreciate any reasonable gesture and will understand that things happen. Unfortunately, the 99 percent don't go out there and tell people what an amazing time they had in your studio. However, the 1 percent scream really loudly, and can destroy the reputation of you and your business.

You must not accept this. You must fight back!

Customer service is the lifeblood
of any business ...
It's not the screw-ups that define your business—
it's how you deal with them.



*Here are two recent situations I experienced,
and how I dealt with them.*

THE KNOT REVIEW

I had a bad review from one of my brides show up on TheKnot.com recently. She wrote, “Sal’s pictures are absolutely breathtaking, but I was shocked to see I had to buy pictures after my wedding, and they are very expensive. BRIDES BEWARE: they don’t tell you this until it’s too late.”

I was blown away by this review. She had just been to the studio the week before to tell me she was so happy and that she loved everything, the whole experience. So, what would you do here? Me, I decided no way was I going to accept that review. I called her out. Not online. *Directly.* I got her on the phone, told her I’d seen her review, and asked why she’d write something like that.

“Well, I was surprised we had to buy pictures,” she said.

“Why would that surprise you?” I said. “We spoke about this during your consultation, and it’s in your contract. All your prices are locked in, and are clearly printed in the contract along with a bunch of other information about the process.”

She called me back later that day and apologized. “You are absolutely correct,” she said. “All that is in my information packet, and I spoke to my husband, and he reminded me that you did in fact cover all of this. With all the planning and contracts I signed, I didn’t really look at anything you gave us. Please accept my apology. I will change my review immediately.”

And she did. That review, if left unchecked, could have been disastrous. Even if it scared off only one bride, that’s one bride too many. Plus, it’s straight-up misinformation!





sharon
 ★★☆☆☆ a year ago

Not impressed with his photography. Does he even have credentials? Have heard some of his previous clients complain about how rude he gets when you don't buy as much as he would like you to. Stay away from this man.....He's from New York City!

THE GOOGLE REVIEW

I hate Google reviews. Google really needs to fix its review process. I have been challenging two reviews for almost two years now, to no avail: one left by “Anonymous” and someone named “Sharon.” The reviews made no sense, mostly because they were written by people who were not clients and who had not done business with us.

The Google review process is a joke. Challenging it is almost pointless. Your emails don't go to actual people. There's never a human response. I have hit every single checkbox and submitted no less than 50 challenges to these reviews as being inaccurate and off topic. Still nothing. They don't even allow you to address negative customer reviews. There are two sides to every story, but on Google there is only one side. That just sucks.

I had pretty much accepted the bad reviews when someone told me she referred a client to me, but that the person refused to work with me because of the bad Google review. Really? I have positive reviews everywhere, and this one negative review that has nothing to do with my business and that's clearly not by a client, and it's this one review that's going to turn you off.

It was really bothering me. So I Googled the name of the reviewer. Hit! Turns out Sharon worked for a competing studio a few blocks from mine. My blood pressure went through the roof. I am all for some competition, but this takes the cake. I picked up the phone to call the owner and explain what was going on. Turns out, Sharon was the owner. Once again, I was blown away.

We talked in circles for a few minutes. She did it, but then she didn't do it, etc.

Finally, I said, “Look, I believe you if you say you didn't do it. But here is the thing: I need you to help me remove it. It doesn't look good that your name is listed on the site giving me a bad review when everyone in town knows you're my competitor. Just looks bad for both of us.”

“I'm really busy, but will see what I can do,” she said.

Huh? Was she being serious?

“Sharon,” I said, “it sounds like you're not going to make this a priority and are blowing me off. How about this: If it's not down in the next 30 days, I take my team of 20 here and we all write bad reviews about your business. Will you make it a priority then?”

“Are you threatening me?” she asked incredulously.

“Yes,” I said, with all the bluntness I could muster. “Yes, I am.”

“I don't want to do anything for you,” she said.

We started going round and round again until finally she said, “Are you still talking?” and then hung up on me.

OK. Game on.



Online reviews are a fact of life

for all businesses today. There is no escaping it. But we don't have to sit there like a victim and let people say whatever they like.

We have a say.

There are two sides to every story.

I wrote about it on Facebook. She got massive heat from the community—people writing on her wall, calling her out, etc. And weirdly, the negative review was down in 15 minutes! Two years I had been trying, and then after a single phone call and a Facebook post, it was down.

The feedback was interesting. Some people thought I was out of line for posting about it, but 98 percent of the people who responded agreed that she and others like her should be held accountable for their slanderous and false reviews. Sure, I could have paid an attorney several thousand dollars to mail a cease-and-desist and maybe even sue for slander, but who has money to piss away? I let a jury of her peers pressure her, and she smartly yielded. Her actions were beyond competitive. They were misleading and even illegal.

What was more telling for me and what led to my writing this article was the number of people who had suffered from the same scenario. What is wrong with people?

So, what is the lesson in all this?

Online reviews are a fact of life for all businesses today. There is no escaping it. But we don't have to just sit like a victim and let people say and do whatever they like. We have a say. There are two sides to every story. People love to hide behind their computers and say whatever they want because they know they live in almost complete anonymity. I say we should hold people accountable.

I am going to protect my family, my business, my reputation and my name with everything I have. I will not stand by and let people take potshots at my business, especially when they are false or inaccurate.



Here is what you can do
to protect your business.

1. Make service a priority. When you screw up, find a way to make it right that matters to the client. Make it right, and you will save yourself many headaches down the road.
2. Create a survey to get clients' feedback before they go online and tell the world. This gives you a chance to make it right. Don't overcomplicate it. It can be as simple as an email asking if they are happy and loved their experience, product, etc.
3. Contact the client first. When a negative review is posted, don't go online bashing the client and saying things that make you look defensive. That's when "The customer is always right" mode kicks in for everyone. Contact the client and ask about it. Say, "Hey, I saw your review online. First, I want to apologize if we failed you in any way. Is there anything we can do to make it right for you and possibly get you to rethink or change your review? We all make mistakes, but I would love the opportunity to make it right." This can be huge for your business, and a great step in getting the client to remove or change the review.
4. If the client refuses to change the review, then you should respond online where you can. Tell your side of the story. If you are wrong, then be wrong. Don't make a million excuses. Don't blame the client for being an idiot, even if he or she is. Own the mistake. Then, talk about what you did to make it right. And be apologetic. Potential clients appreciate that more than you can imagine. Makes you look professional and committed to service even if you did screw this one up.
5. When clients post a false or inaccurate review just because they didn't get their way on something, then you need to do everything in your power to get it removed. Obviously, the first thing is to contact them and try to resolve it, but it can't sit there. These are the most dangerous reviews because they are typically filled with the most venom. I have gone as far as serving a cease-and-desist and threatening legal action. Here is the thing. If the review is accurate, there is nothing you can do legally, but when that review is a lie or inaccurate, you have some options. My bride who claimed confusion over the price of pictures is a perfect example of this. Turns out she was extremely reasonable, and accepted my answer and changed her review.



6. When a competitor posts a false review in an attempt to discredit your business, the gloves come off. You do whatever you have to do to protect your business, your family, your name. It's not OK. People do stupid things when they think they can get away with it. Challenge them. Challenge the site. When I first opened, a photographer posted a negative review about my business, and it was so blatant that it was not a client. I emailed the review site saying, "If you do not remove this review about my business, my attorney will be serving you with legal papers. This is slanderous." And sure enough, it came down. I never figured out who did it; the most important thing is that the review was gone.

There is no substitute for good service. Even when you screw up, it always wins you positive points and can stop problems before they start.

Online reviews are here to stay, so you have to be diligent and protect your brand. Keep an eye on this stuff even if you check just once a month. Don't let it get out of control. ■



SHUTTER
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TOP 4 WEDDING
DISASTERS

and How to Avoid Them

WITH VANESSA JOY





BY VANESSA JOY

News headlines love a good wedding disaster. Priests kicking photographers and videographers out of the ceremony, best man tripping and pulling the bride into a pond, and Grandpa's pants falling down during a bride-grandfather dance (I actually witnessed that one!). But the worst disasters at weddings aren't those that can't be avoided. They're the ones that can.

1 VENDOR HAS NO IDEA WHAT HE'S DOING & IS RUINING EVERYTHING.

This is usually out of your control, but there are things you can do to counteract another vendor's bad behavior that'll benefit you and your clients.

>> SMILE, JUST SMILE

Not only is this a defusing technique for whatever vendor you're dealing with, but it'll help keep the bride and other key players oblivious to problems happening behind the scenes.

>> COMMUNICATE

Hopefully, the vendor you're dealing with is simply suffering from lack of experience or being ignorant to what she's doing (or both), and having a quick chat can help things. Communicate the problem in a way that won't cause her to become defensive or make you look pushy. Using statements like "It seems like it would be better if . . ." or "What do you think about maybe doing [whatever else] instead?" can be a great way to create a positive outcome.

>> BE THE BIGGER PERSON

Some vendors are simply unruly. Recently, my husband witnessed a photographer at a wedding who was not only difficult to work with but actually lost his temper and started spewing obscenities at his crew during the best man's speech. At this point it's easy, and potentially called for, to really deal with this guy at his own level. But you run the risk of looking like the problem to your clients and their guests instead of like the solution. Isolate a vendor acting like a fool, and he'll look like a fool. Join him, and you both will. Ignore him and save it for a discussion on the car ride home.

THE WORST DISASTERS IN WEDDINGS
AREN'T THOSE THAT CAN'T BE AVOIDED...
THEY'RE THE ONES THAT CAN

2

THE FIVE-MINUTE PHOTO SESSION

We've all been here. Hair and makeup are two hours late, the priest thought the wedding was about him and gave his autobiography during the homily for an hour, or even something so common as no first look at all the pictures during the cocktail hour that the bride and groom want to attend.

>> TRUST AND SCHEDULING

Your brides should trust your advice, and by this point, you should be a trusted advisor to them. But none of that is any good if you don't use it to your advantage. Jump the gun on the scheduling session and reach out to them at least eight weeks before the wedding when they're starting to schedule their hair and makeup. Taking the time to run through their wedding day timeline with them will probably gain you extra time that you wouldn't have had otherwise in at least the beginning of the day. If you go over their schedule and see some serious red flags, let them know about it ahead of time; even if they don't change it for the better, you'll get a chance to manage their expectations. This way, if they ask after the wedding, "Why didn't we get that picture I wanted of . . ." you can refer back to what you went over in your scheduling session.

>> FLOWING THROUGH IT

Even if you did your due diligence in scheduling with your clients, time sometimes still manages to get away from you on a wedding day. In this case, you should have a box of tricks up your sleeve, or a mental checklist of poses, that you can easily flow through quickly to get the most out of the time you do have with your clients. Practice getting 20 amazing pictures of a bride and groom in five minutes. Learn the right way to run a family session so that you're not having every family member walk in and out of photos five times when they could've stayed in the same spot as you built more people into each grouping.



3 GEAR FAILURE

Back in the film days, there was so much more that couldn't be avoided, or at least was more delicate to handle. With the new technology, we have the capability to double- and triple-back up wedding images before we even leave the reception.

>> CREATE REDUNDANCIES

The safety of the client's memories are at the top of any wedding photographer's priority list. Get a camera that has dual card slots for image redundancy to protect yourself from card failure. Even if you have to take a loan out to get it, it's much less expensive than a lawyer.

>> BACK UP

Laptops at weddings are another no-brainer. Take the time to back up to a portable hard drive during the reception to add another layer of security. It's much easier to download your images to your desktop when you get home later.

In addition to backing up images on your home system, keep copies at another location in case something happens at home. Keep a collection of hard drives at your mom's house, or simply back up online using a site like SmugMug.com. That way, you won't lose more than a day's sleep over it.

The last thing I'll say about backing up is to bring backup gear. Chances are, you'll use it once every three years, but that's three lawsuits in a decade that you'll avoid. A backup camera, batteries and flashes will suffice.

>> CHECK YOUR GEAR

Equipment malfunctions. There's really no avoiding it entirely, but you can minimize the chance by having your gear cleaned and checked by the manufacturer regularly. Do this *at least* once a year if not more, depending on how hard a beating your equipment takes.



4 IT'S POURING RAIN, THERE'S HORRIBLE LIGHT & THERE'S NOWHERE TO TAKE PICTURES

If that doesn't describe pretty much every wedding, I don't know what does. I've had maybe two weddings in the 10 years I've been shooting them that all circumstances and lighting worked out perfectly at every point of the day.

>> KNOW YOUR CRAFT

I am a natural-light shooter. If I could walk around the whole day with nothing but my 85mm 1.2 Canon beauty of a lens and no flash, I would. Who wouldn't? But it's not realistic, and none of us should pretend it is—otherwise, we're just pretending to be professionals. Take the time to learn what you hate. I hate off-camera light. It frustrates me endlessly—between not seeing my light before I fire it when I'm using flashes, and equipment being finicky (why do transmitters have 100 things that can go wrong with them?). But what classes do I take when I go to trade shows? Classes on off-camera lighting. You need to learn what you're not good at so you can be prepared for anything on a wedding day, when anything and everything is bound to come at you.

>> PLAY IN THE BAD

Some of the greatest photographs I've ever seen and taken were from not-so-ideal circumstances. But if you have a plan for the typical bad situations—rain, indoor yellow light, tight spaces—not only will you slowly start to master those situations, you'll want them! After learning how to backlight a nighttime rain shot, I pray for rain at weddings now (OK, maybe only during the reception). After playing around with off-camera flash or lighting, I don't mind indoor yellow light as much because I can twist it to my advantage. Use the “bad” situations as an opportunity to create something new.

I could go on and on about wedding disasters, but I'll stick to these four because they are the most typical. But if you want to hear the craziest and most stressful wedding disaster I had this year, check out the video below. ■



Tamara Lackey isn't just an award-winning photographer. She's also a busy mom.

See how Tamara creates timeless video slideshows for both her clients and her family. Find out how you can get started with your own videos.

ANIMOTO.COM/GO/TAMARA



Photo by Tina Wilson

The most beautiful video slideshows on Earth.





YOUR BLOG AS A MARKETING TOOL

YOUR BLOG

BY SKIP COHEN



I look at a lot of blogs. Over and over, I see so many mistakes that could easily be avoided. I know the photographer/author is passionate about the business, but the messages coming through on the blog are likely being misinterpreted.

I see posts that make no sense and often are irrelevant to the target audience. I read posts that just fill up space because somebody said you should have a blog. A good blog is one of the most valuable marketing tools you can have, but you have to ask yourself the most basic question before creating one: “What do I want to accomplish?”

The answer is likely: “Build brand awareness.” A good blog can do just that, but let’s first differentiate between your blog and your website.

Your website is your storefront. It’s the equivalent of a brick-and-mortar building where you sell product. Your blog, though, is about your heart and personality. Your images in your galleries show your skill set on your site, while your blog gives you a chance to show who you are, share your values and be helpful.

Here’s a list to help you stay away from so many of the pitfalls that can contribute to losing business rather than building it.

+CONSISTENCY

It’s the number one rule of building traffic for your blog. Whatever it’s going to be, once a day, every other day, once a week, however often you decide to post, you’ve got to be consistent. My suggestion for photographers is to post twice a week, minimum, and never miss a post.

Here’s what happens when you miss a few. A client interested in finding more about you visits your blog and sees the last post you did was months ago. The first thought is going to be wondering if you’re still in business! If they’ve been following you for any length of time, they’re going to wonder what happened to you. Suddenly something you created to help build your brand is a detriment.

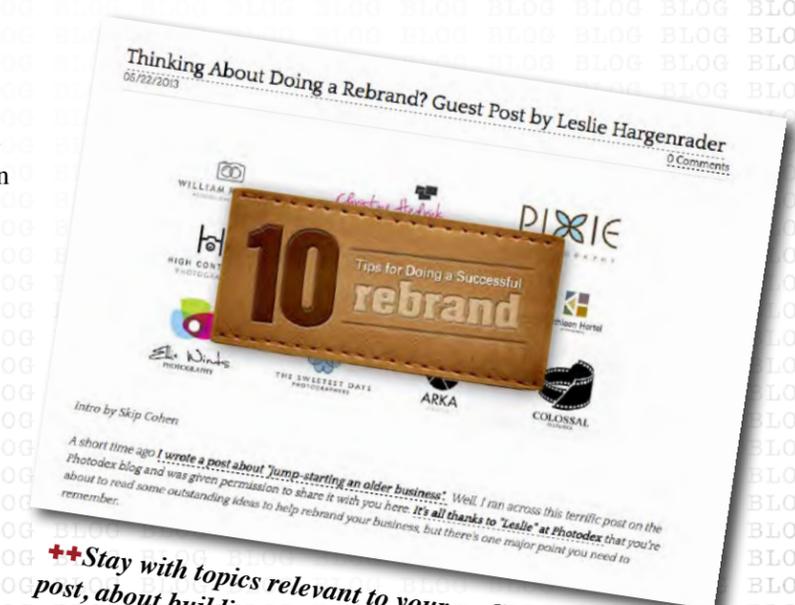
+IRRELEVANT CONTENT

You’ve got to pay attention to the profile of your target audience. Your posts have to be about topics they’re interested in and that are relevant to their needs. Here’s a prime example of what not to do.

A short time ago I was looking at a blog post by a young photographer talking about her recent night out with the girls. They hooked up with a local rock band at a bar. She posted pictures of them doing shots, pictures of the girls with the band, etc. It was actually very well written and perfect for a college crowd or a sorority blog. The problem is that she wants to build a business photographing children and families. The post didn’t match the typical interests of the target audience, which is mostly moms. Women make 98 percent of the portrait/social photography purchasing decisions. Most moms are not going to be interested in hiring a photographer who’s anything but wholesome. Most have outgrown the fun of a sorority party.

It’s an easy take-away: Stay relevant to your audience. There’s a great line I got years ago from a marketing consultant in Texas, Ed Foreman: “If I can see the world through my client’s eyes, then I can sell my client what my client buys!”

Switch the word *client* to *reader*, and you’ve got an easy way to remember what’s appropriate to write about and what’s not. You’ve got to see the world through your readers’ eyes and focus on topics they value.



++Stay with topics relevant to your audience. This blog post, about building a stronger brand, is from a partner

YOUR BLOG

+TOO MANY IMAGES

A post sharing images of a client's engagement shoot or last weekend's wedding is wonderful and appropriate, but you don't need to show dozens of images. Many photographers who show client work let themselves get caught up in the challenge of running a popularity contest. Now they're stuck in a position where, if they don't show a client's images, they have to deal with hurt feelings.

Don't let your blog posts become your galleries. Use one to three images from a shoot to demonstrate your skill set; do not preview the entire shoot. Use images to display the technique that went into the shot. Maybe the location is one of your favorite places in the community. Maybe the time of day was unique, or your subjects were wearing something interesting.

Remember the difference between an amateur photographer and a professional. Amateurs show you all their images.



++Always include at least one image with any blog post.

+DON'T BABBLE

It's tough to find two social-media experts who agree on how long a blog post should be, but most are 200 to 500 words long. You can go longer, and I certainly have on my own blog, but the topic has to be relevant to your audience.

Too many photographers not only babble on and on, they don't proofread what they write. The result is typically a grammatical train wreck, and if you've got nothing more than a series of disconnected thoughts, you're going to lose readership quickly.

+BE HELPFUL

Professional photographers have the ability to help their target audience take better pictures. Use your blog to be helpful. Give people tips on how to take better pictures. They're not going to take over your business and compete with you. Providing just a few tips to help them get a better shot over the holidays is all it takes for you to start becoming a hero.

There are also events going on in your community your target audience wants to know about. Maybe it's a fundraiser walk, an art show or a community event. Use your blog to be the equivalent of the old town crier of the 1700s. Share information with your community about events relevant to photography, art and family.

+BUILD A STASH

Another word on consistency. Whatever you decide on the frequency for publishing your posts, it's critical you stay with the plan. But what happens when you just get buried and life gets in the way?

Here's a real easy idea. Before you step back and decide on a plan for your blog, build up a stash of posts on relevant topics. Everyone is qualified to write a half dozen posts on basic photography tips. Write about posing, lighting, composition, etc.

One of the easiest is simply a post about "What you see is what you get!" It's a post reminding your consumer audience not to be afraid to move in closer. Consumers typically shoot twice the distance from their subjects that they should. Remind them to move in, and that what they see in their display is the way the image is going to look.

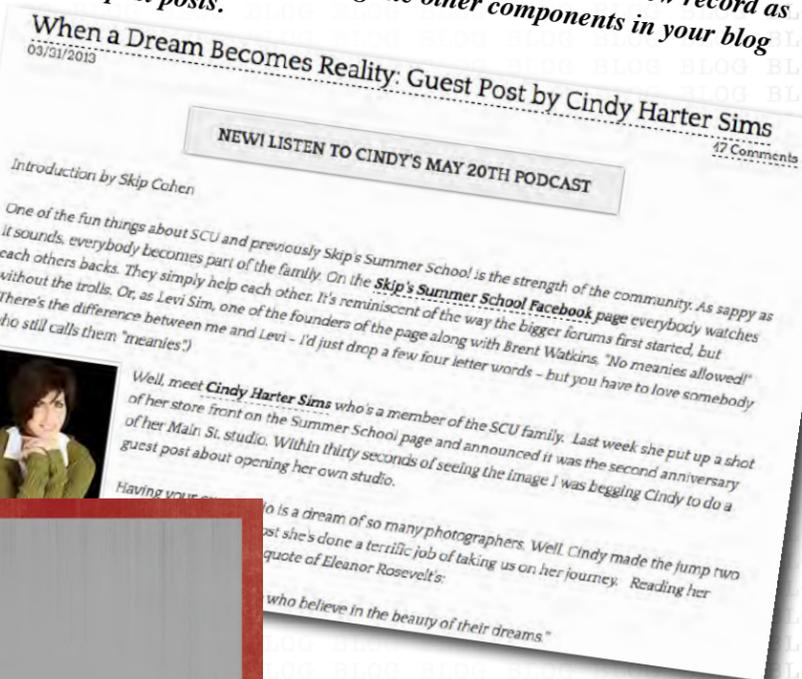
A post about posing the family could talk about building triangles of the subjects and getting away from the typical firing-squad poses that are in every collection of family snapshots. Just reminding them to be a storyteller with their images gets people thinking more about what they're shooting.

Thanksgiving is coming up. Do a post for your consumer readers that tells the story of Thanksgiving. Suggest detail shots of the table, family members in the kitchen, the centerpiece, etc. The same way you build a wedding album is the way you're going to help them tell a better Thanksgiving story.

The idea is that you're teaching while at the same time showing off your skill set and planting the seed to get hired for their next family portrait or event.

There's a lot more to the art of blogging, but it boils down to what kind of experience you want to give visitors to your blog and website. Being consistent, concise, entertaining and helpful, and opening your heart, is the best way in the world to make your blog an experience for your readers and build a stronger brand.

++Guest posts give you a day off. This post by Cindy Harter Sims went over 5,000 reads, and her podcast set a new record as well. Look for ways to integrate other components in your blog with past posts.



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The Photographer's MBA Senior High School Portraiture

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to Know to Run a
Successful Business



Sal Cincotta



YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS THIS MUST-READ FOR ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS!

Photographer, Editor of Shutter Magazine & Business Coach

Sal Cincotta

talks about the skills you need to run
successful senior photography business!

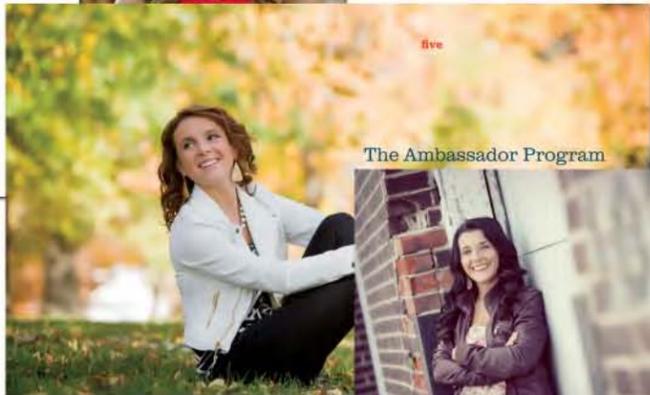
For those photographers looking to start a business—or expand their current business—to include the lucrative high school senior portrait market, *The Photographer's MBA: Senior High School Portraiture* is a complete resource that dives deep into every aspect of the genre. Unlike other books that only cover one part of the business, Sal Cincotta covers them all, including everything from shooting, posing, lighting, and post-production, to all the details on the business side: from creating business and marketing plans to pricing, costs, branding, and sales.

By helping you create a solid plan, a strategy you can implement, and a vision for your business, *The Photographer's MBA: Senior High School Portraiture* gets you well on your way to creating and sustaining a high school portraiture business that will grow and succeed for years to come.



Two-Light Setup

When you're looking to set up a two-light setup, there are a few things you need to know. First, you need to have a good understanding of how light works and how to use it. Second, you need to have a good understanding of how to set up your equipment. Third, you need to have a good understanding of how to work with your subjects. This setup is perfect for creating a professional-looking portrait in a studio setting.



The Ambassador Program



Pricing

When you're looking to set up a pricing strategy, there are a few things you need to know. First, you need to have a good understanding of your costs. Second, you need to have a good understanding of your market. Third, you need to have a good understanding of your competition. This strategy is perfect for creating a profitable business in the senior portrait market.

The Session Plan

When you're looking to set up a session plan, there are a few things you need to know. First, you need to have a good understanding of your equipment. Second, you need to have a good understanding of your subjects. Third, you need to have a good understanding of your location. This plan is perfect for creating a smooth and efficient session.



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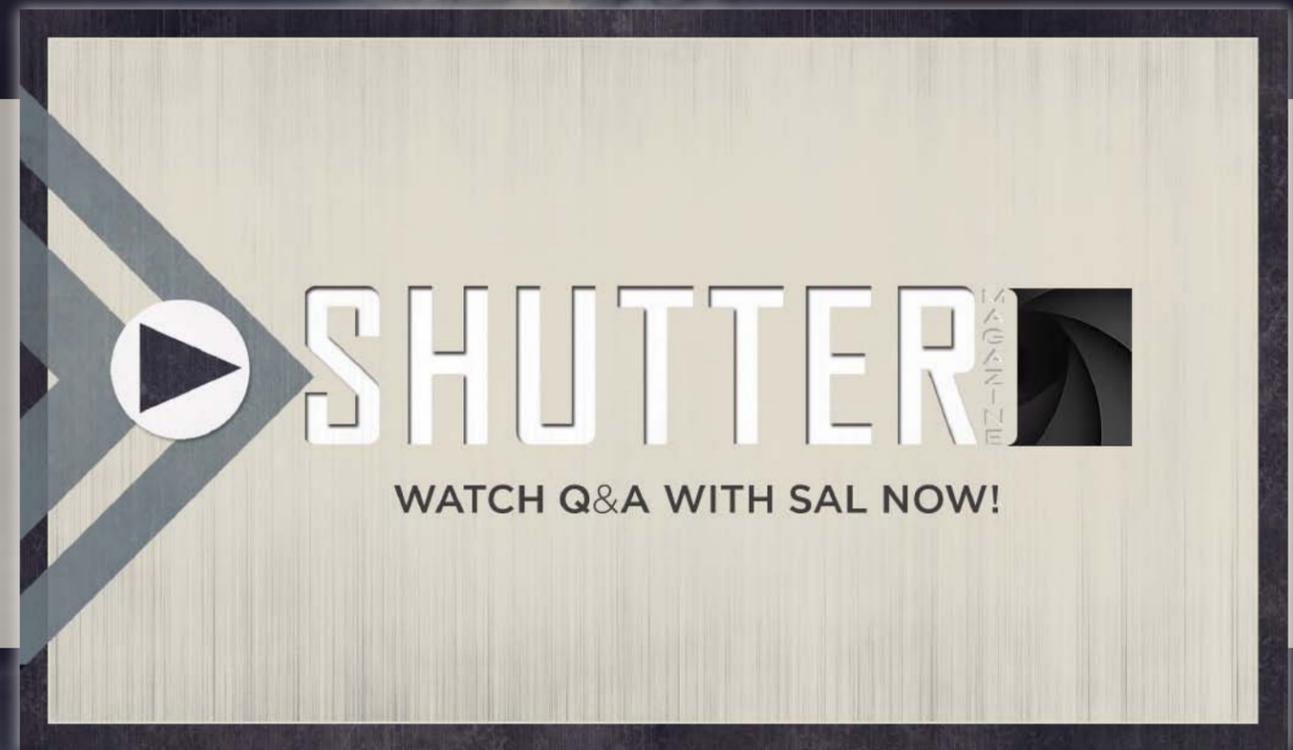
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- + Finding life-work balance
- + How to refresh, inspire, and re-energize your studio throughout the years
- + Are rechargeable batteries a good investment for your speedlites?
- + Transitioning from online sales to in-person preview sessions
- + Using different branding to create separation for multiple businesses
- + Building your portfolio to find 'your client,' while maintaining a full-time job

YOU'VE GOT
QUESTIONS?
WE'VE GOT
ANSWERS



Q
&
A

WITH
Salvatore Cincotta

GOT MORE QUESTIONS?

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

WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG!

WITH SAL CINCOTTA



- 1 | Custom Louis Vuitton Camera Strap
 - 2 | Canon 1dx with 70-200 2.8
 - 3 | Rogue Softbox
 - 4 | Spyder Lens Calibration Tool
 - 5 | Lowepro x200 Roller Bag
 - 6 | Sima Video Lights
 - 7 | Rogue Flash Gels
 - 8 | Phase One iq260 with Schneider 150mm 3.5
 - 9 | Cyclone Battery Packs
 - 10 | Canon 600 Speedlites
 - 11 | Canon Speedlite Transmitter
 - 12 | Lens Cloth
 - 13 | Flashlight
 - 14 | Memory Case
 - 15 | Canon 24mm 1.4
 - 16 | Canon 85mm 1.2
 - 17 | Canon 100mm Macro 2.8
 - 18 | Canon 16-35mm 2.8
 - 19 | Schneider 80mm 2.8
 - 20 | Schneider 28mm 4.5
- *not shown: canon 50mm 1.2, schneider 55mm 2.8*



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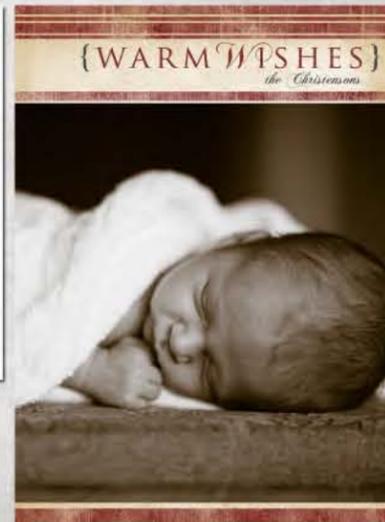
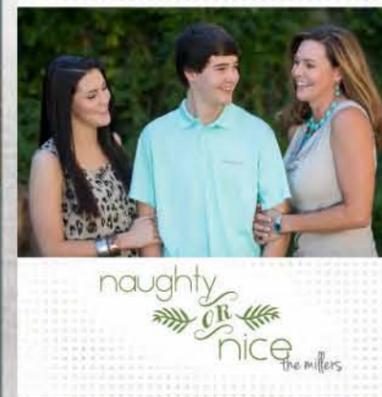
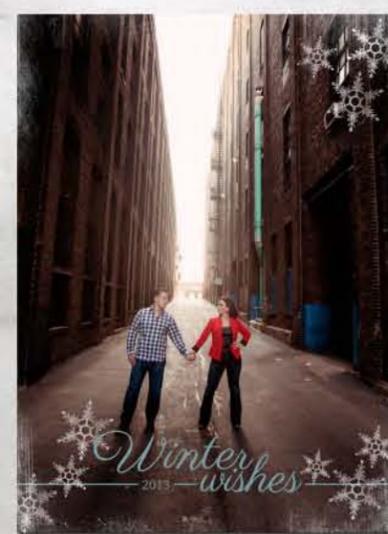
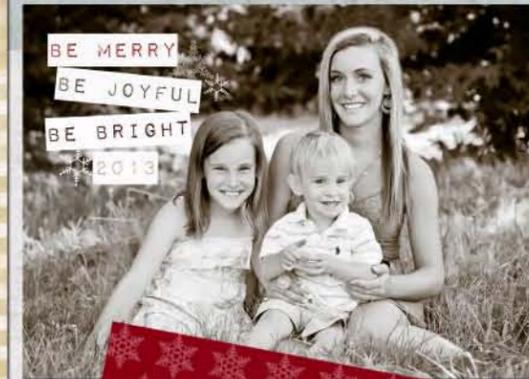
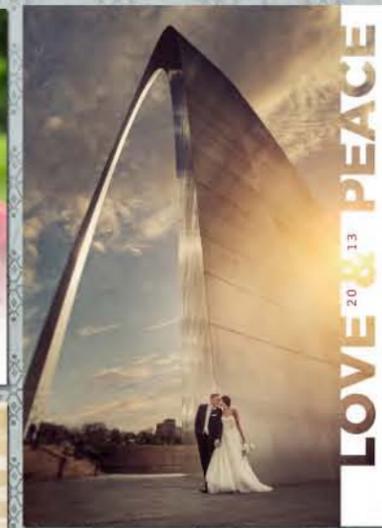
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HOW TO

VIDEO ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE

with Rob Adams



BY ROB ADAMS

A few years ago, when cellphone video was new, the thought of ever using that video for professional applications seemed ridiculous. As a producer of video since the days of Betacam SP tape cartridges, knowing how much time, effort and money were once needed to produce quality video productions, I found it laughable to think a single palm-held device could create acceptable-quality video, audio and graphical elements for public consumption.

It's astonishing that for hundreds of dollars, not thousands, you can promote your business with a thoughtfully produced cellphone video. Not one that screams, "YouTube amateur," but a polished and presentable piece. Here's how to get started producing some impressive-looking promotional videos for less than \$1,000.

- 1 Get a mobile device that shoots full 1080p video or better. The newest iPhones and iPads are a great place to start. My pick is the HTC One. It shoots the highest-quality video I've seen from a sub-\$1,000 piece of electronics. This includes many popular camcorders. With faster, more robust processors and better GPU chips, the latest phones are producing stellar video. The trick is how you use them. Mobile-device cameras don't give you much manual control over how the exposure is set, and having a consistent exposure is key to producing a professional-looking video. A few tricks can help you avoid these shortcomings.



2 Get a small tripod. For a mere \$60 to \$100, you can mount your phone in a horizontal position (you don't want to shoot vertical video) with a lightweight, portable piece of gear. Spend a few bucks more, and get one with fluid pan and tilt capability. Chances are, you already own or have access to a decent-quality tripod, so start there and save a buck where possible. You still need the horizontal mount. If you don't want to splurge for a tripod that has pan/tilt, you're fine. You don't necessarily need to move the camera at all.

A few good gear choices include:

Mount to get the phone horizontal:
Steadicam iPhone 5 Smoothee Mount

Cheap Tripod:
Magnus PV-3400 Photo Tripod With 3-Way Pan-and-Tilt Head

Fluid Head Tripod:
Davis & Sanford Fusion 3-Section Tripod with 3-Way Fluid Head

All available at: BHPhotoVideo.com

3 Apps can also help you achieve quality video on your mobile.

RØDE Rec LE by RØDE Microphones allows you to capture high-quality voice-overs for your promotional videos. You'll likely want to get the RØDE Smart Lav to go along with it to get the best-quality sound for a very fair price. The mic is only \$60, and plugs directly into the phone's headphone jack. Voice-overs are a key component to making videos with a professional touch. The Smart Lav also works with your device's camera or voice-memos app to record your voice-over, but RODE REC offers some advanced features.

Download the free Vimeo app so you can upload and host your videos on our favorite free video hosting service.

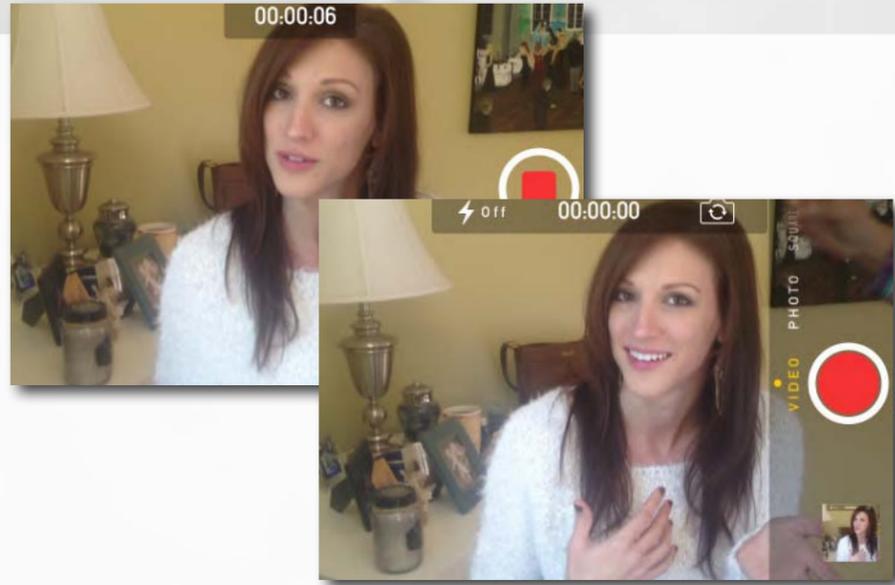
RODE apps available at: BHPhotoVideo.com
Vimeo available at: iTunes.Apple.com



4 Pick up a reflector. An inexpensive 37-inch to 40-inch five-in-one reflector screen does wonders for mobile video making. Having an extra pop of light to fill in faces and shadowy areas saves you from having to rig up continuous lighting (but do so if you feel the urge), and saves you money if you don't already own a complement of them. Here's an inexpensive one I like.

Westcott 5-in-1 Reflector Disc - 40.5" (1 m)
Available at: BHPhotoVideo.com





Now let's look at technique. Imagine you want to make a short promo video for your website with your iPhone. The anchor of the video will be dialogue delivered "talking head" style or as a voice-over. This is you talking about whatever it is you wish to talk about. Think photographically. Find some good 3/4 light, possibly from a window, and set up your camera to compose a nice headshot. Position the microphone about 6 inches down from your chin, not directly on the neckline of your shirt. This makes the audio sound a bit muffled since your voice will fall off your face and miss the microphone somewhat.

Prop up your reflector screen (you may need a standard light stand to get it to stay in place) and fill in the darker area on your face. Make sure your window light is consistent so the camera is not making wild adjustments to the exposure while recording. Remember, the iPhone's camera is always in auto mode, so it will always try to compensate for changing light. Even someone walking by in the room can cause a drastic enough change in the light that the camera will stop up or down. You may need a second person to help compose and set the initial exposure of the shot. Many mobile cameras allow you to choose the area to expose simply by touching the screen. You can lock in the exposure by pressing and holding on the screen where you want the camera to expose and focus. When you release, the camera informs you with an icon that you have locked the autofocus and auto exposure.



HOW TO: VIDEO ON YOUR MOBILE DEVICE

Keep in mind that your iPhone camera and lens don't allow for shallow depth of field, so choose a simple background and light that has some contrast to avoid making things appear too busy.

If you record outside, beware of ambient noises that can ruin your audio—cars, airplanes, and other sounds of city life.

Enable the phone's audio input so that it's using the plugged-in mic as the audio source. Test your audio by recording a small clip to ensure the levels are not too loud or quiet. This is where the RODE REC app is great. If you're capturing voice-over only, you have more control over the audio levels while recording.

Start rolling. Be clear and concise in your message.

Once you have your talking-head segment or voice-over in the can, you can move on to your B-roll with your tripod, repeating the method above for consistent light. Film video shots you may want to edit into the overall video later. Simple pans from side to side or tilts down and up add easy, smooth movement, but attempt this only if you have a fluid-head tripod. This could be shots of your workstation, you working with clients, art products in your studio, anything. Later in editing, you will be able to add some of your best photos and even screen-captured videos you have made on your computer. ■



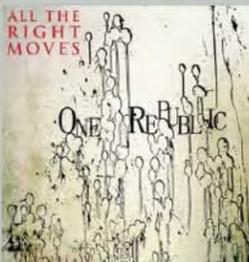
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OCTOBER | 2 birds. 1 stone.

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Congrats to Alexia Wardell Photography.

This month's challenge of *Two Birds, One Stone* was meant to be vague. It was meant to test your creativity and force you to get out there to practice or try something new. We all need some inspiration, and what a fun challenge it was for the staff here as well.

Thank you to everyone who submitted their images!
They were very interesting to say the least.
The staff throughly enjoyed discussing and trying to interpret them.

Print & Flash Wood Boxes

Inspired by... **twin lens**
artful documentary



Craig Fritz and Kitty Clark Fritz of Twin Lens are known for their uncanny ability to capture emotions ranging from joyful to somber and from subtle to overwhelming, they work unobtrusively without interrupting the beauty of real life as it unfolds. They spend much of the year photographing destination weddings throughout the U.S. and beyond.



Inspiration from our amazing customers drives us to keep developing the best possible products we can! Twin Lens approached us seeking a way to deliver pro grade select prints and flash to clients in custom wood boxes - that inspired us to develop a whole new product line!

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SALCINCOTTA

www.SalCincotta.com

LOCATION: O'Fallon, IL

PASSION: Weddings & Seniors

Sal was exposed to photography at a very early age and has been in love with our craft ever since. He can still recall the smell of the chemicals in his aunt's makeshift dark room in the basement. However, a career in photography would elude him for over 20 years.

Graduating from one of the top 25 business schools in the country, Sal pursued a corporate career with his photography becoming more of a hobby. In 2007, he left corporate to pursue his dream of a career in photography and has never looked back.

Today, Sal Cincotta and his wife Taylor own and operate a very successful studio in the St. Louis metro area. Salvatore Cincotta Photography, Salvatore Cincotta Films, and BehindtheShutter.com.

Focused on wedding and senior portraiture, Sal has had the opportunity to shoot for corporate clients like Nordstrom's and the St. Louis Cardinals to elite sports celebrities and the White House, photographing President Obama.

FEATURED ARTICLES

- Fight Back
- Q&A with Sal Cincotta
- The Buzz



ROBADAMS

www.RobAdamsFilms.com

LOCATION: Freehold, New Jersey

PASSION: Weddings

“Wedding films are my life. It’s all about the the story-telling. The art of seeing action, drama and beauty unfold and then harnessing the emotion of it all and the making it come to life on screen...that’s why I do this.”

Rob Adams began his video career in television over 15 years ago. Four years after that he merged into the wedding industry and eventually started his own business in 2006. Recently, Rob filmed and directed his first full-length feature film that was premiered at Robert DeNiro’s personal screening room in New York City.

Because Rob is on the cutting edge of the DSLR video revolution, his business has grown rapidly over the past few years and his passion for finding new creative ventures in the field has as well. His main goal, along with making sure that every product that leaves his studio is amazing, is to teach other wedding film-makers how to bring their work to the next level. Speaking around the world at venues such as creativeLIVE, WPPI, Imaging USA and more, he wants to see each and every film-maker learn about the little things that make filming and editing go from “good” to “the best in your market.”

FEATURED ARTICLES

How To: Video on Your Mobile Device



DAMIANBATTINELLI

www.damianbattinelli.com

LOCATION : Plattsburgh, NY

PASSION : Seniors

I took photography all through high school in Peru, NY. Developing, enlarging, dodging, and burning. I was smitten. I also attended Champlain Valley Educational Services (CV-TEC) for graphic design in Plattsburgh, NY. This is where I would find another passion, design! I was introduced to Adobe Photoshop. I learned that if I scanned images into a computer, I could manipulate them.

I graduated from Peru in 1999 and entered the military one month later as a graphic designer at the 105thAW, Stewart ANG in Newburgh, NY. I attended Defense Information School (DINFOS) at Ft Meade, MD. Only a few short years later, I met up with those same towers from years earlier, no longer massive but scattered at my feet. I spent 2 weeks at ground zero days after the attacks. Fast forward several years, 13.5 years of service to be exact, I exited the military.

By this time, my knowledge of digital photography, design, and editing were strong. I was able to take my love of art and photography to a new level and launched my business. I am still learning and growing as a photographer/artist and embrace this rebirth with open arms.

I am an Associate and Mentor for Peter Hurley's PH2PRO

FEATURED ARTICLES

Photoshop: Masking





PHILLIPBLUME

www.BlumePhotography.com

LOCATION : Athens, GA

PASSION : Weddings

Phillip and Eileen Blume are international award-winning photographers who exemplify a new generation of socially conscious creatives. They not only push boundaries to create unforgettable imagery around the globe, but also innovate to address poverty and impact the world for real change. As owners of a high-demand boutique studio, they've worked with clients in New York, London, Manila, Antigua and beyond. In 2011, they released their first feature documentary film, *Lost Boys of Paradise*, which screened across the United States to raise awareness about children fighting to survive in Guatemala's post-civil war slums. By implementing sound business principles and catering to a select number of wedding clients, Phillip and Eileen strike a balance that affords them time and resources to invest in what they value most – parenting their two young daughters, adoption, involvement in their community, and personal projects. As educators, the duo accepts invitations to speak to students and photographers about the art and business of photography. They have appeared at WPPI in Las Vegas and on CreativeLIVE for Photographers Ignite. In 2014 they will premiere their new studio space in Athens, GA, as well as workshops for photographers.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Change The World



© Phillip Blume

CONTRIBUTORS



SKIP COHEN

www.SkipsPhotoNetwork.com

LOCATION : Sarasota, Florida

Skip Cohen is President/Founder of Marketing Essentials International, a marketing consulting firm specializing in projects dedicated to photography, primarily photographic education. (www.mei500.com)

He is also the founder of Skip's Summer School (www.mei500.com), the founder of the Akron Photo Series (www.AkronPhotoSeries.com), and the co-founder of GhostRighters (www.GhostRighters.com), a content resource for professional photographers needing help with editorial content, web re-design and marketing. His blogs, SkipsPhotoNetwork.com and PhotoResourceHub.com, is read by thousands of professional and aspiring photographers. On May 21, MEI launched PhotoResourceHub.com a new content site for professional photographers with video, podcasts, blog posts and an ongoing calendar of industry events.

He has been a recipient of ADL's Torch of Liberty Award and Foto Imagen Magazine's Man of the Year Award and in 2001 he received PPA's Legacy Award for his work in support of PPA Charities. His images have been published in a long list of photographic trade magazines, including: *Rangefinder*, *Shutterbug*, *Foto Imagen*, *Studio Photography and Design*, *Petersen's Photographic* and *The Hasselblad Forum*. He's also competed in print completion in both WPPI and PPA's national conventions.

In addition, he has written six books on photography: *The Art of Wedding Photography*, *The Art of the Digital Wedding* and *The Art of People Photography with Bambi Cantrell: Don Blair's Guide to Posing and Lighting Body Parts: and Wedding Photography from the Heart*, co-authored with celebrity wedding photographer Joe Buissink. Book number six, *GoingPro*, co-authored with Scott Bourne, was released by Random House in October 2011 and remains on the photography book best seller list at Amazon..

FEATURED ARTICLES

Your Blog As A Marketing Tool



MICHAEL CORSENTINO

www.CorsentinoPhotography.com

LOCATION: Petaluma, California

PASSION: Lifestyle Photography

Michael Corsentino is an award-winning, contemporary wedding and portrait photographer. He is an American Photo 2013 Top 10 Wedding Photographers nominee, Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Lightroom expert, Capture One Pro Certified Professional, author, contributing writer for Photoshop User Magazine, Shutter Magazine and Resource Magazine, speaker and international workshop leader.

Based in Northern California, Michael has been shooting digitally since 1999. His love affair with the magic and science of photography is more passionate today than ever. Stylish, dramatic, edgy and modern images set Michael's photography apart. His award-winning photojournalism, fashion and editorial styles have made him an in-demand portrait and destination-wedding photographer. Passionate about education, Michael loves to share his lighting and posing secrets, post-processing techniques, time-saving workflow strategies and shooting philosophy at workshops and speaking engagements.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Classic Hollywood Glamour Lighting





KRISTY DICKERSON

www.KristyDickerson.com

LOCATION: Atlanta, Georgia

PASSION: Weddings & Engagements

Kristy Dickerson is the founder and CEO of Fisheye Connect (www.fisheyeconnect.com), professional laundry sorter, CFO of multitasking, wedding photographer, mom of two, and a wife who is never wrong... never. Upon earning her degree in finance and business management, she started her photography business after the birth her first son. As if she didn't already have enough on her plate, in June 2010, Kristy launched Fisheye Connect for other photographers, like herself, looking for quality education. Fisheye Connect allows aspiring photographers to connect with photography industry experts by location, instructor or interest. It is a searchable database for photography workshops/ events, along with services that help instructors manage the marketing and financial aspects of their businesses. Merging Kristy's business sense with her passion, Fisheye Connect has become a thriving community of photographers learning and growing together.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Mom First - Business Plan





VANESSA JOY

www.VanessaJoy.com

LOCATION: Freehold, New Jersey

PASSION: Weddings

14 Years of photography, eight years of shooting weddings, three years of business ownership (not to mention five college degrees)

Vanessa is a trilingual (English, Spanish and a bit of French), award-winning photographer, living with her husband, Rob Adams, in the great state of New Jersey. She has studied photography since 1998 and has spent most of her life running a successful wedding photography studio that shoots 35 weddings a year (at a premium price). In her first three years of business, Vanessa achieved honors such as: 20+ publications in print magazines (including three cover photos and interviews in *PDN* and *Rangefinder*), a Grand Imaging Award from PPA and a second-place wedding Image Award from WPPI.

Vanessa enjoys speaking across the country at venues such as CreativeLIVE, Clickin Moms, WPPI, Imaging USA, PPA-related conventions and personal workshops. She is recognized for her talent and even more for her business sense. Vanessa's clients love working with her, and industry peers enjoy learning from her generous, informative and open-book style of teaching.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Top 4 Wedding Disasters



BLAIR PHILLIPS

[wwwBlairPhillipsPhotography.com](http://www.BlairPhillipsPhotography.com)

LOCATION: Landis, North Carolina

PASSION:

Seniors, Babies, Families & Weddings

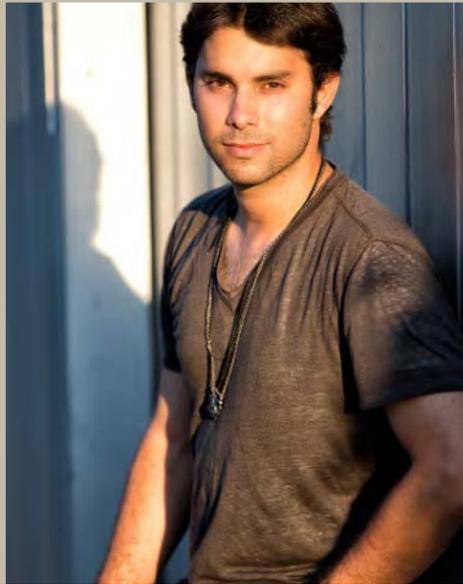
Blair's team includes four employees plus Blair, who photographs 20 to 30 weddings and 500 studio sessions per year. Blair has a passion to teach photographers how to express themselves in ways they can't find with traditional training. He speaks to and teaches thousands of photographers and digital artists each year at national conventions and expos including WPPI, Imaging USA, SYNC Seniors, and various PPA conventions.

Blair and Suzanne's "eclectic elegance" style and positive energy educate and inspire photographers, while allowing them to stay true to themselves. This young team pushes the envelope daily with creativity and positive inspiration. As a side note, after 10 years of marriage, Blair and Suzanne welcomed Ava Blair Phillips into the world on August 3, 2011.

FEATURED ARTICLE

Location, Location, Location!





ROBERTO VALENZUELA

www.robertovalenzuelaphotography.com

LOCATION: Beverly Hills, CA

Roberto Valenzuela is a wedding and fine art photographer based in Beverly Hills, CA. Roberto Valenzuela is a 70-time International award winning photographer and three-time International first place winner. He serves as a photography judge for the 16x20 WPPI (Wedding and Portrait Photographers International), PPA (Professional Photographers of America), and various European photography competitions. Roberto's private photography workshops and speaking engagements are held worldwide. His goal is to encourage and inspire professional photographers to practice their craft when not on the job, as any other artist must do so in order to perform. He is an active teacher and platform speaker at WPPI and has served as the keynote speaker at other International photography conventions.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Picture Perfect Critique



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