

the business behind the shutter | NOVEMBER 2014

# SHUTTER

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## THE LIGHTING EDITION

- + **Lighting on the Run**  
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- + **On-Location Lighting  
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Salvatore Cincotta  
BEHIND THE SHUTTER

## MISSION STATEMENT

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

*Shutter Magazine*: By photographers, for photographers.

### SHUTTER MAGAZINE

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## THE COVER

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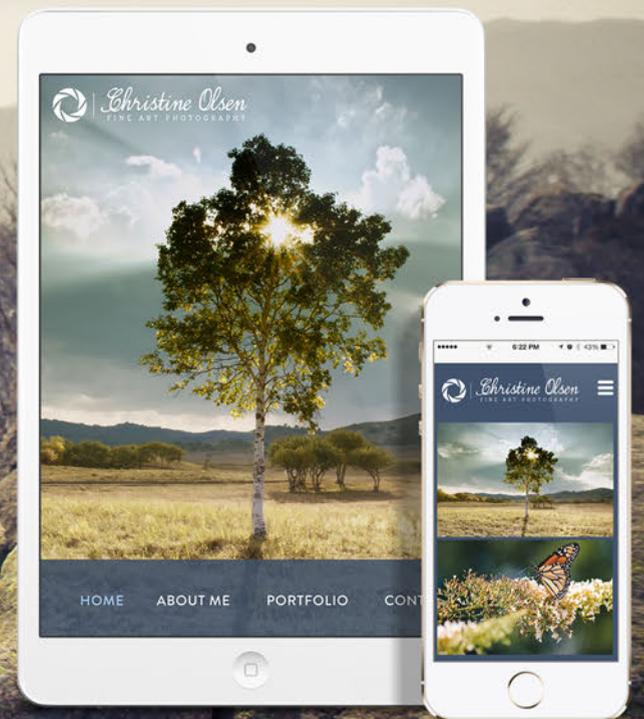
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1 - The Iconic Bridal Portrait



2 - Shooting the Wedding Dress



3 - The Girls Getting Ready



4 - The Bridal Details



5 - The Guys Getting Ready



6 - The Processional



7 - The First Kiss



8 - Shooting Family Photos Quickly



9 - Shooting the Reception Details



10 - Iconic Bridal Party



11 - Capturing Reception Uplighting

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13 - The First Dance



14 - The Flower Girl



15 - Capturing Emotional Moments



16 - The Cake Cutting



17 - The Hora



18 - The Night Shot



19 - The Nighttime Portrait



20 - The Sparkler Exit



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+ Birthday Club Sessions  
with Lori Nordstrom

+ 5 Tips for Better Branding  
with Kristy Dickerson

INTRODUCING  
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DOUG GORDON  
JOE SWITZER

THE WEDDING

THE PORTRAIT

PLUS

WEDDING

INSPIRATIONS

Portraits From Our Readers

+ Childrens Portraits That Sell  
with Lori Nordstrom

+ Marketing Your Portraiture  
with Skip Cohen

+ The Changing Times:  
Family Portraits and the Economy  
with Blair Phillips

+ Finding the Right Clients  
with Sal Cincotta

+ Wedding Timelines  
with Kristy Dickerson

+ Be a Better Second Shooter  
with Allissa Zimmerman

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# QUESTIONS

- + Tips on creating and raising your pricing.
- + How to introduce higher pricing to your current clients.
- + Where is your time better spent? Marketing, shooting, editing.
- + How to negotiate pricing for commercial jobs.
- + How to enforce your contract when it has been breached.
- + Tips on identifying opportunities for your business.
- + Where to invest your sweat equity as a first year professional.
- + Finding the right employees for your business.
- + How to handle multiple inquiries as a one-man operation.
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YOU'VE GOT  
QUESTIONS?  
WE'VE GOT  
ANSWERS

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.*

# THE ART OF **GIVING BACK**

WITH KRISTY DICKERSON





by **Kristy Dickerson**

As artists, creators, photographers—however you define yourself—we can sometimes reach burnout. Either from shooting/working too much, shooting too much of the same thing or many of life’s other contributing factors. We can almost forget how important what we do truly is. I am saying all this from experience because I have been there.

Three years ago, I was coming off shooting 18 weddings for that year, which, for some, might not be a lot, but for me, a mother of a little one and the owner of FisheyConnect.com, it was a lot. I honestly was losing my passion for photography. I then found out that I was pregnant, and every ounce of energy from my first trimester was sucked out of me and I was starting to set my camera down. At the time, my aunt Tina, at the age of 38, was battling leukemia as well. We all took turns staying with her at the hospital so she was never left alone. Her odds of beating it were slim at best, but for some reason the possibility of losing her never hit home. I was in denial, and although the doctors were saying you only have x amount of time left, I didn’t believe them.

I had been documenting the cancer process for her all along, but in my mind, it was only to show her kids one day, long after she’d beat the illness. The day she lost her hair, the day she got released and her kids didn’t know she was going to,

the days at the clinic, a day in the hospital, etc. I wish I could go back and do things differently. Tina had a brief stay at home, and she asked me if I would take some pictures for her girls to always have of her. I don’t think it was until then that I realized that in her mind she didn’t think she would make it. I asked my friend Tessa to help, and, without hesitation, she graciously offered. (You can read more of this story here: <http://kristydickersonblog.com/?postID=242&tina-waldrop-our-angel>.) But not even two months after we took those pictures, she passed away. Every single picture of Tina now means so much.

*Below and left: Kristy's aunt Tina, 38, battling leukemia.*



“  
**WE MAKE  
 A LIVING BY  
 WHAT WE GET.**

**WE MAKE  
 A LIFE BY  
 WHAT WE GIVE.**

-WINTSON CHURCHILL



It reminded me why I do what I do. It doesn't matter if cancer, illness or tragedy is staring you in the face or not—life is short and we really never know how long we have. If you are a parent, you know firsthand that life flies by and it is constantly changing. Photographers get the honor of preserving these life memories for so many.

There are a ton of great organizations—like Help Portrait, Now You Lay Me Down to Sleep and countless others—that connect people in need with photographers wanting to give. You can also volunteer in your local community.

As photographers, we have a unique opportunity to give through our talents, knowledge, even our products. I wish I could make a career out of giving. I am not saying you should give at the sacrifice of your family and business. I am suggesting that you give in small doses, and here is why.



# WAYS TO GIVE IN SMALL DOSES

## PURPOSE AND PERSPECTIVE

Giving to someone in need reminds you as a photographer how important your job truly is. It reminds us of our purpose, and every picture is a family heirloom for someone. We are not just taking a picture; we are preserving history. It also can refocus your perspective. Life can sometimes seem hard and overwhelming. Donating and giving can remind you that so many people have it way worse. It can renew your point of view.

## GROWTH

Both growing as a photographer and as a person. Volunteering or donating is a great way to try new things and push yourself. Sometimes we can fall into a routine or become comfortable with where our skills are. Trying things and pushing yourself can result in your growing as a photographer.

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

This is not why I give, this is just a benefit. As a business or someone who volunteers and shares about it, it can shed good light on you or your company. Everything you do, both on the clock and off, can impact your reputation, especially if you run a business under your name.

## COMMUNITY

I think humans thrive on a sense of community and feeling together. Giving back and volunteering can lead to social connections and help you feel more connected.

## NETWORKING

Volunteering and giving through your photography can grow your network of people. Sometimes just putting yourself out there and in a social situation is one of the best ways to grow your network. This is something that I love. I love meeting people, but I know for others this might be a hard thing to do. There is a saying, “network is your net worth,” and it is so true. Giving is a great way to grow your network of friends.

## INDIRECT MARKETING

Again, this is not why I do it, but sometimes the best exposure is when it happens naturally and is not forced. We have the ability to help tell someone else’s story, which can have a huge impact on that person, their family and the community as a whole. Using social media and community resources, you can indirectly grow your audience and following, which is something that is just a benefit.





© Kristy Dickerson

“**STRENGTH,  
PERSEVERANCE,  
FAITH, FAMILY, LOVE,  
HAPPINESS...**”

A lot of times, people don't give until a personal experience happens to them, and for me, that was the case. Until my aunt Tina passed away, I never thought about giving through my photography. Now, every year, I try to give back to at least one deserving family in her honor. This past year, I have been able to give back to a couple different families that were affected by cancer. I know firsthand that these memories and pictures mean so much.

A friend of mine reached out to me about someone she knew who was battling breast cancer with three young kids. It hit home because I am a mom myself with

young kids and I couldn't imagine. She had been documenting her fight through a Facebook community page (<https://www.facebook.com/AshleyFranksLight>). I reached out with an email just offering to do a session for her and her family, with no strings attached. At the time, she had no hair from the chemo, so she said thanks but that she'd rather wait until she got her hair back. I am not sure what changed, but a week later, she was like, "I want to do them now while I don't have much hair." You can see from the pictures this lady is gorgeous both outside and in! There is something about these images that speak to so many people. Strength, perseverance, faith, family, love, happiness—the list of

emotions goes on and on. I think her kids are so young that they don't really understand what is going on. One day they are going to look at these pictures of them as a family and truly see how strong and beautiful she is. Ashley is currently in remission.

Here is what Ashley wrote about the experience: "I am forever grateful for Kristy offering her amazing talents to help our family. These photos are irreplaceable and speak so much to us. As a mom and wife, I now have my family captured in time reflecting how we can walk through this trial and any other mountain put in our way through Jesus Christ.

Thank you Kristy for giving back to us!"

I know I got way more in return than I gave to this family through all the points mentioned above. In regards to indirect marketing, one picture alone had 630-plus likes. I got over 70 new likes on my Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/KristyDickersonPage>). Just that one image reached 14,072 people on Facebook.

Have you ever heard the saying it is better to give than to receive? Well, it is true for more reason than one for your photography business. ■



Check out Kristy Dickerson's video here!

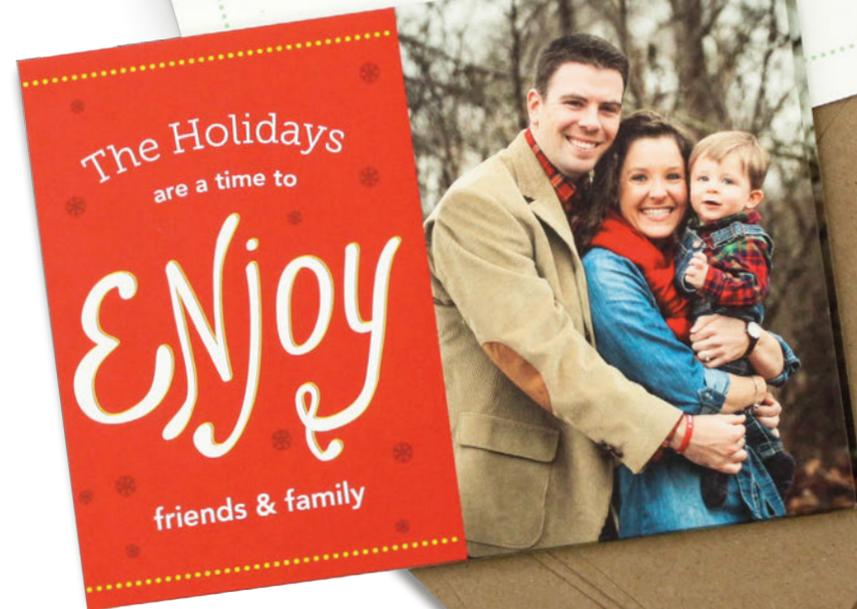
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**SHOWING**  
— AND —  
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WITH  
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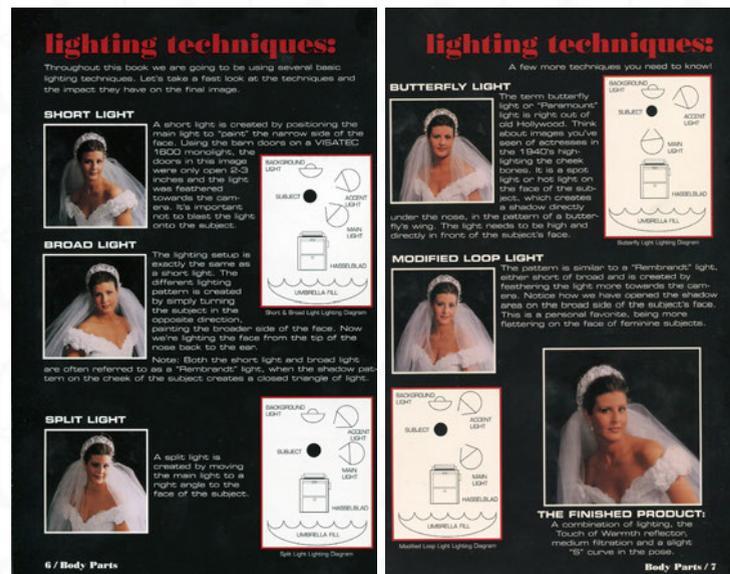


BY SKIP COHEN

The theme this month is all about lighting. Understanding lighting is critical to building your skill set. In fact, if you want to separate yourself from the competition, you have to know how to light an image. SEE IMAGES BELOW

These two pages, explaining the different kinds of lighting, are from a book I coauthored with Don Blair years ago. He passed away in 2004, and his work is still considered some of the finest classic portraiture ever captured. Even more impressive, this was all done before digital...he had to get the shot clean, right out of the can. There were no Photoshop tools to bail him out, never an opportunity to think, “No problem, I’ll fix it in Photoshop later!”

But there’s one other thing about Don, and that’s my own theme for this issue. Don never showed an image that was anything but his best work. He didn’t have a website, because he was back in the Film Age. If he were alive today, he’d have a website that would put all of us to shame, again never showing anything but “wow” prints. So, let’s spend some time looking at how to be more selective with what you show on your site, your blog and to your clients.



So, let’s spend some time looking at how to be more selective with what you show on your site, your blog and to your clients.

## SHOW ONLY YOUR BEST WORK!

It seems obvious, right? For many photographers, it’s not. For some, it seems to be about quantity, not quality. The truth is, less is more.

The ease of posting images online doesn’t mean people want to see everything you’ve ever done. There’s a great line I learned years ago from the legendary Ernst Wildi of Hasselblad fame: “The difference between professional and amateur photographers is, amateurs show you all of their shots!”

Here’s an easy qualifier. Look at each image in your galleries, on the walls of your office/studio and in your published material, and ask, “If this was the only image I could show a client, would I get hired?” If the answer is yes, then it’s a keeper. But if there’s any hesitation whatsoever, it doesn’t deserve to be shared.

## DON'T SHOW TOO MUCH!

A lot of you are going to cringe, maybe even argue with me, but most of you are showing too many images. You don’t need more than six to 10 in any one gallery topic. If you’re a wedding shooter, I can understand wanting to show more. Show completed albums, but still keep the count low in your galleries.

Think about the benefit of showing an album. Most importantly of all, it shows your ability as a storyteller. An album shows your creativity in design and layout, and it also gives you a chance to show diversity in the images you chose.

Last but not least, a great album is a perfect example of what should be part of your sales pitch. It’s not an album, but the first family heirloom of a brand-new family. You’re welcome to plagiarize that all you want.

## STAY WITH ONE TOPIC.

---

Remember that what you show is essentially going to define what people are going to ask for. For example, a wedding photographer who loves to do a little commercial work now and then, showing commercial images along with weddings, is really targeting two completely different clients.

An ad agency looking for a commercial shooter is going to be totally turned off hitting a stream of wedding images when on a search. At the same time, a mother and daughter looking for a wedding photographer are going to walk away from galleries of commercial images most of the time.

Just make sure there's a little logic to what you show, with some connectivity between galleries. Weddings, children and family all work well together, but throwing in a fine-art landscape series is going to throw people off. That doesn't mean you can't share those images—just do it on a different site or give people a landing page that allows them to make a choice.

This is also where your blog can play a big role. Your website is about what you sell, what you do for a living. Your blog is about your heart. A children and family photographer who loves to photograph landscapes could easily show children on his/her website, but share landscape images on the blog.

## WHAT IMAGES ARE YOU SHARING ON YOUR BLOG?

---

There are two key ingredients to a great blog: consistency in how often you post and simply being helpful. Most of you are using your blogs to showcase more work, rather than really giving people help in photography.

Sadly, a lot of you are also caught in what I call “riptide marketing.” You started showing images of clients each week, and it became a popularity contest. Now you're having a hard time backing off the trend. You're caught in the riptide.

What you show on your blog is just as important as the quality you show in your images on your site. Show one of two things: your very best images or images that help people understand how to make their work look better.

All of you are qualified to share tips on how to take better pictures. Use images from previous shoots to give advice on composition, posing and exposure, for example. This way you're sharing images from your clients, but at the same time being helpful to your readers. You can add to the list of topics, great locations to photograph in your community, what to wear and what not to wear, lighting and even tips on storytelling.

With images out of your mainstream specialty, use your blog to show your heart. Your blog is the perfect place to share your passion. It's also a great way to remind your clients and the community of the rest of your skill set.

## WHAT YOU SHOW IS WHAT YOU'LL SELL!

---

I'm amazed when I meet a talented photographer who only shows images 8x10 equivalent or smaller, or they don't even show actual prints, just digital albums. If you want to sell big prints, then you've got to show them!

If you have some kind of showroom, lobby or even a small office, decorate it like a gallery. Show diversity in framing along with the style of prints. Include a canvas or two, and make them big.

If you don't have a studio, don't worry about it. At least half of the industry doesn't have a fancy lobby or storefront window to show off their work, but that doesn't let you off the hook. Get yourself a portfolio case that's big enough to hold three or four big prints, and then have them with you whenever you meet with a client. Again, the whole idea is to plant the seeds for them to consider doing more with the images you've captured. You won't get their attention just showing them an album or two.

## AND SPEAKING OF LIGHTING...

---

Since this month's theme is lighting, let's also talk about how you actually light the prints on your walls. I know, it's not really in line with the topic, but lighting is lighting, and you want to show off your images without having to apologize. Visit a few galleries and look at the way they light their images.

There's nothing worse than looking at a stunning image in lousy light. If there's no room to compromise on the quality of an image, then there's also no room to compromise on the quality of how a final image is presented!

## WHAT DO YOU SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

There's nothing wrong with sharing images online. What is wrong is the expectation too many of you have that everyone likes the same things you do. Don't share an image in one of the forums you're involved with if you don't have a thick skin. There's always one fool who just lives to pick apart images. Just remember that beauty is in the eyes of the checkbook holder.

But there's a side issue I'd like you to think about when you're sharing images. A lot of people want to share their work because they're looking for feedback. That would normally be fine, but too often it's because they don't believe in themselves yet. They lack confidence. Matthew Jordan Smith is one of the finest fashion/beauty/editorial photographers in the country. His work has appeared in countless magazines and ad campaigns, and he's been on *America's Top Model* at least three times. But Matthew didn't always have the confidence.

In a podcast a couple of years back, he very candidly talked about how, when he was first getting started, he used to ask everybody he knew for their opinion on his images. Over and over again, he'd analyze what he had done, taking everybody's opinion to heart. One day he realized he needed to find his own voice. He needed to have more confidence in his work and abilities.

Sharing work online is terrific, but recognize why you want to share it. This is where that classic line from Shakespeare comes in.

*"To thine own self be true."* ■



*Check out Skip Cohen's video here!*



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PRESENTS

# SCOTT ROBERT LIM

SHUTTERFEST EDUCATOR



with **Scott Robert Lim**

## TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR STUDIO.

I'm a self-taught photographer, but was a graphic designer for 12 years before I started my photography career. I always thought of myself as more of an entrepreneur than an artist. Whenever there was an art project at school, I would never get a good grade, so I never saw myself as an artist because I can't draw worth a lick. However, with the advent of the computer and digital photography, I was able to translate my artistic skills into a medium more suited for my skill set. I always had a knack at selling, which has helped my photography career immensely. I also love talking and getting to know people, and I've always enjoyed teaching. I started teaching about eight years ago, and transitioned my career to education about five years ago. I realized I could not do both teaching and have a serious wedding photography career at the same time, especially if I wanted to spend quality time with my wife and two girls.

My greatest accomplishment is being married to my loving wife for more than 25 years. I feel so blessed my family got to celebrate our silver anniversary in Paris last summer, the birthplace of my photography career.





## HOW DID YOU GET INTO PHOTOGRAPHY?

I started getting serious about photography in 1999 when my wife and I took a trip to Europe for my first time. I shot 40 rolls of film during that vacation and fell in love with taking pictures. I remember on the plane ride home, I pondered how far I could take my photography, I had a dream of having just one of my images being published one day. Little did I realize that photography would change my life and lead to me helping so many other people with their photography.

When my wife and I started our family, my wife quit her high-paying job to stay home with our first child. The only problem was I was only taking home \$10,000 a year with my graphic design company. I was one of the partners. We owned a small place in Los Angeles, and we literally had no idea how we were going to make it, but we felt strongly this was the path we needed to take because my wife was getting burned out with her corporate job. I vowed I would work three jobs at once if I had to—Starbucks (for health insurance), McDonald's, Home Depot, etc. Whatever it took. I am a college dropout, so employment options were limited to me at the time. We figured if we could take home about \$30K a year, we could survive.

Out of desperation, I had to look for other ways to supplement our income. Because I loved photography, I reasoned shooting weddings on the weekend could be a viable option. Heck, I was just looking to make an extra \$600 a week. Well, as the story goes, I realized my skill set and personality were perfectly suited for the wedding business, and went from making \$10,000 a year to earning \$10,000 a wedding. My wife and I had both found our dream jobs! She got to manage our family and I got to take pictures for a living. We feel extremely blessed even to this day. When you go through hard times, just earning a living doing what you love feels like winning the lottery.

## IF NOT PHOTOGRAPHY, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?

I know I would still own some sort of business, maybe two or three. I would probably be making more money, but I know for sure I wouldn't be as happy as I am now! I just love creating businesses because the root of all successful business is to serve your customers or clients well and create a product or service that makes their life better. I love that idea, to serve people well. Yes, I'm not perfect, I make mistakes, but if my intentions are good, people are reasonable and will give you another chance if you take responsibility for mistakes. I love business and enjoy analyzing success patterns and helping people with their business.

## TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR WORK AND STYLE.

I started my photography career shooting weddings, which I still love doing. I only shoot around six a year, but now I see myself as an on-location portrait artist. I think I would be great at shooting high school seniors, but there is not a market for that in my area of Los Angeles. I'd rather teach anyways. I am attracted to shooting the female form, which I think is the most beautiful of all creation. I believe what makes my work special is my ability to make my subjects feel comfortable with me. I can very quickly break down their walls, which allows me to capture a sincere portrait. All the technical things like posing, lighting, composition can be learned to a certain extent, certainly to a level where a person can earn a living if they really try and sacrifice, but I think there has to be another level beyond the obvious that makes a photographer special—one can feel it when viewing their work, there is something there, it is like we get glimpse into the photographer's soul.

## WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU OFFER PHOTOGRAPHERS WHO ARE NEW TO THE INDUSTRY OR WHO WANT TO TAKE THEIR WORK TO THE NEXT LEVEL?

The greatest chance of success is to be mentored by someone whose work you admire and who has been extremely successful. In a typical workplace, if we want a job one level up, we witness on a regular or even daily basis what people do performing that job—how they act, what they do right, what they do wrong, what is expected of them, their work habits, what skills they have or don't have, etc. We are constantly learning how to perform at that level. When we decide to become a photographer, it can be a very lonely road. We don't run into world-class photographers on a daily basis; in essence, we are on our own to figure it out.

The rate of failure is extremely high. Most photographers give it a year or two, and then go back to another job because becoming a full-time photographer earning a decent living is one of the hardest jobs in the world. Young photographers need to make the necessary sacrifices to gain two-way information from the best photographers in the world on a regular basis. Watching videos is great, but they can be limited because the information is one way.

The highest-performing artists, musicians or athletes in the world usually have coaches. Can you imagine a gold-medal figure skater acquiring all their skill by watching YouTube videos? It just won't happen. Iron sharpens iron, so if you want to be good, you need to be sharpened constantly. It is like an osmosis process. Frequently surround yourself with greatness, and then start to put the puzzle pieces together and figure out the elusive formula for success.

“SURROUND YOURSELF  
WITH GREATNESS  
AND FIGURE OUT  
THE ELUSIVE FORMULA  
FOR SUCCESS.”





# WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG?

WITH SCOTT ROBERT LIM

- 1 | SRs KVL 300
- 2 | Sony 70-200 FE4
- 3 | Tokina 19-35mm 3.5-4.5 with LE-A4 Adapter
- 4 | Sony 85mm F1.4 Carl Zeiss with LE-A4 Adapter
- 5 | SRs Triple Mount
- 6 | SRs Stroble 230 x 3
- 7 | SRs Transmitter v3
- 8 | Sony A7S with Battery Grip x 2
- 9 | SRs KVL Battery Charger
- 10 | Sanyo Eneloop AA Batteries x 8
- 11 | Porter Case



## TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR COURSES AT SHUTTERFEST.

We are going to dig deep into how to manage all sorts of lighting situations encountered when doing on-location photography. We will learn how to create amazing results with small portable lighting. We will continue the two-way learning process with hands-on learning. I can't wait to teach and show I do things firsthand, on location. Every situation has its own set of obstacles and advantages. I will be sharing my step-by-step formulas on how I do my work and what my 15 years of experience have taught me.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT SCOTT & SEE MORE OF HIS WORK HERE:

They can download a mobile app right on their smartphone. If they are in the USA, just text "scottrbert" to 24587. Or they can go to my website, [www.scottrbertLA.com](http://www.scottrbertLA.com). There they can find my current world tour teaching schedule, lighting products and other photography resources.

**DON'T MISS SCOTT AT SHUTTERFEST 2015!**



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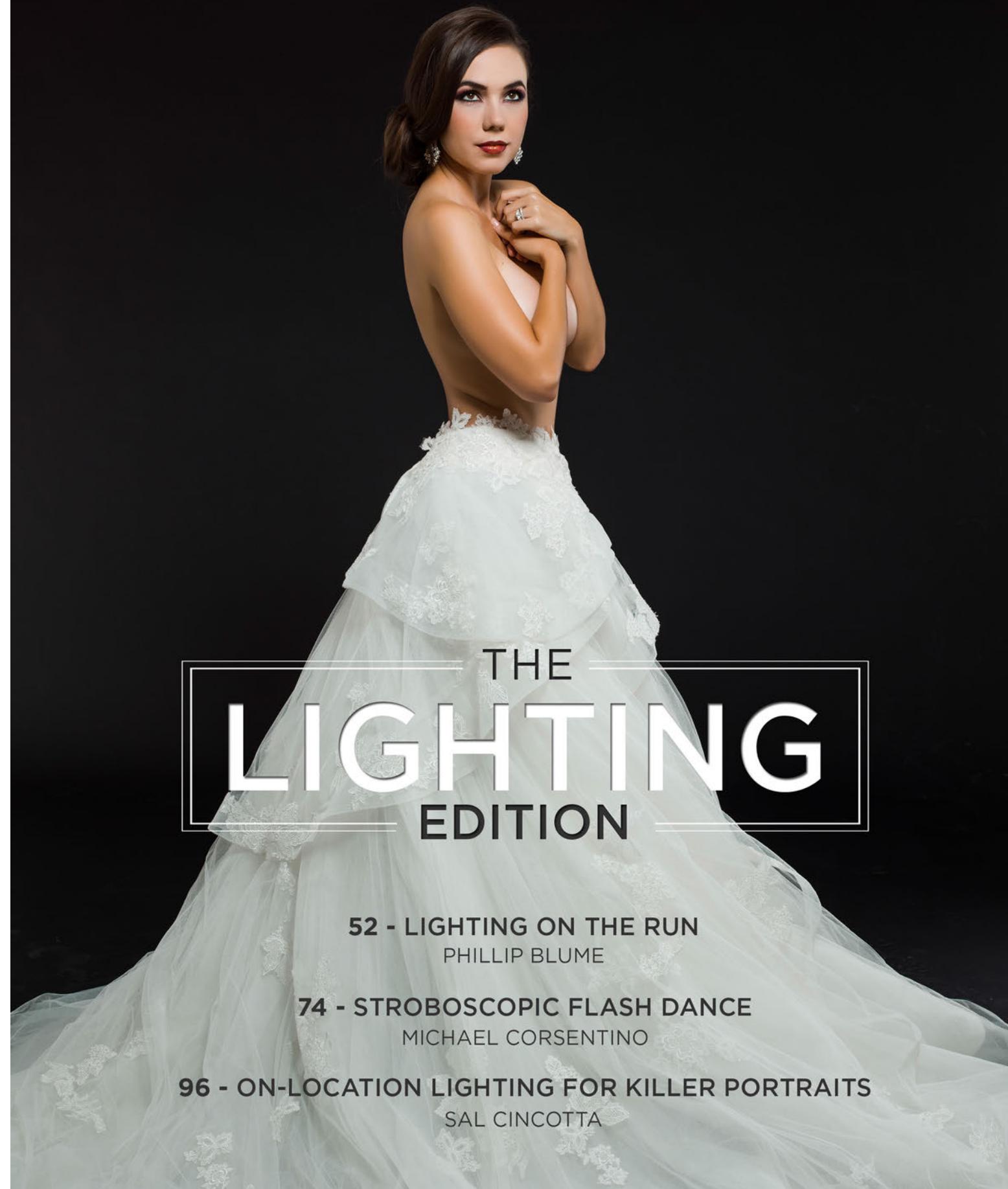
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# LIGHTING ON THE RUN

WITH PHILLIP BLUME





by **Phillip Blume**

I'm standing over a Colorado mountain precipice, caught in a sudden blizzard, 45 minutes from the nearest paved road. My fingers can no longer feel the camera they clutch. A mere black suit and white gown cover the man and woman huddled together in front of me, as my wife Eileen runs to them with an umbrella.

She aims it at them. I pull the trigger.

This is not where I pictured myself just an hour ago when we left in the early morning from Vail Cascade, a peaceful resort perched in a warm nest of yellow and orange trees clinging to late autumn. Yesterday had been the most beautiful wedding. Jackets lay on the backs of chairs. The bride danced in the sunshine, its rays warming her bare shoulders. Now she grasps for a thin gray fleece. According to the error warning flashing behind the condensation on my Speedlight display, it won't be enough. We're frozen.

How did I get here? The truth is, there's no place I'd rather be. Eileen and I are constantly amazed by the opportunities photography affords us. The road here was paved with many

stones and a lot of grace. But neither was the journey an accident. We sought to distinguish Blume Photography from the pack. Aside from establishing solid business practices, the most important difference for us has been our adoption of off-camera flash.

The good news? Off-camera flash isn't rocket science. It's easier than you think. The bad news? It actually isn't science at all. It's art. Let me say that again: Lighting is art! I tend to assume if I learn the "tech"—which buttons do what—I'll master it. No, that knowledge only goes so far. You must invest the sweat equity to engrain this stuff into your muscle memory. In other words, you aren't pulling out your calculator to determine the fall-off rate of light according to the inverse square law while the sun goes down on an impatient bridal party. Instead, you instinctively know, "Hey, that light should be at least another 10 feet away from my subjects if I want them evenly lit!" Adjust. Shoot. Bam! Whether or not your light is precise, it feels right. Your clients are impressed by your speed and how painless the experience is; and you use the extra time to direct, pose and create more compelling images.

“  
THE MOST IMPORTANT  
DIFFERENCE  
FOR US HAS BEEN OUR  
ADOPTION OF  
OFF-CAMERA FLASH.  
”





© Phillip Blume

# WEDDING DAY WORKFLOW

Lighting a single portrait well and telling its story is one thing. Lighting a thousand unrehearsed, unposed images throughout a wedding day is another. Just the thought of those innumerable artistic choices used to make me sick to my stomach. Repeated success builds confidence, though. Confidence results in peace of mind. And peace of mind results in me keeping down my Cheerios.

So what's the simple lighting workflow that carries me confidently through? It's not a one-size-fits-all solution. There's more than one way to skin a cat. Ultimately, your elusive "personal style" is what evolves from the methods you find enjoyable and, therefore, use again and again. As for me, I'm always thinking of ways to parse down my kit without sacrificing creative options. So—a little foreshadowing—you can bet the Blumes are developing something to make this imperfect system easier for both ourselves and you. In the meantime, here's how I run and gun on the big day.

## — GEAR

I use two SB700 Speedlights throughout the day until the reception, when I begin using three Speedlights. I trigger everything using TTL-enabled Pocket Wizards and an SU800 commander unit (again, until the reception, when I use the third Speedlight, an SB900, as my commander unit and as my on-camera light). I carry just one light stand with a multipronged head for mounting multiple strobes. One white shoot-through umbrella, a midsized diffuser/reflector, and we're good to go!

## — GETTING READY

Indoors with an on-camera flash set to TTL, I continually readjust the flash head to bounce off the nearest wall and (ideally) back into my subject's face. I almost always place a white bounce card (attached with Velcro) between the flash head and my subject so excess light won't spill onto him. I prefer the higher contrast and modeling of directional light. Occasionally I will use my light stand indoors, but only if the walls are absolutely too dark for bounce. More often I place a flash down on a table, supported by the plastic "foot" it came with (you know, the little piece most people throw away with the box) and fire remotely for dramatic effect. This works great for hairspray shots or isolating your subject in a mirror, etc.

## — BRIDAL PARTY PORTRAITS

I prefer to use an umbrella for these mostly outdoor group shots. But it's often too windy or too bright to sacrifice the two stops of light lost with a modifier. So I don't hesitate to shoot bare-bulb, especially since the multiple flashes on one stand help fill each other's shadows, acting together as a larger light source. I expose for the background with my camera in manual mode, generally darkening the scene just enough to prevent lost highlights (and to save battery power), but sometimes dark enough to underexpose even a bright sky if the composition calls for it.

I shoot TTL flash on wedding days to move faster. But take note: You can't predictably shoot TTL/eTTL flash unless your camera is set to manual. Add more than one automatic variable into the system, and the various algorithms can't keep up. Your camera will fight your flash, and the results will be inconsistent. My advice is to drop aperture priority (or any other "auto" mode) like it's hot. Get used to shooting manual, and new worlds will open to you. (Alternatively, you can use exposure compensation and all the rest; but I think it actually becomes more complex.)

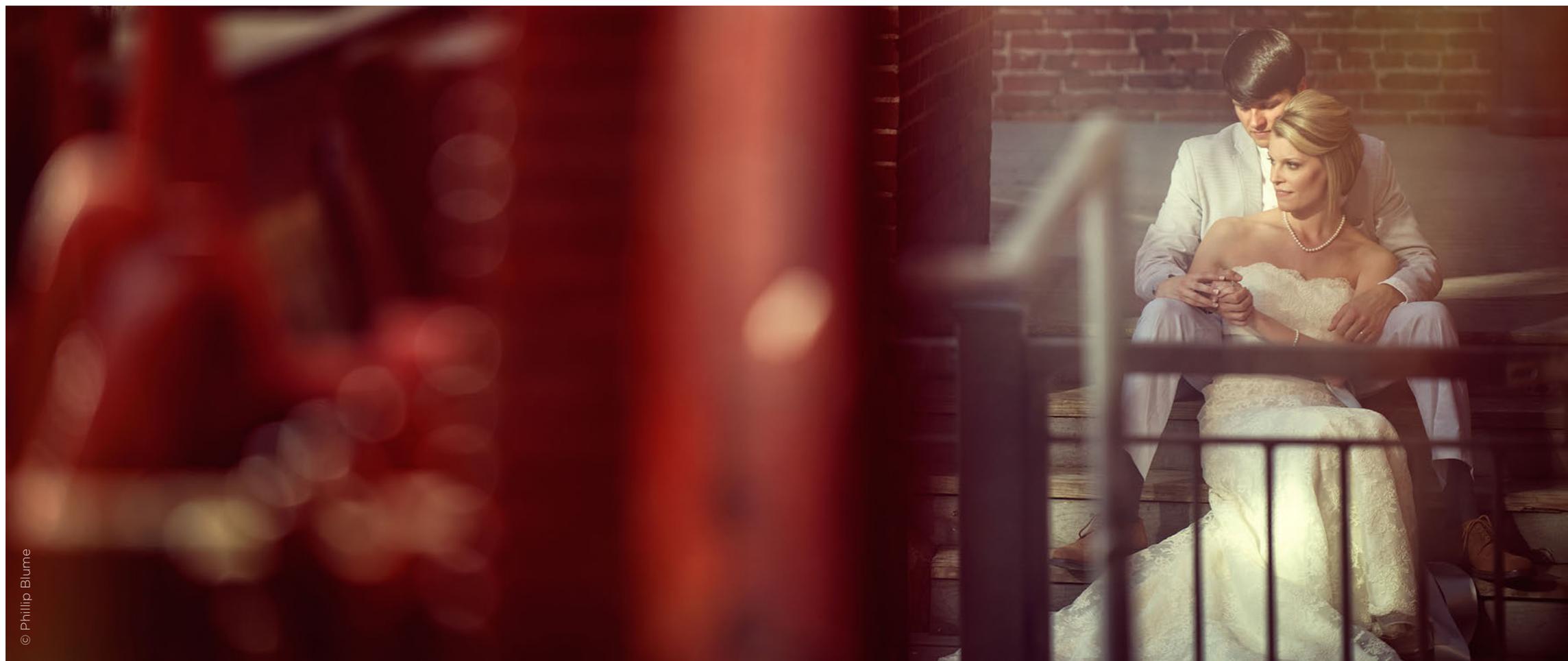
## — COUPLES PORTRAITS

Similarly, I maintain at least two strobes on my light stand. Even on overcast days, I like the sparkle a low-power flash adds to the subjects' shadowy eyes. You can stay in TTL mode and dial down your flash compensation (not camera exposure compensation) by two or more stops; or put your strobes in manual mode and take a test shot around 1/8 power. Remember, get a sense of how the light "feels." Then adjust accordingly. With multiple flashes, I love that I can remove one flash and place it behind the couple to add a rim light or flair. It adds so much life!

“  
THE **RESULT** IS AN  
AMBIENCE-RICH,  
**SHAPELY LIGHT**  
WITH NO  
**REAL NEED FOR GELS.**  
”

My on-camera flash gets set to TTL minus 1-1/3 stops. If I can bounce reasonably well off a wall, I use my bounce card between my flash and the subject. If I must bounce off the ceiling (this should not be your first choice!), I will place my card behind the flash to reflect some fill light directly into my subjects' now shadowed eye sockets.

And the two flashes dangling from the venue walls? They're set on manual at very low power. I'll try a test shot at 1/64 power first. I can adjust up or down. These flashes aren't intended to be key lights or to model anyone's face; in fact, that's the last thing I want. If these outside flashes are too strong, every object in front of them will cast unwanted shadows onto my subjects. Instead, these flashes are operating as subtle rim lights. They not only create beautiful separation between bodies and the otherwise cavernous background, they also fill the space with identically colored light to my main on-camera flash. The result is an ambience-rich, shapely light with no real need for gels.



On the other hand, using your flash as a key light may cast unwanted harsh shadows onto one individual's face if your couple is nuzzling. To improve this common problem, remember: Aperture controls flash exposure; shutter speed controls ambient light exposure. Therefore, you can simply slow down your shutter speed to let the ambient light brighten those shadows.

## — FAMILY FORMALS

Easy cheesy! I expose properly for the shot, or just slightly underexposed. Then I remove one of the two Speedlights from my stand. If I brought an extra stand, I now have one flash to light each side of a large group. If I have only one stand available, I ask a nearby groomsman to step in as a human light stand. I use TTL flash bumped down to -1 stop, just filling in shadows in all those eye sockets and giving a punchy, finished look to every portrait.

## — RECEPTION

This is the big one, right? That dreaded, dark reception hall is the stuff of photographers' nightmares. You can't exactly treat it like a hotel room during getting-ready photos. I mean, the nearest wall is 100 feet away and paneled in dark mahogany! And which gel is best to white-balance the DJ's neon laser lights? I have a solution. I'll explain it in detail, but I want to stress how simple it really is. So take a deep breath. Here it goes.

First, take the two Speedlights off your stand. Hang them up high on the walls on either side of the reception hall. (I use a ball bungee and a small Commander Strip from WalMart. No more drunken guests colliding with light stands!) Next, attach your third flash atop your camera. (Even if you don't own dedicated flash triggers,

you should have no problem using the camera's built-in infrared system in such a confined, dark space.) Then I fearlessly boost my ISO to 2000, 2500, 3200, 4000—whatever number gives me a visible exposure of the room's low ambient light. I may shoot wide open at 2.8 with my 24–70mm or at 1.4 on my 50mm. But I feel comfortable switching to a 3.5 or 4.0 aperture if I have trouble focusing in the dark; that gives me a better shot at being sharp. Just boost that ISO higher. Not too bright, mind you. I want this “natural light” test shot maybe two or three stops underexposed, just to bring in the surroundings and “feel” of the venue.

Next I set the power levels for my three flashes right from my on-camera flash, now in commander mode. (If your flashes are incompatible with your camera's auto system, no worries—it's nearly as easy to set each flash manually.)

A single light stand and small strobes are incredibly convenient and versatile on a wedding day, especially when you don't know whether to expect an overcast fall day or a sudden blizzard. (Just try creating drama in those conditions with only available light! It won't be the kind of drama you want, believe me.) Thankfully, when one of my flashes froze up in the snow, I had a second already on the same stand ready to take over. The same setup that lent enough light to freeze a spinning bride under noon sun allowed me to add the faintest fill light to a night reception.

Do I recommend you learn everything there is to know about gels and color balance, light patterns and ratios, modifiers and inverse square laws? Yes, I do. As artists, we must never stop learning and upping our game. As professionals and servants to a couple on their wedding day, there's a lot to be said for speed, agility and ease as well. I'll create my complex masterpieces on my time. When I'm on the bride's watch, I feel confident using simple tools and reliable methods.

Besides, when a churning stomach full of Cheerios is calmed, I can actually focus and create a few masterpieces after all. 🍷



*Check out Phillip Blume's video here!*



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INTO A MASTERPIECE.”



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# PRODUCT REVIEW



## — CHIMERA: **COMBI KIT** —

Starting out or adding to your lighting arsenal, the Chimera Combi kit gives you unique versatility. Comprised of three sizes and shapes, your lighting assignments can be lit with distantly varied light qualities.

Handcrafted in the US, Chimera brings you the quality of materials and workmanship from Boulder CO. It's not unusual for photographers to still be using their Lightbanks for more than 10+ years. The kit comes with everything you need to get started. The Medium Super PRO Lightbank, the Small Strip Lightbank, and my personal favorite, the collapsable and extremely portable Beauty Dish.

The most impressive part of the entire kit, beyond the obvious, was how portable, light, and easy to assemble it was. I know it might not seem like a big deal, but if you are like me and use light modifiers on location, portability is paramount to a seamless shoot. The video really showcases the shaping of the light and how we used it in a real world environment to create some dramatic portraits. Quality that's quick and easy. 📸

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**ONE-LIGHT**  
**SETUP**

WITH LORI NORDSTROM



» by **Lori Nordstrom**

## » MY PAST WITH PHOTOGRAPHY

When I started in photography almost 20 years ago, photographing outdoors with natural light was an anomaly. Most photographers had retail studios and practiced traditional, classical posing and lighting. I, on the other hand, didn't have a photography background. I started like most photographers do these days, photographing my own kids in my backyard. When I finally opened a studio space in 2000, I knew that I needed studio lighting, but had no idea what to buy.

I had worked for another studio for about a year, but not as a photographer, so I was going into this new purchase pretty blindly. I did know that I should always look for a main light (or key light) and a fill light, even when working outdoors, so that's exactly what I decided to purchase. I chose the biggest light modifier I could afford (a 4x6 softbox) and a large fill source (a 72" reflector). Soon I realized I could create the same type of beautiful lighting that I had seen from some of my favorite photographers at the time: Tim Kelly, Tim and Beverly Walden, and Darton Drake, to name a few. This type of lighting is so simple and consistent. I don't have to think much about getting set up, which is a huge bonus for me. I don't consider myself a technical person, and knowing that I'm going to get the same thing every time means a lot to me.

For the past several years, we have seen the tables turn in our industry. Since more and more people are able to afford great cameras and owning your own home business is a popular choice, we've seen fewer retail locations being opened and more and more photographers working outdoors, and many all on-location. Just in the last year, however, many portrait photographers who want to run a profitable business have realized the need for studio lighting, something to set them apart from every other photographer out there.

If you've read any of my past articles or heard me speak, you know I'm a fan of the full-service portrait business. While I absolutely love outdoor location photography and would choose it every day, I also know that I need the ability to create studio portraits with great lighting. It's that mix of creating both for my clients that gives me an extra edge. More and more photographers are realizing this, and I get a lot of questions from photographers wanting to know how to get started with studio lighting. I always, always recommend the same simple setup that I personally started with for someone who wants to get going with studio lighting. This is the lighting that I use to this day, even though I now own many lights and light modifiers. You can certainly add lights—including a hair light, background light, lights for fill, for depth or for certain effects—but these things aren't required for beautiful, sellable, perfectly lit portraits.



“NO MATTER WHAT YOU  
CHOOSE TO ADD LATER,  
**ONE LIGHT WITH A LARGE MODIFIER  
AND ONE LARGE REFLECTOR**  
WILL REMAIN YOUR BASE.”

» WHY NOT START SIMPLY, AND THEN MAKE THE  
DECISION TO ADD MORE LATER IF YOU NEED TO?

I use one light and my 4x6 softbox for kids, families, high school seniors and corporate head shots. I also use the same setup for my “Little Angels” charitable events, and even day cares and dance schools. I’ve had people ask how I feel about lugging around this giant piece of equipment, but in the end, a smaller softbox doesn’t mean much less setup time, and multiple lights will certainly take longer.

One thing I love about this setup for special events is that once I have my lighting set up, I’m going to get beautiful consistency with every shot. I also love that the large size of the 4x6 and 72" reflector create this sort of “space” for my little people to move around yet be confined in. When a background is added and I’m in front, it gives my subjects a perimeter boundary. This is great for kids who are just starting to walk, and through ages up to six, who need to be told, “You can do whatever you like within this space right here!” I can have them dance, make silly faces, jump and twirl, and the flash from the strobe freezes that action for me. I can slow down the shutter if I do

want to see the movement, and still have perfectly focused eyes.

With kids, especially, this setup is not only flattering and momma-approved, but it helps me during the session to get all of the great expressions that I want. I have used this setup in very small spaces. In fact, for a while, I had a room that wasn’t big enough for my large reflector and softbox, so I purchased a small reflector and painted the wall on my right a bright white for fill. I’ve also used this in large spaces, including my current 8,000-square-foot studio with 22-foot ceilings. The coziness of the setup really lends itself to containing and corralling kids and making the space seem less vast.

I don’t endorse any lighting or light modifier companies, so trust me—you won’t regret this setup. No matter what you choose to add later to your arsenal, one light with a large modifier and one large reflector will remain the base of your lighting setup.



© Lori Nordstrom

ONE-LIGHT SETUP

## » MY LIGHT PLACEMENT

I prefer my light on the left side of my scene, reflector for fill on the right (as I'm facing the subject). I usually position the bottom of the softbox at about shoulder height, which allows for natural fall-off and a soft vignette. I move the reflector, looking for nice fill and highlights in the eyes. It's that easy.

Don't be scared to get your subject close to your light source when using a large, soft diffuser like the 4x6 softbox. The closer your subject is to the light, the softer the light will be; the farther away, the harsher the light becomes.

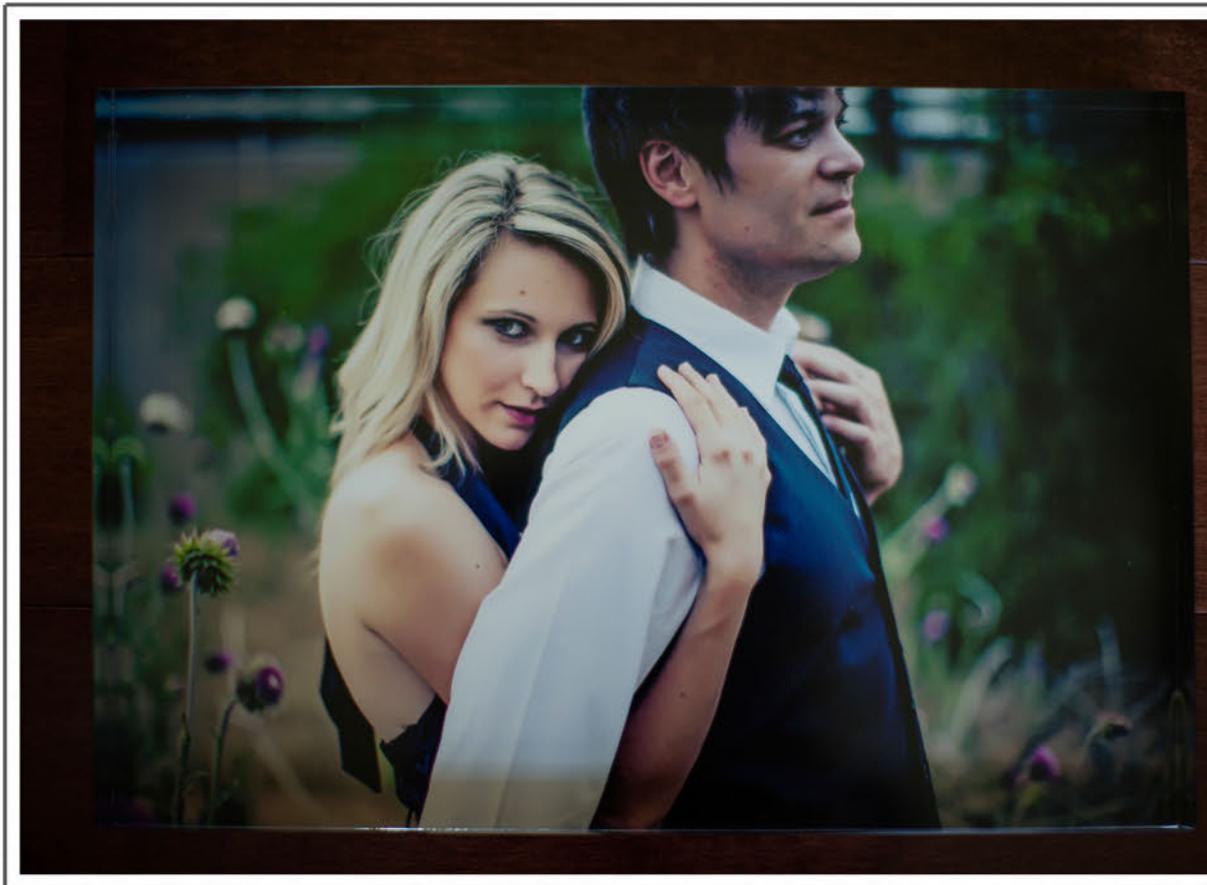
This is the way I set up my lights for kids and families almost every time. For high school seniors, I play around for more contrast about 15 to 20 percent of the time. As a mom, I like more flat, even lighting, which is what this main light placement with reflector fill gives me.

Of course, once you have mastered the rules, remember: They're made to be broken. Have fun. Practice with your subject in different positions in the light, and find your happy place. Soon enough, seeing the light and placing your subject will come naturally. ■

» CHECK OUT LORI'S VIDEO HERE!



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# STROBOSCOPIC



FLASH  
DANCE  
WITH  
MICHAEL CORSENTINO



© Michael Corsentino

by **Michael Corsentino**

Flash is the perfect tool for freezing motion. Whether it's speedlights or strobes, we've all seen this in practice, but there's more than one way to freeze a cat. What if we wanted to repeatedly freeze motion, capturing a series of movements all in one exposure? Stroboscopic flash is the ticket. To illustrate this awesome technique, I'm enlisting the help of some brand-new, hot-off-the-presses gear: Elinchrom's new ELC Pro HD mono heads. These bad boys have a built-in stroboscope feature set, something usually reserved for underpowered speedlights or prohibitively priced high-end power packs.

Finding the right vehicle for this motion study with flash was key. I thought about using boxers, break dancers, MMA fighters and, of course, a classic ballerina. Equally important was finding the right venue. Not only would I need space to capture the motion and agility of my subject, I'd also need room for my lights. Equally important, I'd need a way to kill almost all the ambient light in the shot, as the technique I planned on using called for flash only and a long exposure. Happily, through a stroke of good luck, I connected with Oxbridge Academy of the Palm Beaches, a private high school in West Palm Beach, Florida, with a noted dance program. They provided access to their beautiful, spacious theater for the shoot—along with one of their classically trained ballerina students, Carli.



The concept for this environmental dance portrait was to create an image that repeatedly froze Carli's motion as she moved across the stage. In order to do that, I'd need to rely on the use of a long exposure and a series of flash heads capable of stroboscopic interval flash. Remember, long exposures behave like our eyes; they're able to record multiple flash pops as a series of frozen images. In an earlier article, I used the example of a strobe light in a dance club to describe the action-stopping power of flashes. That same example also applies here. Long exposures allow us to record light in several ways. With ambient, we can record light in a continuous stream of motion, and with flash, we can record multiple bursts of light during one exposure, rapidly freezing motion at different intervals determined by the photographer. If we combine ambient and flash together with long exposures, we can produce a mixture of continuous motion, contributed by the ambient light, and frozen action, contributed by the strobe, essentially painting with light.

Here the goal was to freeze Carli's movements as she danced across the stage, using only strobes fired in a sequence of rapid intervals during a long exposure. This choice was made so that the final image would contain a series of frozen images of Carli as she moved stage left to stage right. The number of flash pops set on the strobes and the length of my exposure would dictate how many frozen images of Carli would be captured and how close to one another they would appear. The shorter the interval time was between each flash pop, the closer each frozen image would be to the next.

To create shadow and drama, I chose to side-light Carli. I placed a key light stage right facing her as she moved left to right, and an accent light slightly behind her and stage left for added dimension. This created a shallow cross-light pattern. One important exposure consideration was the variable distance between my stationary lights and a moving subject. I had to account for the fact that as Carli moved closer and farther away from each of my lighting positions, the amount of light falling on her would change. This is where an understanding of the inverse square law is very useful. The inverse square law says that the farther away our lights are placed from our subject, the less rapidly their light falls off and the more consistent their exposure value will be over a distance.

However, once you start moving your lights farther away from your subject, in addition to reduced exposure fall-off, you have reduced output from your lights. The farther away they are, the less of their light is reaching your subject. Luckily, I had four heads to play with, so I was able to gang up two heads at each position: two Elinchrom ELC Pro HD 1000WS heads for the key light and two Elinchrom ELC Pro HD 500WS heads for the accent light. The Elinchrom ELCs are exciting new mono heads with a ton of sophisticated, built-in wiz-bang features like stroboscopic flash. I know what you're thinking: That's a whole lot of lights, Michael! You're 100 percent right. And in an ideal world, if you have them, use them. But if you find yourself with minimal gear, don't despair—you can create similar effects using the gear you already have on hand. Many speedlights include stroboscopic features, and the effect can also be achieved manually using standard garden-variety strobes, albeit with considerably less precision.

Working in a theater allowed me to photograph Carli from the audience, providing the necessary distance I needed and height I wanted for Carli. After numerous tests, I set the camera and lights as follows: f/11, 100 ISO, three-second shutter speed and a 5Hz-interval pops setting for the flashes.



© Michael Corentino



## FLASH DANCE



© Michael Corsentino

Using a tripod to support my Phase One IQ250, I prefocused my 55mm lens on Carli, and then had the theater's house lights turned off. This meant the only source of illumination was the strobes firing a sequence of flash pops that corresponded with the length of my shutter speed. Because there was no ambient light, by design, the only thing captured was the series of rapid flash pops freezing our dancer along her path across the stage.

Wardrobe always plays a key role. For this shoot, choosing the right fabric to stand out against our black-box environment was essential. I asked Carli to bring a selection of bright, iridescent red and blue garments to choose from. Want to learn more about this fascinating use for strobes? A Google image search for Harold "Doc" Edgerton should be your first stop. Arguably the father of modern flash photography, Edgerton produced incredible stroboscopic motion studies.

The fact that this kind of work was being produced decades ago using antiquated gear should be encouraging to anyone interested in exploring stroboscopic flash photography. You don't need all the bells and whistles—just your creativity, desire and a flash or two. 📷



*Check out Michael Corsentino's video here!*



## PHASEONE

"The quality I was getting with the IQ250 made me look at my once fancy DSLR and left me wishing I could go back and reshoot my favorite images with medium format."

**- Michael Corsentino**

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# CHALLENGES OF A NATURAL LIGHT PHOTOGRAPHER

WITH VANESSA JOY



BY VANESSA JOY

The first time I attempted off-camera flash, I was working for one company and second shooting with another main photographer who was also fairly new to OCF. We get everything set up, test it, then bring in the bride and groom, and bam!—nothing's working. So embarrassing. There's nothing that'll make you look like a total idiot than obviously not being able to get your equipment to work.

And so began my journey into OCF, and it was a painful one. Between RadioPoppers, PocketWizards and Canon infrared transmitters, I tried it all (and hated it all). My problem, and one I think many photographers can relate to, was that something always went wrong. I needed to have at least five troubleshooting techniques up my sleeve in order to be sure that my system worked properly, since there were always issues—line of sight being interrupted, for example, or high outdoor temps causing the padding on my transmitter to slide down and cover the part that needed to transmit. Then I had to actually learn how OCF worked with exposure, ratios and all the rest of it. “I’m a natural-light photographer” was sounding like the best idea out there.





I think since I've started experimenting with OCF, the systems all around have gotten better and more reliable. Currently, I'm using Profoto B1s, and I have to say, they take the guesswork and need for troubleshooting out of the process. Regardless of what you use, whether strobe or even a continuous light source like a video light or Ice Light, going from natural light to OCF can be difficult.

Maybe you have absolutely no desire to stray from your natural-light ways or add a little pop to your brand. I can relate. I have no intentions of giving up my soft, dreamy natural-light look—and my clients wouldn't want me to either. But having the knowledge and the tools to be able to implement off-camera lighting techniques for a wedding where it's raining, or to get a cool shot with a killer sunset that's not a silhouette, is priceless and is only going to add to your photography clout and confidence. I'm going to break it down for you and give you some tips and tricks in "natural photographer lingo" to make things easier to understand and shed some new light on your new light tricks.

#### IT'S JUST LIKE FINDING NATURAL LIGHT, EXCEPT YOU CREATE IT.

Don't let all you know about light and direction go out the window when you start using OCF. It's still the same as far as finding light goes. You want that beautiful Rembrandt light? Then position the light at a 45-degree angle to your subject. You want a silhouette? Then place it behind your subject.

Don't throw the use of reflectors out the window either. You can use an off-camera light source and a reflector, just like you would position your subject using the sun and a reflector, except the sun in this case is your OCF.



## IT'S ABOUT HOW YOU POSITION THE LIGHT.

**RULE #1** – The closer your light source is to your subject, the harsher the light is and the more contrast between the light and shadows is. If you want a softer look, move your light source farther away from the subject or throw a diffuser of some kind in front of it.

**RULE #2** – You don't have to point the light directly at the subject. This also creates a more harsh light. If you're side-lighting your subject at a 45-degree angle, try pointing the light just past the tip of the subject's nose rather than directly at the eyes or cheek. It'll create a softer light pattern on the face.

## THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS FOR ETTL!

You're probably familiar with how to use an on-camera flash in its ETTL mode, especially if you've ever shot a wedding. Thankfully, most OCF systems have ETTL. That means all you have to do to get it to work is set your exposure like you're just taking a picture of that area without your subjects in it, drop down your exposure by a stop, then turn on your ETTL lights and fire away. ETTL should do the job correctly. If it's a little bit off, use the flash exposure compensation to adjust it if possible (it's different with every camera).

The beautiful thing about the Profoto B1s that I use is that I set them to ETTL first, then switch over to manual, which leaves the last flash power it just used so that I can move it up and down manually from the transmitter on my hot shoe. It's one of my favorite and most-used features of the system.

## YOU NEED TO PRACTICE THIS ONE.

I think a lot of photographers (myself included) sometimes wait until their next shoot to try something new, learn something new, or try out a new piece of equipment. Trust me on this one: This is not the time to do that.

Learning to use off-camera light, especially if it's a strobe of sorts, can be very annoying, frustrating and difficult—and 100 things can go wrong, leaving you looking like dumb little me eight years ago at a wedding not knowing how to properly work her equipment in front of the bride, groom and their families. On the flip side, if you master OCF and use it effectively, you'll look like the hero for creating a photograph that your clients couldn't have envisioned themselves by looking at the same scene with natural light. This is also a fun tactic for warding off Uncle Bobs. Just place your subject in a scene that will create horrific pictures for Uncle Bob's natural-light shots while you work your magic with your OCF skills.

“  
**YOU'LL LOOK LIKE  
 THE HERO FOR CREATING  
 A PHOTOGRAPH  
 THAT YOUR CLIENTS COULDN'T HAVE  
 ENVISIONED THEMSELVES.**  
 ”



**DON'T SHOW IT OFF UNLESS YOU CAN REPLICATE IT.**

This is where my marketing and branding self comes into play. As always, we want to make sure that we're correctly setting the expectations of our clients. When we post images online, our clients (and potential clients) see them and expect you to do the same thing, or something similar, at their shoot. While you may be ecstatic that you successfully photographed your first OCF shot and want to show it off everywhere, settle for posting in closed photography groups for now. Wait to post publicly at least until you feel confident that you can consistently replicate the technique for your clients at any time on your future jobs. You'll master it in no time—I promise!

I hope that sheds the preverbal light on off-camera lighting for you natural-light photographers, and inspires you to give it a try. One trick is to look at pictures that used OCF, and try to dissect how the lighting was used in it. Check out this video, in which I give you the opportunity to do just that (and then, of course, give you the answers to see if you're right!). ■



*Check out Vanessa Joy's video here!*





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**ON-LOCATION**  
**LIGHTING**  
FOR KILLER PORTRAITS  
— WITH SAL CINCOTTA —



“ IF YOU ARE  
SHOOTING  
WITHOUT GOALS,  
YOU ARE ASKING  
FOR TROUBLE.

THINK BEFORE  
YOU SHOOT.”



BY SAL CINCOTTA

As many of you know, I recently returned from a trip to Brazil. While there, I wanted to make sure I got some killer portraits. Wherever I go, I bring my travel kit, which consists of the standard camera, lenses, etc. The most important piece in the kit is the lighting; without light, there is no shot. In my kit are the standard Speedlites that we all have, but the big dawg in the kit is my Profoto B1. I know what you're thinking: "You travel with that?" Yes! Everywhere I go, that is typically in my bag. It's one of the most powerful lights on the market. And it's portable and powerful, key for travel. At a minimum, you should have two to three Speedlites in your arsenal.

Many people tend to overcomplicate lighting, but many situations benefit from a single light source. Don't re-create the wheel. Don't try to replicate your studio setup on location. That's nuts. Instead, have the tools you need to create gorgeous shots anywhere, anytime.

## LET'S DIVE INTO THIS

I have a Profoto B1 and a 2x2 Profoto softbox. That's it. I am on location, the sun is setting fast, it's raining and I don't have time to goof around with equipment. It has to be fast and easy. One of my favorite features of the Profoto B1 is ETTL, for both Canon and Nikon. Translation: even easier to get the shot.

Let's talk goals and objectives for the shoot. And by the way, if you are shooting without goals, you are asking for trouble. Think before you shoot. It's the responsible thing to do. Every shoot I am on, whether for a client or myself, I create a mental checklist of things I want to get from the location. This isn't something that takes days of planning. It's literally less than five minutes of brainpower. Take a moment to process the scene.

## MY ON-LOCATION GOAL

My goal in Brazil was to create something for my article, of course, and to create something for my portfolio. I realize these seem like extremely nebulous ideas. To a certain extent, they are. Until you are on the scene, it's very difficult to really nail down the shot. Upon arrival, you are dealing with what the location will give you. No matter what you want from a shoot, you will always be limited by what the scene is giving you. For example, I wanted a silhouette, but that just wasn't in the cards on this day. That's fine—you have to take the scene for what it will give you.

Let's get in my head for a minute (albeit a very scary place sometimes). Upon arrival, I saw a boardwalk, some greenery, and some rock cliffs. Boom. Three different scenes. I saw a very dramatic sky that I wanted to incorporate. I saw really bad light—and by bad, just flat and lifeless. This is where having that alternate light source can really save the day. And like I said, it doesn't have to be complicated. Keep in mind that, if it were a sunny day, my decisions would have been completely different. Again, we have to take what the scene gives us.

## 10 MINUTES WITH BRUNO

First up, Bruno. Bruno has deeply set eyes, so we definitely needed to lift those shadows by pushing some light in there. First shot was with off-camera flash and ETTL for the B1. Gorgeous light right out of the gate. The way this was lit and shot, the background looks almost painterly. It really looks fake. That is testament to the light. It gives the shot that little something extra. After that, I wanted to try something a little more dramatic. So I had Alissa, my assistant, take the light to the side of Bruno to create something a lot more dramatic. First shot, and I was loving what I was getting right out of camera. The ability to move and adapt quickly with a single-light setup was integral to the success of the overall shoot. Ten minutes with Bruno, and I was ready to move on to the next scene.





## OUR MODEL, TACYANA

Tacyana, our model for the day, was done with makeup—which, by the way, was being done in a restaurant bathroom. Something you have to realize is that it's not going to be easy all the time. You have to adapt to the environment—but I actually love the rush of winging it sometimes.

We got outside and put her in a red top we picked up on our travels recently, and used the green background to create gorgeous contrast with the colors. I took a test shot, and things were flat. It needed that extra pop of light. I would have loved to use a reflector, but with nothing but a dark, cloudy sky, a reflector had nothing to reflect. Bring in the B1 and softbox. We quickly set it up off-camera left, and within seconds were dialed in. No matter what alternate light source you use, be sure to have extra batteries and a power pack that will allow one-second recycle times. There is nothing worse than waiting five seconds for your flash to recycle. That's a nightmare that slows down the pace and momentum of the shoot.

Next, we had a wedding dress we brought with us from the U.S. We work with a local bridal salon that's always willing to lend us dresses. Trust me here: Start networking! This is a major hook-up every photographer should have. Also, earlier in the day, I had Alissa create a headpiece from flowers she had picked up in Brazil. Again, I wanted to do something a little different here. We shot this on the same background, so the lighting was set up and good to go.

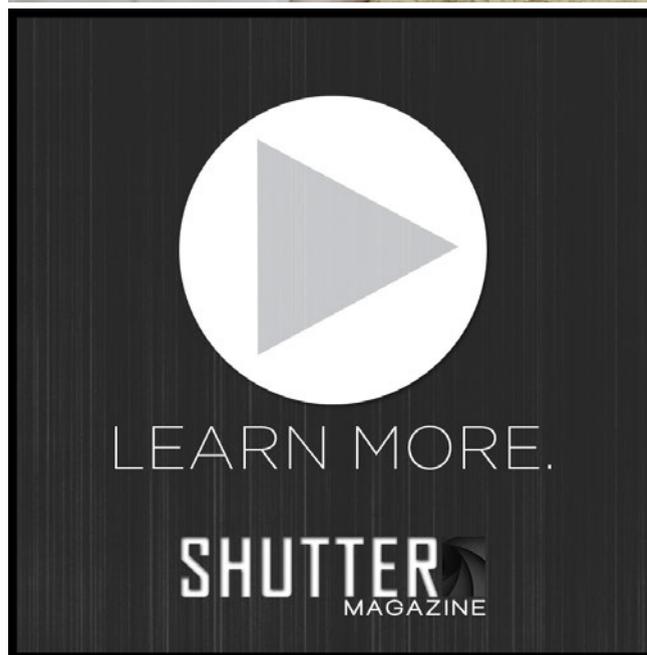
## DISSAPPEARING LIGHT

Light was disappearing at an alarming rate. We had maybe 10 minutes left, and I still had not gotten to my shot on the rocks. If I missed this, I knew I would be pissed at myself, because that is the one shot I wanted most. The team—models, makeup artist and all—scurried up about 150 yards to get set up while I set up at my location to shoot. My biggest mistake here (beyond the obvious—not leaving enough time) was that I left my walkie-talkies at home. In my bag, I almost always have them to ensure we can communicate no matter how far away we are. The worst part of all is that I looked right at them as I was preparing my gear stateside and thought, “Nah, I don’t need them this trip.”

I was screaming at the top of my lungs to get to the pose, which had to then go through translation and interpretation. I was then screaming lighting directions to my team to get the light positioned correctly. I was then screaming to Taylor, my wife, on how to throw the veil. Then I was screaming the countdown so everyone was ready. Three...two...one...pop. Reset, everyone. Three...two...one...pop. Again. The light was disappearing so fast and the communication was taking so long that we got only five shots. But in those five shots, there was gold. You are seeing my final shot of the day. Just a gorgeous shot of Tacyana on the edge of the cliff. Hope you love it as much as I do.

Lighting scares many photographers who are starting out. When I see someone advertising himself as a “natural-light photographer,” that always translates to “I am scared to death of off-camera light.” Get over it. Get out there and practice. It will change your portfolio, your look, your mindset. It will add a dimension to your work that’s just not possible without it.

And I promise you, after you do it, you will realize it’s not as hard as you thought, and you will wonder why it took you so long to try it in the first place. ■



*Check out Sal Cincotta's video here!*



THE

# LISTS

# TIPS

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1



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2



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3



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THE MOST  
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by **Blair Phillips**

After several years of using a reflector outdoors, I began searching for more inspiration. Just like every other photographer just starting out, I knew the time had come for my business to tackle off-camera flash. The public is exposed to so many impressive things, which means we must keep pushing the envelope.

Six years ago, I heard someone explain how to use off-camera flash, and I felt like it was way above my head. After several days of listening to people explaining how to use it, I was more confused than when I started. That is when I went out with my light and really thought through the theory of how to make it perform the way I wanted. The first order of business was learning how to overpower the sun.

The easiest way to instantly change your images is to use a simple formula to overpower the sun. Generally, I will put my subject's back to the sun. Use your camera's built-in light meter to determine the overall needed exposure for a natural-light image. Once your camera's internal meter is showing, you are at perfect exposure for your subject. Take a test shot with the light while making sure your off-camera flash is turned off. Now, underexpose the image by adjusting your shutter speed, aperture or both. Take another test shot, which should read underexposed on your histogram and appear darker on your camera back.



## THERE IS **NO REASON** TO COMPLICATE THINGS **ANYMORE.**

Now all you need to do is add light to your subject. Without adjusting your camera settings, turn your off-camera flash to half power and put it into the desired position. Now take the same image with the flash firing on your subject. You will need to do one of two things after you view the first image with the flash firing onto your subject: adjust the light output either more or less. It is really that simple. The most important thing to remember is to not adjust your camera settings once you get the image looking the way you want before adding the flash. If the image is too dark, increase the power output from the flash. If the image is too bright, lower the power output of the flash. There is really no reason to complicate things anymore than this.

One of the biggest reasons I began using this simplified method was to spend more time with my family. I also began paying attention to my expenses and profit margins. Back when I was waiting every day for the perfect light for outdoor pictures in the evening, I noticed I was working a ton of hours each week. Getting to the studio to work on the business side of things at 8:00 in the morning and getting home at 9:00 at night is not exactly as profitable as one may think. Photographers can be horrible at not including their time at work when calculating profit margins. I began adding up the total number of hours spent working and divided that by my profit margin. This was a complete wake-up call to push myself to learn OCF and be able to shoot at any time of the day. Why be self-employed if you are working twice as much for the same amount of money?

Let's jump into some of the tools and equipment that will make off-camera flash a breeze for you. The key to being very effective and impactful with OCF is to make it easily reproducible. For me, I had to put together a system that did not require an assistant to help me when on location. That means more expense, which puts one more variable into the equation.

The industry-leading camera companies all make very intelligent and robust flash units that mount to the top of your camera. On those bright days, one flash is simply not enough. I learned this early on with a senior session in the bright summer sun at 2 in the afternoon. I simply could not get enough light output from my flash. I was asking this poor little flash to do a job it was not really designed for. The batteries got so hot, the flash felt like it was melting from multiple full-power discharges. I went back to the drawing board and began using an AlienBees 800 with a Vagabond battery pack. This light has four times the amount of power as a single Nikon or Canon flash unit. It's a bit more difficult to lug around a studio strobe and battery pack than a single flash unit. For this reason, I developed a light cart. It is a cart that I mount my light, softbox, battery and camera bag onto that allows me to wheel everything around outdoors. This allows me to never carry anything and never disengage with my clients. The cart easily breaks down and goes into the car or a suitcase for travel.





There are several other ways to use OCF than overpowering the sun. I am sure you have been in situations in which an image would look so much better if you had a reflector. Off-camera flash gives you the ability to achieve that look without a reflector. The method is very simple and very effective. To use this method, compose an image as if you were using only natural light. Now put your off-camera light into the desired position and adjust the power to an output that is very low. Now take the image with the flash firing, and watch your subject's eyes absolutely come to life. Taking that image with only natural light can sometimes leave the eyes looking dark and lacking illumination. This great, simple method adds instant impact to your images that will inspire you through the camera back. Taking an extra step like this one will help you sharpen your edge and show your clients that you go the extra mile.

Have you ever wanted to shoot outdoors at night and maintain all the streetlights in your background? When you take your subject's image using your flash, the background goes completely dark. This can be so frustrating and confusing. The reason is that your flash cannot light your subject and then go way beyond them and light the background too. This is when I use my light as a "video light." My AlienBee has a modeling light that I use in situations like this. Turn only the modeling light on, and move it as close to your subject as possible. Make sure your transmitter is unplugged so the flash does not fire, as it will blind your subject. You are basically matching the light in the background with the same light coming from your light. In this case, you will have to shoot a much higher ISO since you are shooting these as available lighting coming from your constant modeling light. Think of it as having a low-power flashlight shining on them. I usually shoot these at 1600 ISO, an aperture of f/5.6, and a slower shutter speed to bring in all the ambient light in the background.

**TAKE AN EXTRA STEP  
AND SHOW YOUR CLIENTS  
THAT YOU  
GO THE EXTRA MILE.**

## INCORPORATE SMALL CHANGES ALONG THE WAY.

In everyday life, we are always searching for the next big thing that will be record-breaking. We spend so much time searching for something so epic that we lose sight of the opportunities that may be right before us. You have the ability to elevate your work leaps and bounds by understanding and executing off-camera flash. Sometimes incorporating small changes along the way is better than remaining stale for a long period of time, searching for a huge change that may never happen.

Your clients and business are very important, but always put your family before anything, and the rest will sort itself out. ■



*Check out Blair Phillips' video here!*



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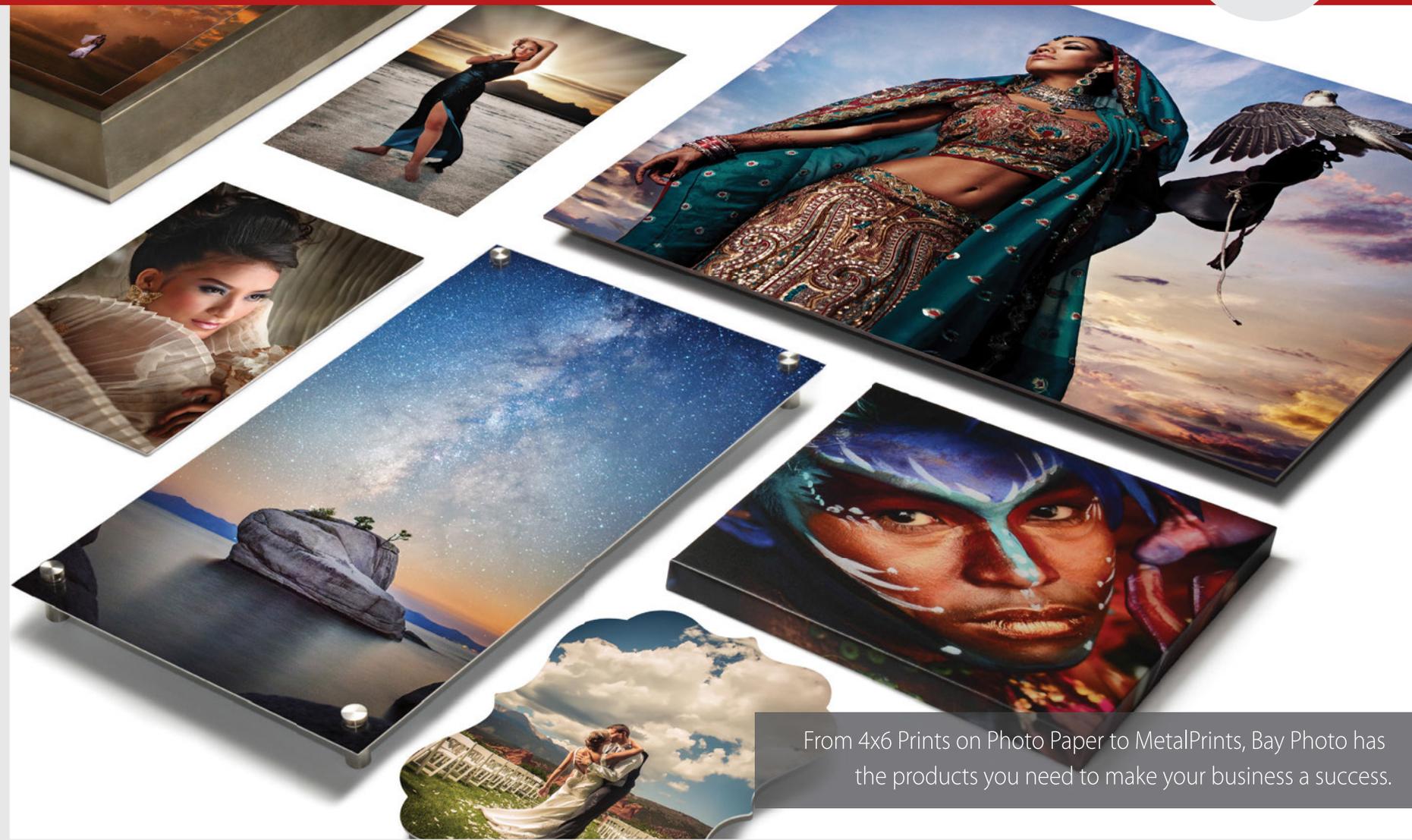
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# ATTENTION TO DETAIL:

**BETTER RESULTS WITH SHARPENING**

WITH DUSTIN LUCAS





BY DUSTIN LUCAS

As photographers, we always strive to stand out in this industry. In doing so, the editing process is becoming as important as the shooting. In my last article, I discussed different editing techniques that add grit to your photography. The next step is the sharpening process. Sharpening images after you've resized and edited them has become an automated process thanks to Adobe and other software companies. This is great for presets and automated workflows, but bringing back the subjective touch to your photography through sharpening gives you the flair to stand out.

Follow me through this article as I take an image through the advanced sharpening process to see the difference—and the proof.

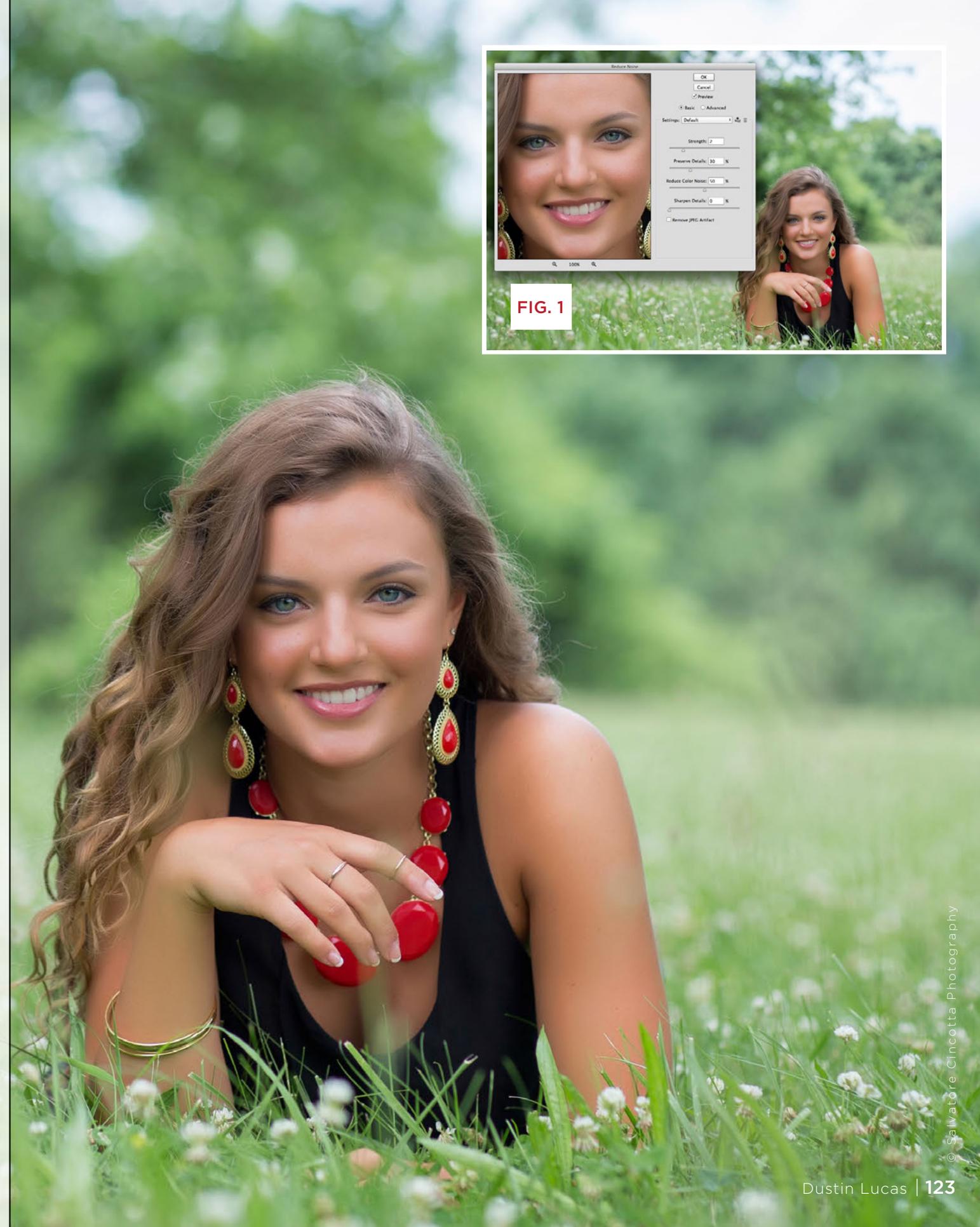
## STEP 1

There are four steps to this technique: reducing noise, sharpening for capture or source, sharpening for creative or content, and sharpening for output. Before starting these processes, you need to resize your image and flatten all layers. In considering noise reduction, this is a crucial step in the beginning of your post-production processing. As you edit your images, dodging and burning areas of the image will reveal and conceal noise. Unlike film grain, which is a creative resurfacing in digital photography, digital noise is a distracting element. We must remove any noise before sharpening, or we will just enhance the clarity of this distraction.

Let's begin by clicking in the menu bar on Filter > Noise > Reduce Noise. In my image, I chose the average settings: Strength at 2, Preserve Details at 30%, Reduce Color Noise at 50% and Sharpen Details at 0%. This image did not need very much noise reduction because it was shot in daylight at the correct exposure (Fig. 1). If your image was taken in low light or at an incorrect exposure, more than likely you will have noise to deal with.



FIG. 1



# THE SOURCE

## SHARPENING PROCESS

### STEP 2

Now let's look at the three-part sharpening process. I will begin with the capture, or source, technique with lens correction software to fix the blurring caused by the anti-aliasing filter or softening. Any number of reasons can cause images at capture to not be as tack-sharp as they should be, so don't worry about that. Worry about fixing it with these steps. Duplicate your base layer (Option + Command + J) and name it "Presharpen." Double-click this new layer and review the layer style dialogue box. Within blending modes, change it from Normal to Luminosity, and the Opacity from 100% to 66%. Opacity will come into play at the end to allow more or less of this initial sharpening to take effect. Move down to the Blend If settings, make sure Gray is selected, and begin moving the sliders, as I have. The This Layer and Underlying Layer should have the same adjustments made to them. (Fig. 2) The trick here is to hold the Option key while clicking the "blacks" and "whites" sliders to separate them for the values I am providing. Click OK. On the menu bar, click Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp Mask. These settings are dramatic and edgy, so don't worry if your image looks gritty like mine. (Fig. 3) Again, opacity will play a large role in reducing any oversharping. Click OK in the dialogue box. This completes the capture or source sharpening process.

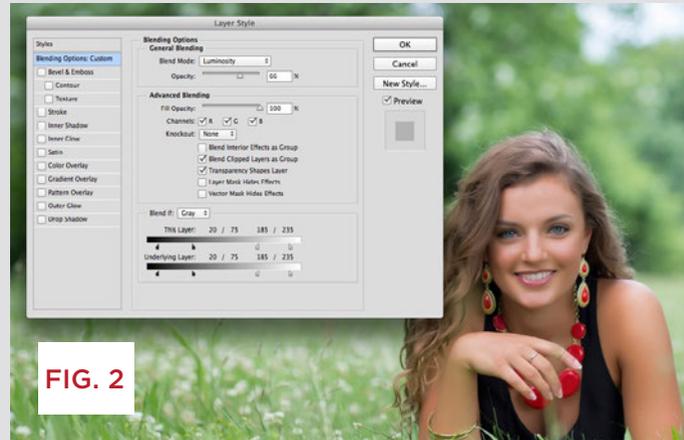


FIG. 2



FIG. 3

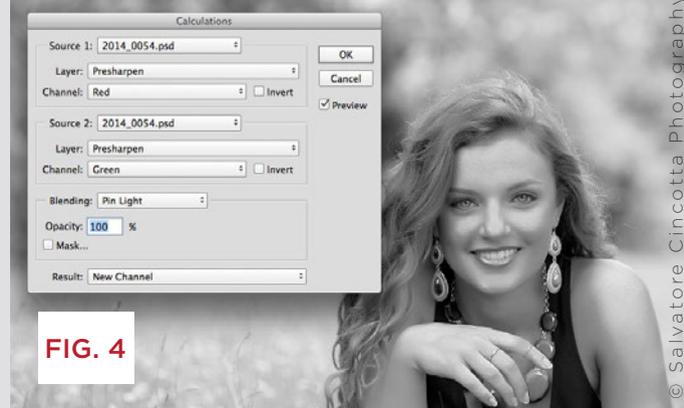


FIG. 4



FIG. 5



FIG. 6



FIG. 7



FIG. 8

Next we are moving into the creative steps—or content process—of sharpening. Select the Presharpen layer and then go to the menu bar and click Image > Calculations. This tool will aid in the creation of a layer mask for our total input sharpening process (Capture & Creative). You can see the settings I have selected in the Calculations dialogue box. Do the same, and then click OK. (Fig. 4) Next, go to the menu bar and select Filter > Stylize > Find Edges and then select Image > Adjustment > Invert (Command + I). Now we need to blur the image. Go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and set the radius to 0.8. On your Layers palette there is a tab called Channels; select it, and you will see a fifth channel called Alpha. Hold the Command key and click on the Alpha channel.

You will see the selection of edges in your image. Now, click on the Layers palette to get back to the Presharpen layer, and click on it. (Fig. 5) After clicking on the Presharpen layer, you must make a layer mask with this selection. Hold down the Option key and click on the Add Layer Mask tool at the bottom of the Layers palette. (Fig. 6) It looks like a little camera or circle within a rectangle. The purpose of a layer mask is to allow only this sharpening process to affect the Base/Background layer in specific areas. You must reselect the image and not the layer mask before making more adjustments. The last step is to resharpen the image. Select Filter > Sharpen > Unsharp mask and change Amount to 200%, Radius to 0.6, and Threshold to. (Fig. 7 & 8)

### STEP 3

STEP  
4

Output Sharpening is automated in many programs when exporting your RAW files by reducing your choices to Web or print applications. Again, I stress in all of my articles about different levels of control in the image-making process. This ability will give you better results. You need to control how your image is being sharpened and for what usage. These next steps will give you this control and the ability to test what works best for you.

Start by duplicating your Base/Background layer and naming it “Output.” As before, double-click the Output layer and make your adjustments as I have done. The key to moving the sliders apart is to hold the Option key while clicking the sliders. (Fig. 9) After clicking OK, go to Filter > Unsharp Mask and adjust the settings: Amount to 320%, Radius to 0.6, and Threshold to 4. (Fig. 10) Immediately after clicking OK, you must go to Edit > Fade Unsharp mask. If this option is grayed out, it means you have done a task after applying the Unsharp mask and must go back in your history states and repeat the last step. Adjust the settings in the Fade dialogue box: Opacity at 70% and the Mode to Luminosity. (Fig. 11)

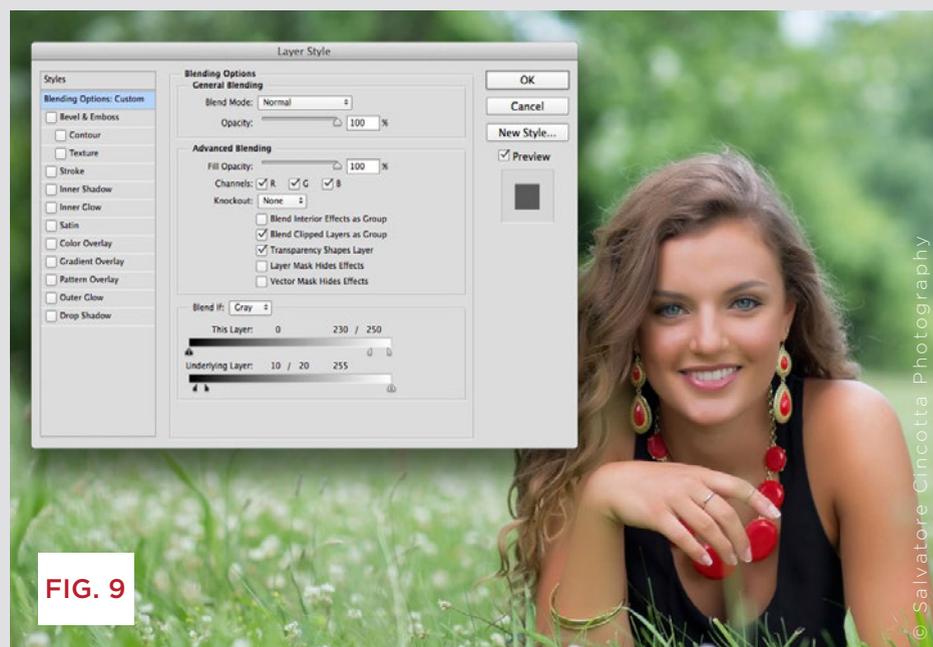


FIG. 9

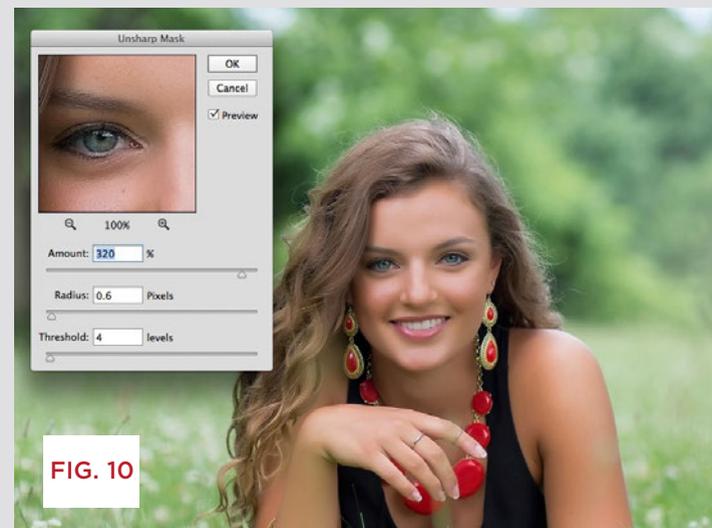


FIG. 10

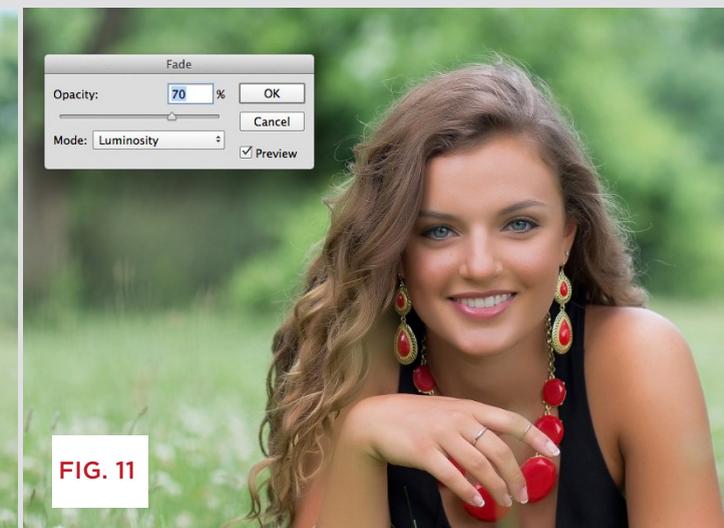


FIG. 11

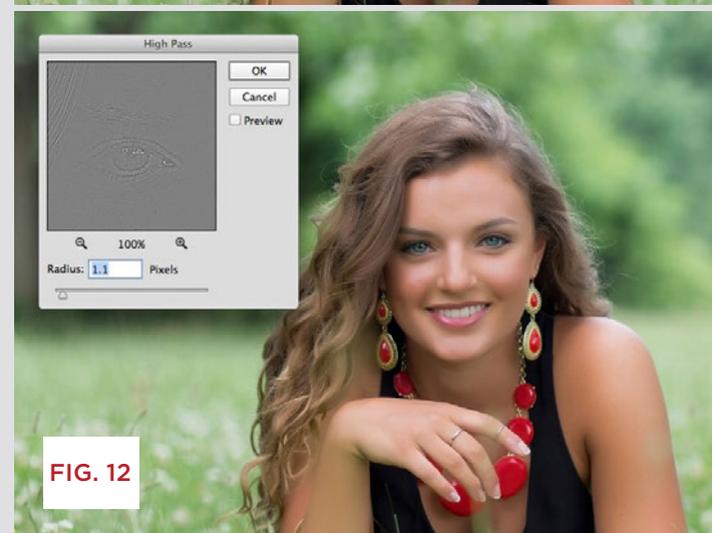


FIG. 12

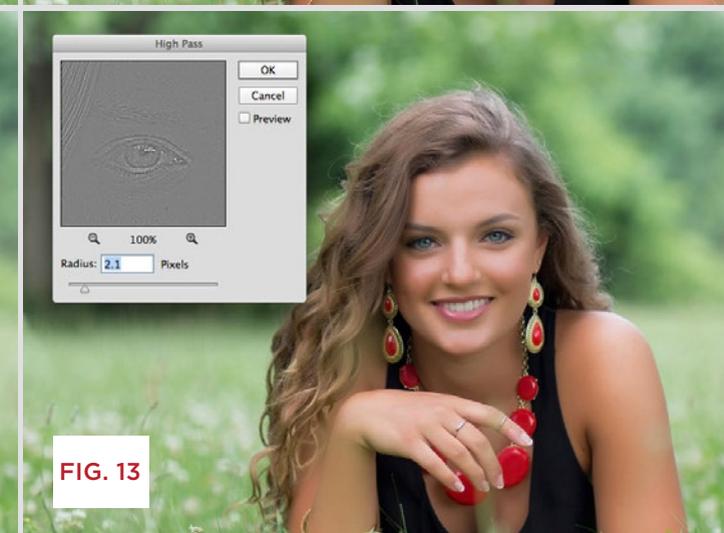


FIG. 13

Once you've clicked OK, you can adjust the layers blending mode to Soft Light, Overlay or Hard Light. These options increase the sharpening effect going from left to right. Also, changing the opacity of this layer to 50% allows the last step to be adjusted properly. Finally, the last step is Filter > Other > High Pass. Start with the slider at 0 and move to the right until you see the edges of the subject appear. (Fig. 12 & 13)

Once you have the desired setting, click OK and adjust the opacity of this layer in accordance with your output.

(Fig. 14 & 15)

I know this process is long and can seem like a daunting task to repeat for every image. Thanks to Adobe, you can create an action with these steps to create a semi-automated creative process. You have the control with these actions to click in the history palette to adjust images as needed. Along with blending modes and opacity adjustments, you have the ability to customize the amount of sharpening, whether you are posting to your blog or printing a large canvas. With purely automated settings, you are left with an “It is what it is” image and workflow. This Photoshop tutorial allows those tack-sharp images to stand out—so your portfolio will too. ■



Check out Dustin Lucas's video here!



FIG. 14



FIG. 15

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The screenshot shows the phototools.com website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for HOME, PHOTO, VIDEO, LIGHTING, CINEMA, RENTALS, BLOG, and ALL BRANDS. Below that is the site logo and tagline. The main content area features a product listing for a Nikon D810 Digital SLR Camera Body. The product page includes a price of \$3,296.95, a 4% reward, and free shipping. It also lists included accessories like a free phototool box, gadget bag, and memory card. There are social media sharing options (Like, +1, Tweet) and a 'Pin it' button. A video player is visible with a play button. The page also shows a 'Select Protection Plan' dropdown, a 'Select Accessories' dropdown, and a 'Quantity' field next to an 'ORDER NOW' button. Availability is listed as 'In Stock'. At the bottom of the product listing, there are several gear icons representing specifications: 36, 51200, CF/SD, 3.2", 6, and 1080. To the right, there's a sidebar for 'Essential Accessories' featuring SanDisk memory cards.

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# INSPIRATIONS

# Inspiration comes to us in many shapes & sizes

Put 10 photographers in a room and ask them to shoot a paperclip, and there's no telling what will happen. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why I love being a photographer. We all see the world in our own special way. Ultimately, though, nothing is truly new or unique. Everything is inspired by something that came before. In that spirit, this month we asked you, our readers, to submit some work you thought would inspire your peers. What you gave us blew away the staff here. Enjoy!



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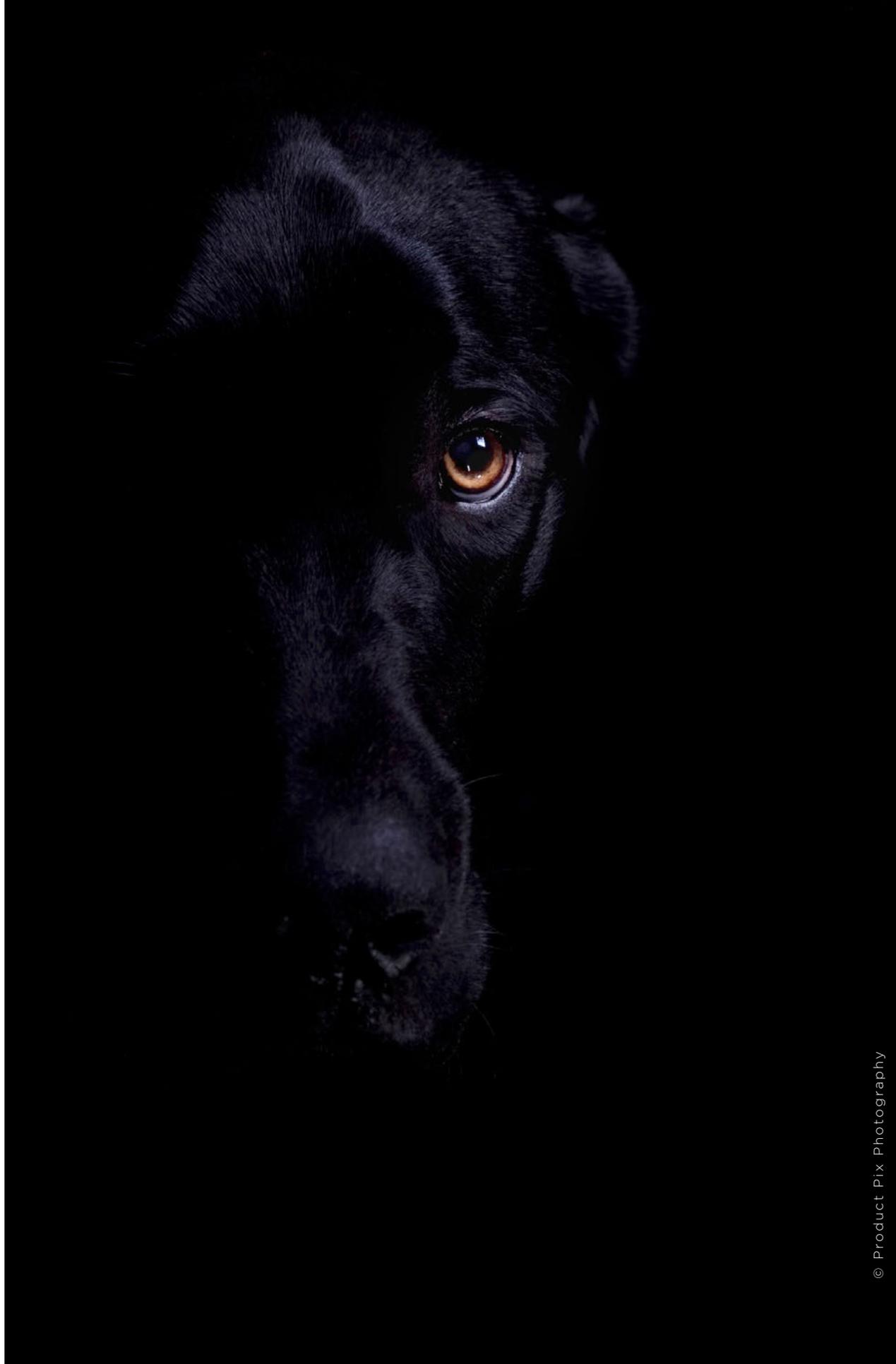
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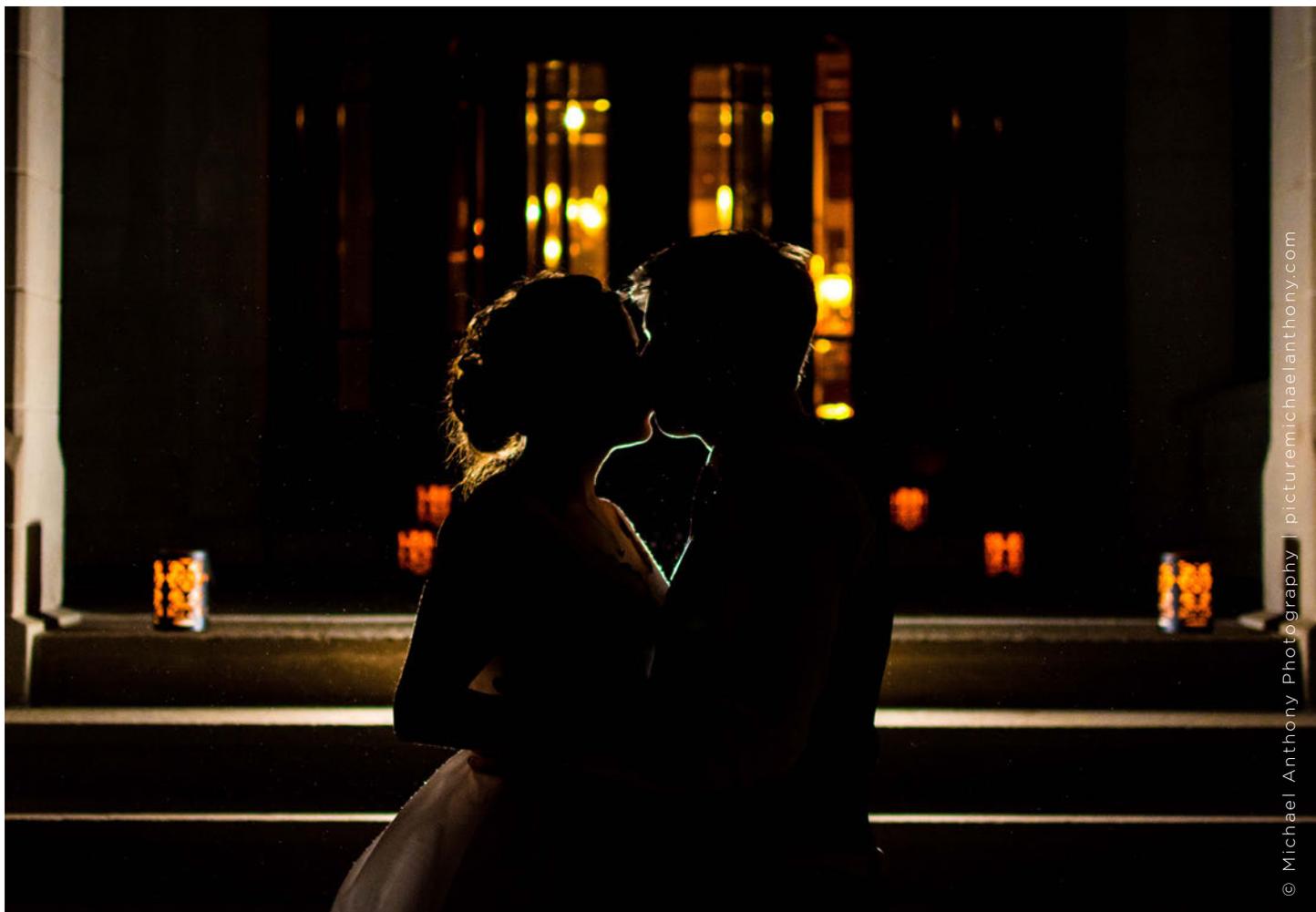
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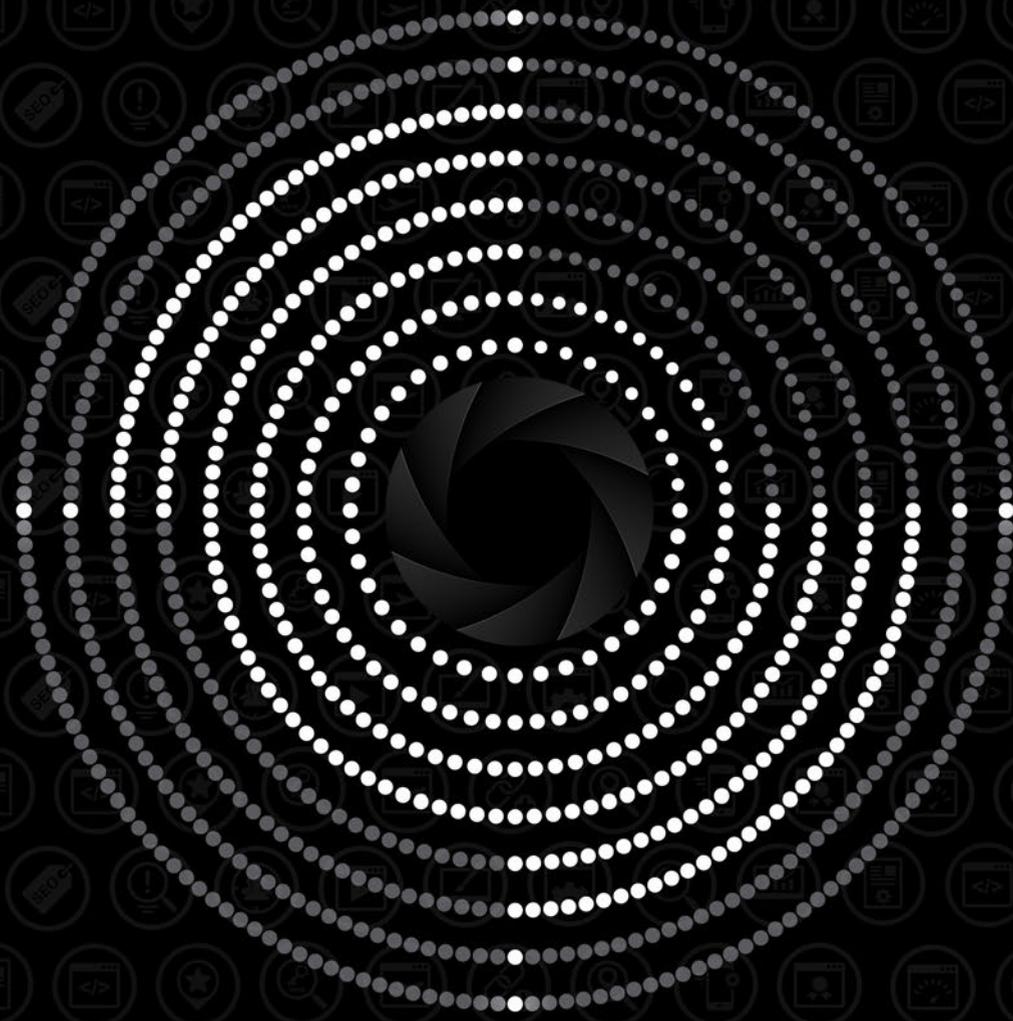
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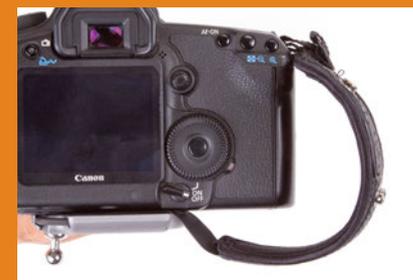


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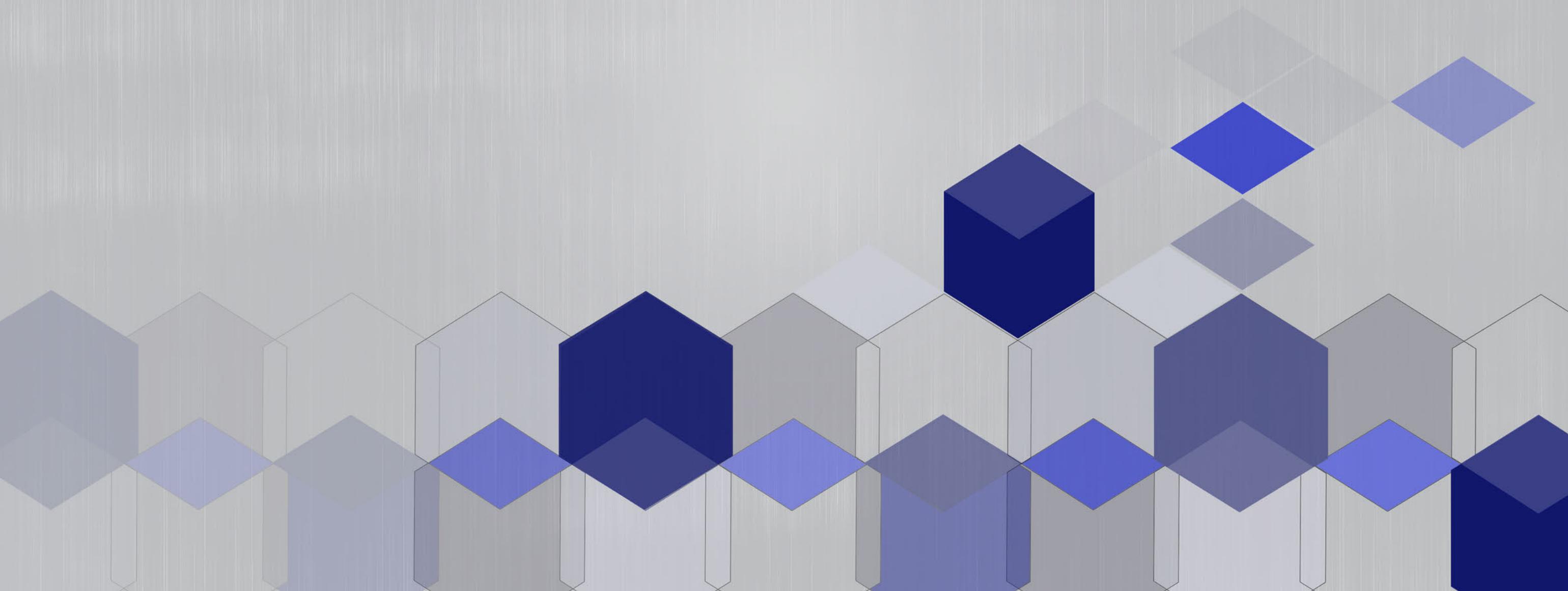


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# INSURANCE

WHAT TYPE  
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— WITH KRISTIN KORPOS —





by **Kristin Korpos**

No business owner should risk carrying on without the proper insurance. Many photographers realize all too quickly the importance of insurance protection, particularly equipment insurance. I remember the story of one photographer who left her photography equipment in her car while she made a quick stop for takeout. She returned to her car to find \$15,000 of gear long gone. Even worse, this meant she was out of business until she could replace that gear. It meant the difference between paying \$15,000 (without insurance) and a \$500 deductible (with insurance).

This is just one of the many types of insurance important to photography businesses. There's a handful of others that photographers should also consider, such as general liability and errors and omissions coverage. Equipment, general liability, and errors and omissions insurance are often grouped together in one policy. Let's look at these types of insurance.

## EQUIPMENT INSURANCE

This is exactly what it sounds like: insurance that covers your equipment. Many people mistakenly think that homeowner's or renter's insurance will cover the gear they use in their photography business. Generally, those policies exclude business property. For this reason, photographers need to purchase insurance to cover the loss or theft of photography equipment used in their business.

This insurance provides coverage for not only loss or theft, but also for accidental breakage. I heard of a photographer who fell off the side of a dock into a lake, and his gear was covered by his insurance policy. Many policies also extend to rented or borrowed equipment.

When you sign up for coverage, you will be asked to provide a schedule. This schedule is a descriptive listing of your equipment, including serial numbers for higher-priced items like cameras and lenses. This list must remain updated in your insurer's records, which is pretty easy to do as most companies have a dedicated email address or contact person you can send changes to when buying or selling gear.

The big question is how much this type of insurance costs. Premiums average around \$400 and up, depending on your location (are you located in a flood zone?) and how much equipment is being insured (costs will be higher to insure \$40K in equipment vs. \$10K). Many insurance companies offer the option to either pay for the policy in full or through a quarterly or monthly payment plan for a small service charge. This coverage is often bundled with general liability insurance as well as errors and omissions coverage.

If you only wish to insure your photography gear, you may be able to add a rider onto your existing insurance policy. Your insurance agent should be able to assist you.

## GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

Liability insurance covers bodily injury and property damage. Most policies obtained by photographers cover \$1 million to \$2 million in damages. The simplest way to explain this type of coverage is by example. Let's say a photographer is shooting a wedding and his heavy light stand falls on someone's foot, causing injury. The injured person requires \$1,000 in medical treatment. The liability policy will help the photographer cover payment for damages in situations like this.

Additionally, let's say a photographer is trying to get the perfect "dress" image when the wedding gown accidentally falls to the ground and knocks over and destroys a statue in the hotel. The insurance policy will help the photographer cover the replacement cost of the statue.

It is also important to note that some venues require photographers to carry liability insurance. A venue or client that asks you to provide a "COI" for the wedding day is asking for a certificate of insurance. The COI is a one-page document issued by your insurance company that proves you have insurance, lists your coverage limits and includes the name of the venue as the "additional insured" for the day of the event. This may sound difficult, but it is easy to get from your insurance company. Be sure to ask your clients well in advance if their venue requires a COI so you are prepared. Having liability insurance is the only way to achieve complete peace of mind.

“ IF THE **PHOTOGRAPHER IS NOT WORKING, MONEY IS NOT BEING MADE.** ”

## ERRORS AND OMISSIONS COVERAGE

Errors and omissions coverage, often referred to as E&O, defends photographers in professional service lawsuits. This occurs when a client alleges some negligence or wrongdoing on the part of the photographer that results in a loss to that client.

This could be a situation where a couple wants to sue the photographer because a particular image was missed during their wedding, such as the first kiss. This coverage is available with most policies. It pays for legal fees in these situations, as well as any settlements or judgments issued against the photographer.

## OTHER TYPES OF INSURANCE

While equipment insurance, general liability insurance, and errors and omissions coverage are the most well-known types of insurance, there are a few other types of coverage that are equally as important.

## STUDIO AND OFFICE INSURANCE

Photographers who have studios or offices will want to make sure they have property insurance coverage for those locations. Most insurance plans allow you to add this coverage for an additional cost.

## DISABILITY INSURANCE

What happens when a professional photographer is injured and unable to work? Because many photographers operate as a one-person studio, if the photographer is not working, money is not being made. But photographers with disability insurance receive money even though they are unable to work. Such insurance can be a lifesaver.

Anything can happen at any time, and it is important that photographers add protections for themselves and their families. Even if you're young and think nothing is going to happen, it may. While it can be costly for self-employed individuals to get disability insurance, it is well worth the peace of mind.

## HEALTH INSURANCE

I just read a statistic that one in four small-business owners do not have health insurance. This blows my mind. This may be a no-brainer, but if you do not have health insurance, get it!

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, if you do not have health insurance, you will actually have to pay a penalty to the government. If you didn't have health insurance coverage in 2014, when you file your federal tax return, you will either have to pay 1 percent of your yearly household income or \$95 per uninsured person, up to \$285 per household. While this does not sound too bad, those who do not have coverage in 2015 will pay a fee that is either \$325 per person without insurance within a household, up to \$975 per household, or 2 percent of yearly income, whichever amount is higher.

Organizations like Professional Photographers of America (PPA) give members access to health and dental insurance, which is a huge benefit. Additionally, self-employed photographers can visit the Healthcare.gov Marketplace to find coverage under what is commonly referred to as ObamaCare. While the cost of health insurance may initially seem too expensive, one nonserious medical problem can cost enough money to really screw up a person's finances and future. Don't let it screw you up.

## LIFE INSURANCE

A life insurance policy assists the family in the event that the insured person passes away unexpectedly. It helps replace lost income, cover debts, pay the mortgage, fund a child's education and more. It ensures there is a mechanism in place to provide for others in a worst-case scenario. We don't like to think about it, but we all have an expiration date. Enough said.

## THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS

Being a business owner is expensive. This is something that should be considered when leaving an employer to venture out into the world of being a full-time professional photographer. Many benefits are paid by or at least partially covered by employers. For example, an employer may pay for half of an employee's health insurance benefits and also provide term life insurance and disability insurance. When an employer covers these items, it is figured into the salary and benefits an employee receives. When a small-business owner pays for these items, it eats into business profits. This is why many professional photographers stress the importance of pricing services and products accordingly.

The next time a client asks for a "discount," remember the importance and cost of protecting yourself and your family. ■



*Check out Kristin Korpos' video here!*

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# SONY A7S:

**TOP FIVE REASONS  
TO OWN ONE NOW**

WITH  
JOE SWITZER



by **Joe Switzer**

There's nothing I hate more than new technology and nothing I love more than what new technology does for our filmmaking. So this is not your average camera review. I'm not a technical guy who enjoys reading manuals and telling you about the latest hacks and color filters. I'm a run-and-gun make-no-excuses video/photo guy who wants to dominate a shoot and provide the best damn video for my client. This article is all about my discovery and implementation of the Sony A7S on my shoots. It's been a few months now, and we have officially made the change from three Canon 5D MK IIs to (2) Canon MKIIIs and a (1) Canon C100, and today we are filming with (3) Sony A7S cameras. It's been a rocky road, frustrating, and eventually rewarding.

I don't care what camera you use, and neither does your client. When was the last time one of you was hired because of what camera you used? Nothing trumps relationships and how you interact with your clients. If you are sitting at home wanting to spend your life savings on this camera because you think people will hire you because you have the newest gadget, you're wrong.



## NOT YOUR AVERAGE CAMERA REVIEW ARTICLE.

This camera might be the greatest thing to come along in our industry since the Canon 5D, but it will not make you more money. With all my clients and relationships, not one of them would care about the difference in quality between our Canon 5D MK IIs and this camera.

The last thing I ever wanted to do was change from Canon. I know how they work and fully comprehend the menu and settings. My team has used Canon cameras for over five years, and all of us are in love with the brand, with over \$20K invested in their lenses. Why would I ever want to change when the entire company flows and operates with Canon?

My goal in this article is to help you make a camera decision. Read the Top 5 reasons to own this camera, but also read the Top 5 reasons why I don't like this Sony. Make up your mind at the end of this review and pull the trigger or stand by and wait for the next big thing to stir up our industry.



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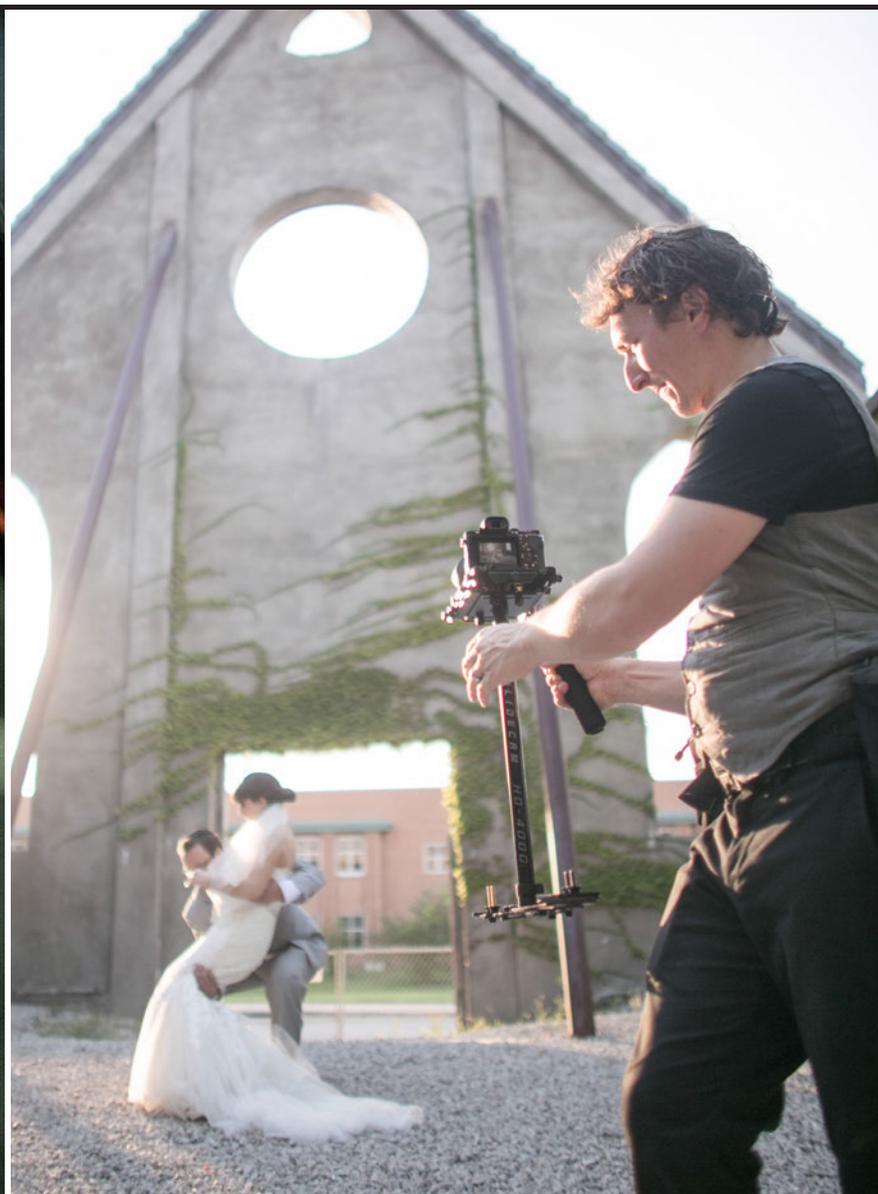
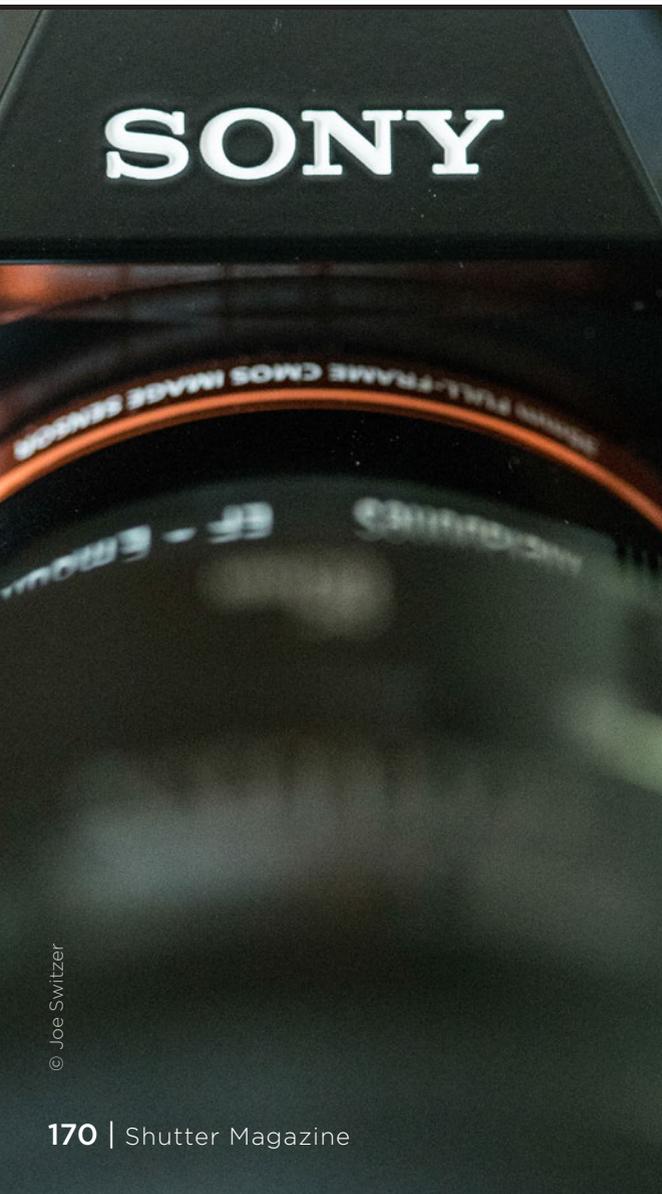


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# TOP FIVE REASONS TO OWN A SONY A7S



## 1 FOCUS

My company and I have always struggled with this one. It seems so simple, right? Just keep the subject in focus and hit the record button. The problem with my Canon 5Ds is that we couldn't magnify while recording. Because we film wedding ceremonies and don't hit pause, we can't exactly shut our camera down to refocus and then record again. The A7S allows me to record and zoom in to focus at the same time. This allows you to never miss a shot while recording.

## 3 LOW LIGHT

If you have read any reviews of this camera, you know that the No. 1 reason filmmakers and photographers choose it is that the A7S basically allows you to crank your ISO to whatever you want. 10K, 20K, 100K or how about 400K? Are you serious? This is ridiculous, and I'm a filmmaker who is always in situations of low light. I need all the ISO I can get, and the Sony A7S is the king of low light. Imagine the possibilities during last light or the middle of the night on your shoots.

## 5 SIZE

I work with four girls, and one is pregnant (my wife), so they don't help me carry around video equipment. If you're like me, you're shooting with little or no help carrying around all your video tools. This camera is so darn small—I'm traveling lighter than ever.

## 2 SLOW MOTION

For the last 10 years, Switzerfilm has implemented slow motion only a couple times in our films. Why? Our Canon 5D MKII and our MK III never had the option to record true slow-motion frame rates. Yes, I'm aware of Magic Lantern and downloading it to the MKIII to record slow motion, but that's not simple and easy. The Sony A7S allows me to record at 120 FPS. This means I can expand my creativity with shots of water, fireworks, confetti (just a few things that look cool in slow motion).

## 4 CROP

About 90 percent of the time when I'm on a shoot, I'm wearing a lens belt (made by Think Tank, which doesn't sponsor me, but should) with a 14mm, 50mm and 135mm. When I was filming with my Canon 5D MKII or the MKIII, I would always want to use a 24mm, 100 macro and a 200mm. With the A7S, I basically get six prime lenses instead of only three. Sony has a technology called APS-C Size Capture that allows you, with one push of a button, to change the crop on your lenses. At the end of the day, a guy like me who shoots with all prime lenses gets a few different shots from the same angle and lens. All I have to do is hit the APS-C button. In two seconds, I can turn my crop on and back off.

# FIVE NEGATIVES TO THE SONY A7S



1 Attaching lenses has a glitch with the Metabones. Just imagine you have a first look with a bride and groom, and you put on your 200mm lens and it's a black screen. What I've found is that you'll have five to 10 moments a day where you have to reattach the lens for it to work. It's a glitch I've found that is super annoying.

2 The record button is made for someone who has fingers the size of toothpicks. Countless times on a shoot, I'm struggling to hit the darn record button. If you have fat fingers, you are going to struggle for a while hitting the record button. Sounds so simple, but it's not. You'll see.

3 The battery cover slides out and the card cover slides open. At least a few times every shoot, I'm running around with my Glidecam or monopod, and I notice my card or battery slot is open and flopping around. It's just another annoying thing to worry about breaking. Most of you are probably not as rough with your camera as I am, so you won't need to worry about this.



4 The screen scratches. I've only had these cameras a few months, and they look three years old. My team and I are rough on our equipment, but you are going to have to be extra careful with the Sony screen. Put it in a safe place and make sure it has no contact with other equipment.

5 The battery doesn't last long. I don't like carrying around four extra batteries, but you don't buy a Sony A7S for its battery life.

The built-in Time-lapse application is the only app that I was interested in, and I must tell you, this is for me! In the past with my Canon 5Ds, I've always

had to have a time-lapse tool (or, as you video nerds call it, an intervalometer). In the past, it's been very inconvenient to grab time-lapses quickly. What a pain to make sure the time-lapse remote was packed, had a battery in it and worked. Before you get too excited, the process of buying this \$9.99 application is a real pain because you have a very annoying three-step process of connecting to Wi-Fi, signing up for Sony Entertainment Network and purchasing a credit in your wallet to buy the application. After 20 to 30 minutes of messing around, you will finally have your application. It's worth the time and money, but Sony should've just included this for free. Are you a lazy filmmaker who just wants to hit one button and have the application shoot your night, sunset or daytime time-lapse? This app will be your new best friend.

At the end of the day, the Sony A7S will cost you about \$2,500 for the camera. Batteries are \$50 each, and I carry five batteries per camera. I prefer a 128GB memory card because I don't want to ever feel like I need to be concerned with finding another card to shoot on. I have enough stress at weddings. Sony recommends a memory card higher than class 10.

So for about \$3,000, you can get started with the Sony A7S. The video below is going to show you how I'm using my video tools with the new Sony. Flying/Glidecaming has been my biggest problem for months with this camera, and I finally figured it out this week! 🎬



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