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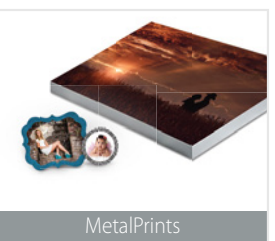
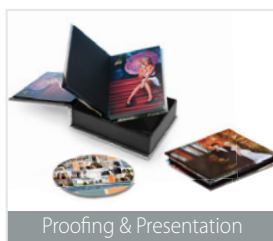
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MISSION STATEMENT

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.

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THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sal Cincotta | salcincotta.com

CAMERA: PhaseOne IQ250

LENS: Schneider 80mm 2.8

EXPOSURE: ISO 100, f/2.8, 1/400th

LOCATION: In Studio, O'Fallon, Illinois

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was shot in our studio in O'Fallon, Illinois. Follow more behind the scenes within Sal's article this month!

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— A MESSAGE —
FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
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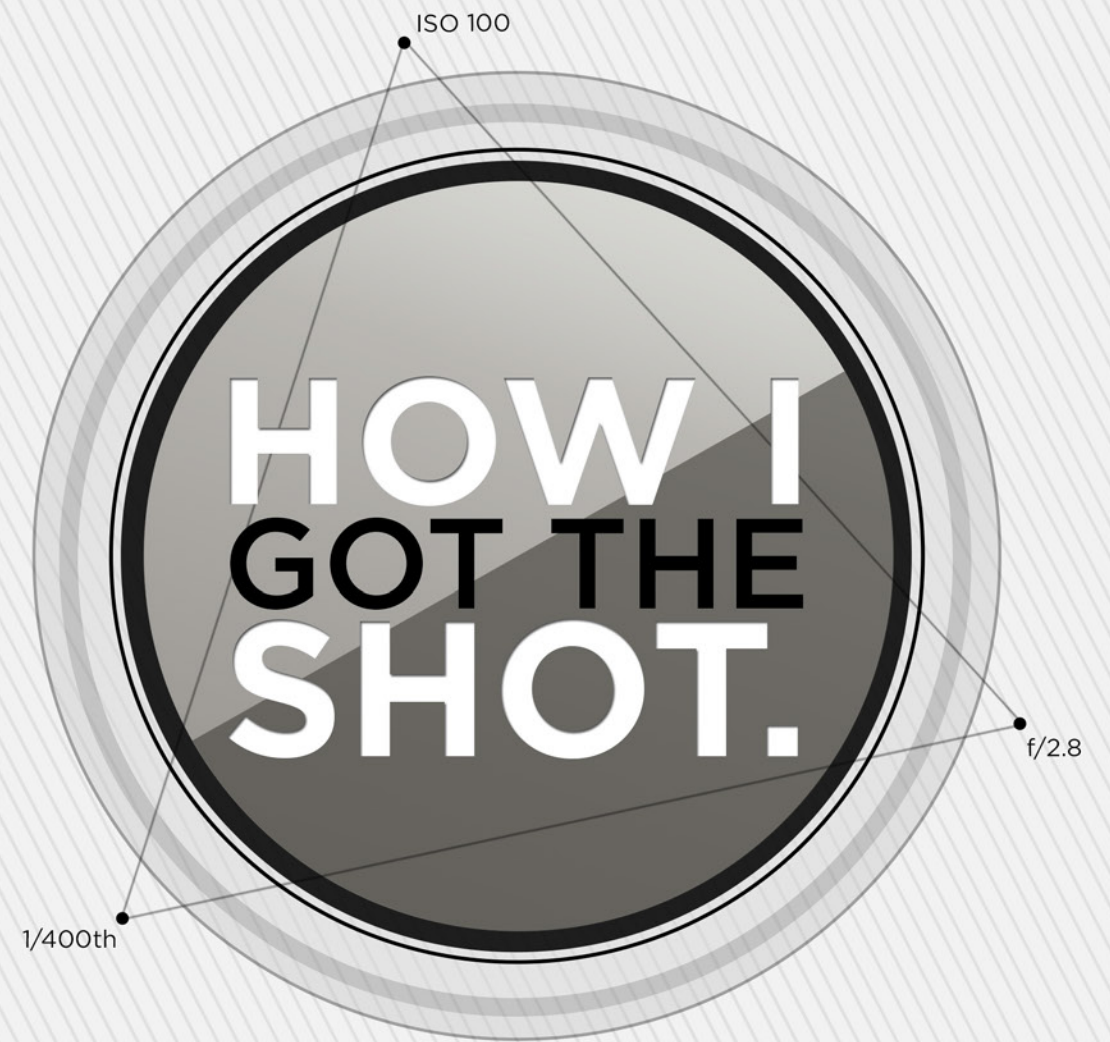
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BY SAL CINCOTTA

Last month we debuted “How I Got the Shot.” This month, we continue with the February cover shot featuring my model Heather. All right, let’s dig in.

[CONCEPT]

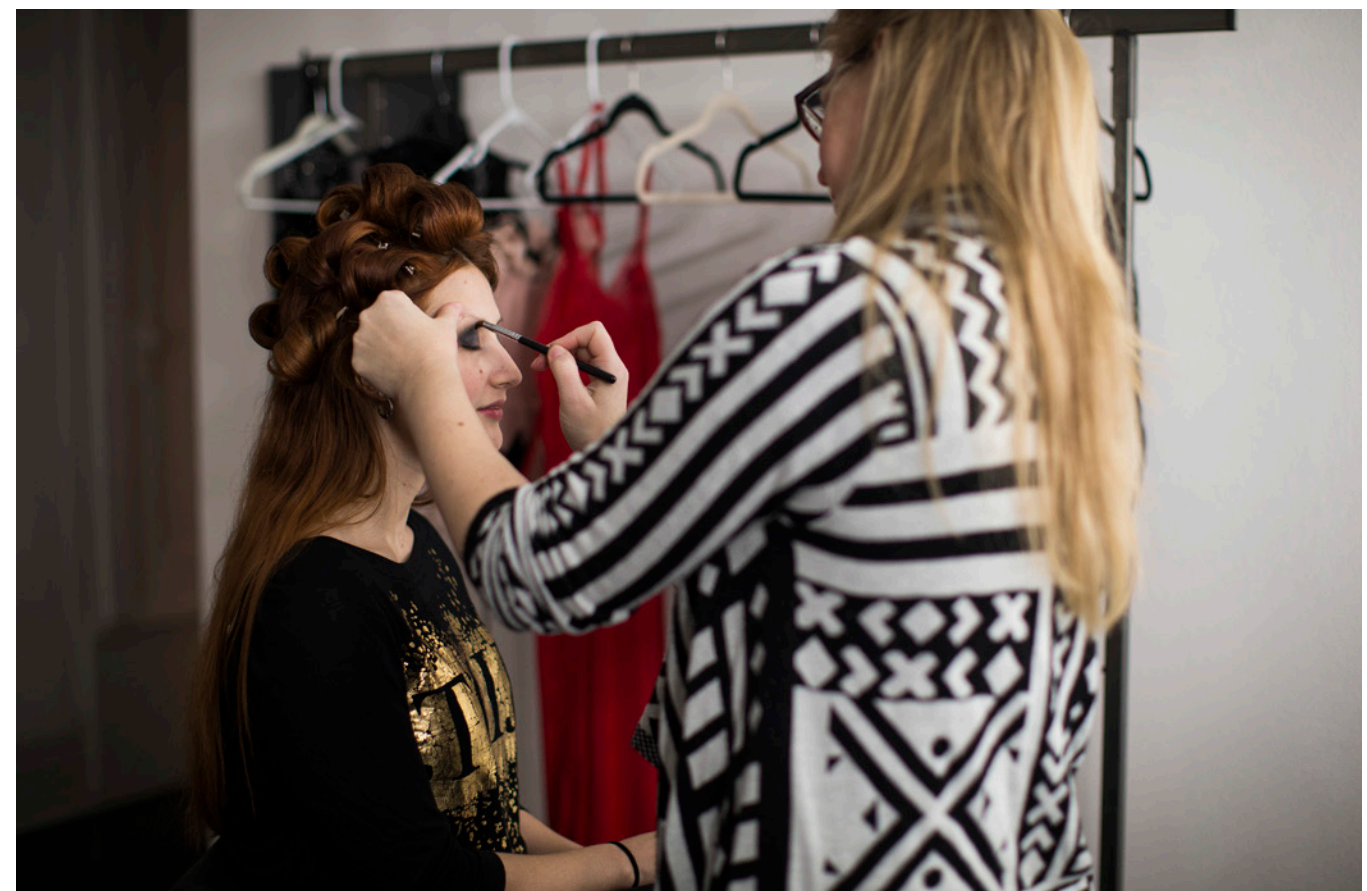
It all starts with a concept. I get asked all the time where I find inspiration. It’s everywhere. You have got to be an artist and start thinking like one. Be curious. I love to look at images, movies, advertisements, painting, etc. And from there, figure out how you can put your own spin on it.

As I am writing this article, I am sitting in London. Today, we went to visit the National Gallery and just absorbed everything we saw. We enjoyed artwork from the 17th century. We looked at several Rembrandts, and just dissected them. It was an incredible exercise, something I highly recommend.

As we sat planning the February cover, we knew we wanted to do something sexy. But we didn’t want to cheese out for Valentine’s Day. We wanted soft, dark, sexy, curious. Those were the inspirational key words for us.

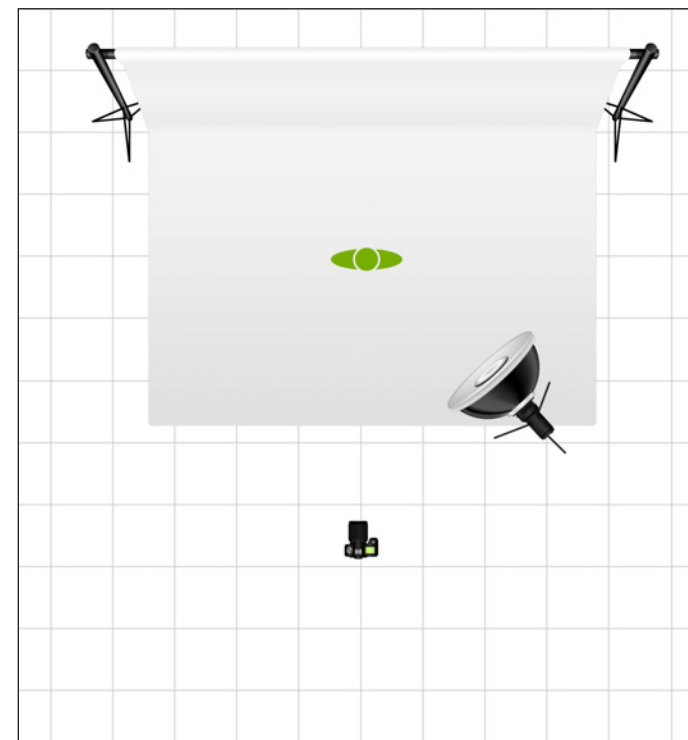
[MAKEUP]

On tap, our makeup partner, Aurora Lord of Make-Up Artistry by A&C. Hair and makeup can make or break your day. Direction was straightforward for this shoot. We wanted even skin tones but big red lips, just the color pop I was looking for. I also wanted big curls in Heather’s long red hair.





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[LIGHTING AND GEAR]

The shoot was in my home studio in O'Fallon, IL. We used the Phase One IQ250 and the Schneider 80mm lens, and I shot tethered. In addition, we used the Profoto D1 and started with their 1" x 4" Softbox RFi. From the beginning, I knew this would be a one-light setup. I was looking for a soft directional light. Like every shoot, I start with a test shot. I do this for the hair and makeup people to see what things are looking like and to make changes in real time. This is so important. You can fix it later, but some things are a nightmare in Photoshop. So, when you can, get it right in camera.

After about 20 minutes of trying, I just couldn't get the light the way I saw it in my head.

To get the look I wanted, I switched to the Profoto Softlight Reflector White beauty dish with the diffusion sock on it. This is gorgeous light, big and soft, exactly what the shot called for. *See the lighting diagram.*

Camera // Phase One IQ250

Lens // Schneider 80mm 2.8

Settings // 1/400th of a sec @ f 2.8, ISO 100





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[POST-PRODUCTION]

It's easy to overwork an image like this. That's where the art comes into play. You have to edit within your style and you have to find that place where the editing matches the mood you envisioned. It's not always a simple process. It's often trial and error.

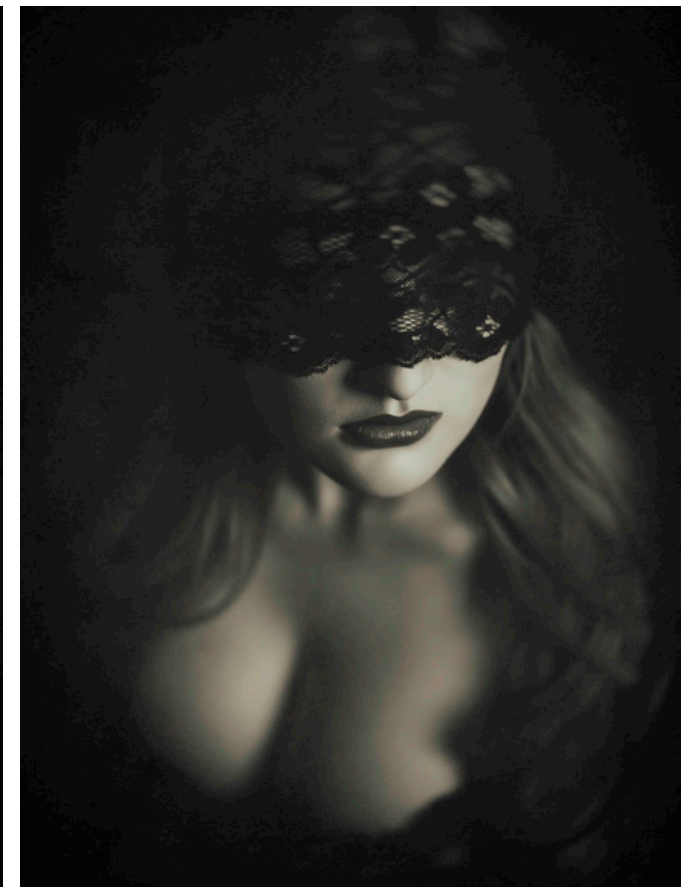
(Elite+ members, log in to your account to see how I made some of these adjustments in Photoshop.)

First, clean up the skin in Photoshop with tools like the healing brush and the stamp tool. The key is ensuring that the skin looks real; don't lose pore detail.

I then look to more technical issues: highlights, shadows and techniques like dodging and burning to get me to the primary focus of the image.

Once the corrective edits are out of the way, the fun begins. Maybe too much fun, because I came up with four different edits. I used Alien Skin Software's Exposure 7, and I love it. This amazing program gives you some great options for putting that final touch on your image.

Ultimately, we let the team vote on which image would grace the cover this month.



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[LESSONS LEARNED]

This turned out to be an incredibly difficult shoot for me. I just did not love what I was seeing on the screen. At first, it was the lighting and then it was the angle. Sounds crazy, but the angle can completely change the look and feel of the shot. I was straight on, on one knee, and then, finally, crouched on a stool to get the perfect angle.

The next struggle was with the lighting. Every time I plan for a shoot, I think I know what light I want, and then I realize I have to pivot and adjust. This shoot was no different. Shooting tethered allowed me to get the shot to look exactly the way I wanted.

The lesson learned for me was to push through the struggle. Every shoot, every genre presents its own set of challenges. What are you going to do? How will you push through it? How will you grow from it? That's the way I looked at it. I learned a ton, and that ensures I continue to grow and evolve as an artist.

Now, get out there and find your own February inspiration. 📸

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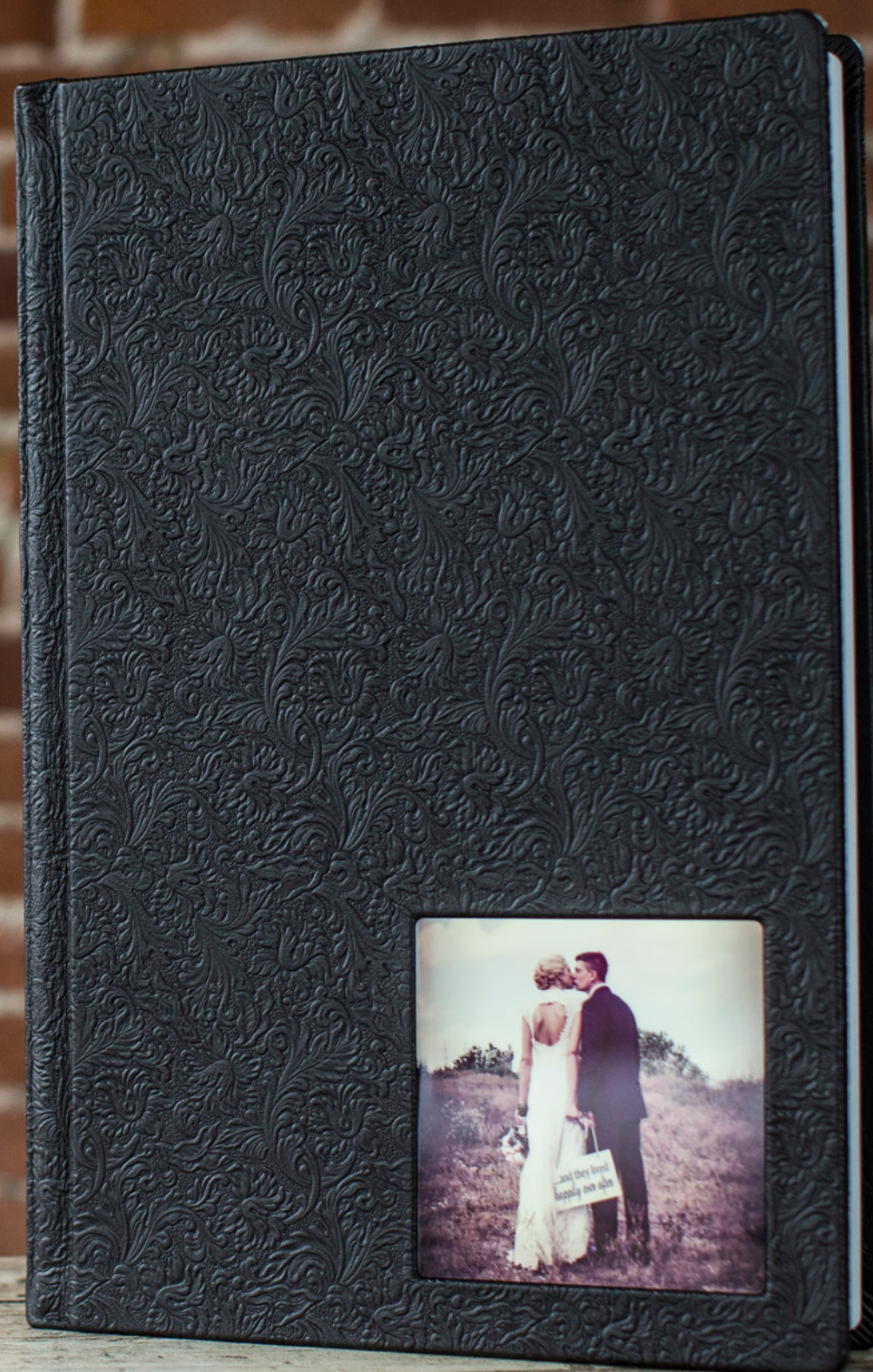
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CONSTANT
FLUORESCENT
LIGHTS

WITH CRAIG LAMERE



© Craig Lamere



by **Craig Lamere**

There are a million light sources and a million options out there today for shooters when it comes to studio and location lights. This month, I'm going to talk about one of my favorites: constant fluorescent lights.

When I started out, I shot on the cheap, which meant using good old sunlight on location. Here in Idaho, you can't really shoot outside between December and April, so I knew I would have to figure out a way to light inside. At that time, the only artificial light I was using was a speedlight, which I really didn't understand other than to put it on my hot shoe and hit a button. I had not used strobes or anything else, so I started to research what I should get. I started reading and studying some of the different light sources: strobes, tungsten and fluorescent. I narrowed down my choice to either strobes or constant fluorescents. It was easy to rule out tungsten "hot lights" after learning how they could melt your modifiers and burn your skin, and because they take

hours to cool down after shoots. I ended up buying a generic brand of constant fluorescents lights. I did not buy them because I thought they were the best lighting option. I got them because they were the least scary of all the other light options, and because they seemed to be the easiest to use.

I put them in my TV room in front of a backdrop, and that was the beginning of Moz Studios. They were as easy to use as I had read. You just turn them on, adjust the height and angle, and start shooting. I shot with my constants for about four months. They were great, and they opened a new world to me. Everything I read said to shoot at f9 to f11 inside. My room was so small that with all my constant lights on, I was able to shoot at that range with them. When I decided to move out of my home and into a studio, I packed my constants away, bought strobes and never really thought about them for almost six months.

CONSTANT LIGHTING



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STROBES

At the studio, I was shooting with strobes at f9 to f11. I was completely happy with what I was getting. As my shooting progressed, I was seeing more work that was shot open, very narrow depth of field, with lots of fall-off; I was really wanting to shoot that style for my glam and boudoir in the studio. One day I was shooting boudoir with a client with my strobes. I wanted that soft light and narrow depth of field so my subject's eyes would be in focus but the rest of her would fall off. I chose my 85 L 1.2 at f2 because of the compression and the sharpness.

I set everything up for my shot. I put my strobes in a position to create the light pattern and set my lens to the f-stop I want for the best depth of field. I turned the power of my strobe to its lowest setting and also made sure my ISO was at 100 because I knew with my lens wide open, I would not need a lot of power to expose my shot. I metered my shot, and, even with the ISO and the power at their lowest settings, I was still metering at f5.6 on my subject, which was a long way from the f1.8 I wanted. The fastest solution to the problem would have been to just move the light farther away from the subject and therefore decrease the f-stop, but the tradeoff for doing this would have been loss of control of the light.

A lot had changed in my understanding of light and the properties of different light sources. Once I actually remembered I had my constants, they were a game changer for the looks I could create and the versatility I had in my studio. At the time I was shooting them in my home, I didn't understand how easily they could replicate soft, pretty sunlight. I didn't understand how you could use them to supplement ambient light to make your images really sing. But once I did understand, it was a no-brainer to have

them as a fixture in my studio, since they solved some shooting problems and I loved the light. I get asked a lot about the best lighting for studio, and I tell people it really is all about what you want that final product to look like. Every light source acts differently. Constant fluorescent lights are very soft and not very specular. The light produced is soft, diffused and natural looking. They're perfect for natural-light shooters who want more light control than they get with natural light and a reflector. They are also fantastic for studio strobe shooters who want to add another dimension to their arsenal.

LIGHTING BRANDS

The brands include SweetLight Systems, Westcott (which I used to shoot), Kino Flo and Interfit. The actual bulbs are pretty consistent across the board. They are primarily daylight balanced at 5500K. You can get other temperatures, but 5500 is the most common. Most heads come in either three-, five- or six-bulb configurations. The mechanisms are very simple and about the same for each brand. All you have to do to get the amount of light you like is either turn more of the bulbs on or off by flipping a switch. Most companies have modifier options. For the most part, they are proprietary to that company's head. Unlike regular softboxes, where all you have to do is change the speedring to make it compatible with any head, with constant fluorescent lights, most of the time the base of the constant serves as the speedring too, so only that company's modifiers will be compatible. All the companies have boxes and strips for them. Probably the biggest differences in the units is how each company has constructed the head or the materials they have used. Some are built like tanks and some are pretty fragile, which was the problem with my generic set. They broke pretty quickly.



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CONSTANT FLUORESCENT LIGHTS: PROS

GET WHAT YOU SEE

The biggest benefit is the "get what you see" light. When shooting strobes, you use the modeling light to give you a good idea as to where and what you are lighting. This varies by power level of the strobe and what modifier you are using with the strobe. A lot of the time, you are only getting an idea from the modeling lamp. Constant fluorescent lights are better than strobes because what you see with your eye is what you

are going to shoot—there is no extra power or unknowns as to how the light will react to the modifier.

HEAT

One of the great things about constant fluorescent lights is that there is almost no heat, which is the polar opposite of constant tungsten lights that will melt your modifiers and burn you and your studio to the ground if you let them. You can shoot all day with constant fluorescent lights and put them away within minutes of shooting.



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PERFECT LIGHT

They are as soft as warm butter. The light that comes from constant fluorescent lights is so perfectly soft and nonspecular that everything it hits looks great. It really is the closest to soft, natural, diffused light of all the light sources I have shot. A lot of people say you can get the same look from the right modifier with a strobe, but I disagree. I have every mod on the planet, and I've never gotten the look I get from my constant lights.

EASE OF USE

It is very easy to create exactly the image you want if you understand what it is you want. In fact, they are so easy to use that you will get good stuff if you just point the light at what you are shooting with no plan.

METERING

I treat my constant fluorescents like natural light. I meter the same way I do outside, which is in-camera metering. With my strobes, I have my light meter constantly running back and forth to my subject to make sure I will not clip or blow out anything, but with constant fluorescents, you just pick your metering mode in camera, and when you have the exposure you want, just shoot.

— | CONSTANT FLUORESCENT LIGHTS: CONS

POWER

Without a doubt, the No. 1 weakness of constant fluorescent lights is power. The only way to increase the light output is to add more bulbs to the head. Most manufacturers are somewhere between four and eight bulbs, so you are limited in how much illumination you can get.



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VERSATILITY

When you compare what you can produce with a bank of constant lights versus what you can produce with a strobe, the constant light comes up short. You can pretty closely replicate the look of a constant light with a strobe using the right size of modifier and enough diffusion, but you cannot replicate the hard light or the specularity of a strobe. If you use a lot of different types of light or like a lot of hard shadows, then constant fluorescent light is probably not the best choice for you.



OUTSIDE USE

The main limitation of outdoor shooting relates back to the power issue. For all intents and purposes, constant fluorescent lights are only effective indoors and only at a certain distance. Unlike a strobe, the constant lights just do not have the ability to overpower the sun due to their lack of power. Also, to use constant fluorescent lights outside, you need either a mile of extension cords or a generator.

There is no one light source that does it all, and each one has its good and bad points. If you are a new shooter who is trying to figure lighting out or if you are a natural-light shooter who wants to add some artificial light to enhance what you are doing, I can't recommend constant fluorescent lights enough. ■



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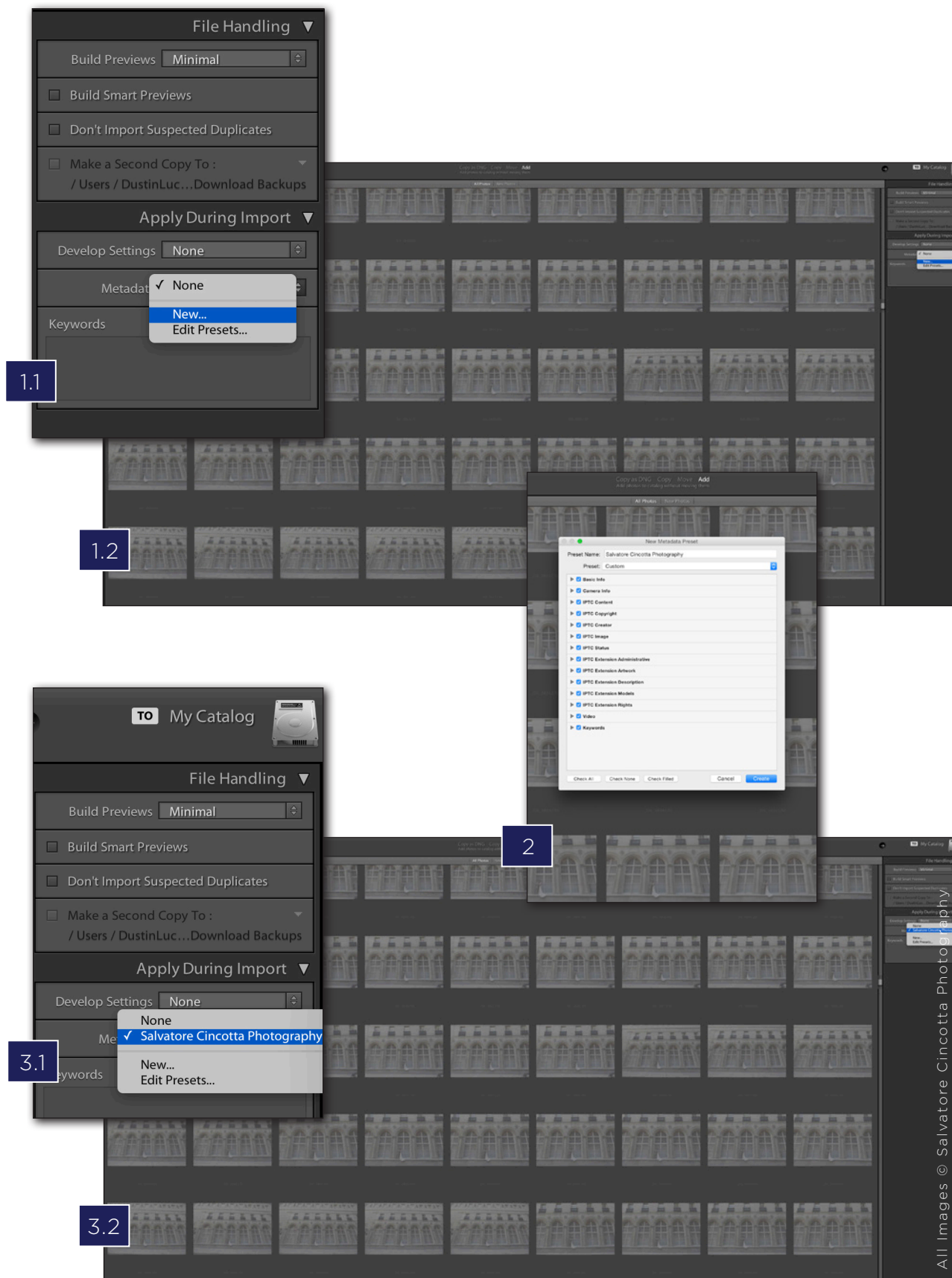
In my past few articles, I stressed efficiency in workflow. Whether you are outsourcing your editing or painstakingly punching the keyboard all night, you need to take into consideration the time spent between the event and delivery. What's your turnaround time?

Without getting heavy into business practices, I want to focus on the digital side. After loading all your cards, backing up files and culling your favorite images, you are ready to begin the hours of editing, right? This is the time for your artistic abilities to shine as you treat all your images as separate works of art.

So your question at this point should be: What's the solution for editing artistically and efficiently? The answer: Lightroom presets!

Lightroom presets are a game-changing tool for editing large batches of images. I use them daily, and have never looked back. If you haven't tried presets, stop resisting change and follow my guide. Let's start by figuring out what Lightroom presets are.

A preset is a tool that allows you to save your settings in Lightroom. Settings such as metadata, develop, export, etc. are the most commonly used presets. Starting with metadata, you will want to create a preset for your images before importing in Lightroom. Open the import window, click in the metadata preset box under Apply During Import, choose New, name your preset and fill in all the IPTC data (Figs. 1.1 & 1.2). Check the boxes at the end of every line you wish to save. Click Create, and you're done (Fig. 2). Now you can import all of your RAW images with this information saved in the .xmp file. For future imports, you can select the saved metadata preset, and this will streamline your workflow (Figs. 3.1 & 3.2).





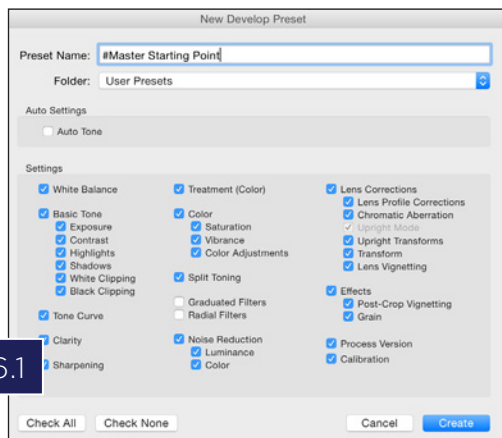
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Editing is time-consuming and stressful. This is why I have to use presets in my workflow. If you've never created a preset, it's simple. Start by going to the Develop module in Lightroom, and make slider adjustments to an image. See Figure 4, which is how I usually start editing. Take some time to figure out different settings to act as a base for editing. I suggest making adjustments that can be globally applied to large sets of images.

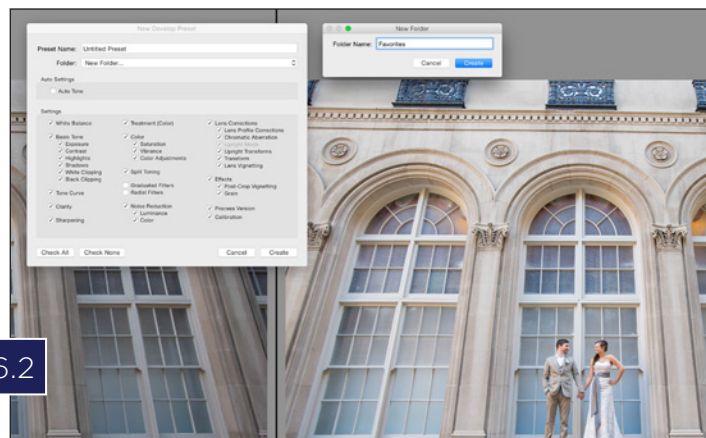
Generally, I leave the white balance and exposure As Shot (Fig. 5). Tools like adjustment brushes, cropping and spot removal are useless unless you are shooting on a tripod and your subject doesn't move. Once you have finished with the develop settings, press Shift + Command + N. A dialog box opens where you can name the preset, create a folder to store it in and select all the categories that you want to affect (Figs. 6.1 & 6.2). I always leave adjustment brushes, cropping and spot removal unchecked (Fig. 7). The reason is that if you sync these settings globally, you can override or apply wrong adjustments. After you click Create, your preset will appear in the folder you have chosen in the left panel of the Develop Module (Fig. 8).



5



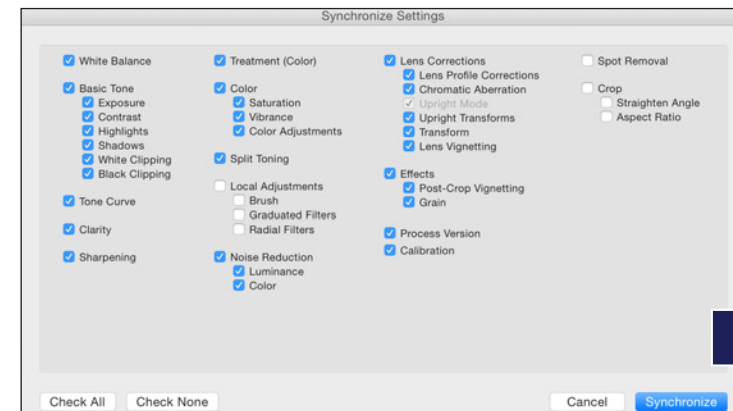
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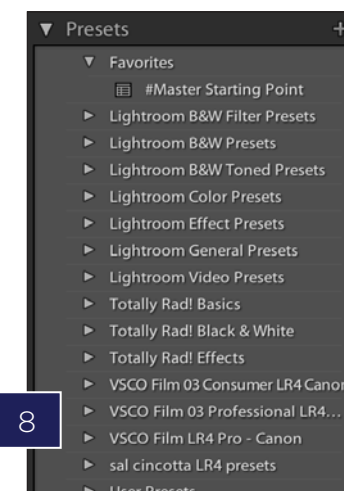
6.2

There are many ways you can apply a preset in Lightroom. I suggest applying them after you import your photos into your Lightroom Catalog. This is important if you edit with a Before and After preview. When you apply a preset at import, the B&A images become the same and you won't have the As Shot preview. Even if you choose the Reset All in the Library module under Quick Develop, you still have the preset applied to the Before preview (Fig. 9).

Do not apply the preset at import (Fig. 10)!



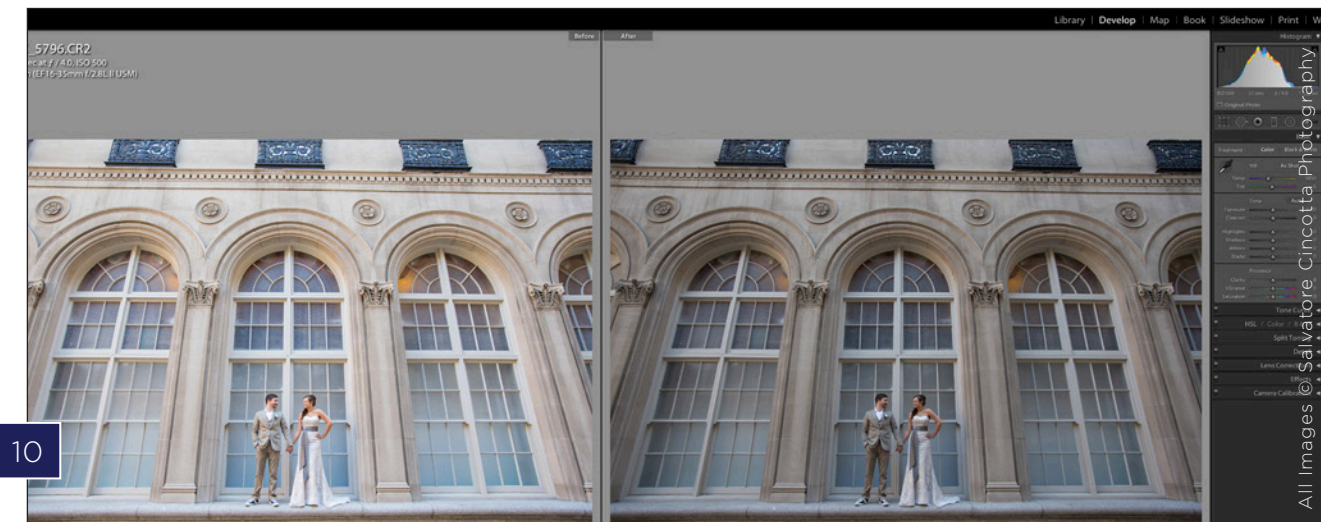
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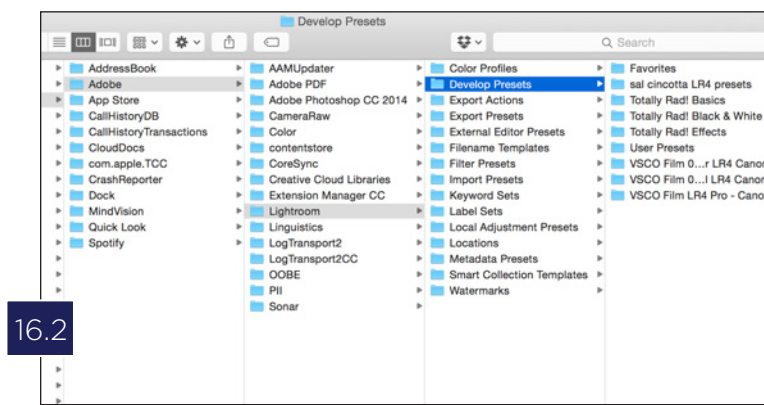
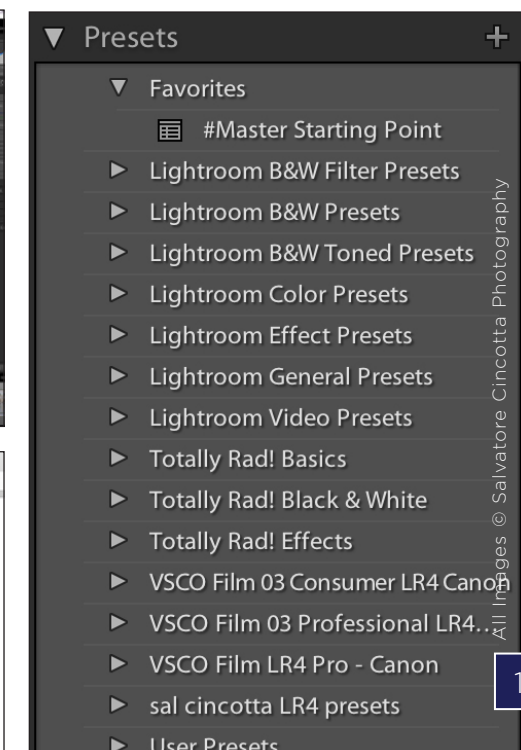
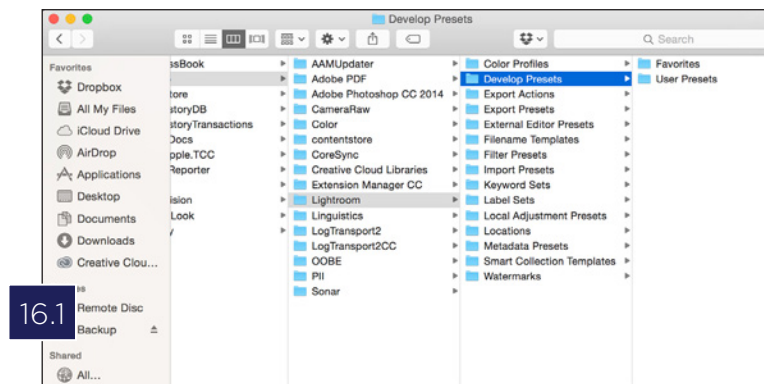
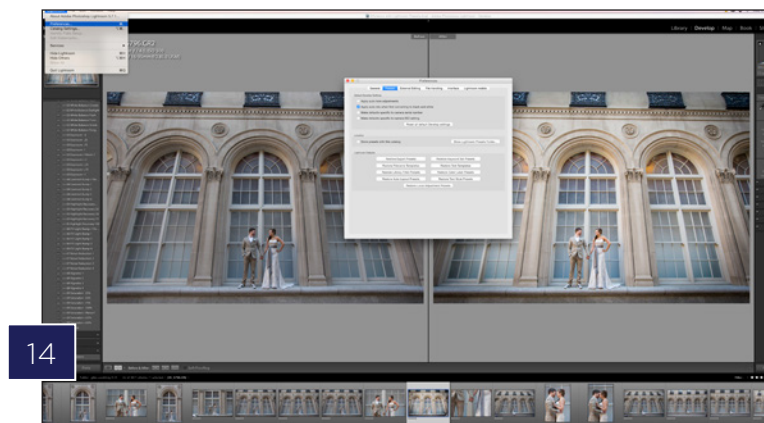
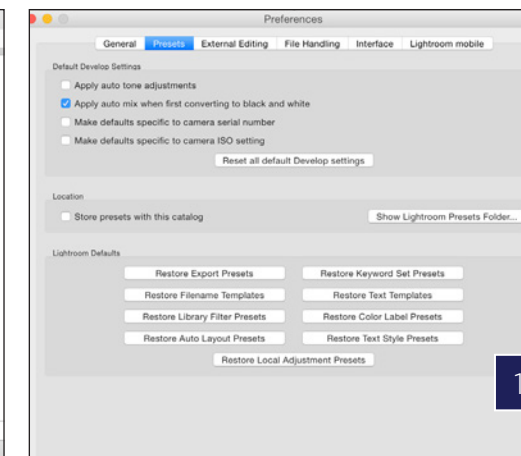
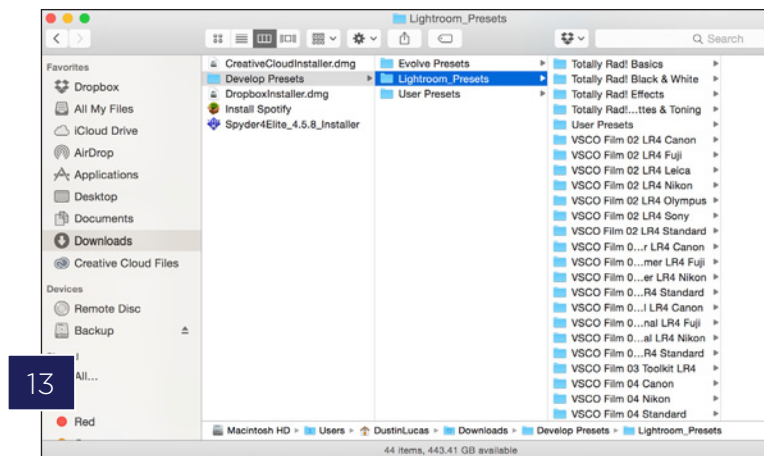
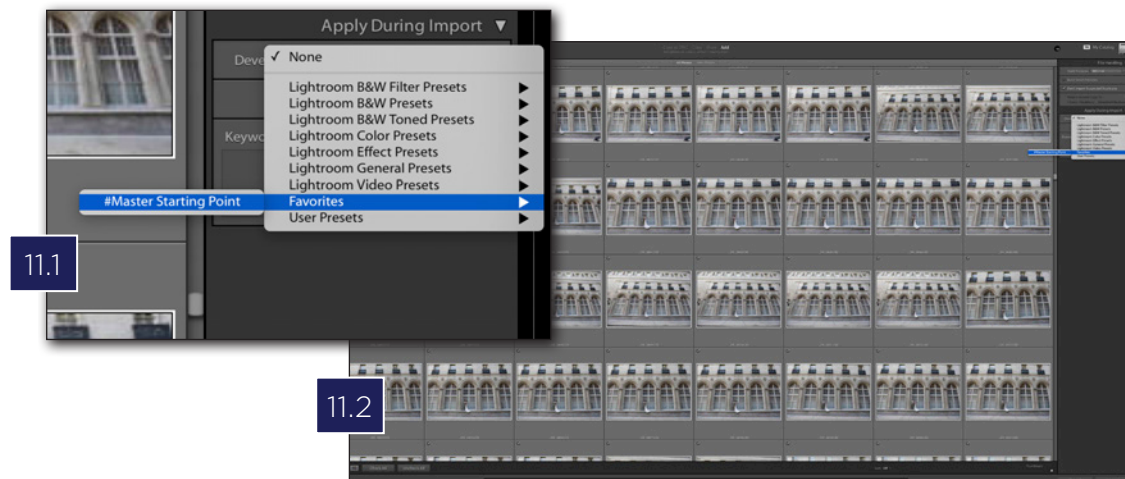
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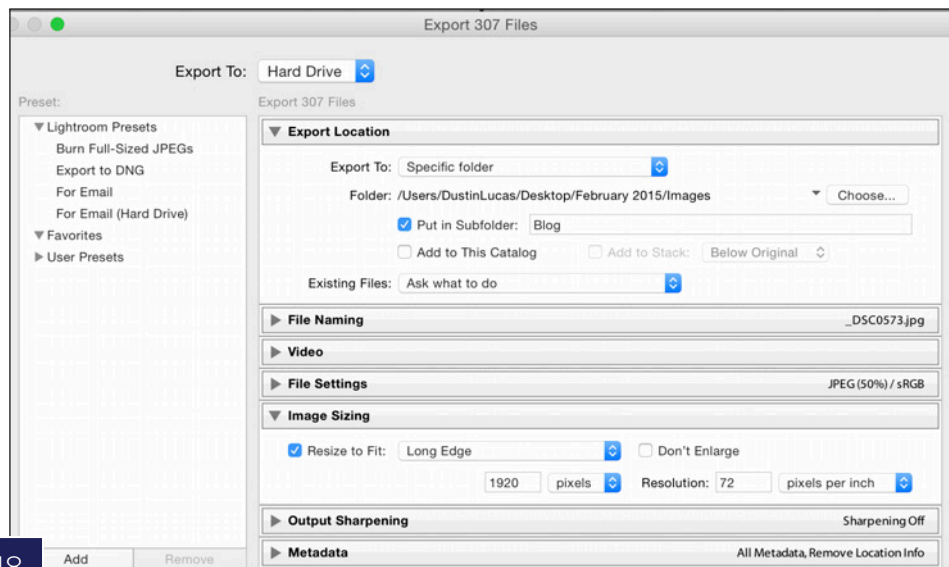


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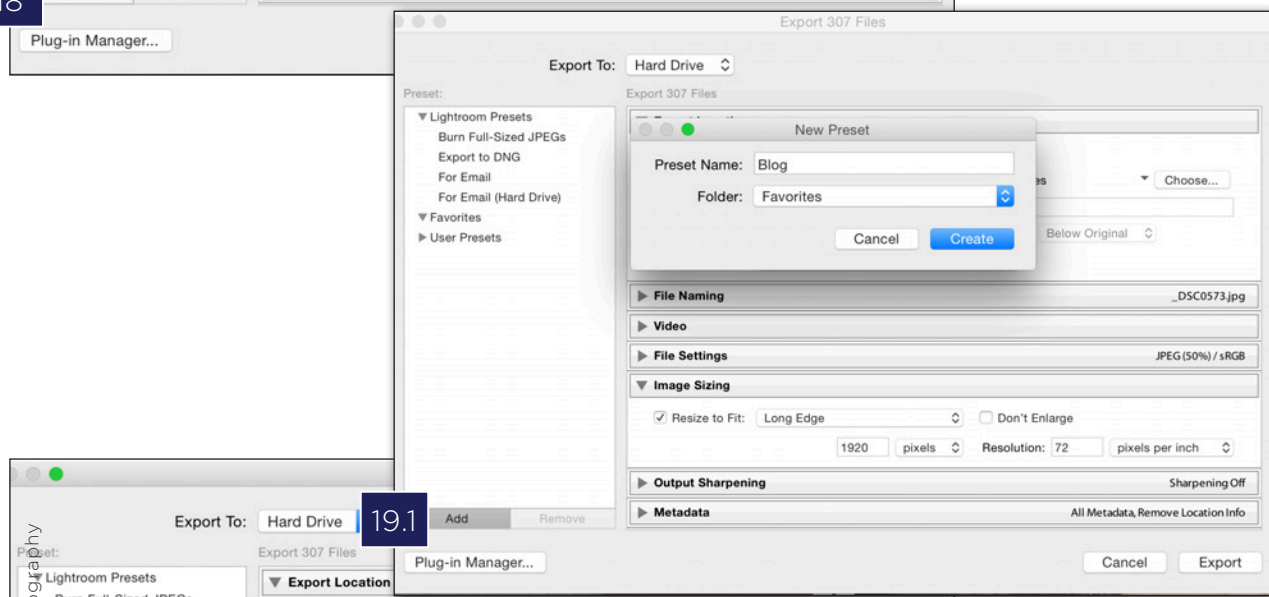


Instead, apply it after import in the Library module. The option Saved Preset allows you to select a preset and affect the After image only (Fig. 11). This is a huge help in my workflow because I use the As Shot image to gauge how I edit and sync images together like sets. This cuts my time in half (Figs. 12.1 & 12.2).

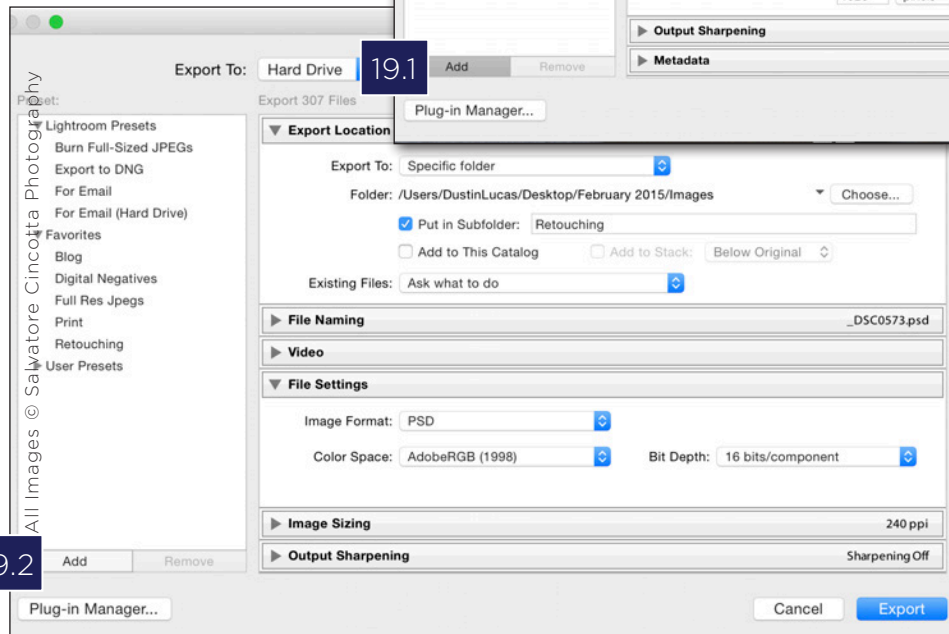
Within the Develop presets, I like to change my style and keep up with trends in the industry. Certain looks like film, airy, urban grit, etc. can mean a multitude of styles. Great resources for film presets are Mastin Labs, VSCO Film and Totally Rad. It's always a benefit to be researching what software developers and your competition are doing. After you find some presets and download them to your computer, how do you get them in Lightroom? It's easy! Start by opening the downloaded presets in Finder and then open Lightroom (Fig. 13). Next, access Preferences in Lightroom and go to the Presets section (Fig. 14). Now, select the button Show Lightroom Presets Folder (Fig. 15). Within the subfolders, you will find Develop Presets; this is where you copy and paste the downloaded presets folder (Figs. 16.1 & 16.2). Restart Lightroom, and you are all done (Fig. 17)!



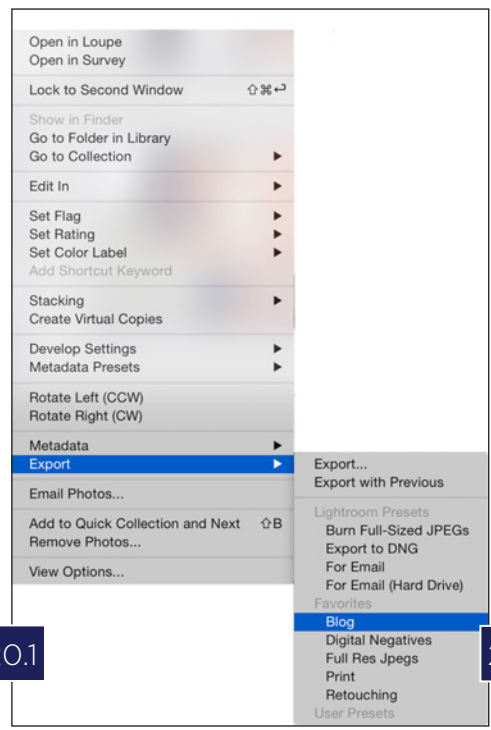
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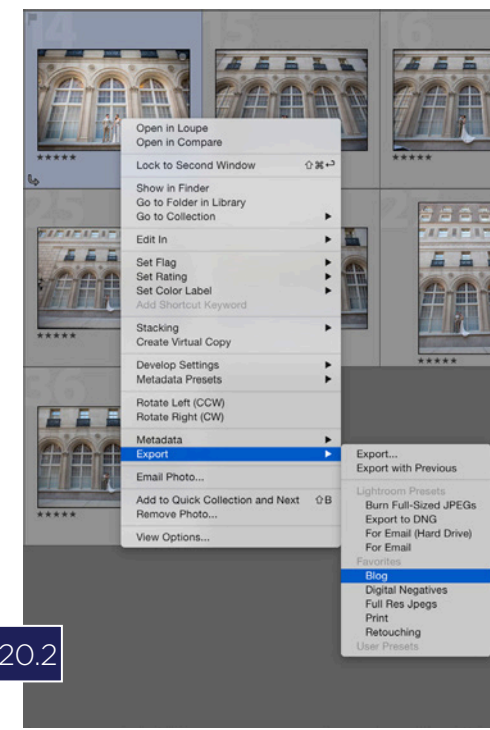
19.1



19.2



20.1



20.2

Exporting is crucial; this is how you save all your changes. Creating an export preset is a huge time-saver as well as a fail safe in using the right settings. All you need to do is choose the right settings for common exports within your workflow. Some of these may include Blog, Digital Negatives, Print, Full Res JPEGs, Retouching, etc. Once you've made settings for one type of export, click the Add button at the bottom of the preset section to the left (Fig. 18). Once you name it, also create a folder name to keep them organized. Repeat these steps for all of your common export settings (Fig. 19). Once you've completed this, go to the Library module, right-click on the selected images, choose Export and select the preset (Figs. 20.1 & 20.2).

With the Lightroom Presets folder open, you can save and back up your presets. Do this often. As you can see, there are many types of presets within Lightroom and plenty of room for you to streamline your workflow. So why waste anymore time? 📸

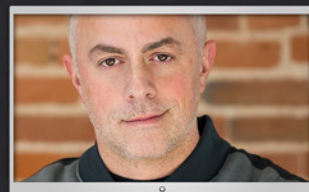
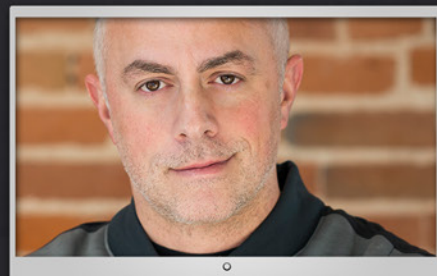
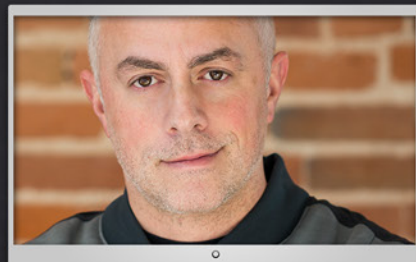
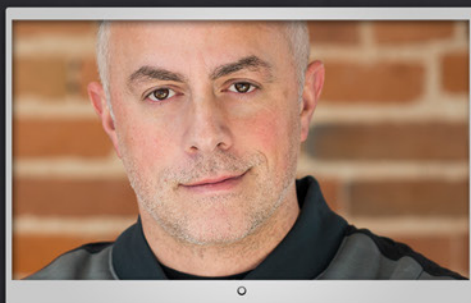
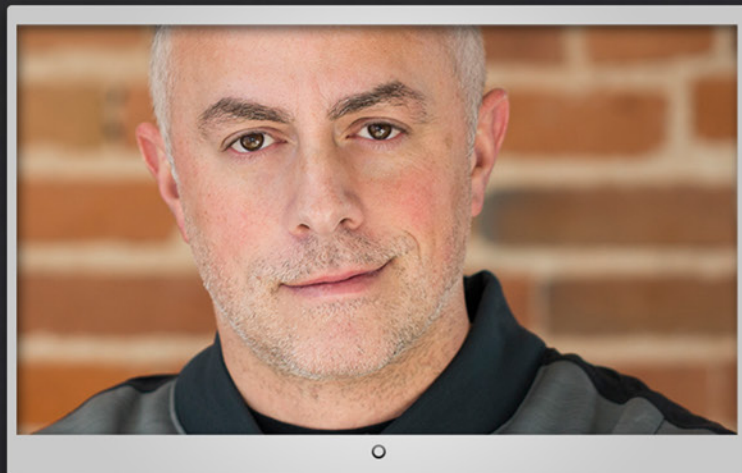
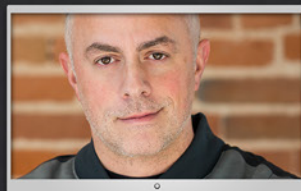
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MAKE IT ABOUT YOU

MARKET YOURSELF WITH VIDEO TODAY



“Photographers are always creating video slideshows for clients. Let’s turn it around and create video marketing that sells ourselves. Animoto Pro makes it so easy.”

- Sal Cincotta

CHECK OUT SAL’S MARKETING
VIDEO + CREATE YOURS TODAY:
ANIMOTO.COM/ABOUTYOU

THE SALES & MARKETING EDITION

FEBRUARY 2015



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VANESSA JOY



BUILDING BLOCKS

WITH SKIP COHEN

A NEW SERIES DEDICATED TO HELPING YOU
BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT
WITH YOUR MARKETING INITIATIVES.

YOUR
'ABOUT' PAGE



BY SKIP COHEN

This series is called “Building Blocks” because, just like that dream studio you might build someday, each component of your website is another important structural element.

Sadly, my frustration with many of your websites takes me right back to *The Three Little Pigs*. Too many of you have built your house of sticks and straw instead of bricks. You’ve built your site too fast because you knew you needed a website. That would have been fine, but you never came back to fine-tune the components.

So, we covered demographics, design and your galleries last month. Let’s start with your next critical tab: your About page.

YOUR ABOUT/BIO PAGE

I’ve seen a lot of sites where photographers have tried to be clever by calling their About page something abstract. Just keep it simple and call it what it is. This is the second most valuable piece of real estate on your site. Don’t minimize its potential to help you bring in great clients.

Your galleries should be your first tab, but information about you is next in line. Why? Because a picture really is worth a thousand words. That’s your first chance to hook a potential client. Once you’ve hooked them with your images, they’re going to want to know who you are. However, there’s a right approach to connecting and a wrong one. Most of you are doing it wrongly.

You’re wasting time telling clients your life story. They don’t care.

- Stop talking about how you got started in photography. Your clients don’t care.
- Stop talking about awards you’ve won. Unless it’s a Pulitzer, again, clients don’t care.
- Definitely stop telling them about your gear. They don’t care about that either.

What they do care about is why you’re a photographer. This is your first opportunity to start building trust. They want to know about your passion for people, the human experience, capturing memories, etc. This is where you get to actually use some of those expressions you might think are sappy and cheesy. Remember, in the portrait/social specialties, 98 percent of the purchase decisions are made by women. Your About section is the perfect place to talk about being a hopeless romantic. Even in commercial work, landscape and fine art, people want to know about your passion for what you’re doing.

- Write it in the first person rather than third person. This is your chance to open your heart and share with people why you’re their best choice.
- A good About section gives credibility to your galleries and the other information on your site. Your potential client wants to know if she can trust you to see the world the way she does. People don’t care about what you do or how you do it—they want the romantic side of why you do it. Don’t be afraid to open up and share why you love being a photographer.
- Say what you need in just three to four paragraphs, and keep it all above the fold.
- A photograph or two of you is great, but even better if it’s a shot of you working with a client. Stay away from plain old boring headshots. How about a shot of you photographing a client? The shot should be taken from slightly behind you, so we can see you holding a camera and the client in the background, slightly out of focus.
- Make your About section sound more like an artist’s statement. This is your commitment to future clients.
- Sign your About section with your signature for a more personal touch.

A PERSONAL VIDEO

I’m a huge fan of promotional videos, but they’ve got to be done right. One of the best in the industry is the classic with Justin and Mary Marantz. It’s worth watching to get a feel for the level of sincerity in their message. Today, virtually all of you have the ability to do a promotional video, but remember to keep it relatively short. Work with a professional company—this isn’t the time for your teenager to be producing a video for you. Stay true to your message. This is about building trust with the client. This is not easy to do if you don’t have a certain level of poise in front of the camera.

YOUR CONTACT PAGE

There are people who might argue with me, but I'm convinced this is tab number three. You've hooked them on your images. They love what you wrote about why you're a photographer. Now it's time to give them a way to contact you, and there's no such thing as too much information.

I can't figure out why so many of you insist on leaving out a phone number. I understand if you work out of your home and don't want to use your home address, but think about how you feel when trying to contact a company you're serious about and you go through default after default, never being able to talk with a live body. Make it easy for them to contact you by using a contact form.

Get a phone number that's dedicated to your business. You don't have to take every call the minute it comes in. Just call people back, ideally within an hour or two. These are potential clients, and if they called you, then there's something they're excited about that deserves your complete focus.

One of the hardest things to learn in business is to not manage by the exception. Just because a client might have burned you once, there's no reason to punish everybody you work with in the future.

Many of you have very strict policies about cancellations and deposits. That's fine, but it doesn't belong on your website. It belongs in your contract discussion, directly with clients, once they've hired you. I've read some policy statements that would scare an IRS auditor.

PRICING

Pricing is another building block we'll be talking about in the future. Many of you share too much information on pricing. Not everybody agrees with me on this one, but I don't think photographers should show their prices. I like having a statement like, "Wedding coverage starting at X," or "Portrait sessions starting at X," but just listing your prices doesn't begin to give you a chance to sell yourself and what makes you the best choice.

INFORMATION

A section many of you call "Information" has grown into a dumping ground for so many things you decided you needed on your site. For example, many of you have a whole Q&A section on what to wear for a portrait session, what to do if the weather is bad, etc. Stop overloading your potential clients with information they don't need...at least not in the very beginning.

Let's boil it down.

When people come to your site, are they walking through a Nordstrom, where everything is easy to find and nicely displayed, or is your site a disaster, the equivalent of Macy's the day after Christmas? Your website needs to be an experience and needs to have a look and feel that connects with the "shopper."

- Make your site easy to navigate. Don't bury important information where people can't find it.
- Be consistent in the look and feel of your site and blog. Even though they serve two different purposes, you still need continuity in the design and feel of both.
- Let your site show your personality.
- Stay away from hard-to-read artsy-fartsy fonts.
- Reverse type is fine, but if it's a page you hope your client will download and print, then just make it black type on a white background. The average client has a \$79 printer at best, and trying to print an all-black page with white type is going to leave them with nothing more than a soggy sheet of paper.
- Where you do have text, keep it short and proofread everything you put on your site. Read it out loud several times, and have a friend or family member check it over as well. Ask them to explain what you just wrote to make sure it's being understood.

“ IN TODAY’S WORLD,
YOUR COMPETITORS ARE
 ONLY **ONE CLICK AWAY!** ”

As you look over your site, just remember: Your website is about the products and services you sell, while your blog is about your heart, letting you show your personality. Having them both showing the right appeal and having effective content is what creates “sticky pages.”

Your goal is to create a site so sticky that people don’t want to leave it, and want to share it with all their friends. It all starts with your galleries. But your galleries aren’t worth a nickel if you don’t have the skill set to back them up.

I know I’ve written this a few times in the past, but...

Any moron can get his first customer. The key to building a successful business is getting that first customer to come back a second time. Then, you want to become so habit-forming they tell all their friends about you and help bring in customers number two, three, four and so on.

Make your site an experience. Share images that “wow” your clients. Don’t compromise on the quality of any image or your commitment to be the very best.

I heard a great comment not long ago: As you build and fine-tune your website, remember that in today’s world, your competitors are only one click away. ■



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VIRAL SOCIAL MARKETING

with Phillip Blume





by **Phillip Blume**

The new year should hold promise, right? Why does it sometimes feel like the promise of ruin? For Eileen and me, during the early months of 2014, the future looked as bleak as those dark February nights when I began to wake up in a cold sweat. We had just come off a year of record profits, photographed two weddings in Europe, won awards, appeared on CreativeLive and were preparing talks for conferences, including ShutterFest. I should have felt on top of the world. Instead, engagement season came and went, and we had only three weddings on the books.

Not 23, as expected. Three. Worse yet, we'd just poured our lifesavings into a beautiful house-studio combo, with an extra bedroom intended for a son; we had finally begun our adoption. Suddenly, I was afraid I wouldn't be able to feed the two daughters we already had. On those nights, I would migrate from the clammy sheets and onto my knees beside the bed, looking for direction and grace. For a while, it seemed I just got humility. I think God knew that's what I needed.

Spoiler alert: Everything turned out A-OK. If only the happy ending had been revealed more quickly during those

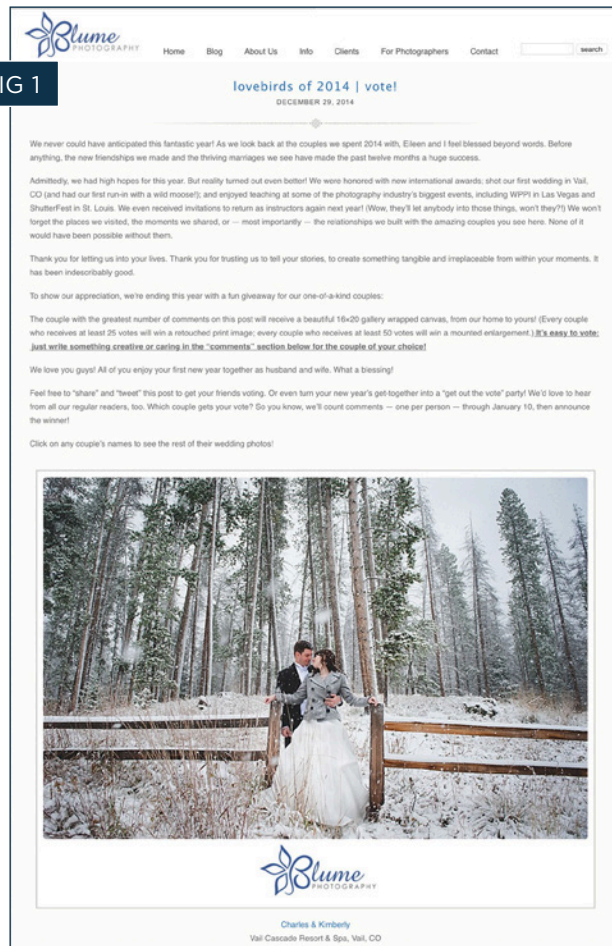
excruciating months. Eileen and I know how scary the new year feels for many of you who are just starting up, or who can't quite put your finger on what isn't working.

It became painfully clear what wasn't working for us. It was what we weren't doing: social marketing. Amidst the busy-ness of our exploding business, I'd put the brakes on "trivial" things like blogging and Facebook. The unintended result was an implosion of everything we'd built. In advertising, companies pay billions for visibility. Yet I'd failed to put our work in front of people who were hungry to consume it.

Why is social marketing so powerful? Because it's tech-age "word of mouth." Over 90 percent of our bookings have always resulted from free marketing strategies. Your circles (via your clients) will get you farther than you think. And that's where better brand confidence can be built. Here's how we strategically post to Facebook, maximize our social reach and land more new weddings and portraits than ever before.



FIG 1



“ FOR MAXIMUM EXPOSURE... START SHARING SNEAK PEEKS. ”

FIG 2

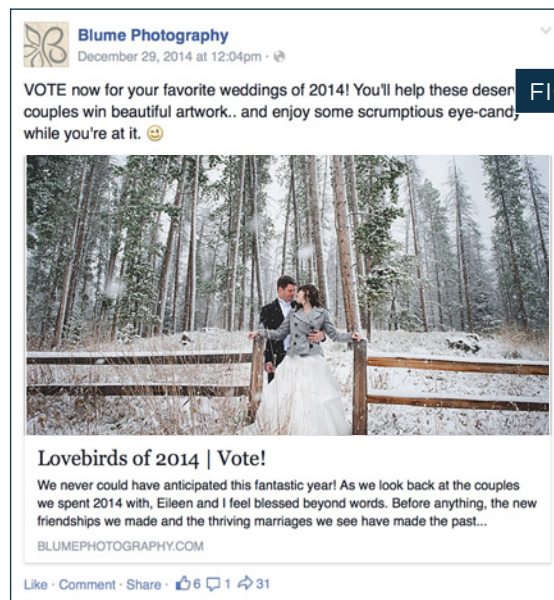
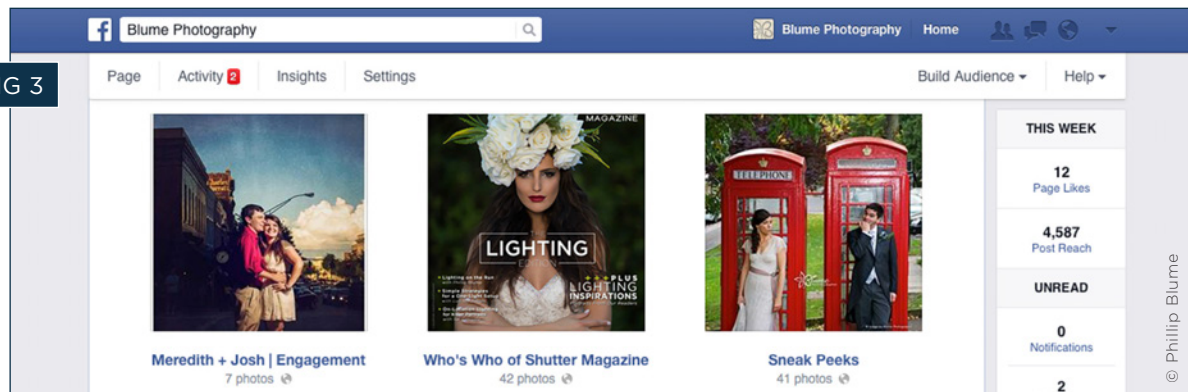


FIG 3



SNEAK PEEK - DAY 1

The sneak peek is the first link that creates anticipation for the social chain you're just beginning to craft. First, post the image on your blog—the same day or day after a shoot (Fig 1). This does more than reassure clients that you responsibly backed up their images. A sneak peek has the potential to become the object of countless excited (even giddy!) conversations your couple is having with their friends and your potential clients. Don't let the conversation end in, "We haven't seen any pictures yet. I hope they came out." Provide an illustration to accompany them. The more quickly you show the sneak peek, the more enthusiastically they'll direct attention your way. Don't miss that chance.

Share just a link to your blog post on Facebook and other social media the first day. When you email your clients to announce their sneak peek, send them the link for your Facebook post (not a direct link to your blog). Your page posts alone hardly reach anyone, but your clients' social shares help them to reach tons of their friends. Now they're personally presenting your Facebook page and brand to everyone, giving you an astronomically higher chance to earn followers at the same time.

SNEAK PEEK - DAY 2

For maximum exposure, you'll want to start sharing sneak peeks in two parts. On day two, follow up by posting the same image directly to your page's wall (Fig 2). Photos, rather than links, currently play best on Facebook because of their larger scale in the newsfeed and how they interact inside profiles. This gives your little sneak peek a whole new life on day two, especially among users who weren't

online yesterday. I post our images with this simple caption: "Sneak peek of John & Jane's wedding," plus our copyright notice and a link to the same photo on our blog, making our website easily accessible to the curious.

USE ALBUMS AS PORTFOLIOS

Also, try saving all your sneak-peek photos within the same Facebook album (Fig 3). (The cool thing is, even if you haven't been doing this, you can start fresh and relocate all your past sneak peeks into one folder today.) This simple change has allowed our past sneak peeks to amass extra attention when, otherwise, they never would have seen the light of day again. It transforms our "Sneak Peeks" folder into an impressive mini portfolio that viewers end up perusing and commenting on once they flip past their friends' photo that led them there.

TO TAG OR NOT TO TAG?

The cold truth is, tagging is crucial to the success of social marketing. As a rule, you can't not tag. People's privacy is important. I get it. But our clients' privacy expectations have changed, too. Most of them want to share, and enjoy a little attention. It doesn't help your business to be overly sensitive, passing up every opportunity to share your work out of fear. As in everything, Eileen and I like to set clear expectations about social networking up front.

Our couples and families receive a questionnaire as soon as they book us. It politely asks for their social network usernames, and explains, "We'll be able to share your images with you the moment they're ready!" See? It's as easy as reminding your clients of the value in it for them.



When they share their usernames, we personally “friend” them. (You can always look them up without requesting the info first. But profiles are often hidden, and it sometimes feels more awkward to friend via the stalking route.)

As Blume Photography, we can’t tag people. But now I can visit my Page as “Phillip Blume” and personally tag images. That’s huge. Tag everything you post. Use the comments field to tag people in links you post. Tag sneak-peek photos and, later on, individual portrait albums. Tag the couples featured in your “Best of Press” Album. (Boy, does that create some excitement for the client and your brand!) Tag vendors, too, if they’re easy to find. You can bet they’re excited to share any details you include—though less likely to share images of the couple alone.

On a side note, it’s wise to be more cautious about tagging high school seniors and/or newborns. As a man, I generally don’t friend high school girls, for instance. But there are plenty of sensitive ways to adapt the idea to your business model.

CALL TO ACTION

The “call to action” is one of the oldest and best-proven techniques in modern marketing. Usually, consumers just need to hear an imperative to snap them out of passivity, get them off the fence and remind them that “I’m talking to you.” Every piece of content you post needs a call to action.

It can be simple. But remember, positive directives tend to earn a better response than negative ones. For example, “Be the first to see John and Jane’s wedding” is better than “Don’t miss out on John and Jane’s wedding.”

Better yet, lead with an alluring detail: “Look at this wedding’s amazing centerpieces.” Now tweak it with an appeal to wider public perception: “Everyone’s talking about this wedding’s amazing centerpieces. Check them out!” Asking a question creates a sense of mystery that drives readers crazy until they look into it to find the answer: “Have you seen these amazing centerpieces everyone’s talking about? They’re brand-new on the blog today. Check them out!” People like to hear other people’s stories, and they like to hear their own stories retold. No one wants to hear us talk about ourselves. So let’s consciously replace all those “look at my blog” posts with “here’s a story for your enjoyment” posts.

THE EPIC VALENTINE’S DAY CONTEST

I want to leave you on a high note. Every New Year, we run one of our most successful marketing strategies. It’s virtually free, and we do it using the techniques I described above. With Valentine’s Day near, right now is the best time for you to try this and jumpstart your social marketing once and for all. We’ve dubbed it the “Lovebirds” contest. Create a simple blog post showing one favorite couple’s portrait from each wedding you shot last year, or one favorite family portrait from every session.

Start the post with a thankful note to your clients. Then announce something exciting. You'd like to thank them by gifting valuable artwork to all the clients whose friends and supporters mention them in the comments section below. We gift a large canvas wrap to the first-place "winner," but we also gift mounted print enlargements to every couple who receives a reasonable number of votes (at least 50). I post the contest on our Facebook page. Finally, I email each couple individually to express our thanks and explain the giveaway. Now watch your social marketing explode! If you'd like all the little details about how we've refined this strategy, you can join our newsletter. We're sending out the step-by-step now.

As a boutique studio, we photograph a limited number of weddings and portraits each year. That means a limited amount of content to share. But we can easily maximize that content and put it in front of a lot more eyeballs. Post more, and your brand stays top of mind. The downside is the sheer amount of time it takes. So we focus on posting and reposting (without cloning) content we've already invested time in creating. I also use BlogStomp to streamline our blog content while posting to Facebook and Twitter in one fell swoop. The crowning jewel in our renewed social marketing efforts has been ShootProof, the online proofing (and so much more) service that we adopted just in time to lift our bookings out of the dumps. Services like these allow us to personalize the social networking experience—for instance, putting our custom app and booking info into the pockets of every member of a bridal party.

As for 2014, our renewed attention to social media made it another record-breaking profitable year. Were bookings later than usual? Yes. Was that more stressful? Definitely. But we didn't have to lower pricing or roll over to make it work. We stood up and took action. We have as many weddings booked today as we shot in total last year. Now 2015 is looking bright. Whether you merely need to maintain your momentum, or you're geared up to take on these challenges we're talking about, I hope your new year is beginning to look brighter, too. ■

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It's not who you know,
it's who knows you.

.....
Networking for business success.
.....

with Lori Nordstrom



.....
 by **Lori Nordstrom**

We've all heard it before: "It's not what you know, it's who you know." But what we should be thinking is: "It's not about who you know, it's about who knows you."

Marketing is hard work these days. Daily, the average person is in front of hundreds if not thousands of ad pieces. They come in magazines, on billboards and city benches, throughout malls and stores, and especially online. It's not just email anymore. We see advertisements throughout all of social media, in every search and inside most articles we read. In games and other app experiences, we are constantly bombarded with advertisements for more games and apps. We are being attacked visually, and don't have the capacity to absorb everything we see. We see up to 20,000 marketing messages every day. "It's a nonstop blitz," said marketing guru J. Walker Smith. "Everywhere we turn, we're saturated with advertising messages trying to get our attention."

So how do we stay in the minds of our customers? What is the best way to market? Word of mouth remains one of the greatest forms of marketing. Someone telling their best friend, neighbor or gym buddy about your business is something that they'll remember. Even if they don't remember your business name, they'll remember their friend telling them about their experience and contact them if they're interested in more information. But word of mouth is one person at a time. It's very important to have a plan in place to ask for referrals, to encourage your clients to tell others about their experience with you and then to thank them for following through. I have also realized that I can compound those efforts by networking with other businesses that have a similar target client as me.

There are many businesses that are in front of your target client. Your best bet is to build a relationship with those businesses, and get them to refer you. If we know who our target client is, it's easy to make a list of businesses and other well-connected people that we should be partnered with. Make a list of these people and businesses, and start networking.





© Lori Nordstrom

Networking, by definition, is a supportive system of sharing information and services among individuals and groups with a common interest. David Avrin, author of *It's Not Who You Know—It's Who Knows You!*, says that networking is the power of using creative partnership promotion to attract clients. Don't forget that networking should be a partnership. Find out what you can do for the other person before asking what they can do for you. Relationships are key in all partnerships, so build a relationship first.

See Lori's video for how to make the first connection with another business.

Here are some of the ways you can partner with another business to reach out to the right clientele.

.....

1. Partner on a newsletter or blog post

.....

You have a camera, so tell a story. Find out what businesses your target clients are using, and offer to do an article about those businesses for your blog or newsletter. You'll not only be doing something for them (which will make them love you), you'll get them sharing that post or newsletter with their database as well.

.....

2. Have a contest drawing

.....

Partner with a group of businesses (six is a nice number) and host a monthly drawing. The winner receives something cool from each of the businesses. Get together as a group one morning each month for coffee and pool together all of the contest entries. You'll each have new names to reach out to and one person who will "win" something from your business. Follow up with each of the other contest entries, thank them for entering and offer an incentive for calling and/or booking with you.

.....

3. Offer gift cards as a way of saying "thank you"

.....

Many businesses send a gift to their clients when they've made a big investment. Some ideal businesspeople to think about are real estate agents, commercial insurance agents, financial planners, interior designers, landscape architects and plastic surgeons. Choose a handful of businesses that you've created relationships with, and offer gift cards for thanking their clients. The gift should look like it came from the business that is offering it, but you actually supply the card at no cost.

.....
4. Create an informational piece
.....

Most businesses have some sort of information that they would love to get into every client's hands, so ask them what this info is and create a piece for them that includes it. I like to put the business info on one side of the card and my info on the other side. My side also includes an image of the staff or the owner's family. It should definitely be something applicable to that business. (Don't use an image of kids without a dog for a high-end groomer!)

By making this piece about them, you're more likely to get your information in their clients' hands.

.....
5. Partner on an open house
.....

An open house is a great way to get in front of your target client. Offer to host one at another business, or invite them into yours if you have a retail location. By partnering up, you'll double the guest list. You'll also be surprised by the people who know each other when you get them together in one place. Make introductions and be a connector.

.....
6. Displays
.....

Displays can be a great way to show off your work in front of the right clients. Just don't go into a business and shove the idea at them. That's the best way to get turned down. Try one of these other ways to partner up first, or think of something new to collaborate on together. Once you've started a relationship and built trust, a display is a great extension of that relationship, and will be that much more powerful.





© Lynn Nordstrom

In his book *Think Like a Rock Star*, Mack Collier talks about creating “ambassadors.” Ambassadors are those who loyally follow your brand and tell others about it. Collier calls this the ultimate form of marketing because it’s free and credible. It’s not you advertising your business, it’s others telling your target client about you. Collier reminds us not to focus exclusively on acquiring new clients, because taking great care of the clients and partnerships we already have will bring in more clients than we know what to do with.

In my business, networking has remained a key component of staying in front of my current client base and reaching new targeted clients. When other businesses or well-connected people get to know you, they will start recommending you to others. So ask yourself: Who do you know and how are you taking care of clients so that they will spread the word and make sure that others know you, too? ■



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BONUS IN THIS ISSUE:

Read how **Vanessa Joy** makes buzz-worthy client gifts with Black River Imaging products. **PAGE 110**





UNDERSTANDING **COPYRIGHT**

WITH KRISTIN KORPOS



by **Kristin Korpos**

As a photographer, it is important to understand how the copyright to your images is protected. It is equally important to educate your clients so they understand what your copyright means to them.

WHAT IS COPYRIGHT?

Our copyright protections all started with the United States Constitution, Article I, Section 8, which states:

The Congress shall have power to promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.

In plain English, this means that copyright is an exclusive right that is granted to the author or creator of an original work. This includes the right to copy, distribute and adapt that work. When a photographer captures an image, she is authoring a work, and becomes the owner of that image. As the owner of the image, she has the exclusive right to exercise control over that image.

The protection of copyright is our oldest personal right. It exists not only to protect innovation but also to protect business. Modern-day printing was big business around the time the Constitution was signed. Book production was turning into a commercial enterprise, and it was important to protect one's right to the printed work so it couldn't be reprinted and sold by someone else. Over the

years, copyright laws have been revised and defined within Title 17 of the United States Code. You will see documents referring to the Federal Copyright Act, which is contained in Title 17. Unless you have transferred your copyright in writing, you or your heirs retain it for 70 years after your death. After that time, images become public domain, meaning that anyone can use them.

To put it all in simple terms, it is illegal for anyone other than the photographer, the creator of the image, to copy, scan, edit or share prints or digital images without the photographer's permission. Clients who want to edit or copy your images need permission to do so. Most commonly, this permission comes from the photographer through a print release. A print release is an agreement allowing the client limited use of the images, such as printing rights, with certain limitations. This agreement also states that there are consequences for ignoring such protections.

REGISTERING IMAGES

Photographers often question whether or not they should register their images with the U.S. Copyright Office. Just to be clear, photographers have copyright protection as soon as they create an image. Registering copyrights for specific images and groups of images provides further benefits if infringement occurs, such as the ability to collect statutory damages and recover attorney fees.

If you register images, the registration must be timely. This means that you need to register prior to infringement or within three months of the first authorized publication. The definition of what constitutes a publication is complicated. For this reason, if you are going to register images, do it promptly. While you can hire an attorney to complete the application for registration (at a fee of approximately \$300 per application), it's not required.

Photographers often do a better job completing the information needed for the application because they understand the nuances of their work. The application fee, paid to the government, ranges from \$35 to \$85, depending on the type of application. Visit Copyright.gov for more information.

ENFORCING COPYRIGHTS AND HANDLING INFRINGEMENTS

Copyright infringement happens all the time. I often hear stories from photographers who are upset about clients doing things they shouldn't be doing with their images. This includes editing images and posting them to Facebook without permission. I think most of the time clients do not receive the proper education and they have no clue as to what a photographer's copyright means or why it's important to respect.

Consider including a "Client Copyright Information Card" with images that are delivered to the client, whether print or digital. This card tells your clients that your images are works of art, and that you want to make sure their value is retained. It should say something along these lines:

What is a copyright?

We hear the term a lot, but do we really know what it means? When the term "copyright" is used, it is referring to the protection provided by the Federal Copyright Act, Title 17 of the United States Code.

The Copyright Act protects photographers by giving the creator of the photograph (in this case the photographer) the exclusive right to copy, edit and distribute the image by sale or transfer.

This act makes it illegal to copy, scan, edit or share photographic prints and digital media without the photographer's permission. Violators of this federal law may be subject to civil and criminal penalties.

Because these photographs are works of art, I want you to know about this important copyright protection. By respecting the law, you help protect the photographer's rights. The law also prevents you from being subject to any prosecution. Beyond that, it helps ensure that these photographs retain their original value as art.

If you need additional copies of your prints, would like the right to scan images or wish to post your images online, please contact me. All reasonable requests will likely be accommodated, but in some cases may require the payment of an additional fee.

If you have questions, just ask! I am more than happy to help answer them. For more information on copyrights, visit <http://www.kodak.com/global/en/consumer/doingmore/copyright.shtml>.

Photographers can find themselves in a situation in which another party, or even a venue or vendor, disrespects their copyright. Digital media makes it easy for anyone to copy images online. Going to court is expensive, and it's often not worth the investment or hassle. With this being said, there are other steps photographers can take that do not require an attorney. First, reach out to the infringer and ask how he obtained the image. This provides you with important background information that will help you take your next step.

Once you determine the use is unauthorized, send a demand letter. The letter should describe the image, include registration information if the image has been registered with the U.S. Copyright Office and state the amount of compensation requested for the unauthorized use. If the image is being used on a website, the Digital Millennium Copyright Act gives the photographer the right to contact the website hosting company and demand that the image be removed, or that access to the image be blocked. You can find the hosting company information in the WHOIS listing for the domain name. When you reach an agreement with the infringer, create a "settlement agreement" that includes the information agreed upon.

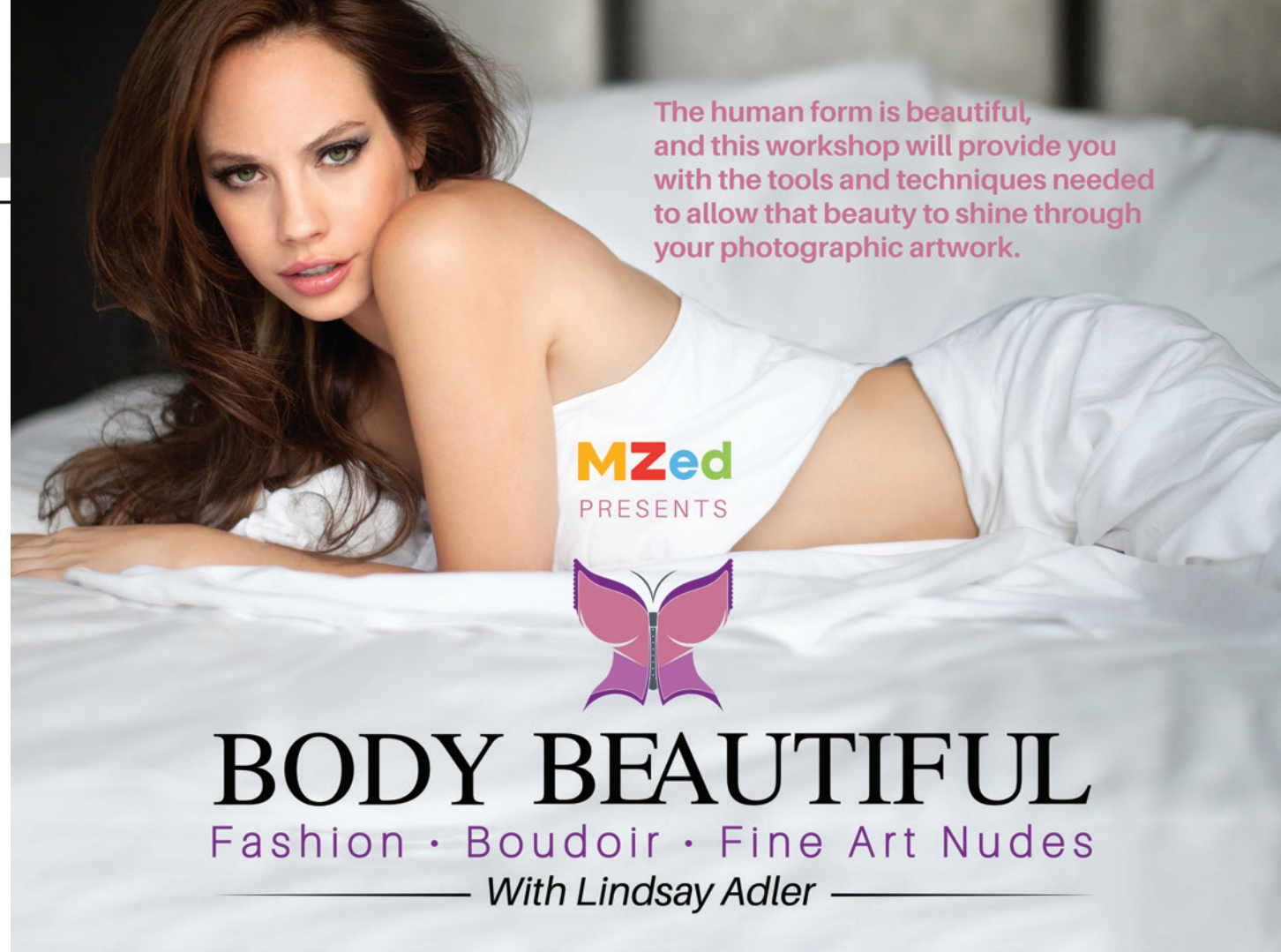
This should include compensation paid and future-use information, if applicable. If no agreement can be reached and the images are registered with the U.S. Copyright Office, the next step may be to file a lawsuit. Lawsuits are very expensive. Most copyright infringement cases never even make it to court due to the expense, and are settled outside of a courtroom. You may have read about huge awards being given by judges in certain cases, but just remember these awards are few and far between.

DIGGING DEEPER

Being a professional photographer brings many rewards, but also many challenges. One of those challenges is protecting your rights and limiting your liabilities. When all is said and done, these are two things that directly impact the profitability and the overall health of your business. If you wish to learn more, pick up a copy of *Legal Handbook for Photographers* by Bert P. Krages. His book is one of the best I have seen on this topic. If your copyright has been infringed, there is no substitute for hiring an attorney specializing in copyright law. ■

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GO BIG
BY GOING SMALL
MARKETING WITH
**MINI-BOUDOIR
SESSIONS**

WITH STACIE FRAZIER



BY **STACIE FRAZIER**

Whether you are already a busy studio or just getting your feet wet in the world of boudoir photography, mini-sessions can be a great way to help market your business, while generating extra revenue. These sessions (we call ours Haute Shots Petite Sessions) help tell the story of your brand, and also engage with a demographic that may have been previously neglected for a broader range of clientele.

Why mini?

Mini sessions can help build or boost your portfolio during slower periods. They generate buzz during time-sensitive events (like holidays), or can introduce a new studio set or location. Offering these themed sessions makes them more special. When creating a theme, take into consideration what you would like to portray or offer—for example, a special bed set that reflects a holiday like Valentine's Day or Christmas, or even a general season like summer or fall. During nonholiday periods, promote a set that isn't normally in your boudoir routine, like shower shots, artistic/IMPLIED nudes or sheet shots. If you are hip to trends, consider something that reflects a hot topic, like a sexy movie that is about to be released, a top television show or even a best-selling book.

Keep in mind that these themed mini-sessions are not giveaways. You still need to charge enough to maintain a sustainable business and make them worth your (and your team's) time and effort. Find the balance between making a profit and broader access for those who can't yet afford a regular session. If you offer these special sessions several times a year and build their momentum, you can capture the budget demographic and encourage current clients to book an extra session since it captures something entirely different from their previous shoot. I do not recommend offering mini-sessions as part of your regular offerings since they take away from the exclusivity and bring down the prestige of being a luxury brand. As an added bonus, especially for those who use social media heavily, these sessions can encourage your online community to continue to engage with you and your brand.



Creating & marketing the mini-session

Making a profit and managing my time are incredibly important to me as a business owner. I needed to figure out a way to do mini-sessions on my terms, not just based on the needs of the discount-hungry client. Boudoir photography, to me, is and always will be a luxury product. The discount client is often the most demanding and also the least likely to return for another session. I knew I needed to create a promotion that made sense for me and my bottom line. This meant being strict on all time parameters. I was able to offer a turnaround time of three days to one week because of these factors: shortened photo shoot timeframe; a dedicated mini-session product list consisting of inexpensive products that can be produced quickly; and elimination of the client gallery (I choose the final images as well as layout). I needed a solid posing routine that would work for the specific setting and for all body types to ensure I got every shot I needed while sticking to the timetable, especially if we were to offer mini-sessions as a marathon (multiple clients with back-to-back sessions).

Before announcing your mini-sessions publicly, utilize your spokesmodel, a hired model or even a past client to create images based around the theme of your upcoming shoot. Use this time to work on capturing gorgeous images for marketing, but also to develop and practice a solid posing routine for your setting. Having a routine streamlines the shoot and helps manage your client. Be mindful of your lighting setups so you can have the technical side of things running smoothly when it's time to rock and roll.

Use these images to create a campaign that builds excitement and gets potential clients lusting for your offer. Use social media to help spread the word a month or so in advance. Post teasers like sexy detail shots from the practice shoot to your Instagram account. Create a behind-the-scenes video for your YouTube channel. Add inspiring quotes or past-client testimonials to the images for added emotional value for Facebook/Twitter. This will all have your audience abuzz and encourage those who have been hesitant to give it a try. Even writing a how-to styling article for your blog (like a guide on outfit selection) can promote your session. Don't forget to send out the details in a newsletter for those clients on your mailing list who have been patiently waiting for something like this from your studio.

Set the mood

A mini-session should be a sampling of your brand, a taste that leaves them hungry for more. Don't offer your full luxury experience. You want your clients to feel comfortable and enjoy their time with you, but always make it clear that for something even more memorable, they need to book your full session. We are constantly planting seeds throughout our mini-sessions of the customization and possibilities available in our regular packages.

With our Petite Sessions, we aim to appeal to all the senses without being overly fussy in the details. Your location or studio should be immaculate and beautiful, with your chosen setting styled and ready to go before your client arrives. We play music throughout the session that matches our brand and encourages a sexy, relaxed and confident mood. Scented candles can delight their sense of smell. Choose something light and somewhat neutral that won't offend your more sensitive clients. We offer them a luxurious robe to lounge in while in hair and makeup, stimulating their sense of touch. We bring additional soft textures to the photo setting, like plush furry blankets, satin sheets or a flokati rug. We offer high-quality chocolates to keep their appetites satiated and energy up since boudoir clients tend to not eat before their sessions.

How I run my mini-sessions

- Schedule one day for a marathon of Petite shoots (up to five clients).
- Offer 30-minute sessions (after one hour hair and makeup).
- Aim for around 10 amazing final images from a 30-minute session.
- Use a posing routine that is flattering to all body types.
- Offer one outfit choice per client.
- Use just one setting (bed, sofa, etc.).
- Shoot for variety. Get three distinct looks from a single pose by shooting from different angles and distances.
- Offer a dedicated product list with limited offerings: small album (or "little black book"), two image folios and digital files, all with quick turnaround.
- Retouch photos between sessions, while the next client is in hair and makeup.
- Select final images for the product, not the client. This speeds up the turnaround time, but also serves as incentive to book a second, regularly priced shoot.
- Secure an agreement on the product during the booking phase.
- Ship the images or have them picked up within one week of the session.
- Upsell the digital files.





After the session

Once your mini-sessions are complete and you have clients wanting more, now what? Consider your future marketing opportunities, like offering referral incentives on full sessions. Once a client has an amazing session, no matter which package she chooses, she'll be more likely to refer your studio to her friends and family.

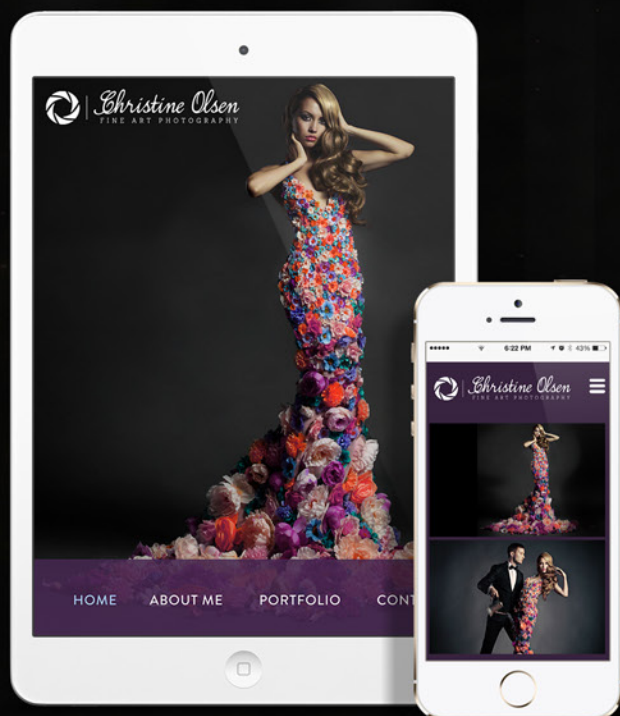
Gather client testimonials. You can take video testimonials between mini-sessions or written ones a few days after. Just request those great write-ups while the excitement is still high. With client permission and a model release signed, send out and tag sneak peeks of a session via social media before they see the final product. These images should follow all social guidelines so they don't get flagged—maybe a gorgeous headshot.

Send your clients home with beautifully designed marketing collateral to give to their friends, or mail them a sweet thank-you note. Everyone likes receiving one, and it adds a personalized touch.

Mini-sessions have brought us new-client referrals and new bookings for full sessions, and given us the opportunity to work with past clients who couldn't resist getting a third or fourth session. I hope this inspires you to get started with your own mini-sessions that bring you many new clients this year. ■



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PRICING

— YOUR WAY —

TO SUCCESS

WITH BLAIR PHILLIPS



[by **Blair Phillips**]

The constant pursuit of success is a common denominator that most of us share. Success can come to us in several different ways. There is no step-by-step handbook. One important way we measure success is by our profit margins. Money is not the only thing that we measure success by, but success seems so much more enjoyable with an influx of profit. Most successful photographers have spent years tweaking their pricing to pave the way for their success.

You have to know your place in your market. It is very easy to assume you should charge a certain price for your products and services. I like to generally start with my needed profit margin and work my way backward. If there is no chance to reach the needed profit margin, your answer is right there in front of you. It is important to evaluate your pricing for all the products you sell and buy each year. Even if everything is working, you can always find a couple of things that contribute to the bottom line. Something as simple as evaluating the companies you buy from can add generously to your profits. Recently, we looked into a few new companies that hit the market offering the same boxes we use to send out portraits. I was blown away by the savings we found. That one find is enough to grant another week of vacation next year. That sparked a saving frenzy here at the studio.

Pricing can be a make-or-break situation. Often, the fear of change can be the only thing keeping us from pricing success. Clients like to feel they are in control when it comes to spending their money. I find it important to not have a one-size-fits-all type of pricing menu. What I do find important is to have the same profit-margin outcome no matter which pricing avenue they choose. This way, I make similar profits from every client. We have a system in place that involves several steps. In each step, there are several items they may choose from. They have to choose at least one product before moving to the next step. The prices are “discounted” if they follow our system. If they buck the system and make choices from the à la carte menu, the prices are dramatically increased. This is one way we ensure similar profit from each client.





IF THEY WANT YOUR WORK, THEY WILL BOOK

We have all had those sessions that we worked for two hours on and just knew they were going to lead to amazing profits. There's nothing worse than when clients of these sessions leave their order appointment with little to nothing. Most of the time, this is a direct reflection of the lack of communication before the appointment. If you want to make sure your time is not wasted, put together a list of things to cover when a potential client calls. Go over what is expected of your client. Let them know what your average client spends. Tell them all about the ordering process and when the payment is expected. If they like what they hear and really want your work, they will book. If they do not book for any of those reasons, they have left an appointment time for someone else who will not leave you working for free. One of the most important things I have learned about the ability to be profitable is to be up front and honest.

PAVE THE ROAD BEFORE YOU

Without clients, the most rock-solid pricing structure is worthless. The most successful companies in the world have marketing teams working for them around the clock. Marketing consists of more than an occasional Facebook post every now and then. It is a great idea to take at least one or two days at the beginning of each year to pave the road before you. Get out of the studio and go somewhere for this type of planning. You need to have zero distractions to ensure your most creative thinking. Bring along everyone who is involved with your business if possible. Never underestimate the creative thinking and potential ideas from everyone. Reach out to your closest friends and family. Ask them to dig deep and help you with ideas.

[IF YOU SHOW IT, YOU WILL SELL IT]

No matter how awesome you make something sound with a description, nothing explains better than a picture. When you add upcoming events to your marketing calendar, set up a mock shoot to have images for marketing. Here in our studio, we do around five limited-edition series per year. We design and build a one-time-use set and book mini appointments every 15 minutes all day long. We generally plan them all out during that marketing planning meeting. One of the reasons they generally sell out is because we shoot it months before, allowing the clients to see exactly what they are getting. It takes more effort, but they generally sell out the day we make them available. If you show it, you will sell it.

[THE IDEA BOARD]

There are several things that add to the success of our marketing calendar meeting. One of my favorites is the idea board. Everyone involved with your photography business should have one within arm's reach on a day-to-day basis. How many times have you seen an awesome idea only to forget about it two days later? Put up a bulletin board to catch all of those ideas that hit you at random times. If you see something online that you like, print it out and put it on your idea board. Seeing this board every day will help you condition your mind to put plans together that will bring those ideas to life.

While putting together your marketing calendar, set aside a handful of ideas that you are excited about. Include several things that have worked really well in years past. Reach out to like-minded photographers who aren't competitors. Develop a web of people who can share ideas with one another. Create a private Facebook group. Whenever you have good luck with something, share it with the group.

Attack this new year with as many new resources as possible. Don't be afraid of change in 2015. Fear might be the only thing holding you back. ■

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- + Tips on getting potential clients to see the value in your work.
- + Defining yourself as a professional in the industry.
- + Dealing with difficult clients and how to wow them.
- + Tips on establishing yourself as a business after the transition from being a hobbyist.
- + Pricing post-wedding sales for wedding guests.
- + How to best utilize client referral programs.
- + How to put together information guides to best represent your studio.
- + Do's and don'ts of delivering final product to your clients.
- + Sal's recommendations for wedding service-based sites.
- + Photography how to: creating separation between your client and the background.

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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



Q & A

WITH

Salvatore Cincotta

YOU'VE GOT
QUESTIONS?
WE'VE GOT
ANSWERS

SHAKE IT UP

HOW TO HEAD OFF MARKETING STAGNATION

with Vanessa Joy



BY VANESSA JOY

It's natural this time of year to look at what marketing efforts worked last year and decide what to use again this year. It's a good practice. The beginning of the year is always a good time to evaluate your marketing efforts and figure out what's working and what you're wasting time and money on. When we continually do the same things over and over, we simply get bored with what we're doing—even if it's working fine.

There's a fine line in marketing that tell us we need to stick with what works but at the same time keep things new, fresh and interesting. As photographers, we see that two-fold with our marketing efforts as well as in our photography. We need to keep consistent to keep our brand recognizable, but we need to shake things up a little to stay on top of the game and to make sure that our work and business aren't getting stale. Staleness is death to a photographer.

Here are five ways that you can liven up your marketing efforts and keep your business from becoming redundant, all while making sure that you're leaving room to stick to your current marketing strategies that are already working for you.

Freshen Up Your Imagery

Marketing guru Gary Vaynerchuk tells business owners that they need to think of themselves as media companies. This is a no-brainer for photographers because we're constantly making new media (photographs) that we can use for marketing. The downside to this is that we can easily get in a rut creating the same imagery with different clients. We run the risk of becoming just another cookie-cutter photographer who's obeying client requests for typical Pinterest poses.

One way to change this is to give yourself a photographic goal or two this year. What new lighting setup can you learn? How can you pose your subjects differently? How can you change your typical photo composition? Find ways to incorporate fresh photographic elements into your imagery without changing your overall brand. Then, use these new photos to update your online portfolios on your website, wedding networks and Facebook page. Incorporate them into your daily marketing posts on places like Pinterest, Facebook and Instagram. Don't forget to use appropriate hashtags and keywords when posting.

Try New Paid Advertising Outlets

If you've found paid advertising sources that work for you and bring at least a 3x ROI (return on investment), great. But don't stop there. You may find that other outlets can bring you just as much or more of a return. Continually experiment with paid advertising to ensure you're getting the most bang for your buck, and to get you in front of a new audience. Here's a quick list of different paid advertising channels that you can experiment with. They are mostly wedding-related because that's what I know, but just apply the same outlet type to your genre of photography.

Blogs

Style Me Pretty
100 Layer Cake
Green Wedding Shoes
Rock n Roll Bride
Junebug Weddings

Local and National Magazines

(consider their online listings as well as print advertising)

New Jersey Bride
Grace Ormonde Wedding Style
Martha Stewart Living
Destination I Do

Online Advertising

Google AdWords
Facebook ads
Paid SEO services

Wedding Networks

TheKnot.com
WeddingWire.com
Local bridal show listings





Make New Friends

Hopefully you work consistently on establishing relationships with similar vendors in your area. For wedding photographers, these are florists, event planners and reception venues. For family photographers, they would be doctor's offices, boutique clothing and toy stores, and mom groups.

Just because you have great relationships with vendors already doesn't mean you should stay in your little clique exclusively. Find ways to meet new colleagues and form new relationships. This might mean that you help a local newbie photographer (that'll usually come back to you ten-fold at some point); ask a vendor whose work you admire out to coffee; or establish a new connection with a unique vendor of some kind. As long as you don't have an exclusive relationship with any current vendors, there's no reason you can't make more friends and collaborate with them on cross-promotional marketing ventures. It may even benefit you to introduce two florists that you work with to each other so they can develop a relationship and refer business too.

Find New Products

It's trade show season! This means you get to interact with vendors to see hands-on what's new and exciting. Updating your products will not only give you plenty of marketing juice when you introduce them to your audience, but can help you bring in more income when you sell these products to your clients.

Find new products that you've never offered before, like luxury LOFT cards from Black River Imaging. Improve upon the products you currently give your clients by upgrading the quality of canvases, albums and metals. It'll make you look better to your clients, give them a better product and get you excited about your final image delivery medium.





© Vanessa Joy




© Vanessa Joy

Beef Up Your Branding

This is a fun one! Marketing is about how your clients perceive you and their experience. By giving your branding efforts a facelift, you can wow your clients and give them a reason to chat about you.

One of my favorite ways to get my branding out in front of clients and their friends is to give gifts like Black River Imaging's Luggage Tags with their engagement session pictures on them around the time they're packing for their honeymoon. I give other fun things, like Black River's Stone Coasters and complimentary thank-you cards. I get to market my business this way, but I'm also creating a better client experience and boosting my brand in their eyes.

Check out this video to see how I've beefed up my brand this past year on everything from packaging to client surprises. 

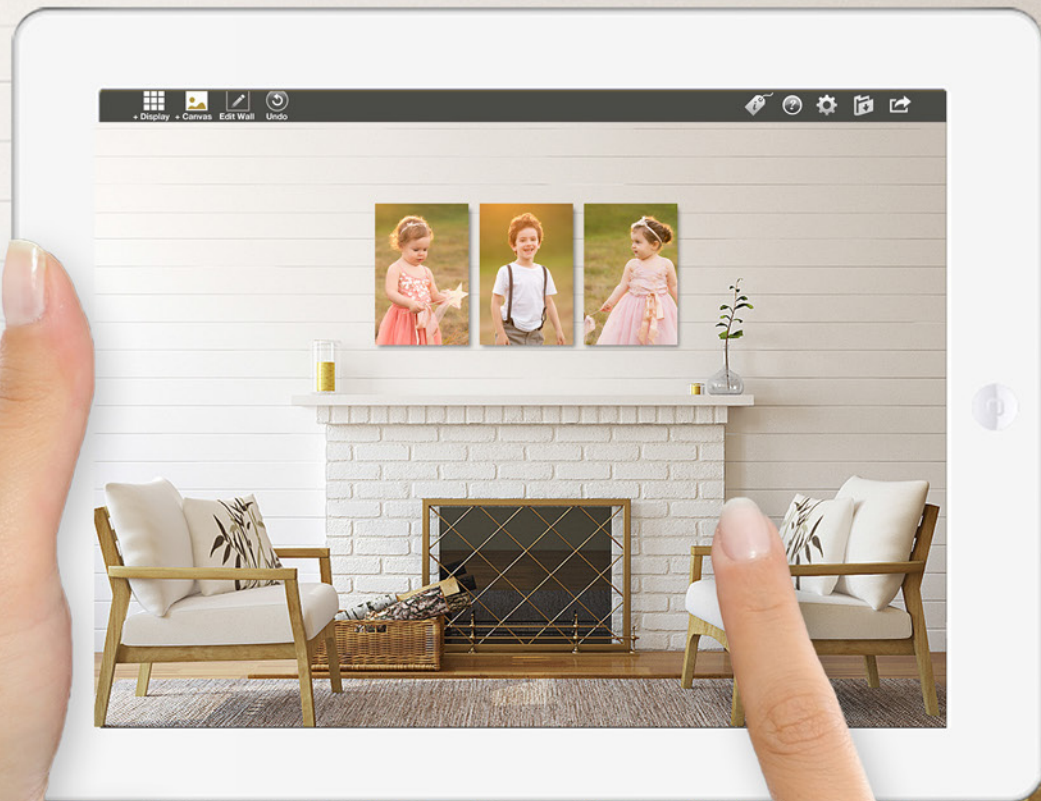
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PRODUCT REVIEW

WITH
Salvatore Cincotta


“ IN OUR SALES ROOM
WE STRIVE FOR A SEAMLESS
LUXURY EXPERIENCE. ”

Today I do in-person sales with a laptop tethered to a large TV. I have my laptop charger, the HDMI cord, the audio cord, and a hard drive all plugged into a laptop. There are cords everywhere, and as much as I try to conceal them, it just looks sloppy.

The ProofShare system eliminates all of that—now I can run my entire sales session right from my iPad. I can play music with Bluetooth, use Apple TV to tether wirelessly, and sync ProofShare with my Dropbox folder of images. The slick and easy-to-use interface requires almost no ramp time. You can begin using the app immediately. The structure of the app works just like Adobe Lightroom if you use that for sales (which I do). It has a flagging system, compare feature, and the ability to export the chosen images themselves, or a list of the chosen images.

Combine this cord-free experience with the Shoot and Sell app and you now have a no brainer sales process. With Shoot and Sell I can now show my clients exactly what an image will look like in any size in any room of their home. I can use actual images of their rooms or stock photos to create a wall gallery. From there, I simply save my design to the ProofShare gallery and am then giving my clients visual ideas and suggestions on how to decorate their home.

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INSPIRATIONS



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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 was inspiring for sure. Enjoy.



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with **Bambi Cantrell**

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF AND YOUR STUDIO.

Let's start with the obvious: Yes, my real name is Bambi. I've been a professional photographer for over 25 years, and own a wedding/portrait studio called Cantrell Portrait Design, Inc., which is located in the historic town of Benicia, California.

HOW DID YOU GET INTO PHOTOGRAPHY?

I've known since I was five years old that I wanted to be a photographer. When my husband and I got married, our wedding photographs were taken by an amateur with a good camera. That was a very poor decision. Our wedding photographs were terrible, and I was completely devastated. I'm the kind of person who always tries to look for the silver lining, and in this case, there was one. That experience made me realize I wanted to specialize in wedding photography.

About that time, my husband walked in the door from work and asked how I felt about moving to California from Georgia. Well, I had never been there, so I said, "Let's go." We sold our house in two weeks and moved. This was the worst and the best decision we ever made. At the time, it was the worst decision because within three months, we were completely broke. We failed to count the cost of such a move. But it ended up being the best decision we ever made.

I had to grow up quickly and I had to face all my fears. No, I did not get a job as a photographer right away. I got a job as many women did in those days: I became an executive secretary, which is hilarious for anyone who knows me and knows that I can't spell worth a darn. I did not immediately enroll in some fabulous photography school—in fact, I barely scraped through high school. I always joke that I graduated from the top of the bottom of my class. I've always been a very visual person, and had great difficulty learning from a book.



© Bambi Cantrell



About a year after I moved to California, a friend of mine mentioned that the photographer she worked for was looking for someone to photograph weddings for him. That day changed my life, but my interview almost didn't happen. The day I went for my interview with this photographer, I was absolutely petrified that he would not hire me because my work wasn't good enough. I went to the studio, put my hand on the doorknob and was so afraid that I turned around, went out of the building and ran down the street. The only thing that stopped me was a traffic light. Thank goodness for that traffic light! It gave me a moment to gather my thoughts and courage. I turned around and ran back to the studio, walked in, stuck out my hand and said, "Hi, I'm Bambi Cantrell and I'm here to speak to you about working for you." He hired me on the spot, but how could he not? I told him I would do it for free! I worked for a year for him without pay so that I could learn everything I possibly could. I got to make all the mistakes I wanted to under his brand, and not mine. I am very grateful to this day for that man's patience.

IF NOT PHOTOGRAPHY, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?

If I weren't a professional photographer, I would probably be a dress designer. I have always had a passion for fashion.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR WORK AND STYLE.

My style is timeless elegance, but with a human element. I believe that each person I photograph is unique, so I try to photograph them the way they want to be photographed. So it's very important for me to embrace their humanity and not try to make them do stupid human tricks. Good posing is very important for today's wedding photographer. I just don't have a formula. Some weddings, I will pose a couple and drag them all over town and do beautiful, romantic images of them. Other weddings, I take a very hands-off approach and don't do any posing or just very minimal posing based on the subjects I'm working with. We always have choices. Maybe our clients don't want to be posed, but that doesn't mean we can't take a flattering picture of them. We still have control of where our camera position is in relation to the light on the subject. I take that same approach when I photograph families with small children. In fact, I use the same thought process for both babies and brides.

WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU OFFER PHOTOGRAPHERS?

Take every class you can. Keep a humble spirit and never quit learning. One of my very favorite photographers of all time, Don Blair, was still taking classes when he was in his seventies. I admired the fact that he was taking notes in another photographer's class when he had been teaching photography for years and years.

In addition, I would say learn the difference between an f-stop and a bus stop. Many photographers today—or, should I say, amateur photographers with a good camera—let the camera do everything for them, and they become very lazy. Don't be like that. The more you know about the mechanics of your equipment, the more you learn how to manipulate the situation and the experience, and the less work you have to do in Photoshop. Learn the art of good communication, and make the experience fun.



© Bambi Cantrell



© Bambi Cantrell

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR COURSES AT SHUTTERFEST.

I am quite excited about my courses at ShutterFest. I will be teaching posing, lighting and how to get noticed in a time when everybody and their brother has a camera. I will teach how to create gorgeous gowns out of unique products like window screen and newspapers and garbage bags. My goal is to teach photographers to think differently so that clients will come to you not because of what you charge but in spite of what you charge—because your work is unique. ■

TO SEE MORE OF BAMBI'S WORK, VISIT
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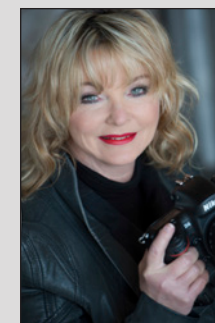


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

















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IT'S ALL ABOUT MUSIC

HOW TO PICK AND EDIT YOUR SOUNDTRACK

with Joe Switzer



by **Joe Switzer**

Many of you have editing frustrations, like finding the song that matches your video. Some of you have trouble agreeing with clients over song choice. You might be the person who just picks a random song and lays it down at the end of the edit. I hear from many of you that you just dread trying to find music.

In this article, I'll show you how our studio goes about choosing that perfect song for every project. Finding the perfect song should be easy, fun and very rewarding.

»» HOW NOT TO PICK YOUR SOUNDTRACK

First, avoid letting your client choose the song, which can set you up for failure. Clients will likely choose the longest and hardest-to-edit song, which might be wonderful for listening to but a major challenge to edit with. You need to help your client choose the song. Secondly, licensing your songs from music websites that have limited music selections and genres can be a mistake. You need to be able to use everything from the newest indie music to instrumental, cinematic and popular music. The freedom to choose the best song that matches your project is of most importance. Lastly, waiting until the last minute to pick your song can ruin your edit. Wedding companies have told me they don't care what song they use. This leads to a final edit that looks less professional because the timing of your edit doesn't flow with the rhythm of the song.

»» HOW TO CHOOSE THE BEST MUSIC FOR YOUR PROJECT

Switzerfilm's process of choosing the perfect song is simple. If you implement it into your workflow, you will save time and money, and have happier clients with more impactful videos. So where do you start? You can't just go to iTunes or Pandora and download a song. The only company I use to license all my music is SongFreedom. (I'm a shareholder in SongFreedom, but don't worry, I pay for the music just like you do, and always will.) SongFreedom has the most music, and allows you to share it easily.

The music process starts long before a client comes to you for a corporate or wedding video. Whenever you're at home going through footage, answering emails or just working around the house, that's a good time to have music playing. I'm constantly making mixtapes on SongFreedom, which is similar to creating playlists on iTunes. So for your next wedding or corporate video, you will always have a starting place with your preselected songs that have been saved for you on the site. This year, I've primarily made and used three mixtapes under my customized names of Same-day Edit, Instrumental Commercial and Slideshow. This makes it easy for me when we have a wedding coming up in a few days or if we have a corporate video that we are storyboarding. It helps us visualize and get off to a quick start without having to search for all sorts of music.



So what do you do when the client wants to pick the song? For our latest corporate shoot, I emailed the client the mix tape with my top songs. I shared with them my thoughts on what song I preferred, and the company agreed. Next time the client asks about picking the songs for their wedding film or corporate shoot, share with them the link to the group of songs you've preselected, and they can pick from that group. This way you are still in control and the video project won't suffer with a song that doesn't do your edit justice.

»» MATCHING MUSIC TO YOUR PROJECT

So what about matching your music to your project? Choose carefully. Ask yourself what you want your audience to feel when they are watching your video. Can your footage go with a tune by Phillip Phillips or Imagine Dragons, while maintaining the energy and variety of video clips on the edit? Or, if you want to use a voiceover for a corporate video, you'll need to be focused on instrumentals. This takes time and experience to get right, but always remember to really think about the client, locations and what shots you're going to have. If it's winter with not much sunlight, you don't want to use "Brighter Than the Sun" by Colbie Caillat. If you are filming a video for a company introducing a new app with a voiceover, you probably want to choose an instrumental that builds in intensity and complements the voiceover.

How long of a song do we use? As short in length as possible. Most Switzerfilm videos are two to three minutes. Why? You and the rest of the world have very short attention spans, and they are getting shorter. We want to entertain the audience so that when the video experience is over, they are left wanting more. The last thing we want to do is show 10-minute videos that nobody has the time or energy to watch.





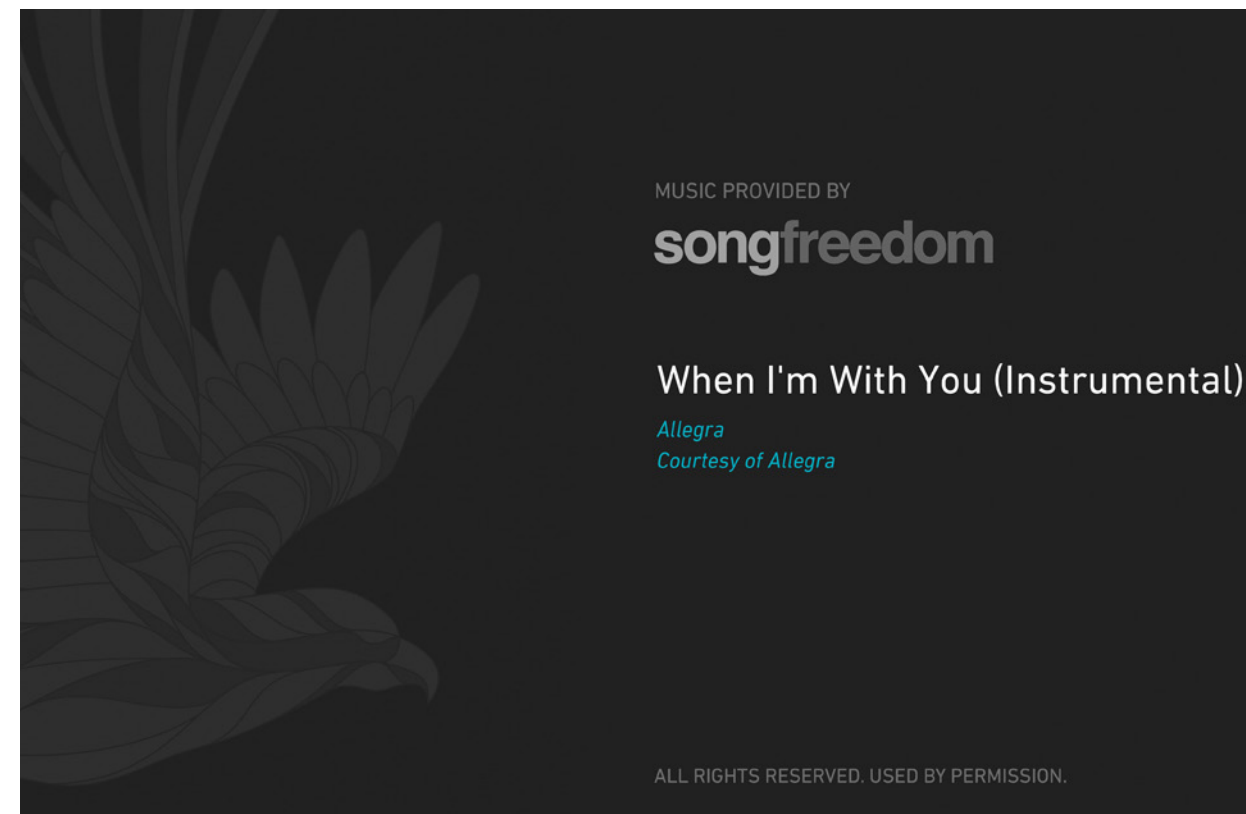
SongFreedom makes it easy for my team to find the music we need. The two most valuable tools that have revolutionized the way we license music are mixtapes and trending. When I'm dealing with clients who want to choose their own music, nothing is better than sharing a mixtape on SongFreedom. With mixtapes, you are preselecting the most likely song candidates, which are easily organized and shared. Your clients feel the video coming together when you send that link, and appreciate when you let them in on the creative process.

The other problem I've always had when searching for music is trying to find current music. Rather than spend days looking for the perfect or most popular song, with one click on the Trending tab, I can find out what songs other editors have been using. With thousands of people searching and buying as a community, the Trending tab keeps track of it and helps all of us find the perfect song for our project, so we're not wasting time searching through hours and hours of songs.

Of course, if you're a music junkie like everyone at SongFreedom and know every song ever created, you can use Sonic Search to narrow down your results. Basically, if you know you're looking for something that sounds or feels like "Fix You" by Coldplay, then you just search for "fix you coldplay." Even though that exact song might not be available yet, you'll get a ton of suggestions for songs that sound like what you're looking for.

» EDITING TO THE SONG

We want to edit to the rhythm of the song. Depending on what editing program you're using, it's best to have your most amazing and favorite video clips selected and ready. Keep in mind that you want to draw your audience in and show some amazing shots at first so you have their attention. You don't want to use too many of your best clips because you don't want to run out of footage. Your video needs to have an intriguing start and a strong finish. With most wedding videos I see online, the No. 1 mistake is that the editor ran out of good clips at the end.



The song example we're going to use is Mat Kearney's "Count on Me." The first nine seconds give you a chance to tease and use four or five diverse video clips to foreshadow and give your viewers a taste of what's to come. It shows viewers why they need to watch it, and not leave your video to check their Facebook feed. Think I'm kidding? How many times have you checked Facebook while reading this article?

If you're using this song for a wedding edit, for example, you don't need to edit it as the day happened. You can mix it up and start with the ceremony or reception. Maybe jump back to the wedding preparations. When you listen to that Mat Kearney song, you'll notice the verses and refrains. You want to section off the different parts of the day and change the parts of the day when the verses and refrains change. Save your best footage for the refrains. If the morning wedding prep wasn't exciting, you'll want to use that for the verse sections.

If the wedding ceremony had the most epic shots, you'll of course want to use that for one of the refrains.

Be supercritical when you edit each clip. Try to edit to the beat of the music. When you jump from those refrains back down to a verse, use transition shots that let your audience know you are taking them to a different location. The more you edit to music, the more all of this becomes natural and easy.

The bottom line is that the music you choose and how you edit your project to the song can make your videos much more impactful than you ever dreamed. At Switzerfilm, almost all of the videos we produce are edited to the rhythm of music. Our passion for editing and filming starts with the song. It's everything to us. Music is the universal language. If you choose your music wisely, it can help you tell those stories and connect with your followers. ■

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HARD LIGHT
VS.
SOFT LIGHT

WITH MICHAEL CORSENTINO



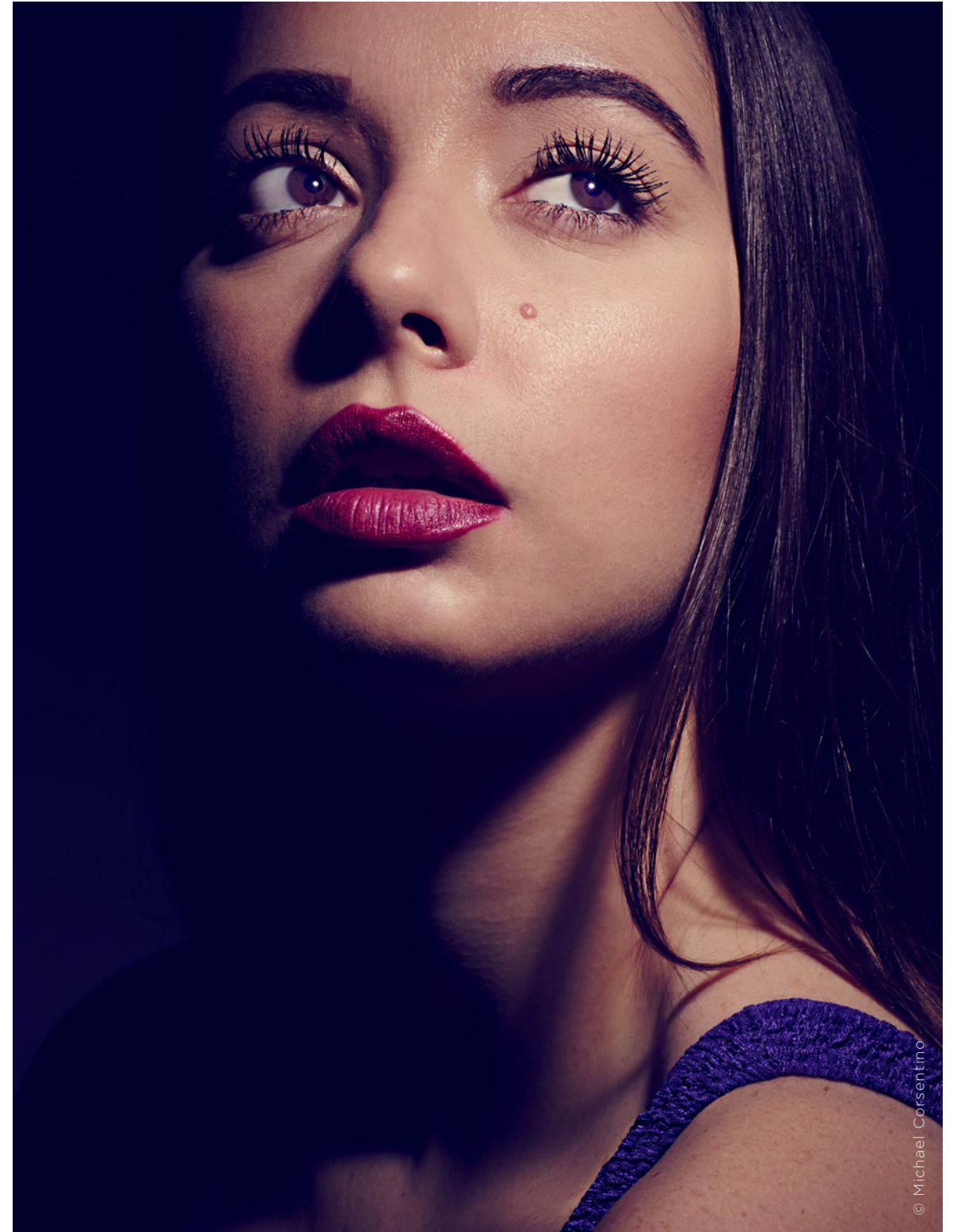
by Michael Corsetino

Hard light and soft light are all suited up and ready to rumble! They're both strong contenders, but at the end of the day, I think you'll agree they're both winners. They're at opposite ends of the spectrum, one edgy and dramatic and the other soft, willowy and open. This month, we'll explore their differences and how they're created, and jump into the studio for a few examples of what's possible with each.

As you'll see, they're both beautiful in their own right, each with unique qualities, distinct flavors and emotional impact. Let's start by defining the qualities of each type of light.

- Hard light creates a rapid transition between highlight and shadow. Its hallmarks are dark shadows with crisp edges.
- Soft light creates a gradual transition between highlight and shadow. Soft light's signature look is very diffuse, with soft-edged, open shadows.

So what's the real difference between hard light and soft light in practical terms? Shadows—that's the whole ballgame! The slower the transition from highlight to shadow, the softer the light. Conversely, the faster the transition from highlight to shadow, the harder the light. With hard light, the transition from highlight to shadow is crisp and well-defined, and casts deep, dark shadows. With soft light, the opposite is true, with the transition from highlight to shadow happening very gradually, creating shadows that remain light, soft and open.



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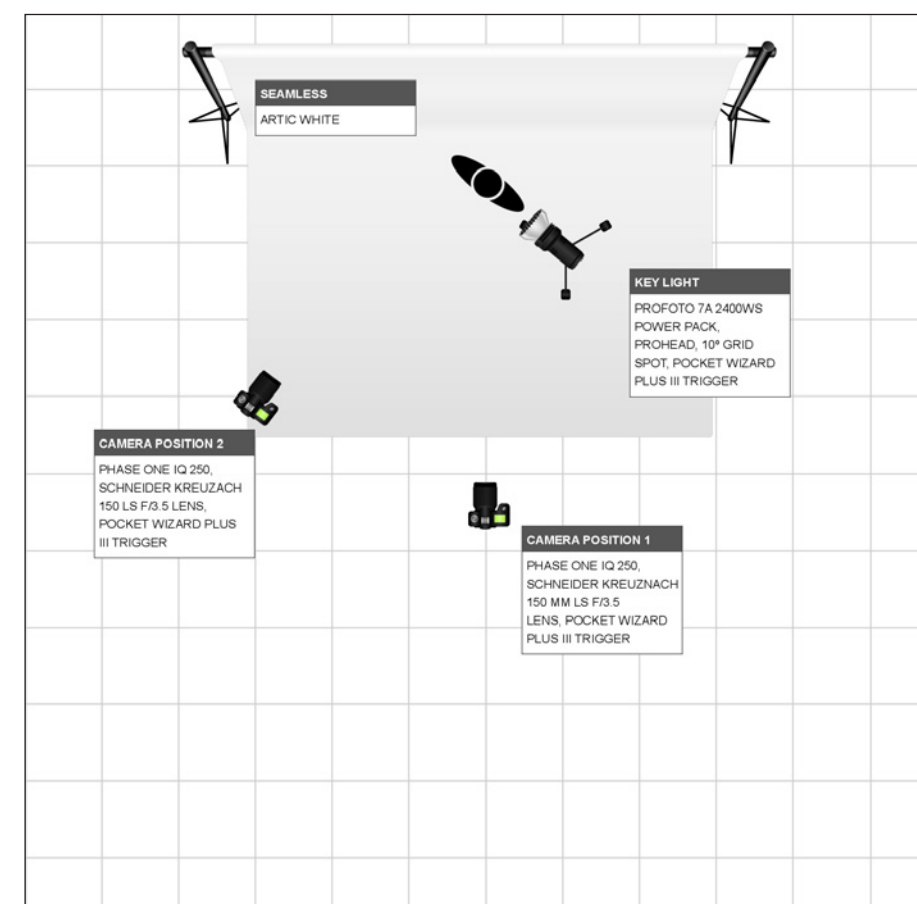
© Michael Corsentino

Not surprisingly, creating these effects relies on a combination of gear and technique. Let's look at a few of the considerations required for each. With both techniques, the light's distance, height and position relative to the subject play important roles. One of the most important considerations to understand is the concept of distance and its effect on lighting. The distance of the light source from the subject has a direct relationship to hardness or softness of the light created. The farther away a light is placed from a subject, the harder the quality of light will be. The closer a light is to a subject, the softer the light will be. The position of the light around the circumference of the subject determines the angle and amount of shadow introduced, creating light known as "directional." The height of the light dictates the length of shadows.

The factors above apply to lights with or without modification. However, a discussion of the wide variety of hard and soft lighting effects possible wouldn't be complete without including modifiers. There is no shortage of modifiers for both hard and soft light. Some of my favorites are bare strobe reflectors, silver beauty dishes, snoots, grid spots and barn doors for hard light. For soft light, it's octabanks, V-flats and bounce-back umbrellas—the bigger the better.

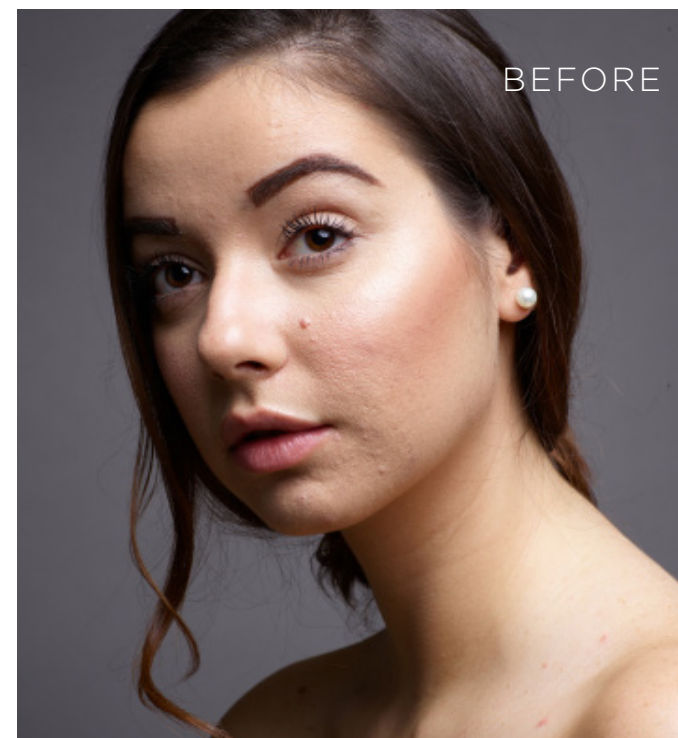
Hard light setup: Key light: Profoto 7A Power Pack, Profoto ProHead, 10-degree grid, Pocket Wizard Plus III trigger, Arctic White seamless backdrop, Kupo Low Roller light stands.

Hard light notes: For this one-light setup, I placed my key light high above my subject and to the right, letting the length and angle of the shadow cast on the subject's nose be my guide. In order to create drama and focus the light, I modified the key light with a 10-degree grid spot. This confined its light to a narrow directional beam, avoiding any spill on the white background, which became almost entirely black in the process. One backdrop, many looks! All achieved with lighting.



Rapid, well-defined transitions between highlights and dark shadows are hard light signatures. Note the shadows under the nose, lip and neck. The angle and length of the shadow cast from the nose dictates key light height and placement.

AFTER



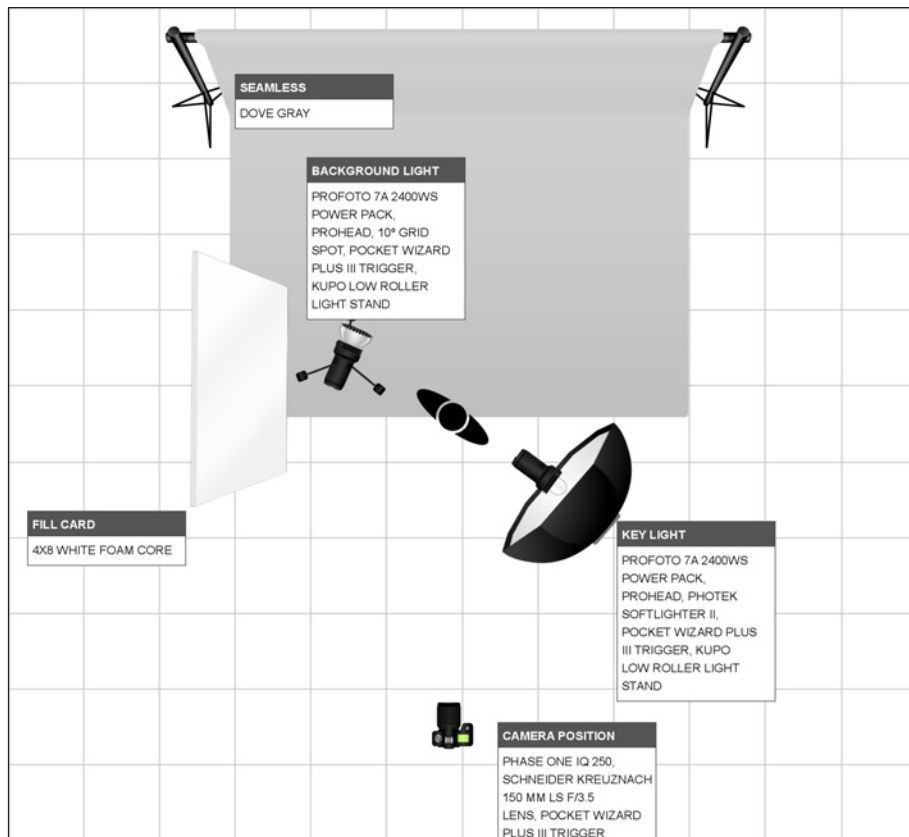
BEFORE

Comparing before and after images it's easy to see the role realistic retouching and properly executed color grading play in creating beautiful final edits.

It's worth mentioning that as much as the position of the lights relative to the subject creates various lighting effects, your position is also key. Changing your position once your lights are set up allows you to explore myriad lighting effects without ever moving a single light stand. Some of the results will be ho-hum, while others will be amazing hidden gems waiting to be discovered. Experiment and remember to step outside the box you've created. I always pose the following question to myself as I'm shooting: What am I not seeing? At this point, I'll circle around the subject in the studio and on location looking for different angles and lighting effects. This reminds me not to get stuck focusing solely on the direction I've chosen, and to explore other possibilities.

Soft light setup: Key light: Profoto 7A Power Pack, Profoto ProHead, Photek 60-inch Softlighter II, Pocket Wizard Plus III trigger. Background light: Profoto 7A power pack, Profoto ProHead, 10-degree grid spot, Pocket Wizard Plus III trigger, 4x8 white foam core reflector panel, Dove Gray seamless backdrop, Kupo Low Roller light stands.

Soft light notes: Size matters here, so go big or go home. The larger your source, the softer the light and the more gradual the transition between shadow and highlight. I modified the key light with the ridiculously inexpensive Photek Softlighter II. It's essentially a bounce-back umbrella faced with diffusion fabric. It creates a glorious soft light. Distance counts as well. I placed the key light as close to the subject as possible without actually being in the image. Additionally, I used a background light fitted with a 10-degree grid spot to create a soft vignetted circle of light on the backdrop. This helped add separation between the subject and background. To keep the shadows open on the nonlighted side of the subject's face, I placed a 4x8 sheet of white foam camera left. I experimented with different distances from the subject until just the right amount of light was reflected.



Gradual transitions between highlights and open shadows are soft light signatures. As with hard light the angle and length of the shadow cast from the nose dictates key light height and placement.

Post-production: Color grading (aka the color tint applied to each of the images) was handled exclusively in Capture One Pro 8. This is a topic I hope to cover in more detail in a forthcoming feature or video. Skin retouching was done in Photoshop CC using the “frequency separation” method. Again, a full description of frequency separation falls outside the scope of this article. However, if you’re into retouching, I strongly recommend investigating this technique.

With one or two lights, the guidelines above and a few simple modifiers, you can easily explore hard light, soft light and everything in between. So get into the studio and start playing around. 📷

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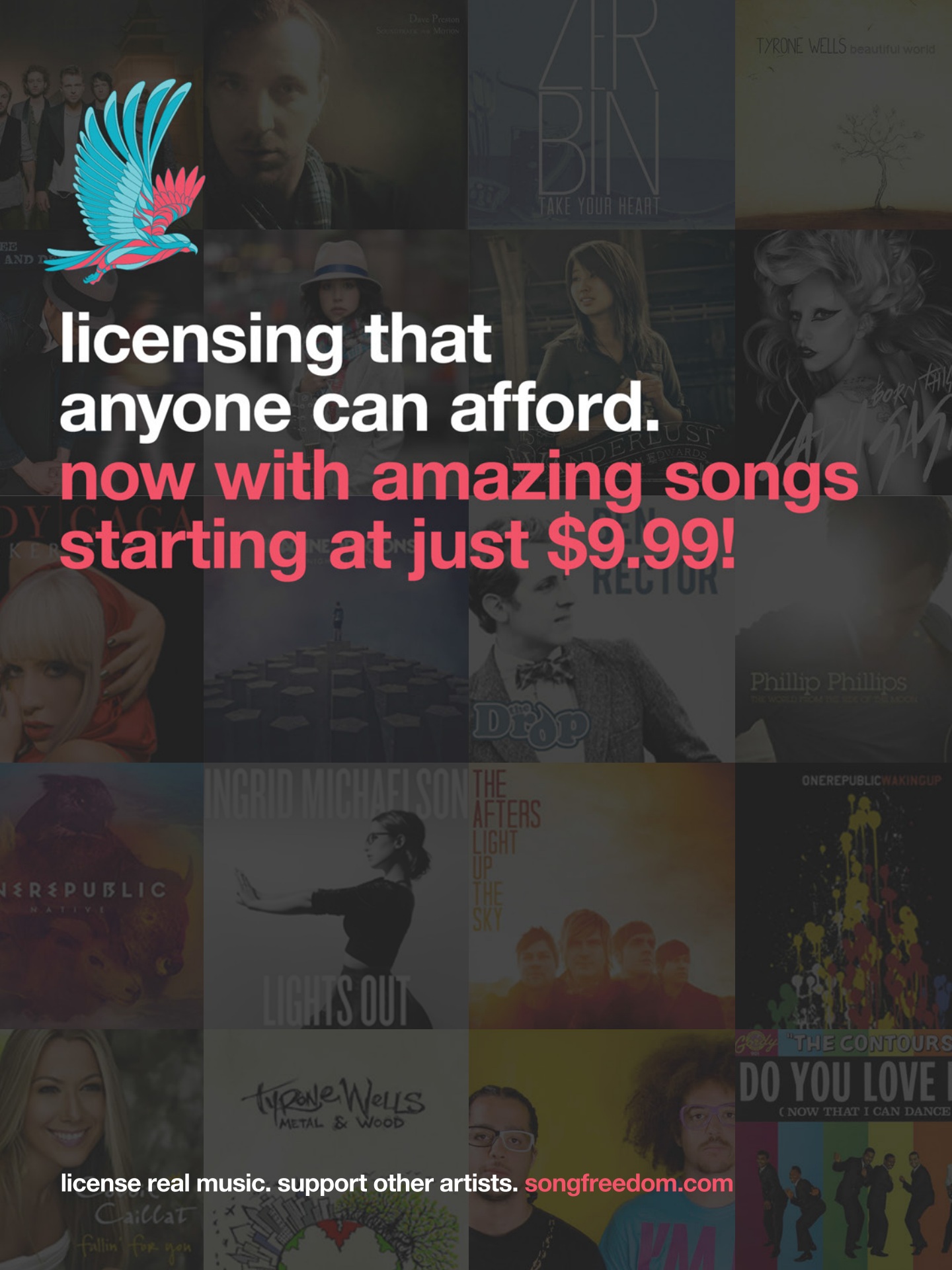
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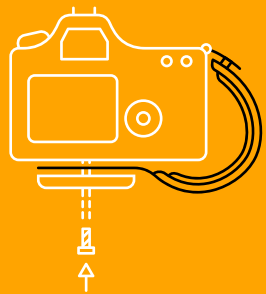
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