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may 2016

# shutter

magazine



THE  
**WEDDING**  
EDITION

“ THIS IS GONNA  
BE HUGE ...  
IT'S GONNA BE  
BIGGER THAN  
SALVATORE  
CINCOTTA  
PHOTOGRAPHY

SAL CINCOTTA

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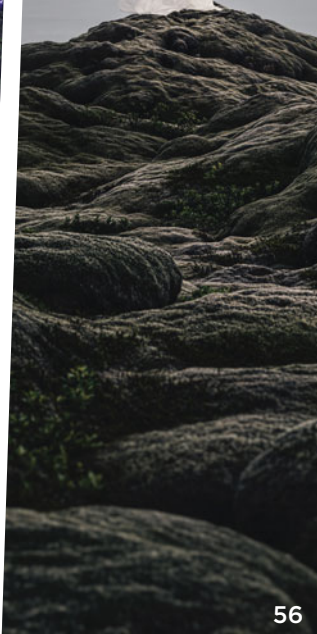
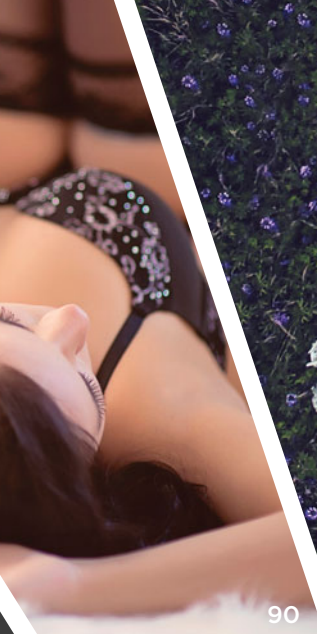
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*Salvatore Cincotta*  
BEHIND THE SHUTTER

## MISSION STATEMENT

*Shutter Magazine's* focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter 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 have established the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

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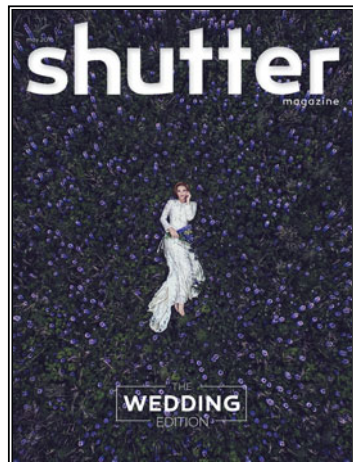
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## THE COVER

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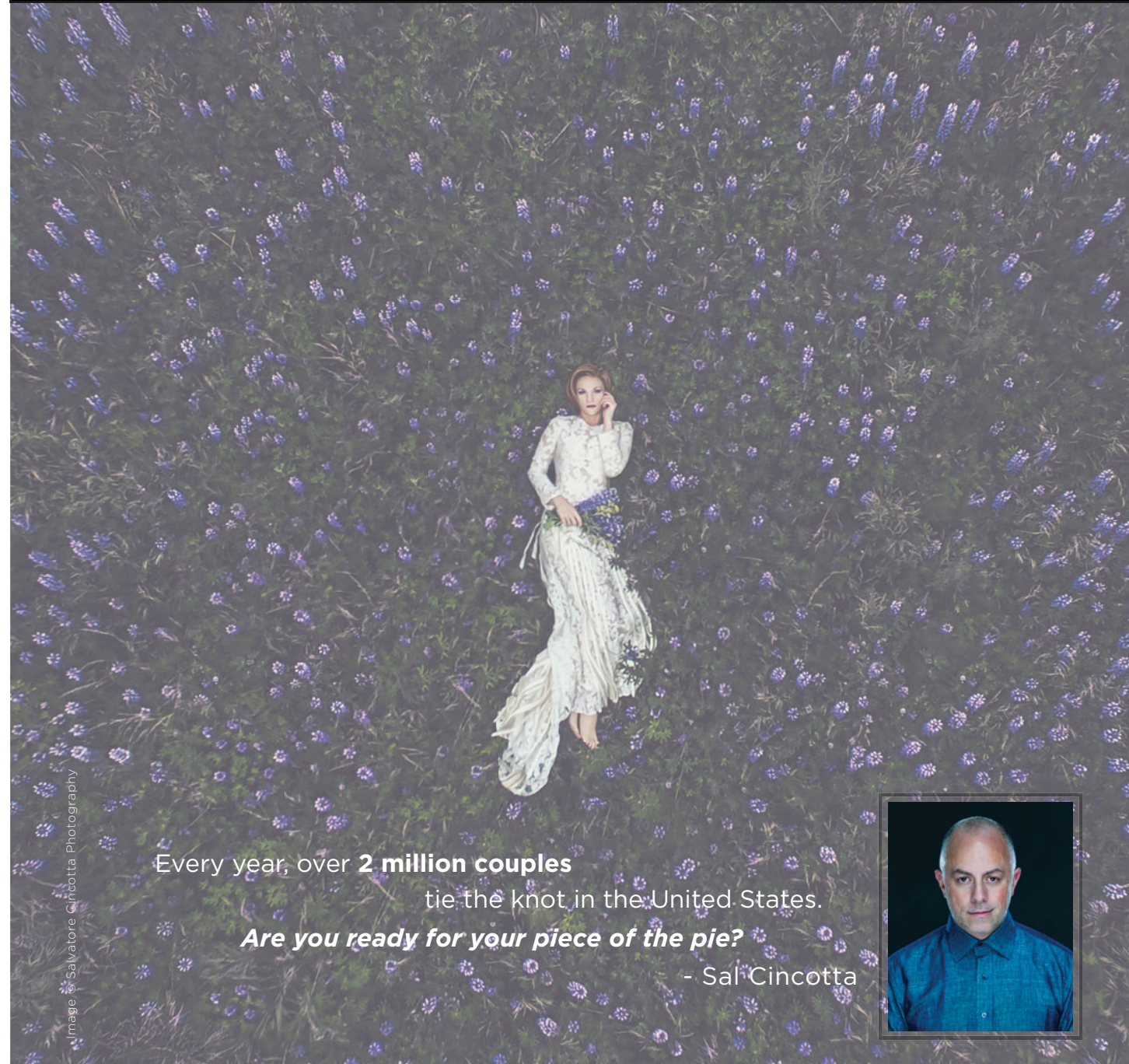
**EXPOSURE:** f2.8 @ 1/100th, ISO 118

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**ABOUT THE IMAGE:** This image was taken by drone in Iceland in July 2015.

# LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief



Every year, over **2 million couples** tie the knot in the United States.

***Are you ready for your piece of the pie?***

- Sal Cincotta



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

# BUILDING DRAMATIC FASHION LIGHTING

with Michael Corentino

I'm a big fan of great lighting, especially dramatic lighting. Fear not, all you lovers of supersoft light—I'll be covering that as well in an upcoming issue. I write often about the different methods and tools used to create various lighting styles. This month, I want to dig more deeply into the creative process and give you a step-by-step demonstration of exactly how to create dramatic light.



I certainly could have cut right to the chase and shot my previsualized concept first, but that would have defeated the purpose of showing you how various light distances, positions, modifications, background color choices and additional tools make the difference when you're building lighting effects from no drama to maximum drama. With this approach, my hope is that the reasons behind the choices made, techniques employed and their results become much clearer.

The difference between dramatic lighting and lighting without drama lies in the shadows and contrast created, or the lack thereof. Introducing shadows immediately infuses an image with more drama, and the harder the transitions between shadows and highlights, the more contrast and drama created.

I began with one bare bulb strobe placed above my camera, angled down at my model Kat. I photographed her on a white background to demonstrate what is nearly the flattest light possible. And I wanted to give you a point of departure for the forthcoming looks, where I'll introduce direction, various distances and several different modifiers to increasingly ramp up the drama. As you can clearly see, without any direction to the light relative to the model, there's very little in the way of shadows. This causes a flat look because, without shadows, there is nothing to give the subject a sense of volume and depth. This look is our baseline no-drama lighting.

Small changes create big results. By simply moving the light (still a bare-bulb strobe) to the right side of my model (from the camera position), I've introduced a significant amount of shadow to the image. I'm still using the same white background, but by repositioning and adding direction, the image now looks completely different. It has more drama and impact, and the subject is considerably more dimensional than in the previous flat-lit image. With one simple change and no modifier, I've gone from no drama to major drama.



Look 1: Bare-bulb strobe, no direction, 10 feet from subject, with white backdrop.



Look 2: Bare-bulb strobe, camera right, 10 feet from subject, with white backdrop.

The next step in the evolution toward uber-dramatic lighting is the introduction of a modifier to help shape and control the light from the bare-bulb strobe. I'm still shooting on white seamless with the light in exactly the same position as the previous image. But for this third look, I've added a 7-inch reflector with a silver interior. As you can see, this dramatically changes the characteristics of the illumination, creating a more defined, punchy, specular pool of light. Consequently, shadows are now deeper and the transitions between highlights more rapid. It's another step forward in our dramatic lighting journey.



Look 3: Strobe with 7-inch reflector, camera right, 10 feet from subject, with white backdrop.

It's safe to say that shaping and controlling light is really is all about modifiers. Building a vocabulary and understanding of which modifiers create which effects, and knowing when to use them, is the key to creative freedom. For this fourth look, I kept the position of the light and background the same, but I've swapped out the 7-inch silver reflector for a focusable zoom spot Fresnel modifier for the strobe. This tool is all about drama. With it I can create basically any shape I want, with soft or supercrisp edges, like I've done here. Again, the drama you're seeing is a result of light direction and modification.



Look 4: Fresnel zoom spot, camera right, 10 feet from subject, with white backdrop.



The distance of your light from your model and the background also plays a key role in the quality of light created. In the previous series of images, the keylight was approximately 10 feet from the model. For this fifth look, I moved the keylight close to my model and background, still a white seamless, and used a Mola Rayo to modify the light. The shape and interior finish of the modifier impact the shape, contrast, falloff and efficiency of the light. The Rayo's long conical shape and silver interior create deep shadows and a specular, punchy pool of light with rapid falloff. The small changes made in each of the successive looks have had a large impact on the overall quality of light and the drama created.

Grids, both fabric and rigid grid spots, are go-to tools for creating dramatic light. Lighting is all about placing pools of light where you want them. Grids excel at helping you do this. They confine the light from a strobe or speedlight to a narrower beam, eliminating any light spill that might be contaminating a background or another part of the image. For the sixth look, I've added a 7-inch silver interior reflector with a 10-degree grid spot to the strobe. This replaces the Mola Rayo used in the last look. Everything else has remained the same. The background is still white and the position of lights hasn't changed, but the quality of the light is vastly different. That's the power of modifiers. When you need to eliminate unwanted light on a background, grids are your tool of choice.



Look 5: Strobe with Mola Rayo reflector placed close for keylight, medium strip box below for fill light, white backdrop.



Look 6: Strobe with 7-inch reflector and 10-degree grid spot for keylight, strobe with strip bank and 30-degree soft egg-crate grid for fill below keylight, white backdrop.

Tone also plays a vital role in imparting drama to an image. For the next look, I've swapped the white background used in all the previous images with a dove-gray seamless. I'm using exactly the same lighting setup as the last look: a 7-inch silver interior reflector with a 10-degree grid spot close to the model. Yet again, we've achieved a completely different look simply by changing the tone behind our model rather than changing our lighting. Don't underestimate the impact of tone and color (more to come on the role of color in the final concept).

You can't beat a black background when it comes to creating dramatic lighting. Again, the choice of the background color makes a huge difference, as you can see here. Moving from gray to black and using the same lighting setup as the previous image—a 7-inch silver interior reflector with a 10-degree grid spot—amps up the drama quotient even more.



Look 7: Strobe with 7-inch reflector and 10-degree grid spot for keylight, strobe with strip bank and 30-degree soft egg-crate grid for fill below keylight, gray backdrop.



Look 8: Strobe with 7-inch reflector and 10-degree grid spot for keylight, strobe with strip bank and 30-degree soft egg-crate grid for fill below keylight, strobe with strip bank and 40-degree grid for accent light camera left, black backdrop.

For the final look, which was my original previsualized concept, I kept the background black, added two lights and colored gels, changed the modifier and brought in some fog and wind for added effect. This gave me three lights: two behind the model gelled with Rosco Primary Blue and facing the camera, and one light camera right, half-gelled with Primary Blue, serving as the keylight. The reason I half-gelled the strobe inside the strip bank was that I wanted the keylight to contribute mostly white light but still deliver a hint of blue.



*Look 9A: Two strobes gelled with Rosco Primary Blue behind model and facing the camera, one strobe with large 30-degree soft egg-crate grid camera right for keylight, strobe half-gelled with Rosco Primary Blue, fog added but insufficient for desired effect, wind machine for hair.*

The background lights were bare bulb with gels tapped over them, and the keylight was a large Elinchrom strip box with a 40-degree Lighttools egg-crate grid to keep the light off the background. On a cautionary note, when you're using gels in direct contact with strobes, be sure to turn off the strobe's modeling light. If you don't, your gels will quickly melt. One other important step I took for this setup was to mask the light stands supporting the two background lights with black gaff tape. Otherwise, the light from the strobes would have illuminated their silver finish, requiring a lot of work to get rid of them in post.



*Look 9B: Two strobes gelled with Rosco Primary Blue behind model and facing the camera, one strobe with large 30-degree soft egg-crate grid camera right for keylight, strobe fully gelled with Rosco Primary Blue (too much blue for the desired effect, so I went back to half-gelling the keylight, but fog amount is correct).*

For the final touches on my dramatic lighting concept, I employed a Rosco Vapor Machine to create a moody fog effect to diffuse the background lights and create a wash of color; a wind machine added a sense of motion to the model's hair. It takes a minute to get used to working with fog, finding the right amount of fog and the right direction, but once you get the hang of it, fog can add a lot to your repertoire.



Look 9C: Two strobes gelled with Rosco Primary Blue behind model and facing the camera, one strobe with large 30-degree soft egg-crate grid camera right for keylight, strobe half-gelled with Rosco Primary Blue, fog for atmosphere, wind machine for hair.



Final Look

Image © Michael Corsentino

I hope walking you step by step through the process of creating dramatic lighting has piqued your creativity and given you a better understanding of how to control, shape and work with light, color and tone. See you next month. ■

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Michael Corsentino is an Orlando, Florida-based editorial fashion and portrait photographer. In addition to his busy shooting schedule, Michael is a passionate educator, teaching workshops domestically and internationally. He is an author of two books, writes a monthly lighting column for *Shutter Magazine* and is a regular contributor to *Photoshop User* magazine and *JointheBreed.com*.

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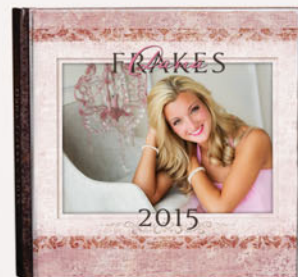
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# IPHONE FILM- MAKING

with Joe Switzer

For years, I've laughed at the concept of filming or taking photos with an iPhone. My team and I have teased all the iPhone camera people we encounter. I'm sure you've seen a guest at an outdoor wedding in harsh sunlight using a flash with their iPhone. Or how about the guy at a pro sporting event recording with his iPad and trying to zoom in from 400 yards away? All I've ever done is laugh at these people. Until now. I'm starting to second-guess myself, and have been thinking the iPhone is a movie studio in our pockets that can change the video world as we know it.

Here are the top five reasons you need to start using an iPhone on your shoots.



## #1 EASY TO USE AND SHARE

The iPhone is the ultimate camera for capturing photo and video moments. Last month, we filmed the wedding of two pro photographers in Las Vegas. Many of the guests were legends in the wedding photo world who had the latest state-of-the-art cameras and lenses with them. But many of them were taking photos with their phones, including the groom.

This makes sense to me. It's easy. Your phone is always in your hand or pocket. You can quickly share on Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram. Your cameras can't compete with the ability to capture and share moments instantly. The convenience of your iPhone makes it more likely you will capture the most real, emotional, funny and glorious moments on the fly.

Anytime my family and I go on a trip or to a family function, we rarely take our professional cameras with us. We don't want to lug around equipment. If it's good enough for family gatherings and vacations, is it good enough for your clients? Maybe it is. One thing is certain: Throughout my life, I've shot the greatest, most fun, epic, beautiful, exciting moments on a phone and not a camera.



Images © Joe Switzer

## #2 VIDEO TOOLS

The iPhone works with the professional video tools you already have. We found it worked perfectly with tools like the motorized track and Ronin-M. If you want to be more than a handheld iPhone filmmaker, video tools will take you to the next level.

Taking your iPhone filmmaking seriously means mastering the way you use your device with the different tools. Grab a MeFOTO or Manfrotto iPhone tripod. The MeFOTO is great for off-roading adventures and travel. If you are going to use your iPhone for interviews, weddings or time-lapses, try the more stable Manfrotto.

You can even use your existing tripods with the right adaptors. When filming motion video shots, we used our Ronin-M with the wide-angle lens, and were pleased with how stable and beautiful the shots were. Motorized slider time-lapses with moving clouds looked almost as good as with our professional cameras.



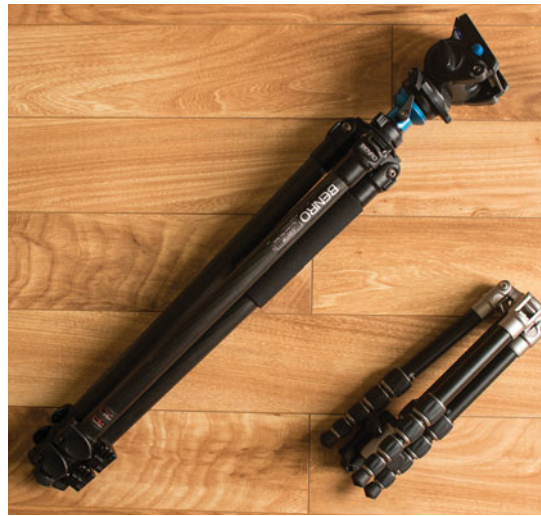
Images © Joe Switzer

### #3 INEXPENSIVE

For less than \$300, you can get everything you need to capture professional-looking footage.

You probably already have an iPhone or something similar. The Manfrotto iPhone tripod is only \$75. The MeFOTO tripod kit is \$149, and the MeFOTO SideKick360 Plus adaptor is \$35.

The Olloclip 4-in-1 Lens combines a fisheye, wide-angle, 10x macro and 15x macro all in one for only \$79.99. Olloclip's other two options are the Active Lens and the Macro Pro Lens. We experimented with the Macro, and found it difficult to get close enough to the subject to get video shots. To film your eye, for example, the camera lens has to be about an inch away from your eye. The Macro won't work for everyone, but if you're into filming bugs or something in the medical field, it could be useful. The Active Lens is our next purchase because it gives you an ultrawide and telephoto lens in one for \$99.



#### #4 SIMPLICITY

The iPhone is the easiest camera to use. What other camera in the world can every 5-year-old pick up and use to take photos and video within seconds? What makes it easy is that you don't have to worry about customizing functions or navigating tedious menu systems. It might have limited functions, but it does the basics really well and produces tremendous results. It's the most efficient camera on the market.

With other cameras I've owned, I would always press the wrong button and wind up in some weird setting where I couldn't focus or take photos. With the iPhone, there are no buttons, so you won't get lost in settings. The basics like focusing and exposure can be locked in by just touching the screen.



Images © Joe Switzer

#### #5 SOPHISTICATION

The iPhone is loaded with cutting-edge technology. The iPhone 6s Plus can film in 4K and shoot 12MP photos. You can even take still photos while you're recording. It has the largest video screen I've ever held.

Not enough to get you excited? I'll keep going then. The iPhone can shoot 240 fps slow motion. It can time-lapse without an intervalometer, and you can zoom in while you're recording. You can live-stream on Facebook as well.

Could you imagine if a camera company came out with a DSLR or mirrorless camera that could do all of this? We will always want smaller, faster, better. Apple has given us the winning combination of the technology we all want in the smallest package.



Images © Joe Switzer



Try out your iPhone with your existing tools and see how you like the results. It's the video tools and techniques that are the most important thing for you to focus on. Other camera phones may be just as good. If you want to see the iPhone in action, watch the video with this article. We filmed it entirely on an iPhone. Motion, time-lapses, tripod and track shots with a few of the Olloclip lenses looked really great.

Still don't want to try video on your phone? Imagine going to a photo or video shoot with your camera and lenses in the same pocket, a camera as thin as a pencil and lenses as small as ChapStick. I've seen three major evolutions in video in my life. The first was high definition. You could really see and feel the difference with those cameras. The second was when filmmakers started using DSLRs for video. This allowed mainstream filmmakers in the wedding industry to have a chance at producing Hollywood-quality content.

Now the time has come for the third evolution in the last two decades. It's time the creative world woke up and embraced mobile phones. A movie studio is in your pocket. What are you going to do with it? ■



Image © Joe Switzer

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Joe Switzer founded the international award-winning photo-cinema business Switzerfilm. His team is made up of four young creative minds striving to take the world of wedding cinema and photography to the next level. The team travels the world for inspiration, going anywhere and everywhere to top their latest work. Joe finds joy in teaching all over the world and helping up-and-coming "ographers" lay the groundwork for a solid future. Over the past 10 years, he has counted the majority of his clients as lifelong friends.

*Salvatore Cincotta*

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**WHAT TO  
SAY TO A  
CLIENT  
WHO'S ALWAYS  
RIGHT**

with Phillip Blume

Lift your eyes up away from these words for a moment, stare straight ahead and say, “No.” Say it out loud. Say it like you mean it. Seriously. Wherever you are right now—reading online, in an airplane or sitting comfortably inside a Barnes & Noble with *Shutter Magazine* in one hand and a latte in the other—give “no” a try. I promise the people around you won’t mind. (They may stare at you and slowly walk away. But at least you’ll gain some extra personal space.)

How did the word *no* make you feel? Interestingly, the sound of this negative word has a measurable psychological effect on us. It *feels* bad. It feels even worse when someone levels a “no” in your direction.

But let’s change things up, and say “yes” out loud. Now that feels good, doesn’t it? This universal emotional reaction to *yes* and *no* is why successful businesses have long honored one sacred motto: “The customer is always right.”

But is the customer really always right? Heck, no. (Now that *no* actually felt kind of good.) But if employees are sometimes all too eager to deal out harsh *no*’s in response to a customer’s bad behavior, then owners must learn that saying “yes” is the key to profits. We have something to gain by it.

The question is, how can you say “no” while still making it feel like a “yes”? If you can master this art, it will enhance your clients’ positive experience so much, it can transform your business.



## THE COST OF GIVING IN TO CLIENT DEMANDS

How often are you telling your clients “no”—that bitter, soul-crushing word? Or how often are you giving them a begrudging “yes,” giving in to their demands when you know it isn’t good for your business or for them?

Years ago, my wife and I received an unusual honor. A young couple, our wedding clients, invited us to celebrate their first anniversary with them. We expected it to be a party. As it turned out, it was just the four of us for dinner. I think this says something about the intimate experience we provide our couples from the start, but it says even more about how awesome and kind our couples are.

Thank goodness we brought a gift for them, a simple 11x14 print from their wedding portraits we’d made exactly one year before. As the bride unwrapped it, a surprising thing happened: She became emotional. “Oh, it’s so beautiful. I haven’t seen any of these pictures since our wedding,” she said, to our astonishment.

But we’d given them the digital images a year ago. Surely they printed them, right? No, they hadn’t. It turned out that none of our couples from the early years of our business had done much with their photos. (“Well, at least that custom-printed CD looks amazing in your junk drawer,” said no one ever.) We had literally given them nothing of lasting value. What had we been doing?

Well, we hadn’t been succeeding. We were just another pair of unprofitable wedding photographers—the last thing the world needed.

But you, as the manager of your own business, have the choice to say “yes” to doing things differently starting today. That’s what we did. We said “yes” to a lifestyle of charitable projects that our regular readers are familiar with. Doing pro-bono work to alleviate poverty is costly, but “yes” helped us discover new business opportunities through that work that we otherwise would have missed.

We said “yes” to creating ComeUnity, an informal but powerful network that helps photographers balance life with greater business success. (We’d love to invite you to join all of us “Unifiers” at [ComeUnityWorkshops.com](http://ComeUnityWorkshops.com) or @ComeUnity on Instagram.) Our own success allowed us to do what mattered most to us: By the time you read this, we will be on our way home from China after picking up our newly adopted son.

It’s been quite a journey. This all became possible because “yes” created a better experience for our clients. Here are three simple ways to say “yes,” even when you mean “no.”





Images © Phillip Blume

## THE PERSUASIVE YES

The persuasive “yes” leverages the power of suggestion. For example, your client might say, “We don’t want to do a first look. But can we still get beautiful sunny landscape portraits outside after dark?” I’m exaggerating only slightly. Don’t we all have those clients who can’t seem to see the logistical nightmare they’re creating for themselves on the wedding day?

My response has become, “Yes, we can figure that out. Most couples now plan a special, private moment together. So that really has become the new tradition for most people.” Here I’m using the word *tradition* in my response because I realize that’s the main reason couples make wedding-related choices like these. Heck, that’s why Eileen and I chose not to see each other earlier on our own wedding day. But I, as the expert, have a new and valuable perspective to share with my clients. I must do so gently to get the point across.

“The choice is totally up to you,” I say with a smile. “If it helps, I can tell you some of the pros and cons of first looks, too.”

It’s irresistible. You’ve already given them “yes,” so of course they’ll hear you out. Then I seal the deal: “When you share that private first moment together, it’s beautiful because you still see each other for the first time. But it’s not for an audience. It’s just for you. You can actually breathe and speak to one another. Nerves just melt, and couples say they enjoy the ceremony even more because they can soak it in better.”

If I just can’t get through to them, we can always offer a day-after session, which is an extra sale for us. But by this point in the consult, the bride’s eyes usually well up with tears. The first look is a go. We’re appealing to emotion, not giving orders.

## THE ALTERNATIVE YES

A big reason for our success is that we stopped giving away our product for free (imagine that). Yes, of course there are valid business models that differ from ours. But if you would like to be one of the very few photography businesses that continue to thrive beyond their first few years in business, know that the vast majority of successful studios don’t shoot and burn.

Here’s the reason most of us are terrified to branch out from the “shoot and burn” model. We know this question is coming: “Aren’t the digital negatives included with the session?”

Don’t panic. It’s all in how you answer. Should you say, “No. Does Coca-Cola give you their secret formula just because you paid for a two-liter?”? Great analogy, but that response may lose you a client.

Instead, use the *alternative yes*: “Sessions don’t automatically include negatives. But, yes, if digital copies are important to you, they’re available for purchase. Or most couples actually receive them as a free gift with a certain minimum in artwork purchases. That’s something we do because we believe so strongly in the lasting value of physical artwork for families.”

Plant seeds. You want your clients to have something that lasts. Guide them toward better choices. After all, you don’t see USB sticks or consumer-grade prints in museums.

## THE NO/YES

Here’s a fun exercise. Try shaking your head “no” while actually saying “yes.” It’s hard, right?

“Can we get a discount if we don’t want an album in our package?” your client may ask.

You could say: “No, I can’t afford to shoot your wedding unless you buy an album. That’s why it’s in the freakin’ package.” But don’t talk about your needs; talk about their needs. Try this: “Yes, my packages do always include a wedding album. My goal as an artist is a finished art piece that your daughter or granddaughter will love as much as you do.”

“Do we get the Raw images?” is another common (and ridiculous) question. The answer obviously should be “no.” But I almost feel compelled to respond to this one like Inigo Montoya, the Spanish character from the comedy classic *The Princess Bride*: “Raw. You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.” Keep in mind that clients don’t speak photography jargon. Say this instead: “Raw images aren’t edited. But, yes, any digital images you purchase are color-balanced and ready to print.”



Images © Phillip Blume

Yes is what it all comes down to, isn't it? In the end, successful businesses don't offer products. They offer an experience. Photographs are a commodity. But people will pay for an experience, pay to feel valued. Value your clients. Give them "yes," and they will return to you again and again. ■

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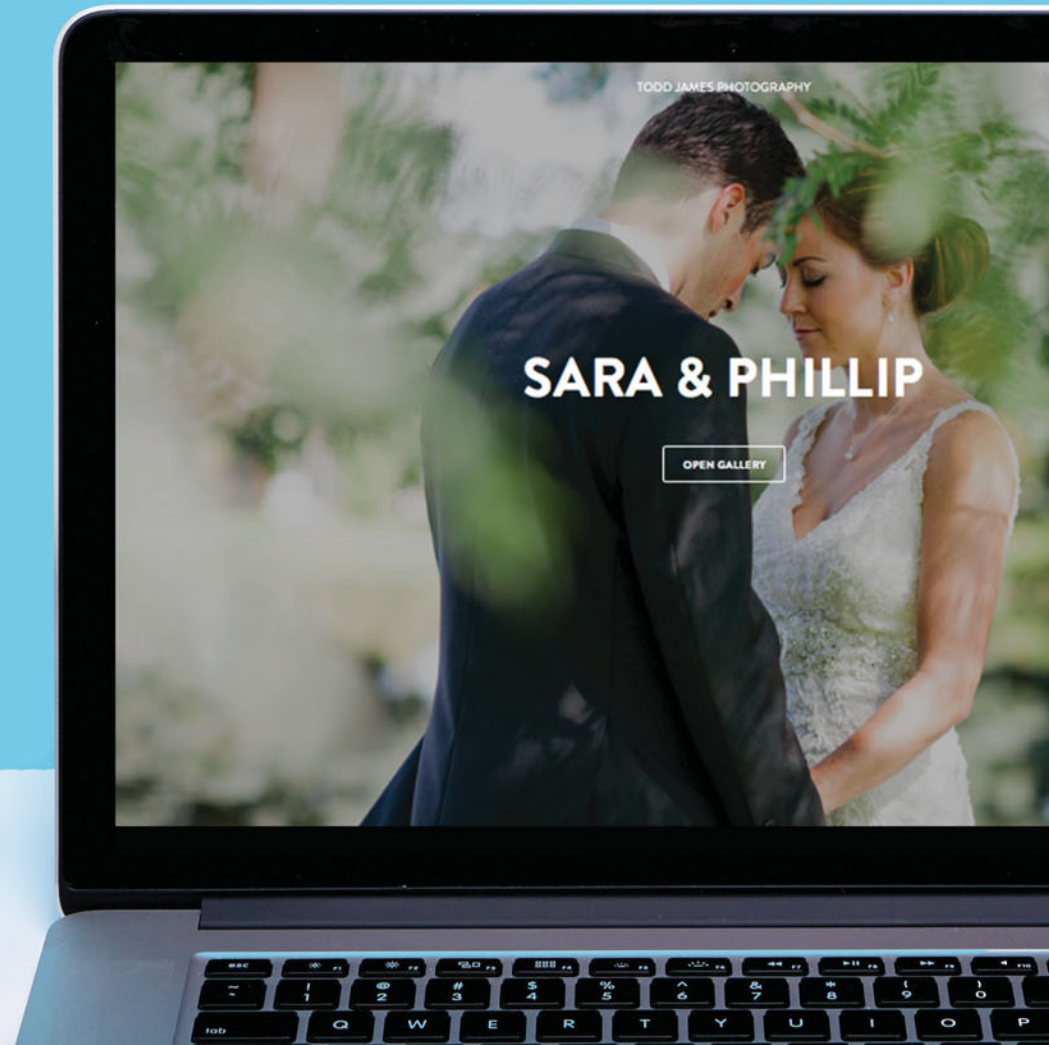
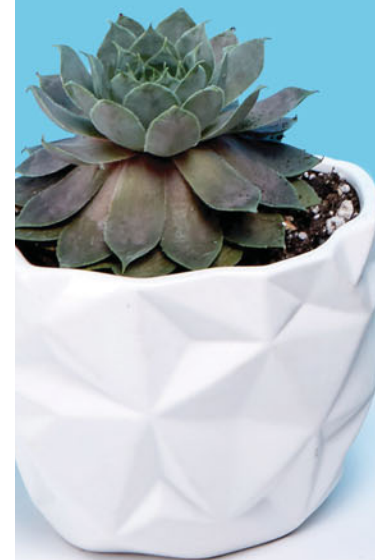
Phillip Blume is an international award-winning photographer and, with his wife, Eileen, cofounder of Blume Photography Studios and ComeUnity Workshops. In addition to photographing weddings and portraits worldwide, the Blumes focus their efforts on personal projects to help those suffering extreme poverty.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

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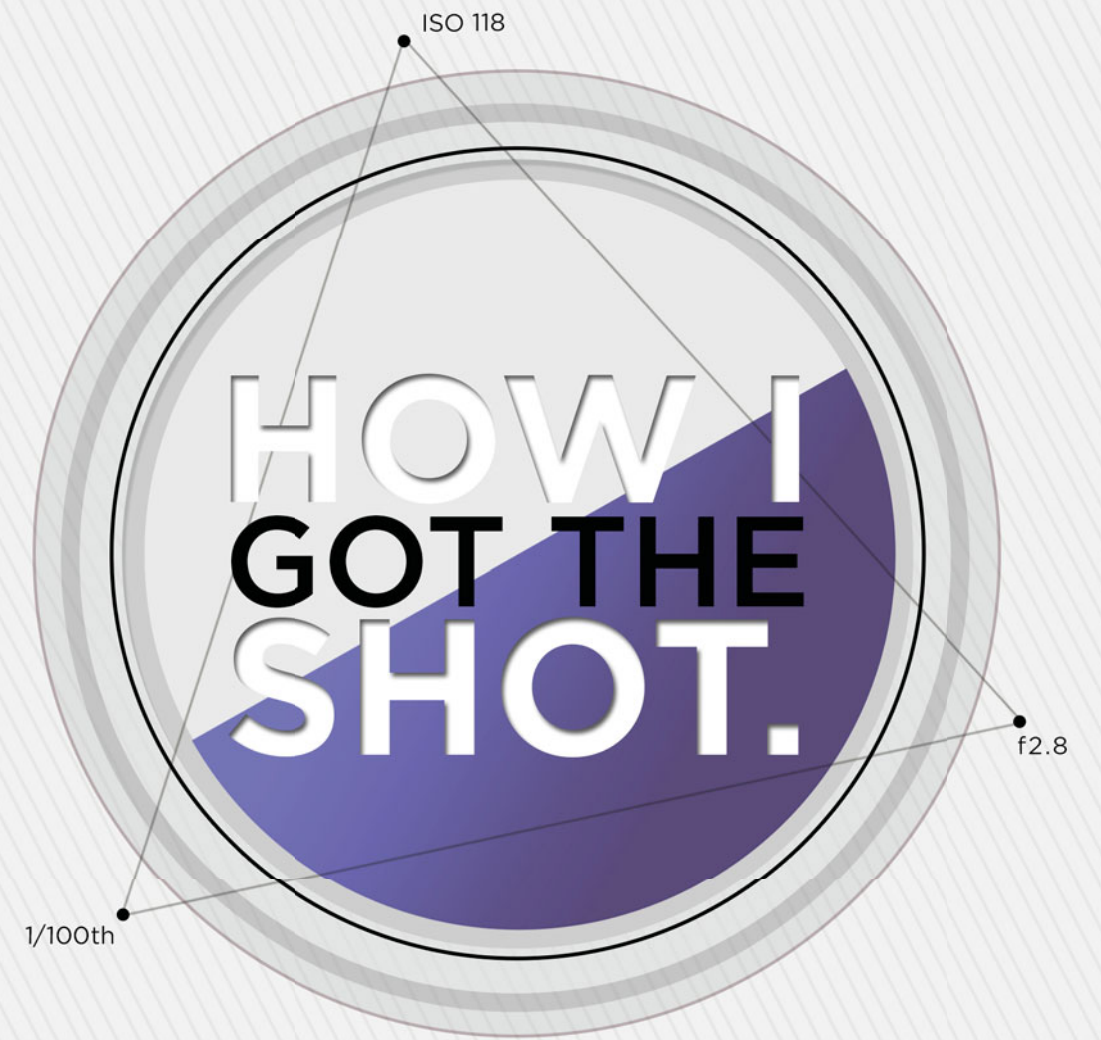
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with **Sal Cincotta**

Drone photography is here to stay. If you see drones as merely for playtime, you are missing out. But with this bold new frontier comes unique challenges. There are all sorts of rules and regulations we are going to have to learn about and adhere to, and they seem to change daily. If you ask someone to explain them to you, well, it's clear as mud.

Don't let this discourage you. Drones can give you a different perspective on life and photography. When people think drone, they think video. But recently, we have been using drones to enhance our photography coverage. This article isn't about how to use drones. The Internet is filled with that content. Instead, I want to talk about what was going on in my mind to produce the recent shots you see here.

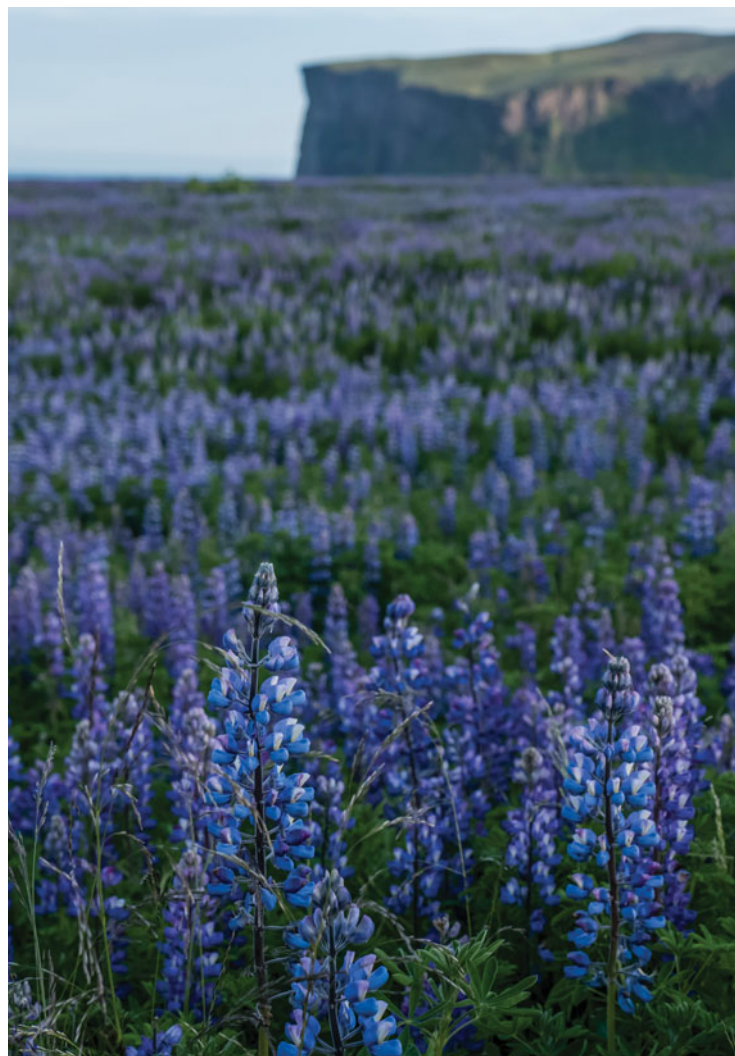


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### Drone.

I use the DJI Phantom 3 Professional with 4K camera. Are there better drones? Yep. Are there better optics? Yep. Are there better . . . yep. I am not about to have the age-old Canon versus Nikon debate here. Find what works for you. There are countless online reviews to slog through.

The Phantom 3 is perfect for us for a number of reasons. Ease of use and portability are the main two reasons. We travel a lot, and portability is key. Everything fits in a nice Pelican case or backpack that is carry-on size, so we don't have to check it. And when it comes to ease of use, I can have this bird in the sky in less than four minutes—that's out of the box, blades assembled, GPS calibrated. I know because it took some work for me to nail down the process in record time.

We love the 4K video. Would I love better optics for better still imagery? Without a doubt. But for now, that's a tradeoff I can live with.

These things are getting better and better and cheaper and cheaper every year. As I write this, I am getting ready to leave for a National Association of Broadcasters event in Las Vegas, where they reveal the latest and greatest in video tools, so I expect to be blown away by cool new drone tech.



## Lighting.

When working with drones, the concept of off-camera light is not going to happen. It's all about available light or possibly constant light sources, like an Ice Light from Westcott. We're talking WYSIWYG: With these optics, you are not going to get the same quality of imagery you would from your DSLR, but that's not the goal. With that in mind, lighting as best you can will save you lots of frustration in post-production.

## Focus.

The focusing system is complete shit. It's a video camera. I use it with a spray-and-pray mentality. You have to overshoot. If you are shooting landscape or architecture, you need to shoot more frames than you usually would to ensure you end up with a sharp image.

The differences between the Phantom 2 and 3 is huge. There are massive differences in the camera and software. Pay attention to your settings, and don't let your settings get to 1/30th of a second. While the drone uses GPS to hover somewhat smoothly, taking a still image from a drone at 1/30th of a second will almost certainly result in a blurry image.

## Setting up the shot.

Using a drone for your portrait photography requires that you see the world a little differently. You have to start thinking top-down. Posing and composition are way different. Drones also aren't meant for close-ups. Use your normal camera for that. When I am using the drone, I am thinking big and dramatic, with my subject smaller in the frame. It's a bird's-eye view of the scene. Your clients will be blown away when they see an image from this perspective. They'll tell you they've never seen anything like it before. Be the hero.

## Printing the results.

Here is where things get a little tricky. This is not a DSLR with 8-bagillion megapixels. This is a 4K camera with 12-megapixel images coming off it. Using software like ON1's Resize 10, you can blow up images with no issues. Recently, I printed an image as a 15x30 for one of our bridal shows, and it looked incredible. It was a showstopper for our brides, which is totally the point. Do something different, something with impact. Clients don't pay big money to get something that every photographer is doing. They want something different. Show them that difference by thinking outside the box.

With Resize 10, we were able to resize a nighttime drone shot that was used on both the client's website and on a huge banner on the side of their building.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

**Closing thoughts.**

Drones will only become more pervasive with time, and what you do with them will help you stand out from the crowd. Start embracing these tools as an add-on service. The options are endless, and your clients will love what they see. Sometimes the smallest addition to your arsenal can make the biggest difference to your bottom line. ■

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

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# HOW I PLANNED THE SHOT

CREATIVE PORTFOLIO SHOOTS

with Alissa Zimmerman

Shooting for your portfolio and expanding your skill set are the most important parts of building your brand and photography business. Never stop learning and pushing yourself to be better than you were yesterday. Trends and techniques evolve constantly in our industry, and it's crucial to build your studio with one mantra in mind every day: Innovate or die.

The planning process that goes into creative photo shoots should be simple and painless. If it causes you stress and anxiety, you're doing something wrong. I've talked about our three-part formula for planning photo shoots a handful of times, and without this outline for organization, the thought of planning a creative shoot will be enough to make you want to quit your dreams of being a photographer. Trust me, I've been there.

The portfolio shoot is anything you want it to be. Do you have a trip planned to an exotic location any time soon? Start researching the areas you're going to be, and build a mood board of ideas for a shoot. Have a few days off coming up? Grab a few friends and plan a shoot in an area within driving distance. Portfolio shoots are meant to be fun, a time for you to take a step back from the computer screen and paperwork to practice new techniques and poses, and try out any new gear that's been sitting on your shelf.

Okay, so you have a general idea of what you want to do. Now what? Use the steps below to start the planning process, and watch how easy it all falls into place once you figure out the big-picture items.

Last July we went to Iceland, where we got to see some of the most breathtaking landscapes I never even knew existed on this planet. Driving in Iceland somehow had me acting like an eight-year-old on Christmas morning—every 5 miles we drove was like unwrapping a new and even more exciting present from under the tree. We went from black-sand beaches to endless fields of blue bonnets to what looked like the surface of Mars, all within 30 minutes. If you ever get the chance to go to Iceland, just go. And give yourself at least two weeks to explore.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

### Step 1: Determine the goal of the shoot.

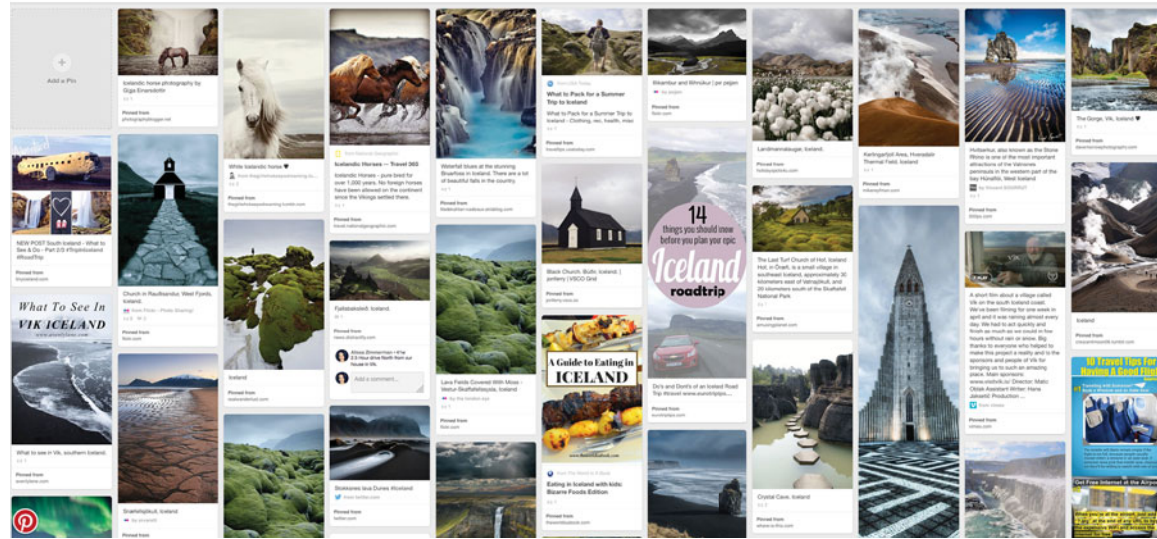
The shooting opportunities in Iceland are endless. We knew we wanted to walk away from this trip with at least 10 solid images we could submit to print competitions over the next year. We did our research on submission criteria for each competition. We also studied images that have scored and won over the past few years to see how we could focus our energy on making our shots impactful and as close to perfect as possible.

Luckily, the sun never really set while we were in Iceland, so we could spend as much time as we needed on every little detail of each shot. We have learned over the years to set one main goal for each shoot instead of trying to cram in multiple objectives. Doing things with focused purpose allows you to pay attention to what matters, to take a step back and breathe if something happens to go in a direction other than what was planned—which, of course, is what always ends up happening anyway (more on this later).

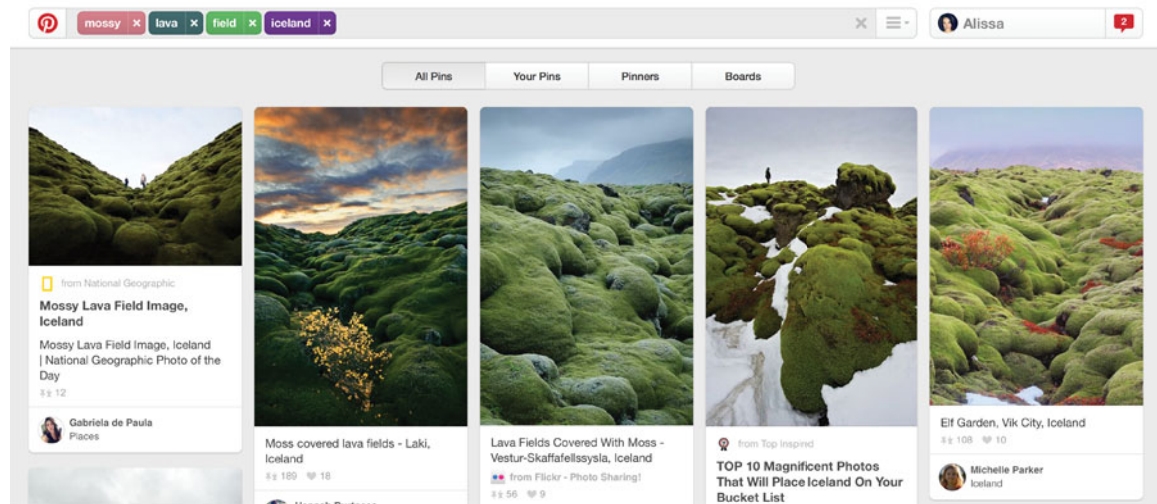


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**Step 2: Find a location.**

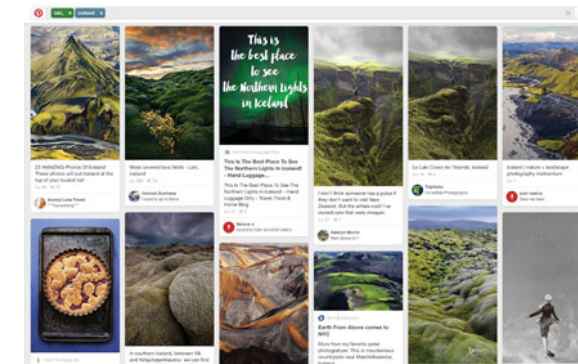


A few months before the trip, I started digging into my mood board for Iceland. I gathered around 30 Pinterest images of killer photo spots. I shared this board with Sal and asked for his top five to 10 picks. The mossy lava fields were the first thing to stand out to Sal. We narrowed it down to 10 locations, and then I put together a plan for traveling to those places from our hotel.



Browse through the images in your Pinterest search and click on the ones that catch your eye. Place names are almost always included in the description.

Seeing isn't always believing. It's important to always fact-check locations on Pinterest. Make sure the place name is spelled right, and that the place even exists. You'll figure out pretty quickly as you research if the information in the description is accurate.



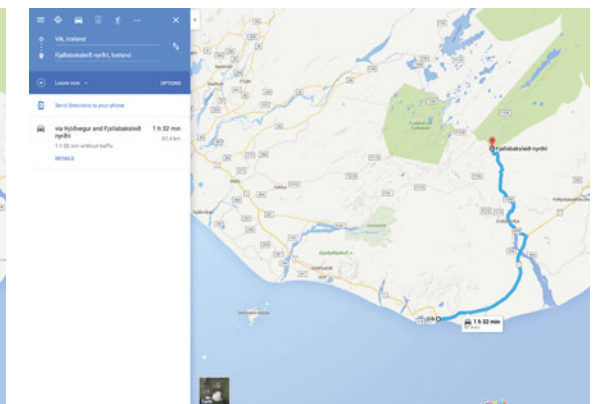
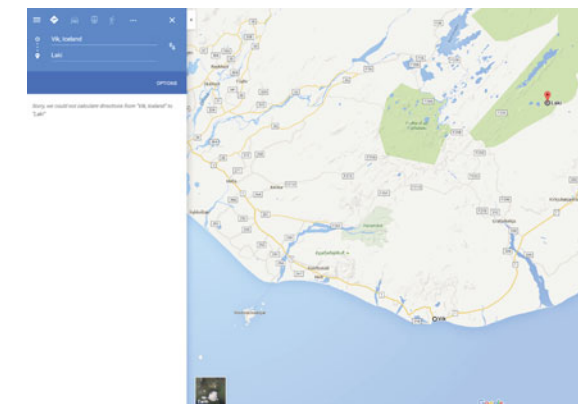
Moss covered lava fields - Laki, Iceland

189 likes 18 hearts

This is when I turn into a travel agent of sorts to put together an itinerary. I plug in my starting address and final destination in Google Maps (this can be as simple as "Vik, Iceland," the town where our rental house was, and "Laki, Iceland," the name from the Pinterest description).

Now what? Pivot. If you can't get to that exact spot, drag the destination pin to a spot that appears to be a road and is close to the location you're trying to get to. This is the next best thing to do to get an idea of how long it will take you to get from point A to point B, and to determine if you will need to plan an entire day trip around it.

Wall No. 1: "Sorry, we could not calculate directions from Vik, Iceland to Laki."



### Step 3: Determine the concept or story you want your final image to tell.

What's the first technical thing you notice in these images? Leading lines. We knew we wanted to shoot from a low vantage point with the subject far in the distance so we could use the lines of the mossy lava to lead you straight to the subject.

We played around with the idea of doing a fashion shot here, but quickly realized there would be no real story. And trying to find a dress that didn't compete with the uniqueness of the mossy lava would be a challenge. So we decided to go with a bridal shot.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

### Step 4: Decide if you need a model.

We have learned the hard way too many times about hiring models. We spent years trying to save money, and ended up with models who either never showed up, or did show up but looked nothing like their portfolio images.

If you're going to invest a lot of time and money into a creative shoot for your portfolio, do it right. Hiring a model through an agency ensures you'll get what you pay for: an experienced model who understands her body and face, someone reliable who will show up on time.

We have worked with top agencies around the world, and we haven't had to drop \$25,000 hiring through them. Reach out to the agency, explain what you're planning and ask if they have any new faces that might fit your budget.

For the lava shoot, we wanted the weird rocks to compete with the model for viewers' attention. We did this by making the model very small in the frame, with her back turned to the camera, which meant we didn't have to hire a model—that's me standing on those gorgeous alien rocks.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



### Step 5: Do your research.

I can't stress the importance of diligent research enough. There's nothing worse than planning an entire shoot around a location or monument that doesn't actually exist or is impossible to get to without outside help.

After a lot of digging, I realized that if we wanted to get to Laki, we would have to book a day tour because we needed a special vehicle to get us where we needed to be. That was fine, but we didn't want to be on someone else's schedule on a tour with a bunch of tourists. We would need a custom day tour. It doesn't matter what language you're speaking—the word *custom* always translates to “way too much money.”

Next up, more digging. I found a bunch of blogs by people who have been to these places and had advice on where to go and how to get there.

One blog post titled “An Icelandic Adventure” is by a young photographer named Elizabeth Gadd. It's as if she knew exactly what I was looking for. As I read through her self-portrait project, *The Icelandic Red Dress Series*, I found myself getting more and more overwhelmed with excitement and inspiration with every new spot she wrote about. Her post gave me insight into every question I had. Most importantly, she had photographed the mossy lava fields and wrote that these fields are right off the main highway on the southwestern coast, within 30 minutes of our rental house in Vik.

Moment of truth: Will Sal trust me enough to just drive and pull over when we see the mossy lava? Can we plan an entire day of shooting around some girl's blog?

Working with Sal, it's all about the pitch. Gather the information in a way that gets him excited. Show that there's some inkling of a plan behind the madness, and he will be onboard. This one was a total crap shoot, but sure enough, 30 minutes down the road and a right turn off the main highway from our rental house, there it was: miles and miles of the most strange, unique, beautiful, mesmerizing landscape I've ever seen.

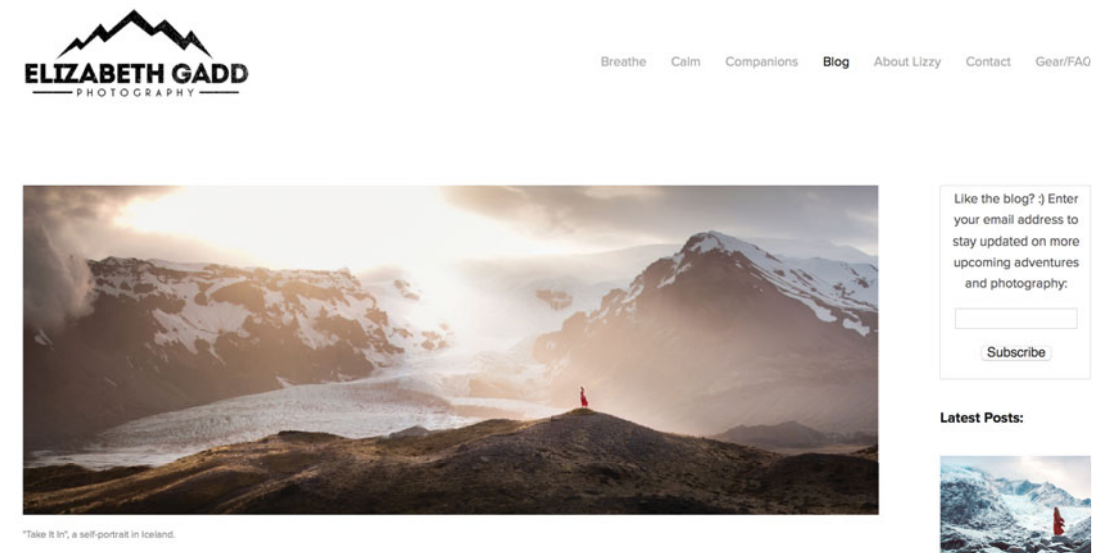


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

This shoot was an incredible experience, which is what it's all about. As I've said many times, if you're not having fun with the process and it's creating a headache, you're doing something wrong. Organization is everything in the planning process.

Do your research to help ensure the shoot runs smoothly so you're able to create breathtaking images and memories that last a lifetime. ■

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

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Image © Craig LaMere

# lighting tips

for

## studio bridal shoots

with Craig LaMere

Of all the genres I shoot, bridals are one of my favorites by a mile. I love the dresses. There are few things cooler than a super-ornate, well-fitted wedding gown and a happy, full-of-life bride who can't wait to shoot.

One standard shoot is the after-the-wedding location shoot. Most of the time, the reason a bride waits till after the wedding is to make sure the dress stays clean and undamaged. Location shoots after the wedding often fall in the "trash the dress" category. Some bridal shoots are done before the wedding. They're usually done in studio, for the same reason as waiting to shoot till after the wedding—so the dress will stay clean and undamaged.

This month, we look at a before-the-wedding studio shoot. When shooting in-studio bridals, there are three main shots: the portrait, the full-length front-dress image and the full-length back-of-dress image.

## THE PORTRAIT

When people think of bridals, the first thing that pops up in their mind is the dress. It's important to bring your portrait skills so your bride knows the images are not just about the dress.

Before I place my light, one of the things I look for right away is the part in my client's hair. One of the best ways to mess up a headshot when you are using directional light is to place the light so you are shooting on the side of the part, rather than shooting against the part. You do not want to shoot into the part because you will cast a very unflattering shadow on the forehead. Put the light on the opposite side, and you will be good. I love it when I have a client with a middle part because I can shoot to whatever side I like.

The next thing you are going to do is place your light for your shoot. The placement is determined by the mood you want to create. If you want a more formal type of portrait, consider a Rembrandt pattern, which is a short light pattern. If you are shooting more bright and light, you more than likely will shoot a loop pattern so you can get plenty of light in both eyes but still have some direction to the light for some shallow depth.

The other pattern I would use on a bride who wants a lighter feel is a butterfly pattern. Like the loop pattern, butterfly puts light in both eyes and also provides depth. Unlike the loop pattern, the depth is from on top rather than from the side.

My favorite for bridal portraits is the loop. The entire face is lit and there's great light in both eyes. It's the most foolproof pattern.



Images © Craig LaMere



Image © Craig LaMere

## THE FULL-LENGTH DRESS

Some brides spend pennies and other brides spend fortunes on their dress, but they both want their dress showcased in the best possible way. Think of it in the exact opposite way as you would think of shooting a portrait. When you think of lighting a portrait, you are thinking of the most flattering light. If you are shooting a face that has a lot of unflattering details, like wrinkles or very textured skin, you don't want to light the face in a way that accentuates those details. Pick a lighting method that flattens out the textures. When you are shooting a bride's dress, bring out as much detail in the fabric as possible.

When shooting the dress, I shoot very directional light on the fabric, which makes the dress sing. At the same time, you still have to shoot flattering light on the bride so she looks great as well. It can be tricky using one light, and in a lot of cases, it is best to use a two-light setup. The reason for two lights is that you can light the face the way you want with a pattern that is flattering to your subject, and then use a different pattern on the dress.

If you are going to shoot one light, use a larger light source, like a 4x6 softbox, and feather it a lot to get the light scrim across, or shoot at least a 60-inch a strip light. I have a pretty hard rule on strip lights: They need to be shot with a grid attached, but this is one of the exceptions to my rule. I like the grid off the strip light because now it functions like a skinny softbox. I am able to wrap the light around the face, and at the same time I get directional light to bring out the detail on the dress. If the light is getting a little dark on the shaded side, I bring in a V-flat or other reflector to help bring back some of the detail.

I prefer a two-light setup. The light on the dress should be a strip light with the grid attached, but the second one is a matter of taste. If you want a softer look, you could shoot the face with a 2x3 softbox. If you want a little harder look, you could shoot with a 22-inch beauty dish. If you want a hard look, you could shoot with a snoot.

The setup for the two lights is pretty simple. You want to make sure you have both lights on the same side, or you will get conflicting shadows. The biggest challenge of the setup is making sure the light from the strip and the light from whatever mod you choose meter the same or very close to the same value. Let's say you used a dish and the bottom of the spill from it metered f9. You would want to make sure where the strip was hitting is registering f9 as well. The strip can fall off as much as it wants after that; just make sure it is a match at the intersecting point.

Whatever pattern you choose for the main light, put the strip light to the side in a position like you would if you were going to split light. What you are trying to do is bring light across the fabric of the dress, to fill in every little nook and cranny to bring out all the detail in the dress.



## FULL-LENGTH BACK OF DRESS

When I'm shooting the back of the dress, I use one light. It's a lot easier to light than the other two setups. You're not dealing with the face of your bride, so you have a little more wiggle room.

I want to make the dress look as long as possible. It needs to be bigger than life. I distort the dress with lens choice. If you shoot the dress with an 85mm, it will be scaled to proportion and just okay. I shoot the dress like this so I make sure I have covered my bases. Shooting from a low angle in an upward direction at 24mm lengthens the dress and creates a dramatic, larger-than-life effect.

My style showcases a combination of directions, both upward and downward, using wide-angle lenses. The one pitfall of this combination is making sure you are at an f-stop that gives you some leeway, or you can lose the focus you want. Because you are shooting at 24mm, you don't have a lot of depth-of-field issues. As long as you are shooting at f4 or more, you should be good. ■



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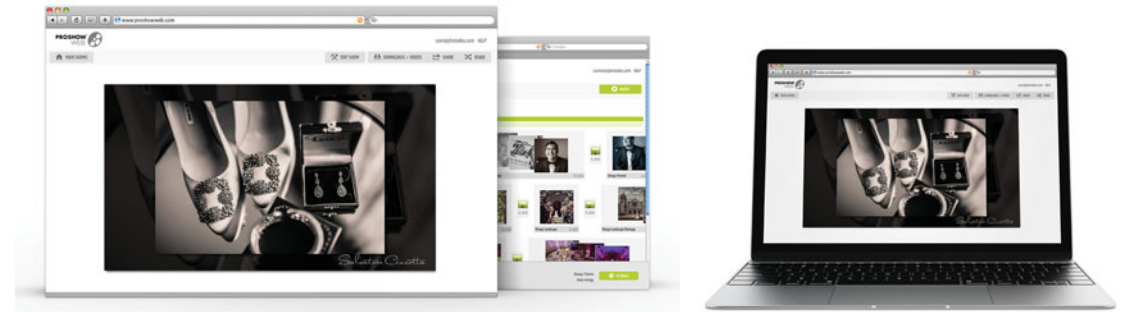
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FROM  
**WEDDINGS**

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TO  
**PORTRAITS**

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A CLIENT FOR LIFE  
with Lori Nordstrom



Image © Lori Nordstrom



Image © Lori Nordstrom

Most photographers, even wedding photographers, end up wanting to photograph portrait sessions. Weddings are essentially a series of portraits. But the wedding day comes with a lot more pressure than a traditional portrait session.

In the portrait world, photographers think in terms of a “client for life.” We want our clients to return over and over, so we think about the long-term goals for that client instead of just one session at a time.

There is no better time to start this process than with the wedding. If you are a wedding photographer, you have a premium opportunity to photograph portrait sessions. It’s built in. Once a wedding is photographed, you should have in your calendar a first-anniversary date. At the time of a first anniversary, you should offer an update session for your couples. Before the first anniversary, send out a card telling the couple that you would like to photograph their love story one year after their wedding. Note something memorable about the wedding day so that you are continuing the story. It’s another chapter.

Of course you will want to photograph any additions to the family, whether kids or furry kids (pets). Make this available to your clients by offering this session right from the beginning. Make your clients aware of these services, and remind them with update cards.

After a wedding, plan for follow-up. This is an area that photographers often forget about. If you photograph a wedding and then deliver great service and product in an heirloom album and wall portraits, your clients may believe that this is the end of the road. They should know that you would love to continue working with them.

Step one is with that anniversary date. Put a system in place to connect with your couples a year after their wedding. At this time, they have had the opportunity to work with you and have hopefully built quite a relationship with you.

If you don't photograph weddings, you can still recommend dates to your clients that will encourage their next visit with you. Let your clients know when they should schedule their next appointment, whether you are photographing a business headshot, a birthday session or a family portrait.

It's human nature to want to belong. We want to feel special and appreciated and a part of something. Create a membership program that gives your bridal couples a VIP status in your business. This also gives you a reason, or an excuse, to reach out when it's time for an updated session. Send out a reminder letter 10 months after the wedding. Tell your couples that you are excited to see what their love story looks like one year later.

Follow up on their plans to grow their family. If children are in their future, make note and follow up. I always follow up with a note about their love story a year or two later instead of inquiring specifically about children. Following couples on social media will keep you in the loop about special events such as the announcement of a pregnancy, a pet adoption or even family members who are having babies or expanding their family.

Years ago I started a Birthday Club, and photographed kids during the month of their birthday every year. This gives clients a reason to return each year, and also gives me an opportunity to touch base periodically. I have created specialty products that moms will want to purchase year after year. A VIP or "client for life" program is an opportunity to give something special to repeat clients or clients who spend over a certain amount. Reward them with discounted sessions, a complimentary add-on service or free gift prints with each wall portrait purchase. Make clients feel like they will get something special for returning to your business.



Image © Lori Nordstrom



Image © Lori Nordstrom



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Creating a client for life is all about building relationships. Follow up with your clients. Just because a client works with you once doesn't mean she will return. Keep in touch. Stay on top of what is happening in their lives. Check in with your clients about the products they have received from you, how they feel about them and how they feel about your customer service. Surveys are great for this, and can be done through sites like PhotoBiz.com.

Don't be afraid to pick up the phone. Working the phone has kept my schedule booked. Call past clients and let them know you are thinking about them. Say you would love to photograph them again, and get them on your calendar.

By communicating with your clients, you'll keep your calendar busy and continue to work with people you know and like. ■

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Lori Nordstrom (M.Photog.Cr., CPP, ABI) owns a boutique studio (NordstromPhoto.com) specializing in children and family portraits located in the tiny, picturesque town of Winterset, Iowa. Lori began her career photographing her own kids in her backyard almost 20 years ago, and is now known not only for her simple and sweet portraits of children, but as a leader in the photography industry in the areas of business, marketing and sales. Lori is a PPA-approved business instructor, and is passionate about sharing her knowledge with other photographers and small business owners.

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

# BRIDAL *boudoir*

with Melanie Anderson



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I am a portrait and commercial photographer, and while I do photograph several weddings a year, I am very selective. I need to be excited about the wedding experience, and generate revenue without having to invest an entire day photographing a wedding. We do it through “bridal boudoir,” which is a prewedding shoot for the bride that we turn into an intimate gift for her husband.

When we attend bridal shows, we set up our booth to showcase boudoir. We collect brides’ information in exchange for their chance to win a \$1,000 credit toward a boudoir session. We call nonwinning entries and offer them a \$100 portrait credit. What’s great about this method is that all those who enter our giveaway truly are interested in boudoir, and they receive a packet filled with information on how to prepare and what to expect. (I showcase this process in the video segment.) We create this packet from templates by Design Aglow. Our typical boudoir sales are between \$1,500 and \$3,500. The boudoir collection includes a large wall portrait canvas and an album. As I explain in the video segment this month, the wall portrait is usually black and white and very artistic. It’s rare that my client’s face is the main focus—it is usually the curves of her body.



Image © Melanie Anderson



Image © Melanie Anderson

Let's go through our bridal boudoir process. A session lasts about an hour. Set aside two hours if she is having hair and makeup done in the studio. Brides often bring along their maid/matron of honor and/or her mom for support. It's also not unusual for them to bring champagne or wine to ease their nerves. While they're in hair and makeup, I browse through her outfits and discuss the product line we offer. I am preselling the album size and style.

Knowing what the bride wants allows me to continue to shoot with intention. If my bride's goal is for a canvas wall portrait only, there is no need to take a ton of images. Whatever my client's budget is, I want to spend it wisely. I walk them through the products and discuss the cost, and offer a payment plan if needed. Most of our clients end up with a 4x8 accordion album or a 10x10 leather album, along with a large wall canvas. The album style they choose dictates how many poses, outfits and images I need to capture. I am purposeful with my time and my client's time. By keeping track of our process and creating the storyline as I photograph, I put my client at ease and make her final decisions easier.

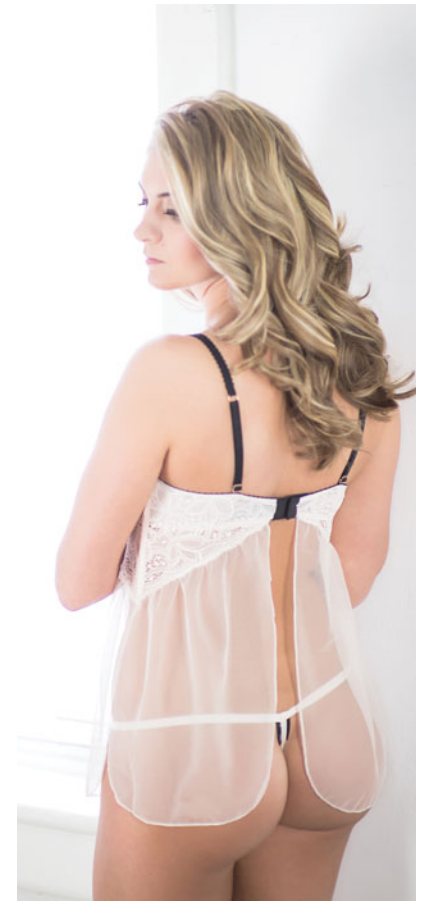
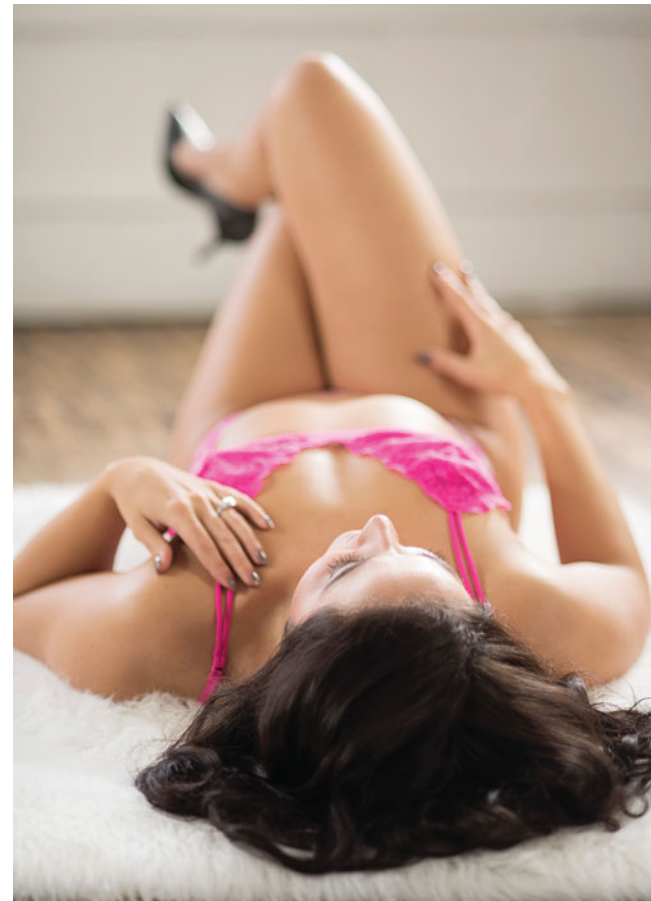
We hold our order session immediately following the shoot. I do not pre-edit our images, which also saves a ton of time. Clients gather their stuff and relax while I download the images. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to download and narrow down to my favorites, crop and convert a few to black and white. I use ProSelect for this process. I then bring my client into our sales room and ask her to choose her favorites. We start with the wall art, since that usually becomes the cover of the album.

After our full-time staff designer receives the order, we send off our images for editing. When images are complete, our designer begins the layout process. She uploads the album to a private gallery for our client to view and approve. Upon approval, the album is ordered. The entire process takes about two weeks.

On the day of the wedding, the bride presents her boudoir album to her soon-to-be husband as a gift. The canvas is usually revealed that evening or when they return from their honeymoon.



Image © Melanie Anderson



Images © Melanie Anderson





Marketing for this brand of photography is word of mouth—it is vital. We rarely post these images on social media, and they are not on my website. If a client is interested in viewing our boudoir images, we give her a link to a private gallery or invite her into our studio to view our albums.

What to bring:

- Four to five outfits (anything that makes her feel beautiful; doesn't need to be all lingerie)
- Something of his, like a favorite t-shirt, jersey or tie
- Multiple pairs of heels in a variety of colors and styles
- Accessories
- Thigh-high panty hose or fishnets

Action Plan and Recap:

1. *If you are not already photographing boudoir, create a call to action. Seek out a few women and offer a complimentary boudoir session to create a portfolio for display. Print several album choices, along with a few wall portrait canvases in 16x24, 20x24 and 24x30. It's important for clients to see and feel the products you offer. It provides several opportunities for you to upsell.*
2. *Create an internal pose guide. Design a way to make your clients feel comfortable and confident during the session.*
3. *Presell your products.*
4. *Shoot with intention.*
5. *Seek out bridal shows and set up a boudoir display. Give away a free boudoir session. This gives you a list of other potential brides who might be interested in your services. Offer all others a \$100 portrait credit. ■*



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

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# GETTING THE MOST OUT OF

## DESTINATION WEDDINGS

with Leonardo Volturo





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The destination wedding is one of the most sought-after gigs in our industry. Why do we love them so much? Is it for the free vacation? Is it the opportunity to photograph new, exotic, exciting locations? Maybe you want them for the notoriety and ability to showcase the images in your portfolio.

If you answered yes to the free-vacation question, you need to reevaluate your zeal for destination weddings. I see way too many photographers who look at destination weddings the wrong way. They take them on and essentially work for free, with the client paying only for travel. They give a substantial discount right away. I've actually seen photographers pay their own way and take a big loss just to get the job.

They justify booking the weddings this way by looking at it as a vacation. Or they think they'll capture such great images that the destination gigs will start rolling in. This is not the way to build a destination-wedding business. In fact, it could be an easy way to fail if you don't take them seriously.

Now that we've got that out of the way, let's talk about how you can get the most out of your destination weddings, financially and artistically.

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## FINANCIALS

The number-one thing you need to keep in mind is that when you take on a destination wedding, you're going to most likely be away for a minimum of three days. That's three days away from your business. That's three days during which you could have booked multiple weddings.

Let's say your average wedding is \$5,000. You have a potential loss of up to \$10,000 if you were daring enough to shoot three weddings in a row. (We did that once, never again.) But call it two weddings. That's still \$5,000 you're potentially losing. The great thing about shooting weddings is that we get booked up months in advance. We know what our peak times are, so we're able to project out far enough to weigh our options when considering taking on a destination wedding. That's a solid step one.

Obviously there's no guarantee you're going to book two weddings that weekend, or even one, which takes us to the next part of the decision tree. Turning that wedding down could leave you with zero. Let's presume, then, that you want to book the wedding. Being confident in your pitch and pricing and knowing your numbers is the best way to position yourself to land the gig.

There are two ways to price a destination wedding:

1) Use your standard pricing. The client covers all travel expenses, including flight, hotel, and airport transfers or a rental car. This can be tweaked by adding a daily per diem to cover meals if you're forced into a situation where only more expensive meal options are available. A second tweak would be to only accept destination weddings if they're booking your top collection, which, if you're priced correctly, should provide a good enough payday to take the wedding without worrying too much about being away from your business.

2) Add up all your travel costs for the event and give the client an all-inclusive set price. On top of that, you can charge extra for your time away. This model is preferred by many clients because it's a single figure.

Whatever method you choose, ensure you have done your homework and are pricing yourself for profit.

For more information, including travel tips and challenges we've faced, check out my article from June 2015.



## IMAGERY

This is your time to shine, go nuts, experiment and build your portfolio. This is what it's all about, right? Wrong.

Our couples hire us to provide a complete wedding experience and to document their day. You have to make sure you're telling their story and capturing images just like you were back at home. I know the allure of all those new portfolio images is really calling you. Take a breath, get your timeline on point, and you'll be able to work it all in.

Do your walkthrough the day before. The first thing we do when we arrive on property after checking in is to identify all the key locations and map everything out. Where is everyone getting ready? Where is the ceremony, cocktails and reception? Do you need a first-look location? Offer to photograph the rehearsal as part of your package. You're there anyway, and it's a great way to meet the families and get some candid images to add to the story. We include as much time as we need to document the day.

On the wedding day, do your best to stick to your normal routine. After you've got the images your clients expect, you can experiment. But what if you don't have enough time to experiment on the day of? Great question. This is where your scouting and planning are crucial. Come up with a plan for where you want to go and what you want to do after you've got what you need for your clients.



Images © Leonardo Volturo

The final thing we throw in for all of our destination weddings (and you should definitely do this) is a free day-after session. Our clients have no issue keeping us another night to gain another day for creative images.

This is your time to shine. If you did get all your safe shots on day one, now you can take all the time you need creating more dramatic images to add to your portfolio—and, hopefully, to your bottom line. Come up with a plan for that day. Your clients will most likely be getting hair and makeup done again and putting their wedding clothes back on. So get what you need, but be efficient. Don't keep them out all day just so you can pad your portfolio.

Don't rely on your day-after session to get the images you should be getting on day one. What if it rains, or the bride and groom are hungover? This day is the quiet reason we take these weddings, which is to get more ammo for our sales sessions and build our portfolio to bring in new clients.



Image © Leonardo Volturo



Image © Leonardo Volturo

Now that you've got your shooting plan and a solid pricing strategy, you are on your way to building a solid foundation for adding destination weddings to your repertoire. ■

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Leonardo Volturo is an international award-winning wedding and portrait photographer, writer and educator. He and his wife, Melissa, operate Leonardo Volturo Photography, a boutique New York and South Florida studio. Together they cater to discerning clients around the world with their signature blend of modern, stylistic and dramatic imagery.

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5 second-shooter  
**musts**  
with Vanessa Joy



Every year I make it a point to be a second shooter for other photographers' weddings. Seeing how other photographers run a wedding helps me improve my skills. It gives me a chance to be more creative since I don't have to worry about the staple wedding photos. I love the opportunity to not direct anything and simply be a fly on the wall, free to roam around, find different angles, play with composition and just shoot.

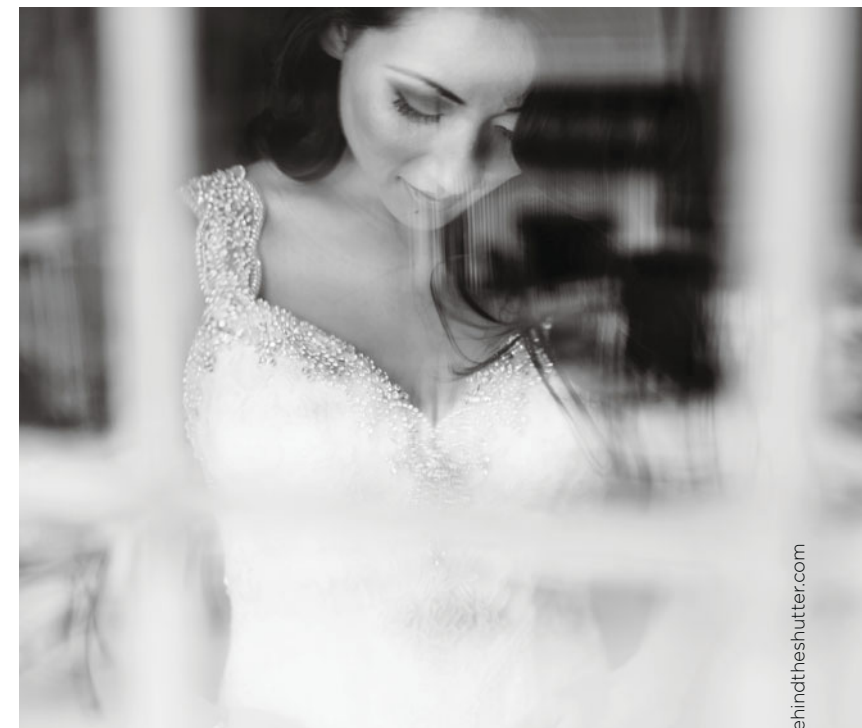
I could go on about the different types of pictures to take (like I do in my e-book, at [www.breatheyourpassion.com](http://www.breatheyourpassion.com)), but a lot of that comes with experience and varies with every photographer. What we're going to talk about here are the things you must know and do so you don't tarnish your reputation as a second shooter. Some of these things people learn only after making an irreversible mistake, so let's get these straight before that happens.

### 1. Know the Rules

Know what the photographer you're working with allows you to do with the photos afterward. There are 100 schools of thought on this, and I'm sure you'll work with photographers from many of them. Some believe that if they're paying you to take the pictures, you shouldn't be able to use them for your purposes. Others, like me, are okay with you using them, but not just anywhere you feel like. Some will trade off and let you come shoot to build your portfolio, but won't pay you for the day (I do this when I bring third shooters along who I'm training for second-shooter positions). Whatever the conditions are, make sure you're clear on them with each photographer you work with so you don't end up with an embarrassing and potentially reputation-ruining debacle in the end.

Here's what I tell my second shooters: "Pictures *may not* be used *anywhere except* up to five images on your website portfolio or up to 20 images on your blog with proper credit given that the wedding was shot by 'Vanessa Joy Photography,' with a link back to my website. You may not use or tag any names of B&G, venue or vendors. This includes putting them on Facebook or Instagram, and tagging or hashtagging my bride/groom in it; that should not be done at any time."

It may seem harsh, but believe it or not, I recently had a venue find one of my second photographers' photos on their blog via a Google search because the venue information was there in her blog. Because so many people steal images without permission or even the common courtesy of a notification, this venue did just that and used it on their social media. The kicker was that they credited and tagged my second shooter and her company as the main photographer. *No bueno*. I don't think my second shooters should gain SEO juice from one of my jobs, and definitely not referrals or social media tags from my clients or networked venues either.



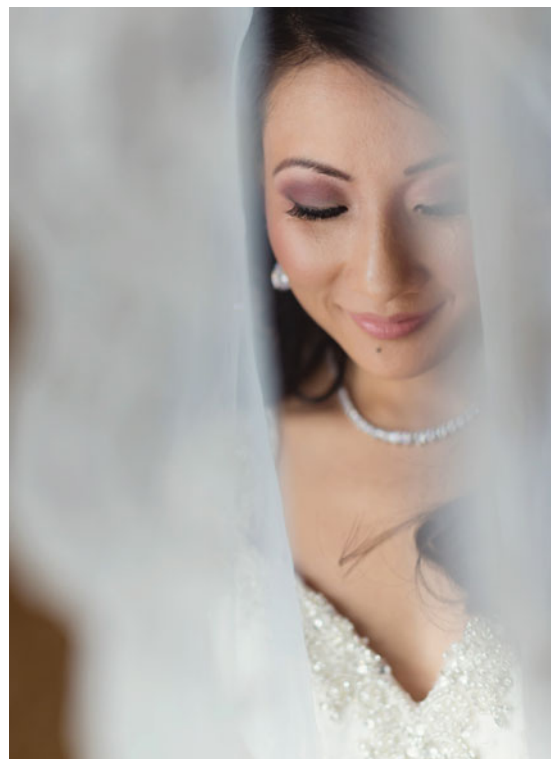
## 2. Dress the Part

Whenever you are working for another photographer, you are representing their business. How a photographer dresses feeds into the brand image they're working very hard to maintain. Represent it not just well, but in line with the brand you're portraying.

I ask my shooters and assistants to dress professionally and in dark colors. No jeans or sneakers are a given, and I don't need all black, but dark is good for blending in. On the other hand, I've worked with rustic-style photographers capturing more casual weddings where, if I wore all black, I'd stick out like a sore thumb. Talk to the primary photographer about what you should wear. Always represent your photographer well—and always, always wear a smile.

## 3. Know Your Role

I remind my shooters that I will be happy to answer any questions they have, but to wait until the reception to ask them or when we are not in front of the clients. A second photographer pestering the main photographer with questions in front of the bride and groom looks unprofessional and ill-prepared. It's a creative distraction to the main photographer. I also actually encourage them to make suggestions during the shoot, but to me only, not announced for all to hear. I'm always willing to hear ideas and explore possibilities that didn't come to me initially, but it should never look like the second photographer is the director.



Images © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

#### 4. Shooting Format

This may be a no-brainer for most, but it's a good idea to ask what format you should shoot in. I like my shooters to shoot in RAW with a large JPG backup on a separate card if they can. I know photographers who only want images in JPG format and some who only want RAW. Whatever it is, make sure you know ahead of time since there's no converting JPG to RAW. If they do want you to shoot in JPG, ask them to clarify what picture profile and settings to use since in a JPG image, that makes a difference in the amount of information that's recorded to the card and how they'll edit them later.

#### 5. It's Not Your Wedding

If you hope to get asked to second-shoot again and build a good reputation within the photography industry in your area, remember this one. It's not your wedding. Don't make yourself known to the clients or any of the guests as anything other than the photographer working for XYZ Photography. Introduce yourself by your first name only. Don't hand out your business card (but do hand out the primary's business card). Don't connect with the clients or bridal party in or outside of the wedding day.



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Images © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

If you typically take a primary photographer role on jobs, I can't recommend second shooting any more highly. In addition to the creative angle and getting a break from being in control, it's a great to build relationships with other photographers. There's no measuring how valuable it is to convert your competition into colleagues, trusted photographers you can call to help you out in a pinch. ■

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

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HOW TO  
**BOOK**  
MORE  
**WEDDINGS**

with Brian Marcus



When I started in the photography business, there was a ton of pressure not only to refine my craft and master the skills needed to excel as a photographer, but also to translate that into income. That meant booking as many weddings and events as possible. I believe there are three key factors in becoming a successful (not just talented) photographer.

You have to treat this like a business, not just a creative pursuit. Many people have the skill to aim, focus and take an incredible photograph, but professional reputation and reliable customer service are not as common. I quickly recognized this would be something that would have people referring me to their friends and rehiring me for years to come.

I often speak with brides who didn't hire our studio who say that although they loved their first-look, getting-ready or editorial portraits, they were extremely unhappy with their overall experience and deeply regretted not using my studio. The complaints range from lack of coverage or missing shots of important family members to unprofessional follow-up and late delivery of images and albums.

How do I avoid this? Although my photography is an art, it is also a profession that needs to be treated seriously and with the same attention and detail as if I were running an accounting firm. The key to this is preparation. Nothing should be left to whim or chance or the last minute. Before the wedding, we meet with our brides and grooms or party hosts, and get a full rundown of each and every important family member and friend. We take notes so we can focus on any special or unique scenarios that each wedding undoubtedly has. We record these notes in a detailed outline, and then the photographer who is covering the event is given a printout to review before the event. The photographer uses it as a checklist at the event.



Image © Brian Marcus



Image © Brian Marcus

We take our business very seriously, and know that when clients hire us to shoot these once-in-a-lifetime events that they are trusting us with their hearts and memories. This isn't something to take lightly. Nothing frustrates me more than to hear a bride tell me she regrets her choice of photographer because she doesn't have a picture with her grandparents on her wedding day. That should never happen. A wedding is a rare and special moment that needs to be properly documented so the client can preserve the memory of the day forever. That's our job, to take incredible pictures and make sure we get everything the client wants.

I also like to familiarize myself with the venue and scout the best locations to shoot prior to the actual event. It's important to map the schedule out in your head so you're organized on the big day. If it's a venue that I shoot at regularly, I keep the locations fresh. We don't want all of our clients to have the same wedding album. I mix it up with backgrounds both in the hotel or venue, and in the surrounding area.

Living in New York City, we are fortunate to have a diverse canvas to shoot against, and sometimes the most unexpected backgrounds make for amazing pictures. Anything from a subway station to a hot dog stand can add some color and excitement to a traditional wedding shoot. If I'm shooting in a new location, I give myself enough time to explore before my start time. When traveling, I try to get there the day before to get to know the area.



Image © Brian Marcus





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The second factor in building a solid and lucrative business is to be personable—not just so people like you (which is obviously very important). Being personable helps you manage the stresses and chaos that will inevitably occur. It is so important to keep a cool vibe running throughout the event so you can keep your subjects stress-free and happy and get the shots you want. Weddings involve large groups and heightened emotions, so you need to be a therapist, buddy and class clown. You want to make sure that everyone is happy and having fun so that you can get your job done. It is important for you to help everyone get through the day with ease. Your energy is the key to keeping everyone in line.

Another reason to make sure that you are Mr. or Mrs. Congeniality is so you can maintain positive and lasting relationships with everyone in the industry. It is essential to know (and get along with) every party planner, florist, caterer, musician, DJ, bathroom attendant . . . you name it. These people are your colleagues and your allies. When you all work together as a team, the night will be flawless. Beyond that, having a solid group of wedding professionals around you is really helpful for growing your business. We all refer each other continuously, which creates a great synergy within your network.

The third step is your post-production process. You need to be organized, professional, talented and charming, but you also have to be responsive and reliable following the event in delivering the client the final product. We have a dedicated team that works with the client after the event.

Our retouching and album design services are unparalleled, and we protect our images and craftsmanship by making sure nothing leaves our studio unless it's perfect. This is a time-consuming but essential process. ■

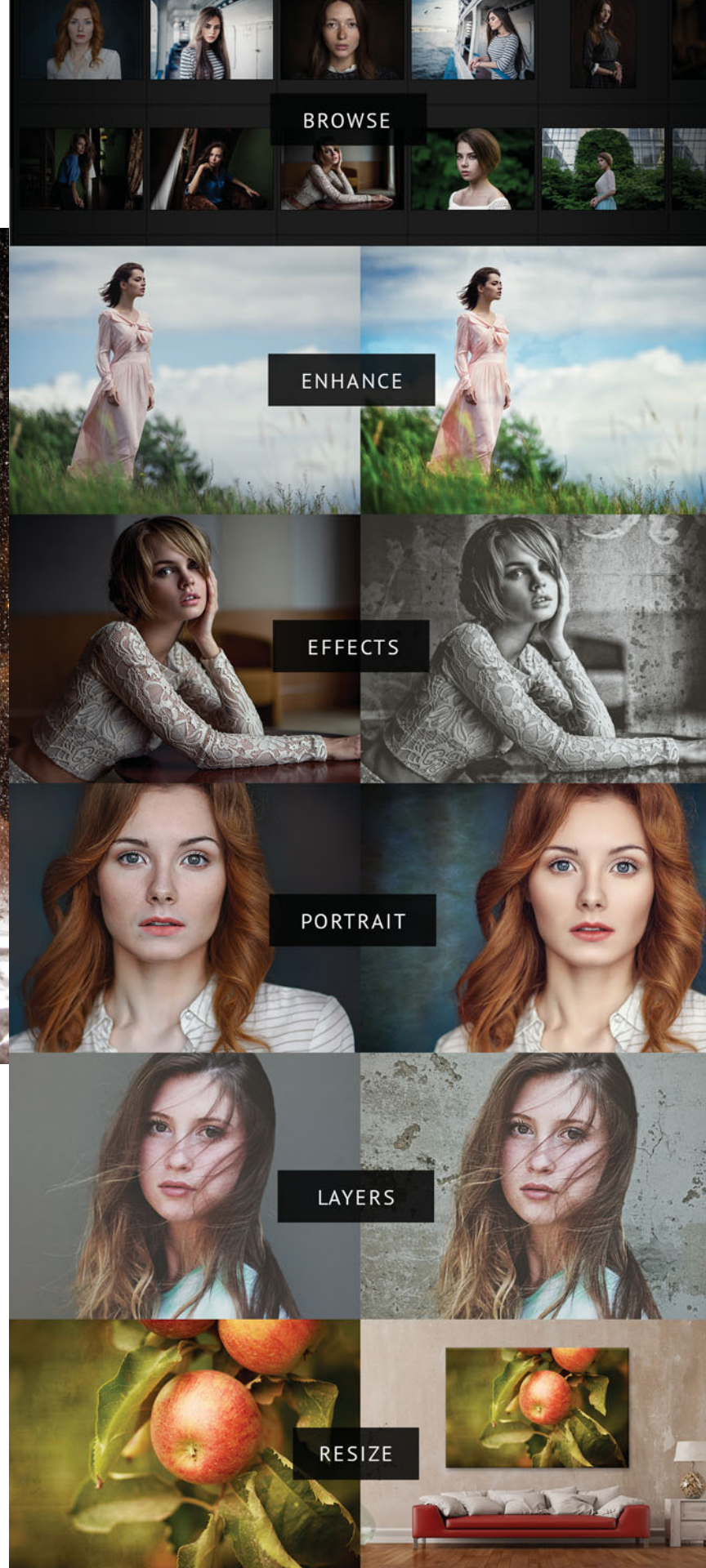


Image © Brian Marcus



For Brian Marcus, photography is more than a profession—it is a vital part of who he is. Brian learned his craft at a young age, and has been shooting professionally since 2003. He is a highly respected speaker, and has taught at conferences around the world. He works in the same studio his grandfather, Fred, worked in when he arrived in America after World War II. Brian resides in New York City with his beautiful wife, Gabrielle, and their daughter, Alexandra.

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



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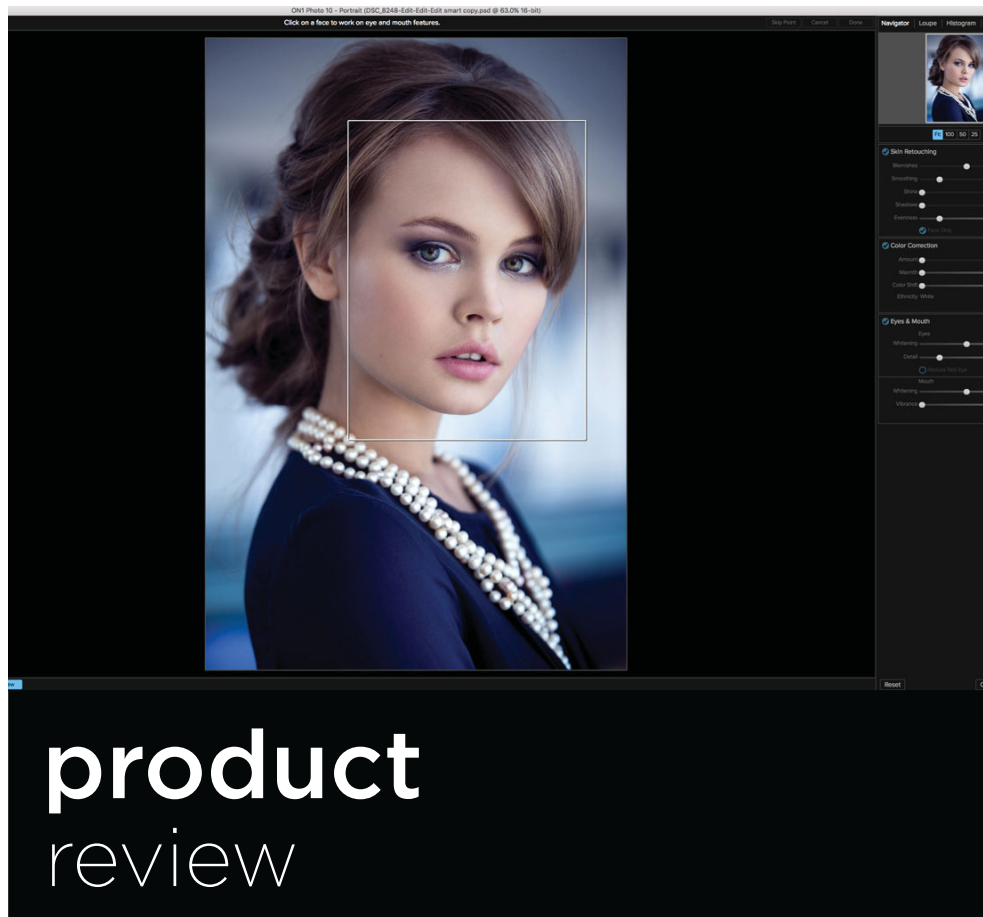


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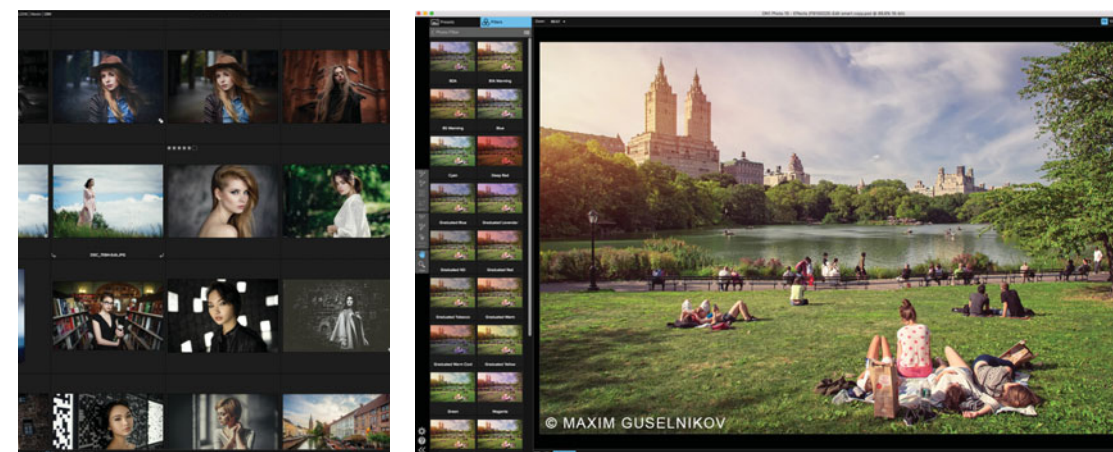
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JOYCE REINERSTON



2ND PLACE |  
JOYCE REINERSTON



3RD PLACE |  
KATHERINE KIRWAN

**GENERAL PORTRAIT**



1ST PLACE | COREY DOSTAL



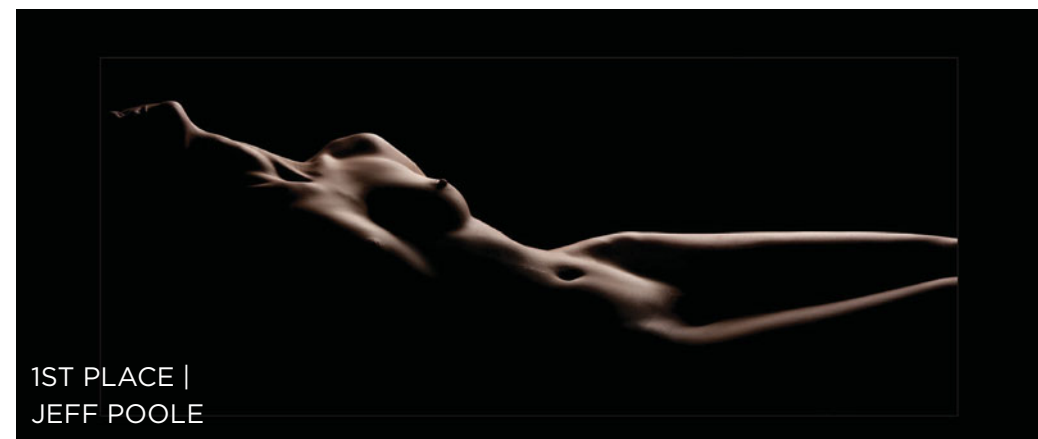
2ND PLACE | MELISSA GOWEN

**FAMILY/GROUP**

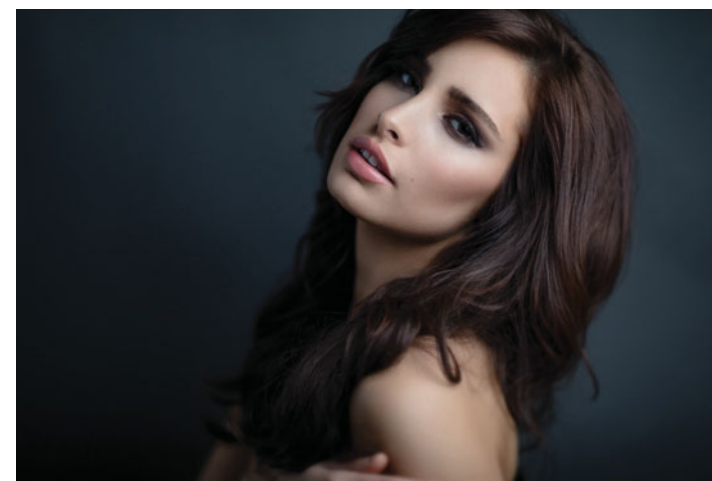


1ST PLACE | JENNIFER BAILEY

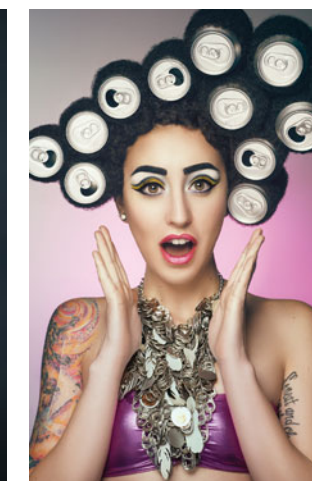
**BEAUTY**



1ST PLACE |  
JEFF POOLE



2ND PLACE |  
MOSHE ZUSMAN



3RD PLACE |  
KERRI JEAN

**CHILDREN**



1ST PLACE |  
BONNIE HILL



2ND PLACE |  
NADIA DOYLE



3RD PLACE |  
CAROLYN ANN RYAN

**NEWBORN**



1ST PLACE | EMMALEE  
SCHAUMBURG

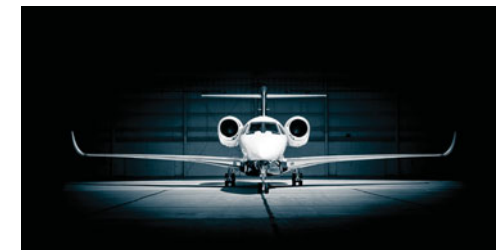


2ND PLACE | LORI KULIGOS

**COMMERCIAL**



1ST PLACE |  
LISA POLK



2ND PLACE |  
TODD ANGUISH



3RD PLACE |  
LISA POLK

ENGAGEMENT



1ST PLACE | RUBEN GORJIAN



2ND PLACE | LEONARDO VOLTURO



3RD PLACE | ROBBIE CANTER

FASHION



1ST PLACE | SCOTT RODENBURG



2ND PLACE | KRIS KRIEG



3RD PLACE | KERRI JEAN

**LANDSCAPE**



1ST PLACE |  
CHRIS MARTIN



2ND PLACE |  
KRISTOPHER ROWE



3RD PLACE |  
ERIN REEMSNYDER

**WEDDING - PHOTOJOURNALISM**



1ST PLACE |  
MARIEA RUMMEL



2ND PLACE |  
MARIEA RUMMEL

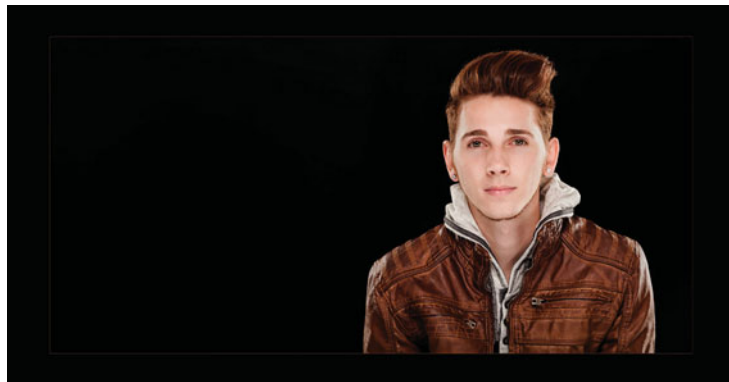


3RD PLACE |  
RUBEN GORJIAN

**SENIORS**



1ST PLACE |  
JENNIFER CRAFT



2ND PLACE |  
JEFF POOLE



3RD PLACE |  
DAVID BECKHAM

**WEDDING - COUPLE TOGETHER**



1ST PLACE |  
JACKY WONG



2ND PLACE |  
JACKY WONG



3RD PLACE |  
ROBBIE CANTER



WEDDING - BRIDE OR GROOM ALONE



1ST PLACE |  
LEONARDO VOLTURO



2ND PLACE |  
JODIE KELLY



3RD PLACE |  
JACKY WONG

WEDDING - BRIDAL PARTY OR FAMILY

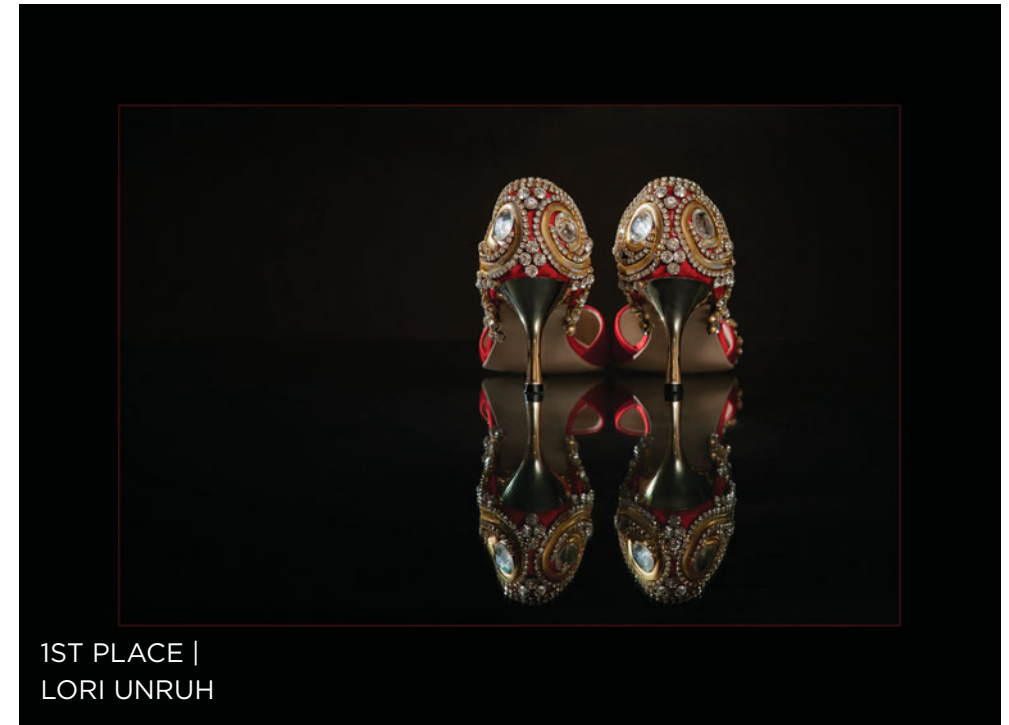


1ST PLACE |  
GARON COOPER



2ND PLACE |  
MARIEA RUMMEL

WEDDING - DETAILS



1ST PLACE |  
LORI UNRUH



2ND PLACE |  
STEVE SABRIER



3RD PLACE |  
JOSE NODARSE



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TRANSFORMING YOUR  
WEDDING BUSINESS  
WITH **ALBUMS**

with Michael Anthony

In the business of wedding photography, there are few constants. We are in a changing world where technology moves at a breakneck pace. In this constantly changing industry, one thing has remained: Your clients want wedding albums.

When you are starting your business, the easy route to take is to adopt a shoot-and-burn strategy. This allows you to show up for a few hours, create a few digital proofs and send your clients on their way. I understand the appeal: It's easy, and causes fewer problems in production behind the scenes. I had the same mentality when I started my wedding business in 2012. I didn't see the light until I ordered an album sample, and my first contract that included a wedding album earned us 40 percent more revenue than our most expensive contract. That was when I made the pivot and started incorporating albums as a permanent sales strategy.

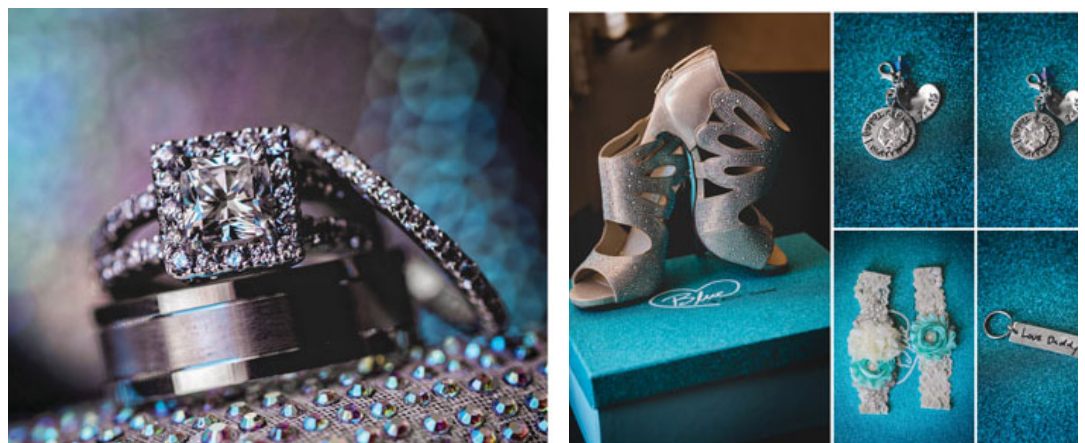
When you raise your rates to the point that you are now competing with other photographers who offer albums as well, you will need to up your game and shooting strategy. To succeed, you have to show that you are more than a photographer—you are also a talented storyteller who photographs a wedding with the final product in mind.

### PICTURE BOOK VS. STORY BOOK

When your clients visit other studios (and they will), they are going to be shown albums from your competitors. When they eventually visit your studio, they need to be able to see a clear difference in your album layouts compared to your competitors' books. To make your albums stand out, employ techniques when shooting the wedding that allow the clients to see that you shoot with purpose, and with the album in mind. This is a skillset that very few people sell to potential clients.

#### Details

I recommend shooting all of your details on the same surface and in the same orientation. That way, when you lay out your album design, you can place them all cohesively on the same page. You can close the spread on the opposite page with a large image, such as the groom, bride or wedding ring. Take a look at the example designs.



Images © Michael Anthony



#### Film Stripping

This is a technique I often use on the first look, first dance or any other activities that require motion for storytelling. It involves placing a series of images together on a spread consecutively. The composition and orientation of the image need to remain the same while you are shooting. Clients love this technique.

A series of good images grouped together to tell a story is just as good as a single great image.



Images © Michael Anthony

behindtheshutter.com



MARY & MICHAEL  
MAY 2ND, 2015

### Double-Spread “Wow” Shot

When we design our albums, we include a double-spread image every fourth or fifth spread, and for our title page. A large image helps solidify the story and creates impact, which is important in evoking emotional response from both clients and potential clients. Double pages also offer more buying options, so shoot images that can be used for double spreads throughout the day.

People often have problems with aspect ratios of images. This is a very quick fix in Photoshop. In order to see how we edit our album designs, refer to the video we created as a companion to this article.

Always use a double spread to open and close the album. Every story should have a beginning and an end.



HANNAH & COLE  
01.23.2016

## CHOOSING YOUR ALBUM COMPANY

This is the most important aspect of this entire article, so read carefully. The story you design and the images you create are only as good as the medium you are displaying your images on. I went through many album companies in search of the perfect product for our clients. When I decided I wanted to be known as an elite studio in our area, I ordered my first sample from Signature Collection Albums. I underestimated the quality of the books before getting one in my hands; when I received it, my perception of what a quality book should look like completely changed.

When you are selling your services to a potential client, or selling them an album upgrade, there are a few things you should point out when building the value of your product. I promise they will be looking for these things when they go to your competitors:

- Leather options
- Crushed velvet liner
- Handcrafted corners, evident by the pinch-point design
- Solid binding with genuine bookbinding tape
- Art paper option, a high-end product we use for our competition prints
- Metal or acrylic cover options
- Size is important; it's unlikely they will be seeing another book that is 12 by 18 inches; large books create visual impact



Image © Michael Anthony



Image © Michael Anthony

Refer to our video attached to this article to see exactly how we sell these albums to our clients during a presentation.

To justify any expense, you have to ask yourself if it is worth it financially. Allow me to shed some light on our experience for you. After incorporating these SCA albums into our line, our post-wedding sales average went from just over \$400 in 2014 to just under \$2,000 in 2015. This one product, coupled with a solid design strategy, changed the financial outlook of our studio in 2015.

In 2016, we are incorporating SCA's newest Soho line into our flourishing glamour/boudoir business. The Soho features a soft Italian leather cover and Canson Rag Photographique or Rives BFK Fine Art Paper with an option for deckled edges. I have no doubt that this fine-art product is going to take our boudoir sales to new heights.

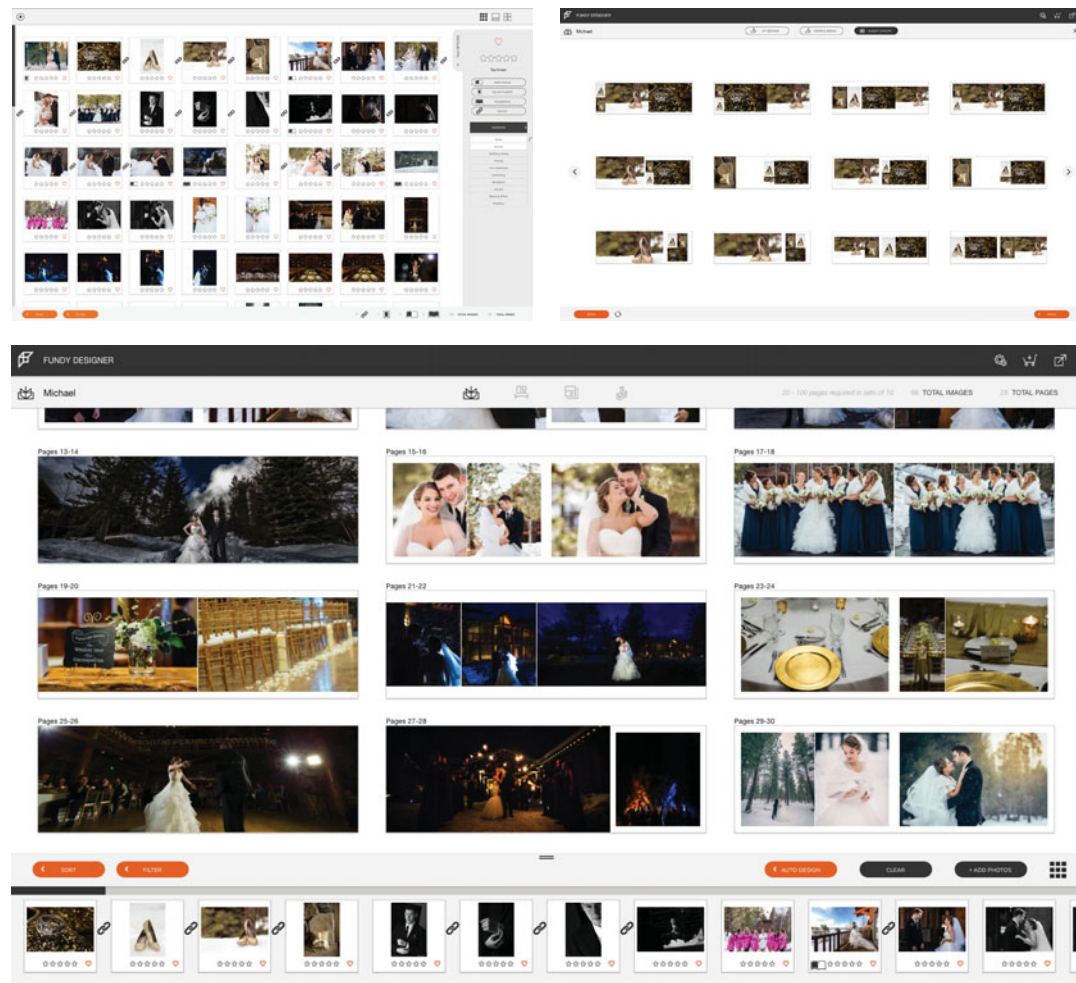
You must make sure that you stand out above the crowd. Making the switch to SCA has been one of the best decisions we have made. If you are looking to incorporate albums or upgrade your album line, I encourage you to order a sample. You will be blown away as soon as you take it out of the box.

In addition to amazing albums, SCA offers beautiful wood presentation boxes. The quality of these boxes is evident as soon as you get them into your hands. In our most expensive wedding collection, we offer the wood box with the client's album.

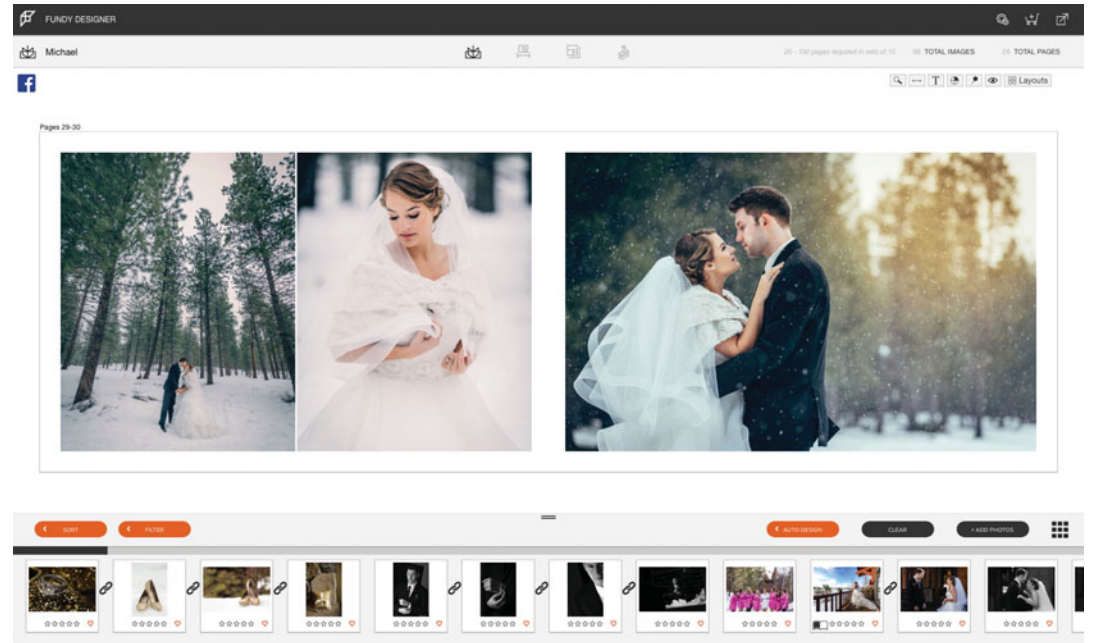
## DESIGNING YOUR ALBUM

It's no secret that our studio outsources all of our post-production, including album design, to Evolve Edits. Our studio manages around 100 weddings a year, so outsourcing whatever we can has been essential to our ability to grow. Evolve handles not only the album design, but also our clients' changes, so we do not have to lift a finger until the spreads are ready to go. Time is money, and not having to worry about keeping up with changes from our clients has saved some serious time that I am able to use for marketing.

There is an exception to my outsourcing rule. When we sell a client our top collection, which includes SCA's New York Album, I personally design the book. High-end album design does not have to be hard, and today it's easier than ever. I have always wanted a solution that was easy to use, not template-based, and one with flexible design options. After trying all of the available options, from lab templates to all of the popular software, we have settled on Fundy Designer.



Images © Michael Anthony



Images © Michael Anthony

With the launch of Fundy Designer 6 around 18 months ago, the software dropped its dependence on Photoshop, becoming its own stand-alone software.

The latest Fundy Design 7 is intuitive and powerful in many ways. When I was demoing it for the first time, I was able to use the new auto-design feature to build the layout of our album in seconds. This software uses the timestamp of your images to group them together into album spreads. After making your selections, you can get a rough draft of your album with the touch of a button. I was impressed beyond belief at how well it worked. Version 7 also uses a unique grouping feature that integrates with Lightroom to choose images that will be panoramic, main images, cover images or grouped together. The auto-design feature saves a lot of time.

Most importantly, Fundy is not template-driven, and drop zones allow us to create completely unique designs for each client.

Fundy Designer has a lot of integrated features. One that we have started to incorporate into our sales session is the Gallery Designer, which allows us to showcase prints that we sell in our collections in a collage on the client's wall. It has proved essential to giving our clients a complete vision of how amazing their purchase could look. Remember, you have to show it to sell it.



Images © Michael Anthony

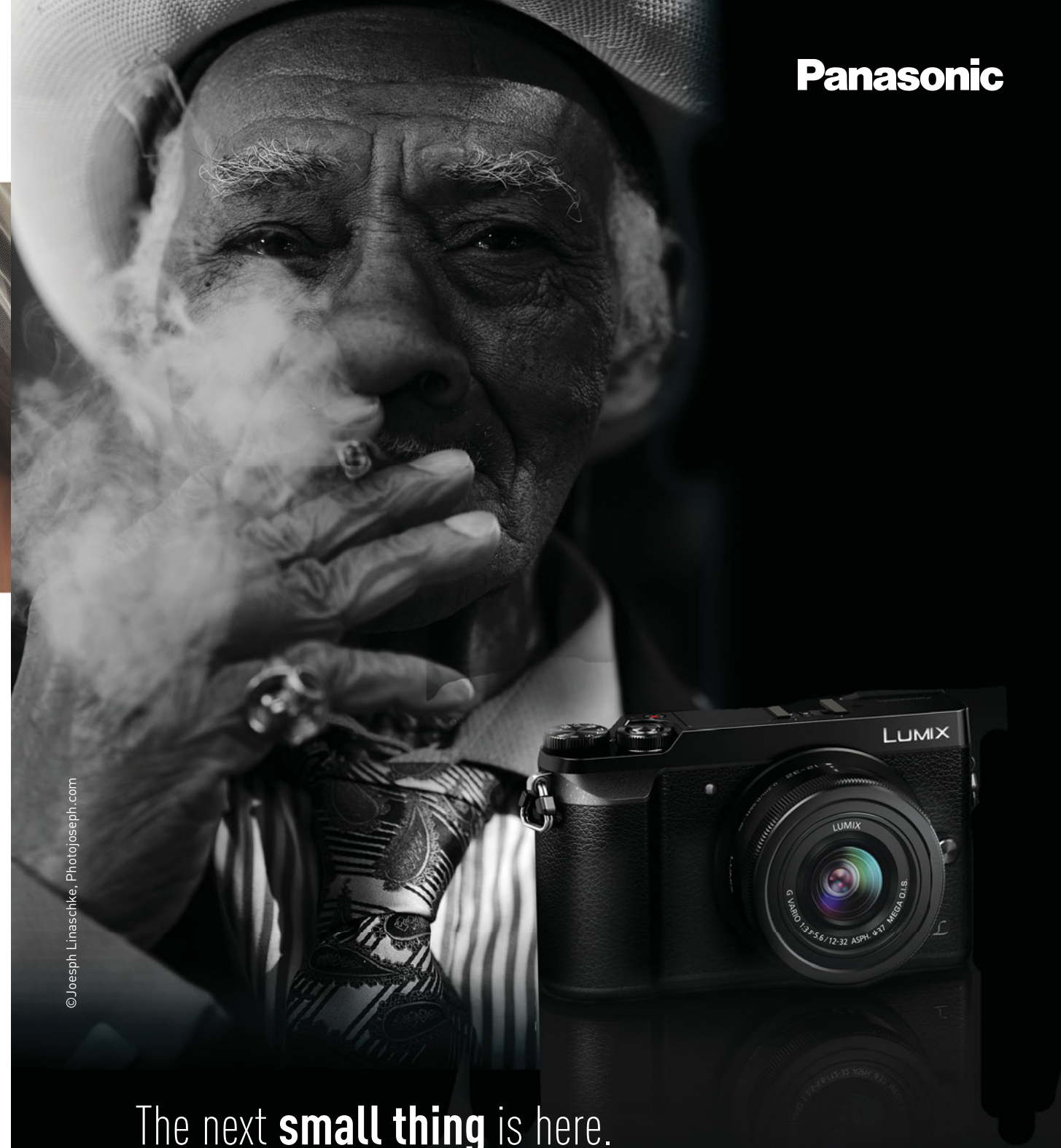
Albums offer an incredible way to elevate your brand perception. By selling yourself as not only an amazing portrait artist but a talented storyteller, you make it much easier for clients to trust you with one of the most important days of their lives. ■

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

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



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# ALL-DAY WEDDINGS

IN **6** HOURS

with Blair Phillips

There are generally two types of photographers: those who shoot weddings and those who no longer shoot weddings. Those who no longer shoot weddings rarely have nice things to say about them. This is generally due to poor planning on the photographer's part. Weddings can be an all-day affair. While there are photographic opportunities throughout the day, that does not mean I need to be there all day long. It is really easy to get burned out when you find yourself photographing weddings for 10 to 12 hours each. I have been a higher-volume wedding photographer for several years, and shoot 40 to 50 a year.



Finding true enjoyment photographing weddings is easier when there is a plan in place. Enjoyment comes when both parties are happy and the photographer is done with the wedding in six hours. Many argue that a wedding cannot be covered properly in six hours.

I begin my weddings two and a half hours prior to the ceremony. During that time, I photograph everyone getting ready, the bride, her with bridesmaids, her with family, the groom, he and his groomsmen, he and his family, and any details I can put together. Immediately after the ceremony, we photograph all of the family obligations and wedding party, and end with the bride and groom. From there, we are off to the reception. My couples know that we need to cut the cake as soon as dinner is over. Once the cake is cut, we keep the ball rolling throughout the rest of the events. This time frame and shooting system have allowed me to efficiently photograph over 1,000 weddings in my career.



Image © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips

This timeline is not something you can spring on a bride and groom on their wedding day. We explain to them at the first consultation that we offer six hours of coverage. Once we explain it and show them albums of our work, they understand. When we get the occasional person who wants 10 hours, we both know that we are not the right fit for one another. Wedding planners need to be made known of your timeline before they begin planning the whole day. The wedding day needs to be planned around the photographer's schedule. It is so much nicer to show up to weddings where people actually respect your time and the job you have to do.

There are several variables that can mount up to a very stressful day. Battling the elements, keeping up with family, staying on schedule and uncooperative people all make it really hard to focus on creativity. To combat this issue, I have found it best to create and follow a template. I spent a ton of time creating my most favorite poses for every situation. I named them so I could remember and easily reproduce them each week. Using a name association for the poses allows me to easily establish a base. Depending on the subject matter, the poses will change slightly. Remembering my poses allows me to rid myself of tons of stress trying to create something brand-new every week. It has helped me maintain consistency throughout my wedding brand. I encourage any wedding shooter who struggles with posing to implement this.



Image © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips

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The weather doesn't always cooperate for outdoor weddings. We are often faced with blazing sun and no shade. For this reason, you have to know your equipment inside and out. I take my equipment out in the most extreme and terrible conditions I can find on an occasional practice day.

Putting yourself in terrible conditions and areas and forcing yourself to create a great image is a must. I heavily rely on additive lighting for all of my weddings. I use a studio strobe light and modifier when shooting outdoor weddings. I put my subject's back to the sun when shooting in bright sunlight. I set my exposure to slightly underexpose my subject. This darkens down the background a bit, making it more pleasing to the eye. I then use my studio strobe to add the proper amount of lighting back to my subject.

Fumbling with settings and exposures on the wedding day is a recipe for disaster. It takes your mind off of being creative and spins you into a state of anger. This struggle is very obvious to all of those around you. This can hurt your credibility, put doubt in people's minds and make weddings wildly unenjoyable.

---

If you have a family and photograph weddings, one of them will eventually suffer. I realized that early on, and did not want either of them to suffer. My family is obviously the most important thing in my life. I knew that once my children came into this world, I was going to create a six-hour time frame for my weddings.

Money is important, but spending down time with your family has a price as well. If you are not always working to maintain a balance between the two, you will not find success. I know people in the wedding industry who missed nearly everything on the weekends while their children were growing up. If you photograph weddings, you should take a day off during the week to give back to your family. True success comes when you are not burning the candle at both ends.

Wedding directors can make or break you. The moment I receive a lead on a wedding, I let them know we will need to all meet with the wedding director before any planning gets underway. During this time, I let my bride know how important it is that we stick to my shooting schedule. This conversation needs to be had with the bride and director present. Tell her that the photography will suffer if the schedule is not respected.

These conversations do not have a negative tone or vibe. I am very courteous and respectful. The main purpose is to mark my territory and ensure everyone knows what it takes to create what I do. Photographers are usually running short on time because people don't understand that it takes time to create variety and a beautiful album. Getting all parties together early and educating them on your process is key. This sets the tone.



Image © Blair Phillips

The wedding industry is forever changing. Continue to believe in what you do and what you create. Never fall victim to price shoppers. If you lower your pricing just to beat someone else, you will never be very excited about that job. Since you have laid the groundwork, you will be able to ask the couple if there is anything else they need, thank them and let them know that you will be at the reception for 30 more minutes, and then you are headed home.

The six-hour wedding is liberating. No more standing around the dance floor for countless hours photographing the same thing all night. Ask the parents before leaving if there is anything they can think of that they may want from you. This gives them the opportunity to speak now or forever hold their peace.

Weddings can be a lot of fun. But you need to have a schedule, keep it short and work smart. ■

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

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



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Q+A

WITH Salvatore Cincotta

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- + Tips on building your portfolio to start shooting weddings.
- + The best gear to have on a wedding day.
- + How to find the bride who sees the value in photography.
- + Tips for dealing with overbearing brides and clients.
- + How to start in person sales with no studio.
- + Best ways to get your brides to do a bridal shoot.
- + Tips on posing large bridal parties.
- + How to find and train a consistent second shooter.
- + Tips on managing and taking control of the wedding day timeline.

### 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.



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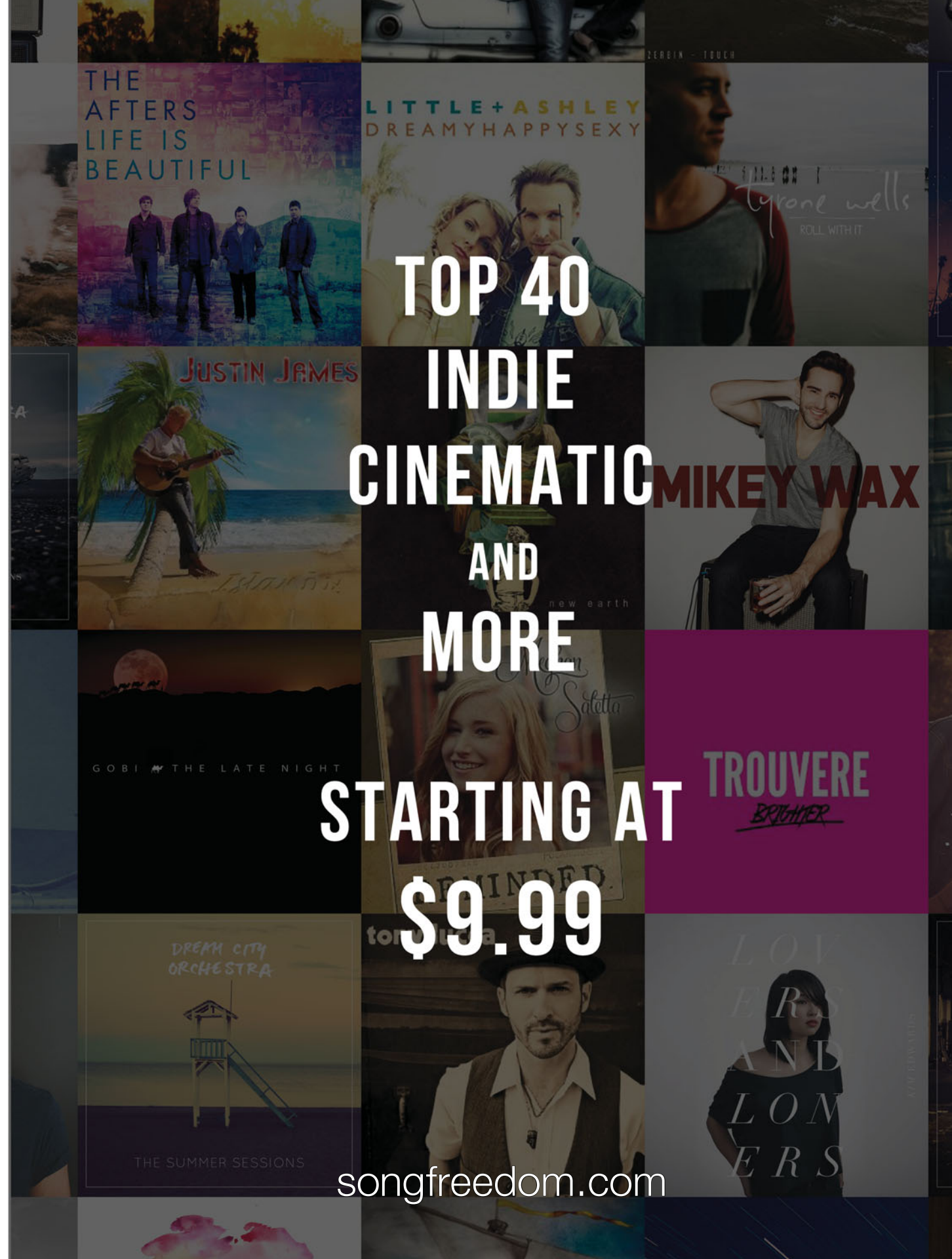
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# INSPIRATIONS

*Inspiration can come when you least expect it. As photographers, we are visual artists. We express ourselves through our camera and the images we create. Inspirations represents a sampling of our industry and the vision of professional photographers from around the world. Congratulations to all our featured artists. Be inspired and create something that is you.*

**Sal Cincotta**  
Editor-in-chief

best wedding image



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THE  
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EDITION



# BUILDING BLOCKS

## PRICING

with Skip Cohen

Most photographers are right-brain artists. The right side of your brain is known as being responsible for creativity, while the left side is analytical. An accountant would typically be a strong left-brainer, while a jazz musician a right-brainer. Artists are more creative and less interested in operational issues, while accountants are more focused on the numbers.

You're an artist, and you need to respect both sides of what it takes to run a business. You need to be creative, but you also need to pay attention to the details.

You didn't set out to be a photographic philanthropist. Nor did you plan on macaroni and cheese every night for dinner. That takes me right to the topic of this month's article: pricing.

The success of your photography business comes down to revenue, but it's not just about how much you make at the end of the year. It's about how much you kept. It all starts with your pricing.

Sal Cincotta has often said that nothing screws up a business like incorrect pricing.

He takes it one step further, talking about punishing à la carte prices rather than bundling to raise your revenue and margins.



## WHAT'S YOUR REAL COST TO DO BUSINESS?

Let's start with a list of everything you should consider in your costs.

|                      |                            |                                 |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>Gear</i>          | <i>Gas and Maintenance</i> | <i>Dues/Memberships</i>         |
| <i>Education</i>     | <i>Supplies</i>            | <i>Packaging</i>                |
| <i>The Internet</i>  | <i>Phone Service</i>       | <i>Utilities</i>                |
| <i>Computer</i>      | <i>Legal Counsel</i>       | <i>Advertising</i>              |
| <i>Insurance</i>     | <i>Furniture</i>           | <i>Website</i>                  |
| <i>Car</i>           | <i>Social Media</i>        | <i>Subscriptions</i>            |
| <i>Printers</i>      | <i>Accountant</i>          | <i>Charge from your vendors</i> |
| <i>Rent</i>          | <i>Software</i>            | <i>Additional Labor</i>         |
| <i>Entertainment</i> | <i>Time</i>                | <i>Travel</i>                   |

As thorough as this list is, I can guarantee there are a few things I missed.

What drives me crazy is hearing photographers talk about how much money they're making because a 5x7 costs them only a dollar or so from their lab, and they charge clients \$5 or even \$10. That kind of pricing doesn't begin to reflect what it really cost for you to be a professional photographer.

At this point, I need to make one obvious clarification: Everything I'm writing about assumes nothing but the very best skill set as a true professional. I'm assuming your work is outstanding, with images that match your clients' mindset and exceed their expectations.

So, you've spent some time and calculated all of your costs to be in business. There's a lot of discussion about the appropriate margin. Check out Bryan Caporicci's articles at [SproutingPhotographer.com](http://SproutingPhotographer.com). There are 12 posts, each covering a different area of pricing. (Click on Articles, then scroll down to Pricing.)

## PRICE POINTS

Keep it simple, with no more than three or four price points. There should be low, medium and high tiers, plus an exclusive tier if you're going for four. Remember, your client base, if you've done a good job establishing value, will always aspire to move up in what they spend with you.

Think about buying a new car. The salesperson never shows you the bottom of the line first. Instead, they show you the top of the line, and you need to decide what features you can live with and without.

I also like names attached to the packages, especially for wedding photographers. For example, you might want to have Silver, Gold and Platinum. The important thing is strong differentiation between the coverages—the more the client spends, the more she gets.

## PUBLISHING YOUR PRICES

Don't. While there are some who say my directive is old-fashioned, I still believe people aren't just buying images—they're hiring *you*. I'm fine with giving people a range of your costs, but encourage them to contact you directly since every client is different.

## ADDED VALUE VS. DISCOUNTS

Sooner or later, you're going to be putting together promotional offers. Do your best to create added value rather than just offer discounts.

Here's my pet peeve. I know we live in a *but-it's-on-sale* society, but there are ways to add value for a special promotion that don't require you to turn your business into a pricing war with your competitors.

- Watch the YouTube video from several years ago in which Sal talks about different packages. Package pricing allows you to put together different components for a limited-time promotion. (Just type "Sal Cincotta Pricing" into the YouTube search box.)
- Talk to your lab. There's so much going on with new products today, and you might want to add a canvas or metal print to the mix. Ask your lab a simple question: "What's new?" Also, while canvas isn't new, it's still unique to so many of your customers.
- Michele Celentano has made herself a "full service" photographer. She helps the client decide on the size of the portrait and the frame, and then she shows up when it's ready, complete with hammer, level and picture hooks. Nothing is preventing you from also becoming full service.
- Wedding photographers can create added value with extended hours of coverage or an expanded engagement session.
- Contact your album supplier for new products, additional grandmother albums, etc.
- Are you offering hybrid solutions? I'm a huge fan of Photodex and slide shows. It's so easy to mix still images with short video clips. This can be an add-on product for clients purchasing a certain package. It's not specific to bridal clients. With a family portrait session, you could offer a slide show as a holiday card for the family to send out.
- Holiday cards, invitations and virtually anything you can do with an image becomes a fun promotional addition to your mix of products. And don't forget framed prints; you have to show them on your site and in your studio to plant the seed.
- Offering a client a blog page with images along with a unique URL is so doable. You can also offer them all their images on an iPad, which is still considered unique.
- Look for ways to cross-promote with other vendors. Get together with the limo company, florist or caterer, and find ways to promote each other's products. A Mother's Day promotion could include a family portrait plus a gift certificate to a florist or Mother's Day brunch at a restaurant.

## EDUCATING YOUR CLIENT

You've got to do a better job getting the client to understand what an album is, especially in the wedding category. An album isn't just a book of photographs. (I've been saying this for years.) An album is the first heirloom of a new family. It captures memories that would otherwise be forgotten years later, and answers the question from an inquisitive granddaughter who asks, "Grandma, what did you look like when you and Papa got married?"

## RAISING YOUR PRICES

At some point, it's going to be appropriate to raise your prices, but let's put a little logic into the equation. Many of you just pick a number and then raise everything you sell.

If you were going on a road trip, you'd never just pull out of your driveway and head in the direction of wherever it was you were going. You'd plan your route first. Pricing is no different.

- Look at what you sell and determine your best-sellers and your average price.
- Look at your costs, including all your expenses.
- What's costing you the most? Are there ways to reduce that cost?
- How much do you want to make on each product/service you offer?

Denis Reggie was the first photographer I ever heard make this statement: "Don't price your products based on what you can afford. It was years before I could afford myself."

## PEAKS AND VALLEYS

To even out the seasonal peaks and valleys in revenue, you need to take the time to analyze your business. As a portrait photographer, for example, Bruce Berg is one of three studios in the Pacific Northwest involved in the Lane County Children's Photo Contest during the first quarter each year.

Three competing studios have created an incredible event during what is typically the slowest time of year for most photographers. And they've been pulling in the entire community for over 30 years. Google "Lane County Children's Photo Contest" to read all about it.



You don't have to accept that things are tough during the slow season. Look for ways to make your business more diverse so you can even out the peaks and valleys.

Pricing isn't rocket science, but it is labor intensive. I know it's trite to say it, but no pain, no gain. Analyze your business and work to educate every client on what makes you different from the other photographers in town. Offer quality services with quality products, and exceed client expectations.

The key is to make yourself habit-forming. ■



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

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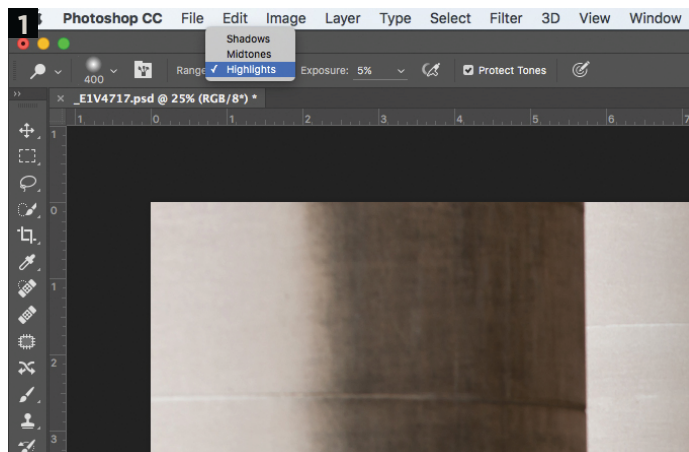
Whether you cut your teeth in the analog film days or started with a DSLR, you have probably heard the term *dodge and burn*. I know what you are thinking: This is a dated technique, and Photoshop is way more capable of filling shadows and reducing highlights. Yes and no. Adobe Camera Raw and Lightroom have great options for recovering these shadowy or bright tones, but selectively editing with layers is a huge advantage when working nondestructively.

It's a simple concept: Edit your image without changing the original. Similar to the way Raw files are used in ACR and Lightroom, there is a sidecar metadata file created to save the changes. The Raw image is untouched and left as shot. For new Photoshop users, layers are your new best friend.

Now let's open an image and get working.

## Dodge & Burn Tool

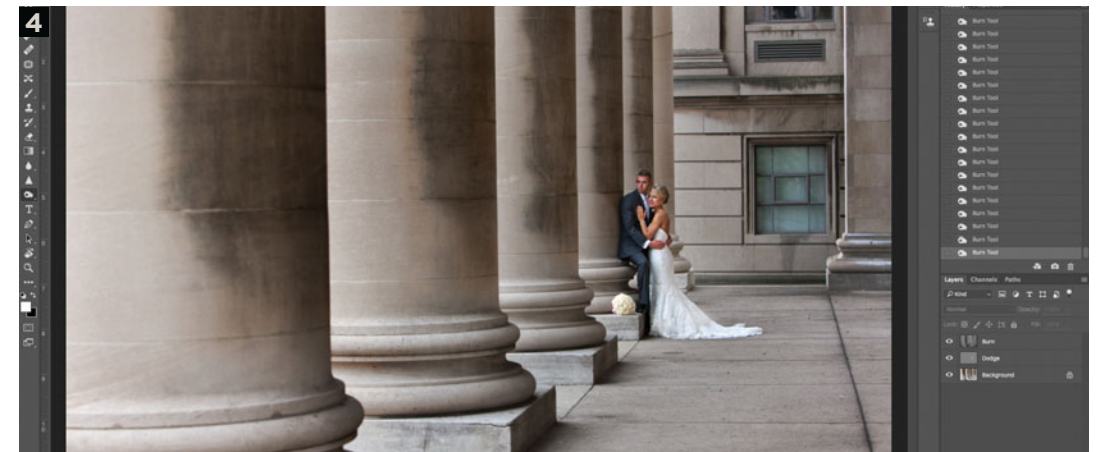
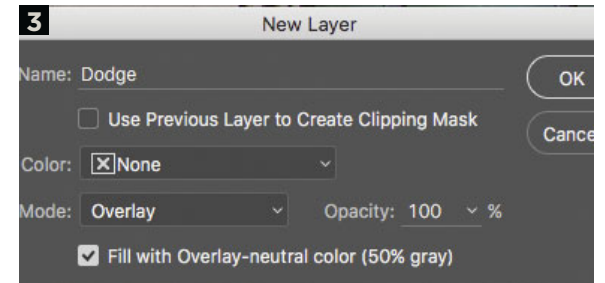
After opening an image, you are ready to begin dodging and burning specific areas. Simply strike the "O" key and the dodge tool is in hand. Hold Shift and strike the "O" key to toggle the Burn tool as well. Hotkeys are a huge time saver. To get started, we need to choose which tones we want to affect by clicking the Range options and selecting Shadows, Midtones or Highlights. The term *exposure* relates to the intensity of the effect. It works similarly to the opacity setting of an adjustment layer. (1)



When painting this effect, it's best to stay between 0 and 15. Remember with a Wacom tablet, this effect increases the longer you tap and drag the cursor over an area repeatedly. With a mouse, you have to click multiple times, which can be annoying. Keep in mind that we are manipulating the background layer. (2) This means we are destroying the original image. We need to build separate dodge and burn layers.

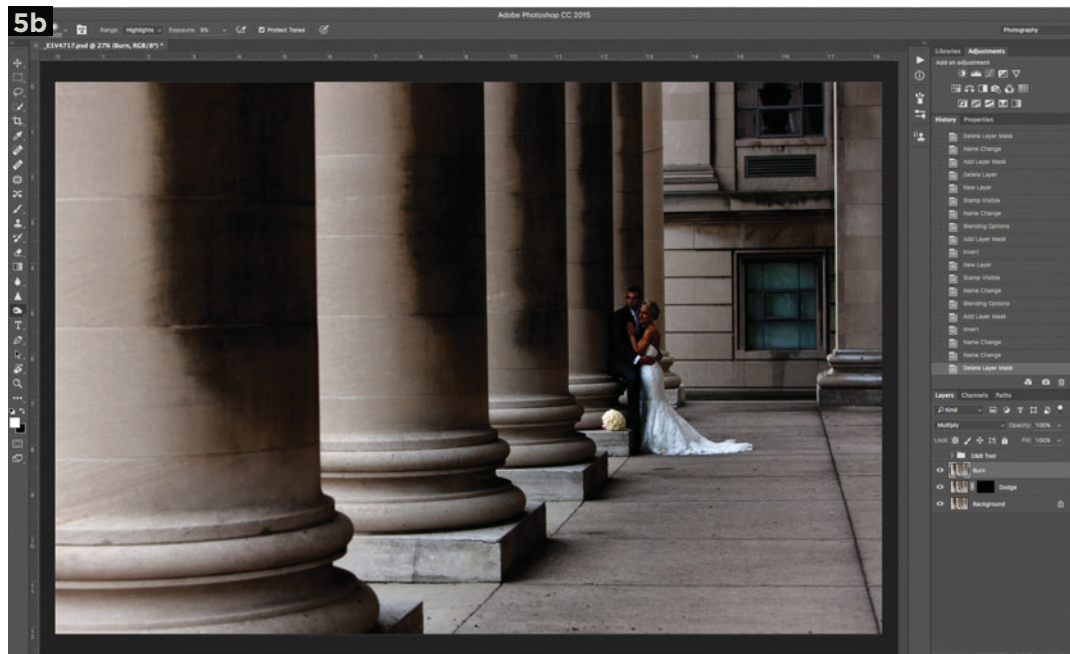
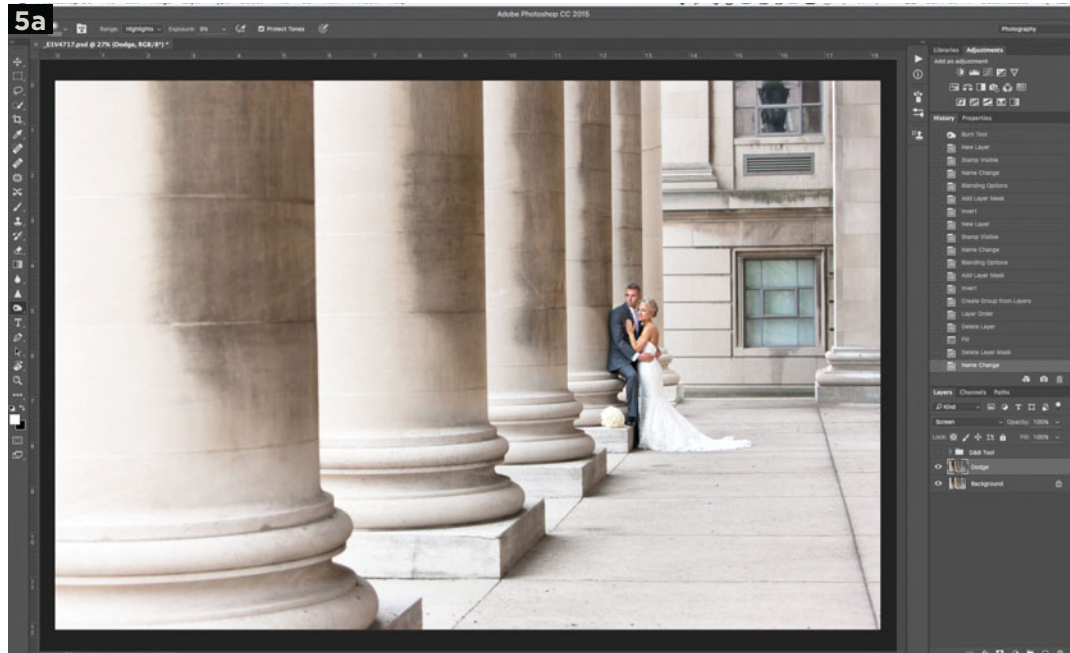
Start by creating a new layer. Hold Shift, Command and the "N" key. Name it "Dodge." Change the blending mode to Overlay and check the box Fill with Overlay-neutral color (50% gray). (3) You can follow these same steps for your burn layer. You are now ready to nondestructively dodge and burn. Simply grab the tool according to which layer you have selected and start painting right on the image. If you decide that the effect is too heavy, lower the layer opacity. (4)

This technique is a little slow for my taste, having to toggle between two layers, two adjustment tools, three ranges of tones, exposure values 0 to 100, etc. Also, there isn't a way to selectively fix your painted areas like you can with layer masks. This is a 50% gray filled layer, not as easy as toggling white and black as your foreground color to add or remove the effect.



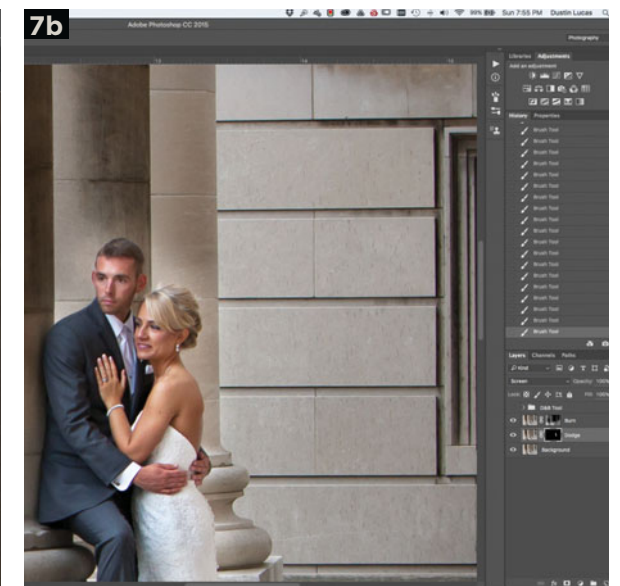
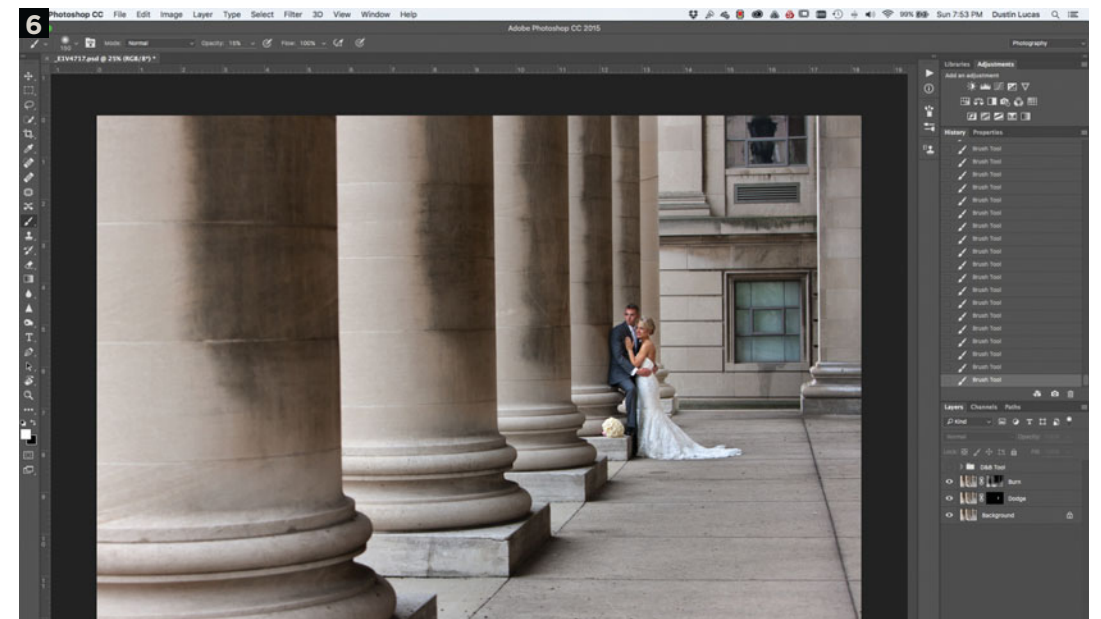
## Blending Mode Technique

Blending modes can add some interesting effects to your images. We've previously used Overlay, which is considered a contrast mode. Other modes that affect brightness include Screen and Multiply. Changing the blend mode to Screen makes your image brighter and Multiply darkens. These two modes offer excellent ways to create dodge and burn layers. (5a, 5b)



Start by duplicating your background layer two times, and name them "Dodge" and "Burn." For your Dodge layer, change the blending mode to Screen to brighten the image. Next, hold Option or Alt and click on the Layer Mask button at the bottom of the layers palette. This turns off the effect for now. Select the Burn layer and change the blending mode to Multiply. You will notice that your image immediately gets darker. Hold Option or Alt and click the Layer Mask button to hide the effect.

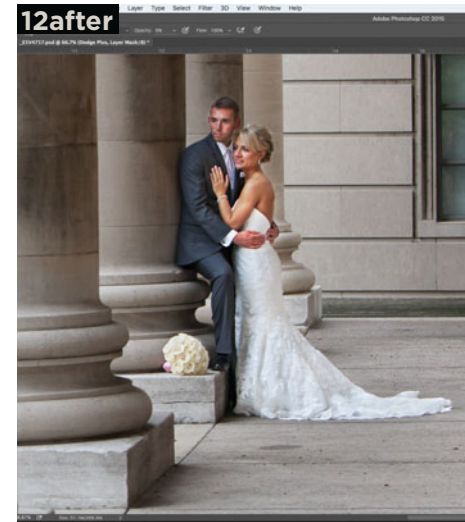
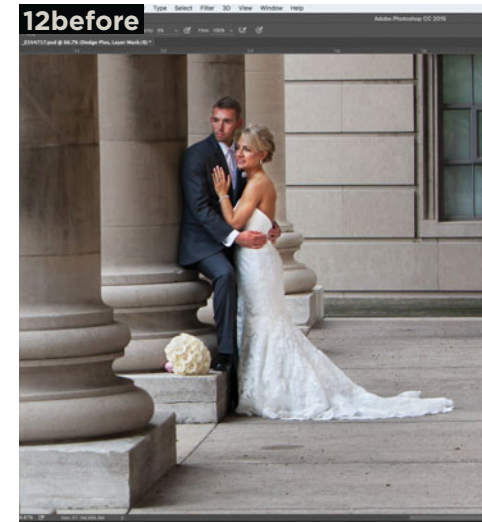
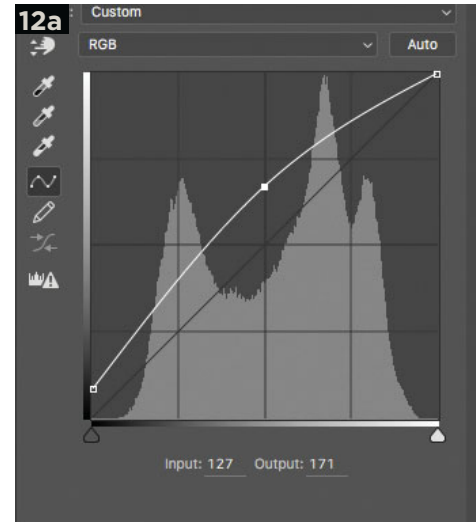
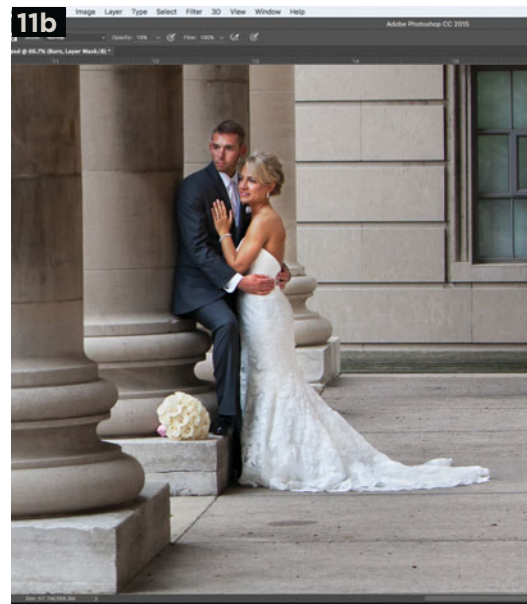
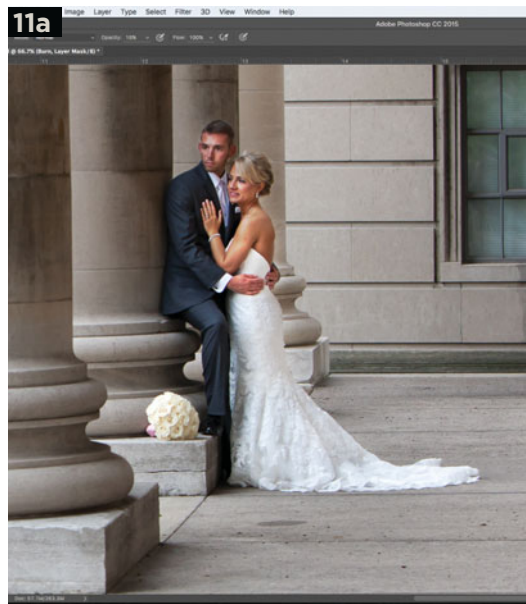
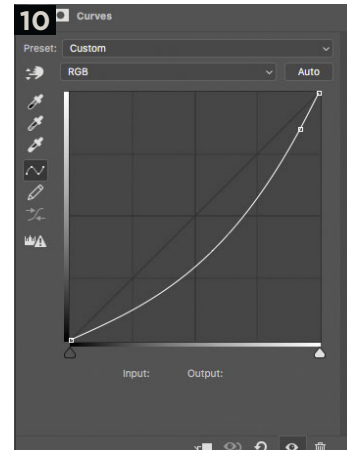
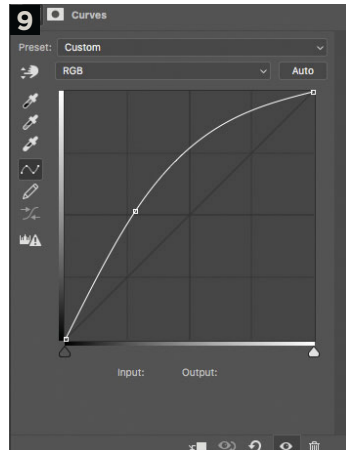
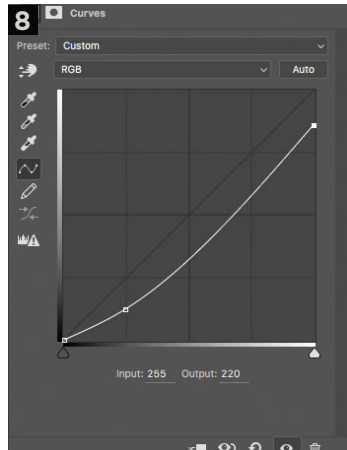
Now you are ready to grab the Brush tool with white as your foreground color and paint on the effect. Make sure you have selected the layer mask, and lower your opacity to make sure everything blends well. (6) Soft brush edges are a must when you dodge and burn. Be aware of haloing around your subject. (7) We want to draw viewers to the subject, not force them to get stuck on the mistakes. It's all about those little details.



## Using Curves

You can do so much to an image using the Curves adjustment tool: brighten, darken, dull whites, flatten blacks, add contrast or white balance, etc. This is a great way to build your dodge and burn layers as well. Create a curves layer adjustment and drag the line upward for your dodging effect. (8) Again, hold Option or Alt and click the layer mask button. Do the same thing for the burn layer, but drag the curves line downward. (9)

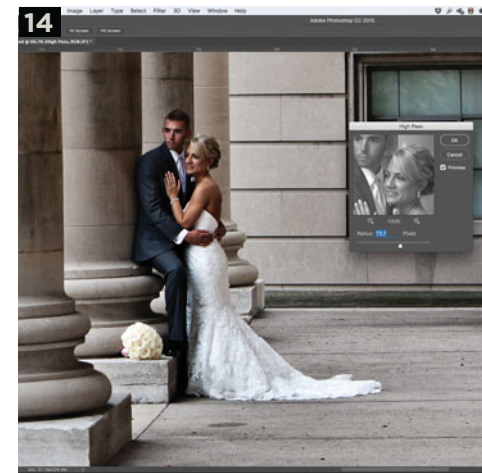
The advantage of using curves as opposed to a 50% gray layer set to opacity, or duplicating image layers set to Screen or Multiply, is that you can fully adjust the tonal settings. On my burn layers, I tend to drag the white point down to dull the whites in the image. (10) This acts as a highlight recovery when I am burning down distracting hotspots. (11) When I need to dodge any clipped blacks in an image, I lift the black point so the area blends better with the surrounding tones. These areas are hard to recover with just brightening shadows, which is why I lift the black point. (12) That means I don't have to dodge as much.



## High Pass Filter

This filter is widely used when editing in Photoshop. It is more commonly associated with sharpening for output purposes. By contrast, it's the blurring effect for frequency separation. For a quick dodge and burn effect that acts like an interesting contrast boost, start by holding Option or Alt, Command and the "J" key to duplicate your background layer. Desaturate your image by holding Shift, Command and the "U" key. Change the blending mode to Soft Light for a subtle effect or Vivid Light for more intensity. (13)

Now we are ready to apply the High Pass filter. From the menu bar, choose Filter < Other < High Pass. Let's determine what the radius needs to be. As we increase the radius, the image begins to appear again; the typical range is 70 to 200. You can always select higher because we can lower the layer opacity if it's too high. (14) Now create a layer mask. Hold Option or Alt and click the layer mask button in the layers palette. Also, if we select Soft Light as the blending mode, we can duplicate these High Pass layers and alter the opacities as well. This is a great technique to subtly build your image. (15)



## The Results

As you see, there are many ways to attack dodging and burning. The simplest workflow is to create a blank layer with 50% gray checked and the blending mode set to Overlay. You can simply paint and toggle between white (which dodges) and black (which burns). This can be added to a basic retouch action set, and run on a batch of images when opening in Photoshop. Always work on separate layers and do not destroy your image. ■



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Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his master of fine arts degree, a career opportunity opened once he began working with Evolve Edits. Through teaching photography classes and writing about photography, Dustin continues to expand his influence on art and business throughout the industry.

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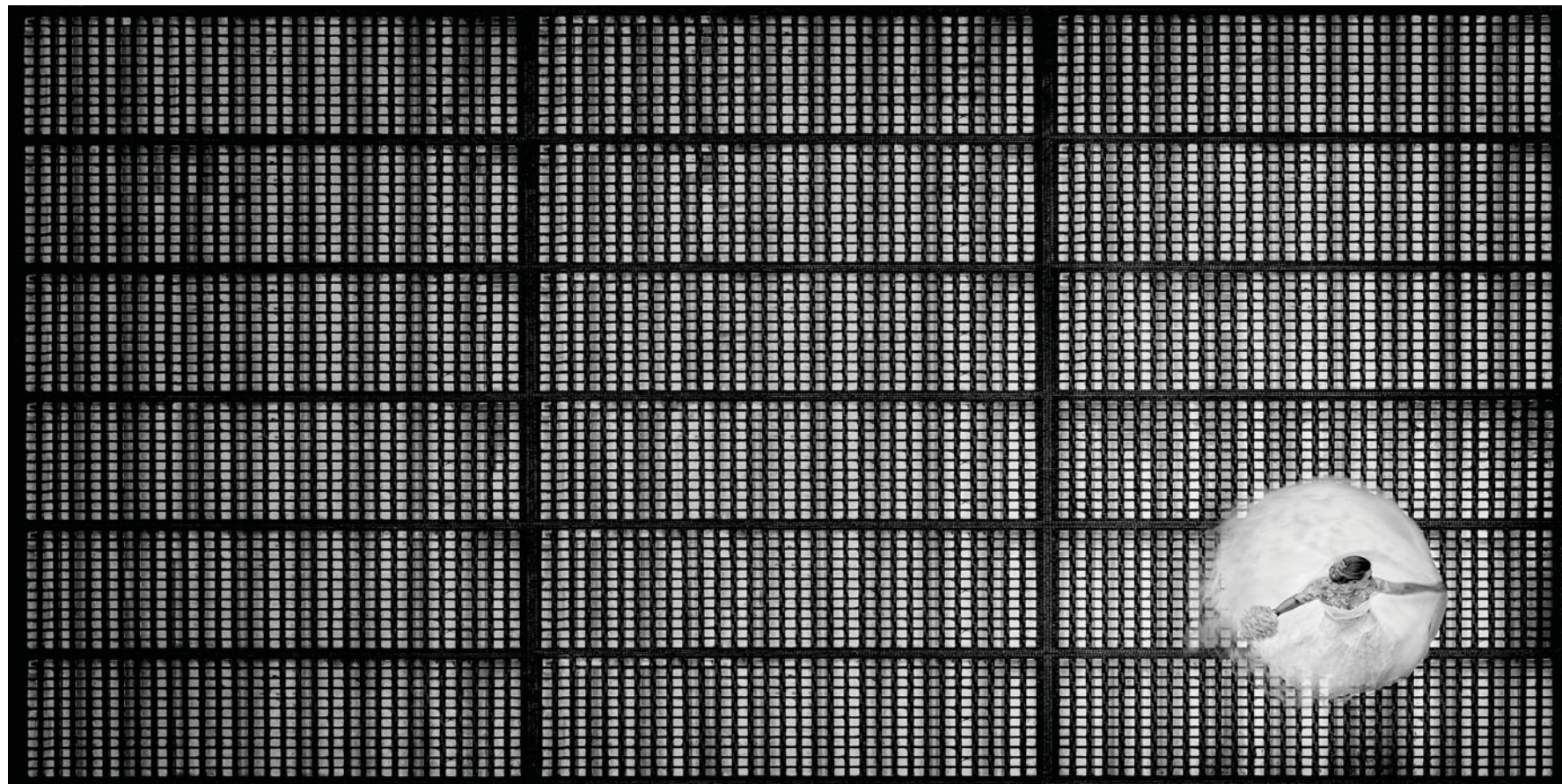


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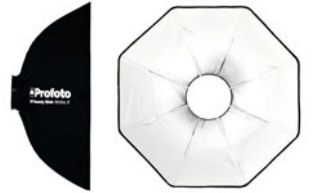


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