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Salvatore Cincotta
BEHIND THE SHUTTER

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

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THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sal Cincotta | salcincotta.com

CAMERA: Hasselblad H5D

LENS: Hasselblad 100mm

EXPOSURE: f2.2 @ 1/125th, ISO 100

LOCATION: Isle of Skye, Scotland

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken near Portree, a small town on the Isle of Skye in Scotland, July 2015.

LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

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- Sal Cincotta

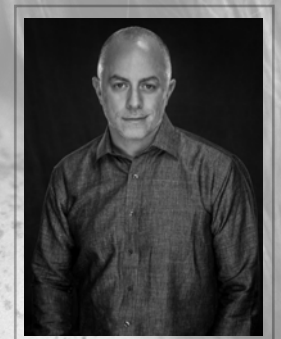


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Working With Your Spouse

Could Be Easier Than You Think

with Blair Phillips

Success is often measured by net returns. But you can be making lots of money and still be miserable. Time is a commodity that is nearly impossible to purchase. Time with your spouse and family can never be replaced by money. My idea of success is making good money while having tons of time for my family. In order to have a work and home environment that is completely serene, you must create balance. Working with your spouse or significant other could be the missing link to make this possible.

Working every day with one's romantic partner can be the entrepreneur's most rewarding experience. My wife and I have worked together for 11 years. Things run smoothly and are very enjoyable. The largest contributor to making our business relationship work so well is that we both know our roles.



Images © Blair Phillips

Delegate Roles

You have to be able to admit that you are not good at everything. Small-business owners tend to try to do everything themselves. That often leads to their being mediocre at a lot of things. When you identify your strengths and pass off your weaknesses to someone else's task list, you can become really good at fewer things. In our business, I am really comfortable with handling clients. My wife is not as comfortable with it, so I do it. It is nearly impossible for me to sit at a desk all day working in Photoshop. I am terrible at sitting still, so I passed it off. I take all of the pictures, my wife does all of the editing. Check your ego and pride at the door, and stop trying to be good at the things you despise. Even if it means outsourcing a few of those tasks, it is well worth it in the end.

“Police Officer” and “Paramedic”

Establish who will be the “paramedic” and who will be the “police officer” in your business. The paramedic loves to help people. The police officer enforces policies. The personality of the police officer is more in line with his or her role. The paramedic’s personality is more in line with listening to and solving problems before the police officer needs to be brought in.

It is rare for a person to be good at both roles. Generally a person will cave at one or the other. In our business, my wife has a much harder time telling people no than I do. I have no problem at all standing my ground when I know we are in the right. You have to always remember that you are running a business. Everything you do costs you money one way or another. Larger companies often have a conflict resolution person trained to handle problems. This person generally never takes anything personally, and should have a warm, bubbly personality.



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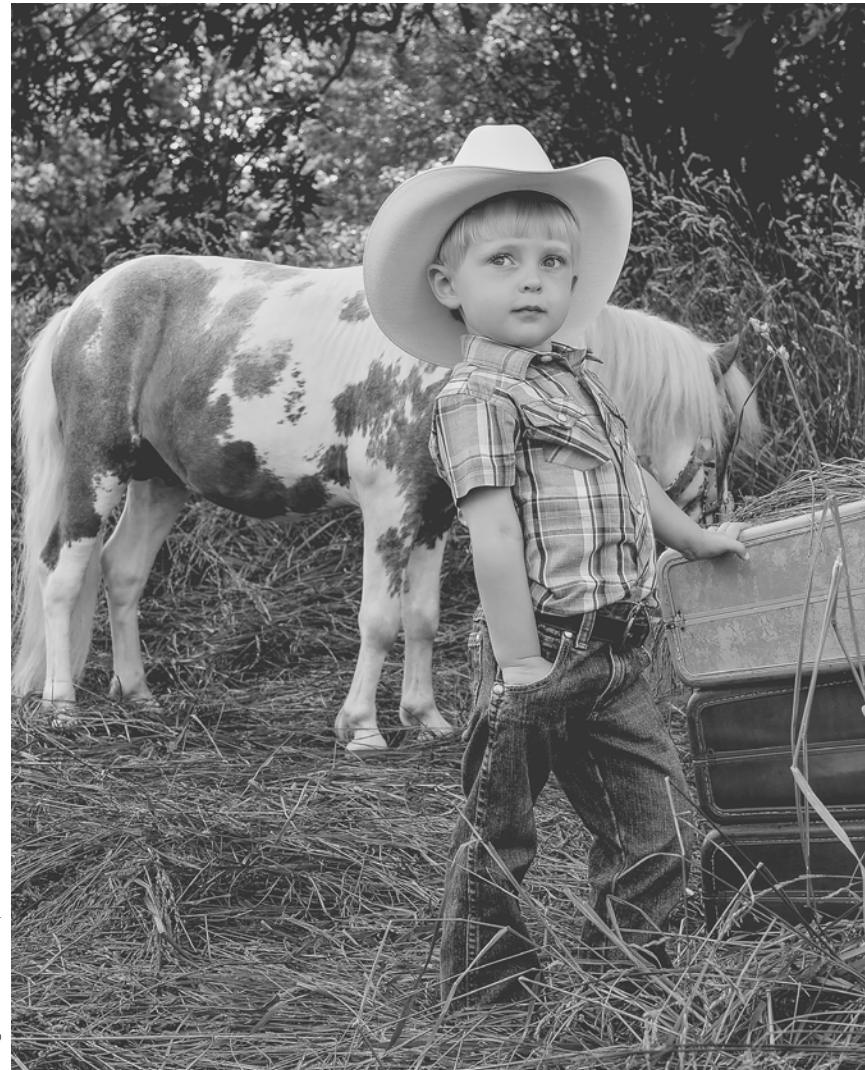


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Agree on Policies— and Stick to Them

Things can get really interesting when two people are equally invested in a business. They can really get tense when making decisions. In order for anything to work, both have to agree on those decisions. This is especially true when formulating procedures and policies. Nothing's worse than when a client hears one thing from one partner, and something different from the other.

We learned early in our business that it was imperative for us to develop a policy and procedure for every possible scenario. Write them down so you can always reference them. This way, you remain consistent and don't have to handle everything on a case-by-case basis. Never go behind your spouse and alter things, which is belittling.

Once, we had a minor snafu over an evening client appointment. I take my last appointment at 3:00 in the afternoon. There is a general understanding that I leave everyday at 5:00 to go home and be with my children. The client called, and I told her that the latest possible appointment was 3:00. She called back later and told my wife that she could only come at 6:00. My wife caved, and it made me look like a fool. Lesson learned.



Alone Time

While it can be richly rewarding to work with your loved one, don't forget to set aside some time for yourself. Our personal hobbies help keep our excitement for each other alive. The time we are apart makes us miss each other. We're excited to get back home and spend time together. Take turns taking a spontaneous afternoon off to do whatever you like. This brings so much enjoyment, leaving you refreshed and excited to get back to your family.

Step Away From the Business

We all get really busy and feel that there are not enough hours in the day. Your business will not perish should you take an occasional break from it. Vacationing was really difficult for us early on because we were afraid of losing business if we were not here. If you do not close the doors every now and then, you will grow to resent your life. Ask yourself: Am I working my job, or is my job working me?



Image © Blair Phillips

Sharing Space

Just as you have to adjust to the routines of people you live with, you have to adjust to those you work with. You have to learn to respect each other's space. This is certainly true in a workplace that you share with your spouse.

My wife's domain is our production office. This is where she spends all of her time. My domain is my studio and outdoor shooting space. It would drive me crazy if she came into my space and started moving things around. Everything is just how I need it. It's the same for her. Agree that your spaces are not to be bothered by the other person.

I can't imagine coming to work every day without my wife. We have grown into the perfect team. Each of us knows when to give a little more than the other and when to take a step back. Establishing and maintaining roles has been the most important tool for survival. We continue to attack each day as it comes with an open mind and a lot of love and respect for one another. If your heart and spirit are in the right place, you can make it work too. ■



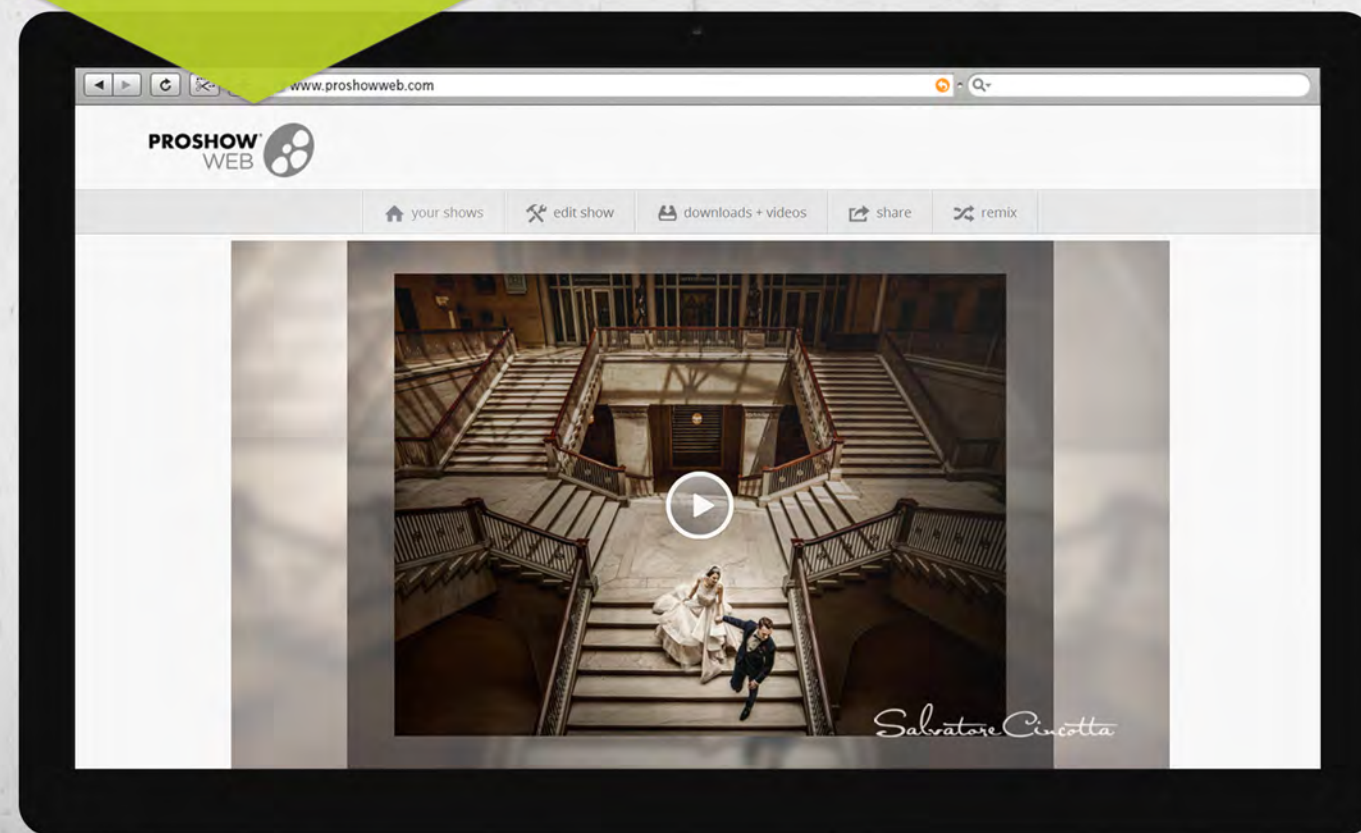
Blair Phillips launched his business nearly 10 years ago in a small town. Since then, Blair Phillips Photography has become a beloved household name to its many fans and clients. Each year, Blair photographs up to 30 weddings and over 600 high school senior, newborn and family studio sessions. He has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

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Black and white—some of the most iconic pictures are presented this way. There is just something about black and white that sucks you into an image. It's that absence of color that really gets the viewer to focus on the things that matter, the story being told. Color becomes a distraction.



In honor of this month's editorial namesake, "The Black and White Edition," we wanted to blow you away with a beauty who really shines in that medium. Rachel, with her sublime freckles, was the perfect candidate. Yes, we used her for her freckles. We love them.

Concept

While traveling in Scotland this summer, we ran across Rachel, who is as beautiful on the outside as she is on the inside. And let me tell you, this is one smart cookie. She is in the process of getting her degree, and wants to be an engineer when she graduates. Are you impressed yet? Well, I certainly was. While abroad, I wanted to photograph someone local, someone with a unique look, and she fit the bill.

Wardrobe was nothing fancy, just some gray chiffon. Ultimately, we wanted it to be about Rachel and not about glam makeup or glam clothing. We were going for pure beauty.

For hair and makeup, we used some local talent. We got to work with Angie and her assistant, and they turned me on to some local slang—and, of course, Cadbury Chocolate Buttons. (Um, yeah, I will eat these all day long. They were life changing.) They were absolutely amazing to work with, and fit right in with the team.

Location

This particular day, we were shooting all over the Isle of Sky in Scotland, but this specific shoot was in the living room of our rental home.

We had some great light coming in through the window, but it was directional and not very flattering. Beauty portraits don't have to be overly complicated. In fact, sometimes the simplest of setups is all you need to create stunning portraits.



Images © Sal Cincotta

Lighting

This is where things start to get interesting. The directional light in the room was not the look and feel I was going for with this portrait. If it were a man, maybe. I like harder light on guys sometimes, but for Rachel, I wanted a nice soft light.

In a situation like this, it's really easy to start slamming light into the room and overpower everything. What is tough is to get the artificial light to match the ambient light in the room.

So, time to get out that light meter. First, take a reading in the room of the ambient light. That reading, whatever it is, is what you are working with in the room. The goal is to balance that light with a strobe. The key here is to start at the lowest power setting and push from there until you get the look you are going for.

For this shot, we used the Profoto B1 and an Octabox fired into the ceiling. Then we had a reflector pushing both natural light and the reflected light from the B1 up to provide some balanced fill. The final shot is exactly the look and feel I was going for. The light looks natural and soft, but it took a combination of several light sources and modifiers to get that perfect look.



image © Sal Cincotta

“
*Don't underestimate
 the importance of light
 and the light shaping tools
 in your arsenal.*”

Closing Thoughts

Lighting doesn't have to be complicated, but sometimes getting that look you are going for requires you to put all your knowledge to the test. Creating a portrait that looks like it is naturally lit—but that is achieved through a careful balance of modifiers and lights—is an art form.

Don't underestimate the importance of light and the light shaping tools in your arsenal. It can make all the difference in the world to your final results.

Finally, while this image was shot in color, I wanted to tell the story of Rachel by highlighting her unique features. I wanted to remove any distractions from the image and draw attention to her freckles. The final black-and-white treatment makes them pop.

As always, get out there and make some amazing images. Your best work is ahead of you. ■

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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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VIDEO COLOR-GRADING

////// THE BASICS ///////////////
WITH ROB ADAMS



It all starts in the camera. To get the most out of your video images, shoot in a way that retains as much detail as possible. Default picture profiles like Standard, Faithful, Portrait and even Neutral can have too much gamma curve. That's a fancy way of saying they have too much contrast and brightness to maintain fine detail in the highlights and shadows of your video. There are a couple of different ways to get a flatter, more workable image from your camera natively.



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I'm so jealous of photo editors sometimes. They get to work with Raw formats, which allow so much latitude in correcting and manipulating the look and feel of an image. Unless you are working with the most advanced video formats that are produced by super-high-end cinema cameras like the ARRI Alexa, RED or certain Blackmagic cameras, you are limited as to what you can fix and how the moving image can ultimately look. Enter the world of color correcting and grading for video.

Most of you reading this are likely using a DSLR to do your video work. Some of you may be using a straight-up video camera that is meant for small-sensor video capture. Either way, this article will show you the ABCs of color correction and grading, including where to begin.



////PROFILE OF SETTINGS //////////////////////////////////////

“Prolost Flat” is a common profile of settings that can help achieve a solid starting point for DSLR video footage. It is good in many situations where basic color correction and grading will be done. It doesn’t really matter which brand of camera you are using. You will want to edit your existing Neutral picture profile by duplicating it in your camera’s custom user settings. Next, decrease the contrast all the way down and drop the color saturation of the profile to about one notch above complete desaturation. Don’t go all the way down, or you may end up with a black-and-white image. Finally, drop the sharpness slider down all the way or almost all the way. This is a personal preference. I prefer to add my sharpness back into the video in post-production so I can more precisely control the look. This technique was developed by Prolost, a company that makes presets and effects for various software applications.

Another way to flatten out your image is by using the Technicolor CineStyle profile, which you can download at Technicolor.com. (Technicolor is the film industry’s leading creator of color information processing and digital imaging technology, and is considered the forefather of the modern motion picture industry.)

Be warned: Using Technicolor CineStyle will make your images out of the camera look terrible, but they are supposed to be that way. CineStyle removes the “S-curve” completely, allowing your DSLR maximum dynamic range to retain a greater amount of detail and more flexibility in grading later on. You will be scared by what your unaffected video looks like when you record it, but this is normal. Another warning: A fair amount of color-grading skill is required to achieve a polished, professional look using Technicolor CineStyle, and it will likely be harder to focus your image in camera without the use of a hood-loupe or external electronic viewfinder. Hopefully, this article will get you started on the right path.

////MIRRORLESS CAMERAS //////////////////////////////////////

It’s worth mentioning that certain digital cinema cameras and the new generation of mirrorless cameras offer very flat built-in picture profiles. The Canon C-series cameras, like the 1DC, C100, C300 and C500, have the Canon Log or C-Log; and the Sony A7S, A7Rii, FS7 and FS5 have the Sony Log or S-Log, for short. “Log” stands for logarithmic, and refers to the gamma logarithm used to capture a video image in the brand’s native codec. In simple terms, it’s the brand’s custom-defined set of parameters that create a flat, straightforward image for video producers to use without having to tinker too much with settings to get a more gradable image. What’s nice is that certain color-grading presets have been designed to work with these Log profiles. They are called LUTs (“lookup tables”), and they are instantaneous “looks” and gamma curves that make the image “viewer ready” and thereby more user-customizable. More on that in a minute.

////3-WAY COLOR WHEELS //////////////////////////////////////

Once you have captured a flat image in your camera, you are ready to begin serious color grading. The first thing to remember is that you are not working with Raw images. Like I stated earlier, photographers have much more latitude in their still images. If you are shooting with a DSLR, you will be working in post-production with a compressed video image that equals about a small to medium JPEG in resolution and likely only 8 bits of color information. That is not much, considering the gamut of available colors and exposure control when working with Raw still images in Lightroom. You can still produce nice looks and get some great-looking video.

Color-correcting your shots is the first step. If you misjudged your white balance in camera while trying to do it manually, or if you trusted the camera to auto-white-balance and it doesn’t look good, you will have to correct the white balance. When working with video of people’s skin tones, I always recommend white-balancing the image first back to true color so you have a standard starting point to work from. For a sunset, however, I may leave the natural red and orange hues alone and enhance them with my grading.

There are several ways to color-correct in your video editing application. Plugins can do it automatically, but I don’t recommend using the built-in white-balance features of Adobe Premiere or FCPX. They’re often too harsh, or they overestimate the amount of correction needed. A good one I use is White Balance Plugin from FCPXEffects.com. Just choose the part of the image that is supposed to be white, and the plugin will set the rest of the color gamut in relation to that point. There are a few of these out there, and they all work fairly well. Of course, you can always use your editing application’s three-way color wheels or linear curves to correct shots manually. I find this tedious on my wedding projects, where multiple cameras are being used simultaneously.

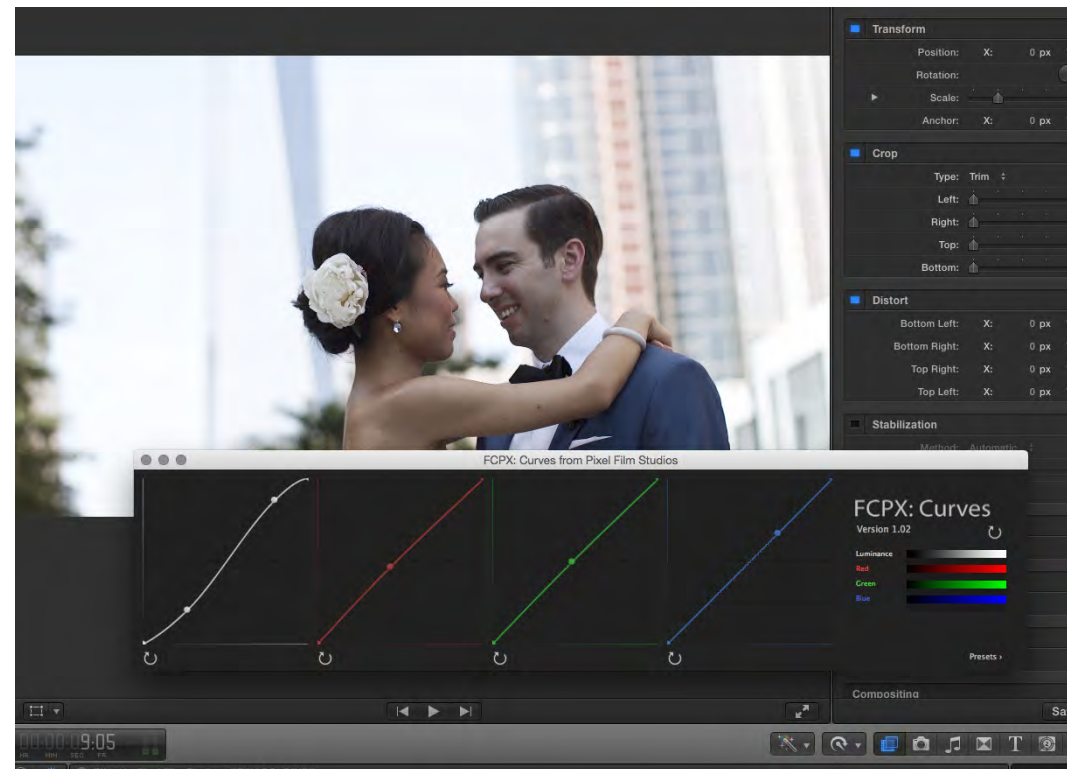


///S-CURVE ///

Once you have a true-to-form color image, you can start applying “looks” or a “grade” to your video. The best way to learn what you like is to grab hold of some presets and then start applying them to see what fits your style, brand or the look you are going for. The top grading applications and plugins out there right now are Red Giant Colorist, Magic Bullet Looks, Color Finale and DaVinci Resolve (a very advanced tool that will have you spending lots of time riding the learning curve). Many have built-in presets, plus give you the ability to build and save your own custom looks and white-balance your shots to match. With simple presets, you will be able to tell right away the amount of contrast, hue adjustment and mood work with your clips.

Be careful not to overeffect your video. There are certain units of measurement you want to keep an eye on to avoid surpassing technical limits. Your NLE or grading application likely has something called a waveform monitor. It is a measurement scale of exposure, color balance and saturation that shows how your video will look on other people’s monitors and TV screens. By not dropping your shadow areas (represented by the bottom part of the content on the scale) below zero, you avoid crushing your blacks or making them “too black” for a desired look on TV screens. Same thing at the top of the scale.

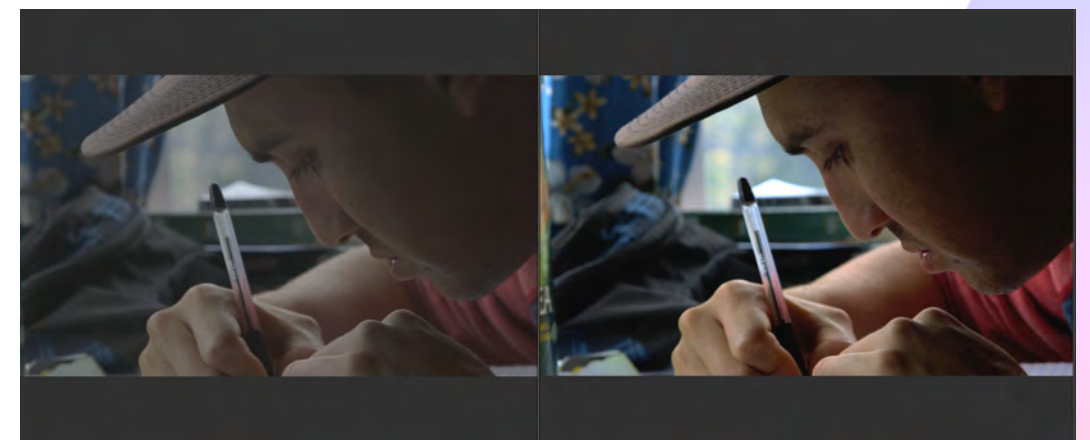
By not allowing the “trace” or the measurement to exceed the 100% line, you avoid overexposing, or blowing out, your highlight areas. Since skin tones and optimal brightness live in the midtones, you will want to keep this region around the 60% to 75% range on the waveform scale. You can always customize your looks using parameter adjustments. By shooting flat, you have given yourself the ability to decide where you want to retain detail and where you want to make colors and contrast more prevalent. The best way to adjust your overall gamma is to apply a “curve” and play with it to get the image how you want it to look. Color grading is a subjective art form. Don’t be afraid to ask your colleagues, friends and ultimately your client if the look is pleasing to the eye.



///LUTS IN ACTION; CANON C-LOG VS. REC709 ///

Another way to apply “looks,” or an instant grade, to your very flat footage is by using lookup tables. A LUT is a predefined set of gamma, lift, gain and color that gives footage a certain feel or mood. Pixel Film Studios (PixelFilmStudios.com) makes several great sets of LUTs that can be applied and then adjusted to suit your taste.

A LUT can also be designed from a preset look that you’ve created in Lightroom if you are more advanced. The original idea behind LUTs was that filmmakers could quickly apply a pleasing S-curve to their dailies (footage that was shot that day) to show their client or team members without having to explain why it looks so terrible coming from the camera. Most in-camera picture profiles are based on REC 709 gamma curves. This is an industry term for a universal S-curve and gamma profile that brings very flat footage from awful to viewable. Flat profiles negate the REC 709 standard. Canon and Sony both have their own ways of doing this with their proprietary C-Log and S-Log LUTs. These custom LUTs make those flat profiles close to an actual grade by reapplying the REC 709 standard. LUTs are easy to use and are usually loaded onto footage from within your video editing application using a third-party plugin.



GRADING IS SUBJECTIVE, SO IT REALLY IS UP TO YOU HOW MUCH WORK YOU WANT TO DO IN POST-PRODUCTION TO ACHIEVE A DESIRED LOOK.

////PERSONAL METHOD //////////////////////////////////////

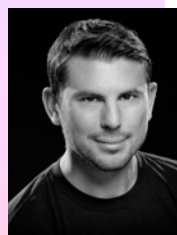
My personal method for grading my wedding films is to shoot in the Canon C100's "Wide DR" picture profile. I get more dynamic range than shooting on picture profiles like Standard or Faithful, but not as flat as CineStyle or C-Log. The result out of the camera is an image that I can grade with a fair degree of control or leave untouched—like when doing a same-day edit—and it still looks great.

My wedding footage doesn't have to be that flat because I want a simple workflow. For corporate, feature or documentary film work, I like to shoot C-Log to give myself maximum control. Again, grading is subjective, so it is up to you how much work you want to do in post-production to achieve a desired look.

Some shoot DSLR Standard profiles, and just tweak them slightly to cut down on contrast and some saturation. The choice is yours. The only mistake you can make is to shoot without any thought as to what you want the final image to look like, and then not correct or grade your footage at all.

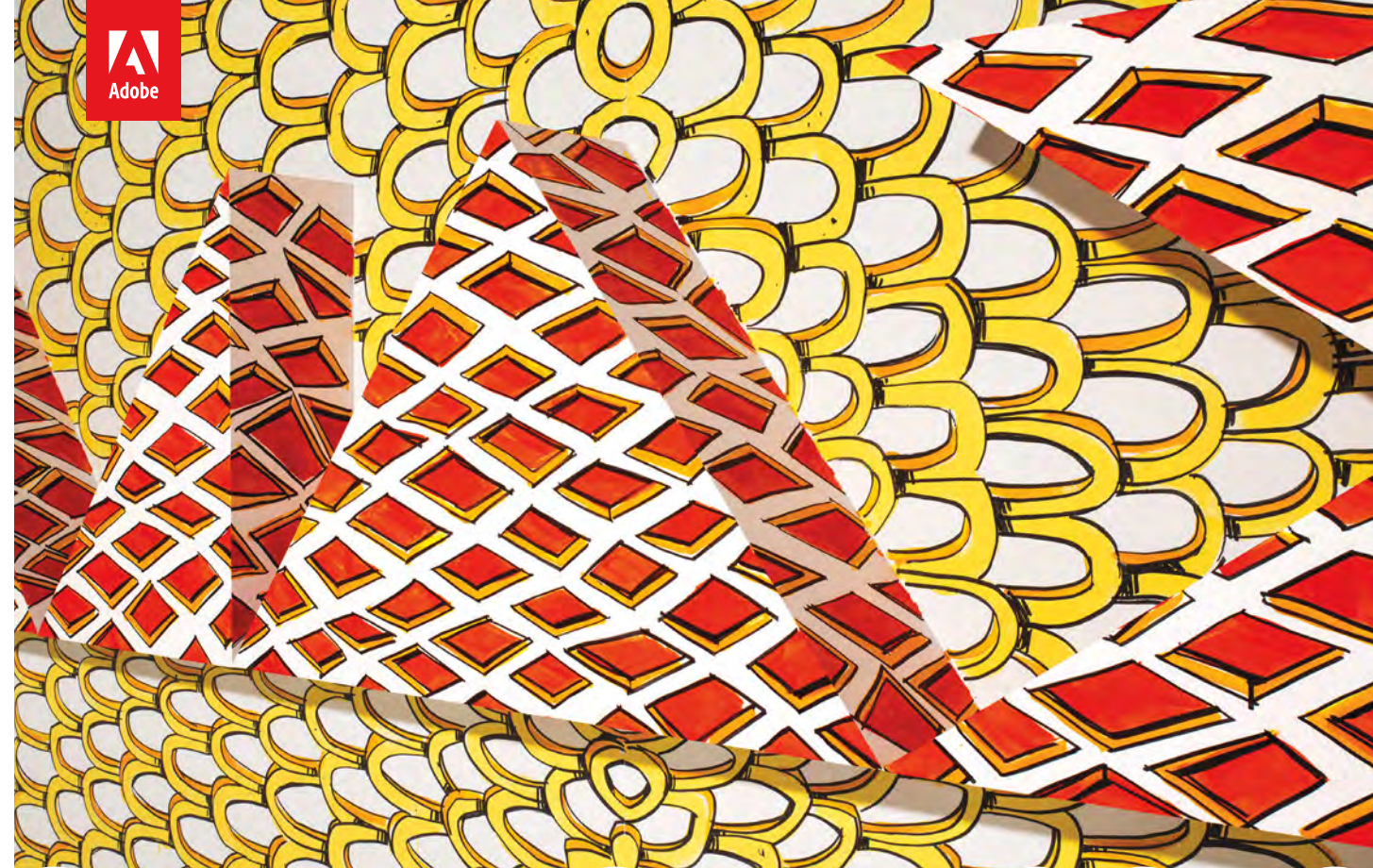
Next time you watch some film, pay attention to the color and how it "feels," or how a scene is contrasted. Ask yourself: Is it flat or punchy? Where are the shadow areas, and are they very black or slightly "lifted"? This will teach you about color grading and how it's used to enhance a story.

Better yet, look at a film and see if you can pick out where shots are mismatched. Seeing two shots whose color is not a spot-on match will help you appreciate the art that much more. ■



Rob Adams is a New York City-based wedding cinematographer, commercial film producer and educator who has been producing wedding and corporate films for high end clients for more than 17 years. Rob's visual storytelling style and knack for creating amazingly high-production value under pressure is industry-leading. He films and speaks around the world.

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Shooting
— for **Black
and White**

with Craig LaMere



Images © Craig LaMere

Dual Mindsets: Color vs. Black and White

About 90 percent of the time I create a black-and-white image, I specifically design it that way. The other 10 percent of the time, I shoot for color and decide later it would be cooler in black and white. Shooting for color and shooting for black and white have some obvious commonalities, as well as very different ideologies and approaches.



Image © Craig LaMere



Basic Approaches

If you have ever looked at my color images, the one thing that I hope stands out is how easy my images are to look at. I don't mean that they are simply good, pretty or creative. I mean there is a cohesion, or theme, in the hues in the entire image.

When I'm shooting for color, one of my goals is to stay in a single color palette. This makes it easy for my viewer to get the point of interest in my images. This is evident in my studio work, as I can totally control the backgrounds, clothes and temperature. It's a little harder to do on location, but I still try to do it as much as I can. I feel if I have colors fighting

for the attention of my viewer, then I'm unnecessarily making work for them and doing a disservice to my subject. So my main goal is to make the image harmonious for the viewer.

When I'm shooting black and white, my head is in a whole different place. In many ways, shooting color is easier because in black and white, you face a lot more choices and factors that go into making an image really rock. When shooting color, I really have only a few creative choices beyond lens, f-stop and modifier. When I'm in my black-and-white mindset, I see the world in terms of light and dark, contrast and fill, and workable hues.

Black-and-White Survival Mode

When I first started shooting, I pretty much pointed the camera at my subject and, as they say, "sprayed and prayed." By the law of averages, I wound up with a few good images. One of the many problems with that method is the waste and the overabundance of crappy images.

Back then, I had a solution for when an image was messed up tonally or the white balance was not good: I would go into black-and-white survival mode. I would grab the not-so-hot images, take all the color out of them by opening saturation in Photoshop, move the slider all the way to the left to desaturate the image and then call it black and white.

Yes, you can technically call an image processed this way a black-and-white because all the color information has been removed, but to me, that's like putting the body of a Ferrari on the chassis of a VW Bug.

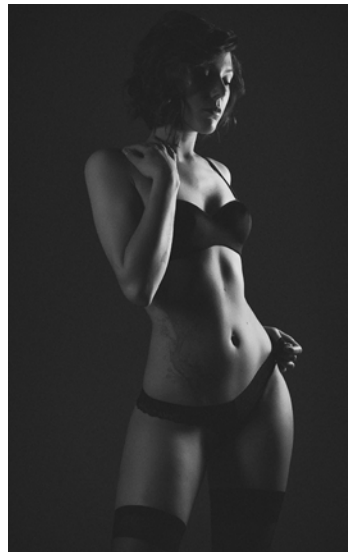
Studio Shooting for Black and White

When I shoot for black and white in my studio, my approach is very minimal. Most of the time, I don't use drops or color backgrounds. I keep it simple. I either shoot on my white walls or a black drop, or I use a textured gray hand-painted muslin. I want high contrast, so I use directional and contained light sources.

I use strip lights for modifiers, beauty dishes and small dish reflectors, and all of them have either grids or egg crates. The only standalone modifiers I use are barn doors. The studio is a controlled environment where I can choose exactly every property of the image. If I want a blown rim highlight, if I want to clip part of the image so it blends into the darkness of the

drop or if I want to shoot against my white wall and create a killer shadow, I can do it all and more.

If you are going to shoot contrasty images indoors, use a light meter. One of the pitfalls of shooting like this is the highlight and shadows are usually on separate ends of the spectrum and your tones are all over the place. It's too much of a pain to keep chimping the histogram, and it is not accurate in the least to just look at the back of your LCD. With a light meter, in two clicks you will know what f-stop your highlight is exposed at and what your f-stop is in the shadows. This is vital in the creative process because you automatically know if you are producing the image you want or if you are off and need to readjust.



Images © Craig LaMere



Location Shooting for Black and White

Control outdoors is minimized. The factors involved are totally different because of the array of hues, textures and type of light you have to account for. You never know for sure what Mother Nature or man will throw at you on location shoots. I'm managing the factors of the shoot rather than dictating them like I do in studio.



Images © Craig LaMere

Colors, Light and Post-Production

A lot of planning goes into black-and-white location shoots. Here are a few of the things I consider.

– Time of day is huge. If you wait till later in the day, you get more diffused light and produce more of a soft, even glamour image. If you shoot in the midafternoon, you get a far more directional, specular, Old Hollywood-style light.

– Time of day also has a huge impact on the type of lighting patterns you will be able to produce if you are using only natural light. Think of the position of the sun in the same way you think of the position of a strobe in studio to help you plan for the right look.

– The seasons impact your images because of their unique colors. When you shoot in the summer, when everything is at its most green, you get a lot of tonal contrast because your subject is in one color range and your environment is in another. Shooting in the fall gives you an entirely different look.

– I always try to dress my subject in the opposite colors of the environment. This comes into play in post. If you are shooting in summer when everything is super green and you put your subject in green or blue or something else that blends in, then you will have a harder time making the subject stand out. But if you dress your subject in reds, you



Image © Craig LaMere

will be able to easily make those colors pop. This is very helpful if your location has a lot of texture.

I hope this helps you look at black-and-white shooting a little differently. Just keep in mind that there's way more to it than just sliding the saturation to the left in Photoshop. ■



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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*My Photography,
My Business
in Black and White*

with Lori Nordstrom

*To photograph is to hold one's breath,
when all faculties converge to capture fleeting reality.
It's at that precise moment
that mastering an image
becomes a great physical and intellectual joy.*

Henri Cartier-Bresson

“Sometimes, the world looks better in black and white. It just does,” the *Huffington Post* wrote in 2013. I agree. Because I photographed in black and white exclusively for so many years, I still see and compose in black and white, and have to really think through my color images. I think the opposite is true for many photographers.

I love black-and-white portraiture, and have been a primarily black-and-white shooter since my film days. I started out in photography by taking my kids out once a month and shooting a roll of black-and-white film. At the time, I was also dabbling in hand-painting those images, and tried about every medium available to me. I tried different papers to print my black-and-white photos on, and painted with oils, charcoals and pencils. I settled on oils and papers with a “tooth.” Watercolor paper was my favorite.

I was obsessed with this technique. There was an artist easel set up in my dining room where I would paint the images of my kids in the evenings, often into the night while they slept. I loved the smell of the oils and the mindless work while I dreamed and planned, and I loved the oils on my fingers. As I experimented, I started displaying those portraits on the walls at my hair salon.

Over time, my hair clients began asking who photographed the portraits. They asked how it was done, and some said they reminded them of photos of their parents or grandparents. Back before color photography, black-and-white images were painted to add color to skin and eyes. I loved the comparison, and was deeply influenced by my own grandmother’s photos. When I visited my grandmother as a child, I explored her attic and was fascinated by the hand-painted portraits I found.



Image © Lori Nordstrom

After I displayed my portraits in the hair salon, my photography business began to grow. As more people became interested in what I was doing with my kids, they started asking me to photograph theirs. When I started out, my niche was very clearly these black-and-white hand-painted portraits of children. That was my specialty and even my tagline, so there was no question why people came to me for their portraits. This was something that I took with me as I became a professional. I knew that if I were narrowly niched, I would attract the people I wanted to photograph and get to do what I loved. This remains true today—almost 20 years later.

We’ve all heard it said that “the smaller the pond, the bigger the splash you will make.” This has definitely been true for my photography business. I’ve also found it to be true for many other photographers I’ve worked with. Over the years, as I started doing weddings, high school seniors and more, my specialty remained black-and-white portraits. In fact, I sold high-end weddings (starting at \$5,500 and with an average of \$8,500) in all black and white for many years. Photographer friends were shocked that I could sell a black-and-white wedding for that amount; it goes to show that the more narrow your focus, the more draw you will have to that person who wants what you’ve got.



Image © Lori Nordstrom



In late 2000, I went completely digital and have never shot another roll of film. When making that change, I knew my product needed to be consistent, and I wanted to continue to create digitally what I had created for my clients with oils on paper. I worked hard to develop my “look,” and, while it seems overly simplified now, at the time I learned it through trial and error. There was no one teaching this at the time. There were certainly no classes being taught online that you

could do a Google search for. (Check out my digital hand-painting process that I still use today, in this month’s video.) Black-and-white portraits are still my first love, even though I now incorporate some color into my sessions. I think the thing I most love about black and white is that it’s timeless. All distractions are removed and you can really fall into the spirit of the image. Personalities and emotions are more real and raw.



Images © Lori Nordstrom



Lessons Learned ● ● ● ● ●

There are some key take-aways that have stuck with me since I began in photography all those years ago. First, do what you love. Photographers are a dime a dozen these days, so photograph what you love and stick to it. Realize that you can't be all things to all people. If you can own a look, style, genre or product line, you will attract those who want what you're doing.

Second, clearly define your niche based on what you love to photograph most.

Third, I learned early on the power of displays of my work. I had a built-in display space at my hair salon, which made me realize how important this was to starting and growing my business. We have a visual product, after all. I knew that if I didn't have a storefront, I needed to display my work in other businesses. I realized the importance of networking and developing relationships with other people who were in front of my target client. I've had a storefront since 2000, but have continued to utilize the power of displays in other businesses. It's said that a potential buyer needs to see three to seven impressions of a business before taking action. Displays are a great way to get in front of a potential client, and if they've already seen something from you or heard about you from a friend, you're well on your way to that client picking up the phone to make an appointment.

Do what you love, love what you do. There may be jobs that you take in order to pay the bills, and that's OK. But stay true to your passion, and always remember why you fell in love with photography in the first place. This is what will keep you moving forward and keep you motivated in the crazy business of photography.





Images © Lori Nordstrom

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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.

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“The Customer ^{Is} Always Right”: Not So Black and White

— with Vanessa Joy —

You’ve heard the cliché before: “The customer is always right.” And you’ve doubtlessly cringed hearing it. As a business owner, you know the customer is *rarely* right. Top that off with the type of customer photographers are used to dealing with (emotional moms, bridezillas, Christmas-crazed families), and you’re looking at quite the headache when you butt heads with a client.

In a recent post on his “Unreasonable” blog, Seth Godin made this conundrum abundantly clear:

“It’s fascinating to note that everyone else is consistently more unreasonable in their demands and their policies and their views than we are.

“I know the math is impossible, but we certainly act as though the other person is the unreasonable one, no matter which side of the table he sits on.”

Ain’t that the truth?

From each seat in a conflict, it seems quite clear that you hold the correct answer. Conflict is very often just a matter of perspective. So how can you see through your client’s eyes and get her to see through yours? Here are some ideas from the classic *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.



Image © Vanessa Joy

Read That Book

If you're a business owner and haven't read Dale Carnegie's famous book, you're seriously missing out. Heck, if you're a human being actively engaging in conversations with other human beings, you're seriously missing out. This book, for me, is a close second to the Bible: You just can't read it enough, and every time you do, you see something new.

In case you don't have the time to ponder a couple hundred pages (although this is a book for which I recommend grabbing the audio version), then let me give you the big picture: Honey attracts more bees than vinegar does, and this book will teach you to stand your ground while keeping your words tasty sweet. So sweet, in fact, that your listener will want to come join your point of view.



Images © Vanessa Joy

Always Answer in the Affirmative

No, you don't get the Raw files. No, I can't work an extra three hours for free. No, I don't give discounts. No. *No. No!*

When a client comes to you with his list of questions he found online that week (half of which he doesn't even understand), he's not looking for you to shoot them down. Well, actually he is looking for you to do that so you'll be easy to cross off the list of potentials. Is the answer "no" to all of the above? Probably. But you don't need to say it that way.

We have connotative feelings. In other words, we associate certain words with certain feelings. If you continually say negative words during a consultation, your prospective client won't leave your studio with a warm and fuzzy feeling. If you continually say positive words, that won't be his last visit through your doors.

To make sure you're being honest, and to correctly set client expectations, you'll want to still give the correct answer. Just word it so it doesn't sound harsh. Like this:

Q: "Will we get the Raw files?"

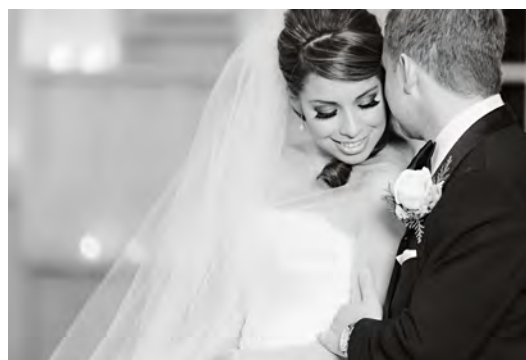
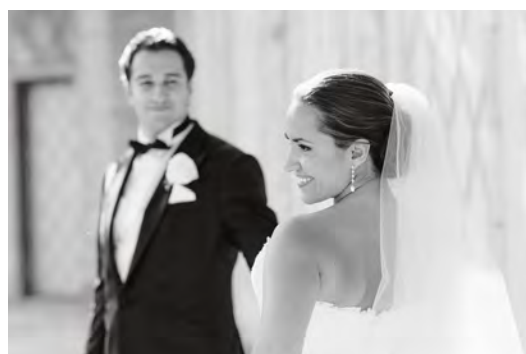
A: "With Collections A, B and C, you'll get all of the proofs in high-resolution JPGs on a USB drive. It's like getting the Raw files but in a format that you can work with more easily."

Q: "Can you stay until cake cutting?"

A: "I'd love to capture that for you! It's \$400 per additional hour, so it'll just be \$800 to make it to cake cutting."

Q: "Can you work with me on the price?"

A: "Sure. We can create something custom for you, or you can remove items you don't need from the package to lessen the cost."





What's It Worth to Ya?

There are around 100 ways to say this, but we'll go with the easy one: Pick your battles. If you're anything like me, you get an upset client and your whole night is ruined. Heck, your whole month is ruined. All you do at night is reread the hate email to yourself wondering if it's professional to send a photo of your pile of crumpled, tear-filled tissues.

The truth is that being in conflict is so stressful that it affects our health, friends, family and job. Obviously, you're going to avoid it at all costs, but when it inevitably comes your way and your client just isn't being swooned by your sweet talk, you have to ask yourself: "Is fighting about this going to get me anything other than an unhappy customer?" If the answer is no, then consider the consequences of an unhappy customer and added, prolonged stress on your life. Sometimes you have to make the decision to just give them what they want; drop the principle of the matter and get on with your life.

A few years ago, I had a bride we'll call Janie. I loved and adored her to pieces. She sent her engaged friend, Cynthia, my way. I photographed Cynthia's wedding, and when she got her wedding album a year or so after Janie had received hers, Janie saw that Cynthia got an album box that she didn't get. Despite the fact that Janie was 100 percent happy with her wedding album—which didn't come with a box at the time—she wanted the box that Cynthia had, and insisted that she should get it. Instead of giving her my wedding album box price, I offered it to her at my cost to be nice.

Apparently, that wasn't nice enough.

She Googled the wedding box and found that she could get it directly from the album company. She wrote me and essentially called me a liar because she could buy the box herself for that price. (I am now not a fan of companies that sell directly to brides.) Back and forth we went, with her demeaning me left and right for days; 38 emails later, I finally just ordered the *stupid freaking box* for her for free, and shipped it to her. I should've just done that to begin with and saved myself hours of reading and writing emails. How does the *GoodFellas* quote go? "He's out of your life for \$20. You got off cheap. Forget it." Amen.

I've been a professional photographer for over 15 years, and I don't think I'll ever reach a point where all of my clients are 100 percent happy all the time. Don't get me wrong, I've kept a much better track record. I've gone from my very first wedding client writing me a bad review on Wedding Wire to being fairly shocked last month when I received an angry email from a groom, because I hadn't had an issue in close to two years.

All of my blunders and blows are worth it, though, because I make it a point to learn from all of them. Learn from your mistakes and their mistakes, and how to both avoid and quickly resolve them in the future. Check out this video to hear another story of a conflict that I ended up having to resolve lying in an ER bed. ■



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

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Using a Light Meter ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ in a Digital Age

Turning the Ordinary Into Extraordinary
with Michael Anthony

Handheld light meters are synonymous with film photography. With the advent of recent technology over the years, photographers have replaced high-quality handheld incident light meters with the built-in meters that come with their cameras. While I agree that technology has gotten a lot better at determining proper exposure, it is still far from perfect. For the foreseeable future, the way to get a quick, perfect exposure from natural or artificial light sources remains the use of a proper handheld light meter.

I have learned after years of using creative lighting that trusting the meter in my camera was a good way to make mistakes in obtaining proper exposures when time is crucial. This is due to the way an in-camera light meter works. When obtaining an exposure, generally your subject should be the brightest part of the image in order to draw the viewer's eye directly to the subject. When shooting in this manner, your subject will often be much brighter than your background. This is the exact situation in which a built-in light meter would have trouble determining the proper exposure of an image.

I know what you are thinking: That is what my camera has an LCD screen for. I will be the first to tell you from experience that the LCD will never give you a consistently accurate result. By using a proper light meter, you are able to get the exact exposure the first time, which saves you time in post-production but, more importantly, allows you to spend more time interacting with your clients rather than fiddling with your lights and camera settings, and judging test shots on your LCD. Once you get used to using one, you will find that using your meter makes you a better, more confident photographer.



To help you get started using a meter, let's look at some basic functions and exactly how to use a meter on an assignment. I asked Sarah, our client coordinator, to model for me. While this is not a stylized bridal session, this is exactly how I use a meter on any paid job. I never leave the studio without it. It is as crucial to producing images to me as my camera itself.

Keep in mind that, to use any of these techniques—especially when metering flash—you should operate your camera in manual mode.

■ Incident vs. Reflective Metering ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

There are two types of light meters, incident and reflective. Your camera's built-in meter is reflective, meaning that it reads light that is reflected off of a light source, and then bounces it through the lens where the internal calculations are made. The problem with a reflective meter is that many other factors—such as backlight, a dark or bright background, or even the attire your subject is wearing—can influence the reading coming off the meter, causing inaccurate readings.

An incident meter, which we will be using today, reads light that falls on the meter itself directly. An incident meter is far more accurate than a reflective meter because of how they work. My meter of choice is the Sekonic L758-DR, which includes many features, some of which we will talk about. An incident meter, when used right, can be trusted to produce a perfectly accurate exposure every single time.



Images © Michael Anthony

A great practice when jumping into using a meter is to tape the back of your LCD with gaffer's tape. We did for this shoot because I want you to see how accurate and quick using a light meter can be to meter both natural and off-camera flash. Resisting the urge to “chimp”—or look at your LCD during a shoot—allows you to learn to trust your meter. When you have done it for a while, you will learn to trust your instincts.

■ How to Meter Ambient Light ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

Light meters have different modes, usually ambient, flash and radio mode. On a Sekonic meter, switch to the ambient light function, which is a sun icon. Dial in your ISO and either your shutter speed or aperture (depending on your priority for your shot). From there, determine the placement of your subject in relation to the light. Place the meter under the chin of your subject, being careful not to block the light falling onto it. Where you turn the dome of the meter gives you a different result, and should be done based upon your intentions. With a strong directional light source, such as flash or the sun, aim the dome of your meter toward the light source. In even lighting, aim the dome toward the camera.

In digital photography, we want to expose for the highlights in an image because it is easier to bring out the shadows in post-production than it is to recover blown highlights. I had Sarah standing directly in the sun for this image, so I pointed the dome of the meter directly at the sun, which was at a 45-degree angle to Sarah, so that it was giving me the reading directly for the highlights. (Side note: When you have a white dress being lit by highlights, it helps to obtain a reading on the brightest part of the dress.) I then placed the meter under her chin and pressed the read button, which gave me an exposure of 1/2000th of a second, f/4.0 and ISO 100. When turning the meter toward the camera, the shutter speed dropped to 1/1600th, so it is important to make sure that you are metering for your highlights when you have a directional light source for accurate results.

Here are the resulting exposures.



Images © Michael Anthony

When metering open shade or even ambient light, place the meter's dome pointing toward the camera. In this set, there was a strong backlight. This is where using a camera's built-in meter gives you an inconsistent result because your subject has less light on her than the overall scene.

I then went back to the bottom of the hill and used the Sekonic's spot meter to give me a reading of the sky close to the horizon line (where it was brightest at that time of the day). I got a reading of ISO 50, 1/250th of a second and f/8. Using the same thought process as before, I underexposed the sky one stop and dialed in the exposure at f/11. Now comes the really cool part. I then used the spot meter to determine exposures for the flashes.

As my assistant changed the position of the lights in order to better serve the composition of the photograph, I got new exposures without having to climb up the mountain again. Using the Profoto Air TTL-C remote, I adjusted flash power. (I make the exposure decisions myself because I want to be in full control of the final outcome of an image.)



Images © Michael Anthony

■ Determing Flash/Ambient ■

Photographers new to flash photography often obliterate the ambient light and overpower it with their flashes. While this look can be great, keeping a balance between flash and ambient lighting is almost always better. In fact, when I purchased my first light meter, it was because I wanted to be able to determine the exact percentage of ambient light to flash light without relying on my camera's LCD.

When you blend flash and ambient perfectly, your flash looks like gorgeous natural light, and not at all like flash. For this image of Sarah, I metered the ambient light at 1/250th of a second, f/4.0 and ISO 160. I then matched the ambient light and metered my flash at the same settings. The meter gave me a 50% flash-to-ambient ratio. I matched the flash exposure to the ambient exposure, with the intent of adding a direction to the flat light source.

Take a look at the difference in the light of the images below: While one is flat and even, the other has a direction to it, giving it a unique look. This image was photographed with a Profoto B1 and a 22-inch soft light reflector.



Images © Michael Anthony



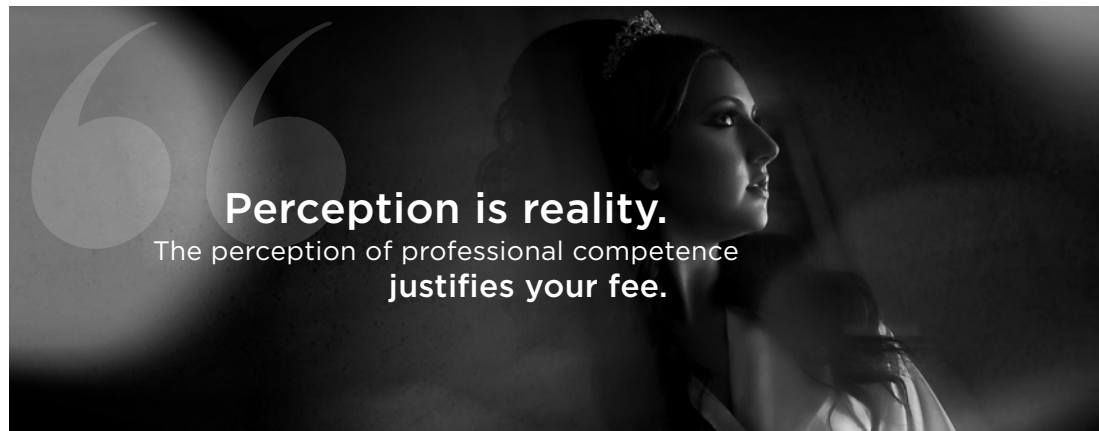


Image © Michael Anthony

Perception is reality.
The perception of professional competence
justifies your fee.

■ Effective Metering on a Shoot ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■

So how do you use these techniques on a shoot without slowing down the pace? Isn't it easier to take test shots and adjust?

Let's look at this from a time and workflow perspective. In the beginning, you will work at a slower pace because you are learning. Over time, you will be just as confident with it as you are adjusting your camera settings. By obtaining readings over and over again, you will already know what exposures look good in different situations. By using solid information to determine your exposures, you will eventually become a master of lighting. You will understand how to create images that look amazing every time you push the shutter button. And you will be able to do it in a matter of seconds.

In the beginning, though, you will still save time because you will be taking fewer test shots and doing less correction to your exposures in post-production. Your clients will also appreciate the work that goes into creating these images. If you were the client and your photographer was creating your image based either on trial and error or by competent use of a tool, which method would you perceive as more professional?

Perception is reality. The perception of professional competence justifies your fee.

Be sure to watch the video attached to this article to see more about how to practice without an LCD. ■



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

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Everyone talks about what to do as an assistant on photo shoots or weddings, but no one ever really talks about the day-to-day. This month, I dig into a few more behind-the-scenes tips for those of you who are full-time salaried assistants, and give photographers tips on what to look for in an assistant.

Attitude

Something I've learned over the past four years working under Sal Cincotta is that your attitude is everything, especially when you're working with one person for 10 or more hours a day, seven days a week. The male/female team is something we implemented for weddings (it creates a nice balance for the wedding day to be able to work with the bride, groom and the whole bridal party). However, with that guy/girl combination comes a very drastic difference in attitudes—typically, females are emotionally driven and males are logic-driven. As I have said in previous articles, being 100 percent in sync with your assistant is crucial to your success. If your attitude isn't right, getting in sync with your boss or assistant is going to be near impossible.

There is a time and place for everything—a time to speak your mind and a time to bite your tongue. The best skill you can master as an assistant is the art of knowing when to stay mum. Being right should never be your mission, and you should *never* undermine your boss in front of clients. Sal and I spend at least 12 hours every day together. He's just as much my family as my own blood. Of course we are going to fight and bicker and get on each other's nerves. But when it comes time for shoots or any kind of client interaction, we put all of that to the side and focus on the task at hand.

General rule of thumb for you and your business: Check your attitude at the door.

Perspective

There comes a point in every twentysomething professional's life when she stops seeing her work not as a job but as a career. This is all about perspective—something that takes time and effort, but something that, when that switch in your brain flips, makes the whole world seem to fall into place.

It was about a year and a half into my job that I started to realize I was, in fact, that whining, complaining, entitled millennial I always claimed to despise so much. I would go home after work and complain to my family about how unfairly I was being treated—you know, the typical overworked-and-underpaid, woe-is-me, closed-minded type of complaint where you don't really tell both sides of the story. This mindset is cancer—eating away at you internally and turning you into an entitled, self-righteous person no one wants to be around. I let myself spiral into such a dark place that I had a letter of resignation written and ready to hand to Sal, coincidentally the same day he was planning on firing me.

However, I went away that weekend for a solo trip to clear my head (and also to visit a company where I was planning to apply for a job). Something clicked while I was away: I'm still not 100 percent sure what it was or how it happened, but it was then that I realized how fortunate I was in my current role. I realized that bitching and complaining won't get me a raise—hard work and initiative will. In that moment, I was able to see myself as the annoying, self-righteous stereotype of my generation, and something needed to change.

It wasn't the job that needed the change, though. It was my perspective. Three key things shifted in my head; three strategies I learned that helped me see that my mere job was now my career:

- Treat everything as if it were your own business. Start working like you're risking everything.
- Take pride in everything you do. Do this, and you'll see the results of doing your job with excellence.
- Own your mistakes. They're going to happen, it's inevitable. But if you don't hold yourself accountable, you'll never learn, and you'll continue running into the same wall over and over again.

Never Stop Learning

If you want to become irreplaceable to your boss, the best thing you can do is become an expert at your craft. And I'm not talking about being the best reflector holder on the planet; I'm talking about taking your spare time to learn the things your boss would normally have to take the time to train you in. Take the initiative to read about things going on in the industry, to really understand lighting and posing techniques, to practice using the gear your boss uses—so that when it comes time for real-life shoots, your boss can be confident in your abilities as an assistant and not have to worry about doing everything for you. You want to become your boss's trusted person, his or her right hand.

As a boss, it's important to be open-minded and patient when teaching your assistant. Training someone to be the person you need takes time; usually when you decide to hire someone, you're at a point in your business where you don't really have that time. Make it. Know what areas you're weak in, and learn *alongside* your assistant. That is one of my favorite things about working with Sal: We constantly push each other to learn new techniques and try new ideas. This builds the relationship and makes working together that much more enjoyable.

Because at the end of the day, you will be able to look at your results and see where you've come together as a team. And that success is what makes it all worthwhile.

Work Hard, Play Harder

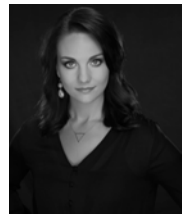
If you want to be truly successful in this industry, you have to challenge yourself to never give up and never settle for mediocrity. Set goals together as a team, exceed those goals and keep going with that hunger to never be less than the best. That hunger is what will keep you at the top. But don't forget to take the time to celebrate your victories together. Sal is big on giving gifts as a way of thanking his team for their hard work and dedication. After being on tour together for three months straight a few years ago, he walked me into Louis Vuitton in San Francisco and said to me, "Take your pick, whatever you want. Thanks for all of your hard work."

Before I had the right perspective, I never understood why he wouldn't just give me money. Until one day I finally just asked him.

"You have bills you have to pay," he said, "but if I gave you cash, it would go straight to your bills, and 10 years from now, you would forget it ever happened. Whereas when I take you to a nice dinner or into Louis Vuitton, those are experiences you'll never forget."

We really do have the best jobs in the world, creating amazing art and memories for our clients and building lifelong relationships with them. Not to mention, we get to work side by side with our family every day, pushing each other to be the best versions of ourselves, both professionally and personally. Sal has pushed me to be a person I never thought possible. When I wanted to give up, he knew I had more left in me, and he forced me to the edge of the cliff because he knew I would fight to come back, stronger and wiser than before.

The gray areas of being an assistant are the best part of the job for me. They are the unspoken parts of the job that keep me motivated and constantly striving to be better. ■



Alissa 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, Shutter Network, and School of Photography. Alissa is also the Creative Director for Shutter Magazine. In addition, Alissa serves as Sal's right hand, managing daily operations within the family of Salvatore Cincotta brands.

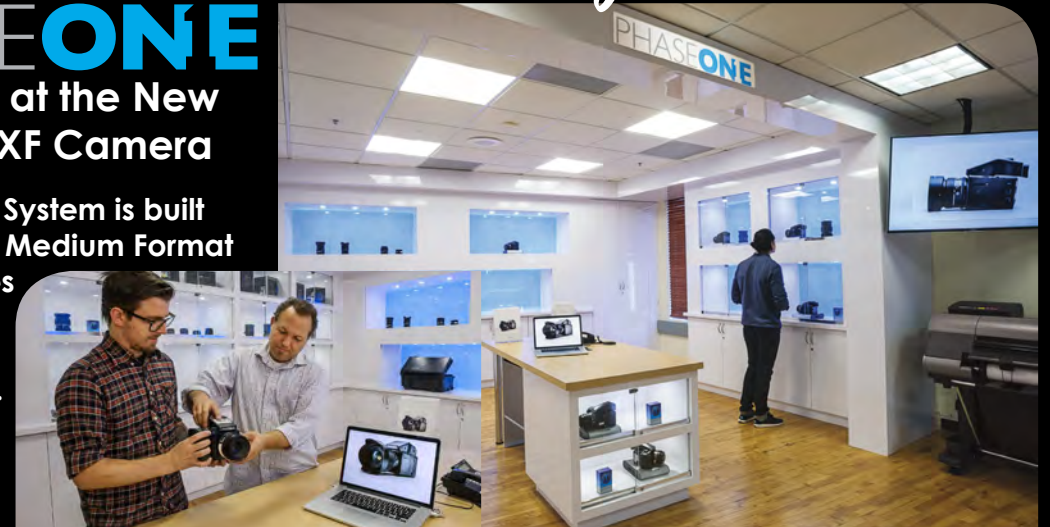
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Black & White
and Why?

with Melanie Anderson



ANDERSON PURPOSE STATEMENT

"WE BELIEVE IN CREATING VISIONARY WORKS
WITH A PASSION FOR THE COMMUNITY
WHILE PLACING FAMILY FIRST,
DEVELOPING OUR CRAFT
AND EDUCATING OTHERS"

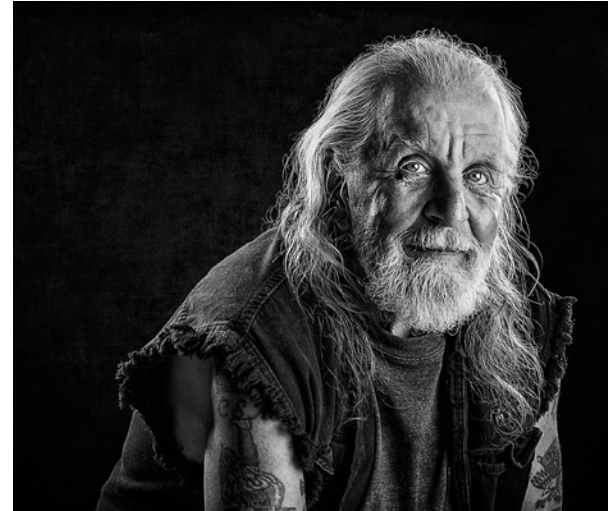
As I filmed the video for this month's segment, I asked myself: Why am I photographing these people? Why am I drawn to these subjects? What is the significance of what I am shooting?

And then I was reminded of my purpose statement: "We believe in creating visionary works with a passion for the community while placing family first, developing our craft and educating others."

I want to take a moment to dissect the difference between a mission statement and a purpose statement. I learned the following secondhand from my daughter Sarah, who learned it from a TED Talk (see Action Plans at the end for the link). A mission statement is "what" you do. A purpose statement is "why" you do what you do. The "why" is crucial to me. On the days I am tired, frustrated, feeling like I can do no more, I am reminded of my purpose statement. The "why" in my purpose statement truly gets me through some rough days, days when I want to give up, days when I don't want to get out of bed, days when I'm worried I can't pay the bills. Thankfully, those days are few and far between. But we do work in a feast-or-famine industry, and if we aren't prepared for the famine season, we can get really discouraged.

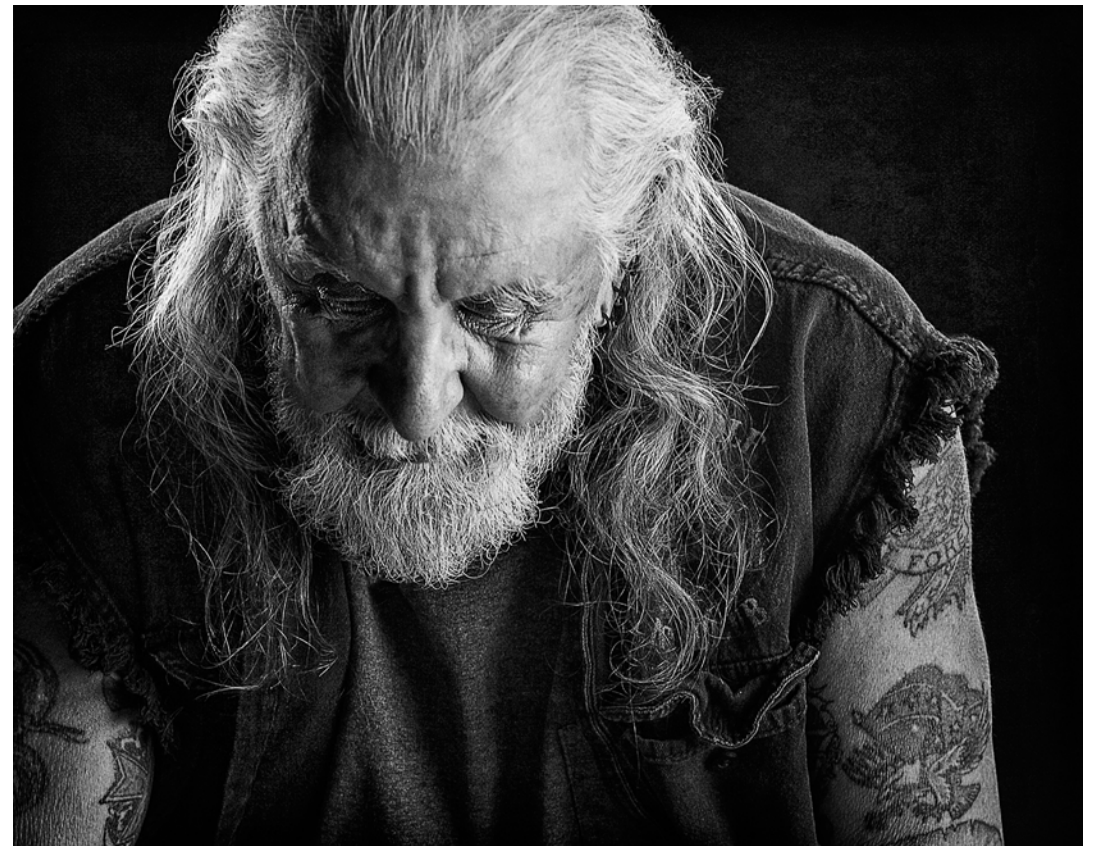
Let me break down my studio's purpose statement for you.

Images © Melanie Anderson



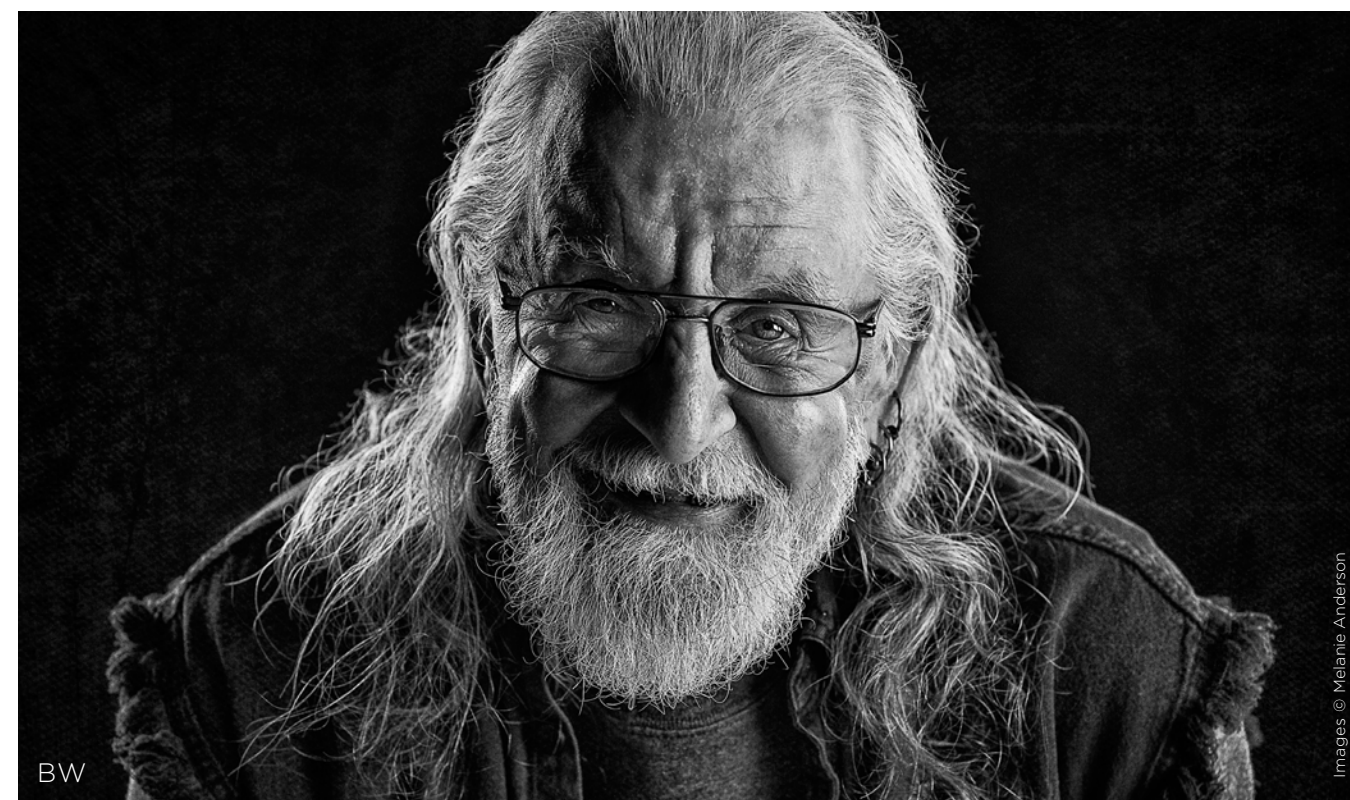
"We believe in creating visionary works": True, I own and operate a very busy and successful photography studio. We specialize in all photography genres, and video too. So, on a daily basis, we are creating visionary works.

"...with a passion for the community...": We believe wholeheartedly in giving back. I can't even tell you how many times our generosity has come back tenfold. We donate tens of thousands of gift certificates yearly for fundraisers to be auctioned off for those in need. We strive to be active in our community by donating our time and talents wherever needed.



*“We believe
in creating visionary works
with a passion for the community...”*





“...while placing family first...”: OK, sort of a no-brainer for my studio, but not always easy. My studio is a blessing, not a burden, though running the business can be a challenge not only as the owner, but boss too. When my staff needs time off due to family situations, it can cause a strain on the business, but allowing my employees this benefit provides a loyalty from them that I cannot buy. Making time for my family is of utmost importance. Ensuring I have quality time with each of them becomes an “intentional” part of my life. I work hard to show them that they are a priority. They do understand there are times when I need to put the studio first, as that is what pays the bills. By being vocal about upcoming obligations and enlisting their help, they get it, and allow me the time I need to complete tasks.

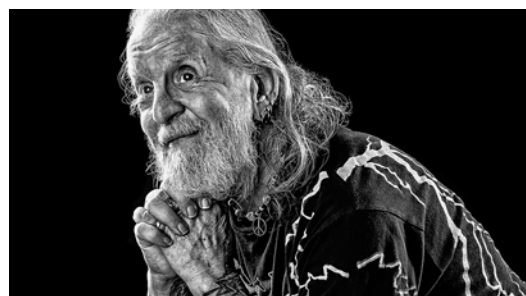
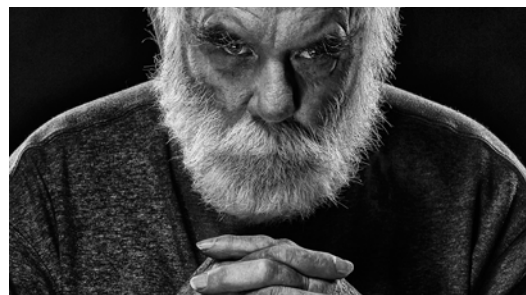
“...developing our craft...”: This is part of my “why” for this article. I pushed my lighting, composition and post-production in a way that I wouldn’t have normally done for a “paying” client. Sometimes we just need to create. We need to put ourselves out there to try new things, to push the boundaries and to #buildyourdamnportfolio, as Sal would say. I truly believe these are the perfect times to experiment. You may be surprised by what you can create when you are creating for you.

“...and educating others.”: This is another reason for my articles, seminars, all my workshops, etc. To open up and share all that I know about photography and business. I make mistakes all the time. If I can open up and be honest about my journey, maybe that will allow you to excel even faster. I want to showcase the value in why we do what we do. By creating a purpose statement that is displayed on my website and in my studio, I am reminded daily of the “why” I do what I do. I encourage you to create your own purpose statement today.

For this article, I chose to photograph people I see often. These are people who frequent the downtown area. They’re not the typical kinds of people who hire me; I truly wanted to capture them, capture their features, capture their personalities and share them with you. I have demonstrated images straight out of camera, in both color and black and white. As you can see, the black-and-white versions truly showcase their character and emotional depth.

Take time to see people around you. Don't be afraid to ask if you can photograph them. Explain why you're interested. Maybe it's to build your portfolio. Maybe it's for a print competition. Maybe it's to learn a new technique. Put yourself out there.

If you have been following me and reading my recent *Shutter Magazine* articles, you know that I am not afraid of failure, not afraid of the word *no*. If you get a no, ask someone else. I'm putting this in your Action Plans for the month, and I want you to share your creations with me. I am inspired all the time by your work. And what a great way for us to inspire each other.



Images © Melanie Anderson

Equipment for BW Pics Shown

- Nikon D4
- 85 1.4
- Sweetlights
- Ringlights
- Strobes

Post-Production

- Adobe CS6
- Anderson Eye Enhance
- Nik Filters
- Various Textures

Action Plans

1. Watch the TED Talk "How Great Leaders Inspire Action," by Simon Sinek
2. Create a purpose statement.
3. Photograph five people with distinct character and convert the images to black and white. ■

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SEE PAGE 8 FOR MORE INFO ON OCUTAG SNAP



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.

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One Light

Most of us start out working with one light. For many, this is due to the intimidation factor, while for others, it's simply a matter of budget. I'm betting the deeper you delve into OCF, the faster you'll discover more lights equals more flexibility and creative options. That said, working with one light is not only very flexible, but also portable, allowing you to create tons of great images as you learn the ropes of off-camera lighting. Because it's the most accessible for those starting out with OFC, I've kept the focus on one-light examples.

Images 1-3 demonstrate a simple one-light portrait look. I shot these using the white cyclorama wall at our studio as a backdrop. For the keylight, I placed a Profoto B1 with a 3-foot octa directly above the subject and angled down 45 degrees. In each of these images, you can see the even lighting created on the model's face and how the area under her chin falls into shadow. Also take note of the catchlight's position and the shape it creates in her eyes.

The term *catchlight* describes the reflection created in the subject's eyes by the keylight. The sparkle it creates in your subject's eyes helps bring them to life. Without catchlights, your subject's eyes can look a little lifeless. So in most situations, you'll want to make sure you've got a solid catchlight around the tops of the eyes. If your light has a modeling lamp or if you're using a constant light source, it's easy to see the positioning of your catchlights before you start shooting. A modeling light is also very useful for showing you where the light from your flash will fall when it's triggered.

There are potential downsides to working with one light, depending on the look you're trying to create. In the first example images, those drawbacks are deep shadows and the darker background, with only one light illuminating the subject and no light providing separation. A separate light on the background helps add depth and dimension.





Let's look at a full-length image lit with one light (Image 4). Note the fairly evenly lit face, the shadow under the chin and the gray background. The other issue you should be aware of is light fall-off. While our model's face is well illuminated, her clothing and the rest of her body are dark. This is the result of the light from our one source falling off, its power dissipating as it radiates out from the center.

Now for this shoot, it wasn't about the garments. If it were a fashion shoot, if the clothing were more important or if we wanted more open shadows, we could lessen the fall-off by using a much larger light source/modifier, backing up our light, adding a second light from below or using a reflector to add fill light in the lower part of the image. We left it as is in order to illustrate the fall-off that can happen when you're using one light source.

The easiest, most cost-effective way to open up the dark shadows under the model's chin is to use a reflector to add fill light. By simply placing a reflector close to our subject's midsection, we were able to fill in the dark shadows and create a more evenly lit look (Image 5). Our model now has double catchlights in her eyes. The top two are coming from

our keylight, and the bottom two are coming in from the reflector.

For another option, see Image 6. For this shot, we placed our subject against a side wall in our studio. We positioned the main light camera right, and our model's head was angled in a way that allowed us to cleanly light the left side of her face and minimize the contrast below her chin. Additionally, because she was placed against a white wall, the light reflected off it provided additional fill.

To tackle the issue of the darker background, you have two options. One is to move your subject close to the background, as shown in Image 7. Doing this could add an unwanted shadow, or not allow for the depth of field you're looking for by being so close to your background. In this image, you can see how, by bringing the subject and light source closer to the background, we've whitened it up a bit. Additionally, we've moved our light over to camera right to give a more contrasty look to our subject's face, another great option for portraits.

Your second option allows you to pull your subject off of the background because you're going to bring in a second light.

Two Lights

In Image 8, you see the previously mentioned main light with our second light used on the background. Here, because of the second light, we are able to pull our subject off of the background, which eliminates any shadow being cast on our background. If you were using a backdrop or were on location, you would be able to leverage your depth of field and blur or compress your background because your subject is pulled off.

Beyond simply lighting your background, using two lights is where you'll really start to get creative. Bringing in a second light allows you to add dimension to your images, to shape and sculpt your subject, and to create fill light.

In the next example, we set up a cross-light pattern using an octa as our keylight and a 1 x 3 strip box as an accent light.





Images © Leonardo Volturo

We placed this camera left and behind the subject (Image 9). The keylight helped create the contrast we wanted on our model's face, while the strip box added dimension and shaping around the edge of her hair, side of the face and along her neck and shoulder. Notice how the accent light on the right arm creates separation from the background. These are the kinds of exciting effects possible with this lighting pattern. You can also "feather," or aim your lights slightly past the subject, for a subtler look, or adjust power on the accent as desired. See Image 10 for a closer look at



the strip light and its effect on our model's hair and shoulder. Remember, if you need some fill light under the chin, just pop in a reflector and you'll be in business.

Additional two-light setups include clamshell lighting. In this arrangement, the second light replaces the reflector previously used for fill light, allowing more flexibility and control over the results. You can also keep using the reflector for fill light and use the second light for the background. Working with two lights really made me want three.

Three Lights

Next up is classic three-point lighting, a method that provides considerable flexibility. This popular style is used in film, video and still photography. It comprises a keylight, a fill or accent light, and a background light.

In Image 11, we fitted our keylight with a 2 x 3 softbox and placed it above the model. A 1 x 3 strip box is providing fill light from below in a classic clamshell arrangement. We fitted our backlight with a 10-degree grid spot. This setup lets you dial in the exact look you want. You can see how the backlight not only creates separation but also adds shape to the model's right arm and a highlight on her hair.



Image © Leonardo Volturo

For Image 12, we did something a little different. Instead of using the backlight in a traditional way to create a highlight on the side of the subject, we used it as more of a kicker light for the hair. This achieved two things: It provided light but also added definition. Alternatively, we could have used a strip box or wider-degree grid spot to create more of an edge light and add dimension.

Moving around to the front of the image, we again used the 3-foot octa as our keylight, and in this case we wanted only a hint of fill light on the right side of our model's face. For that, we used a 1.3 x 1.3 softbox. If you wanted something more evenly lit on the front/right side for the clothes and/or couch, you could use a strip box there.

All of this is "season to taste." Once you have the basics and the rules down, you can get out there and break them. Just don't forget about reflectors. They offer an inexpensive way to add light to any setup. If you have three lights, you'll be able to use a reflector as a fill for your main light, your second light as your backlight or your third light on the background.

The main thing is to get out there, experiment, have fun and make great images. ■



Image © Leonardo Volturo



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 South Florida studio. Together they cater to discerning brides around the world with their signature blend of modern, stylistic and dramatic imagery.

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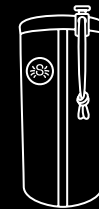
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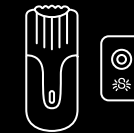
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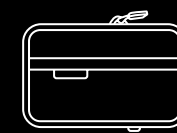
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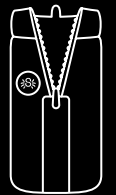
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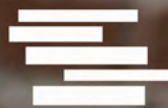
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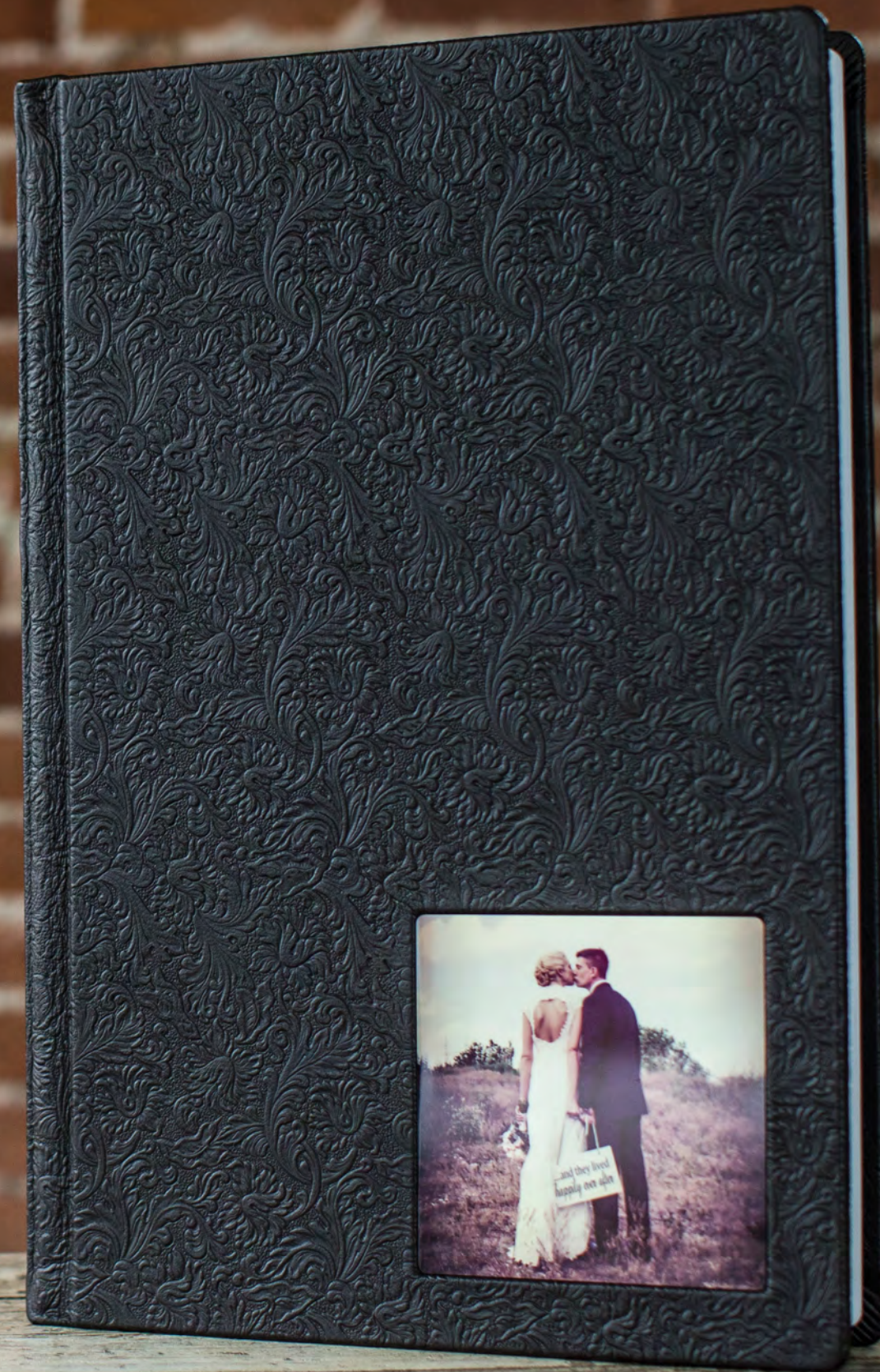
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INSPIRATIONS

— best black & white image —

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

— **SAL CINCOTTA**
Editor-In-Chief







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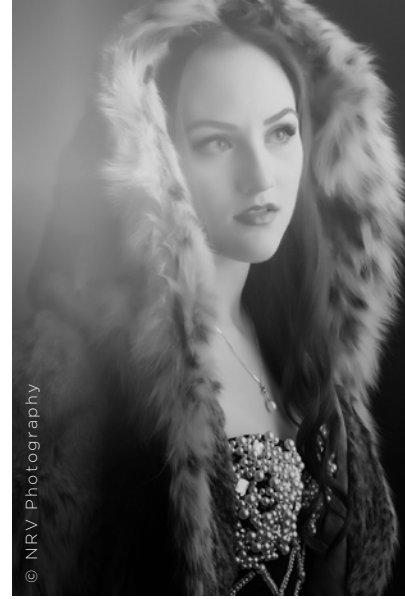
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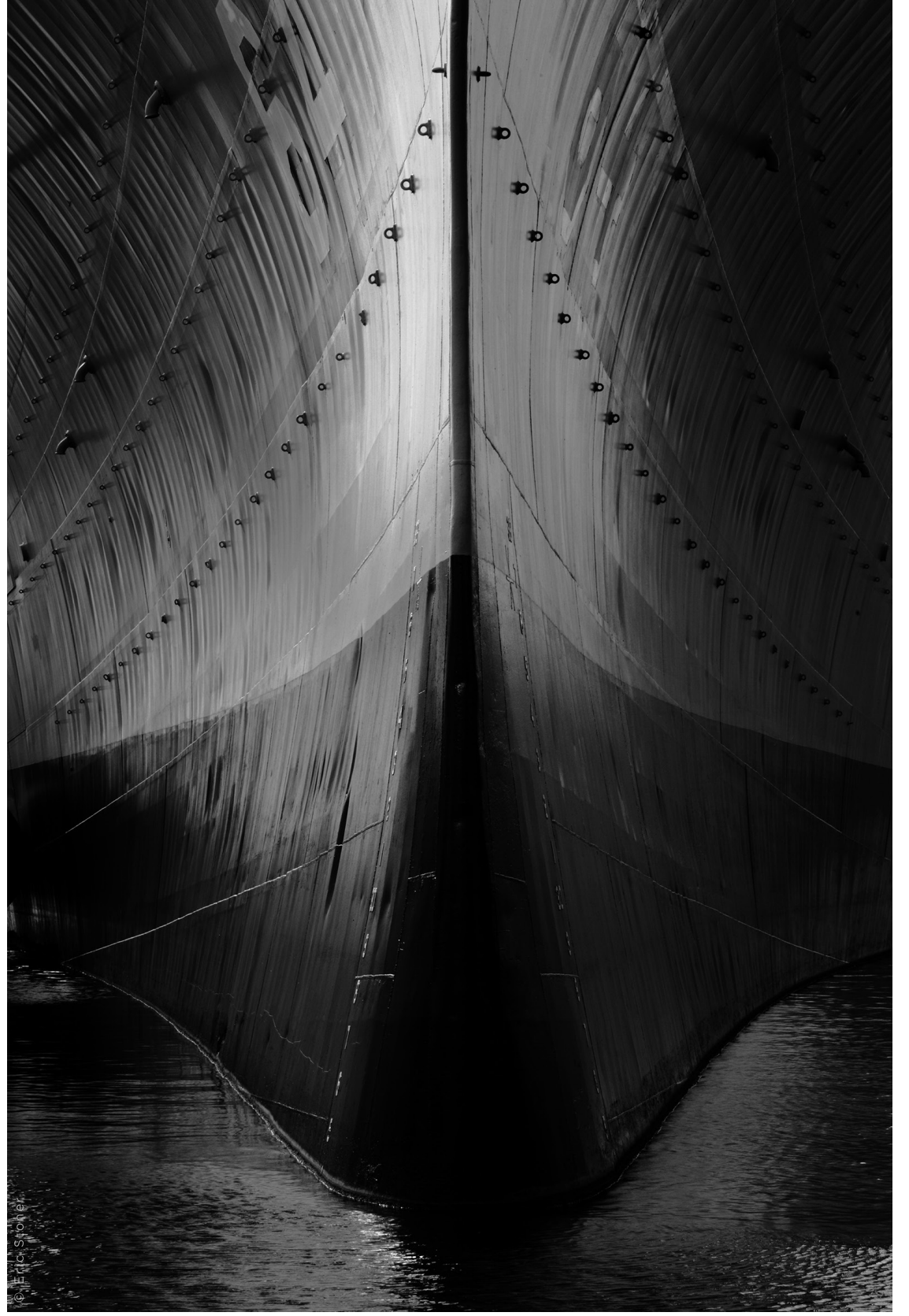
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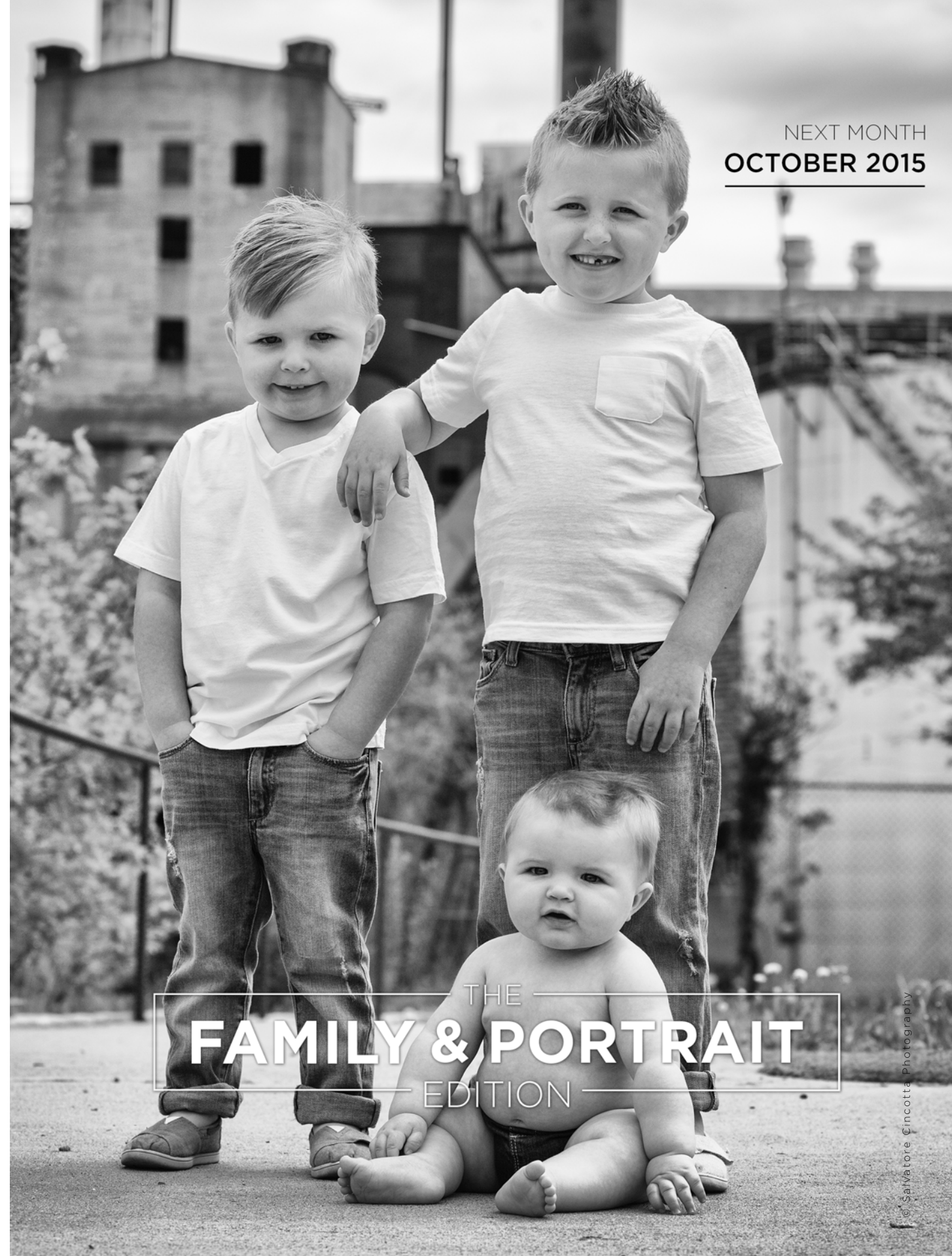


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NEXT MONTH
OCTOBER 2015



THE
FAMILY & PORTRAIT
EDITION



product
review

simply  color lab with *Salvatore Cincotta*

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Why Simply Color Lab?

It's the same conversation over and over again: "My clients just want the digital files." Of course they do—because you refuse to offer them quality products that they can't get anywhere else. Who can blame them? Why should they pay 10 times the price for the exact same product they can get at Walmart? Perception is reality. We have to give clients something unique, something they want, something cool.

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PUBLICITY



PUBLICITY

With each Building Block over the past few months, I've introduced another ingredient to building a stronger business. This month, we're going to talk about publicity. Building a strong business isn't as much about *who* you know, but *who knows you*.

While there are dozens of ways to get your name out there, from networking to community involvement to your blog, this month we're just going to talk about press releases and publicity.

WHAT AM I GOING TO WRITE ABOUT?

The first thing I always hear is, "But Skip, there's nothing going on here to write about!"

First, it doesn't have to be a jaw-dropping event to be newsworthy and interesting to people. Plus, we're not writing a novel, typically just 200 to 400 words with a photograph or two, so it can't hurt to try.

Here are some examples of things you can promote:

- You just added large-format printing to the services you offer.
- You've diversified your skill set or partnered with another photographer, and are expanding into another specialty. Say you're a wedding photographer, but now offer family portraits.
- You're launching a seasonal promotion for a limited time.
- You've hired another photographer or formed an existing partnership with another artist.
- Your new website is ready to launch.

Too often, you see a picture in the local paper or read about one of your competitors online and think the exposure is random. Well, it's not. The days of news photographers wandering around looking for stories is long gone. You have to be the one to get the word out, not only to the various publications but the various relevant businesses and, essentially, the majority of your address book.

-You just came back from a great workshop or convention, and want to share things you're doing that make you one of the best photographers in the area.

-You're working with a new lab or frame company. Or, your current vendors are offering some exciting new products.

-Your business is growing, and a family member is about to join you in the business.

-You just participated in a nonprofit event in your community with a leading charity.

The list goes on. Don't think of the topics of your press releases as being worthy of a Pulitzer Prize. Odds are they're not, but they are of interest to the audience you're trying to reach.

WHO SHOULD RECEIVE MY PRESS RELEASES?

People never think about whom they want to share the news with. All they think about is whether or not the local press will run it.

Develop a press list with the actual names of the people you want to contact. People tend to think that just sending things addressed to the editor is enough, but you need a real name on the front of the envelope.

Your press releases should also go to local newspapers and entertainment magazines, but also organizations like the Chamber of

Commerce. Organizations like Kiwanis, Rotary and Exchange Club all have newsletters—and lots of members. Churches and temples often have newsletters as well. Then there are countless blogs—often good local ones—and industry-specific publications such as bridal magazines. And don't forget your hometown paper if you've moved away but still have roots in the community.

And of course there's social media. Share the release far and wide on forums and platforms like Facebook.

HOW DO I WRITE A PRESS RELEASE?

Writing a press release is only as tough as you make it. You need to be able to express yourself with the written word. If writing is a challenge, look around your community for a passionate high school or college kid who's an A student in English. You might also consider talking with the head of the English department at a high school. Teachers often moonlight on projects like this.

If you have the resources, I'm a big fan of "right-sourcing," an expression I picked up years ago from Jeff Jochum. Hire a publicist with writing skills and an understanding of the various reach engines like PR Newswire and PRWeb.

In terms of the release itself, it's going to have a headline and a summary paragraph to start. Then you should have a paragraph or two that make up the main body of the release. It's good to have at least one quote here, and then close with an "about" paragraph letting people know where to find you.

The headline and the summary paragraph are the most important because many publications, especially online PR services, will publish only your summary. PRWeb prefers just three sentences.

2. Press Release: New Equipment

(Sometimes the simplest of ideas can make a good press release.)

For Immediate Release: New Equipment

Your City, Today's Date

Area Photographer Stays Cutting-Edge

In (his/her) nonstop efforts to consistently provide cutting-edge photographic services to his clients, (your name) recently added a new (type of product) to (his/her) tools of the trade that make (him/her) one of the leading professional photographers in the area.

“Technology doesn’t stand still, and we want to make sure we offer only the very best to our clients. With the new (product), we now have the ability to provide our clients with instant fulfillment on all of their photographic needs,” commented (your name).

(Your name) is the founder of (your studio), located at (address). The studio offers a full range of (portrait, wedding, children's, etc.) services.

For more information, contact: Your name, phone and email address.

Include a photograph of you and a client or staff member looking at the new printer, camera, etc.

3. Video Holiday Cards and Announcements

For Immediate Release

Your City, Today's Date

Area Photographer Adds Video Holiday Cards to Services

Technology is constantly changing, and _____ is taking full advantage of everything photography today has to offer.

“There’s so much that’s changed in technology over the last few years, especially in photography. We now have the ability to offer our clients so much more than just photographs. Putting together still images with short video clips gives our clients the ability to customize their message to family and friends in a way that’s so much more fun than just sending out a holiday card. We want to make sure our clients get only the best in service and products,” commented _____ of _____.

_____ is the founder of _____ (your studio name), located here in _____. The studio offers a full range of (commercial portrait, wedding, children’s, etc.) services.

[Or use: _____ plans on continuing as a freelance photographer...etc. You don’t have to have an address for people—you just want to let them know you’re in the community.]

For more information, contact: Your name, phone and email address.

HOW DO I SEND OUT A RELEASE? --- HOW DO I GET MY MESSAGE OUT THERE?

You've got four basic choices, and I suggest you use them all.

-When you use any of the online resources, like PR Newswire, you'll load in your copy and images, specify the publications you want it sent to and schedule the release date.

-With local publications like a daily newspaper, I like to send a hard copy of the written release and images, along with digital copies on a disc.

-I'm a huge fan of emails to your database.

-Last on the list, use your social media reach and put the link to the release in a post on all your active social media sites, especially Facebook and Twitter.

FINAL WORDS ---

I hope I've gotten you thinking about the importance of publicity. I don't want to turn you into publicity machines and take time away from building your skill set and marketing. But I do want you to understand the potential it can bring to building brand awareness. What's most important is that you become proactive, whether it's DIY or through a staff member or a publicist.

Most important of all, stop thinking there's nothing of interest going on in your business. Every day there's something you can write about. Use your network to build relationships with the movers and shakers in your community. ■



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*.

skipcohenuniversity.com

Panasonic



"As a wedding photographer, combining Lumix GH4 4K video with my photography expanded my portfolio options to meet and exceed the changing demands of my clients."

— William Innes, Hybrid Photographer and LUMIX Luminary

William Innes. Changing Photography with 4K Video.

With the new Lumix GH4, William Innes is discovering how easily 4K cinematic in-camera memory video recording with Fast Tracking Full Area AF, plus simultaneous 8.8-megapixel HD photo frame capture adds value to his portfolio. You can too. At under \$1700* it's the ideal solution for quickly integrating hybrid photography into any photographer's sales kit. The LUMIX GH4 delivers in-camera creativity across video and stills through an innovative touch-LCD. And with 22 lens options and growing, your creative possibilities are endless. See William Innes's GH4 wedding stills and 4K video at www.LumixLounge.com. *Body only

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Get Into the Zone!

Gain Your

Independence

With

Zones of Light

with Michael Corsentino

Great black-and-white and color portraits both start with great lighting. In the studio or on location, it's the same thing: The better your lighting, the better your result will be, and the less work you'll need to do in post. What exactly is great lighting? It's illumination that describes volume and shape, that contours, that layers and sculpts surfaces and planes, that heightens or reduces texture, and that helps create mood and drama—anywhere from soft and open to hard and edgy.



Images © Michael Corsentino

This article is all about helping you gain your independence by working with and thinking about lighting in terms of zones, which I also refer to as groups. This is theatrical as well as practical. A zone can be any source of light: the sun, one or more strobes or speedlights, or all of the above. The basic concept here is independent control of each light source, group or zone—the terms are interchangeable. It's this independent control and separation that gives you the ability to craft the sophisticated, dimensional, finessed lighting I know you all want.

Why am I calling them zones rather than lights? Because a zone can comprise anywhere from one to several lights grouped into one singular source, area of illumination, group or zone. Whether it's one light or several, you want to get into the habit of thinking about each area of illumination, keylight, fill light, accent light, background light, etc. as a separate entity, separately positioned and controlled. Just as we regard ambient and flash as two separate and discrete sources, each controlled independently, multiple off-camera strobes/speedlights also benefit from independent control.

Zones can be easily arranged into groups using the controls available on strobes, speedlights, their remote control units and radio transmitters such as the Pocket Wizard Plus III. Separating zones permits their power and other functions to be independently controlled, their positions varied and each zone independently modified for endless looks. When it comes to lighting backgrounds, knowing how to work with zones can be especially useful in reducing or eliminating spill from the keylight. Zones add up to an infinite amount of technical and creative control.

Classic three-point portrait lighting in a controlled studio setting offers the clearest way I know to demonstrate zones.

In this clinical setting, it's easy to illustrate the contribution made by each light zone by zone, their placement and why independent control is so helpful. This way, you can easily see, one light at a time, how a portrait evolves from flat and one-dimensional to a sophisticated three-light portrait with modeling and volume.

So, nothing super-fancy this month—instead, a clear, straightforward illustration of zones that hopefully leads to a few ah-ha moments. Keep in mind that these images were created in a studio, but that the techniques and concepts are just as applicable on location. Independence rules the roost in all scenarios.

Working with one light at a time allows you to eliminate the variables and clearly see the contribution each light or zone is making to the overall exposure. If all the lights are turned on from the beginning, it's much harder to discern the role each zone is playing.

Once you start working with zones or independently controlled lights, meters become a very useful tool. Sure, you can work intuitively, but it's considerably more time-consuming. There's just no way to establish the exact values for each light—the keylight versus accent light, keylight versus background light, etc. A meter offers the only way to accurately and consistently understand the relationship between the output of each lighting zone.

Having a way to determine this information also becomes important if you want to replicate your lighting setup later. What was the power for that background light versus the keylight? Without a meter, there's no way to tell. What's easier, dialing and chimping over and over or using a light meter and getting it right first and fast?

One-Zone Lighting

You don't need a ton of lights to gain an understanding of zones. So let's start with one light.

I always begin with the keylight because the power of each additional light is based on its output—in other words, +/-1 stop over or under the keylight. This is where that light meter comes in handy. I'm using a 60-inch Photek Softlighter on the strobe to create a soft, pleasing quality of light. For me, the keylight is always zone A (or group A). You can use numbers or letters. Manufacturers typically designate groups using A, B, C and D.

As you can see from the sample images, even with just one keylight, you can control the brightness of the background using distance. The closer the subject and keylight are to the background, the brighter it will be. This is both good and bad.

It means you can achieve a fairly white background using just one light for both the subject and the background,

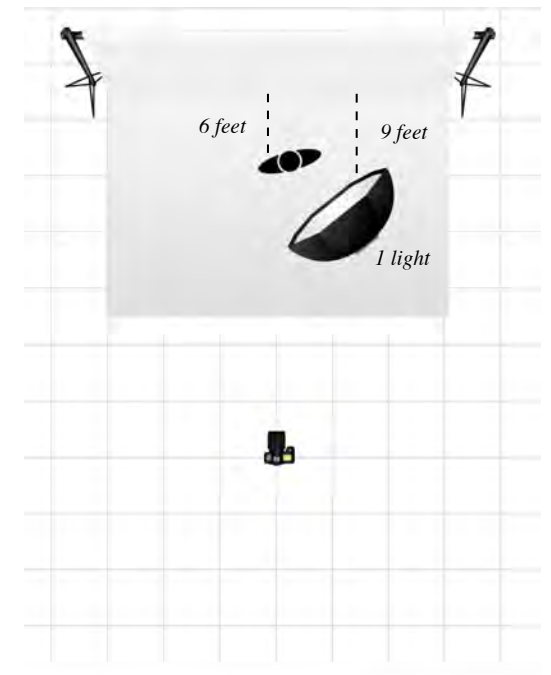
but it's not ideal because you don't have a lot of control. Basically, you get what you get based on amount of spill from the keylight and the distance from the background. If you don't have a lot of front-to-back space, you're also limited in creating a darker background.

Pulling the subject and keylight away from the background and creating distance between them—and manipulating the angle of your keylight—is the only way to get a darker background in this scenario. A more acute keylight angle reduces the amount of light hitting the background. The farther away from the background your subject and light are, the less spill from the keylight falls on it and the darker the background will be.

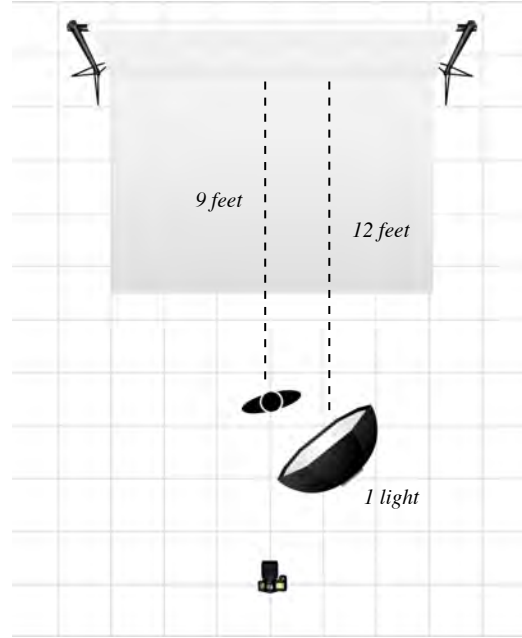
And that, my friends, is one-zone lighting. So if you have only one light, you're limited, but you still have options.



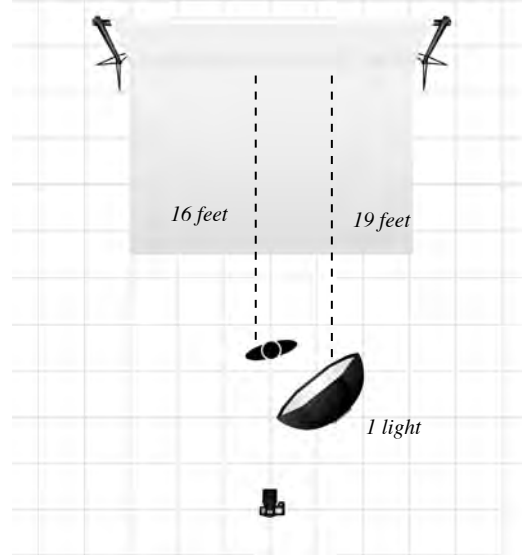
Image © Michael Corsentino



1 light, subject 6 feet and light 9 feet from background
With the subject close to the background, spill from the keylight illuminates the background.



1 light, subject 9 feet and light 12 feet from background
As I move the subject and keylight away from the background, it becomes darker, with less spill reaching it.



1 light, subject 16 feet and light 19 feet from background
Here, I've moved Ashleigh and the keylight even farther from the background, making it even darker. This is where things start to look good. With the shadowed side of Ashleigh's face toward the camera, we're working with what's known as short light.



Image © Michael Correntino

1 light, short light vs. broad light

In the previous example, Ashleigh was lit using short light. Here, I've kept everything the same except I've asked Ashleigh to turn away from the light to demonstrate broad light, where the side of the face with the majority of light faces the camera.



1 light, white reflector placed close

In this image, I've introduced a 3 x 4 white reflector to add fill light on the shadowed side of the face. It's a good start, but it's added too much light and killed some of the drama.



1 light, white reflector farther away

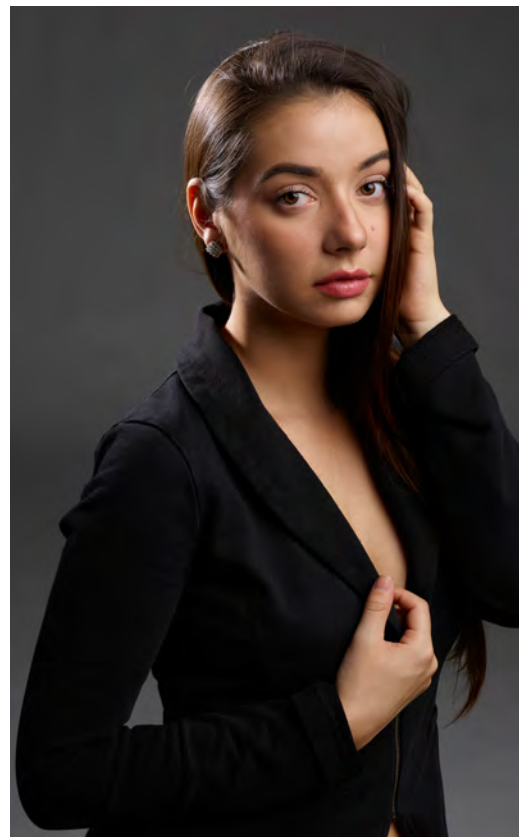
To obtain the right amount of fill on the shadowed side of the face, I simply experimented with the distance between the subject and the reflector until I achieved the desired effect.

Two-Zone Lighting

For my money, pulling the subject off the background so it can be lit using a separate zone is the way to go. This way, I can make the background exactly as bright or dark as I want. Once I've got the keylight and distance from the background set, I switch off the keylight and add my next lighting zone, typically the accent/rim light. You can see from the example images how working with only one light at a time helps you see exactly how much light that zone is contributing.

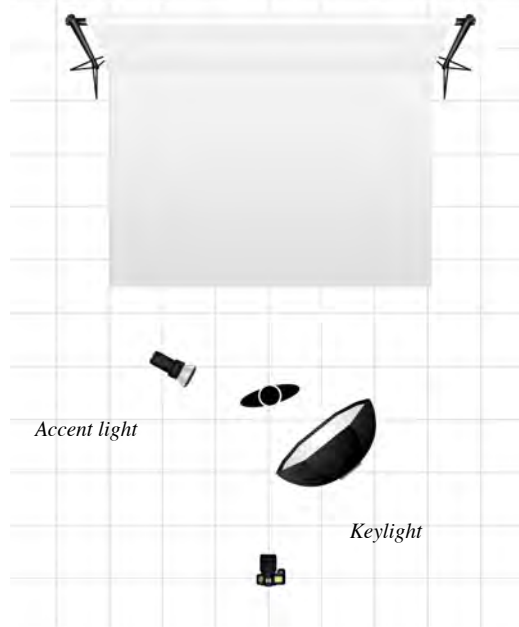
Once the keylight has been positioned and metered, it's time to turn it off and dial in the accent light. I do this using a flash meter to determine the ratio between it and the keylight. I'm looking for +1 stop with a brunette and -1 stop with a blonde. These are just guidelines to get me into the ballpark; sometimes they're spot on, and sometimes I need to adjust.

With the addition of this accent lighting zone, it's safe to say the image has gone from flat to dimensional in one simple step. This two-light arrangement is our old friend "cross light," aka "axis light." In mixed ambient and flash situations, the accent light, zone B, could just as easily be the sun. I've modified the strobe used for the accent light with a 10-degree grid spot to confine its light to a tight beam that falls on the side of the subject's head and shoulders.



Accent light alone

Now that my keylight is dialed in, I shut it off and turn on my accent light, metered for +1 stop over the keylight. I adjust its output until I am satisfied with the result.

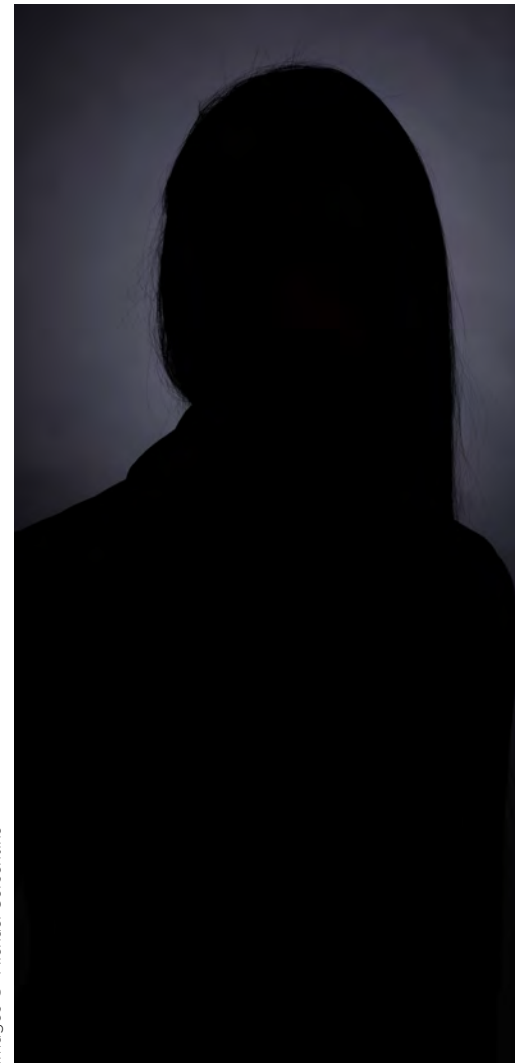


Accent light with keylight

Here you see the contributions of both the key and accent lights. The addition of the accent light has added dimension to what was previously a rather flat-looking one-light pattern.

Three-Zone Lighting

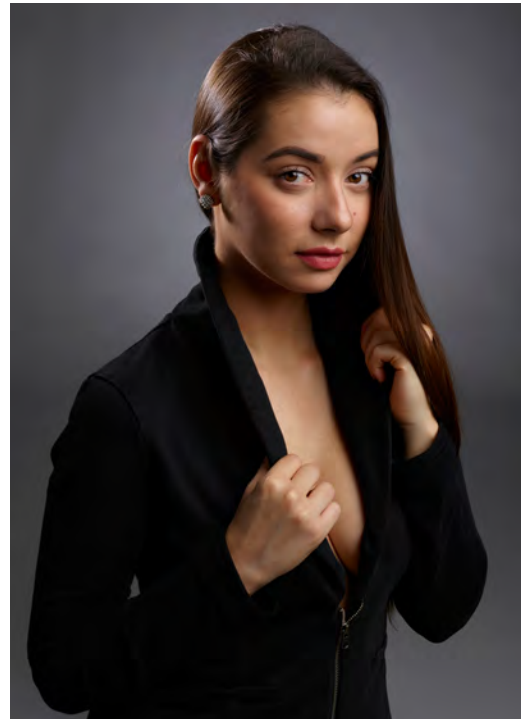
The third zone in our lighting trifecta is the background light. I used a 10-degree grid spot on this strobe as well. This creates a circle of light with a gradual falloff behind the subject—a classic. This zone is all about creating separation between the subject and the background. Now that I've separated the background and foreground into two zones, I can easily control exactly how bright or dark I want it.



Images © Michael Corsentino

Background light alone

With both the key and accent lights turned off, I dialed in the background light. Keeping in mind I'd still have some spill from the keylight hitting the background, I kept it a little darker than I otherwise would have.



Keylight, accent light, background light and fill reflector

This image shows the final effect achieved with all three lighting zones firing and the 3 x 4 reflector in place. Because each zone is separate and independently controlled, I'm able to exercise full control over the results.

White Background

I've also thrown in an example of a white background. Separate zones are key for evenly illuminated "blow-away" white background shots. The look is completely different, but the concept is the same.

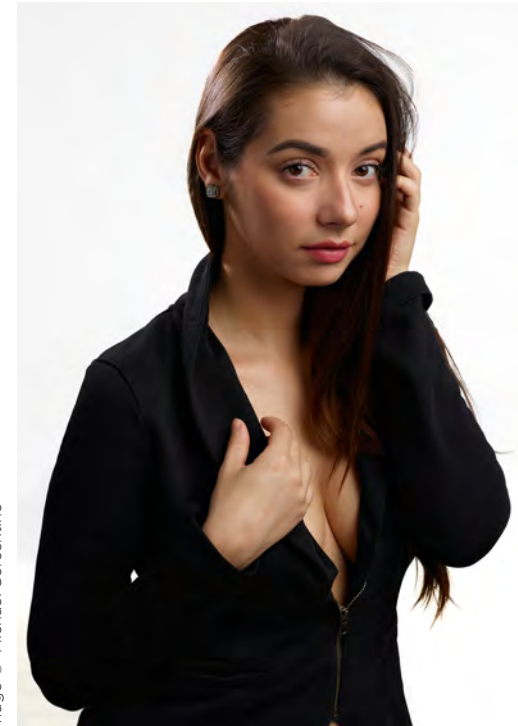
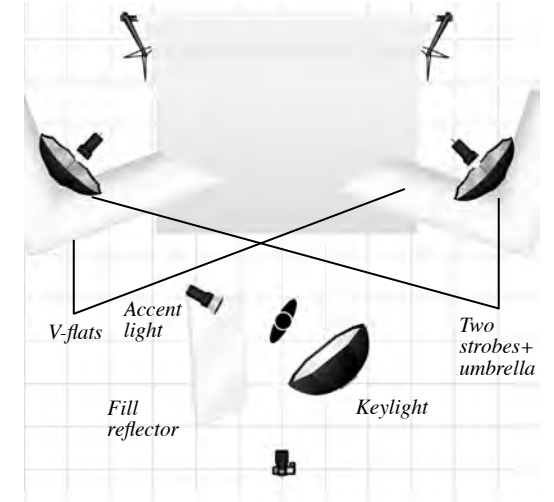


Image © Michael Corsentino



"Blow-away" white background effect

To achieve this, I swapped out the background light with two V-flats and two strobes with umbrellas. This is adequate for 3/4 shots, while full-length typically requires two lights and two umbrellas per side.

Final Words

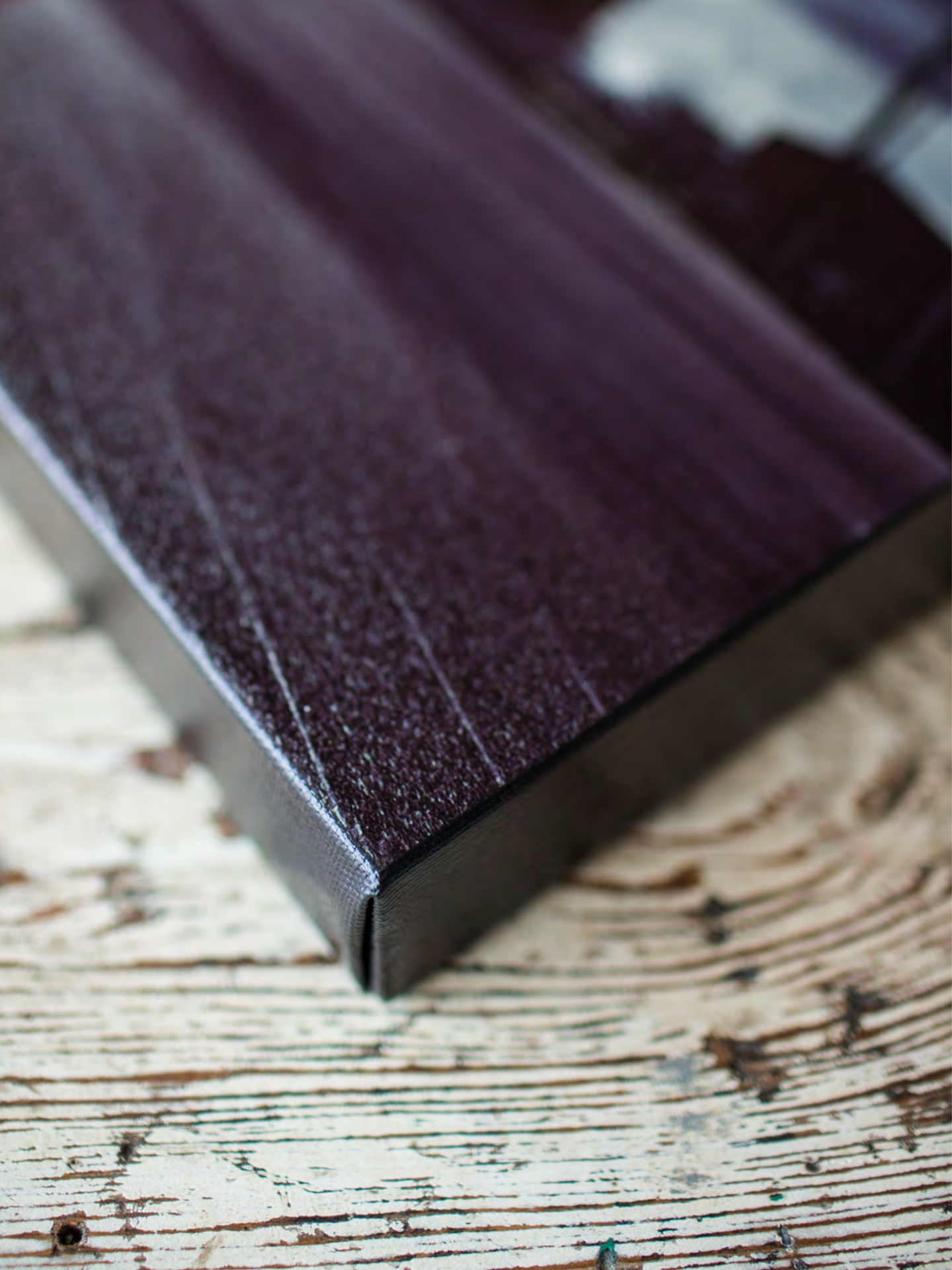
As you can see, separate zones rule. They allow precise control, help reduce or eliminate spill, and provide a clear indication of what each light is doing. Try incorporating

zones and ample space between your subject and background during your next portrait session. You'll be well on your way to killer lighting. ■



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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- + Getting away from shooting and burning and still attract clients.
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- + Marketing tips for slow times during the winter months.
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- + Marketing tools for newbies.
- + How to sell wall art to your clients.
- + Tips on shooting in difficult locations.
- + How to get your clients to open up during shoots.
- + The good and bad of mini-sessions.

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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RONIN-M

THE DISRUPTER

WITH
JOE SWITZER



Images © Joe Switzer

When you think of a technology disrupter, what comes to mind? Perhaps the smartphone eclipsing the cellphone, the iPod killing the Discman or DVD destroying VHS. All those products disrupted an existing product line. For decades, filmmakers have been using Steadicam vests and handheld gimbals to capture motion video shots, but there's a big change coming. Welcome to the latest and greatest disrupter.

A few years ago, Freefly Systems introduced a revolutionary next-generation gimbal called the Movi. This \$5,000 technology breakthrough was amazing, and now others have entered this marketplace. Things got interesting as pricing and weight of these new products were slashed by more than 50 percent. An overwhelming number of handheld stabilizers exists today, and the number of choices has accelerated, which makes it difficult for the average filmmaker to decide which handheld or three-axis gimbal to buy.

DJI's Ronin-M might offer the best way for you to increase effectiveness and have the most beautiful motion video shots you've ever captured. Maybe you're frustrated trying to get stable video shots or could never figure out the balance or tune your stabilizer correctly. Maybe you avoid trying to get gliding and motion video shots altogether. Capturing smooth-moving motion video has always been the biggest struggle, but it doesn't have to be anymore.

Let's look at the pros and cons of the DJI Ronin-M so you can see if this new product is for you.



Images © Joe Switzer

THE BAD

I'm not a hugely technical guy, and have a very short attention span. Reading manuals, assembling baby cribs and anything else that requires patience are not qualities that describe me. When you order your Ronin-M, it comes in a box with parts that you'll need to assemble, including a remote. Assembly took me about an hour, eventually had to find a video tutorial on YouTube that helped me see how to combine all the parts.

You'll also need to balance the camera, which is more difficult than assembling it. When you do so, make sure you put the battery, card and lens on the camera. Take your time. Watch the YouTube tutorial and read the manual. You can't just put a camera on the Ronin-M and start shooting, which may be annoying if you're impatient. If you have trouble balancing a Glidecam, Merlin or Steadicam, then you are probably going to have trouble balancing this.

The last quality I don't love about the Ronin-M is that I have to carry a stand with me so I can set it down on it when I'm not shooting. The stand is collapsible, but Ronin claims you'll need to keep it on the stand when you're not using it because of the fragile technology. Apparently the gimbal is sensitive, so you have to carry it around like a baby and keep it on the stand or just hold it. If you have a Glidecam, you can just throw it on the ground when you're not using it, and throw it in a suitcase when you travel. So, you'll be giving up a little durability.



Images © Joe Switzer

THE GOOD

The main reason to look at the Ronin-M is because it wears a lot of hats. It's a tripod, monopod, track and Glidecam all in one. During the last 10 years, I've never seen such a disrupter like this. It's least effective as a monopod or tripod, but shows its brilliance with the motion video shots that you normally capture with a track and Glidecam.

The challenge of using a track is getting a variety of video shots when you have limited time. A track can be placed on the ground or on tables quickly, but if you want specific heights, you'll need to connect the tripod and change levels; it can take 10 minutes to set up a single shot, which is rarely worth the risk reward on a fast-paced shoot.

Holding the Ronin-M, you can get motion track shots from any angle you can physically get to by making the same side-to-side track motion. Low to the ground or over your head, the speed at which you can cover all the angles you want in a matter of minutes with perfect smoothness makes this video tool better than any track on the market.

For those longer gliding and moving shots, the Glidecam has long been the industry standard. Balanced correctly and using only one hand, the Glidecam was the only tool we used to capture motion for as long as I can remember. Our industry has had struggles with a Glidecam: It's hard to keep it balanced, it puts heavy stress on your arm and it's sensitive to the way you hold and walk with it. Maybe you can relate to coming home from a wedding day with a sore back, neck and arm.

The Ronin-M is easier to keep perfectly balanced, and is physically easier on you because you're using two arms instead of one. You will still need to master the art of the walk and absorb bumps with your body. This takes time, and you will see the wider the lens you choose the easier it is. Sometimes we've had to stabilize motion video shots in post. Using the Ronin-M correctly saves time by giving you those perfect motion shots—without your track and Glidecam.

Finally, the Ronin-M gives you the ability to capture a variety of angles. It comes with a remote control with which you can pan and tilt while you're in the middle of a shot.



Image © Joe Switzer



Images © Joe Switzer

GETTING STARTED

So you bought a Ronin-M. Now what? Head straight to YouTube to watch “Ronin-M Full Setup Tutorial by Aerial Media Pros.” The video is about 20 minutes long, but it took me a few hours to set mine up. The video helps you see how to achieve perfect balance with your camera. Don’t let the setup and balance get the best of you. Have patience and take your time to set this up correctly, or your Ronin-M is worthless. Download the DJI Assistant App on your phone right away. It’s easy to fine-tune your calibration using the app, which is necessary for most shoots, especially if you plan on changing lenses. With the app, you can change the speed with which your camera reacts and moves. Try out different speeds until you find the movement you’re comfortable with.



Image © Joe Switzer

We have used the Ronin-M on all of our corporate shoots for the past month. We’ve learned to use it efficiently. On some shots, we can team up and each hold a handle or even pass it off for longer crane-like shots. We found moments where we could add a pan or tilt, with one of us using the remote control to get an added effect while the other operator focuses on the movement of the shot.

We like that you can just turn on the Ronin-M and go for it, without any help. Or you can be fancy and operate as a team. It has changed our workflow and our ability to capture flawless motion video.

For the rest of the year, our Glidecam and tracks will stay in the car and make a great backup for when we hit a tech hiccup with the Ronin-M. We will continue to use a tripod for our time lapses, monopod for close-ups and the Ronin-M for just about everything else.

We’re always looking to do our job better, faster and simpler. This video tool lets us do that. In previous years, other brand-name gimbals have proved too heavy and complicated to rely on for our fast-paced shoots. If you have the money and want the newest technology disrupter, the Ronin-M is worth the risk and investment. ■



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.

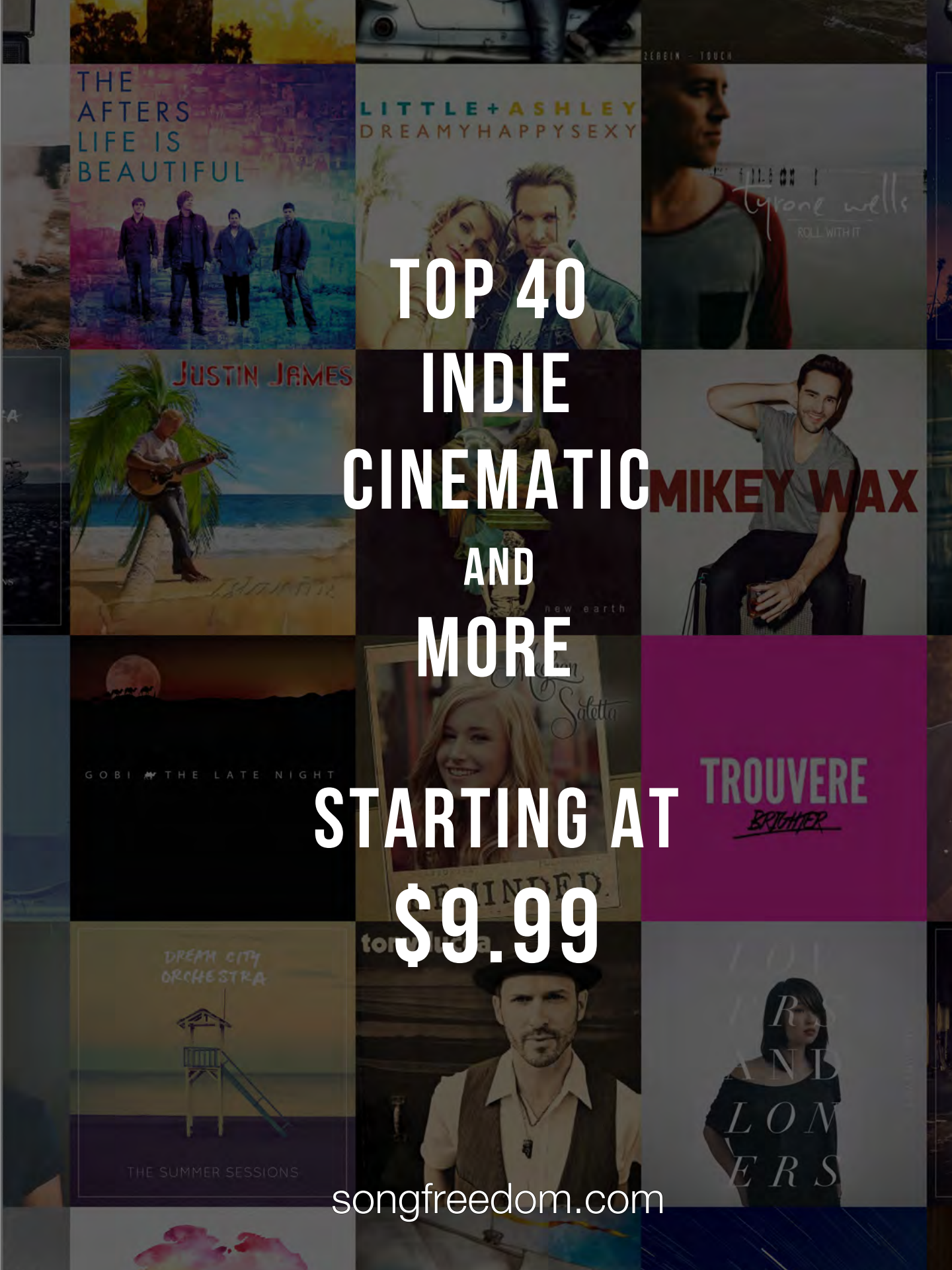
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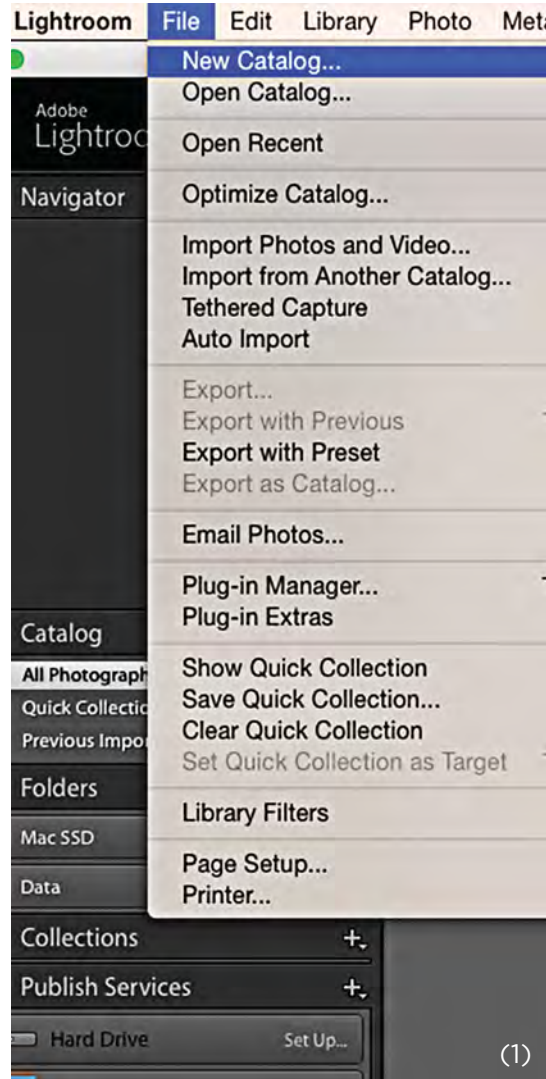
5-Part
Workflow
With
Lightroom CC
with Dustin Lucas

Part 2

Catalog Management

I am constantly trying to keep my digital photography process constrained to a single program. I want my workflow to be uncomplicated. I know Photoshop is the end-all program for intensive editing, but I want to get the most out of Lightroom before making the jump. In this article, I continue my five-part series on Lightroom CC, with catalog management.

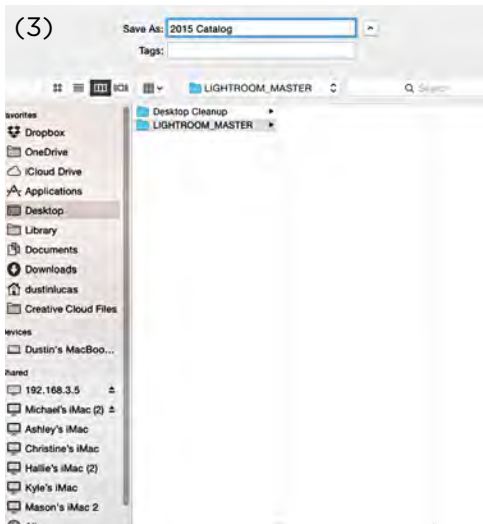
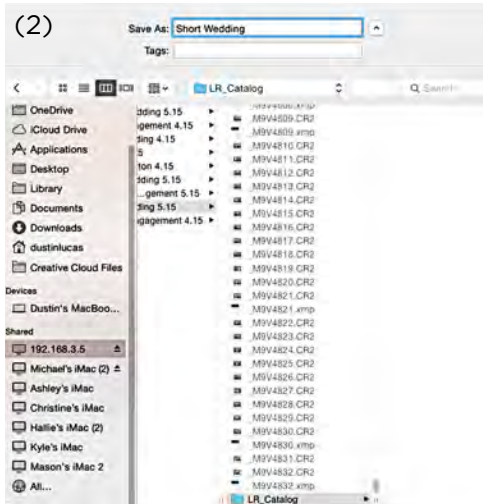
This is one of the most overlooked aspects of Lightroom workflow. Why bother changing? All you need to do is import, edit and export, right? Well, those are the steps to process work in Lightroom, but you need to develop a game plan for how the files live in Lightroom. This is where catalogs come in.



Create a Catalog

Creating a catalog is simple: Just open Lightroom, navigate to the menu bar and click File > New Catalog (1). This is where you can decide where to store the catalog and how to manage your future jobs. You can create a client/job catalog or a master catalog. Now let's organize your workflow.

If you like to store the catalogs with the Raw files on your working drive, make a new catalog per job. This allows you to store everything together for convenient access (2). With convenience comes the cost of performance when working off an external hard drive. Keep the catalogs on a local drive



so there isn't lag time while working in them. On the downside, you don't have quick access to all of your files when working this way. You have to dig up another catalog to view another job. Put them all into one catalog.

Master catalogs are a great strategy for organizing all of your work. As a best practice, make a new one per year (3). This lets you jump from job to job so much faster. Remember, as you import more work into a single catalog, it becomes increasingly slower and unsafe to work from. This requires backing up catalogs, which I will cover later.

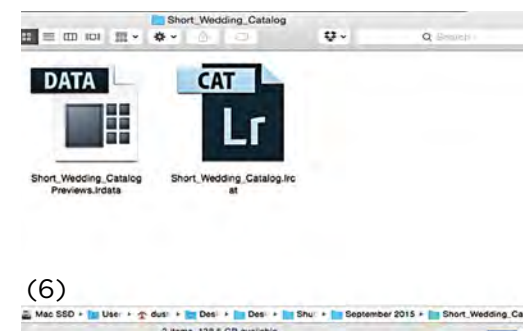
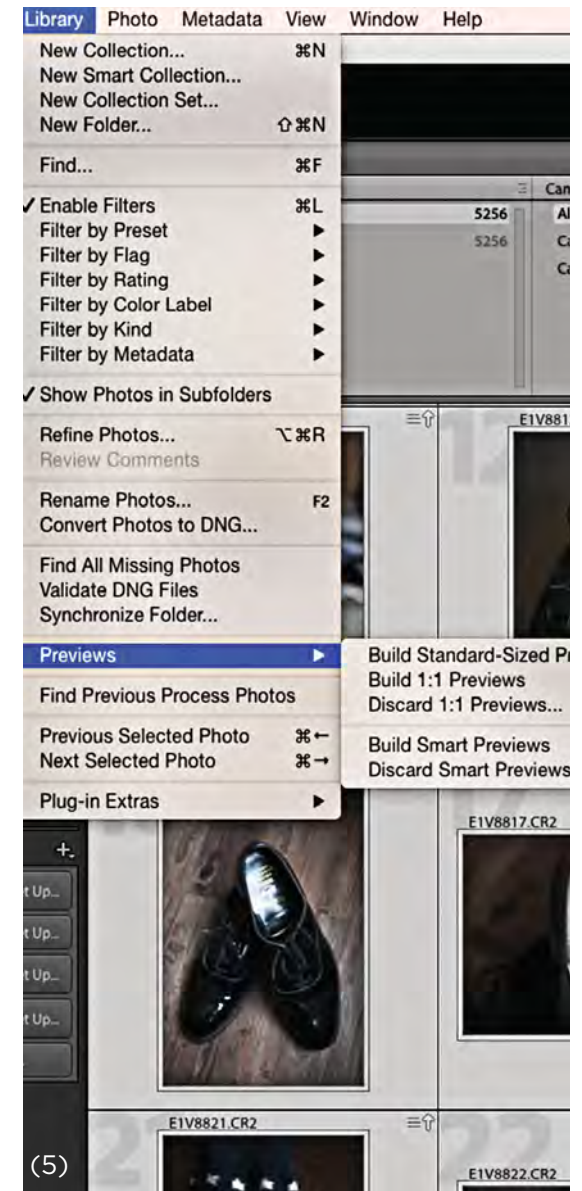
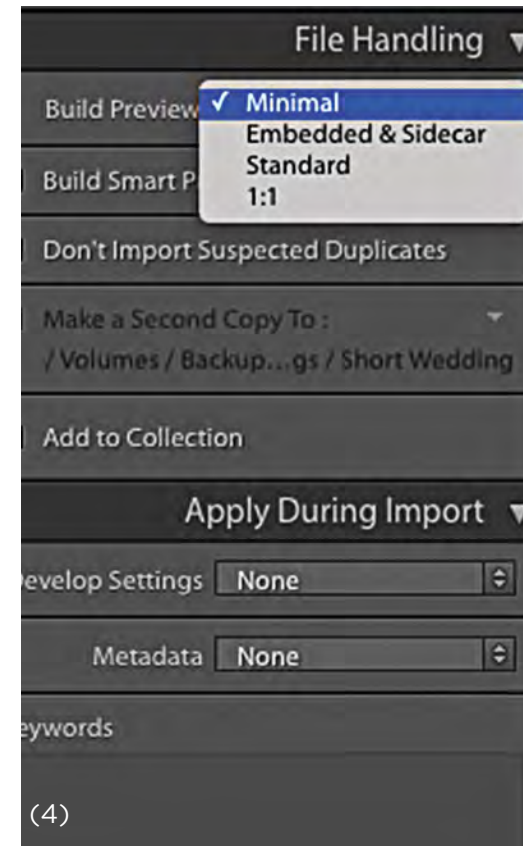
Building Previews

Lightroom allows you to view and process your image files by rendering previews. There are five types of previews: Minimal, Embedded & Sidecar, Standard, 1:1 and Smart. The process for building these previews starts at import. Minimal is preferred for import performance. Embedded & Sidecar is slightly larger and generates the image file by accessing the JPEG preview (4).

A secondary option is to build previews after import, which is highly advised for Standard, 1:1 and Smart. To access these

options, go to the Library module, navigate to the menu bar and click Library > Previews (5).

Standard previews are best for culling and most editing tasks. These previews automatically render once an effect is applied in the Develop module. You will notice a new file appear in the folder where the catalog is saved. It is important to keep these together (6).



To choose the size of these, go to Catalog Settings in the menu bar, and select the File Handling tab. Pixel dimensions correlate to your screen size. Choose the appropriate size based on the width of your screen. For example, if computer resolution is 1920 x 1200, I would set my standard preview to 2048 pixels (7). For quality, I would choose Low to gain a little performance (8).

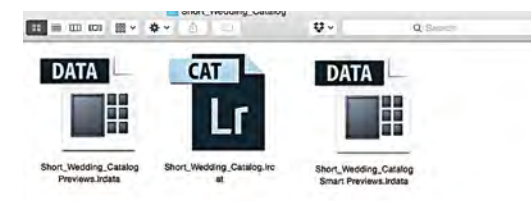
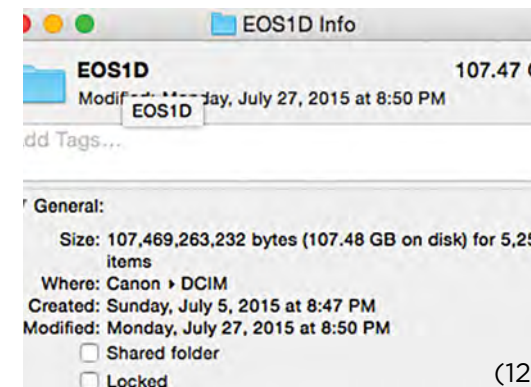
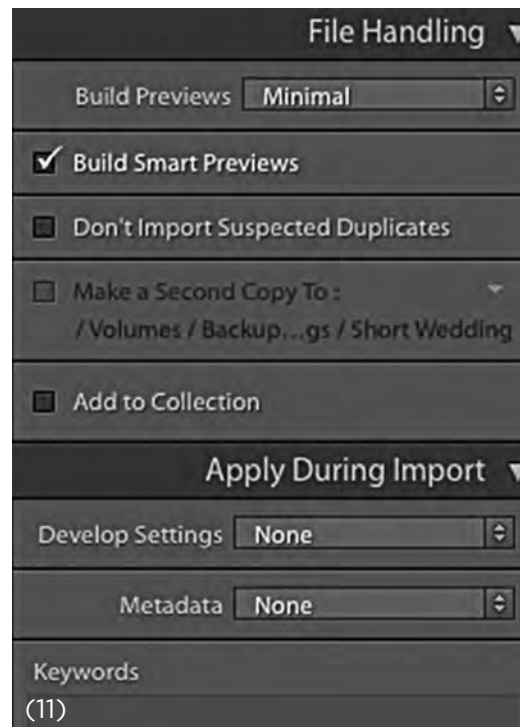
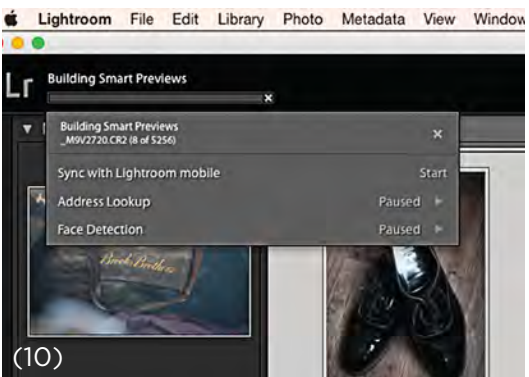
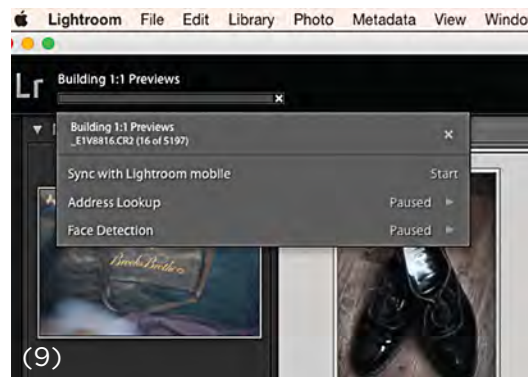
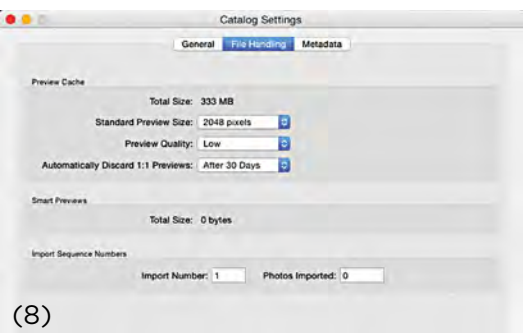
More advanced editing and full capability to zoom in at 100% require the building of 1:1 previews. These take significantly longer to create, so walk away from your computer while they process. You can build these at import, which makes processing files increasingly faster, but this slows down importing. It's a give-and-take. Build them a few hours before you edit (9).

Lightroom 5 and later versions introduced Smart Previews. These are a different type of preview altogether because they do not require the image files to be linked to a catalog. What

do you need to edit with, then? Like 1:1 previews, you have to actively build them (10).

You can also do this at import by going to the File Handling section and clicking on Build Smart Previews (11). This is a time-consuming process and unnecessary for all your captured files. Build these once you finish your selection process. However, if you are using Lightroom to select, this is a performance-enhancing option.

These Smart Preview files are a fraction of the total size of your Raw files. In this catalog, I have over 5,000 images totaling 107GB of data (12). Smart Previews for these images would be a little more than 4GB total (13). That is an insane amount of space saved. Not only do you gain space and performance, you can fully edit the images within Lightroom. This takes us to exporting catalogs and using Smart Previews.



Export as Catalog

This option is great for outsourcing your work and lowering the amount of data you have to upload. Once you select the specific images, go to File > Export as Catalog (14). A dialog box appears asking for a location to save to as well as Export Negative Files, Build/Include Smart Previews and Include Available Previews. Export Negative Files makes copies of the Raw files and puts them in a folder. This is a huge time saver versus individually selecting files in Finder. Exporting with Smart Previews packages them with the catalog in a new location. With this catalog opened, you no longer need access to the Raw files. Including available previews in the export is useful only if you are linked to the original files. These built previews save time when viewing and editing the full-resolution Raw files (15).



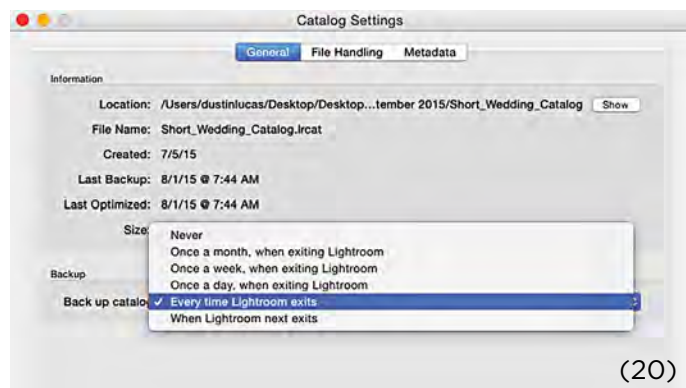
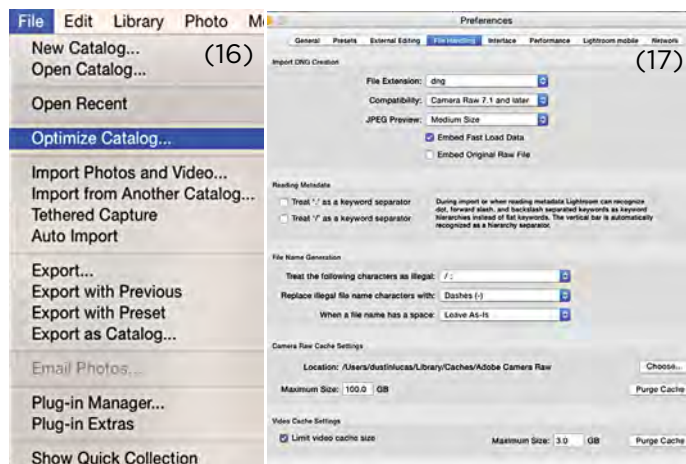
Optimizing Your Catalog

Whether you are working in a single job or master catalog, you need to keep the catalog at optimum performance and stability. Your first step is the easiest one: Click on File > Optimize Catalog (16). From here, it's important to store your catalog on your local hard drive. Make sure you exceeded the minimum hardware requirements for Lightroom.

In Lightroom Preferences, choose the File Handling tab and look at Camera Raw Cache Settings. I set mine to the total file size of my entire job, which is 100GB (17).

Moving to the Performance tab brings in the help of the GPU or graphics card. For most users, it helps to uncheck the option Use Graphics Processor. This option works well on the 5K iMacs, but most users should leave it off. For some reason, this comes as a default setting (18).

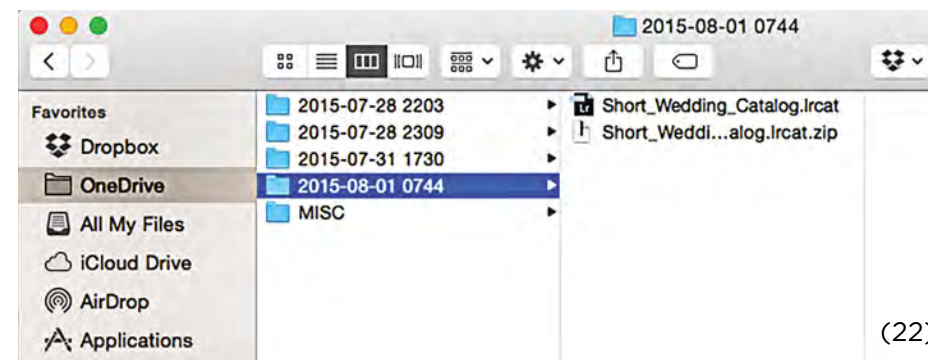
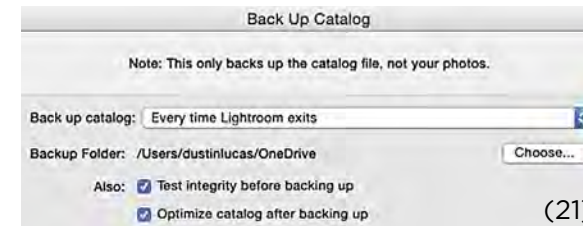
By accessing Catalog Settings, you can increase performance as well. Click on the metadata tab and make sure you uncheck Automatically Write Changes Into XMP (19). This process runs every time you make a change to your files. Manually save metadata afterward. Previously, I mentioned how to lower the quality of Standard Previews, which helps to increase rendering time. In the General tab, choose when to prompt the Backup when closing a catalog, which brings us to the next topic (20).



Back Up Catalog

This is a very important step in using catalogs (21). You need to back up your catalog on a separate disk from where your original is saved. To change this location, close a catalog and click Choose. I use a cloud storage platform like Dropbox or OneDrive to store this file. That way, I have access to it on any computer that's connected to the Internet (22).

Optimize the Catalog is another option in this window. This becomes important as your catalog increases in size. This can cause corruption as you repeatedly open and close the catalog.



Conclusion

I use Lightroom for the majority of my post-processing, so optimizing the catalog is a must for me. Managing catalogs is as important as managing files. Once you choose what type of catalog you want to make, import the files and render previews. It's that simple. These first two articles have shown the essential steps in maintaining a solid workflow for your business. Tune in next month for the third part, in which I'll look at processing files. ■



Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his master in 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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