

the business behind the shutter | OCTOBER 2013

SHUTTER

MAGAZINE

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CHRISTA MEOLA
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MEANINGFUL, FULFILLING & FUN
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PHOTOSHOP: STRAY HAIRS

PICTURE PERFECT

INTRODUCING NEW CONTRIBUTORS

CHRISTA MEOLA . DAMIAN BATTINELLI . ROBERTO VALENZUELA

GET 'ER DONE

5 STEPS TO FINAL CUT PRO X
Rob Adams

MOTION MEETS FLASH
Michael Corsentino

DAILY GRIND



MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY
Laurin Thienes

WEDDING ETIQUETTE
Vanessa Joy

ADDING VALUE TO YOUR
SENIOR SESSION
Sal Cincotta

MOM FIRST
Kristy Dickerson

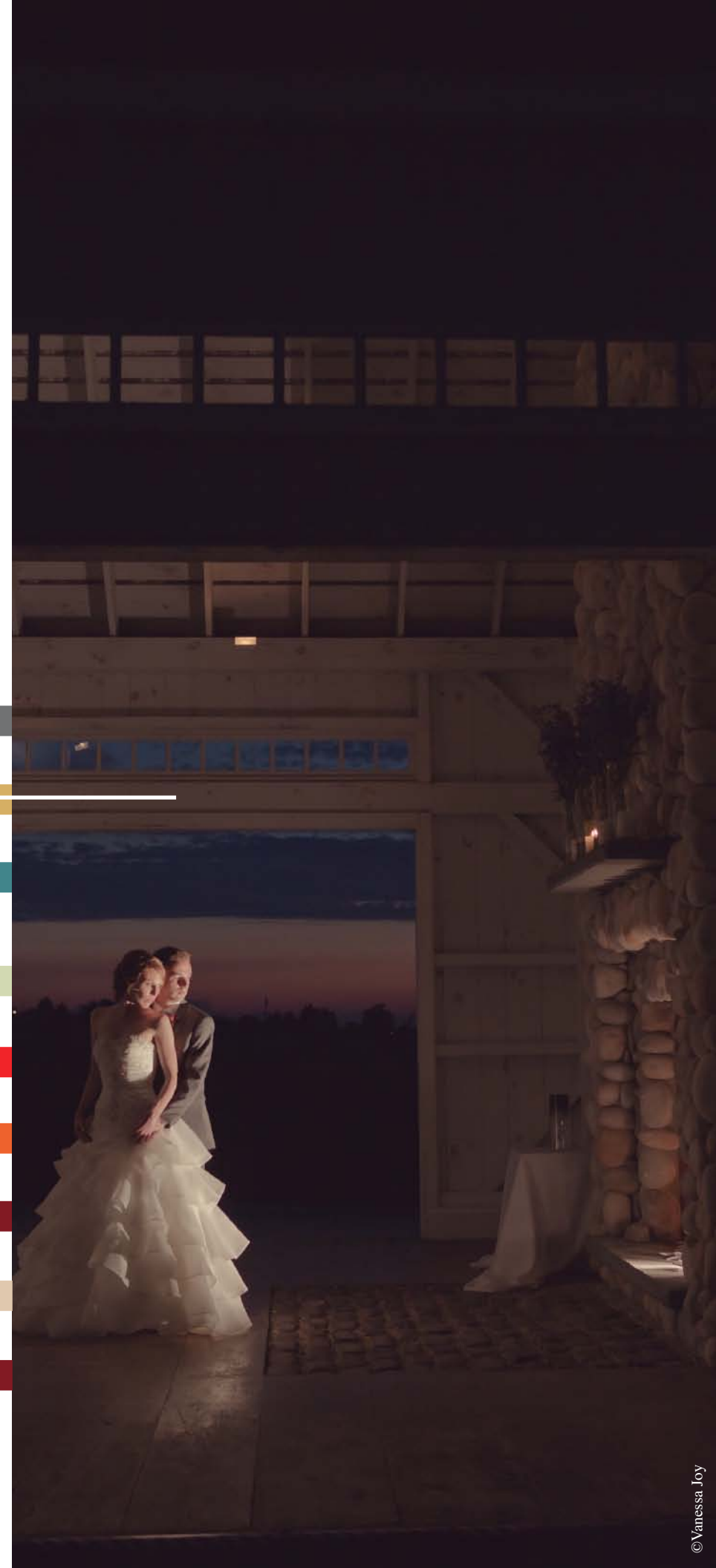
WEAR THIS. WEAR THAT.
Blair Phillips

FALL EVENTS
Lori Nordstrom

STAYING SHARP
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Q&A
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THE CHALLENGE



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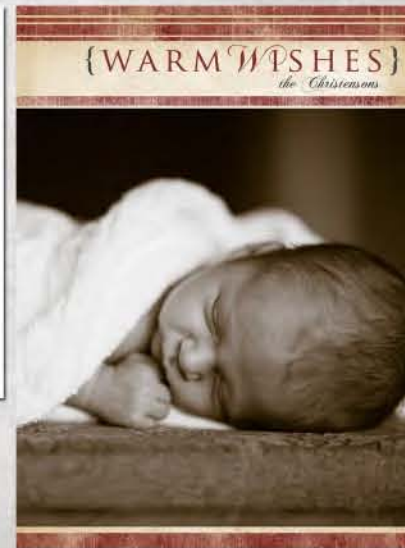
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Submit an original image showing us how you interpret this well-known phrase. There is no right or wrong answer, it's about letting your inner artist run free.

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THE RULES:

- Submit web resolution files (1 MB or smaller) to info@behindtheshutter.com
- Subject line must read: "OCT13 Challenge"
Any files submitted without this subject line will not be accepted
- File must be submitted before midnight on October 25, 2013
- One image submission per person
- Image may be featured in our magazine, website and social media

THE WINNER:

Will be announced in the November edition of Shutter Magazine & receive a \$500 gift card to Virtuoso (www.vbysal.com)



MOTIONMEETSFLASH

WITH MICHAEL CORSENTINO

MOTION MEETS FLASH

*Combining flash
& constant light
for fashion portraits*



BY Michael Corsentino

All photographers draw inspiration from one another. I first came across the lighting technique featured in this month's article—mixing strobe and constant light—after seeing some of photographer/retoucher Julia Kuzmenko's images. I was immediately inspired to try it out myself. If you're unfamiliar with Julia's work, you owe it to yourself to look her up. It turns out she was inspired to try this lighting style after seeing similar techniques used by her colleague Oleg Tityaev . . . and so on and so on. Now I, in turn, will hopefully inspire you to try your hand at this cool lighting technique.

Naturally, I'd dragged the shutter before to bring in additional ambient light in mixed-light situations. This was different—more a controlled studio application—and I loved the look. As you experiment, you'll find your own unique vision and bring your own artistic voice. When I started, I was trying to replicate the effect Julia and Oleg had gotten, but in the end I created something totally different and personal. I used the technique but gave it my own signature. That's the best part of inspiration: Be inspired, then make it your own.

Due to the unpredictable nature of painting with light, you'll need to recalibrate your expectations of the ratio between successful and unsuccessful images. Therein lies the beauty and magic. No two images will be the same because of the way the continuous light is captured. The average of successful images will be considerably lower than what you're used to. So expect a lot of misses and experimentation. When you get it right, though, the results are killer.

I started by looking at articles written by Julia and Oleg. The technique is simple enough. It involves freezing the subject with a strobe for a nice, crisp counterpoint to the softer ambient light streams you get with a long shutter speed and camera movement. The additional softness, long exposures and ambient light give the images a welcome departure from what is sometimes an overly crisp digital photography world.

MOTION MEETS FLASH

The images you see here were all created in-camera using only one exposure and no PhotoShop compositing. I started by making sure my studio was completely dark. Any additional ambient light, aside from your dedicated ambient source, affects the exposure due to the long shutter speeds needed. I used a simple two-light setup (see diagram) of Profoto D1 500WS Air heads. I modified the key light with a Mola Demi beauty dish. I disabled the accent light, also a strobe, allowing only the modeling light to illuminate. This is what I used as my continuous light source, but any continuous source does the trick. Modeling lights on the D1 heads have variable power control, which proved helpful when dialing in just the right amount of ambient light. I covered the modeling light with a blue gel to get the cool blue tones I was after.

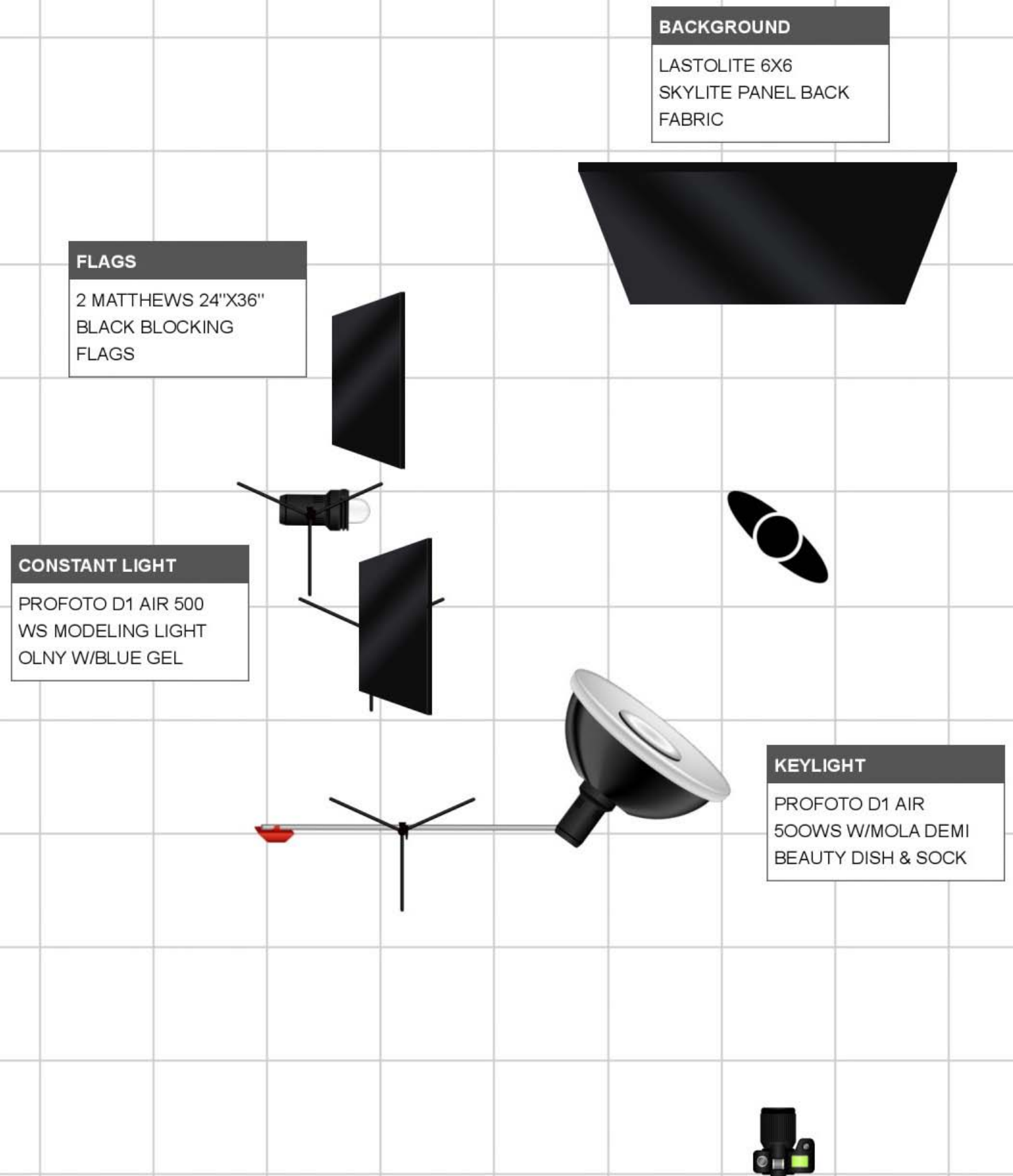
If you're using gels, make sure they completely cover your continuous light source. This is to avoid any unwanted light spill that doesn't match the color of the gel. Keep an eye on your continuous light, and be aware of heat buildup and the possibility of gels melting. Matthews sells a line of low-cost rectangular gel frames that I recommend for safety.

This technique is as much about light as it is about movement—both camera movement and model movement produce interesting results. The final images here were produced using handheld camera shake in various patterns during long exposures. I started with one-second exposures as Julia and Oleg recommend, but I found much more success with 2.5- to five-second exposures. My eventual sweet spot ended up being five-second exposures, an ISO setting of 100 and a key light metered at f:11. Regarding camera shake, to produce these images, it was as important to move the camera during the exposure as it was to hold it still again before the end of the exposure. I did this to capture a sharper image with the continuous light source along with all the light streams.

For the background, I set up a Lastolite 6x6 Skylite Panel with black fabric. I used Matthews 24-inch by 26-inch black flags to control the constant light—one behind it to keep it from spilling onto the background while controlling where it illuminated my model, and another in front of the light to block it from the camera and cut out glare.

I used reflective makeup and accessories to bring it all together. Along with the constant light, long exposures and camera movement, these reflective elements helped maximize the effect of the motion and added specularities that gave the images extra sizzle.

Just as important, if not more important, than the techniques outlined here is the role the creative team plays in capturing successful images. Fostering the right creative environment, one in which an open exchange of ideas and input are welcome and encouraged, makes all the difference. As the saying goes, "There's no I in team." I put the hair and makeup in the hands of supertalented hair and makeup artist—and new *Shutter* magazine contributor—Annie Radigan. She shares her insights on this important part of the process next.



"ANNIE'S" PERSPECTIVE

Working as part of a new creative team is exciting and intimidating at the same time. Along with exciting new ideas, styles and concepts, you encounter new philosophies, personalities and ways of working. Will the new photographer share my vision of what it means to work together as a team? Will the photographer allow me the creative freedom to contribute and do the best job I can? Or will he or she run roughshod over my ideas? These are all considerations when joining a new creative team. I'd say nine out of 10 photographers would agree that the best teams are those that work collaboratively, allowing the photographer, stylist, hair and makeup artist, and client to each contribute their unique skills in order to create a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts.

When Michael contacted me about working together, it quickly became evident that we shared the same collaborative philosophy. He provided a detailed brief of the goal for the shoot, and explained the look, feel and concept he had in mind. To provide a creative reference for me, he also sent images with styling, makeup and hair that appealed to him. Pinterest is a great tool for creating inspiration pinboards that can easily be shared with creative team members. The brief bullet points for the shoot were "dramatic, fashion, cool toned, reflective and motion."

Together we created a plan of action that included the hues and textures for the hair and makeup we planned to use. Craft stores are a great resource for props and accessories. Like Michael, I too hit the local Hobby Lobby store and browsed the aisles looking for objects that would reflect light. We'd be using these to create the streams of light the long exposures would make possible. I arrived for the shoot with a bag full of sparkly goodies ready to create magic.



MOTION MEETS FLASH

For our model, Makaila Nichols, I needed makeup that would reflect light. As with the accessories, this was to maximize the streams of light and make the image stand out. First, I chose iridescent rhinestones, but after playing with various lighting schemes, we found that applying more reflective surface makeup did a much better job. This second makeup style did exactly what we needed it to do. To create this look—what we ended up calling “black-and-blue swan” for the makeup and gel combo used—I chose Make Up For Ever’s Flash Palette and Aqua Black Cream Waterproof Liner. I essentially created a mask and used fine-grain black glitter on top of it. With the black base from the Flash Palette, the glitter held well on Makaila’s forehead and temples, and also provided a gorgeous, seamless base. I evened out the rest of her skin tone with Make Up For Ever’s HD Foundation #115 and coated her lashes with Lorac’s 3D Lash Mascara. I created her lip color with the same formula as the black face mask, and lined it with NYX Black Eyeliner.

Michael and I agreed that Makaila’s hair would work best pulled back away from her face to create an edgy look and help accentuate Makaila’s bone structure. The “top knot” is very popular at the moment, and this lent itself to the high-fashion look Michael was after. Makaila’s ombré hair color, with its darker roots fading to lighter ends, gave us additional contrast, further solidifying our look. All of this came together to help us achieve a look that surpassed our initial goal.

It’s safe to say that the images we created were the result of an open exchange of ideas between team members working toward a common goal. Successful creative teams have members who share an intense love and passion for what they do, as well as mutual respect for one another’s expertise and contributions. ■

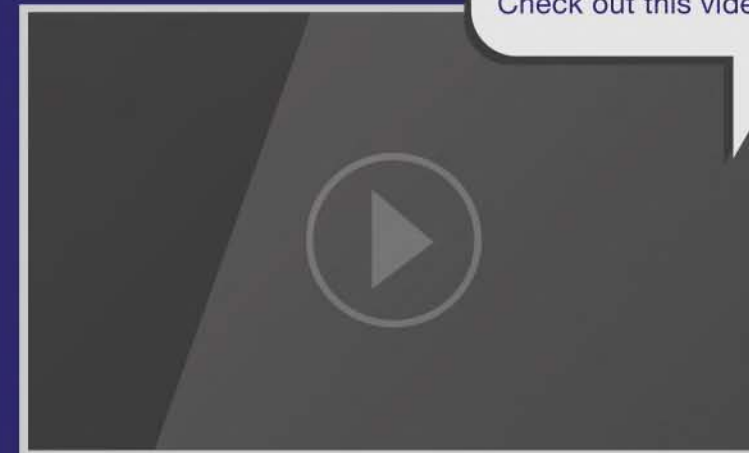
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WEAR THIS

WEAR THAT

WITH BLAIR PHILLIPS

BY BLAIR PHILLIPS



We live in a world of excuses. The only person who wants to hear an excuse is the person giving it. I used to complain and make excuses about my images all the time. It wasn't until I took charge and started coaching my seniors on their wardrobe that I truly began loving photography.

The thing that all good senior sessions have in common is awesome outfits, though we've all had a senior show up with outfits that are not very inspiring. Having a system in place for your studio for how to handle outfits is a must for several reasons. I have spent the past eight years working with several scenarios, and have finally figured out a bulletproof method.

We have found that putting a limit on the number of outfits a senior can bring starts the experience on a negative beat. Letting our clients feel like they're in total control is the best way to conduct business. We tell clients to bring as many outfits as they want, way more than they'll need. The reason is simple: If they bring too many, I'm guaranteed they will have at least a handful of outfits that work. We offer to look through their outfits and help make the best selections. Acting as their personal stylist really gets us involved, and the parents appreciate it.

THE STYLIST



THE DRESSING ROOM

Don't let the sheer volume of clothing scare you. We tell clients from the beginning that sessions run two hours. Once we reach the dressing room, I remind them of the time limit. This tells them that the quicker they change, the more outfits they will be photographed in. This has put an end to sessions that last forever.

Having a dressing room that's organized and well prepared can save you tons of time. Having lots of different places on the walls to hang outfits is a great way to spread them all around. Tell your client to put shoes underneath the intended outfit. Provide an area where they can arrange all their accessories. Stock your dressing room with various types of lotions, perfumes and styling products. (I generally stock up for the year on the day after Thanksgiving, when most stores have blowout sales.) This setup allows you and the client to look at everything at once without having to dig through everything over and over.

I tell clients to pick a few favorite outfits. Don't forget to ask Mom if she has a favorite too. Be on the lookout for when clients arrive so you can help them bring in their clothing. Don't follow them into the dressing room. Instead, provide your senior and parent with their own personal space. This removes many potential liabilities.

Music is really important when a senior is getting ready. Step foot into an American Eagle or Hollister store sometime, and take in the hip, funky atmosphere. Notice how loud the music is. Volume control can be just as important as music selection. When you have the music pumping in the dressing room, people can talk among themselves and not worry about you eavesdropping. Music takes the senior's mind off a lot of things. Turn it up, and don't scrimp on your system. Sound quality can be an absolute killer. I have home theater-style speakers mounted in the ceiling all throughout my studio. Rather than ask for their favorite music via a questionnaire (which I find kind of cheesy), I play what I like, which is a reflection of my brand.



Most seniors in my area seem to be all about their prom dress. They share stories about traveling great distances to purchase theirs. They want to make sure that no one else has the same dress. If they were to show up at prom and someone else had the same dress, their life would be over! I ask every senior to bring her prom dress to her session. Not this year's, but last year's. That's because they may not have their senior prom dress yet, but more importantly, it's because I'm afraid of getting it dirty—because I like to shoot seniors outdoors. Even though they probably have a ton of pictures in that dress from prom, they don't have pictures like the ones I'm creating. The prom dress is an outfit I go all out on. I really fire up the creativity.

Communicate with both the senior and the parent how important it is that they bring way more than they need. This gives them a lot to look forward to, and starts building the excitement well before they come in. Build your brand and create an environment for spending by creating an awesome dressing room. Photographers put way too much emphasis on the camera room and go the el cheapo route with the area they spend their alone time in.

Your clients are already impressed with you and your work, so go the extra mile and act as a personal stylist. Thank me later when you have more personal time and your seniors are bringing in lots of outfits that you love using. ■

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*- Blair Phillips
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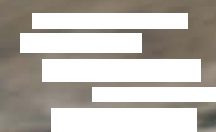
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FALL EVENTS

with Lori Nordstrom



FALL EVENTS



BY Lori Nordstrom

It's the time of year when photographers are getting busy gearing up for the crazy fall and holiday season. Many portrait photographers make over half of their income during the fourth quarter of the year. Having a plan for fall is crucial to making it a success and being sure that your own Christmas is merry.

If you're like me, you may have learned the hard way that you should set up a plan, a schedule and a system for this time of year. After years of working right up until Christmas Day, I now create deadlines for holiday cards and gifts. We all want our clients to be able to give our photography as gifts, which means they have to be in mailboxes on time. I've learned over the years to start promoting early.

I started promoting Thanksgiving cards and a Thanksgiving event years ago, inspired by my photographer friend Kay Eskridge. I loved the idea, and immediately implemented a "Thankful" event in our studio. The idea behind it is: "Let your friends and family know that you're thankful for them—before the rush of the holiday season." We created a line of Thanksgiving cards that say just that, along with Christmas cards carrying sentiments like "We're thankful for you and wanted to let you know before the busy rush of the Christmas season." Clients get excited about getting this task out of the way. During our Thankful event, we not only promote the idea of Thanksgiving cards, but also the fact that our clients can check gifts off their list by purchasing early. We offer specials on tabletop frames, Kotori photo jewelry and holiday-themed frames from Wild Sorbet. Our clients love the gift suggestions.

FALL EVENTS

Having products that are available only during certain times of the year makes that product a “must have.” I’ve also found that anything I suggest that helps clients start a tradition in their home means repeat business. Our specialty product for the Thankful event is our Thankful Box, whose front panel holds an image from the client session. We print a set of cards for the box that includes another image from the session and the words “I’m thankful for...” on the other side. Family members write on the cards throughout the year about things they’re grateful for. The box comes out at Thanksgiving dinner, where the cards are read aloud. This unique product has gotten us great word of mouth.

It’s not too late to get something on the calendar and promote the idea of thankfulness to your clients. Send it out in a newsletter to past clients, or partner with another business and post on its blog or newsletter. When I was in a home studio, I made it my mission to partner with as many businesses as possible that were also serving my target client. This way, I can tap into an existing community of loyal clients.

Put a date on your calendar for a holiday event. Encourage past clients to reserve their sessions early. Create specialty gift products that inspire your clients to start neat new family traditions, and watch your numbers climb. Don’t forget to put deadlines on your calendar and send out a reminder newsletter to past clients. When promoting a deadline, also promote an alternative, like New Year’s cards, for those clients who can’t schedule before the deadline.

BEFORE THE RUSH OF THE
HOLIDAY SEASON
WE WANTED TO LET YOU KNOW...



...AS WE’RE REMEMBERING ALL OF
THE THINGS WE’RE THANKFUL FOR,

YOU ARE AT THE TOP
OF OUR LIST!

THANK YOU FOR THE GIFT OF
LOVE & FRIENDSHIP



WE ARE
THANKFUL
FOR YOU!

Part of our planning is also setting aside time to make phone calls to our best clients: "Hello, Kim, this is Lori Nordstrom. How are you?" (Time for a little catching up!) "I'm calling because our fall schedule is getting really full, and since I hadn't heard from you yet, I wanted to touch base to see if we can reserve a time for your family session this year—I don't want you to miss out!" I might also tell Kim about our holiday deadlines so that she's sure to schedule before those dates.

Being proactive in marketing is a must these days. Our clients are busy, and there are options all around them. I want to stay on their minds and be (kindly) aggressive about filling my calendar. ■



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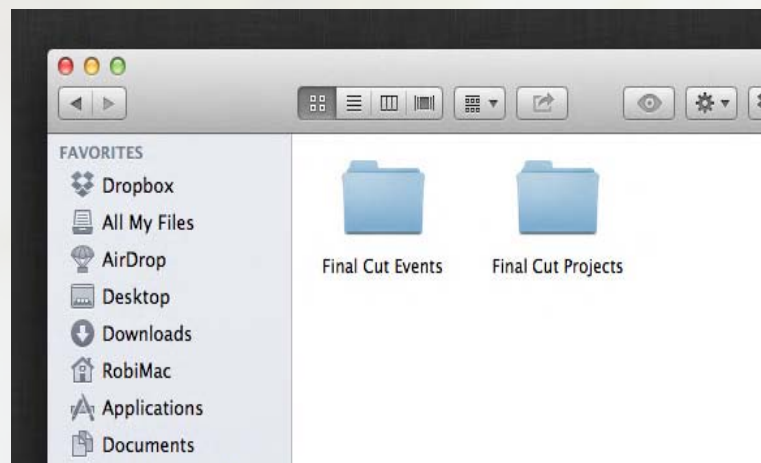
**BY** ROB ADAMS

A good way to look at video editing is this: You really only need to know about 2 percent of what a program like PhotoShop or Lightroom can actually do in order to make a compelling video or film short. For the most part, I rarely use more than just the most basic functions of any video editing program when I make films.

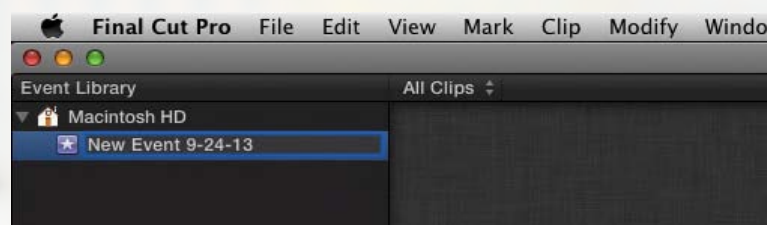
All editing programs have the basic timeline interface in which you assemble portions of video clips you want to use, along with an inspector window to help you adjust some basic video and audio parameters to make it all work together. As far as effects and filters go, if you know how to use PhotoShop actions, you've pretty much nailed the concept of using editing software. I recommend that newer editors start with Final Cut Pro X (FCPX for short) because it's more intuitive, and because I think it represents the future of video editing.

Here are a few simple steps to get you up and running in FCPX if you've never touched a video editor before.

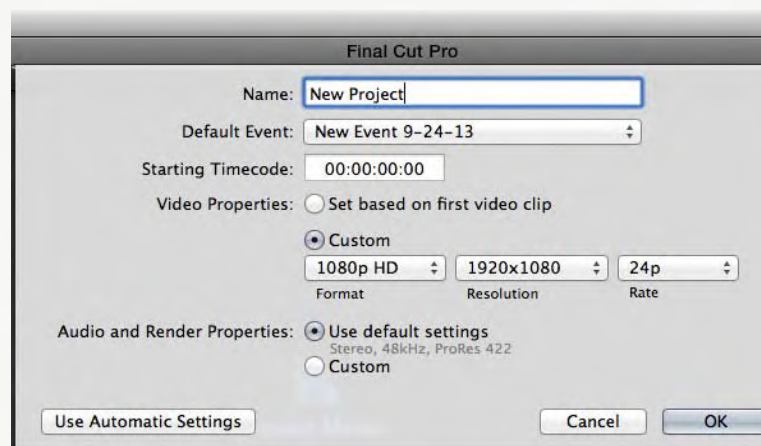
1 Opening the program. Opening the program and configuring it to suit your needs is an important step. We need to tell FCPX where to store our project and media files, and how to handle them while editing. When you first install FCPX, two folders are created on your Mac hard drive in the Movies folder. Final Cut Events is where your media is stored. Final Cut Projects is where your projects or editing timelines are stored. You can have unlimited numbers of each.



When you open the program for the first time, you are asked to create an “event.” This is when you import the video and audio you will be using.

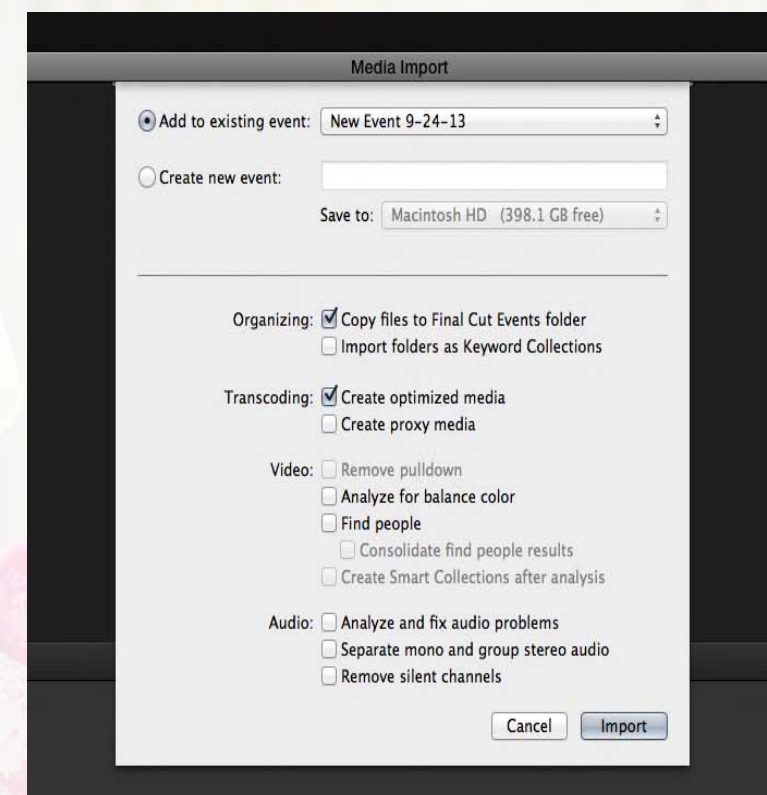


Once that’s done, you create a new project. This is the timeline you will use to assemble and arrange your video shots.



You are likely using video shot at 1080 resolution. If not, choose the appropriate resolution in the Format and Resolution boxes. Also, if your footage was shot at 30 frames per second rather than 24, you need to change that. You can also let FCPX choose your project/timeline settings for you by checking the Set Based on First Clip box.

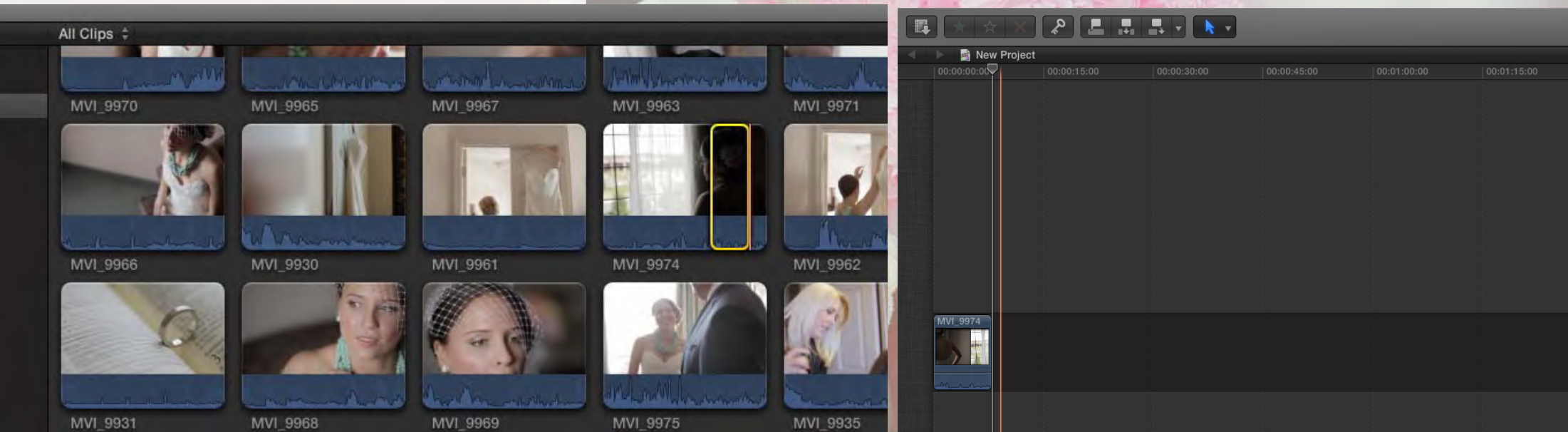
2 Importing media. This is quite simple. All you have to do is tell FCPX what footage and audio or music you want to work with. Go to File > Import Media or press ⌘ I. From here, select the media you want to bring in. Select the two checkboxes for Copy Files to Final Cut Events Folder and Create Optimized Media. This ensures your media doesn’t get lost (as long as you never mess with the Final Cut Events and Final Cut Projects folders) and that your media conforms to work its best with FCPX. This conforming—or transcoding, as it’s called—is done in the background when your system is idle and FCPX is open, so there’s no need to worry about what it’s doing.



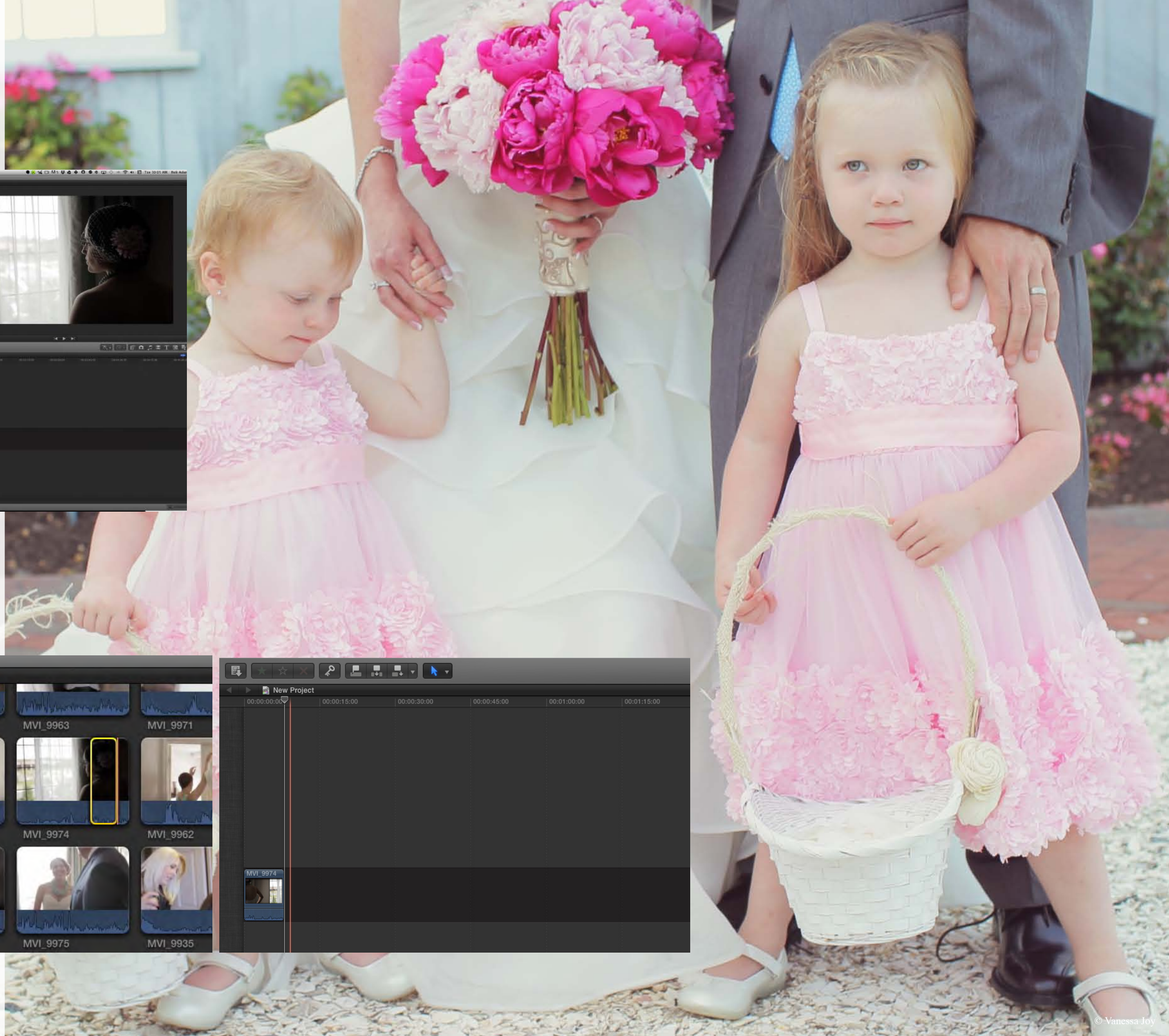
3 Once your media is in, you will see it in the top left window (Media Browser). Now you're ready to begin editing.



To edit down your original video clips and place them on the timeline, use your mouse to “skim” across the thumbnail images. You will see them move. Simply click and drag to select the portion of the video clip you want to use. Press “E” to place the selected range onto the project timeline at the bottom of the screen.

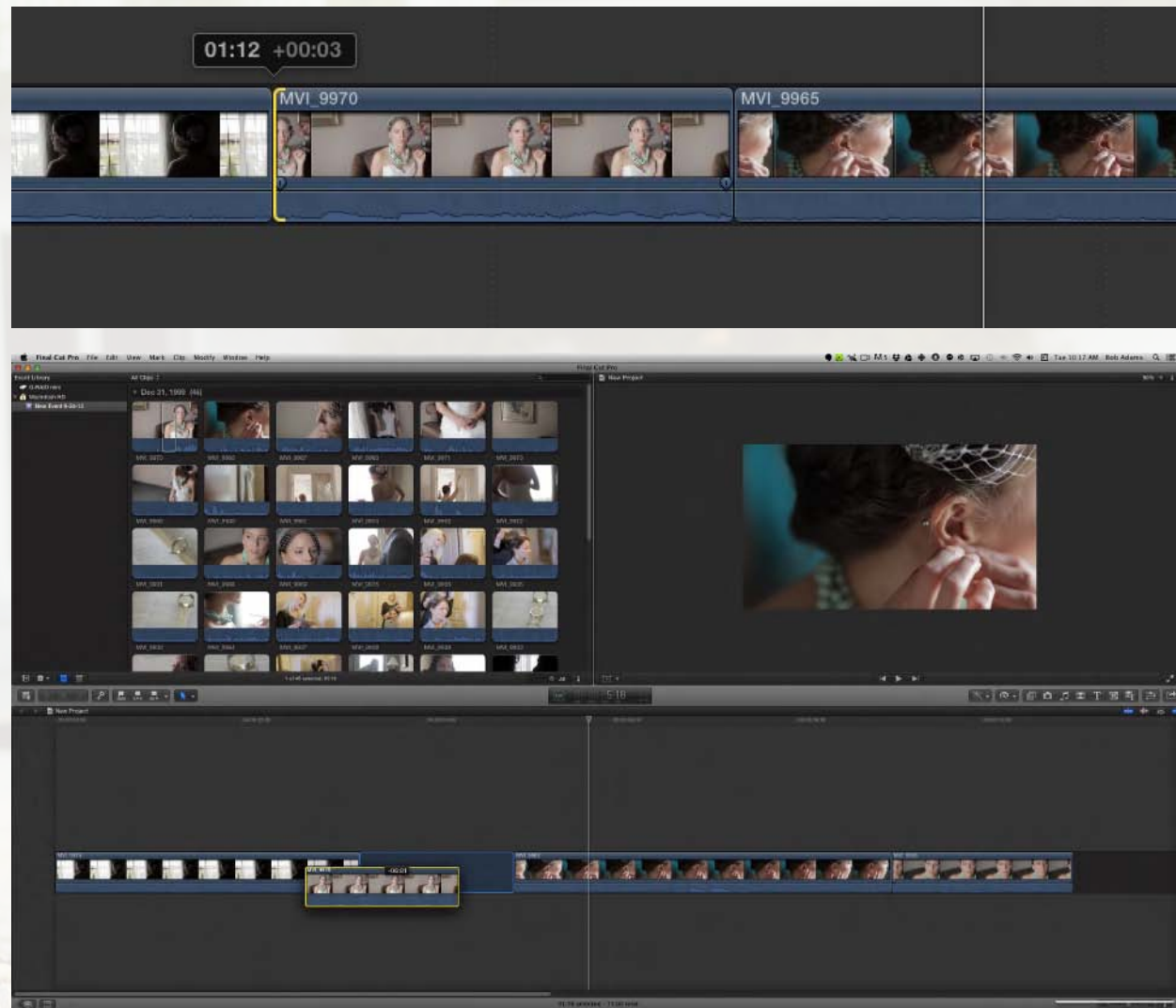


Repeat this process until you have all of your desired video clips on the timeline.

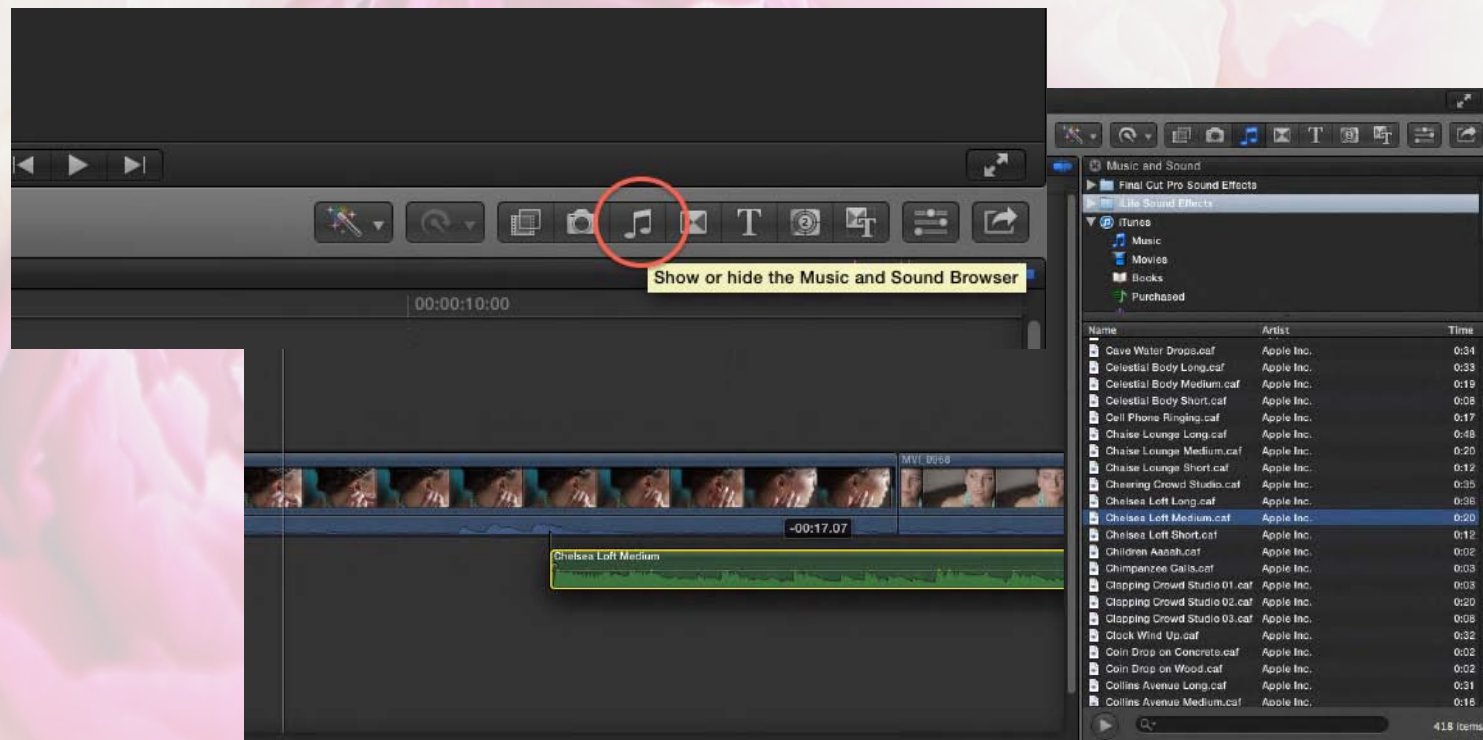


4 Trimming and arranging. You can now begin to trim, move and arrange your selected portions in the order you want. Just be careful: By pressing “E” to bring your clips down to the timeline, you placed them on the Primary Storyline. This darker-gray bar along the middle of the timeline is “magnetic,” meaning that anything that is trimmed or moved within it affects all the other clips down the line. When you start playing with clips on the Primary Storyline, you will start to understand how it behaves.

Below I have illustrated trimming a video clip and moving a video clip.



- 5 Adding music.** Working with audio is a lesson in itself, but you can easily add it to your productions by dragging in files from your iTunes library. You can also import music files the same way you would video files. Click the music-note icon to bring up your iTunes library. FCPX has its own built-in music and sound effects library. Music and audio files are represented by a green bar on your timeline. Simply place it where you want it.



That should be enough to get you going. As with any piece of software, practice makes better. Plenty of online FCPX tutorials can help you master the most basic of functions.

Remember, I use only the bare minimum of what this program can do, and I'm regularly able to achieve great results and make beautiful films. Check out my video for some other basic tips and tricks in FCPX. ■



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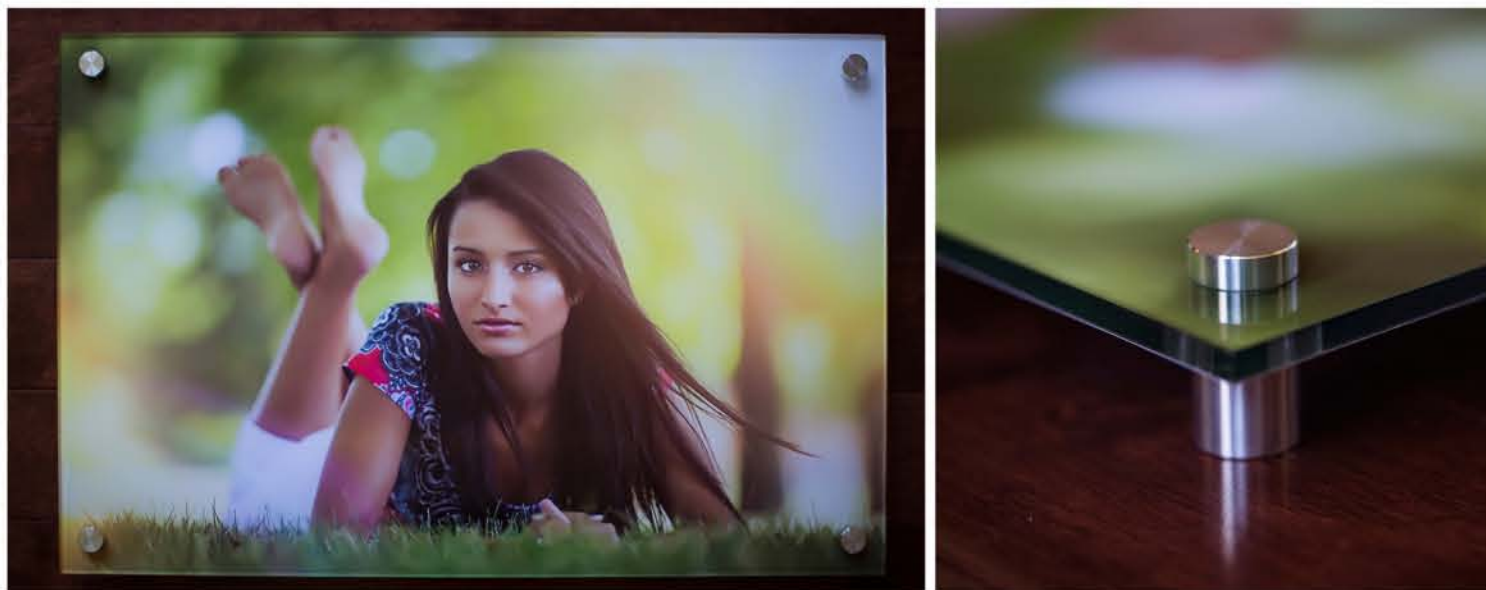
To get you started, we are giving a free "Photo Toolbox" with every Digital Camera purchase. It includes a free memory card and camera bag. These essential accessories will get you up and shooting the minute you get your camera.

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VIRTUOSŌ

by Salvatore Cincotta

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PHOTOSHOP

STRAYHAIRS

WITH DAMIAN BATTINELLI



BY DAMIAN BATTINELLI



Not all of us have stylists on hand for all our photo shoots. Fixing stray hairs in PhotoShop can be a messy task, but mastering a few techniques can help alleviate some of the mess.

Before you go after those stray hairs, take stock of the situation. What is the hairstyle supposed to look like? Is it a loose style that would look great blowing in the wind? Is it a tight, smooth style doused in hairspray? A mixture of both? The next thing to look at is the background. From a solid color, to textured, to outdoor shots, recognizing these will help you determine which PhotoShop tools will work best for the job.

I use four PhotoShop tools: Patch Tool, Spot Healing Brush Tool, Brush Tool and the Clone Stamp Tool. I use them in combination with a Wacom Intuos Pro tablet. I edited for many years without one, and I'm kicking myself for not getting one sooner. With a Wacom you can use your brushes to their full potential, and also edit with precision. Using the ExpressKeys and Touch Ring allows you to use the tablet without your keyboard. There are lots of ways to tackle stray hairs, but I'm going to teach you my own method.

First, make a copy of your image by pressing COM/ALT+J on your keyboard. Make it a habit to do this for every image you work on. The ability to go back to the original can be priceless.

For loose hairstyles, remove all stray hairs that extend blatantly beyond the subject's head. Then, diminish or completely remove the remaining strays that you determine need to go. The Clone Stamp Tool is great for this. The hairstyle will tell you whether or not you need a harder or softer brush.

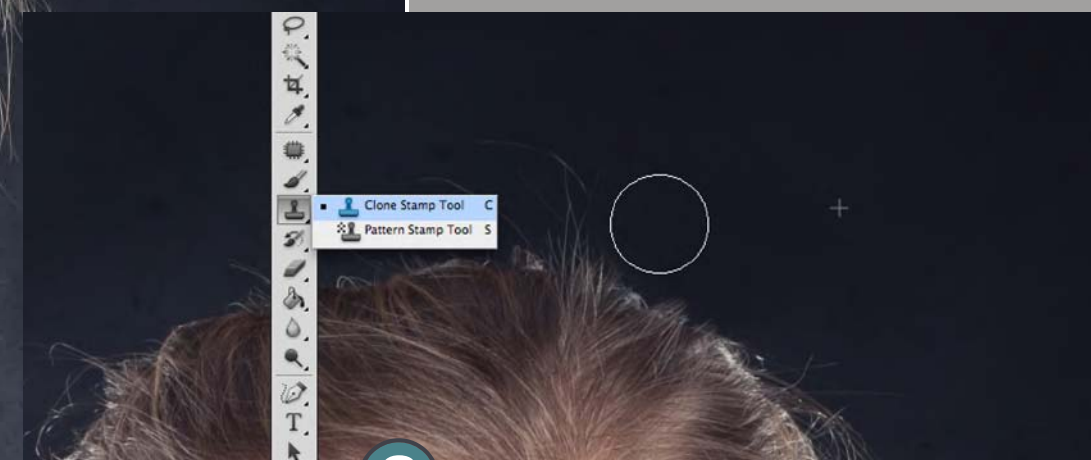
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STRAY HAIRS



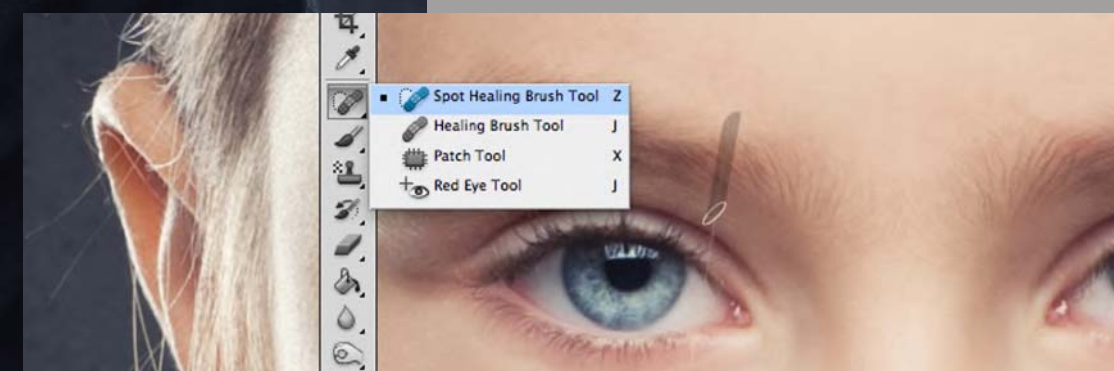
1

Select the required brush and zoom in 200% or more. Sample the background behind the hair. Press ALT and click on the area you want to sample from. I start by cloning out the longest strays by brushing over them and moving in toward the edge of the hair. For smoother edges, increase the hardness of your brush. If there is a repetitive pattern in the background, such as bricks, try not to disturb it—instead, try your best to replicate it. Otherwise, tap into your inner artist and clone accordingly.

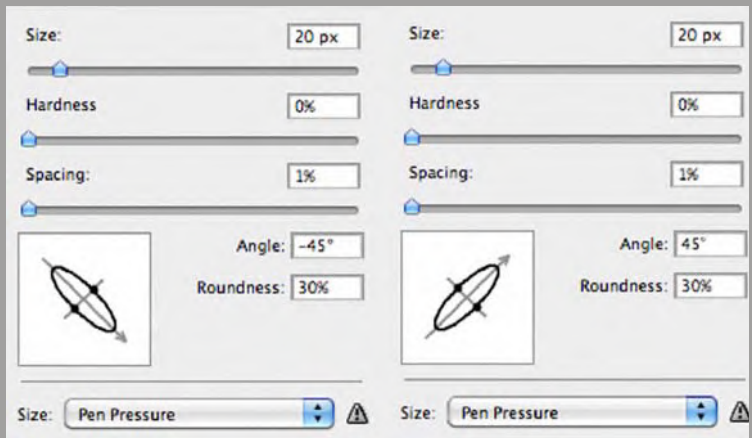


2

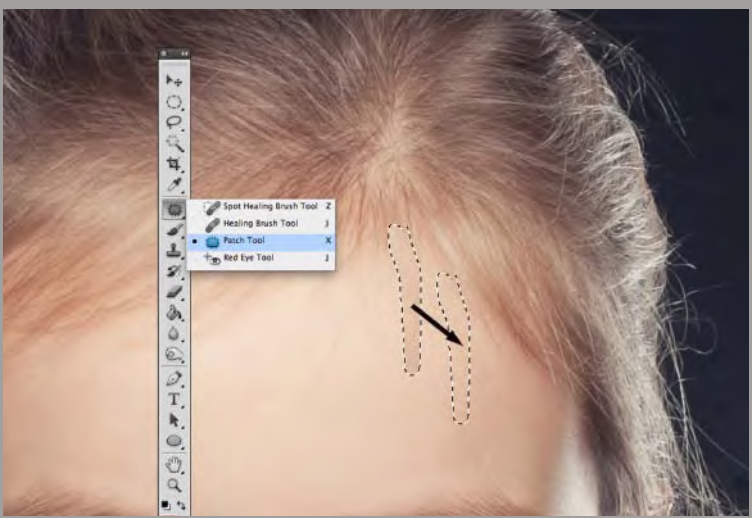
The Spot Healing Tool is fast and accurate. It's used like the Brush Tool. I create an oval brush either at -45° with 30% roundness or 45° with 30% roundness, depending on which way the hairs lie. Adjust the size accordingly. The shape of this brush enables you to sweep wide or cut in narrowly on single strands of hair. Typically, these hairs cross over the bulk of the hairdo or across the face, and can stand out like a sore thumb. (These brush shapes double as great blemish removers while using the Healing Brush Tool, but that's another article.)



3 Carefully brush over unwanted strays using single strokes. The tool samples pixels from the surrounding area and replaces your strokes beautifully. The nice thing about this tool is that you don't have to specify an area to sample from; just brush over the stray hairs, alternating between the 45° and -45° brushes, depending on the direction of the stray.

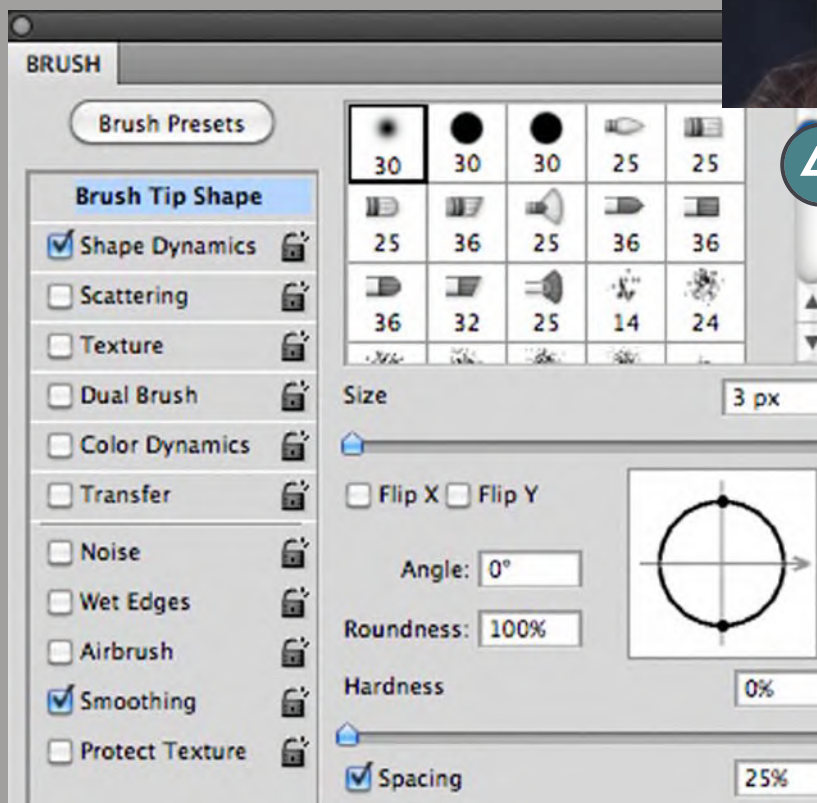
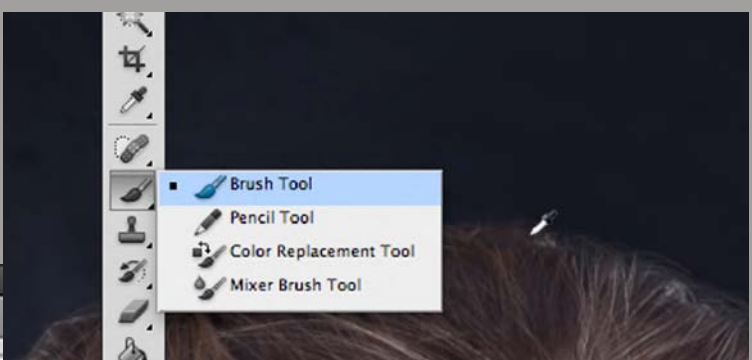


The Patch Tool does a great job replacing those pesky hairs that extend into the background or across the forehead or cheeks. These locations allow for a larger area to sample from. Use the tool to replace skin texture and patterned backgrounds as well.



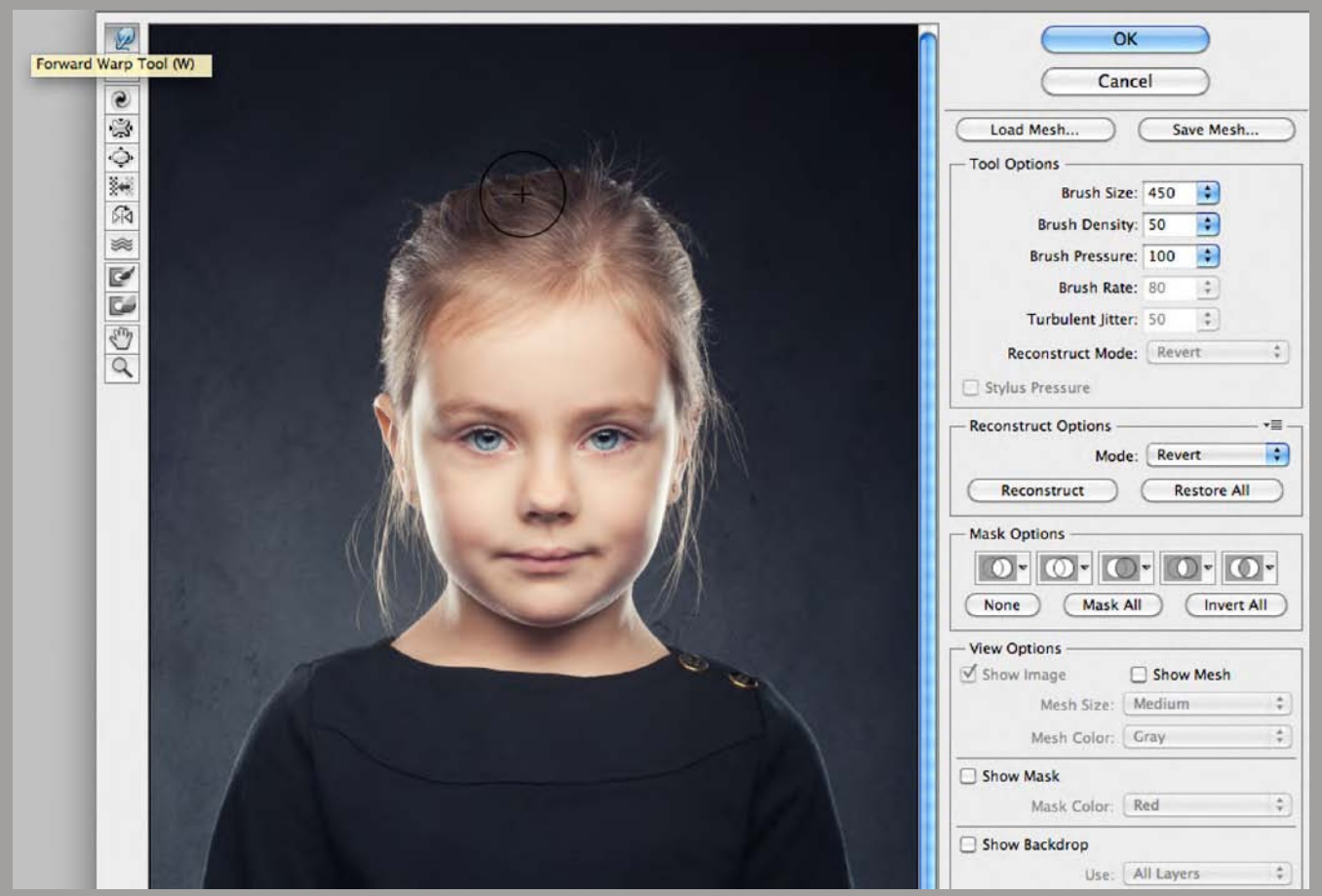
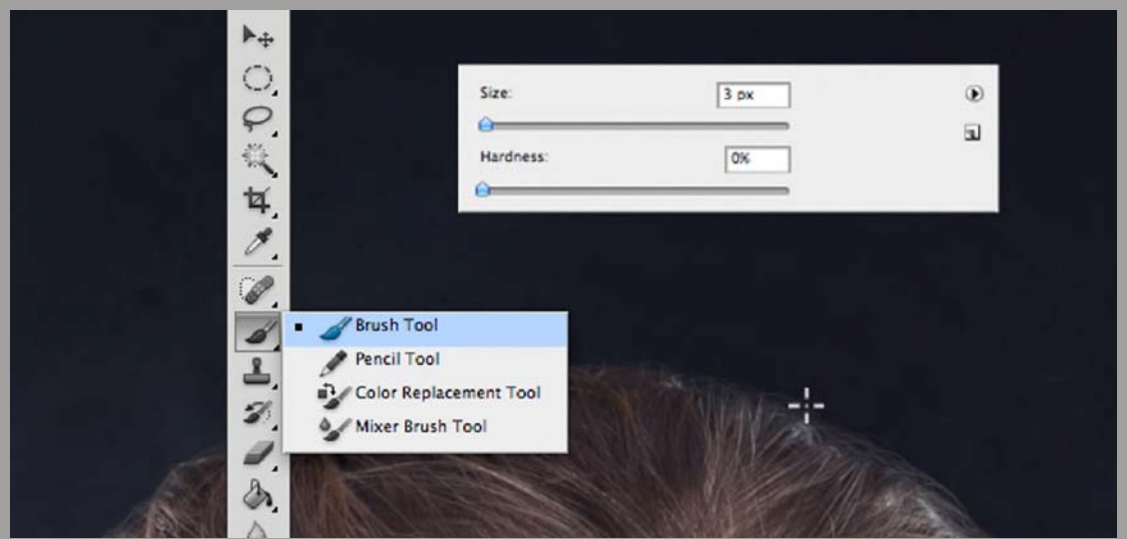
Using the Patch Tool, create a selection by circling the strays. Don't choose too big an area. Drag the selection to a similar area and release it. This fills in your selection with the area you dragged to. You may need to clean up the area with a few more selections afterward. You can also use the Spot Healing Tool to help with cleanup. Switch back to the Clone Stamp Tool to fix any disrupted patterns.

My final step involves the Brush Tool. I actually add hairs instead of remove them. Since I've cloned out the hairs around the head, I'll need to brush in new strands to make a realistic-looking head of hair.



4 This is where the Wacom tablet dominates. This technique also involves a bit of your artistic eye. Create a new layer by holding down COM/CTRL+SHIFT+N. You don't want to paint directly on your image. You'll need to change the brush characteristics by opening the Brush Panel. Under Brush Tip Shape, I check Shape Dynamics and Smoothing. Set the Hardness to 0% and set Spacing to 25%. These settings give you a realistic-looking strand of hair that tapers at the end. Use a soft brush set at between 2 and 5 pixels, and paint back in strands of hair to create a more realistic edge. Brush in hairs in the direction they are going.

5 Sample the colors from the edge of the hair with the Brush Tool. This creates believable strands of hair. Press and hold ALT, and you'll see the eyedropper appear. Tap on a hair color in the area you're working on. You may have to give this layer a slight blur to match the original image. In your menu bar, go to Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur and set the amount accordingly.



Here's the before and after of the headshot with the stray hairs removed:



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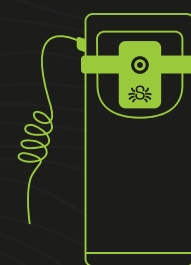
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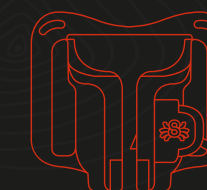
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BLACK WIDOW

MOMFIRST

STARTING A BUSINESS

with Kristy Dickerson



BY KRISTY DICKERSON



As parents who are also professional photographers, we sometimes have to choose between tucking away money for college and buying a new lens. It's tough because we feel that the better our gear is, the better our work will be. That's not necessarily true.

When starting a business, the costs of equipment, new logos, websites and education quickly add up. Startup debt can lead to problems on the home front. If you have already started that process, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Small businesses on average don't see profit until three to five years after launch. Starting a business is tough, and a lot of people underestimate the time, value and effort that goes into it. In September's article, I talked about personality types suited to being a successful entrepreneur. Now let's look at the numbers.

Keep in mind that you don't have to have the best gear. In fact, gear should be the last thing you invest in, even though for photographers it is typically the first. If I had \$1,000 to invest, I would allocate at least 70 percent to marketing. I would get a logo, set up a website and establish a brand. Invest in your image, your brand and your skills first. Buy older camera models or rent newer ones.

Education is huge in my book, and you don't have to go to a traditional school to get it. Online resources such as my own FisheyeConnect.com can provide a treasure trove of knowledge. You can connect with industry leaders and real working professionals by taking a class, training online and attending free events. You can learn from real working professionals while building a network of like-minded photographers who are learning and growing with you. You get a support system. Learning from pros can help you avoid some major mistakes in photography and business. You can often learn something in a day that might take you six months to learn in a traditional school. My online education and training have been priceless. I still attend workshops regularly. There is always something to learn in business and photography, and always new contacts to make.



If I had \$1,000 to invest,
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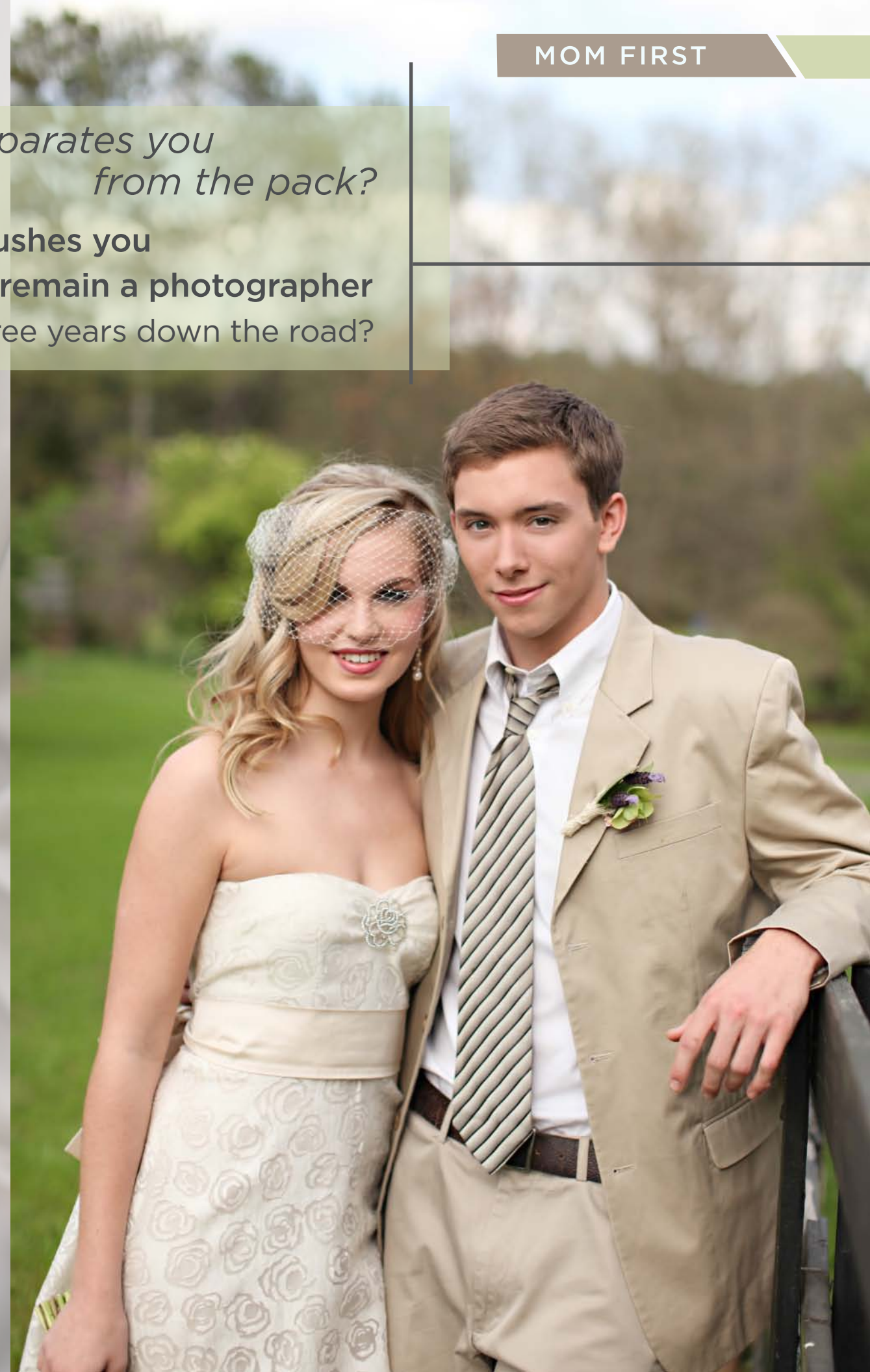
*What separates you
from the pack?*

What **pushes you**
to remain a photographer
three years down the road?

More than anything else in this article, I want you to take away these key points:

- *You don't need to buy the latest and greatest.*
- *Don't grow your business on debt!*
- *Setting up a business plan and simple budget sheet is necessary when starting any business.*
- *Don't always buy; rent if you can, and buy used or older equipment.*
- *Invest first in your marketing and branding. Don't cut corners on logos and branding elements. This sets the stage for your business, and is probably the investment that is most overlooked.*
- *Even if you do your own bookkeeping, have an accountant who will keep your taxes straight.*

Starting a business based on something you're passionate about poses unique challenges. I don't think I've ever heard of a photographer who got into the business to make money. We do it because we love photography. What separates you from the pack? What pushes you to remain a photographer three years down the road? What makes you turn this hobby into a career? It is the things that you do businesswise that determine that. You can be one of the most talented photographers or artists, but without setting up a sound business burnout, expenses or a loss in revenue will eventually be the end of your photography business.



SCENERIO 1: SALLY

Sally just had her first baby and has decided she wants to be a stay-at-home mom, but she can't figure out exactly what to do because she knows if she doesn't return to her day job, money will be tight at home. She has a camera and she loves taking pictures of her new precious little one. A photographer friend advises her to go to a photography seminar with her. The seminar inspires her to take the leap. Sally talks to her husband about starting a business. He seems apprehensive but sees the sparkle in her eye. She quits her day job and buys a brand new Canon 5D Mark III and a 50mm F1.2 lens. Because she is new, she feels like she needs to get the greatest gear for the best results. She starts a Facebook page, offers free sessions, purchases PhotoShop for editing, creates her own logo and starts a blog. Month two rolls around, and she gets the first credit card bill that she can't pay, plus interest. Balancing home life and work life is tough. Months go by, and she's getting some low-paying sessions that aren't even covering the interest. Stress builds. Her husband becomes frustrated and bitter, and within a year and a half of launch, their relationship is in shambles.

Startup Costs:

Canon 5D Mark III	\$3,500
Canon 50mm F1.2	\$1,600
PhotoShop	\$700
Interest	(Never-ending)
Debt :	\$6,000+

SCENERIO 2: BETSY

Betsy just had her first child. She wants to stay at home and turn her passion for photography into a business, but money is just too tight. The best scenario is to keep the job at least part time while the new little one is at daycare or Grandma's. Was it hard to leave that baby? Yes, but she knows she's doing the right thing for her family. She does her research and finds an older used 5D body and a used Canon 50mm F1.8 lens. She pays cash from money saved from working. She practices, reading the manual from front to back and teaching herself what she can online (including \$20 classes from FisheyeConnect.com). She decides to go with Lightroom for editing for now. She hires a graphic designer to create branding, and has a website designed. She pays these costs with a little money from small sessions. She continues working part time at her day job.

Startup Costs:

Used 5D body	\$500
Used Canon F1.8	\$125
Lightroom	\$99
Debt	None



MOM FIRST

Sally's scenario is more common than you might expect, but there's no reason to put your relationships and finances in jeopardy for your business. Betsy's scenario is much more promising, and I would highly encourage you to go that route instead.

Make smart financial decisions and stick to your business plan. Baby steps are OK! Bigger is not always better when starting off; a brand-new computer and/or camera will not make or break your business, but stress and anxiety caused by financial burden can hurt both your business and family. Being successful takes some planning, hard work and dedication—I know you can do it! ■

xoxo,
KD

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 - 6 | Sima Video Lights
 - 7 | Rogue Flash Gels
 - 8 | Phase One iq260 with Schneider 150mm 3.5
 - 9 | Cyclone Battery Packs
 - 10 | Canon 600 Speedlites
 - 11 | Canon Speedlite Transmitter
 - 12 | Lens Cloth
 - 13 | Flashlight
 - 14 | Memory Case
 - 15 | Canon 24mm 1.4
 - 16 | Canon 85mm 1.2
 - 17 | Canon 100mm Macro 2.8
 - 18 | Canon 16-35mm 2.8
 - 19 | Schneider 80mm 2.8
 - 20 | Schneider 28mm 4.5
- *not shown: canon 50mm 1.2, schneider 55mm 2.8*



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WEDDING ETIQUETTE

WITH VANESSA JOY



A GUIDE TO PUTTING THE RIGHT FOOT FORWARD ON A JOB

BY VANESSA JOY



Hopefully by now, we've gotten the gist of how to be professional and polite, and still do our job the day of the wedding. Then why do so many brides and wedding vendors constantly complain about the behavior of photographers and videographers on the wedding day? This article is all about the do's and don'ts as told by brides, makeup artists, officiants, maître d's, photographers and cinematographers. Read on to see what you're doing that's giving you a bad name and frustrating your clients.

PLAY NICE

Getting along with other vendors is key to doing a great job for your clients and not embarrassing yourself in front of your clients and their guests, but it's also vital to your marketing plan. A little says a lot. If you're even a little bit rude, vendors won't want to work with you. But if you're a little bit nice, that'll go a long way and establish great relationships with vendors who may refer brides to you. Here are three ways to play nice in the wedding sandbox.

>> COMMUNICATE YOUR PLAN

This one won't even take much time out of your day, but will mean a better experience for all involved and a better product for your client. Take time to ask where the photographer/cinematographer plans on standing during the ceremony and reception. If it hinders what you're doing, you'll know ahead of time and can reach a compromise. It's much better than the alternate scenario, in which you're getting in each other's way in an increasingly tense atmosphere.

Don't forget to communicate with the other vendors. Reception halls, deejays and bands also have a schedule and special things they like to do for the bride and groom, so coordinate with the maître' d' for the sunset or twilight shot with the couple.

>> HELP EACH OTHER OUT

The "do unto others" rule really comes into play here when you're both trying to capture the moment. Photographers, consider the negative effect your shutter click or camera flash may have on the audio and visual for the videographer, and try to be considerate by not overshooting during important audio moments or flashing when it's not necessary. Videographers, consider the negative effect a mismatched video light (tungsten inside with window light) will have on the photographer's shots. Or what it feels like to work hard to set up a detail shot just to have someone ask to shoot it after you're done.

>> BE PUNCTUAL

Timing on the day of a wedding has a domino affect on the entire day and every vendor involved. If hair and makeup is running late, it robs the photographer's shooting time before the ceremony. If the priest extends his homily by 10 minutes, it makes it nearly impossible to get all the family photos done before they kick you out of the church. If the photographer takes more than his allotted time during the photo session, the reception hall's schedule gets crunched. Keep yourself on schedule.

KNOW YOUR ROLE

As wedding vendors, we aim to serve our bride and groom, and in a lot of ways we are servants the day of the wedding. That means we have a role to fulfill and appropriate behavior to abide by. Here's three ways to make sure that you're not standing out like a sore thumb.

>> DON'T HOG THE SPOTLIGHT

It's the bride and groom's big day, so at no time should you draw unnecessary attention to yourself. A photographer who talks to the bride and groom too much throughout the day makes the other vendors' jobs difficult. It can also be irritating to the bride and groom to continue conversing with you during special moments, like when the bride is getting dressed with her mom. The videographer's audio can be ruined with you giving your autobiography in the background.

>> DON'T STUFF YOUR FACE IN FRONT OF GUESTS

We are all starving by the time cocktail hour rolls around, but it looks bad when photographers stand in the cocktail room shoveling down food. Take a sensible amount of food, don't cut in front of guests and eat in the reception hall. Clean up after yourself so you don't become a burden to the waitstaff. Make sure the guests have all been through the line before you—there's nothing that'll get another vendor quite as mad at you as stealing their food!

>> DRESS PROPERLY

Wear professional attire that is appropriate to and matches the style of the wedding. If you're shooting a wedding at a barn, a tuxedo is likely inappropriate. If you're shooting at a country club, jeans and a t-shirt probably isn't the way to go. Find clothing that is professional, comfortable and long-lasting. Not sure? Just put on your work clothes, take a picture of yourself and post it on Facebook asking if your friends think it's appropriate wedding work attire that won't be a distraction at any point.



 RESPECT YOUR SURROUNDINGS

Overall, we want to make sure we're respectful of the people and locations we're working with/at. This means following the rules of churches and venues, but it can go a few steps past the obvious. Here's five huge no-no's that'll help you avoid looking like "that guy."

>> DON'T STAND ON FURNITURE/SPEAKERS WITHOUT PERMISSION

This goes equally for when you're at the bride's house in the morning to when you're at the reception hall at night. Never assume anything is your personal stepping stool (other than maybe trees at a park). Better to ask permission first than be looked at as a rude vendor.

>> KEEP YOUR EQUIPMENT NEAT

This is another biggie to keep in mind throughout the day. Don't let your gear anywhere the bridesmaids can trip over it in the morning or where it looks sloppy in the corner of a reception hall at night. Yes, we need our gear, and no, I'm not recommending stashing it in a closet next to the back door for it to get stolen. However much equipment you need, devise a way to keep it hidden or neat, even if it means asking for a table to stash it under or bringing a small room divider to hide it behind.

>> DON'T BE OBTRUSIVE DURING THE CEREMONY

This is the time when you are noticed the most. A lot of times it can't be helped. But at no time is it a good idea to stand any closer to the bride and groom than 10 rows back from the altar. You have a telephoto lens—use it. Squat down if you can, hug the walls if possible and move around quietly and discreetly. One of the biggest complaints I hear from guests and officiants is how obtrusive the photographer/videographer was, and that's not the impression you want to leave!

>> NEVER APPEAR BORED OR STRESSED OUT, ROLL YOUR EYES, ETC.

It doesn't matter if you think you turned your head fast enough before you made a face, or you know that no one can hear you huff—someone is always watching! Yes, undoubtedly you've photographed the cha-cha slide 700 times, but this time it's special and fun for your clients, so it should be special and fun for you. Because you're with the bride and groom all day, you can either be a source of stress or a stress relief. Choose the latter, smile all day and let it all out over a beer with your team later that night.

>> DON'T HANG OUT ON YOUR CELL PHONE

It is simply unprofessional to be texting or answering emails during any point of the wedding. If it has to be done, go somewhere private to do so. If you're using your phone to look at the wedding schedule or photo ideas and inspirations, use a tablet instead. It looks more professional, and people won't assume that you're on your phone goofing around when you're really using it for work.



Overall, let common sense prevail, and try to empathize with the clients, guests and other vendors on the wedding day. Be considerate, professional and pleasant to everyone. It's a great business practice to evaluate your behavior on the wedding day both by reflecting on the day yourself and by once in a while asking clients and vendors if there's anything you can improve on.

I'll leave you with some firsthand quotes from brides and wedding vendors on the do's and don'ts of wedding etiquette. And make sure you check out the video below to see how you can go from being a pleasant photographer to work with to being one who vendors happily refer.

WHAT WEDDING VENDORS SAY

Ereny Milad (makeup artist): I hate it when some photographers show up and rush the makeup and hair. No matter how early the beauty team shows up, bridal parties always have extra requests when they realize there is extra time. What ends up happening is the bride is usually in the chair when the photog arrives and rushes the makeup and hair, while the bride gets all nervous and teary-eyed and makes our job so much harder to finish. I prefer if the photographer just photographs the bride's accessories and leaves us alone to finish until we are done. Do not shove your camera in the bride's face while we're trying to apply liquid liner. It does not end well!

Michael Langsner (banquet director): Nothing irks me more than vendors who hoard over the buffet. I strongly agree with vendors being able to eat at events, but guests should always be entitled to first selection, and should never have to wait on line behind a paid vendor.

Ginger Murray (photographer): Don't roll your eyes or look annoyed or stressed. People will see you.

Lori Puhr (videographer): When I'm shooting video, one of my photographer pet peeves is when a moment is happening and photographers say, "Oh! Oh! Stop right there!" Then I can't use that footage. Recently a mom was going to give her daughter a sweet kiss on the cheek after putting the veil on, and the photog wasn't paying attention, so she made the mom stop so she could get it. I was so bummed because I could tell it was going to be really intimate and special. Also, it's hard to work with people who are constantly talking to the bride and groom while we're shooting. For video it can be tough because we love to use audio from special moments, and instead of getting breathing and crying and "I love you," we're getting someone else saying, "Oh my gosh, guys! So cute! Woo!"

Agnieszka Aggie Marciniak (photographer): Trying to be the center of attention is a big no-no. Stealing a spotlight from the bride and groom is not OK.

Jeremy Cayton (photographer): Drinking alcohol during the reception—we get offered drinks all the time by guests as well as the bride and groom, and we always respectfully decline. If they insist, we jokingly say we want to make sure the pictures are in focus.

Vijay Rakhra (cinematographer): Don't take the bride and groom for a photo shoot and leave the videographer, or vice versa.

Donald Calello (maitre' d): Standing on the venue's chairs, moving furniture and not moving it back, removing the bride and groom during a poignant part of the reception without consideration for the other professionals.

Michael Justin Porco (cinematographer): Something we cinematographers appreciate: silent shutter!

Richard Pickrell (pastor/officiant): Never—*never*—talk money on wedding day. Never.

Todd Hobert (photographer): Always when asked or even if not, tell your bride that she looks beautiful, stunning, etc. Sometimes you get so busy shooting that you forget to compliment your bride.

WHAT BRIDES SAY

Danielle Simmons: I have seen servers eat the food off the trays at cocktail hour!

Caroline Norris Wright: A limo driver who doesn't know where they are going, refuses to listen to the GPS and gets lost, making the bride 40 minutes late.

Jessica Goldschmidt: Asking to get a shot of the centerpieces you worked 15 hours to create, and you get two pictures, no close-ups or details. Not using the entire two and a half hours between the ceremony and cocktails to get any group photos, then disappearing the entire cocktail hour and not being available then, either. Getting annoyed during family portraits because of poor location choice and everyone [family] snapping pictures.

Brielle Billig Lenihan: Having to ask for nearly every shot. Obviously we had no clue what we were doing, and so we missed out on a lot of photos of that day that we would have really loved to have. Also, checking as you go to make sure the bride or groom isn't routinely doing something unflattering in a lot of photos. I had a double chin from the way I was smiling in nearly all of them, something I don't have in real life.

Daniel Cruz: You show the photographer the one photo you would love for him/her to do with you and your groomsmen, but after looking through all the proofs, you find that he/she took every other picture under the sun except for the only one you wanted.

Kaitlin Coppock Felter: Telling the bride to hurry up and get dressed so that she can stay on your schedule on her wedding day, so she misses important photos with her bridesmaids, and doesn't get to eat breakfast and gets lightheaded during the ceremony.



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BY SAL CINCOTTA

Right now, senior season is in full swing. I can barely keep up with my schedule. This is a good thing. It's part of the madness we call our lives. During this time of year, we know we have to suck it up and shoot, shoot, shoot! If you are slow right now, something's off.

All year, my studio has been marketing, advertising, building up the calendar. Our business, like most photography studios, is seasonal. The goal is to get as much through the pipeline as possible.

It's very easy this time of year to be so busy we don't see the fall creeping up on us. For me, fall is family-portrait month, and sometimes I lose track of it. October and November in the Midwest are also sketchy. It can be 65 degrees and gorgeous, or it can rain almost every day. We had that happen one month. I had 70-plus family portraits scheduled for October, and it rained 28 of 31 days. It was insane. Needless to say, our sales were garbage.

Something new we have been doing is adding a quick family portrait session to our senior sessions. The families that do it spend more money than they would on a normal senior session. How do we do it? Let's take a look at our process.

+ COMMUNICATION IS KEY

The client likely won't be expecting an offer of this kind of package, but it's a brilliant option. Some families haven't had a family portrait in years. They are already getting ready for this shoot—why not add an extra 15 minutes for a family portrait?





+ NO EXTRA CHARGE

There is no charge for this. You read that right. We want to make it easy for everyone. At most, you'll be adding an extra 15 minutes to the session. Don't drag it out. Clients see this as a huge value add. Most importantly, it gives you a big bonus in extra sales. It's an easy way to get more great images that the parents want. Don't get greedy by tacking on an extra \$50 or \$100 session fee. You are already there and already working with the family. Just plan for a little extra time with the family, and make it a fun experience. You will see the return on your investment when they come in to buy pictures.

+ THE SESSION IS STILL ABOUT THE SENIOR

Don't get so caught up in the family event that you forget the seniors. This is still about them. They have been getting lost in the family event their entire life. This is their moment. It is their experience. Make sure you remember that. It's too easy to get caught in the excitement that, the next thing you know, 45 minutes to an hour has passed. Now you are rushing the senior.

As you can see from some of the images I've provided, we focus on the family unit and then isolate the siblings. If you move quickly, you can do this in less than 20 minutes. We get some amazing images, and fast.

Keep in mind a sibling of your senior may have had senior shots done by someone else. This is a great opportunity for me to get an isolated portrait of that potential new senior client. The take-away here is: Don't be afraid to isolate family members. Just be quick. Having the extra images will pay off big in the sales session.

+ ADDING VALUE

+ THE RESULTS

Family members are excited when they come in to see their pictures. They're going to spend more money than they would have on just senior portraits. It's inevitable. There are so many choices for them. They all invested in the shoot. They took off work, put wardrobe together, coordinated family members. They want this as a centerpiece in their home.

Our studio is seeing a 30 to 40 percent spike in sales over our normal senior sales sessions. If I can add 40 percent in sales just by adding an extra 30 minutes to a shoot, count me in every day of the week.



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- *Sal Cincotta*



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A wedding couple is shown in a romantic embrace in a forest. The groom, in a dark suit, is kissing the bride on the cheek. The bride, in a white lace wedding dress and veil, is holding up her train. The background is filled with trees and foliage bathed in warm, golden light, creating a bokeh effect. The text 'PICTURE PERFECT' is overlaid in a large, bold, black font within a thin black rectangular border. Below it, the word 'CRITIQUE' is written in a smaller, spaced-out, black font. Further down, the text 'WITH ROBERTO VALENZUELA' is displayed in a small, black, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, there is a small copyright notice: '© Roberto Valenzuela'.

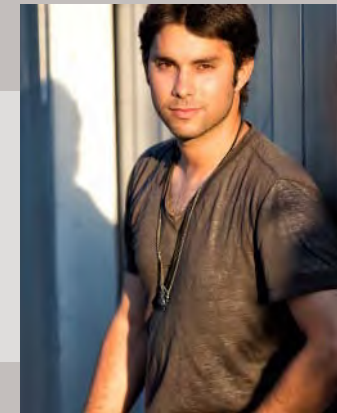
**PICTURE
PERFECT**

CRITIQUE

WITH ROBERTO VALENZUELA



© Tyler and Hannah Photography



BY ROBERTO VALENZUELA

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

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

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

>>WATCH FACEBOOK.COM/BTSHUTTER FOR OUR CALL TO SUBMIT IMAGES NEXT MONTH!<<



© Amy Davis



© Robin Putt



© Nate Creamer



© DoubleKT2

SHUTTER

WATCH CRITIQUES NOW!
CHECK OUT THIS VIDEO...

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a light-colored sleeveless top, dark pants, and high-heeled shoes, is sitting on a wooden bench on a dock. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. The background features a calm lake reflecting the surrounding green trees and a clear sky. The scene is set during the day with soft lighting.

MAXIMIZING EFFICIENCY IN YOUR **WORKFLOW**

with Laurin Thienes



BY LAURIN THIENES

Time is money. With photographers spending so much of their time editing and processing their images (whether they outsource or not), seconds count. What would you do with 10 more minutes per day? What about an extra hour or more? Here are five workflow hacks to help you get to a place where you need to answer that question.

COPY VS. INGEST

I spoke with a client a few months ago and almost died when the words came out of her mouth.

“I plug my camera into my computer and import them into iPhoto.”

I swallowed hard, bit my tongue to keep from going ballistic. Was I really having this conversation? The reality is, many newer photographers were never taught the best way to get their images from their memory card to their computer. Their camera comes out of the box with a USB cord, and it's easy to think that is the right method.

For the most efficient workflow, set up a file structure and stick to it. When the card is plugged into the computer, instead of ingesting via Lightroom, Photo Mechanic or iPhoto, just drag the files directly into one folder. This is your raw folder. Label it like this:

“2013_08_13_SmithWedding” [Year/Month/Day_JobName_Wed/Eng/Port/etc.]

From there, set up the following folders at minimum in the master folder: Raw, LR Catalog, Exports. Of course, you can make it more extensive depending on the specific workflow: slideshow, blog images, prints, etc. This becomes your master folder. However, you must have the discipline to put your exports and all your work in this one folder. It's easy to have a lapse in judgment and export images into many different folders everywhere. Get it together and stick with your process. Being organized is the most efficient thing you can do for your workflow.





BACKING UP

There is always the risk of catastrophic failure—house fires, acts of God, etc.—but we can plan for at least a small level of insurance against things that can drive you insane. Between the simple, manual backup methods and the complex automated methods, I like to focus on the simple. We use a simple color label method that tells us what has been backed up and what has not. A duplicate copy of our raw folder gets stored on a separate drive and the main folder gets tagged with a green color label. When the backup drive is full, the drive is transported to an offsite location. This can be a closet space at the in-laws' or either your home or studio, depending on where you work. These should also be bare internal drives, which are compact, stackable, and affordable. Some programs allow you to catalog what is on different drives, but a screenshot can do the trick as well. This backup method ensures you never lose a raw image. Can you lose some work? Absolutely, but as long as you have the raw images, you can always replicate what you have already done.

YOUR COMPUTER SYSTEM

That brings us to what you are putting your work on. As Apple prepares to release one of the fastest production computers for creatives in the new and updated Mac Pro, it might be time to reevaluate your hardware. Do you have a small screen or a computer that lags every time you work on any file that pushes the limits? Determine the amount of time you wait on your computer. This becomes a simple math equation for total cost:

$$\begin{aligned} & \textit{Time Waiting} \times \textit{Your Personal Time per Hour} \\ & + \textit{Your Opportunity Cost of Lost Time} \\ & \quad - \textit{Cost of a New, Faster Computer} \end{aligned}$$

Only you can answer that question, but you might be very surprised by the answer. The other benefit of having the fastest computer on the market is longevity. Taking the time to swap out hardware every year is a time drain. Having the fastest computer you can get saves time and money if it saves you from needing to upgrade more often.

DUAL MONITOR

Many of us are stuck on our laptops and are used to using Lightroom on one screen. The second you unlock the power of Lightroom with two screens, you'll wonder how you ever used it on one. The ability to keep a full screen view, or better, a 100% view on one monitor, while having a grid view on another, cuts down on your need to switch between the two different view modes. Another fantastic way to run with this is with develop mode on the main monitor and a grid mode on the other. This allows to you get a lay of the land without having to switch multiple times to different view modes and modules. I'd even be willing to wager that running Lightroom on multiple monitors allows productivity to increase anywhere from 15 to 25 percent. With the amount of time we spend in Lightroom, this can be a significant amount of time savings.

KNOW YOUR SOFTWARE

One of the fastest ways to speed up your workflow in PhotoShop and other software is to know your quick keys. Shortcuts allow you to not break hand-eye coordination, and to navigate around your program with the touch of a button. Numerous keyboard shortcut tools help you navigate around Lightroom, including VSCO Keys, RPG Keys (a 45-key keyboard with custom settings), and The Cullinator (a Playstation gaming controller used for culling images). Setting up customized PhotoShop actions is another great way to make sure you are able to do repetitive tasks with a click of the play button or a push of a customized keyboard shortcut. With shortcuts you can set up an action that gives you dodge and burn layers, or automatically runs a skin-smoothing plugin, then adds a mask to it. ■



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Salvatore Cincotta
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STAYING

SHARP

WITH SKIP COHEN

BY SKIP COHEN



We're all part of an industry that's driven by technology and marketing, and pretty much everything is a spinoff of those two things.

Technology is constantly changing. Every day there's something new coming your way, promising you the best and most creative tools in the history of photography. New cameras, lenses and software keep expanding your bag of tricks. Photographers today have tools at their disposal that just a few years ago were available only to corporations.

Marketing brings it all together. Each of you, because of social media, has the reach that only major magazines and newspapers used to have. Consumer trends come and go through a revolving door of fashion, taste and culture, as each of us tries to intuit what the next big thing is going to be.

Even challenges in the economy can be neutralized with great marketing. You still have the power to influence your target audience. Marketing done right can also get you through the noise and put your business in the spotlight.

So, what's the big deal? I haven't told you anything you didn't already know. Well, how are you going to stay sharp? What are you going to do to make sure your education in every aspect of this business never slows down?

I had some fun with this topic, and made some calls to the experts for their take.



I'm always learning from and being inspired by other artists' work. When I'm not producing, my days are filled with other artists' publications, exhibitions, presentations and interviews. I develop a greater appreciation for an artist's work by reading not the latest magazine headlines but the essential critical thinking by contemporary art critics published in books. I'm particularly fond of Oxford's Very Short Introductions series (covering photography, journalism, art theory, beauty, etc.), which delivers the latest thinking on timeless subjects distilled into beautifully short and sweet packages.

I keep learning from people working outside my disciplines too. While it's important to focus on relevant areas of personal interest, it's also important to search outside your personal filter bubbles. I learn so much from anyone working at the top of their game creatively, whether it's artists working in other disciplines (the sculptor Anish Kapoor has been a major influence for me recently), marketing gurus delivering messages effectively (Nancy Duarte's Resonate has helped me improve my presentations) or entrepreneurs developing life-changing technology (Steve Jobs demonstrated how design can change culture). Innovation comes in many forms—and it's always inspiring.

My education started when I was born, and will continue until I'm dead. Who knows where/who my next lesson will come from?

Visit JohnPaulCaponigro.com to check out John Paul's latest projects, and to see how the changing fine-art landscape has impacted his ongoing education.

SCOTT BOURNE

I've worked on several projects with Scott, including coauthoring *Going Pro* with him two years ago.

Three things: First, I read everything I can, even when it's something that normally doesn't interest me. For example, I just read a book about model trains—I have zero interest in the topic, but it was fascinating, giving me ideas on things I'd like to incorporate into my work. Second, I expose myself to food, culture and art from around the world. I like to see how other artists express themselves. Third, I like to sit in on as many programs as I can. That's something I learned from Monte Zucker.

Years ago I was teaching a workshop and spotted Monte in the back of the room. I couldn't believe that the legendary Monte Zucker was sitting in on my program, and I asked him why he was there.

"I already know what I know," he said. "I want to know what you know!"

Visit ScottBourne.com to learn more about Scott and his work.



I've worked with Bob and Dawn on a long list of projects over the years. They're definitely one of the leading couples involved in education. Dawn tends to stay on top of marketing, while Bob focuses on technology.

Dawn is a big fan of downloads from PhotoShelter.com that help her stay on the cutting edge.

We try to attend programs by anybody who comes to Chicago, such as Sandy Puc and Jerry Ghionis.

Bob gave me a perspective on how they stay sharp that I really hadn't thought about before.

When we teach workshops, newer photographers get us thinking about something new simply because they suggest new ways of doing things. It might be as simple as somebody asking, "Why do you do it that way?" The very nature of the question gets us thinking, and before you know it, we're changing the way we approach something.

Check out what Bob and Dawn are doing next at DavisWorkshops.com.

BOB & DAWN DAVIS

ROBERTO VALENZUELA

Roberto is currently studying video and cinematography. He knows what it's like to tell the story through the lens of a DSLR, but now he wants to learn video to see if it changes his perspective.

He's also pushing himself in other formats, and recently bought a Hasselblad to understand medium format. He watches a lot of Lynda.com ("at least one program a night").

As both a judge and participant in contests around the globe, he pays close attention to print competitions. He follows all the judging, and loves to learn from other judges' perspectives.

If I just rely on my ability to tell the story with a DSLR, then I'm being complacent, but by learning to be a videographer, I push myself to be a stronger artist!

Roberto is another photographer who needs to be on your radar. Check out RobertoValenzuelaPhotography.com to keep tabs on where he's speaking next.



I've worked with Bob for close to 15 years, and I've watched his work change. I believe he's producing some of the finest work of his career right now, and I wanted to find the secret to his ability to constantly keep growing as an artist.

Becoming a PPA-affiliated judge has been a key part of my education. It's a three-year project of just judging. Then there's work involved to be approved, followed by another three-year process before you're approved to judge other judges. Every time I come back from any one of these programs, I'm completely renewed and my work seems to jump another notch.

Another aspect is being an instructor. As an instructor, you learn a lot from the challenge of just teaching. You have to think how you're going to explain something, and really think it through. Plus, virtually every night I look at other images and study other artists.

I'm also a voracious reader, and read everything I can.

Last on the list, I shoot constantly. I'm never without a camera. I'm actually shooting now with the new Panasonic GX7, which has me going crazy with so many things I'm able to do that took bigger, heavier, slower gear in the past.

Bob's doing some exciting things in education. Check it out at Successful-Photographer.com.

BOBCOATES

There you have it. Six photographers who have made it a point to never stop learning, while carving out their niche and helping all of us grow.

“ Anyone who *stops learning is old,*
whether at twenty or eighty.

Anyone who *keeps learning stays young.*

The greatest thing in life
is to **keep your mind young.**”



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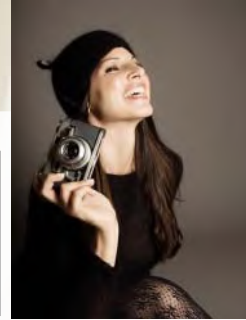
A close-up photograph of a woman wearing a red corset with ruffled bustiers and long red gloves. Her hands are clasped in front of her. The background is a plain, light color.

9 WAYS

TO MAKE YOUR BOUDOIR BUSINESS **MORE**

*Meaningful,
Fulfilling & Fun*

with Christa Meola



BY CHRISTA MEOLA

Whether or not we're doing great work and making good money, the essential factor necessary for happiness in our profession is finding meaning in our work. It's easy for us to get caught up in lighting, posing, pricing and all the other aspects of running a photography business, and lose sight of the reason we chose to become a photographer in the first place. But after the quality of your work, the meaning and enjoyment you create out of your career is what leads to real fulfillment. I hope you finish reading this article not only inspired, but also with a clear action plan for how to achieve a deeper, more fulfilling career.

1. *Ask yourself: "Why?"*

Why do you do this work? Why boudoir photography and not landscapes? Try to go beyond "to empower women." Why is it important that a woman do a shoot? That you pick up a camera and point it at this particular woman? Why does the world need this? These questions will help you creatively, in developing a vision and when you press the shutter, but also in designing your business and what your process is, what you sell, and for how much. Your business will be designed with intention, and your photography will have a heart and soul.



2. *Identify whom you love to serve*

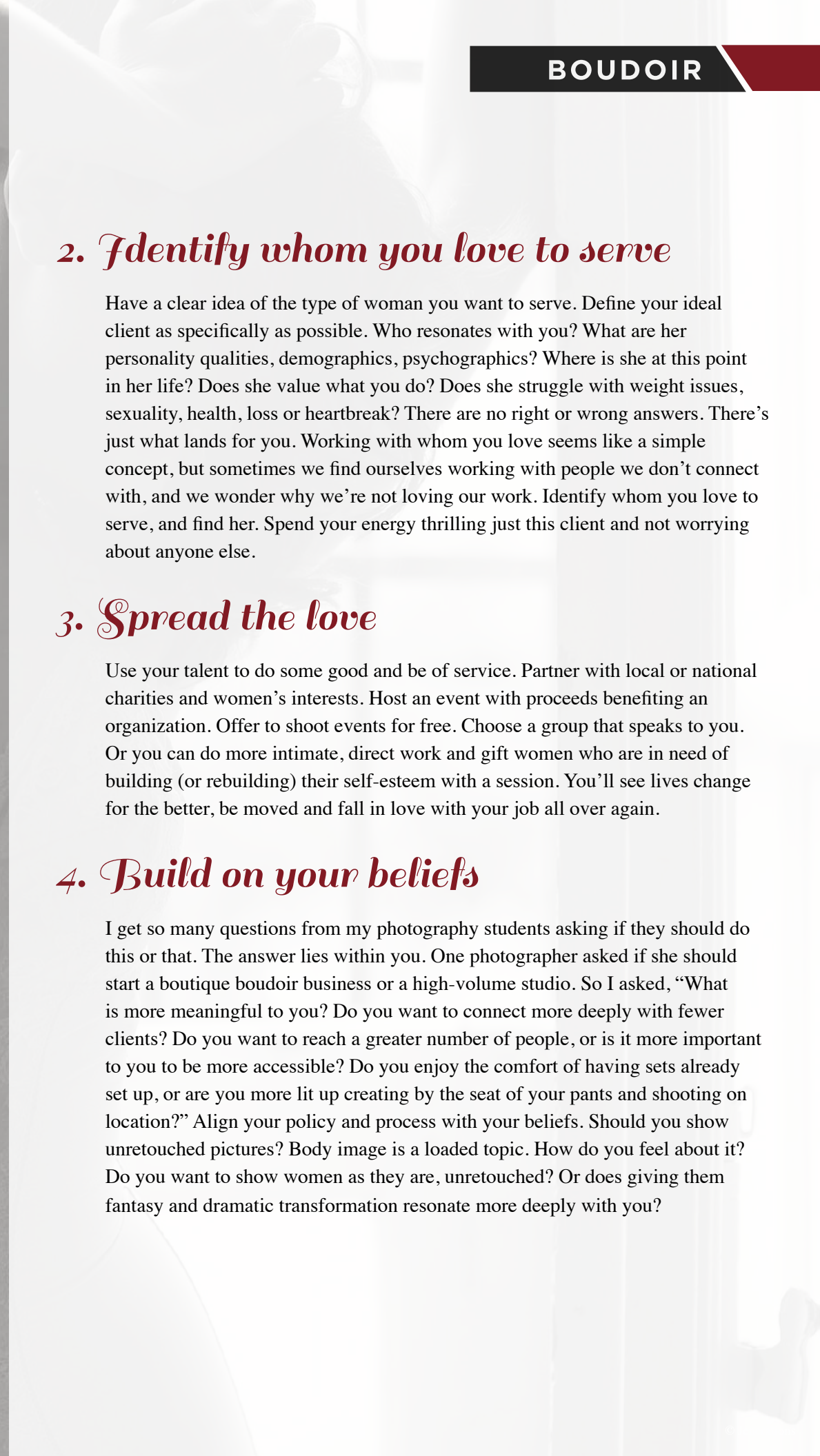
Have a clear idea of the type of woman you want to serve. Define your ideal client as specifically as possible. Who resonates with you? What are her personality qualities, demographics, psychographics? Where is she at this point in her life? Does she value what you do? Does she struggle with weight issues, sexuality, health, loss or heartbreak? There are no right or wrong answers. There's just what lands for you. Working with whom you love seems like a simple concept, but sometimes we find ourselves working with people we don't connect with, and we wonder why we're not loving our work. Identify whom you love to serve, and find her. Spend your energy thriving just this client and not worrying about anyone else.

3. *Spread the love*

Use your talent to do some good and be of service. Partner with local or national charities and women's interests. Host an event with proceeds benefiting an organization. Offer to shoot events for free. Choose a group that speaks to you. Or you can do more intimate, direct work and gift women who are in need of building (or rebuilding) their self-esteem with a session. You'll see lives change for the better, be moved and fall in love with your job all over again.

4. *Build on your beliefs*

I get so many questions from my photography students asking if they should do this or that. The answer lies within you. One photographer asked if she should start a boutique boudoir business or a high-volume studio. So I asked, "What is more meaningful to you? Do you want to connect more deeply with fewer clients? Do you want to reach a greater number of people, or is it more important to you to be more accessible? Do you enjoy the comfort of having sets already set up, or are you more lit up creating by the seat of your pants and shooting on location?" Align your policy and process with your beliefs. Should you show unretouched pictures? Body image is a loaded topic. How do you feel about it? Do you want to show women as they are, unretouched? Or does giving them fantasy and dramatic transformation resonate more deeply with you?



5. *Make it personal*

Get to know your subject, and invite her to bring more of herself to the process and the session. Ask questions during the preconsultation, and incorporate personal details into the shoot—a prop, a note, a wardrobe item or accessory with a story or history. Go deeper and ask her why she’s doing a shoot. What does she love about her body? What excites her? What does she hope this session will do for her? What’s her life like right now? This builds rapport and trust with your client. But you’ll also create your shot list from her answers. Get details. She loves her hips—why? Her answers will help guide what and how you shoot. This discussion also gets her more excited and invested in the shoot. Clients love the shoot so much more when they feel like a collaborator. And so will you.

6. *Curate an experience*

Curate the type of experience that you’d love. Design an event that fits the core of your brand, and build a team that helps realize this vision and bring it to life the day of the shoot (stylists, photo assistants, a good friend). Think of the session as a party and an invitation to get sexy. Add unconventional elements that are unique to you and fit your brand, like a full makeover, massage, striptease class or gallery outing. Customize the experience with a little gift, a special playlist and refreshments. Little touches go a long way. Offer a take-home of the experience to the client, like a Polaroid or Instagram. See the experience all the way through to the end and beyond. Instead of a standard ordering session, why not a fun reveal event over bubbly? Interview her about why she did the shoot and how she felt before and after, and ask her permission to blog about it.

7. *Don’t try to please everyone*

There is no person or company on the planet that can please everyone. We all have critics and cynics who don’t like what we do or how we do it. That’s fine. We’re all different, and we’re not for everyone. Don’t waste time or energy trying to win over people who don’t get you. If you’re a man and a prospective female client isn’t comfortable with a male photographer, that is not your client. She will always be more comfortable with a female. It has nothing to do with you. Not everyone who calls you is your ideal client, and that’s OK.



8. *Keep growing artistically and creatively*

True fulfillment comes from growth, especially for creatives. As artists, we all go through periods when we feel unsure or stagnant. Assign yourself projects that not only challenge your creativity, but also force you to build skills, experiment with the unknown and remain inspired. Step out into the world and find your inspiration as you move through your day. It can be art, nature, cinema or the woman sitting next to you while you're having coffee. Nurture your inner artist to remain creatively juiced and enjoying what you do.

9. *Where you're at is OK*

Sometimes fulfillment and happiness means knowing it's natural to have different phases in your career. Your art and business are constantly evolving. Take a breath and be OK with where you are as you walk or sprint to where you want to be, and enjoy the journey!



PHOTOGRAPHERS

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SALCINCOTTA

www.SalCincotta.com

LOCATION: O'Fallon, IL

PASSION: Weddings & Seniors

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

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

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

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

FEATURED ARTICLES

Adding Value To Your Senior Session
Q&A with Sal Cincotta



ROBADAMS

www.RobAdamsFilms.com

LOCATION: Freehold, New Jersey

PASSION: Weddings

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

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

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

FEATURED ARTICLES

Final Cut Pro X - 5 Easy Steps



DAMIANBATTINELLI

www.damianbattinelli.com

LOCATION: Plattsburgh, NY

PASSION: Seniors

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

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

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

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

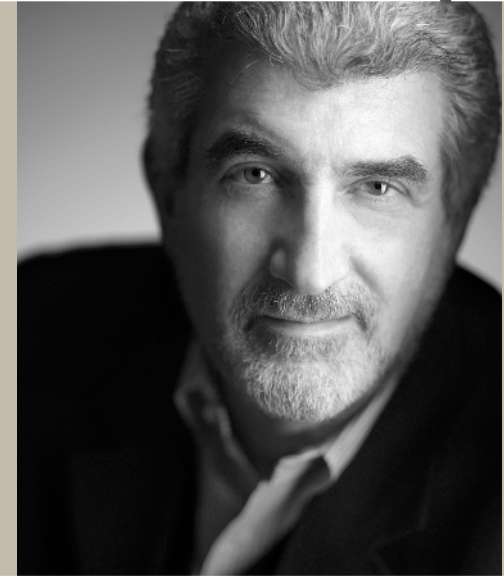
FEATURED ARTICLES

Photoshop: Stray Hairs



© Damian Battinelli

CONTRIBUTORS



SKIP COHEN

www.SkipsPhotoNetwork.com

LOCATION: Sarasota, Florida

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

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

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

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

FEATURED ARTICLES

Staying Sharp



MICHAEL CORSENTINO

www.CorsentinoPhotography.com

LOCATION: Petaluma, California

PASSION: Lifestyle Photography

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

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

FEATURED ARTICLES

Motion Meets Flash





KRISTY DICKERSON

www.KristyDickerson.com

LOCATION: Atlanta, Georgia

PASSION: Weddings & Engagements

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

FEATURED ARTICLES

Mom First - Starting a Family





VANESSA JOY

www.VanessaJoy.com

LOCATION: Freehold, New Jersey

PASSION: Weddings

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

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

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

FEATURED ARTICLES

Wedding Etiquette



CHRISTAMEOLA

www.ChristaMeola.com

LOCATION: NYC

PASSION: Boudoir

Christa Meola is an internationally recognized photographer, speaker, teacher, and author of the five-star reviewed *The Art of Boudoir Photography*, *How to Create Stunning Photographs of Women*.

Christa is on a mission to empower women to adore their bodies through private one-on-one shoots in New York City and destinations around the world. Founder of The Online Boudoir Workshop and creator of The Money Shots, she has taught thousands of photographers the secrets of her successful photography business.

Christa has enjoyed life behind the camera since the age of six, when playtime included dressing up with friends and taking pictures.

FEATURED ARTICLE

9 Ways to Make Your Boudoir Business More Meaningful, Fulfilling and Fun!





LORINORDSTROM

www.NordstromPhoto.com

LOCATION: Winterset, Iowa

PASSION:

Babies, Families, Weddings & Seniors

Lori Nordstrom {M.Photog.Cr., CPP, ABI} owns a boutique studio specializing in children and family portraits located in the picturesque town of Winterset, Iowa. Lori is a PPA approved business instructor and marketing consultant for Studio Management Services. Sharing with other photographers and small business owners is one of the things she most enjoys. In 2009 Lori started Photo Talk Forum, an online community of photographers working together to grow their businesses.

Lori has always had a heart for children and believes in giving back. She has run a successful fundraising campaign for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society (LLS) for 10 years. In 2011 Lori began her own non-profit organization, Dando Amor which focuses on helping orphaned children in Ecuador. Lori and Travis Gugleman hit their goal of raising \$100,000 the first year of Dando Amor existence. You can find out more about going to Ecuador or making a donation at www.dandoamor.org

FEATURED ARTICLES

Fall Events



BLAIR PHILLIPS

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

LOCATION: Landis, North Carolina

PASSION:
Seniors, Babies, Families & Weddings

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

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

FEATURED ARTICLE

Wear This, Wear That!





LAURIN THIENES

www.EvolveEdits.com

LOCATION: Portland, Oregon

PASSION:
Weddings & Engagements

Laurin Thienes was 17 when he photographed his first wedding – 20 rolls of Porta400VC. Never looking back he went on to study photography with some of the most well-known photography studios in Oregon as well as leaving the state to study still photography at Brooks Institute in Santa Barbara, CA. Upon returning to Portland, Laurin was the studio manager of Holland Studios, a high-end, high volume wedding photography studio photographing over 250 weddings per year. After his departure from Holland Studios, he has continued to work as a contract and freelance photographer, having work published in *Grace Ormond*, *Men's Style*, and *Rangefinder*. Most recently, Laurin is the co-founder of Evolve, a premier wedding and portrait post-production service in Portland, OR. Outside of photography, Laurin also likes to cook, travel, and spend time with his wife and young daughter.

FEATURED ARTICLE

Maximizing Efficiency in Your Workflow





ROBERTO VALENZUELA

www.robertovalenzuelaphotography.com

LOCATION: Beverly Hills, CA

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

FEATURED ARTICLES

Picture Perfect Critique



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