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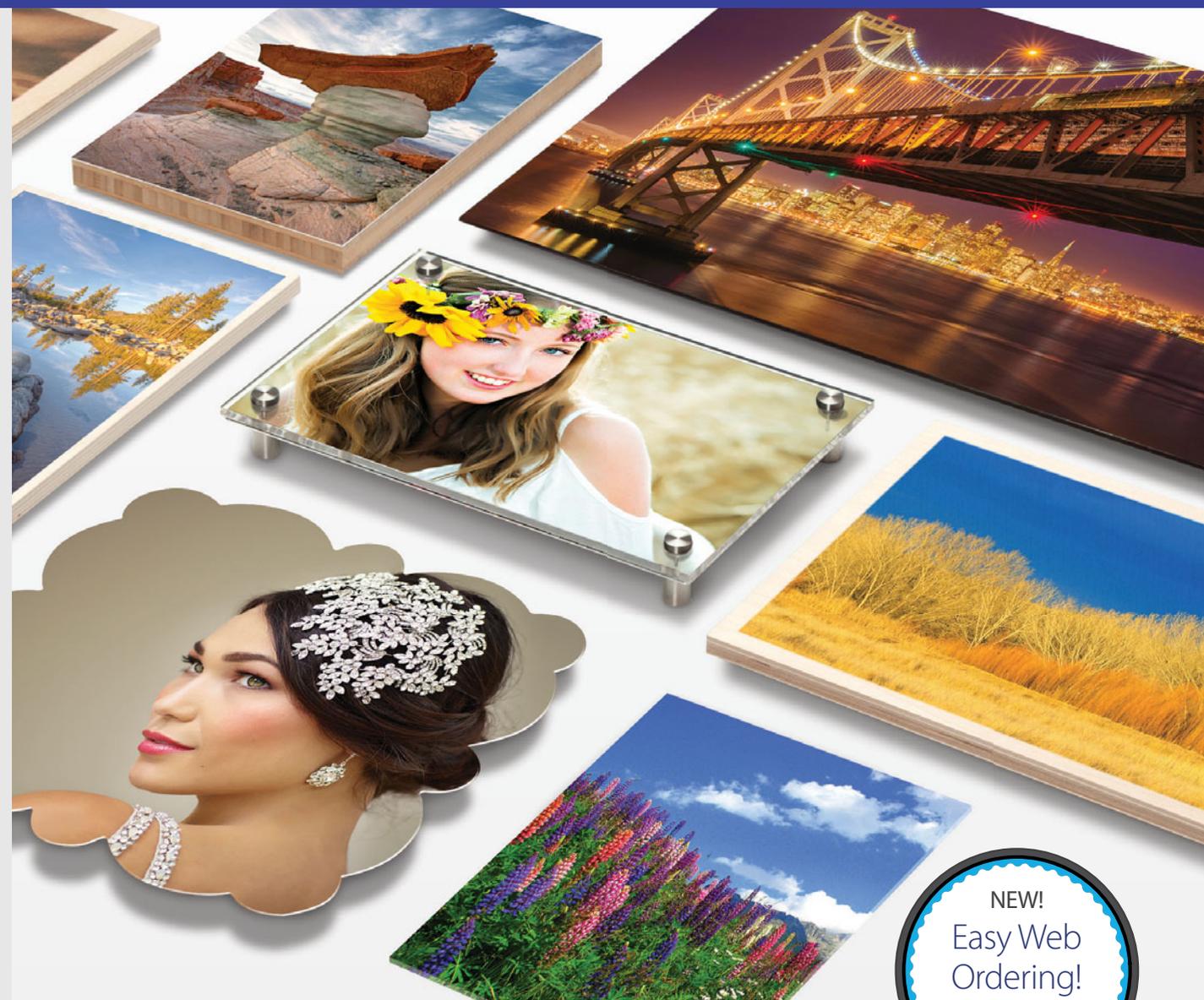


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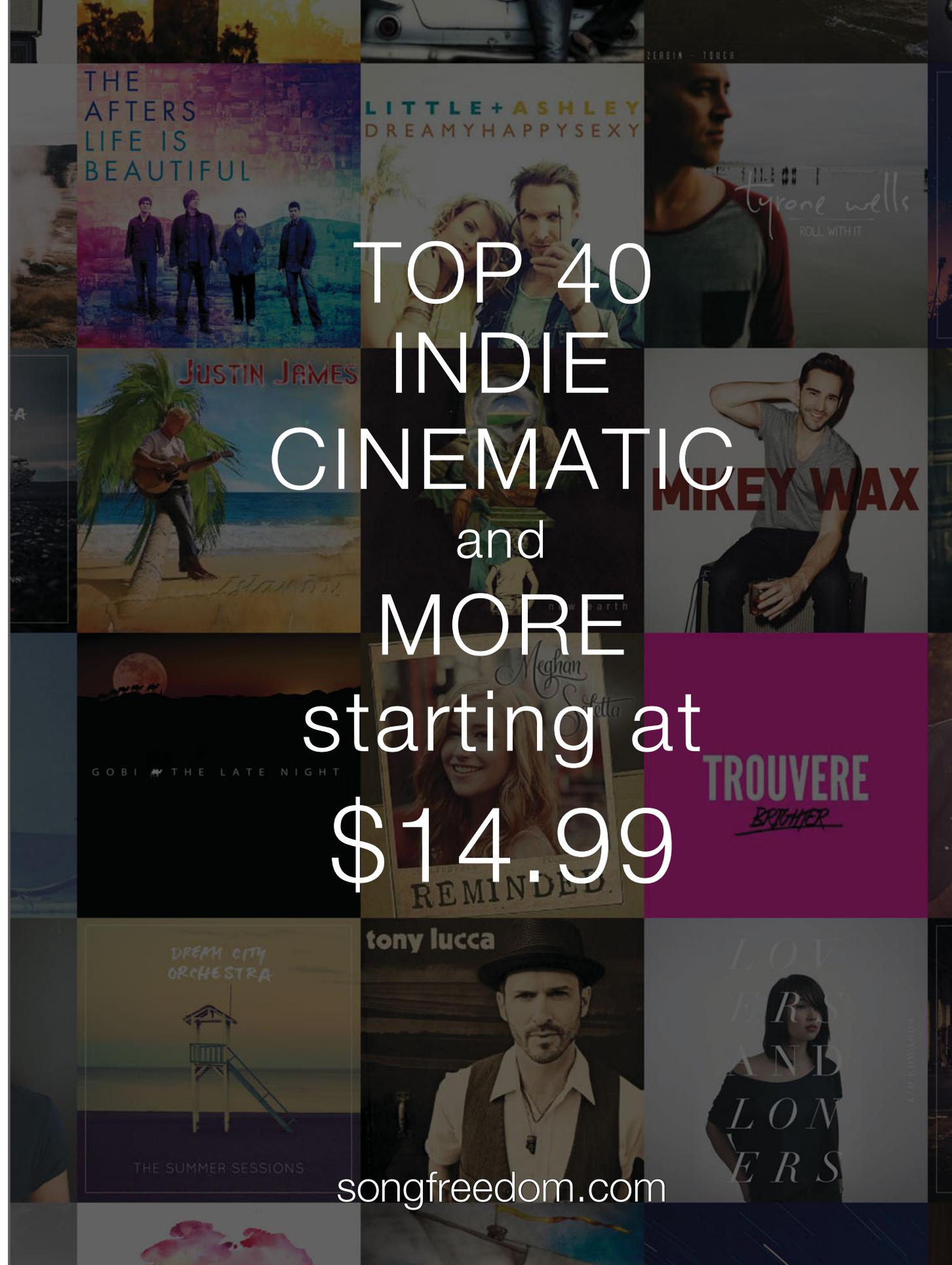
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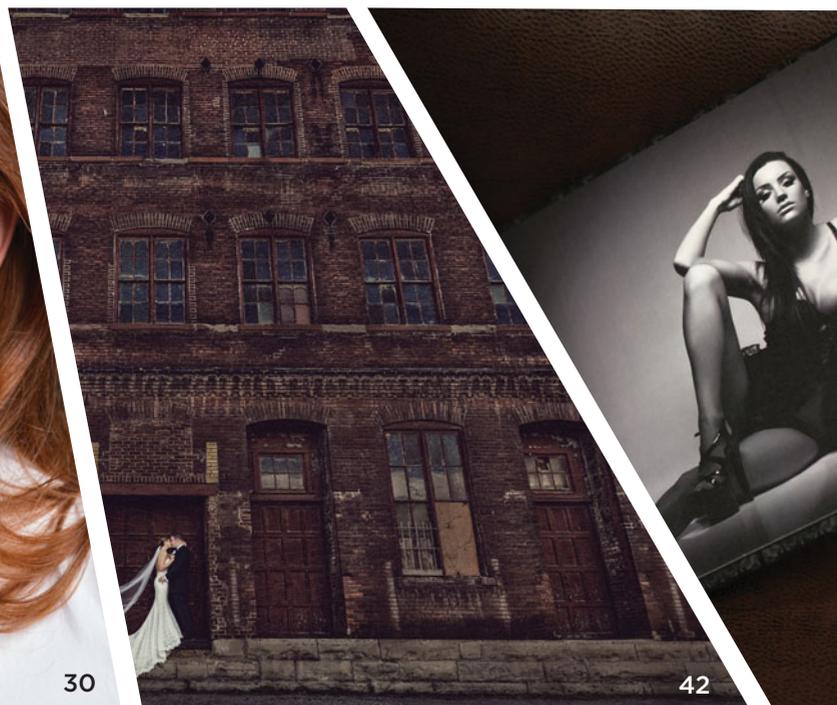
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Sabratore Cincotta
BEHIND THE SHUTTER

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

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LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

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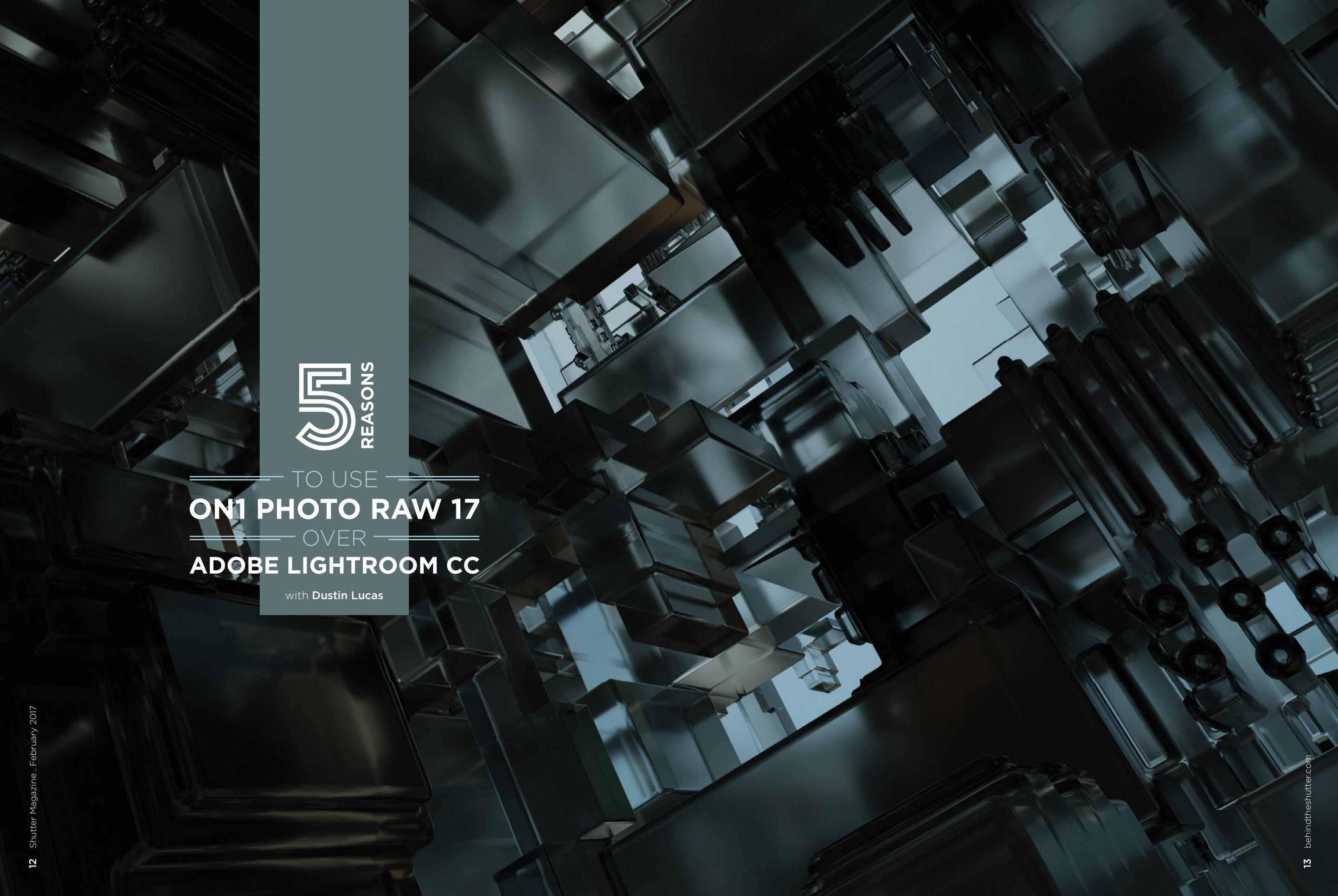
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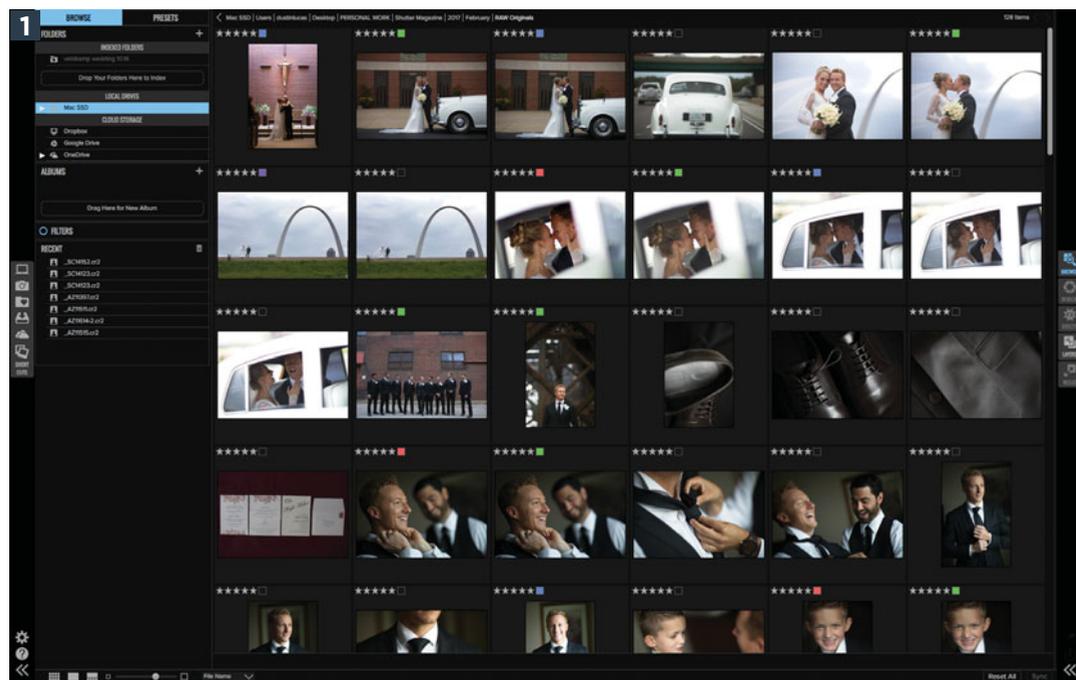
with Dustin Lucas

As a long-time Lightroom user, I am always looking for a program to handle my Raw files better. It's not that I have a bunch of complaints against Lightroom—I just want the best quality for my images. After taking a test drive with On1's new and improved RAW 2017 software, I am blown away. It's time for a change.

Working in On1 RAW 2017 is faster from start to finish—no more cataloging or rendering Raw previews. This helps me to get going quickly on selection, but more importantly to start editing my creatives. With the nondestructiveness and syncability between images, I can navigate from adjusting Develop settings to applying stylistic Effects. This has layers for Develop settings, layers for Effects, and an entire editing panel dedicated to editing with Photoshop-like Layers. We can build up our creativity and don't have to rely on Photoshop for our end-all program. There are new Develop panel adjustment tools that expand the quality of Raw files. The versatility of Masking across all panels is a massive upgrade.

1 FASTER FROM START TO FINISH

Let's start by opening the program and accessing my images instantly. Wait, don't I have to import the images and make a catalog? Say goodbye to waiting for and building previews for what seems like days. On1 developed its Browse software to essentially treat your images like actual previews rather than having to wait for the Raws to render. I can access all my images instantaneously. (1)



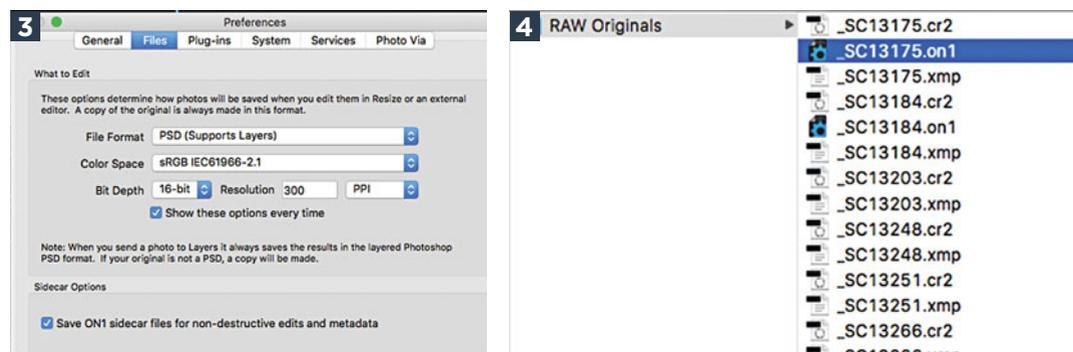
I can search in the left panel, but I have so many drop-down folders. Instead, let's hold Command and strike the "B" key. My handy Finder window pops up, and I am ready to search my folder of files. After selecting the folder and clicking Open, we are ready to start working. The first thing I notice about each image I view is that there are 1:1 previews instantly built. This is the same time it takes for Lightroom to make a Standard preview. You'll notice the difference when zooming at 100% and waiting for Lightroom to load for a few seconds. No more waiting with On1 RAW. (2)

Rating images is virtually the same in Lightroom, except they added purple to the color labels, which you can access by striking "0." You can unstar-rate an image by striking the "" key. I use "Lights Out" mode for Lightroom when selecting, but I couldn't find the equivalent option in On1. I am not too worried about that. Photo Mechanic still ranks as the best for culling. Better yet, these star ratings and color labels will read from the XMPs saved in Photo Mechanic as well.



2 NONDESTRUCTIVENESS AND SYNCABILITY

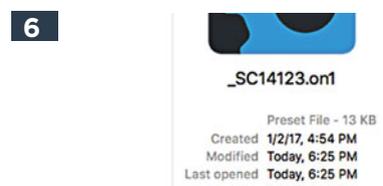
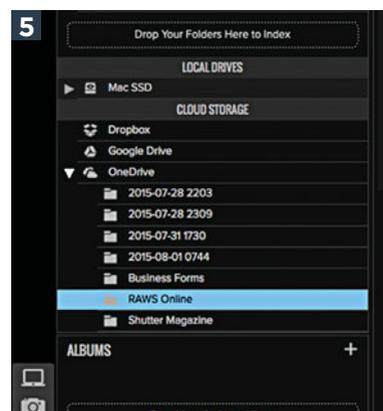
Nondestructive editing is a must when working with your Raw files. There's nothing more annoying than having to render PSDs just to start your creative edits. This brings up an important point for choosing the right Preference settings right out of the gate. Go to Preference by holding Command and the comma key. I like keyboard shortcuts for everything. Go to the Files tab and, under the Sidecar Options, check the box below. (3) Similar to XMP files from Adobe, these proprietary sidecar files save your metadata outside the program. (4)



This is even more useful for sharing files between computers and seeing the edits immediately. Yes, I said that right, sharing files between computers allows you to instantly share metadata on the fly. No more saving metadata to files and reading metadata when working in a different catalog. This was and is a huge workflow for Lightroom when working on multiple machines and backing up catalogs, saving metadata, importing metadata, etc. Say no to inefficiency and yes to On1 RAW 2017.

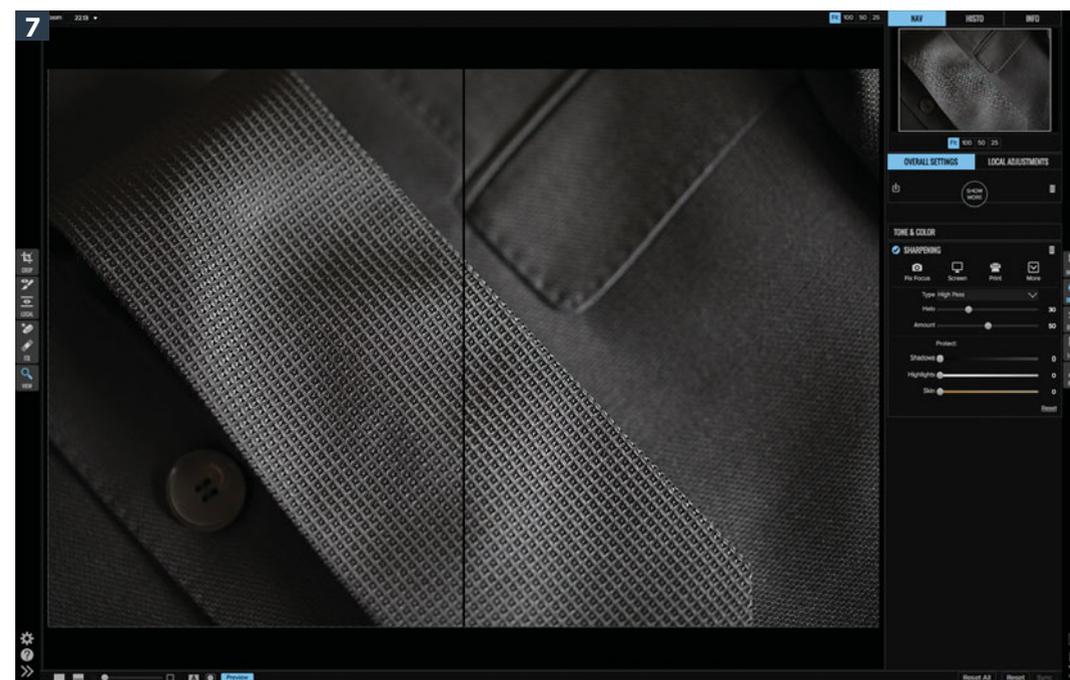
Working in a cloud-based system would be the ideal way to do this. In the Browse panel to the left, you can choose to use Dropbox, Google Drive or OneDrive folders. These local folders continually sync to your cloud storage and allow for machine-to-machine syncability. (5) You may be worried that your Internet is too slow and this would not be efficient for you. Well, that is why you are accessing your Raw files from a local folder that syncs changes to your cloud storage app.

So why isn't it slow? With the option to autosave ON1's proprietary metadata files we selected earlier, these are the only files that are changing and syncing. That means we aren't having to save image files with every editing change; it's completely nondestructive. These total in size form 10 to 100 kilobytes, which is nothing. (6) Try it out for yourself. This is huge for photo teams accessing networked drives and sharing files across the network. All in all, I am very happy with the speed and quick access I have to the images to start editing. Now, on to the other panels listed on the right-hand side: Develop, Effects, Layers and Resize.



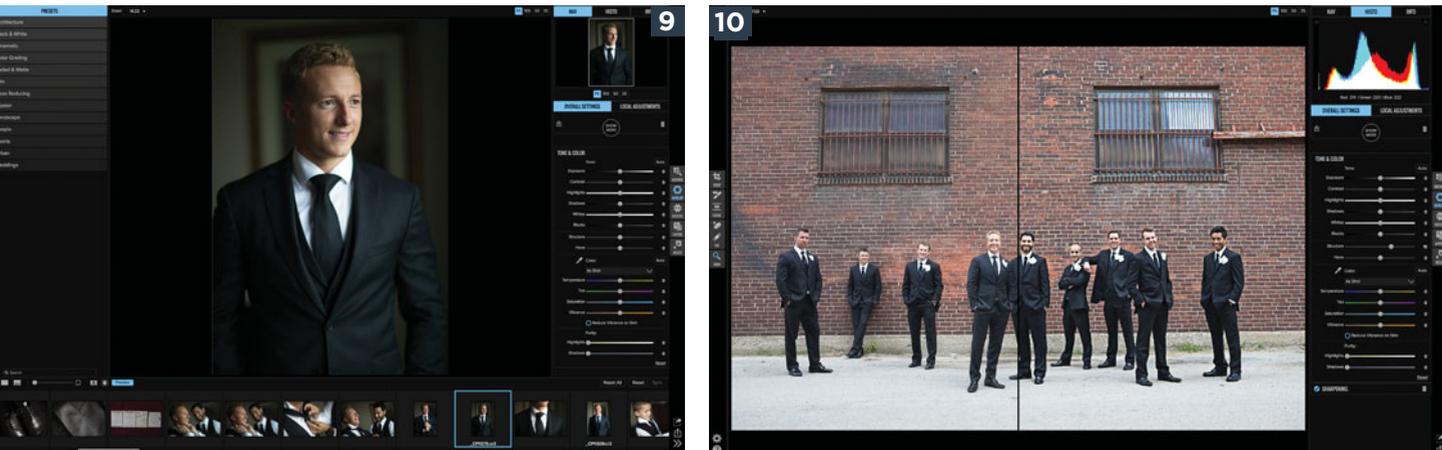
3 EXTENSIVE DEVELOP PANEL ADJUSTMENTS

As soon as I start working on my image, I notice the Overall or basic settings are a bit out of order and my image is much sharper. (7) Not to worry: On1 is thinking about how we edit. I wouldn't mess with white balance before I get my exposure and tone settings dialed in. Just like Lightroom, sharpening is automatically applied. We can get into that setting later.



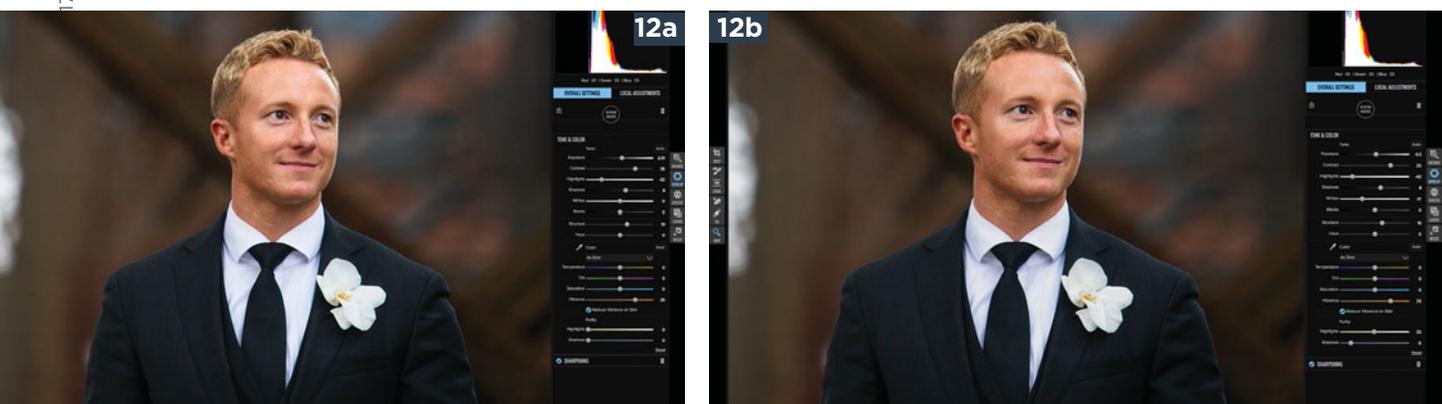
I do, however, utilize the before-and-after previews when editing. It seems I have only a split-down-the-middle option for now, and I hope this will be updated soon. (8) For now, I can strike the "V" key to toggle my shot out of camera and On1 edit. I am also missing my filmstrip, which allows me to quickly cycle between images; strike the "F" key to bring this back.



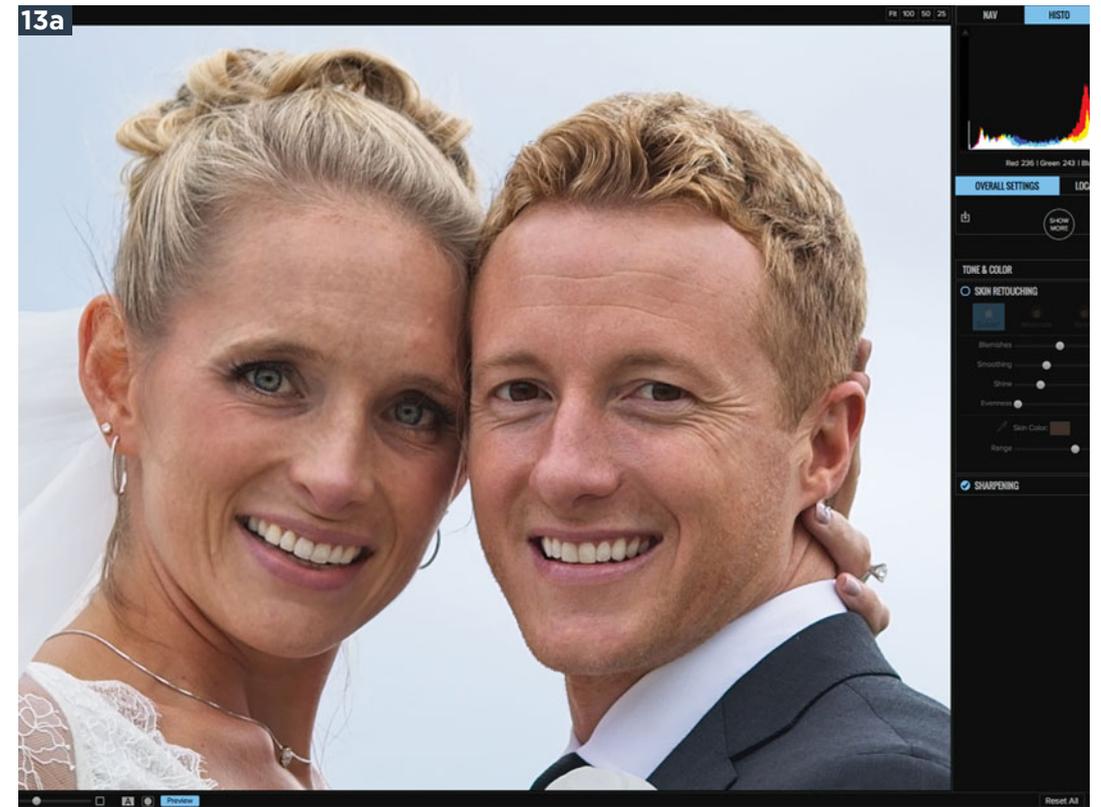


Now that I am feeling a bit more familiar with On1 Develop, let's dive in. (9) Starting with the Tone section, we have the usual suspects from Exposure to Black Point, along with the ability to auto-tone the image. Wait, ON1 dropped the Clarity slider and replaced it with Structure? What's that? I've used this before in Nik Silver Effects Pro 2, and I think it does a much better job with skin tones. This boosts the midtones and works with contrast more locally. I like it better. (10)

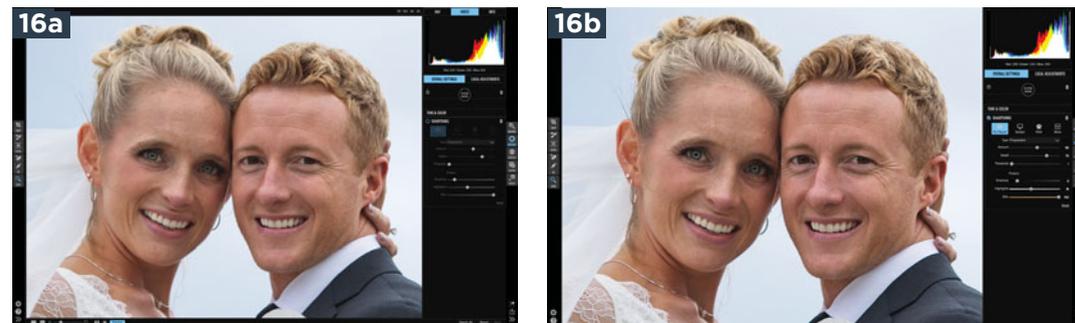
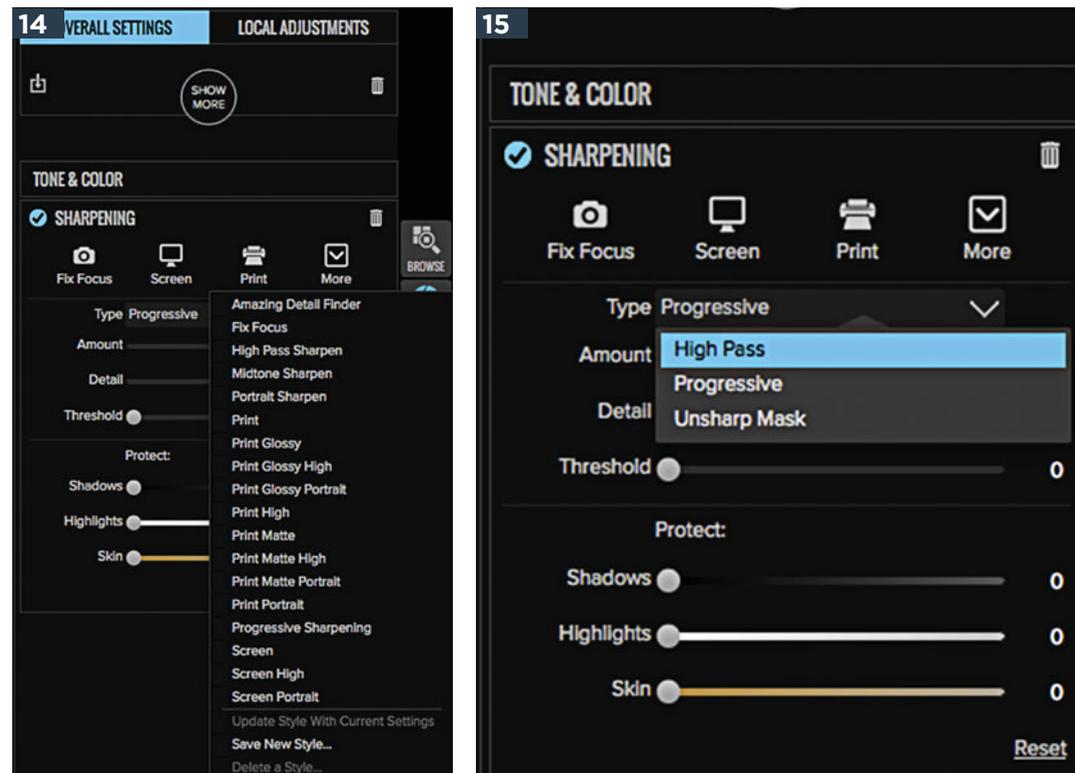
Moving down to the Color section, we see similar settings from Temp and Tint, to Saturation and Vibrance. They added a Reduce Vibrance on Skin feature that works quite well. (11) Originally, Vibrance was designed to do this, but it still turns the skin orange and the suits and dress blue. Now you have the ability to remove this without dropping all the orange or blue tones with HSL. This new feature in the Purity section allows you to desaturate your image in the highlights and shadow tones separately. It's great for fixing these issues. (12)



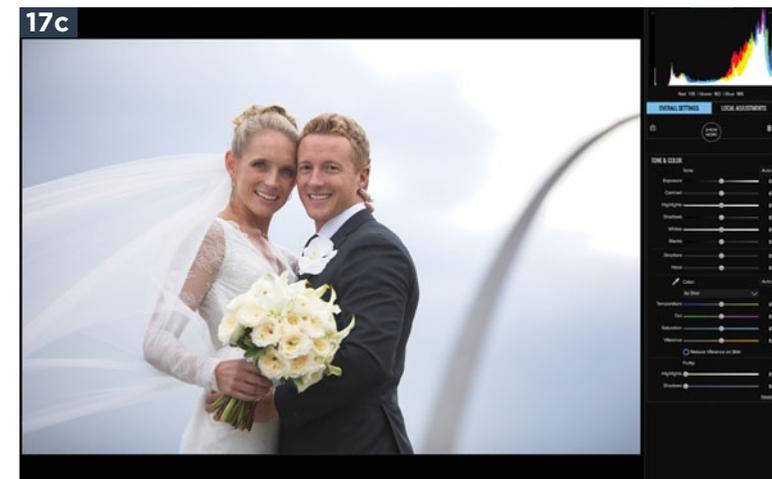
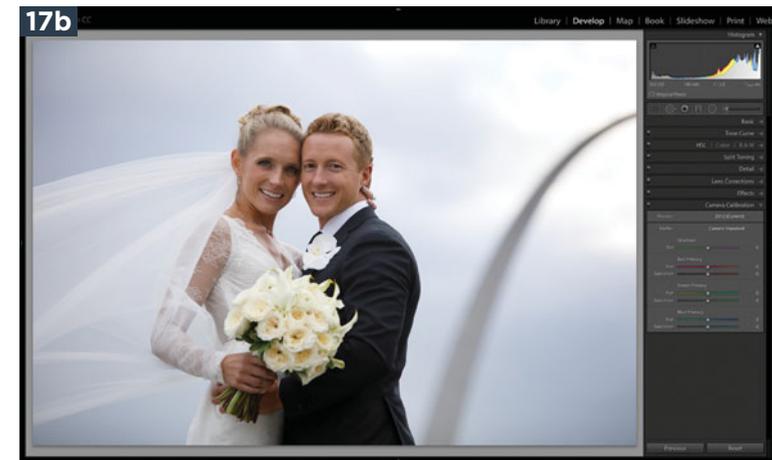
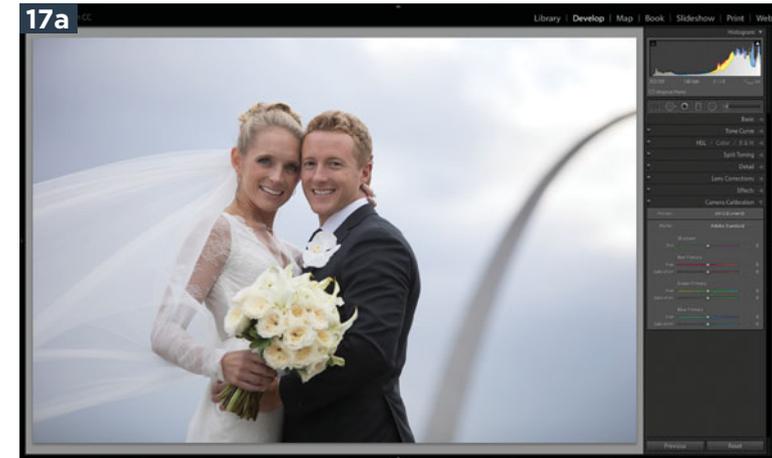
Clicking the Show More button, we have so many new options that make this program worth having. They added the ability to retouch skin with sliders. Skin Retouching is an intuitive adjustment that allows you to select the skin tone and a range of other tones. It gives you control of blemish removal, skin smoothing, shine and tint evenness. This tool serves my beauty edit workflow well. (13)



ON1's Sharpening panel had quite an overhaul as well, adding an opacity slider to allow you to reduce this effect on the entire image. You can choose predetermined settings for output to automate your slider settings. (14) They added different processes to sharpen images, including High Pass, Progressive and UnSharp Mask. (15) There is a new section dedicated to protecting certain tones like shadows, highlights and skin. The program is focused on protecting skin tones—I am too. (16)

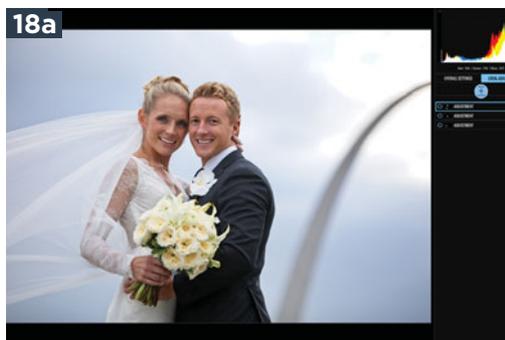


A couple of missing features are lens correction and camera profile settings. After researching these settings, it appears that lens correction is auto-applied and can be manually adjusted in the Transform panel. In terms of camera profile, the image untouched looks better than Adobe Standard in Lightroom. I assume On1 is automatically controlling this profile, which looks similar to Adobe's Camera Neutral. (17)



4 LAYERS, LAYERS, LAYERS

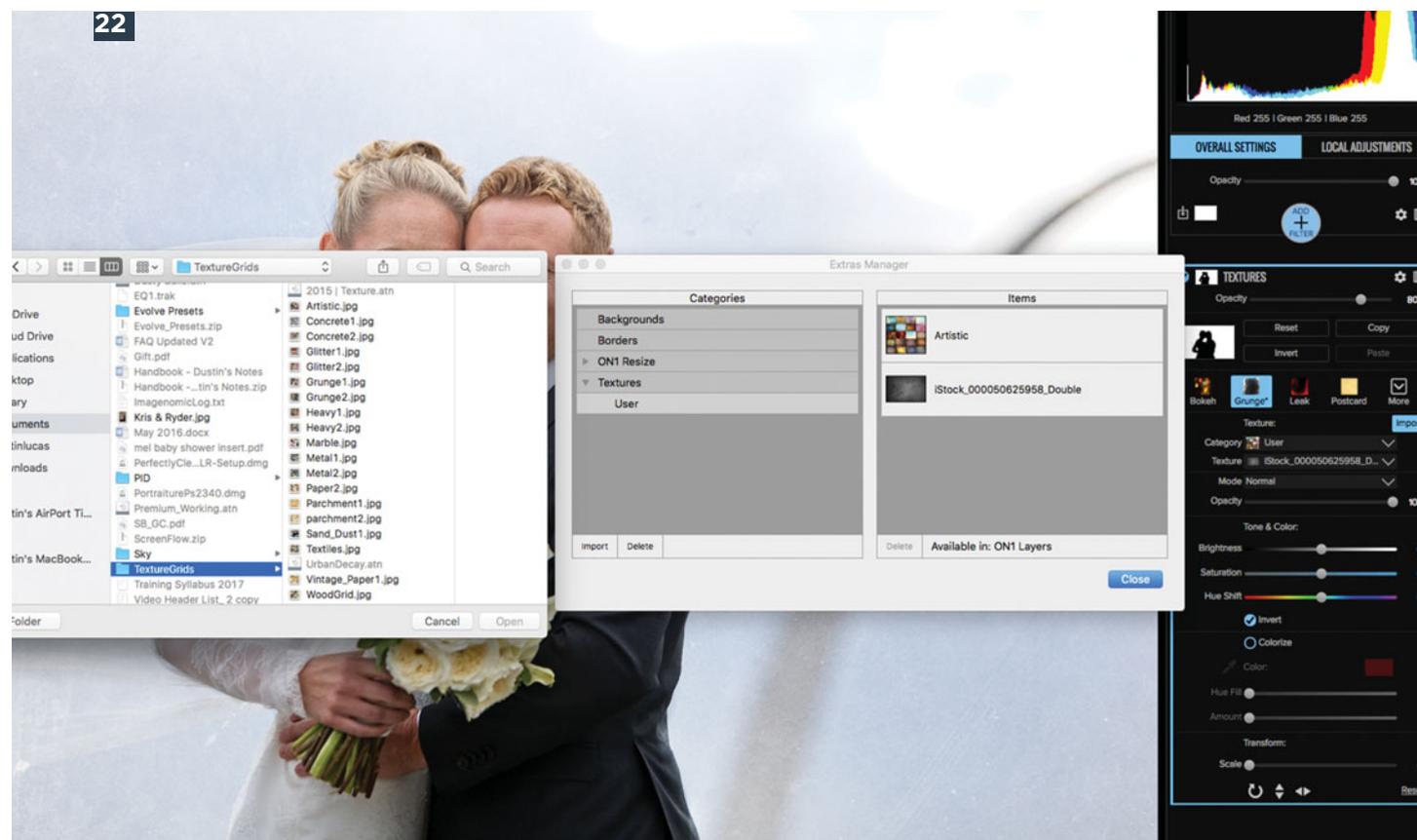
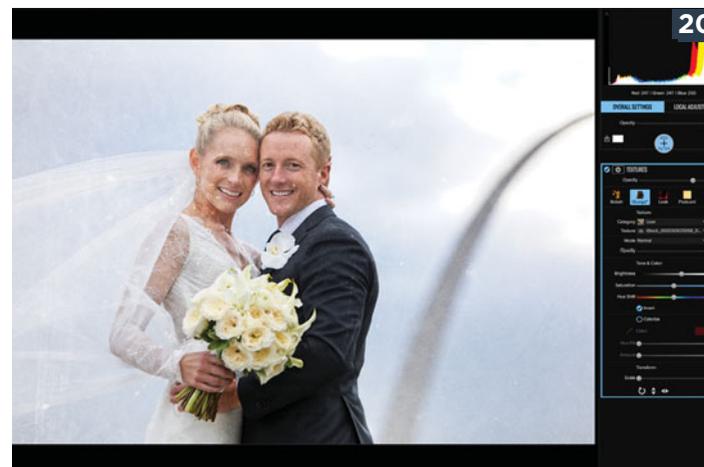
Jumping into On1 Develop local adjustments, I can edit with brushes and layer my adjustments. To do this, strike the “K” key at any time while in On1 Develop. Yes, you heard me right, I can layer these adjustments. It’s way less clunky than the edit pin system in Lightroom. Your adjustments are pretty straightforward, with some added predetermined settings. (18a)



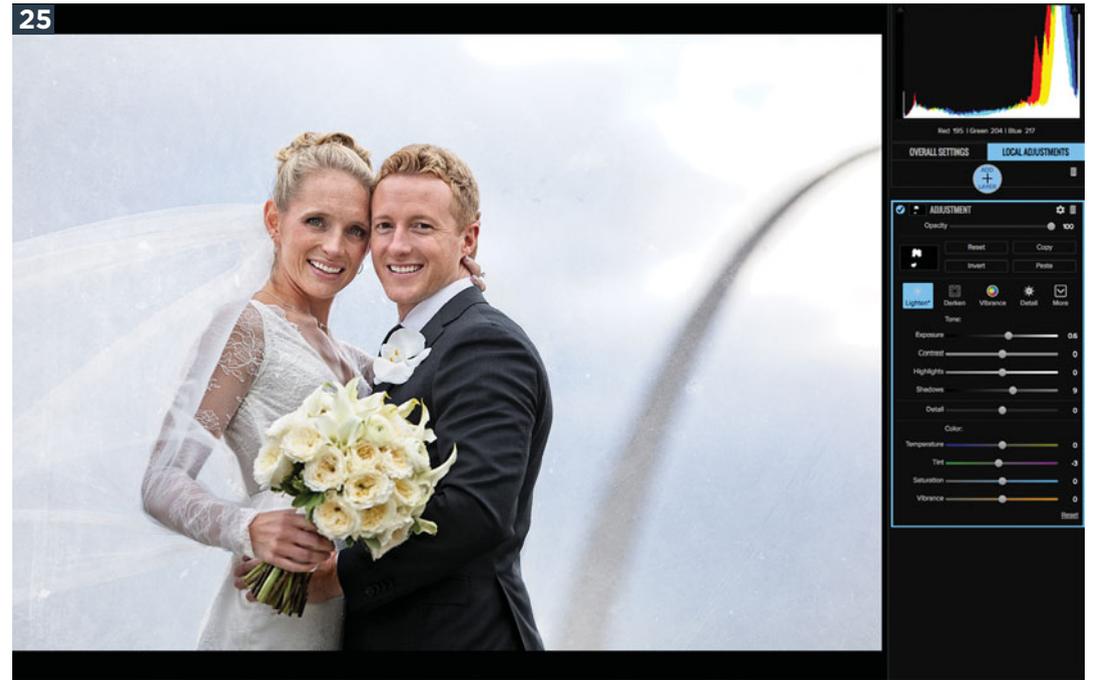
The brush settings are similar to Lightroom, and the Perfect brush has been added as well. This is called Automask in Lightroom. It works pretty similarly in that you can paint over hard edges, and it separates these for you. Hold Command and the “R” key to turn this on and off. (19)



There are a lot of keyboard shortcuts for making your brush work so much faster. To toggle the Paint In and Paint Out brush setting on your mask, strike the “X” key or hold Option while clicking and dragging the cursor over an area. I find the Option + click and drag method to be much faster. Changing the brush size is easy: To increase it, strike the “[” key; to reduce the size, hit “[.” To change the feather, hold Shift and the “[“]” keys to increase or decrease. The same goes for brush opacity, except you hold the Option key. Striking the “O” key allows you to view the mask overlay with your image.



Moving into On1 Effects, we can layer filters in the same way as Local adjustments. Using Textures on my creative edits has always forced me to open my exported images into Photoshop. Now I can do this all in a single program without exporting anything. (20) With textures, I have to mask out the skin, so this effect doesn’t make the client look bad. All I have to do is strike “B” and toggle the mode to Paint Out. (21) Another great feature is that I can import my textures, even the ones loaded to Photoshop. This is a must for my creative workflow. (22)



Other useful filters include Color Enhancer, Dynamic Contrast and Skin Retouching, which gives you more control over your images. (23) All of these allow more localized adjustments because they all have paintable masks. Let's move into the world of masking.

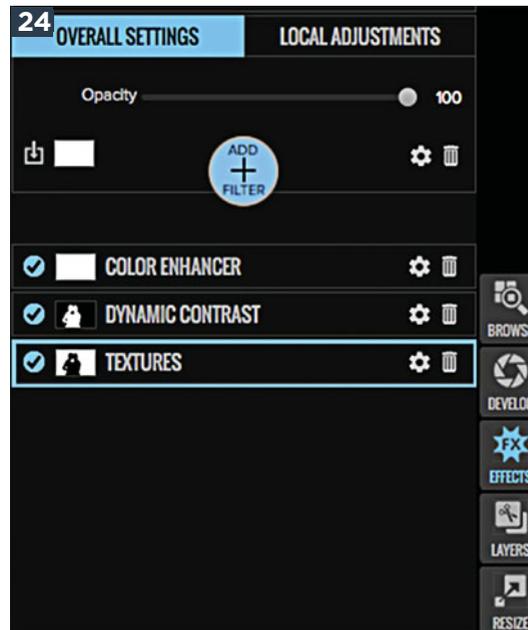
RESULTS

On1 is giving Lightroom and other Raw processors a run for their money. This program is starting to look like a one-stop shop for photographers. From instantly browsing images in your cloud storage to editing beyond basic settings, with On1 Develop, you can do quite a bit in the first five minutes after opening your image. You can add creative effects with masking capabilities, sync them to other images and save metadata between computers. The only question remains: Are you going to try out this software for yourself? Grab it now while it's on sale. ■



5 THE VERSATILITY OF MASKING

As if On1 RAW doesn't already give your images more flexibility in color correction and creative processing, they have brought an effective masking solution to each Effects filter, along with opacity sliders. Much like Local Adjustments, you can stack or layer these effects and paint the effects in or out as you see fit. (24)



These masks are adjustable after you close the program, and you can always reset to start over. I find that inverting the mask (Command + "I") and painting in the effect is quicker when working with smaller areas. (25) You can also quickly copy and paste the mask created to other filters. This is a huge advantage over Lightroom.



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

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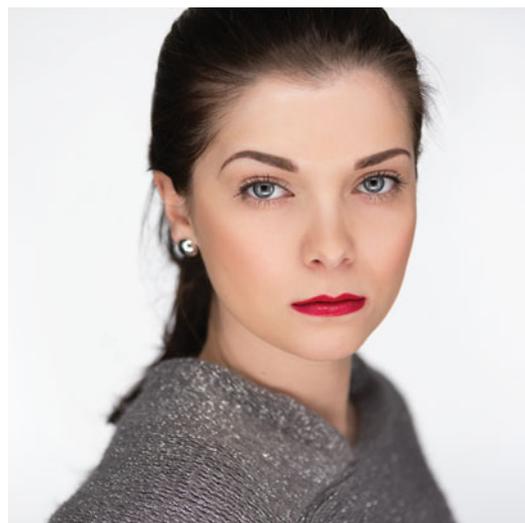
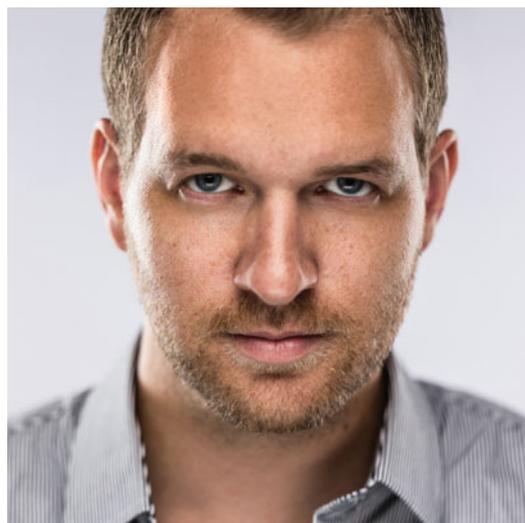
THE →
**MARKETING
HEADSHOTS**
→ GAME PLAN
with Moshe Zusman

When I first picked up a camera, I had no idea I was going to use it to photograph powerful CEOs, fly on their private jets to where they wanted me to photograph huge business deals and find myself almost too busy in my studio. If you're starting off in weddings, it can seem like a pretty big leap to jump into a new genre of photography. A lot of people think it requires a completely different method of marketing, but it doesn't.

When I first moved to D.C. from Israel, I started researching photographers in the area, and kept hearing the name of a celebrity photographer (no I'm not going to tell you who). Everyone knew him. He was marketing himself perfectly. The celebrities he photographed and put on his website weren't paying him to be their photographer, but somehow he was photographing them regularly. Bingo. Marketing brilliance.

Marketing is much like math. Math is the same in every language, and marketing principles are the same in every business. Marketing is learning how to get your business out there and make it look attractive enough that people will want to plunk down their dollars to work with you. Everything in D.C. is who you know and who knows you. I knew no one when I came to the states, so if I can do this, anyone can. Here's my game plan for marketing myself in the headshot world.





Images © Moshe Zusman



Images © Moshe Zusman

1. MEET PEOPLE

Photographers hate this part. A lot of us are introverts and got into photography because it put something between us and everything else. If you're working with headshot clients, you'll soon discover that being a people person is no longer an option, it's a must. You have to learn how to bring your client's best self out, which comes through conversation and getting them to let their guard down.

Thankfully my wife, Ashley, was working in a PR firm at the time and introduced me to a foodie who got me in to photograph top chefs, cocktails and food. I was growing my portfolio, but more importantly, I was meeting people—business owners, magazine editors and publishers, all people that I could network with to grow my business. You don't need your own Ashley for this. Think of how you are already connected and start expanding your network there. As Tim Sanders says, "Your network is your net worth." Networking and word-of-mouth became the cornerstones of building my business and life those first years.

2. PHOTOGRAPH PEOPLE

I know this sounds like a no-brainer, but work with me on this one. If you don't have a portfolio, you'll need one. If people don't know you photograph headshots, you'll need to do more of it. If you're not comfortable getting people comfortable in front of your camera, you'll need to practice.

This is where my headshot date idea came into play. When I was transitioning from weddings to studio work, I needed to create a portfolio. Unlike weddings, I didn't need to spend the next year developing a portfolio. I could do it in a day. And I did.

I sent out invitations to everyone I knew and asked them to let me photograph them. In just a day, not only did I build a complete portfolio (exactly like we do at www.headshot-bootcamp.com), but I also practiced my lighting, developed my banter with my subjects and built relationships with people from all types of career paths. It's one of the best things I did to jumpstart my headshot business.



Image © Moshe Zusman



Images © Moshe Zusman

3. MAKE IT EASY

Photographers spend so much time getting clients in the door, but when the client finally gets there, they're met with obstacles. If you want clients to book with you and leave happy, you have to make everything extremely easy for them. This starts the second they get to your website.

My website (www.headshotdc.com) is chockfull of information for my clients. They're first met with an Animoto video introducing them to me and my studio. They can then browse through my comprehensive portfolio and take a look at my pricing and packaging in the info section. The most important thing about the info section is the FAQ. Every typical question I get is listed there, along with a video summarizing the most important parts. I give my prospective clients everything they need to decide if they're going to book with me.

Now comes the best part. When a client decides they're ready to book, they don't need to call the studio. They don't need to send an email and wait for a response. Everything is done right through my website. Clients use Square Up (related to Square, the credit card processing service) to choose a booking time, type of session and add-ons, and pay right there on the spot. It makes my life easier because the system is linked to my Google calendar and, once an appointment is booked, it updates my calendar automatically. The whole process is fast, effective and super easy for the client.

After the session, delivery of the images is just as simple. I tell them they'll receive their final retouched images within 48 hours of the session, and all they have to do is wait for an email. Using CloudSpot, I share the images with the client in a super sleek email with an easy-to-use photo sharing system. It doesn't get any easier for me or my clients.



Images © Moshe Zusman



Image © Moshe Zusman

If you're looking to change photography genres like I did, or perhaps you're just looking for an extra marketing boost in your current business, these principles will help you out. Not only will they better your business, but they'll better your life as well.

Check out this video to see a few more marketing tips for your headshot business. ■



Moshe Zusman is recognized for his innovative, bold use of light and color with a distinctly modern edge. The Washington, D.C.-based Moshe has been shooting for more than a decade, and specializes in weddings, portraits, headshots and events. He has been featured at numerous workshops and conferences, including WPPI, PhotoPlus Expo, ImagingUSA and ShutterFest, and also hosts his own workshops at his D.C. studio.

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with Sal Cincotta

When we talk about the world of professional photography, it's pretty sad to think that some of the most creative people make less than a Starbucks barista. Don't get me wrong, I love me some Starbucks, but we are artists. We are documenting the memories of our clients. Don't we deserve more? Well, here is the thing. You don't deserve shit. Sorry. Time for us to come to the understanding that in the real world—you know, the one we all actually live in, the one where your parents aren't there to argue with your teachers for a better grade and give you a hug when things don't go your way—you don't deserve anything.

If you want success and more money, you have to go out there and get it. Work hard. Fail. Pick yourself up and try again. So, to that point, in the world of sales, you are not going to be successful if you don't implement strategies to ensure your success. Below are tips to help you get more out of your sales and make more money immediately.

Offer high-end products.

Photographers around the world have convinced themselves that clients don't want physical products. Nothing could be further from the truth. Clients want to show off their images in their homes on their walls. We know this because we see companies like Sam's Club, Wal-Mart, Snapfish and ShutterFly making billions in photography-related product sales. Those are our images they are using to make money. So, clients want these products—they just don't want them from you.

This challenge can easily be overcome if you find a way to stand out. Clients are not willing to overpay for a product they know they can get for a fraction of the cost at their local box store. Our studio offers high-end products that clients see the value in.

On the following page are images of a custom product we created.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Show it to them.

There is no point in having a sales process that doesn't show your clients the actual product you are trying to sell them. It is mindboggling to me when I see a business owner not show the product. I don't know too many other businesses that can survive that way. Can you imagine buying a TV without seeing the picture? Why do photographers think they are going to sell their clients a \$500 product if they don't show them what it will look and feel like? We have to show them the quality of the product. They are paying for this quality.

Make the investment in sample products. When they see and feel them, they'll know immediately whether or not they want to buy them. They will either like them or not, and you adjust your offerings based on what the clients spend their money on. If all you offer is digital products, you will never sell products, and your sales potential will be reduced to almost nothing.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Stay current.

One of our jobs is to keep up with trends to ensure we are offering our clients the products and services they want. This is very important to understand. I am not suggesting we change our business every day with the wind of change, but I am suggesting we look at the current consumer demands and behavior to determine our strategy. I look at this once a year.

Trends pertain to both products and services. Do you remember when photo booths were all the rage? All of a sudden, every photographer on the planet was scrambling to offer photo booth services—myself included. Brides were inundating us with requests for booths. After turning down several of these requests, I realized there was a lot of opportunity here and that I should probably add this to my services. We did, and made thousands in extra revenue from events we were already working.

Trends come and go. Just as quickly, the photo booth craze subsided and we stopped offering it. We paid attention to trends in the marketplace. This applies to both services and products you offer your clients.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

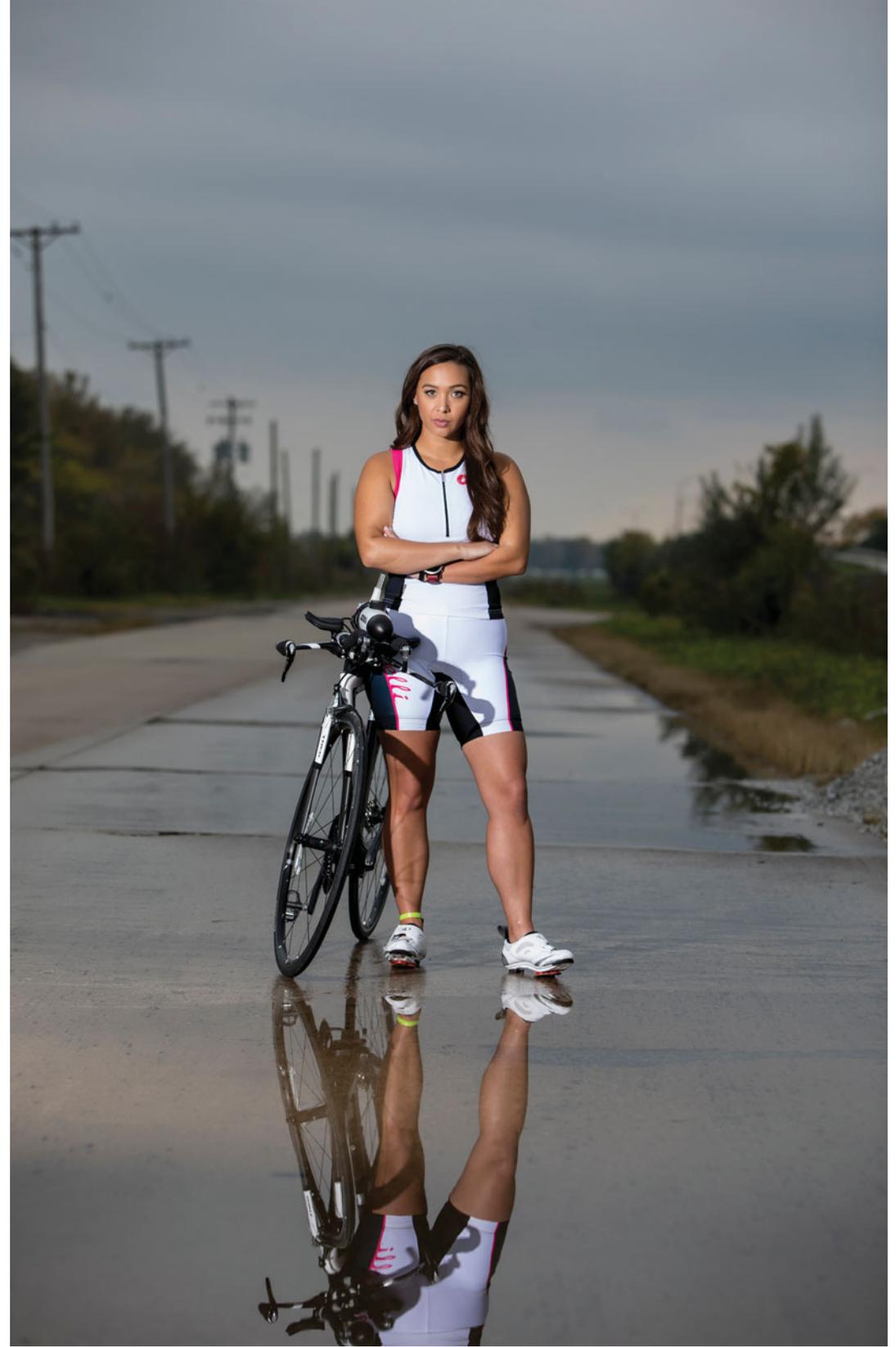


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Take advantage of online sales.

The sale doesn't end in your studio. There is gold in them thar hills. And the hills are the world of the Internet. If you are not using online galleries, you are missing out on huge sales and marketing opportunities. Your clients will share these images with friends and family who will either want to buy products or remember you when they need a photographer themselves.

We use N-Vu.com for our online hosting. No commissions. No upload limits. This gives us the opportunity to sell even more to our clients and their networks.

Don't just post online. Offer discounts or a 48-hour sale to get friends and family members to make purchases. Sure, they are probably not going to buy a 20x30 canvases, but what about 8x10s or other gift prints? We don't get \$2,000 sales online, but we see an additional \$200 to \$500 from each event we post just from ancillary sales. Every sale makes a difference to the bottom line.

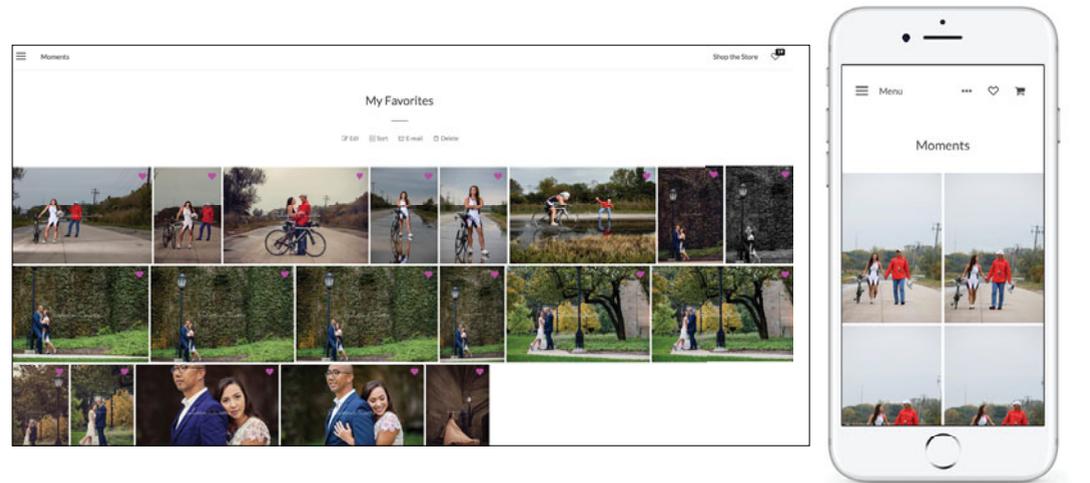


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Relaunch your galleries.

What are you doing with your clients' images after your initial sales meeting? Most photographers I know do nothing. Talk about lost opportunity. Up until recently, we were in the same boat. We use N-Vu's Re-Vu feature, which is a reactivation service. It automatically relaunches your client galleries on a predetermined date. This can be a wedding anniversary, Christmas, Mother's Day, you get the idea.

This was groundbreaking for us. Think about it. Christmas rolls around, and every client who logged in to the gallery gets an email from you saying the gallery has been reactivated and there is a 48-hour sale. You can create a sales email that goes out encouraging them to use the gallery for Christmas presents for the wedding couple or the family. You make money by doing nothing. This is brilliant.

I hope these tips help your sales process. They've certainly helped ours. I am always evaluating what is working and what is not. What do you have to lose? Try them now, and make 2017 your year. ■



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

The logo for 17hats, featuring the number '17' in a stylized white font with a curved underline, followed by the word 'hats' in a clean, white, sans-serif font, all set against a green rectangular background.

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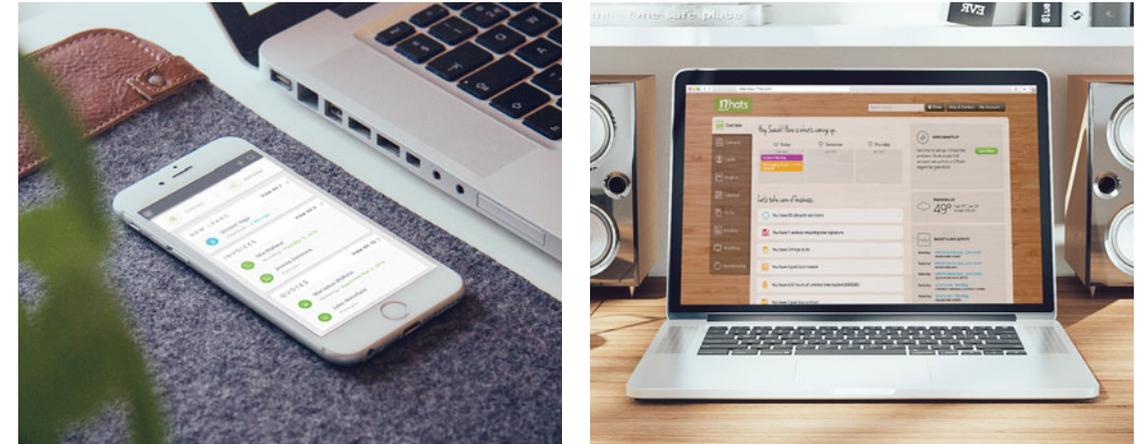
"17hats has been a complete game-changer for our business. The ability to streamline and automate our workflows allows me to focus on shooting and the experience I provide for my clients while 17hats handles the rest." - **Sal Cincotta**





product review

17hats with *Salvatore Cincotta*



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For more information, visit 17hats.com

USING ALBUMS TO INCREASE SALES

When it comes to sales, there are a million ways to skin a cat. In photography, there are a million and one products you can use to sell that cat. My studio is product-based. We sell digital files, but they are the last option for our clients. Our philosophy is anything digital will at some point be obsolete, and products never will. Our biggest genres are high school seniors, families, weddings and boudoir sessions. While we don't sell albums for families, we do sell a ton of them for the other three categories. This month, we look at my studio's best-selling product: albums and books.





Image © Craig LaMere



Images © Craig LaMere

TIME MANAGEMENT

When I first started shooting, I wanted every shoot to be 100 percent unique. I would find all new locations for every shoot, find new poses for each person or family, and design each album page by scratch. I felt if I was not shooting and creating this way that I was doing a disservice to my clients and me. When I was building my book of business, it wasn't an issue to spend extra time finding a new location for each shoot or building custom pages and layouts. As my book of business grew and my other obligations to the studio grew, I found myself getting more and more behind.

I asked friends who were shooting way more sessions than I was how they kept up with the work. A few of them told me it was just a matter of time management and setting routines. They were right.

Albums and books are a fantastic way to sell a variety of images to your clients, but there are a number of pitfalls you need to be mindful of, or they can quickly become a loss leader and a pain in the ass to offer your clients.

Probably the most common mistake when selling albums is pricing. The actual cost of the physical album is not that substantial when put up against metals or acrylics and even some canvas displays. Where you get yourself in trouble is the amount of time you invest in the creation of the album or book. Time investment includes shooting, editing and layout.

Pay close attention to your time. The easiest way to gauge it is to take the amount of money you are charging and divide it by the number of hours it took you to shoot, edit, design and deliver your book or album—that gives you a rough estimate of how much an hour you are making. If you take too long, you get beat up; if you can do it faster, you win!

FIGHTING YOUR NEED TO BE CREATIVE (ALL THE TIME)

Artful shooters have a tough time suppressing the need to be creative during client sessions. This might sound weird, since what we do is art. But it's important to adopt a set routine for sessions. I understand the need to flex your creative muscles so you do not get into a rut or get bored. So learn how to accommodate both your artistic and business needs.

You need a system that incorporates posing, locations, post-processing and design. Have a go-to shot list you go through when you shoot your session. These are the shots you know are going to sell every time. These are the shots that are pretty much going to look good with any client. These are the shots that you have done so many times that you can tweak them to fit any client. Have a location list that you know is going to have great light at a certain time. You know how to get the best depth of field because you know exactly where to place your subjects. When you take your images into post, have a base system and an order for each image. Have a system that gives you consistent results. From there, you can get creative. The system for your layout should be tried, true and pretty quick.

This will get boring for some of the creative shooters out there, but you can fill your creative needs by scheduling your own personal shoots. I do it all the time. It is my time to cultivate the artist in me. I can go as wild and take as much time as I like, and it does not affect my bottom line. This allows me to grow as an artist, which carries over to my clients.





PLANNING FOR SPREADS

I always ask clients to send me pictures of their outfits. This helps me streamline my shoot and prepare for the layout. I have talked in other articles about how seeing the clothes will help with picking out locations and choosing backdrops because of the color palette of the clothes, but there are a couple other advantages to seeing the clothes before the shoot. One is that you will have an idea of how many changes you are working with. Because my main goal is to fill spreads, the more the merrier; if a client sends you just two clothes changes, you are limited in image choice at the view and order session. It is hard to sell a 10-spread album or book when you have only two outfits.

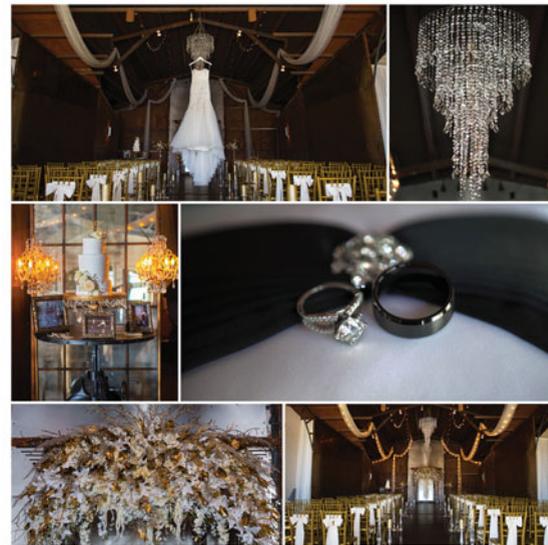
With high school senior sessions, we want a minimum of five clothes changes, and not more than eight. We stay out of the studio as much as possible. The only time we are in the studio for senior shoots is when we shoot fashion or sports uniforms. Most of the time we are running all over the place to different locations. If they have too many changes of clothes, clients start to get antsy.

Our boudoir sessions are a little different. Although we are still shooting to fill spreads, we do not need the same number of clothes changes for variety. That's because 95 percent of these shoots are in the studio or indoors on location somewhere, so we are able to change the looks of the outfits with lighting. You can take a white outfit and shoot it with a 4x6 and make it light, soft and airy. You can take the same outfit and shoot it with a strip light and grid, and make the image contrasty, dark and moody.



SHOOTING FOR LAYOUTS

When I'm shooting for albums and books, my mind is in layout mode. When you shoot for spreads, you do not need a million images. You need only three solid images. With any one pose, I shoot a full-length, a three-quarter, a tight crop, a vertical and a horizontal. This ensures I have all my bases covered for layout purposes. You can have more than three images in a spread, but you don't want a cluttered page. Spread sessions go fast.



Images © Craig LaMere



Images © Craig LaMere

LAYOUT: DON'T DO IT YOURSELF

When I started selling albums, I laid them all out by hand. I created the layout templates using clipping paths, and bought different backgrounds online for each spread. I spent up to 30 hours editing and designing each album. I had it in my head that each album had to be totally unique. I felt I would be cheating my client and myself if I didn't do it this way. After a while, I realized my clients were never going to see each other's albums, and I was not cheating my clients or myself by changing my process.

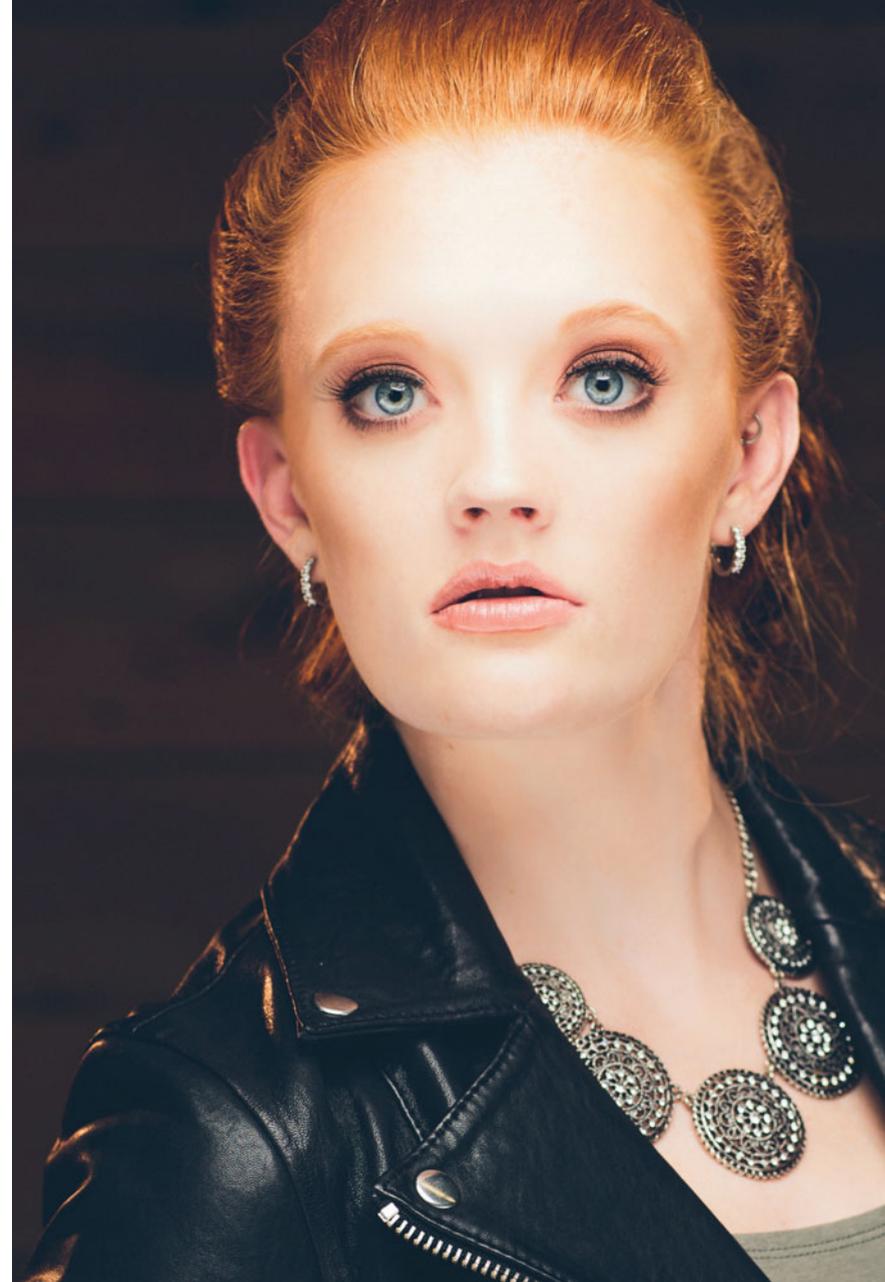
The first thing I changed was how I did the layouts. I had been creating albums for so long that I had a bunch of templates. If I needed a spread with two vertical placements and one horizontal, or if I needed a spread with two horizontal placements and one vertical placement, I was in business.

The problem was how long it took to place everything by hand. Then someone introduced me to this company called Fundy...and my life was changed. I could go on an on about Fundy, an automatic layout program. All you have to do is load your images, hit a button and choose a layout you like. You can easily tweak a layout in seconds. What once took me hours I could now do in minutes.

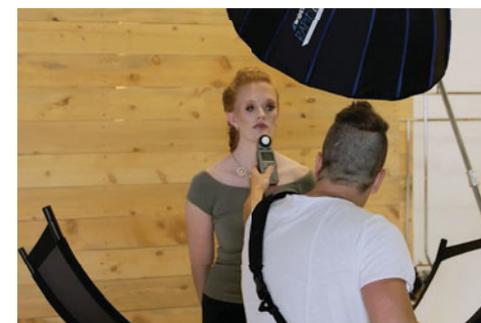
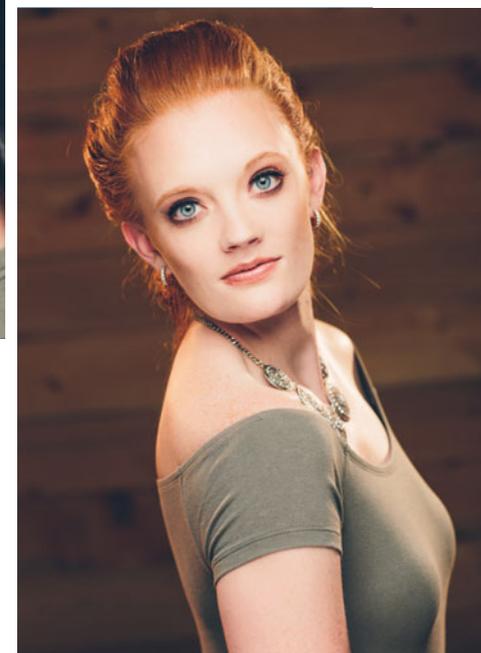
I also changed my album design. I had been painstakingly matching the background of the album with the images, framing each image, and on and on. It was so time consuming. Just as my shooting style has changed, so has my layout style. Instead of using all these crazy backgrounds, I use a plain white background for my pages, which has saved a lot of time in the design process—while making my studio more profitable. ■



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

**GREAT SEASONALITY DOESN'T
HAPPEN BY ITSELF**

with **Skip Cohen**



It's February, one of the three times of year you don't have to do much to attract customers. Love is in the air thanks to Hallmark, American Greetings, Godiva and the rose industry. The demand for photography under the love umbrella is stable and the need for engagement, wedding and boudoir images is high.

If you're reading this and didn't do much to promote your business in February, it's too late, but there's another round of great seasonality coming in the spring. Most of you will now turn your thoughts and energy toward Mother's Day, Father's Day and graduations starting in May.

But here's the point I want to hit hardest this month: What about the times between holidays? The times when you've got to stand on your own without help from society? Most of you simply kick back and wait for the Seasonality Fairy to sprinkle business on your doorstep.

Nothing happens during all those other days of the year unless you get creative and aggressively go after the business. You've got to create your own seasonality.

Here are some ideas to get you out of your complacency. You have so much control if you make an effort and go after the business that's out there.

YOUR BLOG

There it is again, that four-letter word that haunts you. Build a stash of content so you can be sharing something fresh at least twice a week consistently.

Not sure what to write about? Think about the value of photographs. Remember, your target audience is Mom, and her kids are growing up way too fast. Share an image with lots of emotion and write about the value of stopping time for a memory. Share a few photo tips for better images. Share some great locations in your community for backgrounds. Share articles about things to do with images—from frames to slide shows, to some of the novelty items every lab offers.

CREATE YOUR OWN EVENTS

You don't have to wait for Hallmark to put the word out. Create your own.

Children's photographer Vicki Taufer has been doing it for years, and I'm stealing a few ideas from her play-book.

She sent me one of her holiday cards years ago whose impact I've never forgotten. It was a four-panel accordion style. On one of the panels was her calendar for the year. Remember, she's one of the most talented children's photographers in the industry, and knew she just needed to support Mom's need to capture memories. First she created a product she called "Limited Edition Prints," which she described as "very special portrait sessions offered by V Gallery. We photograph each themed session at certain times during the year, which makes them very exclusive. Our extensive investment in props and accessories makes these portraits one of a kind."

Next, she created one theme after another with incredible "Mom Appeal." Here are a few examples:

March	April	May
2nd – 12th: Children's Formals and Shabby Chic	13th – 16th: Best Friends	4th – 7th: Little Flyers
16th – 19th: Grandparent's Special	20th – 30th: Baseball Dreams	11th – 21st: Once Upon a Time
23rd – 26th: Funny Faces Week		25th – 28th: In the Garden

Before the new year even started, she built her own seasonality by creating opportunities for images that no mom could turn down, but that was only part of Vicki's marketing.

USE A FEW ADJECTIVES

You're artists, not writers, but think about how you describe your work. Are you selling an album or the "first heirloom of a new family"? Are you offering a print or creating "a tangible fine-art memory to share with future generations"?

Most of us rarely paid attention in English class, but here's where it all pays off. Don't just describe your products with all the excitement of a chemist in the lab. Let a little romance in. Spice things up. If you're stuck because you hate to write and you cut most of those English classes, it's time to go back to school.

Relax. Go to a local high school and find yourself a senior who loves to write, or, for that matter, an underpaid English teacher who'd like to work part time for you.

SEASONALITY IN EVERY SPECIALTY

Children's photography might be one of the easiest to talk about, but there are opportunities in virtually every specialty. For example, in the pets arena, Vicki Taufer, in another moment of brilliance, did the original "Dog Days of Summer."

She knew there was a correlation between pet owners and family, so she launched a program for a free 5x7 pet portrait to kick it off. This was cause-related marketing, with a requirement to make a food donation to an animal shelter. She had a few partners in the community to help promote the event.

When the day of free 5x7's ended, Vicki and her staff had photographed 120 pets with 40 on the waiting list. It eventually established V Gallery as the number-one pet studio in the area.

UTILIZE YOUR DATA BASE

Before you start worrying about where to find new customers, what are you doing with your old ones? Let's use wedding photographers as a perfect example.

After couples start families, there are endless opportunities for portraits. It's not just the bride and groom any longer, but a constant stream of potential memory makers as the kids grow and the family dynamics keep changing. Mom and Dad are typically missing a little romance. Life, kids, responsibilities get in the way.

Here's your chance to be a hero in your community.

On the family side, do a direct mail piece to all your past clients. It can be as simple as a personalized letter. Remind them of your skill set and let's get you in there to help capture those memories of the family changing and the kids growing up. Before you roll your eyes and tell me you're not a children's photographer, if you don't want to build out your skill set, then build a relationship with another photographer. Find an artist who specializes in children's and family portraiture.

On the romance side, launch a program reminding Mom that it's been too long since you did their engagement portrait. I love the concept of date night, and it's so easy to make it fit into your business.

Date night starts with you reminding Mom, "When was the last time you and your husband got out for a night without the kids?" Next, go to work with a local restaurant and get a discounted gift certificate for a romantic dinner for two. The components of the package can also include a short portrait session loaded with the same fun you put into the couple's original engagement session. It's all included in one package price. They've got to get the sitter, but you're there to capture another memory.



There's so much more I could write about, but here's the bottom line. You don't have to wait for society to give you reasons to capture images. Building a business doesn't happen by accident; it's the result of planning and an incredible series of efforts all built on your passion for being the best.

If you're stuck, email me. Most of you know how much I love this stuff. Sometimes the biggest challenge is being too close to your own business. ■

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

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3

WAYS TO NAIL CLIENT CONSULTATIONS

with Vanessa Joy





Images © Vanessa Joy



Images © Vanessa Joy

One of the best experiences I had when I was working for another photography company was being able to observe consultation sessions. Out of all of the photography education out there, there isn't much on how to talk with clients—or, more precisely, how to talk clients into trusting you with their money and memories.

It's not easy to teach because you're essentially teaching people skills. There are other elements to it, like selling without being salesy and setting client expectations while walking them through your process. But at the root of it all is the ability to communicate and connect with other people. To some, this comes naturally, but if you're an introvert like I am, you'll need to work on this. Our students work on it while shooting their portfolio for half a day at headshot-bootcamp.com.

PRACTICE

How do you practice consultations and sales sessions? It's unlikely that another photographer is going to let you hone your skills on their potential clients. But that doesn't mean you can't practice talking.

One of the best ways I learned to speak to people was by traveling alone. It can be as simple as taking public transportation and striking up a conversation with a stranger. I would take the PATH train from New Jersey into New York City and find people to talk to on the way.

Doing this boosted my confidence in speaking to people, but it also taught me how to talk to just about anyone. It's easy. First, I'd break the ice by commenting on an article of clothing they were wearing, or maybe a bag a woman was holding. I'd continue by asking them questions. It's all small talk, really, but that kind of talk is all you get when talking with clients. You get one first impression, and it's best to give it while not shyly stuttering.



Images © Vanessa Joy

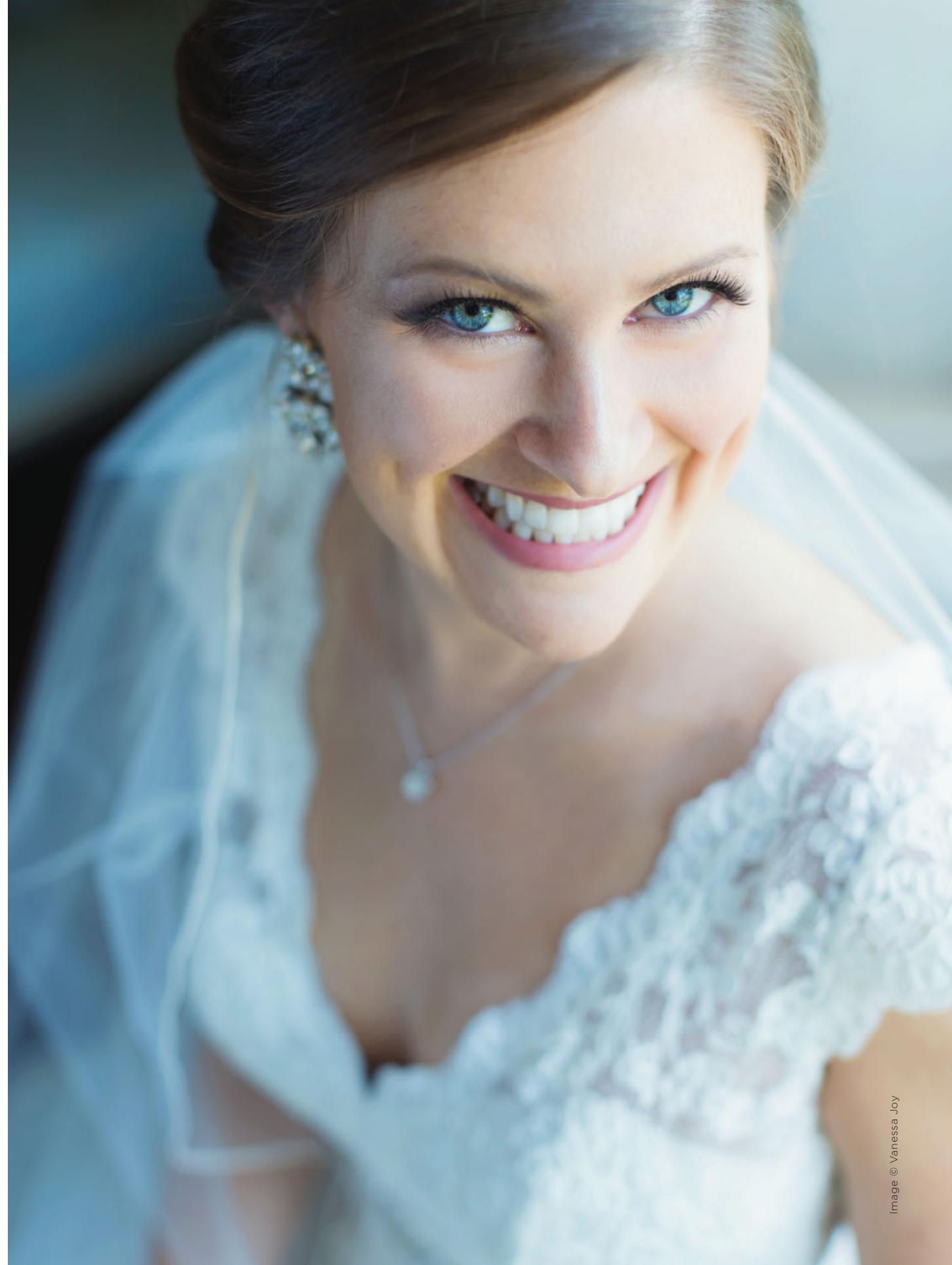
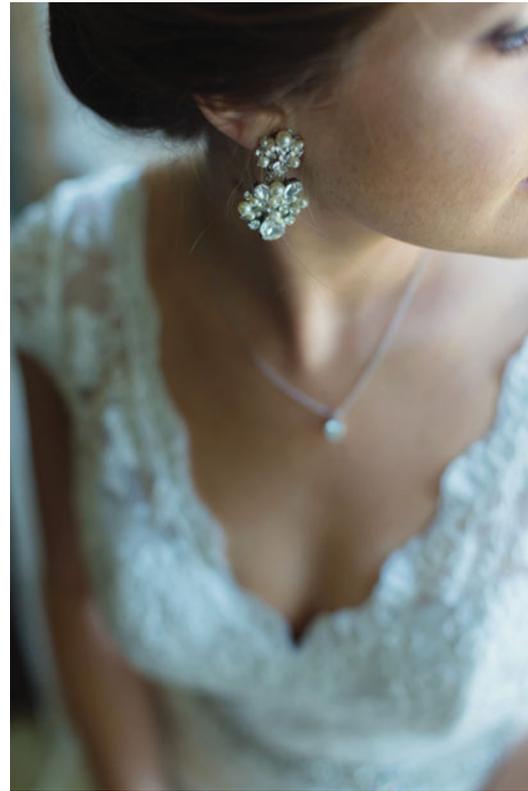
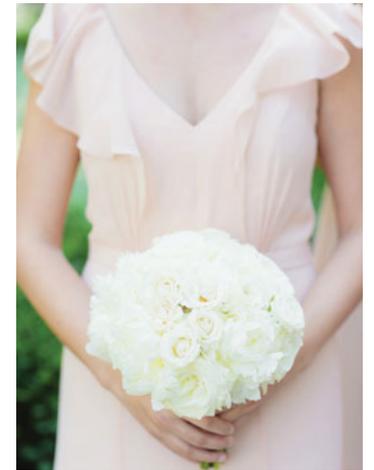
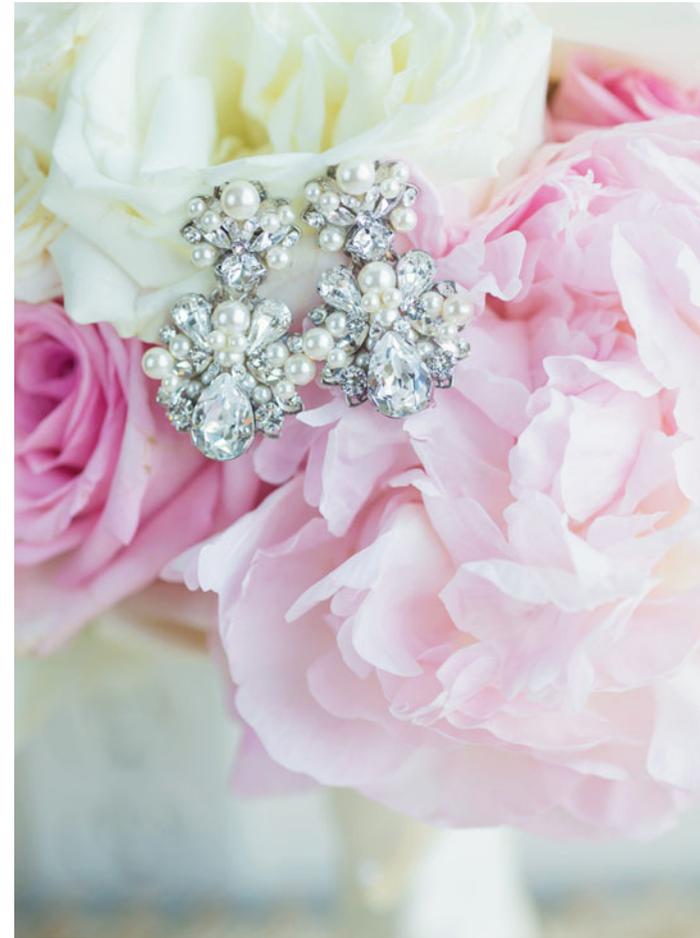


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LEAD

When you meet with a client, lead the meeting. This ensures it goes where you want it to go, and gives off an air of confidence and experience. I guide my wedding clients through a few crucial steps, hitting all the important things they need to know.

Don't chatter through the whole presentation like you're giving a lecture. Leave room for them to ask questions. Have a plan. If there is a lull in the conversation, you should know exactly where to move it.

Here are the things I always cover in an initial consultation:

- Rough timeline of the day
- Pricing and packages
- Delivery times and methods
- Next steps for booking

READ

Learn how to read people.

Interpreting body language and reading between the lines is an art. You need to be able to figure out how people are feeling without them saying it. So much of their unspoken communication tells you if they're ready to book, if they need a little push, if they need a little time or if they just want to get the heck out the door.

Understanding how your clients are feeling will help you lead the session and speak to them better. It's also a matter of demographics. I realized a long time ago that my typical New Jersey/New York clientele just won't go for that cliché sales pitch ending: "Does this sound like what you're looking for?" Even if they did, yuck—those words would taste like vinegar coming out of my mouth.

Toward the end of a consultation, I can usually tell if they're ready to book, in which case I say, "Do you want to me send you a contract to look over?" Or, if I feel they need to think about it or just aren't interested, I give them space and tell them to go home and talk it over, and let me know if they have any questions.

Either way, I want to leave them with a good feeling, like we connected. Whether or not they hire me, they will have only nice things to say about me. That is a successful consultation in my book.

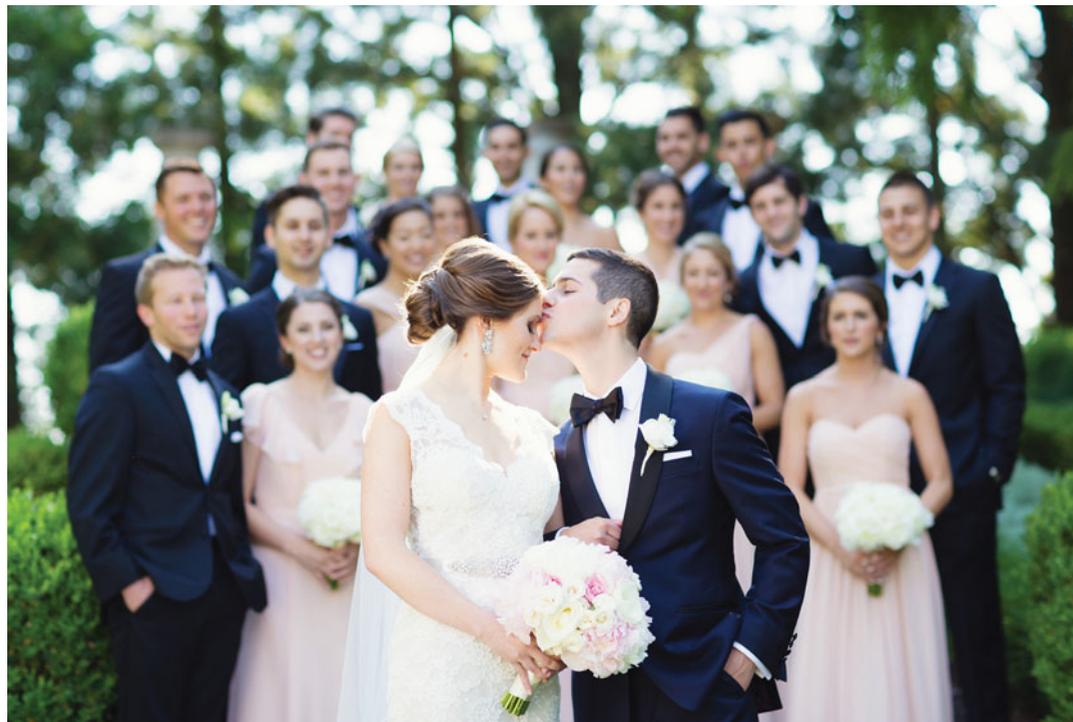


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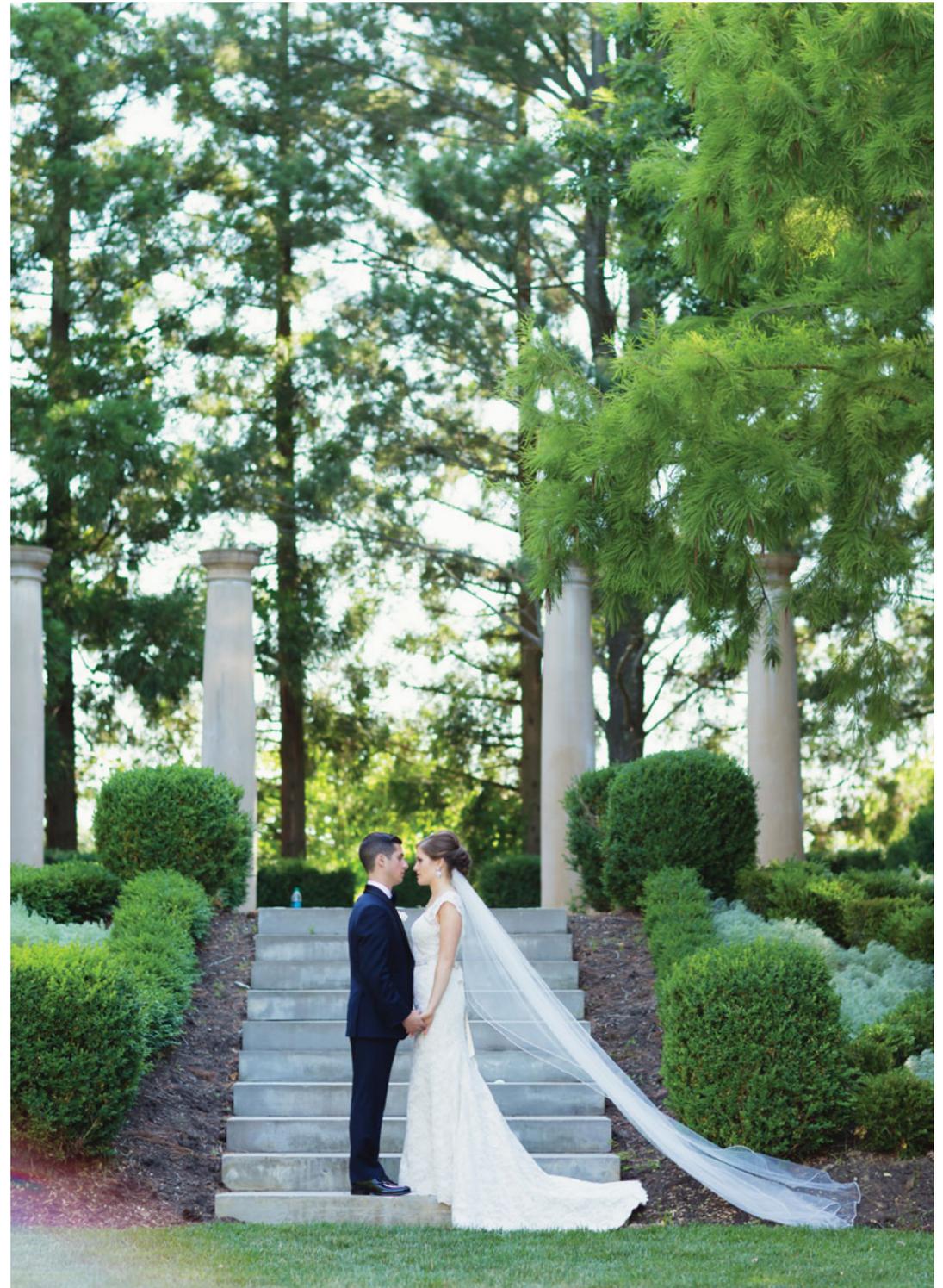


Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

Making people feel comfortable is one of the most important skills a photographer can possess. We can be amazing at our craft but fail because we have no idea how to relate to other people. We can't be shy. Wallflowers have a much harder time booking gigs since most of us are sole proprietors.

The same goes for marketing. I know too many photographers who are incredible at what they do behind the camera, but can't make a living because they don't know how to market themselves. That's why this issue of *Shutter* is your goldmine. It holds the keys to growing your business. Don't just read this. Do it.

Still not booking clients? Watch this video for a bit of honesty. ■



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

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CREATING
DIFFERENT SESSION TYPES

TO WELCOME
EVERYONE'S DOLLAR

with Blair Phillips



Newton's first law states that an object in motion stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force. If things could just automatically stay in motion, all businesses would be set. Unfortunately, we are always faced with an unbalanced force. To remain successful, you must possess the ability to continually change and adapt to the marketplace.

We have seen many changes in our business over the past 10 years, with the largest change beginning about a year ago. It was common for clients to pay an average of \$2,000 for a portrait order. The general public has begun to lose sight of the value of professional photography. In years past, there were not as many options for a good portrait. Now you can get a decent image on a phone, use an app for a decent edit, and your image is ready for social media. Social media seems to be the most important reason for pictures these days. In response, our studio recently completely overhauled its offerings.

Just as retailers are closing more and more stores and innovating to protect themselves from the bite of online sales, photographers also have to find ways to stay relevant in the marketplace. It is easy to sit at a desk and find the lowest price in the world and have something shipped right to your doorstep. Americans are accustomed to getting what they want when they want it. So at our studio, we have three pricing tiers that fit almost every budget.

The first option we offer is the traditional session that we have offered from day one. It's a two-hour shoot with unlimited sets, indoor and outdoor, followed by an in-person sales appointment. Hair and makeup are included. If they don't want hair and makeup, the price for the session does not change. We explain that it is complimentary. With hair and makeup, sessions tend to be more inspired. This session is for the individual or family that is not as budget conscious, and are used to getting exactly what they want. You should always keep products and services that may be considered too pricy for the average client. You should not punish the client who will spend a lot of money. Always have the higher-ticket offerings available for those clients. Think of it as the parking lot of a shopping mall. You peruse the parking lot and find vehicles that range in price from \$500 to \$100,000. There are people from all walks of life who gather there, in search of similar things, with completely different budgets.



We were getting phone calls from people stating that they had a certain budget they needed to remain within. Some of those budgets did not fit within our offerings at the time. Realizing we were turning away potential income-producing customers, we developed our second option. We wanted to create a way to let them spend their money with us. Our second session offering includes a modest session fee that nearly anyone can afford. We fought the issue of people that only want the digital files for long enough. This session generally lasts less than an hour, with two outfit changes, and includes only the digital files.

We also offer 40 percent off the regular price of prints should they choose to order any from us. When they order through us, they get the very best color, consistency and quality. Think of this as an express session for the working family that wants the experience and quality that you offer, but may not have a big budget. This gets them in the door. You have not put forth a ton of effort, and have created a new client who will market in the community for you. This has allowed us to reach a ton of new clients who would not have come in for the premium session that we offered in the past. It has opened up another side of our business. The key is adjusting the amount of time you put into these types of sessions to ensure you maximize your profits.

Image © Blair Phillips





Images © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips

We developed our third type of session for the client who loves our work but cannot afford our higher-priced products. I see no harm in making everyone's money welcome. We offer a session that takes 10 minutes, on one set, and post the images online for them to order from. The key is to collect the session fee and a minimum order requirement up front. This way you are guaranteed to make at least that amount of money for your efforts.

There's very little work involved. We would never be able to reach these clients otherwise. These clients often return again and again. This turns into a constant influx of small amounts of cash. We stack these appointments on certain days each month. These sessions are an in-and-out type of deal. Every dollar I bring in helps the bottom line.



Image © Blair Phillips

However you view the photography industry, we can all agree that it is constantly evolving. There are not many things in life that remain the same for eternity, without constant improvements or attention. The photography business is not self-sustaining without your constant evolution and willingness to answer the call of clients' spending habits. ■

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

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IN-PERSON SALES:

Overcoming the Top 5 Most Common Objections

with Alissa Zimmerman

The art of in-person sales is a terrifying beast for many photographers. I never wanted to be in the sales room because selling is very low in my skillset. Like many photographers, I didn't have a choice. Even though I was thrust into this role, many photographers don't have a choice because their businesses just aren't profitable without in-person sales. If I can do it, so can you.

Here are five of the most common objections I have run into in the sales room over the past year in this new role. Role-play these scenarios with a friend, family member or coworker until you're comfortable making the sale. Your clients can smell your fear when you're not confident in the "why" behind your responses to these objections, and will pounce at any opportunity to take advantage of that weakness to score photography and products at a discounted price. Don't let it happen. Remember, your answers should always be: "No," "Why?" and "Can I offer you an alternative?" Without using this formula for any objections, your clients will eat you alive.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

1. "WE CAN'T AFFORD IT."

This is probably the most common objection you will run into, especially with brides after their wedding. The post-wedding sale is the most difficult, but if it's handled right, you'll see extra income and a boost in your client averages.

It is crucial to set yourself up for success. Make sure your clients know your pricing before they come in for their sales session so they aren't blindsided. I send out pricing the night after their photo shoot (engagement session, senior session, family session) or the day after the wedding. I attach the pricing document to the email I send to schedule their in-person sales session. This gives them a two-week window where they are able to process how much they are willing to spend. Of course, all of that goes out the window when they come in and love every single image (more on that later).

During the sales session, if your client is having a hard time pulling the trigger because of price, offer a payment plan. It's important that they know the order will go into production once payment has been made in full. We have done payments split into two and up to six. The payment plan timeline can be worked out with your client that night, but get their credit card number before they leave so you can run it on the agreed-upon dates without having to chase them down.

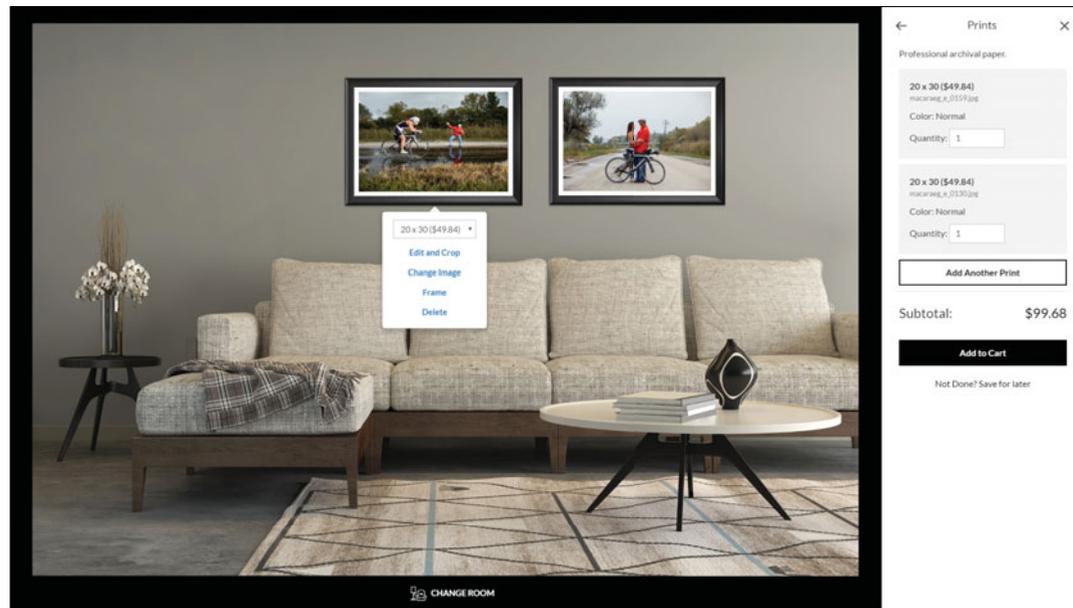
2. "IS AN 8X10 BIG ENOUGH FOR MY WALL?"

I guarantee that at some point in the course of your career, you will run into this question. And I guarantee it will take everything in you not to crack up laughing when you hear it.

Of course, it depends on where and how your client is wanting to hang the photo, but in the case of creating artwork and the staple centerpiece of their home, the answer is no. But you can't just tell your client no. You need the tools to support your response. This is why in-person sales are so important for photographers. A client with this mindset of needing only an 8x10 will never understand how small that is when looking at their images in an online gallery. Having them in your studio with your samples (all at least 16x24) hanging over couches, mantles and sofa tables is the only way for them to get perspective.

We showcase a variety of sizes and products in our sales room, and have smaller sizes hidden to bring out when this question comes up. When a client sees an 11x16 next to a 30x40 over a mantle, their entire mindset changes.

Something else that has helped with this objection is a tool called Room-Vu from a company called N-Vu. With Room-Vu, you can use preloaded stock images to show your clients what their images will look like on a wall. You can also ask clients to take pictures of the wall they want to decorate in their home so you can mock up their images using their actual home within Room-Vu. The value of being able to do this in person after they have just seen all of their images for the first time is priceless.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

3. “WE JUST WANT THE DIGITAL FILES.”

Ah, yes, the objection every photographer dreads hearing.

The first thing you need to determine is whether or not you offer digital files in your packages because the wording will be different. The main point you want to drive home to your clients who think they want only the digital files is that you are a full-service studio and your job is to create one-of-a-kind artwork for your clients’ homes.

If you do offer the digital files (which you should do only if your client purchases a certain package), explain that you’re a full-service studio and believe in printing artwork for their home, but that the digital files are available for purchase or included in your top package.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

4. “WE DON’T NEED THAT MANY PICTURES ON OUR WALLS.”

This one is magic to my ears. I take clients through a narrowing-down process in Lightroom after I have shown them a slideshow of their images. We go through and sort out the images they don’t like. Through this process, the client normally ends up with an overwhelming number of images they love. That’s when I present the folio of our packages and walk them through the products listed in each.

This is your time to play trusted adviser and push them into the top package that includes an album: “You don’t want all 84 images in your home? No problem at all, that’s where an album becomes the perfect product to showcase your images without having to hang them all over your walls.”

As the trusted adviser, go through the package and show them the images that would look best as big wall art, and which images would be best to fill the album.

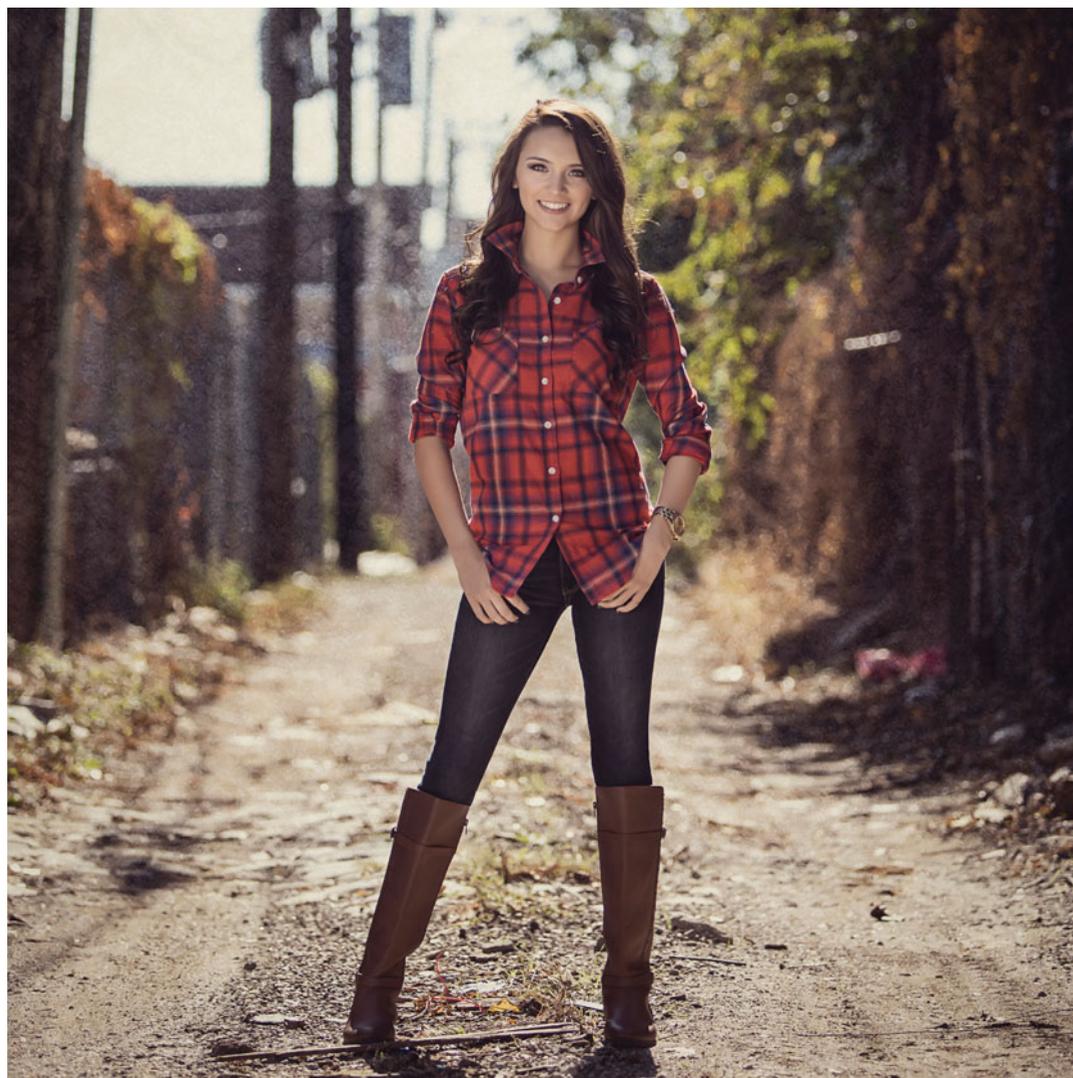


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



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5. “CAN I SWAP OUT ITEMS IN THE PACKAGES?”

First of all, if you do not have this disclaimer written into your pricing sheets already, go do it right now. At the bottom of your pricing document, you should have a sentence with an asterisk in front saying, “*Packages cannot be altered.” This will save you when the question comes up because you can always refer back to the document you sent them in the email scheduling their sales session.

Your language here is very important. You want to point the finger at something else instead of just saying no because your margins don’t allow for it. We tell our clients that packages cannot be altered because they are tied to specials our vendors are running.

Also note that the packages should be structured in a way that shows the value of going into a package versus buying à la carte, so they are already discounted.

And we all know what Sal always preaches: You cannot discount a discount. ■



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

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— USING —
CONTESTS
TO EXPAND YOUR
SOCIAL MEDIA
— REACH —

with Curtiss Bryant

In the past, we had great success with Facebook/Instagram ads. Then something changed, and they are no longer as effective. We were spending more money and not getting the same amount of engagement as before, so we started to abandon them. We still needed something to gain reach on social media to replace Facebook ads. We decided to run a contest for a free shoot, and the results were amazing. It's the same thing we were doing before with the ads, only this time it was all organic reach and we didn't pay a penny. Let's look at how to use contests and "free" giveaways to drive social media reach to grow your business.

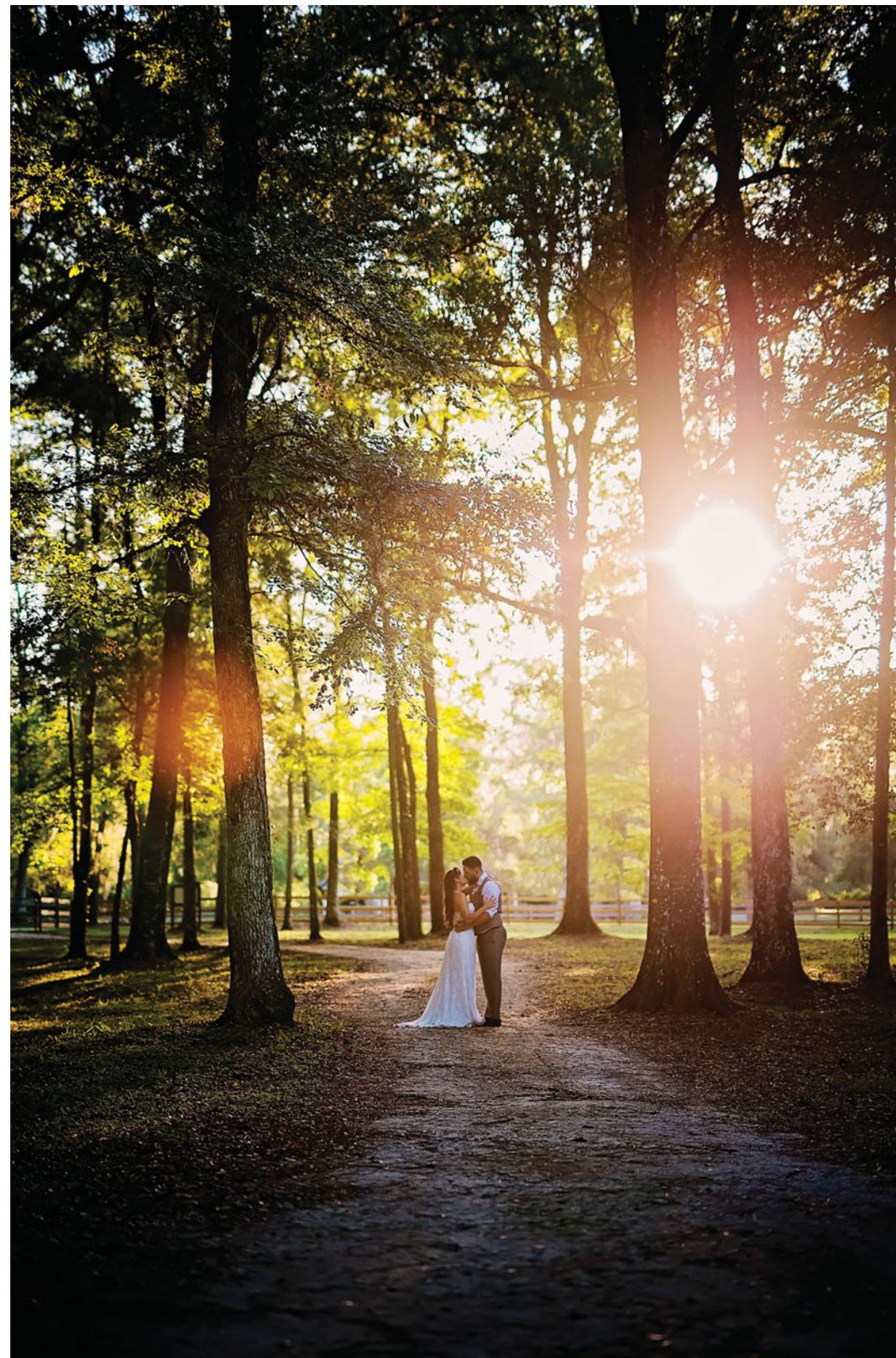
First, let's dispel the myth that free devalues your brand. Shooting a cover for a large magazine is often a free shoot; but in return, you get the cover image on a magazine that is seen by thousands (sometimes millions) of people. That is certainly not a bad use of your talents. Free doesn't have to be a bad word. Embrace it to help your business grow.



STEP 1: BUILD THE DEMAND

We rarely discount our services, and everyone in our area knows that. When we do offer a contest for a free shoot, it is a big deal because it's the only time you can get us for free. If we did discounts or sales all the time, there wouldn't be an incentive to enter the contest, as they could just wait for the next giveaway or discount. If we did a monthly mini-session, why would anyone want to pay full price for a regular session when they can just do a monthly mini-session for a fraction of the price? It is the same concept here. If we always offered a discount, why would anyone pay full price?

We run these contests twice a year, coinciding with engagement season and the holidays. The one over the summer is for engagements and the two we do over Christmas are for regular sessions as well as engagements (one for each).





STEP 2: DECIDE WHAT YOU WANT TO OFFER

Do you want to offer a full session? Do you want to offer digitals? Prints? We want to keep our out-of-pocket costs as low as possible on these giveaways, so we offer only digitals—they are the cheapest product for us to produce. Digitals also happen to be the most expensive product we offer, so the giveaway value is huge. Our Christmas giveaway is our biggest value of the year. We give away the session and include 20 digital images, which is worth over \$1,000. For the engagement giveaway, we include the session and five digital images (a \$499 value). We have found that the bigger the value of the giveaway, the more people are interested.

STEP 3: STRUCTURE IT FOR SUCCESS

Since Facebook ads stopped working well, we needed to find another way to reach a large audience. With these contests, we are able to do so if we structure them properly. We cannot just post the contest and tell people to message us. Once we post the contest on our page, we tell people they have to do three things to enter the contest:

- 1) "Like" our page
- 2) Share the post
- 3) Comment with the word shared on the post (or have them tell you their favorite movie or something else fun)

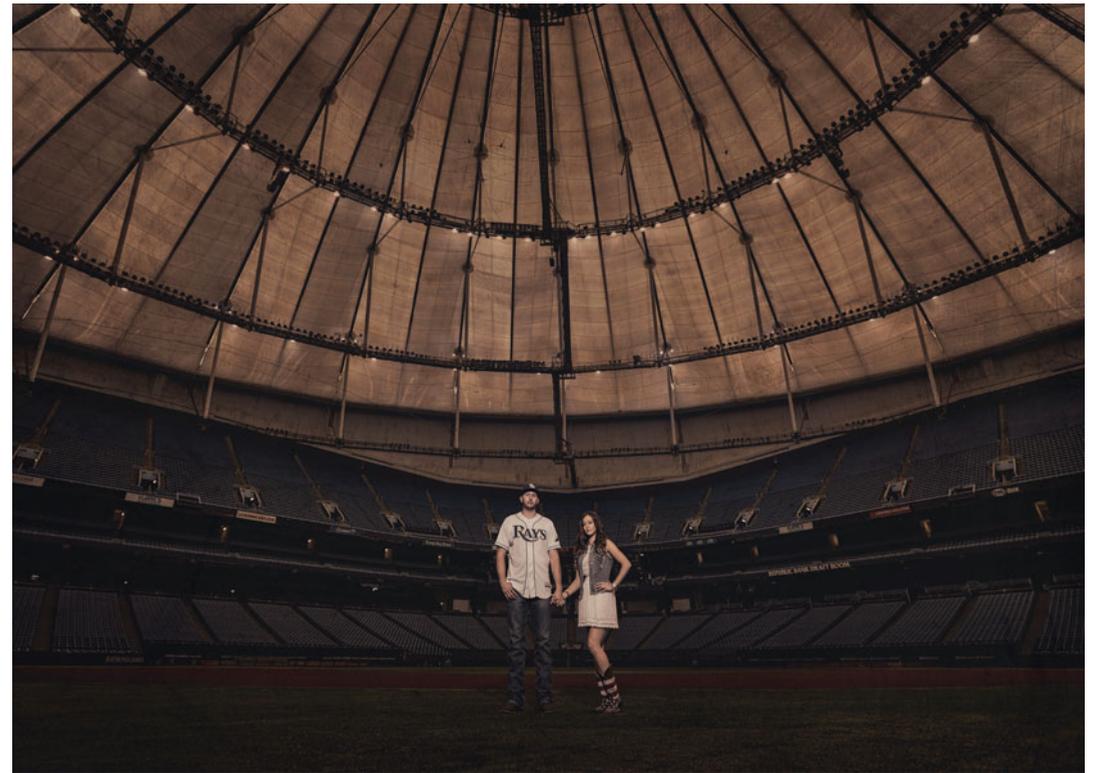
We don't have time to monitor it to make sure they do all three things in order for their entry to count, so we count them just as long as they comment, since we need names to include in the drawing. Posts that include an image with the giveaway details are seen more throughout Facebook than a post with no image. The most important aspect here is that they share the post so it builds organic views. The more people who share it, the more Facebook puts it out. The likes on the page don't mean much, but it does get noticed by potential clients who are looking for a photographer. To them, more likes equals a better photographer, so they aren't a bad thing to have.

Our engagement contest is a bit different. We use the same idea as above, but we ask that people comment on the post with a name of someone who recently got engaged, rather than commenting "shared" on the post. This way, we have the names of the bride and/or groom, and they can see the post as well (and share it). This can be more successful than a bridal show because the engaged couples are now being given to you on a platter (for free) rather than you having to find them on your own or pay money for a bridal show. Bridal shows are an important part of what we do, but this gives us extra names to help us fill our books (more on that in a bit).

An important thing to remember is that they have to go to our page and like, share and comment on the post on the page in order to count. They cannot do it on shared posts since we will never see them. We want them on our page checking out our work.



Image © Curtiss Bryant



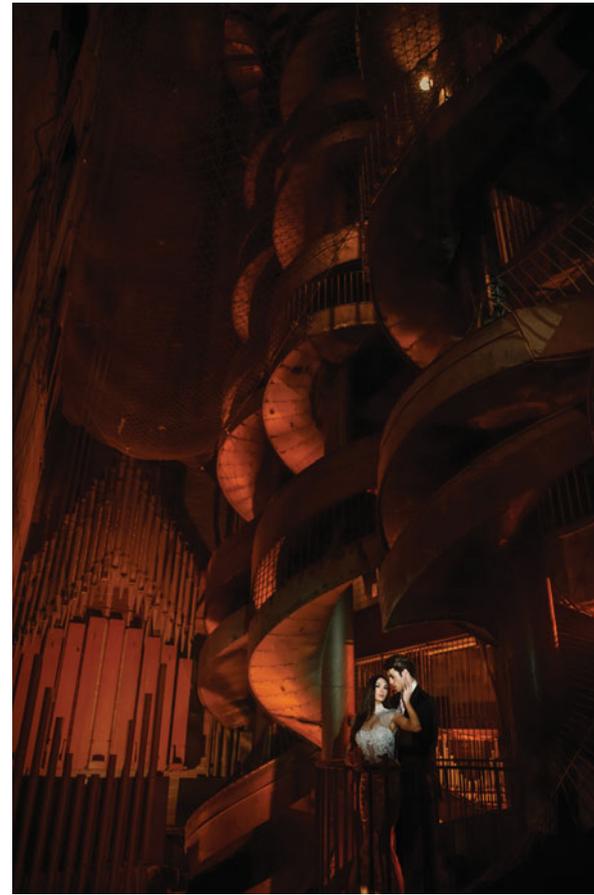
Images © Curtiss Bryant



Images © Curtiss Bryant

STEP 4: DETERMINE A WINNER

Now that we have all these entries, how do you know whom to pick when the contest ends? We take all the names of those who commented (or those tagged engaged couples) and put them into a spreadsheet so each is assigned a number. We hop onto Facebook Live and use a random number generator to generate the winner. We announce them live so that people see it's a transparent process and we aren't just selecting people we know. Normally, we do the big giveaway (the reason they signed up), and then, as a bonus, we include a few smaller giveaways (mini-sessions). This way, more people win and we surprise them, which gets them talking about us with their friends.



Images © Curtiss Bryant



Image © Curtiss Bryant

STEP 5: MAKE EVERYONE A WINNER

This is huge for our studio. We reward everyone who participated in the contest with some type of prize. For the portrait giveaway at Christmas, we offer everyone a discounted session fee. We do not announce this; we simply message each person with the offer. This weeds out those who aren't willing to invest with us, and allows us to shoot more portrait sessions than we would have otherwise.

For our engagement entries, we make everyone a winner of a free engagement session. This gets them into our studio, where we can show them what we do. If they hire us for the engagement session, chances are they will hire us to shoot their wedding.

We make it known to all the secondary winners that products and images are available at an additional cost and are not included in the free/discounted session they receive. This eliminates any confusion. They know they are expected to pay for any prints or products they want.

In addition to the winners (who will likely spend more money with us), we have all the people who saw our name all over Facebook for a week. Those people will remember us when they look for a photographer, and will likely reach out to us first. Our recent campaign for Christmas brought over 20,000 views, over 280 shares and 200-plus likes to our pages. We didn't pay a penny for that reach, nor did we boost the post. It was simply organic reach, using the power of social media to get the word out and get people to our pages. ■



Curtiss is the owner/photographer (along with his wife, Valerie) of Curtiss Bryant Photography in Central Florida. He has a degree in marketing and has been shooting professionally since 2005, specializing in weddings and high school senior portraits. Curtiss's work has graced the pages of international publications, and his awards include being named to the Hot 100 for 2016 by Senior Style Guide.

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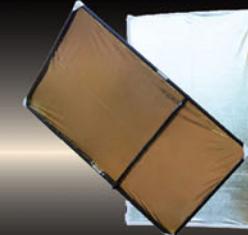
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THE
EMOTION
OF
**SALES AND
MARKETING**

with **Melanie Anderson**

This month, I share several vital areas of my business that enable me to communicate clearly with my clients, ensuring that I am maximizing my time, shooting with intention, and creating products and a workflow that put the focus on the client experience. Efficiency is key. You must have a system in place that puts you in front of clients and creates an emotional experience. Below are four ideas that can help you connect with clients, from the initial contact to in-person sales.

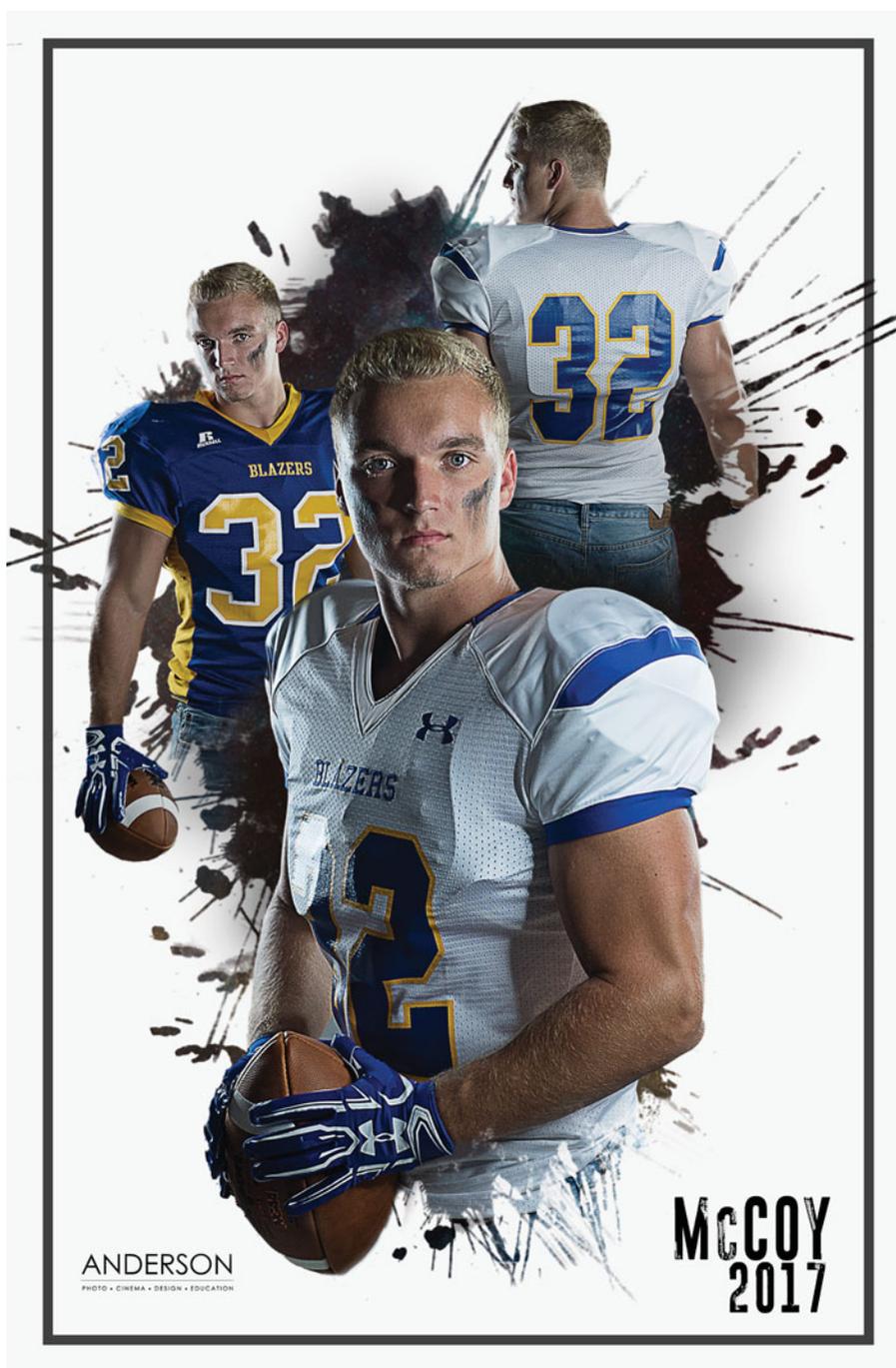


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CONNECTING WITH CLIENTS

When a prospective client contacts me, I always respond this way: “Thank you so much for your interest. What is your phone number? We will contact you with details.” I do not respond with pricing or have a conversation via email. I need to make a personal connection with my clients. I need to sell them on the experience. I cannot stress this enough. We are a high-end elite studio, and we must preserve this reputation through the experience, conversation and how we educate our clients to “see the difference.”

I always ask, “How did you hear about our studio?” I want a personal connection—did they hear of us from word of mouth or social media? Did they see our display at the mall, their doctor’s office or the hospital, or maybe the extreme team or senior banners hanging on the fields and in the gyms at high schools? This is vital because it tells me if my marketing efforts are working.

I want to find out the purpose of the shoot and any important details. I express excitement over their session and lead them toward booking by suggesting available dates and times. You should be able to secure most everyone who contacts you for a session. You have engaged them to a point that they want to have you capture this moment in time because they understand the importance of preserving it with a pro. They feel comfortable, like they are in good hands, and will sacrifice in other areas to be able to afford your services.

A client preparing for a session is stressed out. It requires a lot of prep work. Our job is to ease any anxiety they may have and create the best experience for the entire family. Make it easy to order, and provide beautiful products. I can do all of this over the phone. I do not need to schedule preconsultations, which means I can spend that time growing my business via networking or taking on more sessions.

I pride myself on being personable and easy to engage. This personality strength comes out when I photograph. I am better able to capture emotion and expression. I get the “real” smile, which is accompanied by the smile in the eyes. I do not overshoot. You must be intentional with your time and your client’s time—before the client knows it, I’m finished with the shot and we’re moving on to the next location, outfit or pose. This keeps the client from feeling defeated.

You have to be able to work fast. Clients are already self-conscious about what they are wearing, how they look and every flaw they see; if you take too long to grab a shot or take too many shots, they see the lack of confidence in you, and that emotion rubs off on them. They no longer feel so good about their appearance, and this shows in the photos. Lift your clients up. Make them feel beautiful so that beauty comes out in their photos, thus creating an emotional connection and driving sales.

Clients want photos that make them feel good about themselves. You must understand posing, lighting and lens selection so you can move swiftly through a session. If you find that a certain pose and location are not working, move on, don’t force it. Perfect a system that lets you engage with your clients while you’re shooting. Your camera and vision are an extension of you, not a barrier. Allow the equipment to do the work. Know ISO, aperture and shutter speed so that you are not using up valuable time on technique. You must be able to do this in any environment at any time.

INTENTIONAL CONVERSATION

Prior to the session, I ask a few questions. I want to understand the purpose of the session. Do they have specific needs for their home or family members? I need to know if my client understands the value of wall portraits—if not, I educate them and ensure that this investment is worth every penny.

Family dynamics change, and photography has a way of stopping time and allowing us to relive moments in time. We must convey the emotion of this from the beginning. I want to understand the family as well: Will I have a challenge with one of the children? Are all who are present willing participants? I discuss a few collection options while I'm photographing. I mention how beautiful a certain image just captured would look on a canvas. I discuss collage options, and explain these are part of one of our portrait collections that I will show them in the sales room after our session. I want my clients to be visualizing the final product in their home during the session. This creates an emotional attachment to images and ensures that even my favorites are purchased and created in sizes that are intended to showcase my work—not only in their homes, but on the social media pages of friends and family.

After the portrait session, I tell clients that we are going to schedule a sales session and to plan to be here for about an hour. I remind them that I do all of my sales in person, that anyone involved in purchasing decisions needs to be here and that they will be making their purchasing decisions the day of the sales session. I tell them their photos will not be pre-edited. I will crop the images and switch a few to black and white if appropriate, but the images will not be edited.

You should not need to pre-edit. You should be able to upload quickly to your sales software and provide a sales session within minutes. I can have a sales session ready within 10 minutes for clients who are coming in from out of town or grandparents who are visiting. It is not always convenient for them to come back to the studio. I must be able to adjust and schedule these as needed. You should be either behind your camera or out networking, not behind your computer pre-editing images that your clients are not buying. You must create an efficient workflow in order to maximize profit.



Image © Melanie Anderson



Image © Melanie Anderson

IN-PERSON SALES

Sales should always be done in person. I can control the environment. I can educate clients on layout and sizes while adding emotion to the sale. We are the experts. We need to project the vision of what will look best in their home. I have product samples laid out on a table, including announcements and mounted prints. On the wall are the framed and canvas collection options.

I always have an idea about the client's budget going into the sales session, which I gathered from previous conversations. So I know whether to pitch them wall art, creative pieces or gift prints.

Emotion leads photography sales. In order to meet and exceed your sales goals, you must engage your clients on an emotional level. The products that trigger an emotional response include canvas wall art, signature albums, brag books and our extreme metal pieces.

Since my studio is high-end, I am not the photographer for everyone. There is a price that comes with exclusivity. I have to involve the client emotionally, shoot with intention and provide quality products and a personal experience. When I project the slide presentation of the family, senior or newborn on the wall with music, the emotional connection is made. When clients see their portraits larger than life, they know the investment is a good one.



Image © Melanie Anderson

ACTION PLANS

1. Head to Anderson-Education.com for a list of products and companies I love, plus discount codes. These items can help your efficiency, client workflow and sales.

2. Add the following verbiage to your communication:

“How did you hear about our studio?”

“What is the purpose of the session?”

“What do you plan to do with the images? Where will you hang them?”

3. Switch to in-person sales if you are not already providing that service. ■



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

andersonphotographs.com

It's not just about apps anymore —

I get it—

When I founded [StickyAlbums](#) way back in 2012, we pioneered the marketing strategy of creating custom mobile apps for your clients.

Today, in 2017 there are several companies that now offer similar *mobile app* functionality.

In building [StickyFolios](#), I knew it was time for us to lead again.



Nate Grahek

Founder & CEO
[StickyAlbums](#), [StickyApps](#)
& [StickyFolios](#)

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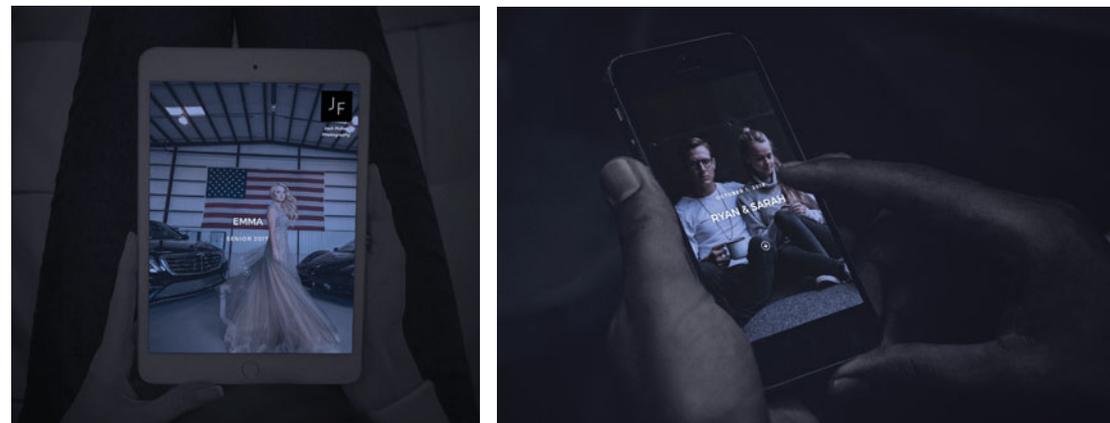
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STICKY  FOLIOS with *Salvatore Cincotta*

STICKY FOLIOS



Why StickyFolios?

Marketing is all about exposure. Make it easy for your clients to enjoy and share your work, and they will become your biggest mouthpiece and a built-in marketing machine for you.

Believe it or not, there is now something even better than StickyAlbums. Welcome to StickyFolios.

We have loved using StickyAlbums over the past five years. After each wedding, we would surprise our couples with their own custom app. They shared them like crazy, which created huge exposure for my brand.

So how could anything be even better than StickyAlbums?

The new Wedding Website template that comes with StickyFolios does everything StickyAlbums did, only better. Now we don't have to wait until after the wedding. As soon as we shoot the engagement session, we can create something our couples value even more, and it gets us exponentially more brand exposure. You can even offer it as a premium upgrade.

This tactic doesn't scale with other website building tools. The StickyFolios builder is dead simple. This is not about being a custom website designer—you need to build and update these sites in minutes, not hours. With StickyFolios' unlimited pricing model, you can make one for every single client without breaking the bank.

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For more information, visit www.stickyfolios.com



Image © Phillip Blume

HACKING HIGHLIGHTROOM

FOR BETTER, FASTER
IN-PERSON SALES

with Phillip Blume

It was our moment of truth. We felt like we were stepping off a ledge, with only the smallest hope that the fall might wake us from our nightmare.

It had been a year since my wife, Eileen, and I had realized “the dream,” going full-time as wedding photographers. To the outside world, Blume Photography looked like an instant success story. I suppose they were right; our culture tends to define “busy-ness” as success. But the dream had become a nightmare. We were slaves to a business that robbed our time from friends, personal endeavors and even our newborn baby girl. In exchange, we barely were making ends meet.

We never aspired to be more than a mom-and-pop studio. We were two lovers in love with shooting and sharing. Leave physical items out of it, we thought. Ours was the simplest business model with no strings attached, right? But there was a string. As bookings increased, the time demand began to tighten like a noose around our necks.

But we had to jump.

We are not salespeople. The idea of adding sales meetings to our already loaded workflow was, well, counterintuitive. If this business model failed, we would hit rock bottom. Instead, we soared. Today, artwork sales account for almost 70 percent of Blume Photography’s profit.

If I could help you tame the sales monster using software you already own, what would it mean for you? Tripling your current salary? Profiting more from images you’re already creating? In line with our principles, we still reject high-pressure sales tactics. So how does it all work?

We do it all in Lightroom. Just like the philosophy our ComeUnity Workshop students learn to apply in every area of business, we focus on simplicity: maximize your impact, but minimize excess tools and effort. Yes, we’re familiar with the shiny features that specialized sales software boasts. Yet we see no reason to pour our time or money into them. Here is how we hack Lightroom to make our sales sessions soar.

FOLDERS VS. COLLECTIONS

Lightroom is first and foremost a tool for organizing photos. This makes it perfect for sales. If used correctly, you’ll never risk misplacing or misinterpreting an order. Plus, your images already live in Lightroom, so there’s no more exporting, importing and transferring to new software—adding hours to your workflow.

First, always remember that the Folders menu (in your left-side toolbar) is a literal representation of the folders you have organized elsewhere on your computer. If you Add a Folder in this section, you are creating a real folder somewhere else on your computer or external hard drive. Our Folders section is organized first by year, with folders labeled “2016,” “2017,” etc. Beneath each year, we add subfolders for genres like weddings, families, seniors and newborns. Inside each genre subfolder, we add a new subfolder for every shoot, like “John & Jane” under the “weddings” subfolder for 2017. You get the idea.

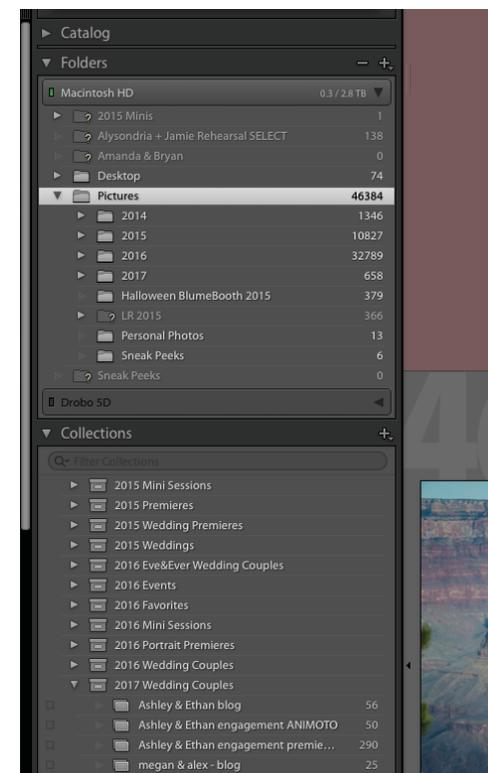


Image © Phillip Blume

“Collections” is where you’ll run your sales sessions. Keep in mind that Collections are just virtual groupings of whatever photos you put in them. They don’t show up anywhere else on your computer, just in Lightroom. To begin, click the “+” icon and Create a Collection Set called, for example, “2017.” Since we perform a sales session for almost every shoot, we essentially mimic our Folder structure here in Collections, making everything familiar and easy to find. However, whereas we had “John & Jane” inside our 2017 > Weddings folder above, here in Collections we have “John & Jane Premiere” instead. So what’s different about this Collection?

In the subfolder “John & Jane,” we have all our photos from their wedding (the good, the bad and the ugly). There, using the “P” key to flag favorites, we select our top 800 or fewer photos to show the client. We now filter to view only our flagged images. You could personally edit your images at this point. But we instead highlight them all, then File > Export as Catalogue... allows us to send only the Lightroom Smart Previews to Evolve Edits. Unlike the era of “overnight uploads” or snail-mailing hard drives to our editor, the Smart Previews are uploaded in just a few minutes. While we wait, we send our client an email to schedule their sales session, or what we’ve dubbed a “Premiere.” Evolve returns the edited images, and we simply “apply” those edits to the folder before the meeting.

Now we drag only our 800 select edited images to “John & Jane Premiere” in Collections. See where this is going? I don’t want John or Jane ever to see or think about the images we scrapped. Part of my job as an artist is to curate my own work; everything I touch isn’t gold—in fact, a lot of it is a work in progress or just plain bad.

Inside the “John & Jane Premiere” Collection now, I can remove all ratings (flags, stars, etc.) without mixing good images back together with unselected images. I’ll need this clean slate so the clients can then use Lightroom’s rating system for their own selections.



Image © Phillip Blume

SET THE GROUND RULES

After getting our clients excited about their images with a brief Animoto slideshow (about 70 images), we go through every image with them. All 800. This is where setting ground rules is crucial. Allowing your clients to choose the images for their family books or wedding albums is a powerful strategy that allows them to sell to themselves. Now you won't have to be a pushy salesperson, because most clients will realize they need to purchase a book or extra album pages to fit (no, better yet, "preserve and display") all the images they've just fallen in love with.

But you don't want a sales session to drag on too long. If you leave the ground rules too open-ended, your most budget-minded clients will want to review their images again and again in an attempt to narrow it down further. It's a painful process for you, but even more painful for them as they unhappily axe images they'd hoped to see in their album. They'll walk away from the sales session exhausted, disappointed and with a bad taste in their mouth.

Here's what we say to set expectations and ensure they leave smiling: "I'm so glad you loved your slideshow. To give you an idea, those images were less than 10 percent of all the images we're about to look through together to select your favorites." (Your clients' expressions will reveal excitement and shock.) "Yeah—it's a lot. But here's how we'll make it as easy and helpful as possible. We will do just two run-throughs of all your images."



Image © Phillip Blume

FIRST PHASE

“You see that film strip of images at the bottom of the screen?” I say. I refer them to the row of all images viewable below the main preview image in their Lightroom Collection (viewed in Preview mode). I keep control using a wireless keyboard; my clients direct me audibly.

“For the first run-through,” I explain, “I’ll literally click through that whole row of images, from the first to the last. But I’ll move pretty quickly and mercilessly. We won’t go back to look at any past image again, and we won’t compare any similar images side-by-side. First, I just want you to see every image. If you like an image at all—in fact, as long as you don’t dislike it—just react to it or say yes, and I will mark it with two stars. If you don’t tell me, I won’t mark it and it will disappear forever. So if you think you might want to see it again later, paint with a broad brush.” The important strategy here is to have your client choose positively, focused on images they like rather than critiquing images they don’t. After phase one, filter to view only their two-starred selections.

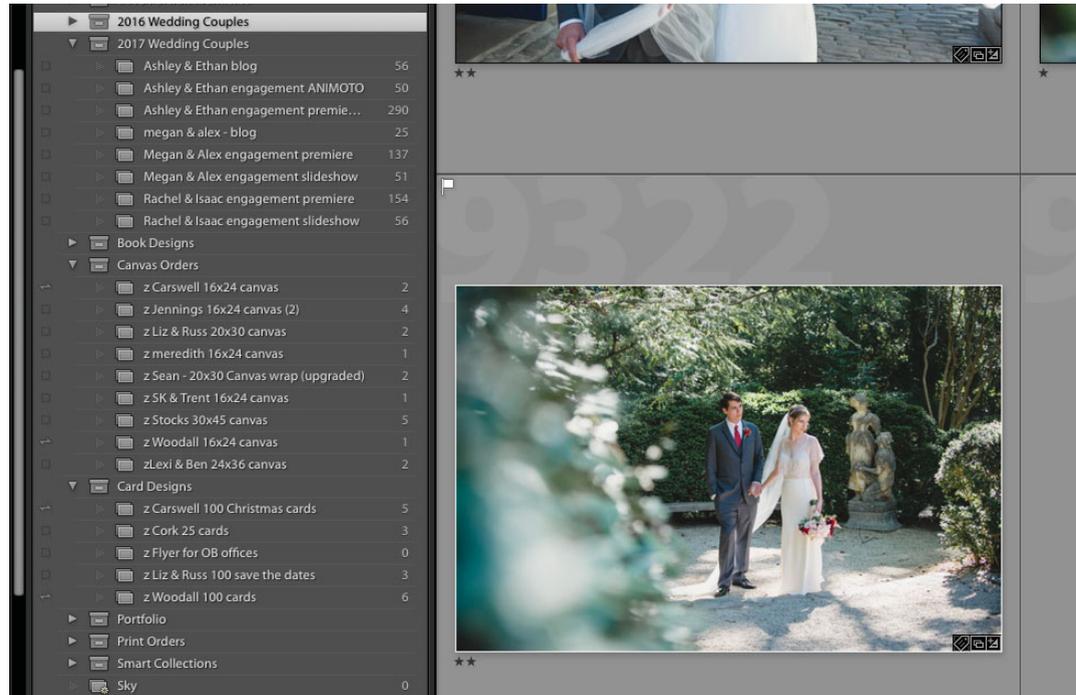
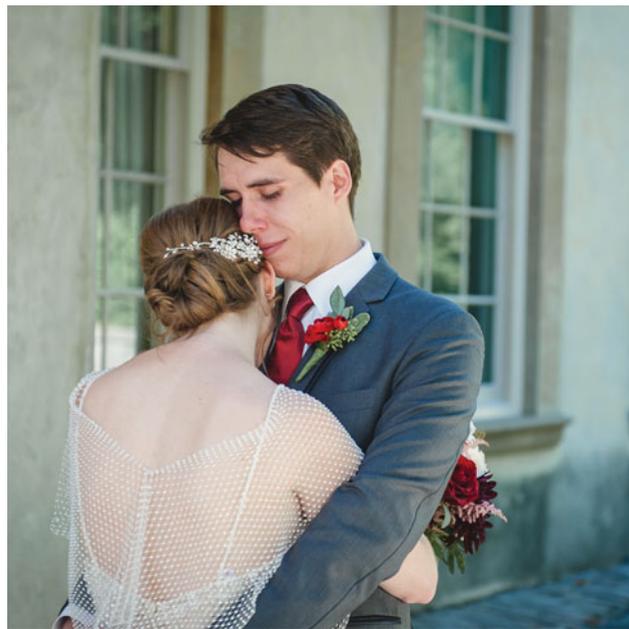


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SECOND PHASE

“On the second run-through, I’ll bring up several images at a time,” I continue. I show them how Lightroom allows me to Command-click multiple images and view them together. Depending on the size of your monitor, you can bring up four, six or more images together, and view similar images side-by-side. (I prefer the speed and ease of this method over Lightroom’s Compare Mode, which we never use during sales sessions.)

On this run-through, clients can tell me how they feel about any image on screen: “Think about images for your book,” I say. “If you want to save an image, let me know.” To save the images they like on the screen, I simply Command-click it again; it drops out of sight, but retains its two-star rating. “Or if you can live without a photo and want to get rid of it, let me know, and I can remove it as well.” If this is their request, I click the image with my mouse and hit 1 star. It disappears due to the lower rating but still has one star, which is helpful if they regret narrowing an image and want to find it again quickly. We never want to be “salesmen,” or make a client feel bad about narrowing an image; in fact, we congratulate them occasionally: “Well done. I know it isn’t easy narrowing down, but you’re doing a great job getting it to the real cream of the crop.”



Images © Phillip Blume



Image © Phillip Blume

THE CLOSE

At the end of phase two, we make clear we're there to serve without overselling. I won't even mention the highest-priced Package A if it doesn't suit their image selections. Our instructions are simple and clear: "After two full run-throughs, we have a really accurate idea how many favorites you have." Then I use a phrase that helps prevent requests for further run-throughs: "Having some extra images is great, too, because it gives us flexibility to design your book aesthetically."

Referring to our bundled and discounted art packages, which are available only during sales sessions, we explain: "You have 100 favorite images. So you can fit almost all your favorite images into the book provided in Package B. Or Package C could work as well; we wouldn't be able to use all your favorites, but we could fit a lot of them and still tell your whole story beautifully without too many gaps." See? All the options on the table are good ones.



Image © Phillip Blume

CREATE YOUR CODE (AND KNOW YOUR SHORTCUTS)

Labeling images for various uses takes up the most time during a sales session. Decide on a clear and consistent code for how to label images for production, whether they will become prints, canvases or other products. For example, beyond the two-star system, we use Lightroom's full range of ratings features to label which artwork items we're producing for different images, then place those orders.

In my video below, I demonstrate our complete common-sense labeling system for you. Plus, see how we project images, keep our LR catalogues synced and the most important Collection we create to streamline orders. This is where you will begin to hack Lightroom's features to your advantage. Click to watch the video now.

To learn more of Phillip & Eileen's simplified strategies for photographers (business and shooting), go to www.blumephotography.com/photographers and download a free gift. We also have new live educational videos coming all this month. ■

LEARN MORE.
Click here or check us out at
youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

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¹As a Digital Single Lens Mirrorless camera as of January 4, 2017. ²As an Interchangeable lens system camera as of January 4, 2017. ³6K PHOTO is a high speed burst shooting function that cuts a still image out of 4:3 or 3:2 video footage with approx. 18-megapixel (approx. 6000x3000 effective pixel count) that the 6K image manage.

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WHAT WILL YOU CREATE?



INSPIRATIONS

Inspiration can come when you least expect it. As photographers, we are visual artists. We express ourselves through our camera and the images we create. Inspirations represents a sampling of our industry and the vision of professional photographers from around the world.

Congratulations to all our featured artists. Be inspired and create something that is *you*.

Sal Cincotta, *Editor-in-chief*



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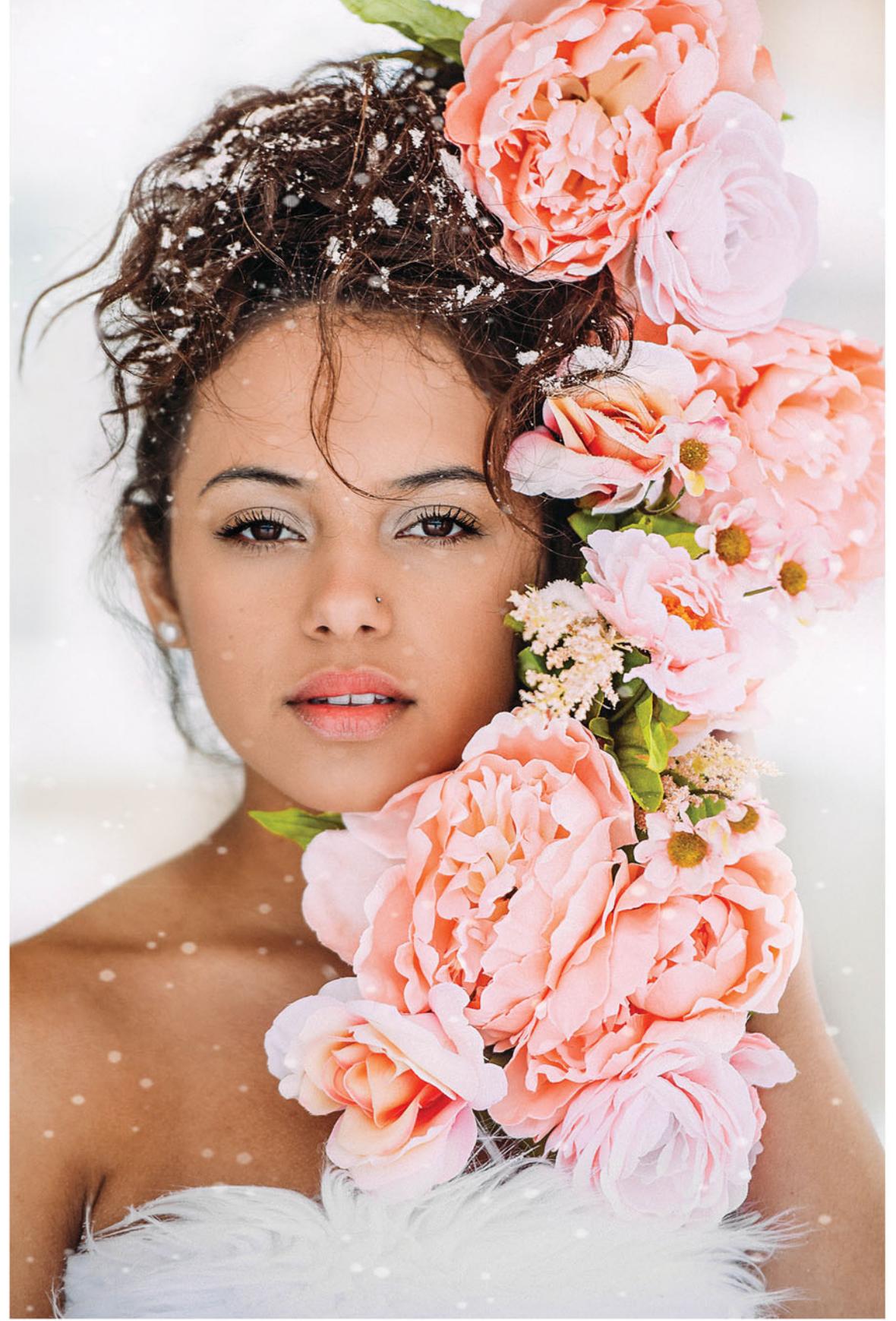


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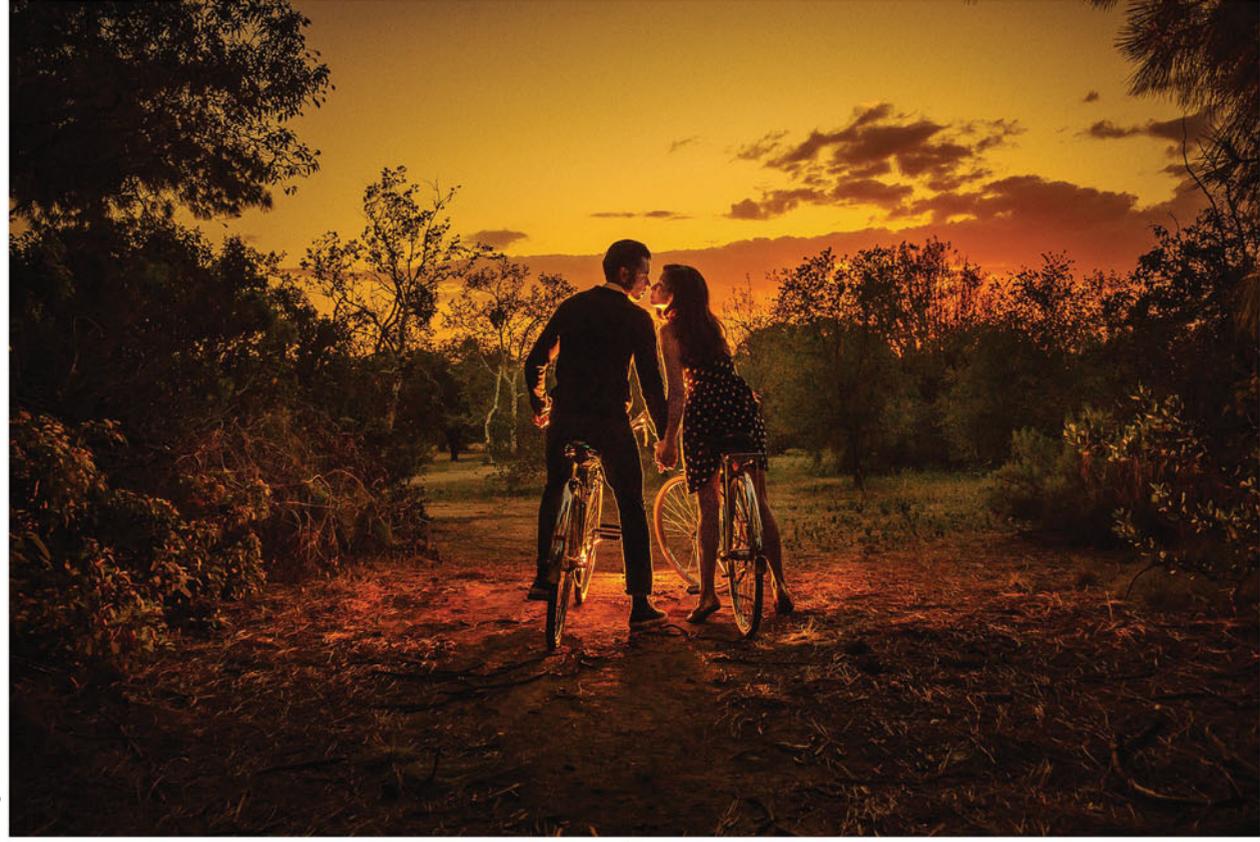


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THE
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CRUSH THE COMPETITION

3 Ways to Get Ahead in Business

with Jeff Rojas

As a business owner, you're constantly battling the competition. In an ever-evolving market, it can be exhausting to keep up. This month, I show you how to crush the competition.

I went to my first hockey game recently with a friend and client, Mark, who was introducing me to the sport. He’s a tech entrepreneur I admire whose business has been vetted by all the biggest social platforms, along with major hitters in the entertainment industry. He and his two business partners are killing the tech game.

I digress. Mark starts discussing the dynamics of the sport and why certain players are so important to their team. He says that as a child, he loved playing hockey and that there was no better feeling than when you scored a goal and your team cheered for you. You were the rock star for that moment in time. The crowd didn’t matter. He turns to me and asks which position I’d play.

I sit for a few seconds thinking about it. “Who’s the best person on that ice right now?” I ask.

Mark points at a guy on the ice.

“I want to be better than that guy,” I say.

He asks me why.

“It wouldn’t matter if anyone else knew,” I answer, “but as long as I’m better than that guy, then I know I’m the best, and that makes me feel happy.” I believe everyone has one leading trait that guides them. I’m competitive. I’ve always been competitive. I’ll always be competitive. That’s who I am.

Here’s the thing about being the best: You have to be wise with whom you’re comparing your success against, because it could be hindering your progress. I say that because most artists are so focused on their specific market, they forget how big the world is. If you’re a goldfish in a fishbowl comparing yourself to other goldfish, you’ll be only as good as the best person in that bowl. If your goal is to be a shark, then you need to focus on how to swim with the sharks. That’s the simplest mindset to have.

If you’re training with the pros, chances are you are light-years ahead of local competition. Think about that the next time you’re hung up on your competitor’s next award or victory. Think bigger. Find better mentors. Hang around better people. Be better.

Page	Total Page Likes	From Last Week	Posts This Week	Engagement This Week
1 CreativeLive	950.9K	▲0.3%	130	25K
2 Sue Bryce Photographer	213.5K	▲0.7%	8	3.6K
3 KelbyOne	205.5K	0%	19	395
4 Scott Kelby	203.8K	▲0.1%	7	2K
5 Lindsay Adler Fashion P...	140.6K	▲0.1%	5	154
YOU 6 Jeff Rojas	8.0K	▲0.9%	2	849

Keep up with the Pages you watch. [Get More Likes](#)

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Image © Jeff Rojas

The image above shows my social stats in a single week against five industry leaders. While I’m still in sixth place in followers, my active growth and engagement is far greater than that of my competitors. Through that benchmarking process, I’ve learned how to craft my content in such a way that it resonates better than that of my peers, which has allowed my brand to outperform my competitors if we average our stats for audience versus engagement ratio. This is the methodology that can reach 1.2 million on Facebook this year, a million minutes watched on YouTube, etc.

Your brain’s perception of what you’re capable of is the only thing hindering you from what you want to accomplish. As the old saying goes, “Work until your idols become your rivals,” and once you’ve reached that step, find new idols.

STOP TALKING AND START DOING.

These days, it seems like everyone is either a “photographer” or an “entrepreneur.” The truth is, 99 percent of people who claim either are full of crap. We’ve all seen them, the relative with a camera who is a “photographer,” but really makes his money working in an office Monday through Friday. If that’s your gig, that’s great. I respect that you’re putting food on your family’s table, but you’re not a professional photographer unless you’re making your income from photography. Professional photographers make their living from photography, not accounting. In that same respect, you’re not an entrepreneur just because you’re working for yourself or because you’re trying to work for yourself.

“ *Entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity without regard to resources currently controlled.* ”
-Harvard Business School Professor Howard Stevenson

I always tell aspiring photography professionals that they need to be an entrepreneur first and an artist second. Photography isn’t easy, but learning how to adapt to an evolving market and client expectations becomes paramount when you’re trying to grow or start your business. Resources should not be a problem when you’re beginning a business. Any great businessperson can turn \$1 into \$1,000 if they’re resourceful. That’s the attitude I expect my peers to have.

This is why I appreciate action over talk. It’s great to have plans, but it’s always better to accomplish them. I’ve found that most people talk more about their dreams and aspirations than they actually spend trying to accomplish them, and it frustrates me. Why? Everyone is capable of grandeur if they’re willing to work for it.

Here’s the secret to accomplishing long-term plans: Dissect them into smaller, more manageable pieces.



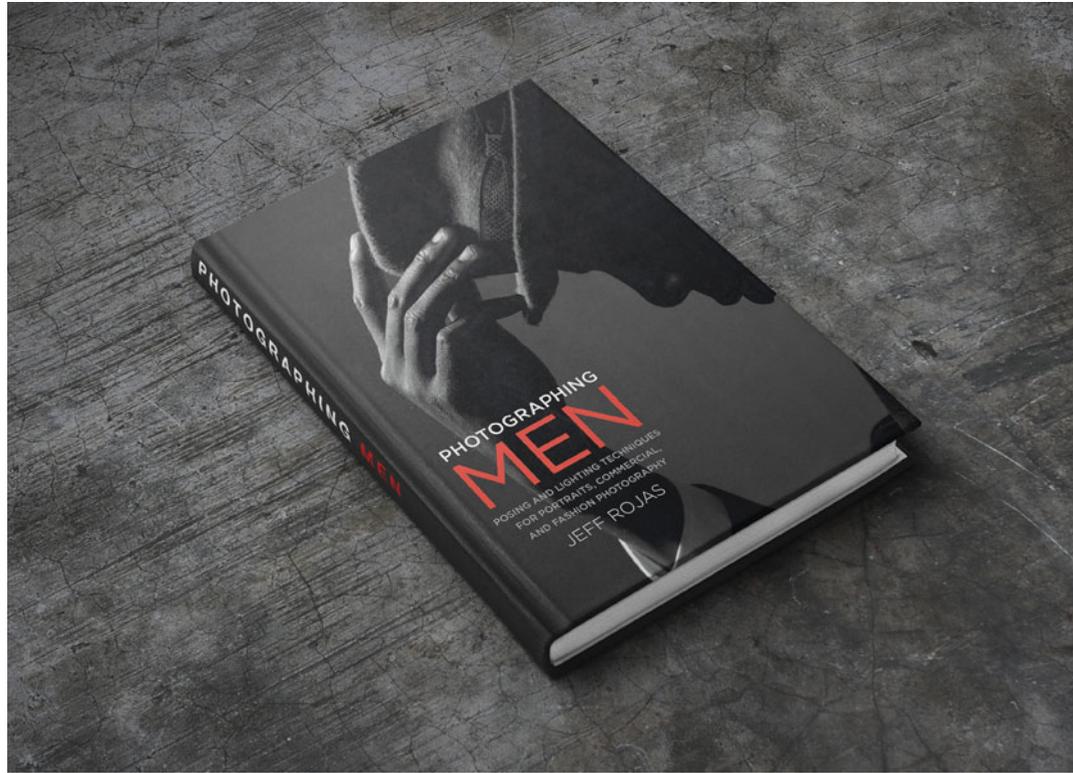


Image © Jeff Rojas

I wrote two books last year. Anyone who's written a book (or an article) can tell you that it's just like high school. Most of us just sit there and stare at a blank screen if we don't have ideas in front of us. The worst thing to do when you have a large project is to try to accomplish it all at once, which leads to procrastination. Dissect that project into smaller pieces.

When I'm writing a book or article, I write a working title and a brief description. From there, I break that content into three to five manageable sections and then break each of those into subsections. If you read my *Photographing Women* last year, you noticed the book is divided into three sections: Theory, Posing and Lighting. While it makes it easier for the audience to understand the content, it makes it easier for me to write because I'm able to break down the content by section and then feel like I'm getting things accomplished quickly.

People who get things done always outperform people who talk about it. As Wayne Gretzky said, "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take."

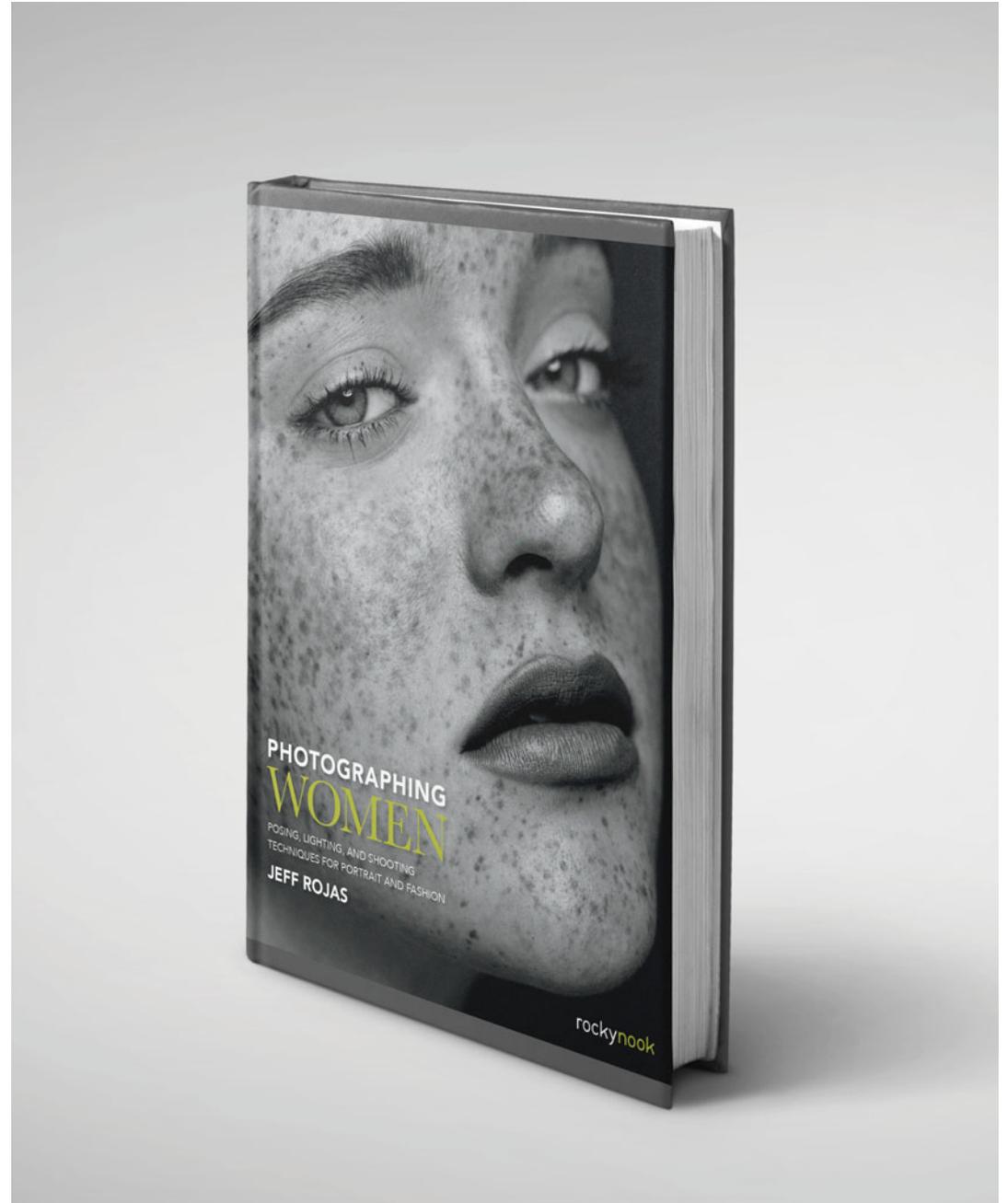


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REMEMBER THAT COPYCATS CAN'T MAKE THE CUT.

Worried about someone stealing your style or replicating your work? Get over it. After I published *Photographing Men*, some of my own peers tried emulating my lighting, retouching and posing, which flattered me. Why? Because it told me I was doing well, that I was onto the next best thing.

This is why I find it interesting that so many photographers spend the time trashing their competition for mimicking their lighting, styling or businesses. If you spent that time working and growing as a businessperson instead of complaining, you'd grow your business more quickly. Those five hours you spend each week writing emails and commenting on social media are much better spent on technique and business. Focus on what you can control. ■

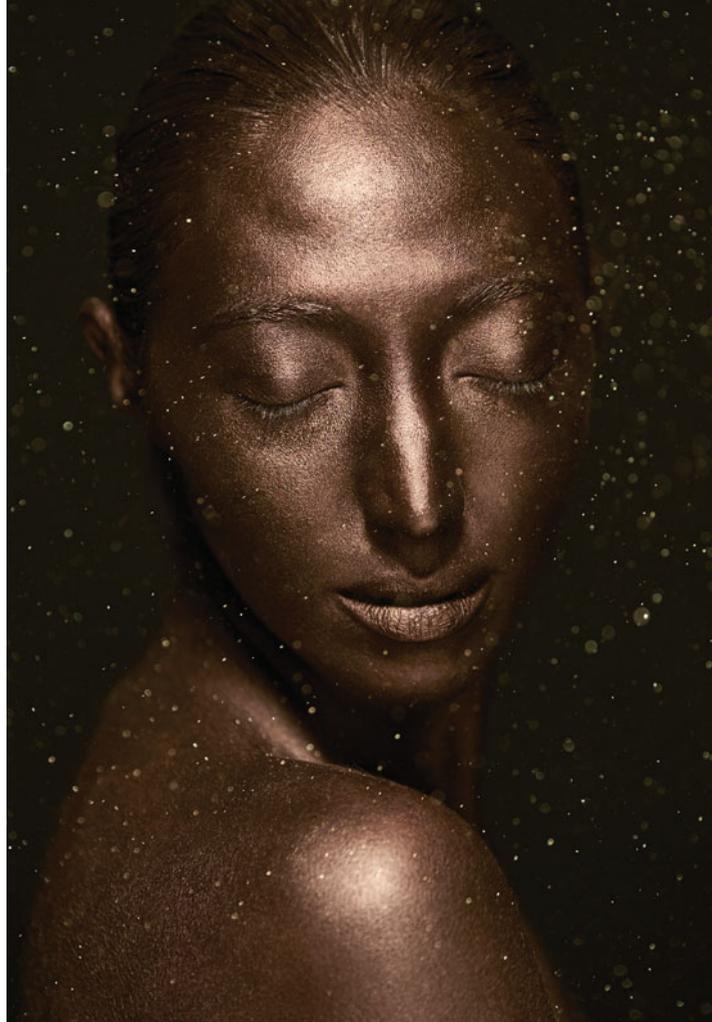


Image © Jeff Rojas

“ They can imitate your **style**,
but they can't imitate your **creativity**. ”
-Sonya Teclai, *TheGoodVibe.co*

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Jeff Rojas is an American photographer and author based in New York City. His primary body of work is his portrait and fashion photography, which has been published in both *Elle* and *Esquire*. Jeff is a heralded photography instructor at platforms like CreativeLive, WPPI, the Photo Plus Expo, Imaging USA and APA.

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WORKFLOW TIPS

FROM A

TO Z

with Michael Anthony

Running a photography business is no easy task. While many people think our job consists of photographing our subjects and delivering products, any photographer with a successful business will tell you there is much more to it than that. In addition to all the business-related tasks, we are responsible for the safekeeping of our clients' most treasured memories. For wedding and event photographers, our business and reputation is at stake with every job we upload.

It goes without saying that when handling millions of images a year, staying organized is no easy task. But it's critical that you have a system in place to handle the influx of new images/video to your system.

As primarily a wedding photographer, I look forward to December about as much as I look forward to Tax Day or a visit to the dentist. We don't have much revenue coming in, but we have lots of expenses: client album orders, holiday shopping, bridal show payments. It is also the time of year when we take advantage of the abundance of time by evaluating and tweaking our systems so we're ready for next year's workload. This year, we put an emphasis on production and workflow.

After photographing 100 weddings in 2016, our studio tested its resources and uncovered flaws that were critical to saving time and staying organized. Think about this: If an album order comes in and you need to track down images on drives from a year ago, that can significantly hamper your ability to deliver the client's product on time, which can cause a major customer satisfaction issue for your business and a bad experience for your clients. This was the type of problem we were running into consistently, and it was a major pain point in our business. I knew that something had to change immediately.

"It's up to you to dictate your business's rate of growth as best you can by understanding the key processes that need to be performed, the key objectives that need to be achieved, the key position you are aiming your business to hold in the marketplace," writes Michael Gerber in *The E-Myth Revisited: Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work and What to Do About It*.

The part of that quote that stuck out for me was that you have to understand the key processes that need to be performed in order to accomplish the main objectives of your business. I wrote down every step of our workflow as part of a process manual for our studio.

The process manual allows me to assign tasks to members of my team. I don't have to sit down and explain every aspect of a task. While it may seem redundant to write a process manual if you work alone, I can assure you that it's not. Using tasks and workflows through 17Hats or other CRM software is great, but I highly recommend keeping a process manual for every aspect of your business.

Now that we understand the importance of processes in our business, let's look at how we handle workflow in a high-volume studio. Our system has been designed to ensure ease of access and to secure data, and will work whether you are running a high-volume studio or a small boutique studio.





Image © Michael Anthony



DATA BACKUP: RULE OF TWOS

Digital technology has given photographers an incredible advantage. With those advantages also come risks, such as loss of data, but we can easily mitigate those risks. Storage media are inexpensive, but I cringe every time I hear a photographer say they lost a client's images. There is no excuse for that these days. It happens to photographers who don't follow a process of backup and redundancy, which is critical for any studio. You should always have at minimum two copies of your clients' images, in separate locations. I call this the rule of twos. As you will see, our studio uses more than two in most cases.

POINT OF CAPTURE

Many photographers do not understand that when your client's images are on the card inside your camera, they are at their most vulnerable. There are many reasons for this. Most importantly, these are the first copies of the photos, making them the easiest to lose or become corrupted.

When the 5D Mark III first came out, we invested in it right away because it allowed dual card slots to simultaneously record Raw images at the point of capture. If you have not had a corrupted card yet, you eventually will.

Just this summer, I was photographing a wedding and came home to download images. I shot it with my 1DX Mark II recording Raw images to a CFAST card with a second Raw copy being recorded to a CF card.

When I got home and uploaded the images to my computer, I discovered that the images on the CFAST card had become corrupted. Had I been shooting on a camera that allows only a single card to be recorded, I would have lost those images, and potentially had a huge expense of data recovery which may not have recovered the corrupted images. Thankfully, we had a CF backup that allowed us to upload without a problem.

In addition, if you are shooting with two cards and you have to leave your camera for whatever reason, you should always bring one card with you. That way, if someone walks off with your camera, at least you still have the images.

BACKING UP

You are a professional, and clients will have no sympathy for you if you lose their images, including after you delivered their JPEGs. I know it can get expensive because you must buy two of everything, but it is essential that you follow the rule of twos and make sure you have a system in place should a catastrophe occur.

Our studio uses a Synology DS1815+ 32TB NAS server configured in RAID 5 as our primary storage device. That NAS syncs with a second identical DS1815+ at my home using Synology's Cloud Sync technology. This allows me to work during the day, and go home and pick up right where I left off. I have access to all of my clients' files at home and at the office. This gives me redundancy should one of my drives fail beyond repair. RAID 5 allows the NAS to use parity to rebuild itself if an internal drive fails, but I wouldn't rely on any non-mirror RAID system by itself since there is not a 100 percent assurance that the array will be able to rebuild itself. Once the images are backed up to our server, we back them up to a single 8TB HDD I keep at home. I keep this drive in my home because it's my last line of defense against lost images, and it is safest there.

Lastly, have a cloud backup solution. While my office Internet doesn't support the high speed necessary to back up Raw files, my home Internet does, so we use CrashPlan, which we point to my home server. This allows all our clients' images to hit the cloud (in addition to ShootProof backups of final images). Remember, when it comes to backing up images, redundancy is key.



UPLOADING IMAGES

When you upload your images, you should copy them directly from the card onto a folder using Windows Explorer, Photo Mechanic or Finder on Mac. Do not use Lightroom to import images, which can cause problems.

It's also crucial that you upload over a wired network, never wirelessly or over a NAS. Large amounts of data can become corrupted if there is a disruption in the network.

Upload directly to a fast drive, such as an internal SSD, using a USB 3.0 reader. Just a few years back, it would take hours to upload an entire wedding over USB 2.0; with CFAST technology in the 1DX Mark II, you can upload 3,000 Raw images in under six minutes, and all types of media upload significantly faster over USB 3.0.

FULL WORKFLOW

1. Shoot the job to two separate cards. Immediately after the wedding, one set of cards goes into a memory card wallet, and one remains with the camera.
2. Upload images to an internal SSD (working drive) and server; back up to an archive HDD.
3. Cull and process images on an internal SSD using the following folder structure:
 - a. 1-Raws
 - b. 2-Masters (selected Raw files stay in this folder)
 - c. 3-Web size (for blogging and social media)
 - d. 4-Catalog (I export the Lightroom catalog here)
 - e. 5-Proselect (I store the client's Proselect album here)
4. Once I complete folder 5, I upload the images to ShootProof.
5. Transfer folders 2 through 5 to the server (it should already be there from your initial download).
6. Remove the files from your working SSD after verifying transfer is complete.
7. Later after the client's in-person, we create two additional folders:
 - a. 6-Print order
 - b. 7-Album

Name	Date modified	Type	Size
1-Rejects	12/14/2016 7:22 PM	File folder	
2-Masters	12/14/2016 7:21 PM	File folder	
3-Web	12/22/2016 1:37 PM	File folder	
4-Catalog	12/14/2016 8:54 PM	File folder	
5-Proselect	12/14/2016 8:54 PM	File folder	
6-Print Order	12/24/2016 3:22 PM	File folder	
7-Album	12/24/2016 3:22 PM	File folder	



Image © Michael Anthony

It has taken us years to create a system that allows for easy access to clients' images. We have also made sure that this workflow allows for quick editing using the working drive, along with redundancy protections.

We are always making modifications. As you start to find the pain points in production, you must be ready to find ways to fix those issues ASAP before they create customer service problems.

Check out the accompanying video for a more in-depth look at our workflow and how we handle portfolio and competition images. ■

LEARN MORE.
Click here or check us out at
youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

michaelanthonyphotography.com



Image © Michael Corsentino

NIGHTLOCATION PORTRAITS

with Michael Corsentino

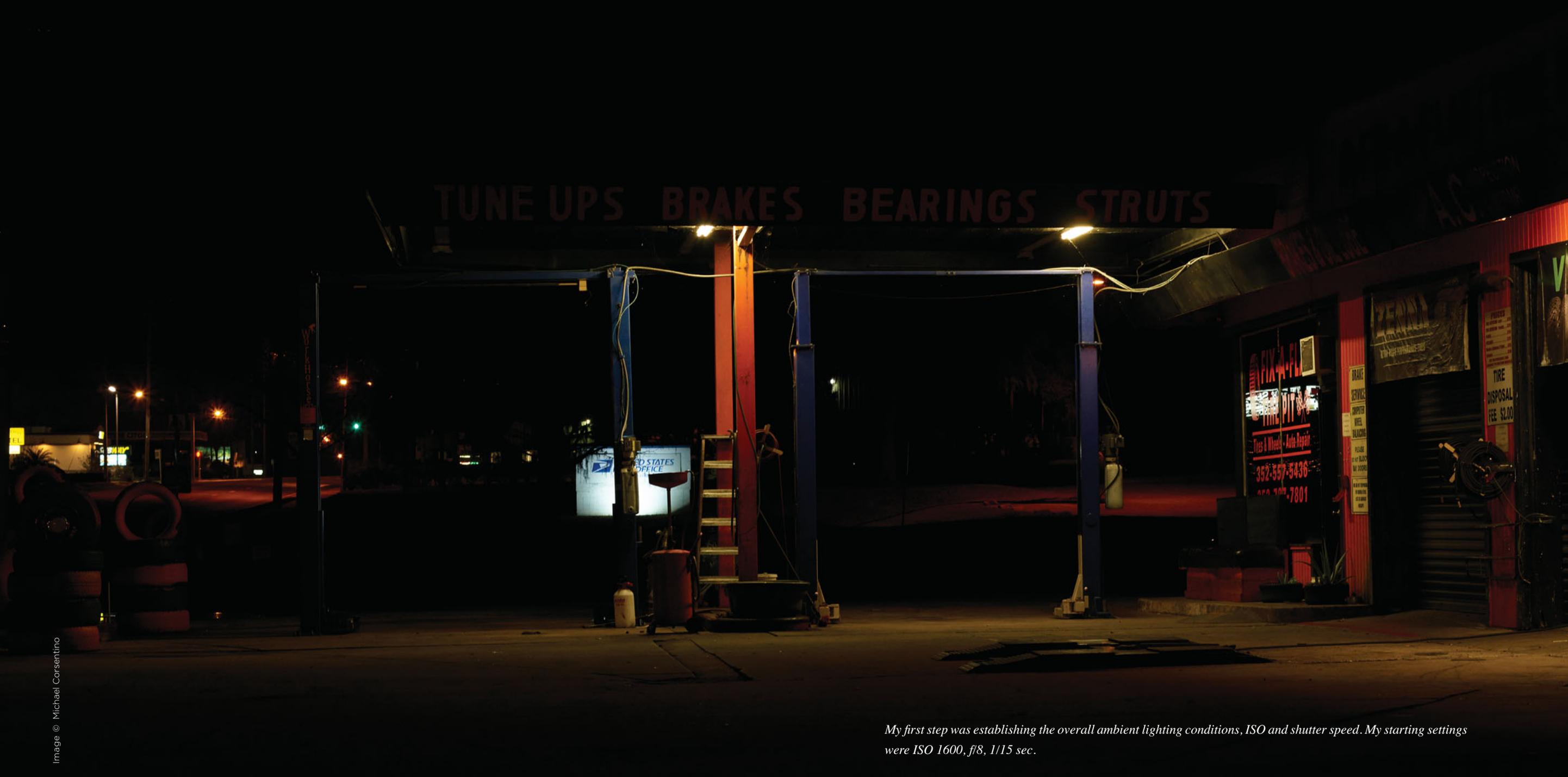


Image © Michael Corsentino

My first step was establishing the overall ambient lighting conditions, ISO and shutter speed. My starting settings were ISO 1600, f/8, 1/15 sec.

LOCATION

I love finding cool locations to shoot in. I'm always driving around scouting, jotting down street addresses, snapping iPhone pics, making mental notes for future shoots. Every town, no matter how large or small, has cool locations. I found the location for this night portrait shoot, a flat-fix garage, by just driving around one night.

I'd never seen it at night all lit up by the fluorescent lights above it, and it immediately struck me how cool it looked. The wheels started turning. Along with all the tires, machines and garage grunge, it looked like the perfect location for a night shoot I'd been wanting to do for a while. The next night, I stopped by to take location pics, and sent them to my team along with pictures of the model so we could all start brainstorming wardrobe, props and general look and feel.

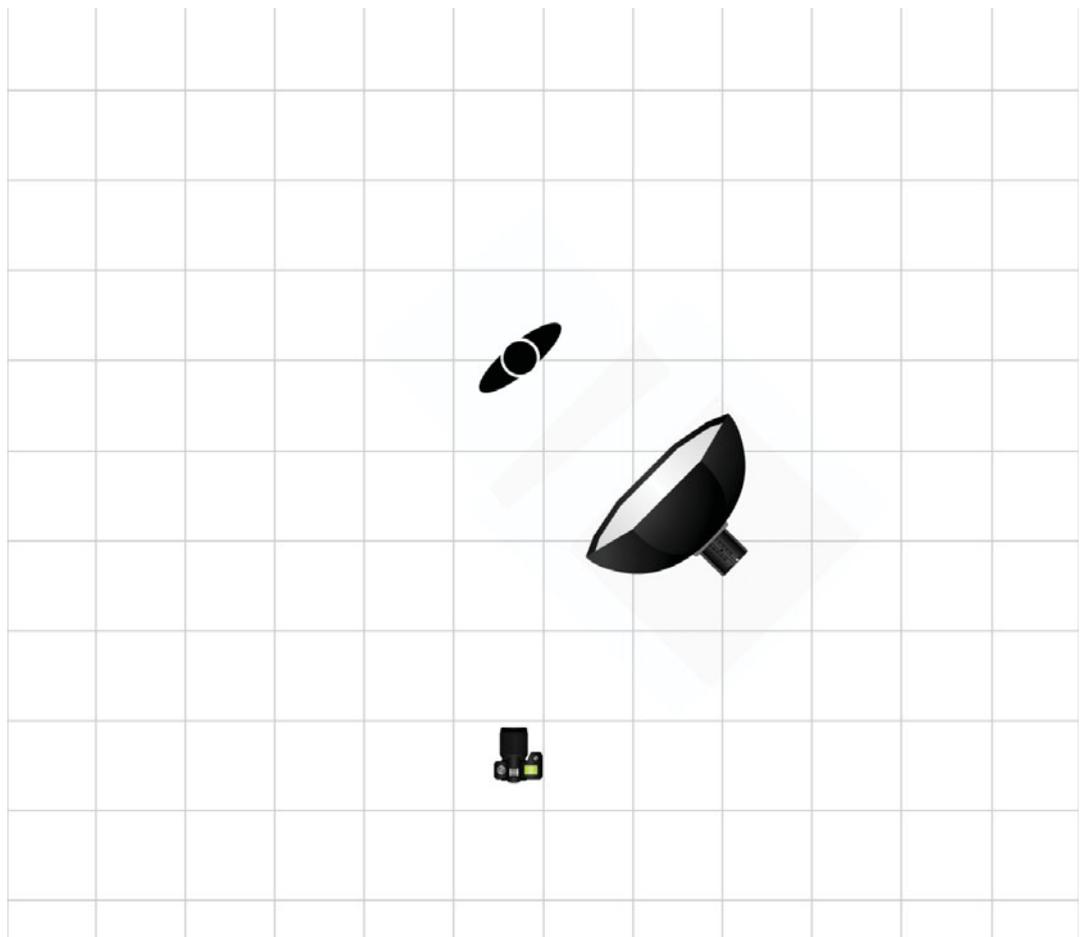


Image © Michael Corsetino

Sometimes one light is all you need. It's how you use it that makes the difference between great and mediocre. Here I'm using an Elinchrom Quadra 400WS pack, and an Elinchrom 27.5" Rotalux Deep Octa as my keylight. My assistant is booming the light over and to the right of my subject using a painting extension pole fitted with a Kacey 5/8 stud adapter. Camera settings are as follows: ISO 1600, f/8, 1/30 sec.

GEAR

When I'm working on location, I like to keep things as simple as possible. For this shoot, that meant using a lightweight two-point light setup. I chose the most portable and easily handheld tools I have in my arsenal: light-duty stands, an extension pole, two Elinchrom Quadra 400WS packs, two companion Elinchrom strobes (these are very lightweight and therefore easily held by assistants), a Skyport HS Wireless Controller and a Sekonic L-478 handheld wireless flash meter.

For light modifiers, I also choose to keep things as light and portable as possible by selecting an Elinchrom 27.5" Rotalux Deep Octa for my keylight and an Elinchrom 14x35 strip box for use as a possible kicker, accent or fill light if necessary. I love the small Deep Octa. It's an extremely versatile modifier for its size and weight. It's able to create looks from hard to moderately soft, and is also compact and easy to travel with. It's always part of my travel kit.



Image © Michael Corsetino

Step number two is to bring in the subject, compose the image and reconfirm the ambient exposure. I increased the shutter speed to 1/30 sec. Keep in mind that I'm counting on the strobe to freeze the action while shutter speed is controlling the amount of ambient light contributing to the exposure.

In this image, I've added the flash, matching its power output to my f/8 aperture setting by using a Seckonic L-478 handheld flash meter.



STROBES

Less is more with strobe lights on night shoots. Typically, you'll be working with a high ISO setting and a slow shutter speed to capture the ambient light in the background while illuminating the subject with strobe. It's a delicate balancing act, the goal being to maintain a moody night feeling by perfectly balancing the amount of ambient light and strobe light. Because the camera sensor's sensitivity is boosted, you need very little flash power to do the job. (A speedlight would also work really well.)

The low amount of flash power needed has a couple of important technical benefits worth mentioning. First, because you're not using a lot of power for each pop, you're asking a lot less from the strobe's battery. This allows you to shoot considerably more strobed images on a single battery change compared to shooting with your strobe at full or half power. I had my strobe set to the lowest power setting possible, which I believe is 25 watt-seconds for my gear. The second benefit is really fast recycle times. With a low power output, your strobe is ready to go again much more quickly, which means you can work much more quickly.

MODELS

I get a lot of questions regarding models, so I think it's worth touching on briefly. How do you find new models to work with? This is something all photographers grapple with, whether they're building their book, working on personal projects or testing out new techniques or equipment. I've had zero luck with online resources such as Model Mayhem or One Model Place. These services have given me major flake factor. There may be others now that I'm unaware of, but none of them are my go-to sources anymore.

In addition to relying on my modeling agency relationships for access to models to "test" with, I use Facebook, something we all have access to. I post work regularly on regionally oriented Facebook groups serving the photography and modeling communities in my area. Even in Orlando, a relative modeling and fashion backwater, I've found some incredible local talent using Facebook groups. In fact, that's where I found Jai, the model for this shoot. So I feel pretty confident saying that for all but the most rural areas, Facebook is a resource worth looking into.



Image © Michael Corsentino



Image © Michael Corsentino

MANUAL VS. TTL

With respect to balancing ambient and flash, my preferred method is working in manual. TTL works but I prefer the consistency and simplicity manual allows me. My workflow is as follows: First, I establish an exposure for the ambient lighting conditions. To do this, I leave my strobe(s) off and focus solely on creating a good exposure for the background ambient lighting. That means the subject will be in silhouette. That's all right because once I've got the background ambient light exposure dialed in, I turn on my keylight strobe and dial it in to match my ambient settings. How do I do that? I use two things to guide me: the aperture setting of my lens and a flash meter. I have to make sure the amount of light being measured from the strobe by the flash meter matches the f-stop on my lens. In other words, if my lens is set to f/5.6, I use a flash meter to measure the light from the strobe until it reads f/5.6. It's that simple. Using an incident light reading, the meter allows me to measure the amount of light from the strobe falling on the subject and match it to whatever f-stop I need. Of course, you could work intuitively and chimp, but why would you? This method is super quick, and time is money. ■

Never underestimate the power of a good color grade. In these before-and-after comparison images, you can clearly see the impact color grading can have on an image's overall mood and tone.



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

corsentinophotography.com

final inspiration

photographer salvatore cincotta
image title 5:58pm
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lighting available light
location big ben | london, united kingdom
gear fujifilm x-pro2 | fujifilm 23mm f/2



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