

# SHUTTER

MAGAZINE

behindtheshutter.com

## WHO ARE THE **TOP 10** MOST INFLUENTIAL IN THE INDUSTRY <sup>2013</sup> ?

*(As voted by you, the reader)*

image © Taylor Cincotta

industry insiders  
share their  
best-kept secrets



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with Taylor Cincotta  
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with Blair Phillips

& Feature Articles from Michael Corsentino, Jen Rozenbaum & More



# LAUNCH POINT

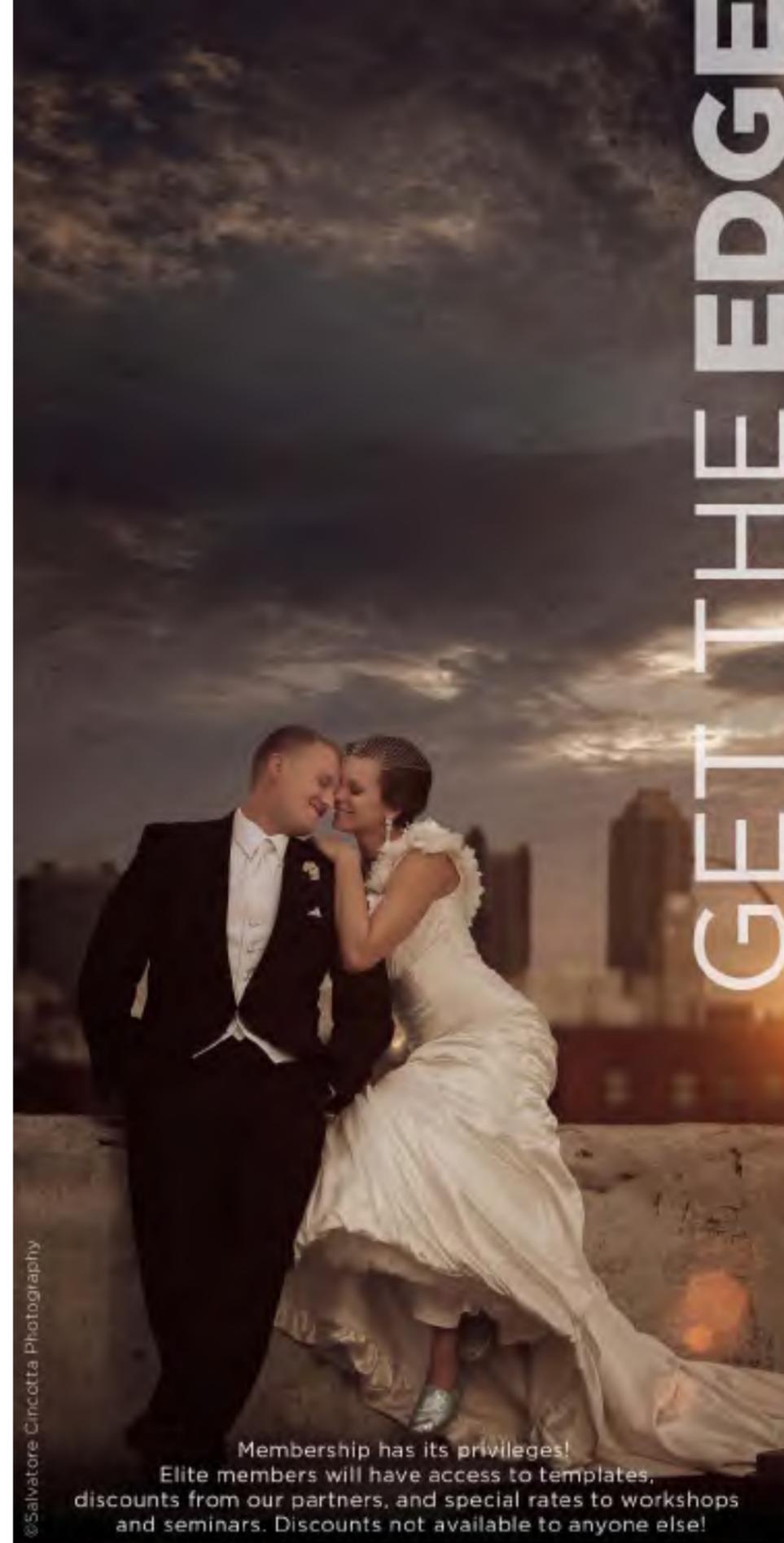
a word from the editor



“ This month we bring you the most influential  
**- voted by you the reader!**  
 In an industry in turmoil,  
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 transform and influence  
 the industry *each in their own unique way.* ”



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SENIORS  
Blair Phillips

BOUDOIR  
Jen Rozenbaum

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# COMPOSITING made EASY

Compositing gives you the  
**opportunity**  
to add another product;  
one **that can differentiate you**  
from “the guy with camera.”



by Dave Cross

Let's face it, to the general public anyone can take pictures. That seems to be the perception of many people, “My friend has a good camera, so I'll get him to take my senior photos.” When photographers ask me how they should deal with this perception, I quickly answer, “Give them something that ‘the guy with camera’ can't.” That can include your experience, your knowledge and your artistic vision—but it can also include Photoshop and, specifically, compositing.

Think about it for a moment. Anyone can buy a good camera, and they may take decent photos. But will they invest in the cost of Photoshop and take the time to learn how to use it? If you think of Photoshop as a companion to your camera, it opens up great opportunities to add to your product offerings.

Compositing is hot! Take a look at people like Joel Grimes, Richard Sturdevant, Ben Shirk, Calvin Hollywood. They often shoot portraits with the specific intent of compositing the subject(s) onto a different background. Compositing gives you the opportunity to add another product; one that can differentiate you from “the guy with camera.”

Before Photoshop CS5, compositing was a potentially time-consuming proposition. But now you can create a composite quickly and easily, if you give yourself every opportunity to make it easier.



## The Shoot

Start with a plan. If you already have a good idea of the background photo you plan to use, you can shoot the portrait with that in mind. Pick an angle and set up your lights so it will better match the background. Shoot your subject on a white or gray background; it doesn't matter if you can see soft boxes and light stands.

When I'm shooting for a composite, I'll alter my shooting angle slightly between shots so I have a few variations. Some photos will be straight on and some will be shot from slightly lower or higher angles.

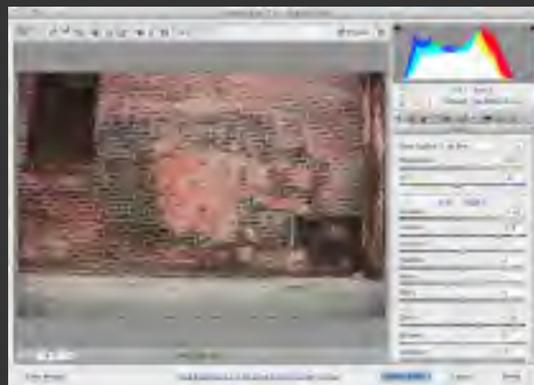
## Backgrounds

You can find all kinds of backgrounds, from those specifically designed for compositing to stock photos. Of course you can (and should) capture cool backgrounds for future use any time you see them. I have an ever-growing collection of backgrounds from alleyways to old buildings to sports fields that I've captured whenever I've had my camera in hand.

## The Process

I recommend using raw format for both the background and the subject, for one main reason: It'll give you the chance to take advantage of Camera Raw Smart Objects to help make a better selection and mask. (See my article in Oct 2012 for more on Smart Objects)

To use Camera Raw Smart Objects, open a raw file and click on workflow options (the blue link at the bottom of the Camera Raw dialog).



Check the "Open in Photoshop as Smart Objects" box to create a two-way street between Photoshop and Camera Raw—this gives ongoing ability to edit the settings to assist the selection and masking tools.

1

If there was a way to make this first step bold, underlined and flashing in red, I would. That's how important it is:

STEP 1: Use File>Place to import the subject onto the background FIRST.

Many people start selecting and masking their subjects without dragging them onto the new background. The potential problem of doing this is there is no context; you might obsess over getting every little hair only to find that when you put the subject onto the new background, you can't even see the difference. So let's start again:

## Use File>Place

to import the subject onto the background.

2

Resize the subject to fit and press Enter. This will create a Camera Raw Smart Object.



3

Duplicate the subject. You'll now have two copies of the Camera Raw Smart Object. Hide one layer and start working on the second.

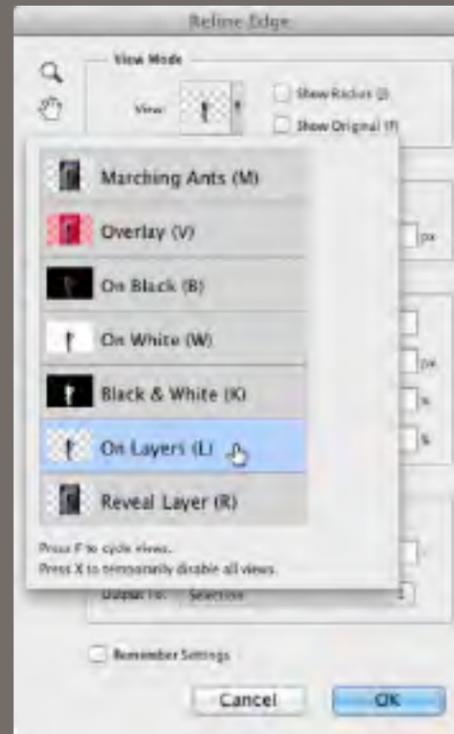
4

STEP 4: With the Quick Selection tool, make a first attempt at selecting the subject, starting with "hard" edges such as arms, body and legs; ignore the hair for now. If you find there's not enough contrast between your subject and the background for the Quick Selection tool to work, double-click on the layer thumbnail to return to Camera Raw. Temporarily adjust the settings with the sole purpose of getting a better edge. You will change everything back once the mask is made.



5

Once you have a selection of the body, arms and legs, go to the Options Bar and click Refine Edge. In the fine Edge dialog change the view to On Layers. Now you'll be able to see your selection in the context of the background.



At any time you can change the view in Refine Edge to Black and White to get a preview of what the Layer Mask will look like. Don't worry about the edges other than the hair.



Choose Output to Layer Mask and click OK.

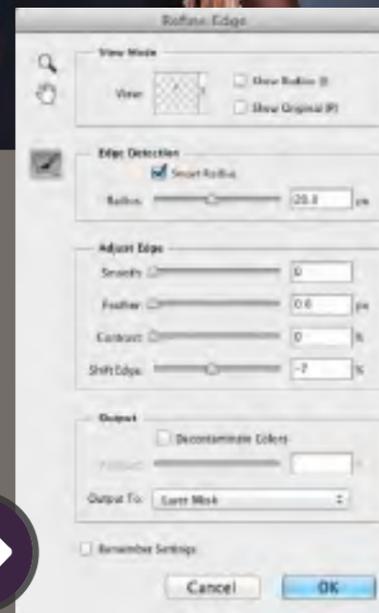
Since our two layers are copies of the same Camera Raw Smart Object, you can double-click on either one to return to Camera Raw. If you previously changed the settings to help make the selection, you can now change the settings back and when you click OK, both copies will update. And remember, our background layer is also a Camera Raw Smart Object, so you can always change its settings, too.

6

In general you won't have to do too much else in Refine Edge, since we're only worrying about selecting the "easy" part, the hard edges.

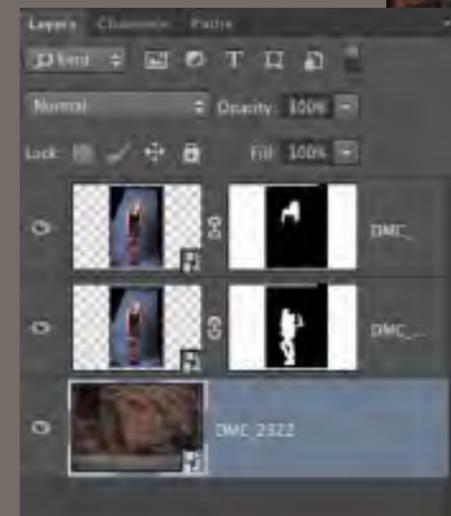
The mistake many people make is they expect/hope that Refine Edge will do an amazing job of selecting both hard and soft edges. Unfortunately, (no matter what Adobe says) that is not often the case. That's why I recommend selecting in two pieces: hard edges and hair.

Choose Output to Layer Mask and click OK.



7

Now show and click on the second subject Camera Raw Smart Object. Use the Quick Selection tool, but this time make a selection of her hair. Use Refine Edge and this time we'll try Smart Radius in Edge Detection and move the slider to the right. Remember, the only goal here is to get her hair. You may need to use the Refine Radius tool to paint over some areas where you are missing some hair.



There's another reason I suggest (insist?) that you import the subject before starting to make your selection and mask. If you looked at just the mask of her hair without the context of the background, you might be tempted to paint on the mask to improve it. Now, it's quite possible that you might need to, but it's important to look at the result on the new background before making that decision.

If you do need to reveal more hair (e.g. the mask is light gray and you want it to be white), use your Brush tool with an important setting: Change the Blend mode of the Brush to Overlay and lower the opacity. Now you can paint over light gray areas and make them whiter, without affecting the background (masked areas). Even then, I would do this by painting on the mask while viewing the subject (not the mask).



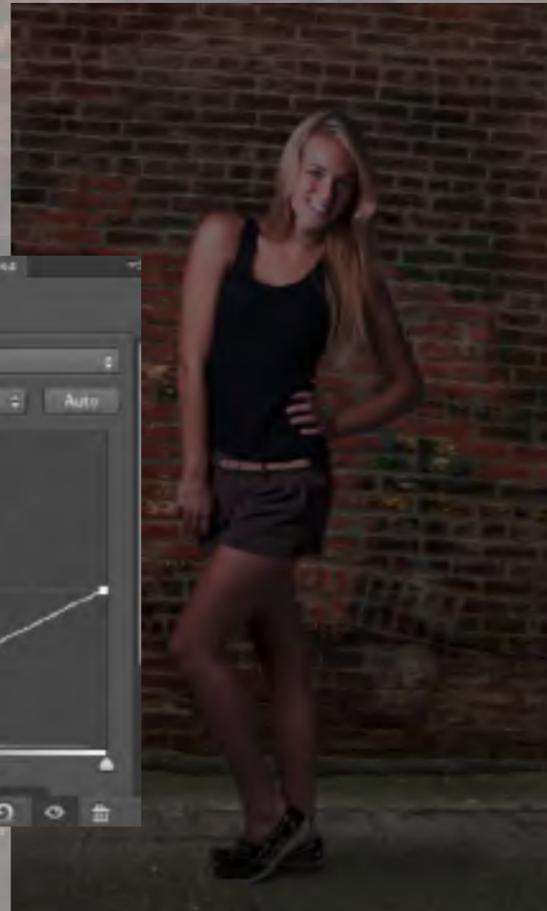
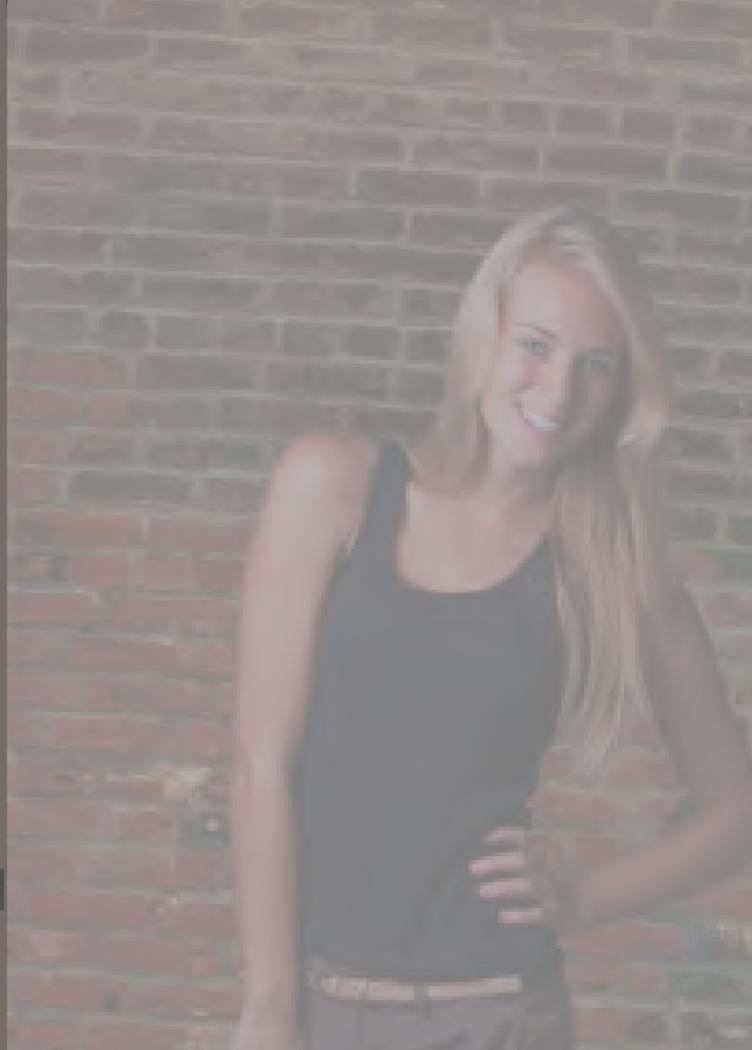
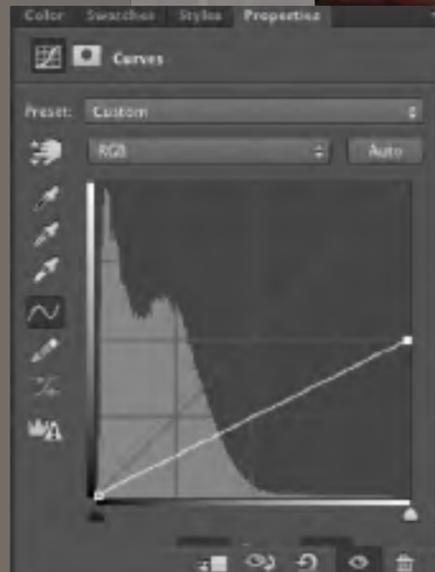
(In the video I show an additional technique to help with hair challenges)

## Believability

Unless you're going for a fantasy, it-doesn't-have-to-look-believable image, one way to sell the effect is to make sure lighting, coloring and shadows match. Here's a simple method for changing the lighting on the subject to better match the environment.

**STEP 1:** Select the two subject layers, Right-click and choose Convert to Smart Object. This will allow us to work with the two layers as if they were one, but still have access to both layers and masks.

**STEP 2:** Add a Curves adjustment layer above the Smart Object and drag the top right corner of the curve down to darken the image. It's not a bad idea to initially make it darker than you'll eventually need.



**STEP 3:** Press the clipping button so the adjustment layer only affects the subject, not the background layer.



**STEP 4:** With the Curves adjustment layer mask active, press Command-I (PC: Cntl-I) to invert the mask and fill it with black. Then use the Brush tool with a soft-edged brush and white as your foreground color to paint on the mask in the areas you want your subject to be darker (remembering it's deliberately darker than you really want).

**STEP 5:** When you're finished, use the Properties panel to adjust the curves so it's not quite so dark.

(Of course you could use the same concept to add a brightening adjustment layer or apply a Photo Filter/coloring layer to portions of an image.)

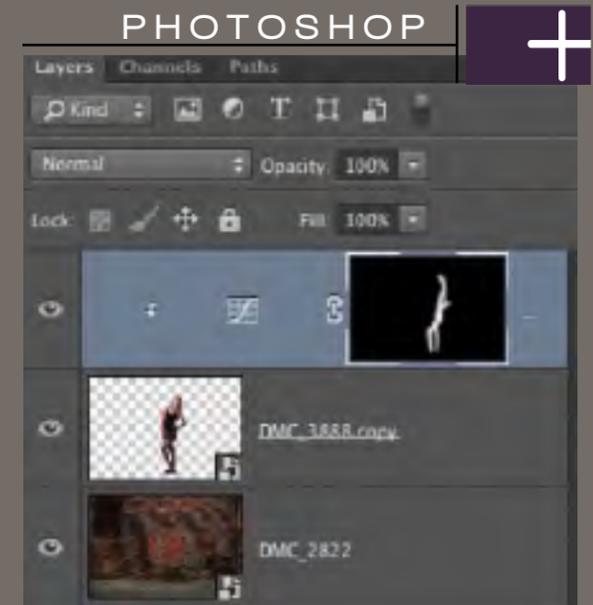
## Shadows

One of the more challenging aspects of compositing is adding realistic shadows, if the image calls for a shadow. That's one reason many composites are done from the waist up, so shadows are a non-issue. If you do need to add a shadow then I suggest you look at the original studio shot to see if there are any shadows you can use as a reference. If so, temporarily hide the layer mask, add a layer and paint an approximation of the shadow.

Some people duplicate the entire subject and transform it to make a shadow. In some situations that will work, but more often than not, if you look at photos with shadows the shadow is not that pronounced.

As with all Photoshop projects, I HIGHLY recommend you save a copy as a multi-layered PSD file so you can teal the layers if necessary—then save a final file in JPEG format.

I think you'll find that creating composites that sell is not all that hard...with a bit of practice.



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***Q. I just invested in a bridal show and now I have all these leads! What is the best thing to do with this list to convert these brides into clients?***

**A.** Best thing you can do with this list is put a promotion together and eBlast it ASAP! Something to the effect of, “We are offering \$400 off any package if you book by this date.”

Get people calling in to find out what the special is and, most importantly, get to the meeting. That’s the key. That is always our main goal. We want to be at the meeting where we can show what makes us stand out from the crowd. If not, then you are going to be just another photographer.

***Q. I’m trying to put together a body of work, but most primary shooters won’t let me use the images I take? Any advice on how to build my wedding portfolio?***

**A.** I That’s not uncommon at all. We will not let any shooters use images from our weddings. The reason is simple; we don’t want to create confusion in the market place. This is our event; we can’t have another shooter show weddings or poses that really had nothing to do with them. The main studio will always own the copyright.

That being said, how do you get started? Here are two ways from my personal experience. First, we ran an ad on craigslist looking for weddings. We priced ourselves very low (ahem, \$500) to get two weddings. We told them we were looking to grow our portfolio and were willing to do two weddings for that price. It worked like a charm. We booked three weddings, two at the \$500 price and a third at \$1,500.

Second option, bridal shoots. Get a model. Get a bride and groom who are friends and take them out and about to work on your portfolio. Experiment and show your potential new clients what you can do!

***Q. I am shy and second-guess myself a lot. What is your advice to overcome these mental blocks to be successful in photography?***

**A.** Hmm...this is a tough one for sure. I think all photographers struggle with confidence at some point in their career. I can vividly remember my very first bridal show when I was freaking out thinking am I good enough? Ultimately, I realized my clients answer that question when they vote with their \$\$\$.

Here is what I have learned to do over the years. First, focus on you. Ask yourself, why are you insecure? It usually comes down to something you are weak or not proficient at. Let’s say for example, reception lighting gives you the cold sweats. Nothing wrong with that. A lot of photographers get nervous or are uncertain during that part of the night. GET OUT AND PRACTICE!!!

Whatever you are unsure of usually comes down to an issue of confidence, but confidence, true confidence, comes from practice, practice, practice. Even if you are shy, confidence is what will allow you to come out of your shell.



## Q. *SEO*

*What are one or two things I can do today to start increasing my SEO?*

**A.** Search Engine Optimization (SEO) doesn't have to be complicated. Start thinking about how you want to be found. What are your keywords? Ours are "St. Louis wedding photography." That's how we want to be found. So everything we post includes that.

Look for plug-ins like Yoast. They make it easier than trying to be a programmer.

Consider switching to a WordPress blog style site. Google loves blog style sites. Flash sites do not work. No matter what you do, a flash site will never rank as well as a site based on heavy text. As a photographer, we have to find a way to balance our gorgeous images with text for search engines.

Name your images using your SEO terms. For example, instead of 123\_img.jpg consider using st\_louis\_wedding\_photography\_1.jpg. This is easy to do and helps with ranking.

**Q.** *What are the steps, tricks and tips one should take to get published? Is it different depending on which regions you live?*

**A.** It's definitely a process. There are some magazines we have still not been published in and it's frustrating for sure. You just have to persist.

The key to getting published is to think like a bride, not like a photographer. They don't want those big grandiose images. For the most part they want details, details, details! I had to start thinking differently when I submitted images.

And keep submitting...that's the key. Most publishers are working on issues months in advance. So if they are working on a story or theme, let's say winter weddings, they will have staff pull all winter wedding images. If you have been submitting diligently there is a good chance you will get some good press there.

Best bet, work locally first. Then go after the national mags and blogs. For me, the local mags get me better results. What good is it for me to be featured on a national blog for a bride in California to see me when 90% of my weddings are seen and booked here locally in St. Louis?

### GOT QUESTIONS?

Every month we will have a call for questions on our Facebook page and Sal will answer them with real-world advice.



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## A NEW WAY TO FOCUS

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— Parker Pfister, award-winning wedding photographer



**LENSBABY**



# SHOOT LESS

(earn more!)

with Blair Phillips



by Blair Phillips

As photographers, it seems we spend an infinite amount of effort marketing to get more and more clients each year. It's easy to think the only way to make more money is to photograph more sessions. Just because you are shooting more doesn't mean you are making more profit. This is exactly where I found myself a couple of years ago. If 12-hour work days and very little time with your family sound appealing, this article is not for you. You can be the best photographer in the world, but if your sales program is weak, you will never make it. You need to step back and review every angle of the selling side of your business. Let me share how I learned to shoot less and earn a LOT more.

It all began when I realized the sales program I had in place was actually hurting more than helping me. Selling packages seemed to be the standard so I figured I would do the same. We had five different packages for clients to choose from. They would always gravitate toward one of the lower-priced packages because I had way too many products in each package and never left them wanting for more. Once they secured a package, there was nothing left to upsell them. With selling packages, I was basically putting a cap on what each client was going to spend.

Then we created a sales program with several different steps that clients can choose from. For instance, with Step 1 clients choose their wall portraits and as an incentive to persuade them to buy more than one, they get a small discount for multiple portraits. At Step 2 they choose their album and they get an incentive for buying two. At Step 3 they select their gift prints, which are 8"x10"s, 5"x7"s and so on. Of course, there are bonus levels in this step as well. For instance, if they buy five, they get two bonus prints for free. If they buy eight, they get three free. Clients will always buy more if they can get something for free. At Step 4 they choose how many wallet images to purchase. Most people are not able to sell wallets anymore. For every image a client purchases as a set of wallets, we give them that image to share on Facebook. It is all about making the client feel like they are in control of what they choose and spend.

Now what if you have a client that doesn't want to choose from the four steps? Let them choose what they want from the à la carte menu. On this menu, prices are far higher to discourage clients from only purchasing a few gift prints and getting out cheaper. We explain that with our four-step program the products are deeply discounted. Make the à la carte prices so high that they would be foolish to only buy a handful of 4"x6"s. Either way you will make great profits with this program. Again, the key is to have a bonus in each step that encourages them to be rewarded by spending more. I was really hesitant to switch my whole sales program to the step system, but the first client to be presented with this proved it to be the best decision ever. My sales averages immediately doubled overnight and have continued to climb.



One important point to remember is that everyone is not your client. When a potential client calls the studio, we try our best to engage in genuine conversation. We explain to them how much effort goes into each session and how laid back we are. Before they book their appointment, we familiarize them with our pricing structure and share a range of what most clients spend. This acts as a way to pre-qualify them so neither of us is put in an awkward position over price. Nothing good comes from not giving your client an idea of what they may spend. To make sure a potential client is serious about showing up for their appointment, collect the session fee at the time of booking. This has proven to be a great way to put an end to no-shows. A client that understands and values your skill will spend more money and allow you to shoot less and make more. But changing your sales program and pre-qualifying your clients is only half the battle of getting to where you want to be. For instance, I was able to photograph 20 less seniors this past year and make more money. This sales system allowed me to actually look forward to going to work each day.

We begin each sales session by bringing the client in generally one week after their session. There are no sneak peeks as I want to build the excitement and help create an emotional selling environment. The order appointment begins by bringing the clients to our theater room and getting them comfortable. We offer a beverage and a snack, then dim the lights and play a slideshow of the images. Immediately following the slideshow, we pull up the images in ProSelect and go through them one by one to pick the favorites. Once these are chosen, we begin the four-step process. Another bonus level we offer is for them to receive the slideshow...if the client reaches a certain sales goal, the slideshow becomes available for sale. As you can see, there are all sorts of bonus levels and incentives to make more profit from our hard work. Once the print order is secured, we mention the frame incentive that they earned. We automatically give each client a \$50 frame credit. We have it built into the price so there is no added cost to the studio. In the past, we hardly ever sold frames. Giving them the frame credit almost guarantees me a frame sale for each client. We only have 10 frame options; by this point they are tired of making choices and I have found it best to limit the selection.





In recent years, I wasted a lot of money re-ordering prints that clients claimed were the wrong ones. They thought they ordered a different one or they claim they wanted it in black and white instead of color. We do not have that issue any longer thanks to ProSelect. On their receipt, there is a thumbnail of each image they ordered. Beside each image is the print size along with any adjustments that need to be made. We review the order with the client and once it's approved, they sign off on it. If there are any adjustments made after that point, the client assumes financial responsibility. All orders are paid in full at the time the order appointment is completed. Otherwise, you may lose the emotional sale and give them an opportunity to have buyer's remorse. This may sound like I am trying to get all the money I can from each client, but I am just trying to capitalize on all my efforts. Make sure you tell your client that you will place their order immediately after they leave their order appointment. This way they will not have the opportunity for any outside influences to sway their spending choices.

When the client comes back to pick up the order, we look at all the prints and check them off against the receipt they originally signed off on. You may have to think of yourself as more than just a photographer; you have to be a salesperson in order to work less and earn more. Making big adjustments to your pricing as well as the way you sell to clients can be very intimidating. I've known a lot of people who wanted to, but chickened out and ended up sticking with what was comfortable. Evaluate your situation, make sure you are leaving nothing on the sales table and that you are getting what you are capable of. Bonus levels are a must. Offer incentives that will drive them to spend more. Set your sales area up in a way that makes clients feel comfortable and create an environment for spending. Your sales area must match what you are charging. Sophisticated selling software will ease a lot of confusion and mistakes. Following this type of system has allowed me to drastically raise my averages, spend more time with my family and market my business to the types of clients that I prefer.

learn more!  
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THE BOUDOIR PHOTOGRAPHERS'  
**GUIDE**  
*to lingerie*

with Jen Rozenbaum



by Jen Rozenbaum

Happy Valentine's Day, everyone! As you can imagine, being the boudoir photographer that I am, this is one of my favorite times of year! The lingerie stores are FILLED with goodies giving our clients plenty of reasons to splurge on that perfect outfit for their shoot.

I always help my clients with their wardrobe as much as possible. It doesn't matter how great a photographer you are if the outfit doesn't fit your client properly. In this article, I am going to give you some tips on different styles of lingerie and the bodies they fit best.

Let's start with something easy...bra and panty sets. This is the most common choice of women, mostly because it's safe. It's what they know and it's something they can easily wear again and again so they don't mind spending the money on them, but there are a few things you need to be cautious of. First is the stomach because in these sets the stomach is fully exposed. That is ok unless your client tells you how much they hate their belly. If they are belly-conscious I would recommend a different choice (I will get into this more as we go on).

The second downfall is fit. There are many different types of bras: underwire, padded, super-padded, un-padded, etc.... Make sure you are clear with your client about what type you would recommend. I often see well-endowed women tempted by the super duper, add-three-cup-sizes bra. The problem with those is that they can look too large and out of proportion, sometimes even causing them to lose their upper chest and neck area when posing. I would also be careful of these bras on smaller ladies because when they lay down there will be a large gap in the bra. Not fun to Photoshop later!

So get to know the bra types and styles. Visit the lingerie shops where your clients shop. Tell them what to wear AND what not to wear. The "girls" will thank you for it!

As far as bottoms are concerned, also get to know the different styles. Nothing is worse than a client who shows up with granny panties! There are thongs, G-strings, Brazilian bottoms, etc... Find out what your client's comfort level is and how much cheek they want to show before they go shopping.

“**Nothing is worse** than a client who shows up with granny panties!”



If a client is self-conscious about their stomach, there are a lot of lingerie options that hide the stomach but are still really sexy. Corsets are my go-to option to hide bellies but still give a woman an amazing shape. They are perfect for the curvier girls, but work on slimmer girls as well. Here is a tip: Try to find corsets that have cups for the breasts. It gives more support and more shape that way. Often when a corset doesn't have cups, it can flatten a woman. And when they raise their arms in a pose, they will flash you!

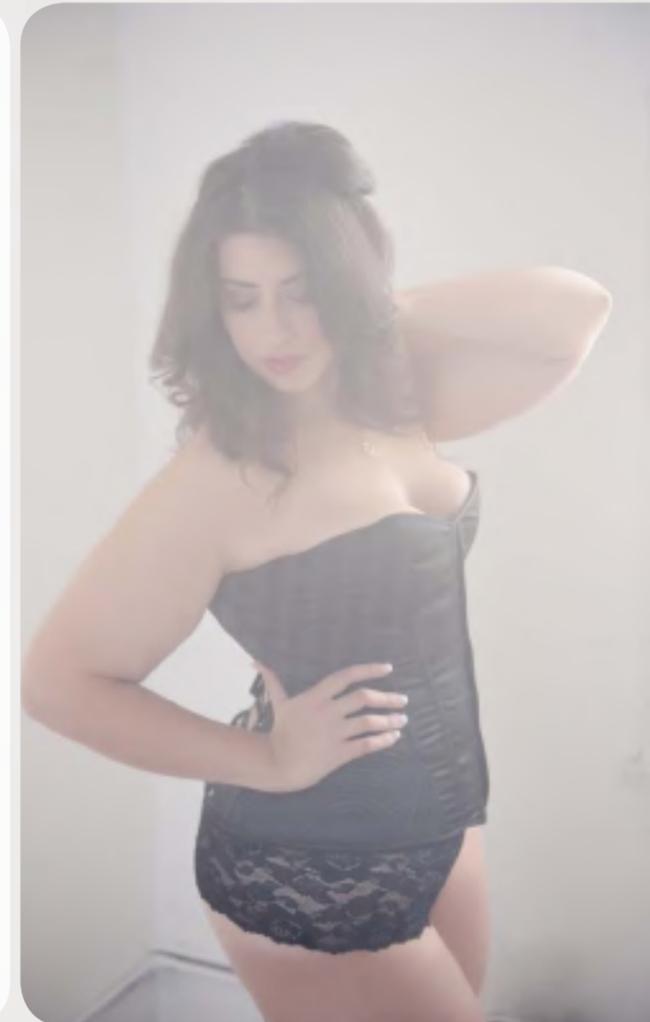
Many corsets come with a bottom. Often the bottom is small and unflattering, so make sure your client thinks about this ahead of time. I always have my clients bring a pair of black and nude bottoms with them that they are already comfy in. This way, no matter what they want to wear on top, they have something that matches the bottom.

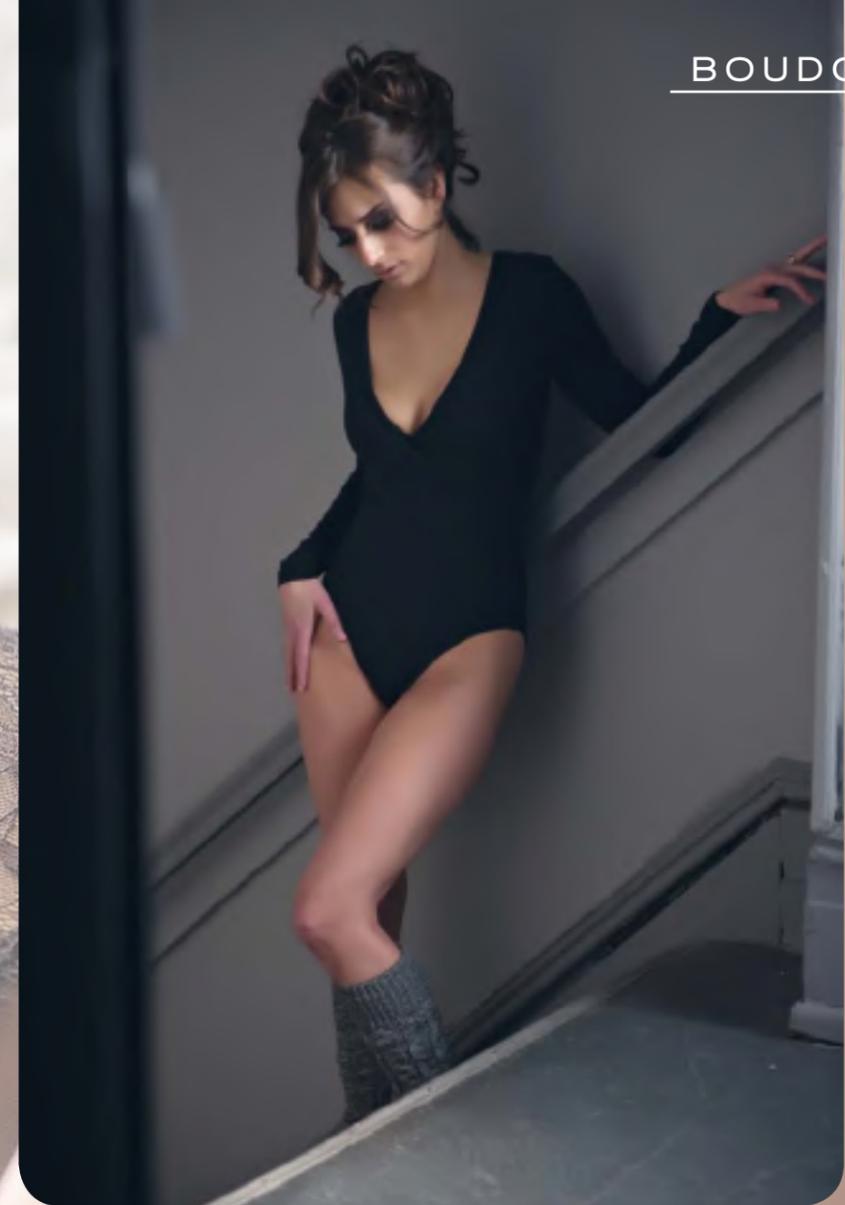
Corsets are also great to hide stretch marks, which a lot of us moms worry about. Most of the time your client will need help getting the corset on, so make sure you know how to do that. Pull...tight, tight, tight! And remember, breathing is optional.

One more tip about corsets: I recommend standing poses for them. Often they are hard to move in when lying down and don't show off a woman's shape quite the same way.

**Pull...tight, tight, tight!**

And remember,  
breathing is optional!





Bodysuits and leotards are another great way to hide stretch marks and some belly but still show off your shape. In fact, if fitted properly a bodysuit can really give some killer curves. I like to look for those that have a high leg cut-out or French cut, which make women look taller. I also like when they are cut smaller in the back to show off a little cheek. Bodysuits are much more forgiving and easy to move in for lying down or sitting poses than corsets, making it another great option.

I prefer fitted garments like bodysuits and corsets, but sometimes a client wants to hide her body a little more. In that case, a babydoll-type nightgown will work. Babydolls usually flow away from the body. This can work on some women, but be careful. On others it will add bulk. I prefer more of a sheer babydoll that can still give a glimpse of skin through the lingerie. When a woman wants to hide her body more than usual, I try to steer her toward lace nighties. Even if it is a little tighter to the body than a babydoll, it's usually a busy pattern, so it will distract and hide imperfections.



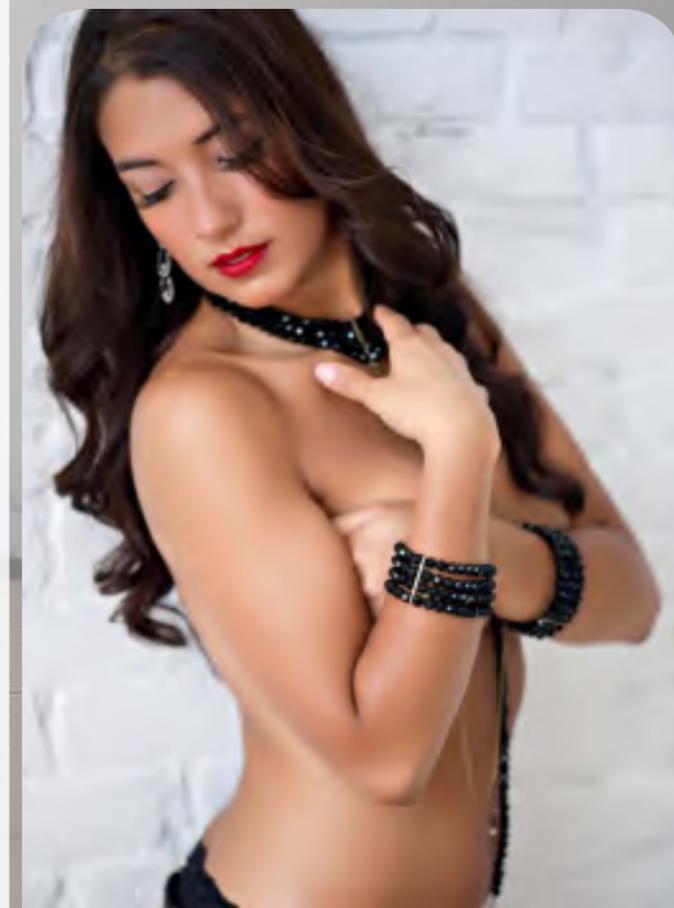
“A very popular accessory is stockings.  
**Thigh-high stockings**  
**are HOT**  
if done correctly.”



Everything old is new again. Depending on the woman and her personal style, I love vintage nightgowns. They can give a very elegant, timeless look. They are not very clingy to the body but rather, body skimming. Just make sure you have a fabric steamer on hand because they can wrinkle very easily! Vintage bottoms are also really popular and very forgiving. They are often high-waisted, covering that pesky bottom belly that so many moms battle to tighten up. You can even find these vintage-type bottoms made by companies that create slimwear. They are designed to hold everything in nice and tight. Perfection!

Along with all of the styles I mentioned above you can add accessories. A very popular accessory is stockings. Thigh-high stockings are HOT if done correctly. There are two types of stockings. The first has silicone inside the top of the stocking that grips the skin and holds them up. Those are perfect when you aren't wearing an outfit with garters or a garter belt. If you want to attach the stocking to garters, I recommend the thigh highs without the silicone. Most stores sell stockings both ways, but most women don't know that. I also find they are often misdirected by the lingerie stores. Sometimes it is very hard to attach the silicone-topped stockings to the garters. If you don't know how to attach stockings to garters, it's something you must learn as a boudoir photographer. I have had to help about 95 percent of my clients attach them because they didn't know how. Most of the time garter belts sit low on the hips, but sometimes they are meant to be worn at the waist. This is extremely flattering for a lot of women, so make sure you mention that as an option.

Other accessories I love that are very sexy (that I keep in my studio) are fun and feminine. For example, I have a set of gorgeous, beaded handcuffs. I also love my lace blindfold and my beaded body chain. These are accessories that will go with the lingerie your clients bring in, or that can stand alone for shots with more skin.

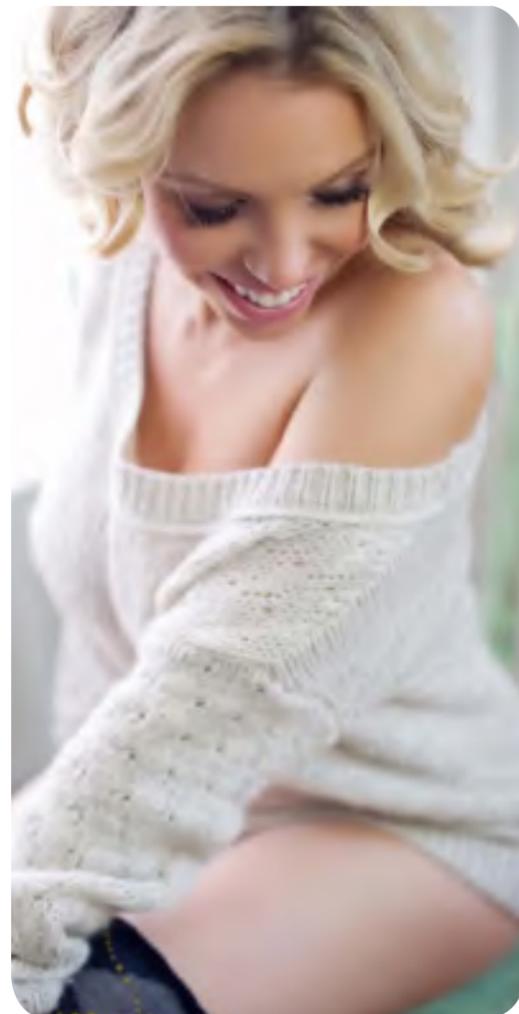




Many items in our wardrobe that we don't consider lingerie can still be worn as outfits for boudoir or can be paired with lingerie to spice it up. Think about a classic button-down blouse paired with a hot bra and panty set. How about an off-the-shoulder top with a cute pair of panties? Or even a large sweater with a pair of high socks? Think outside the box with your clients. I'll bet they have items like this in their closets already!

There are many, many styles of lingerie. I have only addressed a handful of the most popular here, but get creative! There are tons of brick and mortar and online shops that sell gorgeous lingerie ranging from inexpensive to incredibly luxurious. It's important to know what is out there so you can guide your clients in the right direction.

In my video this month, I talk about the top items I keep in my studio for my clients to use. It's impossible to keep lingerie of every size, shape and color in the studio without going broke. There are however, a few key items you ALL should have. So make sure you take a peek at the video to get an idea of what those items are. ■



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*destiniaman*

ENGAGEMENT SESSION

with  
Taylor  
Cincotta



by Taylor Cincotta

Sal and I first offered destination sessions by a happy mistake. We had a client request to do their photo shoot on a particular week a few years ago. I had to tell them no because we were going to be in New York City that week. They then asked, "Well can we shoot there?" My jaw dropped. Of course, I said yes and since we were already there it would be no extra cost; we would just have to do the shoot on one of two days we were there. Our client said that was not a problem and that is how we officially started offering destination engagement sessions!

I know it can be scary trying to figure out how it all works. Hopefully these tips on how I run my destination shoots will help!

### *How to offer it?*

Surprisingly, offer it for free. You heard me right, free. The way we are able to offer our destination photo shoots for free is either we are already traveling to a city for other work, shoots, family visits or vacation, or we know we will be able to schedule a few more shoots in that city, which should more than cover travel expenses.

Since we are able to offer this for no extra charge to our clients, they typically jump on it! They turn it into their own mini-vacation and are elated to be able to have unique engagement photos.

We do not schedule our travel around where our clients want to shoot. We typically already have travel booked for work or vacation and we simply add or block off one day for photo shoots. We inform our clients that we are traveling to many places already, and if they are able to meet us, there will be no additional cost for their session.



## How to schedule?

Normally I shoot my engagement sessions in one to one and a half hours when we're in our hometown. But everything is different when we shoot in another city due to unfamiliar traffic, construction, permits, etc. For this reason, I block off three hours for travel engagement sessions. This typically allows plenty of time to hit three major locations with travel time plus one or two outfit changes.

Have your couple either meet you at your hotel or meet them at theirs. If possible take one car (rent an SUV). This will save your couple from paying for parking, stressing about trying to follow you or risk getting separated in traffic, which all will ultimately cost you time and stress. Your couple will see this gesture as professional, considerate, and will blow them away... talk about customer satisfaction! Not only will you shoot their engagement pictures in another city, but you'll chauffeur them around for the shoot so they can relax and enjoy the session. Trust me; this extra effort won't go unnoticed or unappreciated. Your clients will talk about their positive experience and they'll be happy to spend money with you (providing you nail the shoot).

## How to find locations?

It's definitely unnerving shooting in a new city. Unlike my husband, Sal, I do NOT work well under pressure. So for destinations I pick all the locations in advance.

To find locations that look great in images, I'll search "Austin engagement session," "Austin engagement shoot location," "Austin photo shoot location," etc. online, and look through the image results until I see a location or background I like. From there I'll see if the photographer mentions the location, and if they did I'll map out the address from our starting point (usually our hotel) to make sure it's not too far away. If it works I'll type that location into a Word document, along with the estimated travel time, and include a few pictures from that location so we can generate some creativity when we start heading to that spot.

Now, let's say the photographer didn't mention where their cool location was. Let's say I found a picture of a couple standing in front of a wall that has the word "Austin" painted across it and I love it! From there I'll do online searches for "Austin wall," "Austin graffiti," "Austin painted wall," etc. From all this practice I've become a Google master at finding locations!

From here I just copy and paste the address, travel time and images into a word document, save the document as "Austin Shoot Locations" and keep it for our next visit. I add every shoot to my document if we have already shot in that city, so we can keep offering unique locations to our clients. And now over the last three years I have collected 10 cities of shoot locations!





## *Is it worth it?*

I know a lot of you are probably wondering, “I pay for my own travel? How does that make sense? Why wouldn’t I just shoot at home and keep the money I would have spent as profit?” The answer is if a client is willing to purchase a flight, hotel, rental car, invest in outfits and take time off work, they really value these images. And they’ll show you how much they value them with their dollars.

Our engagement sales for shooting in our hometown normally average about \$1,600. But when we shoot a destination engagement session, sales average about \$2,000. If you can schedule two or three more sessions in that trip then you have more than recovered your travel costs. Your clients now have images that none of their friends or other brides in their area have, they’ve invested so much in the shoot, there is no way they are going to buy one 8”x10” from that session. If they do, then you either didn’t do a very good job shooting, have the wrong client or are not running your sales sessions properly.

On top of that you have just added tons of new locations and backgrounds to your portfolio and made yourself a national and/or international photographer. From there you’ll be surprised at the attention you start getting from couples who live in the city where you shot, and couples in your area that have now heard and seen that you offer unique sessions in other cities at no added cost!

Offering this option to our clients has sometimes been the reason they booked us for their wedding. Once you account for the additional sales, portfolio builder and added bookings, it is 100 percent worth it. And now if you want to take a vacation, take one extra day, shoot, and suddenly you are able to take more vacations!



## True Story

I booked a couple in the fall of 2012. As we were filling out their contract we started talking ideas for their engagement session. I had already told them about the travel option we offer, so I asked them if there was a city or place that is meaningful to them or that they like to visit. Immediately they got excited and told me how they got engaged in New Orleans. BINGO. I knew I would be flying to Houston to visit my family that December and could easily stop in NOLA for a few hours for a shoot with maybe \$200 in additional travel costs once I factored in a rental car, meals, and flight changes.

My couple was ecstatic to be able to have their engagement photos taken in a city that was so meaningful to them. From there we started talking outfits and specific locations. I told them we should do one outfit as more of a theme to create a truly unique piece of artwork for their home, something along the lines of a vintage 18th century-inspired outfit. Then I watched their reaction; we were all on the same page. They loved the idea and we talked about props and more details to make the theme solid.

They also asked for a boudoir session with both of them. I told them we could wrap up the shoot at their hotel in the French Quarter with a quick 30-minute session in their room. You can read and see more images from this portion of the session on my blog post at <https://www.behindtheshutter.com/blog/>.



We booked a 7 a.m. flight from St. Louis to NOLA, rented a car, grabbed lunch, picked up my couple at their hotel and had an amazing shoot. I had all my addresses and locations picked out and handy; I knew where I was going to shoot each outfit so I felt calm and prepared.

We left the same afternoon for Houston and scheduled their preview for three weeks later. My couple was in love with their images and ended up spending \$3,000 on their session. This is just an example of how preparing for your shoot, going the extra mile and offering something unique, whether it's in the next big city, at a local farm or anywhere unique, can pay off. All the images in this article are from that session.

## In Conclusion

Destination engagement shoots definitely require more time, effort and expense. But by offering this option the correct way, scheduling multiple shoots and finding your locations ahead of time, the extra headache will be more than worth it. Grow your portfolio, your market and your sales by offering a unique experience to your clients. ■

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WHO ARE THE  
**TOP 10**

**MOST INFLUENTIAL  
IN THE INDUSTRY** 2013 **?**

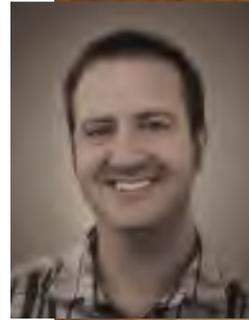
with Dennis Tyhacz

with Justin & Mary





by Dennis Tyhacz



For as long as the photography industry has existed, there have been individuals who rise above the pack and whose influence sends ripples throughout our industry. Whether it's a photographer's style or technique, success in establishing educational platforms, a ferocious marketing drive or business know-how, we can all agree our industry has no shortage of influential talent. Before I spill the beans on the Who's Who of our poll results, it's important to acknowledge the following question: How does a photographer's influence spread throughout our industry?

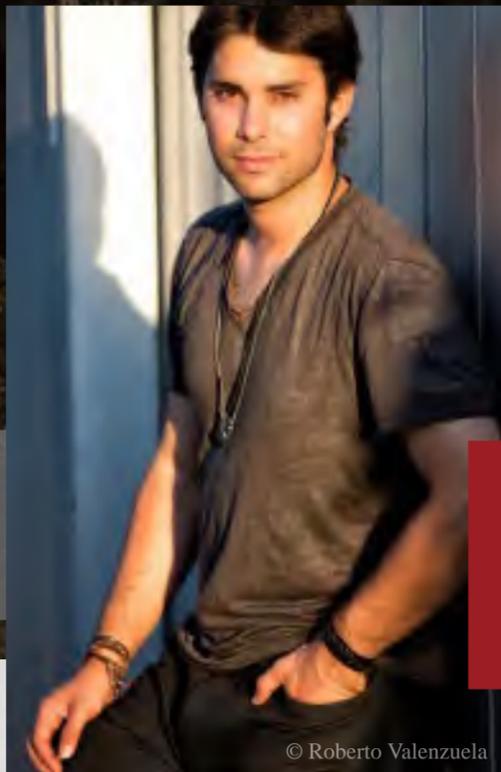
My first taste of witnessing photographers spread their influence first-hand happened almost by accident while I was working as a sales rep for *PDN* and *Rangefinder* magazines. When I wasn't scouring the tradeshow floor for leads, I was fortunate to attend several seminars at WPPI in Las Vegas and Photo Plus Expo in New York. Seminars and conferences are great venues to gauge speaker influence. They reveal in real time how certain photographers possess the "It-Factor" needed to win followers. After attending several of these seminars, it didn't take long to notice that certain speakers in our industry had a definite "magnetism" that made them stand out. There were speakers who were strident in their confidence, displaying an almost "evangelical" furor onstage to a packed room. On the opposite end of the coin, there were those who would shuffle to the podium, maintain a monotone speech and foster zero audience participation other than uninspired applause.

Inevitably, when hordes of attendees worship at any given speaker's altar, debates ensue. Jealousy starts rearing its ugly head in the industry, egos are crushed (or blown up) depending on which side of the fence one stands. Any speaker or public figure who claims to be bothered by compliments is often lying to disguise the obvious realities. We all want recognition, and we all want to be complimented for our talents. Since photography is an individual endeavor, the focus really comes down to the person clicking the shutter at the end of the day. This individual scrutiny will often extend to any business endeavor that a photographer attempts to tackle. As our industry continues its shift from public speaking forums to an online presence, the stakes have only gotten bigger and more complicated. A speaker or public figure in our industry can no longer exist in a public forum without having a strong online presence. This added factor makes influence in our industry that much more encompassing and rewarding. To be considered influential in any industry is a dream worth achieving, let alone living. Who wouldn't want to achieve this both in public and in the online world we now live in?

While I geared up to conduct the interviews with our readers' favorites, questions started popping up in my mind. "What makes you influential in your opinion? How did you become successful? What mistakes did you make early on and then learn from? Perhaps most importantly (and on an admittedly selfish level), I also wanted to know what pearls of wisdom can I pick up from these people and apply to my own endeavors? After several interviews I was struck by how very different their answers were. While one person claimed they love to get advice from as many people as possible in their quest for success, another would prefer to be 100 percent self-reliant to pursue their own dream.

It wasn't until after I finished the interviews that I recognized these people all share a very common thread, that influence is not only built through hard work, but it also boils down to several key ingredients: endless drive, passion, persistence, energy and the magnetism to pull all of these elements together and inspire others. So it was with this shared curiosity and spirit that our Editor/Founder Sal Cincotta took to several social media outlets and asked our readers, "Who do you consider to be the most influential person in our industry?"

*Here are the results of our readers' poll:*



© Roberto Valenzuela

10

An accomplished classical guitarist-turned-photographer, Beverly Hills, California-based photographer Robert Valenzuela isn't afraid to stir the pot with his unique style of wedding photography. When you combine hard work, determination and a unique approach to photography, this wedding and portrait photographer is proof that the combination of all the right elements can pay off. He made the Grace Ormonde "Platinum List" in 2011 and has won over 50 print competition accolades from WPPI to date. As a former business teacher, Valenzuela also has the gift of patience. In talking to him, one gains the perspective that when he says he wants the "greater good for our industry," he really means it.

Who were some of Valenzuela's earliest influences behind the camera? "Jerry Ghionis and Jeff Ascough, definitely. Ascough is a photojournalist who uses Leica cameras. He was a master craftsman with his camera. He knew what lighting was all about so I really looked up to him. Both those guys were masters of their craft so it made me want to work really hard to get there." In addition to his busy photography schedule, Valenzuela has been taking to the industry forums to educate fellow photographers. Valenzuela will tackle two platform classes this March at WPPI (one in English and one in Spanish). His next class will be on creativeLIVE, "The most exciting class I've ever attempted to teach," Valenzuela says. The subject? The Top 100 Photography Problems and How to Solve Them. Valenzuela's enthusiasm for this upcoming class is undeniable. "That is a project that has been in the works for a long time and I cannot wait to teach it."

Valenzuela's hunger for perfection extends outside of photography, whether he's slaving over recipes in his kitchen or boasting in jest about "destroying" others at ping pong. His most interesting hobby outside of photography involves flying 6-foot, remote-control helicopters. Wait a second, six-foot helicopters? "Oh yeah, if you don't know how to fly those things you are in big, big trouble," he warns, "They are not a toy. You can definitely kill someone." That's exactly the kind of cliff-hanging, danger-meets-passion-going-for-perfection that defines Valenzuela. As a photographer, one can say his unique work reveals as much about him as it does his subjects.



ROBERTO VALENZUELA

## + 10 CONTINUED

While many pro photographers lament all the “newbies” coming into the field, Valenzuela says it’s the artistry behind the lens that new photographers should be worrying about. “Megapixels are always going to increase, focus and distance are going to get more sophisticated and the barriers to entry will always be lower,” he explains. “People will continue to buy expensive, sophisticated cameras at Costco and never really work on their craft, or the craft of photography, the essence of painting with light, or understanding what photography is about.” Not surprisingly, Valenzuela wants to combat this technology plague and win back the respect that true, state-of-the-art photography deserves. “My goal is to change the mentality and stigma of the industry so we can respect the art of wedding photography much more than we do now,” he explains. “That’s going to happen through continual education, workshops and teaching.” Valenzuela is sincere in his quest, and his enthusiasm for industry elevation is obvious. “I want to elevate the wedding photography industry so it’s a more respected industry. I hope people all over the world start to realize there’s more to the equipment; there’s skill involved. Not just artistic skill but technical skill, psychological skill, and when you’re a photographer you have to work on that part of yourself, too.”

In talking to Valenzuela, one has the notion that while he’s cognizant of his achievements, he maintains a great, self-effacing sense of humor that makes one recognize that being humble should almost be a golden rule in the photography world. Upon hearing my comment that many people must underestimate the work of a wedding photographer, he offered the following: “How do you deal with people? How do you talk to people? How do you neutralize



your energy or anger?” Valenzuela explains his reasoning, “You really have to be a multi-faceted person. You have to be able to roll with the punches, and the punches will never stop coming.” It’s also no surprise that Valenzuela takes perfection of his craft very seriously and wishes other photographers would as well. Taking a serious tone, he explains that photographers should treat any photography job as seriously as they would a one-time-performance. “A concert pianist has to practice before going out to perform a concert, and I wish photographers would do the same, treat it as a performance,” Valenzuela said. When you’re going to a portrait job or a wedding, or whatever you’re shooting, it should be a performance. Work on something, then perform it.” What’s his final advice for people coming into the industry? “My suggestion is always the same – work your ass off and become a master of what you do. Try to master lighting and compositions, and charge accordingly,” he says. “Don’t lower your price because people will come to you for your work.”

“My goal is to change the mentality & stigma of the industry so we can **respect the art** of wedding photography much more than we do now.”





© Benjamin Edwards

9

Every once in a while, a photographer will fall in love with their craft and want to empower their peers. Some of these photographers do their job so incredibly well that you'd be convinced they were natural-born presenters. Kevin Kubota is such a photographer. A Nikon "Legend Behind the Lens" honoree, the Bend, Oregon-based Kubota is the founder of the popular Digital Photography Bootcamp workshops. He's also the founder of Kubota Image Tools, which produce amazing Photoshop Plugins and Lightroom Presets. And if that weren't enough, he's also an author. His latest book is a guide to help photographers on their quest to tackle lighting, *Lighting Notebook 101*. As a photographer-turned-entrepreneur, Kubota's modus operandi when it comes to his projects is to have fun. Whether it's maintaining a blog column devoted to Bloody Mary reviews and recipes or helping fellow photographers come up with brilliant marketing concepts, Kubota puts his positive approach to business in perspective. "I think for photographers to stay inspired, you really have to enjoy what you're doing. Sometimes we hold back from doing things we think are funny, because we don't think it's going to appear professional. I've definitely skirted that idea in the past where my staff will be like 'that's great, but I don't know...,' and sometimes I have to reel it in, but I think it's important."

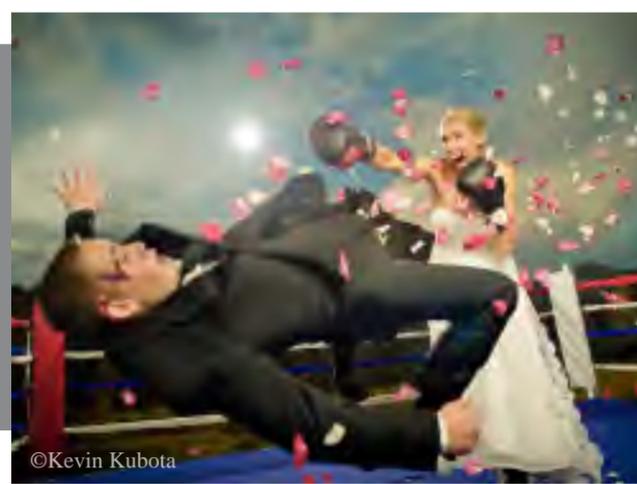
Just how important? Kubota described a marketing exercise from one of his bootcamp classes where he was able to put his unique empowerment into action. "One exercise we do at the boot camp is we have everyone present all their materials, their logos, branding and everything, and we go through it along with their images, and see if what they're presenting to the client really matches who they are as a person. This one girl, when she came to us, her business was going to fold, so this was her last-ditch effort", Kubota explains. "So she presented her materials. She had this beautiful website and everything, but it didn't match her personality, which was completely fun, quirky; she drove a polka-dotted VW Bug. She had this upbeat, silly personality, but her branding was the opposite – completely serious, wedding-gorgeous-elegant." Kubota confronted her about it. "I said 'this is not you at all,' and she said, 'Well, people who are hiring wedding photographers want an elegant, beautiful, serious wedding photographer,' and we said, 'No – they want you! You're going to have to change everything and be silly, be crazy, be quirky in your marketing – just like you are.' She just freaked out." Kubota had some convincing to do, but he managed to persuade her. "She said, 'There's no way this is going to work,' so we convinced her to try it, and she did."



KEVIN KUBOTA

## + 9 CONTINUED

I think for photographers **to stay inspired you really have to enjoy what you're doing.** Sometimes we hold back from doing things we think are funny, because we don't think it's going to appear professional.



©Kevin Kubota

Needless to say, Kubota's bootcamp tactics definitely paid off. "She completely changed everything – new branding, new logo, new website. She focused on the fun, quirky clients instead of the serious clients, and it completely turned around her business. Within a year, she went from making \$20,000 a year to \$125,000 per year, and her husband got to quit his job and help her, and within a year and half, they were making \$200,000 a year, just loving it and turning away clients. So it was a dramatic change for her to go with the silly, the quirky, who she was and not go out with this false front. All of us have a fun, silly side we need to put out there and let clients know we're just human, you know?"

Though he's retired from shooting fulltime after 20 years of shooting weddings, Kubota reflects on a particularly emotionally intense photo shoot that had brought him out of the gate one last time. "After the last wedding that I shot, we got a call from a vendor that I worked with, and she mentioned she was hosting a wedding in her restaurant and they had to move the wedding date up dramatically because the groom had terminal cancer," Kubota explains. "Their original photographer couldn't make the date and they needed a photographer. They asked if I would be willing to shoot this wedding and it was five days before the event. Amazingly I was not booked that day so I said, 'Sure, I'll shoot it.'" The event turned out to be almost too much for Kubota to handle. "We went down and shot

this wedding, and it was the hardest photo shoot I ever had to do, because it was a young couple in their 20s and the guy was in late stages of terminal cancer. He could barely stand up and they really wanted to document this and get married before he passed. It was intense but it was such an honor to be able to use my 20 years of wedding talent to try to pull through and give them something memorable." Reflecting on the shoot, Kubota explains his feelings about it. "That was my most satisfying shoot, even though it was the hardest wedding I shot...to give them those images, knowing that was all they were going to have shortly thereafter, because he did pass away about a month after the wedding. That was intense, and the perfect end to my chapter as a wedding photographer because it made them feel good about the gift we give as wedding photographers."

What kind of advice can Kubota offer an up-and-coming photographer? "For photographers getting into it, the advice I've always given is to learn about business. I think Sal [Cincotta] has been great about teaching the business of photography, which is really something people need to learn," Kubota said. "I think the more a new photographer learns about just running a business, and it doesn't necessarily have to be a photography business, just Business 101. A lot of photographers jumping into this love the creative part, but they don't have a business sense." Kubota indicates that not learning the business side plagues many young photographers today. "That's the one thing a lot of the new people aren't learning. If we put enough effort into personal projects that keep us creative and motivated and learning our good photography skills like lighting, composition and posing, it's important to balance it out with the business sense. It's important to make time for yourself outside of photography," Kubota says. "It took me many years to learn that I have to take time out, like go to the gym, take karate. Do whatever it is you have to do to find balance; I think that's really important."



JOEMCNALLY

8



©Joe McNally

A great photographer must never underestimate the amount of work that goes into capturing a moment. Whether it's enduring below-freezing temperatures on the side of a mountain or scaling the TV antenna on top of the Empire State Building, master-photographer-extraordinaire Joe McNally does what it takes to capture the moment. As an award-winning outdoor photographer as well as a seasoned editorial and commercial shooter, the New York-based McNally is no stranger to awards and recognition. He's shot several cover stories for *Fortune*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, *Men's Journal* and *Time* over the years, and (like our fellow Top 10 finalist, Kevin Kubota) he's a fellow Nikon "Legend Behind the Lens" honoree. He's also a past winner of the Alfred Eisenstaedt Award for his magazine photography. His work has been honored by the Art Directors Club, Pictures of The Year International and World Press Photo. He has contributed his photography skills to *National Geographic* for over 20 years and was a prominent staff shooter for *Life* magazine in the mid-'90s.

When you're in the game for some 30 years shooting a variety of photography disciplines like McNally, one has to ask what it was like when he started out. "When I grew up I had to learn how to do one thing well; I had to learn how to shoot good pictures," he explains. "Now there are a lot of things that fall into that category – how to be a journalist, how to tell a story – but in terms of the technique, the skill set, gear and all that, it was fairly straightforward."

As a long-standing still photographer, one can't help but wonder if video is the next medium on McNally's horizon. "Video is something that's always on my mind, and trying to get better at it," he says. "It's baby steps, but it's been an interesting adventure." In addition to working on the high-profile Nikon D4 campaign earlier this year, which was a combination of video and still life, McNally landed what he described as "one of the best assignments I've ever been asked to do." Since it's still a work in progress, McNally couldn't divulge the client's name to us, but the project "involved a series of video interviews." One of his subjects? None other than one of McNally's own personal heroes whom he reveres, the famous combat photojournalist, David Douglas Duncan. This interview and assignment were also notable for another significant reason according to McNally. "It was the first time in my career that the client flat-out told me that the video was more important than the stills, so that was an interesting turn of events for sure."

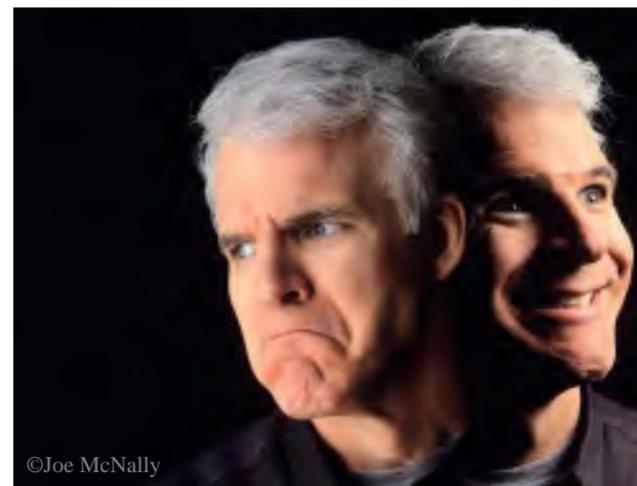
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Will video ever overtake or diminish the discipline of still photography? McNally shared his opinion on photographers utilizing video. “I’m not a soothsayer or fortune teller by any stretch of the imagination, but I think stills will remain very viable, obviously, and they will be my first and forever love, in terms of communicating visually.” What about the benefits of video? Does it push photographers further to tell stories? McNally thinks it does. “The idea of multimedia and that kind of storytelling adds an interesting wrinkle and pushes the envelope for every photographer. It also pushes ultimately in a very necessary way, because of the omnipresence of the web.”

When it comes to “getting the shot” as a frequent *National Geographic* photographer, McNally gets his share of challenging assignments. He described one particular challenging shoot. “I’ve done two telescopes stories for them, which doesn’t sound like everyone’s cup of tea, but I perversely enjoy that kind of challenge I guess you could say.” The telescopes McNally is speaking of are the observatory station type. “Telescopes are a bitch; they’re huge 20-story buildings, these massive institutions sitting on top of mountains,” he says. “It’s always really cold, and the interior of the telescopes are kept cold, and they all have to be lit. So it becomes a fairly massive effort to bring enough light to light these massive institutions,” he explains. “It’s difficult because you’re working at 10 to 14 thousand feet where the air is very, very thin, and you’re fighting 50 to 70 mile per hour winds. You’re in snow drifts and you’re climbing catwalks. It’s a very physical effort to do that sort of stuff. But that is nothing compared to what a lot of wildlife photographers go through for *National Geographic*.” For this kind of work, is the journey part of the reward? For McNally, it just comes with the territory of being a photographer. “Across the board, it’s challenging mentally, emotionally and physically, because you get very involved in the work. You have to be.”

If the labor aspect of his photography shooting isn’t enough, McNally indicates that behind-the-scenes negotiation is also an art form that has to be mastered. “The hard part too, is that people don’t see how complex things behind the scenes can be. One of the last telescope stories I did for them was in a national park in an endangered species area. The amount of permitting and paperwork that you have to go through, to go there and bring your equipment, just negotiating access is an art form in and of its self, and it can be very daunting,” McNally says. “The good thing is that the photograph should appear effortless, so all of the work that goes into this should remain behind the scenes.”

When it comes to the younger crop of photographers who want to bring their skills to the forefront, what kind of advice can McNally offer? “Visual education is important,” he says, “I revere the work that has gone before and I always feel it’s very important for young photographers to understand the depth of the photographic industry that they’re interested in getting into, which means knowing how to shoot, how to light, how to do Photoshop. All that stuff is absolutely necessary, but I also think the underpinnings of it have to have a certain level of visual taste or sophistication, and that simply comes from looking at a lot of pictures and reading a lot about photography.” McNally stresses the importance of research. “Dive into the great masters that have gone before. They are the shoulders upon which all of us stand, and I think you have to get your arms around that. I personally look at all sorts of influences, but I think you have to remember to look backwards, and see where we all came from.”



©Joe McNally



The good thing is that **the photograph** should appear effortless so all **of the work** that goes into this should remain behind the scenes.



©Joe Buissink

An often-overlooked element of wedding photography is the element of catharsis. Joe Buissink not only utilizes catharsis as his reasoning for getting behind the shutter, but he's also got the celebrity wedding portfolio and the industry experience that proves his work is cathartic. The Beverly Hills, California-based Buissink has shot the weddings of Jennifer Lopez, Jessica Simpson and Nick Lachey, Brendan Fraser, Kelsey Grammer, Hillary Swank and Chad Lowe, Jenny Garth and Peter Facinelli, and Christina Aguilera to name a few, and he's another well-chronicled winner of awards in our industry. He's was nominated as one of the "Top 10 Wedding Photographers in the World" by *American Photo*, and he's also been voted one of the Top Five in the World by the BBC in 2003. Buissink received the "Professional Photographers Leadership Award" from the U.N.'s International Photographic Council in 2003 as well.

True to his individuality, Buissink might have the most unusual start in photography tale of all our Top 10 candidates. "I took a photo a long time ago of my son nursing on my then-wife while I was working on my PhD in psychology," he explains. "One of my part-time gigs while doing that was working in a lab and I was processing film, both black and white and color; you know, the old analog days." While processing the image, Buissink had an epiphany. "I took this image and I printed it, and I said, "Oh my God, I think I have to go do this," and what it was to me, was an intimate moment between two people," Buissink says. "I had somehow managed to insert myself into that moment, and shared that moment, and experienced that moment, as kind of a voyeur." Buissink realized then that photography was more to him than just clicking the shutter. "The strength of photography is phenomenal in that it's being present in moments and in people's lives. I thought, 'I've got to figure out a way to do this,' and I stumbled upon wedding photography."

Reflecting on his career and his upbringing, Buissink describes how wedding photography is cathartic for him. "In looking back, my childhood was very emotional for me. I use wedding photography or photography in general, as therapy for myself." Upon hearing my request for him to elaborate on his website description of him as a "seeker of truth" Buissink explains his past in vivid detail. "I grew up in a very abusive environment and my mother left me when I was about 4-years old," Buissink says. "Ever since then, I've been trying to heal that 4-year old in me, and of course in the process I've always been trying to find out the truth behind what really happened, how it happened, because emotionally it affected me." Buissink describes how photography provides him "bits of truth" about himself. "Psychologically I took the responsibly of why my mother left, I must have been a horrible person. So I've been trying to rectify that, and I'm



JOEBUISSINK

This requires dedication,  
it requires you to fall on your face several times  
& get back up.  
It's not shoot and burn, or spray and pray;  
it's a real craft



©Joe Bussink

62-years old now, and wedding photography in particular has been healing for me,” Buissink explains. “Along the way I find out little bits of truth about who I am emotionally, and what happened to me as a child, and how that affected me, the truth of how that made me and how I was able to overcome all of that.”

Bussink sheds light on the real-life impact of shooting weddings and what it means for him. “In growing up I never had any role models, and so now when I go to a wedding, I see the potential for that. A husband and wife getting together for the first time, in love with each other, that pulls on my heart strings.” Buissink describes the uplift these occasions can bring. “What it does is give me hope that it’s possible, and it shows me (or the little boy in me) it’s not your fault, these things happen, and it’s luck of the draw, and somehow you overcome that stuff, you know?”

As a photographer who has to deal with the high pressure stakes of celebrity weddings, Buissink often has to walk a razor’s edge in his work routine. “It’s a double-edged sword. It’s not the clients. I’ve found most if not all of the celebrities I’ve shot to be downright honest human beings, just like you and me. Who I fight with is the publicist, the manager and the lawyer,” he says. “Most of the time, the celebrity doesn’t have a clue what those three entities in their life are doing. All he or she knows is “they’re taking care of me, they’re making me money, and they’re watching my back,” Buissink says. “That’s what they do, they watch their back and they have a piece of the pie, so they have a vested interest in how their

client is portrayed,” he says. “However, having said that, not all three see the client portrayed the same way, which makes my life miserable at times. You have input from three or four people, and they’re all telling me different things.”

Luckily for Buissink, working with people that are used to being photographed can have its creative perks. “The good side of this is that celebrity clients will know at all times where the camera is. Even though they don’t directly show you the eye contact, they will position their bodies in such a way that is very flattering. They know the camera is there, and they just play to the camera, and it’s just amazing to watch that unfold.” With celebrities however come the paparazzi. Buissink shares a humorous episode with the aftermath of shooting Leann Rimes’ wedding. “I’m showing the slideshow and people are asking, “What’s with the umbrellas on a beautiful day in Malibu?” I said, “Well it’s not because it was hot, it was because of the helicopters above that were shooting down on them!”

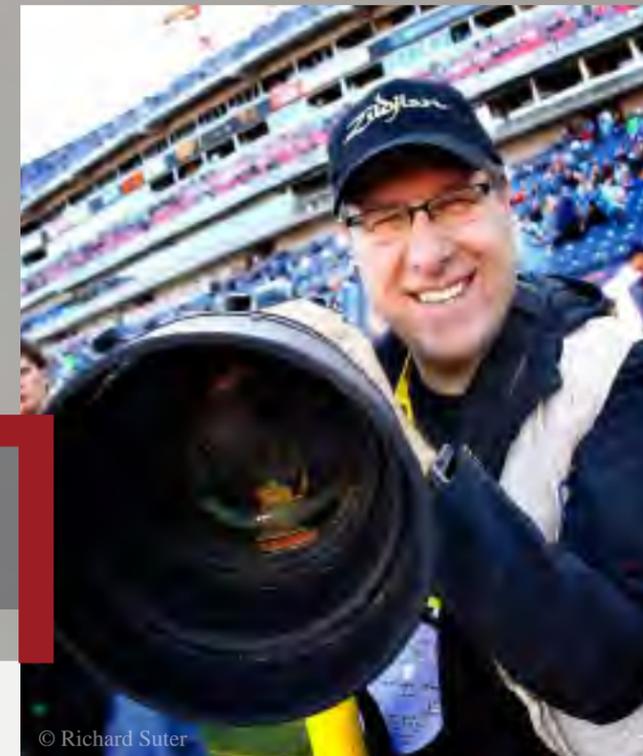
What does Buissink think of the current photography learning process? “I think people are starting to get it, I’ve been saying it’s a craft and there is no magic bullet,” he says. “This requires dedication, it requires you to fall on your face several times and get back up. It’s not shoot and burn, or spray and pray; it’s a real craft,” he explains. “I think I’m starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel. I think people are starting to get that.” As for advice for photographers, Buissink emphasizes the need for personal style. “Concentrate on style versus thinking how fast can I get into this or how fast can I make a buck by tomorrow.” Buissink also emphasizes the importance of finding your true identity as a person. “The most important thing about photography is who you are, and I mean it at the deepest level. It requires introspection, and in doing that you develop your style,” he says. “That’s based in how you were brought up, it defines who you are, and who you are defines your work, and who you are affects the clients that are interviewing you. All of these things are important, but the most important aspect is learning who you are, and how that affects everything you do.”





# SCOTT KELBY

# 6



© Richard Suter

If anyone should be granted a placeholder in any Top 10 list in the photography industry, Scott Kelby would be an ideal candidate. An accomplished photographer, the founder of the National Association of Photoshop Professionals (NAPP), the founder of Photoshop World and a business visionary in his own right, Kelby is also one of the most prolific authors in the graphic arts industry. With this much going for him, one might naturally assume that all of Kelby's ideas must be bulletproof, right? Not always the case. "One time I wanted to launch this website for location shooting," Kelby says, "and it never even made it outside our own doors. It got shot down so much and then we announced it, but it didn't launch!"

After getting his start in graphic design, Kelby had a random idea to help others use Photoshop, and it's safe to say these seminars have found a life of their own. "Our Photoshop seminar tours, which are still going to this day, go to 80 cities a year. This was a shock," he explains. "We initially thought, "Hey, this will be something fun to try, we don't know if we'll make money at it, but it'll be good to train people on Photoshop. We had no idea how it would take off." As someone who has over 54 book titles to his name, several of them translated into multiple languages, you'd think Kelby has figured out the secret to publishing, too. However, like all things, there are no shortcuts, even for a guy like Kelby. "Every time I come up with a book idea, I still have to convince our publisher to publish it!" He describes his ongoing success using the following motto: "Sometimes it's big things, sometimes it's little things, but you don't know until you try."

Simply trying in Kelby's case has certainly paid off, especially when it comes to photography education. With his own Kelby training platform classes, over 75,000 active members in the NAPP, and his runaway success with Photoshop World, Kelby explains his thought process on educating photographers. "Photography education is different than a lot of other business education in that 92 percent of the people that do it, they do it for their hobby," he says. "So it's more like golf education when you think about it. We do it because we love it, because it's fun, it has the social aspect, because it gives us a chance to excel at something we enjoy."

## + 6 CONTINUED

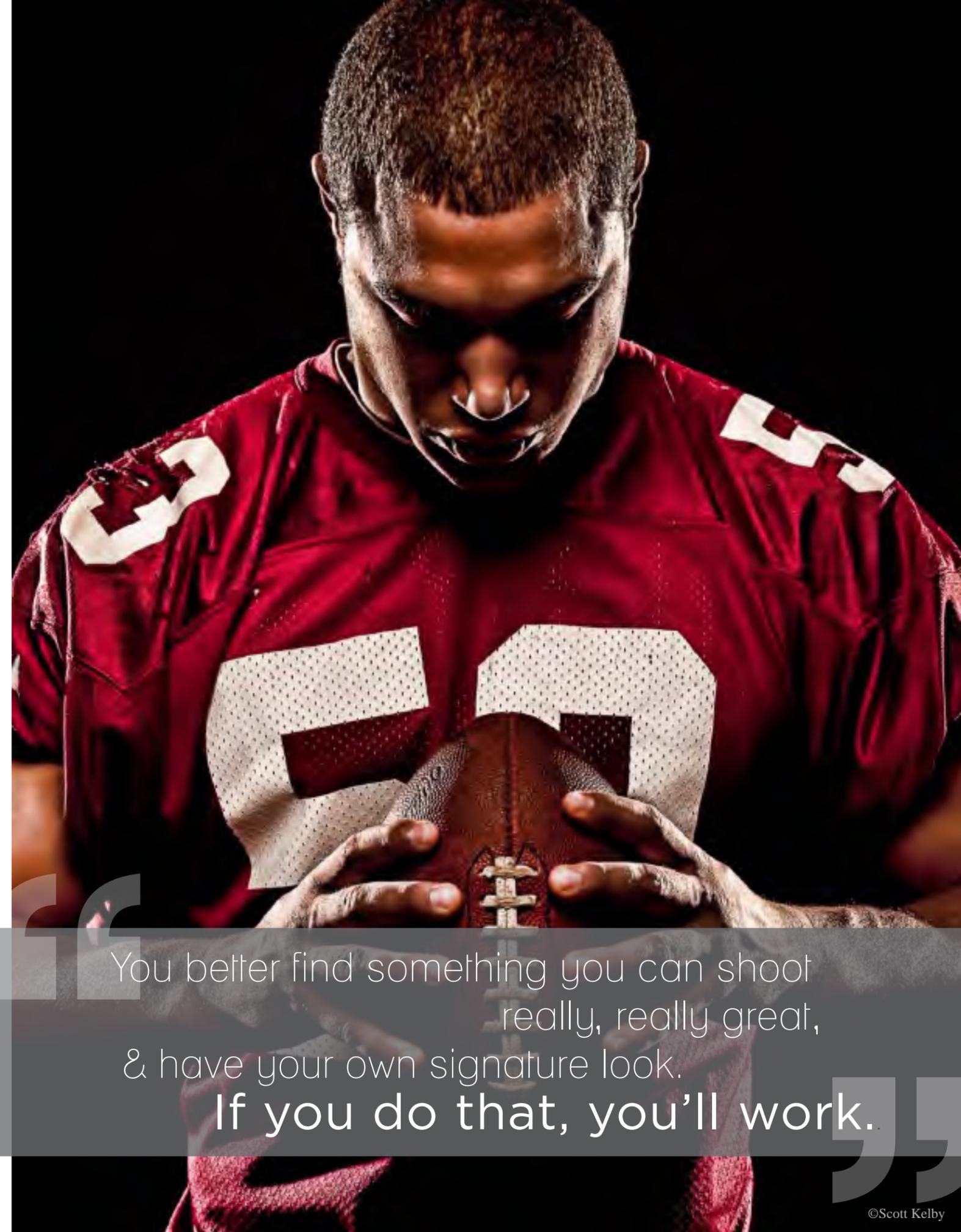
What about making a living as a photographer? “It’s not like traditional business,” he says. “Most people don’t do it for a living. In fact, the vast majority of people that are serious about photography will never make any money at it. Not because they’re not good business people or good photographers, it just isn’t what they choose to do. It’s literally their hobby.” Listening to Kelby, one gets the notion that he’s not only turned on the photography education light bulb, but he’s still twisting it for more illumination. “You have to educate people in a different way. They’re doing this because they love it, they don’t have to do it. It’s not required education, like a doctor or a lawyer or an accountant, where it’s required continuing education every year. So I think you have to create ways to keep them engaged.”

Kelby expands on his golf education to photography education comparison. “I think the golf community does a wonderful job keeping golfers engaged, wanting them to learn more and more, and giving them hardware and training to make them better,” he says. He also sheds light on the psychology of both endeavors. “I think a lot of golf is psychological, and I think a lot of photography is psychological. I think a lot of golf depends on talent, and I think a lot of photography depends on talent, which is why it’s so hard to train.” What about those photographers or golfers who continually dish out advice, but yet their own personal skill set is, dare we say, never to be judged? “I know a guy who is a golfer, who’s been playing 30 or 40 years, and he can tell you everything about golf. He can tell you this is how to play a bunker, how to do this and do that, but at the end of the day he’s just not a very good golfer,” he says. “There are photographers that are the same way. There are people, you can blindfold them, and they can take apart a camera, and they can reassemble it, but they don’t take very good photos. So it’s a very weird industry to train in, and try to reach people that have varying degrees of talent from zero to just a ton. The people that have a ton of talent don’t need a ton of training.”

What kind of advice can Kelby offer photographers looking to grow their business? “If I had to pin down a secret to my success, it would be I’m willing to take other peoples’ advice. A lot of people ask for advice, but they don’t really follow it. They’re hoping that you say what they were going to do is right,” he says. “I think finding people you trust and getting their advice is important because other people can usually see your situation much clearer than you can.” Kelby also offers the following input on the importance of style. “Find something you’re really good at and focus on that. Create a look, create something so that when you look at your photo, ‘Oh my gosh that’s your photo,’ and I can tell it’s yours because clients are willing to pay for a look,” he explains. “They’ll look at five or six different photographers and say ‘Ooh, I want my photos to look like that,’ whether it’s how you shoot, compose, how you post-process, if you want to have your success today you have to have your own look.” Kelby indicates current technology and ease of shooting can sometimes make it harder for a photographer to stand out. “Every photographer can take a decent photo of whatever today. Cameras are so good anyone can get a well-exposed, sharp shot today. You’ve got to have a look where all of your shots are your trademark look. If you look at all popular photographers today, they all have a trademark look. Not everyone will choose your look, but you’re going to starve if you have the ‘I’m everyman look, I shoot everything okay’ approach. You better find something you can shoot really, really great, and have your own signature look. If you do that, you’ll work.”



©Scott Kelby



You better find something you can shoot  
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& have your own signature look.  
If you do that, you’ll work.



©Jerry Ghionis

# 5

## JERRY GHIONIS

If influence is considered a ripple effect in the photography industry, then Aussie-born Jerry Ghionis would have to be considered a tidal wave. With striking images and a fashionably-unique style of wedding photography that is all his own, Ghionis has seen his fair share of awards and widespread industry recognition over the years. In addition to winning “Wedding Album of The Year” by WPPI over eight times running, Ghionis was recently named “Australian Wedding Photographer of the Year” in 2011 by the AIPP. If that weren’t enough, to this author’s first-hand witnessing at WPPI Ignite in 2012, Ghionis can also vocally belt out ballads like nobody’s business.

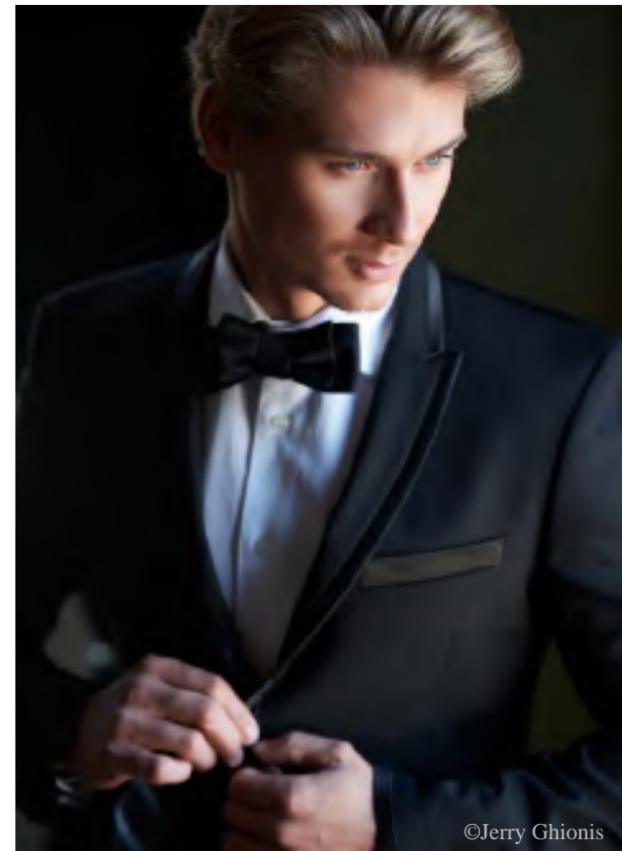
When one has an analytical eye for detail like Ghionis, one has to ask how he first got into photography. “My brother gave me my first camera when I was 15 years of age and I soon became obsessed with photography. I basically did it as a hobby. I photographed anything and everything, every genre you can think of from sports to landscape, streetscape, industrial, you name it.” As the young Ghionis found his true calling, he soon found traditional photography schooling uninspiring. “I finished high school, and then I started a four-year course, and after a year I quit because they were teaching me what I call the algebra of photography. In a sense they were teaching me stuff I’d never use in the real world, so I quit after a year.” Ghionis then cut his chops on the retail side and found a mentor. “I worked in a few camera shops to get my feet wet in the industry, and I approached a photographer who was quite prominent at the time. I offered to carry his bags for about a year and a half and help him out on the weekends. Then he asked me to work for him fulltime, which I did. Then in ‘97 I started my business.”

As a photographer with the artistic flair of Ghionis’ caliber, there was one particular photographer in the industry who caught his discerning eye early on. “Herb Ritts was one of my biggest influences. I think it was his beauty, his simplicity; it was really anything he touched. It just looked like magic.” When it comes to technology and video, Ghionis believes in flirtation but his focus remains on his first love—stills. “I remember the very first time I took my camera out, when you could shoot HD video,” he explains. “I was there sitting at the tripod, about to shoot some video going, “I’m going to shoot some video! Let’s do it!” Then I thought, “Wait—you know what? I’ve got enough pressure as it is being a photographer.” So I don’t want to sit there doing video.” Ghionis’ assessment as a virtuoso still-shooter is that it’s better to grasp a discipline headfirst before trying to do everything. “I think anyone who would be truly successful with video would be focused on it. You can flirt with it I believe, but I think it’s entirely a new discipline, and I’m not really seduced by it.”

## + 5 CONTINUED

A photographer should never underestimate the power of reinvention and facing your creative demons head-on. Ghionis described a recent creative challenge that embodies this mode of operation in vivid detail. “Over the past few years I’ve been fortunate in the WPPI album competition, the print awards and so on, but every year I like to reinvent myself. So last year I had literally a few days to design what I was hoping would be a contender for the WPPI competition,” he explains. “I was looking for new inspirations, new ideas, and I ended up designing an album that looked like a Polaroid collage. That was my biggest creative challenge, because I was sitting at the computer and I became obsessed with the idea, and it took me six days to produce,” he says, “non-stop, every single day to create this album that I had never seen before.” In Ghionis’ case, it was a unique optical illusion effect of 2D meets 3D that he successfully achieved. “It had this effect of a two-dimensional format that gave a three dimensional quality when you looked around the image like you were there.” Ghionis’ self-imposed exile of intensive creativity paid off when his Polaroid album won WPPI’s 2012 Album of The Year.

When he’s not shuttling to-and-from high-end photo shoots around the globe, Ghionis found the time to launch an international non-profit with his wife Melissa called The Soul Society, whose mission is to help poor, homeless or orphaned children in third world countries. It was on a trip to Cambodia that Ghionis witnessed third-world plight firsthand and, true to his passion, wanted to make a difference. “I went to Cambodia a few years ago on holiday and I ended up visiting an orphanage. I had never seen the way the orphans live, and it just made me feel responsible,” he explains. “Being well-known in the industry is great and I can use that to help the industry and so on, but if I can use it to



do some good in the world then why wouldn’t I? So we ended up canvassing to become a fully pledged non-profit charity, which we did, and The Soul Society was born.”

What kind of advice can Ghionis offer younger shooters that want to reach a true pro level? Ghionis says focusing on the business side is key. “Focus more on the business than on the photography. Creatively you have to practice your craft, and really learn the fine art of posing, lighting, storytelling and emotion. But really try to be an artist on the weekend and a business person during the week. I would say as a business owner you want to work on your business, not just in it.” Ghionis indicates it’s important to have a passionate life outside of photography, too. “I would also say use what you do for a living as a vehicle to enjoy your lifestyle, rather than sabotage it. Arguably, we use our lives as photographers memorializing moments for other families, when we have no moments left for ourselves, so it’s important to live your life to the fullest.”

...as a business owner you want to  
**work on your business,**  
not just in it.



©Jasmine Star

4

Jasmine Star is an Orange County, California-based international wedding photographer who is no stranger to making waves in the wedding photography industry. In addition to her recent win of the “Lens & Light Honor” by Best of Wedding Photography, Star has also been voted as a “Top 10 Wedding Photographer” by *American Photo*. Star’s meteoric rise to popularity in the wedding photography world started in 2006 with her award-winning images. Her success has practically become a marketing “how-to” story in itself for all photographers regardless of specialty. Star’s willingness to write about her early photography foibles on her popular blog and how she overcame them gives her highly relatable appeal to her fans that few photographers can compete with. Star not only encourages her fans to pick up cameras and “be themselves,” she invites them to follow her into the sunset and start shooting. Her social media reach knows no bounds, and in speaking to her on the phone, one gets the impression that Star wholeheartedly wants to empower her fellow photographers.

How did Star first get into photography? “As silly as it sounds, I grew up with a fairly simple childhood, to say the least,” Star says. “My mother was able to borrow a camera from someone at church and she used it frequently to take photos of us as kids. I remembered distinctly thinking, ‘Wow, my mother is so cool right now,’ while watching her take photos, and I think it must have made an indelible impression very early on.”

When it comes to marketing I asked Star if photographers tend to underestimate the real power of marketing in the wedding and portrait photography world, and she was honest in her assessment. “I think that wedding and portrait marketing is such a new thing based on my perception. Years ago you weren’t a fashion photographer and then you kinda sorta did weddings on the side,” Star says. “It was something you sort of hid. It wasn’t something you came out very proud of like, this is my direction, this is what I do,” Star explains. “So I think wedding and portraiture really became a catalyst for doing ultimately what you want to do. I think people were accustomed to marketing as their end goal, not necessarily think they were going to market to pay their bills.”



JASMINE STAR



## 4 CONTINUED

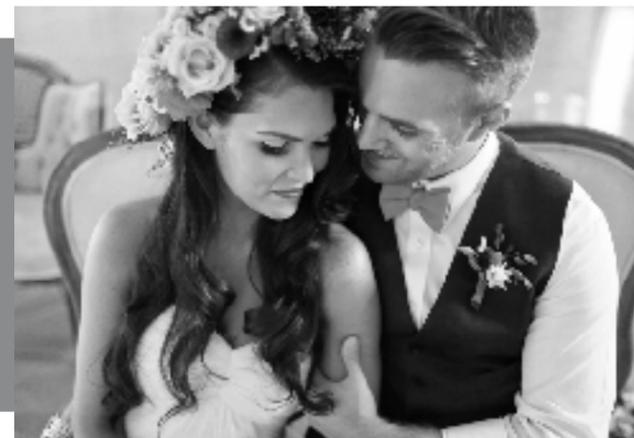
When most fashion-inspired photographers are fighting tooth and nail to get their work into magazines for exposure, Star figured why not just create her own. “I really like to write,” she explains. “My friend and I decided to make a commitment to write 750 words per day, so it was just every day for a month. We could write about anything, we just had to write to practice the discipline. So I just started writing about my experiences in photography,” she says. Where did Star end up? “At the end of the 31 days, I ended up with 25,000 words or something, and I thought maybe this is the start of a book, but I had met so many photographers that had books,” she says. “At the time, I had been shooting maybe five years, and I didn’t want to come off pretentious like, oh here’s my book on my five years of shooting,” but I knew I had something that I found inspiring that I wanted to share.” That something was everything Star finds inspiring in her work. “It was this project of everything meeting that I found inspiring—writing, fashion, magazines, weddings... and so I thought, great!”

Meteoritic success in the photography world can sometimes breed jealousy by peers. By putting herself out there in public on her blog or in appearances, Star takes feedback in a very healthy stride that other shooters can learn from. “I think by putting yourself out there in a personal capacity, you definitely run the risk of being criticized a lot more for it, but I think it’s a matter of perspective,” Star explains. “I think that in spite of how much I might have been criticized in the past, the byproduct of the benefits that come with it far outweigh and supersede any

negativity that I can take personally.” Star indicates that by putting herself out there as a real person, her real-life experiences are worth sharing. “To know the people that I’ve met on a personal capacity by being myself, and making friends, and gaining clients by it, far outweighs any negativity.” Very few other photographers in recent memory have been as inspirational as Star in terms of encouraging people to pick up cameras and basically say “go for it.” While the hipper-than-thou photographers of yesteryear are still clinging to old darkroom techniques, or are digitally focused on “keeping out the newbies,” Star has been instrumental in blowing the industry doors wide open. How else can an industry grow or develop without bringing in new photographers and offering encouragement?

In all her success as an international photographer and speaker, what’s one of Star’s goals in 2013? “Celebrating the small successes,” Star explains. “I think that as an entrepreneur you become consumed by these big-picture ideas and pushing yourself, and you sometimes forget the small things that happen along the way that you should take time out to celebrate. So I think in 2013 I’ll be taking time out to celebrate the small successes.” While she’s shooting weddings all over the world, Star remembers to enjoy her work as well. “In December of 2008, I was able to shoot a wedding in Costa Rica, but my husband decided to extend our trip and enjoy our time out there. On New Year’s Eve we were walking down the beach and I thought, “Right now I’m doing everything in my life that I want to.” It was one of those key moments where I felt very thankful and very blown away that the events in my life brought me to that moment.”

What kind of advice can Star offer younger photographers who want to break into the industry? “Practice, practice, practice—and learn your camera. Be yourself, no matter what the cost. It’s better for someone to not like you 100 percent for who you are, than to like you as a copycat version of what you think you should be.” Star also firmly believes photographers need to believe in themselves. “Don’t listen to anyone else. People are always going to have an opinion of your work. If you like what you’re doing and people are hiring you to do it then work toward that goal and don’t ever look back.”



©Jasmine Star

Practice, practice, practice –  
and learn your camera.

**Be yourself,  
no matter what the cost.**



creativeLIVE

@Kate Hailey | @creativeLIVE

3



@Kate Hailey | @creativeLIVE

While online education platforms aren't exactly a new concept, the idea of a LIVE, uncensored, around-the-world, virtual online classroom is a very new concept, and that's precisely where creativeLIVE comes into play. Launched in 2010 by Craig Swanson and Chase Jarvis, the Seattle, Washington-based company has made an impact on the photography industry that flies in the face of any preconceived notions one might have of what online education is. Whether it's showcasing platform classes by top photographers on technique, or well-known photographers demonstrating how to grow your business, all creatives need education, plain and simple, regardless of industry or discipline.

To say creativeLIVE is growing in popularity and audience size is an understatement. How did this idea first come about? Speaking over the phone, Swanson shed light on the birth of creativeLIVE. "I'm an entrepreneur, and I've been working in IT, specifically around online education systems, for a number of years. I knew Chase [Jarvis] for about 10 years and at my business I had created this online school system that allowed us to basically broadcast to a live audience and a virtual audience at the same time," Swanson says. "I was developing all of these systems in terms of creating a live broadcast experience and I was talking about this with Chase, and he was saying it was a huge opportunity in the photography industry," he says. "Basically we had come together and rebranded the company I was building as creativeLIVE, and we launched creativeLIVE together. It was myself as an entrepreneur who built all of the systems, and Chase as a photographer and a celebrity who could bring an audience. Those things came together and were the start of what creativeLIVE is today."

In terms of personal background, Swanson was used to working with photographers and building their systems, so the transition was seamless. "In Seattle, I had supported a ton of photographers and ad agencies my whole career, so that was my background." What sets creativeLIVE apart from previous online education platforms? The live element, 100 percent. Swanson explains how creativeLIVE functions as its own "live" entity. "Online education has been around for a while, but if you look at them, how many are live? How many have that sense of tens of thousands of people coming together at the same moment from around the world and sharing this one extraordinary class together at the same time? Basically, there are an awful lot of video-on-demand schools out there, but there are almost none that specialize in creating a rich, live experience that makes you feel like you're really there regardless of where in the world you are."

## + 3 CONTINUED

All businesses large and small have hiccups in their quest for success, and when asked about any “potential challenges” he had to overcome, Swanson let out a laugh before offering the following. “We could list them but the BIGGEST one for us, I’ll give you a hint, if you’re a start-up company doing a dozen things at once and trying to execute them all, don’t schedule a live worldwide broadcast of a live wedding.” Describing the Jasmine Star workshop that was one of creativeLIVE’s earliest workshops in 2010, Swanson describes the grueling process that went into it. “We had auditions for a bride and groom that wanted to be married on-air, and so in addition to all of the logistics necessary to put on a live workshop where this was the fourth live workshop we had done were the logistics of a 150-person live wedding. We are so extraordinarily lucky that it all worked.” Just how long did it take to put this wedding together? “We planned the wedding in one month. If it had not worked, it would have killed our company, and we were lucky it made our company.” The risk-payoff for such a feat didn’t go unnoticed. “It basically put us on the map. We trended on Twitter, it was the biggest thing that we had been involved in at that point, and it was a huge event in the wedding photography industry at the time. Today we are doing things of that level of complexity nearly every month, but at the time, we were completely unprepared for what we were getting into.”

For Swanson, his enthusiasm for empowering photographers is enormous, and what better way to achieve this than with a live platform? “For me, creativeLIVE is all about empowering creative entrepreneurs. So every photographer is a creative entrepreneur. Every photographer from a business standpoint is trying to build a sustainable life for themselves, within their creative passion. That is the sweet spot creativeLIVE exists to support. We’re doing a lot of business courses, all geared toward creative

artists, and we are looking at branching into areas that are related to photography.” What else is coming down the pike for creativeLIVE? “We’re looking for things that are going to be interesting to our existing audience. We are bringing a whole series of business courses, and those business courses are applicable to any entrepreneur around the world. We’re also looking at a whole range of lifestyle, creative topics. Over the course of 2013 you’re going to see us rolling out one creative topic after another. Anything from parenting, to health, to fitness, lifestyle balance, there are all sorts of topics we’re looking at for 2013.”

What are creativeLIVE’s long-term goals? In Swanson’s view, it’s all about history in the making. “I believe there will come a time in the future, maybe 10 to 20 years out, when there’s going to be a whole new generation of creative entrepreneurs and leaders in the world. They’re going to be able to speak back to when they got their start through an opportunity at creativeLIVE,” he says. “If you think back to moments in history, there are certain pockets in time when a whole bunch of inventors came up together, or in Hollywood, you discover all these actors that came up through the same high school. There are pockets of time where groups of people coalesce into one thing, and they all achieve more than they expected to, and I think that’s one of the things that define what creativeLIVE is. It’s opening the door for a whole new generation of leaders who didn’t know they had it in them.” While online companies will come and go depending on the market and levels of interest, Swanson indicates that staying relevant is key. “Where will creativeLIVE be 10 years from now when these people look back on the impact this moment had on them?” Swanson asks. “That’s up to us to execute and stay relevant, because this world is changing fast, and we’ve got really big plans. We intend to bring this message to the entire world, to hundreds of thousands of millions of people. But I think where it really makes a difference is in the individual lives that are being touched, and there’s going to be this whole generation of people that got a start that they wouldn’t have gotten otherwise.”



It's opening the door  
for a whole new generation of leaders  
who didn't know they had it in them.

# 2



## SAL & TAYLOR CINCOTTA

While some photographers and creatives are born to pursue their own individual paths to success, sometimes it takes a couple to bring out the best elements in each other. In the case of Sal and Taylor Cincotta, one might say the sum is far greater than simply two creative talents put together. As an entrepreneur and an award-winning wedding and portrait photographer and speaker, Sal Cincotta's road to success was anything but traditional or ordinary. Following a 10-year stint at Microsoft where he did programming and consultative work, Cincotta jumped ship from the corporate life in 2007 and pursued his photography passions fulltime. In only three years, Cincotta managed to grow his own St. Louis-based wedding and portrait studio from a respectable \$50,000-a-year business to a million-dollar powerhouse. Cincotta's success has been a combination of award-winning wedding and portrait work, a tireless work ethic and photography business know-how that is simply undeterred. In addition to having two industry books under his belt, including his recently released *The Photographer's MBA*, Cincotta is the founder/editor of our very own *Shutter Magazine*, which he founded to empower photographers with an online resource of industry information that can be accessed 24/7. Cincotta also founded his own Signature Albums Collection, and when he's not investing in new companies, or educating photographers on how to grow their businesses, Cincotta has his watchful eye on the future of our industry.

How did he get his start in photography? "My aunt had a darkroom in her basement, so it was a hobby for her," Cincotta explains. "My girlfriend at the time was a formally trained photographer and would shoot weddings on the weekends. I was second-shooting for her and helping out, and that's where I caught the photography bug," Cincotta says. "I was always a hobbyist, but I didn't really turn pro until about 2008." How did his wife, Taylor, come into the picture? "I always had an appreciation for photography," Taylor says, "but I never had a background in it, so then I started working as a second shooter with Sal, and I think we knew where things were going from there." Under Sal's training and input, Taylor was able to bring her photography craft to amazing heights and the couple would share photo shoot duties or shoot individually depending on their busy schedules.

As a photographer, Cincotta faced numerous challenges over the course of his career, but perhaps his biggest challenge was photographing President Obama and the first lady upon their staff's request. "I was in a room with all these powerful individuals, including one of the most powerful people in the world," Sal explains. "I was trying to document this event while trying to stay away from everything going on, and yet trying to do my job. That was very challenging from a photographic perspective, but it was also one of the most rewarding moments of our career."



## + 2CONTINUED



# Can I make the leap & follow my dreams, follow my passions?

That is a scary proposition for a lot of people, but it can also be a very rewarding one if you're working at what you love.

As a couple that shoots a large number of weddings every year, the Cincotta's have had their emotional challenges as well. Taylor reflects on a recent wedding shoot. "I had to photograph a wedding for a bride whose father was dying of cancer. They had to have the wedding in the sunroom in their house because her father was on his last legs, and they had to move the wedding up months so he could be there for it. The dad took the groom's hand and put his and the bride's hands together to signal his approval. It was the hardest thing I ever had to deal with. I was wiping tears off my camera, but it was an amazing thing to be a part of."

As a frequent industry educator, Cincotta has views on where photography education is headed. "I see a fundamental shift in the way education is being delivered. I think people are looking for more intimacy at smaller events; they're looking for more personalized education really wrapped around what they need. I think companies like creativeLIVE have really figured it out...where it's on-demand, in-depth training, and no one is doing that to the level they are." Cincotta is also frank in his opinions of the photo industry as it relates to traditional print media. "I don't think people want to pick up a print magazine anymore. They want them on their phones, their iPads, their computers, where they want, and whenever they want. I think there's a fundamental shift much like the VHS tape to DVD happening before our very eyes in education."

When it comes to their success in the industry, Cincotta maintains a very humble stance as to why the wedding and portrait community frequently comes to him and Taylor for advice. "My personal opinion is that I think people are fascinated by what we've accomplished in such a short period of time. I know we're not the best photographers in the world per se, but I do think we're very good business people and I think the community sees us as successful with the businesses we've created. But most importantly, I think they have an appreciation that we give back so much in terms of education," Cincotta says. "That sharing of knowledge is not only going to help our own business, but help the community at large and I think that's why people rally around us."

Taylor indicates that transparency plays a large role in the Cincotta's success. "I think we're pretty much an open book in that there's nothing that we haven't shared about our business," Taylor says, "which I think can be difficult for other educators because I think they might be afraid they're going to run into competition or they're going to share too much or let secrets out," Taylor explains. The Cincotta's have also maintained a solid "enough-success-for-everyone" approach to education. "Our mentality is there's enough business for everyone; there's no reason we all can't be successful," Taylor explains, "So why not help each other out?" Sal is frank in his reasoning as to why he believes in being transparent. "I think people can smell BS a mile away, and the fact we're so transparent with everyone, I think that's what they love about us as a whole." Sal says.

What kind of advice can Cincotta offer a new photographer coming into the industry today? "I think if you're coming into the industry now, it's a scary time. You have economic issues you're dealing with. Maybe you're a hobbyist or a weekend warrior and you're thinking, "Can I make the leap and follow my dreams, follow my passions?" That is a scary proposition for a lot of people, but it can also be a very rewarding one if you're working at what you love," Cincotta says. "The two main pieces of advice I would give are to practice, practice, practice. Get out there and shoot and experiment; you need to get the experience under your belt. The other piece of advice is to get your business in order. This is where I see a lot of photographers make mistakes; it's unbelievable. They go out there; they're not thinking about insurance, they're not thinking about having their accounting set up right. Tracking, workflow, these are all things that will cost you money in the long haul if you don't do them right." Taylor agrees. "The exciting stuff to learn about is photography and technique; the business part isn't so fun," Taylor says, "especially for us as artists. I think people neglect the business side and just react to things as they happen. When they're scrambling to get a business license it's because something's gone wrong, when that's the first thing you should be doing. I know it can be fun to get wrapped up in all the photography, but really focusing on your business, your goals and putting together a marketing strategy, that's what's going to help you be successful and stand apart."



©Sue Bryce

1

Hailing from New Zealand and making the #1 slot in our readers' poll, Sue Bryce is an award-winning portrait photographer, artist, illustrator and a true creative force to be reckoned with. She possesses the rare gift of being able to capture contemporary fashion in all of its natural elements, and then radiate this vision outward with her own signature style. Bryce has received many awards and recognition for her work including the New Zealand Institute Professional Photography Master National Awards "Portrait Photographer of the Year" in 2007, 2011 and 2012, and the Australian Institute Professional Photography Master National Awards "Portrait Photographer of the Year" in 2011. This past year she walked away with six awards including first place in portrait at the WPPI Awards of Excellence in Las Vegas.

Soft-spoken in her demeanor, but with an unwavering confidence wielding her camera, Bryce has the air of a humble marksman on the range. If there was a style of portrait photography defined as "beauty-inspired, humanistic-contemporary," then Bryce would embody it. With this much skill and ability in her photo arsenal, who were some of her influences early on? "When I first started 20 years ago, I was looking at all the fashion photographers like Herb Ritts and '90s fashion photography, which is very much like modern glamour now. I always look to the older fashion photographers and the work that was done back then. Black and white magazines too, which were my favorite magazines back in the '90s."

When I ask Bryce to recall any shoots where she had to overcome challenges, what she offered was the reality of her profession. "I photograph women for a living, so every one of them is pretty grueling," she admits. "It never ceases to amaze me that women are so hard on themselves. Every one of them is a challenge. I've photographed thousands of women and every single shoot I manage to have a conversation about good body image; it's sad that we're so hard on ourselves. I would love to see that change, and it's something I'm faced with every week." Bryce also admits facing these challenges "helped me grow as a person." Upon hearing my comment that she must almost have to resort to becoming a therapist for some of her subjects, Bryce makes an interesting point. "We're all the same, so it's really interesting to be confronted by this challenge. Women want to feel beautiful, they want to feel it, not look it, but feel it in themselves. We just seem to be made that way, and a lot of the time we don't feel good about ourselves. I think people need to be gentle on themselves and focus on the good stuff, and then all the bad stuff just falls away." By making her subjects feel comfortable and beautiful Bryce is able to capture the kind of magic that wins awards and recognition. With her compassionate tone, it's easy to understand why so many people want to be photographed by her as well.



SUEBRYCE

## + 1 CONTINUED

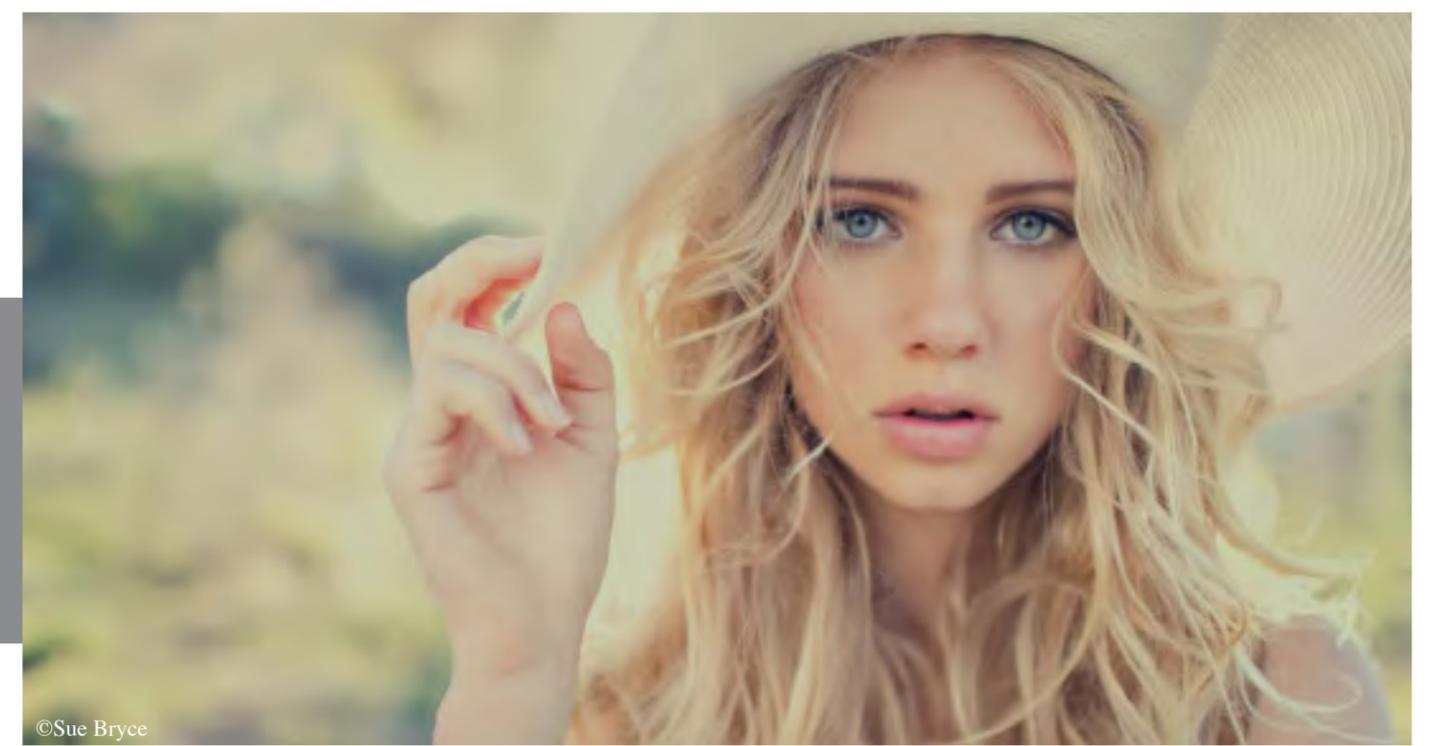
When Bryce gives a reflection of her own career it's proof that learning the ropes is integral to starting any business. "I got a job in photography before I became a business owner. So I got a job for 10 years working in a professional portrait studio. By the time I was ready to go into my own business, my portfolio was already at an outstanding level. So I didn't come in low and try to make everything work at once. I got my shooting down pat, and got paid every week to do it, and then I started to build my business." Bryce kept at it long enough to go out on her own. "In my tenth year, that's when I really started to build a business and make money doing what I was doing, but I really perfected my craft too."

When asked what kind of advice Bryce can share with up-and-coming photographers or those who want to pursue their portrait photography craft fulltime, Bryce says learning the business first is key. "The best advice I could give anyone is to go and work in a studio, in a business, and watch how a business is run. A lot of times people want to start photography and they think it's so romantic a notion to become a photographer, but they can't sell their own work; they can't make a living." When I comment to Bryce that perhaps many photographers simply don't

find the business side of photography interesting enough, she offered the following insight about how creative minds still need to focus. "As a creative, marketing and sales should be the most creative part of your business and often it's not. I realized that most creatives are so revved up just trying to be good enough that they don't put any value in their work. A lot of them will focus on trying to be good photographers instead of being an all-around good service provider, because that's what you are as a photographer."

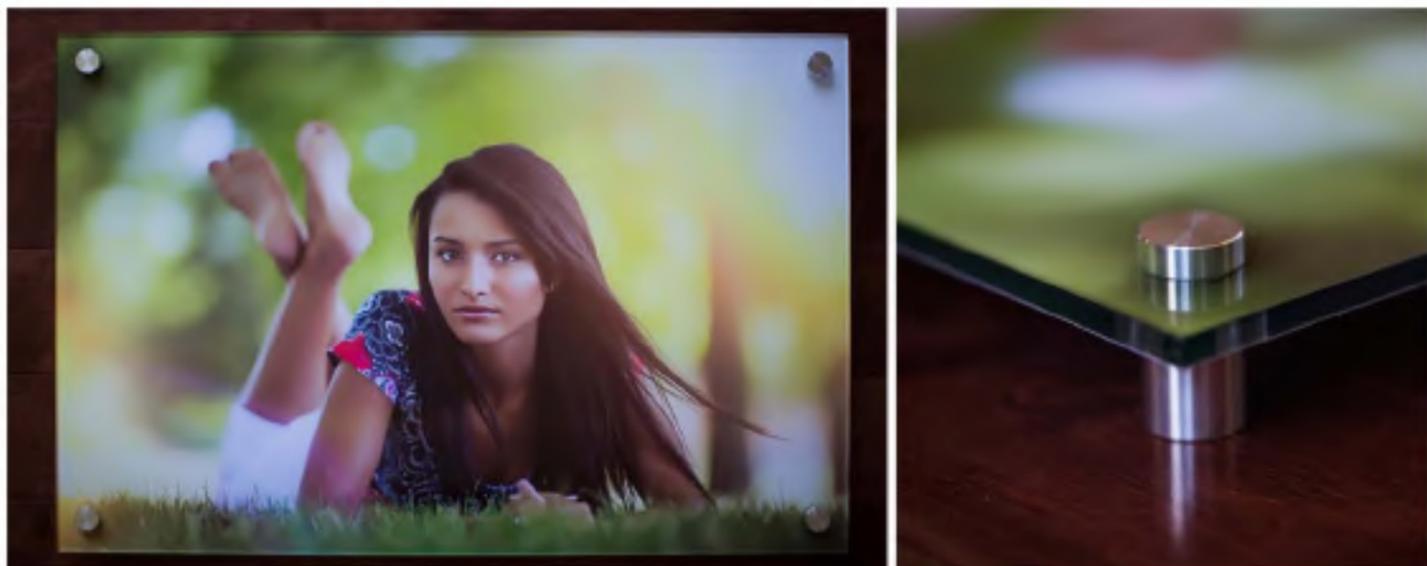
Bryce's message to up-and-coming photographers is honest. Her life career example is further proof that in order to become successful a photographer must not get blinded by romantic notions that creativity comes first. Or, as Bryce says, don't forget you're providing a service. "You're not a creative artist, you're a service provider. As soon as you turn your craft into a service, you get paid for it, and that's the truth."

*Shutter Magazine would like to thank all of our Top 10 finalists, as well as their staff who were instrumental in putting this feature together. We'd also like to thank our readers for casting their ballots, for without them this piece would not be possible! ■*



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You're not a creative artist,  
**you're a service provider.**  
 As soon as you turn your craft into a service,  
**you get paid for it, and that's the truth.**



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*Allure*  
by Salvatore

STARTING A NEW GLAMOUR LINE

with Sal Cincotta



by Sal Cincotta



Like many of you, I have been inspired by the resurgence of the glamour and beauty industry. As a wedding and senior photographer, it's nice to have a change of pace in the studio and work side-by-side with my wife. Not to mention, my brides are the perfect clients for glamour work. They want to give their husbands something unique and sexy!

As many of you know, we recently started a new glamour line called Allure by Salvatore. It has been a tough start for reasons I will highlight below. My goal this month is to share transparently with you the trials and tribulations of a new startup. Even as an established brand, starting Allure has been anything but easy. Will it be successful? I am not sure yet. I know one thing; we are doing everything in our power to make it a success.

# thePROS

## There is a market for it

Bottom line, there is a market for this across the U.S. People of all ages and sizes want to feel sexy. It's a very rewarding process. Much like weddings, you are involved in a celebration of sorts.

What woman doesn't want to look and feel beautiful? In fact, that was the fun for Taylor and me...seeing all these women go through a transformation from the moment they walked in and giving them an experience of a lifetime that was both challenging and rewarding for us.

So, I see two potential clients for this. One, my brides. They are in the best shape of their lives and want to celebrate this moment. In many cases, even offer it as a surprise for the wedding night.

Two, I see the moms of my high school seniors as potential clients. They have been part of the studio and are most often in their early to mid-40s. They watched as their daughters had the experience of a lifetime and are now looking to have their own experience.

What about bachelorette parties? That's a prime opportunity for sure! Think about the typical party that the girls go to... running around to different bars with some stupid tiara on their heads. Brilliant. Give them a girls' night out and now you are being exposed to an entirely new client base.



## Challenge yourself to do something different

Glamour is hard! If you want to do it right, there are a lot of elements to consider. Posing, makeup, wardrobe, creating an environment and experience...none of these can be taken lightly.

As Taylor and I started this adventure together, the team was constantly being challenged to think differently about every aspect of our business. The way I shoot had to be adjusted. Most of my shoots are on location and use natural light. For Allure, we use natural light where it made sense, but we use strobes for a majority of our work.

Not only was lighting a change of pace for us, the space was a challenge, too. It was for me anyway. I am used to having a ton of space to roam in with weddings and seniors on location. Now with glamour, we are working in hotels or our studio, which by any definition, is very confining. So, there was definitely a challenge to work and think differently.

## Alternate revenue stream

This is a no-brainer. Since most of my weddings and seniors are done during prime season—April through October—the business slows from November through March. Funny thing is this is a perfect model for those off-months. Christmas gifts and Valentine's Day are perfect.

I am always looking for ways to grow my business. It never ceases to amaze me the number of photographers out there who just want to complain about business, shoot-and-burners, rock stars and the local weather, and how it's hurting their business. Get a hold of yourself, people! The economy is tough everywhere. There is competition everywhere not just in our industry. Every industry! I have said this before. Imagine how videographers feel. Now that we have our DSLRs with video, we are all videographers.

I am not saying it's not tough out there. It is for all of us. However, the strong and the innovative will survive. So, here it is, a new opportunity. We have to keep reinventing ourselves to ensure we stay relevant and our business continues to grow. Regardless of whether it is glamour or sports or seniors, look for ways to add additional revenue streams. You will never go wrong!

## Conservative Culture

The Midwest is a very conservative culture. Showing any sort of suggestive posing or too much skin can immediately harm my main business—weddings and seniors. We have to be very careful not to offend anyone, but at the same time market the business to attract new clients. It's a massive chicken and egg scenario. When we first started back in 2007/2008 we offered something called a "Naughty Shoot" in our wedding packages. We were trying to brand our offering. Wow! We got some nasty looks from brides and parents alike. You would think we were selling drugs or something.

Five years later things are still a little conservative here in the Midwest, but our clients are much more receptive. However, I still have a fine line to walk. I have to balance it with my other clients and ensure I don't offend anyone in the pursuit of artistic expression.

## Marketing

This has been another challenge. Do we place this on our main website or do we create a new and separate website? We opted to create a separate site for this. We will be using [www.Photobiz.com](http://www.Photobiz.com) to create a custom site and shopping cart. We purchased a separate URL as well. This allows us to really develop a distinctive brand for the business. In addition, it ensures we don't offend our other client base.

Something else we just experimented with was to set up a double booth at a recent bridal show (see picture). The reception was very warm. People would stop and stare at the pictures and just point. We had a "before" and "after" to really drive the discussion. In addition, we handed out 9"x6" flyers with a 50 percent off coupon if they booked by Jan 31st.

Currently. ZERO bookings. Yep, you read that right. No bookings whatsoever. I am definitely disappointed, but I am not giving up just yet. I know this will work, but it's about finding the right formula and price point.

theCCONS



## Sticker Shock

My initial targets were a \$3,000 to \$4,000 session average. There is a lot of work and staff that go into every shoot and that seemed like the only price point that made sense. This included the session fee, three staff members, hair and makeup, and a four-hour shoot.

It's a very expensive proposition for us internally to produce this. However, that price point is scaring people off. What we are doing now is trying to adapt...remove some of the services and bring the price point down. Can we get to a \$2,000 average?

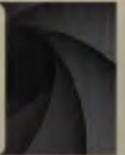
That's our next adventure. Keep trying new formulas until we find the recipe that works. Like I said, I know the demand is there, we just have to figure out how to tap into it and make it profitable.

I hope you enjoy this journey with us and the sharing of information. I could sit here and tell stories about \$20,000 sales averages, but the goal is to teach. I hope that everyone learns from our mistakes and that it helps you grow your business. I will continue to share the evolution of Allure with you and its successes and failures.

With that being said, I am not gonna lie. I want success for this line of business. I loved the shoots. I loved working closer with my wife on the shoots and I loved creating something for my clients that was a celebration of them! That was the ultimate gift in all this. ■

*More to come for sure.*

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# VPOINTS

## LOYALTY PROGRAM

As photographers, we tend to be a loyal bunch. Once we find a product we like, and most importantly, our clients like, we tend to stick with it.

Well, we want to reward that loyalty  
& say  
**THANK YOU!**

*Effective immediately, we have instituted a loyalty program that does just that!*

#### How do I get started?

Create an account, if you haven't already, and log into it. There you will see the ability to track your reward points.

#### How does it work?

For every dollar you spend, you will receive 1 reward point that can be redeemed towards your next order.

#### What about my previous orders?

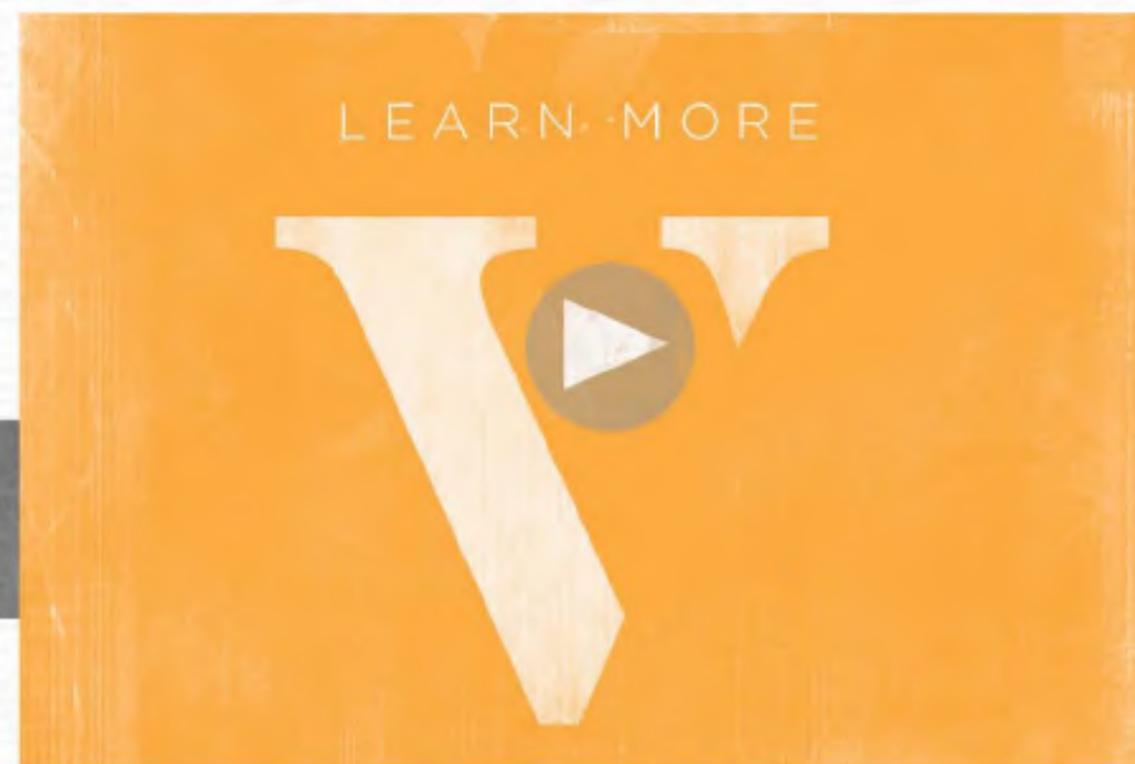
If you created an account we have your points already tracked and in the system.

#### When can I start using them?

Immediately. When you are checking out, you will be given the option to use a coupon code or redeem your loyalty points.

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# HOW TO attract BRIDES

during the engagement season

WITH VANESSA JOY



by Vanessa Joy



For wedding professionals, this is the most wonderful time of the year. Why? A ton of couples get engaged over the holidays, particularly on New Year's Eve. Maybe it's because these proposing guys get so inspired by the holiday spirit or perhaps they're just trying to combine events so they can remember the dates. Regardless of what it is, my research on Google found that almost 30 percent of proposals occur between Thanksgiving and New Year's, around one million proposals in that short amount of time.

After the initial excitement of getting engaged wears off, the wedding planning begins and brides and grooms everywhere start looking for wedding vendors. What can you do during this time to make sure couples find you in the huge sea of wedding professionals? How can you put yourself out there and be found by brides that will book your services?

### ***There are four steps***

***you can follow to make sure you're doing your best to attract this new influx of brides.***

## 1 — Maximize Your Marketing Efforts

Marketing is the way you communicate your goods and services to potential customers. It's important to note that marketing does not need to be synonymous with advertising. We'll cover advertising (which generally costs more money) in another step.

Be creative with your marketing plan this time of the year. Think of ways to reach your target market that will seem natural and unobtrusive. No one likes to be sold, but everyone likes to think they magically discovered your amazing photography as if it was the best-kept secret since who shot Kennedy. So find ways to let them discover you.

One of my favorite ways to market to future brides this time of year is to hold a Facebook Photo Contest. I celebrate my previous year's brides by entering them in a photo contest. I let them spread the word about it to all their friends and family while I watch the "Likes" on my Facebook Fan Page go up dramatically.

Be sure to follow Facebook's rules on holding contests. Facebook doesn't allow their "Like" button to be used as a voting or entry mechanism in any type of contest or promotion (more on that here). You need to use a third party application to host your contest for you.

**Here are some third-party photo contest applications I found online**

***OfferPop • WooBox • NorthSocial • Photo Contest App***

The key to this is letting your clients spread the word for you. Email or Facebook message your clients with a simple text to copy and paste so they can easily tweet, post and email it to friends and family. Having them do the work for you is not only easier, but it takes you out of the equation so it doesn't look like an advertising ploy. Offer intriguing prizes that will get your clients excited and make them really want to win the contest.

**Prize ideas**

***Free mini photo session • Metal print or canvas • Movie poster***

***Mini-wedding album • iPod with their wedding film installed***

***Dinner and a movie date night***

***(www.restaurant.com and www.fandango.com gift certificates shipped with a bottle of wine)***



## 2 — Brush up on your search engine optimization (SEO)

Google is undoubtedly one of the best tools for finding anything in the world, and brides searching for wedding vendors are sure to use it. SEO is the key to making sure your company shows up in her search. There are volumes of information out there on SEO and how to make it work for your business, so if you're not already making this a priority, now is the time to start.

**Here are a couple resources for learning and implementing SEO in your business:**

<http://www.tofurious.com/photographers-seo/seo-for-photographers/>

<http://www.photographers-seo.com/>

## — Spend advertising dollars wisely —

## 3

Ultimately, you should invest in advertising for your business. Most business books will tell you that you should put at least 10 percent of profits back into advertising. You want to make sure these marketing dollars work for you and spend them in the best possible way. This requires some research for what works in your area, demographic and target market, and some straight trial and error for what works for you personally. The best way to make this efficient is to keep track of where your leads and bookings come from. Using a client management system like [www.Tave.com](http://www.Tave.com), [www.PixiFi.com](http://www.PixiFi.com) or [www.ShootQ.com](http://www.ShootQ.com) that will make this very easy.

At the end of every year, take a look at last year's leads and bookings. Decide what advertising methods are bringing in leads but not bookings, leads and bookings, or no leads or bookings? For your advertising dollars to be worth where they're being spent, they should bring in at least a return on investment (ROI) of three times the invested amount. Whatever isn't doing this for you, get rid of it and try something else with those dollars.

What if you're just starting out and don't have the budget for high-priced and traditional advertising means like print ads, bridal shows, pay-to-play reception hall vendor lists, wedding website listings (The Knot, Wedding Wire), etc.? Here are some low-budget but extremely effective ways to advertise.

**Vendor Brochures** . As a photographer you have what every other wedding vendor wants and needs—amazing photographs of their work. Put together a small (4"x5"), doubled-sided print press card that has a nice collage of your photos along with both of your logos and contact information. Give 25 to 100 of them to any wedding vendor you want to work with more frequently and who attracts the kind of bride you're looking for. What reception hall wouldn't give out free brochures with their work on it to every prospective bride that walks in the door?

**Blog Advertising** . Advertising with smaller but prominent wedding blogs can be effective and a much less expensive option than larger wedding websites like The Knot. For some blogs like Style Me Pretty you have to be accepted before being permitted to advertise with them, but it's definitely worth a try. Blogs like Green Wedding Shoes, The Knotty Bride and Wedding Chicks are a great place to start.

**Photography Referrals** . If you have relationships with fellow photographers, hopefully you've created a nice networking circle where you refer jobs to each other when one of you isn't available. If not, consider developing those relationships or offering a photographer in your area a finder's fee if they refer a job to you and you book it. No photographer can work every wedding, and I can't imagine too many of them would mind making a few bucks off the weddings that they can't work.



## Make your website work for you — 4

All of your marketing, SEO and advertising efforts will be useless if you finally get these new brides to navigate to your website and it's messy, clumsy and does not make your best first impression. Check out this interview with graphic and website designer, Jessica Lee, of [www.JessicaLeeMedia.com](http://www.JessicaLeeMedia.com) for tips and tricks to make your website the best it can be. ■

[learn more!](#)

Check out this video



### STEPHEN WILKES:

## THE POWER OF THE STILL IMAGE

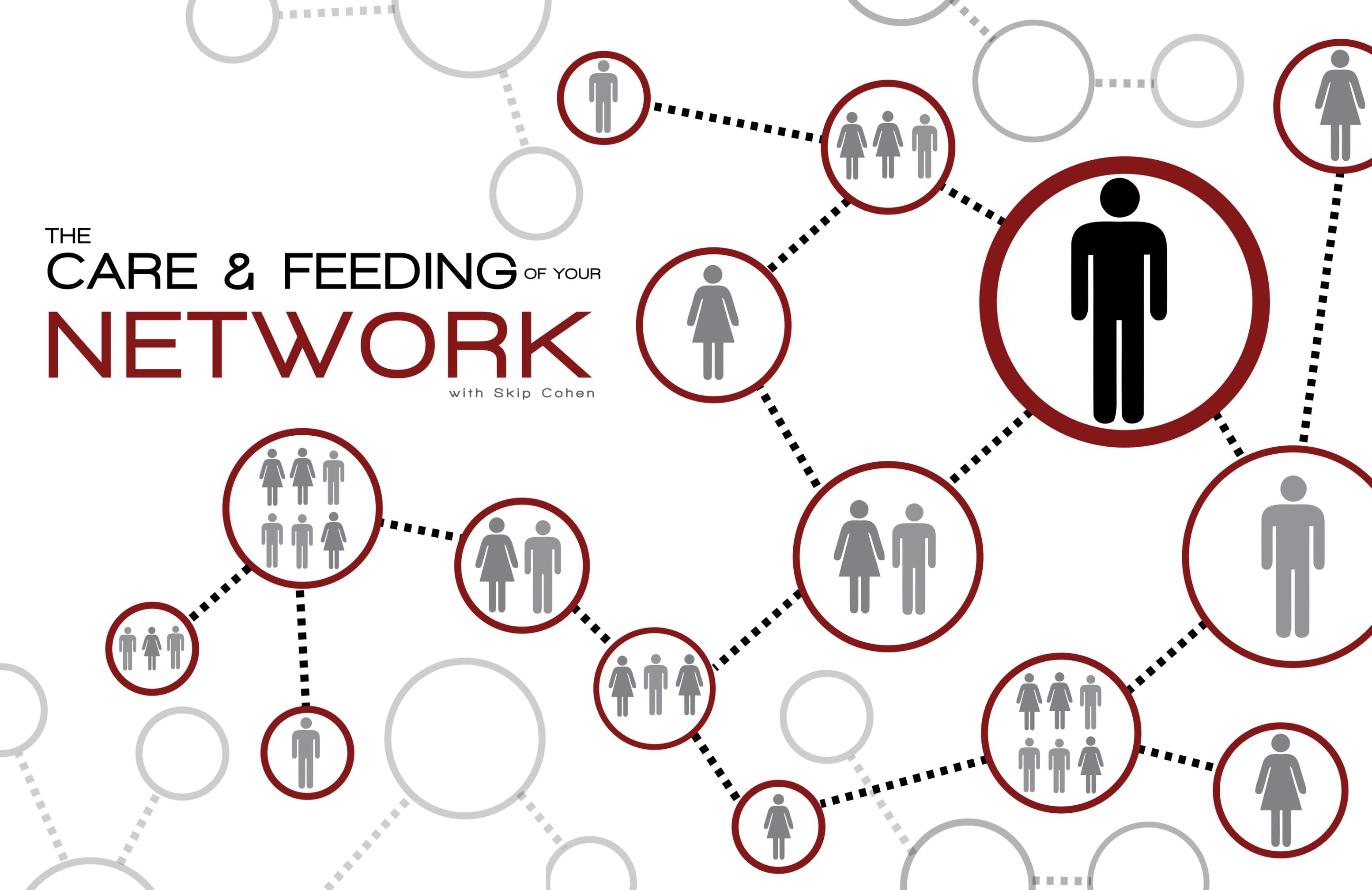
“Everything is based on the color flow from the way we manage our computer, to the output device. That’s why it is so utterly important that we balance everything and that the workflow starts right from capture all the way to the final output.”

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THE  
**CARE & FEEDING** OF YOUR  
**NETWORK**  
with Skip Cohen





“The successful networkers I know,  
the ones receiving tons of referrals  
& feeling truly happy about themselves,  
continually put the  
**other person’s needs**  
ahead of their own.”

—Bob Burg



by Skip Cohen

WPPI is coming up next month and most of you have probably attended at least one convention since the beginning of the year. Building your network is one of the fundamental reasons to attend every possible industry event you can. Sadly, very few people consider the importance of the care and feeding of the network they’re working so hard to build.

#### *The Basic Building Blocks*

At every event you attend make sure you’re prepared. Bring business cards. Yes, I said this would be basic, but as recently as last year’s IUSA convention I bumped into a past student from Hallmark Institute who I met years ago. I wanted to follow up on what he’s doing now and asked for a card. “Sorry, I forgot to bring them with me!”

You should always have your business cards and preferably a postcard or brochure showing your work. I’m a big fan of oversized postcards with a few images on them and all of the photographer’s contact information on the back.

When you attend a program, make it a point to introduce yourself to the people sitting around you. You’ll be amazed at how much you have in common, especially with the challenges of running a business in today’s economy.

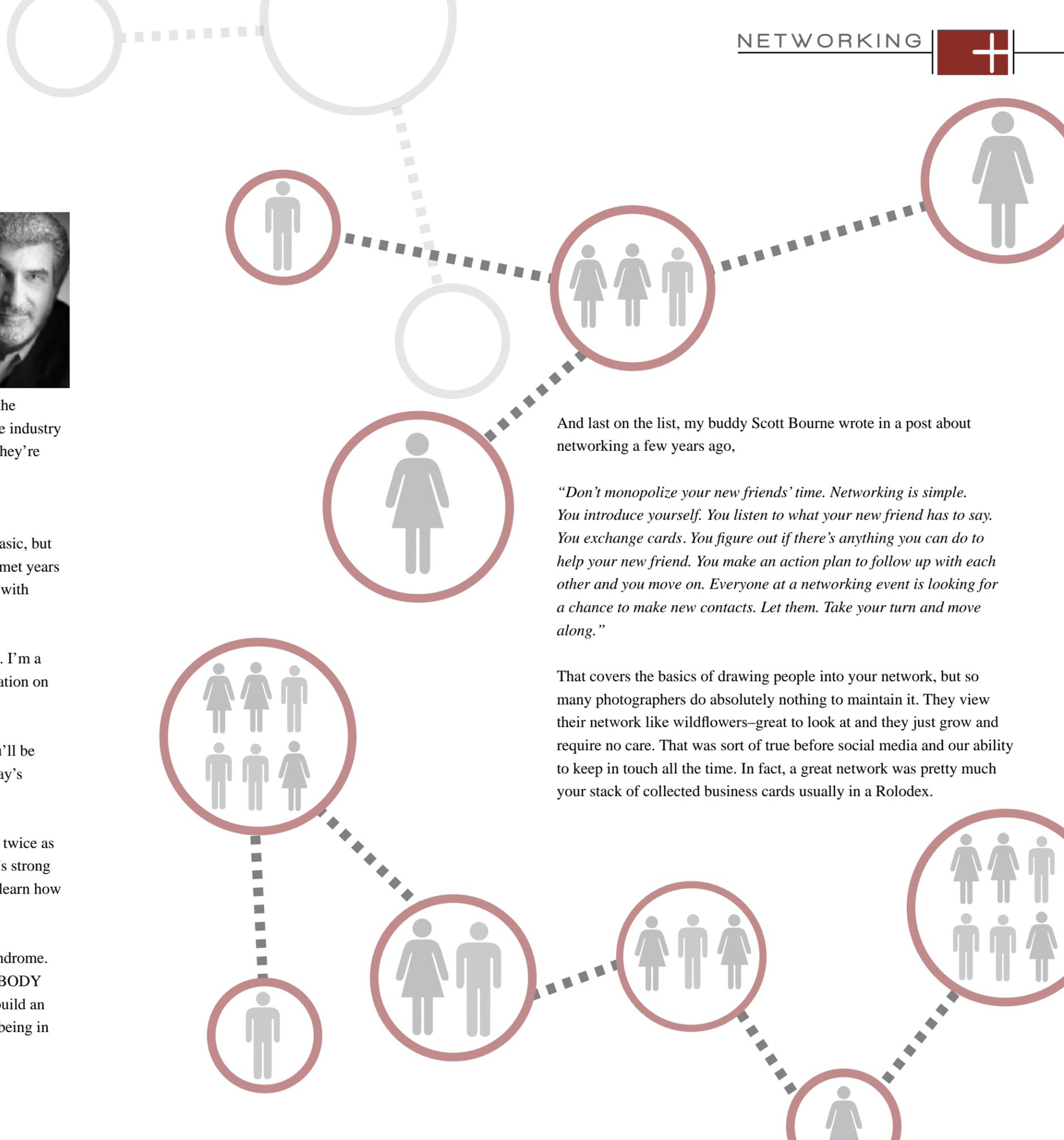
Listen more than you talk. There’s a great line about how you’ve got two ears and one mouth, so listen twice as much as you talk. The effectiveness of a great network is based on a clear understanding of everybody’s strong suit. If you spend too much time talking about yourself, you’ll not only shut people off, but you won’t learn how they might be an effective member of your network.

Don’t be shy. I see it all the time with new photographers. It’s the Wayne’s World “I’m not worthy” syndrome. The truth is, no matter how little time you’ve been working to be a professional photographer EVERYBODY is worthy—everybody has something in their experiences that’s valuable to somebody else. You won’t build an effective network by always sitting in that last chair by the door in the back of the room. This is about being in the parade, not standing and watching it go by!

And last on the list, my buddy Scott Bourne wrote in a post about networking a few years ago,

*“Don’t monopolize your new friends’ time. Networking is simple. You introduce yourself. You listen to what your new friend has to say. You exchange cards. You figure out if there’s anything you can do to help your new friend. You make an action plan to follow up with each other and you move on. Everyone at a networking event is looking for a chance to make new contacts. Let them. Take your turn and move along.”*

That covers the basics of drawing people into your network, but so many photographers do absolutely nothing to maintain it. They view their network like wildflowers—great to look at and they just grow and require no care. That was sort of true before social media and our ability to keep in touch all the time. In fact, a great network was pretty much your stack of collected business cards usually in a Rolodex.





***A good network doesn't happen by accident—  
it takes work to keep it maintained, active and useful.***

The challenge most people have is simply staying in touch. Your network requires the same care and feeding as a garden and here are some great ways I've picked up over the years to keep it alive and well.

***Think of your network as having two different levels.***

The first level are those dozen or so people closest to you. This is the core of your network, the people you know you can always rely on for help and in turn, who rely on you. This is the small crew of people you trust the most and know the best.

The second level is everybody else. There are three to four subgroups of other photographers, manufacturers, service providers and associates in your community who make up the rest of your network.

***Keep in touch!***

Depending on the type of help you need, it can be really embarrassing to call somebody for major support if the last time you talked to them was a few years ago. That means communicate once in awhile. An email, a note or better yet, pick up a phone and call. If they're local, grab lunch once in a while. If key members of your network are out of town, make plans for breakfast or lunch at the next convention. This is all about staying in touch and keeping up with what's going on in each other's businesses.

***Stay active in social media!***

Brian Palmer, a local photographer from Akron, and I met on Facebook. I was moving back to Ohio and he lived in the area. We emailed a couple of times and then met for lunch once I was living here. Since then we've helped each other in all kinds of projects and he's become a very good friend, but it all started on Facebook. Now he's headed to Japan, but Twitter and Facebook will keep us in contact.

***Pre-convention setups***

During the first quarter of the year just about everyone you know in the photography industry is going to be at one of the major conventions. Set up some meet-ups in advance. You've got three meals a day and at least two coffee breaks. Remember the Golden Rule of Networking: NEVER have breakfast, lunch or dinner alone! And make contact before you get there! There's nothing more pathetic than returning home and finding out somebody you really would have liked to meet was at the same show, but you never knew it.

***“More business decisions occur over lunch and dinner than at any other time, yet no MBA courses are given on the subject.”***

—Peter Drucker

***Always have some of your most recent work with you.***

I know everybody is into their iPad, but here's what's missing. This is especially true about talking with manufacturers and exhibitors. You can't leave your iPad with anybody. This is why I love oversized promotional cards. A great convention is going to be hectic. Key staff at the various vendors you work with will forget you came by within minutes if the booth is really jammed. Having something you can physically leave with an important prospective vendor gives you strength when it comes to recall when the show is over.

This isn't rocket science, just great images you want to share. You might have a mailer you did from a past project. Maybe you've got some images demonstrating your new piece of gear or technique. Maybe it's just an update of family images. Again, it depends on who you're talking to and what you want to share.

***Send a thank-you note!***

This one is worth its weight in gold and everybody forgets about it. If you want somebody to be impressed, like vendors you're hoping to work with some day, send them a hand-written note after the convention. Use your own stationery like the cards you designed with your own images and simply thank them for their support and for taking time to meet with you. This will be the first piece of the foundation for a new relationship and hopefully friendship, too.

***Include members of your network on your “cc” lists.***

When you're sending out an eBlast or just an email to several people about something important to you, remember to include the people in your network. Keep them up-to-date on projects you're working on.

A great network is about reaching out and being generous with your time and support.

***You've got to give more than you take!*** ■



# (101)

# ACCOUNTING

KEEP IT ORGANIZED!

with Kristy Dickerson





by Kristy Dickerson



I am going to start off by saying that for any specific questions about accounting as it pertains to your business and state, you need to speak with a local CPA. I have a degree in Business Finance, but hiring a CPA is crucial for anyone who owns a business. You can choose to do your own bookkeeping, however, laws constantly change and hiring a CPA for reference and annual filing, in my opinion, is a necessity. I am going to give you general pointers and show you how to organize the booking side of your business. This is one area that everyone struggles with and it will continue to be a struggle and headache until you take the time to make things happen.

Day-to-day bookkeeping is something that you can outsource or choose to do on your own. Depending on the volume of your revenue the capital might not be there to outsource. A lot of photographers are scared of this aspect of their business, but this part of your business is what you should know the best – how to look at ROI, how to see your net profit on a job, etc. Without knowing these vital aspects of your business you are driving blindly through the year. When you choose to open a photography studio you are a business owner first and a photographer second.

***It is now down season.  
Spend this time to get organized.***

Organize your computer files, backup files, move and store, prepare 2012 taxes and, most importantly, prepare for 2013. Get organized now and it will be easier when the rush comes. If this is your first year in business, even better! You have an opportunity to start from the beginning on the right foot and you won't have to worry about fixing mistakes from the past. Stop saying I will do this later. Spend the time now to make it happen. I promise you will thank me later!

I am going to talk specifically about organizing the bookkeeping... getting bills paid, depositing funds, managing sales tax, etc. Remember, I am talking no specifics because this can vary widely across states. The goal here is for you to put an established workflow in place for accounting.



**ONE /** First, understand your software. I choose QuickBooks because I think it is easy, and most accountants can easily take that information. Whatever software you choose, make sure you understand it and know how to use it. Take a class, watch a YouTube video, meet with your CPA or meet up with a buddy. Knowing how to use the accounting software and setting it up right in the first place is crucial. If you lost yourself somewhere in years past, you can let an accountant catch you up and start fresh with 2013. Get help. We all need help at some point so don't be afraid to ask for it!

**TWO /** Pay bills bi-weekly. I personally choose every other Monday and I have that on my calendar. That is when I handle all entering, paying and filing. I think if you do some here and do some there it can get lost and it is not as efficient. Bi-weekly is plenty of time to know what is coming up in order to handle payouts on time, deposit funds and pay sales tax. Depending on your volume, this can also be done monthly. I think a lot of people are afraid of this aspect of their business and don't set certain days aside for accounting, but doing a little on certain days makes them feel like they get it better. On the first Monday of the month I also do a few extra tasks such as record and pay sales tax as well as record mileage for the previous month. It helps to have a checklist and plan of action. If you don't have one, use this and build upon it for your own business.

It helps to have a checklist  
& plan of action.

If you don't have one,  
use this and build upon it for your own business.



**THREE** / Have a system of organization, from receiving to entering to filing. Remember this is your business; if you get audited you have to be able to show everything. So here is my method. All of this takes place at my home office and I actually do the same thing for my personal bills. *Have these three folders on your desk:*

+ (TO PAY)

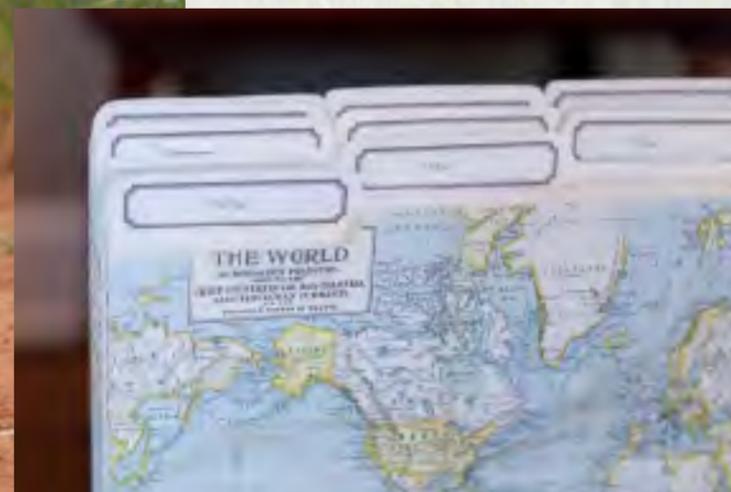
Includes items that have to be paid the next accounting day. Examples include second shooters for upcoming events, phone bill, credit card bill and invoices.

+ (TO DO)

Includes items that need my attention. This is not necessarily done just on those Mondays. My goal is to keep this folder empty. Examples include file annual business registration, create an album, and any items that need to be done ASAP.

+ (TO FILE)

Once I pay the bills and deposit funds I make copies of any supporting documents, staple and place them in this folder. I find it faster to pay everything and then file everything. My goal is to keep this folder clean, which brings me to my next point.





© Kristy Dickerson

**FOUR** / Filing and storage are very important. You may not think they are important until the IRS sends you a letter that they will be auditing you. So once you have taken care of the transaction and put it in the “To File” folder, have a system of organization for storage. Here are the folders I have in my file cabinet for my photography business:

- + **Bank Statements**
- + **Deposit Slips** (I chose voucher printing deposit slips and checks for record keeping. If you don't have that make copies of your checks)
- + **Checks**
- + **Credit Card Processing Statements**
- + **Operating Income / Expenses.** I have 12 January through December manila folders ready to go. My company operates on a cash-basis system so when I write the check, that is the month in which the bill is filed or a deposit is made. I always finalize that month with sales tax filed and paid.

You might read this article and think of an even better system. Most importantly, establish a method and stick to it! Workflows and systems save so much time and headaches. On this month's video, I will show you how to enter/record deposits plus a couple tips and tricks to use with QuickBooks! ■



# PHOTOGRAPHERS

## TAKE A CLASS or ATTEND AN EVENT

- Research and Register for Workshops in your Area
- Search by Interest or Instructor

**Instructors**  
 Do What You Do Best  
 Manage Events and Workshops in  
 Less Time and Get More Attendees!



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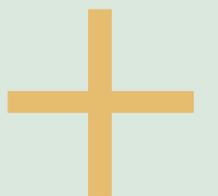




# BABY'S FIRST YEAR

PLANNING

PRICING



PRODUCTS



by Lori Nordstrom

Baby's first year is a special time to photograph. When you get involved in the entire first year it really ties you to the family! I love photographing each of the different stages and always make sure to talk about those stages with the parents. Even though all babies go through similar changes during their first year, every parent recognizes that their child is special and unique, and of course the smartest baby of all! Let them talk about all of the new stages they are experiencing as parents. They will feel this way whether it's their first baby or their fifth!

When preparing for a "Baby Plan" or "Baby's First Year" most photographers get pretty hung up on how to price and what products to offer. Let's face it—if the first year plan isn't priced for profit, it can be really draining! Why should we do four sessions, and four times the work for the first year when we could profit more from an individual family session? I realized this very quickly when I started photographing newborns and came to the conclusion that if I was going to create a baby plan and make it a product line that I market, I needed it to work within my business model.

There are several ways to price any of your product lines

- + À la carte
- + Packages or built-in products
- + Build-a-collection or Build-your-own model
- + Buy-in levels

There are benefits to each of these, but it comes down to how you are most comfortable presenting pricing to your client. I have tried them all and use different pricing methods for different product lines in my business. For the Baby Plan, I've settled on a version of the à la carte menu. Instead of offering pre-built packages, I want to suggest products at each stage that we photograph. We are usually designing a baby nursery with the portraits from the first year, but I ask moms for snapshots of any rooms where they plan to hang their portraits.





To recap the last four issues of *Shutter Magazine*, these are the products I suggest from each stage:

**new** Full-length baby sleeping, usually on the tummy. The right size is typically a 20"x30", but I'll suggest size based on the decor, style and space where they will hang the portrait.



**4mo** A 9-up Expressions Collection (baby head shots); we offer this in a 20"x20" or 30"x30".



**8mo** A three to five-image storyboard, 10"x30", with the baby sitting, crawling, on all fours, sitting turned to see the buns, on tummy, or whatever the baby is doing at this stage.

**1yr** At one year we suggest the first portrait for the living room if we haven't done one yet. We will often do a first family session at one year as well, and if we do I'll suggest a wall grouping for a living space in the home. We end the session with birthday cake and create a "Birthday Baby Designer Collection," which is a 20"x24" multiple-image piece. (You might call it a collage; I've chosen to remove that word from my vocabulary!)





While I'm suggesting the same main piece for each stage with every baby, they still remain unique because we design their frames based on their nursery decor style and colors. Almost all of our nursery frames come from Wild Sorbet Frame Company. I ask my First-Year clients on the first phone call if they have started decorating their nursery yet. If they answer yes, I'll say, "Great! I would love to see some snapshots of what you've done! We have some amazing hand-painted frames that everyone loves for their nursery, so bring in a piece of bedding or something from the nursery that I can use to custom-design your frames for your baby's room." If they answer no, I'll say, "Great! We have some really great hand-painted frames that everyone loves! We can look through colors together and I'll help you put some ideas together." Either way I want to hand-hold them through the process and make suggestions for designing their nursery and other areas of the home. I do ask our clients to send a quick snapshot of any room in the house where they are considering hanging their portraits. With PreeVu Software, I can bring those walls and room views in and design right on their own walls so they get to see what it will look like! (I design on their walls and leave the frames blank. We will fill them with images when they come for their order appointment).

If you have another main product other than wall decor, doing a Build-a-Collection option might be best for you. The great part of working with clients to build their own is that you aren't boxing them into a package. With packages you are usually leaving money on the table...you are telling clients that everyone who comes in chooses A, B, C or D, which leaves them feeling pretty uninspired. With a Build-a-Collection option, you can tell them, "You're going to get the same value as a package, but get exactly what you want!" Most moms love hearing these words! When you plan a build-your-own menu, you'll want to lead them through the process starting with step one, which should be the main product you want to sell. For me that would be wall decor. For someone else it might be to choose an album, or image box or any other product that you're excited to get into your clients' hands and homes. The following steps lead the client right through the process. If they purchase from each one of the steps you've outlined, they get a nice discount! In my Build-a-Collection menu, we give 20 percent off the order for choosing from each step. This is about the same sort of discount you'd build into a pre-determined package, so they are getting the same value.





Another method of pricing is to have “buy-in levels.” For example, offer a \$500 plan that includes four sessions and \$100 credit toward wall portraits from each session. Your \$800 plan could include four sessions plus a complimentary maternity session and \$200 toward wall portraits at each session. Your top package could include the album or an image box and be a nice discount plus incentive for pre-purchasing. When pricing with packages or a method like this, I like to see added incentive for purchasing more. If your client has \$100 to spend on wall portraits at each session, you want to make sure she is also buying table-top prints, gift items and anything else you have available. Offer a deeper discount at each level to encourage adding other pieces or gift prints.



A little over three years ago, we got a studio baby! One of my employees had a little boy, so we decided to photograph him every single month. As we were doing this, clients started asking about it, so I created a new product in our First-Year Plan called “A Year in 12 Months.” Our clients can choose this option by commissioning their first year album up front. They invest \$4,800 in the beginning and then they can bring baby every month into the studio. We only do order appointments at Newborn, 4 Months, 8 Months and 1 Year, just like our regular First-Year babies. We let our clients know that the images from the other sessions may be purchased, but the session is geared toward getting images for their album each month. This is a great example of showing what you want to sell! We now have a canvas hung of one baby each month of his first year, and everyone asks about it. It’s a great selling tool for this product line, because it’s unique and a conversation starter.





“The goal for most photography businesses is to create a

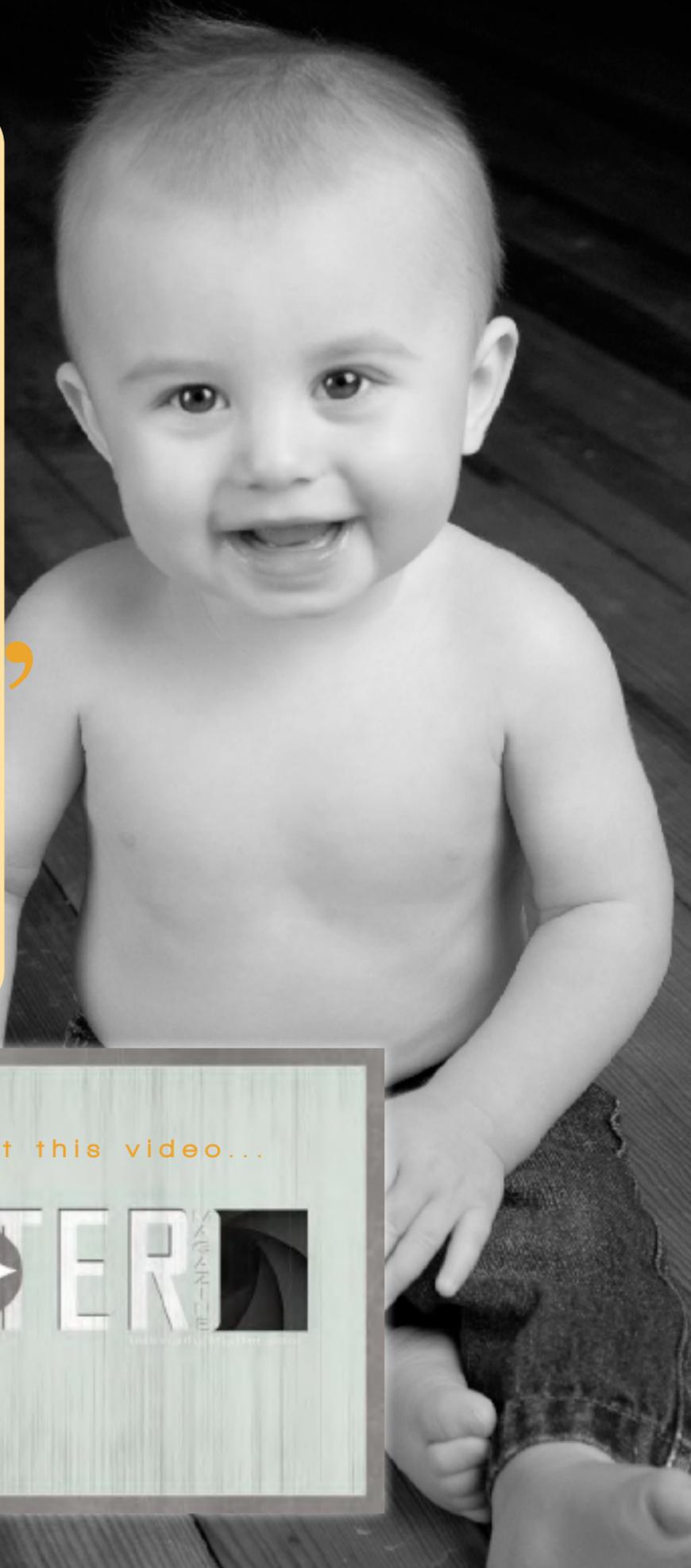
“client for life.”

Building a relationship through

baby’s first year lays the foundation

for that.”

Even though our Baby’s First Year program is profitable for the studio, the best part is these clients are now our friends and feel like family. We’ve been a part of one of their most important years, which leads to a client for life! ■



learn more! Check out this video...



# photo talk forum

## LET’S GROW OUR BUSINESS TOGETHER

As a subscribed member, you will have access to some of the most respected photographers in the country during our monthly spotlight series. Learn tips and tricks from industry pros, get monthly downloads and bonus how-to learning webinars throughout the year. We have tons to talk about, see you inside!

## SHOOT, SHARE AND LEARN WITH US LESSON 1: DEFINE YOUR NICHE

Don’t be all things to all people. It doesn’t mean that you can’t do everything, but what do you want to be known for? If you say “I do a little of everything,” people have nothing to be excited about! Define your niche and describe your uniqueness.

### FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

- What do you love to photograph?
- What makes you happy?
- What are you good at?
- What do you want to be known for?
- What is your unique niche?

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take your image

# OVER THE TOP

with Critique & Manipulation

with Laurin Thienes





by Laurin Thienes



There is a euphoric feeling when you know it. You've found the perfect light, the most gorgeous couple, and all the evidence points toward the fact that you have just shot your next portfolio image. It is easy to think about just ending the photo shoot then and there so you can rush back to get all the images loaded onto the computer. You are impatient and ready to see the results now. I know, I have been guilty of exactly that and have forced myself on more than one occasion to exercise restraint. They do say however, that patience is a virtue, and for good reason. Emotional attachment to one's own images gets in the way of objective thinking, and you will undoubtedly at times be connected to an image that quite possibly was just average at best. Slow down to make sure you really do have that groundbreaking image, and with that groundbreaking image, see what you can do with some creative Photoshop to really take it over the top.

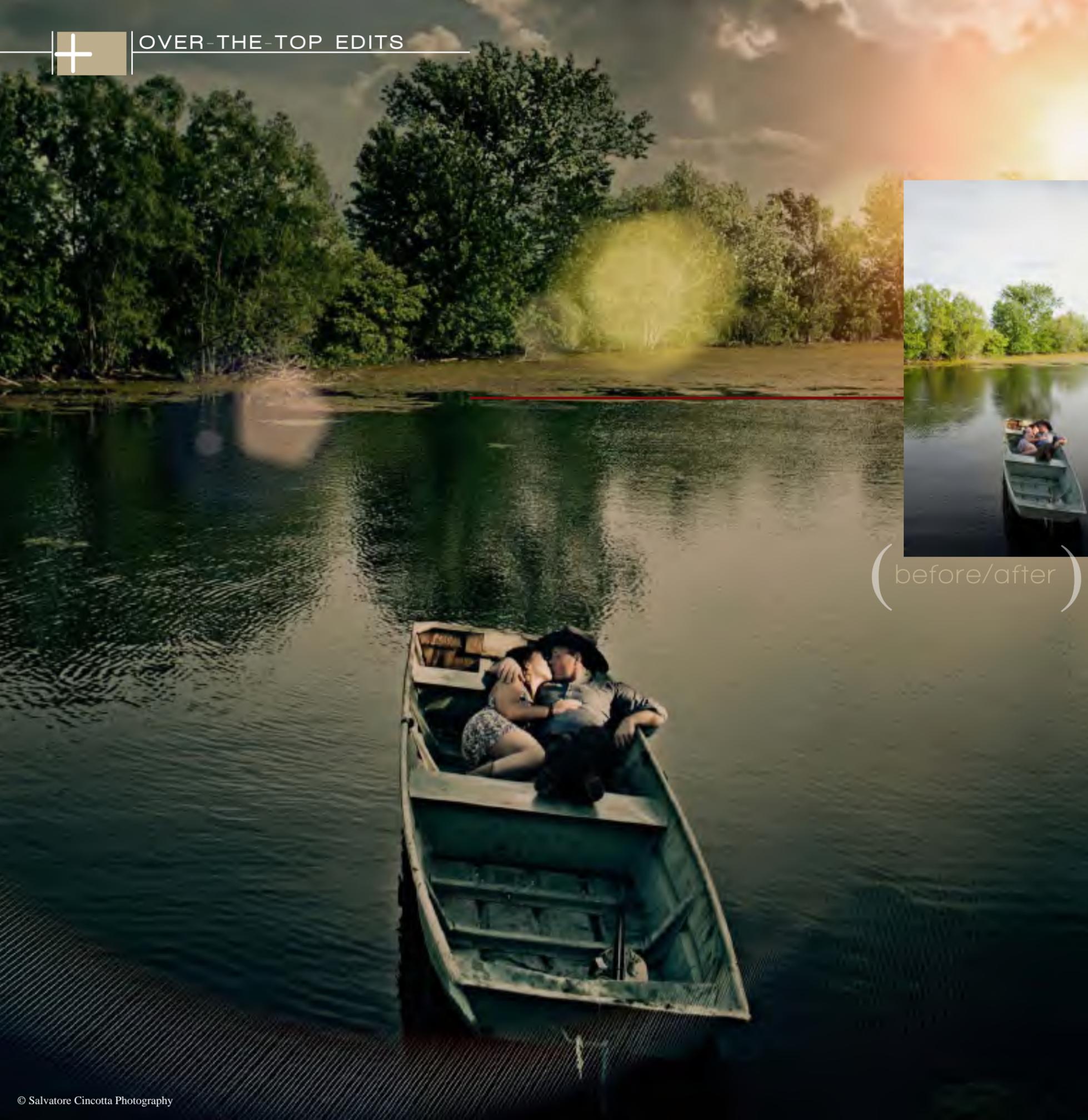
In my early days as a photographer, I bride told me in a pre-wedding consultation that they wanted images they could order as large wall portraits that would cause people to look twice at them, thinking that it was a gorgeous piece of art, then realizing the couple was in fact them in the image. On their wedding day, I set out to find an environment that would lend itself to the creation of such images. The challenge has stuck with me to this day, really shaping my vision, and likely my obsession with making environmental portraits with a 14mm. Some of the best images include a bride and groom that take up just a small percentage of the frame...and it is these images that have some of the most depth for editing in Photoshop.

I should note that I could easily write a dissertation about the use of Photoshop vs. a true out-of-camera image, but that is an argument for others to have. My school of thought is the use of Photoshop can allow for enhancement of a great image taking the image to the level of an art piece. At the end of the day, the best truth is told by whether or not your client is going to buy your work. With that said, make sure you can embrace Photoshop with open arms.



(before/after)





(before/after)

It is much easier to take a **great image** & make it **totally over the top** than it is to take an average image to the same level – and rightfully so.

Your memory card has been loaded, the images downloaded, and your top image is staring at you on your screen. You must ask yourself whether the images you are so in love with will stand on their own, sans Photoshop. Great images have many characteristics without needing to create them in Photoshop. The impact an image has is much like a first impression when you meet someone new for the first time—you usually know the people you are going to really click with after just a few words. Great images follow the same path. The compelling nature of that image should stop you in your tracks. But how do you take it to the next level with Photoshop? Plan a clear and concise direction for your image. It is much easier to take a great image and make it totally over the top than it is to take an average image to the same level—and rightfully so. Photoshop should be used to enhance, not re-create.

So how can Photoshop be used to enhance a good image that might not be perfect? Can a quick crop change the story of the image? Usually the answer is a resounding yes. A great exercise is to create 10 unique images out of your main image by cropping. You will likely be amazed at what you force yourself to see. Where does your eye go when viewing the image? Your eye should immediately be drawn to the subject and then any additional areas of interest. When working fast on a wedding day it is easy to not see distractions in your images when making the pictures because your attention is on the bride and groom. Ask yourself what natural leading lines draw you to the center of interest, or how dodging and burning the image can help draw you immediately into the subject.

How is your subject framed? Background elements coming out of heads or subjects being outside the rule of thirds can really restrict the initial aesthetics of telling a story. In many cases, retouching the background around the subject can help get you directly to the couple.

What distractions can be removed? Little distractions can take a great image and ruin it very fast. A hot spot in the wrong spot can draw the viewer's attention away from the subject. This is where we lean heavily on Photoshop to get us out of this bind. Elements of an image that do not help tell the story should be removed. Do not hem and haw over this—just edit them out. Take the approach that if it is not adding to the story, it is taking away from it.



(before/after)



In some cases, manipulation of the image requires the couple to be moved a bit, perhaps to a different third. How this is accomplished can make or break an image, and attention to detail is imperative. Are the shadows right? Is it believable? Any time you change anything that has the laws of physics applied to it in the image, make sure you are crossing your "t"s and dotting your "i"s. There may be manipulations you make to an image that aren't meant to be believable but always follow the laws of physics—this is not the area to be creative. You can also spend many hours applying the coolest actions, only to go back in the history, and apply another action, wasting tons of time. Stop and think about the direction and put the plan of action into place. When developing the plan, think about the mood you want to portray. Using toning and texture, and developing a look for the image must tie into the emotion that is projected and enhance the story of the subject.

The story is told in an organic manner—the emotion between the couple or subject within the image—and through the overall post-production of the image. It is important to note that manipulating emotion is a tall task, and definitely best done in camera because you will get the most raw emotion here. Plain and simple, without true emotion you do not have a standout image. Using Photoshop can change the mood of the image with a different sunset, sunrise or with some clouds to add depth to the sky. The tonalities can be enhanced or muted to deliver mood. The romanticism of the image can expand if you tone the color of the entire image down and turn on lights within Photoshop to make the ambiance more realistic. Will your artistic vision for the image in Photoshop enhance the emotion in the image to change it into a work of art?

Looking at the discretionary nature of defining art much is in the eye of the beholder, and in many ways, the buyer. Sometimes, the most technically correct images are unsellable. Brides and grooms like to buy images that depict their emotion, but have the capacity to hang on their wall as artwork. By using careful critique and then Photoshop to enhance the best images, you increase your chances of getting better sales, as well as gaining standout images for your portfolio. ■



Learn more!  
Check out this video.



THE **ART**  
OF **video**  
STORYTELLING

with Rob Adams



by Rob Adams



Applying your knowledge of photography to shooting and editing video can be a beautiful thing. A decidedly biased opinion coming from me, I admit, but there truly is great satisfaction in creating a successful juxtaposition between composition, light and subject, and then bringing that visual motion message to life within the fourth dimension of time. This dimension is the canvas for which visual storytelling manifests itself for our brains to interpret into a storyline. To accomplish motion storytelling you have to train yourself to think outside the static, bounded edges of a frame and start thinking in terms of frames running together. While adding movement to visual images may create motion, there's more to telling a story with motion than simply adding it. In this two-part article, I'll introduce you to the methods of storytelling using video, and then show you some of the basic ways to bring those methods to life onscreen.

You can point your HD-DSLR and press record all you want, but if you aren't applying basic movie-making techniques your intended story may be lost to the dreaded realm of amateur video that the viewer may instantly dismiss as well, "amateur."

Following are a few tips to film your subjects or stories with purpose, a method for creating compelling motion images that captivate the human mind, drawing the viewer into a scene. That should be your goal...to draw the viewer's eye into a scene.

We live in a three-dimensional, physical world. We don't go through life seeing people, places and objects as a series of plate images being fed to us on an invisible conveyor. We have the ability to view all things from different angles. We can see 360 degrees around any person, place or thing and can therefore study objects and people freely, with a sense of relativity. In still photography, we study the subject from a single perspective. We see the artist's creation from the point of view of the one moment in time from which the image was created. In video or film, we have the unique ability to give the viewer the pleasure of seeing our two-dimensional images in a more rounded world of time and space. The key to drawing the eye into a scene is to think and create in 360 degrees. Boiled down to its most simple definition this is called sequencing. It's the art of taking two-dimensional images and stringing them together to give the audience a sense of being in a 360-degree world. We aim to give them the ability to see beyond that single perspective point of view.

For example, let's consider someone making tea in a pot, on a stove, in a kitchen, in a house, in the morning, on a snowy day. We just described a scene in words. If I've done my job as a writer successfully, I've painted a picture or a series of pictures in your mind. You likely envisioned a tea kettle. Then you may have envisioned a range top and next to it a person (gender unknown at this point but your imagination may have filled in this detail on its own). Perhaps after that you imagined a kitchen, maybe yours or one you've seen recently, and a house from the outside and the condition of the house, covered in snow with the morning sun beaming from low on the horizon. By using the adjective, "morning," I've attempted to conjure these images in your mind. The very same technique can be done with moving images by aiming to tell a story in a series of shots. Some abstract, some obvious, but each with a purpose. This is what separates your aunt's home videos from Hollywood movies. It's about how the action is filmed and presented.



So here are a few techniques that you can employ as long as you understand the basic principles of shooting video. For starters, the video must be clean and relatively steady in nature. Excessively shaky video will distract the viewer and take away from your intended message. Exposure must be consistent across multiple shots and audio (if being incorporated) and must be clean and crisp. For more on audio see my article entitled Audio for Video in the October 2012 issue.

If these basic principles are present then we can apply these more advanced storytelling techniques:

## + SEQUENCING

As I mentioned before, sequencing means cutting together three or more shots of video to move the viewer around a scene. Using the most basic video-editing techniques, sequencing is accomplished with straight cuts mostly; sometimes the occasional dissolve or fade. Let's take the tea example again.

Fade up on Shot 1: A small house on a hill, sun rising over the horizon in the distance, morning fog in the foreground.

Cut to Shot 2: Close-up shot of a tea kettle being placed on a range top. It makes an audible "clank" as it's set down on the metal burner.

Cut to Shot 3: Medium-wide shot of woman lighting the stove. We hear the familiar clicks of an electric igniter.

Cut to shot 4: An empty kitchen table. The woman walks into the frame, pulls the chair out, sits and then opens a newspaper that was laying on the table.

Cut to shot 5: A wall clock. The time reads 8:29.

Dissolve to Shot 6: The wall clock. The time now reads 8:35. We hear the sound of steam escaping from the tea kettle.

Cut to Shot 7: The spout of the tea kettle fills the frame. We now see the violent rush of steam spewing into the air. The whistle of the steam is louder now that we see the steam up close.

Cut to Shot 8: An extreme wide shot of the woman turning off the burner and removing the tea kettle from the stove. We view this from outside the kitchen, in another part of the house.

Eight shots all in the span of about 20 seconds tell the story. Each shot is only a few seconds long. This is sequencing. We employ this technique on weddings but it's usually not from a planned perspective. It is usually from thinking quick on our feet and trying to build sequences from the environment and situation taking place around us. However, if you have time to plan or "storyboard" your sequences you've taken your first step into the world of true movie making.

## + A/B ROLL

This is sometimes called B-Roll. This is a series of shots that are placed over a primary storyline to tell a more complete story. It is often used to illustrate visually something that is being said audibly via dialogue. For example, our video starts with a priest talking in church (obviously a wedding ceremony) about a bride and groom. Roughly 6-7 seconds into his speech, we cut the camera to a shot of the bride and groom walking hand-in-hand in a park, but we still hear the priest's voice. Even though we don't see him, his words are a major part of the story. His voice is what our ears are listening to while our eyes are watching something else. After showing a few more shots of the bride and groom in romantic scenes, we cut back to the priest (still talking) and finish our scene with him asking the bride and groom to stand and share their vows with each other. The priest was our "anchor." We used him and his voice as the backbone of our scene, while the shots of the bride and groom in the park were our B-Roll shots. You could say that the priest was the A-Roll, and the bride and groom were the B-Roll. B-Roll is commonly used in filmmaking when one person is trying to relay a story to someone else in the scene (they are really trying to tell the story to the audience.) It is widely used in wedding films as a major story driver since we lack the ability to script our action and pen dialogue like a major motion picture.



## REVEALS

Reveal shots are just what you might assume. They reveal something. The camera doesn't have to do a crazy acrobatic movement to accomplish a reveal. The simple act of a person walking into a scene is a reveal. A camera slowly pulling back to reveal an object in the foreground is another. A reveal is meant to move the viewer's eye in an effort to move a story forward. For example, a toddler from a previous scene is running to evade his mother who is trying unsuccessfully to give him a bath. Attempting to dodge her efforts, the child has run out of the room and out of view of the camera. We see the mother's face, a close-up of her angry and frustrated, holding a bath towel and baby shampoo. The camera cuts to a shot of an empty bedroom. Here is where our reveal begins. The child is nowhere in sight. After a second or two we hear the mother's voice from the hallway. She is not seen, only heard. "Jimmy, where are you!? When I find you, you are going to get it!" The camera slowly moves to the left, and we see only Jimmy's face peering out from under the bed. That's a reveal. In wedding filmmaking, reveals are often used to establish a scene. Having the camera slide out from behind a row of bushes to reveal a grand church building is a popular establisher.

## ESTABLISHERS

Establishing shots sets a scene and often a mood as well. If I'm going to show you shots of people skiing on a mountain, I'm going to show you the mountain first. If they are skiing dangerously close to a cliff, I'm going to show you just how high that cliff really is. A really wide shot of the mountain from far away that shows its size is a good way to do that. Perhaps a shot from above looking over the edge of the cliff starts the scene, and then we see our skiers come flying into the frame, narrowly avoiding the edge. That really sets the scene. Establishing shots can be of anything – a bride's house, a hotel, a reception venue or the ballroom itself. Establishing shots are usually wide shots that tell the viewer "this is where we are now."

## OVER-THE-SHOULDER DIALOGUE

So you want to show two people talking? Well, you could show them looking at each other from the front, facing each other and taking turns talking. But this is boring and doesn't do much to accomplish our principal storytelling rule...to bring the viewer into the scene. Watch movies and chances are you will see that when two people are talking, the camera is almost always cutting back and forth to each person's face. This goes much farther toward bringing you into the conversation and makes the moment much more intimate. In movies, a scene like this is often shot repeatedly to allow for each actor to say his or her dialogue from their own camera angles. The angles are then cut together in post-production to move you around the scene. This is easily done with wedding films if you are shooting with two or more cameras. During wedding ceremonies, we always attempt to position one camera on either side of the bride and groom. We then aim to compose each frame similarly as over-the-shoulder dialogue often is. This adds a huge cinema-like feel to our films and is something you should aim to master whenever you film any sort of dialogue for creative aesthetic. Wanna take it a step further? Study how depth-of-field is used to make a dramatic dialogue scene more intense and how close-up shots are used to make dialogue more impactful. Oh, the fun of filmmaking! We will touch on this in Part 2 next month.

For examples of each of these techniques at work  
view my video below.

SHUTTER



VIDEO  
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JOY





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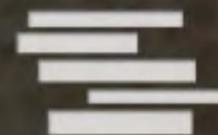
# LUXURY redefined



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THE SIGNATURE  
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INSIDE AN  
**ETTL**  
LOCATION  
PORTRAIT

with Michael Corsentino



by Michael Corentino



After last month's Top 10 Speedlite Techniques feature I got a lot of requests for more...more in-depth coverage, more explanations, more diagrams and examples. So this month you've got 'em all as I take you behind the scenes of this location portrait created using Speedlights and the simple-to-use ETTL (Canon) or iTTL (Nikon) flash exposure mode. This is a great mode to work in when you feel the need for speed just getting your feet wet working with Speedlights on location.

Speed and flexibility are big assets when working on location. Because of this I often mount my Speedlights on extension poles and have assistants control their position and angle. Working this way allows me to move quickly, keeps me very mobile and avoids the need for permits, which are sometimes required when using stands. In situations like these where the distances between the lighting, the subject and my position frequently vary, the ETTL/iTTL flash exposure mode is perfect.

This is because selecting ETTL/iTTL on Speedlights used off-camera, and also set up for wireless communication with the camera, keeps them linked to the camera's metering system as though they were mounted in the camera's hot shoe. It's important to note as I mentioned in last month's Top 10 Speedlight Techniques that even though the camera calls the initial shots you still have control over the exposure! ETTL/iTTL just gives you a solid starting point. In the event you want something different than what the camera's brain thinks is appropriate, you can tweak the amount of flash and ambient light contributed to the exposure by using flash exposure compensation, aperture and shutter speed (see my video for more on this).

When working wirelessly outdoors as I am here I prefer to use radio-based triggers to provide communication between my Speedlights and the camera. Radio signals are far superior to optically based systems that can be unreliable in bright sunlit conditions. They also have much longer ranges, don't rely on direct lines of sight like optical sensors and can go through walls and around corners. When I shot this I was using the Radio Popper PX system of transmitters and receivers, the Pocket Wizard Flex system is also a fine option. Currently I'm using the built-in wireless system in the Canon 600EX-RT and love it for its simplicity and ease of use. In the behind-the-scenes shot you can see I also have a Speedlight in the camera's hot shoe. This is only to provide communication between the camera and the off-camera Speedlights. In fact, I've turned off the light output of this flash so it only sends and receives exposure information but does not contribute any light of its own to the exposure.



In this series of images I'm using E TTL combined with high-speed sync for even more control. Using high-speed sync allows you to shoot with shutter speeds that exceed your camera's maximum sync speed with flash. This is important because it gives you the flexibility to use wider apertures and make up the difference in the exposure balance with higher shutter speeds. If you're limited to 1/200 or 1/250 of a sec. shutter speeds, once you reach that maximum threshold you'll need to rely on the aperture to control the exposure by stopping down more than you may want for a portrait where a soft focus background is important. By using high-speed sync, I was able to shoot the finished image in this article at 1/500 sec., f 2.8, ISO 100. That's a full stop more than I could have gotten without high-speed sync. I could easily have used a much faster shutter speed if needed to allow for use of a wider aperture.

If I'm using soft boxes and lighting panels outdoors I opt for assistants whenever possible. Even relatively small modifiers like the portable Lastolite EZY Box Softboxes used on this shoot can quickly hit the deck when you least expect it if a good gust of wind comes along. So always sandbag if nothing else. When I'm working alone I'll also tie down stands and lighting equipment using camping stakes and rope. The clove hitch and triple-sliding hitch (Prusik) are great knots to learn for this.

The position and size of the soft boxes relative to the model play an important role and one worth considering. Sunlight provides all the harsh light I need on the left side so I decided to go for soft fill light on the right as it seemed like a nice balance. I achieved this by positioning the lights as close as possible (just outside the camera's view). This creates a larger source relative to the subject and consequently a softer effect (see my video for more on this). The light modifier you choose is also an important decision as each produces a different effect. Selecting a soft box for my modifier created a less specular source by diffusing and spreading the Speedlight's beam across the entire front surface of the soft box and creating a larger light source.

My usual thought process when dealing with harsh sunlight is to soften it using a diffusion panel like the one in the behind-the-scenes photo and lighting diagram. As it turns out the image I chose as the final from this setup was actually shot without the diffusion panel. In this case, based on the subject and the mood I was going for (think "Twilight Goth"), I decided to try removing the diffusion panel and let the sun provide a harsh key light. Always try and use the sun if possible; why not it's a free light source! I've included a before image to show what things looked like before post-processing and the lighting effect with the diffusion panel included. I think you'll agree that for this particular image harsh is better. It's always important to keep your options open. Have a plan but don't be afraid to deviate and try something different, some with diffusion, some without. Many times the unplanned or unexpected turns out way better.



**DIFFUSION PANEL**  
39X59 COLLAPSIBLE,  
USED TO TAME &  
CONTROL HARSH SUN

**ASSISTANT**  
AKA: VOICE  
ACTIVATED LIGHT  
STAND

**ASSISTANT**  
AKA: VOICE  
ACTIVATED LIGHT  
STAND

**WEDGE LIGHTING**  
2 24X24 COLLAPSIBLE  
LASTOLITE EZYBOX  
HOT SHOE SOFTBOX, 2  
LASTOLITE  
EZYBOX HOTSHOE  
EXTENSION HANDLE, 2  
CANON 580EXII  
SPEEDLIGHT, 2 RADIO  
POPPER PX  
TRANSMITTERS

**ASSISTANT**  
AKA: VOICE  
ACTIVATED LIGHT  
STAND

**CAMERA POSITION**  
CANON 5D MKII,  
580EXII, RADIO  
POPPER RECEIVER  
(FLASH DISABLED,  
USED FOR E TTL  
COMMUNICATION ONLY)

**SETTINGS**  
F 2.8, ISO 100,  
1/500 SEC.



before post



after post

For this kind of location portrait shoot I typically use a combination of what I call “axis lighting” or “wedge lighting” because they’re quick to set up, reliable and effective. Today, we’ll look at the wedge lighting pattern I used for this series of images. I’ll cover axis lighting in an upcoming issue. I call it wedge lighting simply because both lights form an imaginary pie slice emanating out from the subject at its narrowest point to the two widest points at each light’s position. Since I’m using the sun as a very strong key light on the left, I’ve placed my Speedlight wedge lighting setup on the opposite side. One Speedlight is providing much-needed fill light for the right side of the model’s face and another is behind her illuminating her hair and creating separation from the background. Compare the behind-the-scenes image and the final image to see the ambient lighting conditions and how much the fill lights opened up the shadow areas.

The perk of creating great lighting on the front-end is there is a lot less post-processing necessary on the back-end. To create the “Twilight-inspired” look I was after for the final image I used an adjustment layer in Photoshop to desaturate the colors, bleached out the highlights by adjusting the white point on a Levels adjustment layer, and burned and dodged by painting with black and white on blank layers set to the Soft Light blending mode. I then added some warmth with a yellow filter layer and gave it some extra edginess by duplicating all my layers into one (Merge Copy), applying a High Pass filter to that layer and setting it to Softlight blending mode. Don’t be intimidated by all that Photoshop speak, I just like to tinker!

There are plenty of amazing Photoshop actions out there designed to make your life easier. ■

*Until next month – go forth and light! I can’t wait to see what you come up with; post them on my Facebook wall!*

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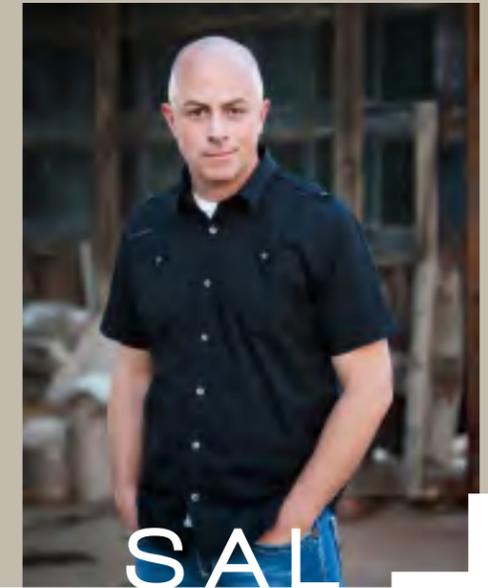

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# EDITOR



**SAL**  
CINCOTTA

[www.SalCincotta.com](http://www.SalCincotta.com)

**LOCATION:** O'Fallon, IL

**PASSION:** Weddings & Seniors

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

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

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

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

## FEATURED ARTICLES

Q&A

Allure - Starting a New Glamout Line



**ROB**  
ADAMS

[www.RobAdamsFilms.com](http://www.RobAdamsFilms.com)

**LOCATION:** Freehold, New Jersey

**PASSION:** Weddings

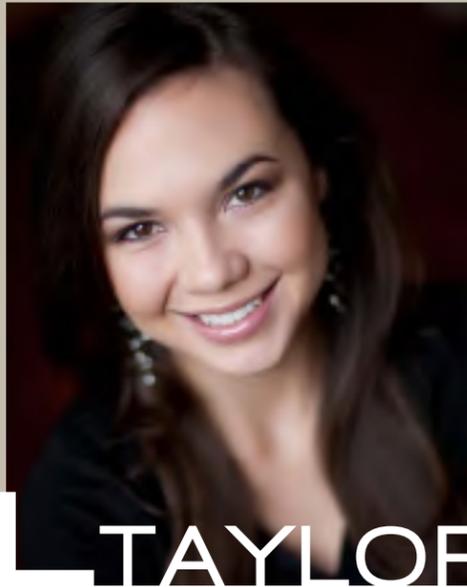
“Wedding films are my life. It’s all about the the story-telling. The art of seeing action, drama and beauty unfold and then harnessing the emotion of it all and the making it come to life on screen...that’s why I do this.”

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

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

#### FEATURED ARTICLES

The Art of Video Storytelling



# TAYLOR

## CINCOTTA

[www.SalCincotta.com](http://www.SalCincotta.com)

**LOCATION:** O'Fallon, IL

**PASSION:** Weddings & Seniors

Taylor is a business school graduate, only picking up a camera in the last 5 years. Catching the bug from Sal, Taylor has fallen in love with the romantic side of wedding photography and photographs 20+ weddings per year, along with, running the sales side to their studio.

She brings her own sense of style to a wedding day and her clients love the calm she brings to an event. Her passion is in creating moments for her clients.

More recently, Taylor has gotten increasingly involved in the training aspects of our industry and now enjoys speaking and writing educational pieces for new photographers.

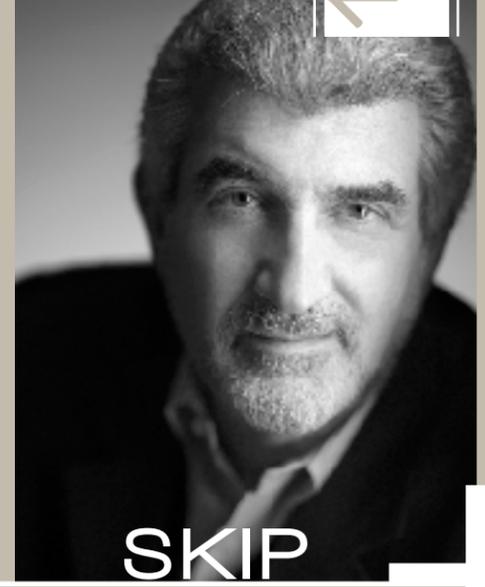
### FEATURED ARTICLES

Destination Engagement Session



© Taylor Cincotta

CONTRIBUTORS



# SKIP

## COHEN

[www.SkipsPhotoNetwork.com](http://www.SkipsPhotoNetwork.com)

**LOCATION:** Sarasota, Florida

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

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

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

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

### FEATURED ARTICLES

The Care & Feeding of your Network



# MICHAEL CORSENTINO

[www.CorsentinoPhotography.com](http://www.CorsentinoPhotography.com)

**LOCATION:** Petaluma, California

**PASSION:** Lifestyle Photography

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

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

## FEATURED ARTICLES

[Inside an E TTL Location Portrait](#)





DAVE  
CROSS

[www.DCross.com](http://www.DCross.com)

**LOCATION:** Tampa, Florida

**PASSION:** Photoshop

Dave Cross has been helping photographers and creative professionals get the most out of Adobe software for over 25 years. He has a Bachelor of Education, is an Adobe Certified Instructor, and is a Certified Technical Trainer. Dave has taught at Photoshop World, the Texas School of Photography, the Santa Fe Workshops, and Imaging USA. He runs the Dave Cross Workshops in his own studio/workshop in Tampa, Fla. He is well-known for his engaging style, humor and ability to make complex topics easy to understand. In 2009 Dave was inducted into the Photoshop Hall of Fame.

#### FEATURED ARTICLES

Compositing Made Easy



# KRISTY

## DICKERSON

[www.KristyDickerson.com](http://www.KristyDickerson.com)

**LOCATION:** Atlanta, Georgia

**PASSION:** Weddings & Engagements

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

**FEATURED ARTICLES**

Accounting 101





VANESSA  
JOY

[www.VanessaJoy.com](http://www.VanessaJoy.com)

**LOCATION:** Freehold, New Jersey

**PASSION:** Weddings

14 Years of Photography, Eight Years of Shooting Weddings, Three Years of Business Ownership (Not to mention Five College Degrees)

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

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

#### FEATURED ARTICLES

How To Attract Brides



## LORI NORDSTROM

[www.NordstromPhoto.com](http://www.NordstromPhoto.com)

**LOCATION:** Winterset, Iowa

**PASSION:**  
Babies, Families, Weddings & Seniors

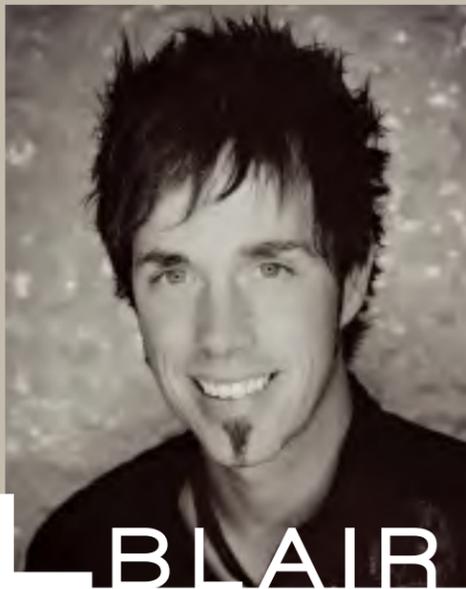
Lori Nordstrom {M.Photog.Cr., CPP, ABI} owns a boutique studio specializing in children and family portraits located in the picturesque town of Winterset, Iowa. Lori is a PPA approved business instructor and marketing consultant for Studio Management Services. Sharing with other photographers and small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

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

### FEATURED ARTICLE

Babys First Year | Planning, Pricing & Products





# BLAIR PHILLIPS

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

**LOCATION:** Landis, North Carolina

**PASSION:**  
Seniors, Babies, Families & Weddings

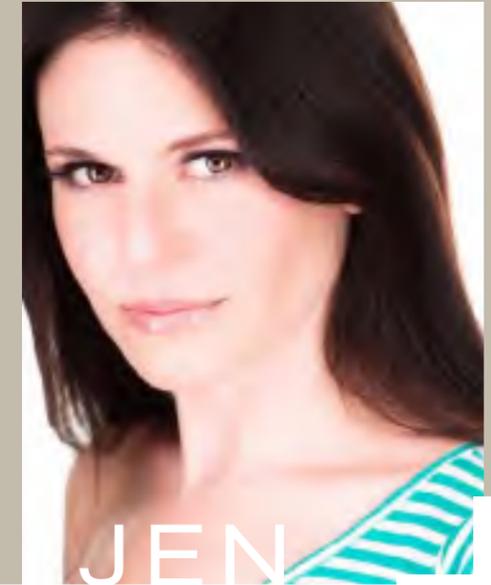
Blair's team includes four employees plus Blair, who photographs 20 to 30 weddings and 500 studio sessions per year. Blair has a passion to teach photographers how to express themselves in ways they can't find with traditional training. He speaks to and teaches thousands of photographers and digital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

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

## FEATURED ARTICLE

Shoot Less (Earn More!)





JEN  
ROZENBAUM

[www.Jenerations.com](http://www.Jenerations.com)

**LOCATION:** New York

**PASSION:** Boudoir

Jennifer Rozenbaum is the eye, talent and sultry force behind Jenerations, THE Woman's Photography Studio. Her artistic background lends an almost sixth sense when it comes to the aesthetics of boudoir photography (which is only half the reason for her extraordinary success). In just 3.5 years, Jenerations has found a burgeoning audience in the market for women's photography (specifically Boudoir), due largely to Rozenbaum's magnetic personality and her unique ability to make women feel beautiful, confident and strong. Her clients are her biggest supporters, having gone through what they describe as "a life-changing experience" after seeing the results of their portrait session. "They feel stronger, they feel gorgeous and most importantly, they had fun!" says Rozenbaum. Empowering women with a renewed sense of self-confidence and beauty is the inspiration and motivation behind Jenerations.

**FEATURED ARTICLE**

Boudoir Photographers Guide To Lingerie



# LAURIN THIENES

[www.EvolveEdits.com](http://www.EvolveEdits.com)

**LOCATION:** Portland, Oregon

**PASSION:**  
Weddings & Engagements

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

## FEATURED ARTICLE

Take Your Image Over-The-Top





# DENNIS TYHACZ

**LOCATION:** New York

**PASSION:**  
Photography, Sales, Editorial & Music

Dennis Tyhacz was born and raised in Mount Kisco, NY, and fell headfirst into the photography industry by way of sales. After graduating from SUNY New Paltz University with a degree in Communication Studies in 1997, Tyhacz divided his time between pursuing music and working as a recruiter in New York City until 2001. After tiring of the rigors of recruiting, Tyhacz soon found himself at the *New York Press* in 2002 where he spent his time in both sales and writing for music websites. After leaving the Press, Tyhacz accepted a sales position at *Editor & Publisher* magazine. While at E&P, Tyhacz was given the task of helping Lauren Wendle, publisher of *Photo District News* (PDN), generate ad revenue. After seven years, Tyhacz left VNU (which had been acquired by Nielsen) to focus full time on his blog, *VegasallNight.com*.

In late 2012, Tyhacz answered a call from his old *Rangefinder* advertising client, Sal Cincotta, who informed him that his newly-launched *Shutter Magazine* was in need of sales help. Realizing Cincotta's brand of digital magazine would be the future of photography education and news, Tyhacz decided to devote his Molotov cocktail of sales and editorial skills to *Shutter Magazine* full time.

**FEATURED ARTICLE**  
Top 10 Most Influential In The Industry



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