# shutter

magazine



MARCH

2022

# Profoto A10
# the flash for life

How do you improve the best on-camera flash in the world? It's not an easy feat, but if there is one thing you can expect when you invest in gear from Profoto, it's quality and longevity. The A10 has got all the quality and performance of its predecessor A1X as well as Profoto's newest bluetooth enabled technology Profoto AirX built in. It enables you to unleash the full power of the A10 flash no matter what type of capturing device you use - now and in the future.




visit profoto.com/ for more information

pictureline

Profoto®

# Access the world of creative possibilities
## With the OCF Adapter




**Features**

- Sturdy and user friendly design.
- Compatible with all OCF light shaping tools.
- Fits with any type of Profoto A-series flash.
- Easy to bring, mount and use.
- Integrated umbrella mount.

visit profoto.com/ for more information

pictureline

Profoto®

# HANDS-ON PHOTOGRAPHY CONFERENCE

APRIL 19-20 , 2022




speakers
announced
SHUTTERFEST.COM

# shutter magazine

**MARCH 2022** | ISSUE 114

12 **Food Photography Tips & Tricks** with Chad Montano

26 **A Beginner's Guide to Boudoir Photography** with David Byrd

38 **The Art of Visual Storytelling** with Deanne Fitzmaurice

56 **Minimal Reception Lighting with Maximum Results** with Esteban Gil

68 **Pricing Guide for Senior Photographers** with Isaac Coffy

84 **The Four Secrets to Recreating Window Light In The Studio** with John Gress

98 **Creating Impactful Wedding Portraits** with Jesse Rinka

114 **How To Get Started With Branding Photography** with Mena Darre

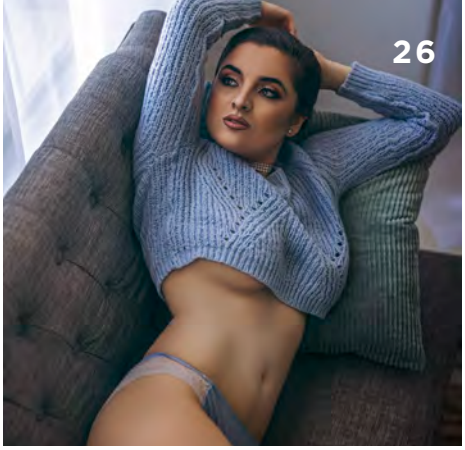
126 **5 Basic Lightroom Techniques You Need To Use** with Vanessa Joy

138 **Inspirations** from Our Readers

174 **Top 10 Tips for Beginners in Lightroom Classic** with Dustin Lucas

192 **Final Inspiration** with Eli Infante


12


26


84


68


192


114


98

# FIND US.
# FOLLOW US.

FOR **SPECIAL OFFERS** & **BEHIND THE SCENES** ACTION

BEHINDTHESHUTTER.COM

FACEBOOK.COM/BTSHUTTER

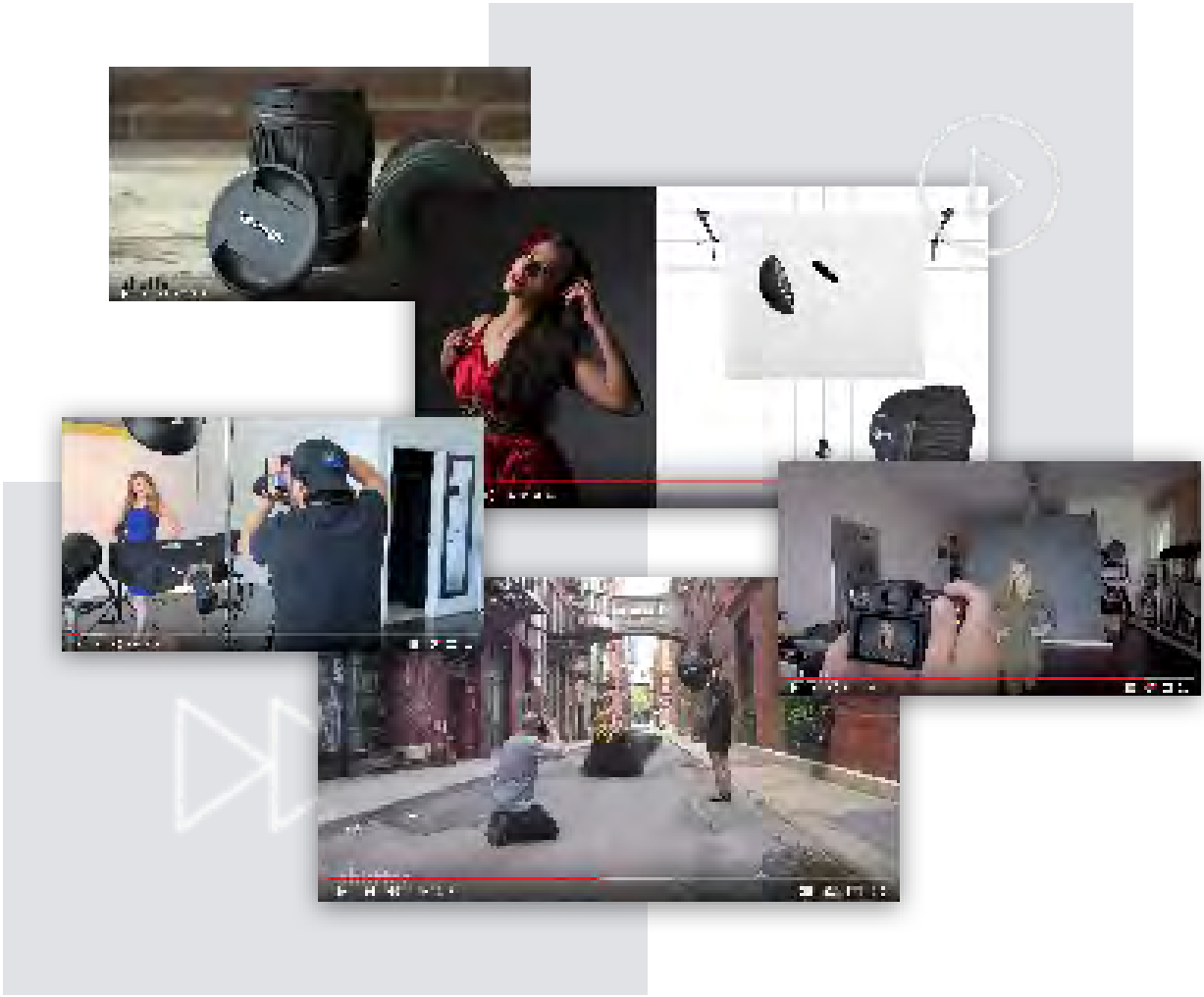
TWITTER.COM/SHUTTERMAG

PINTEREST.COM/BTSHUTTER

INSTAGRAM.COM/BTSHUTTER

# VISIT US ON **YOUTUBE**

TO WATCH **EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS** THROUGHOUT THE MAGAZINE



**YOUTUBE.COM/BTSSHUTTERMAGAZINE**

shutter magazine

# MISSION **STATEMENT**

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

*Shutter Magazine*: By photographers, for photographers.


**PUBLISHER**
Sal Cincotta

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**
Alissa Cincotta

**SENIOR DESIGNER**
Ellie Plotkin

**COPY EDITOR**
Allison Brubaker

**CONTRIBUTING WRITERS**
Chad Montano, David Byrd, Deanne Fitzmaurice, Dustin Lucas, Esteban Gil
Isaac Coffy, John Gress, Jesse Rinka, Mena Darre, Vanessa Joy





## THE **COVER**

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Eli Infante | eliinfante.com
**CAMERA:** Sony A7III
**LENS:** Sigma 35mm
**EXPOSURE:** ISO 250, f/2.8, 1/500
**LIGHTING:** Flashpoint Speedlite with 36" Westcott Rapid Box Octa M
**ABOUT THE IMAGE:** Color has a strong influence on my work. The rainbow feature at The Wall Flowers location inspired this photo. When I composed this image, I wanted to be sure she was right in the middle to create balance. Once I had Betsy positioned, my goal was to suggest motion in the pose to create a striking, one-of-kind image.
**MODEL:** Betsy Loyde

# message from **sal cincotta**

*publisher*



*Are you photographing seniors?*

*This lucrative market is hot right now. This month, we have several articles helping you figure it out. Enjoy.*

*~Sal*

# FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY
# TIPS & TRICKS

with **Chad Montano**





Image © Brie Willy Photography




Image © Brie Willy Photography





Images © Brie Willy Photography

## WHAT IS FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY?

To really understand food photography you must first love food. It begins with passion. Many people see food as just something to fill their bellies. I look at food like a piece of art. It can be transformed into something beautiful and delicious that brings happiness and creates community. Food photography is a powerful tool that can be used for social media, commercial advertising, cookbooks, brand awareness and storytelling. People always ask me how I make food look so good. It's not easy, but definitely possible. Let me tell you how.

## GETTING STARTED

There are a few things you need to know before you can create dynamic food photos that will make people stop and drool. This type of photography takes time to learn and the only way to really become good at it is to become obsessed with it. Look at professional images online and you'll notice how flawless they look. The photos are well lit, sharp, and have vibrant colors. It takes a little more than just whipping out your iPhone and taking a shot. It's the process and production behind the photography that really makes a good image.



Image © Brie Willy Photography



Image © Brie Willy Photography

## FRESH IS BEST

The food you're photographing must look as delicious and fresh as possible. Food has a short life span so you want to photograph it quickly. Whether you are shooting at a restaurant or shooting a recipe in the comfort of your own home, the food must be crisp and attractive. When working at restaurants, I personally talk with the chef and ask if they can provide me with the best quality ingredients for the plates. This will save time with the editing process having to fix produce or meats that have blemishes or discoloration. I'm a firm believer in sourcing the best local ingredients for the best quality images.

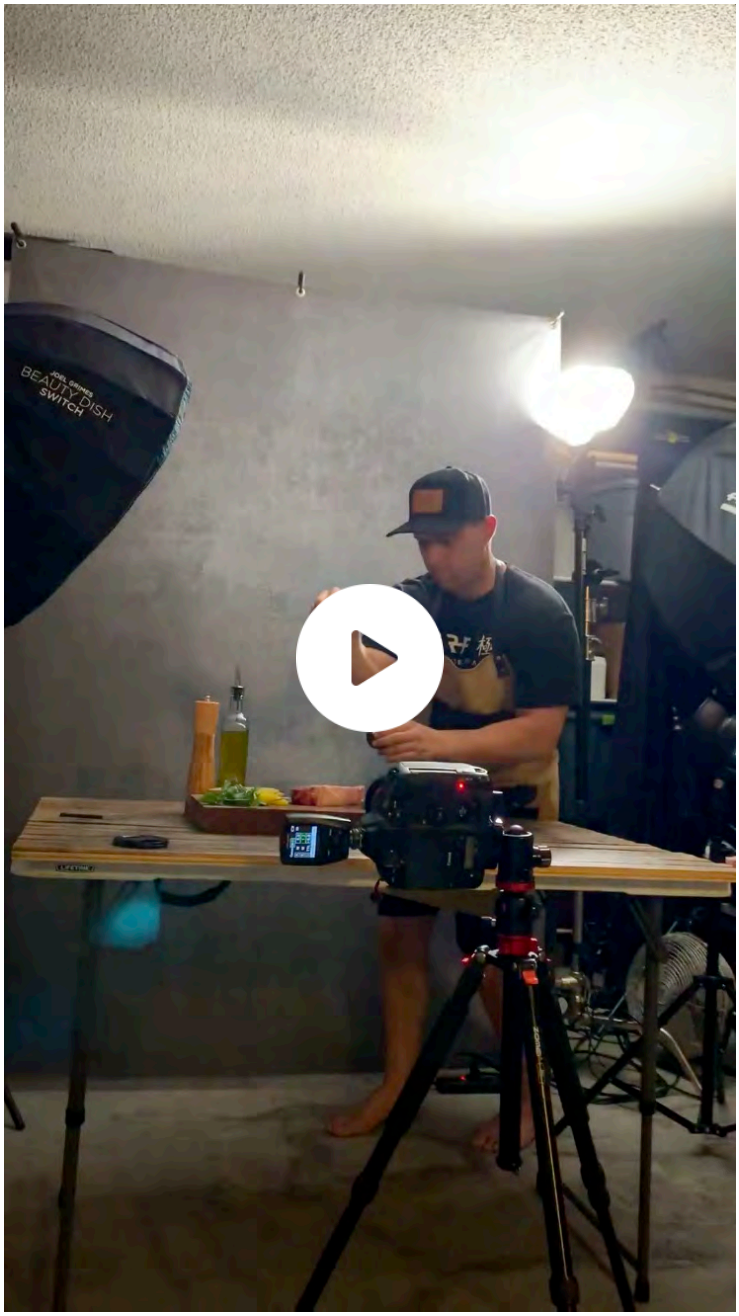





## EQUIPMENT

Photography gear plays a big role in this business. If you are shooting food photography for fun, then using a phone camera will suffice. If you are shooting to make money and create a career, then you will want to invest in a professional full frame DSLR. There are a variety of cameras out there so do some research and find something within your price range. Remember to not break the bank on just a camera body. You will need to take into account the prices for lenses, memory cards, batteries and accessories. To start, a 20mp or higher DSLR with a 50mm f/1.2 or 24-70mm f/2.8 would be a solid kit. Once you practice your skills and become more confident in your abilities I would invest in a macro lens. Something like a 100mm or 105mm lens will help bring out those stunning details in food.

Images © Brie Willy Photography




## SHOOTING IN MANUAL MODE

Whether you're shooting food, portraits, sports or animals, using your camera in manual mode is far more rewarding than automatic mode. The problem with automatic mode is that the camera decides what it wants to shoot. We want depth of field and that beautiful, soft bokeh. If you want that juicy burger to stand out, then you'll want some depth and separation. Learning to shoot in manual mode is not only beneficial, but really necessary when it comes to shooting food.



Image © Brie Willy Photography

## ARTIFICIAL VS. NATURAL LIGHT

The lighting when it comes to shooting food is the most critical. If you are shooting with natural light, then make sure to pick the best time of the day when the light is soft and not harsh. If the natural light ever becomes too bright, you can use some sort of diffusion to soften the light and avoid blowing out the images. Once the sun goes down, artificial light becomes a necessary tool. When starting out with food photography, I recommend beginning with a good quality continuous LED light. These are easy to use, affordable, and can be used with a large softbox to create beautiful, soft light that is consistent and can be used any time of day. Once you have mastered that, you can look into trying flash and studio strobes. These are invaluable tools that give you full control over lighting scenarios. It takes time to learn but is definitely worth it and will add extra value to your credibility.



Image © Brie Willy Photography





Images © Brie Willy Photography

## EDITING

Now that you know how to use a professional DSLR and create stunning light, it's time to put the final touch on the whole process. All of that hard work won't be worth it unless you can take those photos and make them come to life with the power of photo editing. There are a few programs out there, but Adobe Lightroom has been tried and true for the majority of photographers. It's user friendly and a powerful tool that can turn flat images into vibrant, stunning works of art. To get the most dynamic range out of your images you will want to make sure your camera is shooting RAW files. Trust me, just do it.

## SHARING YOUR WORK ON SOCIAL MEDIA

With the world we live in today, social media surrounds us everywhere. People with a large enough following can make a living on social media as a public figure or a content creator. Photography is a powerful tool in this business and if the quality of the work stands out from the rest, there will definitely be a future.

Food has become extremely trendy on social media and is one of the biggest topics on the internet. As a food photographer, there are different avenues to explore to see what fits your style. There are food bloggers, recipe developers, restaurants, commercial advertising, cookbooks, brand collaborations, social ads and more. Start creating a portfolio of your work and share it on social media and your website. The most important thing is to get your work out there on the internet for people to see. Be active and reach out to people and brands that appeal to your work and begin building relationships within the industry. This type of networking takes time but is vital in building a successful clientele.





Images © Brie Willy Photography



Image © Brie Willy Photography

## MORE IMPORTANTLY

The most important thing at the end of the day is to HAVE FUN. No amount of work in life is worth it if it doesn't make you happy. Making a career with food photography is hard but possible. Take the time to learn as much as you can about this craft and continue to grow. It's not so bad getting paid to stay home and cook a steak while getting paid for it. You feel me? ■



Chad's love for food is what got him into photography. One day he had a burning desire to marry his passions for cooking, food and photography to create mouthwatering photos for people to enjoy. Today, he works as a freelance photographer building content for brands in the food industry, local restaurants, and his Instagram account @briewilly. Make sure to follow if you love food porn.

**website: briewillyphotography.com instagram: @ instagram.com/briewilly**

westcott®

# FJ WIRELESS
## FLASH SYSTEM



NEW!

## FJ80™
### UNIVERSAL TOUCHSCREEN 80Ws SPEEDLIGHT

Navigating a speedlight menu system has never been easier. The first round head touchscreen speedlight with integrated radio transceiver that provides revolutionary multi-brand camera compatibility like the FJ-X2m. Use on-camera as both a speedlight and transmitter for controlling FJ Wireless and Canon RT flashes, or position anywhere off-camera.

$329.90



NEW!

## FJ200™
### 200Ws STROBE

Intelligently designed for photographers that need a portable flash without sacrificing power, this 200Ws strobe with round head features an industry-leading 0.5 to 1.3 second recycle time and fits in the palm of your hand. Comes standard with tilter bracket, reflector, grid, and gels for additional lighting control.

$399.90



## FJ400™
### 400Ws STROBE WITH AC/DC BATTERY

The first portable 400Ws AC/DC strobe with less than 1 second recycle time at full power, 480+ full-power flashes per charge, and unrivaled color consistency across its entire 9-stop output range. Includes a free Rapid Box Switch light mount insert.

$569.90



## FJ-X2M
### UNIVERSAL WIRELESS TRIGGER

Pair the FJ-X2m with virtually any camera to maximize the full potential of all FJ flashes. It's multi-brand compatible with many Canon, Nikon, Sony (with adapter), Fuji, Panasonic Lumix, and Olympus cameras. With a large display and user-friendly menu, controlling TTL and HSS has never been easier.

$99.90

**Unrivaled performance. Revolutionary compatibility.**

**FJWESTCOTT.COM/FJWIRELESS**

Visit fjwestcott.com/4705 for FJ-X2m and FJ80 camera compatibility. Trademarks listed are property of their respective owners. ©F.J. Westcott Co. All rights reserved.

# A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BOUDOIR PHOTOGRAPHY

with **David Byrd**

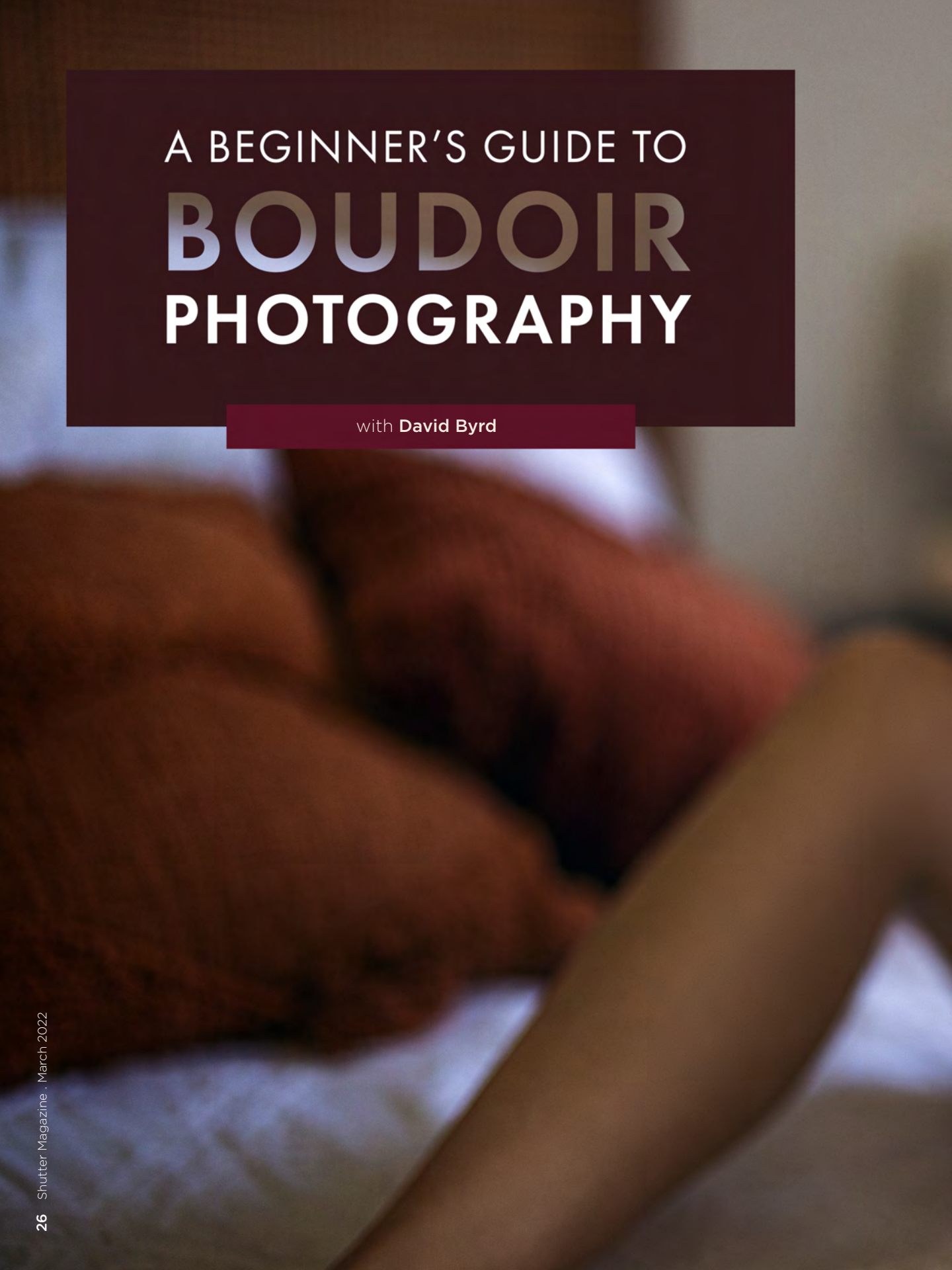




Image © Reality Reimagined

Image © Reality Reimagined

I began my photography journey long ago, with weddings, high-school seniors and high-volume dance/sports as our main genres. Along with my wife, we navigated the turbulent waters of learning pretty much everything you need to create a successful business, on the job. The bills piled up and the funds continued to recede faster than they were replenished.

The wise concept of "you don't know what you don't know" sadly became an overused phrase to boost our spirits as we tried, failed, tried again, learned, grew and achieved as many of the original goals that we could. That journey ended in 2017 as this other brand called Reality Reimagined made far more sense and had nothing to do with the portrait world that I cut my teeth on long ago.

Now in 2022 I am returning to the portrait sales world and I've chosen boudoir as the one and only genre that I'm going to explore. Let's talk about why I'm doing this, how I'm going into this better prepared than I was at the start, and how you can use this as a guide to starting your own journey—regardless of the genre.

## WHAT MAKES ME UNIQUE? WHAT'S MY VALUE?

Storytelling has been a guiding force to my work as a photographer for ages. When I first started I was honestly crippled by posing, lighting patterns, what to do with their hands, etc. I learned the rules of composition. I had a flip book of poses. I had all the anxiety of not knowing what to do (while the paying client stared at me waiting for me to produce magical images worthy of the dollars of my top package offering).

The day that I learned to TRUST my instincts and asked myself, "What makes me unique? What's my value?" was the day that I actually broke free from the label of "I don't know what I'm doing" and started earning those top package dollars. My answer to that proposed question was, "I think cinematically, theatrically, and I want to tell a story with each session." Suddenly posing wasn't an issue any longer, because if I knew the story of this location (that I labeled in my mind as a scene) then I knew how to guide the subject to move and pose in that location/scene. Suddenly branding and client experience of my business were born. Instead of telling seniors to pick two locations with their chosen session fee, we told them to pick two scenes. That one domino falling led to clothing choices, lighting choices, post-production choices and ultimately helped finish the experience in the sales room.

## HOW I'M DOING IT AGAIN

Storytelling is still my "thing" and definitely is going to be the cornerstone to this boudoir portrait sales endeavor. However, I know more "things" now and one of them is to define the genre in relation to how it fits into my brand. I've been creating stylized glamour (with gel lighting) artwork for a while now. The clothing the models have worn is definitely on the revealing side, but it isn't what I would expect the general public to envision when they think "boudoir photography." But it's not just about clothing—it's about the experience too. Empowerment. Celebrate your beauty. Unapologetically sexy. These are key words/phrases that current working boudoir photographers are using to define some of the experience a client will find with their brand.

None of these fit my perceived value to my client.

Storytelling. Art. Your Story. These are the key words that define my brand offering. How do I build the experience around these words?

Well, first I'm going to step into the 21st century of our digital world and make video a key integral component of what my clients achieve on their journey with my brand. Let's discuss that later in this article. Right now, let's look at some basic bullet points to show you how my mind works as I forge this path ahead.

Image © Reality Reimagined

## CLOTHING

• Not just about lingerie. All brand/marketing images need to show three clothing types:
    • Lingerie (full deluxe ensembles and just plain everyday undies)
    • Clothing to get out of (formal dresses unzipped; unbuttoned shirts/blouses; sweaters and undies)
    • Character driven (full fantasy wardrobe with swords, wings and shit; leather jacket, hose and high heels; secret fantasies)
• Create character/mood boards you can include in the consultation, so the client IMMEDIATELY understands this experience is very unique from the typical.
• Curate some pieces/styles/costumes that can be used by the client. Need varying sizes available. Make a list of Amazon links (find other vendors besides Bezos) to the pieces they can order if their size isn't available in our closet.

## LIGHTING STYLES

• Natural light, Rembrandt (with kicker) and gel lighting
• Link clothing/costume styles to each lighting pattern:
    • Lingerie for natural light
    • Get out of clothing/character driven for Rembrandt
    • Character driven for gel lighting

## GENERAL SETUP FOR SESSION

• Studio session
• Booking session: Schedule the day of the shoot and IPS to follow two days later. IPS via Zoom for now, until Rona fucks directly off. Client selects two of three available styles. 2.5 hours of total session time, split between both styles. HMUA included in session fee. Product review with client before they leave.
• Location session: Only for clients that have already done a studio session. Limited engagement on these; four times a year, X number of spots available. Prequalifies them so I know I can get the images they expect in a non-controlled environment. One look only, variations on the clothing/costume accepted. HMUA needs to be scheduled outside of this event. If HMUA has their own studio then potentially can include this in the session price.

## SALES

- Curating 75 images to show to the client, all with basic retouch.
- Two main products from H&H:
    - Tooled Leather Wrap Album (9x9, 48 sides max)
    - Edge Print Boxes (8x10 print size, 12 max prints)
    - Album COG $150 for max 48 images - RR price: $750 (2022 pricing; increase by $100 each year)
    - Box COG - $170.16 for 12 prints lustre - RR price: $600



Image © Reality Reimagined

These concepts and ideas need to remain a little fluid as I go through the first series of clients and learn what works and what needs refinement. Obviously there are many more elements to plan for, like marketing goals and sales goals. However, the key here is to know my value, show that value as a journey the client can join me on, and together we achieve our goals of art-making. It's not about "come in and I will do all the work and make you look beautiful." They aren't just the client; they are a collaborator and they have work to do themselves. This helps the client to be committed to this journey and it will show in their images, the sales session and their praise of the work to others. Now let's talk about that video option.

Image © Reality Reimagined

## STORYTELLING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Let's tell the client's story (like, literally) rather than just solely relying upon two-dimensional images to be the only access to said story. The concept of empowerment is often used to define part of the goal of the typical boudoir photography experience. That's fine, but I want it to go much further than that. Why are they here and why do they want to go on this journey? Are they celebrating a milestone of age, doing something nice for their significant other, or do they just want to say they had the experience of being photographed in a state of undress? We generally explore these possibilities through the consultation or through a questionnaire. It may lead to a discussion with the client and that can help break the ice and enable them to feel more comfortable with you. However, after that, how much of that story can be seen in the images? Let's be realistic—75% or more of the images captured are just going to be good posing to flatter them to the camera and hopefully create some solid art. There are some basic story elements that can be suggested with their poses, but it's mainly about processing the same go-to poses in the same sections of your studio. Because that's what's comfortable and we tell ourselves, "This is what the client expects because they've seen my other work." Sure, nothing wrong with that, but can it be more? I think it can and that's why I'm doing this.

Imagine a client's own voice speaking to the audience (whomever that audience is for the client) making one single true statement about what intimacy, sexuality or empowerment is for them. Then the camera fades in from black to a slow crawl from the client's foot to the top of their beautifully done hair (while the client puts on their finishing touches of some lip gloss). That single shot can be broken into several small sections and in between each of those sections is a piece of art from their journey with you. While this plays out, the client's voice speaks to us (the audience) and tells us why they wanted to go on this journey and thus they can finally, directly tell their truth—their story.

The rest of the video can include behind-the-scenes moments of arrival, putting on clothes, the hair and makeup art process, then the journey of art-making with you, the artist. Their voiceover can be their own answers to five leading questions you send to them ahead of the shoot. Then during the recording of this interview, you can ask them three new bonus questions all designed to get some genuine responses that aren't planned. Laughter, coy smiles, naughty nibbles of the lips or even some tears—again, depending on their story.

Shooting this footage is relatively easy once you have a plan for what pieces of footage you need. You can rely upon the supplemental information you've gathered during the onboarding process to know that plan. Video is not hard, it's just like doing a photo shoot. You plan each sequence and know where you are going to place the gear to capture it. You plan your shoots, right? Right? If you don't, then I strongly recommend you do. And I'll show you how I do precisely that and the shoot itself, in part two of this three-part series.

Video can be done with your cell phone and your camera. Yep, you'll need a few extra bits of gear to get started, but like all things in this business it doesn't have to be the most expensive gear out there. Editing the footage together is easier and easier with the various programs available (DaVinci Resolve is free and quite powerful). YouTube is a great resource to learn how to use those programs, you just have to invest the time. And you have the time—no really, you do. You just spent a minute telling yourself why you can't do video and that same minute could be spent on a tutorial learning how you can do it.

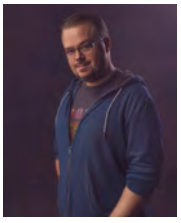


Image © Reality Reimagined

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The video is what I want to be the key element that brings prospective clients to my brand. I will provide my clients with a full-length video (5 minutes or shorter) and then a 60-second teaser. I will encourage them to share the teaser with friends that they know will respect the journey they have just been on and may want to go on it themselves. I've learned to show clients the exact pieces of artwork that will communicate precisely what my brand is about. I will use words like art (instead of pictures) so I set a mental tone that this is not just a "go get your naughty pictures done." I will invite them to go on the journey together, so they know that can shape what they are investing in. I know the exact sections of my business they can begin their journey with and I have answers for all the relevant questions I can expect. When the journey is complete and goodwill has been earned with my client, then I will ask them to share their story and help others begin their own journey with Reality Reimagined.

In part two of this series I'll share with you how I organize inspirational images into sequences that I cover during the shoot. This allows for a systemic approach to the photography session that has an organic feeling to it. Then we'll see some behind-the-scenes footage and images as I take a model through the experience, building my portfolio to launch this new adventure. ■



David is an award-winning photographer, Photoshop artist and educator who specializes in unique portrait and photo manipulation art. Through his brand Reality Reimagined, his artwork spans the genres of fantasy, glamour, fashion and all the stories found therein. In 2018, he received the Grand Award from the ShutterFest image competition and is currently nominated for a Grand Imaging Award through Professional Photographers of America. The center of his universe is his wonderful wife Bethany, who reminds him to never be afraid to fly. Together they have traveled the world and continue to explore all the possibilities of Reality Reimagined and the imagination it is based on.

**website: realityreimagined.com/ instagram: instagram.com/realityreimagined/**

evolve

*create » edit » design*

SPEND MORE TIME DOING THINGS YOU LOVE

# YOU SHOOT.

# WE EDIT.




SELECTION. COLOR CORRECTION. RETOUCHING. SPECIAL EDITS. AND MORE.

evolveedits.com




Image © Deanne Fitzmaurice

# THE ART OF VISUAL STORYTELLING

with **Deanne Fitzmaurice**



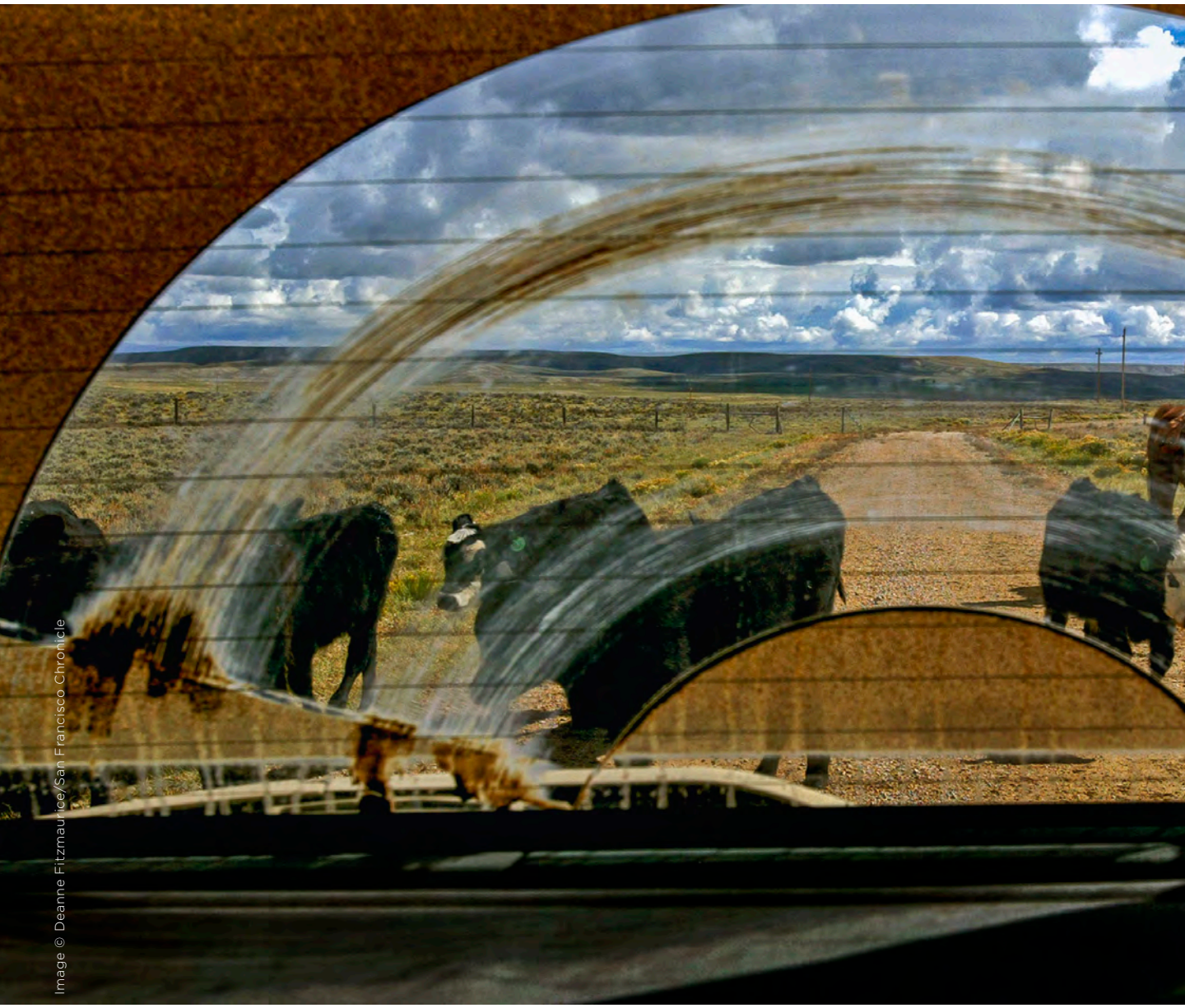


Image © Deanne Fitzmaurice/San Francisco Chronicle



## SERENDIPITY

Sometimes the picture we find is not the one we've been looking for. My mindset is as important as my subject matter. I find confidence by going into situations feeling prepared, having done my research, but staying open to what unfolds. I trust what I need will be there and if not it will push me to where I really need to be. I go in with prepared confidence. Sometimes things aren't going my way, so I try to stay patient and often things reveal themselves, sometimes through a roundabout way. It helps me take chances and be bold. I try to go into a situation with confidence that everything will go the way I want, or even better than I can imagine. There will be surprises. Serendipity happens. Trust your instinct.

## HUMANITY & CURIOSITY

By nature I am positive and see the best in people, I see the light in people. In my work, I try to illuminate something, to bring something into the light, actually and metaphorically. I am always looking for good light to illuminate the people I photograph as well as the issue. I look for universal themes to bring attention to something, hoping to show humanity so people will care and engage with my photography. I often take an issue or data and put a human face to it, to make it relatable. Through humanity I try to tap into the universal things that make us all human—love, family—to provoke the viewer to engage. Even though we have differences we all share these basic human characteristics.



Image © Deanne Fitzmaurice



Image ©Deanne Fitzmaurice/San Francisco Chronicle



## SPARK EMOTION

Unlike art photography, photojournalism is done for a reason, to call attention to something. It doesn't work unless people are moved to act or feel something. My goal is to get people to feel emotion—that is the only way we can make a difference. I aim to create poignancy, empathy, compassion, to provoke emotion, evoke a feeling, to show how it feels. I have to feel something enough so I can photograph it, but not feel it so deeply that it paralyzes me. I photograph with the hope that the viewer will feel joy, sadness, anger to act, in a way that they are moved to act or are informed in a new way.

## STOP YOU IN YOUR TRACKS

I strive to teach the viewer something, to bring them new information or present old information in a new way. Our lives are so busy—a constant barrage of input—that we've grown numb to stimuli. One way to cut through the clutter is to take a photograph that stops you in your tracks.

I aim to find the essence of each and every scene or to present a new and unexpected way of looking at something, The foreground, middle ground and background are equally important. Everything in the frame, edge to edge matters. How can I take this scene and make it as visually compelling as possible? Each image is edited down to its essence. What is really needed to tell this story? I'm looking for something we haven't seen before that provokes an emotion—laughter, anger, joy, surprise. In this crowded media space, how do we capture the viewer's attention?





Image © Deanne Fitzmaurice



Image © Deanne Fitzmaurice



## JUXTAPOSITIONS

I'm looking for interesting juxtapositions—what is incongruous or an outlier here? I want to surprise the viewer as I look for the unpredictable, an image with an edge. Every image needs something special: light, color, moment. There should be nothing extraneous that doesn't help build the story you are trying to tell within this frame. What are the moments in this story that I need to interpret into an image? Can I create a mystery so the viewer asks questions? Can I create an interesting place for the eye to wander with layers upon layers of storytelling elements? I aim to take the viewer to a place they've never been on one level or another—visually, emotionally. There should be nothing in the image that isn't helping to tell the story.

## CAPTURE A MOMENT

I'm looking for the magic and the energy in the frame created by light, color, moment.

There is a crescendo when the perfect storm aligns the elements in a peak moment.

I anticipate where the action is going to go, even in a room, and that is where I bring my camera. I understand how to work a room and anticipate where to go from photographing sports. I learned about anticipating where to go on a football field, for example, and the same way I would position myself along the sidelines of a football field where an interception may take place, I also position myself in a room where the action may go. That way I am ahead of the action instead of behind.

When I'm not sure what to shoot, I ask myself this: What is the truth in this moment, place or story? I'm reading the room. I try to observe deeply, interpret and show what others don't see. I look for gestures and body language. I'm looking for authenticity and rawness. While studying the human experience, I'm looking for the revealing. I spend time becoming forgotten and invisible so real moments happen. I'm curious and I ask questions. I've learned to be bold and ask for what I want. I go there to document and I photograph to understand.




Image © Deanne Fitzmaurice

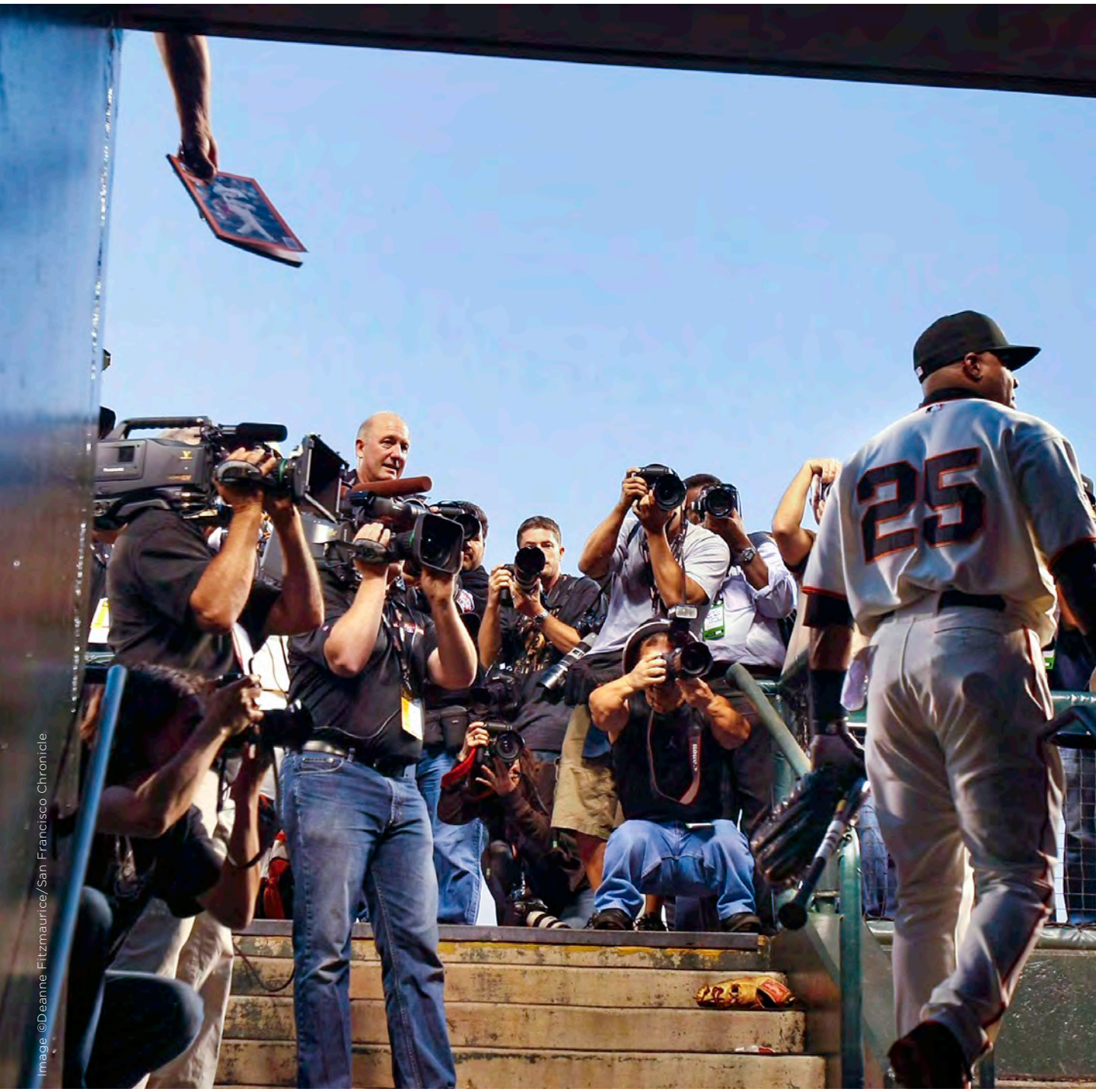



Image ©Deanne Fitzmaurice/San Francisco Chronicle



## SPEND TIME & BUILD TRUST

I try to be a human first and photographer second. I've learned to sometimes put the camera down and simply be present. When I speak my truth with honesty in a vulnerable state, I connect on a deeper level with the people I photograph. I aim to make a personal connection, find common ground so they will reveal their truth. As I observe, I am reading people. What is their body language telling me? I've learned to honor and respect the people I photograph as they trust me with their story. Build trust; they are trusting me to tell their story. When it's right, I try to keep it light, to have some fun. I persevere. I don't give up, arriving early and staying late.

Patience is a photographer's virtue. I trust the story will develop and evolve. I go for intimacy to get deep into people's lives. I try to put myself in their situation with empathy and compassion. To gain access into someone's life, I allow them to say yes. No is a word you hear on the way to yes. I've learned to give people multiple opportunities to say yes.



Image © Deanne Fitzmaurice

## STORYTELLING

In storytelling, it's your job to make sure all of the elements are there: change, conflict, narrative arc, meaning, metaphors. Is there a journey for the viewer? Sometimes you can reveal a deeper truth with a deeper narrative. Is there a change/conflict arc in this story? I look for meaning, metaphors, things for viewers to discover. I look around the edges. I'm always looking for the stories that matter to me and interest me. I photograph in diverse spaces, always trying to create engaging storytelling images with layers in composition and meaning so your eye wants to linger and explore the frame. ■



For more than two decades, Deanne Fitzmaurice served as an eyewitness to sweeping change across the Bay Area as a photojournalist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Her work for the Chronicle garnered the attention of global publications and soon she was shooting and creating stories for *National Geographic*, Sports Illustrated, ESPN and others. One photographic essay, documenting a young Iraqi war victim named Saleh, earned her the Pulitzer Prize. This Nikon Ambassador has won multiple top prizes from Pictures of the Year International, AI-AP American Photography, Communication Arts, NPPA, and others. When she's not on the move, Deanne and her photographer husband, Kurt Rogers, help guide Think Tank, the cult camera bag business they co-founded.

**website: deannefitzmaurice.com** **instagram: @instagram.com/deannefitzmaurice/**

# LEVEL UP YOUR MARKETING

SENIOR REPS • SALES • Q&A • LIVE CHAT

LEVEL UP




## SAVE 50%

WITH CODE **SMMARCH22**

**$99**/mo
reg. $199/mo

**$999**/yr
reg. $1999/mo

**levelupsal.com/sign-up**



# MINIMAL RECEPTION LIGHTING WITH MAXIMUM RESULTS

with **Esteban Gil**

Image © Esteban Gil Photography

"I hate the way my reception lighting looks."
"I don't know what settings to use on my flashes."
"How many lights should I use?"

These are all questions that we, as wedding photographers, have asked ourselves at some point in our careers. I have never met a photographer that hasn't struggled with their reception lighting setup and after years of trying to come up with the perfect setup, I've slowly realized that like everything else, less is more.

With that being said, I want to cover three different types of lighting setups that I use throughout a wedding reception. All three use minimal equipment and all three yield excellent results!

Let's dive in…

## EQUIPMENT THAT I BRING TO EVERY RECEPTION:

One AD200: This light is one of the most versatile strobes you can buy and it is extremely affordable. This is what I generally use as my main light.

Two AD100s: I use these tiny lights as kickers when I want to use a triangle setup (which I will explain in a bit).

One small modifier: It could be a MagSphere or a portable softbox. Keep in mind, the bigger the light source, the softer the light. I have been a big fan of using a MagGrid and MagSphere stacked in order to create some soft light with very accurate direction! The modifier will go on my AD200.

Voice-activated light stand (VAL): This is the most game-changing thing you can do to your reception lighting game. A voice-activated light stand! When you're only using one light and it's limited to a light stand, you're pretty limited to light positioning. Having a voice-activated light stand or an assistant following you around makes everything so much easier! Try it! I promise you it will make your life so much better!

Impact QuickStik+: This is a very helpful piece of equipment when you have an assistant holding your lights! It's a very easy way to get your light and modifier on a stick. It also comes with a belt that can be used for proper support.




Image © Esteban Gil Photography



Image © Esteban Gil Photography

## SETUP 1: THE TRIANGLE

This is probably the most well-known and commonly used setup for receptions. I will generally set up one or two AD100s in the back of the venue as kickers. You want them as tall and as far away as possible. NEVER put your light stands near the dance floor where you may run the chance of having someone trip over them. This will do nothing but put you in a liable spot if someone gets hurt. So, take those really tall light stands and put them up away from the crowd!

For the main light, you can either have an on-camera flash firing at the ceiling OR you can do what I do! Have your assistant maintain a 45-degree angle between your camera and the subject. This setup is extremely useful for first and parent dance shots when using an ultra-wide-angle lens!

For a general base on settings, I usually will set my AD100s to 1/64 or 1/32 power and my main light always starts at 1/32. I've always thought 1/32 is a great starting point since it's close to the middle of the power range and it's much easier to adjust from 1/32 depending on how well your subject is lit.


Webster Hall







Images © Esteban Gil Photography



## SETUP 2: SINGLE AD200 AND NOTHING ELSE!

This is my most used setup, especially for dancing! It's one AD200 with a MagSphere and grid being held by my assistant. All they have to do is hold the light up and ensure it's pointed in the direction of where I am shooting!

It's so simple that the only direction I give my assistant is, "Stay at around a 45-degree angle and hold the QuickStik as high as you can hold it."

My job during this setup is to ensure I have a good balance of ambient light and flash hitting my subject. As a general rule of thumb, my shutter speed will control the ambient light coming into my image, so the higher the shutter speed, the darker my background will look. If I want to bring in more ambient light, I will lower my shutter speed.

Generally speaking, for my style I enjoy having a darker and moodier background, so my shutter speed will sometimes go into the thousands via high-speed sync!



Images © Esteban Gil Photography



## SETUP 3: DRAGGING THE SHUTTER TO CREATE AWESOME LIGHT TRAILS!

This is something that has been coming back in style lately and I absolutely love it! It's one of my favorite ways to get creative during dancing and helps me experiment with light trails and the settings of my camera.

This technique is certainly one that requires a lot of trial and error. The idea behind it is to use a VERY slow shutter speed to create motion and use your flash (on-camera or off-camera) to freeze your subject. The end goal is to have images similar to the ones here.



Images © Esteban Gil Photography



Image © Esteban Gil Photography

In order to achieve this look, there are a few things you might need to do. As a general rule, I like to keep these settings as my starting point:

Shutter speed: 0.5 seconds
Aperture: F8
iso: 400
Flash power: 1/32 (See? This is where I start every time and I adjust from there.)

When attempting this, it all goes back to the very simple rules of flash photography. You have exactly 0.5 seconds to create your light trails. Experiment by moving your camera in different shapes and directions.

The flash is going to be what freezes your subject, so make sure it is pointed directly at them in order to get a nice sharp image!

You also have two options with most flash and strobes. You can either fire it at the beginning of your exposure (front curtain sync) and create the trails after it freezes your subject OR you can create the trails and have the flash fire at the end of your exposure (rear curtain sync).

I personally prefer to have my flash fire at the end of my exposure because it tends to yield better trails and I'm able to time my exposure pretty accurately.



Image © Esteban Gil Photography

Well, there you have it. Three very simple setups for reception lighting. Go out, have fun, and practice!

Before I leave you, I'd love to preach a little about the importance of prioritizing the right things during the reception. This is one of the most important parts of a wedding, so please do not get overwhelmed by the technical aspect of it. Throughout my career, I have seen a lot of fancy lit images of receptions with no essence or emotion behind them. Let's focus on what's important! The couple, the party, the emotions, the candid moments!

Whenever I talk about reception lighting, I always recommend the same thing: Learn to capture moments before you get technical. I would much rather deliver a poorly lit image full of emotion than a beautifully lit image with absolutely no essence behind it! Get comfortable capturing moments before you go out and experiment with different setups.

The ultimate goal is to have a beautifully lit image full of storytelling and emotion.

Needless to say: Moments will always trump any technical fancy lighting, but a mixture of both will ensure your work stands out among the crowd! ■



Esteban Gil is a Guilford, Connecticut-based wedding photographer and educator. Over the years, he has honed his raw creative abilities into a talent that is undeniable. Esteban places importance on capturing emotion first and art second, but consistently succeeds in turning every moment into artistry. His work is easily recognized by his well-thought-out framing, out-of-the-box creativity, and even more so his imaginative use of light—be it natural or flash.

**website: egilphoto.com instagram: @instagram.com/egilphoto/**


MAKE YOUR NEXT SHOOT SOMETHING TO BRAG ABOUT
Enter to win a FREE BACKDROP
FROM INTUITION BACKGROUNDS
WIN THIS BACKDROP:
SEATTLE
This beauty would be the perfect addition to your studio this season! we adore this one.
ENTER NOW!
bit.ly/3GU8IYV
Image © Significant Moments Photography

# PRICING GUIDE FOR SENIOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

with **Isaac Coffy**



Image © Coffy Creations



“Are you kidding me?! You’re telling me that this costs $55?!” he said as he waved a sample 8x10 print in front of me four years ago.

At the time, I muttered some sort of BS response about how there’s a lot more that goes into it than just an 8x10… because I didn’t really feel confident in my own pricing. I knew I needed to upcharge to make money, but didn’t have a grasp on what (or, more importantly, why and how) to set my photography pricing.

I think I was even “that guy” that was delusional enough to just go with what “felt right” or what I thought my market could afford.

I was insecure because I was convinced people would balk at anything above $5, and everyone around me was offering free digitals included in their session fees.

Anyway…

If you couldn’t guess this already, my clients could sense that I was unsure about my own pricing, and my sales were struggling as a result.

It’s like this one part of my business was a glaring weak spot holding my entire business back. There are so many differing opinions on how much to charge for photos that it’s hard to know what’s right.

Does this sound familiar?

The good news is, things have changed! I now charge a lot more because I have an EASY and LOGICAL pricing structure that I’m confident in, so I’m no longer shrinking into my seat anytime someone questions my pricing.

I want to share this all with you to make sure you also have a rock-solid reason for pricing your photos in a way that’s a win for both you and your clients.

## PRICING FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Pricing. The oh so wonderful topic that every photographer enjoys talking about and feels 100% confident in… No?

Actually, in the 10 years of running my business and the handful of years teaching, this is the very first time I'll ever be sharing pricing education, and I couldn't be more excited!

We're artists here to create, but in order to create, we must also be business owners here to make money. Your pricing structure stands at the very foundation of your business.

But instead of having an awesome foundation that's like a badass man-cave basement, most photographers have a pricing structure that's kind of like that sketchy basement you avoid entering and you're 100% embarrassed to show anyone.

It's dark. It's scary. You know if you took an honest look, the foundation is cracked and your whole business could come crashing down.

If you're anything like me, you've learned all different ways of structuring your pricing:
• You've seen people get their pricing torn to shreds in the Facebook groups (or YOU are that person… I'm here for you if you need a friend to talk to, by the way).
• You've copied what other photographers have done in the past, number for number, without much change.
• You've tried packages and IPS, but still struggle to make ends meet.

Basically, you're confused, but you know something needs to change.

In the past 10 years alone, I've probably changed my pricing 5,000 times—barely an exaggeration. But it wasn't until just two years ago that things finally clicked.

A lightbulb went off and things finally just made sense.

I'm going to show that pricing really can be as simple as punching a few important numbers into a spreadsheet rather than fudging a bunch of numbers because it "feels right."



Image © Coffy Creations

Image © Coffy Creations



## PORTRAIT PRICING STRUCTURES THAT SUCK

Every pricing structure I've tried has left me weak and exposed. It's like the emperor's new clothes… except I was fully aware that I was naked when other photographers would tell me my clothes were on. Awkward.

They fall short because most portrait pricing models are built around the lab cost of the products you offer, but hinge on a random multiplier that you never really feel good about.

It goes something like this: [print cost] x [random multiplier] = your price

Seems simple… until you need to put food on the table. This pricing model leaves you starving at one end of the sheet, and your clients' eyes popping out on the other end of the sheet.

Some others take it a step further by factoring in some other expenses: [print cost + expenses] x [another random multiplier] = your price

Yet again, this model falls short because the smaller prints might make you some money, but the multiplier has to be random and obscure to avoid bankrupting your business or making your clients laugh you out of the room. Oh, and you still don't feel good about the multiplier.

You actually fiddle with the multiplier until your pricing seems like it's in a spot that makes sense… which means you're right back where you started. You've got a calculator, but your pricing foundation is still a mess because you're not confident in your multiplier.



Image © Coffy Creations





Images © Coffy Creations

## THIS PRICING STRUCTURE TRANSFORMED MY PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS

Two years ago we decided to blaze our own path and create a pricing model that makes every photographer confident.

We wanted something that we felt good sharing with our clients and something we could back up with hard numbers and logic.

What we've come up with:

• **Puts the right value on the work you've done,** and what you need to make per image, regardless of the medium.
• **Takes the emphasis off of the "multiplier" you use… and actually makes the multiplier make sense.** Instead of a number you pull out of your ass for your multiplier, it's the same across the board and uses logic to set it in stone. Hint: your print costs will now always be 25% or less no matter what your client buys.
• **Doesn't make our clients pay a "size tax" because they're buying a larger print.** It doesn't make sense to us that we should gouge our clients just because a print is a little larger. Clients felt the same way, and they'd rarely buy the wall art pieces we wanted them to enjoy.

With our new pricing, larger photos are far more attainable, so our clients are buying larger prints more often because they're within reach—and the studio still makes money!

OK, Enough of the Build-Up: Here's the Portrait Product Pricing Formula We Use:

## [BASE PRICE] + [LAB COSTS X MULTIPLIER] = PRICING THAT MAKES SENSE

Here's a quick breakdown:

• **Base Price:** What you must make per unique photo to keep your studio running. There are many things that go into this number: your take-home pay, operating expenses and overhead (even if you don't have a studio), boxes/shipping/presentation, marketing costs, equipment, etc.

• **Lab Cost of Goods (COG):** Total lab costs per print.

• **Multiplier:** Yes, we still use a multiplier. However, it has a smaller impact. We keep ours at 4 (except for books/albums, but again, solid reasoning behind it). This multiplier will guarantee that your COG is at or less than 25% of your total sale. This number ONLY pertains to your actual print costs, so you will not need to change this number often. You will not need to fudge with this multiplier or question its validity.

The awesome thing is, this formula is future-proof because it's tied to hard numbers, and accounts for more than fluctuations in print costs.

For example:

• Did your rent just go up? Great. Just adjust the base price accordingly and everything levels out. No guesswork with your multiplier.

• Do you want to add an associate photographer? Perfect, you're scaling your business! Just account for it in your base price and everything updates. You know you're still making a profit.

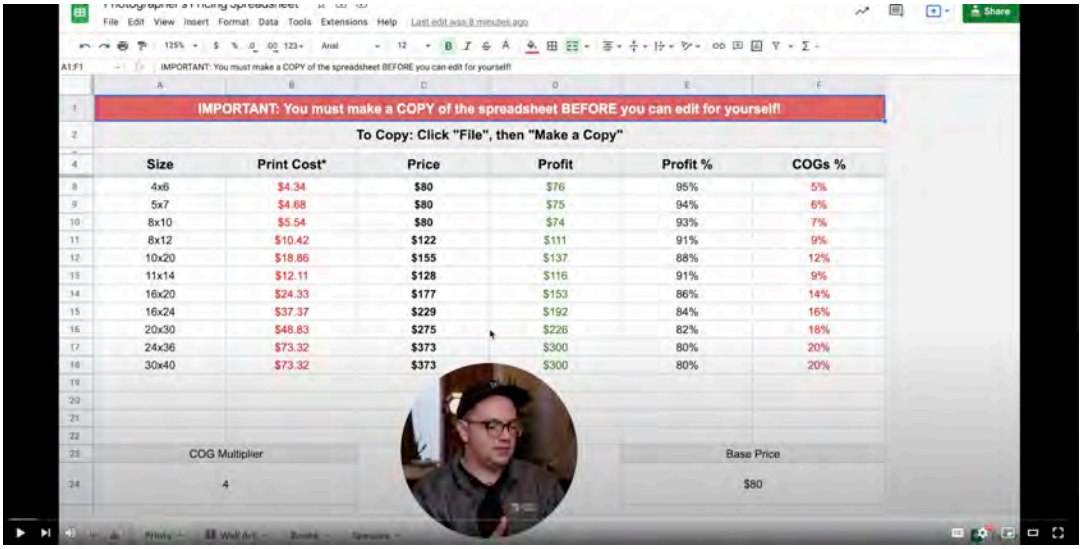
• Shoot. Your lab just increased prices? Update the COG to match and your profits are still intact.

• Want to buy the latest and greatest hipster Sony camera? There's something wrong with you. Reconsider your bad decisions and switch to Canon, you weirdo. :)

Image © Coffy Creations

## ADDITIONAL THINGS TO HELP YOU NAIL YOUR PRICING

We've put together a spreadsheet so you don't have to mess with creating one yourself. It's the same one we use at Coffy Creations. It includes our formulas, sizes and instructions on how to customize it for your business.




Albums are a little different. You'll notice our base cost is far more, and our multiplier is 2 instead of 4. Our base cost is more because our base cost is figured per image and albums include 20-25 images (plus, we basically give our clients a bit of a bulk discount). The multiplier is at 2 because: our profit margins are where we want them to be and we need to cover our tails in case we mess up and need to replace an entire album.

**Choose products that increase your value.** We haven't sold loose prints ever since Mr. $55 Print Meltdown Guy waved a (very nice) flimsy photo in my face years ago. He, and many others, could only think about the $0.19 prints they get from those cheap, consumer "labs." When people buy prints from us, they're always mounted prints. Clients can see and feel a difference, and expect it to cost more than their crappy cheapo prints. This pivot alone has been wildly successful because the perceived product value is already heightened.

**Digitals.** Every client asks, so you need to be prepared. I can't tell you what to specifically charge for high-resolution digitals, but I can share this: You need to make sure they're priced in a way that almost "scares" the client away from buying and promotes value in printed products.

For example: I'm doing myself a disservice if I charge $80 for one 8x10 and then $100 for one digital… Yes, the digital is priced more, but the client is not going to be inclined to buy that print when they print 500 copies of that image if they buy the digital.

At the same time, you want to price your digitals not too high so you can leverage packages and "discounts" without cutting into physical COGs. More on this when we talk about packages.

**Not every lead is "your client."** You should always be up front with your leads and clients with pricing, so anyone who books with you feels comfortable with the prices they've seen. The sales session goes far smoother since they are prepared ahead of time, and nobody (including you) is squirming because of pricing. A win for everyone!

If someone doesn't like the prices, they don't book with you, which is also a win for you both.

**Packages.** The best tip I can share with you about packages is not to stack them in a way where your top package includes the best of everything or a ton of products that the clients don't know what to do with. In our top package, you'll see we only have an 8x8 linen album, yet our "top" album might be a 12x12 leather with a custom engraved cover and cameo. We have some head room to upsell and add to the order. We'll also create some incentives to encourage the client to add more, like a percentage off additional wall art or prints.

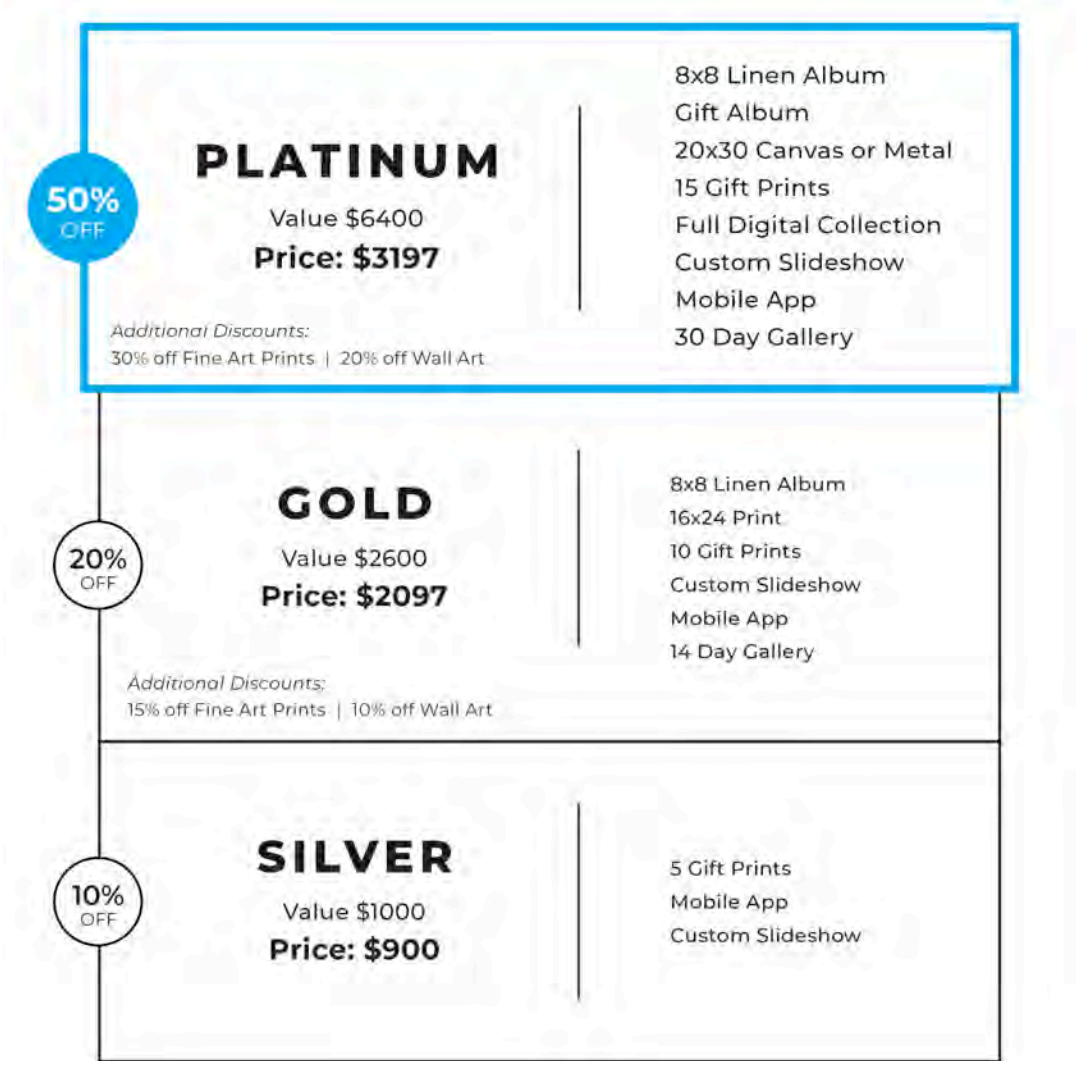









Image © Coffy Creations

You'll also see in our packages that we're leveraging the digitals and digital products (apps and slideshows). We put a value of $2,500 on our full digital collections and $300 each for the slideshows and apps. This allows us to build the value of our packages and offer discounts without cutting into our physical cost of goods.

## FINAL THOUGHTS ON PRICING YOUR PHOTOS

Ultimately, we want you to feel confident while you make money. Your customers want you to be confident. Do what it takes to stand on a solid foundation. Our pricing guide is a great start, and if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. ■



Unapologetically caffeinated, self-proclaimed coffee connoisseur and three-time "Hottest in the Office" Dundie Award winner, Isaac operates a high-end portrait studio in his small hometown of Ashland, Ohio. Aside from writing epic bios, Isaac also loves spending time with his two boys and wife. It's all for them.

**website: coffycreations.com** **instagram: @instagram.com/coffycreations/**

EDGE

# BOXES + PRINTS

PRESENT YOUR IMAGES IN CUSTOMIZED BOXES

- mounted or matted prints
- acid free 4-ply mats
- magnetic box closure
- silk, linen, synthetics, natural - 34 textile choices
- stained wood sides - 4 color choices
- acrylic display easel - included

h+h color lab

www.hhcolorlab.com

*Images by: Jeff Locklear (senior portrait), William Innes (Venice portraits)*



Image © John Gress



# THE FOUR SECRETS TO RECREATING WINDOW LIGHT IN THE STUDIO

with **John Gress**

When it comes to re-creating window light, the first thing we have to ask ourselves is: What exactly is window light? On the surface, it's just some photons coming through a glass opening and hitting our subject. But what we really have to ask ourselves is: What are we trying to re-create—hard direct sunlight coming through a window, or indirect soft light on a cloudy day?




The former is going to feel more edgy. It's going to be the type of lighting we might use for a fashion shoot or when we want a little bit of grit. The latter will feel more pleasing and perhaps be something that we would refer to as more beautiful. It's a type of lighting that you might want to use for a subject who is concerned about their age, or maybe it's just a vibe you're going for that day. It's a vibe that I go for most days. There's no hard and fast rule that says a fashion image has to feel edgy or an older person needs to be photographed in soft light. You really can choose which approach works for you based on your personality or the side of the bed you woke up on that day. Most people are going to think of soft light when they think of window light, but I think they may be missing half of the possibilities.

In order to re-create that direct sunlight look, the first thing we should think about is how that light is created in the real world—basically, the general characteristics of the light quality. I've always heard that if the sun were an artificial light source, it would be the size of a dime (1cm across), 60 feet (20m) away from your subject. Therefore, direct sunlight is a very, very small light source, far away from your set. When that direct light passes through a window it scatters just a little bit, plus it is going to bounce off of your subject, possibly the background, and then it will bounce around the room, which causes light to fall into the shadows ever so slightly. When it comes to re-creating this type of light, we don't have to be so literal and place a single flash on the other side of the room. In fact, it's going to almost be impossible to get a light source that small or a studio that large. Instead, we could just take a light and put it in a reflector or a small softbox and have it be not so close to our subject.

Keep in mind that lighting a portrait is about conveying a feeling and not building a rocket to put a man on the moon. You don't have to take everything so literally.

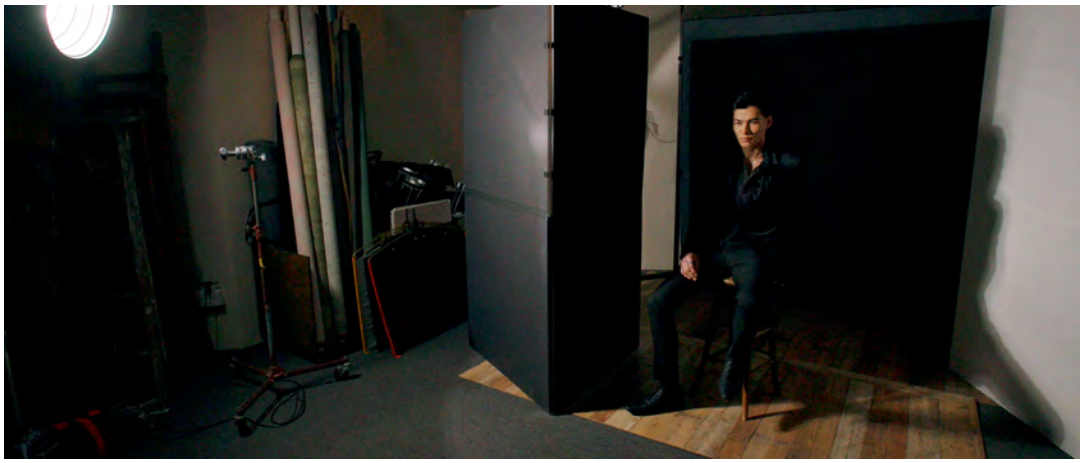


Image © John Gress



Image © John Gress

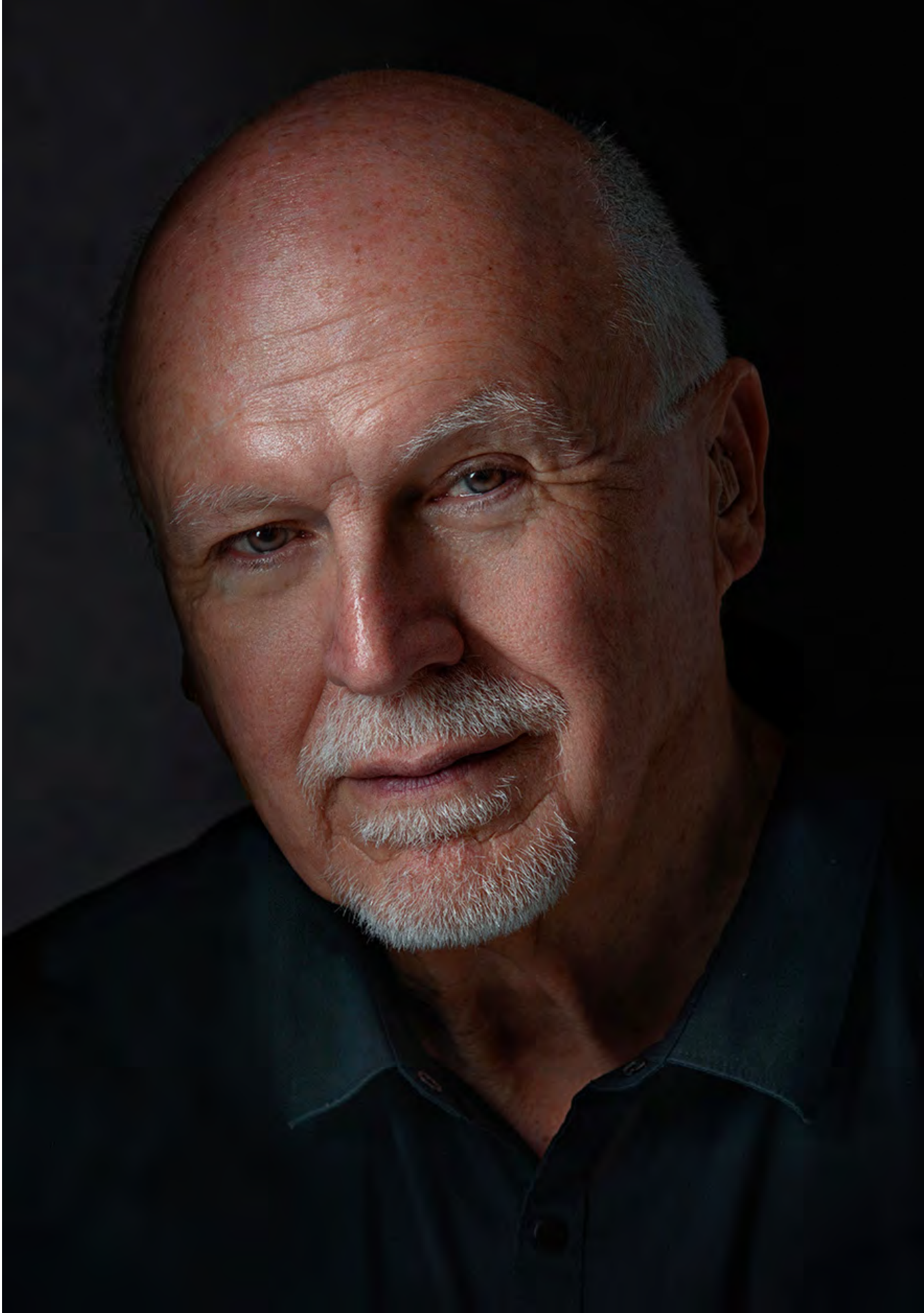


Image © John Gress



To further sell the idea that we are shooting hard window light, you might choose to place a gobo between your light and your subject. A gobo is simply an object that "goes between" two things. You could use a cucoloris as your gobo, palm branches, or any object you find around the house. There are infinite creative possibilities. Or instead of placing a large object between your subject and your light, you could place a very small gobo—in this case, a metal stencil of a window—into an optical snoot, like my NiceFoto SN-29, and then you could project that pattern onto your subject.

On the other hand, if you wanted to create window light on a cloudy day, you would want to use a very large light source. There's a general principle in lighting that states that the larger the light source is relative to your subject, the softer the light will be. Basically, you want it to take up a large amount of space in the subject's field of view. You could use a large softbox or a large umbrella close in to your model. Something around 5 feet in diameter should fit the bill. I felt like I really started to nail this type of lighting when I got an Elinchrom 74"/190cm indirect octabox. Indirect just means that the light points away from your subject and then bounces around the softbox before coming out the front, which causes the illumination to be extremely even side-to-side.

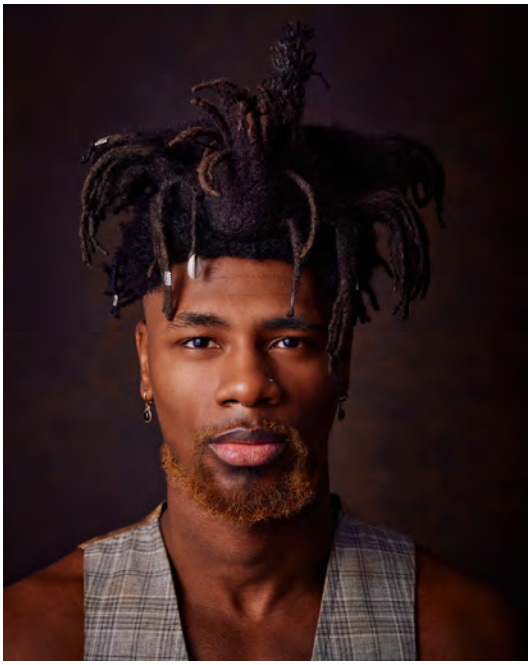


Image © John Gress




Additionally, you could add a layer of diffusion, either a 6-foot-wide or larger professional scrim or an opaque shower curtain between your modifier and your subject. The goal here is to create a larger, softer light source, so you'll want to have enough room between the modifier and the scrim so that the light from the modifier fully illuminates the surface of the larger scrim.





Images © John Gress

Images © John Gress

The next thing you're probably wondering is where should the light be placed. Dutch master painter Rembrandt often posed his subjects next to a window, but at an angle. If we think about the hours on the face of an analog clock with the photographer at 6 p.m. and the subject in the middle, the light would be placed at about 4 or 8 p.m. In these positions you'll end up with a triangle of light under the subject's eye opposite the "window." Or to look at it a different way, you'll create a shadow of their nose that falls across their face and intersects the cheekbone shadow on the side of their head opposite the main light. It's the same exact thing, but just another way to express it.



Image © John Gress



Image © John Gress



Image © John Gress





Images © John Gress

So, our first secret was the light source and the placement was our second secret. The third secret is fill. What I mean by fill is light bouncing off of something and then falling into the shadows. One way to do this would be to place a V-flat on the side opposite of your "window" in order to reflect that light directly back into your shadows. Not only will the use of a V-flat in this position increase dynamic range, it will decrease contrast and in many cases create a more pleasing light, which will have the side effect of making your subjects look less wrinkled. If your main light is at 4 p.m., positioning the V-flat around 8 p.m. should bounce back the most light. Of course, you could put it at 9 p.m. too. If you place it at 10 p.m. you will create a highlight over their shoulder, which will separate them from the background.



Image © John Gress

Alternatively, you could add a second flash in a large modifier behind the photographer, or bounce a second light off of a white ceiling to fill in the shadows. The advantage of using this approach is that you can dial in the precise amount of fill you desire.





Images © John Gress

The fourth and final trick is to use flags to block where the light from the window falls, essentially taking on the function of the window frame or window sill. This will help you to keep the light from spilling onto the background or floor. You don't have to use commercially available flags. You could simply use a V-flat or pieces of foam core to channel that light so that it only goes towards the subject. You can also use flags, or 20x30" pieces of foam core, to darken down a portion of your subject's body, so that the viewer's eyes are drawn up to your subject's face and not distracted by the brightness of their pants, shoes or the floor.

As you explore window light, keep in mind that learning is a process and the more you practice the better you will be at executing the exact look that you're going for. ■



For over 20 years, Chicago photographer and director John Gress has created stunning photography and videos for some of America's largest companies and international media outlets. His work has included national lifestyle advertising, portraits and videos for the beauty industry, and action photography of professional athletes.

**website: johngress.com** **instagram: @instagram.com/johngressmedia/**



Image © Jesse Rinka Photography



# CREATING IMPACTFUL WEDDING PORTRAITS

with **Jesse Rinka**

No matter what your style of wedding photography is—photojournalistic, editorial, etc.—creating images with high impact should always be your goal. Question is, what makes an image impactful?

Although opinions will vary, there are a few key elements that stand out to me when it comes to separating the most memorable images in a client's gallery from the normal ones. These elements include great lighting (natural or artificial), strong composition and genuine emotion. Let's take a deeper dive into each of these elements along with some samples.





Images © Jesse Rinka Photography





Images © Jesse Rinka Photography

## LIGHTING

It goes without saying that lighting is pretty much the most important element to consider when creating any type of photograph, let alone one that jumps out at your viewer. Whether on the technical or creative side, lighting drives every decision you make as a wedding photographer, from the moment you arrive at the bride's location right up to the final shot of the day.

Your ability to find the good light, correct the bad, or simply create your own within moments will likely dictate how well your day goes and how great of an experience your clients will have. In the two sets of images above and to the left, I am using one of my favorite techniques, compositing, to achieve my preferred light placement while still including more of the environment. At ShutterFest in April, I will be doing a live demonstration regarding this exact method and the steps that I take to achieve my desired result.

When focusing on natural light portraits, I try to look for ways to put my couples in motion or have some sort of motion involved (think veil in the wind). I feel the presence of motion can encourage the viewer to connect more closely to what was happening in that moment, bringing additional impact to the image.

I wish photographers wouldn't classify themselves to be only one specific type of photographer, like "natural light" or "strobist." Whenever I hear that, I can't help but assume that they are perhaps not comfortable enough shooting one way over the other. There's a big difference between comfortability and preference. We all have a preference and I personally prefer using off-camera flash. I strongly feel as though the use of it in my work is what has allowed me to stand out the most in my local market. I love the look and dimension that I can create in most any situation, like this image on page 101 at night in front of my couples' venue. By utilizing off-camera flash and red and green colored gels, this image really came together.



Image © Jesse Rinka Photography

Image © Jesse Rinka Photography

Image © Jesse Rinka Photography





At the end of the day, our value to our clients is in our versatility. I always stress to my couples that I will never fight the natural light when it's right. They should be able to find comfort in your abilities to work under all conditions and deliver a wide range of portraits.

Even if it's not your preference or strength, being able to understand and use off-camera flash will prepare you for unexpected moments, such as this surprise fireworks display where we were given only a moment's notice to get outside. The venue now uses this image for their sales brochures, so you can see the importance of being able to act fast.



Images © Jesse Rinka Photography

## STRONG COMPOSITION

There are many things that can quickly ruin a beautifully lit image. Among those things is poor composition. Great composition is typically a result of pre-visualization and knowing what things to look for or avoid before pressing the shutter. In addition, as you analyze your scene, you must consider which area is best for you to place your subjects. In some cases, this may mean being vocal and descriptive in giving proper instruction to your subjects, especially for posed portraits. In other cases, this will mean changing your shooting position to have all elements in your image align in a pleasing way.

Here are some things to keep in mind while composing your images:

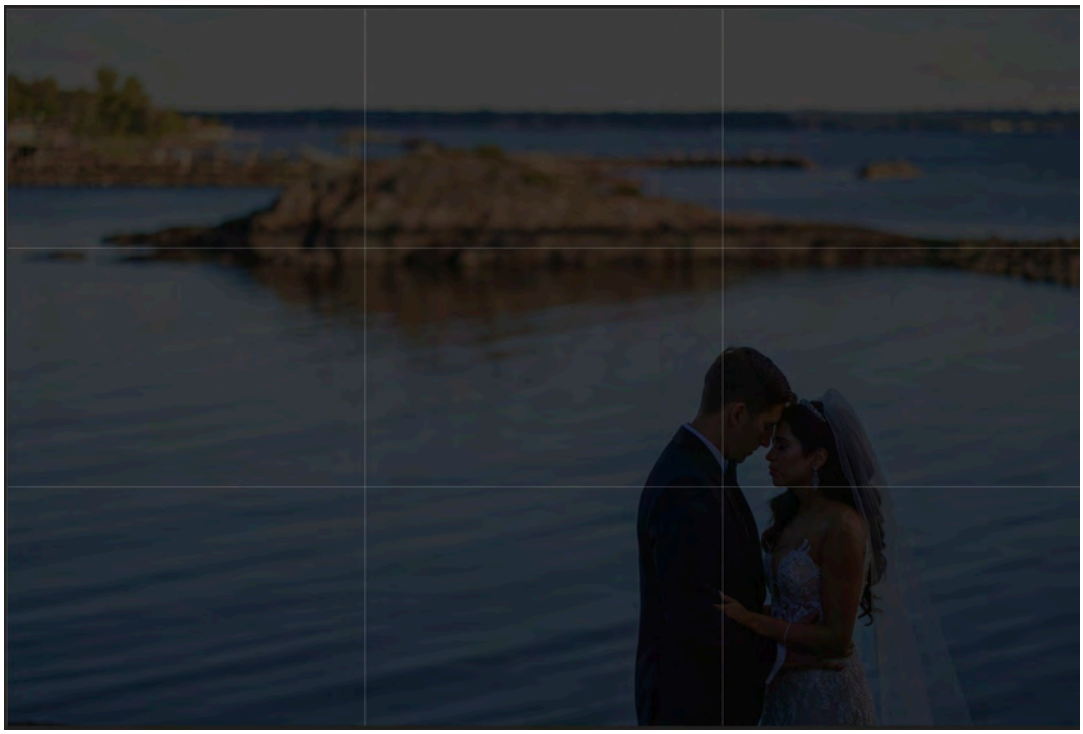
1. Look out for horizon lines, tree branches, buildings, or any other elements which may cut through your subjects' heads. This can be easily avoided by changing the height from which you are shooting. Experiment by getting higher or lower, or perhaps just a step or two to the left or right and you will likely end up with a much stronger composition.

2. Don't have your subjects placed too close to the edge of a frame. While there are good ways to utilize negative space, you must be careful not to have your subjects too close to the edge as it often creates tension, especially if they are facing that same edge which they are closest to. Try to utilize the rule of thirds to ensure your subjects have a more pleasing placement in the photo. Also look for areas of the background that contrast with your subjects, as these areas can create frames around them and allow them to stand out rather than compete for attention. Below you will see how referencing the grid of thirds (either while shooting or in post processing) can be helpful.



Image © Jesse Rinka Photography

3. Don't mistakenly cut off limbs/extremities. Unless intentional, if your subject's wrists are visible, I always suggest that you consider including their hands as well. The same rule of thumb should apply for legs and feet. Cropping at the ankles is generally never a good look. If you decide to include your subjects' knees, then chances are you should probably include their feet as well, assuming that they are in a standing pose.





4. Use leading lines and symmetry. Whenever your composition includes leading lines, it's generally a great idea to have those leading lines drawing the viewers' attention directly to your couple. Also, when it comes to your backgrounds, always keep an eye out for any symmetrical elements. If they exist, do your best to utilize them to provide balance to your composition. Once you have proper balance, you can then decide which area of the frame will be most appropriate for your subjects. The best-case scenarios are those which include symmetrical leading lines. Your composition in these situations should be a no-brainer!





Images © Jesse Rinka Photography





Image © Jesse Rinka Photography

Let it be known, we don't always get the perfect composition in-camera. I mean, we are still human. But that doesn't mean that we cannot correct it in post. Below is an example of ways we can take an image which we already love and tweak it to perfection.

There are certainly more that I have not mentioned, but following at least these few compositional rules should put you in a great position to create images with greater impact.





## GENUINE EMOTION

"Luck happens when preparation meets opportunity." I've heard this quote many times, and to me it is one of the most accurate quotes that describes what capturing emotion as a wedding photographer is all about. It is our job and our duty to be prepared for whenever the emotional moments may happen—whether they are subtle or obvious. We must be able to read each situation and be familiar with those around us to properly react to the moments as they unfold.

One way that we prepare ourselves before the wedding day is having our clients fill out a questionnaire which identifies who they consider to be VIPs (siblings, parents, grandparents, etc.). We do our best to understand the connections and relationships between them and their closest loved ones so that we can have them on our radar on the wedding day, especially so during moments that typically generate emotional reactions.

Although it is their day, the bride and groom aren't always the only ones you will need to focus on when it comes to capturing emotion. While they may be happily enjoying what seems like a normal moment together, it is often those around us that will be reacting with displays of emotion, such as laughter, crying, applause or all the above.

As you gain more and more experience photographing weddings, you will develop strong instincts and be able to anticipate these moments more easily. I would never want to discount the importance of composition, but when it comes to emotional moments, I would much rather have the moment captured than have the perfect composition that JUST missed it.

As photographers, we must accept that these types of images may not always end up being our most creatively composed photos, but I guarantee you that regardless of how we feel about them as our own worst critics, these images will always hold the most importance to our clients and will be the most cherished photos in their album.



Image © Jesse Rinka Photography





Images © Jesse Rinka Photography



Image © Jesse Rinka Photography

Here is a list of some of the most common moments when emotions run high:

- Reveal of bride in wedding dress during bride prep
- Gift exchanges/card readings between bride and groom and their parents
- Bride walking down the aisle at church or bride reveal during “first look”
- Reading of vows during ceremony
- Speeches/toasts
- Bridal party introductions at the reception
- First dances and parent dances
- Dance floor action (the fun, wild and crazy stuff!)

My word of advice is to never be comfortable as far as assuming you know when things will happen. Always think ahead and anticipate moments that may occur and rely on your skills and instincts to nail them when they do. I hope this information that I have shared with you all has been helpful. Good luck! ■



Jesse Rinka is a wedding and portrait photographer based out of Tarrytown, New York. In 2015, after 10 years spent working in corporate America, he left his job as a Solutions Developer to pursue what brought him true happiness: photography. Relying on his technical background and placing a strong emphasis on the client experience, Jesse, along with his wife and business partner, Maria, have built an amazing reputation which has allowed the studio to grow each year. If there is one thing that he is most grateful for, it has been the opportunities he has had along the way to give back to the photography community through educating and helping others.

**website: jesserinka.photography/ instagram: @instagram.com/jesse_rinka/**



Image © Mena Darre Photography

# HOW TO GET STARTED WITH BRANDING PHOTOGRAPHY

with **Mena Darre**



Image © Mena Darre Photography



So you want to be a personal brand photographer? According to the Census Bureau, in 2020 during the United States pandemic, more than 4.4 million new businesses were created.

Solopreneurs, entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses across every industry are searching for photographers to provide content that converts. The demand for branded photography is higher than ever, so it's an excellent way to expand your photography business. The tips below will help you create a strategic approach to launching your new branding photography services.



Image © Mena Darre Photography

## 1. DETERMINING CLIENT NEEDS WITH A FREE CONSULTATION

When a client reaches out, begin with a live or virtual consultation. This is your chance to understand who they are, how they stand out from their competition and what their vision is.

If they have a formal brand kit that includes their brand colors, logo, detailed demographics, website, social media and a summary of their business—have them send it over ahead of time. At the very least, visit their website and social media profiles before the consultation to get familiar with their brand.

Then, compile a list of questions to determine who they are. This should include:

- What is their background and brand story?
- Who is their target demographic?
- What solutions do their product or service provide?
- What makes them unique?
- How and where will they be utilizing their photos and videos?
- What isn't working with their current content creation process?
- What are they looking to do differently?

## 2. UNDERSTANDING IF YOU CAN SERVE THEIR NEEDS

In addition to discovering your prospective client's needs, the consultation ensures that you are the right fit for one another. If the client is the right fit, clearly outline what you will need to succeed for their photoshoot. For example, if they live out of state you will need to travel to them or they will need to travel to you.

It's also important to understand what type of photos they need. During the consultation, I always ask for reference photos so I can determine whether I can deliver or if I need to refer them to another photographer. For example, if a client desires dramatic lighting and color gels but that's not your skill set, it would be very professional of you to refer them to someone else.



Image © Mena Darre Photography



Image © Mena Darre Photography

## 3. HAVE THE ABILITY TO SHOOT NATURAL LIGHT AND OFF-CAMERA FLASH

No shame to other brand photographers, but the ones I've seen on social media primarily shoot with natural light. I love natural lighting as well, but I know there have been times where I needed additional lighting.

Natural light can be your lighting of choice, but understanding off-camera flash is necessary. Even when natural lighting is ideal, it won't always be positioned where you need it to be. However, having the right tools will provide the crisp lighting you need for your session. Practice makes perfect, so invest in your equipment and learn to shoot in a variety of low-light indoor and outdoor settings.

If you would like to utilize natural light, strategically schedule your photoshoot to maximize the natural light and just be prepared if it's a cloudy or rainy day.

My go-to lighting setup includes a tripod, two Godox AD200s, and the MagMod Softbox. This setup is quick and easy for on-location photoshoots.

## 4. LICENSING AGREEMENTS

Protect yourself as both an artist and business owner with the legal documents listed below. Each should be drafted by a lawyer ahead of time so that you can edit the details for each client:

• Portrait agreement: This outlines the basics such as session date, fees, cancellation policy and more.
• Copyright notice: This can be a separate agreement, but it is important that clients understand that they do not own the rights to their photos unless an agreement has been signed.
• Model release: The model or the parent/guardian of the model must sign a document to authorize the photographer and brand to use their photographs.



Image © Mena Darre Photography

## 5. CREATING YOUR FEE STRUCTURE

Yes, you can and should charge more for branding photography! Why? Personal photography such as birthday parties and senior portraits are for personal use. However, branded images and video will be used for marketing purposes, which allows you to structure your prices differently.

If you look at other industries such real estate, insurance and even software, there is a higher charge for businesses simply because income will be generated. That is no different when it comes to photography. Your brand images and videos are meant to help your clients generate income for their business.





Images © Mena Darre Photography

## 6. BRANDED PHOTOGRAPHY UPSELLS

Branded photography clients don't require your typical upsell items of albums or prints. However, they could possibly come with other upsells such as:

- Wardrobe styling
- Makeup and hair
- Additional skin retouches
- Graphic design
- Social media ad design
- Marketing videos
- Video interviews
- Websites

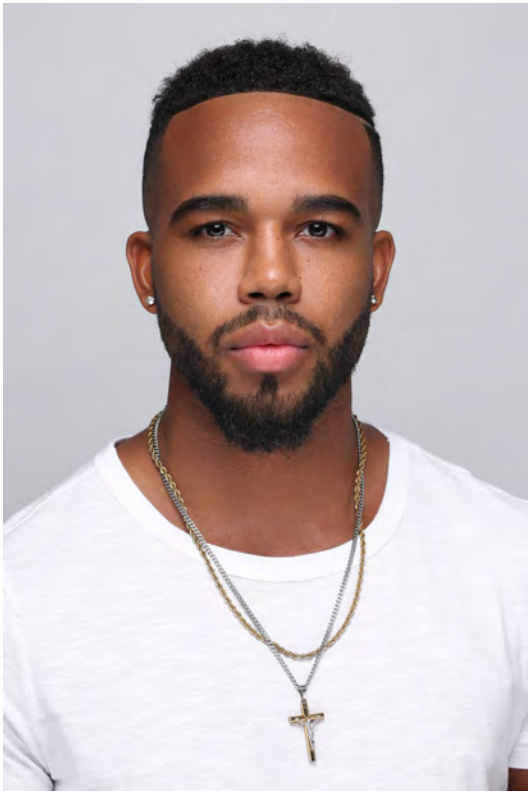
If you do not have the skills listed you can always partner with a third-party contractor or hire someone to join your team who can handle these projects.

## 7. OVERCOMING PRICE OBJECTIONS

Be prepared for clients to attempt to negotiate your pricing. While we all appreciate fiscal responsibilities, you have fiscal obligations too! Establish your value with these steps:

- Listen intently, pause to assess, and repeat their budget concerns back to them so they feel heard and understood.
- Ask any questions you may have, then empathize with their concerns.
- Highlight how the brand photos will help their business look professional.
- Demonstrate your value by sharing content outcome statistics for your clients, including the traffic, leads and sales generated after utilizing your branding services.



Images © Mena Darre Photography



Image © Mena Darre Photography

## 8. STAYING ORGANIZED WITH A CLIENT MOOD BOARD

Once your fees are confirmed and the client has signed their contracts, it's time to begin creating!

I prefer to create a private client mood board on Pinterest for each of my clients. There's no right or wrong way to create a mood board. The goal is to have the visual concept laid out on a physical or digital board for you and your client to view. This helps to keep everyone on the same page, including the makeup artist and wardrobe stylist. Possible mood board elements include:

- The client logo
- Color story
- Images of their products, if any
- Words that describe their brand
- Examples of the look and feel the client wants to convey
- Inspirational poses
- Possible scenes and locations for photoshoot

## 9. CHOOSING YOUR PHOTOSHOOT LOCATIONS

Now it's time to start sourcing your photoshoot locations. Since you will be shooting a mix of portraits for content, you'll need to figure out which setup would be best. For example, the locations can be a photo studio and a local café.

The client should also weigh in on the locations and may even have locations in mind. Confirm that the locations they provide or suggest have enough room for your lighting and equipment. Before confirming a location, ensure you have the following for each photoshoot location:

- Photography permissions (some locations do not allow photography or flash)
- Dedicated time slot
- Insurance (some locations may ask for proof of business insurance)
- Covid guidelines





Images © Mena Darre Photography



Image © Mena Darre Photography

## 10. ADVERTISING YOUR NEW SERVICES

Now that you have a game plan in place, it's time to advertise your new services. Use your photos and videos for your website, social media and targeted online ads. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram offer a variety of ad types, including traffic generation, lead generation and conversion-oriented ads. These ads are budget-friendly, with investments as low as $10 to $20 per week.

Outside of paid advertising you can utilize free Facebook groups to advertise your new services. You can also write blogs to contribute to your website's SEO and ranking on Google.

Adding brand photography to your service list is an excellent way to expand your brand. The tips above are the same strategies I used to expand my services during the pandemic. When the Covid shutdown hit, I had to pivot since weddings and events were cancelled or rescheduled. Many of my clients either launched their side hustle or needed quality photo and video content for their website and social media. Offering brand photography truly helped to keep the doors open. ■



Mena is a former classroom teacher turned photographer. Since the big leap, Mena has had the ability to photograph influencers, political figures, Olympians, small business owners and creatives. Mena enjoys being able to help tell the story behind the brand through imagery.

**website: menadarrephotography.com/ instagram: @instagram.com/menadarrephotography/**



Image © Vanessa Joy



# 5 BASIC LIGHTROOM TECHNIQUES YOU NEED TO USE

with **Vanessa Joy**

Lightroom is a great tool in the arsenal of any photographer. If you're serious about photography, you likely already use Lightroom. In this post, I'll share with you some of my favorite tips that improve my workflow and help to create more compelling images. You may already know and use some of these tips, but hopefully you'll learn something that will allow you to be more expressive the next time you open Lightroom.



Image © Vanessa Joy

## 1. ADJUST SPECIFIC COLORS

This technique will only work if you have distinct colors to mess around with that aren't the same as the skin tones you're photographing (reds and oranges). The hue section of the HSL controls allows you to adjust individual colors, which can be a lot of fun to play with. The little circle icon next to each option will let you select a specific color to adjust. Just click on the icon, then go to the image and click on the color you want to change. Now, with the mouse button still down, slide the mouse just as you would over the slider control.

With this method, you can change only specific colors, provided your image has enough color separation between the objects. This is something you can spend all day just tweaking and adjusting for endless creative possibilities. You can change objects in the photo to match the color of the bridesmaids' dresses in wedding photographs, or just create an entirely new color palette for the scene that's more aesthetically pleasing than what was at the actual location. It's best to start with the hue to find the basic color that you want, and then try to come in with the saturation and lightness to refine it so that it more precisely matches the color you have in mind.

Image © Vanessa Joy





Image © Vanessa Joy

## 2. FIX A BLOWN-OUT SKY

The gradient tool is underutilized in Lightroom. A good use of it is to fix those blown-out skies in your photographs. The blue sky preset dragged from the top will add a slight bit of blue to an otherwise blown-out, white sky. You'll probably need to adjust it a bit with the exposure and saturation tools.

Not all photos will work well with the gradient tool. To get more precision when it's needed, you can instead manually paint the blue color onto the sky. The auto mask tool will help you avoid objects that shouldn't be blue and the erase tool will provide further refinement for when you overshoot your target or if unwanted artifacts pop up.



Image © Vanessa Joy

## 3. ADD SUN FLARE

We're back with the gradient tool. The sun flare adjustment allows you to add a little extra sun flare to your photo to complement what's already there. If you weren't fortunate enough to have a nice sun flare on location, you can use this trick to add one in.

You'll want to start by trying to place the sun flare in the direction the sun is facing so it's more realistic. But you can certainly experiment with different angles or even multiple angles for your artificial sun flare gradient and see what works best for you. You may end up with something that looks a little more stylized if you go overboard with it, but even that can look great in certain circumstances. Just play around and get a feel for how the sun flare gradient works and find a way to use it that matches your style and the aesthetic goals you or your customer have. The settings for the sun flare gradient involve lowering your contrast and clarity, and raising the warmth. Play with it to your heart's content or grab my pre-loaded local adjustment brush at presets.breatheyourpassion.com.




Image © Vanessa Joy

Image © Vanessa Joy

## 4. MAKE TREES WARMER

Here's a simple trick that I like to add to images that have trees in them. To my eyes, the dark green of some evergreen trees seems lifeless, as if these trees are where light goes to die. Maybe this is just because I've lived in Jersey too long and I'm tired of seeing green, but I like to make a simple adjustment to those trees so they pop a little more. You can try different color-grading presets, or try bringing up the shadows to bring some life back into them, but none of that works all that well compared to my method.

Go back to the hue settings and move your green slider down to yellow—the trees will come alive! As long as your trees don't end up looking dead, the switch from a bright green to a more yellow hue adds warmth to the scene and makes the whole photo feel more alive.

Of course, you can further tweak the color by adjusting the saturation and luminance just as you did in the first tip. Since you've brought some yellow into the scene, you can adjust the yellow slider as well as the green. You'll need to be very careful playing with the yellow values, though, as they will almost certainly have an effect on the skin tone. A little warmth won't hurt there, but you don't want your subjects looking like they are jaundiced, especially if they are paying you to make them look good.

Speaking of green, too much ambient green in a scene will cause the skin tone to have a bit of a green coloration to it. Not so much that your subjects look like aliens, but enough to be unpleasant looking or perhaps make them look a little sickly. Pulling the greens over towards yellow is also a great way to get rid of that effect on the skin and restore some of the natural warmth to their complexions.

## 5. ADJUST SKIN TONES

The selector tool we used in the first tip to adjust the hue, saturation, and luminance can be used to adjust skin tones as well. This time, instead of starting with the hue, we'll start with the luminance. With the little circle button pressed to enable the selector tool, pick a nice midtone color on the person's skin and move it up a little bit to brighten their complexion in comparison to the background.

You don't want to go crazy here, as things can start looking bad quickly and, of course, you don’t want to drastically change a person’s skin tone. Instead, make minor, subtle adjustments. Think of it as adding a reflector, but after the fact.

One likely side effect of adjusting the skin tone this way is that you'll end up washing out the skin. This isn't really the desired effect, but can be counteracted by using the saturation tool to bring some of the color back. Minor hue adjustments can help as well. Just be careful as changing hue can make skin look very unnatural.

Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

## BONUS TIP

While we're on the topic of skin, let me share with you one bonus tip that can make your subject's face really pop. You can use the local adjustment brush to contour a face similar to the way you would with makeup.

For a simple effect, you can play with the dodge and burn settings on the brush. On my website, you'll find a nice collection of Lightroom and Capture One presets that will give you a much broader set of tools to work with at presets.breatheyourpassion.com.

Of course, head over to Behind the Shutter's YouTube page for a look at all of these tools in action. ■






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

**website: vanessajoy.com instagram: @instagram.com/vanessajoy/**

Canon

SEE HOW CREATIVES AROUND THE WORLD

# BRING THEIR ART TO LIFE

WITH CANON PRO PRINTERS



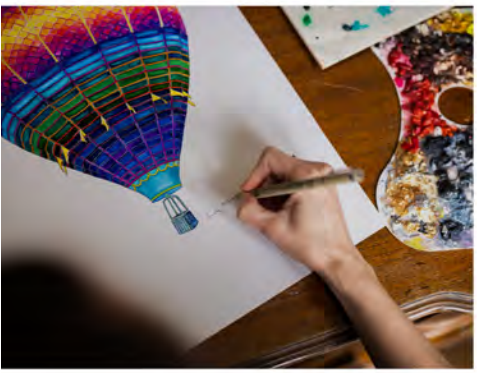
ALYISSA JOHNSON
GRAPHIC ARTIST



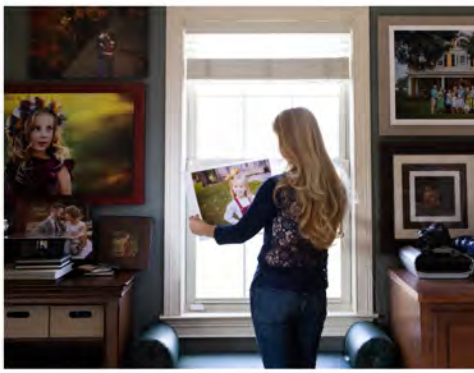
JENNY POLLITTE
PHOTOGRAPHER



EMILY MERCEDES
ARTIST



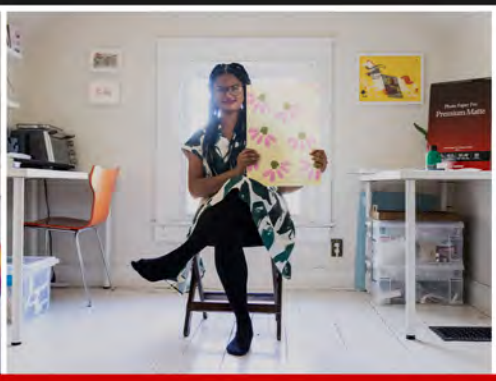


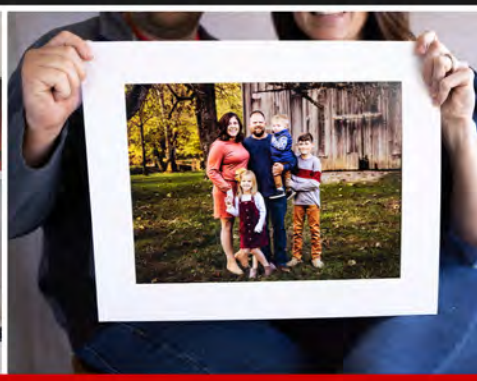


IT'S MORE THAN JUST AN IDEA OR A CONCEPT. IT'S AN OBSESSION.

**YOU ENVISION IT. YOU CREATE IT. YOU PRINT IT.**





LEARN MORE - EQUALLYOBSESSED.COM

# INSPIRATIONS

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

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

**Sal Cincotta**, Publisher

BEST SENIOR IMAGE



Image © Jack Savage



Image © Heather Hammond Photography



Image © Trysh Jaeger Photography



Image © Nostalgic by Kara Lee



Image © Kris Bott | Photography & Design



Image © Nature's Child Photography



Image © Kathy Weigman Photography LLC



Image © DarciAmundson



Image © Imago Dei Photography- Crystal Reddick



Image © Limboden Photography



Image © Belle Époque Photography



Image © Nature's Child Photography



Image © Maria N Polleiner Photography

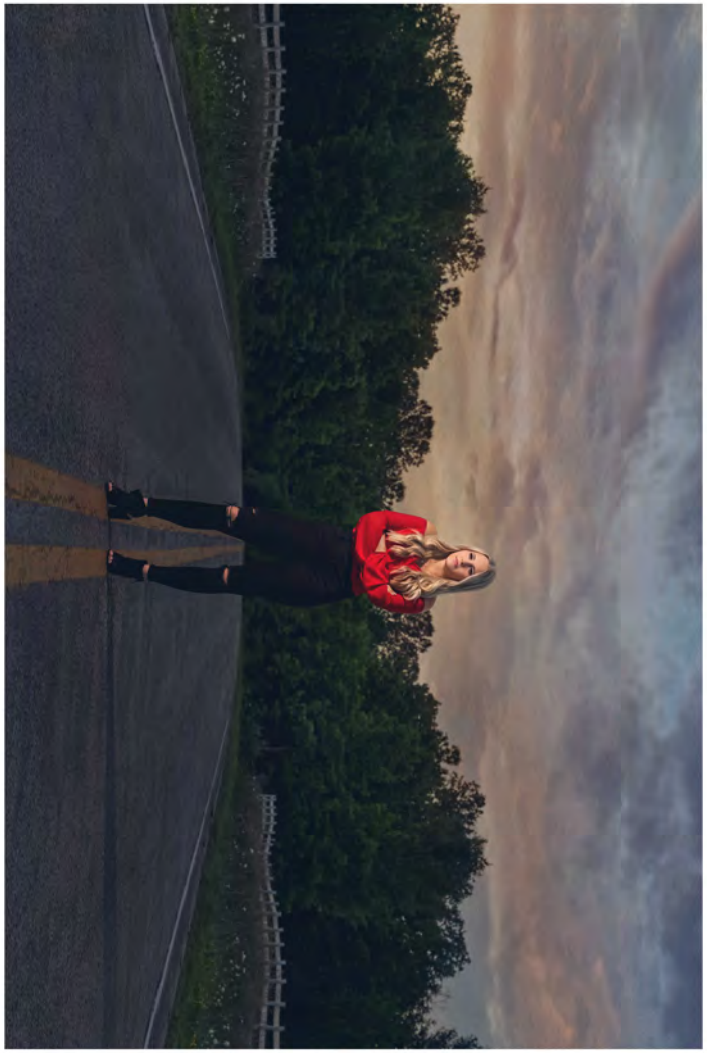
Image © Jessica Robertson Photographic Artistry



Image © Nature's Child Photography



Image © Ambient Photography



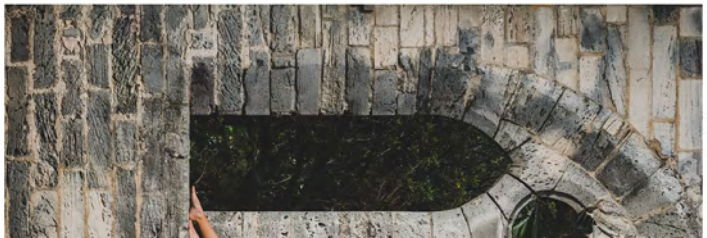














Image © Imago Dei Photography- Crystal Reddick

Image © Tiny Dragon Photography



Image © Steven Corley Photography



Image © Maurice Ligon Photography




Image © Trysh Jaeger Photography

Image © Lindsey Rabon Photography



Image © Lindsey Rabon Photography



Image © Nostalgic by Kara Lee



Image © Patty Ingalls Photography

Image © Massaro Images



Image © Marvin Blue





Image © Marshall Perspective Images



Image © CTandRina Photography Studio LLC

Image © Tina Marie Photography



Image © Lisa Jones Photography





Image © Monochrome Photo Studios



Image © David Bowman


Image © Nostalgic by Kara Lee







Image © Trysh Jaeger Photography

Image © Corey Wallis Photography



Image © www.AmberHenryPhotography.com



Image © Cathy Quarles Photography LLC



Image © Nadia Chapman Photography



Image © Tiny Dragon Photography



Image © FELICIA SCUHTTE PORTRAIT



Image © FELICIA SCUHTTE PORTRAIT



Image © Whitney Stilwell



Image © Inna Kalashnikova



Image © Little Lion Photography Co



Image © Frank McDonough



Image © Barbara MacFerrin Photography

Image © Holly Hood Photography



Image © Josh Dean Photography



Image © Limboden Photography



Image © CeMe Photography & Designs

Image © Christy Fassnacht Photography





Image © Connie Etter Photography



Image © Kris Butt Photography & Design



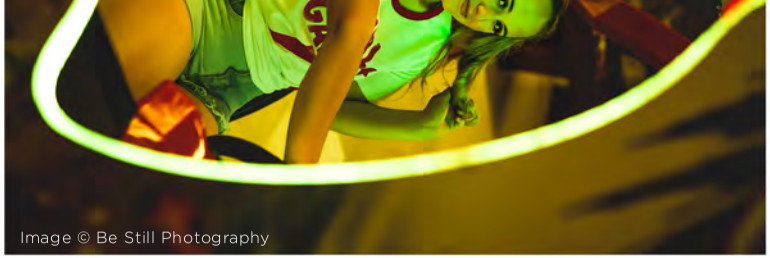







Image © David Beckham Photography.jpg



Image © pixels on display photography, LLC



Image © Shanell Bledsoe Photography



Image © Aaron Taylor Photography



Image © Shanell Bledsoe Photography



Image © 2022 Copyright Harrington Photography, Three Oaks, MI



Image © Shaw Photography Group



Image © 8 Oak Acres Photography




Image © Be Still Photography



Image © Jrsactionshots LLC



Image © Criss Ford Photography




Image © Corey Wallis Photography

Image © Giovanni Logrono Photography



Image © Amanda Kranz Photography



Image © BridgetteKellyPhotography

Image © Belle Époque Photography



Image © Belle Époque Photography



Image © miss lady jane




Image © Grant Young Photo



Image © Jodi Walsh Photography

Image © Whitney Stilwell



Image © BridgetteKellyPhotography




Image © Kim Mumford Photography

Image © Emily Megan Photography



Image © Kimball Vince Photography Saskatoon, SK CANADA

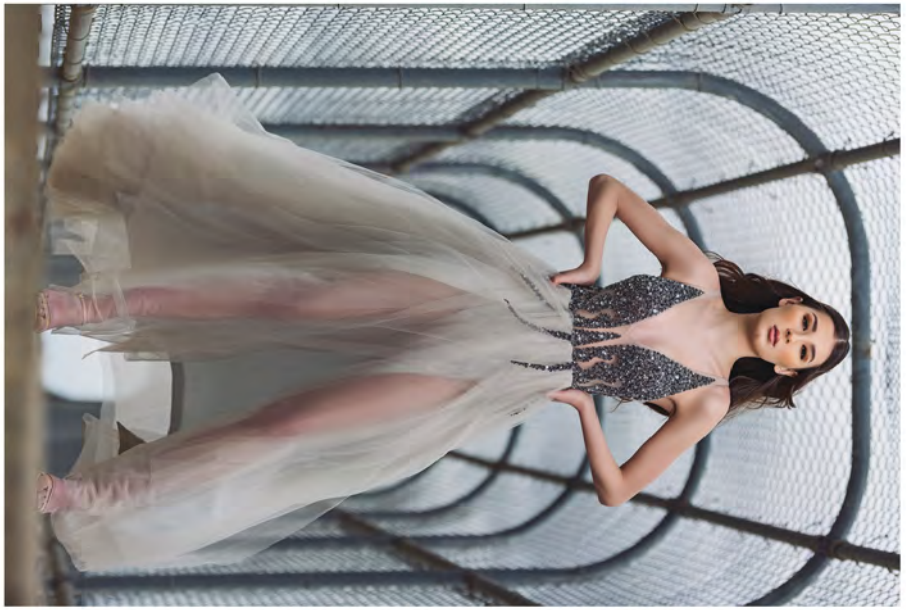


Image © Rich Taylor Photography





Image © Moments Photography VT

Image © @AprilSommers

Image © Gary Box



Image © Four 2 North Photography



Image © Mark the Date Photography



Image © Irish Eyes Seniors by Nicki McGuire







Image © FELICIA SCUHTTE PORTRAIT




Image © PdPhotography



Image © Lynette Smith Photography



Image © Regina Lynn Photography



Image © SugaShoc Photography



Image © Polly's Lens Photography



Image © Tanya Smith Photography


Reference
Active
Reference Photo :




# TOP 10 TIPS FOR BEGINNERS IN LIGHTROOM CLASSIC

with **Dustin Lucas**

Whether you are just starting out or have been in business for years, you've likely come across Adobe Lightroom Classic. Learning this tool can be daunting at first—and with all the tutorials and courses you can buy, it seems hopeless to start. Having used this program for almost a decade, I am still learning and making my own workflows better.

If I can give an early tip it would be to map out a workflow or plan when you first start out. Do you want to make a single Lightroom catalog for all your work this year or make one per shoot? You might be thinking, "What the hell is a catalog and why do I need it?" We'll get there and with this article you are gonna learn the top 10 tips when starting out to help you along the way!

Lightroom is a digital asset management system, or DAM for short, which means you will basically have to create a catalog or catalogs, import your raw images in a catalog, edit within the program and export your edits to share them. If you've used Adobe Bridge and Camera Raw, Lightroom is the supercharged offspring of these two programs.

Tip #1 is catalog management and how to protect your work. Tip #2 is all about importing files and building smart previews. Tip #3 is all about building previews before you edit—I call this the preview game! Tip #4 is edit on the fly with Quick Develop to make global adjustments to your images. Tip #5 is to get focused when selecting or culling your images with Lights Out mode. Tip #6 is speedy crop and straightening technique. Tip #7 is use Reference Mode to dial in your color correction consistency. Tip #8 is making presets from import to keywording, to editing and exporting. Tip #9 is after editing, it's time to rename the right way. Tip #10 is learn your shortcuts or hot-keys to work faster.

## TIP #1: CATALOG MANAGEMENT

When you launch the program for the first time you are prompted to create a catalog. Fear not, you can multiply catalogs later or create a single catalog to use all year. I recommend the latter and working in what's called a master catalog workflow. All of your events and sessions get imported into a single catalog. Make sure you save this catalog locally on your computer as opposed to having it on a external hard-drive. This will keep it running at optimal speeds and less likely to have errors. Another overlooked part of managing your Lightroom catalogs is backup.

You can choose where to save and how frequently you want to be prompted to back up. Just like your precious raw files, you need to back up your catalogs in case you corrupt one or lose it altogether. A workflow without file backup is just plain poor planning. Go to the top menu bar to click Lightroom Classic>Catalog Settings or hold Option and Command and strike the "," (comma) key. (Fig. 1) You can choose how often you'd like Lightroom to prompt you to back up when closing a catalog. I like to choose "Every time Lightroom exits." (Fig. 2) Then in the Back Up Catalog pop-up window you can choose where to save along with some cleanup tasks. Do not have this save to the hard-drive your master catalog is saved. Again, the goal is to have a backup offsite from the master. I would suggest a cloud storage option you have linked to your computer and store it there, like Dropbox, Google Drive, Amazon Photos, etc. (Fig. 3)

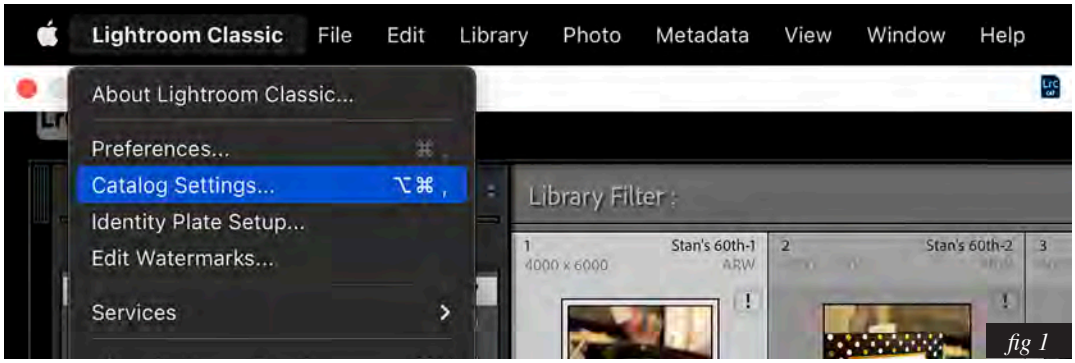



*fig 1*

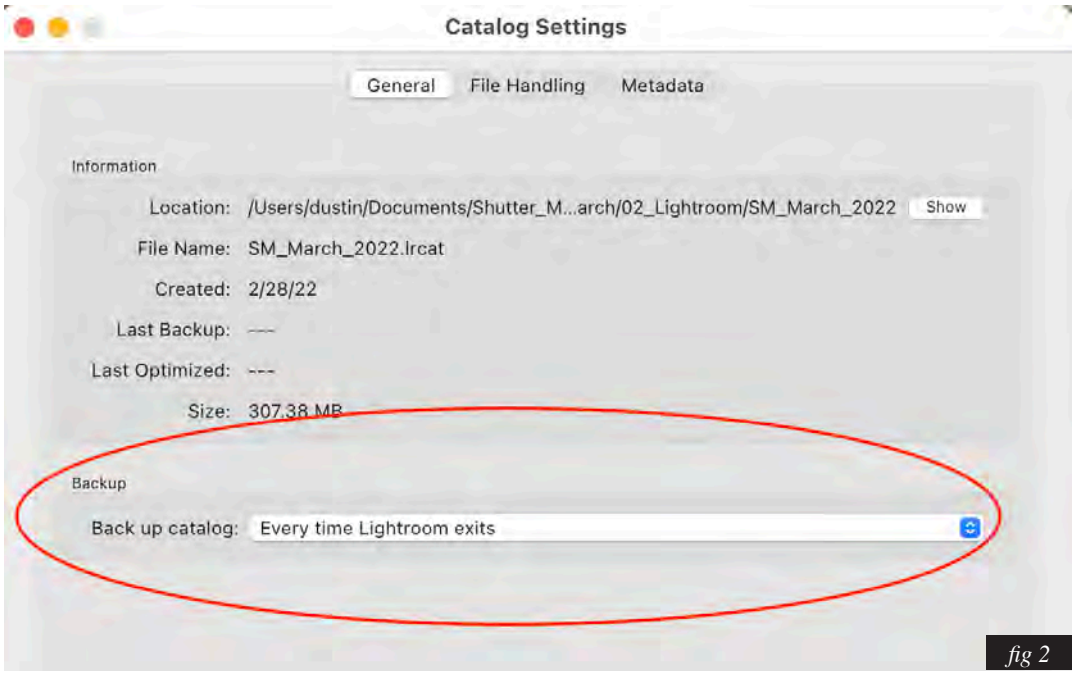



*fig 2*

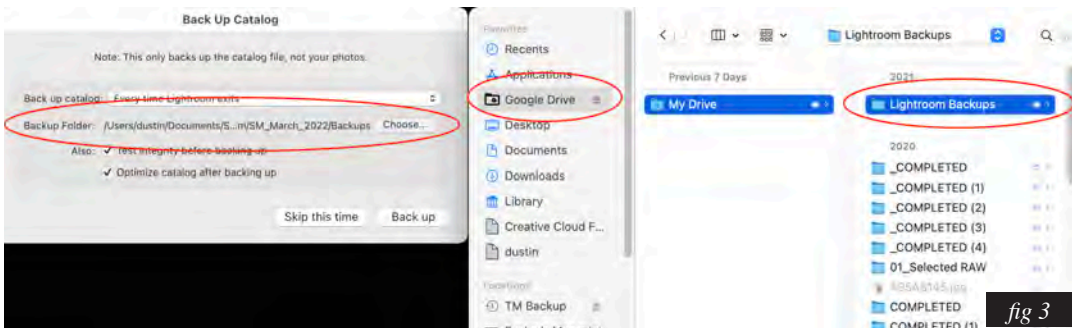



*fig 3*

## TIP #2: IMPORT AND BUILD SMART PREVIEWS

Keep in mind when it comes to editing in Lightroom you have to import your images into a catalog. It's simple to do but knowing the fastest way is important. If you already ingested your files from your memory card to an external hard-drive, you can simply add the images, which is the faster way. (Fig. 4) Keep in mind if you are copying them, this process takes a lot longer, but it's a useful way to let Lightroom organize your file folder structure. Do not use Copy as DNG, this is useless and I suggest to keep your raw files raw! Moving into the File Handling section, here is where this tip comes in handy. (Fig. 5)

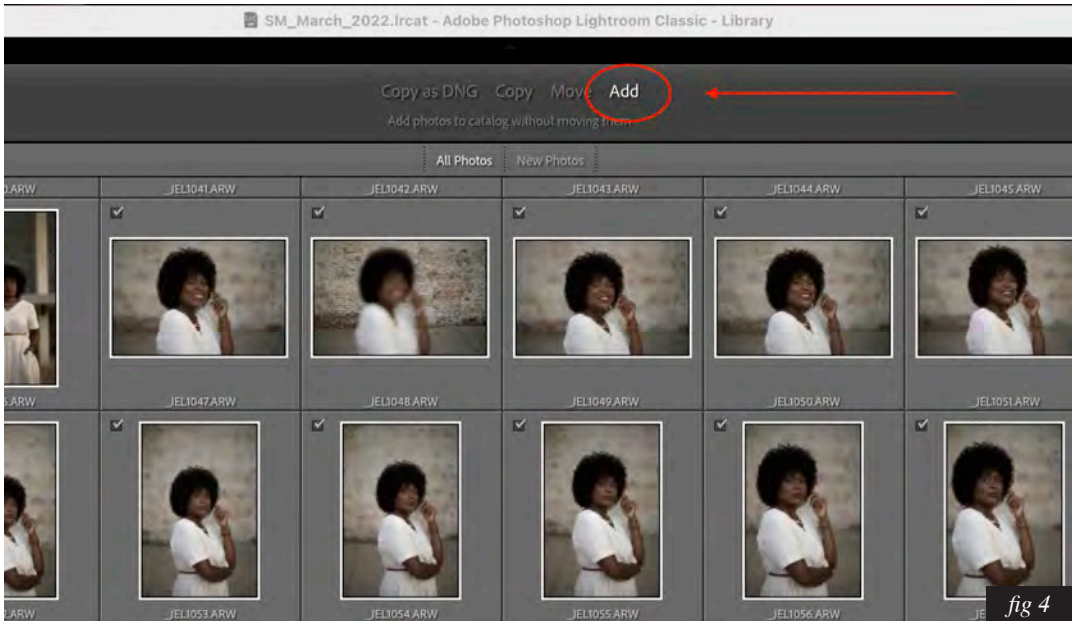


*fig 4*

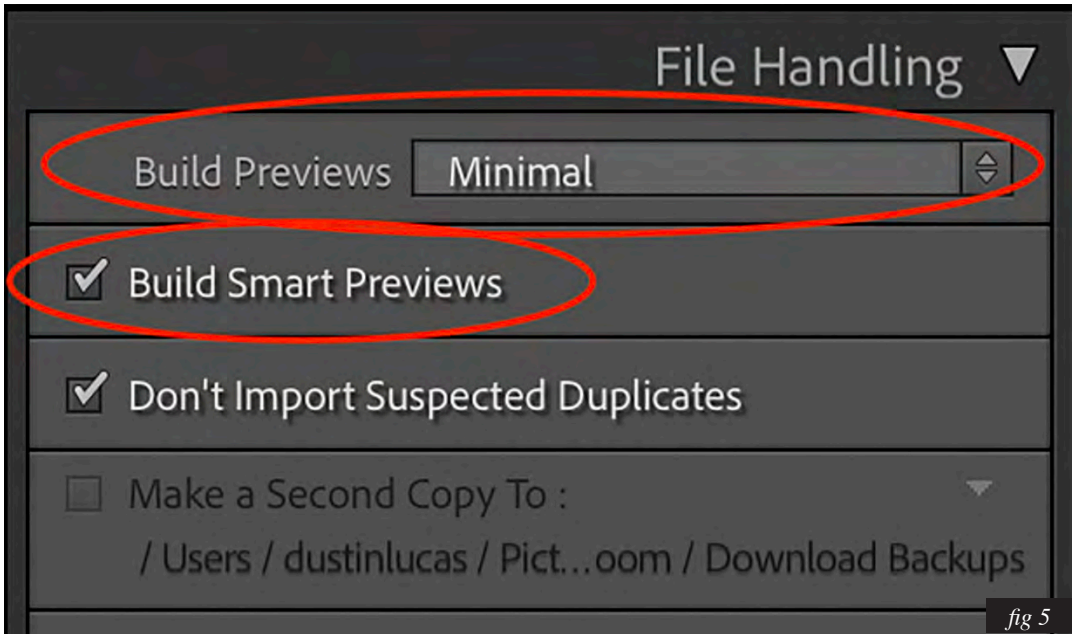


*fig 5*

Make sure to keep the Build Previews option set to Minimal versus leaving it as Embedded & Sidecar. This means Lightroom will use less energy building previews from your raw files, which takes forever. You should instead check the Build Smart Previews box to start this process right away. Once this is done you can essentially take your raw file offline or disconnect the external drive while still having full ability to edit. Doing this will give Lightroom a massive performance increase! (Fig. 6)

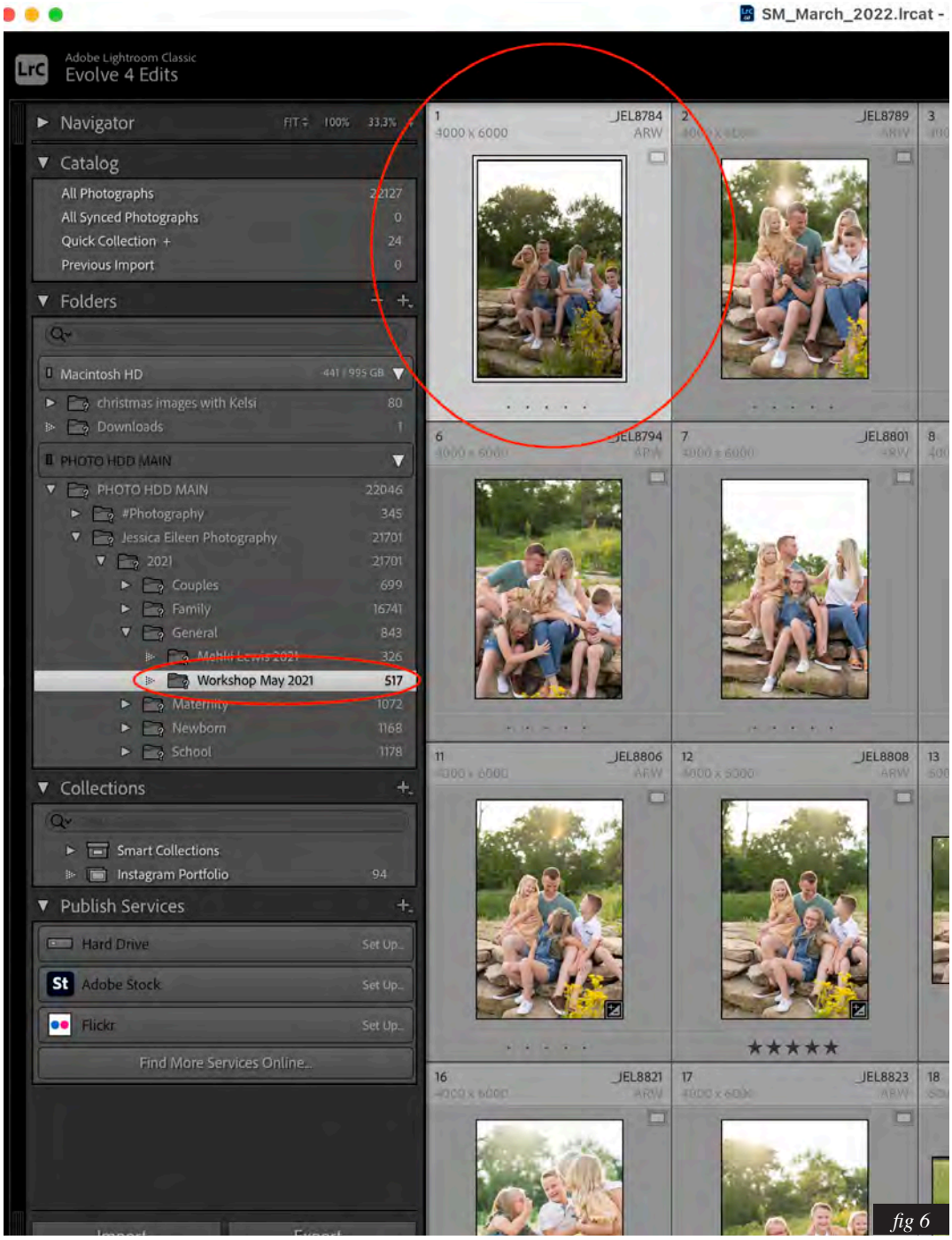


*fig 6*

## TIP #3: BUILD PREVIEWS BEFORE EDITING

Now that your files are imported and Smart Previews are built, you are ready to disconnect your raw files from the catalog. You can either physically disconnect or update folder location to the wrong folder path. This forces Lightroom to use the Smart Previews, which are roughly 1/10th the size. (Fig. 7ab) You might be wondering why you would want to have the raw files connected while editing, and the short answer is speed. Most raw files are 30MB+ and Lightroom takes a lot of energy already rendering previews, adjustments to files, etc. Lessen the workload so you can efficiently cycle between thousands of images without waiting for previews to load.

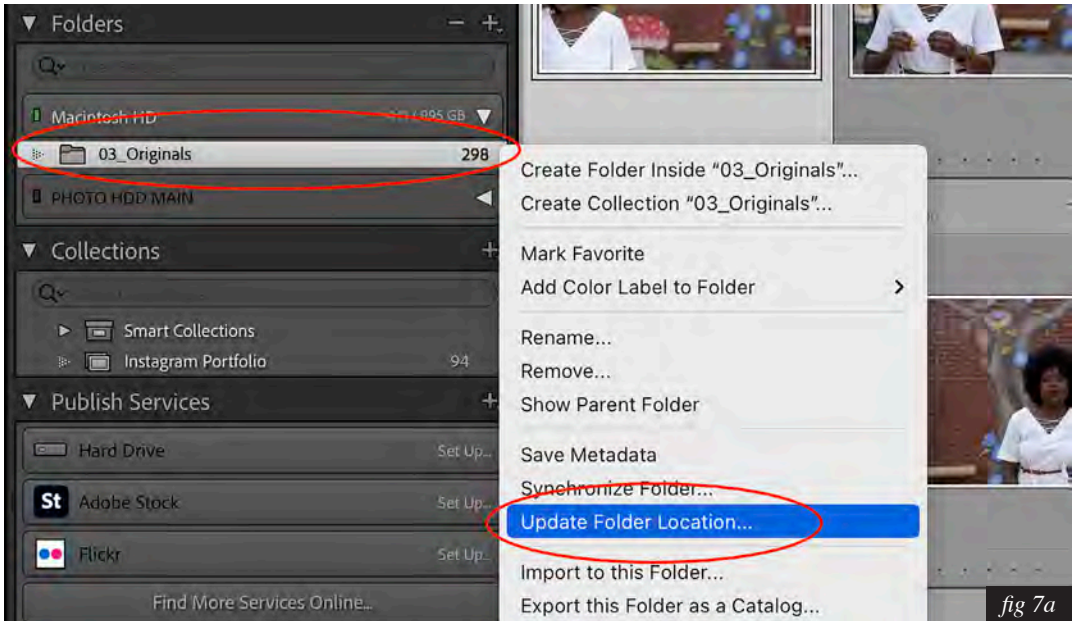


fig 7a

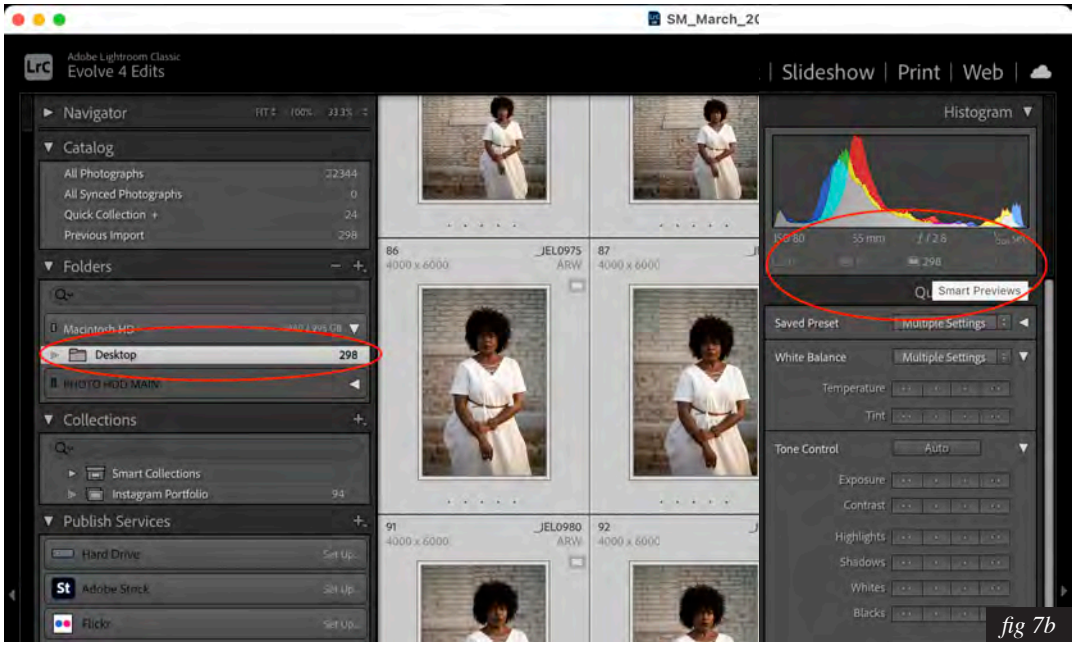


fig 7b

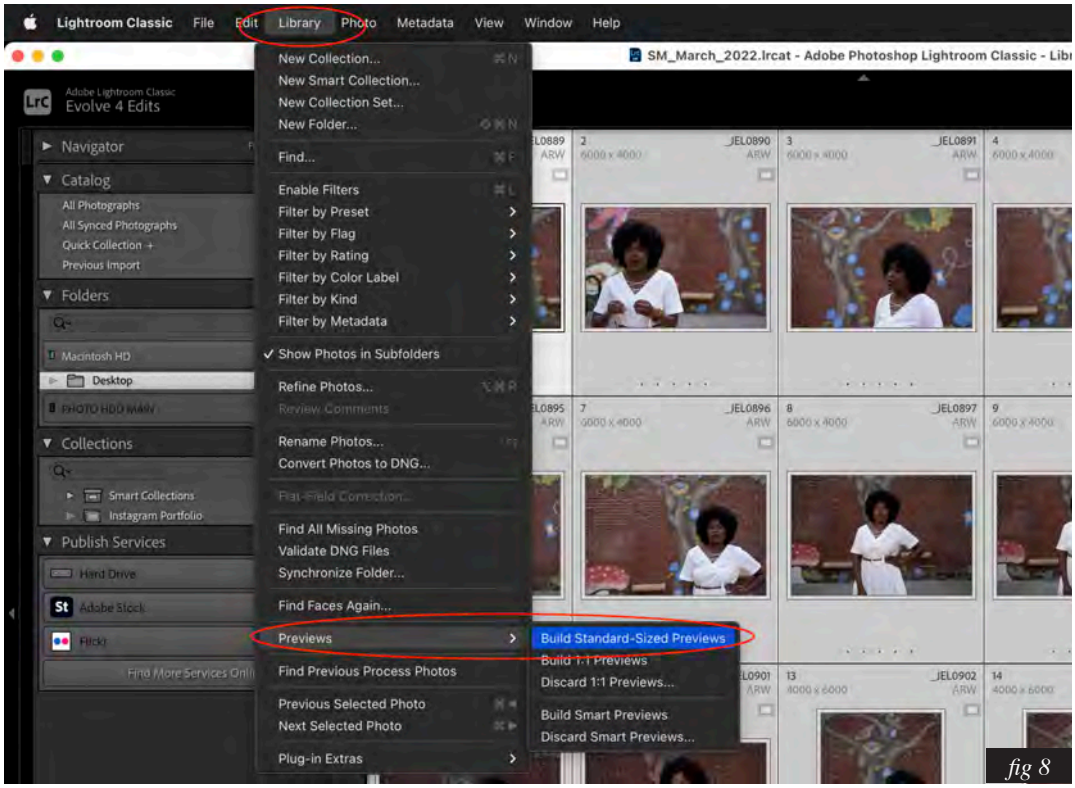


*fig 8*

Lightroom also builds Standard Previews in the background every time you make a change to the files. That is why it's important to build Standard Previews from your Smart Previews so it's as fast as possible. Reducing load times is essential when culling and color correcting. You can force previews to be built in Library mode by going to the top Menu bar>Previews>Build Standard-Sized Previews. (Fig. 8) If you are only selected on one image, it will ask if you want to build all or just one. Of course you want to build all in this case. (Fig. 9)

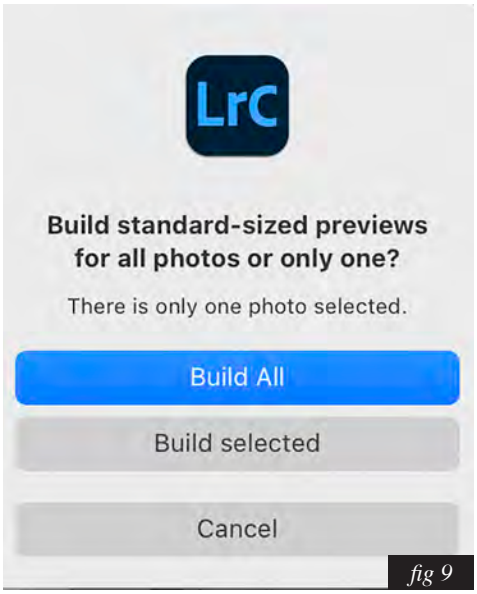


*fig 9*

## TIP #4: QUICK DEVELOP PANEL

One of my favorite tools in Library mode is Quick Develop. This allows you to globally apply Basic Panel adjustments like temp, tint, exposure, highlights, etc. while in Library or Grid mode. This is usually used after I color correct files in Develop mode when an entire section is too cool, bright, flat, etc. and I want to incrementally fix all the images. (Fig. 10a) To make very small changes, you can hold Shift while clicking the single arrow options for the Tone Control adjustments. I highly recommend utilizing this tool when proofing your editing in the end. (Fig. 10b)

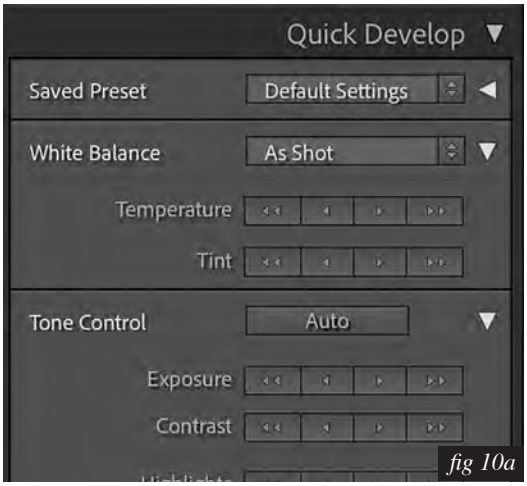


*fig 10a*

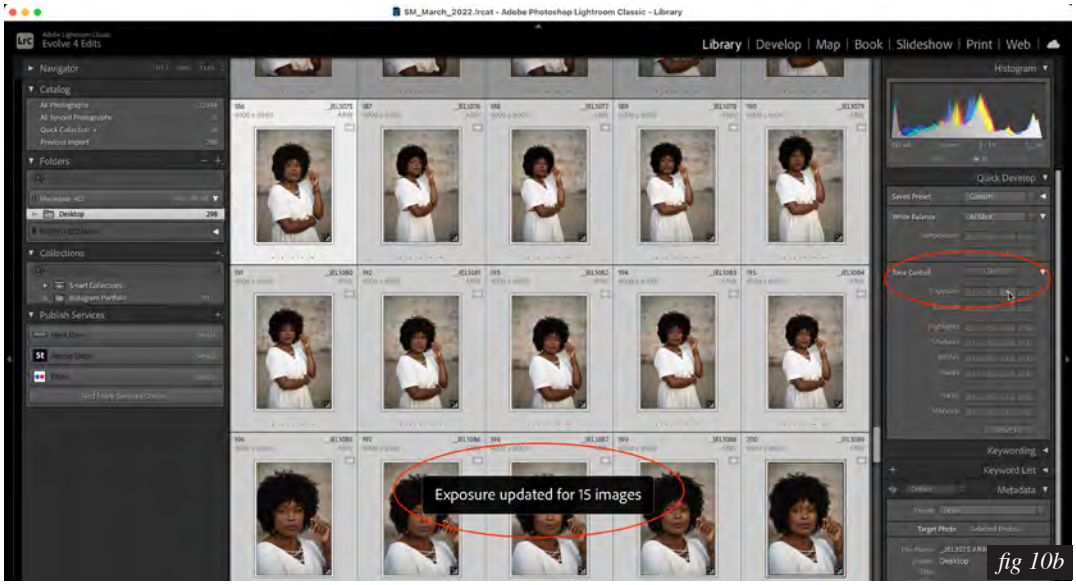


*fig 10b*

## TIP #5: LIGHTS OUT WHEN CULLING

Culling always comes first when it comes to my post-production workflow and more specifically editing. I want to quickly cycle through thousands of images and choose the best ones to color correct. I also want to be laser-focused on the single image I am viewing. (Fig. 11) In Library mode you can double-click the first image, hold Shift and strike the Tab key to hide panels and then strike the L key twice. (Fig. 12) You are now in Lights Out mode. Culling can seem daunting and if your Library filters correctly it should be a breeze. Here is what I do: Filter based on flag status (unflagged images), and when you see an image to cull out/remove you can strike the X key to apply the reject flag. (Fig. 13ab) Once you make a pass through all the images, you can then then refine selections. (Fig. 14)



*fig 11*

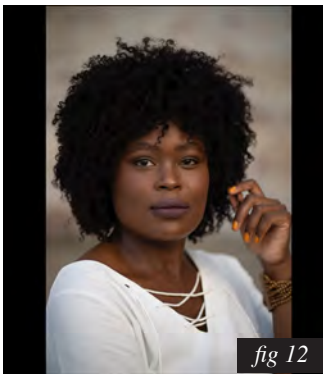


*fig 12*

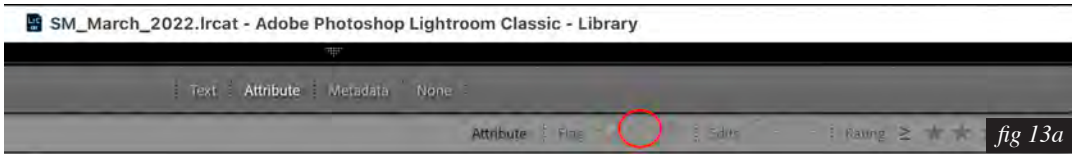



*fig 13a*

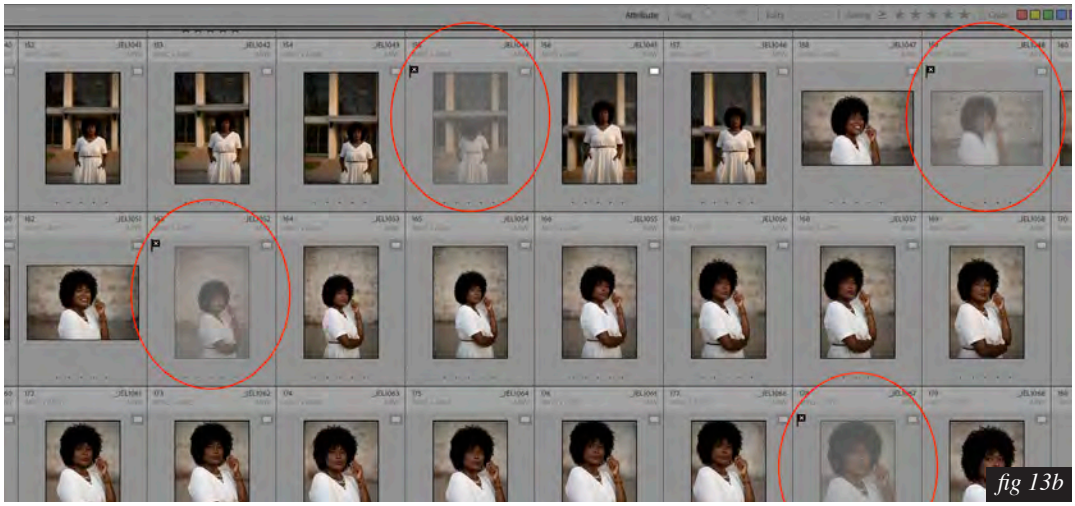


*fig 13b*



*fig 14*

## TIP #6: STRAIGHTEN IMAGES ON THE FLY

When you have a crooked horizon line or an anchored architectural element you want to fix, there is an automated way to apply the Transform tool. I like to use the Full option and it fixes skew and crooked images, however, it can distort your images. (Fig. 15) To simply fix tiled images, you can choose Level instead. (Fig. 16) I like to use the crop tool for choosing the specific point I want to straighten to. Strike the R key to enter cropping, hold Command, and click and drag on an element you want to straighten the image to. (Fig. 17) Continue holding the Command key and arrow right to stay in this tool and cycle to the next image. This is a massive time saver to stay in the tool while straightening multiple images.



*fig 15*

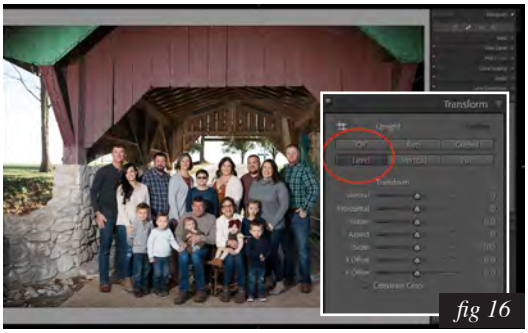


*fig 16*



*fig 17*

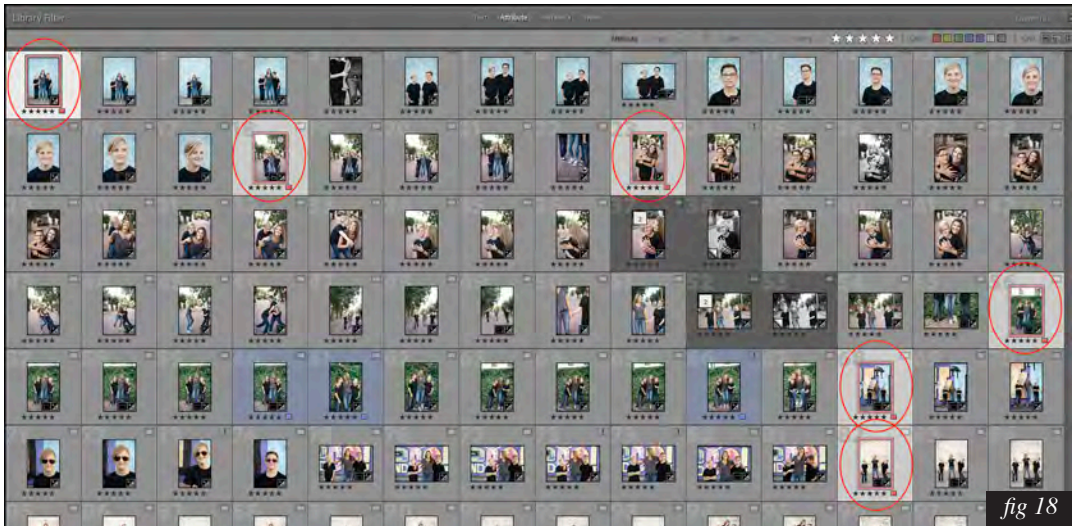

fig 18



fig 19


fig 20

## TIP #7: EDIT IN REFERENCE MODE

When it comes to color correcting, I am a huge advocate for making samples. I typically choose the first image of each sequence and then edit those selected images only at first. This is called the divide and conquer method and it's extremely useful for large weddings. (Fig. 18) The first image I would choose is a closeup of the main subject in even lighting. Then once I am done I open Reference Mode by holding Shift and striking the R key. Then you want to make sure the lock is closed so that image remains on the left. (Fig. 19) Then you can cycle through the other samples staying in Develop mode and matching them side by side. This is the quickest way to edit consistently. (Fig. 20)

## TIP #8: CREATE PRESETS FROM IMPORT, TO EDITING TO EXPORTING

Having the ability to save presets has been an essential function for Lightroom over the years. This lets you save preferences for repeated use in the future. Above all, it will help you save time and keep your workflow consistent. When importing you can save a preset for the previous preview settings I mentioned early when adding files. This becomes vital if you are importing from memory cards and have a standard way of organizing files. You can save all these preferences to quickly apply. (Fig. 21) In Develop mode you can make a starting point for your editing to apply specific tone, lens correction, HSL, profiles, etc. to all images before editing. Remembering what you did before or applied can be easily missed. Why not save it in a preset and keep things simple. (Fig. 22)

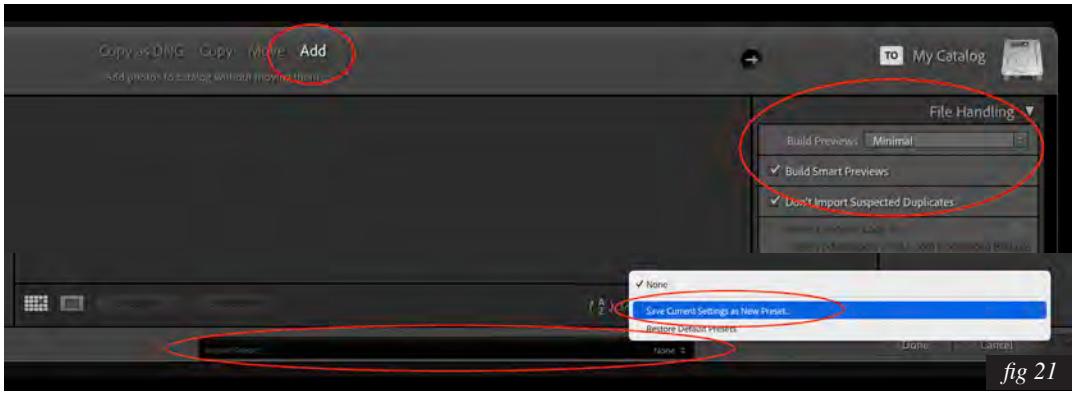


*fig 21*

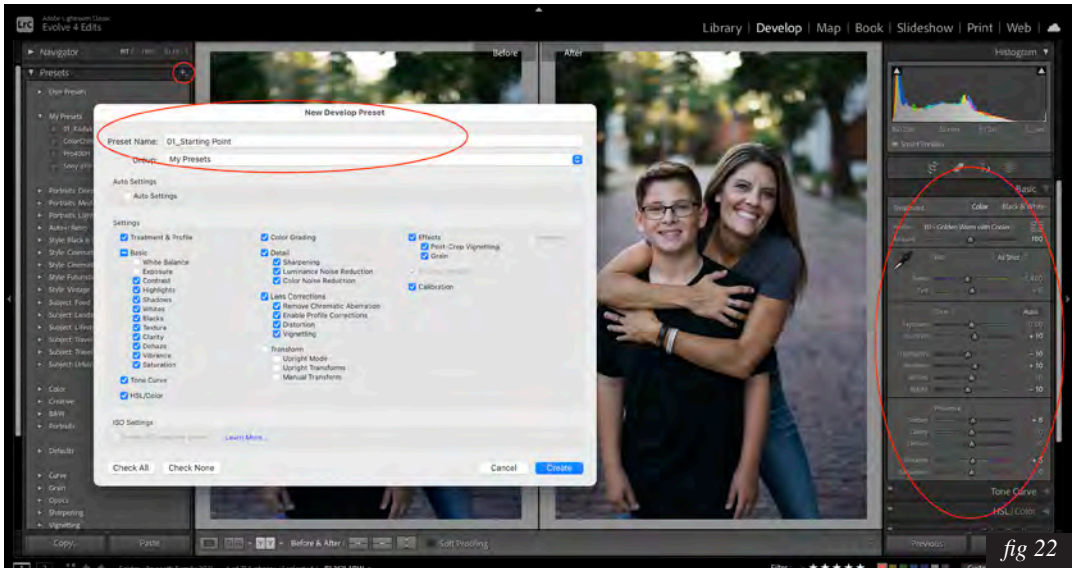


*fig 22*

When exporting images, you have the same saving ability. Creating multiple presets helps when needing to export to specific output methods like displaying on a TV for your sales preview, Instagram, Facebook, website, labs for prints, etc. Keeping these presets handy makes Lightroom life much easier! (Fig.23)

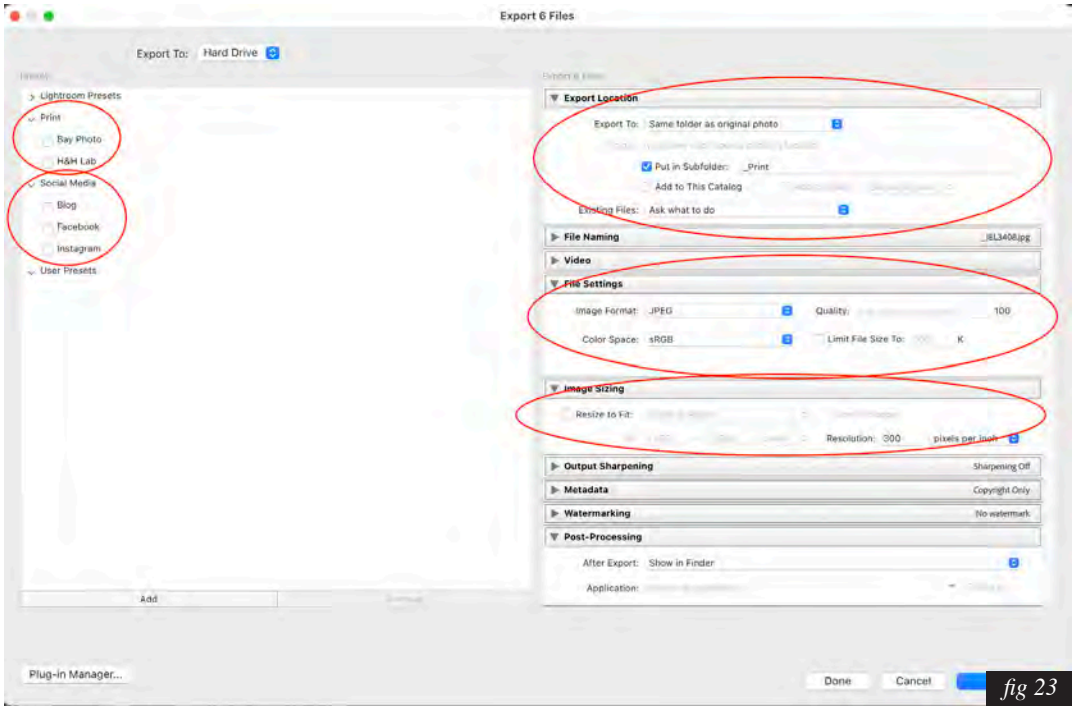


*fig 23*

## TIP #9: RENAMING FILES AT THE END/ARCHIVE

This is a key part of your workflow as you will want to rename the final edits in sequential order starting with 001. At this point you would want to relink you raw files so you can properly rename inside Lightroom. (Fig. 24) The reason I recommend renaming before you export is so your raw files are named the same as your JPGs later.

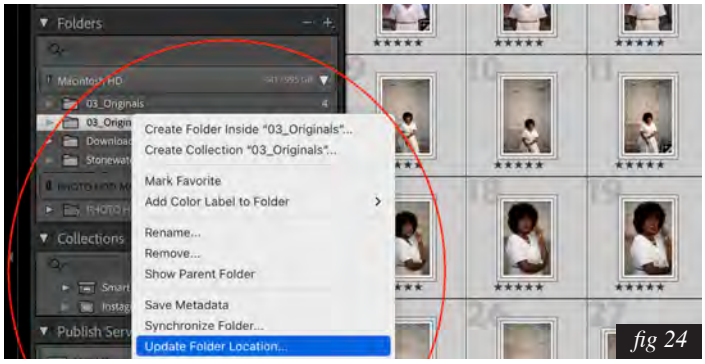


*fig 24*

When you design a book or post files for your client, you don't want two different names for the same file. After selecting all the files in Library mode you will need to click the Batch Rename button under Metadata panel. (Fig. 25) Then in the Filename Template editor you can add the client's name, date, event type and sequence. Once you apply, this will rename the original names of the raw files. (Fig. 26ab)

You can even move the files to a new Selected Raw folder to get even more organized in Lightroom. Select all images you've renamed in Library mode, click the + button in the Folders panel to add a new subfolder and name it "Selected Raws." (Fig. 27abc) Since you have your files selected you can check the Include Selected Photos box as well. This will move the files the proper way within Lightroom. Doing this outside would cause your files to unlink and be missing.

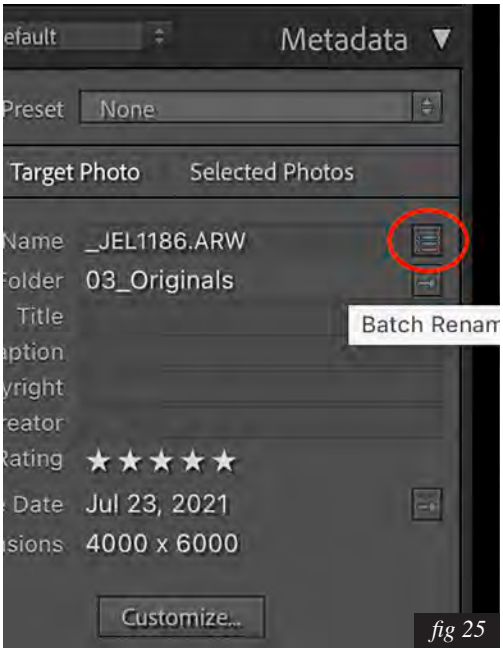


*fig 25*



*fig 26a*

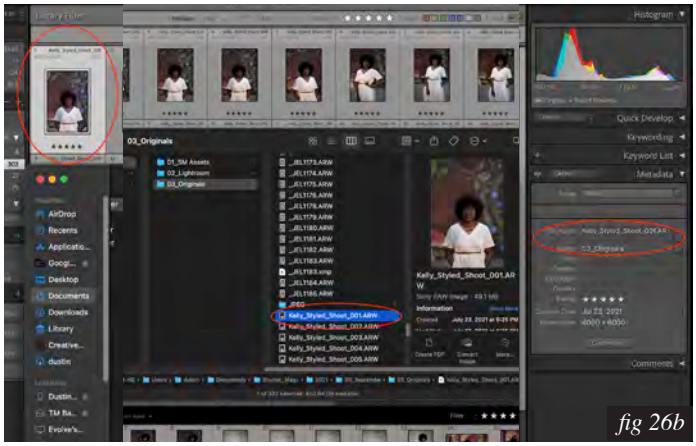


*fig 26b*

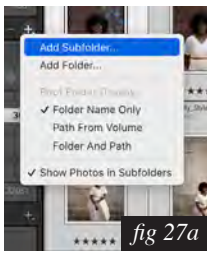


*fig 27a*

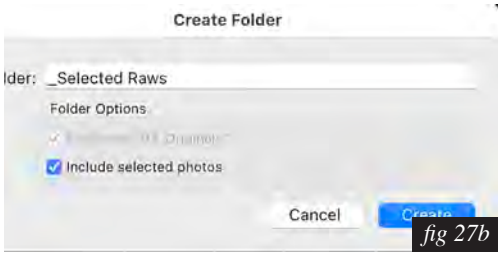


*fig 27b*



*fig 27c*

## TIP #10: SHORTCUTS/HOT-KEYS

When it comes to editing thousands of images you need every split second you can get! This is why shortcuts or hot-keys are so important. You can access them easily in each mode by holding Command and striking the "/" key. This is your first shortcut to memorize! (Fig. 28ab) If you find that a shortcut isn't on the list, you can make one up!



*fig 28a*



*fig 28b*

If you are a Mac user, start by launching System Preferences. Click on the Keyboard icon and chose the Shortcuts tab at the top. (Fig. 29)

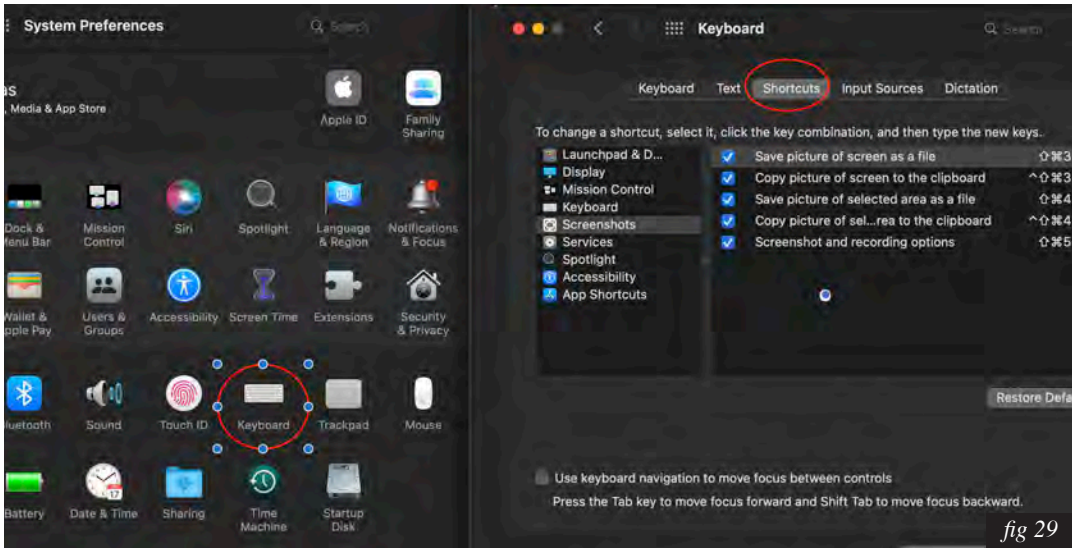


*fig 29*

Then select App Shortcuts in the list on the left side and you'll notice Lightroom Classic is not listed. To add an app click the + button, navigate to the applications folder and choose Adobe Lightroom Classic. (Fig. 30) Then you can select Lightroom in the Shortcut list and click the + button to add a custom one. In the Menu Title section it is important type exactly as it is shown in the Lightroom Menus. (Fig. 31) For example, if I want to make a shortcut for building Standard Previews, in the Library menu it's referred to as "Build Standard-Sized Previews." (Fig. 32) Then I would have to come up with a unique shortcut combination. I want to use the P key since this is for previews and would eventually land on Shift, Option, Command + P. (Fig. 33) Once I relaunch Lightroom Classic I can simply run this function in a split second! (Fig. 34)



*fig 30*

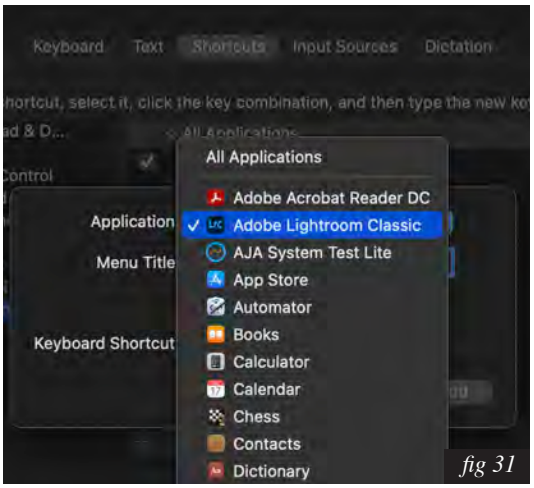


*fig 31*

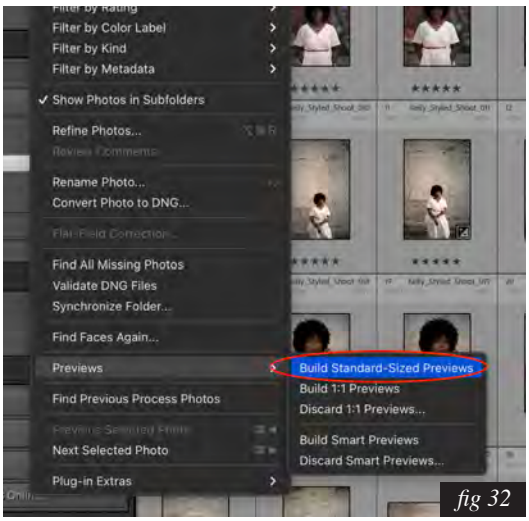


*fig 32*

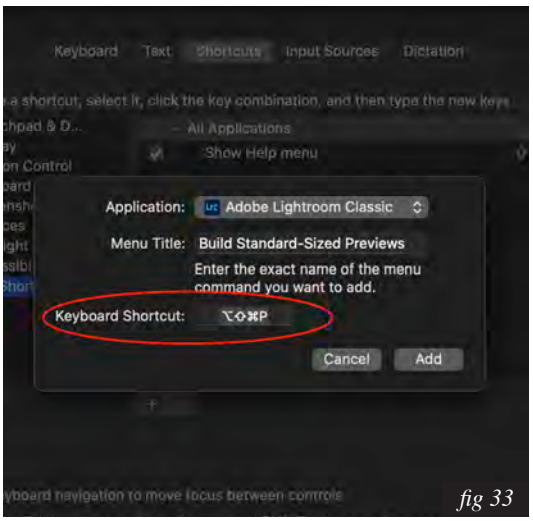
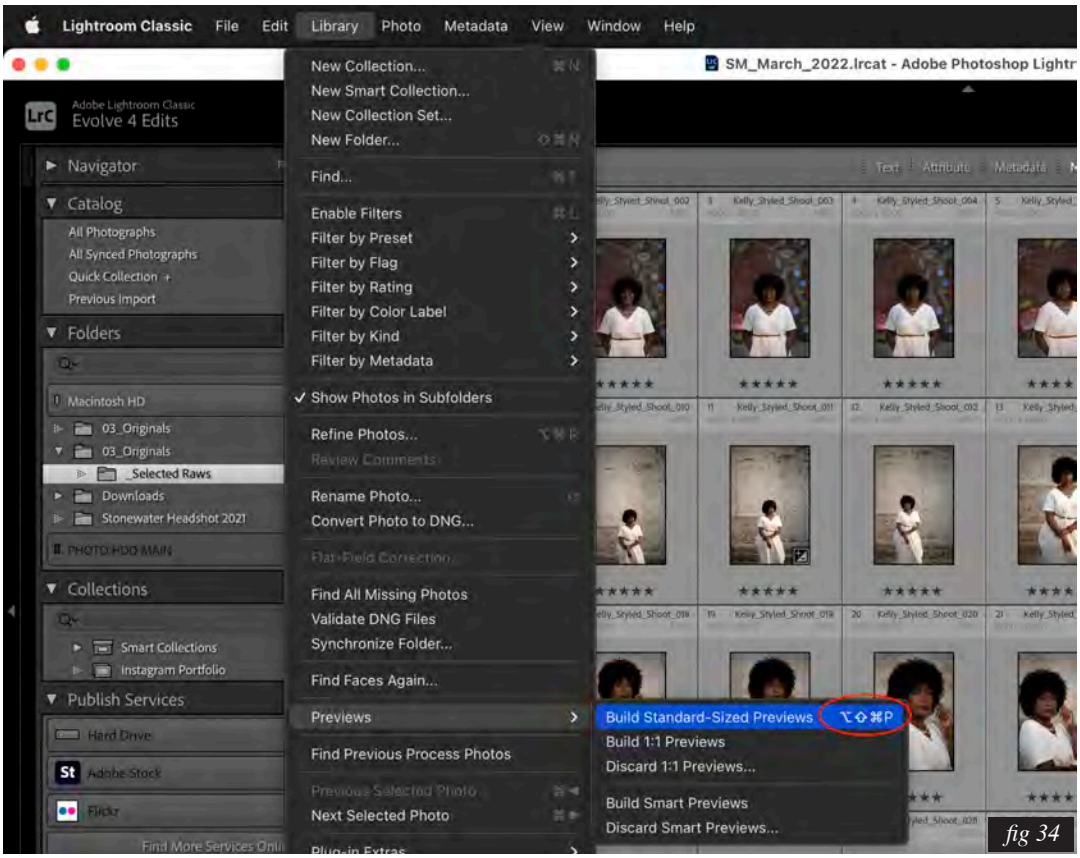


*fig 33*




## THE RESULTS

Lightroom will always have a learning curve and if you find yourself to be teachable I can assure you will do well. These 10+ tips are my personal preferences when it comes to working in Lightroom Classic and instead of spending painstaking hours watching tutorials start here! Commit to a workflow and map out how you plan to go from ingesting files from your memory card to delivering files to your client. Then the shortcuts, tips, efficiency will come into play while you repeat your plan/routine. Last tip is to always look for a better or more efficient way to work. Protect your time when working in the business. ■

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



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

**website: evolveedits.com instagram: @evolveimaging**

# final inspiration

| | |
|---|---|
| photographer | eli infante photography |
| website | eliinfante.com |



| | |
|---|---|
| model | joanna galindo |
| exposure | f/1.8, 1/6500, ISO 100 |
| lighting | westcott fj400 + 48" westcott rapid box octa I (key light), westcott fj200 + 3'x1' westcott stripbox (rim light) |
| gear | canon r5<br>canon rf 35mm |



Image © eli infante photography

h+h color lab

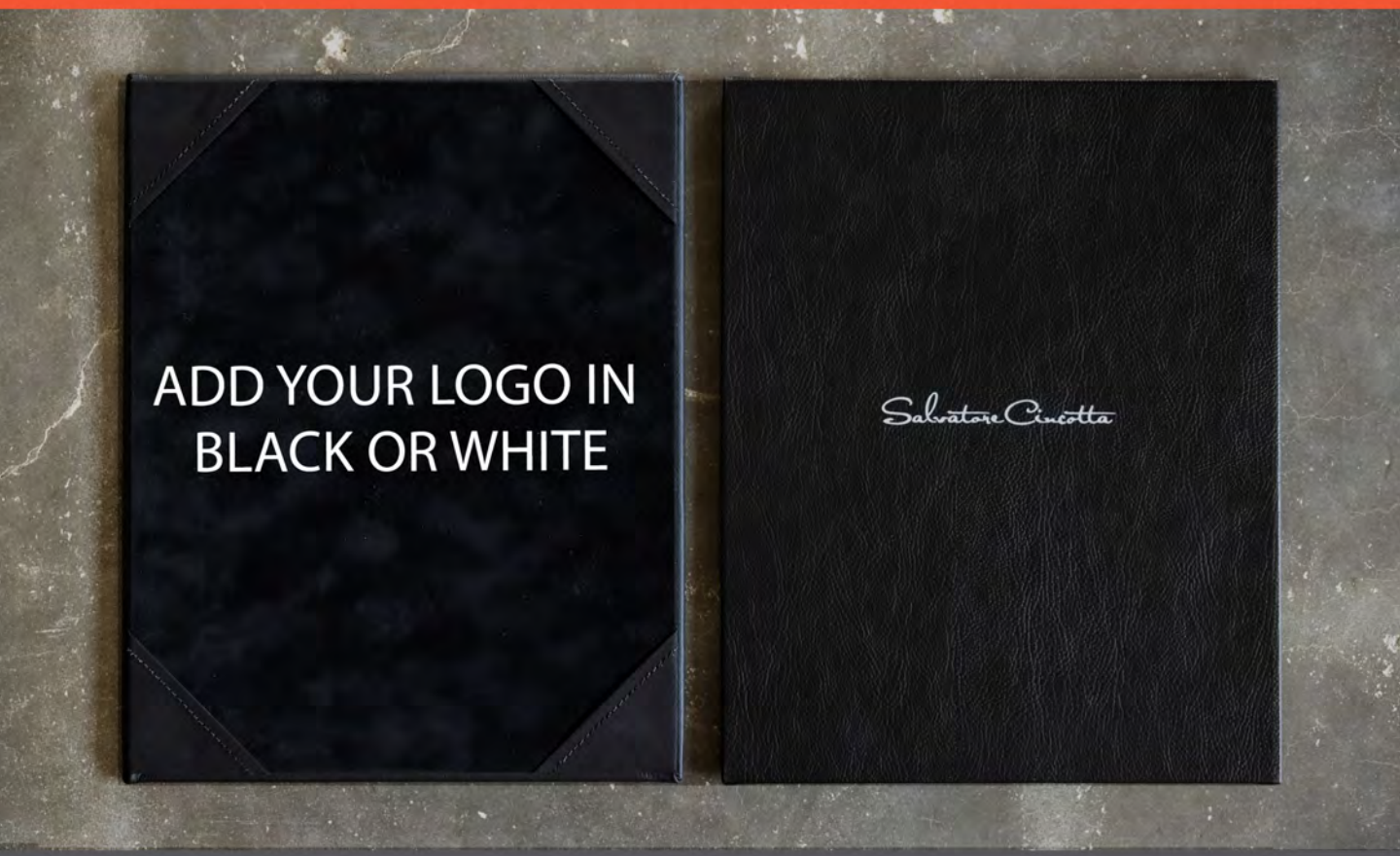
NEW

SINGLE PANEL AND FOLIO STYLE

# PRICE MENU

Salvatore Cincotta

5 LEATHER COVER COLOR OPTIONS - 9 PANEL & CORNER COLOR OPTIONS




GET YOURS TODAY - HHCOLORLAB.COM