

Insight + Inspiration Series


# Portrait Photography



Photo by featured photographer:  
THOMAS INGERSOLL

VOLUME 7

The Insight + Inspiration Series delves into the world of Portrait Photography. We feature seven talented photographers and go behind the scenes on how they managed to capture the unique personalities of their subjects through the use of bold lighting, natural and urban landscapes, and props. Each article brings out the endless creativity and inspiration that truly defines the age old saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”





# Rooftop Shot with Natural Light

by Erich Saide

The concept for this shot was based on the client's needs to capture some moody images. For the setup on my roof we used a Profoto B1 paired with a four-foot Octobox, a Profoto B10 to add a highlight to the left side of the talent and again the Westcott ScrimJim to fill in some of the harsher shadows with light from the sun. The sun also played a huge part in the lighting setup for the background and adding a backlight from the left side of the set for the subject.

Tethering is essential to my process; it saves so much time and because of that, money. Being able to tweak the lighting, adjust

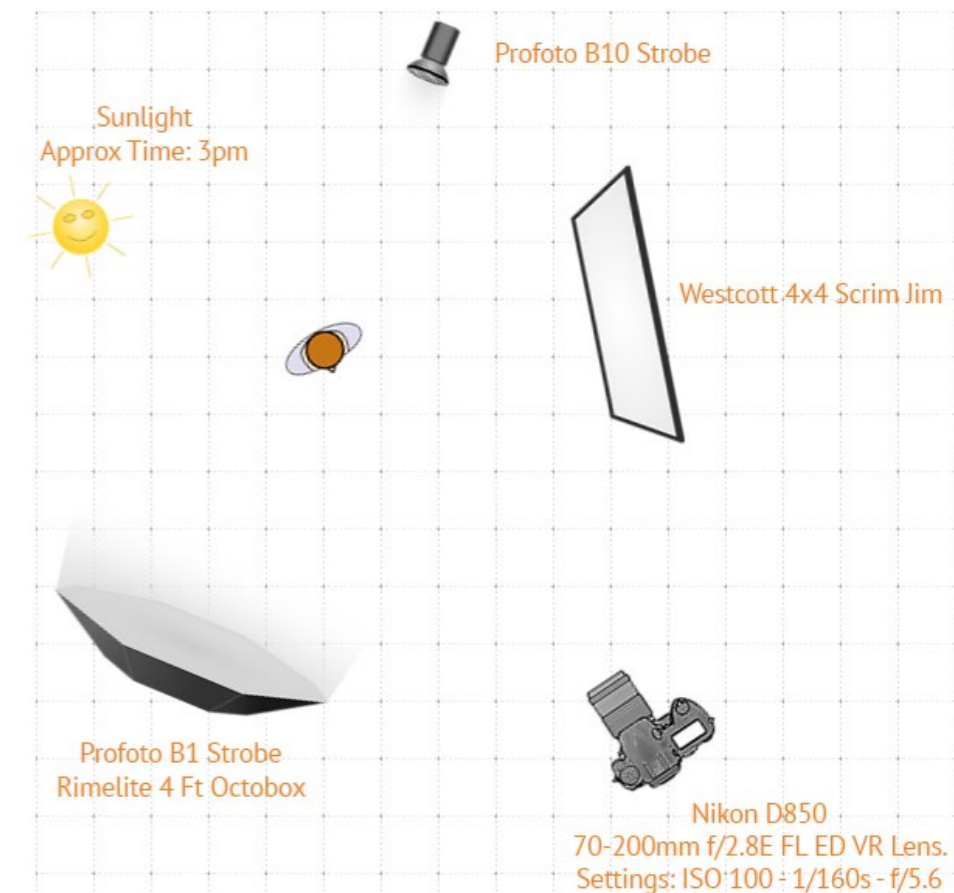
the pose and make any clothing adjustments based on how the moodier light looked on the screen is a huge asset. But it's the client interaction process where tethering really shines. Being able to make sure clients are 100% happy with the images in real time is invaluable. Any concerns can be addressed at the time of the shoot. It reduces the likelihood of miscommunication and ensures the results exceed the expectations of my clients.

Being a relatively straightforward shoot, there was no real big challenge to overcome. But in saying that, having equipment that you can 100% rely on to not fail, disconnect, misfire, break,

etc., goes a long way in being able to just shoot. It allows the photographer to be creative and concentrate on his/her craft as well as the client and model. This comfort helps create the best images one can hope to make.

One small challenge for the rooftop shot, we decided to use the Profoto B1 and B10 to take advantage of the High Speed Sync to raise our shutter speed and overpower the very bright sun slightly.

We were tethering into Capture One Pro during the photoshoot which I also use for colour correction, basic exposure edits and then to output 8-bit Tiffs. I use Adobe Photoshop CC 2019 for all the retouching on the images accompanied by Alien Skin Exposure X4 to apply my final looks. We then output/save as a high res jpeg or TIFF depending on the client's final needs.





# Golden Hour Bride

by Rebecca Denton

The concept of the shoot was to create a romantic outdoor bridal portrait with soft, golden backlight using one studio strobe to mimic a golden-hour sun.

I used one Alien B800 with the 7" standard reflector and a one-quarter CTO warming gel (to add the golden color), along with a Vagabond Mini Lithium for power. The Alien B800 was set up camera right, behind and to the right of the bride at about a 45-degree angle. The light was set up behind a rock wall, but the stand was raised up high with the strobe peeking over the wall as if it were the sun streaming in. I also had an assistant holding a white reflector to the left of the camera to bounce some light back onto the bride's face.

Shooting tethered in this situation allowed me to see the image more clearly and to make sure I wasn't getting any unnatural shadows or extreme flares from the strobe.

The biggest challenge was that we were shooting at 1 p.m. on a bright, sunny, cloudless day with harsh sunlight and shadows everywhere. We weren't able to shoot later in the day, so we had to find a place with open shade that allowed us to create soft, golden light in a believable way. I found a patch of shade behind a rock wall, which worked perfectly and also matched the mood of the bridal shoot. The final images only needed basic editing, with some minimal color correction/brightening and light facial retouching.



Rebecca Denton is a wedding photographer based in Nashville, Tennessee.

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“ In order to be a wedding photographer, I knew you’d have to master your light. Because on a wedding day, you hardly ever have perfect lighting scenarios. No matter what you need to know how to work with the light, and many times, create your own light. ”



REBECCA DENTON  
rebeccadentonphotography.com



BRIDE: Alden D.  
ASSISTANT: Deb Scally  
FLORIST: Wildflowers, LLC.

## EQUIPMENT USED



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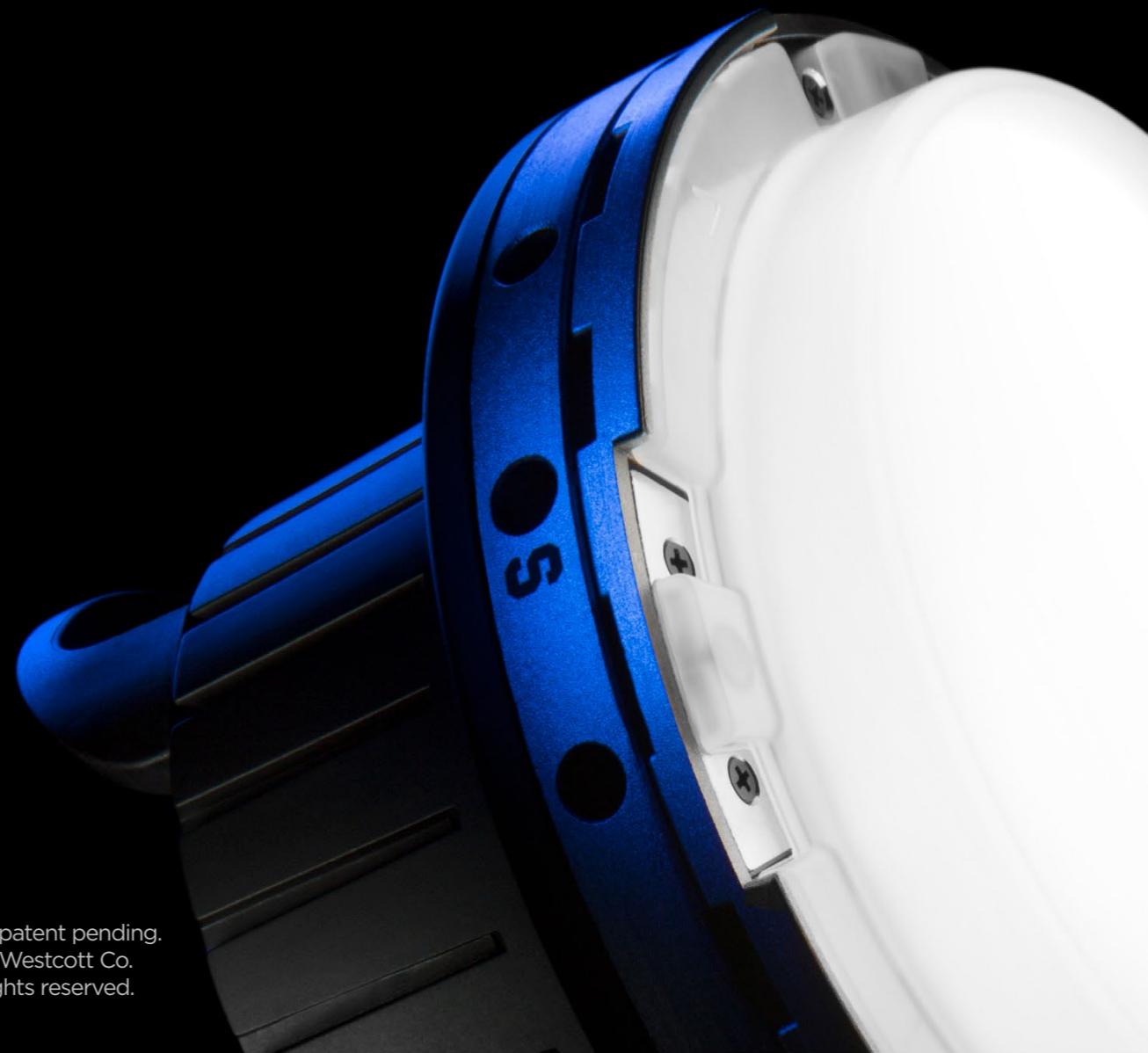
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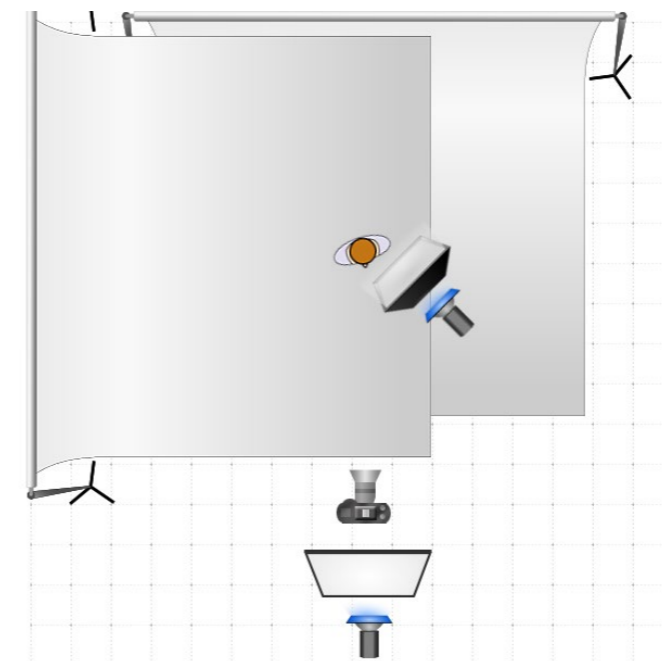
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# Motion in Music

by Thomas Ingersoll

The exciting aspect about photography is that we can exaggerate what our eyes see. I used light to explore the motion that transpires through creating music. I also wanted to depict the relationship an artist has with their instrument. Using color, I was able to compliment the style of music and instrument. The bass has a fun way of sounding hauntingly eerie or soulful.

I wanted this to have a very clean and minimal background, so I shot in the studio. Each look was a different light setup. I approached this lighting the same way I do every shot. I started with my key, then added fill, then added any extra light sources. I used the modeling light on the strobes to get the motion trails. I used multiple large white light sources to get the gels to be less saturated.



Tethering is an absolute must for me. I simply cannot rely on a tiny 3" LCD screen. I need a computer monitor to make sure the images are exactly how I envisioned them. I am able to confidently tell the image is in focus, the colors are accurate, and I am getting the effect I desire. Plus, I am able to use the monitor to communicate to the subject without having to run over to them with the back of the camera.

There is always a little bit of a mystery when playing with gels, especially if it is a new setup. The first few shots we took with the red were atrocious. The red was underpowered, and the blue was overpowering the red. The long exposure with the red constant light took a minute to dial in. Open the shutter too long and the dark background is too exposed, if it wasn't opened long enough then I wasn't getting the effect I wanted. It's all about balance.

I used Capture One to handle all the raw processing and initial color tone. Then I opened the images into Photoshop where I went through my workflow. I started by cleaning up the image, fixed the background, cleaned up blemishes, etc. I then will do my skin treatment and dodge and burn. And lastly, I colored graded the image. I looked to the available colors in the shot to push the tonality in the best direction.



*Thomas Ingersoll is a commercial photographer, visual director, writer and educator born and raised in Phoenix, Arizona.*

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# A Day in the Life

by Radhakrishnan Chakyat

I enjoy shooting in sets. Especially the process of conceiving, designing, building a set keeping the camera angles and lighting needs in mind. It's always a guessing game and one gets better as you go.

A Mumbai-based real estate developer who was launching their new apartment project wanted us to promote a relaxed and quality lifestyle. The challenge was to shoot it in their sample "show flats" which were in the basement and had no sunlight. In this particular assignment, we were asked to work with an existing structure, modify to fit the require-

ments of the marketing team, and create four different moods within one sample apartment of 1500 square feet. With no natural light coming into any of the rooms, it was a task to recreate a bright, sunny, airy apartment and high-quality living.

We used the Nikon D850 tethered to the computer using TetherPro Cables. I prefer to shoot tethered for similar assignments since I can inspect every corner of my frame in detail. We also used many flash lights, with and without light shaping tools on them, to recreate natural light.

WATCH THE VIDEO 



*Radhakrishnan Chakyat is a commercial photographer based out of Mumbai, India. He has been photographing celebrities, lifestyle and architecture for more than a decade.*

 seeradha.com

 instagram.com/seeradha



# The Valkyrie Within

by Renee Robyn

Lanna reached out to me, wanting portraits of herself, but not the typical kind. She's tall, almost 6 feet, blonde, Icelandic descent and proud of it. A former fitness model and now a very active mum of two, she wasn't sure what she wanted, but it wasn't the average boudoir/fitness style. She wanted to feel strong, ethereal, totally badass, and loved the warrior styled work I'd done in the past. I reached back into my database of inspiration artwork and came up with a few concepts, but once I met her in person and really took in her presence, I knew what would work.

Taking notes of her heritage, I offered up a mix of fantasy themed Viking-esque concepts. Heavily inspired by the paintings of Frank Frazetta, I mentioned a designer local to us who hand-made leather armour that would help her embody her inner Valkyrie.

I wanted her to look on the outside like what she had hiding on the inside. Lucky for me, the designer was available and Lanna loved the concept. A few days later, we were in the studio prepping the lighting. I went through a few different lighting setups with her shoot; ultimately there were several images that wound up on our favourites list. At first, I used a simple beauty dish with a diffusion sock on it, but I found the shadows were too strong for the image itself. The costuming had so much detail on it, I was losing some of the craftsmanship to the light quality. So, I added a fill light to the right of camera, just by putting a reflector on the strobe and bouncing it

off the wall. Big, soft light was the goal, but I didn't want it to be obvious, I just wanted to lower the contrast ratio.

Next, I pulled out a v-flat and positioned it to camera left, and in front of me by a few feet. Again, I just wanted big, soft light to fill in the shadows under her chin and bring out more details in the leather. I set the power 2 stops under my main light, and I had exactly what I was looking for.

Tethered shooting to Capture One is everything for me, especially when dealing with a client who knows exactly what she likes about herself and how she wants to be perceived. As soon as she saw the first images on the screen, even before I had the lighting where I wanted it, she was excited and empowered. Being able to see the shots large, we were able to fine tune each pose to maximize the potential of the session. Because of her modelling history, I would often turn my laptop to her so she could see what she was doing in the shot and make adjustments on the fly.

The biggest challenge whenever photographing someone new is making sure they feel accurately represented in the images. When the client can see each image coming up on the screen, with open and honest communication, I can easily avoid poses and angles they find unflattering to themselves and only focus on the ones that help them see their perceived best. This helps make the shoot more successful and time efficient.



Canadian born and raised, Renee Robyn is a commercial photographer who has worked with industry leading brands like Adobe, Wacom, Corel, Capture One, and Intel.

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Compared to my usual work, there's not a lot of post-production on this. I did some color grading in Capture One, then hopped over to Photoshop to dodge and burn, swap out the background, and finalize the color. I didn't want anywhere too specific or loud, so I chose another sky and cracked desert ground which I thought matched the attire best. Once I masked her in, I cooled down the background and left her skin warm so there was a nice separation between her and the background. I added some small sparks across the frame just to pull the image together, but again, not to be too identifying. Pin up artwork doesn't always have to follow the rules of gravity or environment, when the subject itself is the focus of the shot, and the background is merely there to give a digital aftertaste.

I photographed her on both the Canon 70-200 2.8 and my favourite lens ever, the Canon 135L on my Canon 5DMk3 tethered to my laptop. My lights are absolutely nothing special, they're 10+ year old Alien Bee 800's and one 1600 that I have used over the last decade. Admittedly I'm impressed they still work as they've been through it all. They definitely look their age.

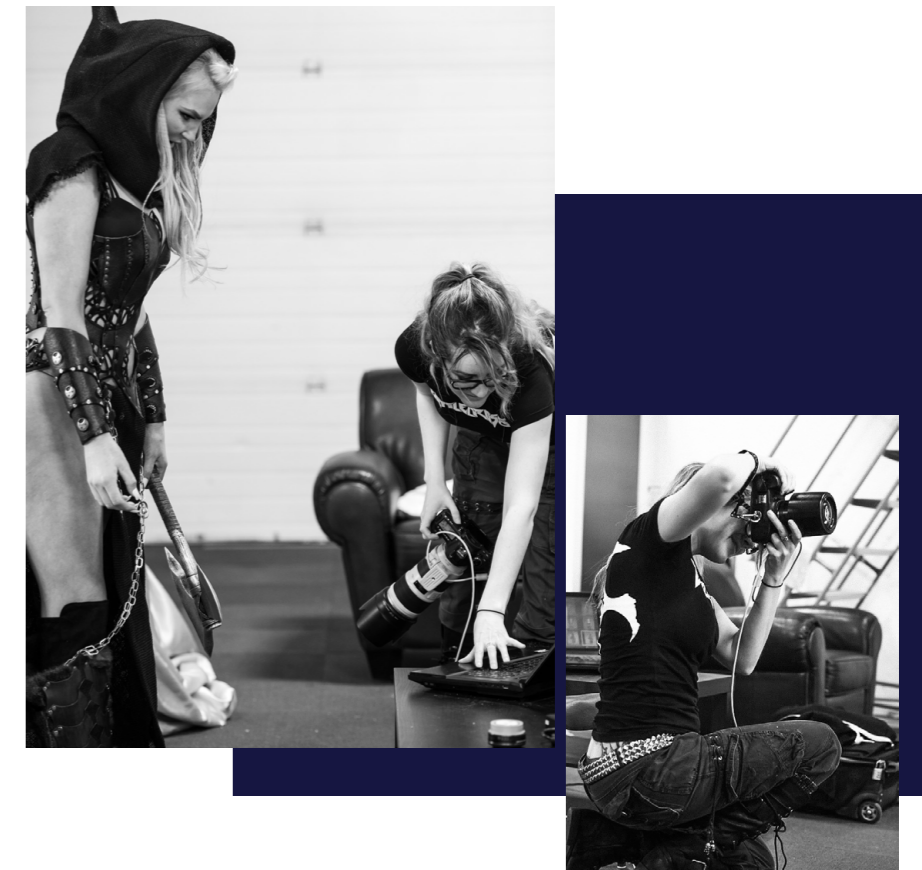
Since I'm using the wall as fill light, and I didn't want the beauty dish to

brighten the background, it's important to optimize the distance between the subject and walls. The distance from the cyc wall is approximately 15 feet, which means I can use a socked beauty dish and not worry about lighting up the wall behind her or creating any weird shadows. She was also about 10 feet from the wall where I had the bounce light which means the small amount of fill that I had firing at the wall will be soft, and not obvious.

On shoots like this I tend to run a very small crew for the client's comfort. I had myself, the designer Arisen Armory, and an assistant/BTS photographer Curtis Jones. The client showed up with her hair and makeup done to her liking already, so it saved a lot of time.

The makeup and hair design were something we had discussed before the day of the shoot. Texture in the hair and not too much of it falling around the face was important. I also asked her to get the makeup artist to apply lashes and a little darker eye shadow as we were going for a more fantasy look than historical accuracy. I wanted her to feel like herself but upgraded.

All in all, a very happy client and some of my favourite images I've done this year.







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The concept of this shoot was to create an extremely soft light with faded edges on the model. This is actually not one of my inventions, I have my mentor and first master Bardo Fabiani to thank for it. I have simply made a couple of small adjustments to it to make it more personal and to make it fit in this small series of images.

The principle is to make a softbox even softer than it already is; by placing it behind the model instead of in front of

her. Then I am letting all the light from the largest available softbox, the Softbox RFI 4x6', bounce around a cage of white polystyrene boards, reaching the model as a reflected and very large light. As we all know, the larger the light source, the softer the light, so with this system the light source is enormous and coming from all around the subject.

The only direct light on the model is the B1 flash head with a scarlet gel, which is not the main light, which I use to add a

# Think Outside the Softbox

by Andrea Belluso

touch of colour on the model's hair, so that the picture fits right in with our colour theme.

The Softbox RFI 4x6' also acts as the background of the image, creating an even softer effect by burning out the edges of the model's body, hair and clothes, blending them almost in the background itself. I added a diffusing panel in front of the softbox to spread the light even more and to eliminate the bottom edge of the softbox itself in the picture.

Being able to have a monitor next to me is so much more helpful than having to pull the camera away from my eye to see the camera screen, which, in any case, does not have the same settings as the ones I have in Capture One. Tethering for me is not just to be able to instantly share my shooting with the team and clients; it is mainly for myself and the accuracy of my light, exposure, colours, tones, details and basically the whole quality on all levels of the final image as I shoot.

In the preparation stage of such a shot it is extremely helpful to tether in a way that I can see what is going on set as well as on the screen, since balancing the backlight and the front light is crucial for achieving the desired effect

The main challenge with this shot is to find the perfect power of the flash on the 4x6 Softbox so that it does not burn the subject too much at the same time as it gives enough power to light the front of the subject. In this specific case, as I wanted to be able to publish the picture both online and in print, I had to make sure not to hit the dreaded 255 on the highlights, which is quite a challenge since a big part of this light is to burn out parts of the picture. That is when tethering into Capture One comes in handy so that I can keep total control on that, by slightly under exposing my shot by -0,08 of an f-stop.

As I tether straight into Capture One Pro, my images are practically ready

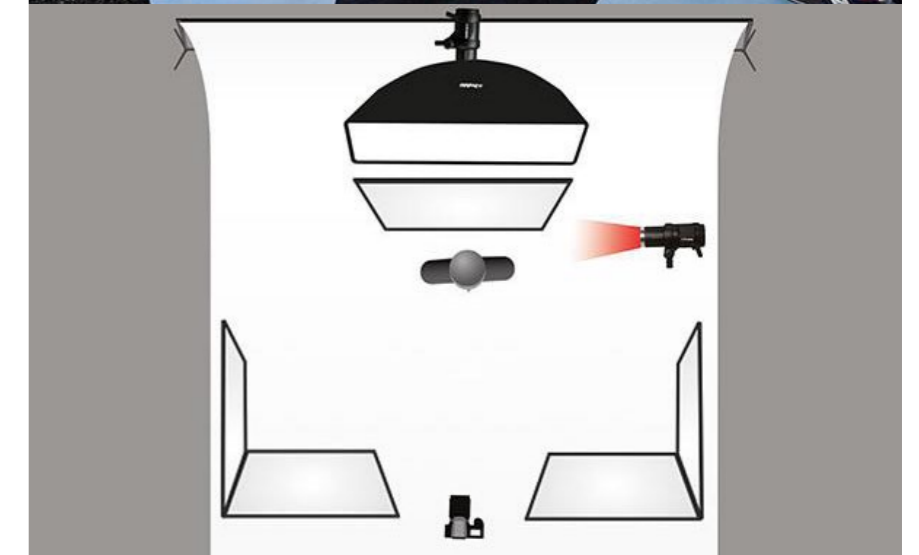
at the end of my shoots, so the only post-processing normally required is to clean up the model's skin and fly-away hairs or imperfection in the clothes. In this particular picture, apart from very slightly cleaning the model's skin, I also removed those parts of the "light cage" that came into my shot. While I was at it, I also placed the model in the middle of the frame, which was a 3-second job since the background was so even.

My Creative Director was Marco Cavazana and he was a big part of creating the actual concept together with me. The stylist came into the project after my initial briefing with the Creative Director in providing the outfits and accessories that matched our vision. I believe that if the whole team is putting in their touch and personality, then the final shot becomes even more magic. After all, we are all creatives and we don't really like being told what to do, right?

The hair and makeup artist worked pretty much in the same way as the stylist, except that she based her hair and makeup on several factors, our initial vision, the outfits chosen by the stylist and the model's skin and general look. Then she also added her own personal touches. The model, the wonderful Luna Green, simply got to hear part of our initial vision, to allow her to deliver her own magic in front of the camera. I normally talk to my models before the shoot and also during the actual shoot building up a space of creative freedom for them so that they feel comfortable in doing what is really fun for them and at the same time adding to the big creative pot that composes the final image.

The assistants and digital techs too play their important roles in creating more ease not just for me but for the whole team, and I feel that they are not praised enough in our business. The good ones are truly priceless.

Let's face it, the photographer is only a small part of a co-creation that is a final picture. I can only take credit for the lighting and for basically directing the whole team, and every team member plays a truly important and valuable role to make ideas turn into reality.



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For the past 30 years, world renowned photographer Andrea Belluso has been working as a photographer and video producer. He is based in Sweden.

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Toronto-based photographer Giancarlo Pawelec has a self-taught photography career spanning two decades. He has worked with a wide clientele that includes Jaguar, Porsche, Ford, and Kenneth Cole Productions.

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# More Than Meets the Eye

by Giancarlo Pawelec

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There's nothing better than working collaborative with a team of fellow creatives. As the theme for this shoot was that of a portrait, I wanted to do something truly unique. For this shoot, I needed a crew that understood the story that I was trying to tell - both from a viewer's point of view and also technically. After putting a mood board together and firing off emails to those that I have wanted to work with for some time (including friends), the responses came back as an overwhelming yes! Within days, I was able to secure the lead subject, the location which turned out to be his home-shop, a digital tech, assistant, one of the best videographers in the city, and a pair of brand-new Indian motorcycles.

The concept for this shoot was to capture the nitty-gritty side of a bike builder in his home garage, with some colored gels to create a dynamic series of portraits. A couple of years ago, I did a men's fashion editorial titled "Lucky Number 13" featuring custom-built cafe-racer motorcycles. The builder of those bikes was Bram of Shredded Chrome Customs and since then I always wanted to have him in front of my lens. Once I told him about the idea of me photographing him in his element, he was truly surprised and grateful for the opportunity. We often judge a book by its cover and the

same could be said about people, including bikers. In order to change that mindset (even if only for an instant), I wanted to showcase Bram and his passion for building beautiful motorcycles in a positive light.

Normally when it comes to motorcycle builders, images tend to be either too clean and staged or lack any emotional pull. For this, I wanted to dive deeper as if I were an observer all while pushing the creative limits with the added elements of strobes, gels, and fog/haze. There's plenty that goes into building a custom motorcycle for his clients, but that is all a means to an end - for him to earn a living and enjoy riding out on his own motorcycle.

Without question, the biggest challenge for this shoot was the location and the constraints of it. Rarely (if ever) do I go to a location without scouting it or knowing the most essential variables (how much space to work with, any possible dangers to be mindful of, etc), but this was different. Although I have access to workshops across the city, none would be Bram's own and as such the images wouldn't feel authentic. The location was set for Bram's own home shop - a one car garage that was fitted with tools, fabrication machines, and one motorcycle lift.

We estimated that the space was about 300 square feet with ceilings maxing out at about 8 feet. As I wanted to light both the subject and the shop, I quickly felt the space constraint and couldn't take a traditional approach.

I tend to be old school in keeping post-processing to a minimum and getting most of the shot done in-camera. For this though, I needed to push the files to give it a crunchy-gritty feel and dodge/burn parts of the scene. My first step is to make my selects in Capture One v12; thankfully, tethering allows for the files to be saved on the internal SSD of the MacBook Pro. From there, I do simple adjustments and corrections to the image before moving it into Photoshop for more detailed processing like cloning, healing, etc. before sending it back to Capture One for color grading and export.

Shooting tethered is essential to my workflow as it is key to building the shot. By simply connecting the TetherPro cable from my camera to the computer (and in turn through software), I'm able to see everything in the frame. When dealing with multiple strobes and variables (like photographing at an unknown, unscouted location like the small garage), I can take all the necessary test shots before I begin. My starting point is usually a general exposure shot to see what I'm getting and how things are looking on the screen. Moving forward, one strobe is setup and I take a series of test shots until I am satisfied with the light output and what it's doing (be it placement, distance, or choice of modifier). I then do the same with each strobe until I have everything dialed in just how I envisioned it. The final element (at least for this shoot) was the fog machine. With it being such an uncontrollable variable, tethering allowed me to see what it was doing and find ways of manipulating it so it wouldn't engulf the subject, but rather add drama to the scene. Furthermore, the digital tech ensured that each shot was sharp all while making selects (favorite shots) as we went along. After a day of shooting on-location, we ended up with just 290 shots within 5 sets - averaging under 60 shots per scene - and a final series of 12 great images. Keep in mind that these shots included variables like fog and sparks from a grinding wheel, requiring many attempts to get it just right and also slowing the camera's shutter to 0.5-second to capture the trail of sparks.

