PORTRAITURE

Learn to take the breathtaking Portraits you always wanted with Tamron Pro Photographer, ***John VanSteenberg***

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The World's Most Awarded Lens Company

John VanSteenberg
TAMRON'S SENIOR EDUCATION MANAGER

Over his 30 long year photographic career, John has photographed many subjects including landscapes, models, social events, rock stars and prizefighters. His strong technical background, artistic abilities, and vast experience makes John a great teacher, public speaker and writer. John has made a lifelong commitment to photographic education; in fact, he was instrumental in founding one of the first online professional photographic instruction sites in the photographic industry. Today, John is a Senior Education Manager for Tamron USA and regularly speaks at industry events and writes for the Tamron blog, The Angle of View.

John's approach to studio and field portraiture

Tamron lenses work beautifully on nearly every camera body I've owned over the last 20-plus years. When I'm in the studio, my Tamron SP 90mm Macro is the lens I use the most for individual portraits. I also use the SP 17-50mm F/2.8 Di II VC lens for individual portraits, as well as for pairs, groups, and event images. I'll use my Tamron SP 70-200mm F/2.8 Di VC USD lens for live action portraiture. There are six main components to taking portraits, whether I'm indoors or outdoors: the subject; lighting in general (including the patterns, sources, ratios, and texture); background (I have to decide whether I want it to contrast with or complement the subject, as well as select my subject size relative to the background chosen); depth-of-field; placement angle of the key light to the subject; and camera height, or POV.

In the studio, I have the advantage of a defined workspace — I select a logical background and build from there. I work to create natural-looking lighting patterns and ratios by choosing the right direction and texture of the light, adding lights and modifiers as needed and balancing scene-brightness ratios. Outdoors, I have to examine the entire environment. I work to create natural-looking lighting patterns and ratios the exact same way I do in the studio, but I often have to seek them out from within the existing environment, adding as few instruments as I can to accomplish the same goal. The key whether you're shooting in the studio or on location is to decide on the emotional intent of your image, and through the volume, texture, and direction of light support that emotional intent. My objective is to make the lighting invisible and focus on my subject. I try not to overlight. It took me years to figure that out. Just because I own a piece of lighting gear doesn't mean that I have to use it on every subject.

Every subject has two sides to his or her face: One side is more appealing, and that's the side that should be presented to the camera. However, the entire face is important (except in profiles) — when the face is truncated, the image becomes distorted. So, once I've selected the better side and decided which view of the face I'll use, I'll light the face to be as complementary as possible to the person. The subject's hands and posture can also tell the story as much as the face, as can the environment in which they're being photographed.

I usually photograph athletes and musicians. It's important to make them feel comfortable when creating their portrait. In the case of musicians, I often ask them to perform or hold their instruments. That way they're in their own element and in command. I also start a conversation that's unrelated to our shoot and make the "posing" a secondary issue. The plastic, stiff expression will disappear when they're reacting to an idea or telling me about things they've gone through, such as their difficulties or successes and the way it felt to be in those moments. Empathy is important to create during a portrait session. It will make your image come out so much better.

"The studio can be anywhere:
in a classic studio 'room' with lights,
outdoors in any conditions,
in an auditorium or sports arena."

What is Portraiture?

Portraiture is about exploring and understanding the subject. It has four basic elements:

1. The five classic views of the face: Straight on, two-thirds view left & right, profile left & right.
2. The five classic light patterns:
   - LOOP LIGHTING: Light directly in front of the face and above slightly so that a shadow is formed below the nose on the upper lip, which does NOT drop as low as the top of the lip itself.
   - MODIFIED LOOP LIGHTING *(Rembrant)*: Moves the loop light to one side about 30-45 degrees so that the shadow of the nose goes down the cheek crease and a triangle of light forms on the shadow side cheek. This creates more contrast & a more three dimensional look than standard loop lighting.
   - SHORT LIGHT: The light is on the far side of the face from the camera angle approaching the face. Usually a two-thirds view of the face shot against the light. Usually a two thirds view of the face shot from the same side as the light source.
   - BROAD LIGHT: The light and the camera are on the same side of the face.
   - SPLIT LIGHT: Divides the face down the middle with one side bright and the other side dark.
3. The environmental influences surrounding the subject.
4. The emotional content. It is the most elusive aspect of portraiture and tells the viewer the most interesting things about the subject.

It is the combination of these variables that make portraits with impact! Whether it is the light, the face, or the environment, emotional content is the most powerful.

The "studio" can be anywhere, in a room with setup lights, outdoors in any condition, even a auditorium or a sports arena. Most of my images are made in real time, meaning they are not posed. I just combine years of learned photojournalistic skills with my in depth studio lighting experience, to create, memorable, compelling images.

The subjects included in the eBook are fantastic people. Read more about them at the end of the book.

Additional Definitions:

Mask of the face: Described by the outside of the bones of the eye sockets, the outside edge of the forehead, and travels down the jaw line to the bottom of the chin.

Main Light (aka: Key Light): The light that establishes the exposure and the key lighting (shadow and dimension) pattern on the face. All other lights do one of two things: control contrast (fill light) or provide an accent edge/highlight (rim/hair light).

Softbox: a window like light modifying fixture that is covered in diffusion cloth to soften the light. Models range in size from about 20" square to very large.

Reflector: A flat panel of various materials (white, silver, gold, etc.) that simply reflects light back into shadow areas to add light volume, usually to reduce contrast; but sometimes used as a main light outdoors.

LENS USED:
SP 70-200mm F/2.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 200mm
Exposure: F/4, 1/1000th sec., ISO 1250

NOTE:
A vignette was added to minimize background objects drawing the eye away from Teeny. Hue was adjusted to correct the wider variety of colors in the stage lights.

TIP ONE: Optimize Your Line of Sight

The stage is one of my favorite studios. I focus on the subject and the lighting that is constructed around them. When photographing live performances, awareness of the basic principles of portraiture are coupled with photojournalistic anticipation, along with line of sight choice, to create inspiring and emotional images. When preparing to photograph this sort of event, I always consider the lighting pattern on the subject and how that will influence my line of sight choices. This helps me to capture the dramatic expression in the moment images that captivate viewers. For this, I need a lens that will let me choose an aperture that isolates and emphasizes the subject. The Tamron SP70-200 VC is perfect for this kind of work and is quickly becoming my goto lens in these situations.

Sometimes, several images can tell more of a complete story than a single image. My work is a combination of portraiture and photojournalism. I look to create emotional images and have learned to avoid situations like the mic covering the face and a mic stand between me and the performer.

LENS USED:
SP 70-200mm F/2.8 Di VC USD

SETTINGS: *Exposure: F/4, ISO 1250*

Left (200mm, 1/120th sec)
The questioning, defiant and defensive posture and expression makes this image real. Nearly full face. Split light with accent rim on dark side of face.

Middle (135mm, 1/50th sec)
Here is a rare emotional view in classic profile. Note the 'tim light combined with split light main light. (This silhouette of Teeny is rim lit by the main light with the near side of her face having some detail from the fill light).

Right (139mm, 1/125th sec)
Happily reaching out engaging the crowd response. Split light with accent rim light on dark side. Note that her face is divided down the middle, therefore called 'split light.'

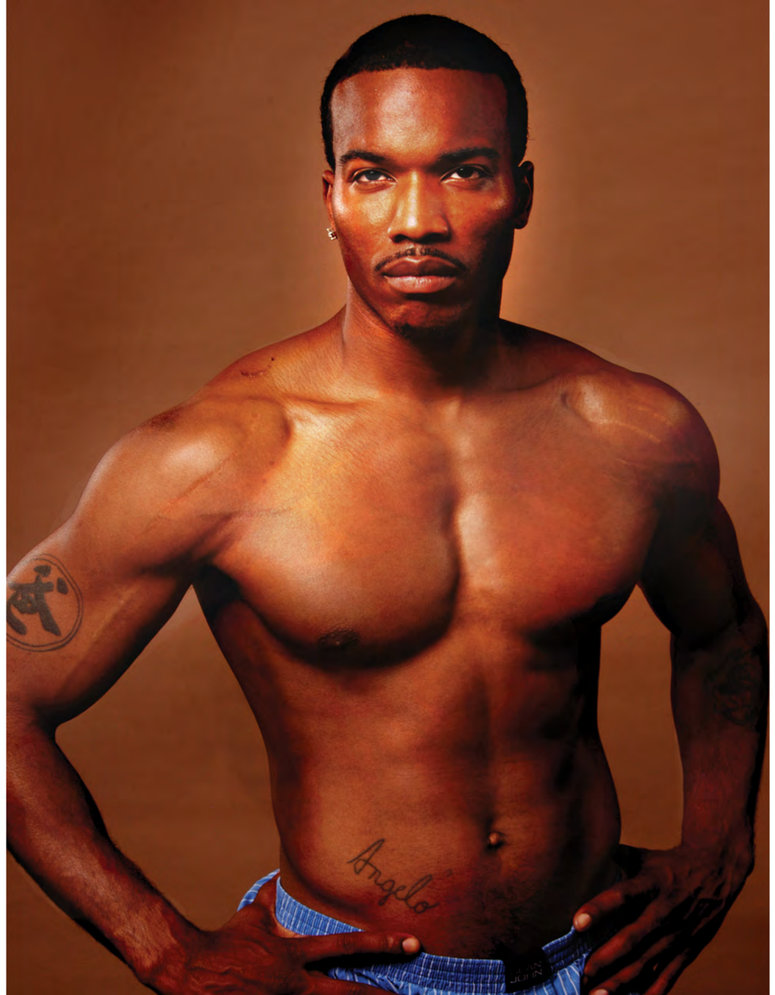
Bottom (200mm, 1/160th sec)
Pleading her case. Split light with accent rim on dark side.

LENS USED:
SP 17-50mm F/2.8 Di II VC

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 50mm
Exposure: F/6.3, ISO 400

TIP TWO: Find Your Style in Natural Light

If you practice and know what to look for, you can recognize studio lighting patterns in natural lighting situations. Not a single studio light was used to create this portrait proving you don't always need lighting equipment to create great portraits. Window light made this portrait of Mr. Downchild, it was just a matter of recognizing the right position to place him in. The image shows a two-thirds view of the face and his placement causes a short light effect so the shadows fall in the near side of the nose and jaw. This illuminates primarily the mask of the face. The window was 12 x 20 feet and nicely illuminated the large white wall for the portrait. In post-production I added the extra hand on the neck of the guitar for a look that would suggest playing it. In all, I was able to find a studio and create the right conditions to bring out his great rugged face, masculine posture and attentive thoughtful expression.



TIP THREE: Light Your Subject to Show Depth

When I look at a face I'm about to photograph, I study the way the shadows fall on the face due to the structure and look to create depth in the face with lighting. This in depth study gives me the opportunity to see how to light for depth in the face creating a three dimensional look in a two dimensional image. The image I created of Angelo shows a full mask of the face. I used a single strobe light and a softbox to create this image. In post-production, saturation was increased to add impact.

LENS USED:
SP 17-50mm F/2.8 Di II VC

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 45mm
Exposure: F/18, 1/125th sec., ISO 400

LENS USED:
SP 17-50mm F/2.8 Di II VC

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 50mm
Exposure: F/4, 1/40th sec., ISO 400

TIP FOUR: Separate the Background From the Subject

Adding additional lights can help to separate the subject from the background. A second light placed to illuminate the background can do this adding emphasis to the subject. In this shoot, I used my main light, moving it to the left of camera until I found the right position that covered the mask of the face. Then I used a hair light above to splash a rim of light on his head and shoulders to complete the portrait.

LENS USED:
SP 17-50mm F/2.8 Di II VC

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 17mm
Exposure: F/11
Shutter speed 1/125th., ISO 400

TIP FIVE: The One Light Anywhere Studio

Many formal portraits can be created using just one well positioned strobe light. In this image of Shawn Porter, NABO, NABF North American Champion, I used a single flash with a softbox. In a situation like this your time to photograph can be limited making a single light setup useful and easy. I positioned myself to reveal the best look in his face. The ceiling lights added a nice rim light and I captured the moment.

LENS USED:
SP 17-50mm F/2.8 Di II VC

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 32mm
Exposure: F/11, 1/80th sec., ISO 200

TIP SIX: Two Light Studio

Sometimes during the shoot a new idea enters the mind of the subject. With the key light (main light) already in position, I just added a second light above and behind her to light her hair, arms and spill over onto the background creating a quick look to capture the moment. Her poise and expression create a seductive and powerful diva-like quality to the image. I always look to capture these moments quickly because they really show personality and spontaneity. Many times these are the best images of the shoot.

LENS USED:
SP 10-24mm F/3.5-4.5 Di II

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 10mm
Exposure: F/11, ISO 400

TIP SEVEN: Merge for Effect

Sometimes a more compelling image can be created by merging two or more images. This allows you to be creative in a way you may not be able to directly photograph. Also, you can shoot images with intent to merge them with similar lighting, position and perspective. I imagined this image before the shoot allowing me to shoot Emmanual and the keyboard on his shoulders in one image (#1), and the keyboard (#2) for below his feet in another. Doing this helped me achieve the correct perspective to make the image believable and realistic. Both images were created from the same perspective before merging. The optical distortion of his body was created by using a ultra-wide angle lens and an above looking down perspective.

Post Production Work:

1. Rotate image #2 and convert it to black and white.
2. Composite #1 & #2 together and size them to look in the desired proportions.
3. Photoshop a grain.
4. Photoshop in shadow/movement drop shadow.
5. Photoshop filter: To add and adjust plastic coating on everything
6. Photoshop: Erase plastic coating randomly from half of E's face.

TIP EIGHT: One Light, One Reflector

This image is split light with a silver reflector on the left side and a large strobe on the right side. My intent was to draw attention directly to E's face and posture. The strobe with baffels is positioned so the silver reflector brings out the highlights on the facial structure and the pointing hand, while at the same time, lighting the right side of his face. I adjusted the silver reflector until I fully defined his head, face and hand

LENS USED:
SP 17-50mm F/2.8 Di II VC

SETTINGS:
Focal Length: 42mm
Exposure: F/10, 1/125th sec., ISO 200

Teeny Tucker is a wonderfully fun, sophisticated, warm and welcoming person. In just a few short years, with just a few public appearances each year and a few albums, she has risen to the very top of the world of the Blues. Her particular gift is that she really connects with the song-story and her ability to bring you in emotionally and connect you to the story in her songs. I've seen her perform several times, every time to a standing ovation. Not just a polite: "I'm tired of sitting" ovation; but a raucous "THANK YOU for the experience" ovation. She is one of the very few living members of the elite community of "Monterrey Blues Festival 'Artist of the Year'.

Visit: www.teenytucker.com

Mr. Downchild: After public recognition as a child star on the London stage, Mr. Downchild heard the American Blues and immigrated to America where he became a widely respected blues musician.

Ingrid is a fabulous entertainer from Detroit.

Shawn Porter is a North American boxer (currently ranked #4 in the WBO world rankings). The image with some of his amateur belts was a portrait I took just after he won the Golden Gloves Championship of the World, just before he went to China with the 2008 Olympic Team. I think he was just 19 at the time.

Visit: www.shawnporterboxing.com

Angelo is a spoken word artist with a lifetime of experience written all over him. Note the surgical scars on both shoulders, the bruises on his left cheek and left pectoral, the tattoos and the bite mark on his right shoulder. Those, plus the expression in his eyes tell you about him.

Emmanuel Fipps (AKA Flip, Captain Hook, E!) is a composer, lyricist, producer and performer. Emmanuel; "I just make good music. Some of it is very spiritual, some of it very experientially based."

Visit: www.icreateent.com

18-270mm
F/3.5-6.3 Di II VC PZD (Model B008)

Tamron's 18-270mm, the world's lightest, smallest 15x zoom optimized for use on APS-C DSLRs, continues the pursuit of the ideal all-in-one zoom lens. Special piezo electric technology delivers faster, quieter precision auto-focusing. Tamron's exclusive tri-axial VC (Vibration Compensation) image stabilization combats camera shake-related image blur. Defining compositional freedom, the incredible 15x zoom range provides a versatile wide to tele all-in-one zoom solution.

Di II | VC | PZD | AD | ASL | IF | ZL

For Canon, Nikon & Sony APS-C DSLRs*

SP 10-24mm
F/3.5-4.5 Di II LD Aspherical (IF) (Model B001)

The ultimate extended-range, ultra-wide-angle zoom lens. This compact, lightweight, high-performance lens for DSLRs with APS-C size sensors provides 35mm equivalent coverage from 16mm ultra-wide to 37mm semi-wide; a remarkable 2.4X zoom ratio.

Di II | SP | LD | ASL | IF

For Canon, Nikon, Pentax & Sony APS-C DSLRs

SP 70-300mm
F/4-5.6 Di LD (IF) VC USD (Model A005)

A high resolution zoom bred for fast focusing. With superior optical performance, Tamron's new USD (Ultrasonic Silent Drive) and VC anti-shake system, the SP AF70-300 F/4-5.6 Di VC USD provides the performance of a high-end premium telephoto zoom; the USD and VC make the lens fast, quiet and easy to use. An Extra Low Dispersion (XLD) element delivers best in class resolution. Designed for digital SLR cameras and can be used with both full-frame and APS-C (109-465mm equivalent) sensor DSLRs.

Di | SP | VC | USD | XLD | IF | FTM | ZL

For Canon, Nikon & Sony Full-Frame & APS-C DSLRs*

SP 70-200mm
F/2.8 Di VC USD (Model A009)

The apex of telephoto lenses in a compact package. SP 70-200mm F/2.8 Di VC USD with VC image stabilization delivers leading-edge image quality in a body that's smallest in its class. Equipped with Tamron's proprietary USD (Ultrasonic Silent Drive) motor, this lens boasts a speedy autofocus so you can capture that one decisive moment. For sports, journalism, fashion, weddings or even landscapes, the 70-200mm will exceed your expectations every time.

Di | SP | VC | USD | XLD | LD | IF | FTM | ZL

For Canon, Nikon & Sony Full-Frame & APS-C DSLRs*

SP 24-70mm
F/2.8 Di VC USD (Model A007)

The world's only full-frame high-speed standard zoom lens with image stabilization. The 24–70 is a high-quality, highly functional, high-speed full-size standard zoom lens that includes both Tamron's proprietary VC (Vibration Compensation) image stabilization to reduce shake and its USD (Ultrasonic Silent Drive) motor, enabling speedy, silent autofocusing. This SP lens makes full use of specialized glass elements in its lens layout, including three LD and two XR (Extra Refractive Index) elements. Tamron has minimized all types of chromatic aberration, making it a lens at the top of its class whether you use it on a digital APS-C or full-frame, SLR camera. Its F/2.8 aperture enables a balance between brilliant resolution and beautiful soft blur effects, and makes full use of Tamron's rounded diaphragm and the uncontrived, artistic blur that it provides.

Di | SP | VC | USD | XR | LD | ASL | IF | ZL

For Canon, Nikon & Sony Full-Frame & APS-C DSLRs*

SP 90mm
F/2.8 Di Macro 1:1 VC USD (Model F004)

State of the art optical and image stabilizing (VC) technologies combine to create a new masterwork lens in the 90mm Macro providing images of astounding sharpness, augmented by natural blur effects. Equipped with Tamron's VC image stabilization system and USD AF drive. The lens features new eBAND (Extended Bandwidth & Angular-Dependency) coating to yield significant anti-reflection properties, efficiently reducing undesired flare and ghosting to an absolute minimum to deliver sharp, crisp images.

Di | SP | VC | USD | LD | IF | XLD | eBand

For Canon, Nikon & Sony Full-Frame & APS-C DSLRs*

*Sony Mount without VC as image stabilization is built into the camera body.

FOCAL LENGTH ON DIGITAL SLR CAMERAS WITH APS-C SENSOR

10mm (15mm full frame)

18mm (28mm full frame)

24mm (37mm full frame)

28mm (43mm full frame)

35mm (54mm full frame)

50mm (77mm full frame)

90mm (140mm full frame)

135mm (209mm full frame)

200mm (310mm full frame)

270mm (419mm full frame)

300mm (465mm full frame)

500mm (775mm full frame)

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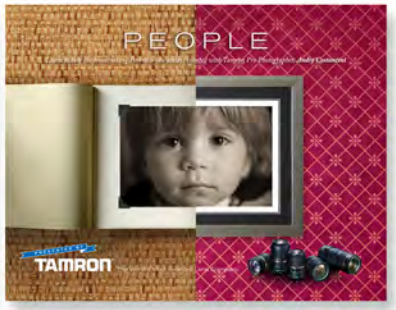

PEOPLE
Photographs by *Andre Costantini*

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