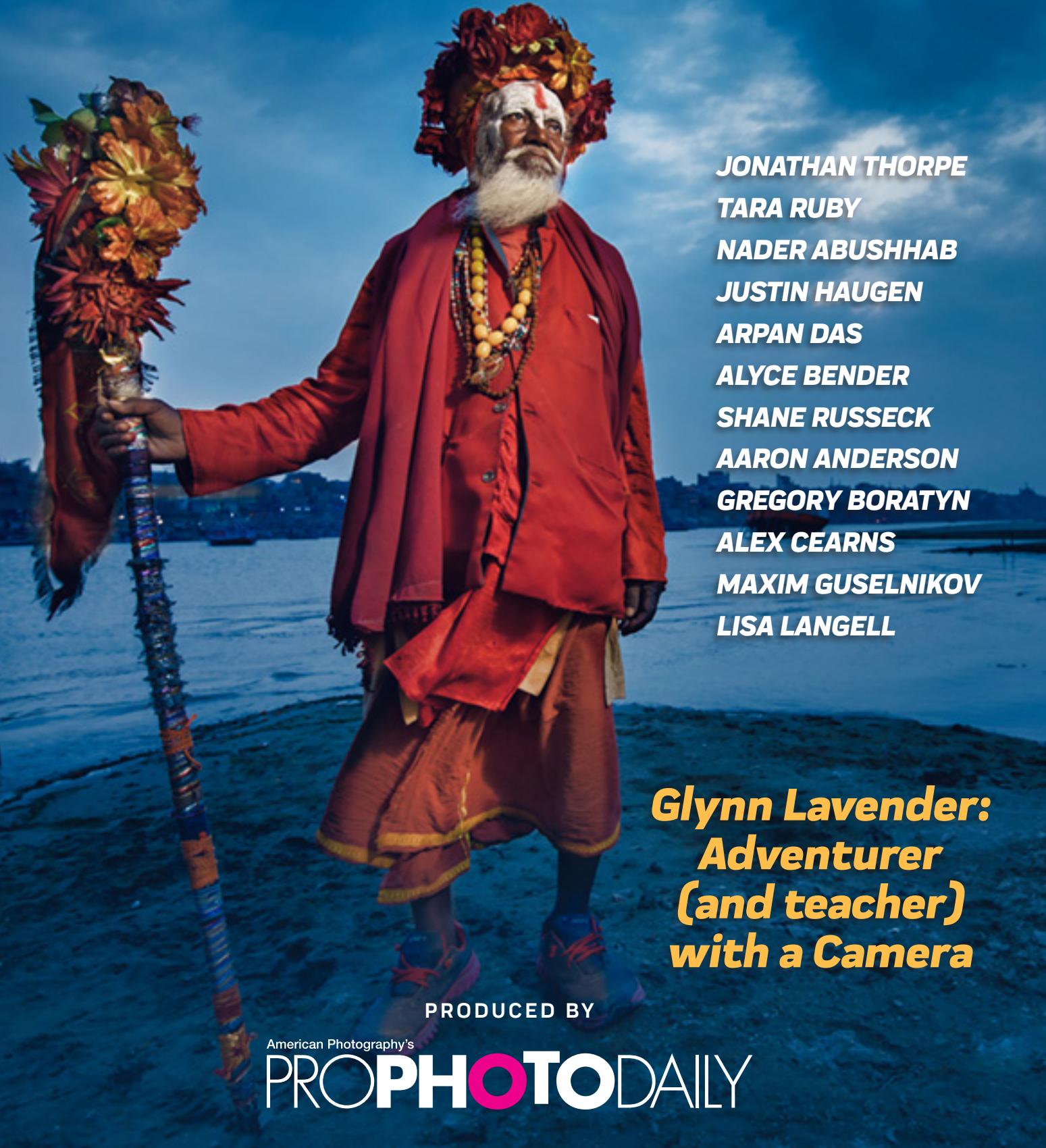


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**Glynn Lavender:
Adventurer
(and teacher)
with a Camera**

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Glynn Lavender: Adventurer (and teacher) with a Camera

By Jeff Wignall

Glynn Lavender possesses an impressive combination of skills that have led him to great success as a photographer, a world-roaming adventurer and as a gifted and generous teacher.

Based in Melbourne, Australia, Lavender's company Discovery Photo Tours has led more than 1,000 travel-photo workshops in places as far flung as India, Myanmar, and Tanzania. "My main

day to day business is running photography workshops teaching off-camera flash and natural-lighting skills," says Lavender. "On top of that I usually run three to four photo tours per year as well, where

we can put the skills learned in the workshops into practice."

Lavender is heavily involved in the photographic industry worldwide as former president of the Digital Image Marketing Association, Chairman of the PMA Education Committee as well as several other positions with the Australian branch of the Photo Marketing Association. His images and articles have been featured in numerous publications including Better Photography, Australian Photographer, Digital Photography and Travel Photography Guide.

During a Covid-mandated pause in his adventures, Lavender spoke recently to writer Jeff Wignall about his passions for photography, travel, adventure and Tamron lenses.



PPD: How do you uncover such interesting characters and settings when you are traveling?

GL: If you go to interesting places you tend to find lots of interesting people. Places like India, Bangladesh and Myanmar are filled with glorious characters to photograph. As for the locations it requires lots of research and planning. You don't want to be at a location when 14 tour buses show up so it's really a matter of trying to find when to be at locations where you have the best chance of capturing great images. Having said that though, if you are a portrait photographer primarily, you can photograph people at any time of the day; so in between ideal location settings we look for characters to meet and photograph.

PPD: Do you use guides of any kind when you are traveling?

GL: I always use local guides, many who have become friends and are with me on each trip. Local guides help with translation when needed, driver coordination and general knowledge. It takes a while for a guide to understand the special interests of photographers so once you've built a strong working relationship with a guide you really want to continue that relationship.

PPD: Your travel portraits are often very intimate and face-to-face. Have you always been comfortable in photographing strangers in such a close way?

GL: My goal in my images is to remove any elements that don't add to the story of what I am seeing. Sometimes it is all about a person in a particular location, sometimes it is just the person themselves. Therefore, if there is just a face in the image it is because adding any other elements simply did not add to the strength of the image. It is my job as tour leader to connect with people as we travel and hopefully set up a chance to photograph them. My first approach always is to meet the



Shoot what you see, don't go looking for what you've already seen. Celebrate the differences.

person first, make a connection, and then photograph that connection. Photographing someone you 'know' is always a lot easier than photographing a stranger.

PPD: You seem to use a mix of available and artificial light. Are you using on-camera flash or do you set up lighting?

GL: I'm a big believer in keeping things simple, on tour that is a necessity. If the natural light is great, or I can move the subject into good light, then I will always do this first. That said, however, I always carry LED panels to add some fill light or off-camera flash when something stronger or more dramatic is needed. Again, if it adds to the image, I have no problem setting up lighting. I can set up off-camera flash and dial in the needed exposure in less than a couple of minutes, so it really doesn't slow us down too much to add lighting to our shot.

PPD: How much gear do you bring with you on the road—how many bodies and lenses?

GL: The trip usually determines the

gear, however, an absolute minimal kit would be two bodies, two lenses (15-30mm and 70-200mm), a flash and flash triggers for every brand (I supply lighting for all my guests).

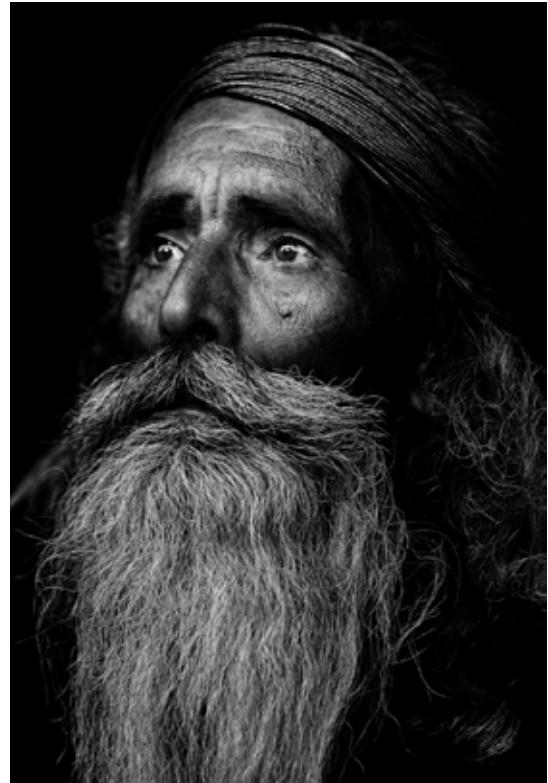
PPD: Which are your favorite Tamron lenses for general travel and for portraiture?

GL: For travel I always have two bodies out ready to shoot. One body has the Tamron SP 15-30mm F2.8 G2 and the other the Tamron SP 70-200mm F2.8 G2. The vast majority of my images are probably captured at the wider settings around 15-20mm and at the 200mm range of those lenses. I usually get wide and get close or zoom in and isolate.

The other two lenses that get used a lot are my Tamron SP 35mm F1.4 for shooting into the evening and, if I am staying in a location for a while because the light is so good, I may put on the fabulous Tamron SP 85mm F1.8 VC.

PPD: Is there a particular set of features that drew you to Tamron lenses?

GL: Yes! Quality at a price point.



As a teacher of photography, you need to make gear accessible. If you only show up with the most expensive of everything you give people the impression that only



really expensive gear will achieve the results. I'm a very big believer in 'The right tool for the job, not the most expensive one'. Tamron offers outstanding quality at a price point that's achievable for most. When it comes to travel, I always say use the money you saved buying Tamron to go out and shoot in amazing places. There's no point having expensive gear and not being able to afford to go somewhere great to shoot.

PPD: Can you talk about the photo workshops that you teach, and did you create that business?

GL: I started Creative Photo Workshops in 2007 and have since run over 1000 workshops. My greatest joy in photography is being able

to share information, break down complex technical jargon into easy to understand information and demonstrating practical lighting ideas that people can actually replicate easily. It is a great joy to help people take another step on their creative journey.

PPD: What is your advice for travelers who want to photograph classic scenes like the Taj Mahal but want to add their own visual twist?

GL: Heading to iconic locations like the Taj can be fraught with stress. Most people have seen tons of amazing images from the location and they want to capture something equally great. It is hard to shoot iconic locations mostly

because we are at these spots for such a brief time and the conditions you have are what you have to work with. Rarely will this be iconic light. So, my recommendation is to always go everywhere with a blank mind. Shoot what you see, don't go looking for what you've already seen. Celebrate the differences. A couple of trips ago the Taj Mahal had some scaffolding on it and rather than be dejected that it is different, strive to find ways to capture that difference in ways no one has done before.

PPD: How long are your shooting days and what are your favorite times of day to shoot?

GL: Depending on the location the days can start at 5am and not finish until 8pm but there's usually a break during the middle of the day when the light is at its least flattering. Early morning and early evening are always times to be out and ready to shoot.

PPD: What is your advice for getting comfortable photographing strangers in exotic places?

GL: Walk everywhere with a smile and look people in the eyes. If someone looks at you and smiles, then you already have a connection and it is far easier to approach them. If someone gives you a grumpy looking face, then they are most likely not open to being approached.

PPD: How do you suggest people get past the language barrier if there is one?

GL: Smiling is universal. People react positively to a smile most of the time. Pointing at yourself and saying your name is also easily understandable. Then pointing at the camera and then at them you have held a full conversation, "I'm a happy friendly person called, can I take your photo"

A smile and a nod will often be the reply.



The Cinematic Vision of Jonathan Thorpe

By Jeff Wignall

In looking at photographer Jonathan Thorpe's very entertaining portrait work, you immediately think, here's a guy that has not only spent a lot of time studying Hollywood cinema, but is also fond of offbeat characters and exaggerated situations. Thorpe uses an ambitious combination of settings, props, lighting and, of course, perfectly chosen models to create portraits that are anything but ordinary. In fact, each portrait is a study in cinematic extravagance as intense as any Hollywood still you'll ever see.

Based in Washington, DC, he's also about as far from Hollywood as you can get but that hasn't stopped him from assembling a lengthy roster of both commercial and editorial clients. He's also photographed numerous award-winning musicians and celebrities and

directed several music videos.

Thorpe is a Tamron Image Master and also teaches and lectures around the world. In addition, he reviews portfolios, teaches photography and offers business advice one-on-one in Zoom meetings (you can contact him through his site). He recently spoke

with writer Jeff Wignall about his creative vision, his techniques and his love of Tamron lenses.

PPD: You were an optometrist before turning to photography full time in 2008. Was that a gradual transition or did you just make the leap?

JT: I just made the leap. I received a camera as a present from my parents, it was a Canon SX-10IS, a little bridge point and shoot camera that looked like a DSLR. I took it to a local music venue and shot a few photos of the artist performing. I then found him online and sent the photos off to him. A month or so later those same images ended up getting published in a major magazine. Once I saw the photos in the magazine, I quit my job the next day.

PPD: Who are your typical clients? Ad agencies? Individuals?

JT: Typical clients are kind of all over the place, anything from work-



ing directly with brands, to ad agencies, magazines, and the occasional individual, depending on what they need and what the finished product will be. Over the years I've worked with companies like Adidas, Red Bull, Lululemon, CBS, DefJam, as well as countless national publications.

PPD: Do you have a favorite type of assignment?

JT: I love shooting portraits with some type of narrative to them. So I

suppose editorial is my favorite. At the same time, being able to work with large brands and their teams is also super rewarding. Portraits are always going to be my favorite, but anytime I get a chance to incorporate some type of story with interesting lighting, I'm definitely excited.

PPD: Do you do a lot of self-assigned shooting to work out ideas and concepts?

JT: Absolutely. I love shooting.

Aside from it being my job, I genuinely enjoy what I do. There's something hugely rewarding about creating things. I was never great at drawing, I have a slight background in music, but photography is the way I can show my creative side. Doing personal projects about things you care about allows you the freedom to work totally on your own terms and have complete control over the finished product.

PPD: A lot of your portraits feature very interesting and offbeat environments. Do you spend a lot of time scouting for these settings?

JT: Scouting is definitely a big part in creating photos. For me in every photo I take there are always two subjects, the "actual" portrait subject and the background environment. Everything deserves its own light and consideration. For me, the place the portrait is being taken in will have a strong influence on the feeling or mood of the shot, so it needs to be handled accordingly. Don't be afraid to relight a location and make it your own, it will show your photographic abilities and how you are able to create a mood. I tend to approach most shoots more like a cinematographer versus a photographer.

PPD: What comes first, the concept of the shot or the inspiration of the environment?

JT: That's a tough one, it honestly can go either way depending on the assignment. Sometimes I'll see a cool place and think, '...man, a portrait would look so cool there' and other times you're given a story and a person and need to create or put them in a place that coincides with the story. All in all, it's all up to the client usually and it's our job as photographers to be the problem solvers.

PPD: Your portrait subjects often have very real and quirky faces. Where do you find these folks?

JT: It's often been said a lot of my portraits are "normal people who

look like superheroes" and that's literally what I'm going for. When I started to teach myself photography, I didn't have access to models and honestly, I would be terrified to shoot with a professional model. I taught myself lighting by holding flash lights around a G.I.Joe toy I had. When I saw a lighting setup that looked interesting I would make note of it, then take the same setup to my friends. It's amazing what you can get out of just understanding light a bit more and what it can do for everyone.

PPD: Are there particular Tamron lens that you lean on more than others?

JT: I tend to shoot with the SP 35/1.4 and 45/1.8 VC a lot. Most of my shots are location based and I've found those lenses allow me to tell a good story by allowing just enough of the background in each picture. The 85mm VC definitely comes out for the tight headshot style work. Also the SP 24-70/2.8 Di VC G2 is a workhorse for me. When I don't have a chance to see a location before I shoot, that's the lens I'm using since it's so versatile.

PPD: As a Tamron Image Master, what qualities of Tamron lenses got you most excited about using their lenses.

JT: The lenses are very well built. I'm not easy on my equipment and the build quality of these lenses is beautiful while still being lightweight. The VC Tamron uses is also wonderful. I've been able to hand-hold shots at 1/10th of a second and still have them be sharp. I was in a serious motorcycle accident a year ago that affected my right arm. It now has a slight twitch to it and the VC completely gets rid of any shakiness from it.

PPD: You have a series of portraits that you describe as cinematic that look like stills from a Hollywood production. What was the



I think from the beginning I have always wanted to create images that didn't look like what the human eye sees everyday.

inspiration for these and were they complicated to shoot? Fun? Both?

JT: I think from the beginning I've always wanted to create images that didn't look like something the human eye sees every day. These high concept shoots allow me to be fully creative and put together shoots that can involve my friends. More often than not those type of shoots aren't what clients are doing and for me they are the most fun. Getting all my friends together to create a fun shot is awesome. The shoots can be difficult since there are a lot of moving parts, but when it's all said and done, I really love doing them

PPD: Your fitness portraits are a lot more unusual than the traditional workout shots we see. Do these shots grow out of a personal fitness background?

JT: Kind of, yes, I'm not a big gym guy although I grew up skating and taking pics of my friends and me a lot. Shooting action sports



gives you a different "eye" when you shoot portraits or other types of content. In the action sports world, you want to use hard, punchy, contrasty light, dynamic angles, and



show the locations. So I've taken those same ideas to the other work I shoot, and I think it works.

PPD: How do you keep your ideas and your imagination fresh?

JT: It can be difficult. The best thing

I think people can do is take little breaks from shooting to do other things. For me, it's building motorcycles. It's a nice break from trying to come up with shoots, while still allowing me to be creative and design things for the bike. Often times in-

spiration hits whenever it wants, the important part is to recognize when it does and let it happen. Trying to force creativity never works out well. Also getting ideas from others is fun so try and partner up with makeup artists, hair stylists, etc and bounce ideas around.

PPD: One innovative thing that you're doing is offering online critiquing and instruction. Can you talk more about that?

JT: Sure. Obviously with the Coronavirus, people are stuck at home and not shooting that much if at all. This gives us all an opportunity to grow as photographers and push ourselves to come out better when this all slows down. I started offering critique and instruction through Zoom to people who just want a bit of help right now. It also helps keep us sharp as shooters. Funny thing is, I've actually learned a lot doing these, too. It's been really fun and rewarding.

PPD: Can you offer some tips to photographers that want to stand out in portrait shooting, to break the mold a bit?

JT: I think the best tip is to develop a style and stick to it. Shoot everything you can in that style, no matter what the subject may be. By doing that, when a client wants to hire you they'll know exactly what they're getting.

PPD: What advice can you offer to someone who is new to studio shooting and wants to get started on a budget?

JT: Studio shooting actually doesn't require a studio. All you would need is a wall really. From there use inexpensive light to start. Simple speed lights and a shoot through an umbrella really can do wonders. Look at other photographers and look at shadows, to help deconstruct their light. From there just practice as much as you can and learn to control the light.



Tara Ruby's Salute to Life

By Jeff Wignall

Tara Ruby has two seemingly unrelated forces in life that actually complement each other nicely. Perhaps the biggest passion in her life is her close relationship with the military and military families. A former military member herself (she joined the U.S. Air force just two weeks after high school), she is married to an active-duty soldier and has lived a military-based life since 1997. Ruby's other joy is portrait photography, much of which centers on military families and their close-knit community. "Memories are held near and dear in this community," she says. "I found that I had a passion to help capture every special moment so that those memories could be shared with others."

Today Ruby runs a portrait studio that specializes in portraits, baby and family shots, maternity portraits and, naturally, many of her subjects are military families. She recently talked with writer Jeff Wignall about her devotion to the military community, her thriving photo business and her use of Tamron lenses.

PPD: You left the military with a traumatic injury and turned to photography. In what ways did photography help you build a new life?

TR: Photography actually came many years after I had left the military. I also left the military not on terms of an injury, I didn't accept that anything had happened until many many years later. Photography



is my place of peace, my passion and the reason I continue on. Every time I capture an image, it's creating a piece of history for others.

PPD: How do you market yourself?

TR: Most of my families and clients are military. Word of mouth, even if it's via Facebook, helps me. Someone typically posts in a social group that they are looking for a photographer and then they find me or previous clients or friends will tag me.

PPD: Your subjects range from maternity to baby portraits to families. Why did you choose to make people and families the focus of your life's work?

TR: Because that's where my passion is. Our military families go through so much and it's so very important for them to be able to capture these precious moments. I've also been in their shoes, both as an active duty member and as a military spouse. I connect with them in such a personal way.



PPD: You have a category of newborn portraits called "Fine Art" portraits that feature kids in costume and fantasy settings. Is that fun to shoot and is it a popular style with parents?

TR: Yes! Newborn composites, images that are custom and created just for them with a theme is my new favorite. Most of the time we capture either a favorite movie or a favorite character/actor, anywhere from Dumbo (my favorite) to Lucille Ball.

PPD: Your breastfeeding portraits all seem very relaxed and natural in mood. What are the toughest aspects of creating these shots?

TR: Acceptance. Breastfeeding is still such a hot topic because half of our population is OK with breastfeeding and the other half are not. If you can create an image that creates debate do it. It's a challenge against social norms.

PPD: Where did you get the idea for the "child smashes" portraits?

TR: Cakes are such a part of a child turning one, or any birthday really. This isn't my idea and many photographers are capturing cake smash sessions for when a little one turns one. These are relatively new in my studio, as I now have the space for the mess these sessions create! The creativity needed to make these sets fun for families are so much fun.

PPD: What are your favorite Tamron lenses and where do you use each one (what situations)?

TR: That's hard to say because I love ALL my Tamron lenses. I am finding that I pick up my 15-30mm G2 with newborns, 85mm for maternity and/or families and individuals and my trusty 70-200mm G2 for events.

PPD: Do you have a particular favorite Tamron lens and in what situations do you use it?

TR: I love my 15-30mm with newborns. If I use this lens in the right situation it brings the baby right up into focus and everything else drops off into a nice bokeh. I use it almost the entire newborn session. It's not super heavy, it lets me get in real close for great detail shots like nose, toes and lips but I can pull out for a wide shot for props and basket images. It just does everything I need it to do.

PPD: You've spent much of your life in a military family and on military bases, are your homecoming shots particularly important to you?

TR: Oh my yes, you take a spouse away from her soldier for months at a time, those first few moments of reconnection are like electricity. I've captured soldiers coming home to older veteran parents, coming home to pregnant wives about to deliver and even coming home to brand new little newborns that



they've only seen on FB images. These constantly make me believe in love and that it's all worth it in the end.

PPD: You've begun an interesting project that involves creating a military veterans photography group within the PPA. What is the group called and can you talk about your goals and ambitions for this new group?

TR: The group is called Military Affiliated Professional Photographers of America. First and foremost, I want the group to be a resource for military affiliated photographers, both active duty, military spouses

or veterans, to find any assistance they need to make their business succeed. I also have a great amount of contacts with military affiliated organizations that constantly need a collection of professional photographers to help them achieve their mission and to capture their events, so I want to be able to connect them. I spoke with PPA at Imaging this past January and was given the information on how to get this officially started, and we haven't looked back since!

You take a spouse away from her soldier for months at a time, those first few moments of reconnection are like electricity.



PPD: What inspired this idea?

TR: When I first started in PPA and attended the conferences I felt like there was no one else in the military going through what I had been through. Moving is a constant challenge for us military spouses, either ourselves or a constant rotation of clients. So over the past few years I've worked towards creating this group. We are currently working to acquire our nonprofit status so that we can be a recognized association with the PPA. I have so many ideas for this group and we don't have enough time or space here to talk about all that I want for this group.

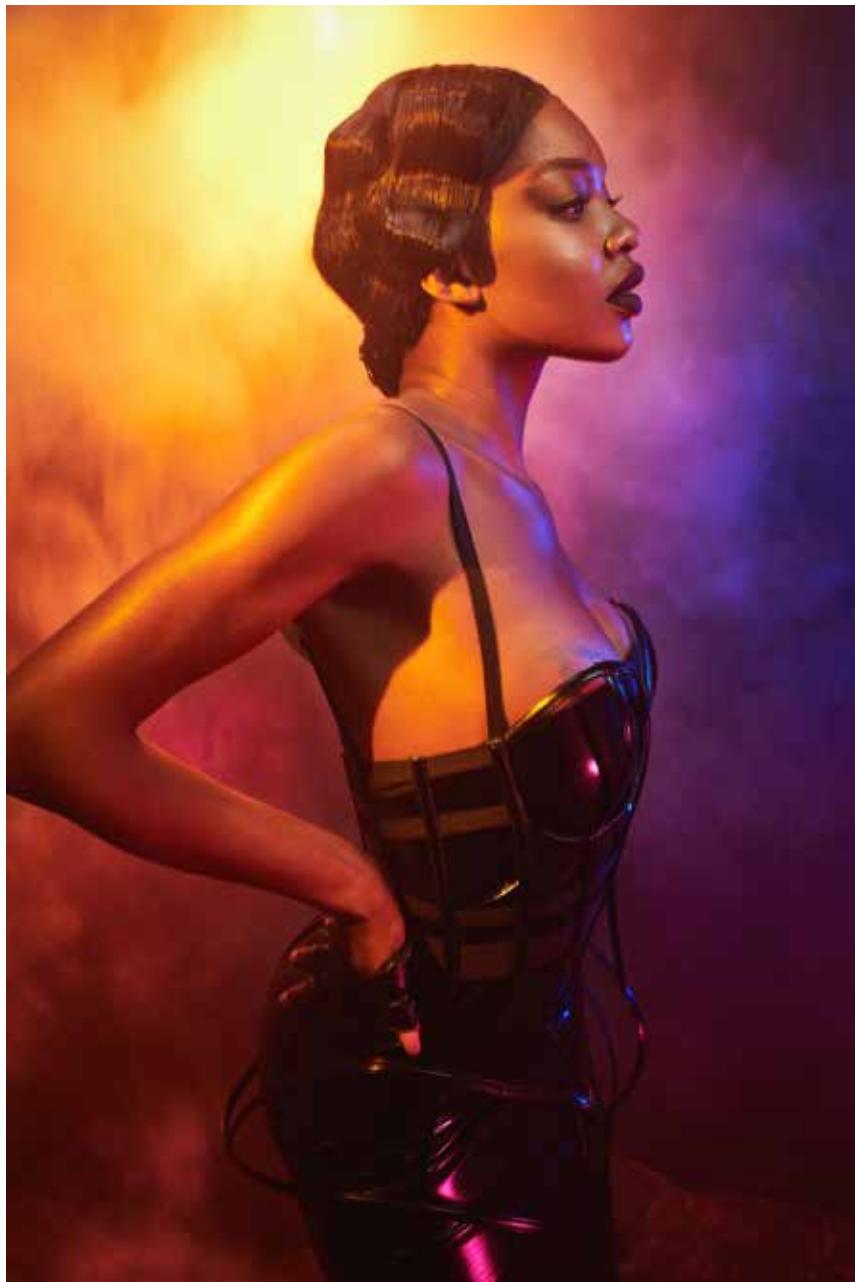
PPD: Do you have any tips, both technically and aesthetically for someone just starting out in portrait photography?

TR: Don't be afraid to be you. It's so easy to get caught up in the cliques, or to want to be just like a mentor, but you need to find your own style. Also find vendors and companies that you want to work with and be loyal to them. For example, I love Tamron and I only use their lenses. Those relationships can be very beneficial, and the support of my sponsors has helped me continue to grow and be a better photographer and I owe them so much!

PPD: Do you have any tips for getting people, particularly kids, to relax and have fun in front of the camera?

TR: Know your audience and fit in with them. When I'm working with children I wear fun leggings, I am comfortable in my skin and I am not afraid to get down on their level. Children will know if you are being fake, or if you're trying too hard. Just enjoy your time with that family. Spend time talking with them and get them to laugh before you ever pick up the camera. Those few extra steps and minutes can make a world of difference for how your session goes.





Nader Abushhab's Portraits in Honesty

By Jeff Wignall

Nader Abushhab is one those portrait photographers who images immediately beg us to know more about his subjects. Whether it's an acrobat dangling with grace and power from her apparatus or a wide-eyed innocent offering a soulful glance into the lens, his photos convey his subjects in a carefully crafted and yet honest way that both demands attention and peaks our curiosity.

Originally from Chicago and now based in Phoenix, Abushhab worked in animation and multimedia design for six years before following his true passion and starting his own photo business. Today his business focuses on a combination of environmental portraiture, fashion, and advertising. He's regularly works with numerous designers and models around the world as well as several major advertising clients. You can follow his work on Instagram.

Abushhab recently spoke to writer Jeff Wignall about his leap into still photography, his philosophy of portrait shooting and his love of Tamron lenses.

PPD: You worked for several years in animation and multimedia work, what inspired you to start your own fashion and portrait business?

NA: Since high school I had always been the buddy in my circle of friends who had some sort of disposable film or point and shoot camera to capture what we were up to. Looking back, it was a lot of me throwing an untamed flash around or hoping the sun was bright enough outside. There was no understanding or study of what or how I was shooting. I simply liked it. It was always important to have a camera around.

Fast forward to my time in the office world in multimedia design, and I had a revelation. I needed to learn more about making photos instead of taking them. This aha moment for me was when I realized I



could create images like the ones I'd always been inspired by. I've always loved the portraits of the Golden Age of Hollywood and the fashion work of the 90s, but never put it together that I could be the one behind the camera. It's empowering envisioning an image and bringing it to life through photography. I would say that photography is the easiest medium of art an aspiring artist can pick up, but it's the hardest to truly express one's self with. I wanted to express myself.

PPD: Was it tough getting established in fashion work and in finding clients?

NA: Of course. It takes time and effort to work yourself into any facet of the photography world. There are so many talented people looking to do the same kind of work. It takes a lot of networking and putting yourself out there to meet the right people. A lot of my clients were made by fostering my friendships/business relationships and via word of mouth.

PPD: What did you find to be the toughest barrier that you had to overcome in getting work and is it an ongoing battle?

NA: The two toughest barriers after having a decent body of work in your portfolio are standing out in the saturation of photographers in the industry. Always try to keep work fresh. Update your site. Create for the sake of creating. Love what you do! The second, again, comes down to making the right connections. There's so much wonderful competition out there, which I love, and that simply means we need to evolve as artists to make our voices louder. Get out there, be yourself and be part of the community.

PPD: Are there things you wish you had done differently in getting started, something you've learned from experience in starting your own business?

NA: In the beginning I would have loved to find direction sooner. I did what a lot of new photographers do and shot everything. If someone found out I was a photographer, they would bring up an engagement session, wedding, event, headshot, architecture...you name a genre. I said yes to a lot of work that my heart wasn't feeling. Having direction early can really fortify your style and network early on. That would have been a nice shortcut. That of course doesn't mean you should only photograph one kind of thing. On the plus side, shooting a lot of different genres and styles can really help you decide the direction you'd like to go in. Once you discover that, stick to it as your base while discovering and dipping your toes into other genres. Having that foundation right at the start would have been a great asset.

PPD: How do you market yourself?

NA: Currently I market myself through some social media, targeted emails to potential leads and agen-

cies, producing fashion editorials with teams to keep work fresh, and networking a ton at local advertising and fashion events. A lot of my clients find me through the network I've built all across the world.

PPD: Your lighting in both fashion and portraits seems very straightforward and natural. What is a typical lighting setup for you?

NA: My typical lighting setup—now that's a tough one. I have a couple go-tos for sure, but I adapt to my subjects and environments. I always begin by lighting for the face and building on top of that. My favorite lighting modifiers and the ones that I always have on hand are brolly boxes, deep parabolics, and fresnel lights. Brolly boxes are fantastic because of their portability, deep parabolics give soft light with great contrast, and fresnels give crispy hard light with control over intensity. In addition to some of my favorite portrait artists, I'm inspired by the lighting in cinema. Lighting in cinema can be very complicated, but also extremely simple. I love trying to keep things simple personally unless the shoot calls for something more. It's all about seeing the light in a location, controlling it, and building on top of that.

PPD: What is your go-to Tamron lens for portrait work?

NA: My favorite Tamron lens for portrait work is the Tamron 45mm f/1.8. I've always loved the standard lens on medium format cameras, and the 45mm from Tamron for 35mm format provides the closest look to those setups I've come across. It's wonderfully sharp in all the right places! The Tamron 45mm also provides a minimum focus of 29cm, which when used properly for portraits, gives a unique amount of depth of field to the subject. It's absolutely a sleeper hit of a lens.

PPD: What advantages do you find in working with Tamron lenses



in both your portrait and fashion work?

NA: There is a lot of great glass on the market. I initially started using Tamron glass to get more bang for my buck, and over time fell in love with more and more lenses. For beginner photographers, Tamron provides an excellent product and value. For seasoned photographers, Tamron is bringing rock solid image quality to the table as well, and even blazed the trail in the industry by adding some top-tier features (like vibration compensation) to prime lenses like the 45mm and 85mm before other companies. Innovation and image quality have really kept me utilizing Tamron glass for my work.

PPD: Are your portrait subjects self-assigned studies of people you know or are they people that have sought you out?

NA: Both! When I'm not on assignment, and I'm always looking for interesting subjects to photograph and create personal projects with. Sometimes that can be friends. Sometimes it's someone completely new!

Aside from truly being interested in and trying to get to know your subjects, go into the shoot with a plan. Also, know your gear. If the subject sees you are intentional with your lighting and confident with your gear, which gives you more time to connect with them on the human level, they will be more comfortable.



PPD: Do you talk to your portrait subjects beforehand about what you want to achieve in a particular shoot or are the sessions more spontaneous?

NA: For certain projects where it calls for it, especially assignments, I absolutely do. Being thorough before a shoot makes the shoot go smoothly. When it's more of a casual shoot, at the very least I'll give a basic idea of

where my brain is headed. In those situations, I tend to enjoy allowing myself and team to freestyle through the process. We bounce ideas off each other, have fun, and create for the sake of creating. It's absolutely important to have opportunities to let your brain create on the fly and calculate any obstacles during that process. That can also help you during production days.

PPD: Do you have any tips for beginning portrait shooters that will help them in getting their subjects to relax and in getting the most interesting mix of results?

NA: I became a portrait photographer because I love people and getting to know them. Aside from truly being interested in and trying to get to know your subjects, go into the shoot with a plan. Also, know your gear. If the subject sees you are intentional with your lighting and confident with your gear, which gives you more time to connect with them on the human level, they will be more comfortable.

PPD: What tips do you have for creating an effective and yet natural-looking lighting set up?

NA: The best tip I have for creating natural looking artificial light is to utilize fill light. Whether that's the ambient light available or additional gear, a great key light mixed with the proper ratio of available ambient fill or artificial fill takes an image to the next level.

PPD: What tips do you have for lighting on location, as far as lighting, time of day, etc.?

NA: Get comfortable with the basics. Analyze the location's lighting and remember it's all about balance. Find your exposure before turning your lights on, and balance from there. Shoot close to sunrise or sunset as much as you can, and get yourself a sun tracking app to really know where the sun is going to be. When it comes to strobes, I would say to use as many different modifiers as you can to see what you like. Once you find ones that you like, take time to practice and get comfortable blending with one light. Mimic the light you're seeing in your surroundings and travel your lights in similar directions to build upon your scene. Save complex lighting setups for after you've tackled one-light setups.



Justin Haugen: Wedding Photography with a Southwest Flair

By Jeff Wignall

When it comes to choosing a career direction in creative photography, a lot of young photographers steer away from weddings because they fear they'll be trapped into creating traditional and somewhat repetitive photos. But creativity is all about what you bring to the game and Tucson-based wedding photographer Justin Haugen is living proof of that. Haugen has re-invented the traditional wedding portrait, for example, to bring the locations and spirit of the southwest into his images. "There is more to the desert than cactus, sand, and sunsets. You can invoke the spirit of this beautiful place without focusing entirely on the desert landscape," he says.

Haugen describes himself as, "...a jet set military brat hailing from Germany by way of South Korea, proclaiming Tucson as my home after 18 years in the Old Pueblo." In addition to his weddings, Haugen has quite a roster of commercial and editorial clients including: Wholesum Harvest, Lululemon, La Encantada, Tucson Guide Magazine, Visit Tucson, Visit Arizona, Sedona Official Visitors Guide, Phoenix Valley Guide Magazine, Madden Media Publishing, Session Yoga, Pima Air and Space Museum, Broken Clover Tattoo, At Home



Tucson Realty, Shyann Kindness Foundation, The Innova Group, and DSport Magazine.

Recently Haugen took time from his busy schedule to speak with writer Jeff Wignall about his wedding work, his very stylish approach to portraiture and why he chooses to shoot with Tamron lenses.

PPD: What led you to build a creative career shooting weddings?

JH: I started photography as a hobby in 2004 while going to school for graphic design. I was constantly manipulating images for design assignments and some client work I was taking on at the time. Like a lot of young men, I was really interested in cars and it wasn't long before I was photographing them for a number of print publications.

At some point in your photography interest, you're fated to be asked "Hey, can you photograph my wedding?" That moment came in 2005 when I was asked to photograph a wedding for a friend. I don't even really remember my thoughts from that day or if I thought, "Hey, I have a knack for this." It went relatively smoothly and it's only now in retrospect that I think how unprepared and uninformed I was about the process of wedding photography. I made it through that day and slowly my focus shifted from cars to weddings which became a pretty regular side gig until my business transitioned to full-time.

PPD: How would you describe your approach to wedding photography?

JH: I think I would describe my approach as emotional and intimate. Early in my photography I thought of the camera as invasive and disruptive to guests and couples, that it would pull people out of the moment. I was apt to use longer focal lengths to stay further away from what was unfolding and not pull people out of their

moments. After photographing 160 weddings, my approach has shifted away from this mindset and I've learned that lens decision impacts the experience of viewing images of precious moments. At wedding consultations and throughout the planning stages of a wedding, I condition couples to expect the camera to be close to their moments. I rely heavily on 35mm lenses for a more photo journalistic approach, filling the frame with my subjects so couples can be participants in their memories when they view the images later.

PPD: Many of your wedding photos are considerably more dramatic and inventive than traditional wedding shots. Do you find you have to explain your work to potential clients or do they seek you out because of your ambitious creative style?

JH: I often find myself explaining the progression of wedding images and how I approach creative portraits, simply because I'm a little self-conscious that it's so different than what's trending in wedding photography. It's very exciting when couples take note of what you're doing differently and they see themselves in your images. When people tell me what they like about my images, it indicates to me that they care very greatly about the photography and that they did a lot of research to find someone who has a vision that aligns with theirs. Generally when I meet with a couple for our first consultation, I have a sense that they are interested in my style of photography.

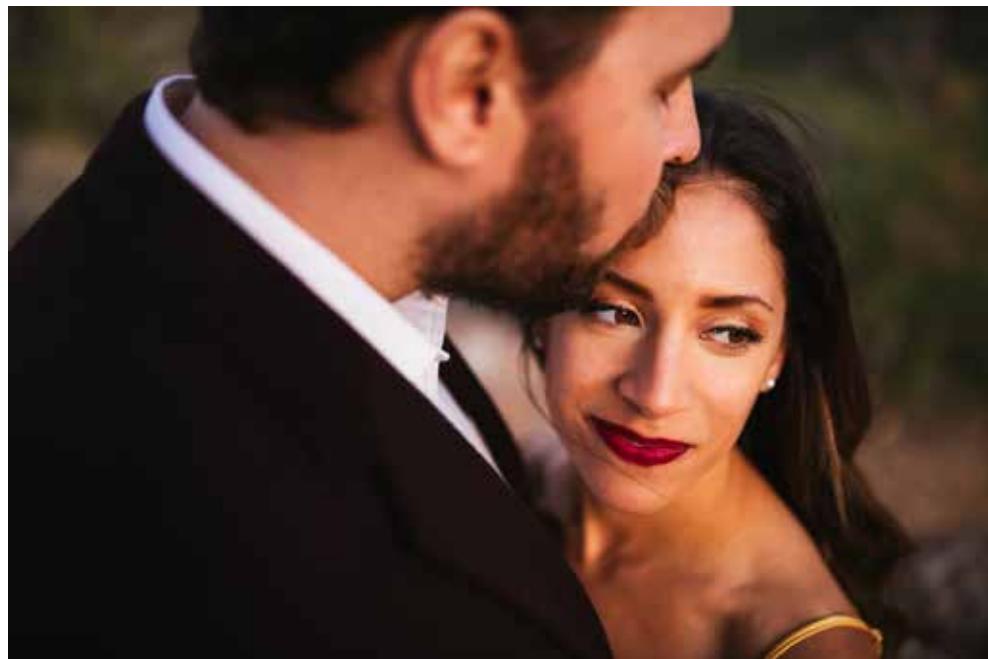
PPD: In some of your wedding portraits the surroundings seem to dominate your subjects and yet the subjects seem to remain the focal point. Is that a difficult visual concept to create?

JH: Above all else, our subjects are the most important part of the image. When you go into every wed-

ding or portrait session with this in mind, it's easy to convey this visual concept. Everything I do in regards to composition, lighting, posing, and depth of field, is intended to make my subjects immediately recognizable in a scene. Regardless

to keep track of gear from being left behind and to assist me with moving lighting equipment into position.

PPD: Speaking of lighting, do you primarily work by existing light or flash?



of how big the scene may be, I need the viewer's eye to beeline straight to the subjects.

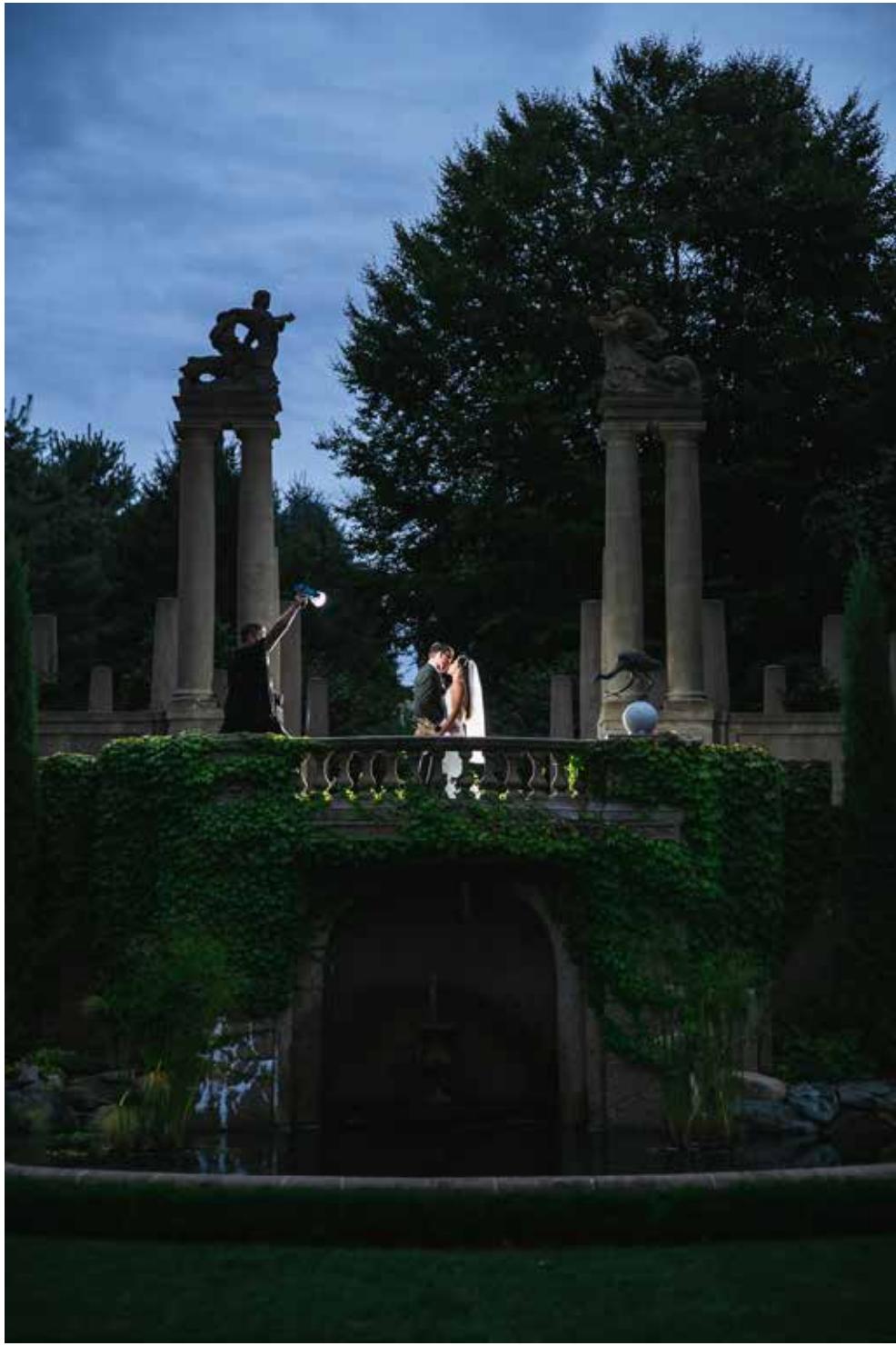
PPD: How do you market yourself?

JH: A big part of my ability to reach new couples is through good SEO practices and keeping my site at the top of my key search results for wedding photographers in my city. Most couples find me through Google searches and reach me through the contact form on my website which generates a client workspace via my CRM. I've also run listings on wedding directories.

PPD: Do you work alone at weddings or use an assistant?

JH: I typically work with a second photographer and assistant. Most of my wedding packages include a second photographer and couples often request the extra coverage. I really count on the help of an assistant

JH: I'm a heavy user of off-camera flash to creatively light my subjects and once the wedding reception starts, 100% of those images are lit by flashes I've positioned around the reception hall. Before the reception though, I'd say 80% of my images are captured with available light and I'm harnessing light sources like light coming through a window or even direct sunlight to make creative decisions about how to photograph As you move into weddings, remember you're dealing with the most important memories of people on their most cherished day. You owe it to your clients to have backups of everything possible should there be failures or loss of data. It's imperative you get backup cameras, memory cards, lenses, flashes, and hard drives to take care of your client's memories.



subjects as they move through a scene.

PPD: What Tamron lenses do you own and rely on for wedding coverage (and why)? Your fav go-to lens?

JH: Currently I own the 35mm 1.4 and the 24-70 f2.8 G2. I'm a heavy 35mm user and the new version from Tamron is such a welcome addition to my camera bag. There's

something special about this lens shooting wide open at 1.4 and how it throws the background out of focus. I've used a lot of 35mm lenses over the years from Canon to Nikon, and this lens competes directly with any lens options. It has been a considerable upgrade from my Nikon 35 1.8G.

I've also come to really enjoy the 24-70 f2.8 G2 and it's my number one

workhorse lens now. During portions of a wedding day when I'm less concerned with shooting wide open at f1.4 and more concerned with the varying proximity to subjects around me, I'm happy to lean on the 24-70 and the versatility it affords me. Once open dancing has started at the wedding reception, I switch from shooting with two camera bodies with a 35mm and 85mm lens, and I change over to one camera body and the 24-70mm. It saves me some wear and tear on my body over the course of a long wedding day.

PPD: Do you have any particular creative or technical tips that you would offer to someone just starting in wedding photography?

JH: Don't overthink your lens selections early in your wedding photography. I've bought a lot of lenses over the years thinking they would all solve different problems for me, but it took several years to hone in on the Tamron 35mm and 85mm focal lengths while shooting with two bodies. The 35mm helps me capture more of a scene for environmental portraits and to involve the camera for intimate moments while the 85mm allows me to capture more traditional portrait compositions and to acquire a little more reach when it calls for it.

If I had to choose one lens only to photograph an entire wedding day, it'd be the Tamron SP 24-70 2.8 G2. If you're initially starting with one body, a lens like the 24-70 will keep you from constantly switching lenses and allow you to be present in the moment as much as possible.

As you move into weddings, remember you're dealing with the most important memories of people on their most cherished day. You owe it to your clients to have backups of everything possible should there be failures or loss of data. It's imperative you get backup cameras, memory cards, lenses, flashes, and hard drives to take care of your client's memories.



Arpan Das Views the Heavens Above and the Beautiful Landscapes Below

By Jeff Wignall

Arpan Das spends his days — and his nights — inspired by two very different muses.

As an astrophysicist/cosmetologist by profession, it is the nighttime sky that captures Das' imagination and sends him traveling to the dark corners of the globe in search of clues to the myriad mysteries of the Universe. As a photographer, however, he spends his days exploring the landscapes of our home planet. The images he produces, often containing intense colors and dramatic lighting, have won the Indian-born photographer worldwide recognition. Often too, Das cleverly mingles his two passions by combining the night sky and the sunlit land below.

Das has covered a lot of geographic ground in both his astronomy career and his photography. "I was born in Kolkata, India where I stayed

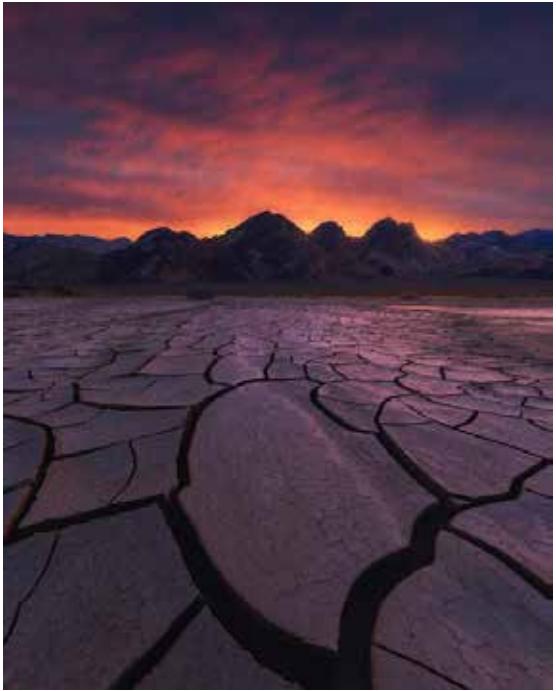
till 2011," he says. "Then I left my hometown and moved to the capital city Delhi to pursue my higher study. Then I moved to the beautiful coun-

try of Italy where I spent two years of my life. Since 2017 I have been living in Canada." His search for terrestrial inspiration has taken him to some of the world's most dramatic destinations, including Kyrgyzstan, Slovenia, the Italian Dolomites, and the Canadian Rockies.

Das' interest in photography, he says, is an outgrowth of a having a naturally creative personality and like many photographers, his first passion was actually painting. "I used to paint landscapes and absolutely loved it," he says. "Unfortunately I had to leave painting behind to pursue my studies. But the hunger for something artistic was always there."

During a family trip, he says, his father decided to buy a point and shoot camera and Das found the camera to be a really interesting tool and he knew that somehow photography would be a part of his life. "I was not sure what

Never ever push yourself really hard for anything you don't enjoy... taking photos for yourself should be your first priority, running workshops, making tutorials, podcasts, conferences everything should be secondary no matter what.



kind of photography I would love to do," he explains. "During the early days I tried everything—macro, street, nature. But when I moved to Italy and took a trip to the Dolomites with a friend, I immediately knew that this is it, this is what I wanted to do."

Since that epiphany, says Das, landscape photography has changed

his life in many ways. "I am pretty sure I would not have travelled to the places I did if I had not become a photographer. I probably wouldn't have heard about eighty percent of those places. Landscape photography is a great excuse for me to travel to unique places.

While a self-taught photographer, Das has been guided by the work of a host of other landscape shooters. "I follow the work of fellow photographers like Ryan Dyrar, Ted Gore, Marc Adamus, Max Rive, Daniel Kordan from the beginning," he says. "They have always been a huge source of inspiration for me. Painters have also been another source of inspiration for me. Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Cole Caspar and David Friedrich are few of my favorites."

Das recently returned from a wild trip in the Yukon and took time to talk with writer Jeff Wignall about his photography, his lust for rugged places and his love for Tamron lenses in capturing both heavenly and more Earthly landscapes.

PPD: You obviously have a great passion for photographing mountains. What is it about mountains that stirs the photographer in you?

AD: Much of it is the scale of the mountains. It is so amazing. With an ultra wide angle lens they can look tiny, but at the same time they can look gigantic with a zoom lens. Moreover, to me mountains are the most dramatic element of nature.

PPD: Are you a climber yourself?

AD: Not at all, you can call me a mountain sloth and I have no shame to

admit it. I am a slow-medium hiker too. But I absolutely love being in the mountains.

PPD: You've said that it was the Italian Alps that really triggered your photo passion, why was that?

AD: The first time I saw that area it totally blew my mind. I can't describe in words but there was something magical about those mountains. Even though India has the biggest mountains, I always lived far from the mountains and didn't get much opportunity to explore. So seeing the Dolomites was kind of my first meeting with the giants and ever since then I have been trying to chase all the mountains in the world.

PPD: By profession you're an Astrophysicist/Cosmologist. First of all, what exactly does an Astrophysicist/Cosmologist do?

AD: Good question. We do crazy stuff, basically trying to explore outer space. Human minds always go crazy when thinking about space and we

just try to answer those questions. Currently I am trying to study how we can detect black holes.

PPD: You describe yourself as a hobbyist. Are you ever tempted to go into photography as a career?

AD: Actually no, I prefer not to have it as a career. I am happier as a hobbyist. I like to have freedom. Having it as a career takes a lot of freedom away. I have to run a certain number of workshops to make enough money, I would have to compromise some traveling in order to do other stuff. I don't want to do that. I just want to enjoy being out and create. Having said that I always love to help and teach other people any way I can. So one or a maximum of two workshops per year is something I want to do. I want to bring people to my favorite places and teach them in the field. This is more about passion.

PPD: You've said that your profession as an astronomer and photography complement one another very well, how is that?

AD: I was equally passionate about science and arts from my childhood. While I can spend a whole day reading some science related books, I can spend an entire day in the Louvre Museum staring at the paintings. Having astronomy as the profession and photography as the hobby perfectly balances them. Moreover, photography helps me to escape the concrete jungle life which I am not a big fan of.

PPD: Your landscapes frequently have very intense sunrise or sunset colors, do you work primarily at the extremes of daylight?

AD: It's true that I post a lot of images of sunrise and sunsets. I love capturing the dawn most. It has a very different feeling than anything else. But I do take a lot of images in full daylight too, I just don't show them in my galleries as much.

PPD: Your colors are very intense, is some of this being done in post?

AD: All my images are post processed in Photoshop. I love spending 4-5 days or even more on a single image. I see them as I did my paintings in when I was a painter. My idea is to bring my vision from the place rather than to capture straight out-of-camera image. Having said that, I don't change anything permanent in the scene. For example, if I have an image with a flowing stream and a mountain in the background it is 100% guaranteed that if someone else will go there he/she will witness the same exact scene, just with different light and sky which are the temporary elements of the subjects.

PPD: What Tamron lenses are you currently using?

AD: I personally own the Tamron 15-30 G2 and Tamron 100-400. However, Tamron is always really supportive towards my art. They send lenses I need for different trips. The 24-70 G2 is my absolute favorite. I also used their 150-600 G2 which is an amazing lens for intimate and abstract landscapes and the 35mm which is great for astro landscapes.

PPD: Is there a particular Tamron lens that is your "go to" lens for landscapes and mountain scenes?

AD: Definitely the 15-30 G2. The focal length is so perfect. I used the 15-30 for first 4 years without having any second lens.

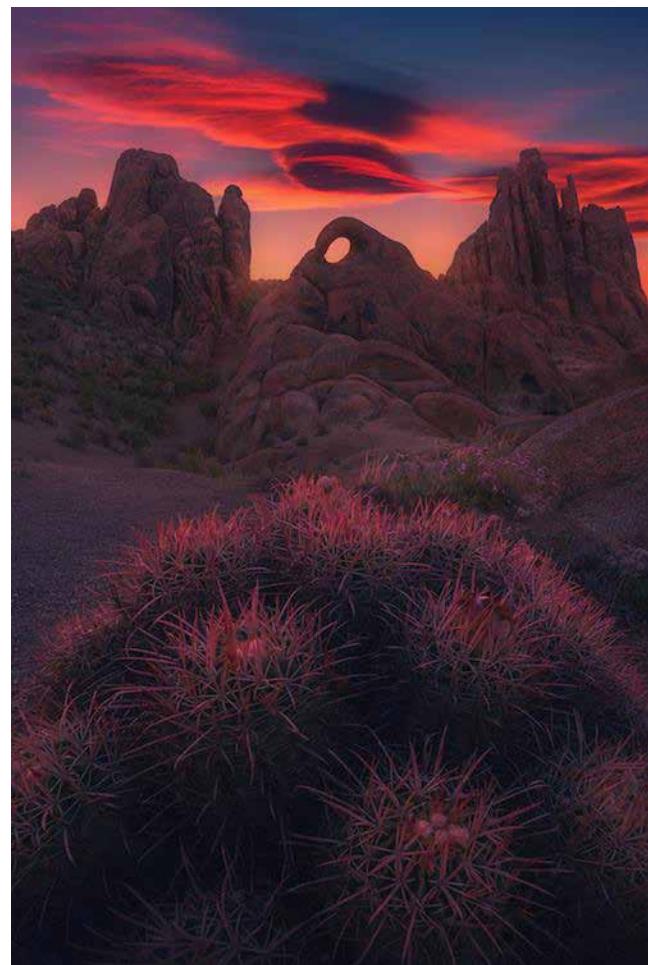
PPD: What is it that attracted you to Tamron lenses and what qualities to you most appreciate?

AD: They deliver amazing products at a much more affordable price than many other brands. I tried their 15-30mm first and it was amazing.

They are constantly improvising new technologies which is much needed.

PPD: A lot of your landscape photos would seem to be an exposure nightmare, yet you are able to capture an extraordinary dynamic range. How are you able to solve such contrast and exposure issues?

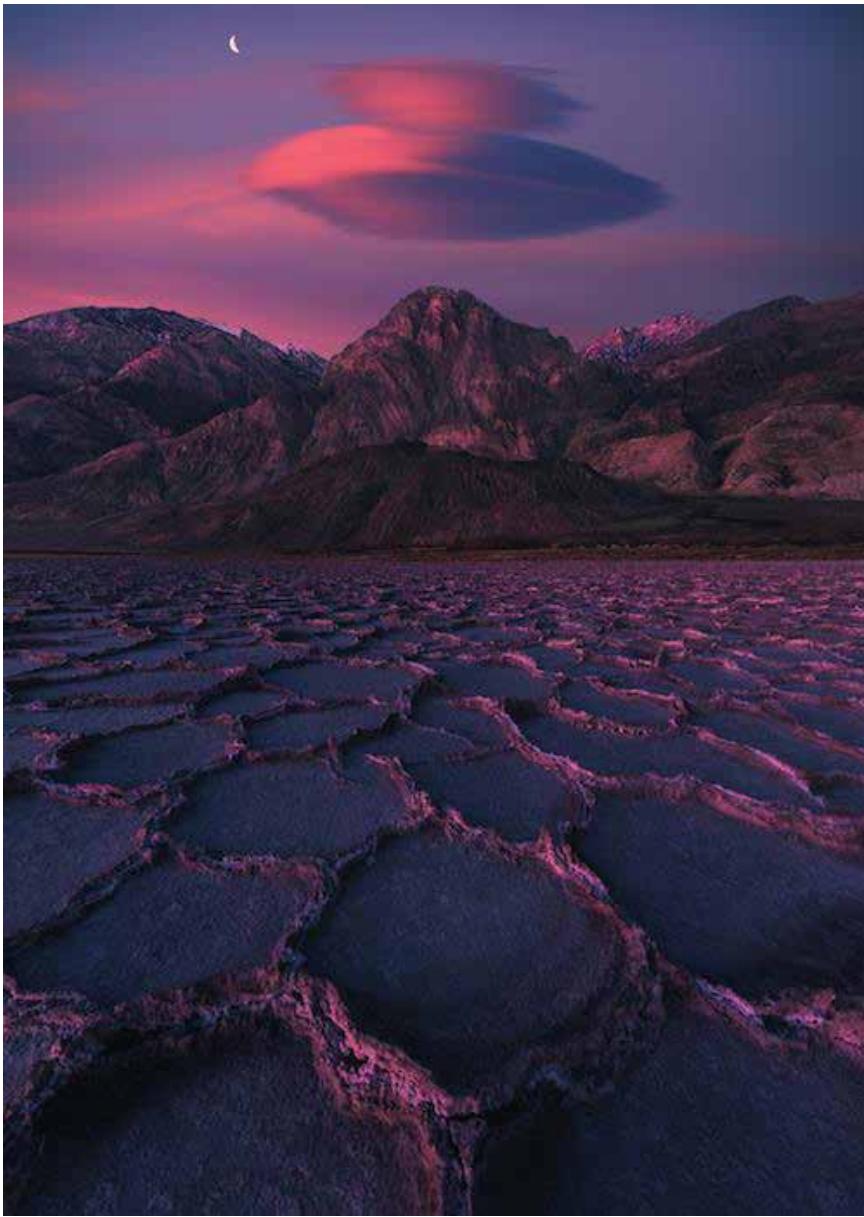
AD: Modern cameras have amazing



dynamic ranges. If one can expose properly they can do magic with a single shot. Most of my images are a single exposure whose dynamic range was expanded in post processing.

PPD: In many of your photos, you mix the daylight landscape with the nighttime sky. Can you talk about mixing those two elements?

AD: Most of those kinds of images were created using "time blending" or



"blue hour blending." The idea is to take the foreground during the blue hour, just before sunrise or after sunset, so that I have enough contrast, less noise and most dynamic range to work with. Then I take a shot of the stars when they appear (generally 45-60 minutes before or after sunset) and I merge them in Photoshop.

PPD: Another of your passions is astrophotography. When did you begin shooting the night sky and can you talk about the challenges the night sky presents?

AD: Almost at the same time I started landscape photography. One of the biggest challenges for me is to compose at night. Anyone can take a photo of Milky Way or stars with modern cam-

eras, even with the latest cell phones. What makes your work stand out is your composition and finding certain elements at night is not as easy as it is during daytime. Finding good night compositions requires a lot of planning and scouting.

I am also using a device called a star tracker these days. When you are shooting a Milky Way or stars you cannot expose more than 25-30 seconds without getting any trails as the stars are moving due to Earth's rotation. In order to expose more and get more details one can use a device called star tracker. But it is quite tricky to use it. Even though it is fun, one small mistake can ruin an hour-long shooting. So you have to be extra careful.

PPD: You've spent time in some Kyrgyzstan which I would think is a very under-photographed local. What was your impression of that country from a photographing standpoint?

AD: One of the main reasons I visited that country is because it is really less photographed. These days I am trying to stay away from the crowd. I don't feel any joy creating which is already created, it's just a personal thing. Kyrgyzstan is a paradise for any landscape photographer, it totally blew my mind away. This country has everything giant mountains, glacial lakes, glaciers, rivers, canyons. However it is not easy to access everything without a lot of hiking or proper off-road vehicles. In a way I like that because it will keep them away from crowds of tourists.

PPD: You recently made a trip to the Yukon for work and did some photography, what is that area like?

AD: AD: The Yukon is another unexplored place which drew my attention. Canada has some of the most versatile and remote mountain ranges in the world. It was an amazing experience to camp in the arctic cold. We were stuck in a blizzard for couple of days. This trip boosted my confidence a lot to do more backcountry trips in Canada and I am already planning them for 2020. This was kind of opening a new door to me.

PPD: Do you have any advice for young photographers who might want to pursue a photo career as artists, not necessarily as pros?

AD: AD: Try to learn from others, take criticism in a positive way. I know criticism can be hard sometimes but without it art can never be improved. Try to improvise every time, push your limit. Also, it is really important to enjoy what you are doing, never ever push yourself really hard for anything you don't enjoy. Finally, if this is your passion then taking photos for yourself should be your first priority, running workshops, making tutorials, podcasts, conferences everything should be secondary no matter what.



How Alyce Bender Makes Peace with Nature Through Photography

By Jeff Wignall

"My entire life I have always felt a special bond with the natural world, especially animals," says Las Vegas-based nature photographer Alyce Bender. "I know that may be cliché, but whether it's the shady green forests of the east coast, the golden deserts of the Middle East, the snowy scenes of northern Japan, or the temperate coastal shores of the Pacific states, I find peace and solace when out in the wilderness."

Part of the reason she is so heavily drawn to nature, she says, is in response to the way most of us lead our modern lives. "Today, where many live in urban settings and rarely get out to explore, I think the vast majority of society has forgotten how to interact with nature," says Bender. "I hope through my images and stories, it can help bring them closer to nature and start conversations about

these unique environments."

She believes there is also a deeper purpose in her work: "As we face mass extinctions and an ever-warming climate, my images act two-fold, both to record what is/was and to bring vulnerable, lesser known corners of the globe to viewers."

Bender began seriously pursuing her photo career after separating from the US Air Force about six years

ago. "I decided to make the jump into a full-time photography career last year when my husband's career took him overseas to a location I could not follow, thus leaving me the opportunity to jump head first into traveling and photography full time by living RV life for 10 months." Today while she does primarily fine art, she always welcomes assignment work and hosts photo tours where she takes very small groups to capture environments and wildlife they might otherwise never experience.

Her nature work has been exhibit-

That's when the real fun begins in trying to stay with that animal as long as possible without it feeling stressed or changing its behavior... start seeing the behavioral patterns and anticipating those great action moments we all want to capture.



ed widely with shows in galleries and online, including at The Hub at B&C, Las Vegas, the Center for Photographic Art in Carmel, CA, the Melrose Bay Gallery, Melrose, Florida, the Visual Art Exchange, Raleigh, North Carolina, the Charleston Center for Photography in Charleston, South Carolina and the View Art Center, Old Forge, New York.

Her work has been published in a number of print and online publications, including: Tamron Magazine (Summer 2019 edition), South Carolina Wildlife Magazine, Photographers' Cooperative, North American Nature Photography Association, Outdoor Photography, Landscape Photography Magazine, and James Kelly Photography Elgin, Scotland (as featured client photographs). She was also recently profiled in a national Japanese newspaper article which she says was, "...kind of cool considering I couldn't read it. I had to get a Japanese coworker to translate it for me."

Bender recently spoke to writer

Jeff Wignall about her extensive travels, her passion for all things wild and her use of Tamron lenses.

PPD: You've traveled a great deal to some rather exotic places—Japan, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, the United Arab Emirates. How much time do you spend each year on the road doing self assignments?

AB: Travel is a way of life for me. If I'm in one place too long, I get really restless. A few weeks without a trip and I am chomping at the bit to do something even if it is just a long weekend in a different part of the state. It fluctuates but typically I am traveling about 20 weeks each year, mostly domestic, but I try to get at least two to three international trips in that time as well.

PPD: Do you have a favorite part of the world?

AB: This is a really hard question to answer for me as I have not been everywhere yet. However, at this point, I would have to say Japan. It is a place

I continuously revisit and would love to be able to live there permanently one day.

PPD: How did you end up shooting in Japan and what was it like to be photographing there?

AB: Well, my husband's career dropped us in Japan for two-and-a-half years and I took full advantage of that time for my photography. There is something to be said about being able to explore a country as an outsider but with insider access due to temporary residency. Areas of the country not often visited by foreigners were a specific joy of mine to discover. This type of access also allowed me to revisit places time and again to learn the environment and what animal behavior to expect.

The famous snow monkeys are a very popular visit for photographers and tourists in Japan during winter. I have spent several weeks in recent years visiting the park where they tend to congregate. During this time, I have learned there are certain times



of day that are better to see them coming down from the mountains or that they tend to be more active and playing. Due to the heavy visitation that these monkeys see, they are used to people but obviously, like most wildlife, they do not like being harassed or pressured. I have been sitting quietly before and had them come very close as they were chased from other areas by less respectful tourists.

PPD: What parts of Japan did you visit and did you just wander alone or did you use a guide?

PPD: Since we lived in Aomori Prefecture, the most northern prefecture on the main island (Honshu), I primarily explored the Tohoku region, which is comprised of seven prefectures from Fukushima north to Aomori. However, I also visited Hokkaido each winter and continue to go back each February even now, after moving back to the States.

My explorations were almost always self-guided, where I would

just get in the car and drive. So much of that region does not have a heavy online presence or English guidance, so many times the easiest way to find out about a dot on the map was to actually visit it.

PPD: What Tamron lenses do you use the most and for what subjects?

AB: The three primary lenses I shoot with are all Tamron.

My Tamron SP 150-600mm G2 is heavily utilized and is my go-to for wildlife. It's been all over the world with me and through all sorts of environments, from the blazing deserts of the Middle East to the snowy islands of Japan.

When it comes to landscapes, I love my 10-24mm zoom. The ultra-wide view allows me to compose wide scenes while still using my Nikon D500 crop-sensor body.

My third lens was a recent acquisition this year and I just can't get enough of it. The Tamron 18-400mm VC HLD has been an amazing addition to my kit. It allows me to take

just one lens when scouting new locations without having to worry I might miss that deer crossing the trail or that I won't be able to capture the great view at the top. I've also been really happy with its capability to act as a pseudo-macro lens, meaning I don't have to carry additional gear for Nature's beautiful details.

PPD: What is it that you like about Tamron lenses, that makes them your first choice with wildlife subjects?

AB: Price point is what originally drew me to Tamron products, however I stay with them because of the quality. I have always found Tamron lenses to be sharp and reliable. Their well-made design, including things like weather and dust resistant seals throughout the barrel of the 150-600mm G2, make them more usable in the field than models of other companies. I don't shoot under only sunny skies so why have gear that can't withstand the elements?

PPD: Do you have a favorite Tamron lens, your go-to lens?

AB: Well the three I mentioned above are my go-to kit and cover a range of 10mm to 600mm. With that coverage, I rarely have need of any other lens except maybe a specialized macro or prime if the situation calls for it. Otherwise, it's that trio.

But if I had to recommend only one to someone just starting out and considering Tamron products, I would highly suggest the Tamron 18-400mm due to its versatility, quality, and it is lightweight, making it ideal for really any shooter out there.

PPD: What is your pre-trip research process like? Do you read a lot? Talk to other photographers before you go?

AB: Trip planning is one of my favorite parts! I always have something in the works as it is how I relax, just scanning areas on Google Maps or reading location blogs. I typically do many, many hours of



e-scouting before putting boots on the ground for distant locations. For places closer to home, I still do a good bit of reading, maybe some image searches to see what others in the area are shooting, before heading out to shoot on my own.

Depending on the location, I will reach out to other photographers who either are local or have experience in the area and just get their stories and see if they have any tips. With all the social media out there now, many photographers, including myself, either have blogs or vlogs about shooting locations and I find those really helpful, as it allows me to pinpoint what questions I might have for them that have not already been answered elsewhere. This shows respect for the other

photographers time and the efforts they have put into creating content already available.

PPD: Is waiting for the right moment tough or do you like the anticipation?

PPD: Waiting is always the hardest part for me. It is one reason I have yet to do any blind work, as just sitting there when I feel like I could be shooting elsewhere is always a very hard feeling for me to overcome. However, once an animal is sighted or even if it can be heard but not seen yet, I'm game. For me that's when the real fun begins in trying to stay with that animal as long as possible without it feeling stressed or changing its behavior. It's during these longer sessions with specific individuals

that you are able to start seeing the behavioral patterns and anticipating those great action moments we all want to capture.

PPD: Do you have any workshops or classes coming up that you'd like to talk about?

AB: I do have two tours coming up that I am super excited about.

The first is in November where I will be leading a small group of photographers into the forests outside Phoenix, Arizona, to photograph the wild horses found there. Coinciding with the fall color down there, we should have some great weather and beautiful backgrounds for our images.

The other tour is by far my favorite every year and that is to Japan! We go for ten days in February and I bring a max of four photographers. We will visit Hokkaido to photograph all the beautiful creatures up there such as the cranes, fox, and eagles. It really is an amazing time and gives those who come with me a great way to see rural Japan stress-free.

PPD: Finally, what advice do you have for those who want to learn more about nature photography or perhaps consider it a profession?

AB: Great question! My number one recommendation would be to invest in field education and travel over gear. Join organizations like the North American Nature Photographers Association (NANPA) as they are a wealth of information and opportunities. Education will teach you the practicals of using your gear while connecting you with those who share the same interests. Travel will broaden your mind and portfolio. Determine what you want your niche to be as early as possible and then become an expert on that subject, technique, region, whatever it ends up being. Then put yourself out there if you want to make it a profession. It's a hard road for most to make this passion a career but, to me, it's all worth it.



Shane Russeck on Seeking the Hidden Beauty of Danger By Jeff Wignall

Shane Russeck describes himself as a modern day **photographer, adventurer, and explorer** who is "...driven by the chase for finding the extraordinary beauty in uniquely dangerous situations." Naturally, of course, this quest for off-the-beaten-path photos frequently means getting up close and personal with situations most of us might prefer to avoid—staring down a lion or coming eye-to-eye (literally) with an orca, for example. His photographs of these moments are almost always a brazen reminder of the drama and intensity that they provide. →



Russeck's subjects include a number of venturesome specialties, among them: wildlife (including extensive studies of remaining wild mustangs in the American West), the rodeo, aerial photography—and even some modern day outlaws. One of his major essays is a series of images he calls "Portrait of an American Outlaw" that features a legendary California biker.

It was another of his lifelong passions—boxing—that led directly to his photo career. "Boxing has always been a huge part of my life," says Russeck. "I still train five days a week and occasionally will work a corner. The guys that make it to the top level are a very rare breed. You know early if you have that desire or not. I never did. Boxers are our modern day gladiators and it's been my privilege to have trained next to and gotten to know many of today's best. I have a great love and respect for the sport."

By chance he was training at legendary boxer Freddie Roach's

gym while there was a documentary being filmed about him. "I happened to pick up a Canon 5D and snap a shot of Freddie. The image ended up in the Boxing Hall of Fame and the rest is kind of history. I bought the camera that I shot that photo with that day and still use it. Up until that moment I had no aspirations to be a photographer—none at all. The oddest thing is even now I never really shoot boxers or in the gym. For me it's too easy. I need some kind of adventure to get excited about a shoot."

Today Russeck splits his time between his photo-related road trips and running the recently-opened Shane Russeck Gallery near his home in Los Angeles. "I'm gone about two weeks out of every month," he says. "Though the past few months I've been in LA more than usual with the new gallery. I have a studio in the back, so I've been doing a lot of printing and creating handmade frames."

Russeck's extensive editorial and commercial client list and his directing credits include an ICON 4x4 commercial and Heidi Klum's Next Top Model. His photos have also been included in several gallery showings, among them: a current show at the Cinq Gallery in Dallas, Texas, the Gallery Center in Soho (2016) and at Canvas Malibu—Malibu, California. (2016).

Russeck recently spoke to writer Jeff Wignall about his career, his pursuit of adventure and his passion for using Tamron Lenses.

PPD: Your work is a mix of editorial and commercial assignments, as well as a number of extended personal essays. Do you prefer one over the other and why?

SR: I prefer my personal work by far and about a year ago I changed the way I work. I only

take jobs that somehow involve my personal projects. Last summer I directed my first commercial but only took the job because I loved the brand and we included wild horses in the shoot. If I'm not passionate about a shoot I just can't do it.

PPD: One of your many passions is photographing all types of wildlife and one of the interesting aspects of this work is that

backpack on all my shoots: "Great photography is about depth of feeling, not depth of field." is from Peter Adams and "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough," which is from Robert Capa.

These are two quotes that I use to remind myself that while we all learn the technical stuff about creating great photos, capturing a feeling in a image can't be taught. It's about capturing that



there is an unusual degree of eye contact. Why is this such an important theme in your wildlife shots?

SR: Eye contact is a form of communication that goes far beyond language. I once had an Orca swim right up to me, turn on his side and really check me out. I could see my reflection in his eyes. It felt like the world was in slow motion and this was the moment I really understood the importance of eye contact in wildlife imagery.

PPD: Does this intense eye contact reflect part of your philosophy of taking photographs?

SR: Yes. I have two quotes that I've written down and take in my

moment between you and your subject. In my case I can't talk to my subjects so the eye contact is everything. It's amazing how eye contact alone can tell such a story about your subject. I have people come into my gallery all the time and just stare at the images. I really feel the direct eye contact get the viewer contact.

Capa's quote is very important to me because most people shoot wildlife using long lenses primar-

I believe in getting as physically and optically close to a subject as possible. I try to photograph animals just the same as I'd shoot a person. That way I can see into their eyes which will give viewers of my work a peek into their soul.

ily for safety reasons. I believe that the closer I am the better. It's all about telling a story and capturing a feeling. You can't do that from too far away. It takes more time and patience to get the right shot but in my case I love being

motorcycle and still works with just a few war wounds that tell a story. I'm often in situations where I only have seconds to capture a shot and I find that Tamron's razor sharp lenses always rise to the occasion. Using

the 70-200 lens helped me achieve that all-important, edge-to-edge sharpness needed to capture the often stunning landscapes of which I find myself surrounded.

PPD: Which Tamron lenses do you own?

SR: I own the 24-70mm, the 70-200mm, and the 150-600mm.

PPD: Are there particular Tamron lenses that you lean on more than others?

SR: The 70-200mm is my go to lens. I believe in getting as physically and optically

close to a subject as possible. I try to photograph animals just the same as I'd shoot a person. That way I can see into their eyes which will give viewers of my work a peek into their soul. The reason the 70-200mm works so well for me is that unlike a shooting a person, I can't tell the animal to stand still. I find the weight speed and feel of the 70-200 is just perfect. Tamron's VC is fantastic and comes in extremely handy when shooting with a lot of movement. 70-200mm f/2.8 Di VC USD Lens

is quite impressive from an image quality perspective. I find even at 200mm the edge to edge sharpness is remarkable.

PPD: Much of your work is done in black and white. Why have you chosen to concentrate so heavily on monochrome work?

SR: I'm colorblind so that's part of it. Also, I like the timeless feel of B&W. I want my work to be hard to date. That's what makes something timeless.

PPD: Do you have any particular projects that you would like to work on in the future? Any dream self assignments?

SR: My life has been a dream assignment. I just wanted to keep doing what I do and follow whatever roads my camera leads me down.

PPD: You are kind of unique among photographers in that you own your own gallery, the Shane Russeck Gallery in Los Angeles. Why did you decide to open a gallery and has it been an interesting experience to show your work that way?

SR: I've always been a person that believes in making my own lanes and paving my own roads. By owning my own galleries—and we are currently looking into opening our next location—I can control every aspect of my career. It's a lot of work but the dichotomy is that I love the freedom that owning the gallery brings me. I don't believe an artist should sell their own work so I stay in my studio in the back most of the time. The gallery is 2,000 square feet and we've been open about four months. I have a full time gallery director and we are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12-5 and Sunday and Monday by appointment (shannerusseckphoto.com/gallery; 906 N La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles).

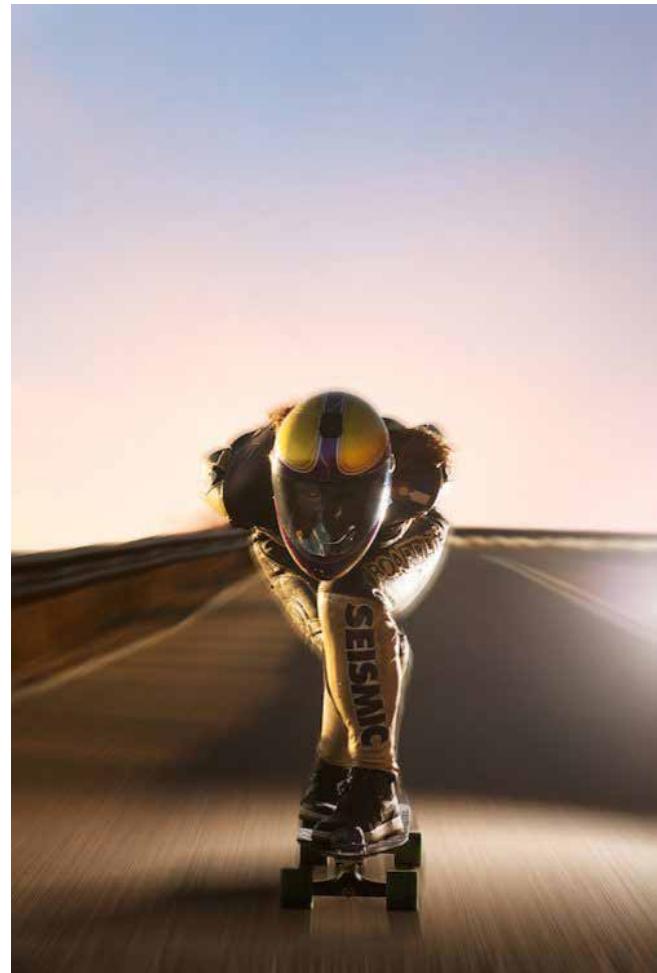
out there so it doesn't matter.

PPD: What qualities do Tamron lenses have that are well suited to your work in such rugged and demanding environments?

SR: Durability and fantastic optics. I know Tamron lenses very well. I was a portrait photographer early in my career, starting with 70-200mm, so I've been using Tamron lenses for 10 years, and they've withstood exposure to everything from the freezing cold boat rides to the heat of the desert. My 24-70mm fell out of my hands while shooting from a



TAMRON | MASTERS SERIES



The Extreme Talents of Aaron Anderson

By Jeff Wignall

To say that Colorado-based shooter Aaron Anderson's work has a flair for the dramatic is an almost laughable understatement. In fact, some of his photos are so intensely theatrical and so perfectly captured that the first thing you find yourself wondering is just how in the heck he created them in front of the camera. Asked about how he developed such a powerful style, he replies: "You find your voice by taking a lot of pictures, a lot of bad pictures, and then taking more pictures until slowly you emerge."

Anderson studied both photography and retouching at the Academy of Art in San Francisco where he spent "countless hours" both in the studio and sitting at a computer learning Photoshop. After leaving school he worked as a retoucher for a company called Sugar Digital where he worked with clients like Coca-Cola, ESPN (the magazine), Tazo, and

Google. In fact, says Anderson, that retouching experience has played a pivotal role in his photography.

Anderson started his own company, Anderson Visuals, in 2009 with "...a camera and a speedlight." Today his work is a mix of sports, extreme athletics, lifestyle and portraits. The sports aspect of his work, he says, is a natural and organic reflection

of his childhood interests. "I grew up riding motorcycles, and still love to ride them to this day," he says. "I played soccer for a good chunk of my life and raced BMX, those both really shaped the way I look at the world and life. Extreme sports, he says, are another passion. "I love how extreme athletes are fixated on the idea of doing something that's never been done, just to say they did it. So often I think we focus on the negative, 'What if I fail?' and I think the question they ask is 'What if I don't fail?' That is the question that is with me most days."

Anderson's raw talent and determination have won him an impressive roster of clients including: Monster Energy, Upper Deck, Ariat International, Tamron USA, Inov-8, Ascent Protein, 1st Bank, Oracle, Giro, Dragon Alliance, Scholastic, Zondervan and Colorado Springs Airport. His work has also appeared in a number of publications, including: Professional Photo Magazine, 10Guide, Launch, Surfer, Good Light!, ISO 1200, Famous BTS, CMYK, Springs Magazine and Colorado Springs Style. He is also a Tamron



Ambassador. You can follow his work on Instagram.

Recently Anderson took time from his busy shooting schedule to talk with writer Jeff Wignall about his career, his shooting techniques and his work with Tamron lenses.

PPD: You're said that your training and work as a digital retoucher heavily influenced your shooting style. In what ways did your experience in post production change the look of your photography work?

AA: Retouching has been a huge part of my photography since the beginning, and that really happened for two reasons. First, I realized a lot of photographers didn't like doing their own retouching, so I saw an opportunity to get work. Second, nothing I really envisioned at the time could be done in camera, or I didn't have the

resources to do it in camera. So that forced me to figure out how to do it with Photoshop. One of the best pieces of advice I was given was when I was complaining about not having the gear another photographer had, and my instructor/mentor Alyson Belcher said, "Don't worry about what they have, make pictures with what you have"

When I was retouching professionally at the beginning of my career it also gave me insight as to how the business actually worked, and what the photographer's role is. It was pretty surprising how bad some of the photography was, even for huge clients, and it made me realize how much they depend on post production. I think that having that knowledge makes you better, and I also think it kind of takes the blinders off you. It's a team effort

and retouchers are a huge part of that team.

PPD: Your work is a mix of both studio and location work, do you prefer one over the other?

AA: It's hard to say I prefer one or the other, I think I was born in the studio and I grew up on location. Because the studio is such a controlled environment it allows for a lot of experimentation and practice, but without a lot of variables. Locations force you to be creative, to make something no matter what the conditions. Being on location is always a fun experience, especially places with character and history. If I could shoot in abandoned buildings and old towns for the rest of my career, I would be OK with that. That being said, I find the studio peaceful, it's a place I go and make stuff. A lot of times if I am struggling creatively, I'll just go into the studio and do something, keeps me moving forward and creating, so it's kind of special in that way.

PPD: All of your photos, both location and studio are marked by a very powerful and dramatic presence of light. Where did you learn and develop such a sophisticated approach to lighting?

AA: I definitely learned the core ideas of lighting in school, that was the main reason I went. I spent a lot of time trying all kinds of modifiers and brands to see what they did, and it taught me a ton. After that I'd say it's just doing it over and over, and failing over and over. A lot of people talk about failing as an essential part of growth, and I am definitely an advocate for that. I also believe that you need to be willing to look at failure and understand it, you need to ask yourself, "Why did I fail?" I spent a lot of time trying to mimic a certain look, either from another photographer or from a movie, and then I would look at my image and try to figure out how it didn't work. Oddly enough, that created not only an awareness of lighting, but a style.

I can honestly say I didn't know what my real voice or style was until a couple years ago, and I am always growing in that arena.

PPD: One very dramatic shot is the photo of the skateboarder coming right at the camera and passing through a pool of light. How did you light that shot?

AA: That shot was with Candy Dungan and Aaron Hampshire, who are two extremely talented downhill . Candy is the one in the frame and Aaron is just out of the frame holding a light. I was hanging out of the back of a car doing like 40mph, it was (and I think will always be) one of my favorite shoots. I have a bts video on my website so you can see how we did it. I think it really goes back to that idea of "What if I don't fail?" that I talked about earlier. I had this crazy idea, Candy and Aaron helped me make it a reality.

PPD: All of your sports shots capture these amazing peaks of action. Is this the most difficult part of the shots?

AA: I think the planning is the most difficult part of the shoot. I really believe communication and planning is the key to a great shoot. I typically meet with the athletes before hand and we talk through everything together, I do the same thing before a shoot with my team. Nothing goes 100% to plan, but it certainly helps to have everyone aiming at the same target.

I am always trying to get a shot that shows them in a way that showcases who they are as a person and an athlete. It's definitely hard work for them, they typically have to do the same movement over and over, and then we talk through minor adjustments to get "the shot." There is a really fine line between an authentic shot and a posed shot, I try to ride that line and hopefully we get there most of the time!

PPD: What is it about Tamron lenses



that makes you prefer them over other lenses?

AA: When I first switched over to Tamron lenses it was about quality and feel, they are robust but tend to be a little lighter than some lenses. I think the image quality alone is enough to convince me though, especially being a retoucher, I look at images well over 100% all the time and I am always impressed by the quality of these lenses. Lately I have been shooting video with my Tamrons, and that has actually made them even more impressive. Stoked to show some of that work soon!

PPD: Which Tamron lenses do you own and which to you use most frequently?

AA: I have a special place for my Tamron SP 24-70mm F/2.8 Di VC USD G2 lens because it's been with me a long time, but the Tamron SP 35mm F/1.8 Di VC USD and the Tamron SP 85mm F/1.8 have been incredible. I'm a sucker for a good prime, and the Tamron 35mm has been oddly addictive. I think just the idea of shooting on a 35mm lens makes me feel cinematic, which is something I love. It sounds odd to tell people that I think about how a lens makes me feel, but it's kind of a

big part of how I shoot. I like to feel cinematic, deal with it.

PPD: Do you have a favorite lens, or a go-to lens and why is it that lens?

AA: I think the above kind of answers this. One thing I didn't mention is the SP 70-200mm F/2.8 G2, it's like the juiciest portrait and action lens. I've had a lot of fun pushing that lens and doing more with it. I always feel like I

PPD: You've done a lot of video tutorials, is that something you enjoy producing?

AA: I do, teaching is something I've always enjoyed. I learned a lot from tutorials and it's kind of my way of giving back. I'm not a huge believer in "secret sauce," you are the secret sauce, people hire you and work with you because you're you. If I can help someone accomplish great things

put in the time, there are no shortcuts to a great career. Photography is so romantic, and it entices a lot of people, but it also can destroy you if you're not ready for how vicious it can be. Sometimes you won't feel "creative" but you still need to create. You will fail, and what you do with that will determine how your career goes. Shoot and evaluate your work often, ask yourself "How did I fail?" and "What am I trying to say?"

Networking is also very important. If you've ever heard the saying "...It's not about what you know, it's about who you know" then you've heard truth. There is an incredible amount of talented photographers who don't get work because they aren't spending time working on relationships and marketing. I remember when I was in school my first semester and I started an internship, one of the other students commented "You can't get internships until your senior year." If that's your mentality than you should probably look for another career, because you aren't going to last long. Point is, you have to go meet people, all the time in all kinds of different arenas. Sure you need to meet the obvious people, art directors, creative directors, etc., but you also have a lot of people you need that you don't know—make up artists, hairstylists, other photographers to assist, producers, scouts, stylists, the list goes on and on. They are not only crucial to your success, they also know a ton of people in the industry.

I think the last point that I wish someone would have told us is this: You don't have a job when you get out of school, and no one cares that you went to school to begin with. It's about the work and your work ethic. No one is looking for a newbie photographer and lots of new photographers—some with way more talent than you—want the same shoots you do, so you've got to be hungry and go after it. I wish someone would've said that to me as I walked out the door, so I'll say it to other photographers instead.

There is an incredible amount of talented photographers who don't get work because they aren't spending time working on relationships and marketing.



am pulling out some kind of weapon when I shoot with that, and the images are so good it's addictive.

PPD: A lot of your shots of swimmer Elizabeth Marks are shot under water—are you a SCUBA diver?

AA: I was actually a SCUBA Instructor for a period of time and I am still a SCUBA diver. Little known fact, that was one of my careers before photography, I had a lot of jobs before photography and that was definitely one of my favorites. I think being a SCUBA instructor actually prepared me for being a freelancer more than most things. It was one of the scariest jobs I've ever done, looking after a bunch of people underwater is pretty intense, especially the first couple of classes, and you really learn how to stay calm and delegate in those circumstances.

then I want to do that, I'd hate to look back on my career and think I didn't help the people around me because it was a "secret."

PPD: Do you have any dream assignments in the back of your head?

AA: I don't actually, I kind of hope I never do. One of my goals is to do stuff, I don't want to constantly be saying "Wouldn't it be cool." I want to say, "Wasn't it cool when...?" If I can't shake it, if I'm dreaming of it, then I want to do it. That's the funny thing about an assignment, it doesn't have to be for money, and you can give yourself assignments.

PPD: Finally, what advice do you have for photographers or students just getting started in their careers?

AA: Work and Network. You need to



Exploring the Paths Less Taken with Gregory Boratyn

By Jeff Wignall

When you first look at photographer Greg Boratyn's meticulously crafted landscape images it's almost inevitable that the work of another great nature master, Ansel Adams, comes immediately to mind. It's not just the similarity in their subject matter—some of the planet's most wild mountains, deserts, forests—that begs the comparison, it's the obvious reverence both share for nature at its most dramatic moments and their ability to capture it with perfect craftsmanship.

It is not surprising then that it was Adams' work that helped Boratyn up his creative game at a crucial stage in his career. "I liked photography and became serious about it with the purchase of my first DSLR body. But even then, the images I produced were mediocre at best and very common," he says. "There was nothing special about them and they looked rather boring and similar to many images you can find now all over the Internet. Then I watched a documentary movie by KPBS in San Diego, California about Ansel Adams and it opened my eyes. His philosophy and approach to photography changed the way I see."

That revelation, says Boratyn,

enhanced his entire approach to his craft. "What I'm trying to produce now is not only original work shot at places hardly explored by anyone, but also at the highest possible quality. For me that means excellent exposure and sharpness throughout the entire frame, a soft calming light at early sunrise or late sunset, and correct color rendition, to name a few."

Boratyn says he spends most of his days working as a software engineer and sitting in an office in front of a computer—a situation hardly conducive to making great photos. But the day gig has helped him fund his photo adventures to some of the planet's most far-flung

corners (including seven trips to Patagonia). "When I became more serious about photography I started traveling more, first within US and later to almost all continents of the world. I started utilizing a big part of my vacation time and weekends exclusively to photograph more exotic destinations," he says. "I became more of an 'outdoor' person because of landscape photography and challenges it presents."

Today Boratyn, who has taught workshops both in the United States and in South America, occasionally also participates in art festivals and he licenses his photos for publication. "I sell more and more of my work to photography

magazines or even occasionally to computer companies who license my shots to be used as background images," he says. "I also wrote an iPhone application for photographers called Photo Master. It's currently available for free on iTunes Store, but I may make a paid version that people can buy to unlock additional features I'm going to implement in the near future."

Print sales are a growing part of his work too, and those sales help supplement his travel and photography. "The extra income from sales certainly contributes to my travel costs and getting new camera gear," he says.

Boratyn recently spoke with writer Jeff Wignall about his passion for travel, for landscape photography on the path less taken and why he relies on Tamron lenses to create the highest quality images possible.

PPD: Many of your landscapes involve mountains and other very rugged terrain, are you an experienced climber?

GB: No. In fact, I don't know how to climb mountains. For serious climbing there is serious training, certifications, and of course risks involved. I just get close enough to get the composition I like and thus a good shot. Occasionally I will hike quite high or camp at the mountain's base but, again, I won't climb it. Maybe in the future this will change.

PPD: You've done quite a bit of shooting in Patagonia. That is a kind of fantasy destination for a lot of landscape photographers, what makes Patagonia such a special place?

GB: Yes, I've been to Patagonia now seven times and even ran workshops in both Argentina and Chile. For landscape photographers this is a must-go-to destination. It offers very photogenic peaks with lots of lakes, glaciers, and rivers all around them. The unique shapes of trees with leaves changing colors

in the fall time makes Patagonia a painterly like landscape as well, which is what I'm after while there.

PPD: There are several incredible photos of Mt. Fitzroy on your site. What is it like to get there and how often have you shot there.

GB: Indeed, Mt. Fitzroy is incredibly beautiful. It's not a very tall mountain but its shape is very unique. It has sharp, "wicked" structure often surrounded by lenticular clouds, which makes images look very dramatic at early sunrise or even before it. And, when framed with a river or waterfall leading towards it, or a lake or glacier, it comes out as if "out of this world." It sure feels like that when you're standing next to it. To me the peak looks the most appealing in the fall time when complemented by colors of trees nearby and the green/blue glacier deposited water of rivers or lakes.

I haven't shot it in wintertime myself but I've seen images of Fitzroy taken in a winter, and they looked spectacular. I'm planning on going there next year and exploring the Argentinean part of Patagonia in early winter (when rivers and lakes aren't yet fully frozen).

PPD: What are the logistics of shooting in Patagonia? It seems like you'd have to be a mountaineer just to get around. Are you traveling with a guide?

GB: I have run workshops in Patagonia several times before and noticed that most customers are not willing to hike long or camp near the mountain base. I was therefore limited to visiting same spots over and over. Because of that, last year I decided to go alone and hike to the campsite near Mt. Fitzroy. This is around a seven-mile hike one way, so it could be quite strenuous for someone who doesn't hike a lot, but the scenery seen and captured is very different than that coming from the "usual suspects" spots. In fact, the majority of my most successful images came

from those hard to get to locations requiring long hikes.

By no means am I a mountaineer and one doesn't have to be to get around Patagonia to get a nice shot, but to get a unique and/or salable one, some hiking and camping is required. I'm planning on running an inexpensive (no hotels or expensive dinners at local restaurants) workshop for a few brave ones willing to go with me and hike to a destination that will let us capture unique scenery from locations no one (or hardly anyone) has shot before in Patagonia.

PPD: Do you do a lot of night photos?

GB: Not a lot but I do occasionally. I shoot maybe one or two night shots per trip. I used to own a star tracker to track the movement of the sky at night to get a clean long exposed shot of the Milky Way, but I sold it because I wasn't using it enough. I now simply take several exposures with a high-quality lens such as the Tamron 15-30mm f/2.8 with a large aperture and expose at high ISO, and then merge all shots in software using smart object's mean stack mode. This removes noise and makes images look clean and sharp.

PPD: Let's talk about the equipment you're using. Are you working with mainly with prime lenses or zooms?

GB: I almost exclusively use zoom lenses. I say almost because I do have one prime lens for the macro photography that I sporadically do.

Zoom lenses allow me to have the flexibility of instantly changing the focal length in the field based on what I see and want to capture in my compositions. I also hike, and the less lenses I have to carry with me the better. With primes I'd have to have a second backpack to cover the range I work in most of the time in the field. For 80% of my work I use the Tamron 24-70mm f/2.8 lens. The remaining 20% is either the Tamron 15-

30mm f/2.8 lens or the Tamron 70-200mm f/2.8.

PPD: What Tamron lenses are you currently using?

GB: I have almost all zoom Tamron lenses. As mentioned above I have the Tamron 15-30mm f/2.8, 24-70mm f/2.8, 70-200mm f/2.8, 90mm f/2.8 Macro, and 150-600mm f/5-6.3.

A few weeks ago, Tamron USA lent me the new and excellent 70-210mm f/4.0 lens that I took to Alaska. I loved it. It weighs nothing. I may replace my f/2.8 version with this new f/4.0. I will lose one stop of light but also lose weight that I have to carry with me. For landscape photography the f/4.0 version is plenty fast.

PPD: Do you have a favorite Tamron lens?

GB: Yes, it's the Tamron 24-70mm f/2.8 lens. I do not go anywhere without it. To me it's a must have as a landscape photography lens, although I'm sure portraiture or wedding photographers equally enjoy this lens. The range is perfect for the type of work I do, and when set vertically at 24mm it allows me to take nice panorama type shots as well. It is also one of the sharpest lenses I've ever worked with, yet doesn't cost a kidney.

PPD: What are the particular qualities that Tamron lenses have that you like and that pair nicely to your work?

GB: Image quality, excellent image stabilization, low weight, fluorine coating, weather resistance, and many more good qualities, all at a very low price.

A 70-200mm f/2.8 lens from other manufacturers can cost three times what Tamron charges, yet have the same or worse image quality. I could afford losing or damaging/destroying two lenses from Tamron and still pay less than for one from other manufacturers.



An overwhelmingly expensive lens is almost like a treasure to some photographers. Not many will take a risk and use one out of their backpacks to shoot it in bad weather conditions in places like Patagonia. Winds there can exceed 70 miles an hour with rain and sand blowing ferociously into camera gear. People will pack up their cameras/lenses and go back to their hotel rooms. I've seen that happen, but the most dramatic and successful shots I've done came from exposures in such horrible weather conditions.

I don't worry as much about my gear in the field as the shot I want to get, and Tamron allows me to achieve that.

PPD: There is an absolutely intense night shot with stars and an icy foreground, that appears to be the same areas in Patagonia. Can you talk about making that shot?

GB: Yes, I took it on the Argentinian side of Patagonia after a long

seven-mile night hike. The hike alone is an amazing experience in itself. If the sky is clear with little (or no) pollution, the view of the Milky Way is incredible. There are usually lots of meteors shooting at night as well. The icy formation is really a small part of a frozen lake near the Mt. Cerro Torre. When I arrived there, I was waiting for a sunrise shot but decided to get a single night exposure with stars and Magellanic clouds (small and large) only visible in the southern hemisphere.

PPD: Most of your landscapes have very intense lighting and often involve changing weather or seasons, what is it about these conditions that appeals to you?

GB: To me the more intense the weather conditions the better. I always look into capturing an action of movement in nature. This could be the flow of a river, drop of water in a waterfall, or movement of clouds. A changing light in the sky, which can be caused by fast



moving clouds pushed by strong winds, makes images look very dramatic, and as if painted by a brush. Such images stimulate and evoke emotions in viewers. They have an "alive – like" unique appearance full of energy stored in them.

PPD: Your technique is absolutely flawless, your images are perfect in every respect. Do you do a lot of work in post?

GB: I work mostly in raw using Adobe Lightroom. There are adjustments I do in Photoshop as well, but I usually import my images as a smart object so that I continuously have access to those raw pixels, even in Photoshop.

I developed my technique by watching lots of tutorials from other pros or directly from the Adobe website. Proper image processing is vital to be successful and have a successful shot, and to expose its beauty in the most natural way. I've seen lots of shots recently on the Internet showing some amazing location and nicely composed, but very badly processed and in a very unnatural way. The

Objects in front of your camera should be as sharp as those further away. If required use the focus stacking technique to achieve the sharpness. And practice how to correctly post-process your images, but don't go overboard with color or sharpness.

color saturation was overwhelming, the image over-sharpened, or the so-called Orton effect heavily applied to make the image look way too dreamy. I don't criticize such heavy processing (unless someone specifically asks me that) because I used to make those kinds of mistakes myself. It takes practice and patience, besides familiarity with tools like Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom, to become an expert in post processing. Digital photography requires this skill.

I now try to stay in a realm of reality and process my images lightly and aesthetically.

PPD: Is there a typical editing scenario that you use with landscapes?

GB: As mentioned above I process in raw mode in Adobe Lightroom (as much as possible). But there are often times that the image requires additional adjustments of a small/specific area that I can't do in Lightroom. I need layers and luminosity masks to apply a precise adjustment. Even the slightest imperfection will easily be

visible on a large print so if I do apply some localized/targeted adjustment it has to be done perfectly. I do print my images; thus, I need my final shots to be absolutely immaculate, and free from all the imperfections that sloppy processing can introduce.

PPD: How much time do you spend on the road shooting each year?

GB: I utilize a big part of my vacation time (around a month per year), and a very large number of my weekends (and holidays). This of course varies each year but I would say between one to two months per year.

PPD: Do you still teach workshops at all?

GB: I don't run workshops at the moment. I do, however, teach photography on small (two or three people max) quick over-the-weekend hiking expeditions to the Sierra Nevada mountain range. This may change in the future, but as of right now I need to concentrate on getting shots I like, and they do require serious hikes and camping in low oxygen areas of the mountains. I'm planning a 17-day hiking photography expedition to Nepal next year to shoot the Himalayas, so all my free time and energy now goes towards achieving that goal. If all goes well I may offer a photography workshop there.

PPD: Do you have any advice for others that want to get very involved in nature or landscape photography?

GB: First, get to know your camera (read the manual that comes with it). Purchase a good and steady, but also light, tripod. It is a must have tool for landscape photography. Constantly practice and when shooting at some well-known location try to approach it differently. Don't shoot the same scene many have shot already a hundred times before (get closer or lower or wait for more appealing light/colors in the sky, as an example). Use tools like color intensifiers or circular polarizers to get the drama out in the sky. Shoot at the correct time, when light is diffused and soft (learn what the golden hour time is and when it occurs). And, don't be afraid of bad weather. Learn how to utilize it to your advantage.

Finally, understand hyperfocal distance to get a sharp image throughout the entire frame. Objects in front of your camera should be as sharp as those further away. If required use the focus stacking technique to achieve the sharpness. And practice how to correctly post-process your images, but don't go overboard with color or sharpness.



Alex Cearns Career Has Gone to the Dogs (and Other Critters), in a Good Way

By Jeff Wignall

For most portrait photographers, getting an interesting pose or cute expression from their subjects usually involves a quiet conversation, maybe a joke or two and some simple directions. But for Australian photographer Alex Cearns, it's more a matter of offering her subjects a tasty treat or waving a fun toy in their face. Widely regarded as one of the country's premiere pet and wildlife photographers, Cearns is the owner of Houndstooth Studio in the west-coast city of Perth and most of her in-studio clientele are cats, dogs and the occasional wild (very wild) critters — koalas and kangaroos, for example. Away from the studio, she's also a wildlife photographer.

Animals, says Cearns, have always been among her closest companions. "As an only child, animals were my first friends and are still some of my best friends today. I grew up in a rural area and was surrounded by cows, lambs, chickens, kangaroos, echidnas, horses, rabbits, dogs, cats, and guinea pigs. I considered studying Veterinary Science but didn't know how I would handle euthanizing animals, so instead I joined the West

Australian Police Service." Cearns served for 14 years as a policewoman and then worked for the Australian Federal Government auditing airports and airlines for their counter terrorist security measures. During that time, she purchased her first DSLR and photography became an instant passion.

"Once I purchased my first DSLR (a Canon 350D) I read as many photography magazines and books

as I could to learn how to use it," says Cearns. "I completed a course on basic camera use and made some photographer friends. Together we shared ideas and learned off each other. I later taught myself studio photography, mostly through trial and error."

Initially she shot a lot of different subjects, including people, pets, still life and landscapes. "I quickly realized all types of photography weren't



paigns and she is the recipient of over 250 awards for photography, business and philanthropy. In addition to her pet portraits, she also shoots for corporate brands in Australia, the USA and the UK, and for around 40 Australian and International animal charities and conservation organizations. She is the author of five books on animal photogra-

phy and her latest book *Perfect Imperfection — Dog Portraits of Resilience and Love* showcases the beauty of dogs with disabilities. You can see more of her work on her website and on Facebook and Instagram.

Cearns, an ambassador for Tamron, recently paused from her busy schedule to speak with writer Jeff Wignall about her career and her passion for animals of all kinds and her love of Tamron lenses.

PPD: How did you make the transition from police-related work to a full-time photo career?

AC: While I was auditing airports and airlines, I was traveling a lot and would take my DSLR camera with me. Once I made the commitment to only photograph animals, people started asking me to photograph their pets outside using natural light. I did this for a few months and was charging \$75 USD for a 4-hour shoot, several hours of editing and a disc of 100 photos. That wore thin quickly as I was basically working for free. I had dabbled in studio photography a little for an animal charity organization I worked with and enjoyed being able to control the light.

I decided to develop that as my style and my goal was to create an indoor portrait studio exclusively for pets. I already had a set of basic portable lights and a backdrop on a stand, so I converted a small office in the bottom of our garden into a studio. I was photographing pets in there on weeknights (after my government job ended for the day) and



as easy as I thought some would be and eight weeks in I started gravitating towards animals," she says. "If I was photographing a person and a bird flew past, I would automatically focus on the bird. I realized I needed to follow the animal photography path one day when I returned home from a family photo shoot and I had more pictures of ducks and dogs at the location, than I did of the family. I decided that I would photograph what I loved and focus my lens on all creatures great and small."

Today Cearns photographs over 1000 pets each year and says she's thrilled that she trusted her heart and her instincts. Her images have been published in books, magazines, billboards and advertising cam-

on weekends, and within 15 months of creating the studio the demand for my photography services had grown so much I couldn't keep up with bookings or the processing of orders. I had to make a choice, either stay in Government employment and enjoy all of the security which comes with it or go out on my own and become a self-employed photographer. I chose the latter and as soon as I devoted myself to photography 100%, my business boomed.

PPD: Your work is a mix of both domestic and wild animals, do you prefer one over the other?

AC: I love photographing all animals in the studio (domestic pets, wildlife, birds, reptiles, wildlife, fish, crustaceans, amphibians) as the images show every tiny detail and have a magazine quality to them. I sit very close to my subjects (about 12 inches away) and they are focused on me and engaged by what I'm doing the whole time. I don't try to control them much, but I can prompt them to move by dragging a treat past them or by showing them a toy.

With natural light photography, I prefer to only photograph wildlife, and not domestic pets. I use a shallower focus and try to capture block color backgrounds so in some ways they have a similar feel to my studio images, which are photographed on black and white backgrounds only. When photographing outdoors I don't have any control over my subjects, since they are often out in the wild or in a rescue center. I love the challenge of capturing the moments I see as images and timing the shot to get what I want. Sometimes I achieve it, sometimes I just have fun taking 1000 images. There are similarities between the two styles of photography. I have to be patient, preempt movement and responses, and time my shots right.

PPD: Your photos of pets seem so animated and almost comical at times, what is the secret to drawing out an

animal's personality?

AC: I conduct my photo shoots in 20 minutes. During that time, I can take up to 300 images, of which I show 30 to my client at a later date. I like to shoot more than I need to ensure I haven't missed any of the poses I'm after, and I run through several signature shots in my head and cover off on them as I go. I usually try for a half face, a zen dog (eyes closed), a high five, a looking down, and a big smile to name a few. Because I'm sitting close to my subjects and showing them treats and toys, it has a similar intensity to a training session. They are very focused during the shoots and will often have a nap when they get home. I like to work fast and capture the images I need quickly. That way my subjects don't have time to get bored and remain interested until the end. Timing plays a big part in the expressions and nuances of character I'm able to capture. I also liken my photo shoots to a team effort — I can only capture what my subject gives me. Making friends with the pets and putting them at ease is the key to then having them look relaxed and happy in their images. I make sure that my subject is having the most fun out of everyone in the room. It's all about them and most animals relish in the experience.

PPD: What is the hardest part about photographing a dog? Is it fidgety animals?

AC: I find most animals very easy to photograph but I think that's something which has progressed over the years. Dogs are generally very happy to be fed treats by their new favorite Aunty and most are won over easily. I welcome all animals in to my studio, even aggressive dogs, those who have suffered a traumatic past, or those who are fearful of strangers. With these photo shoots I use a decade of knowledge about body language and movement (mine and the dogs) and I don't push any boundaries or set off any of their triggers for fear or aggression. I love these photo sessions

as I have to call on a whole other skill set, and their owners are often overjoyed as they didn't believe their dog could ever have a successful, event free photo session. People often worry that their dog won't sit still, but it's a misconception that they have to — I shoot fast and get a lot of fun expressions and poses from dogs who are active.

PPD: Cats are notoriously reluctant to follow any kind of instructions, so how do you interact with them to bring out their personalities?

AC: Cats are generally the opposite of dogs to photograph. They arrive at the studio in a bit of an indignant mood because they had to go in the car and in the cat crate. I'm their least favorite Aunty and they don't want the treats I offer or have much interest in the toys. I photograph them in a black box (3' x 3') and that (combined with the dark and quiet studio) makes them feel safe and they eventually lie down in there or wander around and give me a few poses.

PPD: What Tamron lenses do you own?

AC: I own a wide range of Tamron lenses, but the ones I use the most are: SP70-200mm G2, SP 24-70mm G2, 150-600mm G2 and the latest SP 90mm macro.

PPD: What is your favorite Tamron

lens for pet portraits and what is it that you like about it?

AC: I prefer zoom lenses to prime lenses. I find with animals, I like the option of zooming in or out, sometimes for safety reasons and other times to go from a full body shot to a closeup in a



A typical pet session lasts about 30 minutes ... I find working in one burst engages my subjects more than if I give them frequent breaks and let them wander around the studio doing their own thing. The session requires them to have intense focus on me, and any longer than half an hour tires them out too much.



split second. I love all of my Tamron lenses and I work my 24-70mm lens the most, as this is the one I use 99% of the time in my studio. But when I travel to photograph wildlife I take my 150-600mm G2 and it always blows my mind. I often pack it thinking I will use it occasionally, then find myself never

taking it off my camera. The zoom range on that lens is exceptional and the G2 is fast to focus and responds well my camera body.

PPD: Is there a particular quality of the Tamron lenses, in either function or quality, that draws you to them?

AC: The two things which initially drew me to Tamron lenses were the price and the quality. Don't pay more when you can get a lens as good as, or in some cases, better than (in my humble opinion), other options available. I've exclusively used Tamron lenses now for five years and their Super Performance series range is next level. You can't edit wildlife and animal images much before you change the integrity of the photograph and the subject. Most of my images are very true to how they are taken, maybe with a leaf removed or a dust spot cleaned up. As one of the most prolific Tamron users in the world, and with a 4 million image library captured on Tamron, when I'm asked what I think of the Tamron range, I tell people that the proof is in the pictures.

PPD: How long does a typical pet session last and do you give them breaks during the shoot to keep them interested?

AC: A typical pet session lasts about 30 minutes with 20 of those involving the actual taking of the photos. I find working in one burst engages my subjects more than If I give them frequent breaks and let them wander around the studio doing their own thing. The session requires them to have intense focus on me, and any longer than half an hour tires them out too much.

PPD: Do the lights bother the pets?

AC: Most of the time the strobes don't

bother the pets. Dogs are the most aware of the flashing lights, but they mostly ignore them over the treat I'm offering. All other animals aren't that fussed by them. I think some see the lights as a big sun pulsing out pure white light. Because it's even dispersed light, it's quite gentle and doesn't affect their eyes. I basically teach the dogs that when the lights flash, they get a reward. So, they pick up quickly that it's a good thing.

PPD: Are the pet parents there and a part of the shoot?

AC: The pet parents are standing right beside the dog to my left while I'm photographing them, but mostly as physical moral support. I try to maintain the dogs focus on me the entire time, in order to capture those character filled shots.

PPD: Do you have a lot of pets yourself?

AC: I have three adorable pets — Pip the Greyhound Kelpie Mix who is six years old, Pixel the five-year-old Greyhound and Macy the seven-year-old Moggy. All were adopted from rescue organizations and bring my partner and I so much joy.

PPD: You've published quite a number of books — do you have have a favorite?

AC: I think my current book *Perfect Imperfection — Dog Portraits of Resilience and Love* (out in USA in April 2019) is probably my favorite. I had an idea eight years ago for a book filled with inspiring dogs who had overcome adversity. One of my most passionate aims as an animal pho-

tographer is to capture the adorable subtleties that make all creatures precious and unique. I love every animal I have the privilege of photographing, but those perceived as 'different' hold a special place in my heart. These are the creatures who have lost a leg, been born without eyes, or are still showing the scars of former abuse.

Most animals with 'afflictions' don't dwell on them. They adapt to their bodies without complaint and they survive with determination. They push on, always, wanting to be included and involved in everything as much as they can, and as much as an able-bodied pet does. The tenacity of animals to overcome adversity never ceases to amaze me. They make the most out of life and from them I have learnt so much about always seeing the positive in every situation and never giving up.

To see animals who would've likely been euthanized 20 or 30 years ago, thriving and living full lives warms my heart. *Perfect Imperfection* has been so well received and a behind the scenes clip filmed for 60 Second Docs has received over 8 million views.

So many people understand the value of these dogs and many contacted me to share a story about their own perfectly imperfect pet.

PPD: You have a new book coming out this autumn (autumn up here!), what is the book about? Title?

AC: My next book following *Perfect Imperfection* is titled *For the Love of Greyhounds — Adopted Greyhounds and Their Happy Ever Afters*. As the owner of a rescue Greyhound (or as someone who is owned by a rescue Greyhound), spreading the word about how amazing Greyhounds are is something I'm very passionate about. I hope the book encourages others to consider adding a Greyhound to their home — and couch!





Maxim Guselnikov, From Russia with Love (and Talent)

By Jeff Wignall

If you've ever wondered about the state of creative photography in Russia, you only have to look at the work of Moscow-based photographer Maxim

Guselnikov to know that it is alive and flourishing. Guselnikov's natural-light portraits, shot on location and in the studio, offer a fascinating glimpse into the often mysterious and intensely beautiful character of Moscow and the surrounding countryside. And his young models, a mix of amateurs and professionals, have some of the most enchanting faces that you're likely to find anywhere.

Interestingly, as intensely beautiful as some of his shot locations are, Guselnikov says he grew up in a suburb of Moscow that was hardly stimulating visually. "I was born and have lived my whole life in the city of Mytischi which is satellite city to Moscow," he says. "There is nothing special in terms of landscapes or architecture but it's famous for making subway buses for the Moscow Subway."

Despite the success that he's had and the sophistication that is apparent in his style, Guselnikov is relatively new to photography. He got his first camera in 2010 to try out photography as hobby. "We had some cameras in our family,

but I never was that interested in photography until I bought my first DSLR," he says. "Of course, back then I couldn't imagine I would make it this far. I never had any plans of becoming a famous photographer."

Guselnikov says that he had to rely almost entirely on his own ambitions and determination to learn photography. "I've never studied photography anywhere and I can call myself a self-taught photographer," he says. "Unfortunately, in a country with such a rich background in arts there are no universities where you can learn photography so I simply had no choice but to do it on my own."

Nor has he ever assisted any photographers. "I didn't have enough connections back in the days that I made my first steps in photography so I had to do everything myself and learn from my mistakes," he says. In fact, he says, a bit of artistic impatience played a role in the growth of his creativity. "I've read lots of books on photography but I've never finished any of them since I was too curious to try the ideas that I got from them as soon I'd read them!"

Today, Guselnikov has turned that learning curve around to teach other photographers across Russia and Europe. And, in fact, teaching has become one of his primary



sources of income. "I earn money with teaching in all kinds of venues from video tutorials and online Skype sessions to lectures and masterclasses," he says. "I do some commercial shootings as well, alongside with promotional work for Tamron and I sell pictures on Trevillion, a big international agency which sells images for book covers, album covers, posters etc."

Recently I interviewed Guselnikov via email from his Moscow home and was almost as impressed with his nearly-native fluency in English as with his photography. We talk about his work, the state of the photo industry in Russia and his passion for Tamron lenses.

PPD: A lot of your work is portraiture, shot on location. Is that your preferred subject?

MG: Yes, I prefer to shoot environmental portraits which show not only the person but the location around him or her. I think this kind of portrait is one of the most interesting since it provides so many ways to show mood, atmosphere, emotions and synergy between subject and location, especially if it was well thought and prepared beforehand. But besides that I do a lot of studio shootings, more classic type of portraits.

PPD: You have a lot of beautiful

portraits on your website. Are these personal shots or are they done for clients?

MG: Most of them are my own creative shoots made for my own purposes. They are made on TFP ("time for prints") terms with the models and I do all of the shot planning myself. Also there are some images from my masterclasses and workshops and few more from recent travels. Most of my clients are not interested in being published which I totally understand.

PPD: Is the professional photo industry in Russia an active and growing business?

MG: Well I have to admit that right now we have great generation of photographers who got pretty popular, people like Sean Archer, Tatiana Mertsalova, Alexander Vinogradov, Georgy Chernyadyev, Efim Shevchenko, Dmitry Rogozhkin—I can go on all day long. Somehow all those great artists grew up alongside each other and now influence lots of creatives all over the world. But the industry itself has been under stagnation for a couple of years now due to economic crisis.

Despite that we have lots of great professional and enthusiastic models and dozens of great studios so I guess I can clearly say that the industry base we have is great and I hope that photo industry will rise

up in coming years. As for me, I have business possibilities not only in Russia but in Europe and maybe one day I'll expand to the United States and Canada as well. Luckily, I've studied English my whole life so it has helped me a lot to get into foreign markets.

PPD: The young women in a lot of your shots are extremely beautiful and graceful looking. Are most of these professional models?

MG: Yes, most are professional models. I prefer to work with them since they understand how to position themselves towards camera and some of them even understand the light and optics so you have to do much less direction during the shoot. As for their appearance it is quite obvious that we have lots of beautiful girls here—sometimes during a single ride on subway you may notice dozens of good looking girls. But as I said, to become a great model you need to get some experience and understanding of the shooting process.

PPD: How do you get your models to relax in front of the camera? Is there a lot of direction from you?

MG: Well, there are a lot of ways to get people comfortable in front of your camera. The key to a good connection is the way that you communicate and for that you have to throw in some psychology. The way you approach your models depends a lot on their online behavior in social media and their personality of course. After you do some research browsing through profiles and comments you get an idea of exactly how you should build your communication with any given person.

For example, to get some topics during the shoot I look in their current posts on Instagram and maybe they've been to a new movie or a concert that we can discuss. Discussing the topics that strongly relate to your model is really

important. It will make her or him feel that you share their interests and by that they will open up their personality much easier and faster. As for directions, yes, I tend to take over the whole posture of my model and direct them precisely.

PPD: In a lot of your portraits I've noticed that the hand positions are very elegant and seem very important to you. Is that something that you pay particular attention to?

MG: Hand position is an important aspect of a model's position and left undirected it can and has ruined a lot of shots. Because hands are a very delicate substance it is super easy to over-pose them, so I've analyzed the way that hands were positioned in some classic paintings and in the movies and came to the conclusion that it is very important to make models use their hands to interact with their environment or their dresses. The natural position of hands immediately starts to blend nicely in almost every scenario and the interaction between subject and location will show a strong bond between them. So the secret is that you have to make your model pick or touch something and that will do the job.

PPD: One portrait series that I find very haunting is a little girl holding a teddy bear in front of an old house. What was the idea behind those shots?

MG: Well, that shoot was inspired by horror movies such as The Shining and The Amityville Horror. The shots are really just collective images of my own impression from both movies put together in the frame. Actually it was meant to be much darker and gloomier but the model's mother was afraid her daughter would be too scared so I had to soften it. But anyway I like the result.

PPD: Some of the architectural settings are very beautiful, very

elaborate. Are most of these shots done in Moscow?

MG: Well, unfortunately Moscow is not famous for scenic views. While in Moscow I mostly shoot in studios. In Russia we have lots of great locations both architectural and natural and I prefer Saint Petersburg and regions closer to the Finland border. But since I travel a lot I have opportunities to access locations in Europe such as the Marmosaal in Sankt-Florian

so lazy I don't even bring reflectors or diffusers with me and work only with available reflective surfaces and light options.

PPD: What Tamron lenses do you use most often in your portrait work?

MG: As a Tamron ambassador I've tried almost all lenses that the company produces but I've ended up with a nice set of my favorite lenses, the Tamron SP 15-30mm



monastery in Austria, or Zaanse Schans in Netherlands. But for me the place that impresses me most is Iceland. I finally visited there last year and I have to say that this is photographer's heaven, there are just so many possibilities and so much diversity in terms of landscapes.

PPD: The lighting on these portraits seems natural but it's so perfect, is it a combination of lighting sources? Strobe?

MG: No, I shoot with natural light in 99.9% of my shoots. I never was into strobes and all that stuff so I've just had a camera and lenses with me so that's how I've understood how to work with natural light indoors and outdoors. Actually, I am

f/2.8 Di VC USD, the Tamron SP 45mm f/1.8 Di VC USD and the Tamron SP 85mm f1.8 Di VC USD. I do love primes for their image quality (IQ) and creaminess of background blur, but for some particular scenarios I may go for zoom lens as well, the 15-30 for example. The fact that all lenses I use are stabilized and weather sealed brings confidence while shooting in harsh weather conditions and in dim light.

PPD: Do you have a favorite Tamron lens?

MG: Yes, my favorite lens is the Tamron SP 45mm f/1.8. This glass is just beautiful. These days everyone goes crazy about sharpness but only a few people understand

that sharpness and creamy bokeh are on opposite sides and most of modern super sharp lenses suffer from busy bokeh. And in that case I love the cinematic creamy bokeh it produces. I think this lens produces the best background rendition I've seen, and I've seen a lot. Also the distortion is so minimal that you can easily shoot indoors at architectural locations and not worry about vertical lines distortion and for me as an environmental photographer this is very important.



PPD: Is there a quality to the Tamron lenses that you particularly like?

MG: For me the thing about Tamron lenses is that they are perfectly balanced – IQ, bokeh, size, weight, set of features. You just can't go wrong with it.

PPD: Tell me about your workshops. What is the primary topic?

MG: Well, since I'm good in environmental portraits those are the main topics of my masterclasses. I'm breaking it down into elements such as character, location, color, optics, composition and of course

developing your visual experience and getting inspiration. Environmental portraits are like puzzles, you can throw in only a few elements and it will work but some ideas demand lots of research and character development so all elements should be put in. The more attention to details you put, the better the outcome. Producing good content takes time and this is the thing I'm trying to clarify to participants. Besides that of course I show my post-processing workflow and my image selection, RAW development, color grading, retouching, etc..

PPD: Where do you teach?

MG: I do a lot of lectures in Russia and last year I visited 25 cities across the country, as well as Europe – Cologne, Milan, Prague, Linz, Tallinn and soon to be others.

PPD: What is it about teaching that you enjoy?

MG: I enjoy encouraging people,

He visited Moscow a few months after that, we worked together and discussed the way we can work together and after that we had lots of successful events both in Germany and Russia, masterclasses, workshops and shooting events.

PPD: Have you taught in the United States yet?

MG: Not yet but I have few students from there and they've booked online Skype sessions or bought video tutorials. Of course I'm planning to visit the U.S. with some workshops and lectures one day but it strongly depends on hosts inside the country. I don't have connections such I have in Europe and in Germany or Austria, for example, and arranging everything being on the other side of planet is too risky. But still, it'll be a great pleasure for me when it happens.

PPD: Do you have any project ideas that you're looking forward to?

MG: Nothing particular yet but

I enjoy encouraging people, making them understand things that were unclear for them and, of course, inspiring them to break the mold and go full speed.

making them understand things that were unclear for them and, of course, inspiring them to break the mold and go full speed. Another thing that I like about teaching that it helps you to completely understand the topic you're teaching and I've come to very important conclusions about my photography during all those sessions.

PPD: I know that you've taught and worked in Cologne a lot, what is it about that city that appeals to you?

MG: My connection to Cologne appeared out of nowhere when famous German photographer Sacha Leyendecker who lives there got in touch with me and asked if I was up to do some collaborative shootings.

this year I've decided to challenge myself to shoot only the models I haven't yet worked with. And I have to say that it is pretty tough and unpredictable but this is the way progress comes.

PPD: Do you have any advice for others looking to jump full time into photography?

MG: Get some patience. Even if you're not happy with your current results and you're aiming for something better, put a lot of effort into what you're doing and don't give up and you'll see the result after a while. Just as I said before, creating quality content takes time so you have to wait and be aware of it. This is what lots of photographers overlook (me included).



Lisa Langell Going Where the Wild Things Are

By Jeff Wignall

Before she committed her professional life to nature and wildlife photography, Scottsdale,

Arizona-based photographer Lisa Langell had a lot of different careers. As a teenager she managed a pizzeria, later she worked as a master floral designer and then after college and grad school she became a licensed psychologist and a professional trainer and consultant in the area of K-12 education. And while she took a somewhat circuitous route to her current career, nature has been a driving passion since early childhood.

"I've loved nature since I could walk," says Langell. "I grew up in the country in Michigan and we had lots of nature right out the back door. When I was little I used to make birds nests out of mud and grass and put them up in trees—and hope with all of my heart that a bird would nest in there."

It was a relative that helped encourage her love of all things wild. "My great Aunt Jo, who lived until she was 102, got me started in bird watching and she was always an inspiration to me," she says. "I went to stay with her for a week and she would teach me

the difference between different birds. She really started the trajectory for me getting into birds."

Her adult life, however, took her on many other paths and as a psychologist in the education field her corporate career grew quickly. "I had started a photography business in around 2010 and between the two careers I was working 80-hour weeks" she says. "I knew that I couldn't do both things. I had an exit plan to step off the corporate platform and I did that in 2015."

Since that decision, Langell's career has soared quickly and her work has

been published in numerous magazines and calendars, including: Arizona Highways Classic Calendar; Arizona Highways, Images Arizona feature, Ranger Rick Magazine, Arizona Wildlife Views, Better Homes & Gardens, Arizona Republic, and many more. Her work has received honors from the North American Nature Photographer's Association and is reprinted in the Professional Photographer's Association (PPA) Loan Collection; National Wildlife Federation honors, and more. She is also on the Board of Directors of the North American Nature Photographer Association .

Recently I spoke to Langell while she was teaching a workshop in Delray Beach, Florida and spending personal time shooting with her favorite Tamron lenses which she talks about below.

PPD: Was it a scary transition to leave a corporate job to become a freelance photographer?

LL: There were ups and downs and I missed a lot of the zeroes in the

paychecks but today I miss little else. I don't regret my decision one bit. Every year it gets better and better and I'm ridiculously grateful for all of the things that have come my way. I

have had great joy in helping people learn photography and helping people get a better image of themselves, as well as traveling to different places and having different experiences of my own. I am just so abundantly grateful. It's been an amazing journey and luckily I'm successful.

You don't want to be encroaching on an animal's space when they are in sensitive habitats or if they are nesting. You have to be very respectful of their space because your physical behavior really does change outcomes for these birds and animals.

PPD: What are the different aspects of your business, what creates most of your income?

LL: Teaching is a big part of my income and that's by choice because I love to teach. I worked in education in a school system and even though I didn't teach in the schools, I loved to figure out what kinds of ways people learn and how to design instruction for an optimal learning process. That's what I used to do whether I was working with kids who had a disability or working with kids that were gifted or anybody in between. Then I would teach adults all day how to do that. I'd consult with schools and give workshops. I love to help people and I like to make it fun. Teaching is in my blood and it's who I am and I love bringing that to photography.

I've also consulted on photography projects, license my images and, of course, I take assignments.

PPD: A lot of photographers seem to be selling their prints at outdoor art shows these days and doing quite well. Is that something that you've done?

LL: In the past I've done a couple of really small art shows and that was more to gain experience and see what the world was all about. I found it was really expensive to keep clean inventory because you drive stuff around in a truck a lot and no matter how well you take care of it, it's going to get banged around. Recently though I've begun to re-entertain the art-show idea. I have really moved into a more artistic realm with the photography, my work is more artistic now and more decorative. About 40-50 pieces of my artistic nature photography were recently featured in a juried gallery in Arizona. I created a vintage look with my nature photography and presented it on handcrafted wood frames and presentations made from reclaimed wood in Arizona. Found objects and other accoutrements were added for a unique, highly desirable, decorative look. Thankfully, it has been a huge success and sales have far exceeded my optimistic expectations!

PPD: How is the work you sell at shows or galleries different than

traditional nature shooting?

LL: It's more of what people really want to hang in their homes. If you go into someone's home or you flip through Better Homes and Gardens and you look at what's on the walls, you'll see that people don't have a bear with a bloody salmon in their mouth hanging over their headboard!

You have to shoot with the end in mind and although it can be a spectacular shot that belongs in a high-end wildlife magazine or in a coffee-table book, but it still may not work in anyone's home if the colors are wrong or the style is wrong. Before I even shoot, I have to ask myself, 'Where is it going to go?' and I shoot for that.

PPD: As a base for photography is Arizona a great place to live?

LL: It's amazing. Two hours in any direction and you're in a completely different scenery, from the mountains and snow and woods in Flagstaff to Monument Valley on the Utah border with those wild rock formations. Then you've got the beautiful scenery in Sedona and, of course, you've got the deserts and the high-altitude desert. The desert area where I live in Phoenix is amazing with all the saguaro cacti. You've also got wild horses and lots of birds, it's a great bird flyway.

PPD: What are some of the other states where you like to shoot?

LL: My number one favorite hands down is Alaska. I love that state. I think I'm an honorary citizen of Alaska. I've been there over forty times. I went there for the first time in 2006 to do consulting in some really rural Native-Alaskan schools way out in the middle of the bush with no roads, very primitive living and no running water. I absolutely fell in love with the state.

PPD: Do you teach workshops in Alaska?

LL: Yes, every year. I focus mostly on wildlife. My tours run primarily in the Kenai Peninsula because there's so much diversity there. I lead my

tours in June to optimize for birds and animals and we actually stay at a lodge on the Kenai River that we rent out and it's completely private for us. I only take six people at a time, that's a manageable size for me. I rent two full-size SUVs and I hire an assistant who is a wonderful photographer as well. Every single thing that we do I've researched and planned myself. We do more diverse things everyday than most trips or workshops. Most trips are more limited in scope, they'll go to Alaska and shoot bears for four days and they might go out in a boat for one day or shoot some landscapes. We try to do something completely different everyday. For example, I charter a private boat and we go out to the Gulf of Alaska for a day. My boat is 43-feet long and is designed for 23 people and yet I only bring eight including my assistant. There is plenty of room to walk around and explore your shooting options. We're down close to the water so you're getting eye-level shots of otters and whales and other wildlife. It's a totally different experience.

PPD: Long telephoto and zoom lens are obviously an integral part of getting good nature and animal photos. What are the benefits of investing in long lenses?

LL: The zoom capacity definitely helps. Getting close enough to something so that you can isolate the subject better from its background is very important from a photographic perspective. Also, long lenses are important from an ethics perspective. You don't want to be encroaching on an animal's space when they are in sensitive habitats or if they are nesting. If you're too close they may not be able to get in to feed their young or if prey is scared away they may not be able to hunt. The zoom lens protects the animals and I think that's something that photographers don't always give enough consideration to.

PPD: What Tamron lenses do you shoot with most?

LL: I have the Tamron SP 150-600mm F/5-6.3 Di VC USD and I also shoot a lot with the Tamron 100-400mm F/4.5-6.3 Di VC USD with the Tamron 1.4X Teleconverter. I really like both lenses and both are super sharp and very bright, they're just wonderful. Today, for instance, I was shooting with the 150-600 and the zoom reach on that lens is incredible. In the past I have always been a Canon prime-lens shooter. I have a 500mm lens and a 1.4 extender and I've shot with that combination for years. That combination has done really well for me with both wildlife and birds.

Recently though I began asking myself if I really want to keep shooting with that prime lens because it's bulky, it's heavy and I'm traveling a lot and it practically requires its own suitcase. Often I would lose shots because I couldn't zoom in or out. I would frequently be too close to my subjects and couldn't back off. So I started to entertain the idea of the 150-600 to replace that prime lens and I tested both the Tamron and the Sigma, including micro-focus adjustments on each to really do a pound-for-pound comparison. Tamron came away as the clear winner for me, it was sharper and it did a great job with birds in flight. The Tamron just felt better in my hands. I really enjoy using that the Tamron 150-600 a lot.

PPD: When you're deciding between the Tamron 150-600mm and the Tamron 100-400mm, is it the situation that dictates which lens you'll choose?

LL: There are a couple of things that I consider. The 100-400mm is a much smaller lens so if I'm doing something where I don't need the 600mm range to pull things closer, I'll go with the shorter zoom. In situations like a botanical garden, for instance, it might be better and more convenient to carry the lighter lens. There are also situations where I need to be more mobile. I do a cattle drive workshop every year where we're shooting the cowboys

coming in with the cattle and I don't need 600mm for that, but I do need to have some pretty substantial range to zoom in and out with the cowboys and the 100-400 is ideal for that. For something where you just need a smaller, shorter form factor, that lens works out beautifully and it is a tack-sharp lens. It's light, it's easy to use and super sharp.

There are also some wildlife situations where I don't need the longer range. When I'm shooting moose, for example, they are usually closer to

to walk away, I have all the lens flexibility that I need and I don't have to physically move or add (or remove) teleconverters at critical moments anymore--and that is a gift.

When you're photographing wildlife and you're standing there for an hour waiting for things to happen the animals tend to acquiesce. They do their thing and they begin to forget that you're there – and that's when you often get your best shots!. If something starts to come a little closer I don't want to have to make



the road and the 150-mm minimum focusing distance is a bit too long. Sometimes you just need a little less zoom, so again, the 100-400mm is a great alternative.

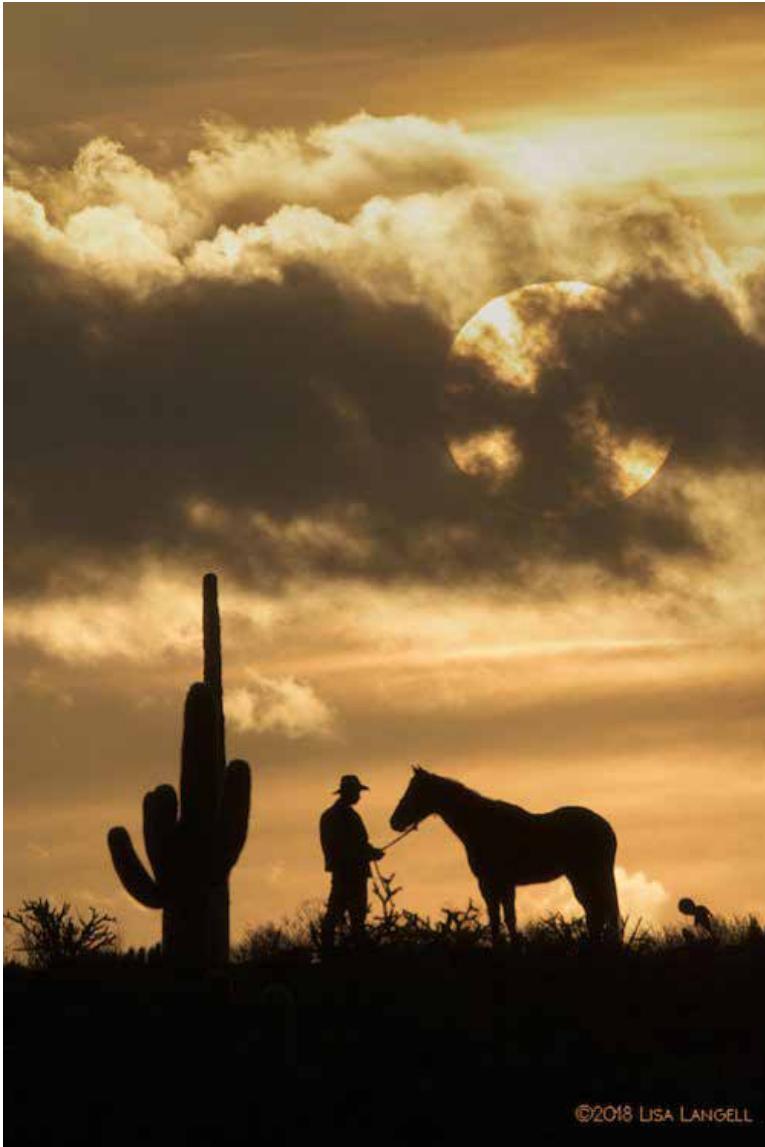
PPD: In what ways does having a lens that covers the extreme 150-600mm make shooting wildlife easier?

LL: In the days when I was using the 500mm prime lens a lot I was using it with a 1.4 converter and that would give me 640mm. The Tamron gives me from 150 to 600mm all in one lens so I have a lot more optical flexibility. If that bird decides to move right up close to me I can pull back and get it. And if that moose comes walking closer to me or starts

movement, to step back to fit it in the frame again. So a prime lens can be a real limitation.

PPD: In terms of overall quality, how do you feel about the Tamron zoom lenses?

LL: Having been a prime shooter for so long I was skeptical for a long time when it came to hearing about some of these zoom lenses and listening to what people said about them. Then I tried them and I have to say that I was just totally impressed by the quality of these lenses. I'm just amazed that for a fifth of the cost of what I can buy a prime lens for I am able to do so much more. I genuinely have been impressed with the quality



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and the sharpness of the images and the responsiveness of the focusing. The lens weight is much more practical and functional for most people.

Also, very importantly, there are a lot of features and settings on the lens for adapting it to whatever type of shooting that you're doing, whether you're working on or off the tripod. You can change functions to make the settings more appropriate for your subject, for panning or for capturing birds in flight, for example. There are a lot of features in these lenses that you would only expect to see in much higher-priced lenses and I'm just amazed that they can bring all of that together in lenses that are very affordable.

PPD: You have a lot of wonderful in-flight shots. What are the tech-

niques you use for getting good flights shots of birds?

LL: Technique is certainly one thing, you need to know the right settings to use to be able to capture good in-flight shots. Understanding the focusing system in your camera and lens is very important. It's not just a matter of focusing and shooting, you have to know how to use focus tracking and continuous-focusing settings. You need to practice with those settings, they're not something you can do consistently well right off the bat. The direction that the bird is moving is also a part of it. Birds that are coming right at you, as opposed to passing by side-to-side, may be a little more challenging for the camera to focus in time. Using the correct panning settings on your lens, as well, can make a difference. Lastly,

your lens and/or camera may require you to turn off vibration reduction when using a tripod. Understanding these features and functions will improve your consistency and success.

The focal-length that you choose is also important. If you are using a zoom lens, for example, you're going to want to initially pull back a little more and see more of the sky so that you can find the bird easier, then zoom in—rather than zooming in tightly and then trying to find the bird. Trying to find a bird in flight with the zoom all the way out is kind of like trying to find the bird looking through a drinking straw. You also need time to coordinate all of these things so typically I'll get ready when the bird is farther away. If I see a bird that is far away but has the potential of passing by close to me soon, I'll start focusing on it in the distance and track it as it comes by. You get into your groove and so by the time the birds gets close to you, assuming it does, you're all prepped and ready to shoot as it passes by.

PPD: Do you have any advice for someone that wants to get into the business of photography or nature photography?

LL: Deeply research your market. Most people who tell you, "You should sell your work!" are truthful about the quality of your work, but are naïve about the current market for your work. Ask, "Would this image fit the style of your home or office?" to learn if your work suits the art and decor market, not just magazines or calendar markets, which often have dwindling budgets. Research buyers, analyze decorating trends, study interiors and art styles used in homes and commercial spaces — then decide if your work is a fit visually and at a profitable price point.

Feel your business model is viable? Next, begin building strong relationships, a contact list, and be a resource. Talk with your potential clients using kindness and respect. Listen. Serve. Innovate. Be brave!



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SP150-600 mm

F/5-6.3 Di VC USD G2 [Model A022]

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