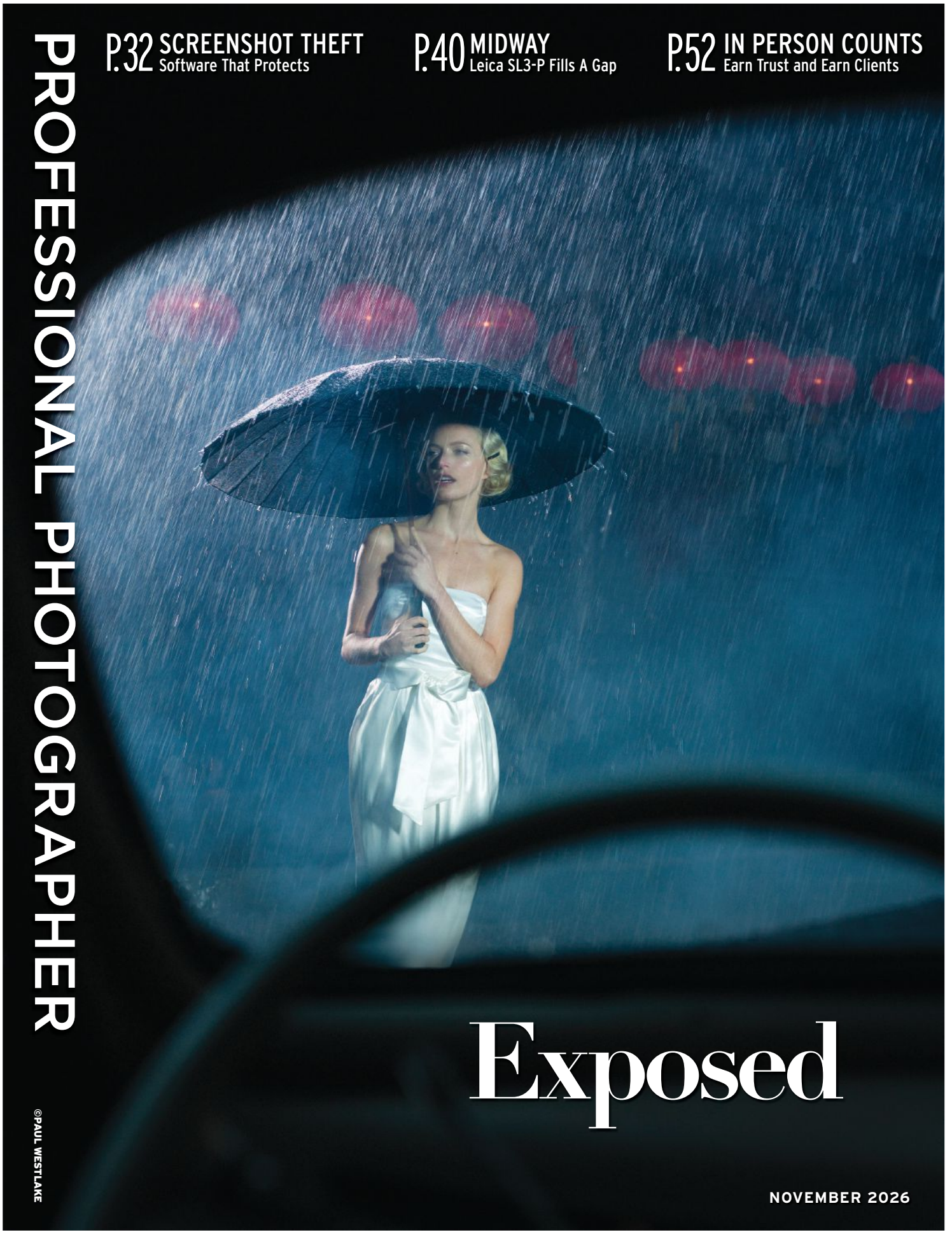
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Earn Trust and Earn Clients



Exposed

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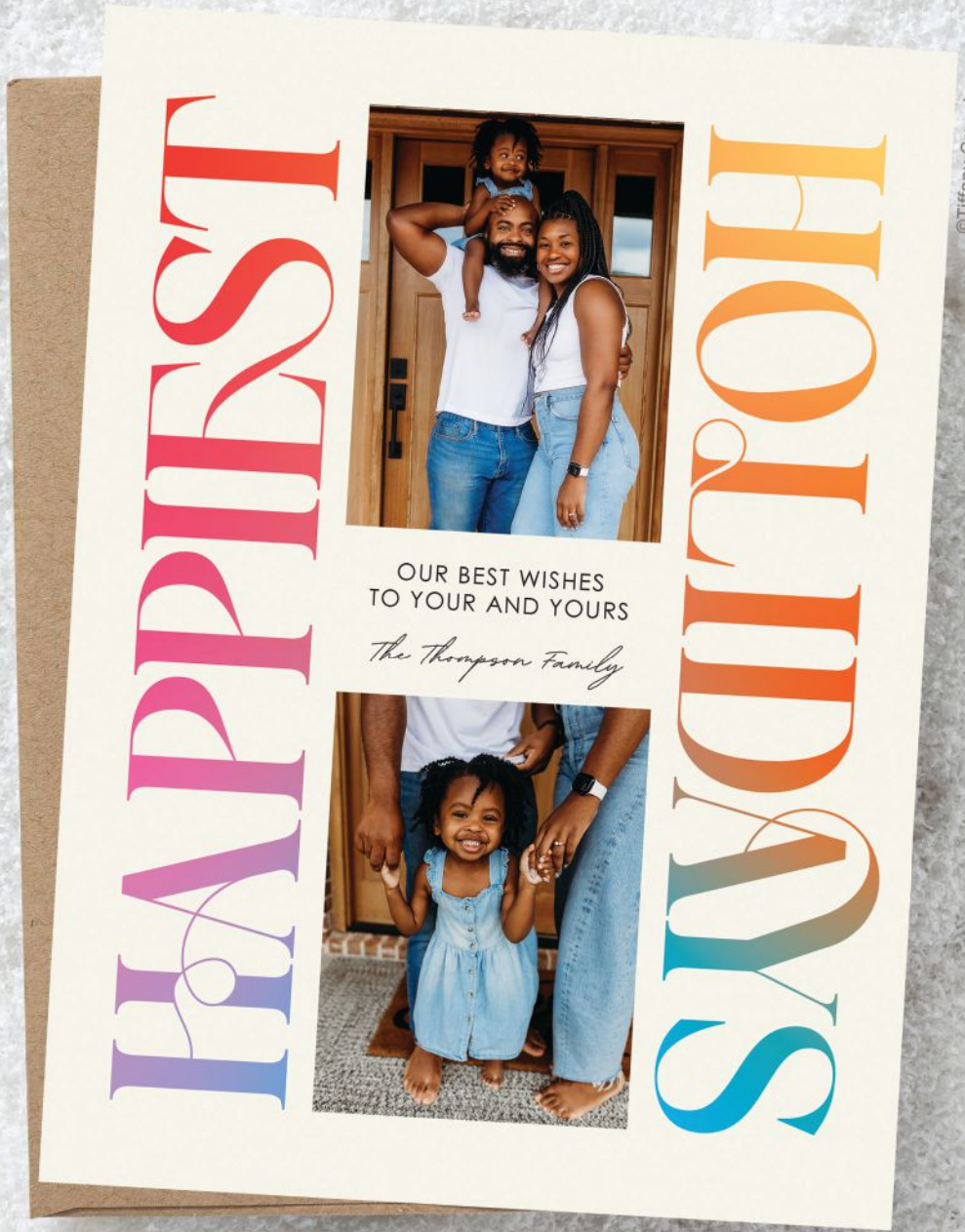
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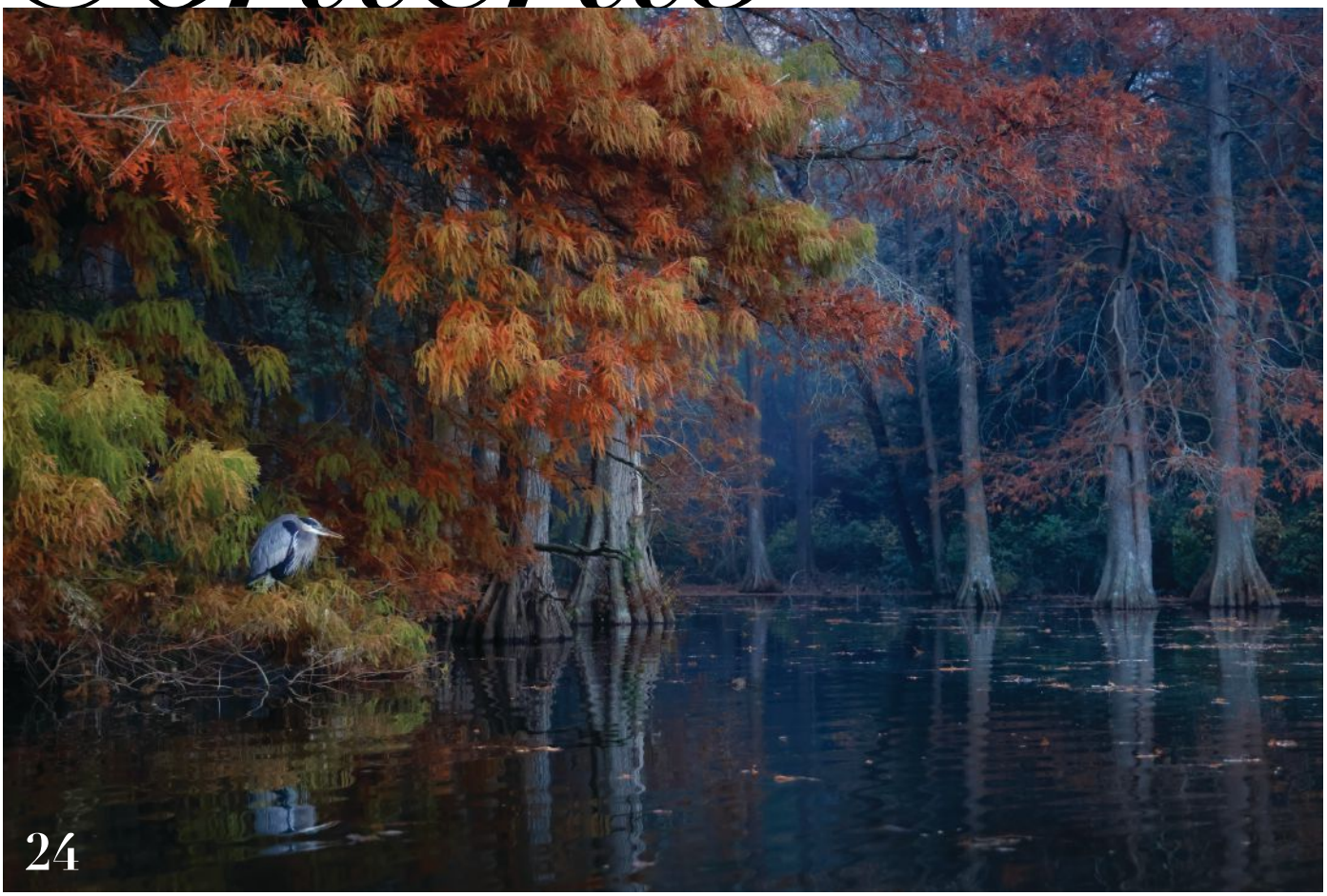
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Know Your Rights

AND YOU CAN HELP SECURE THEM

It can be easy to go about our lives enjoying rights and freedoms without thinking about the people working tirelessly, often out of sight, to protect them. This thought struck me as I read about the EXPLORE Act, signed into federal law almost two years ago, which establishes clear rules and guidelines for photographers who want to capture images on public land, and protect the national parks as well as their livelihoods ("Ready, Set, EXPLORE!," page 76).

In January 2022, PPA member Joanna Adams, a frequent photographer in Glacier National Park and board president of Public Land Creatives (PLC), brought concerns to PPA about new regulations on photographing in national parks. Back then, a professional photographer who took clients into national parks for sessions was classified as a commercial guide and therefore had to gain a permit, be CPR certified, stay within half a mile of trails, and give 3% of their profits from the session to the park. PPA's government affairs team discovered that the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all approached their regulations regarding photography on their lands differently. PPA, PLC, and other stakeholders met frequently with lawmakers on Capitol Hill to create and advance new legislation, which became the EXPLORE Act of today.

Luc Boulet, PPA's government affairs manager, truly knows how Capitol Hill works when he unironically uses the term "lightning speed" to refer to the three years of advocacy and working toward new regulations that happened before the EXPLORE Act's passage. He's not wrong; that timeframe proves the determination, efficiency, and clarity of PPA and its partners working on the issue. It's also a reminder of how crucial it is to know your rights as a photographer and as a small business owner, and that PPA has a full-time team that fights for those rights and works to educate you about them.

Carl Bott, volume photographer and owner of Legacy Photo Company in Nashville, Tennessee, also educates photographers about their rights related to screenshotting. When a client takes a screenshot of a proof you send, even with a watermark on it, they are violating your copyright. In "Professional Photographer" podcast episode 118, Bott shares how software he created can both educate clients about screenshotting and help combat their mishandling of your work ("Protecting a Photographer's Livelihood," page 32).

Learning your rights, voicing concerns, raising awareness, championing a cause: These are actions you can take to support your photography business and those of your peers. You also have the benefit of the oldest and largest photography trade association in your corner for advocacy and education. Together with PPA, photographers can strengthen their own creative businesses and elevate the industry. •

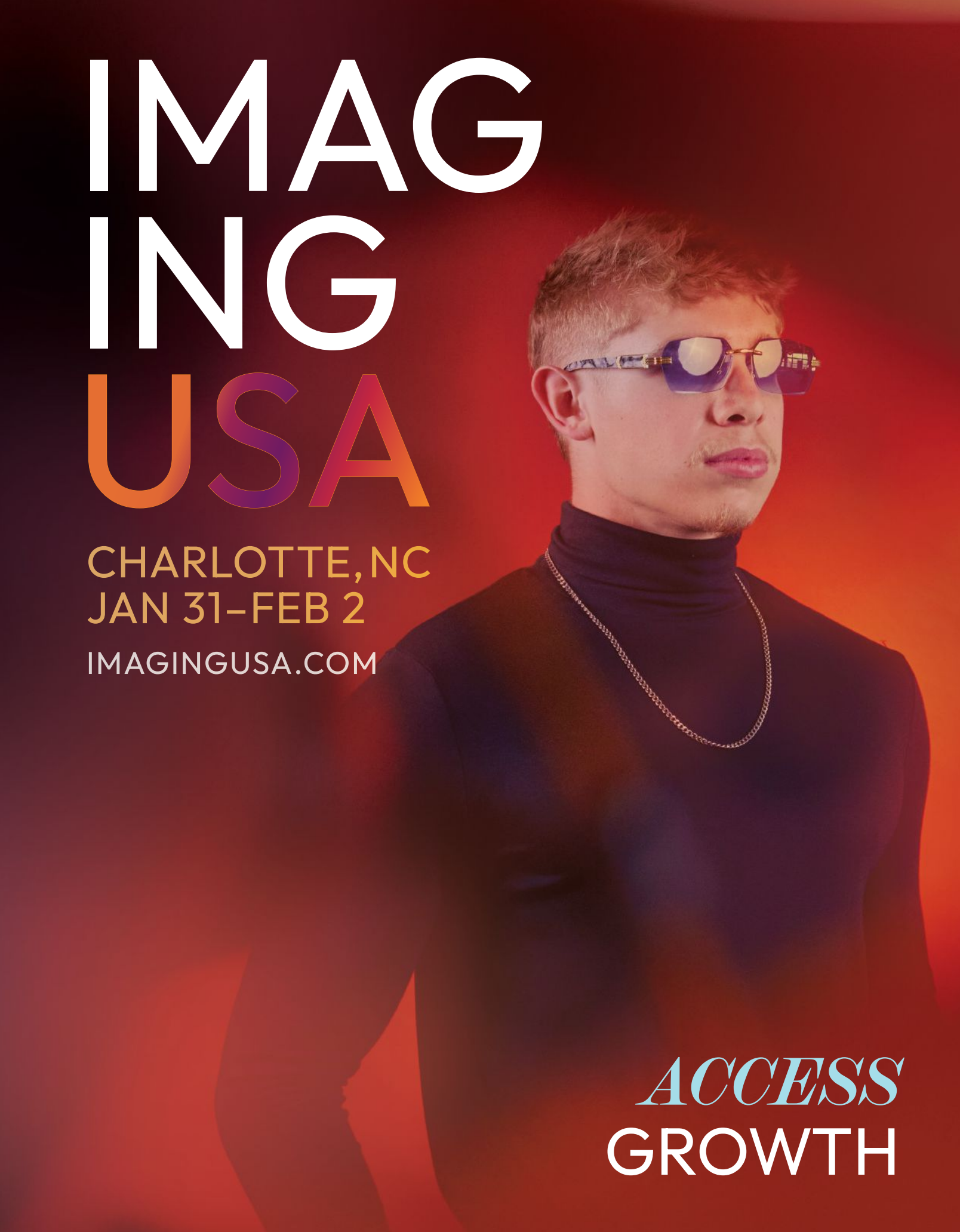
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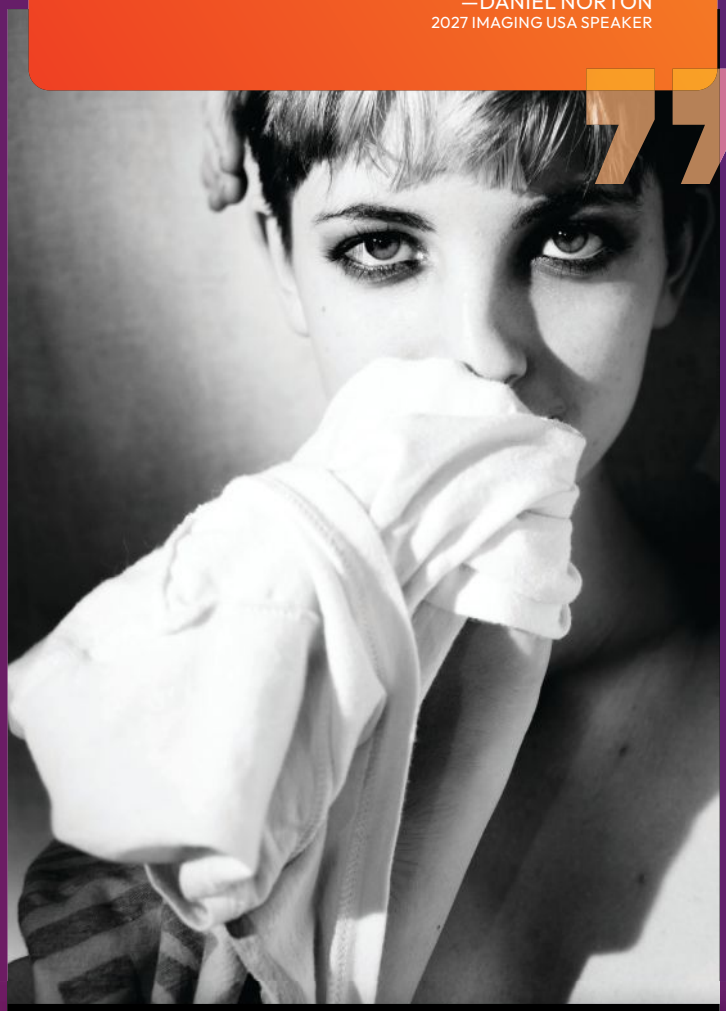
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ACCESS
GROWTH

ACCESS EXPERTS

> This year I'm teaching analog-based skills for the Pre-Convention Classes. I'm going to guide a paper negatives demo, and I'm happy to teach this practice to people in-person at Imaging USA because that's always the magic for me. Digital photography is an amazing tool, but the joy of seeing an image appear on the paper never fades for me.
>
> —DANIEL NORTON
> 2027 IMAGING USA SPEAKER



Pre-Con

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Paper Negatives

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Gimbal Mastery:
Creating Cinematic Motion with Confidence



MEG LOEKS
Turning Ordinary Spaces Into Cinematic Portraits



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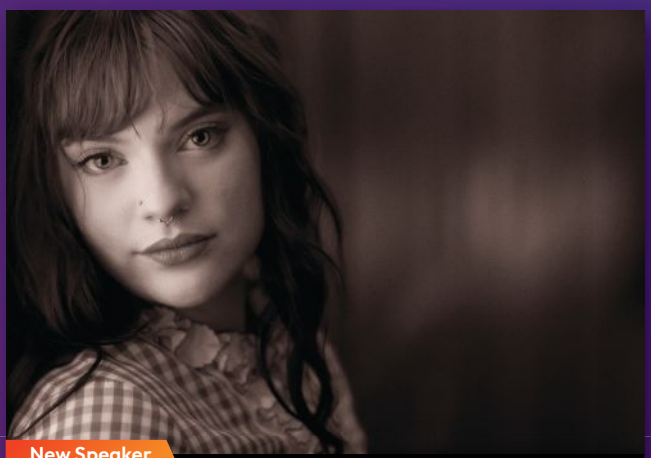
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Pre-Con

ALVARO BALDERAS M.PHOTOG.CR.
La Magia De Usar Una Sola Luz/Mastering One-Light Portraits for Professional Results

IMPARTIDO EN ESPAÑOL TAUGHT IN SPANISH



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SVETA BUTKO
Emotional Portraits

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>
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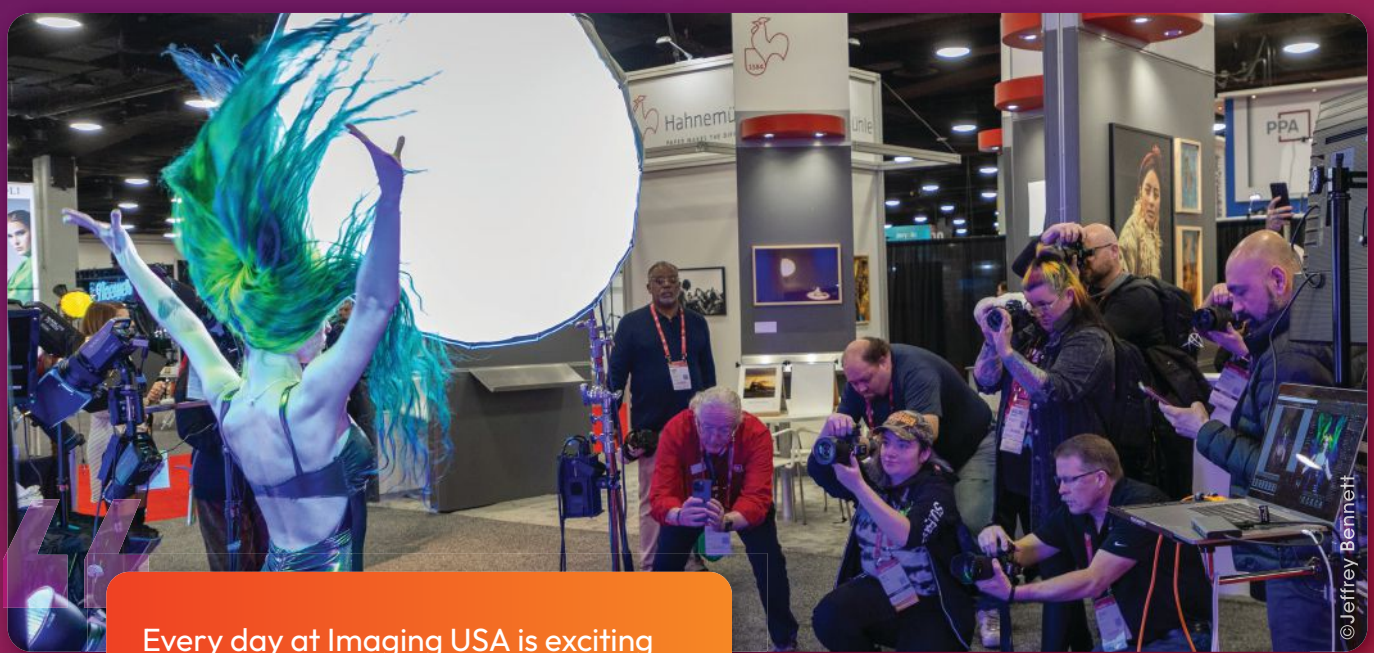
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Bring your camera and create alongside photographers who share your passion. With guided shooting opportunities, styled models, and real-time instruction, you'll leave with stronger skills and portfolio-worthy images.

Level up your experience with:

- 30 Photo walks
- 28 demo stage sessions
- Hands-on instruction from experts
- Styled models and real shooting opportunities
- Opportunities to test tech and create alongside your peers



> Every day at Imaging USA is exciting and filled with new opportunities. The mentors are some of the best in the business, the trade show had fantastic vendors, and the hands-on demonstrations and photo ops brought new inspiration to my brand and business. I can't wait for Charlotte!
>
> —ALISHIA POTTER
> 2026 IMAGING USA ATTENDEE

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TYLER GILLUM

Head Coach of the Savannah Bananas

As an educator, entrepreneur, and Head Coach of the Savannah Bananas, Tyler Gillum has turned lessons from sports leadership into an unforgettable approach to growth, resilience, and servant leadership.

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Dominando los Fundamentos de Iluminación en el Retrato/Mastering the Fundamentals of Portrait Lighting
with Alvaro Balderas
Pre-Con

El Poder Tranquilo del Flash: un Workflow Introductorio para Priorizar la Luz Natural/ The Quiet Power of Flash: An Introductory Workflow for Prioritizing Natural Light
with Matias Ezcurra
Pre-Con

La Magia de Usar Una Sola Luz/Mastering One-Light Portraits for Professional Results
with Alvaro Balderas

Tu Mirada Creativa/Your Creative Gaze
with Gustavo Pomar

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- Table Topic discussions
- Lunch & Learns
- Photo walks





ACCESS
CONNECTION

WHERE CONNECTION MEETS INNOVATION

Since some of the best moments at Imaging USA happen between classes, the Hub and the Expo give you even more ways to connect and get inspired.

THE HUB

Where community connects

Premiering in 2027, the Hub is Imaging USA's built-in gathering place—a space to meet friends, grab a bite, and take a break without stepping away from the energy of the show.

The Hub's backyard-inspired design features a biergarten trailer, lawn games, and a community stage. Drop in for Lunch & Learns, Table Topic discussions, and conversations with speakers. The Hub is open 2–3 hours after the Expo on Sunday and Monday, so there are more opportunities than ever to network and relax.



THE EXPO

Discover the gear shaping the future

Explore 130+ vendors showcasing the latest technology, products, and services at the Expo. Here, you can test tools before investing, connect directly with brands, and unlock ideas that could change the way you create and do business.

MAKE A STOP AT THE PPA BOOTH

There's even more to experience at the PPA booth. Stop by to:

- Get your professional headshot taken
- See how to optimize your PPA benefits
- Connect with the PPA team and other members

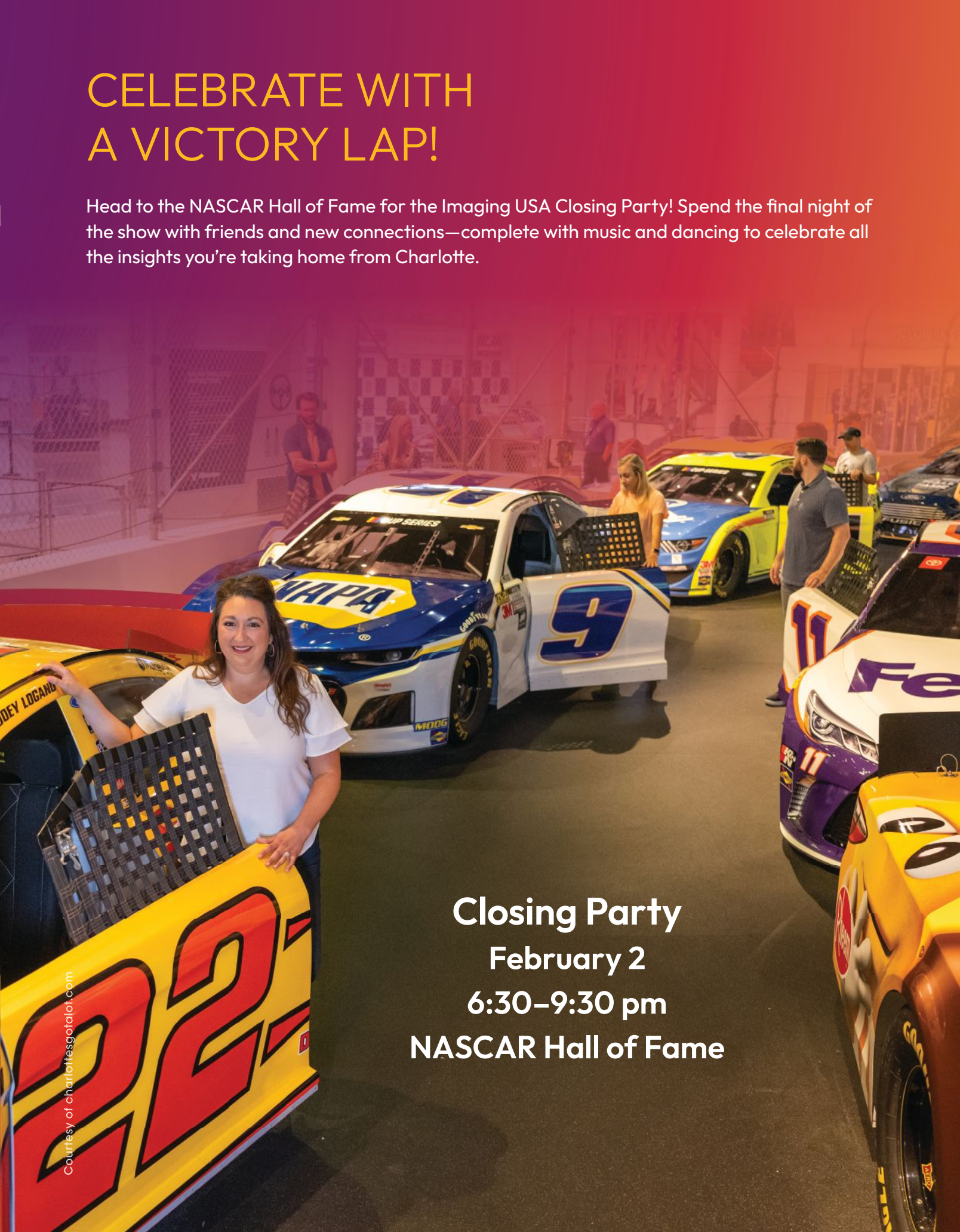
EXPERIENCE IT ALL FOR FREE

Your free Expo Plus Pass gives you access to the Hub and the Expo.

ACCESS INNOVATION

CELEBRATE WITH A VICTORY LAP!

Head to the NASCAR Hall of Fame for the Imaging USA Closing Party! Spend the final night of the show with friends and new connections—complete with music and dancing to celebrate all the insights you're taking home from Charlotte.



Courtesy of charlottesgotalot.com

Closing Party

February 2

6:30–9:30 pm

NASCAR Hall of Fame



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Once you arrive, make time to experience all that Charlotte has to offer. From walkable Uptown streets and skyline views to restaurants, murals, inspiring art, and local culture, the city has plenty to explore between Imaging USA events.

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A Layoff and a Pandemic

CHAPTERS I NEVER WOULD HAVE CHOSEN

By Makayla Harris, Cr.Photog., CPP



©PHANEENDRA GUDAPATI

The two biggest turning points of my career both started as the worst news I'd ever gotten.

The first was a layoff.

I was a business consultant, and then one day I wasn't. My husband, David, and I had just gotten married, bought a condo in Boston, and decided to have a baby. We had a brand new mortgage and I didn't have a job. I ran the numbers on going back to work full time, and they were brutal. I would be paying more in childcare than I was bringing home in my paycheck. So I said something to my husband that still makes me laugh: "I don't know anything about photography, but let's just start a business."

> "The worst seasons are often preparing us for the best ones. They introduce us to people we haven't met yet. They force us into things we never would have chosen."

Photography was a means to an end. But somewhere along the way, I fell in love with the part nobody told me I'd love: pricing, packaging, the client experience, and how to guide a couple through a wedding photography consultation so they walked out feeling taken care of instead of sold. The strategy became my creative outlet and fueled me for 12, 13 years.

Then came 2020, the next biggest turning point.

Wedding after wedding disappeared from the calendar. Couples were scared, planners had no answers, venues were closed, and nobody knew if we were postponing for two weeks, two months, or indefinitely. We became part photographers, part contract negotiators, and mostly unpaid therapists, all while trying to keep money from pouring back out through canceled events and returned retainers.

I carried an extra weight thinking I was responsible. I was the one who had convinced David to leave his very comfortable, very predictable career in finance to build this with me. David never blamed me. Unfortunately, I was perfectly capable of doing that myself. So, we hustled. We livestreamed tiny weddings. We took random side gigs. We rented our home on Airbnb and took the kids somewhere smaller near the beach.

It was heavy. Really heavy. For everyone. But that season pushed me somewhere I never would have gone on my own: out of my comfort zone and into building a new business entirely around the part of this work that had been fueling me all along. For the second time in my life, a door closed and I started something I never planned on. That new chapter has given me more freedom, more flexibility, and more creative passion than I could have imagined in the middle of it all.

I think that's the part we can't see in the moment. The worst seasons are often preparing us for the best ones. They introduce us to people we haven't met yet. They force us into things we never would have chosen. Maybe you're in one of those seasons right now. I won't pretend it's easy. What I can tell you is that both times it happened to me, I didn't have it all figured out. I just made the next decision, and then the one after that. If you had told me, standing in that Boston condo with a new mortgage and no job, that a layoff and a pandemic would turn out to be the two best things for my career, I would have politely asked you to leave.

And yet, here we are. •

Bonita Springs, Florida-based Makayla Harris is co-founder of The Harris Company, and founder/CEO of ASET: Album & Art Sales and the Printographers Society.

See more from Makayla Harris, Cr.Photog., CPP, on **PhotoVision** at **ppa.com**.

FOREGROUND

By Amanda Arnold

Nights at the Theater

MOVIE MAGIC



IMAGES ©KEVIN BOYLE / kevinboylestudio.com

Art deco facades. Neon lights. Kevin Boyle became entranced by vintage movie theaters when he stumbled across one in remote Saskatchewan, Canada, that residents were trying to restore. "It was just such a breathtaking theater," he says, which inspired him to launch an ongoing series, "Movieland." He hopes his photographs of old theaters, which he creates overnight, ignite nostalgia and inspire movie theater restoration. He talks about his process:

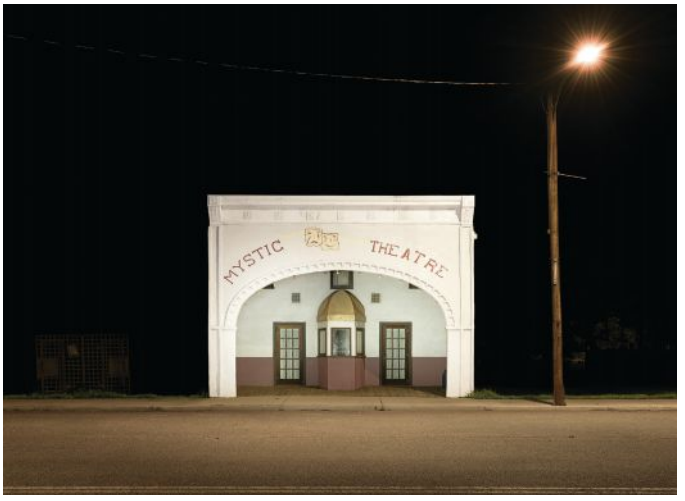
Finding subjects: A press time, Boyle was about to set out on a three-week journey through North America to photograph vintage theaters. To pinpoint theaters he'd like to photograph, he uses Google Maps. "I'll zoom into a state and just go town to town looking for theaters," he says. When he finds one he likes the look of, he contacts the theater or neighboring businesses to make sure it's still standing. "It's amazing how helpful people are when I tell them about the project," he says. He's especially interested in creating and donating photos to groups interested in raising money to restore the theaters.

Lighting and equipment: With his camera static on a tripod, Boyle points a flashlight at various sections of the









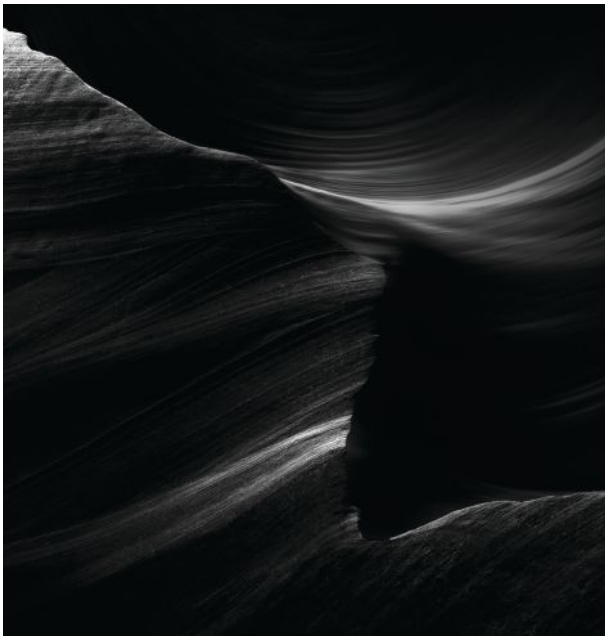
building and creates up to 15 images to layer in post-production so that the entire building appears illuminated in the final image. The flashlights he uses are standard LEDs from a hardware store; if the streetlight is warmer, he uses a flashlight with a yellow filter for better light balance. He also makes a photo of the roadway in the foreground and a background image, which may be jet black, he says. "But sometimes the moon's behind it, or there's a nice tree line you can see if you are exposed enough. Most of the exposures are around 20 to 30 seconds," he explains, to minimize any star trails.

For the earlier photos in the series, he used the Fijifilm GFX100 with a 30mm tilt shift lens and 45mm fixed lens. Now he's switched to a Hasselblad X2D II with a 25-35mm and a 35-100mm lens, a camera he received from Hasselblad when he was honored as a 2026 Hasselblad Master for his theater images. Fifteen to 25 photos from his series will be published in a Hasselblad Masters book. •

Fluid Rock

ANTELOPE CANYON IN BLACK AND WHITE





IMAGES ©LUCIA COOPER / luciacooperphotography.com

"I see lines and shapes everywhere," says Ann Arbor, Michigan-based fine art photographer Lucia Cooper. But it was a "special love for curves" that led her to create a series of photographs of Arizona's Antelope Canyon.

Why black and white: A lover of geometry, Cooper felt black-and-white photography would allow her to best highlight both the parallel lines formed by sedimentation and the curves created by erosion. "I also decided to go quite low-key to put the special emphasis on the places where the light hit, particularly on the edges of the rocks."

The flowing fabric effect: "The phrase 'flowing fabric' perfectly describes what I was seeing in Antelope Canyon," Cooper says. To convey that in her work, she used the blur tool in Photoshop to smooth the curved areas of the rocks while leaving the edges of the rock sharp. "The tricky part was not to blur everywhere."

The equipment: Unable to find a photography-focused tour of the canyon, Cooper joined a tour group led by a guide whose pace left no time for camera setups. So, Cooper made photos quickly using her iPhone in raw, focusing on closeups of lines and shapes.

The challenge: Antelope Canyon is one of the most photographed places in the world, so it was a challenge to create works that hadn't already been seen before. "It took me years to come up with the idea of selectively blurring my images and get up the nerve to go low-key," she says. "The bottom line is that I love beauty, and to me, these images are beautiful." •





For the Birds

CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH WILDLIFE

As a kid exploring the dense forest around his home in Mocanaqua, Pennsylvania, wildlife photographer Josh Galicki developed an early appreciation for songbirds. "I started taking simple documentary photography so I could show family and friends what I was seeing in the field," he says, and they were often surprised by the colorful birds he'd photographed nearby. "Seeing that reaction really stayed with me. Photographing became a way to connect people with wildlife they might otherwise never notice." Galicki, now based in the Washington, D.C., area, offers lessons learned in bird photography:

Blend in. Avoid wearing bright colors or white sneakers. Subdued colors that fit the environment are best. Making photos from his trusty kayak allows Galicki to sit low, so birds are less aware of his presence.





IMAGES ©JOSH GALICKI / joshuagalicki.com



Don't overlook common birds. "Canada geese are a perfect example," Galicki says. "They're plentiful, relatively confiding, and give you endless opportunities to experiment with composition, behavior, light, motion, and environmental images."

Experiment with every kind of light. Don't let the golden hour become the formula. Angled light, backlight, soft overcast conditions, dramatic storm light, and even harsh light can be impactful.

Study composition beyond bird photography. Leading lines, textures, patterns, negative space, balance, repetition, and visual flow can be just as relevant in bird photography as they are in landscape photography.

Don't force the photo. "Birds are wild, and they come and go on their own terms." If you have patience and allow situations to develop naturally, opportunities present themselves.

The best bird photos are often captured close to home. "The strongest work usually comes from places you know well," Galicki says. Having intimate knowledge of the behaviors, routines, and habitats of birds, and repeated access to them over time, results in more thoughtful images.

Closer isn't always better. "The frame-filling bird portrait is a traditional and very popular approach," he says, but sometimes the better decision is to zoom out and include more of the environment in the frame for better storytelling and composition. •



JOSH GALICKI

IN HIS BAG

Josh Galicki's primary camera is the mirrorless Canon EOS R3, though he also uses his Canon EOS R5. His Canon RF 100-500mm f/4.5-7.1 lens is best for quick-moving birds and gives him the ability to change the composition without changing his position. The Canon EF 600mm f/4L IS USM III lens "gives me the reach, subject isolation, and low-light capability I need when working with smaller or more distant birds."



©PAUL WESTLAKE / paulwestlake.net

Shanghai Noir

Paul Westlake
Paul Westlake
New York

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE: "The photograph was created for an advertising campaign for David Jones, commissioned through Saatchi & Saatchi in Sydney," says Paul Westlake, and was made at Shanghai Film Studios in Shanghai, China. "I wanted the photograph to feel like a scene from an old Shanghai film—nocturnal, noir, and slightly mysterious. We shot at night on a period Shanghai street set with red Chinese lanterns hanging in the background. A rain machine provided the heavy rain, while smoke drifting through the backlight created the hazy atmosphere and added a sense of tension and mystery. I photographed from inside an old 1940s car, looking through the [windshield] at the model. Framing her through the car window suggests that the viewer is watching her, perhaps waiting for her to arrive—a classic film noir trope."

CAMERA & LENS: Hasselblad H2 with Phase One P30 digital back, Hasselblad HC 2,8/80 lens

EXPOSURE: 1/125 second at f/2.8, ISO 100

LIGHTING: Westlake used a 4K HMI (brand unknown) as the backlight, positioned high camera left, spilling across the top of the umbrella and the subject's right arm and emphasizing the rain. The main light was another 4K HMI through a one-stop silk scrim, positioned approximately 45 degrees camera right and elevated just enough to prevent the umbrella from casting a shadow across the subject's face. The smoke was allowed to drift through the beam of the backlight but not between the camera and the subject so that she remained crisp in the image. "It was bitterly cold, particularly with the rain, and [the model] maintained an extraordinary composure throughout, giving the image its sophisticated sense of nonchalance," says Westlake.

POST-CAPTURE: In Capture One, color balance was established using a color reference card. Adobe Photoshop was used for minor corrections to the dress.

OUR COVERS: *Professional Photographer* staff chooses each month's cover image from the top 32 images across each category in the International Photographic Competition. Learn more about the International Photographic Competition on **PhotoVision** at **ppa.com**.

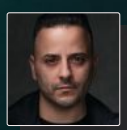

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"IF YOU WANT TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ANYTHING, ESPECIALLY IN PHOTOGRAPHY, YOU MUST BELIEVE IN YOURSELF."

5 WAYS TO KEEP GROWING & ENJOY THE JOURNEY

1. **KEEP THE FUN IN YOUR WORK.**
When photography starts feeling too much like a job, make something simply because you want to. That creative freedom could be the recharge that brings new energy to your client work.

2. **FIND PEOPLE WHO MAKE YOU BETTER.**
Look to your mentors and friends whose work inspires you. Having trusted people to trade ideas with can make challenges less intimidating and help you grow faster.

3. **KEEP IMPROVING YOUR WORK.**
Study work you admire, practice deliberately, and give yourself chances to experiment. Like learning an instrument, becoming a stronger photographer takes repetition and curiosity.

4. **LEARN THE BUSINESS, TOO.**
Practical guidance can be just as valuable as creative mentorship. Consult with peers on pricing, workflow, and the decisions that come with running a business.

5. **PREPARE TO NEVER STOP LEARNING.**
You can only go so far if you don't think you're ready. Recognize the thoughts holding you back, believe in your potential, and pair that confidence with the work required to get there.

KEEP LEARNING. KEEP CREATING.

Growth doesn't stop once you know your way around a camera. PhotoVision gives PPA members access to education that can help you sharpen your craft, strengthen your business, and find new inspiration.

PPA.com/PhotoVision

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Explore Pete's content on investing in your business, strengthening your relationships, and enjoying every moment of your photography journey.

PPA.com/PeteCocoTips

Sittin' in the Morning Sun

John Priano, CPP
John Priano Photography
Knoxville, Tennessee



©JOHN PRIANO / instagram.com/john.priano

PHOTOGRAPHER'S NOTE: "I often explore the river at sunrise to see what images I can capture. I have been to this location many times, but I rarely see a single boat sitting at the dock facing away from the bridge. On this morning, the boat added something special to the scene and immediately caught my attention. While setting up the shot, I started singing Otis Redding's '(Sittin' on) The Dock of the Bay.'"

CAMERA & LENS: Sony Alpha 1, Sony FE 35mm f/1.4 GM lens

EXPOSURE: 0.8 second at f/16, ISO 50

LIGHTING: Natural light

POST-CAPTURE: In Adobe Lightroom, he cropped the image, adjusted the exposure, and balanced the color.

ABOUT THE IMAGING EXCELLENCE COLLECTION: The Imaging Excellence Collection comprises photographs chosen by trained jurors as being the best of the best in PPA's Merit Image Review. The Imaging Excellence distinction is awarded to compositions that successfully address the 12 elements of a merit image. **NOTE:** Lighting diagrams shown here are not to scale. **ppa.com/mir**
Watch "Inside the Image" Merit Image Reviews on **PhotoVision** at **ppa.com**.



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End the Year Strong

With the holidays around the corner, the end of the year is creeping up on us. You may have some loose ends to tie up for your business before you can truly celebrate. Here are some tips to end the year with confidence and be ready to tackle 2027.



Say thank-you to clients. This can be a thoughtful social media post or even a handwritten card mailed to each client. Recognizing them for their business strengthens your relationships and keeps your brand on their radar.

Plan for year-end tax deadlines. Confirm deadlines with your tax professional, particularly if you pay quarterly taxes. Be sure to set aside funds for federal, state, and local taxes for 2027.





Review your financial statements. Start with your income statement, balance sheet, and cash flow report, which provide an overall look at the health of your business. Are you spending more than you're making? Do you understand your assets, liability, and equity? Do you have enough liquidity to cover upcoming expenses? Engage a trusted accountant or fractional CFO for help if you need to.



Evaluate your expenses and consider where you can trim your budget. Maybe you can spend less on equipment next year because you just purchased some new lights. Maybe you did not deduct enough from your taxes this year. How can you save more or spend less in 2027?

Do last-minute tasks. Send out final notice invoices, clean up your workspace, renew those annual subscriptions that are about to expire, etc.





Assess your goals. If you made business goals for 2026, have a look at them. How did you do? If you did not write out tangible financial and/or other goals, take time to create some for 2027. They don't have to be lofty; break them into monthly chunks.

Rest and refresh. The last couple of months of the year can be extra hectic, whether it's professionally with holiday photo sessions, or personally with family gatherings and other events. Be present and consider disengaging when you need to.

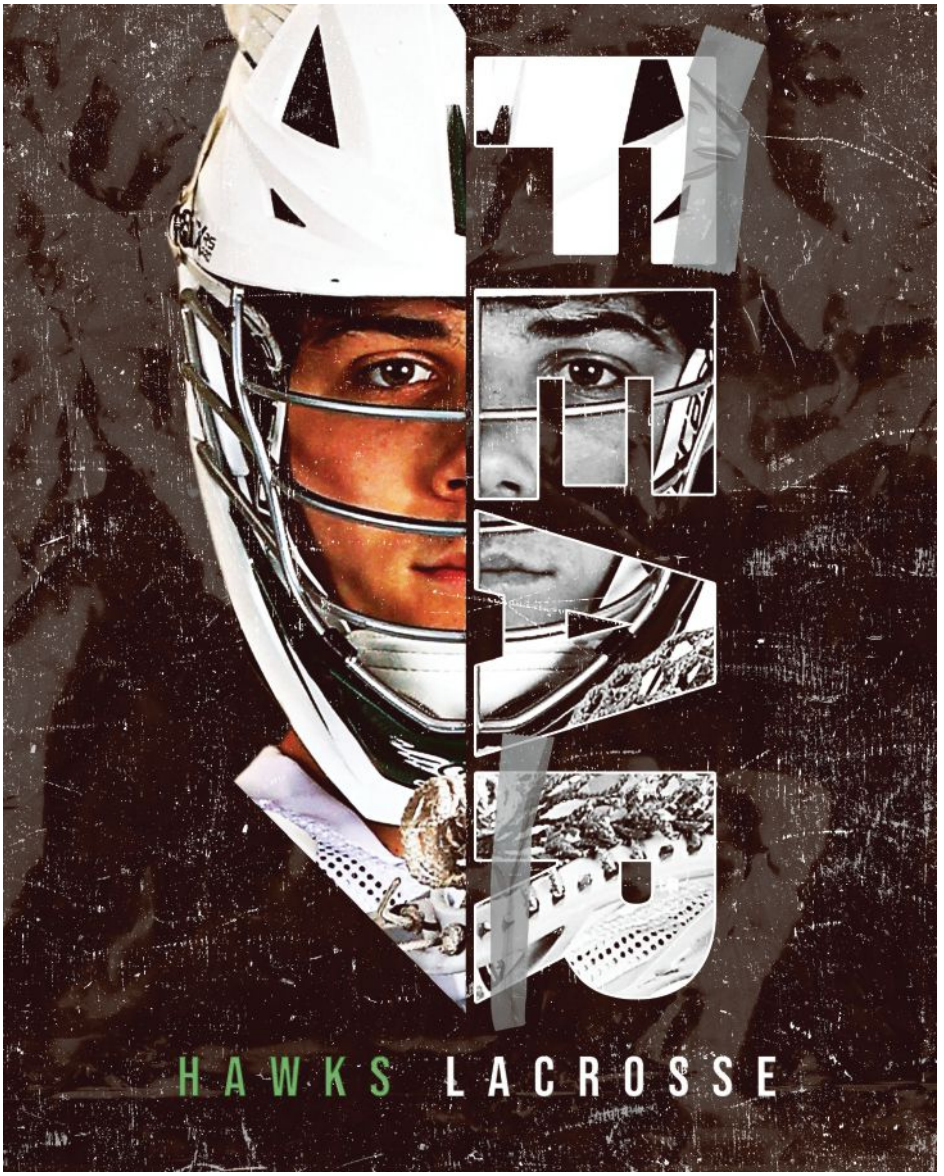


Sources: Landmark National Bank "Small Business End-of-Year Financial Checklist;" farmhousecreative.net "How to Finish the Year Strong as a Small Business Owner"

Protecting a Photographer's Livelihood

SOFTWARE HELPS PREVENT SCREENSHOT THEFT

By Melanie Lasoff Levs



©CARL BOTT / LEGACY PHOTO COMPANY / legacyphotocompany.com

Get more insights from the "Professional Photographer" podcast at:
ppa.com/podcast

It's becoming more of a common occurrence for high-volume photographers: Clients take screenshots of their images, even with watermarks on them, and share with others without paying for packages. Some clients are well-intentioned and some may be trying to get away without paying, but either way, it's a copyright violation, and it's theft. Carl Bott, volume photographer and owner of Legacy Photo Company in Nashville, Tennessee, is working to raise awareness of and prevent screenshotting.

"There's honest people that are doing it that just truthfully don't understand and don't know that that's the theft," he tells "Professional Photographer" podcast host Pat Miller during the filming of the episode, "How to Protect Your Photography from Screenshot Theft" at Imaging USA 2026 in Nashville. "But, you know, there's some that just don't care. And so that's really the battle on a volume side that we're running into. … It's one of those issues that we can't wait until it becomes a major issue because at that point, it's too late."

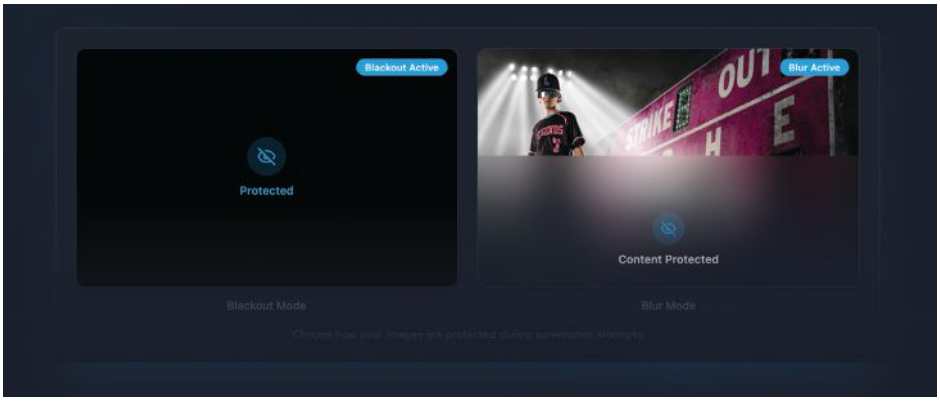
With some 100,000 kids registered as clients this year, Bott uses the high-volume photography platform GotPhoto to support his workflow and business. It has become almost normalized for some sports, dance studio, and school clients to pay a small amount to an AI or overseas company to remove watermarks rather than pay the photographer for a legal download, he explains. "This is theft because it's kind of like the music industry, where people were downloading music illegally. You had a lot of honest people that were doing it just because everybody else was. And so it became a social norm. It became OK to do and people just didn't understand the impact it was making on these artists," Bott says. "It's hard enough

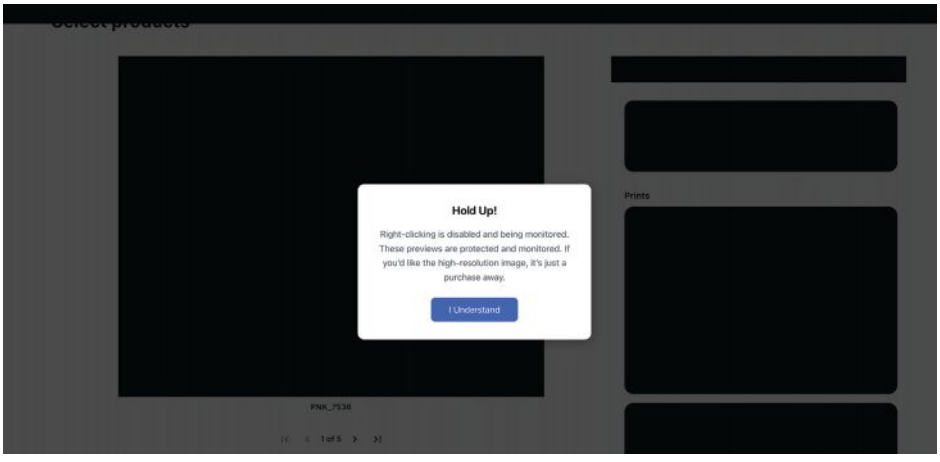
being in the creative realm, so this is just adding a whole other level of difficulty to the jobs that we do and how we support our families."

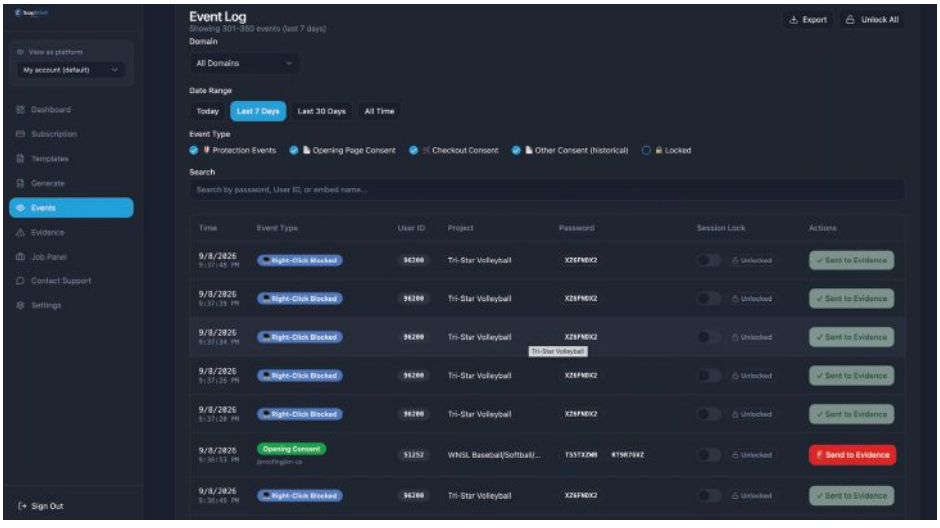
> "I THINK IT'S GOING TO MAKE PEOPLE THINK TWICE. IT'S GOING TO KEEP THE HONEST PEOPLE HONEST."

Before Bott started sharing digital proofs with clients and offered only paper prepay order forms, he would make about $22 per order, he explains. Today, it is more common for volume photographers to share digital proofs, and Bott says doing so has taken him to an average of about $55 per order. Does that $30+ increase in sales offset the theft that is happening? Bott says currently it does, "but, again, a couple years from now, as this [screenshotting] becomes a trend, I think that goes away completely."

Bott created a software, SnapShield, which allows users to embed a code to combat screenshot theft. For photographers with this protection, if someone attempts a screenshot of one of their images, the image either blacks out (middle right) or half of it blurs (top right). The program also offers a customizable consent page for clients to sign ahead of seeing their proofs. "So, you can say something along the lines of, 'Just to let you know, screenshotting is a copyright issue. We feed our families this way,' you know, however you want to label it," Bott explains. "Then they actually have to







SCREENSHOTS COURTESY OF CARL BOTT



consent to that before they ever see their images. … The [clients] that are kind of on the fence … there's that little piece of guilt that hopefully keeps them honest."

The program then sends a notification to the photographer, with the access code and the IP address of that client, that a screenshot was attempted (page 33, bottom). The photographer can then remove the online images for that specific client, confront the client (politely, of course), and say that they will send them a paper form to pay for their images. "It puts the photographers back on the offensive side versus waiting for [stolen images] to show up in a Facebook group where they're doing watermark removal, and then all of a sudden we're trying to chase these people when the work's already been done," Bott tells Miller, adding that though watermarks are still important, even with SnapShield, "we have to get to the point where we're starting to protect and prevent these screenshots from happening to begin with."

Bott's company also doubles down in its terms and conditions language: If a client is caught attempting to screenshot images, they must pay double. For example, the cost for a full download of all sports images for a client is $99, he explains. Clients attempting to screenshot get sent an invoice for $198, due in 15 days. "You got caught, right? No harm, no foul. We're not going to mark your account," he says. "If you don't pay the invoice, then we're going to proceed and say, 'Hey, look, obviously you're OK with stealing this.' So now we need to push this further, and if we need to get an attorney and take this to small claims, then we take it to small claims." This strong language is unfortunate but necessary, he adds. "I think if we don't start pushing back on this, we're allowing it to happen, we're creating bad behavior, and we're going to lose our industry, and that's the terrifying part to me."

Most clients, once they are educated, are understanding, Bott says, and the software is doing its job for professional photographers. He shares the example of a photographer who caught the director of a school sports program attempting multiple screenshots for multiple students, and the photographer sent the director a bill.

Bott's goal is to protect photographers' livelihoods. If just 5% of the 100,000 clients his company is photographing this year attempted to screenshot images instead of pay for them, that is 5,000—a significant number—clients not paying. The blackout screen and the blurred images are deterrents, and the reporting system helps educate consumers and helps the photographers recoup their money, he says. "I think it's going to make people think twice. It's going to keep the honest people honest," he says. "The reporting is really kind of the heart and soul of the platform. That's what gives us the offensive side to say, 'Look, I know this is happening.'"

Pricing options are available on the website getsnapshield.com, and Bott's goal was to keep the software affordable for photographers. And ultimately, the program pays for itself. "If you save four screenshots a year," he says, "you just paid for the entire program." •

Learn more about **copyright** and **PPA's work on Capitol Hill** on behalf of photographers on **ppa.com**.

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Glean Function from Frustration

JANET HOWARD SOLVED WORKFLOW HEADACHES BY CREATING THREE APPS

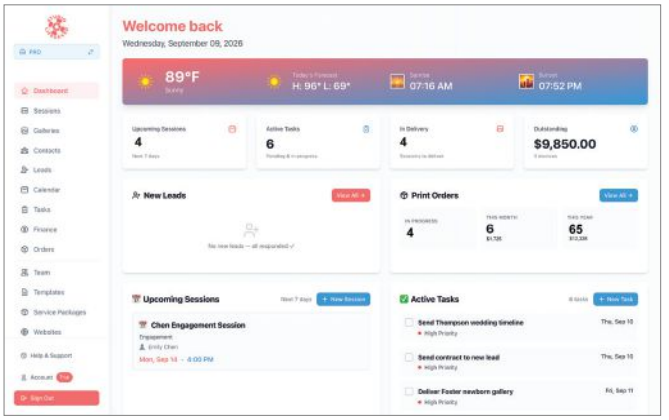
By Jeff Kent

Every photographer occasionally runs into a workflow wall.

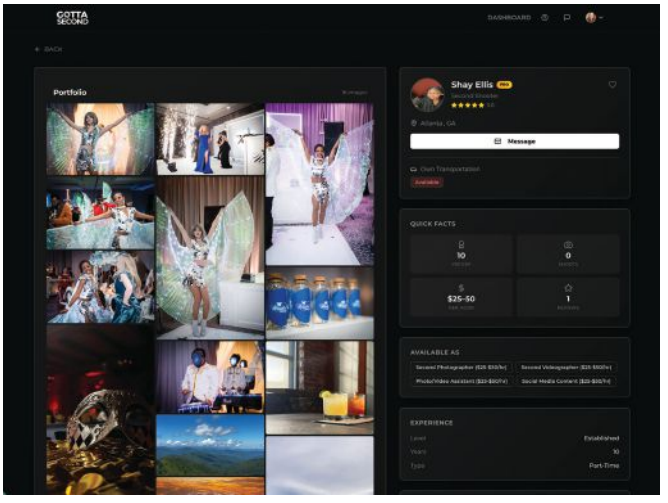
Janet Howard felt these frustrations mounting. The Atlanta-based family, portrait, and headshot photographer, photography business coach, and contributing writer for *Professional Photographer* was growing dissatisfied with her work tools, particularly those related to her CRM and marketing. She decided to bring her background in software development to the forefront to build a set of apps to help her work smarter, not harder. "Every year I was looking at my CRM, and every year I would change it and invest all that time in switching over, and I couldn't find one that did everything that I wanted," she says. "Finally, I thought, 'I can do this myself. Why am I relying on other people to do this when I have a background in this?'"

That realization launched Howard on an app-development journey that would eventually lead to three apps built specifically for working photographers:

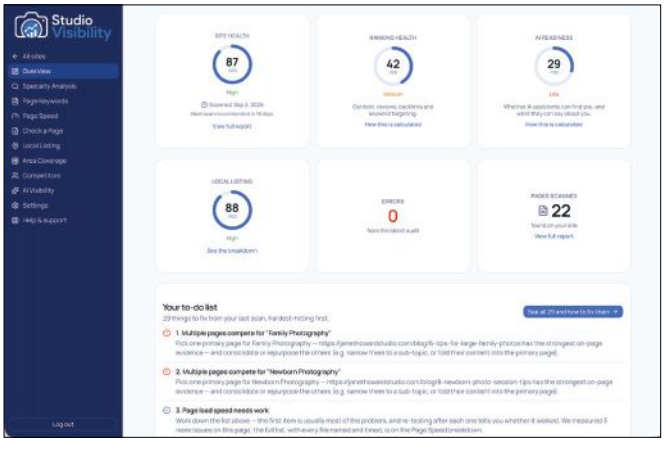
1 **Studio Lifesaver:** a CRM and studio management platform



2 **GottaSecond:** a matchmaking tool connecting photographers with second shooters



3 **StudioVisibility:** an SEO tool for photography websites





JANET HOWARD

Howard's tech background made the process smoother than the average photographer with a clever app idea, but she stresses that anyone with a clear vision can start creating their own app using AI tools, as long as you dedicate the time and resources to the process.

RELIEVE YOUR PAIN POINTS ...

The ideas for each of Howard's apps began as pain points in her photography workflow. For example, Studio Lifesaver began as a social media scheduler. Howard wanted a tool that would organize and post images by session, but she realized a scheduler wouldn't save much time if she still had to hunt for images, upload the photos, and find tags for clients, venues, and vendors.

THEN EXPAND

So, Howard moved the fix upstream to capture the pertinent information once, at the



"I THOUGHT, 'I CAN DO THIS MYSELF. WHY AM I RELYING ON OTHER PEOPLE TO DO THIS WHEN I HAVE A BACKGROUND IN THIS?'"

beginning of a client relationship, and let it flow through her interactions with the client automatically. She expanded the scope of the project to include collecting client and vendor tags at booking, automating captions in her brand voice using AI, cataloging this information in a robust CRM, and adding the ability to not only post social content, but also build websites and publish a blog. The eventual solution is a full studio management application, complete with invoicing, contracts, galleries, and, of course, social media integrations.

USE AI FOR PROOF OF CONCEPT

AI coding tools have changed what's possible for people without technical backgrounds. "With AI coding, it does make it very accessible," says Howard. "Anyone with an idea could start."

Howard suggests using an AI coding tool to create a working proof of concept before spending money on development. But she's also clear about AI's limits. AI-generated code can work to a point, but you can't blindly trust that its solutions are correct. Understanding the underlying structure is important, and that is where human expertise can be especially valuable.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Howard needed the most outside expertise in third-party integrations to platforms like Facebook and Instagram, QuickBooks, and Zoom. Her process became a mix of AI-assisted coding she handled herself and specialized help for the more technically difficult pieces.

KEEP YOUR DESTINATION IN MIND

Howard stresses that it's critical to have an end goal in mind, and to map out your project accordingly. Otherwise, you can end up with a series of what Howard calls "islands of functionality" that are difficult to assemble into a cohesive system. "Anytime you're doing software development, structure matters," she says. "When I start to develop something new, I will lay out the end goal of where we want it to be, with all the coordination, all the interfaces, and then we build."

SPIN OFF NICE-TO-HAVE FEATURES

Howard recommends spinning off features that fall outside the core goal of the project into separate apps. That's what she did when creating GottaSecond and StudioVisibility. Rather than attaching these to the more studio-management-focused functionality of Studio Lifesaver, she scoped these projects separately with a narrower plan, each limited to a single, clear function.

DEFINE RELEASE-WORTHY SCOPE

"Perfect" is an elusive goal in software development. There's always another iteration, another feature, another integration. But if you want to release your app into the wild, you need to decide what is essential for the initial release. This was one of Howard's biggest challenges. "It took about a year from the time that I started to when I was ready to go to beta, and a lot of that time was just trying to figure out where I wanted the app to be before it was released," she says.

Eventually, Howard forced herself to draw a line, pushing about 35 features into a future development pipeline. After all, you can always add more functionality in version 2.0, she figured. "At some point you just have to say, this is the deadline," she says. "What can I live with for release, and what is going to be a future development?

TEST IN THE REAL WORLD

Before going to market with Studio Lifesaver, Howard tested the app on real-world business functions. "I ran my business on it for about six months before I ever showed it to anyone," she says. "I wanted to be absolutely sure that every part of this was manageable, and that I could see through the entire life cycle of a client from booking to delivery." When she was satisfied that the app was stable enough to handle the full cycle, it was time for release.

GO TO MARKET

Every app will have its own go-to-market strategy, which depends on the functionality and the target user base. For example, Howard's Studio Lifesaver app requires slow, deliberate growth built on early adopters who will provide feedback to help shape the product. Howard has tried not to scale it too quickly, instead leaning into a mix of online advertising and building awareness through professional photography channels.

GottaSecond, on the other hand, requires market density. The app only works for photographers in areas with a lot of other photographers. So, Howard's marketing strategy involves building a

base of second shooters in a particular area before promoting the service to studios. She is growing the app market by market, using paid social media and Google advertising targeted specifically at people looking for second-shooter work.

LISTEN TO YOUR USERS

"I once heard another female founder talk about how valuable it was to do her own customer service in the beginning, and I've taken that approach," says Howard. While there are tools like ZenDesk to help with automating common questions for quick responses, Howard feels it's also important to hear your customers' needs and questions on a daily basis. "It helps drive the development path and creates a personal relationship with your founding users," she says. "I recommend only delegating it when it becomes a challenge to keep up with it."

FIGURE OUT THE WHY

Building an app is an investment. It could cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars for a simple app to tens of thousands for something more complex. It's also an investment of time and focus. Therefore, it's important to be honest with yourself about your intentions for the project.

Howard recommends thinking about why you're embarking on this journey before you start playing with code. Is this purely a money-making project, or are you creating something to make your professional life easier? Then determine your scope, establish a realistic plan, and know when to take it to market. With these issues sorted out, you're well positioned to build the next great photography application. •

Learn more: app.studiolifesaver.com
gottasecond.com
studiovisibility.com



Performance to Rely On

LEICA SL3-P

By Tyler Rickenbach



IMAGES ©TYLER RICKENBACH / tylerrickenbach.com



COURTESY LEICA

Leica did something unexpected with the release of the SL3-P. In 2024, Leica released the SL3: a 60-megapixel camera built around a newly upgraded Maestro processor. A year later, Leica released the SL3-S, a 24-megapixel camera with a more video-focused design. For photographers and filmmakers like me who didn't need 60 megapixels but still wanted the Leica look and feel, the SL3-S was a great alternative.

There had been rumors about an upcoming SL4, so when the SL3-P was announced it was a healthy reminder that rumors are just … rumors. And Leica users suddenly had another option.



The SL3-P fills a gap between the formidable high-resolution SL3 and the more nimble SL3-S. Leica's press release says, "At the heart of the SL3-P's features are a new sensor and a new hybrid autofocus system. The 44-megapixel BSI full-frame sensor provides an ideal balance of high resolution and exceptional image." Leica touts its reliable autofocus with moving subjects, and intelligent recognition and subject tracking in dynamic scenes, using phase detection, depth mapping, and contrast measurement. The SL3-P also features 5-axis image stabilization. In a notable departure from tradition, Leica removed the iconic red dot from the front design of the SL3-P, muting the face to an almost-blackout look save for the white Leica lettering.

Alongside the announcement of the SL3-P came a firmware update to Leica's video menu system that was almost as exciting as the camera itself. Don't get me wrong, the SL3-P immediately earned its place in my kit bag, but the redesign of the menu system lets users bypass the headache of sorting through more than 150 recording options.

With the SL3-P also came the ability to record 4K at 120 frames per second, something its predecessor, the SL3-S, can't do. But a few video codecs—for reasons Leica hasn't explained—aren't available on the SL3-P, even though they are on the SL3-S. Sadly, a niche format I've come to love—3.2K in APS-C mode at 50 frames per second in ProRes—is only available on the SL3-S. The other codecs only available on the SL3-P, such as 6k at 60 frames per second and 6.4k open gate at 30 fps, make up for what it does not have.



During a Leica store meetup, I had the chance to test the limits of the SL3-P. During the meetup, a dancer demonstrated her ability to move within a small space, and I took the opportunity to test video capture in 4K at 120 frames per second. The lighting wasn't ideal in a room built for shooting with flash, so I was working with whatever ambient, constant light was available. But despite the low light and the high ISO I needed for a good exposure, the camera performed flawlessly (above right). The playback in DaVinci Resolve blew me away.

One interesting thing about the 4K 120 fps: If you play the footage back in camera, it doesn't convert the playback to slow motion; it looks as though it were shot at any other frame rate. So, to truly assess the video, you have to bring it into post.

After taking several clips of the dancer at 120 frames per second, I noticed the camera felt warm in my hands, but it never overheated or warned me of impending shut down due to heat.

To date, the Leica SL3-P is the most advanced camera in the Leica SL system. I highlight these three attributes:

• **The ability to capture video in 4K at 120 frames per second with audio capture, and smooth and accurate autofocus**. On the SL3-S, you were limited to Full HD at 120 frames per second, without autofocus. This is a specific need for a specific look and feel, but it is empowering to know the option is there. That frame rate at that resolution comes in handy when you need it most.

Watch video taken with the **Leica SL3-P** at **ppmag.com**.

• **The resolution.** Forty-four megapixels is the perfect balance between the 24-megapixel SL3-S and the 60-megapixel SL3. It's not too small to have options and not so large that it weighs down your workflow.

• **The increased frame rate and the accuracy of the autofocus.** Not every job requires captures at 40 fps or even 25 fps, but there are times—when you won't get a second chance—when it can make a huge difference. When photographing at 40 fps, you will see a number in the bottom right corner of the frame inside the viewfinder that indicates how many images you have before you fill the buffer, which from my experience was 70. I could take 70 images in one burst before the buffer filled and I needed to wait for it to refresh. But the refresh time was milliseconds. The refresh rate is the same for 25 fps and 30 fps as well.

Having embedded myself into the Leica community for nearly two years, I can say it's a niche group of creatives who value precision, a minimalist approach, and an undying love for the art of creating. Leicas are not for everyone, but Leica knows that.

The Leica SL3-P would make a great first body for someone who wanted to start using the Leica system. It would also be a great model for photographers who are already in the Leica system and need



a second body to fill the gap between the SL3-S and the SL3.

I've put this camera through more paces than I could in most reviews I've done. Full disclosure: I purchased the SL3-P, so it wasn't a loan unit with a return deadline like equipment for other reviews. I wanted to see how it compared to the SL3-S and the SL3, both of which I've used extensively on various projects. For me, the SL3-P is the sweet spot between the two.

No camera is perfect, and every system, regardless of brand, has its shortcomings, though what measures as "lacking" can vary from photographer to photographer.



For example, the SL3-P has a shorter battery life than what professional photographers might be accustomed to. On average, you can take between 320 and 380 photos on a single charge. That number varies depending on the environment, how much you're using it, the settings, and whether you're bouncing between photo and video. It doesn't last as long as the SL3-S, though that's expected given the file sizes and the additional processing.

Sometimes we need more speed, and sometimes we need both resolution and speed. Leica stakes its spot in that realm, adding, "One thing matters above all else: Trust. In your camera, and in yourself. The certainty of achieving exactly what you envisage without a second thought." The Leica SL3-P performs to that standard and more. •

Tyler Rickenbach is a photographer and filmmaker based in Idaho.



The Art of Stillness

TAKE TIME TO LET A SCENE DEVELOP

By Mark Edward Harris



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Born in New York, raised in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and now frequently based in Tokyo for projects across Asia, I tend to move at a fast—and sometimes *too* fast—pace. I need to remind myself that often the best photos take time to develop. After all, what are the odds of everything being in the right place at the right moment every time you show up somewhere? Consciously slowing down helps avoid the "This photo would have been good if …" self-critique. Waiting for the "if" is often worth the investment in time. Slowing down to let a scene develop, or waiting for sunlight to find a more dynamic angle—especially with architecture—can be essential to a successful photograph.

Spending time in Shipshewana, the heart of Indiana's Amish country, is a study in the art of patience. I knew that entering this environment camera-in-hand, expecting things to happen in a New York minute, would not yield the photographic results that would convey the essence of the community. My goal was to step into this simpler, more purposeful way of life and come away with a meaningful photo essay.

On-location projects start with determining which equipment to pack and which to leave at home. Carrying too much can slow down reaction times and forgetting a crucial piece of equipment can lead to a missed opportunity. Regardless of the destination, you increase the odds of making the right packing decisions by going through the itinerary beforehand and checking out locations online.

Based on my research for Indiana's Amish country, I decided that I could work in a focal range between 14-200mm and leave behind my longer lenses. This meant my Think Tank Urban Access would be a good fit. Into the bag went Nikon Z 8 and Z 9 bodies, Nikkor Z 14-24mm f/2.8, Z 24-70mm f/2.8, Z 70-200mm f/2.8 lenses, and for its magnificent bokeh, the Z 85mm f/1.2. My compact and versatile 20-inch Westcott Illuminator Collapsible 5-in-1 Reflector and an amaran Ace 25x Bi-Color LED

light panel also fit. I added a small carbon fiber Benro travel tripod to the side pocket to open the world of photographic opportunities that exist at shutter speeds slower than 1/60 second.

FIRST, GAIN UNDERSTANDING

After checking in at The Blue Gate Garden Inn, I headed to the Menno-Hof information center, where I gained a deeper understanding of the Amish-Mennonite story and whom I would be photographing.

While living alongside modern society, the Amish maintain a lifestyle rooted in tradition by eschewing public electricity, political involvement, and military service. For transportation, this community relies on horse-drawn buggies and bicycles, which reinforces their commitment to simplicity. Amish often have phones at their place of business or in an outbuilding, but not in their homes. Mennonites more fully accept modern technology, including driving cars. As for being photographed, many adult Amish prefer not to pose for a portrait, considering it a violation of the Second Commandment, which prohibits the making of "graven images" that promote individualism and vanity. Photos of those going about their daily business, especially craftspeople, are typically OK. Most Mennonites do not hold religious prohibitions against photography. They take family portraits, and use personal cameras and smartphones. The key is to be sensitive to the individual and the situation and observe their non-verbal communication. For example, are they turning away or avoiding eye contact? In the more than 100 countries where I have made photographs, from North Korea and Iran to China and India, I have seldom had an issue capturing an image because I pay attention to those non-verbal cues.







ENVIRONMENTAL PORTRAITS

In addition to doing environmental portraits of those willing to be photographed, I documented some Amish and Mennonite craftspeople creating leather goods, windchimes, quilts, pottery, and wooden furniture (page 45, top). These items are often sold at "Shingle Shops," small, independent stores on farmsteads that are perfect locations for environmental portraits. Most community members earn a living through small businesses. The Shipshewana Flea Market, the Midwest's largest with nearly 700 vendors, was a great place for documentary-style photography. My go-to set up was one Nikon camera body with a Z 24-70mm f/2.8 lens or a Leica Q2 Monochrom.

In Shipshewana, I explored the beautiful Amish countryside through guided buggy tours, which offer interesting POV opportunities, especially for videographers. Experiencing life from the vantage point of another person's carriage seat, even for a short time, is eye-opening. It is also a worthy establishing shot for a photo essay, since this traditional horse-drawn transportation is a hallmark of the Amish lifestyle (page 45, bottom).

The Pumpkinvine Nature Trail is a 17-mile paved pathway connecting Shipshewana to the neighboring towns of Middlebury and Goshen. Renting a bike and pedaling my way through the northern Indiana countryside scouting for photo ops at a pace that aligns with the local lifestyle was a welcome realignment of my internal clock.

ENTERTAINMENT WITH THE LOCALS

One of the biggest surprises was the entertainment opportunities in Shipshewana, including The Blue Gate Theatre. Before the curtain goes up, visitors can sit down for a homestyle Amish meal at the

Blue Gate Restaurant. These gatherings are not only about food, but also about fellowship, and maintaining strong family and community ties. I made an environmental portrait of one of our servers with my Nikkor Z 24-70mm f/2.8 and rather than carry a macro lens, I opted for a +1 diopter filter for closeup photos of the restaurant's legendary pies.

For an even more intimate culinary experience with locals, I enjoyed dinner with an Amish family at their homestead, arranged through the Shipshewana tourism office. Toward the end of the meal, which included delicious food and insightful conversation, I asked permission to do an eyes-are-the-window-to-the-soul-type portrait of one of the younger members of the family, who had also doubled as a server. I've found over the years that it's best to follow your instincts when it comes to when and how to ask permission to do a portrait. This approach transcends culture. If the answer is "no" or someone seems uncomfortable with the idea, I simply smile and we move on. People have a right not to be photographed. More often than not, however, I do get a "yes" or a smile that indicates I can proceed. On the homestead I asked if I could photograph the young woman in the open shade of the house rather than in the house for more favorable light (left). Once there, I used my Nikkor Z 85mm f/1.2 lens for the portrait and then turned to the neighbor's horses, who had moseyed over to see what was going on (right).

Slowing down to develop stories leads to excellent images. While it might be a cliché, it's a valid one that can be applied to photography: Good things come to those who wait. •



Mark Edward Harris is an award-winning photographer and writer based in Los Angeles.

Traveling Light

INNOVATION LIGHTENS THE LOAD

By Mark Edward Harris



COURTESY BENRO





Over the course of my four-decade career I have seen many technical advances in our profession. Increasingly sensitive digital sensors and fast-autofocus, high-quality zoom lenses keep improving. There have also been vast improvements in accessories that are healthier for our backs, a constant area of concern. Carbon fiber tripods, for example, are a fraction of the weight of other stability aids. I often explain to travel workshop students that there is a whole world of photographic opportunities at shutter speeds of 1/60 second and slower. I suggest that they change their mindset from, "Do I really have to drag my tripod to the other side of earth?" to, "I'm excited to capture images that my eye can't see."

The Benro CyanBird CF 2 Series, 5 Section tripod with a Benro G36PT Low Profile Inverted Ball Head is an excellent example of a center column carbon fiber tripod system designed for flexibility, height (up to 61.5 inches), and portability. The center column offers added reach as well as low-angle adaptability, with a minimum height





IMAGES ©MARK EDWARD HARRIS / markedwardharris.com

at 6.825 inches, making it a great option for travel photographers, travel content creators, and hybrid photographers who work without the support of an assistant.

Benro considers its G36PT Inverted Ball Head a groundbreaking addition to its extensive and impressive lineup. Its Reversed Ball Mechanism provides a smaller footprint and lowers the center of gravity for enhanced stability. While I use an Arca-Swiss style L-bracket on my Nikon Z 9, the Benro's 90-degree slot allows those who use a basic Arca-Swiss quick-release plate to take vertical shots and maintain stability. The camera is more secure in part because of the head's Pull-and-Twist Arca QR Plate Security mechanism. The ball head's 360-degree top pan rotation works well for capturing seamless panoramic views, while its bubble level assists in accurate leveling. The lower profile makes it more compact and therefore more travel friendly, and the inverted ball design improves balance for heavier setups (supporting



up to a 44.1-pound payload). The Benro CyanBird CF 2 Series, 5-Section tripod's closed length is approximately 18.6 inches. It weighs just under 2.6 pounds, and fits snugly into its soft carry case.

For my Crater Lake National Park trip (left and page 49), I wanted to keep things light both in terms of itinerary and equipment without sacrificing the opportunity to produce stock photography images. Part of this was out of necessity when a sciatic issue had *the nerve* to show up after travel plans had already been made, plane tickets bought, and highly sought-after in-park lodge reservations secured.

Think Tank Photo's 3.5-pound BackLight 18L, with a rear-panel compartment for photo gear, was my bag of choice for this relatively minimalist self-assignment. Think Tank's gear profile is a configuration for holding two standard-sized camera bodies and one to three standard zoom lenses with the maximum lens size being a 300mm f/2.8 or 150-600mm f/5-6.3 lens attached to one of the bodies. The bag, with its high-quality YKK zippers and 420D Velocity and high-density nylon, is offered in Montane Green and Slate Black. Once we arrived at the lodge, I took my MacBook Pro out of one of the two front pockets and swapped in my Westcott 20" Collapsible 5-in-1 Reflector. This featherweight accessory is extremely useful, not only for photographing people but for softening heavy shadows in detailed nature images.

On the trail I could access my gear and change lenses by rotating the bag to the front of my body while the padded waist belt was still secured. I avoided contact with the ground, which also lessened the odds of getting dirt on my sensor. The Benro tripod fit perfectly in



COURTESY THINK TANK

the tripod/monopod mounting system on one side of the BackLight 18L with my water bottle in a pocket on the opposite side.

One of my favorite hikes in the park was on the steep Garfield Peak Trail. Without the air channel and lumbar support on the rear-panel, I don't think I would have taken on this particular trek, for fear of flaring up my sciatica. I also put a pair of carbon fiber Black Diamond Distance Carbon Z Poles to work. Regardless of age or back condition, four legs are better than two for long-distance hiking. I have used these poles on the Everest Trek, the Aztec Trail, and many journeys in between, and they have never let me down.

While the exterior fabric of the BackLight 18L has a durable water-repellent coating, it also includes a seam-sealed rain cover. I recommend always keeping the rain cover in the bag when not in use rather than storing it away for a "rainy day."

Thankfully, the days of lugging a heavy tripod and slinging a bag over one shoulder—which cut short many a career back in the day—are history. •

Mark Edward Harris is an award-winning photographer and writer based in Los Angeles.





IMAGES ©JEAHN LAFFITTE / jeahnlaffitte.com

IN REAL LIFE

BY AMANDA ARNOLD

NETWORKING IS NO. 1 FOR COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHER AND EDUCATOR JEAHN LAFFITTE



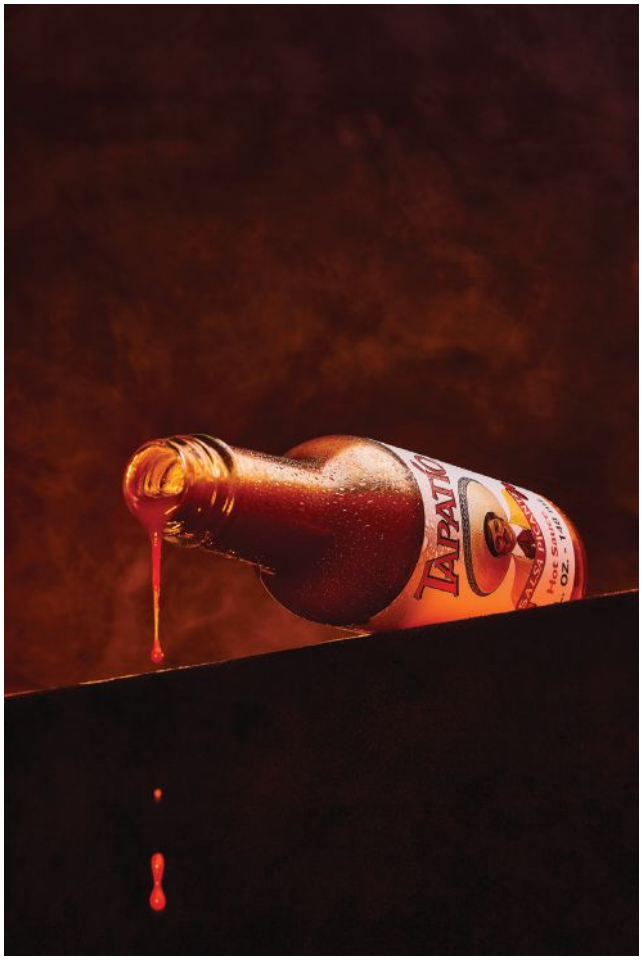
JEAHN LAFFITTE

YES, a polished online portfolio and strong social media presence can engender trust in your brand. But the most powerful thing you can do to build a successful photography business is connect with your target client in person, contends Wheatland, Wyoming-based commercial photographer and educator Jeahn Laffitte. "Even now, with AI becoming so prevalent—yeah, it's a powerful tool, but it's also kind of scary," he says. "And I think people are going to hire as they always have. [They'll] hire the people they trust, who they know. You could have the best portfolio, but if they don't know you, they're not going to hire you."

FACE TO FACE

Like many photography pros, Laffitte's journey didn't begin with photography. In college, he majored in audio engineering, which, although "it sounds kind of weird," he notes, prepped him for photography by educating him on how digital media is recorded, stored, delivered, and processed. "Being able to understand that really lent itself to other aspects of digital art," including graphic design, animation, filmmaking, and photography, all of which he's worked in professionally. Photography began as a passion, not a career, he says. "I was able to take all the complexity of the other mediums and distill it down to one singular form, which is a still image. And to me, it was just a lot more satisfying to create still imagery. I could pour all the perfectionism that I have into that one frame rather than over large projects that take much longer to build."

In 2022, Laffitte was laid off from his job as a video editor for an online education company, which offered the push he needed to start his own commercial photography business. He







IN 3-D

Jeahn Laffitte uses set.a.light 3D software to create lighting diagrams, which help him plan equipment needs and setups in advance and demonstrate lighting setups for his educational workshops. When he's prepping for a photo session, using the software, "I can simulate my actual Westcott lights, my modifiers, the camera settings—everything is very, very close to real world," he says. "It gets me 90% of the way there. It builds out a packing list for me, and I take that with me on set to actually build it."



began promoting himself in the industries he hoped to work with, "companies that aligned with me as a person," says Laffitte. One of those niche industries was knifemaking, a small, tight-knit community where he began attending industry events and engaging in person with the makers. "I think word of mouth, especially in those industries, is extremely important," he says. "That face-to-face connection, I think, is extremely valuable. You can't beat that." Laffitte also recalls that, since the COVID-19 pandemic, people want in-person connection more than ever before, making local networking even more important.

Eventually Laffitte decided to pivot to other industries and today he has clients in e-commerce food and drink, agriculture, and the industrial sector. He found his clients through tried-and-true relationship-building, both within the industries and as a photographer. Since networking groups are hard to come by in rural southwest Wyoming, he searched "networking opportunities for creatives in my city" and found one in nearby Fort Collins, Colorado. "Maybe 20 people show up once a month on a second Thursday of a month just to chat," he says about one of his groups, from which he landed a recent job doing headshots for a company in Chicago. The initial search for a group might be the hardest part, but once you attend one meeting, that opens doors to more networking opportunities, Laffitte says. He also recommends joining a local PPA Community Network.

In addition to Jeahn Laffitte Photography, Laffitte runs a separate business called Luma University. Under this brand, in addition to in-person workshops, Laffitte hosts a podcast and creates photography education content. "The education side has been really great because it allows me to have a purpose for developing work that I really love, that doesn't have a client attached to it, that doesn't have any stipulations around it," he says. "And I can just share it with the world and be free to explain my process." It also helps build his portfolio to attract more of the dream clients he'd like to work with. Also, "What better way to learn than to teach?" he says. "I'm a huge advocate for



"I THINK WORD OF MOUTH ... IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. THAT FACE-TO-FACE CONNECTION ... IS EXTREMELY VALUABLE. YOU CAN'T BEAT THAT."







IMAGINGUSA

Jeahn Laffitte is on the schedule to lead the session, "Light Anything: Master Product Photography for Any Material" at Imaging USA 2027, Jan. 30-Feb. 2 in Charlotte, North Carolina. **Imagingusa.com**

anyone who wants to get better at their craft to start teaching." And there's no need to wait until you think you've learned everything, he explains. "Even if you just learned it yesterday, it doesn't matter. Share that with people."

LESSONS LEARNED

Laffitte shares lessons learned over the last four years from building a commercial photography business and a photography education business:

Under-promise and overdeliver. "Promise enough that the client feels seen and that they're getting value out of you, but then go above and beyond for them," Laffitte says. Video work, such as behind-the-scenes or short reels, is a great unexpected add-on to provide clients, he notes, as is offering ideas on how to position deliverables. "I would caution people: Don't go beyond the point



where you're actually hurting your business," Laffitte notes. But politeness, timely communication, and professionalism go a long way.

Get the most out of the slow times. "Entrepreneurship is very up and very down sometimes," says Laffitte. "And I think that's true no matter how deep you are into your career." First, it's important to price yourself high enough to survive the inevitable slow times, he notes. Second, be proactive and politely persistent. "I think you have to continually just be reaching out," he says, to past and potential clients. "Not in a salesy way, but just a friendly, 'Hey, just checking in. Hope you're doing well. I've got availability coming up next month. If you need anything, let me know.'" Third, take advantage of the slow times to set up test sessions and build your portfolio toward the types of clients you'd like to attract.

To build a social media following, you need to provide value. With over 90,000 followers on Instagram, Laffitte has clearly developed an outstanding social media presence. "My social media was built because I started sharing my processes and started showing people what I know: showing behind the scenes, lighting breakdowns, things like that," he says. "Just providing value to an audience." His followers are largely photographers who want to learn. To build the education side of his business, it was paramount to post tutorials to YouTube, where people are keen to dig into longer educational videos.

In the commercial niche, social media is important, but not *that important.* Laffitte doesn't receive a lot of cold calls through social media for commercial projects. "You do not need a large following on social media to be successful in commercial realms," he insists. "I have a lot of friends who do way bigger jobs than I could ever dream of doing at this point in my career who have no social media. Because, again, they are networking with the people they want to work with. They're in the cities that they want to work in. They are going to events, talking to the people who are running the agencies or companies they want to photograph." Networking in the right circles is how you win commercial gigs. "You don't need social media," Laffitte says. "You need in-person connection." •



IMAGES ©LISA CORY / lisacoryphotography.com

Lisa Cory leverages her nursing background for newborn sessions that sing

sweet fragility

Despite an infatuation with "photographing anything and everything" since childhood, Lisa Cory says becoming a professional photographer was more accident than plan. With a bachelor's degree in nursing, Cory spent over a decade working in emergency and operating rooms. But when her twins were born prematurely, Cory was unable to immediately return to work.

"My oldest was two and the twins were newborns, and one of the ways I was working through it all was to set up photo shoots with them practically every day," she says. "Ever since I was a child, I just wanted to document everything, and so it continued onward when I had the twins." In need of family support, Cory and her husband moved from Columbus, Ohio, to the smaller town of Findlay, where she is still based. "My intentions were to get acclimated after the move and then go back to work," says Cory.

Friends noticed her portraits of her children and began asking if she'd make their own families' portraits. Cory thought family portraiture could help her decide if she wanted to pivot to a photography career, but, she says, she was hesitant to pursue newborn photography because newborns are so fragile. But then a woman she knew asked Cory to photograph her newborn, who had Down syndrome. Suddenly, Cory's nursing background kicked into gear, as well as her artful eye. That session marked Cory's transition from nurse and sometimes family photographer to enthusiastic newborn photographer. "I realized that this was now my thing," she says. "I just absolutely loved it."

By Stephanie Boozer

SAFETY FIRST

Cory wanted to make sure she approached every newborn session with safety in mind. She took newborn photography safety classes, attended workshops, and completed the Accredited Professional Newborn Photographers International (APNPI) program to become Newborn Safety Certified. She is also a National Association of Professional Child Photographers (NAPCP) Master Newborn Photographer and newborn photography safety educator. "A baby is a family's greatest joy, and I want to make sure I'm doing everything correctly and as safely as possible," Cory says. "I had my nursing background, but I wanted to learn about safety from a photography perspective and find out the safest way to pose babies, what not to do, and what to look out for."

At each photo session, before picking up her camera, Cory performs a quick assessment of the baby's arm, leg, and hip mobility. For example, some newborns have hip or shoulder tightness



©OPEN IMAGE STUDIO

LISA CORY





from being in utero, she explains, and if she finds any restriction, she avoids poses that will potentially cause discomfort. "I never promise or guarantee any poses because it's all up to the baby," she says she tells parents.

LET THE BABY LEAD

Because babies do everything on their own timetable and every baby is different, Cory says a big part of her job is to be flexible and adapt to an infant's changing whims. If a baby isn't feeling well, she tells the parents that the baby's health is more important than a photo

GO-TO EQUIPMENT

PHOTO GEAR:

Canon EOS R5
Canon RF35mm F1.8 Macro IS STM lens (for newborns)
Canon RF28-70mm F2 L USM lens (for families)
Profoto B10X monolight
Westcott Parabolic 7' Umbrella Double Diffusion
Manfrotto HiLite Illuminated Background

NEWBORN POSING TOOLS:

The Newborn Nerds Posing Nest
Hello Little Props Original Shape Shifters, Bucket Shifter, and Crate Shifter







QUADRUPLE THE ADORABILITY

When friends encouraged Findlay, Ohio-based newborn photographer Lisa Cory, who had never entered a photography competition, to enter her image "Better Together" into PPA's International Photographic Competition, she submitted her work (right) at the last minute at the end of 2025. Then she put it out of her mind.

In January 2026, a friend attending the live IPC judging at Imaging USA 2026 in Nashville witnessed Cory's image make it into the top 16 in the newborn and maternity category. "She texted me that I was in the top 16, then the top eight, and then said that they like to have the top four [image makers] actually present," Cory recalls. "She was screaming because she was so excited." That's when Cory decided to hop on a plane to Nashville in time for the final judging a couple of days later. "It was just this awesome, surreal moment," she says, when she ultimately took first place in that category, "really a huge highlight in my career."

The photo session with the quadruplets was also a major career highlight, she adds. Cory had photographed the family's firstborn and a subsequent set of twins. When the mother said she was pregnant with quadruplets, Cory's imagination immediately went to work plotting out possible photography setups and creative ideas.

The babies were born early, around 28 or 29 weeks, and had to spend time in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Cory and the mother decided that since the babies were coming home at different times, they would space out the sessions and photograph them individually. She had an assistant and another photographer document the entire process because she wasn't sure when or if she would ever have another chance to photograph quadruplets. "It all went so smoothly," Cory recalls. "And it tied back into my nursing background because all four of them were on heart monitors, which meant they had patches and wires running like spaghetti. But it all came together incredibly."

Read more about "Better Together" in the feature about IPC in the July 2026 magazine on page 46.





session and advises rescheduling. If a baby's nose is clogged, for example, it's almost impossible to coax the baby into a comfortable pose, and the session is an exercise in frustration for everyone. Even if a baby is in perfect health, it still can be hard to accomplish certain poses. Cory finds that some babies happily do anything, and others have trouble with numerous poses for no obvious reason, such as being on their bellies.

"Babies always tell you what they'll tolerate, and I always follow their lead," Cory says. "I will tell a mom that I just can't work through certain poses because I don't want to compromise the baby's wellbeing. You can tell when a baby just needs to settle into a pose versus being truly uncomfortable by how they squirm and move."

SET EVERYONE UP FOR SUCCESS

Cory likes to plan sessions well in advance. For newborn sessions, she prefers families book while the woman is still pregnant and then let her know within the first two days of the baby's birth. Ideally, Cory can then schedule the session within the baby's first eight to 14 days of life. Immediately after that booking, Cory sends out a prep guide and questionnaire, where parents can choose fabric colors and props, and request any special posing. When young siblings with short attention spans are involved, Cory structures the session so the entire family is photographed first



"A baby is a family's greatest joy, and I want to make sure I'm doing everything correctly and as safely as possible."

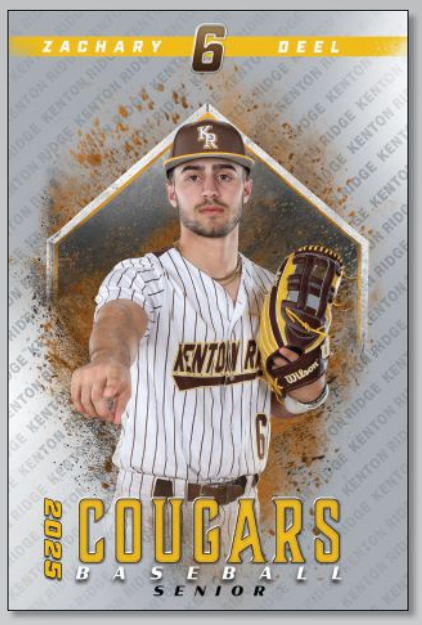


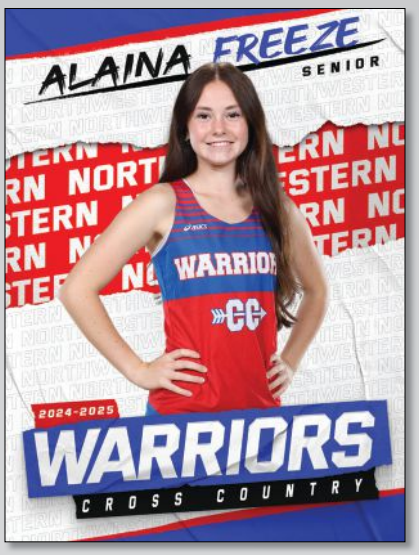


and then individual sibling setups, so that a parent or another caregiver can leave with the older children and the other parent and baby can work through the remaining poses. Cory also has a closed-off space in her studio for older siblings and caregivers to wait out the session if they can't physically leave. "That way, everyone can relax," she says.

While newborns often seem to sleep blissfully unaware of their surroundings, the right atmosphere makes all the difference in how they handle the session, according to Cory. She keeps her studio at a toasty 77 degrees and keeps all the lights off except for her modeling light to create a dim, calming environment. She also keeps a Baby Shusher sound machine running in the background and spa music playing at a low volume. She encourages parents to try to keep the baby stimulated and awake as long as possible before the session. Then, a quick feeding and the soothing atmosphere of Cory's studio usually make for a sleepy baby who is easily poseable during the session. That's when the magic can happen, such as when all the study, preparation, and precautions pay off, resulting in a special image of fragile quadruplets and a prestigious photography award (see page 64). "You really can't call this a job when you love it so much," Cory says. "It really is amazing." •

Watch and read more about **newborn photography** on **PhotoVision** at **ppa.com**

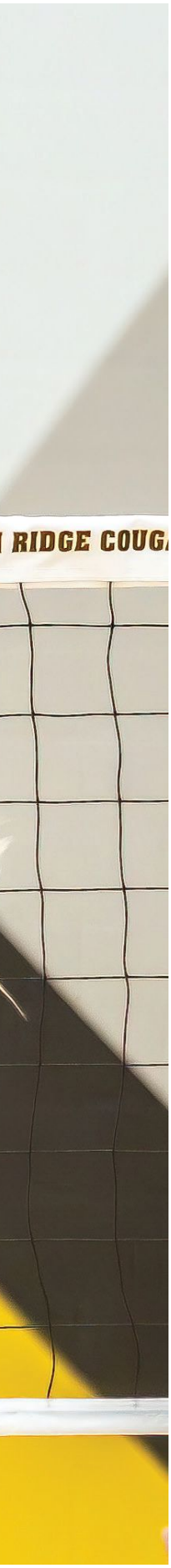








IMAGES ©RODNEY AND SHILOH GETZ



ORGANIZED CHAOS

How Rodney and Shiloh Getz built a streamlined volume photo business

Not everyone is cut out for volume photography. A large-scale school or league picture day can quickly turn into a frustrating jumble of logistical and practical nightmares. It's enough to drive the uninitiated mad.

But some photographers are born for volume, like Rodney and Shiloh Getz, the husband-and-wife team behind Champion City Photography in Central Ohio. Recognizing a need in their area, they built an operation around efficiency and replicable systems, converting high-volume school and sports photography jobs into a thriving business known for consistent quality.

TURNING TO VOLUME, AND FINDING A SUPERPOWER

Prior to diving into photography full time, Rodney Getz, Cr.Photog., CPP, spent 22 years as a firefighter and paramedic. The work involved 24-hour shifts followed by 48 hours off. To fill his downtime, he turned to photography, a creative outlet

BY JEFF KENT



IMAGINGUSA

After nearly two decades building their systems from scratch, Rodney and Shiloh Getz of Champion City Photography are sharing their volume photography secrets in an Imaging USA 2027 program titled, "Systems, Strategy, Scale: Building a Volume Photography Business Without Chaos." Attendees can expect practical lessons for establishing a well-organized program that yields consistent, high-quality results. "There are so many ways to do it wrong," says Shiloh. "We've already done all that. Come learn from our mistakes and figure out how to do it right." **imagingusa.com**

and a lower-stress alternative to his day job as a first responder. When he started to get requests for senior portraits, he began to dabble in professional portrait photography.

Since his community already included two well-established family and senior portrait photographers, Rodney started considering different specialties. He soon found a calling in youth sports. "I felt like the sports market was really being underserviced in our area," he says. "I got my feet wet with some youth sports and found out that we had a knack for photographing a large number of individuals in a short period of time."

Organizing the chaos that often accompanies a high-volume picture day, and managing the data behind it, turned out to be the Getzes' superpower. Rodney and Shiloh, who has worked as a CT scan technologist for more than two decades, gained clients and grew the business steadily, albeit slowly, while Rodney continued to work as a firefighter. He retired in 2015, and the couple committed to photography full time. They pursued new organizations, targeted specific leagues and schools, and worked their personal connections for opportunities. Through cold calling sports leagues, schools, and clubs, they continued to build


SPITZER
STADIUM
ARROWS
GUEST
TIME
DOWN
TO GO
BALL ON
QTR
TIME
BUTCHER SHOP





Champion City Photography. Their persistence paid off, and Champion City today is a well-known and respected volume photography business. "We've learned over the years that just because somebody's happy with the service they're getting [from another photographer] at that point in time, that does not mean they won't be interested in talking to you later," says Rodney. "That's probably one of our biggest takeaways. Don't take a 'no' as a 'no forever.' It's just 'no for right now.' For example, one of the biggest schools that we work with now, about 3,000 students, took us 10 years of no's to get in the door. Now we're in, they're very happy with us, and we're very happy with them."

CONSISTENCY EQUALS EFFICIENCY

In 2016, while struggling to keep every subject the same size in the frame for a composite job, Rodney had an idea. What if he laid down a floor mat with marked spots showing the subjects' feet placement? What if he included marks for his tripod and his lights, so nothing moved from shot to shot? The Getzes put together mats with full floor guides for every camera station, spelling out exact camera settings, light placements, and background positions, so anyone—including other photographers on their growing team—could set up a session without guesswork. "Once we locked that down and realized it was working, the business just started to grow like a monster," says Rodney.

Not only did the floor mat system help standardize their setups, but it also helped move subjects through a series of poses quickly and consistently. Color-coded guides are posted at every sta-

tion that show even the youngest subjects exactly where to stand. "You just tell someone, 'Put your feet on your red marks. Put your feet on the blue marks,'" Shiloh explains. "We can move through the sequence with them quickly, and with limited explanation, so we can focus on getting the most out of every interaction."

"The biggest thing is getting it right in the camera."

The payoff shows up in time savings. Shiloh recalls that when they first started working with a local baseball organization, photographing a 600-child league took five full days. Today, with their system in place and a team managing multiple camera stations (page 75, bottom), they wrap the entire session in about 90 minutes. The Getzes' efficiency includes their approach to image capture. "The biggest thing is getting it right in the camera," Shiloh says, rather than leaning on post-production to fix problems. Lighting, white balance, and framing are dialed in on site, so there's little to no editing once the team is back at the studio. Rodney also credits a strong lab partnership for a smooth workflow. The couple spent 17 years with H&H Color Lab before shifting to Candid Color Systems as their volume grew, and they've had great experiences with both. "It's very difficult to go to a school or a sports league, photograph all these kids, and then be essentially done when



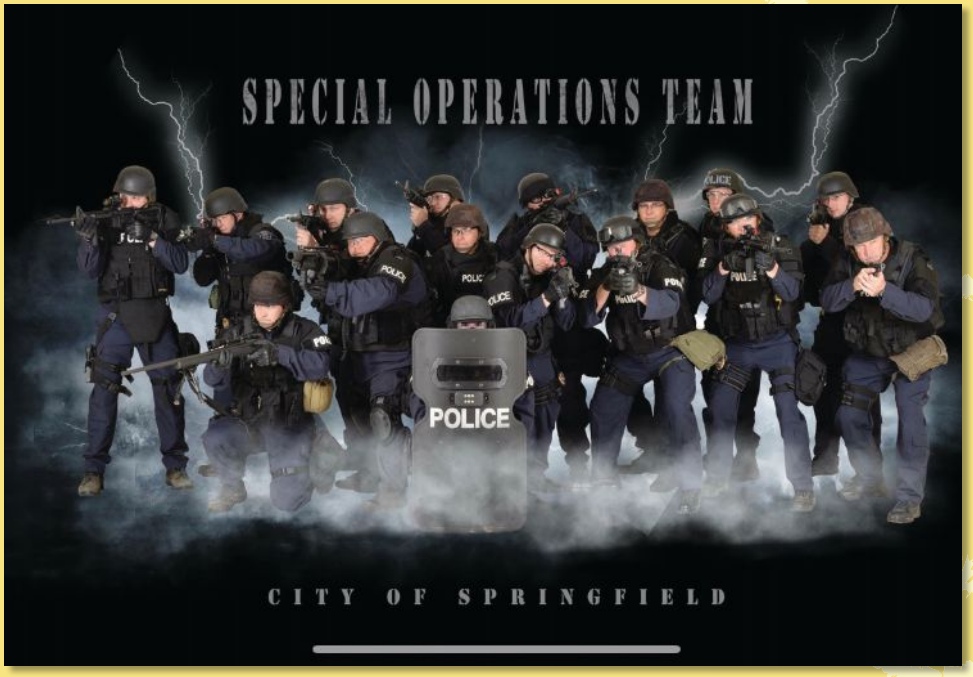
"I GOT MY FEET WET WITH SOME YOUTH SPORTS AND FOUND OUT THAT WE HAD A KNACK FOR PHOTOGRAPHING A LARGE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME."



FRESH PHOTOS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Rodney and Shiloh Getz, owners of Champion City Photography in Springfield, Ohio, practice a unique photography specialty born from Rodney's background as a firefighter: first-responder portraits and composites. Their studio captures images for public safety agencies that need updated headshots on a recurring basis. The project keeps Rodney Getz connected to his former life. Serving this market was a helpful way to kickstart their second career of photography, says Shiloh. "It's a natural fit," she explains, "because that was our life for over 20 years."

Rodney agrees. "I can talk the language," he says. "And the camaraderie is there, which makes it easier for us to photograph people in those types of jobs."





you walk away [from the session]," says Rodney. "But that's what we do because we are partnered with a great lab that supports us with systems that allow us to have some really awesome workflows."

That partnership carries through ordering and delivery. Champion City offers a prepay option via a paper form alongside online ordering. After a school or sports league picture day, emails go out to the addresses provided by the client, which gives families time to view and order. Orders placed in that window ship free to the school or league office and arrive pre-sorted by classroom or team. Later orders go straight from the lab to the customer. "All you need to do is say 'yes' to Champion City Photography," Shiloh tells the admins she works with, "and then you don't have to do anything else."

FAMILY BUSINESS, FAMILY RULES

Champion City Photography is a family operation. The Getzes' three daughters have all worked at the business at various points, from picture day support to sorting cards. Shiloh jokes that she gets "fired" by Rodney regularly, only to be rehired once he remembers he can't run things without her. Working that closely with a spouse, sitting at adjacent desks with no real separation between office and home life, doesn't come without friction. "You definitely need to be able to tolerate each other's nonsense," Rodney laughs, but both agree the partnership works because everyone knows what needs to happen on any given day to make their system work.

Boundaries are also important, the couple agrees. Several years ago, as the business grew, the Getzes established set business hours during weekdays to handle clients. Now, client questions come in through a Google form, voicemail, or email, and the Getzes respond the next business day. These boundaries have helped the couple manage the demands of personal and professional life with the crtitical balance needed for their



of personal and professional life with the crtitical balance needed for their mental health and relationship.

Through the growth and changes in the Getzes' life and business, one thing has stayed constant: the process. "Whether you're a student, an athlete, a dancer, our process never changes," says Shiloh, which, she adds, is a comfort to the clients who run bustling schools and sports organizations. They know their photographers will show up, do the job correctly, and deliver high-quality results, which is the goal of Champion City Photography: consistency and efficiency. If you make people's lives easier and provide excellent quality they can count on, the Getzes say, customers will come back year after year. •



Ready, Set, EXPLORE!

THE EXPLORE ACT HIGHLIGHTS PPA'S ADVOCACY WORK



©JOANNA ADAMS PHOTOGRAPHY

There are few greater joys than capturing the thrill of the outdoors with a camera and lens. Signed into law in early 2025, the Expanding Public Lands Outdoor Recreation Experiences (EXPLORE) Act has made the endeavor easier than ever. The passage of the EXPLORE Act is one example of PPA's collaboration and tireless advocacy on behalf of photographers, and this year, the National Park Service clarified that this law also applies to U.S.-declared wilderness areas.

The EXPLORE Act establishes clear rules and guidelines that enable photographers to conduct their work while responsibly protecting the land they cherish. It also recognizes that contemporary photography equipment (whether used for commercial or noncommercial purposes) and small group photography sessions have little impact on public lands.

THE HISTORY OF THE EXPLORE ACT

Under previous regulations enacted on Jan. 24, 2022, photographers who took clients into national parks, such as Grand Teton National Park, for portrait or engagement sessions, or to capture elopements, were classified as commercial guides. That meant that to gain a permit to photograph clients within the park, the photographers had to, among other things, be CPR certified, stay within half a mile of trails, and give 3% of their profits from the session to the park.

When those rules were released, PPA member Joanna Adams, who photographs elopements in Glacier National Park and is board president of the nonprofit advocacy organization Public Land Creatives (PLC), brought her concerns to PPA's attention. After speaking with park officials, members of Congress, and photographers, PPA's government affairs team discovered that the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service all approached their regulations regarding photography on their lands differently. "We recognized that we needed to create change on a nationwide scale and get a new law in place," says Adams.

Progress was made when PPA reached out to Rep. Russ Fulcher (R-ID), who was preparing to introduce the Federal Interior Land Media (FILM) Act. In partnership with PPA, the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA), American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP), and National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) helped reimagine the bill that was introduced in July 2022 to account for photography, not just videography.

Sen. John Barrasso (R-WY) introduced the FILM Act to the Senate in March 2023, and the coalition of PPA, ASMP, NANPA, NPPA, and PLC lobbied both houses to advance the legislation. They also negotiated with Sen. Joe Manchin (D-WV), the former chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, for his support. Through this collaboration, the coalition received the sign-off.

On November 23, 2023, Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-AR) introduced the EXPLORE Act, which contained the FILM Act. The House passed the EXPLORE Act on April 9, 2024, and the Senate passed the House's version without amendment on December 19, 2024. President Joe Biden signed the act into law on January 4, 2025.

"To have our advocacy start in January 2022 and have a bill passed in January 2025 is lightning speed," says Luc Boulet, government affairs manager at PPA. "I couldn't be prouder to have worked on this issue for our members and all photographers who capture our nation's greatest treasures."

HIGH-IMPACT CHANGE FOR LOW-IMPACT GEAR

The EXPLORE Act recognizes that contemporary camera equipment is compact and has little impact on the land. "The biggest positive photographers now see is clarification," Adams says of the act. It spells out guidelines regarding group size, equipment size, the protection of natural resources, as well as impact on other visitors' experiences:

For groups of one to five people: Generally, handheld still photography or video can be made without a permit as long as the activity causes no damage or disruption to other visitors. Permited equipment includes cameras, lenses, tripods, and other handheld gear. Large production equipment, sets, or staging are likely to require additional permitting.

For groups of six to eight people: A "de minimis" authorization is available for free, provided the photographers or videographers meet the low-impact standards.

For groups of nine or more people or higher-impact productions: For groups of more than eight people—or for work that involves staging, professional setups, or noticeable effects on the area—a full special-use permit will likely be required.

"IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT TAKING A PICTURE. IT'S ABOUT BEING ABLE TO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THAT DAY. THAT'S SHARED HUMANITY, SHARED EXPERIENCES, AND SHARED STORIES."

THE PATH TO A PRODUCTIVE SESSION

Adams, of the nonprofit PLC, offers tips for photographers planning to capture images on U.S. public lands:

Understand the land. "Take the time to understand the specific needs and restrictions of where you're going," Adams advises. National guidance has now been issued across federal agencies, but it is still wise to review the individual park or U.S. Forest Service website for any location-specific requirements.

Keep it low impact. Travel with hand-carried gear, work in small teams, and follow Leave No Trace principles. Remember that you share the space, so be mindful of other visitors' experiences, Adams adds.

Advanced planning is best. When contacting land managers and permit coordinators, mention the EXPLORE Act and your specific plans. It's also smart to keep on your person a copy of any email, authorization, or permit related to your session.

Don't forget standard fees. Entrance or recreation fees often still apply. If you're leading wilderness photography workshops or tours commercially, you may need a Commercial Use Authorization (CUA).

Lean on your community. When communicating with agencies and land managers, organizations like PPA and PLC can help answer questions about permit qualifications.

"It's not just about taking a picture," says Adams of photographing the nation's public lands. "It's about being able to share your experience of that day. That's shared humanity, shared experiences, and shared stories." •

publiclandcreatives.org
ppa.com/benefits/copyright-advocacy

What's New at Imaging USA 2027

MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO NETWORK AND LEARN



COURTESY CHARLOTTE REGIONAL VISITORS AUTHORITY

You've never experienced an Imaging USA quite like this. The conference, which takes place in Charlotte, North Carolina, January 31-February 2, 2027, will offer the following new features:



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THE HUB

Located on the expo floor, the Hub is a backyard-themed gathering space where attendees can buy refreshments, play lawn games, lounge with fellow photographers, and gather in front of the Community Stage. Table Topic discussions, Lunch and Learns, Stadium Club, and part of Networking Avenue will be hosted in this space.

30 PHOTO WALKS

This year, registration for photo walks will take place onsite from 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. on the day of the photo walk—no need to pre-register. With 30 available photo walks, there are more chances than ever to learn from experts and grow your portfolio in real time.



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DEMO STAGES

A new demo room layout allows four speakers to deliver talks simultaneously, making it possible for attendees to get even more face time with the experts who inspire them. Twenty-eight interactive demo experiences covering a wide variety of topics and niches will take place throughout the show.

EXPANDED SESSIONS AND SPEAKERS

Attendees who arrive early for pre-conference classes can choose from a speaker list that features 30-plus new experts. Several platform classes during the show will run until 6:30 p.m., which is almost two hours later than years prior. •

imagingusa.com



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COMMUNITY NETWORKS DIRECTORY

When you get together with other photographers in your area, you'll see a world of opportunities open up to you.

One of the best ways photographers hone their craft is through peer interaction. Finding a mentor, meeting with like-minded people in your area, and relying on a network of business friends are keys to your success. Thanks to the Community Networks program, you can easily find and connect with professional photographers near you.

PPA has Community Networks across the United States. No matter where you live, odds are there's a Community Network to welcome you.

ppa.com/community-networks

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b. Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution (By mail and outside the mail)	(1)	Outside County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions stated on PS Form 3541. (Include direct written request from recipient, telemarketing, and Internet requests from recipient, paid subscriptions including nominal rate subscriptions, employer requests, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies.)	30,672	30,237
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	(3)	Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS®		
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c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4)) ▶			30,672	30,237
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	(2)	In-County Nonrequested Copies Stated on PS Form 3541 (include sample copies, requests over 3 years old, requests induced by a premium, bulk sales and requests including association requests, names obtained from business directories, lists, and other sources)		
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	(4)	Nonrequested Copies Distributed Outside the Mail (Include pickup stands, trade shows, showrooms, and other sources)	83	0
e. Total Nonrequested Distribution [Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3) and (4)]			208	123
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and e) ▶			30,880	30,360
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #4, (page #3)) ▶			640	615
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)			31,520	30,975
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by 15f times 100) ▶			99.33%	99.59%

* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to line 16 on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

16. Electronic Copy Circulation	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Previous 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Requested and Paid Electronic Copies ▶		
b. Total Requested and Paid Print Copies (Line 15c) + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) ▶		
c. Total Requested Copy Distribution (Line 15f) + Requested/Paid Electronic Copies (Line 16a) ▶		
d. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Both Print & Electronic Copies) (16b divided by 16c × 100) ▶		

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17. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requester Publication is required and will be printed in the November 2026 issue of this publication.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Melanie Lasoff Levs — Date: Sept. 11, 2026

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).



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Wyoming-based commercial photographer and educator Jeahn Laffitte ("In Real Life," page 52) describes how he made his photo, titled "Distinguished," which placed in the top 16 in the 2025 International Photographic Competition in the commercial category:

"This is an iridescent, glossy, metallic surface, so understanding how the light reflects off of those [surfaces] to get those cool, different colors was key. This was a four-light setup. I have one light in the front reflecting off the body of the lighter, and one on the left a little bit.

"These were hard lights, which is unconventional for this type of surface, but placed in a way where they're reflected off of the lid and off of the body, two different lights. And then I had one on the top left creating this edge light on the top of the lighter. Without it, you wouldn't see the definition of the shape of the actual rim around the cap and the actual striker area there. And so that was the third light. And the fourth light is the background light.





"This was all captured in camera with just a little bit of compositing. The only thing composited in the photo is the sparks. I took a photo of the sparks when my finger was actually striking the lighter. So it remained in the same position, but I struck the striker there and got the sparks, and then I composited those in. The flame is all in camera as well. The only other thing I cropped out was the [acrylic] rod that I hot glued to [the lighter], holding it suspended into the scene." •

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