

Insight + Inspiration Series

Outdoor Photography



Photo by featured photographer:
JESSICA AMERSON

VOLUME 6

From the night sky to the beach, this issue of The Insight + Inspiration Series dives into Outdoor Photography and features articles with tips and tricks from different types of professional photographers who give us an inside look into how they took their creativity outdoors.





Natural Light

by Jessica Amerson

The concept for this shoot was a loose ethereal storyline. I am so drawn to movement and telling a story in my work, whether the story is clear cut or leaves some room to the viewer's interpretation. I was able to incorporate that movement and enchanting story together seamlessly in this shoot.

For this shoot, I used a single light setup consisting of an Einstein E640 flash unit, the CyberSync Transmitter, CyberSync Transceiver, a 47" Foldable Octabox, and a Vagabond Mini Lithium portable power pack.

Shooting tethered is something I continue to fall in love with. What I love

about Tether Tools is the ability to have real-time viewing and file management. I am able to show my team what I am seeing as well as how to make quick changes to wardrobe, lighting, subject placement, etc. For this shoot specifically, being tethered helped me to see things clearly. When you are shooting outdoors, and for this specific shoot, were outdoors, it was pretty cold and considering our model was in lighter clothing, it helped me to work seamlessly and make changes quickly.

I would say the biggest challenge was that we were outside and typically you are at the whim of the weather and sunshine. Thankfully for us that day we

were fortunate to have fog and sunlight that complimented the artificial lighting and really helped to bring these photos to life. These photos were edited using Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop. The gear needed was simple for this shoot, we used PCB lighting, one Canon camera, and one Sigma Art Prime lens.

I had an incredible talent and team with me that day. Our model was Shelby M Hall, she was styled by Josh Owen and my assistant that day was Jennifer Williams.



Jessica Amerson is a portrait photographer based in Nashville, Tennessee.

jessicaamerson.com

instagram.com/jessica_amerson

WATCH THE VIDEO 





Daniel Woods is a Las Vegas based photography and video production company.

danielwoodsvisuals.com

[instagram.com/danielwoodsvisuals](https://www.instagram.com/danielwoodsvisuals)

Underwater Beauty Shoot

by Daniel Woods

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This was a workshop instructing students how to shoot underwater. Various models were used to expose students to different challenging factors.

I wanted a very soft ambient feel to the images, so I rigged a giant Fotodiox 12x12' scrim over the pool to create super soft daylight. For our nightlight setup, we used 6 submersible ultra-bright LED continuous lights by FoxFury called the Nomad Production N56. The N56s were mounted on a mono pod with various clamps underwater. Then above the scrim we shined 2 additional FoxFury Nomad Production P56s through the scrim.

For first time underwater models there is a definite learning curve. Puffing out cheeks, keeping face relaxed, not blowing out bubbles or introducing fine bubbles into the water through splashing are all tendencies that need to be realized and corrected. Coaching the model

through speaking is one thing, however, being able glance across to a large pool-side monitor to get real-time feedback is invaluable. With the visual, instant feedback of tethering, models are able to smash that learning curve and get onto creating.

For underwater tweaking, the white balance is critical and I do this primarily in Adobe Lightroom. Additional re-touching is done in Photoshop to smooth out background, eliminate stray particulates in the water and distracting bubbles.

LOGISTICS AND GEAR

TETHERING:

- Tether Tools TetherPro USB 2.0 Cable (camera to laptop)
- Tether Tools Tether Table Aero
- Tether Tools TetherPro HDMI Cable (laptop to 46" monitor)

CAMERA AND LENSES:

- Sony A7RII with Sony/ Zeiss 16-35 f4
- Sony A9 with Sony/Zeiss 16-35 G-Master 2.8

UNDERWATER HOUSING:

- Outex with pass through Data port
- This was a workshop/ shoot. The economical cost of the Outex housing allowed me to have enough housings for the 3 workshop participants to all use their own cameras.

LIGHTING:

- PhotoDiox 12x12' Sun Scrim
- FoxFury Nomad production N56 Battery powered LED Lights
- FoxFury Nomad production P56 Battery powered LED Lights

Ballet Dancers in an Abandoned Church

by Brad Olson

This session was a collaboration with two very talented ballet dancers, Juliet Doherty and Slawek Wozniak. I wanted to capture their unique talents in a dynamic location. I had worked with Juliet previously and we traded some thoughts about creating images with her dance partner, Slawek. Our ideas were to combine a very technically executed ballet pose with simple wardrobe, some sensuality and an unusual background. We wanted a wet hair look and we actually got rain on this day, so the wet hair and muddy ground were authentic.

This day started as very overcast and alternated between rain and partial sun. This photo was taken at about 12:40 pm with the sun almost directly overhead, which is typically not a favorite for photographers. We used this to our advantage by placing the dancers in the full sun in front of the wall which was in shadow. This allowed the subjects enough contrast to separate from the background and define their forms.

Using the Case Air Wireless Tethering System enabled us to view and make adjustments as we shot. For the dancers, they were able to see and critique their positioning and decide on the best combination of poses as they appeared to the camera. For me it was very helpful to see a larger, clearer image to assess the composition, depth of field and exposure.

My typical post processing workflow begins with RAW file adjustment in Lightroom and I was able to increase the contrast by lowering the black level and creating a Tone Curve. In Photoshop, I used a variety of techniques to further darken and enhance the character in those walls. I kept the editing on the subjects to very minimal dodging and burning.

The location was new to us and we were exploring many rooms on several floors as well as the rooftop and courtyard, so it was important to be mobile and for me to be able to keep up with the dancers. I maintained portability by using the Case Air Wireless Tethering System on my Nikon D810 and mounted a 10" tablet to a light stand. In my camera bag, I had 35mm, 50mm and 85mm prime lenses and a backup camera body. This image was taken with the 35mm lens at ISO 500, f/16 at 1/160 sec.

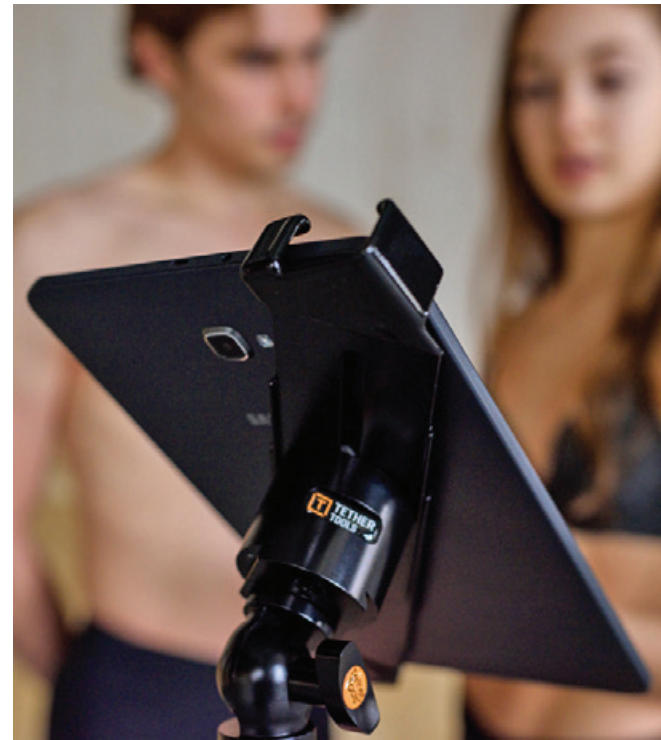
On a typical commercial shoot, I do have a camera assistant and work with make-up artists, hairstylists and often wardrobe stylists and creative directors. For this day, we decided to simplify to just the subjects and myself so that we could explore, react and create as we were inspired by the location and the changing weather.



Brad Olson is a PhotoVogue Artist and Nikon Pro who specializes in fashion, editorial and commercial photography.

bradolsonphotography.com

[instagram.com/bradolsonphotography](https://www.instagram.com/bradolsonphotography)



Shooting the Night Sky at Bannerman Castle

by Gabriel Biderman

Wanna rock long exposures at night? Watch the video and join me at the historic Bannerman Castle on the Hudson River as I put the Tether Tools Case Relay System to task for over five-and-a-half hours of rigorous and demanding photography. In the video, I share my insights and useful tips on how to approach and assess a scene, plus how to prepare and plan for a long exposure sequence that can be used for time-lapses, star trails, and star point images.



FOLLOW THESE STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL NIGHTTIME SHOOT:



- STEP 1: Scout with your legs – Look high and low.
- STEP 2: Set up your tripod and camera.
- STEP 3: Compose your image. Horizontal or vertical?
- STEP 4: Assemble the Case Relay Camera Power System.
- STEP 5: Take high ISO test shots and finesse your composition.
- STEP 6: Take the plunge! Commit to a series of short exposures or a single long exposure.
- STEP 7: Watch and confirm your exposures are running properly.
- STEP 8: Set intervalometer for one-second intervals and infinite exposures for timelapses and star-stacking.

THE BIGGEST PIECE OF ADVICE I CAN GIVE FOR NIGHTTIME PHOTOGRAPHERS IS TO JUST GET OUT THERE AND SHOOT. KEEP ON CLICKING!

WATCH THE VIDEO 



Gabriel Biderman is a travel and self-taught fine art photographer, who has been exploring the night topography for over 20 years.

 nationalparksatnight.com
 [instagram.com/nationalparksatnight](https://www.instagram.com/nationalparksatnight)

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PHOTO: MATT BRESLER

On Location in Sedona

by Jared Platt

This image was shot in northern Arizona at Slide Rock State Park for Luca Magazine. In this shot there was a lot going on, with the river, blue sky, rocks, our three models of course and the sun is as bright as can be. Because it was for a double truck spread in a magazine, the direction of the shot was fixed, and so was the frame, so we couldn't just simply turn them away from the sun, the issue had to be dealt with.

To get the light right, we used an extra-large Profoto translucent umbrella to shade the models from the sun, then we used two Profoto B1 off camera lights (one with a Profoto 2x3 RFI Softbox and the other with a Magnum Reflector) to re-light them. Of course, to fully shade the girls and to soften the light, we needed the umbrella and the light close to the models, so they were brought into the right side of the frame. With the girls on the left of the frame and a mess of lights and scrims and assistants on the right side of the frame, we needed the help of a tripod and our tethering tools.

We put our camera on a tripod so that it wouldn't move throughout the shot, and tethered the camera to our laptop so we could see the shot perfectly. As we photographed, the art director watched for the perfect shot. Since the scene and the crop were not changing, she could focus completely on the models poses, hair

and clothing. Once we had an approved shot, the model's left the frame and the assistants pulled the lights and we quickly took the final shot, which was a background with no changes to the framing, the focus, or the exposure. A quick confirmation between the AD's pick and the background was made by toggling back and forth between the two shots to confirm we had the right match. Then we called it a wrap for the shot.

By tethering this shot, we were able to get an instant approval from the client, and be absolutely certain that our composite was going to work before we moved onto another shot.

For a shot like this, I'll use a tripod so that I can pull my equipment in and get much more power out of my lights. First, I'll take a shot and check the computer screen with the client to ensure we got it right. Next, I'll move out the lights, take one more shot, and I know they'll match because we're lined up and the tripod hasn't moved.

I shot the image using a Canon 5Ds R, which was tethered to my Apple laptop using a TetherPro USB cable and TetherBoost to maintain a stable, reliable connection. Our ThinkTank Sun Screen was shielding the laptop on a Tether Table Aero so we could clearly see the screen in bright conditions.



Jared Platt is a professional wedding and lifestyle photographer from Phoenix, Arizona

jaredplatt.com

[instagram.com/jaredplatt](https://www.instagram.com/jaredplatt)



BY TETHERING THIS SHOT, WE WERE ABLE TO GET AN INSTANT APPROVAL FROM THE CLIENT, AND BE ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN THAT OUR COMPOSITE WAS GOING TO WORK BEFORE WE MOVED ONTO ANOTHER SHOT.

WATCH THE VIDEO 

Shooting To B&W Process Settings

by Dave Montizambert



I love lighting, for me it is the most exciting part of any shoot! To this end I almost always shoot tethered, even outdoors on location. Tethered shooting allows me to create stronger images faster. Seeing my lighting immediately on a high-end laptop screen, greatly speeds up the process and allows me to fine tune my lighting to a much higher degree. And no exception to this, is this image of mine of Californian model Kara Duenas striking a pose on a Hawaiian lava beach. This image was an attempt to capture the vibe

of a smoky sensuous B&W 1960's beach image of actress Brigit Bardot that had caught my eye and imagination as a wee lad.

The lighting for this image is a combination of available and artificial light. Since there was so much great scenery to choose from, I could shoot in just about any direction. I live and die by back-lighting and so I chose a background that would require Kara to stand with her back to the sun. This back-lighting adds

so much depth and beauty to the image plus it means that I don't have to create the backlight with a strobe.

Once camera position and background were decided upon, an incident meter reading was made for the open-sky lighting that would fall on Kara's front. I generally set this to underexpose the subject by 2 - 3 stops turning it into a fill light rather than a main-light. It read F 9.0 at a 1/40th of a second at 100 ISO, and so set my camera exposure to F 9.0 at 1/160th

of a second 100 ISO — effectively underexposing this frontal existing lighting by 2 stops. The sun, which struck the camera-right backside of Kara, was veiled by clouds and so was greatly diminished. An incident meter reading of this back-lighting read F 9.0 1/160th of a second at 100 ISO making it the same as the camera setting but as you can see it looks brighter than a correct exposure because the light is coming from behind, that is, beyond 90° from the camera and so appears brighter than the incident meter suggests. If I had captured an image at this point, Kara's front would appear in shadow, in other words under-exposed.

At this point everything is in place except for the main-light. To that end a battery powered studio strobe fitted with a 22"/56 cm beauty dish was placed a little in front and to the camera-right side of Kara. I chose this smaller sized light source to mimic the hard-light quality of the cloud-haze sun. The reason why I placed this source on the same side as the sun was to wrap artificial "sunlight" onto Kara's front, that is to fool the viewer's eye into thinking that the sun actually wraps around subject's side by enough to light their front. The power on this light was set to give a correct exposure on Kara. This artificial sunlight wrap is a great cheat I use all the time, it allows me to have great back-lighting on everything and have dramatic sidelight on subject. And it all appears to come from one source, the Sun!

For more lighting tutorials, checkout DaveOnDemand at www.montizambert.com.

Camera f9 at 1/160th 100iso
Strobe metered: f9 incident
Open sky-light metered: f9 at 1/40th incident
Metered metered: f9 at 1/160th incident



WATCH THE VIDEO 



Dave Montizambert lectures internationally on lighting, digital photography, and Adobe Photoshop.

montizambert.com

Painting with Fire

by Markus Hofstaetter

Fire reminds me of passion and love – burning passion. Veronika and Andreas booked me for their wedding and that’s how very everything begun. I asked them if they wanted to do a crazy unique wedding portrait and the immediately agreed.

I pictured the final image already in my mind, now I just had to ask the couple if they are into it. The answer was yes. So, they practiced the pose and I had to do my homework during the planning phase. Now I must mention, that I’m also a wet plate collodion photographer and doing a lot of preparation for one shot is daily business.

First, I had to take care of the safety aspect – this was the most important thing to me. I tried to think of every little thing that could go wrong. I’m used from my wet plate collodion process to take safety serious, because of the dangerous chemicals there. So, we had lots of safety material on the set and even a dress code, that prohibits synthetic materials. Check the whole list at the gear section.

For the reflection, I build a little pond with pond liner, wooden boards and some bricks. Just to get a water depth of about 5 to 10cm. There was also a pedestal in the middle of the pond for the couple.

The giant torch was made of a 3-Meter-long 120mm Kevlar wick that was mounted on a about 2,5-Meter-long alu-

minum stick. The wick was mounted with carabiners to the stick and another carabiner was used as a contra weight at the other end. We had to do some dry runs to get the right movement and to see how close we are to the couple. If it would have been a windy day, we had to cancel the shoot, because it would have been too risky. To get the odor-free lamp oil on the wick, I used a metal pot with a lid, so I can seal the pod in the case of fire. The pot had to be far away from the place where we lightened the fire. It was important to have two assistants for the fire painig. One who moves the torch and one who helps killing the flames with wet sheets. We had also a fire extinguisher and a fire blanked on the set. The assistant who was holding the torch was wearing a special fire-resistant suit from the fire department. The whole place was wetted before the shoot too. I had to cut down some branches from a tree, to avoid contact with the fire.

It’s also important to have a business liability insurance for the shooting and a permission if it’s not your own place.

For the setup, I used a beauty dish with a grid on a Hensel Tria 6000 Generator with a Hensel EH 6000 flash head at about half power. The second strobe was a Hensel INTEGRA 500 PLUS with a 12” reflector and grid.

With the grids on the strobes I could direct the light to the subject without hitting the water. This was important for

the reflection and to not illuminate the water itself. As you can see I had to shoot from the side, so I don’t get a bright background, that would have been seen behind the fire. My Canon 5D MKIII including the Canon 35mm 1.4L lens was mounted on a big Linhof ball head which was mounted on a Manfrotto 055XPROB tripod. I used the Canon TC-80N3 remote trigger cable to avoid any shake on the camera.

We put the Kevlar wick in the pot, I drained it with the oil. Then we walked away from the pod and I fired it up. I went back to the camera, the couple did their pose and I pressed the shutter button (Camera was on ISO 100, F22 in bulb mode). In this moment, the strobes were triggered wirelessly and I shouted “go” to the Assistant who carried the torch. He started going with the giant fire torch from right to the left. As soon as he left the frame, I released the shutter and the second assistant put the wet blanket over the burning wick to kill the fire. I shot the whole thing tethered to my laptop, so I can control immediately the picture in Lightroom. This was important to me – because I wanted to have the right exposure on the couple and I also wanted to be sure to have enough red color in the flames. So, I could also see if the strobes would freeze the posing action in the long exposure. We needed 5 tries to get the final image. I did some standard Lightroom adjustments and only minor postprocessing in Affinity Photo.



Markus Hofstaetter is an Austria-based photographer whose primary focus is awe inspiring portrait photography.

🏠 markus-hofstaetter.at

📷 [instagram.com/mhaustria](https://www.instagram.com/mhaustria)

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“Stepping outside of the studio gave me the opportunity to do something a little different and out of my comfort zone.

The consistency of the lighting produced by the Einstein™ flash unit was not only imperative while I was on location, but also made a huge impact on my editing.”



JESSICA AMERSON
jessicaamerson.com

EQUIPMENT USED

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MODEL: Shelby M. Hall
STYLIST: Josh Owen
ASSISTANT: Jennifer Williams



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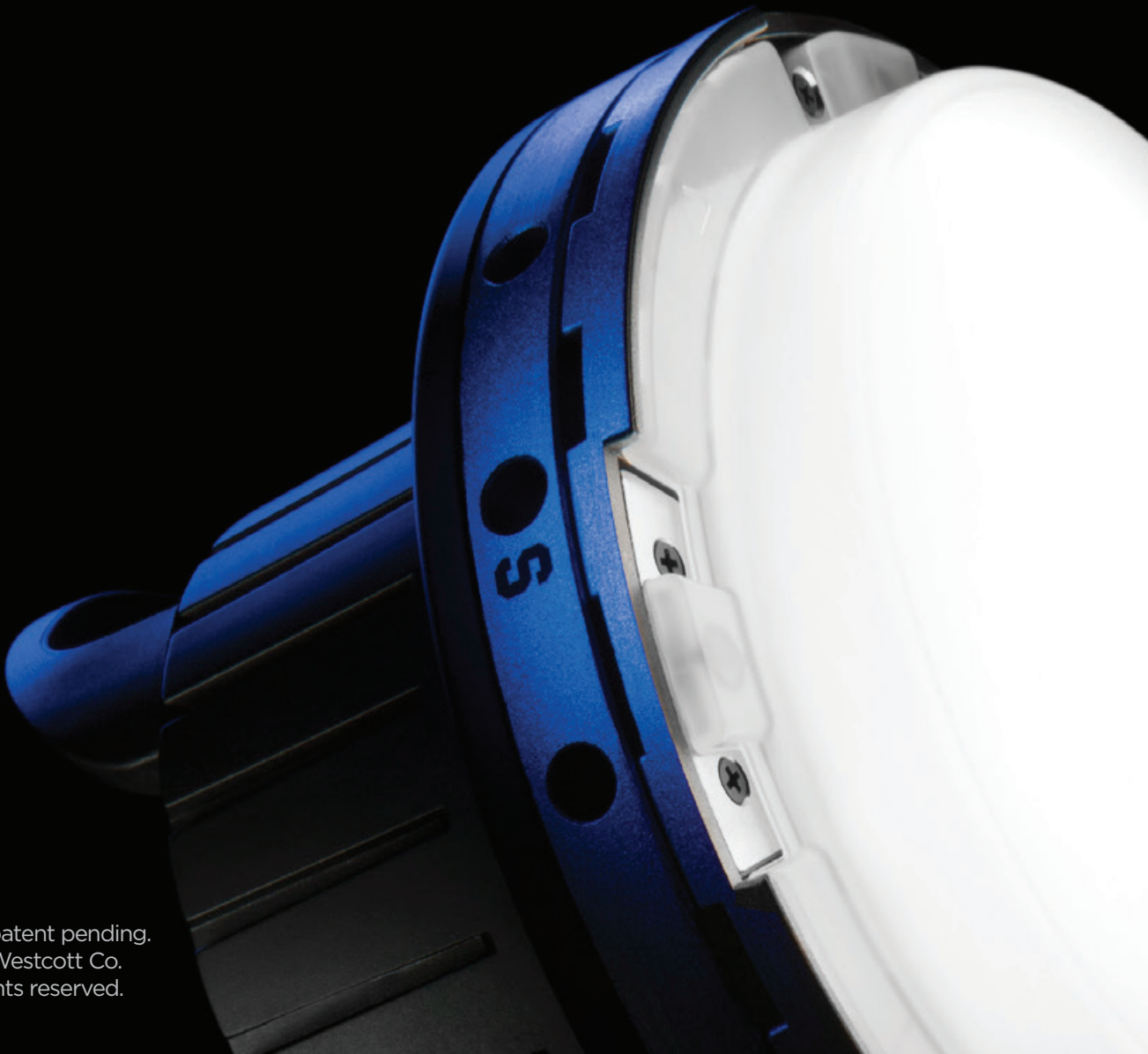
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Location Concept

by Tony Gale

I am always looking for new photo project ideas, and I liked the idea of changing the classic fairy tale concept a bit. Instead of a damsel in distress, why not make her the heroine? This is the first one in the series, and is based on a bad-ass Little Red Riding Hood. So she has an axe to take down the wolf.

I used a Sony a7RII with a 24-70/2.8 G Master lens and a 70-200/4 G lens, on a Gitzo traveler tripod, tethered with a Tether Tools TetherPro USB Cable into Capture One on my PC laptop. The lighting was a Sony HVL-F60M flash with a Lastolite Ezybox Hotshoe softbox, triggered with the Sony wireless transmitter and receiver. One of my assistants held the flash so I wouldn't need to get a permit. I also shot some video to make a little teaser reel for the project after I shoot a few more.

Shooting tethered allows me (or my assistant/tech) to check focus on the fly, and let me know if there are any issues with exposure or composition.

I processed in Capture One 10 and ended up using pieces from five dif-

ferent frames to make the final image. It was a sunnier day then I wanted so I shot and used a background plate, plus additional frames to make the cap larger and a better frame for the ax head.

The first step was to think about wardrobe and props, I got most things through Amazon because I couldn't find what I needed locally. Next step was finding a model, I used a website called Casting Networks to post a casting and then selected from there. I scouted a few days before to find a good location in Central Park to shoot. The day of the shoot the model and my assistants all met me near the subway by the park and we walked in together. In addition to the gear mentioned in the setup, I had a Manfrotto 055 tripod with a Gitzo laptop plate, several Manfrotto bags with to carry everything and a collapsible changing tent.

I had two assistants, Alley Maher and Sharlene Morris plus the model Christine Pardo. Alley and Sharlene helped with setup, behind the scenes, checking the laptop while I shoot and hauling gear around.



Tony Gale is an award-winning portrait photographer shooting for a range of advertising, editorial and corporate clients.

tonygale.com
instagram.com/tonygalephoto

WATCH THE VIDEO




Dark & Stormy

by Michael DeStefano



Micheal DeStefano is a Boston based Photographer focusing on Commercial, Travel and Adventure.

 destefanostudios.com

 [instagram.com/mikephotoagogo](https://www.instagram.com/mikephotoagogo)



New England is not often known for its surfing culture, in fact people who have lived their entire lives on the shoreline are surprised when they see a surfer in the water. However, from Rhode Island to the tip of Maine the north east coastline is covered in beautiful surfable beaches, surf shops, and thousands of surfers of all ages. The original concept for the shoot was an editorial series that showed the freezing winter conditions that a select few surfers brave to catch the biggest New England waves.

Since I knew the skies would be dark and stormy I wanted the surfboard to have a lot of color in contrast. So I used a retro shortboard from the 80's to really make it stand out in the snow. This also helped make the surfer more interesting since being covered head to toe in a wetsuit you don't get a lot of personality from him. with few exceptions wetsuits tend to be mostly black with some dark blue. This looks good against the white snow but just doesn't show very much detail. The colorful retro board becomes the surfers personality.

Some of the best surfing in New England comes in the winter right before and after a nor'easter. Hundreds of dedicated surfers brave these storms and frigid waters for the chance to catch epic waves. A lot of the imagery of these surfers is of the surfing itself which makes for great photos but you cant see the snow and ice in the water. You can't feel how cold the air and water is. I wanted to create

an image that tells the viewer what it felt like to not just surf those waves but to be on that cold shore in the snow before and after.

The biggest challenge was predicting the weather and surf conditions. Timing is everything when surfing in the North East. I wanted their to be snow in the images and great waves in the background. Not every storm that produced waves had snow and not every snowstorm produced waves. Because of this I had scouted several locations that produce waves under different conditions. For the month of Jan every time snow was predicted I went and checked these locations for surf. As an Outdoor Adventure photographer knowing the sports you are photographing is extremely important. When your studio is the outdoors the more you know the better you can manage problems that arise, things like weather. You also have to be in the same shape as the athletes you are photographing so that you can be in these locations under the same conditions. Whether that is hanging off a cliff in the case of Rock Climbing or running on the beach during a snowstorm in Jan. with surfers.

I shot the main shot with Sigma's 100-400mm f/5-6.3 Contemporary lens so I could put some distance between me and the subject. I really wanted to compress the waves in the background as much as possible so that they really conveyed the drama and intensity of the conditions.

