Fun Freestyle Photography
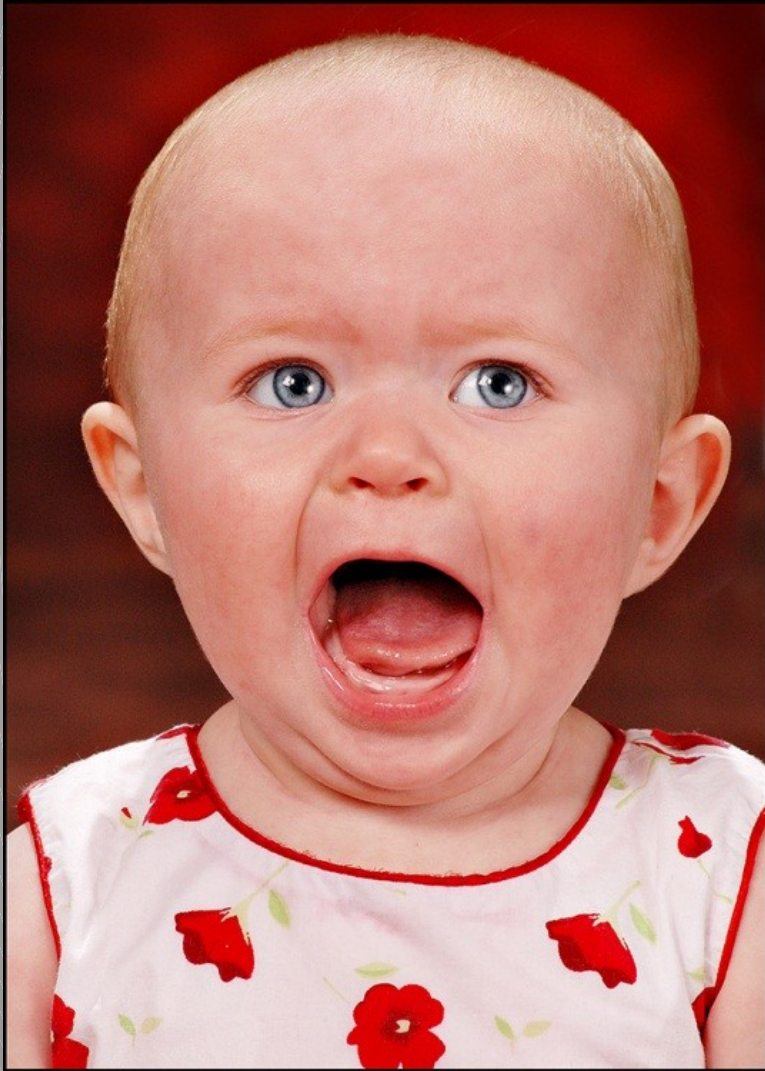The Loft Studio Newmarket
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Improving Your Portraits

Brighton Ontario

Help Me!

Equipment – Camera, Lenses

- Just about any camera system today from point and shoot, phone cameras to expensive professional cameras are capable of producing wonderful portraits.

- I always say buy as much camera that you need and spend the savings on better quality lenses.

Lenses

- I would suggest using lenses that are fast F1.4 to F2.8 to be able to get shallow depth of field and increase your ability of capturing in low light situations.

- I often use my F 1.4 50mm for events where I want to get shallow depth of field and isolate my subject from the background.

- Outside I use my F2.8 70 to 200mm wide open and zoomed out to the 200mm focal length to isolate my subject from the background.

- Wide angle lenses often distort or exaggerate size of objects closer to the lens like hands or noses.

- If you tilt a wide angle lenses it will make your subject look distorted smaller or larger with the proportions exaggerated. This may be a great effect when you want to distort for commercial effect or impact but not for portraits.

- You can use wide angle lenses for environmental portraits as long as your subject is in the centre of the frame and you shoot from the centre of your subject and do not tilt the lens.

- Remember long lenses compress (great for sports) and wide angle lenses create space and distortion.

Aperture

- When I shoot portraits inside I try to use F8 or F11 to keep my subjects sharp and in focus.
- If I have two rows of people than F11 to F16 is best for depth of field. If I have three rows or more
- I have the rows get very close and personal and the back rows leaning forward inward if possible.
- When shooting outside I try to use longer lenses and shoot as wide open as possible (F2.8 to F3.5) I also try to get my subject as far forward away from the background as possible.
- I love the quality this technique produces in separating my subject from the background.

Backgrounds Outside

- Outside I look for backgrounds where I can separate my subject from clutter and distractions.
- I try to place my subject as far away from the background (Trees – buildings – clutter etc) as possible.
- I watch for trees growing out of heads mergers of horizons and hedges reflections and hot spots in backgrounds.
- I like to shoot in shaded soft controlled light.
- I always shoot with flash or reflector outside. I place my subject with their backs to the sun whenever possible and use fill flash one stop under or in some cases one stop over to darken the blue sky.
- When I have determined the exposure and placement of my subject and take the first picture I STOP and analyze the result.
- I look at the histogram and my highlight indicators first before shooting a series of useless images and wasting my subject time.
- I look at the subject on the back of the monitor I mean really look is there anything wrong with their hair the background is uncluttered their hair is in place the tie is crocked they have removed pens from pockets name tags are off etc

Backgrounds inside

- When selecting a location inside be aware of mirrors pictures on walls with glass clutter
mergers with furniture and doors.
- I look for the biggest room with the least clutter and furniture. I always ask if I can move something and prefer that the owner does the moving just in case there is an accident and something becomes damaged.
- I like to shoot into corners so that I have leading lines and I move couches and chairs away from walls so as I can place subjects behind and sitting on arms and couches for large groups.
- If I have to I will set-up backdrops when there is just too much clutter and distractions

Window Lighting

- Window light is free and beautiful.
- If I have an opportunity to shoot with this beautiful light why use flash.
- I move my subject away from the window if the sun is too contrasty and I use a reflector on the opposite side to fill in the shadow.
- The farther away from the window the softer the light becomes

The Flasher & The Diva

Using Flash for Portraits

- If I do not have enough available light I will resort to FLASH.
- The dedicated flash systems of today are marvellous computers that can compute the correct exposure as fast as you can press the shutter.
- Flash fired from the top of the camera using a light modifier like a Gary Fong modifier or bounce card can give you some acceptable results but you could do better.
- If you learn how to control your flash (MANUAL) you will be able to shoot under and difficult lighting situation and get predictable results.
- One flash off the camera will create better results than a flash on camera anytime anyhow. Flash off camera will give you more roundness and bring out more texture from your subjects also your images will appear sharper.
- Shadows will often fall out of camera view and not be distracting.

Multiple Flash Lighting

- Two flash units off the camera can produce the best professional results and give you endless options and better images of your subjects.

- I often enter a location with two stands and two battery operated flash units.

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- I will often use the ceiling to bounce one flash unit off as a fill light and the second flash is on a stand with a small soft box or shoot through umbrella set up as main light.

- The main light is set one stop over the fill both units are on manual power and controlled by distance to the subject and power setting on the back of the flash.

Corrective Lighting Techniques

- The successful portrait photographer realizes that his principal aim is to obtain characteristic likeness of his subjects.

- At the same time, however, he must temper reality with flattery.

- The portraitist does this by combining judicious posing, suitable lighting, proper clothing choices and good camera angles.

Corrective Lighting Techniques

Although each situation in portraiture is different from all the others, the following suggestions for corrective treatment are generally accepted.

Difficulty	Suggested Treatment
Prominent Forehead	Tilt chin upward
Long Nose	Tilt chin upward Face directly toward lens Lower main light Lower camera position
Narrow Chin	Tilt chin upward
Baldness	Lower camera position Screen to shield head Use no hair light Blend top of head with background tone
Angular Nose	Minimize effect by turning face toward lens
Broad Face	Raise camera position Use short lighting Turn face to three-quarter position

Corrective Lighting Techniques

Difficulty	Suggested Treatment
Narrow Face	Lower main light Use broad lighting
Wrinkled Face	Use diffuse lighting Lower main light Use three-quarter pose
Double Chin	Raise main light Tilt chin upward Use high camera position
Facial Defects	Keep on shadow side
Prominent Ears	Hide far ear behind head Keep near ear in shadow Consider profile view

Corrective Lighting Techniques

Difficulty	Suggested Treatment
Deep-Set Eyes	Lower main light Use lower lighting ratio
Protruding Eyes	Have subject look downward
Heavy-Set Figure	Use short lighting Use low-key lighting Use dark clothing Vignette shoulders and body Blend body with background tone

Lighting Placement and Light Modifiers

- The larger the light modifier and the closer the light source the softer the results will be.

- Light modifiers can be anything from a Gary Fong flash diffuser to umbrellas and soft boxes.

- The ceiling in most houses is white textured spray paint. I consider this type of ceiling as a large reflector fill surface.

- Small flash units without modifiers are very small and contrasty sources. To soften the light we add larger diffusers modifiers.
  Do not aim the modifier straight at the subject have the light feathered or aimed across your subject to soften the light even more.

Umbrellas

- I like to use umbrellas for large group photography where I want to scatter a wall of light toward the group from a high height directly at the group.
- This is the only time my light source is directly placed straight on so as not to throw shadows from people in front of others in behind them.
- Umbrellas will bounce light off everything floors ceilings walls etc. I use soft boxes for more directional control of light with less spill than umbrellas.
- Close umbrella a BIT for less scatter and more direction.
- The smaller the soft box the less coverage and the contrastier it becomes. The general rule is the distance to the subject determines the size of the box. So a 3x4 foot box should be no farther than four feet from the subject to get the best results.

Main Light Placement

- If you read the corrective lighting techniques you should understand that there is no one placement for your main light.
- Short Lighting: The main light is placed on the side of the subject left or right on the side of the face not facing the camera and the placement is low enough to light the 5 planes of the face (the eyes forehead chin left and right cheeks and nose).
- Make sure that there is a catch light in both eyes.
- If the light is placed properly there will be a shadow cast from the nose that does not touch the lip and will create a shadow loop to the left or right of the face.
- Short Loop lighting will flatter people and give them the appearance of looking less heavy.

Broad Lighting

- Broad Lighting: is lighting the side of the face facing the camera.

- This will help thinner subjects look heavier. Make sure to get catch lights in the subjects eyes.

Profile Lighting

- Profile Lighting: The main light is placed on the side of the face away from the camera.

- Think of where you would place the light if the subject were facing the camera using short loop lighting.

- Think of the subject as if they had an arrow sticking straight out of there forehead to help place the main light.

Profile Lighting
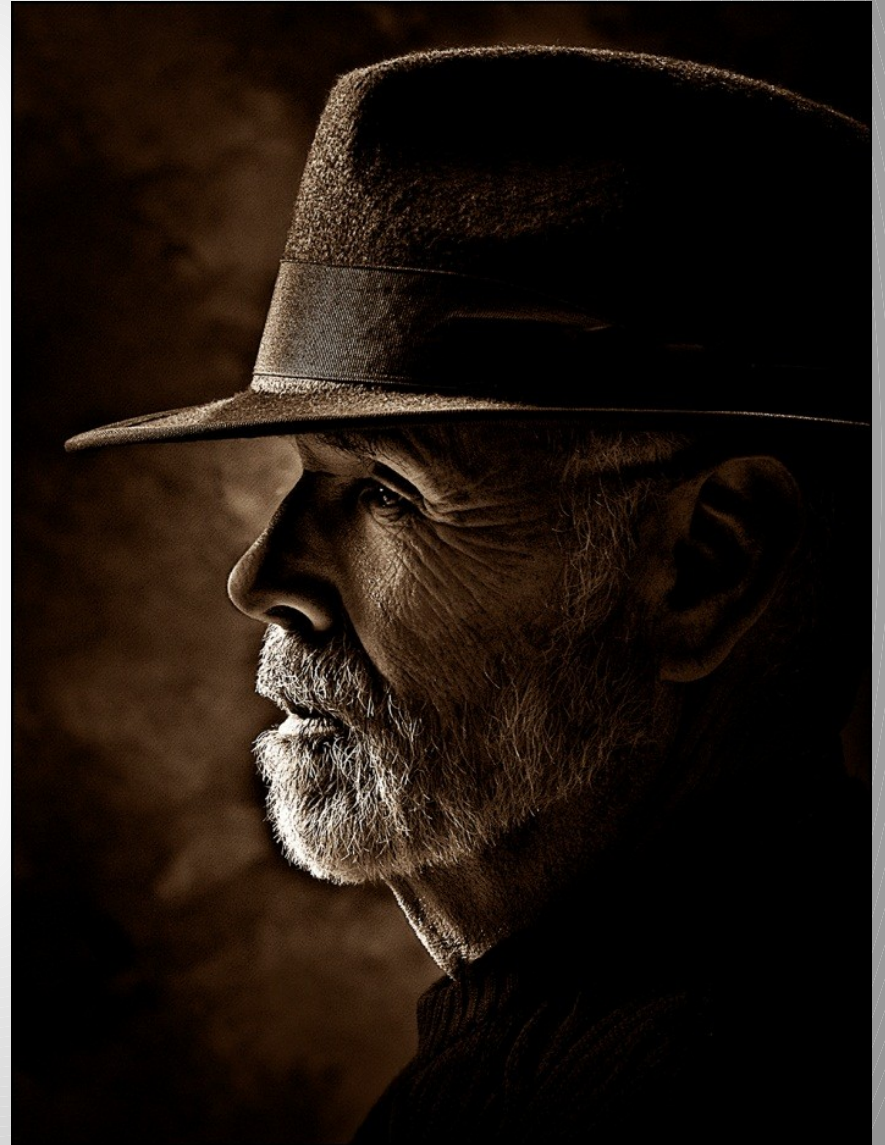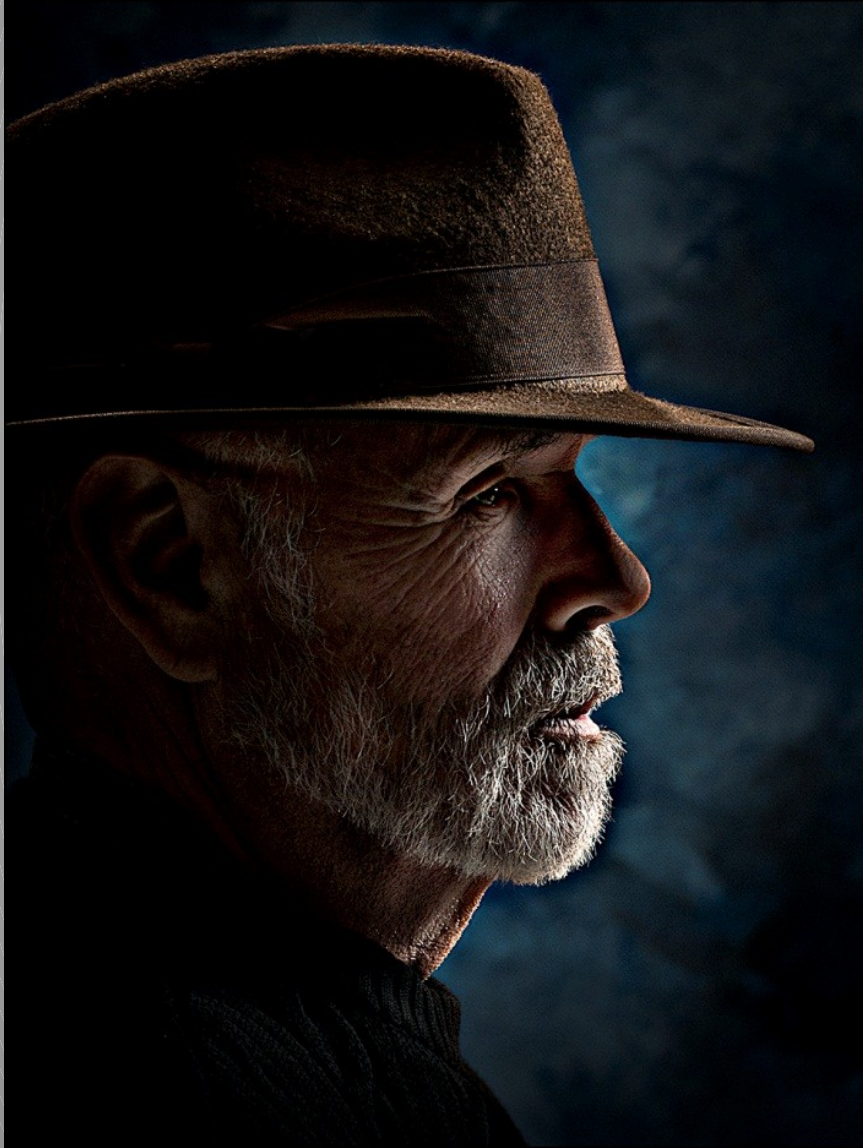
Glamour Lighting Butterfly Lighting

- Most glamour lighting is placing your main light just above your camera and using a reflector or another soft box under your camera with less power than the main light.
- The light placement is very flattering to help soften blemishes and poor skin problems.
- The more extreme the direction of your main light the more impact and excitement you can create in your images.

- Do not hesitate to experiment be aggressive and bring out the best in your subject.

Butterfly Lighting Modified

Props

- I like to use props to add interest and excitement into my images.
- People are also less conscious of their hands and what to do with them if they are holding something or playing with something.
- For younger subjects I use bubbles toys noise maker's food water rattles etc to keep them interested and happy. I often go to the good old dollar store and buy kites fishing polls bubbles toys etc to entertain and help create story telling happy activities for siblings and families to keep younger people from losing interest.
- I can often just stay back and capture the family at play without too much direction from me.
- Older subjects I use sports objects- - dance outfits- cars- horses –picnic - boxing gloves etc

Props

Clothing

- The selection of proper clothing for your portrait is a critical factor in the preparation for a successful portrait.

- If the clothing is noticeable in a portrait, it could easily become a distraction.

- Clothing that does not attract attention to itself is the ultimate goal. It could very well be the difference between a very successful portrait and just another picture.

- I cannot stress enough how important it is for you to observe the following criteria. It is quite possible that if inappropriate clothing is selected, I will suggest you change your selection before the portrait sitting is made.

Family Portraits

- It's important to preserve today's memories and to document your family's lives in portraits.
When you create a stunning portrait of your family it becomes more than a ''snapshot'', it becomes a heirloom.
- Every family is worth that. I hear far too often people say I never look good in photographs. I blame that not on the subject but poor photographers.

Dark Clothing Tends to Slenderize

- Darker clothing helps to blend the bodies with the background, so that the faces are the most important part of the photograph.

- Dark colours definitely tend to slenderize the subject.

- Light colours seem to add weight to bodies.

Low Key   High Key

Colour of Clothing

- The colour of clothing should always be toned down.
- Bright colours attract attention away from the face. Colours MUST be dark and not bright.
- This is ESSENTIAL!
- When choosing lighter colours, stick to pastels, but avoid pink tones.
- Pale yellow and pale blue work well, especially with jeans or kaki pants.

Prints & Stripes

- Prints and any kind of pattern – no matter how small become a distraction.
- In the case of digital portraits, in particular, small patterns in clothing {even a small herring-bone or chequered pattern} or stripes can cause terrible distortions (Moiré) to appear in the clothing that are not visible to our eyes.

Avoid Short Sleeve Clothing

- Long sleeved clothing is a MUST! For casual portraits it is equally important to wear long pants instead of shorts.

- When arms and legs are exposed to the camera there will be more flesh in the photograph in those
areas than on the face, itself. This is a major distraction.

- White shirts and/or blouses under a dark jacket are perfect { I prefer
soft pastel colours instead of white}

Scarves

- A scarf loosely tied around the neck also helps to frame a face beautifully when a collarless blouse or sweater is worn.

- Neckties should definitely be toned-down in colour and a minimum of patterns.

Group Portraits

- Clothing for group portraits must be carefully selected to blend the bodies together.
- First decide whether the basic tone of clothing will be warm-toned {browns, etc.} or cool-toned {blues/grays/blacks, etc.}
- Then make sure to follow all the above instructions. Keeping a group in similar colours focuses the attention of the portrait to the faces and individuals that make up the portrait.
- Dissimilar colours and miss mash of styles {formal and informal – light and dark} tend to be distracting

Proper Necklines for a Portrait

- The most flattering neckline for a portrait is something that comes up close to the neck.
- A wide-open neckline tends to thicken the neck in a photograph.
- A turtleneck or V-neck top is most flattering. It tends to slim down the person and frames the face beautifully.
- Finally, lay out all the clothing onto a bed.
- Shoes, socks, stockings –everything should be included…. shoes, too! Then take a look at the collection. If your eye goes to any one item in particular you can be sure the same thing will happen in a photograph. That item should be changed. { Never Ever White running shoes}
- Clothing should not be too tight or loose. Clothing below the waistline should be darker than above.
- Otherwise, even light jeans worn below a darker top could easily attract attention to the lower part of the body and away from the face.

Casual Beach Portraits

- For beach portrait sessions it is sometimes a good idea to dress in light coloured clothing so that the bodies will blend with light coloured sand.

- In this situation all white or pastel clothing works fine. Avoid pink shirts. All white clothing is great. White shirts and jeans work well too.

- White shirts with beige pants are even better. Staying in all light tones can be very effective in this type of environment. Hi-Key

- Still remember to dress everyone in the portrait similarly. You have to blend the bodies of everyone together, so that faces stand out. This is essential particularly in group portrait.

Hairstyle and Makeup

- Hair style should be SIMPLE and MUST be off the face.
- Hair falling down onto the sides of the face {currently very much in style} create distracting shadows.
- Bangs that come down too low onto the face will keep light from getting into the subject's eyes – the very most important part of the face.
- Makeup should be blended and not extreme.

Glasses

- Eye glasses may or may not be worn. Non-reflective lenses, of course, are
a big help.

- Better yet, sometimes it's possible to obtain a matching set of frames without lenses.

- This is particularly helpful, if your lenses sometimes distort the outline of your face. { You could in difficult cases take two images from the same exact pose one with and one without glasses and layer them in Photoshop)

Interaction with the Subject

- The Most Important Part of All Is Know and Engage Your Subject

- Do not appear frazzled afraid or confused or they will lose confidence and interest.

- Have your equipment ready and know how to use it.

- Make sure you have extra batteries cards back up flash and camera body if you are photographing professionally for weddings and events that cannot be restaged.

Babies Young Children

- For babies find out the best time for them when they are fed or rested to schedule them.

- Have your equipment ready to start as soon as they arrive.

- Photograph them from their height do not shoot down on children get down
to their height and shoot.

Babies

Small Children

- When a small shy child enters my studio or I go to their home I just keep my distance and engage the parents or other siblings in conversation.

- Often after a short time they will get involved and be less timed.

THE BIGGEST TIPS

- For people shoot from the centre of mass if you shoot low you will distort the scale and make them appear taller and if you shoot down they will appear shorter and their head and shoulders will appear larger.

- If shooting a head and shoulders shoot from the same height as their head.

- Watch where you crop your subjects. Do not crop off heads feet fingers, toes etc.

- Keep your subject engaged and talk about them. Compliment them even if you do not like the pose they pick just shoot and talk them into a better pose.

- Do not hide behind a tripod in fact do not use a tripod it will slow you down and just get in the way.

Posing

- When trying to get a subject to pose it works best if you show them the pose. Mirroring by showing them.
- I often use images called tear sheets and posing guides
- I have collected over time to show what I want them to do.
- When shooting outside using long lenses or in the studio I teach my subjects hand signals to help direct them into position.
- I make a circle with my thumb and forefinger and say this is
your chin and I just want you to move your face to where I move my circle and you can drive them into position.
- This is perfect for small movements and adjustments.
- The next hand signal is my index finger which I tell them it is to move their eyes only nothing else.
- The last is the hand straight up like a knife edge which I tell them is the angle of their heads if I bend it right I just want them to tilt their heads in that direction.
Using hand signals can get your subject into the exact position without too much verbal discussion and less time spent trying to get them posed.

Posing

- Most subject look less static and look slimmer if posed at an angle from the camera axis. You should not turn them so much as to lose the far shoulder but for larger subjects turn them more and thinner subjects less.
- For couples the mouth of your subjects should be around the eye level of their partner. If you have too much of a height difference you lose the interaction and closeness.
- Mothers holding babies should hold babies' height close to their face not low in their laps.
- Try to use the letter V for groups of three. Mother father and child in the middle not too low to maintain the relationship.
- You can use a diamond for four people or use the W for two rows or more.

High-Speed Sync Flash

- Most digital cameras sync at 250/200 of a second. If you exceed this shutter speed you will start to see a black bar.

- HSS will let you sync at 8000th of a sec.

- HSS pulses at a very fast rate while shutter is open

- Hyper Sync the technology depends on very precise timing when flash goes off.

F 2.8 1/1600 ISO 200

Equipment

- Check out PhotoGlobe Online.com
- Flash Nikon SB 800/900 Speedlight $55o+++
- Lumo Pro   LP160 Speedlight Manual Flash
- Starfire Manual Flash   Vistek $150
- Metz 60 CT 4 Manual and Auto Old Used $300
- Pocket Wizard Plus II Radio Slave
- Aputure Trigmaster Plus Radio Slave
- Flashwaves Radio Slave
- Stands – Umbrellas – Soft Boxes ???
- Alien Bee (US) ABR 800 Ring Flash $400
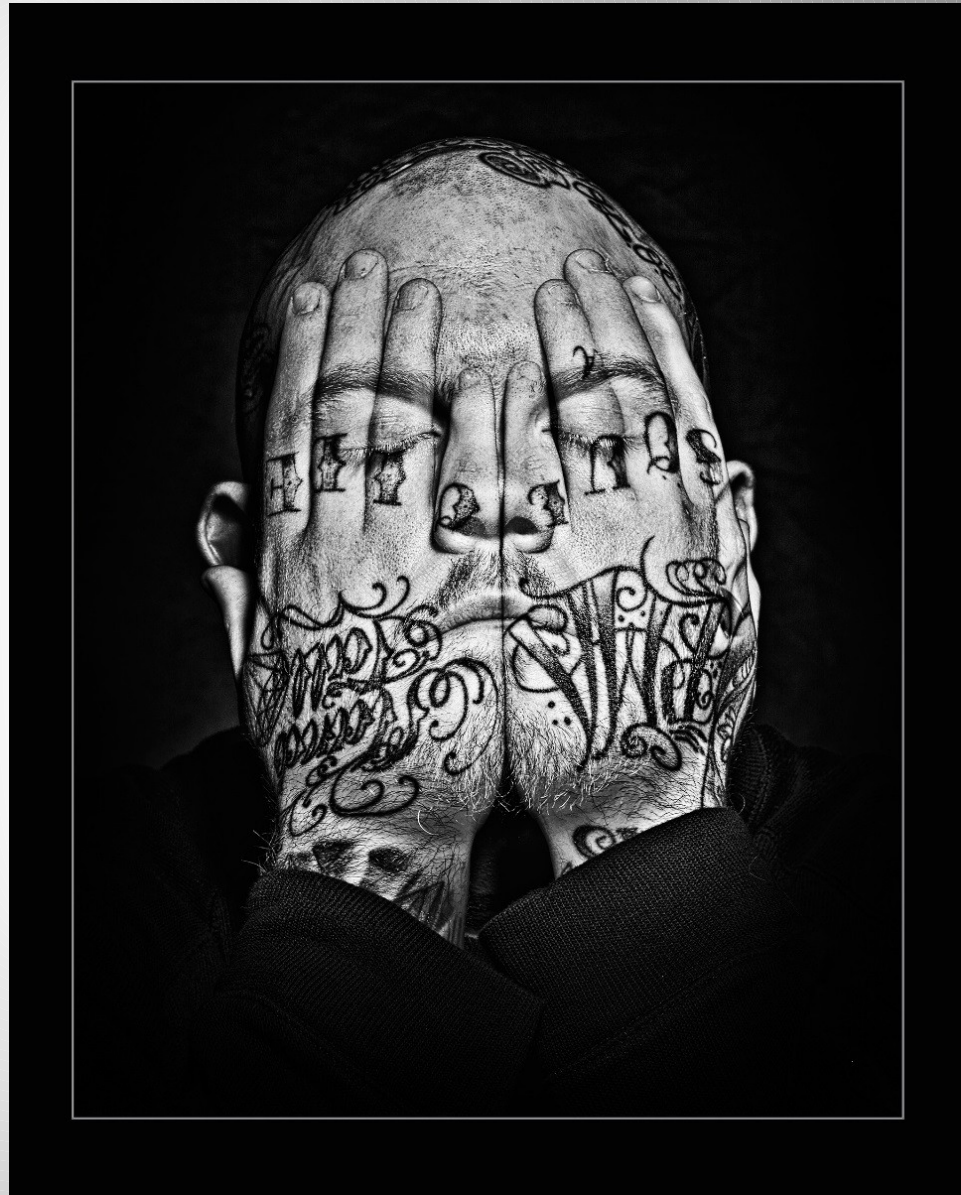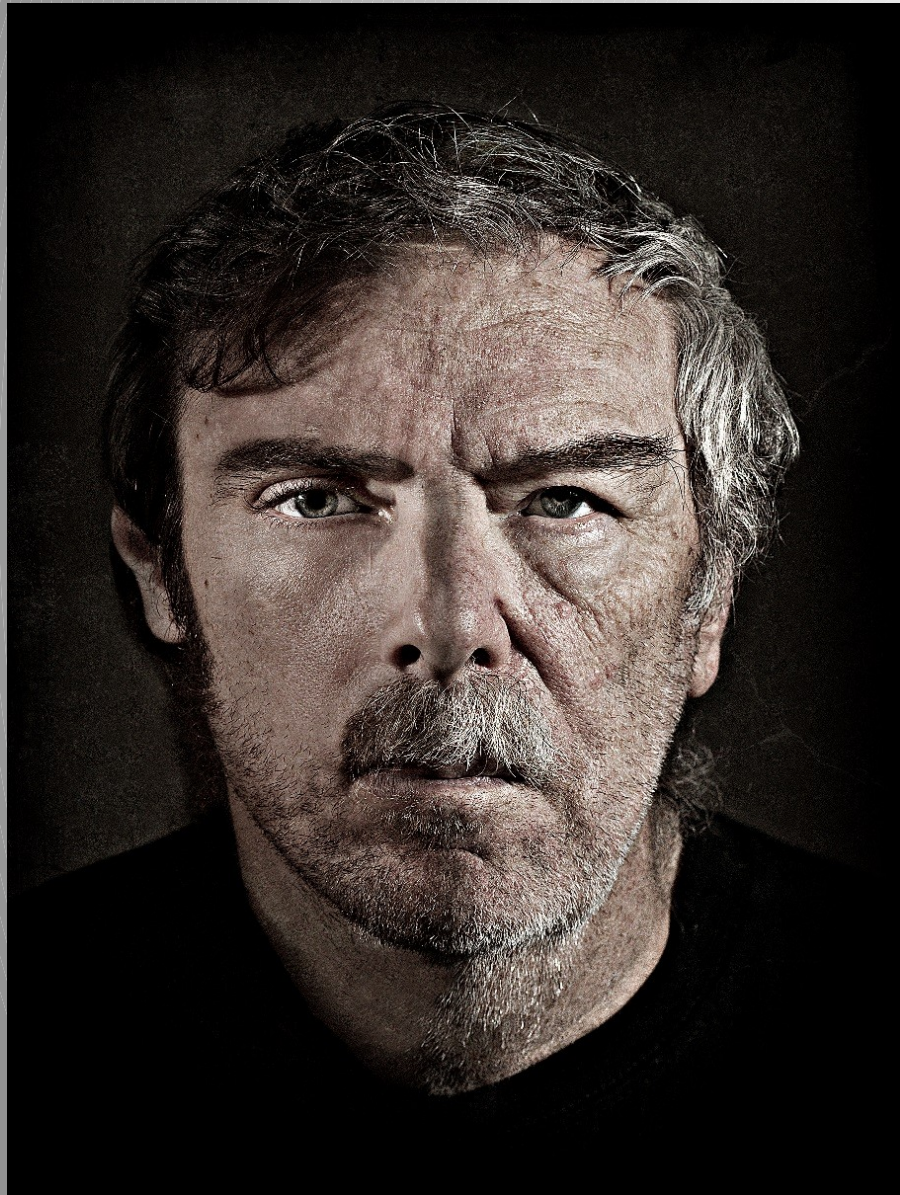
Look For Interesting Faces
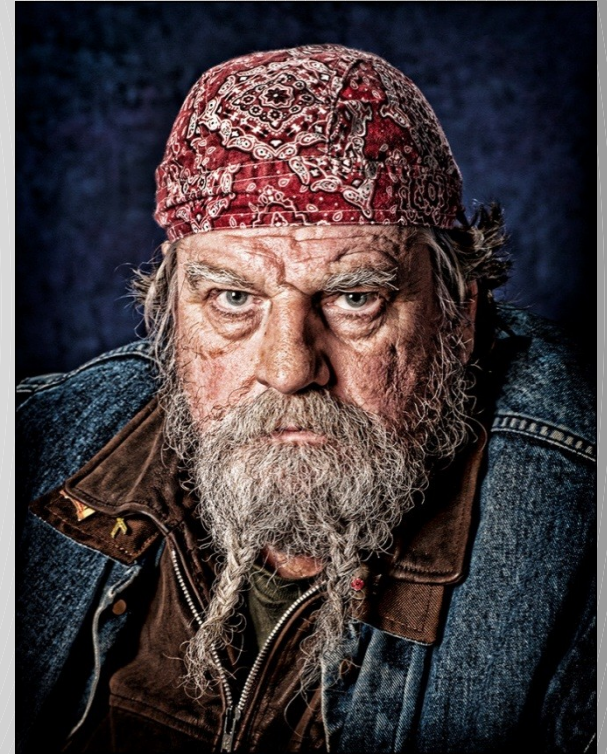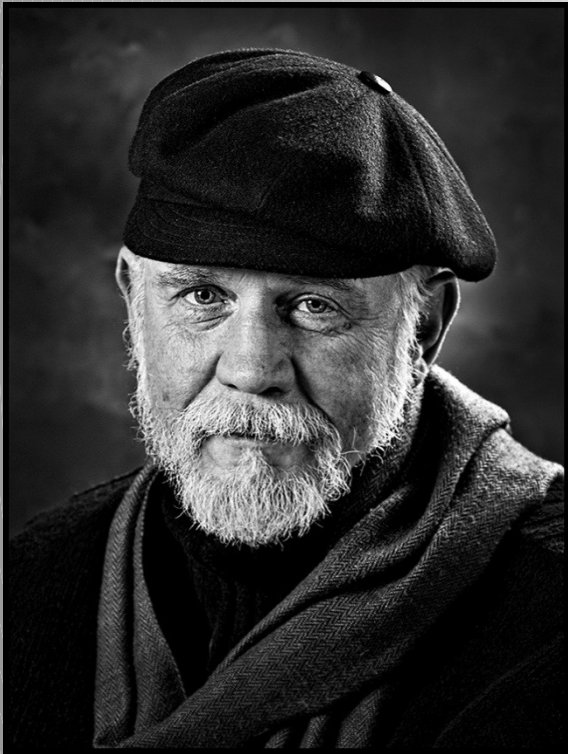
Think Outside The Box
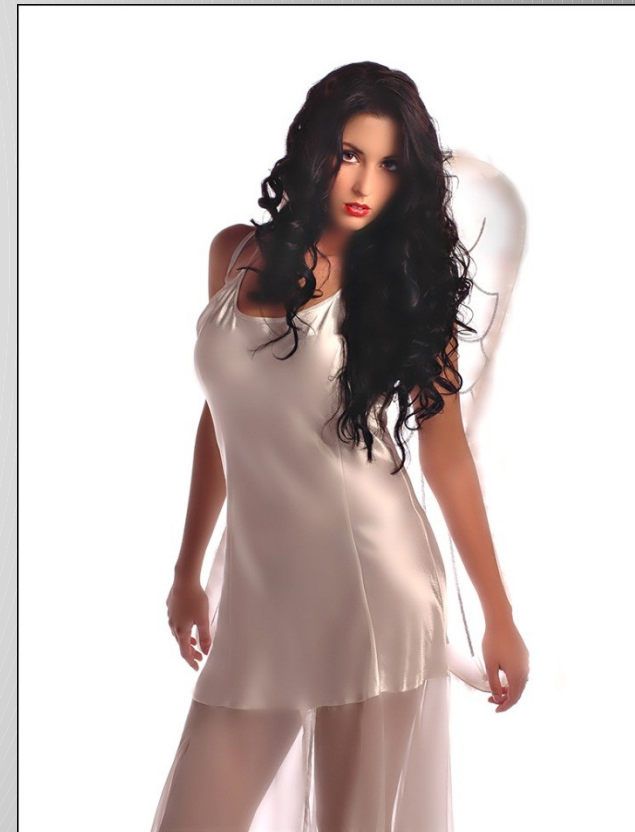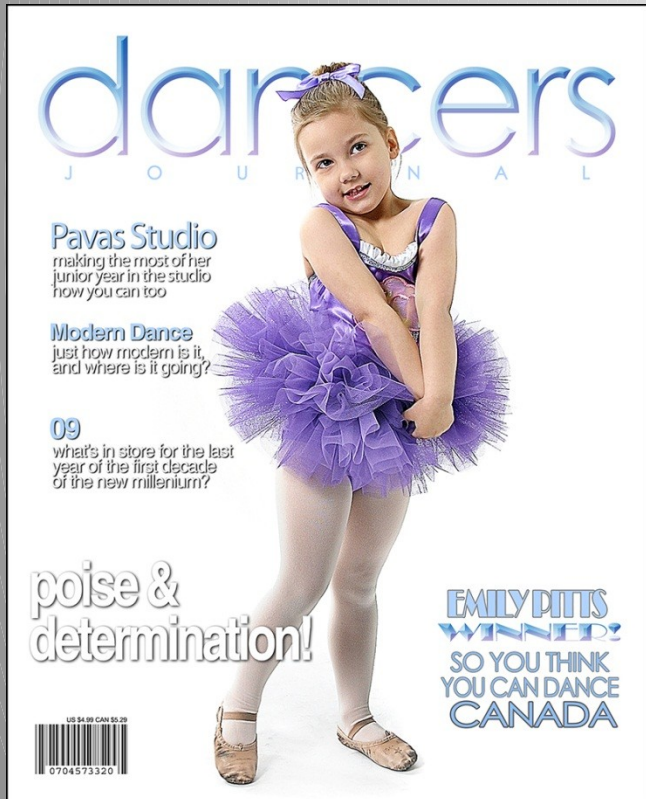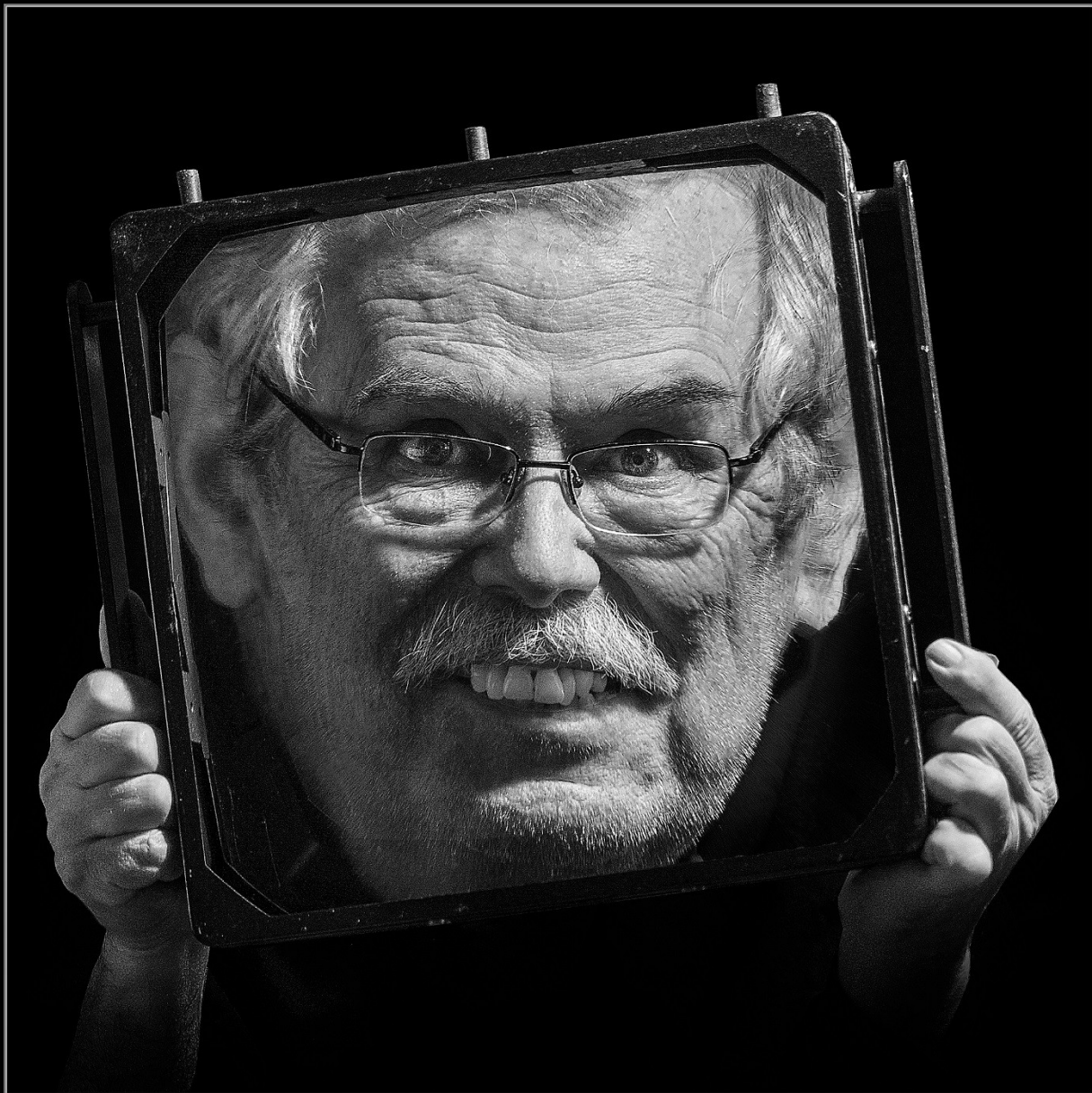
Be Different

The End
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ISAAC

Where to get information

- Gerry Ghionis   Monte Zooker
- Frand Doorhof   Peter Hurlie
- Joe McNally   500PX
- Joey Lawrence   You Tube
- Scott Kelby   Camera Courses
- Zack Arias
- Annie Leibovitz
- Yousuf Karsh