

2016 • ISSUE 1

LIGHT & SHADOW

THE REALLY RIGHT STUFF MAGAZINE



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Interactive PDF

Click on any RRS product, featured in a photo or written in red, to navigate directly to its listing on [reallyrightstuff.com](#).

Sherbet Nights *(Photo by Karen Hutton)*

Shutter Speed: 1/50 sec | F-Stop: f/11 | ISO: 200 | Camera: Canon 5DS R
Lens: 16-35mm | Focal Length: f/4L at 22mm

ON THE COVER: BROODY SEA CRAG *(Photo by Joe Johnson Sr.)*

Bruce Omori and Tom Kualii took me, Ken Sklute, and Miles Morgan around the east side of the Big Island of Hawaii. I got this shot in early morning light between rain showers. I think it's a great representation of *Light and Shadow* as well as a fond reminder of the great friends we make along the way.

Camera: Nikon D810

Lens: Sigma 50mm F1.4 DG HSM | A

Exposure: 2 images: foreground — f/11 @ 1/2 sec; sky — f/11 @ 1/8 sec. ISO 64

Location: Laupahoehoe Point, Hawaii

Date: 8 April 2015

Gear: **TVC-34, BH-55 LR, BD810-L-plate**

Light & Shadow Magazine is a love letter from Really Right Stuff to photography. In this publication we hope to educate our readers, showcase the beautiful, and act as an avenue for amateur and professional photographers to meet and converse.

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Links to social media sites available in the footer of the RRS homepage.

LETTER FROM THE CEO

THE INAUGURAL ISSUE OF LIGHT & SHADOW



Dear Friends,

Thank you for picking up this inaugural issue of RRS *Light & Shadow*. We sincerely hope you enjoy the articles and images we've compiled for you. Like everything we make, we poured our hearts and souls into producing a product you will love. Our goal is to make a best-in-class publication that finds a premium place on your bookcase or nightstand; something with inherent value that helps improve your technique and inspires you to

create; a resource you keep or pass along—not junk destined for the landfill.

We love photography. We love the process of creating images. We love designing and building products of soul-satisfying quality that you love to own and use. And we love passing along our own and others' experiences on how to get the most out of this passion for photography we share.

Of course, we also run a business. We design stuff, we build stuff, and we advertise our stuff. We love to educate folks about what we have and how to use it. Printing catalogs has always been a big part of that process, even amidst the internet revolution. We're fortunate to always receive a mountain of compliments about our catalogs, and pleas to continue printing the catalog, largely because of the "how-to" articles we include. However, because a vast majority of our customers have ready access to our website, we decided to focus *Light & Shadow* primarily on how to use the gear to help you take great images, and make it less of a list of what is available. In the process, we have both reduced the amount of paper used and increased the quality.

We have a star-studded lineup of photographers covering the topics we are asked about most. We look forward to your feedback. Let us know what you think! As always, we commit to absorb your input seriously to improve future issues. ♦

All the Best,

Joe Johnson Sr.
CEO, Really Right Stuff

BY BRANDON BRAY

HERE ARE TWO SIDES to every equation, and, as an engineer, I am constantly seeking the balance between these two sides. Do I make it stiffer, or weigh less? Do I make it robust and last forever, or do I try to make it less expensive? These sides are not always mutually exclusive. Just as we seek to balance "light and shadow" in our photographs, I seek to balance the attributes of our designs so that we produce only the very best equipment.

A 3D SCANNER AND 3D PRINTER ALLOW US TO IMPROVE OUR FIT AND TEST THE ERGONOMICS EARLY IN THE DESIGN PROCESS.

CUSTOMER NEED

Whether it's from phone calls to our Customer Service Representatives, reviews of products on our website, or field use by ourselves and others, every product originates from recognizing our customers' needs and wanting to deliver a product that will make your photography experience better. We identify the key features a design must have to satisfy our own high standards, as well as features that will push the envelope to improve our designs and exceed the expectations of our customers.

DESIGN PROCESS

Our designs go through an iterative process of sketching, modeling CAD files on the computer, and prototyping. Camera plates are not simply functional, they have to precisely fit their respective camera body for optimum ergonomics and elegant aesthetics. We have begun using tools such as a 3D scanner and 3D printer to improve our fit and to test the ergonomics early in the design process.

Our team is thorough and we work closely with each other to further refine each product.

PROTOTYPING

We design for ease of manufacturing. RRS has dedicated in-house machinists and multiple local machine shops to prototype our parts and bring our designs to production. Not only are they 100% made in the USA, many of our products are manufactured within a few miles of our office here in San Luis Obispo, California. Once we have all the parts, we work directly with our assembly team to ensure that the build meets

RRS expectations. We try to improve the design to make the assembly most efficient.

PRODUCTION

Before a product launches, we put it through a rigorous evaluation phase where we personally use that product in our own photography, as well as ask key industry experts to give their feedback. Our work doesn't stop when a product is released. We appreciate feedback from our customers and strive to incorporate their needs and suggestions. At the end of the day, we are only satisfied if our products bring you as much joy as they bring us every time we go out and shoot. ♦

We would love to know what you thought of this article!
[Click here](#) to send us your comments.



ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE

PATIENCE AND DETERMINATION

THE REWARD OF PATIENCE AND DETERMINATION IN PHOTOGRAPHY

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ELIA LOCARDI

HAVE YOU EVER LOOKED AT A SHOT and been completely awestruck — blown away that a photographer was able to capture such a beautiful moment in time? If so, you're not alone. We've all been fascinated by certain photographs, or the ability of certain photographers to embed a unique quality into their images and art.

CONTINUED >>



Winds of Inspiration

ABOVE: A Nikon D810 on **BH-55 LR** and a **TVC-33**, as well as a Fuji XP Pro II on a **multi-clamp** and a **BH-25 LR**.



PRO TIP

If you want dramatic clouds in your shots, it's better to travel during what we call shoulder seasons—typically late March to mid-May, and on the other end, mid-September to early November.

Not to belittle that feeling of fascination, but what we're seeing is a single image that represents what may have taken hours, days, months, or even years of work to create. It's easy to think that the photographer just got lucky or simply happened to be in the right place at the right time. And while luck certainly plays a role in photography, so does patience, determination, and the resolve to try over and over again until you succeed. While it would be great if this process was only a matter of a few hours or days, quite often it's the result of years of trial and error.

One of my favorite photos in my portfolio, and a great example of how patience and determination can be tremendously rewarding in photography, is my shot "Winds of Inspiration."

While spring in Japan can be beautiful, these harmonious moments in time are fleeting as the fragile cherry blossoms often fall victim to unpredictable and turbulent weather. That fragility is part of what makes capturing the cherry blossoms so special, and one of the reasons I return time and

time again, always seeking that perfect moment with the perfect conditions.

This particular shot took me two years and dozens of attempts to capture, but I felt so strongly about my creative vision for the shot that I would've gladly invested three or four more years to capture what I had envisioned for the scene.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SEASONS AND HOW TO CAPTURE THEM

When we think about capturing "the perfect shot," it's important to be realistic about the time it will take to achieve. With cherry blossoms in general, there is only a small window of about two weeks in which the flowers are in peak bloom—not to mention that any bad weather can wipe them out in a single day once they have opened. Capturing cherry blossoms all boils down to planning. Once you plan to invest the correct span of time to be in a specific location, it then comes down to being ready for the shot combined with favorable weather. But what if it's raining? What if the blooming

season came early and you were too late? Well, if you want the shot, you try again next year!

There's something special about the Sakura season in Japan that has drawn me there for the past 5 years in a row. It's a feeling of harmony—a perfect balance as both nature and weather align themselves for just a brief moment to reveal some-

capture unique scenes. That extends to fall colors as well as weather conditions can become turbulent as the seasons change throughout the year. Unlocking the benefits of these variations can be as simple as knowing when you have a greater chance for cloudy weather or clear skies.

In the summertime, in Southern Europe for

CREATIVE VISION, PASSION, DRIVE, DETERMINATION, PATIENCE, AND A WHOLE LOT OF COFFEE ALL REALLY COME INTO PLAY WHEN PRODUCING QUALITY WORK THAT YOU CAN BE PROUD OF.

thing truly spectacular. I can see myself investing many years to come into this location.

INVESTING TIME IN PHOTOGRAPHY WILL NEVER GO UNREWARDED

As you've no doubt noticed by the cherry blossom photos, I love working with seasonal variations to

example, there will be more clear days than cloudy days. So if you want dramatic clouds in your shots, it's better to travel during what we call shoulder seasons—typically late March to mid-May, and on the other end, mid-September to early November.

It's during the spring period in Italy when you also get the greatest chance to capture the famous Tuscan



The Harmony of Spring

ABOVE: A **BH-40 LR** with **TVC-24L**.



Misty Melody — Tuscany

RIGHT: A Nikon D810 with an L-plate on a BH-55 LR and TVC-33 Tripod.

morning fog that transforms the landscape into a fairytale environment. In my photo “Misty Melody,” I spent 8 mornings waking up and leaving our little farmhouse apartment at 4:00AM hoping each time to capture a glimpse of the fog. Each morning, I knew my spot, I had my composition locked in and my fingers crossed. On the 8th morning, I was finally able to capture my dream shot. On the 9th day, exhausted, I slept until 2:00PM!

This is also why I schedule my Italy Photography Tours during this special time of the year. We have the best opportunities for favorable weather across the entire country.



CAPTURING THE ELUSIVE FOG IN DUBAI

Once I have a specific goal and vision for a photo in mind, I really will invest the days, months, or even years that are sometimes required for the shot. For me, it’s not only about capturing that specific moment, it’s about experiencing it as well. I know that if I’m transfixed and awestruck with the beauty and rarity of the moment I’m witnessing, that my fascination will show its way through to the viewer as well. As I pour my heart and soul into creating these images, I want the viewer to feel some of that love, too. And, ultimately, if I can create an emotional response within the viewer, then I feel I’ve done at least something right with the photograph.

I must admit that while I have plenty of shots that I’m still working towards, none have been more challenging than capturing the elusive fog in Dubai. In my panoramic photo “Tempest,” 5 years of patience and determination finally paid off when I was there in March of 2016, waiting and prepared at the right place and at the perfect time in the early hours of the morning. To date, 5 years is the longest I’ve ever worked to capture a single image.

UNDERSTANDING DUBAI FOG

Similar to the Cherry Blossoms in Japan or the ground fog in Tuscany, there is a specific seasonal window of time to capture the Fog in Dubai. Ranging from October to March, the peak for capturing fog in Dubai occurs between November and February.

Like me, if you don’t live in Dubai, you must plan your visit during this span of time and hope that you become fortunate with a foggy morning, but there’s a bit more to it than that. There is no guarantee that fog will happen each year. In fact, sometimes it manifests multiple times and sometimes it doesn’t happen at all. So even if you spend two weeks there in the peak of fog season, there’s still no guarantee you’ll see it.

Securing a high vantage point is also key to being able to capture the fog. If you’re at ground



level, you’re simply stuck in the cloud and there is nothing to shoot at all. You’re simply left with a blanket of white.

The big challenge here is that there are precious few, free, and high vantage points in Dubai that open prior to sunrise. So for my shot “Tempest,” I decided to book a stay at the Shangri La Hotel to ensure that if the fog rolled in, I’d have a guaranteed location from which to shoot. Even with that in mind, the Shangri La vantage point is only at level 42 and on one of the foggy mornings, that was too low and I was completely engulfed in the fog with no chance of a shot.

TECHNICAL DETAILS: HOW TEMPEST WAS CREATED

My hope is that this article inspires everyone to really put the time and effort into getting the best shots possible. Creative vision, passion, drive, determination, patience, and a whole lot of coffee all really come into play when producing quality work that you can be proud of.

While my shot “Tempest” was special in this regard—considering the incredible amount of time invested to achieve it—it also required a bit of a technical setup as well. Check out the setup here on one of my clear (zero fog) mornings.

I used a combination of my Fujifilm X-Pro2, the Really Right Stuff TFA-01, BH-25 ballhead

TVC-33 / BH-55, Nodal Slide,
Nikon D810 shooting time lapse.
TFA-01 / BH-25 LR, PG-01,
Fujifilm XPro2 capturing the
panoramic images.



1 Example of the panoramic shots before stitching



2 Generate panoramic image using “Photo Merge” feature in Adobe Lightroom



3 Post-processed image using Adobe Photoshop

PRO TIP

With Panos in general, it’s advisable to overlap by at least 1/3. I like to give myself a bit more padding, especially with cityscapes.

(www.rrs.us/0113a), and the PG-01 compact Panoramic Gimbal (www.rrs.us/0113b) to capture the scene. Of course, I made sure that everything was perfectly level (and my nodal point was calculated) before shooting the panoramic series of images.

The Nikon D810 was attached to a BH-55 on top of the TVC-33S Tripod. The nodal slide allowed me to push the camera past the edge of the platform to keep it out of the shot. While the D810 shot a timelapse, I manually moved and triggered the exposures for the pano on the X-Pro2.

After importing the images into Adobe Lightroom, I selected the series I wanted to stitch together based on the quality of light and the texture of the fog. With panos in general, it’s advisable to overlap by at least 1/3. I like to give myself a bit more padding, especially with cityscapes. Keep in mind that these shots are straight out of camera with no editing applied.

To generate the panoramic image, I used the “Photo Merge” feature in Adobe Lightroom. Take a look at the stitched result. Again, these images are straight out of camera.

What you’ll notice is that firstly, the image is extremely dull, and secondly, I have some of the foreground building captured in the frame as well. So using a bit of simple post-processing in Adobe Photoshop, I removed the obstructions in the foreground with the clone stamp tool, and added color, contrast, and overall vibrancy to the entire image to achieve the final result.

PUTTING IN THE MAXIMUM EFFORT FOR THE MAXIMUM RESULT

The quality of my photography is something that is extremely important to me and that’s why I’m willing to invest years of time to achieve one portfolio-worthy shot. After that, it also comes down to simple yet precise post-processing.

If you’re interested in learning how I shoot and post-process my images from start to finish, I’ve developed an extremely high quality and detailed

video tutorial series with the team at Fstoppers that covers every aspect of landscape and cityscape photography.

Find out more at: www.fstoppers.com/elialocardi. Shop our RRS Elia Locardi Travel Packages at: www.reallyrightstuff.com/Elia-Locardi-Travel-Kit. [✦](#)

We would love to know what you thought of this article!
[Click here](#) to send us your comments.

BIO: ELIA LOCARDI



ELIA LOCARDI is an internationally acclaimed professional travel photographer, videographer, Fujifilm Global Ambassador, writer, public speaker, and highly skilled educator who spends his life shooting some of the most beautiful locations in the world.

Location independent since March of 2012, he and his wife live a 100% mobile lifestyle, perpetually traveling from country to country, continuously circling the globe. Since he began traveling full time in 2009, he has visited more than 55 countries, flown over 1 million miles, and collaborated with major brands and tourism agencies in countries all over the world.

As featured by Professional Photographer Magazine, CNet Australia, Wacom USA, and Fstoppers, Elia has built an engaged social media following of nearly 3 million people across Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. Due to the years of dedication and genuine openness with his audience, he has become one of the most followed photographers in the world.

Using a combination of traditional in-camera techniques, targeted times of day, and advanced post-processing methods, Elia has developed a widely recognized and unique style of photography that has become well known around the world. With each photograph, his goal is to share his vision so others can see the world as he does, full of color, texture, beauty, depth and emotion. Many of his photos have been featured in some of the most widely circulated publications in the world, including National Geographic.

Throughout the journey, he shares the Art of Photography on many different websites including his popular blog, blamethemonkey.com, teaches post-processing workshops worldwide, speaks at major international photography conventions, and is proud to be one of the founders and leaders of Dream Photo Tours.



GETTING IT REALLY RIGHT

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
GEORGE D. LEPP

FROM THE EARLY DAYS OF MY CAREER, as Car and Driver's West Coast photographer, through the more than thirty years I've worked as an outdoor and nature photographer, writer for Outdoor Photographer and other magazines, and teacher, I've been known for pushing the limits of equipment and technique—and even inventing new equipment—to achieve precisely the result I'm looking for. The evolution of photographic technology over the course of my professional life has been astounding, constantly driving me forward to imagine, to learn, and to master. For the last quarter century, Really Right Stuff has been at the base—so to speak—of most, if not all, of my excursions into realms far beyond the basics of photography.

Some time before Really Right Stuff became a reality, Bryan Geyer came from Los Angeles to attend several of my photographic workshops in Los Osos, CA. He recognized the need for better quick-release plates to fit the state-of-the-art tripod ballhead of the day, the Arca Swiss B-1. Geyer retired from his job in the aerospace industry, moved to Los Osos, and in 1990 he and his wife Kathy began a family, home-based business, Really Right Stuff.

CONTINUED >>

< Taken with a film camera.

Lens: Canon 180mm Macro



Shutter Speed: 1/60 sec | F-Stop: f/16 | ISO: 100 | Camera: Canon EOS-1DS
Lens: EF 500mm | Focal Length: f/4L



PRO TIP

While few professional nature photographers imagined that the industry standard, the Arca Swiss B-1 ballhead, could be improved, RRS did it: The **RRS BH-55** became my, and most every other nature photographer's, go-to ballhead, with a great lever-activated quick release added a short time later.

I was immediately supportive of this endeavor!

I remember bins of milled parts stacked around the RRS workroom; they represented the many different kinds of cameras and lenses that the Geyers were fitting with custom accessories. Every time Canon sent me a new camera, I'd immediately take it to Bryan so he could get its footprint. Bryan was a perfectionist and worked closely with a local machine shop to produce very fine plates that fit whatever camera or lens you owned. The Geyers and their daughter Carla did all of the selling and shipping. Although Bryan had some unusual ideas about marketing, the company grew and became a staple to serious photographers around the world.

A dozen years later, Joe Johnson came to Los Osos for my workshops, just as Geyer had in 1990. While there, he became familiar with RRS and later heard that the business was for sale. In 2002, Joe and his wife, Joan, acquired RRS and moved to

the Central Coast. The company quickly expanded from the Johnsons' garage to an overflowing small facility in downtown Los Osos, to a larger building in San Luis Obispo, and finally, in 2012, to a beautiful office, development, and production building near the San Luis Obispo airport. Carla Geyer remains with the company to this day. The Johnsons grew the product line to the current 720 products that serve the demands of discriminating photo prosumers—and all of their products are still manufactured in the USA.

I've reviewed many of the favorite images I've captured over the last 26 years and have selected a few that represent my use of RRS equipment as my photographic undertakings have expanded and evolved. What's clear is that from the very first RRS camera plate for my Arca Swiss B-1 ballhead, to the improved RRS BH-55 ballhead, and on to today's FH-350 fluid head for video, RRS products have supported my work, and I've been a loyal fan.

Shutter Speed: 1/60 sec | F-Stop: f/16 | ISO: 100 | Camera: Canon EOS-1DS
Lens: EF 500mm | Focal Length: f/4L

TRADITIONAL LANDSCAPE

Every image published in my book, Golden Poppies of California, was captured with an RRS plate under the camera or the lens. I was an early adopter of model specific plates and quick-release functions that allowed me to change the lens or camera quickly. When L-plates became available, I was pleased that flopping the head and camera to the vertical was no longer necessary; the L-plate offered a faster and more stable solution. To capture this image of a poppy field on the Tejon Pass near Gorman, CA in 2003, I used a Canon EOS 1DS and EF500mm telephoto mounted to a tripod with RRS plates.

WILDLIFE

RRS began manufacturing ballheads after the company was sold to Joe Johnson. While few professional nature photographers imagined that the industry standard, the Arca Swiss B-1 ballhead, could be improved, RRS did it: The RRS BH-55 became my, and most every other nature photographer's, go-to ballhead, with a great lever-activated quick-release added a short time later. Three additional heads in different sizes followed, and I've found a use for every one of them. While photographing a bald eagle nest in Smith Rock State Park, OR, I put two BH-55 ballheads to work, with an EF 500mm (rear) capturing video and an EF 800mm telephoto with two 2X tele-extenders (3200mm) (foreground) capturing stills. Note the RRS tripod under the EF 800mm.

Photographing an eagle chick in the nest at 200 feet away takes a pretty steady setup. To eliminate any vibration that would be caused by touching the camera, a CamRanger attached to the 5D MK III sent a Wi-Fi signal to my iPad, which was used to fire the camera and monitor the subjects in the nest. The camera was set to "Live View" and "Silent LV Shoot Mode 1" to eliminate internal camera vibration. The result was sharp still images and video at 3200mm.

Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec | F-Stop: f/22 | ISO: 1600 | Camera: Canon EOS 5D MK III | Lens: EF 800mm | Focal Length: f/5.6L | Gear: **RRS Carbon Fiber Versa Tripod** and **BH-55 Ballhead**



Photo by Brent McGregor

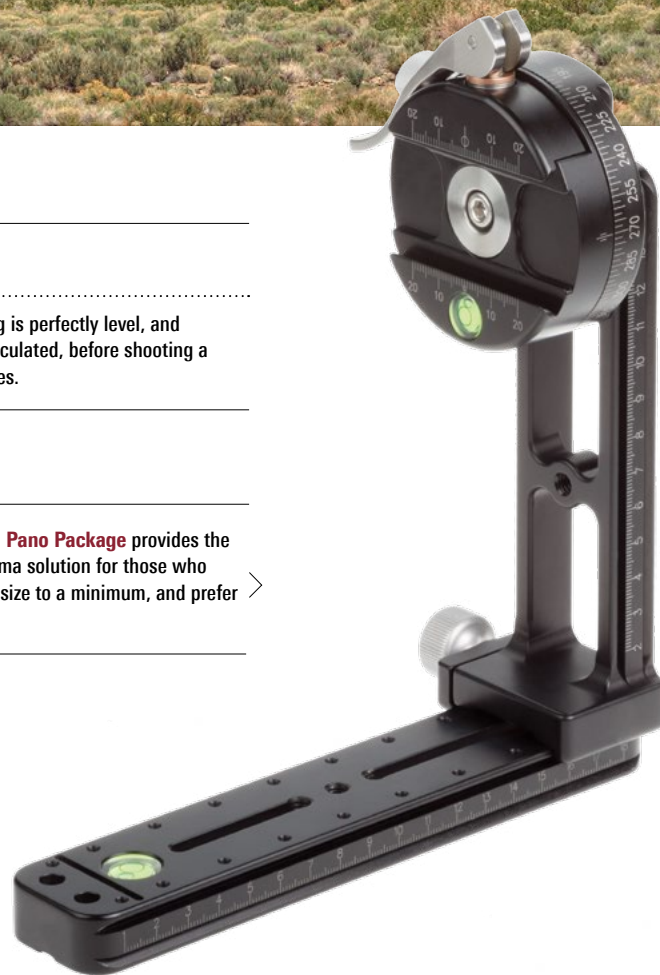




PRO TIP

Make sure that everything is perfectly level, and that the nodal point is calculated, before shooting a panoramic series of images.

The **Lightweight Add-on Pano Package** provides the perfect multi-row panorama solution for those who need to keep weight and size to a minimum, and prefer lever-release clamps.



Shutter Speed: 1/4000sec | F-Stop: f/11 | ISO: 200 | Camera: Canon EOS 5D MK II
Lens: 100-400mm | Focal Length: 195mm (66 Images for HDR of 3, 22 Images pano, 1 Pano)

HIGH-RES PANORAMAS

There are many great panorama tools in the RRS catalogue. This image of Mono Lake, California, is composited from 22 sets of three images at different exposures (for HDR), captured at each of 11 positions in two rows, for a total of 66 exposures. I used the RRS Lightweight Add-on Pano Package to keep my two rows in perfect alignment and each of the 11 positions in the two rows properly spaced. I carry this setup in my camera backpack instead of a heavy GigaPan. The completed file is two GB in size and makes a very large print.

MACRO

Positioning of focus is the key to macro photography, but moving a tripod loaded with camera and lens a few millimeters at a time to achieve it makes no sense; repositioning can be done precisely and effortlessly when camera and lens are mounted to a slider rail. RRS sliders have been a part of my macro kit for many years. In the photograph of the hibiscus flower on the article cover page, I achieved very selective depth of field with a 180mm macro positioned on a RRS slider. As a tool for focus stacking in macro, I often use the B150-B Macro Focusing Rails (www.rrs.us/0119a) to make minute adjustments to the camera's position to capture minute slices of focus for later compositing. An example of this stacking technique is this elephant head wildflower, shown at right, comprised of 10 images captured with the aid of the B150-B.



Shutter Speed: 1/90 sec | F-Stop: f/16
ISO: 200 | Camera: Canon EOS-1DS MK II
Lens: MPE-65mm Macro
Focal Length: 65mm



A snowflake captured at 5X in the wilds of the Oregon Cascades.

Shutter Speed: 1/45 sec | F-Stop: f/5.6 | ISO: 200 | Camera: Canon EOS 70D
Lens: MPE 65mm Macro | Focal Length: 65mm (6 image focus stacked composite at 8X magnification)

EXTREME MACRO

Here's the setup I built to photograph snowflakes in the field, which is one of the more extreme uses of RRS equipment. I took the TP-243 Ground Pod (1) and attached it to a wooden base. On the Ground Pod I used a BH-55 ballhead (www.rrs.us/0120a)



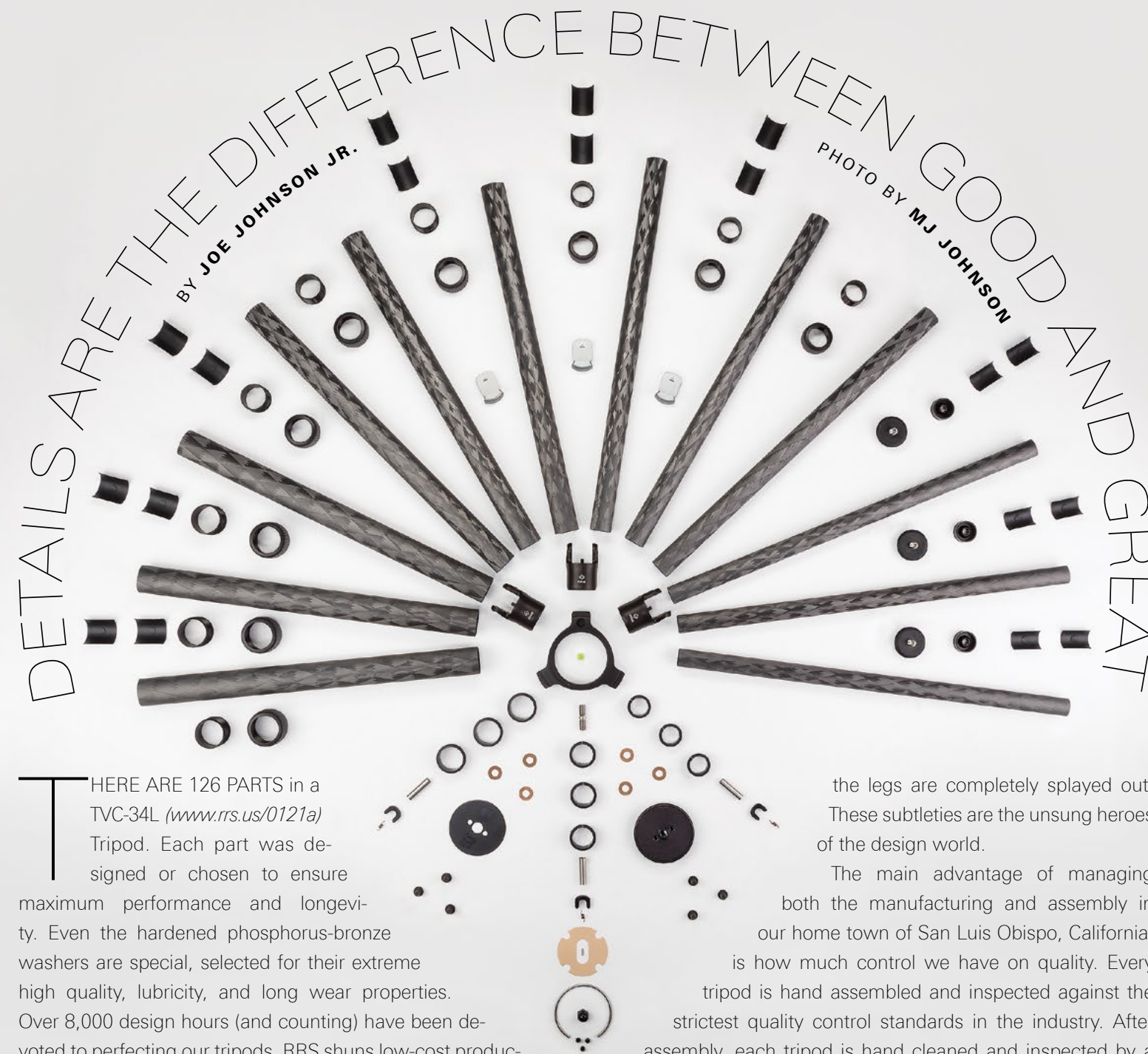
with a StackShot attached (2). The Canon camera has an MP-E 65mm macro Lens attached and set to 5X (3). The Lighting comes from a Canon MT-24EX macro flash (4) and an LED light below with a blue colored gel (5). The snowflake is on a glass plate (6) with two small LED lights for focusing (7). The image from the camera is sent to an iPad for focusing (8) via a CamRanger (9). Finally, there is a controller for the StackShot (10). ❖

We would love to know what you thought of this article!
[Click here](#) to send us your comments.

BIO: GEORGE D. LEPP



ONE OF NORTH AMERICA'S BEST-KNOWN contemporary outdoor and nature photographers and a leader in the field of digital imaging, Lepp is the author of many books and the field editor of *Outdoor Photographer* magazine, where his "Tech Tips" column is widely read. His work is extensively published and exhibited, and his stock photography is represented by Getty Images, Corbis, and Photo Researchers. Lepp is one of the first members of Canon USA's Explorers of Light and Printmasters programs, featuring the industry's most influential photographers. He has presented hundreds of lectures and led workshops all over the world, and often serves as a judge of international photography competitions. Lepp is a founder and fellow of the North American Nature Photographers Association (NANPA) and has won many awards for his work, including the Photographic Society of America's prestigious Progress Award. First trained in wildlife and wildlands management, Lepp later earned a BA and an honorary MSc from Brooks Institute of Photography. George and his wife and collaborator, Kathryn Vincent Lepp, live in Bend, Oregon and can be contacted through his web site, www.GeorgeLepp.com.



THERE ARE 126 PARTS in a TVC-34L (www.rrs.us/0121a) Tripod. Each part was designed or chosen to ensure maximum performance and longevity. Even the hardened phosphorus-bronze washers are special, selected for their extreme high quality, lubricity, and long wear properties. Over 8,000 design hours (and counting) have been devoted to perfecting our tripods. RRS shuns low-cost production practices for the sake of superior performance.

Some features are designed for subtlety and are easily taken for granted, such as the offset leg angle joints that add load-bearing strength, or the Sure-Grip™ platform lock, which ensures that the tripod platform will never accidentally slip out. You may never notice that the oversized rubber feet hit the ground before the twist locks—a feature which protects the twist locks even when

the legs are completely splayed out. These subtleties are the unsung heroes of the design world.

The main advantage of managing both the manufacturing and assembly in our home town of San Luis Obispo, California, is how much control we have on quality. Every tripod is hand assembled and inspected against the strictest quality control standards in the industry. After assembly, each tripod is hand cleaned and inspected by a trusted crew member, a second time, to catch even the smallest imperfections before the tripod is packed. This enables us to respond very quickly to input from both engineers and customers. The synergistic amalgamation of all the individual details is what separates RRS tripods from the rest. The goal was to build a stunningly beautiful tripod that performs even better than it looks. We dare say, we nailed it. ❖

We would love to know what you thought of this article! [Click here](#) to send us your comments.



CHIAROSCURO

IN NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

THE POWER OF DRAMATIC LIGHT

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JENNIFER WU

What is chiaroscuro?

CHIAROSCURO (KEE-AHR-UH-SKYOO-ROH) is a term dating from the Renaissance period and is used in art and photography to describe strong contrast between light and dark areas. Often it features low-key, mostly dark tones or dark backgrounds. The Italian word means light (chiaro) and dark (scuro.) In addition, chiaroscuro is used to describe shading. Light to dark tones show the curves and three-dimensional qualities of a subject, but this aspect is not necessarily low key.

How is chiaroscuro applied to photography?

For photography, chiaroscuro is high contrast, dramatic light or shading on a subject. Chiaroscuro is used to describe

CONTINUED >>

📍 Dettifoss Waterfall, Iceland: Sharp light slices through the dark clouds to illuminate Dettifoss Falls and its rising mist to create a dramatic look of chiaroscuro.

Shutter Speed: 1/50 sec | F-Stop: f/11 | ISO: 200 | Camera: Canon 5DS R
Lens: 16-35mm | Focal Length: f/4L at 22mm

low-key portraits. With Rembrandt lighting, a highlighted triangle of light is placed under the eye on the shadow side of the face. The light can be soft or dramatic, with one half of the face more in shadow than the other. You can see stunning examples of this dramatic lighting in the paintings of Rembrandt and Caravaggio.

Can photographers apply the concept of chiaroscuro in nature photography to create dynamic images?

To find chiaroscuro in nature, look for dramatic weather or high contrast light. Watch the weather for storms with the moody look or dark clouds. Tip: keep an eye on the horizon. If there is a clearing to the west at sunset but still cloudy above, you can get very dramatic light when the sun peeks through along the horizon. Sunlight coming through a break in the clouds above is another situation to look for. Brilliant lights falling on your subject with deep shadowed backgrounds are usually found shortly after sunrise or just before sunset. Flat mid-day light doesn’t cast those long dark shadows needed for a brightly lit subject to contrast against.

These high contrast situations can be difficult to photograph because the camera can’t see the detail in the shadows that our eyes can see. However, we can use this to our advantage—the result will be a background darker than reality, creating chiaroscuro.

Quiver Trees, Namibia: This fits chiaroscuro’s definition of shading for its quality of light. The sidelight has the right side of the trees in bright light, creating a shadow side on the left, giving the image a three-dimensional quality.

Shutter Speed: 1 sec | F-Stop: f/16 | ISO: 100
Camera: Canon 5D Mark III | Lens: 54-70mm
Focal Length: f/2.8L at 34mm



Mesquite Sand Dunes, Death Valley: The strong sunrise light creates deep shadows on one side of the dune and bright light on the other, demonstrating chiaroscuro.

Shutter Speed: 1/15 sec | F-Stop: f/22 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark II
Lens: 70-300mm | Focal Length: f/4-5.6L at 300mm



My assignment for you:

1. Photograph chiaroscuro in low-key. Look for dark backgrounds or dark clouds in nature.
2. Photograph a subject with chiaroscuro showing shading from light to dark.
3. Post your images on the Really Right Stuff Facebook site under the post “Chiaroscuro in Nature Photography.” For these images I used the Really Right Stuff BH-55 ballhead (www.rrs.us/0125a) and the TVC-23 tripod (www.rrs.us/0125b).

Happy Shooting! 💎

We would love to know what you thought of this article!
[Click here](#) to send us your comments.

BIO: JENNIFER WU



JENNIFER WU IS A LEADING NATURE AND LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHER, educator and author. She specializes in photographing the night sky. With a BA in Photography from California State University, Sacramento, Jennifer has spent over 30 years photographing. She has been named by Canon USA for the Explorer Of Light program. Her images have been published in numerous magazines and books. She is the co-author and photographer of the book *Photography Night Sky: A Field Guide to Shooting After Dark* (2014, Mountaineers Books). Jennifer enjoys sharing her passion and techniques for nature photography through seminars and workshops in locations such as Namibia, Yosemite, Hawaii, and Alaska. Visit her website at www.jenniferwu.com.

SEASIDE SHOOTING

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
ATHENA CAREY

MANY OF US ARE DRAWN TO THE SEA, for its magical mix of energy and calm that can, at least for the moment, make every other thing in life seem unimportant. With this dichotomy of power and serenity, it also has many faces, a single location transforming across the course of a day, a week, a season, and a year. It's understandable why we, as photographers, are tempted to capture even just a shadow of this fleeting beauty. I find myself endlessly drawn by the ocean's mystique and tirelessly (ok, sometimes exhaustedly) committed to capturing its many moods. Along the way, I have learned a few things that make this mission easier, more enjoyable, and more successful. A little bit of preparedness can go a long way.

PERSONAL ITEMS

A day shooting at the beach sounds lovely, but the reality of seaside shooting is that I am often there before and after daylight hours. This means enduring less than lovely weather conditions, all in the hopes of capturing an empty beach, the best light, or a special weather feature. Having the things you need to keep you comfortable enables you to stay long enough to get the shots you want.

Try to prepare ahead of time for the expected weather conditions, then be ready for them to change. Sunny days mean sunscreen, insect repellent, sunglasses, a hat, water, and snacks. These are the “easy” days.

The harder, but often more beautiful, days are the cold ones. Bring an extra layer of clothing, a hat, some gloves, and wear thick socks. It's important to know where you feel the cold. If you usually

CONTINUED >>

DeKelders

Shutter Speed: 172 sec | F-Stop: f/11 | ISO: 100
Camera: Canon EOS 5D Mark III
Lens: TS-E24mm f/3.5L II | Focal Length: 24mm



Standing in the last light of the day at the Ballydowane stack in the Irish Copper Coast, I used a 1 stop ND filter to catch the movement in one of the higher waves, creating these beautiful lines through the foreground of the image.

Shutter Speed: 4 sec | F-Stop: f/11
ISO: 100 Camera: Sony A7r | Lens: 24mm
Gear: **RRS TVC-24** tripod, Lee filters, and Holder

have a cold head, then bring an extra hat. No matter what, bring a warm drink and some snacks. Staying fueled will keep you warm and happy.

In workshops I have noticed that most beginner seaside shooters stay well clear of the water's edge, particularly in cold weather. This is understandable, but there are amazing shots to be had by shooting from in the water. Wear waterproof shoes in winter, go barefoot if you can in summer, and get in it.

TIMING

You want to be out when the light is best for your photographs. This means sunrise and sunset, be-

cause within these hours the sun has farther to travel through our atmosphere and the light becomes beautifully diffused in the process.

You must also consider the tides. Low tide may reveal an ugly rock bed or uncover a field of gloppy seaweed. High tide can be dangerous, trapping you in coves without an escape. Know what tide you need for the shots you want, and check the tide tables to be sure you are there for them. Tide charts can be bought locally at fishing shops or checked online for free in most places.

More than likely, you also don't want a throng of tourists in your photographs, so go during the off season, when there are no crowds to deal with. The added benefit is that local accommodations will be cheaper, and the sunrise and sunset will occur at easier-to-manage hours.

GEAR

Know what you need and have it with you. Not only with you, but where you can find it. It helps to always pack your camera bag the same way. This will save you wasted time digging around your bag looking for a cable release while the

precious moments of a stunning sunrise light pass quietly by.

Out in the best light you will most likely be shooting at slower shutter speeds. A strong, stable tripod is a must. And shooting for a variety of compositions means shooting both horizontally and vertically, so I also recommend an L-bracket on your camera. On rocky beaches or a cliffside, you are often sufficiently secure with the normal feet of your tripod, but on sandy beaches or grassy shores, you definitely want to use spikes on your tripod to ensure stability.

Landscape shooting often includes the horizon, and as such having a level composition is very important. Some cameras offer reliable internal levels, but others do not. Be sure to test yours and if needed, bring a level (hot shoe mount or on your tripod) with you to avoid wasting time later leveling and cropping your images, throwing away valuable pixels in the process.

In rough weather, you may want to protect the front of your lens from sand and sea spray with a filter; either a UV filter or a circular polarizer will work. With sideways light, the latter will also let you darken your skies or reduce reflections on the water.

Neutral Density filters are like sunglasses for your sensor. They cut the light coming in through the lens, allowing you to have longer shutter speeds, resulting in everything that is moving (such as waves or clouds) to appear blurred. This is one way to express the calm, serene essence of the ocean. The brighter the day, the more powerful filters you will need to lengthen the shutter speeds.

FUN

Once you have made these preparations, you can just relax and experience the location; breathe it in and let it flow through you. Now capture that feeling with your beautiful images. ✦

We would love to know what you thought of this article!
[Click here](#) to send us your comments.



Avalon

Shutter Speed: 48 sec | F-Stop: f/11 | ISO: 100 | Camera: Sony A7r
Lens: FE 16-35mm F4 ZA OSS

BIO: ATHENA CAREY



ATHENA CAREY IS AN AWARD WINNING travel photographer specializing in long exposure and black and white photography. She is widely recognized for her ability to capture the emotional essence of "place and time" within her images. Her photographs transport you to cliffsides, seashores, lakesides, fields and forests, waterfalls and mountains.

Athena's career in photography began as a portrait photographer, where her greatest goal was to create images that expressed each client's personality—a sparkle of their inner self, seen through the window of a two dimensional image. But her love of the world and of nature lured her outside into the exciting and rewarding world of travel photography, where her goal remains virtually the same, to capture the essence of each place.

One of Athena's greatest pleasures is sharing photography with others. She teaches the technical aspects of photography, how to connect to your own artistic vision, and how to use these two together to create beautiful, powerfully expressive photographs. She teaches photo courses online and locally, and offers workshops and tours around the world.

Her keen appreciation for the natural beauty of our planet drives her excitement about each new and next destination, whether it's the glorious Irish coast or the local fishing hole. There is beauty and wonder to be found everywhere.

For more information on Athena's work visit her website: www.athenacarey.com



I have filters with me (the pouch on my left shoulder), but for the image I was making, I needed none as the light was still low (pre-dawn). We'd gotten up insanely early, made the long drive down to Botany Bay and then biked out to the shore to arrive before the sunrise. It was well worth it. (Photo by Alistair)

Camera: Canon 5Dmk3 Gear: **TVC-24** with a **BH-40 LR Ballhead**



PRO TIP

There are amazing shots to be had by shooting from in the water. On rocky beaches or a cliffside, you are often sufficiently secure with the normal feet of your tripod, but on sandy beaches or grassy shores, you definitely want to use spikes on your tripod to ensure stability.

ONE WEEK ON THE MARA

TOP TIPS FOR MAKING WILDLIFE IMAGES WITH IMPACT

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICK SAMMON



A wide shot of me on safari. That's my guide, Simon, who gets a lot of the credit for the photographs featured here. He positioned me for the best possible shot dozens and dozens of times during my one week on the Mara.

If this custom safari vehicle looks familiar, that is because you saw it in the TV series "Big Cat Diaries" hosted by my good friend Jonathan Scott. Jonathan loaned me the vehicle for the week, so he also gets part of the credit for my photographs.

WHEN I TEACH A PHOTO WORKSHOP, I BEGIN BY ASKING THE PARTICIPANTS THIS QUESTION: "WHAT IS YOUR GOAL?" I ASK THAT QUESTION BECAUSE SETTING A GOAL IS SO VERY IMPORTANT IN OUR PHOTOGRAPHY, AND OF COURSE IN LIFE.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE have different goals, but one goal that I am hearing more and more is this: "I want to make images with impact." It's a great goal, and one that I often set for myself.

In this article I'll share with you my top tips for making images with impact in wildlife photography. To illustrate my tips, I'll share with you some of my favorite photographs from a one-week photo safari to Kenya's Maasai Mara in 2014.

Let's go.

SHOOT FOR THE PEAK OF ACTION

The image of two lions that opens this article was taken when both lions were roaring at their loudest and had their jaws fully extended. That's the moment for which I was waiting. To reach that goal, I waited patiently, set my camera on a high frame rate, set the focus to AI servo focus, focused carefully—and shot.

The backdrop was a clutter of tall grass, so I chose a wide aperture to blur the background, causing the two animals to stand out in the frame.

The Lion King

Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec | F-Stop: f/6.3 | ISO: 500 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon EF 200-400mm





PRO TIP

The correct way to hold a long lens on a tripod: one hand on the camera body and one hand on the end of the lens and the lens hood. Or check out our **Long Lens Support Package**.

GET THE SHARPEST POSSIBLE SHOT

Yes, good glass is important for getting sharp shots, but so is keeping your camera steady. To steady my camera, I use RRS tripods and RRS ballheads.

In addition to providing rock-steady shooting, and fast and easy recomposing with state-of-the-art ballheads, the engineering of RRS gear has never let me down in my travels to almost 100 countries.

This photo best illustrates the correct way to hold a long lens on a tripod: one hand on the camera body and one hand on the end of the lens and the lens hood. This technique provides maximum stability, which is important when shooting with long lenses—especially when shooting at relatively slow shutter speeds.

The Killing Machine

Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec | F-Stop: f/5.6 | ISO: 200 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS UMS



MAKE EYE CONTACT

Making direct eye contact with a wild animal can produce an image with impact, especially when the animal may see you as a potential snack! You'll

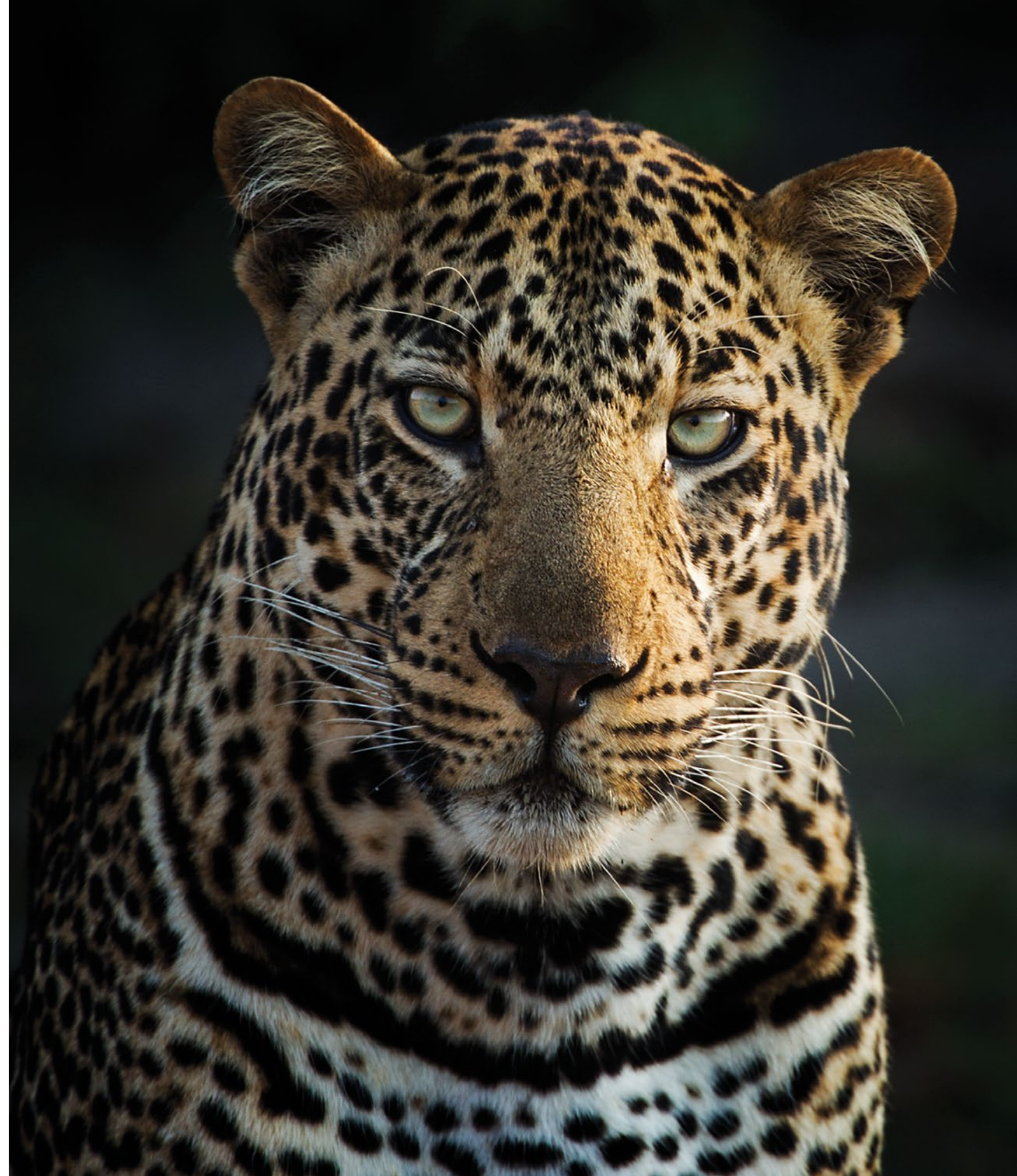
YOU'LL GET MAXIMUM IMPACT WHEN YOU SEE EYE-TO-EYE AND SHOOT EYE-TO-EYE.

get maximum impact when you see eye-to-eye and shoot eye-to-eye. Here I got down as low as possible for maximum eye contact.

This fun behind-the-scenes shot was taken by Susan Sammon.

Shutter Speed: 1/800 sec | F-Stop: f/9 | ISO: 500 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III | Lens: Canon EF 200-400mm

Featuring a **BH-55 LR ballhead** and a **TVC-24L**.





GO FOR GESTURE

Gesture—the expression on an animal’s face, the position of the ears or paws, the body language and so on—can make the difference between an OK shot and a great shot. The key is to look for and be very aware of gesture.

It is the gestures on the faces of these three little lion cubs that give this image impact. Not necessarily a strong impact, but rather an impact that conveys the feeling of “oh how cute!”

Marsh Lion Cubs

Shutter Speed: 1/160 sec | F-Stop: f/5.6 | ISO: 500 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon EF 200-400mm f/4L IS USM EXT

THE TRICK TO GETTING A GOOD BACKLIT PHOTOGRAPH IS TO BE IN THE RIGHT POSITION TO CAPTURE THAT BACKLIGHT, AND TO EXPOSE FOR THE HIGHLIGHTS.

BACK LIGHT IS NICE LIGHT

Backlit wildlife photographs have impact (when you have a good subject) because backlight adds a beautiful and peaceful glow to the subject.

The trick to getting a good backlit photograph is to be in the right position to capture that backlight, and to expose for the highlights. My guide Simon got me into the best position for this backlit photograph of a lioness and her cubs. Activating my camera’s highlight alert, and reducing my exposure by -0.33 EV, ensured that the highlights were not blown out.

A Mother’s Love

Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec | F-Stop: f/5.6 | ISO: 500 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon EF 200-400mm f/4L IS USM EXT



Pride of the Mara

Shutter Speed: 1/320 sec | F-Stop: f/8 | ISO: 500 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon EF 200-400mm f/4L IS USM EXT

MOOD MATTERS MOST

A technically perfect photograph often has impact, but not always. The most important element in a photograph is the feeling it conveys to the viewer.

For example, an overcast sky can create a soft and peaceful mood. An intimate wildlife encounter can create a wonderful feeling of being close with nature. An expression or gesture can turn a good photograph into a memorable photograph. All of these elements came together to make this photo of two lionesses with their cubs one of my favorite images from my photo safari.

So even if you have the best camera and lens and tripod and ballhead on the planet, keep in mind that mood matters most.



RRS makes world class support equipment for your camera and lenses. Shown here: a **BH-55 LR Ballhead** on a **TVC-34L Tripod**.



The Crossing

Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec | F-Stop: f/9
ISO: 640 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon 70-300mm f/4-5.6L IS UMS

CONSIDER COMPOSITION AND CROPPING

Getting the best in-camera composition is important. Cropping in Photoshop and Lightroom gives us a second chance at composition. Put composition and cropping together and you have what I call, “croposition.”

Generally speaking, the tighter the crop, the more impact of the image. In this photograph, for example, I cropped out most of the boring sky and boring grass in the foreground for an image with impact. Being surrounded by hundreds of animals had an impact on me, for sure.



When you look at all the other images in this article, you will see that each is tightly cropped. That said, there is something to be said for dead (or negative) space in a photograph.

DON'T FORGET TO GO WIDE

Wildlife photography is most often associated with long telephoto lenses. Sure, they are needed for the “up close and personal” shots of animals. However, wide-angle lenses can be just as important and valuable. They are used to tell “sense-of-place” photographs and to take photos emphasizing the environment.

For this photograph of wildebeest and zebra crossing the Mara River during the annual migration, I used my Canon 24-105mm lens set at 92mm. Choosing a small aperture and focusing 1/3 into the scene gave me maximum depth of field, so the captured scene looks the same way the scene looked to my eyes: everything in focus.

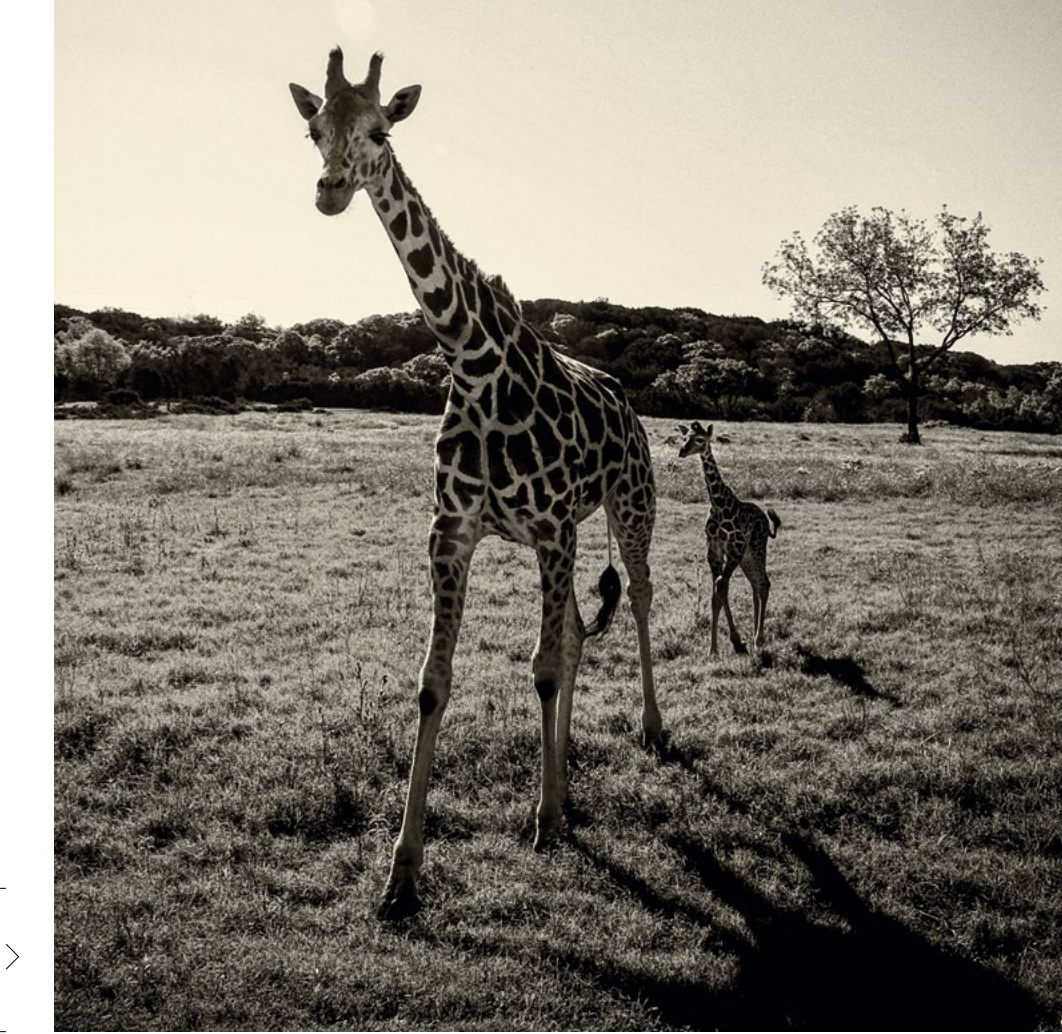
Running Across the Mara River

Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec | F-Stop: f/10 | ISO: 320 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon EF 24-105mm f.4L IS USM

BEFORE GOING ON AN AFRICAN PHOTO SAFARI, PRACTICE CLOSE TO HOME. FOSSIL RIM WILDLIFE CENTER IN GLEN ROSE, TEXAS IS A WONDERFUL PLACE TO PRACTICE ALL THE AFOREMENTIONED TECHNIQUES.

Following Mommy

Shutter Speed: 1/250 sec | F-Stop: f/14 | ISO: 320 | Camera: Canon 5D Mark III
Lens: Canon EF 24-105mm f.4L IS USM



FINAL TIP

Here’s one final tip: Before you go an on African photo safari, practice close to home. Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Glen Rose, Texas is a wonderful place to practice all the aforementioned techniques. With some creative composition, cropping and digital enhancements, you can get “Out of Africa” type pictures in that wonderful wildlife park. I took this photograph of a mommy giraffe and her newborn during one of my Fossil Rim photo workshops. 💎

We would love to know what you thought of this article!

[Click here](#) to send us your comments.

BIO: RICK SAMMON



A CANON EXPLORER OF LIGHT and award-winning photographer, Rick Sammon loves his day job. A tireless, prolific and inspirational image-maker, Rick is called by some “The Godfather of Photography.” He divides his time between creating images, leading photo workshops, and making personal appearances.

Rick’s enthusiasm for digital imaging is contagious. He is a man on a mission—a mission to make digital photography fun, creative, exciting and rewarding for others.

While Rick describes himself as “evolving,” he hesitates to categorize his work. “I’m an A-to-Z type of photographer. I do it all—and I enjoy the freedom of not specializing.” Rick asserts: “When you are through changing, you are through.”

Rick’s latest book, published in April 2015, is *Creative Visualization for Photographers*. For more information about Rick’s workshops and work, please visit www.RickSammon.com, or contact him at ricksammon@me.com.



STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY
KAREN HUTTON

*L*IGHT AND LANDSCAPE: I see and experience both of these things in a kind of poetic, spiritual way, as though they were quite literally the Brushstroke of creation itself.

So I'm going to start there: with what photographing landscapes is really like for me, at the heart of it. It's the context for everything that comes next. People often ask me what gear I use, how I post-process, what camera settings to use, what kind of camera.

I personally think all of those questions are answered—and the best results are created—from the inside out.

You see, when I'm out there, it feels holy. Like I'm standing squarely in the magical, mystical matrix of life.

A gorgeous landscape whispers its secrets, it doesn't yell. (OK, maybe it hollers a bit in a thunderstorm.) But above all, the world of landscape has an "is-ness" about it.

It's bold in that it simply exists, for better or worse. It does not apologize. It doesn't judge. It endures. To me, it stands for the power of life itself.

Each landscape has its own mood, gesture, story and light. Sometimes it's veiled, like when there's fog or rain or snow.

LIGHT, LANDSCAPE AND THE BRUSHSTROKE OF CREATION

Brushstroke of Creation

CONTINUED >>

GhostBarn

Shutter Speed: 30 sec | F-Stop: f/7.1
Camera: Fujifilm X-T10 | Lens: Fujifilm
XF 16-55mm f/2.8 R LM WR Lens
Focal Length: 35.3mm

The Spread: captured with a **BH-40 LR** on **TQC-14 Tripod**

Shutter Speed: 1/60 sec | F-Stop: f/10
ISO: 500 | Camera: Fujifilm X-T1
Lens: XF10-24mmF4 R OIS
Focal Length: 10mm



PRO TIP

I grab my **TQC-14 tripod** and **BH-40 ballhead** for travel and keep my **PG-02 pano-gimbal/nodal slider** always handy for panoramas. I've got **L-plates** on all my Fujifilm cameras.

Sometimes the colors are so bold you can't believe its real.

But it is. Bold and gentle and outrageous, unforgetting and existing by its own set of rules.

Every time I find myself standing before an epic landscape, I'm reminded that I am there by the grace of that which created the entire shebang. I feel humbled, honored, grateful. And I know I have a job to do.

I am its bard, its poet, its very own portrait-maker, drawn by an irrevocable power and beauty that only truly reveals its true self if you open your heart to it.

I want to convey the feeling, to somehow capture even the merest breath of majesty for those who might not otherwise experience its almighty reverence—and for myself to always remember it.

What does it have to say? What must it say or forever perish? Or is it me that needs to sing out loud and be heard? Either way...

My voice becomes its voice.

It whispers, stirs my heart and shifts my spirit into alignment with the Miraculous.

Each epic landscape shows me that magic is both a soaring power and an everyday occurrence, all in the same gesture.

It reminds me that way back when my mother took us out of man's church and brought us into the "church of nature" as she called it, she placed us into the hands of the almighty. She trusted.

That is where I learned to see, and hear, and speak. To give voice to a truth far beyond the obvious.

That is the landscape of my life. That is the story I can't stop telling.

The story of light... told with the power of vision and cameras that literally let me create with light.

Telling this story takes preparation. It takes patience, endurance and vision.

And it takes the breath of divinity to carry me through and beyond myself into the heartbeat of what lies before me: the brushstroke of creation.

So you see, this context is at play whenever I go out to photograph landscapes. It's why I find it difficult when someone asks about cameras, gear, settings and all that first. I always want to answer

"What's your context? What's your story?"

The gear I use must perform in concert with my own story, the way I see the world and want to feel when I photograph. Top of my list: artistic, technically flawless, elegant, ergonomic and beautiful. I want my equipment to help me get to the next level, to elevate me into my "zone".

It has to not care what temperature it is, and mustn't need to be coddled.

That's why I love Really Right Stuff. Nothing holds a candle to it for the job I need it to do. I started with a TVC-23 (www.rrs.us/0141a) and BH-55 (www.rrs.us/0141b) ballhead, which is still my standard for landscape work at home. I grab my TQC-14 (www.rrs.us/0141c) tripod and BH-40 (www.rrs.us/0141d) ballhead for travel and keep my PG-02 (www.rrs.us/0141e) pano-gimbal/nodal slide always handy for panoramas. I've got L-plates on all my Fujifilm cameras.

RRS holds my gear rock-solid on any terrain, yet it adjusts like silk. I have old injuries in my hands from years of training horses. They'll flare up if I wrench and tussle with difficult gear, especially in the cold. This is where RRS really shines for me: when it's two degrees Fahrenheit and all the knobs still work like they did in the middle of summer.

THE SPREAD

Whenever it snows, I'm out for first tracks in the morning! It's just like skiing; there's nothing like fresh powder. It's even better if it's actually snowing, which it was this day in Donner State Park, Truckee, CA. I snowshoed in and could barely catch my breath with excitement over the otherworldly quality that the fresh snow and the soft, diffused, early morning light cast on everything.

The results may be realistic—or somewhat more

fantastical. Both possibilities seemed present in the forest that day.

Panoramas are fun, too. I started by using my regular ballheads, but a pano-gimbal head made everything so much easier. I started with the PG-02, but it wasn't that much fun to hike with. Now with the PG-01 (www.rrs.us/0141f) there's no excuse not to bring it along.

STATELY DWELLER

This was when I was still using the bigger pano head, the PG-02. I live near Lake Tahoe and I love being here in the summer thunderstorm season... or monsoon season, as I lovingly call it.

Days will start clear and get hot. Then the afternoon thunderstorms bubble up out of the east and set up for spectacular sunsets.

Stately Dweller

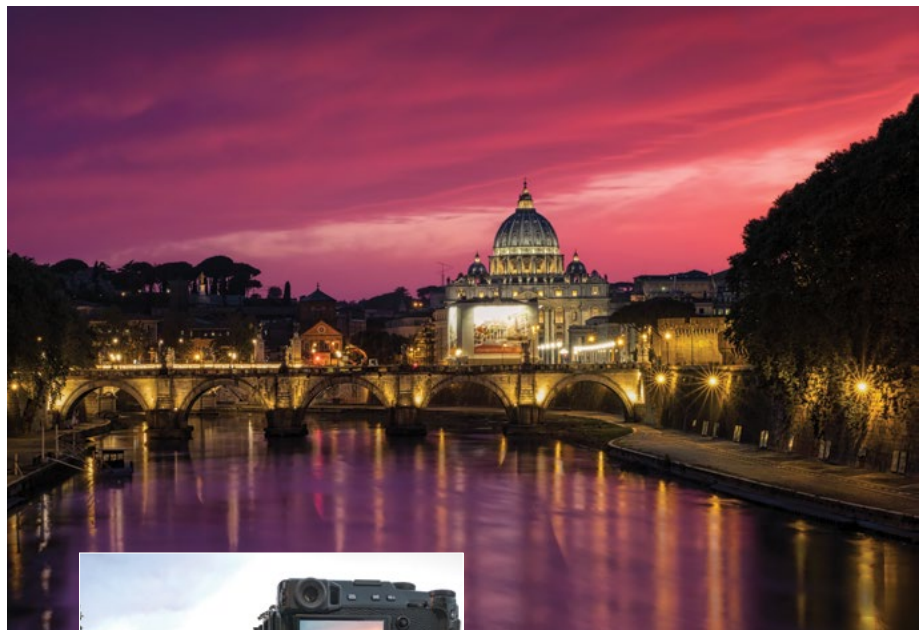
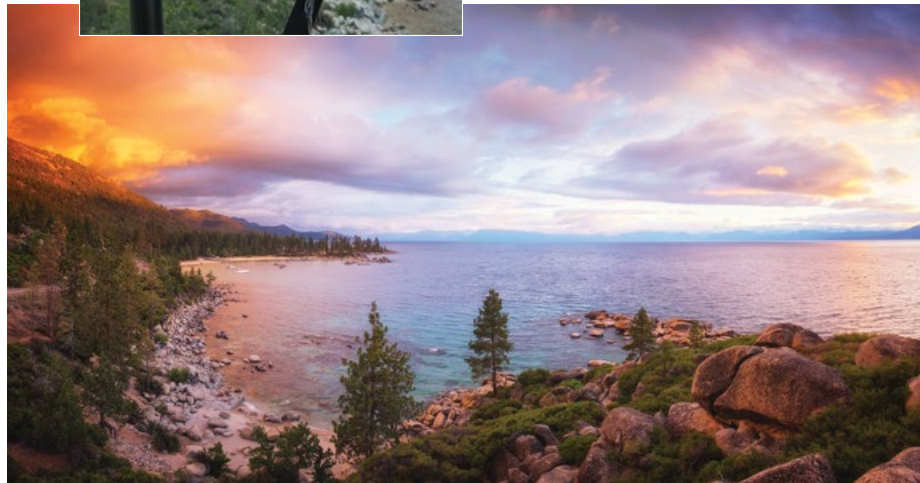
Shutter Speed: 1/90 sec | F-Stop: f/11
ISO: 200 | Camera: Fujifilm X-T1
Lens: Fujifilm XF 16-55mm
f/2.8 R LM WR Lens





Overlooking Delicious: captured with a **PG-02 LR Gimbal Head with MPR-192**

Shutter Speed: 1/2 sec | F-Stop: f/18 | ISO: 200
Camera: Fujifilm X-T1 | Lens: XF Fujifilm XF 16-55mm
f/2.8 R LM WR Lens | Focal Length: 16mm



St. Peter's at Night

Shutter Speed: 14 sec | F-Stop: f/18 | ISO: 250
Camera: Fujifilm X-Pro2 | Lens: Fujifilm XF 16-55mm
f/2.8 R LM WR Lens | Focal Length: 45.5mm

OVERLOOKING DELICIOUS

I didn't want to use a wide angle lens for this, because I didn't want the center to diminish. I wanted the perspective I saw with my eyes. Hence, a pano.

I usually start photographing as soon as the colors begin to change... and even if these sunsets don't look like they're going to amount to much, I always hang in there until the very end. I've seen seemingly disappointing sunsets burst into a secondary kaleidoscope of color after the sun's gone down and reflects back up from underneath the clouds.

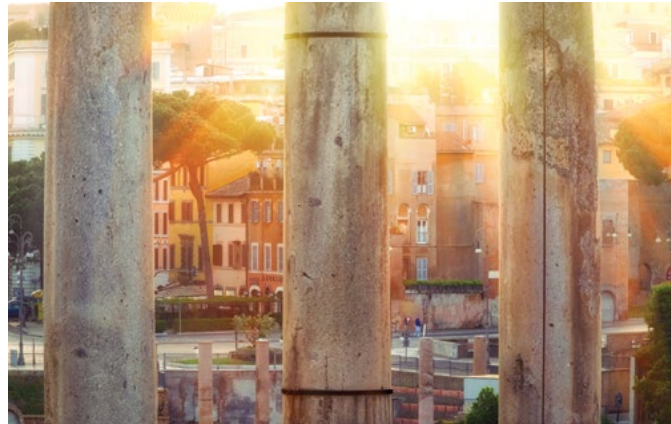
ST. PETER'S AT NIGHT

This was taken in Rome during a recent project I did with Valerie Jardin and Fujifilm. I'd scouted down by the river, trying to find a unique perspective of St. Peter's from this angle for a sunset... but the best spot was the traditional Ponte Sisto Bridge shot. I had to wait a few days, constantly checking the sky for clouds. Finally, it happened. Clouds! I prayed they'd last all day and not burn off right at the last minute, which happens a lot at home. I kept looking up, becoming more and more hopeful as the day wore on. No sign of burn off! So an hour before the sun was due to set, I got my gear together, headed down to the river, set up and waited.

I felt almost lazy, hanging out with my tripod on the wall. But when the sunset went off, I didn't care! Here's a shot of my tripod on the wall, trying out different compositions. I blended two images for the final: one exposed for the lights on the buildings, the other for the super pink sky and reflection in the water.

STORMY FORUM

The Roman Forum was just astounding. It sits in the middle of the huge city, protected and just... there! I photographed it twice: once on my first day in Rome at sunset as seen in "Stormy Forum." The clouds were impossible to resist! And again at



Pillars of Light

Shutter Speed: 1/35 sec | F-Stop: f/10 | ISO: 500 | Camera: Fujifilm X-T1
Lens: Fujifilm XF 50-140mm f/2.8 R LM OIS WR Lens | Focal Length: 106mm

THE ROMAN FORUM WAS JUST ASTOUNDING. IT SITS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE HUGE CITY, PROTECTED AND JUST... THERE!

sunrise in "Pillars of Light." The clouds were impossible to resist!

You may notice I have an extra clamp in between the bottom of the ballhead and the post. That's so I can swap quickly between ballheads and my PG-01. It's worth a little extra weight to make changes quickly and not lose my concentration between set ups. In winter, it saves my hands.

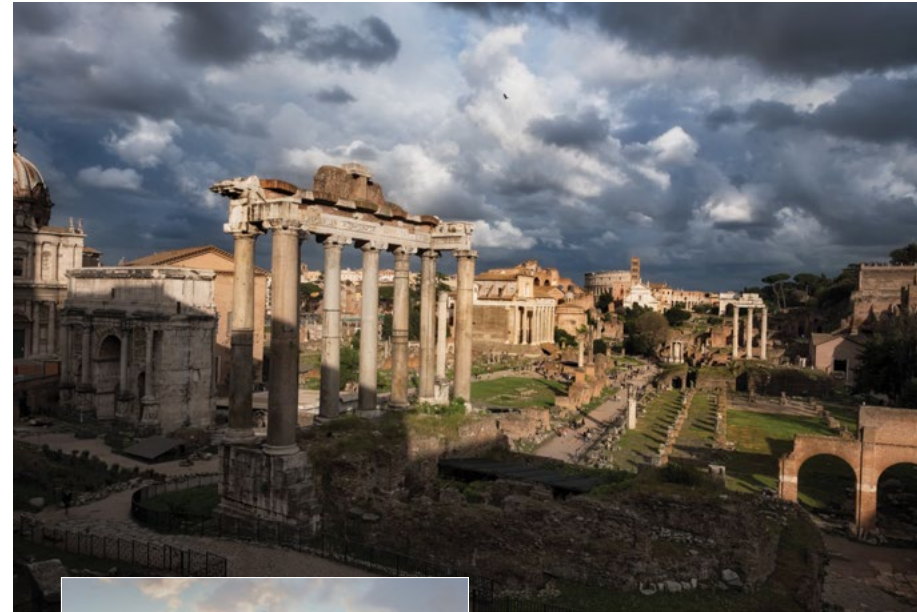
Each one of these scenes made my heart flutter. Each of them had their own story to tell, through my eyes and lenses. It's a spiritual experience for me. Poetic. Hard to define or quantify or even explain.

But in each case, the gear I chose allowed me to dive deep into my "zone." It helped me, gave me ideas, made it seamless to translate the sublime feeling of the moment into a final image.

All the images you see in this piece were taken using RRS gear to support my Fujifilm cameras. All chosen for the way they help me speak in light. 💎

We would love to know what you thought of this article!

[Click here](#) to send us your comments.



Stormy Forum: captured with a **BH-40 LR** and a **TH-DVTL-40** for quickly swapping heads, featuring the **B2-LR-II** on the tripod platform.

Shutter Speed: 1/900 sec | F-Stop: f/8 | ISO: 250
Camera: Fujifilm X-Pro2 | Lens: Fujifilm XF 16-55mm
f/2.8 R LM WR Lens | Focal Length: 16mm

BIO: KAREN HUTTON



KAREN HUTTON is an International Landscape and Travel Photographer, Artist, Speaker, Author, and Educator. Her voice has been heard around the world in commercials, apps (including Stuck on Earth), tutorials and television. Karen was also one of the Inception Masters of The Arcanum. She's a fan of and has used Really Right Stuff gear for many years now.

She is a Professional Fujifilm X-Photographer and has been featured at Google, Photo Plus Expo and on Stuck in Customs, TWiP, Macphun Software, Forbes.com, The Grid, and Landscape Photography Magazine, among other venues.

She lives in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California. You can find her at KarenHutton.com.



Q&A

ON MOBILE PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY

INTERVIEW AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUSSELL BROWN



A **TFA-01 Ultra** with a **BPC-16** prototype were used to capture the icebergs of Greenland.

AN INTERVIEW WITH RUSSELL PRESTON BROWN, SR.,
CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT ADOBE SYSTEMS INCORPORATED,
ON MOBILE PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY.

Q: What drives your craft, inspires your photos, and brings you focus?

I started my career in photography in 1973 (heaven help me, I'm that old.) And what has always inspired me is the discovery aspect of photography—it is like a search for gold. Gold is out there, but it is difficult to find. You have to dig around under rocks, and so, similarly, you have to get out there to find the perfect image. This is what inspires me—that there is no image sitting there, ready to be found. This is what fuels my desire to travel the world.

In the same way that the "Forty-niners" rushed to California with gold fever, photographers are tempted by the promise of a perfect photo. These "Forty-niners" were overcome with fever when they would find just littlest pieces of gold, because they would get a taste for it. The experience of capturing gold, and being able to then share it with others, is addicting. Once you have done that, you cannot rest until you can once again go out and find more gold—if only to brag.

CONTINUED >>

BECAUSE OF THE RISE OF MOBILE PHONE PHOTOGRAPHY, WE SEE A LOT OF GOOD, BUT VERY LITTLE GREAT.



PRO TIP

Every photo taken in this article was taken on an iPhone 6.

The world of photography, especially because of social media, has now become quite the brag-fest. It is at a point where now our photos are driven by the desire to show others what we have captured and to prove that what we are doing is somehow distinct from what everyone else is doing. It is all very addicting. What drives me is the desire to capture new things—the things I have never seen before.

Q: Where do you think the art of photography is headed?

I think the art of photography has changed quite a lot. The great masters of photography started with film in the darkroom, which took a lot of time and precision. In fine art photography people still take the time to think through their photos, but conversely there is now the world of online photography which demands rapid production. As a dear friend of mine has said, “good is not good enough anymore.” Thanks to the internet, we see a lot of good all day long. This new immediacy of photography has totally changed the landscape.

Because of the rise of mobile phone photography, we see a lot of good, but very little great. This is what will stop me on social media. I will only stop and “Like” a photo if it is truly great. I post a lot of good things, and will usually get about 100 “Likes,” but I know when I have posted a great thing because it will get 300 “Likes.” That is my meter, which is pretty low considering most of my friends get thousands of “Likes.” So is that what photography has come down to? “Likes?” Unfortunately, I don’t think photography is headed toward more physical galleries, but rather, toward an even more dominant social media landscape.

I love fine prints hung on the wall, but I am afraid

the art of photography is headed toward being exclusively digital, not museums. These days it is a tough thing to try and persuade people to even print a photo. I often wonder if photos even really exist anymore. I take photos and store them on CDs and flash drives, but as I update computer systems and devices, I have to wonder: what happens when I have updated past the point of compatibility? Do all those photos just disappear? So in short: I think photography is headed toward the world of lights.

How much of mobile photography is instinctual as opposed to premeditated?

I premeditate the location I am headed to, or the model I am bringing. I love shooting models, by the way. Someone you paid to pose for you, with the right placement within a landscape, I absolutely love. I think mobile photography is very instinctual. You are walking around waiting for a moment to strike you. I have gotten better at taking photos by watching other people follow their instincts. There is a moment when, as soon as I walk into a scene I can just say, “Wow! There is a photo here.” It just clicks that something is happening that must be captured.

I don’t think mobile photography can be separated from big kid photography (like DSLR) in this. They both are instinctual in telling you a photo is present at a certain time in a certain location. It is definitely not an instinct that comes immediately. Even Ansel Adams had to learn to find, frame, and move into the right moment.

What drives me is the desire to capture new things—the things I have never seen before.





Q: Do you prefer mobile photography to any other genre?

Yes. I have gravitated toward it despite shooting film, even working in darkrooms, and shooting DSLR. I love big, high quality lenses with all their pixels. But mobile phone photography has grabbed more of my imagination, and I know I am more creative within that genre than any other. I believe I can be faster and more creative on the spot. It is not just the camera that comes on a mobile phone, but the applications that come too. There are tools for exposure, time lapse, video, compositing, and panorama blending; I with my phone am a collection of all the tools I could need. I no longer need to use my computer to assist me in creatively capturing a moment. By doing everything on my phone, I am able to follow my instinct for that moment completely.

THE PERFECT SHOT TAKES ME BY SURPRISE. IT IS LIKE WHEN YOU ARE DIGGING FOR GOLD AND SUDDENLY—THERE IT IS! YOU ARE IN THE MOMENT AND THE MOMENT COMES THROUGH.

I have watched photographers with twenty thousand dollars’ worth of equipment hanging off of them, in a crucial moment, pull out their smart phones for fear of missing that moment. They are capturing for speed. Their color quality and stitching is taken care of on the spot, and so they have immediate results. On an Iceland photo trip, I was surrounded by photographers with bags of heavy and expensive equipment, and there I was shooting next to them with nothing but my iPhone. This twisted their minds; they couldn’t understand it! I even had people ask me, “Russ, what if this is the only time you get to see icebergs in Greenland?” And when I got home I knew there

I have watched photographers with twenty thousand dollars’ worth of equipment hanging off of them, in a crucial moment, pull out their smart phones for fear of missing that moment.

was no reason at all to be concerned. I captured the moment, and I am the only one from that trip who has posted any of those photos yet. With mobile photos you can share photos so much faster and that is satisfying.

Q: Describe the perfect shot. Is it something that takes you by surprise? Something you have been on the hunt for?

The perfect shot takes me by surprise. It is like when you are digging for gold and suddenly—there it is! You are in the moment and the moment comes through.

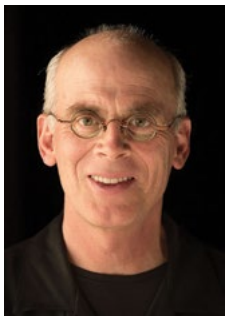
Sometimes I will think I am in the moment, but then later when I go to look at the photos, I will see that something wasn’t right. That is probably how the “Forty-niners” felt when coming upon fool’s

gold. There is a lot of fool’s gold out there: those times when you think you are in the moment, and think you have found some gold, but on inspecting it further you realize it was only copper.

The surprise of the moment is half the fascination for photographers. A great instance of this was when I was sitting in my car, in the pouring rain, in Yosemite We were parked at the Tunnel View lookout point. There was no one else around (why would they be?) when all of a sudden, the clouds part and a beam of light comes breaking through onto the valley. Suddenly, two rainbows appear and I capture them as quick as I can. I was simply in the right place at the right moment. This is why no photographer should ever fear entering a rainstorm, because the most amazing things can come from it. Some days you can spend all your time searching, but go home with no gold. Other days, the gold falls out of the sky!



BIO: RUSSELL BROWN



AS SENIOR CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT ADOBE SYSTEMS INCORPORATED, Russell Preston Brown holds a unique position in the computer industry. Brown maintains a vital presence in the digital design and publishing community, facilitating the exchange between the user and software developer that is so essential to Adobe’s software development. With complete mastery and breathtaking style, Brown shows users how to work — and play — with Adobe software. He has given the world’s leading photographers, publishers, art directors, and artists a strong grasp of the software tools that, by virtually all accounts, have led to Adobe’s applications becoming the standard by which others are measured. Remember what Russell always says: “Learning about Adobe Photoshop should never be boring.”

ACCOLADES

Emmy Award Winner 2008 (Dr. Brown’s Photoshop Laboratory)
Photoshop Hall of Fame Winner 2002

There is so much competition out there as a photographer. To be the best, you have to work ten times harder than every other photographer.

Q: What gets you out of bed in the morning?

The cats meowing at my door (*laughs*). I have an enormous passion for the new, and so begin to feel panicked if I feel I am wasting time. Any time I am sitting in a presentation all I can think about is: “why am I inside looking at these photographs when I could be outside taking this photo myself?” I know I would be the first person to walk out of my own presentation, that’s how bad I am.

Q: What is your best advice for aspiring photographers?

This question is classic. In the end, it all comes down to practice, practice, practice. There is a theory that a person must put 10,000 hours into practicing a craft before they have mastered it. There is so much competition out there as a photographer. To be the best, you have to work ten times harder than every other photographer. Not only that, but you must develop a look and technique that is recognizable with only your work. A real pro will go to the end of the world and will stay up all night to get “the shot.” That is how I know I am not a true pro: I won’t stay up all night. But I do envy the photographers who can do that—that is the kind of person the rest of us need to watch. They are going places. 💎

We would love to know what you thought of this article!
[Click here](#) to send us your comments.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LIGHTWEIGHT SYSTEM

BY **ERIK JOHNSON**



LIKE MANY OF YOU, I deliberated long and hard over which tripod system I should adopt as my own. I knew that the 2-series tripods and the BH-40 ballhead would be more than adequate for my Canon 5DMk3 and 70-200mm f/2.8. However, I also knew that I wanted to shoot multi-row panoramas, and so would need some sort of additional pano package to make that happen. As a backpacking enthusiast, I knew that eliminating any redundant items was critical to keep the overall weight of my setup minimal. With that as my priority, I took a somewhat counterintuitive approach: I chose the PG-02 LR (www.rrs.us/0151a) side-mount gimbal head, along with a 2-series TA-2-LC (www.rrs.us/0151b) leveling platform as my tripod head. I then mounted all of that on top of our most popular 2-series tripod, the TVC-24L (www.rrs.us/0151c), and added an MPR-CL II (www.rrs.us/0151a) nodal slide for when I need to shoot a pano.

While this kit’s combined weight is on the heavier side, it is in fact lighter than the combined weight of our BH-55 LR and our Lightweight Multi-Row Pano Elements Package, weighing in at 4.5 lb (2kg.) Having shot with the PG-02 system for over a year now, I can easily say that a side-mount gimbal system is absolutely the best choice for my photography style and needs. Having independent axis control is immensely convenient when framing a landscape photo and minor, yet precise, adjustments are needed.

Combined with its wide range of utility, the PG-02 is the best tripod head on the market for photographers shooting a mix of landscape, wildlife, portrait, and panorama photography with full-sized DSLR camera bodies. For mirrorless and micro four thirds camera systems, I would instead recommend our PG-01 (www.rrs.us/0151d). This product has similar ergonomics to the PG-02, but on a much smaller scale, making it an even better option for photographers on the move who need to pack light. 💎

We would love to know what you thought of this article! [Click here](#) to send us your comments.



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