

# Perfect Portraits



**Think  
TAP  
Learn**

 **Perfectly Clear**







# Planning a Musician's Portrait

**By Kevin Ames**

Planning and preparation permit perfect photographs. It's impossible to over plan a photo shoot. Once all of the prep is finished, there, simply, is nothing more to plan. The key to planning is having all of the obvious and not so obvious questions answered

before the crew and talent gathers for the shoot.

No matter how much planning goes into a portrait session it is still a plan. Photo planning is just like a battle plan. It will not survive contact with the subject or the enemy respectively.





## Pre Production

Jeff Paige, a musician, contacted me to make photographs for his music website and Facebook page. We met for breakfast at a local Waffle House. Over many, too many, cups of coffee, we came up with a description of our idea. The words that describe our project are dark, dusk, car headlights behind the subject, a spotlight on the subject, solitary, fog and / or mist, guitar and, of course, a musician dressed in black. The black wardrobe was Jeff's choice.

## Concept

The concept of a photograph is the idea behind the story it will tell the viewer. For me, ideas start amorously. First, words describe visuals. Then the visuals are refined. This process in movie making is getting the idea well in mind before writing the script.

This story informs the rest of our planning. I can see the effect of the words in my head. Here's how I break them down...

Dark is time of day. In this case, that time is dusk. As a photographer I know the scene doesn't want to be true night. Night is a pure black background. Black backgrounds have no texture. Black backgrounds add nothing to the story. Black backgrounds are boring.

Dusk is dark. It's moody and blue... deep blue, navy blue.

Car headlights are warm light. I'm thinking incandescent headlights, headlights with a filament making yellow-orange light. Not daylight colored LEDs.

A pair of headlights from behind means the musician is in silhouette. His hair will have a luminous glow.

The car places the musician on some kind of a road.

Solitary means alone-ness. I see him with the guitar over his shoulder, walking toward the camera.

Fog or mist adds a sense of foreboding to the story. Where is the fog / mist coming from? Light enters in here as well. Fog has to be lit either directly from behind or at an acute angle again behind the subject.

Spotlight tells me that a part of the photograph wants to be brighter than its surrounds.

The words from our planning meeting evolved into this story.

"A musician is walking along a road after dusk. His bass guitar is over his shoulder. Mist from the nearby river is floating over the roadway. The mist has a warm glow. It matches the color of the player's orange bass guitar. A car closes in from behind..."

These parameters send me to the Internet for the next step—creating a mood board.

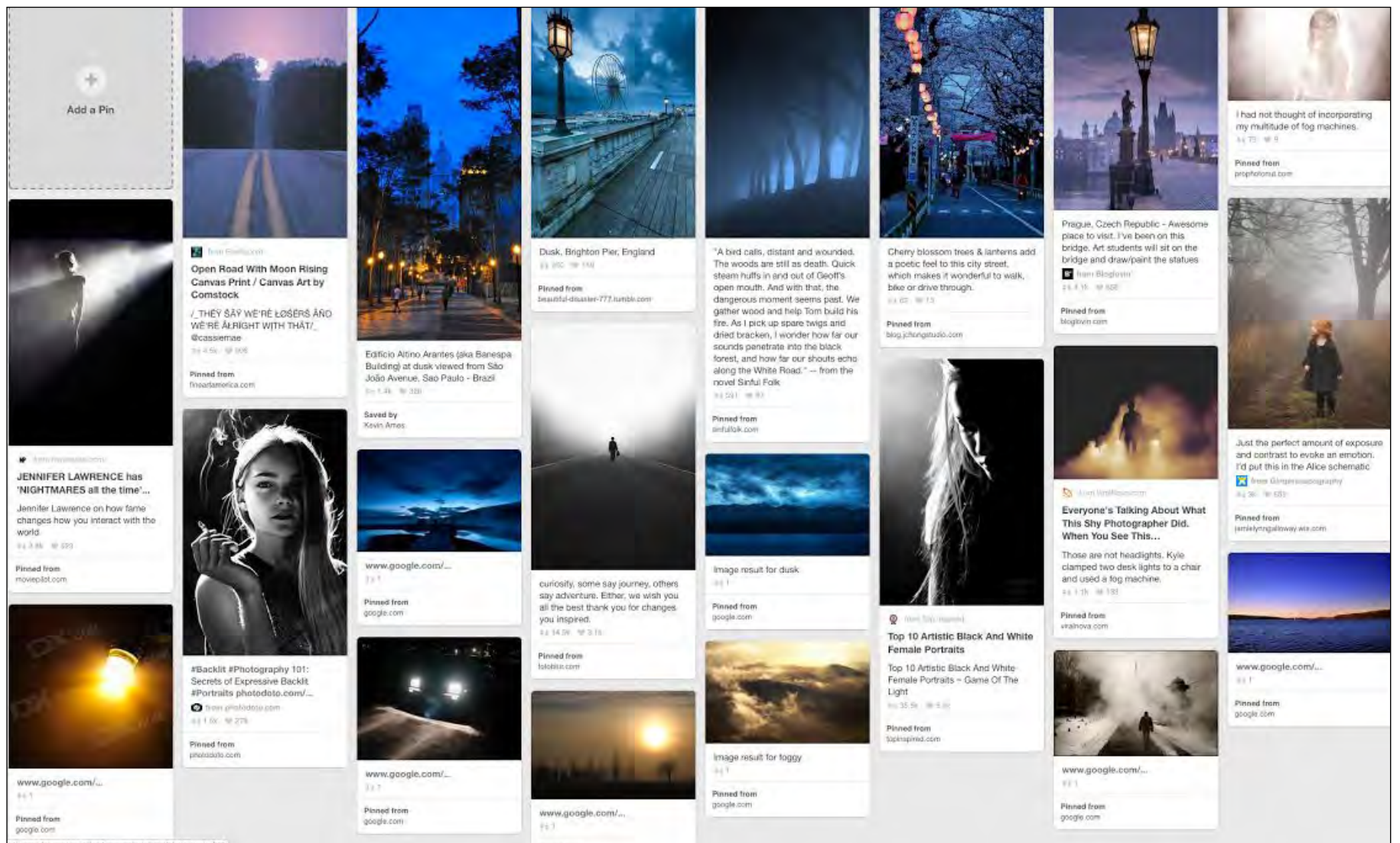


## Mood boards

Mood boards are collections of ideas that represent the concept. I pull from Google Images and pin them on Pinterest. I also search the words used to describe the concept on Pinterest. I don't spend a lot of time thinking about the photos I pin however. When I see something that fits even a small piece of the concept I pin it. This is a gathering of anything that seems to fit the concept. Here is the harvest of representational photographs on Pinterest. I'll share the board with the crew that will help create the look. Usually, though, on a portrait project, I only share with the makeup artist.

Keep in mind that the photographs only represent visualizations of my ideas and concepts. I won't copy these go-bys in any way. They exist as mood generators. I'm also looking for effects to use that support what I will create later on set.

You can see the mood board I made for this shoot here:  
<http://kevinames.news/musicianMoodBoard>







*Courtesy ViralNova, used with permission.*

## Evolution

This photograph is from my mood board. It shows a man in silhouette walking in front of headlights piercing the fog. It is a great visual representation of what I described. In my thinking, the only headlight the viewer would see would be directly behind Jeff's head, highlighting his hair. When you see the final photograph you'll see how the mood board informs the vision without any of the images being copied or derived in anyway.

My original idea was very literal. I was going to have Jeff walking up a paved hill in the industrial park where my studio is located. I planned to place a fog machine behind him along with a car with tungsten headlights. (See what I mean by a literal interpretation?) I planned on shooting about fifteen minutes after sunset so the sky would be a deep royal blue. I would use a 300mm lens to compress the scene in an impactful way.



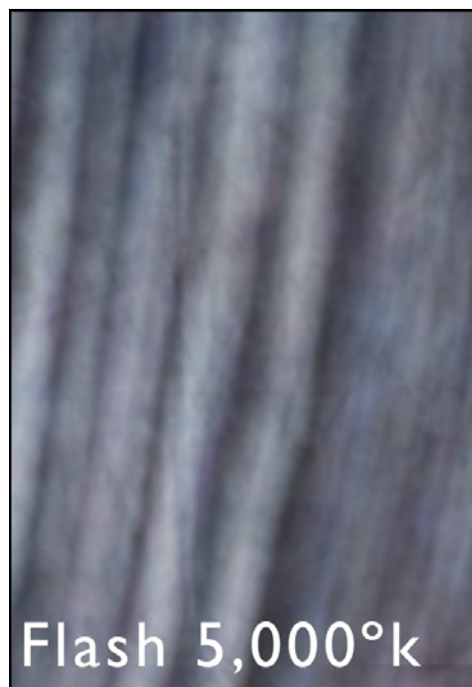
## Planning

I can't begin to tell you how many points of failure there are for this execution of the idea. I could just hear Murphy chanting "yeah, do it this way, do it, do it, do, yeah..."

Shooting at dusk means there is about a ten-minute window before the sky goes photographically black. Jeff, the musician, who is also an actor, kept me from being concerned with him hitting his marks. Headlights aren't adjustable as far as brightness is concerned. This meant that the shoot had to be timed so the darkening of the sky balanced with the

light from the headlights. This made the time that ambient light was just right to shoot even shorter. Then there was working in the fog machine. Would the evening be windy? Would it rain? Hmm. Rain might make a nice effect. If it rained, what would the sky look like? The list of possible problems grew and grew. The more I thought about all of these moving parts, I realized this was going to have to move from the vagaries of shooting outdoors into the controlled environment of the studio.

The gray background (shown here with the lines I talk about in a minute) doesn't have the mood that a photograph made against a royal blue sky at dusk would. The addition of a Rosco #72 Azure gel provided the deep blue color inspired by some of the images from the mood board.



## Shadow lines

My first consideration was that the background has some motion in it to mimic the swaying of trees that might be in the scene. I used Rosco Slit Drape to make the lines. The lines on the background were made by shining a the azure gelled flash head at a three foot by eight foot section of silver / iridescent / gold Rosco Slit Drape suspended on a boom arm. The flash head is about fifteen feet from the slit drape. This made the shadows the drape cast on the background more distinct. Harsh light and distinct shadows come from a small light source.



## Background lighting variations

The difference between the background and Jeff's hair light with daylight colored flash at 5000°k and with the azure and red gel is dramatic. The story is beginning to come together. Next up, lighting!



## Lighting

The background is ready. The next step is to light the subject. Here is where the original words from pre-planning become fully realized. There is no question whatsoever, that photography is all about light. No light equals no photo. Poor light equals a poor photo. Great light, well, you get the idea. One of the best things about being a photographer today is the number of choices of lights and modifiers available.

They allow us to choose the right tool to sculpt the look and feel of any subject.

I wanted Jeff's face to be the brightest part of the photograph. One of the truisms about a photo is the eye is always drawn to the brightest part of a dark image. I chose to have the viewer see Jeff first and then become aware of the environment.



## Spotlight

Spotlights in concerts and the theatre have lenses that make a hard-edged circle. That works well in live productions. The action pulls the eye away from the harsh, cutting round pool of light. In a still photograph where a moment becomes a two dimensional statue, every detail than can distract from the subject must be eliminated or at least controlled. Rather than use an ellipsoidal spotlight, I chose a twenty-two inch

in diameter beauty dish with a 40° grid.

The light is about three feet away from Jeff, to his left and slightly above his eye level. Any higher and the catchlight in his eyes will disappear. This gridded beauty dish is the main source of illumination. It's the one I read with the incident Sekonic light meter to get the exposure to put on the camera. All of the other lights serve this one.





## Strip banks

Jeff has dark skin. He's also wearing black pants, shirt and jacket. His outfit will disappear into the background unless his shape is lit. Unlike his hair, which has a light directly behind it, his outfit wants long highlights. I create them with a twelve inch wide and seventy-one inch long strip bank from Dynalite positioned slightly behind each side of Jeff. A Lighttools fabric grid reduces the amount of spill and focuses the light on Jeff's sides.



## Contrast control

The photo of Jeff, above, defines his shape. This is a high contrast photograph. There is a big difference in brightness between his face and his waist. His face is well lit. His body has almost no detail because it is in shadow. The fall off from the grid cuts the light on his face at his neck. His jacket and tee shirt have no detail.

It's easy to reduce or lower the contrast. All that needs to happen is to add some light to

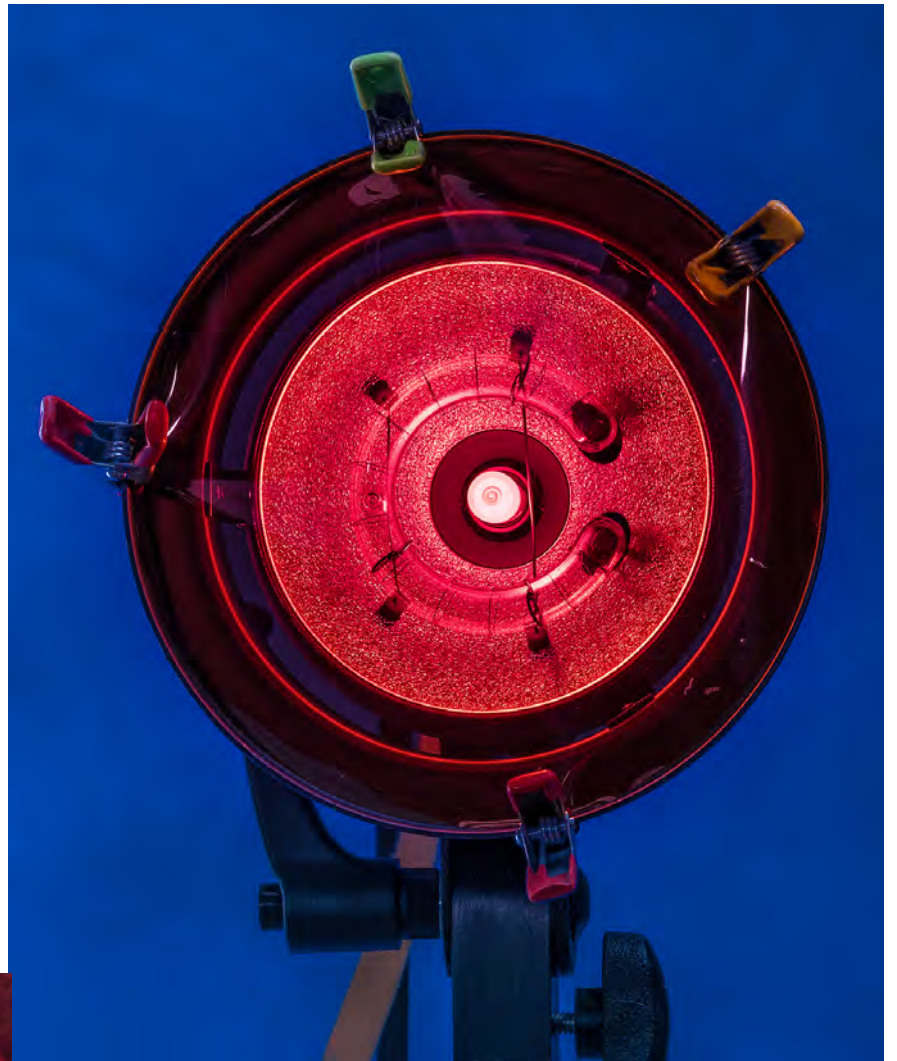
that too dark shadow. A five-foot in diameter Chimera Octabox adds that light. Another name for lowering contrast is to add a fill light. It's important to understand that a fill light's only job is to lower contrast by brightening the shadows as you see below. The only way to lower contrast is to add light to the shadows. I prefer to say "add light to the shadows" because it actually describes what a fill light is supposed to do.



*Adding light to the shadow lowers the contrast hiding Jeff's jacket and gray tee shirt.*

## Backlight

Jeff has thick, full hair that sports really tight curls. The background is dark. I chose to backlight Jeff's hair to separate it. I placed a Dynalite location flash directly behind Jeff's head. I used a grid adaptor to hold a circle of Rosco 25 orange red gel in place with mini A-clamps from Home Depot or Ace Hardware. These really inexpensive clamps (about .69 cents each,) allow me to change colors quickly. I have several different colored gels cut into these five inch circles.



## Effects

### Fog

Smoke, mist or fog effects for this portrait come on demand from a Rosco Vapour fog machine sitting on the floor next to the red back light. Professional fog machine like this one are available for rent at a very reasonable cost. This one is available from PC&E here in Atlanta for \$60.00 a day complete with a two and a half liter jug of Rosco Fog Fluid. Trust me, that's a whole lot of fog.

### Fog control

A professional fog machine like this one makes so much smoke that it will quickly wrap around Jeff, obstructing him completely.



There are two controls that work together to solve the problem. The Rosco Vapour has a panel that sets the amount of fog and the flow of the fog. An assistant turns the machine on and off. The second control is a wind machine blowing across Jeff's face. This keeps the fog in the background for the most part.



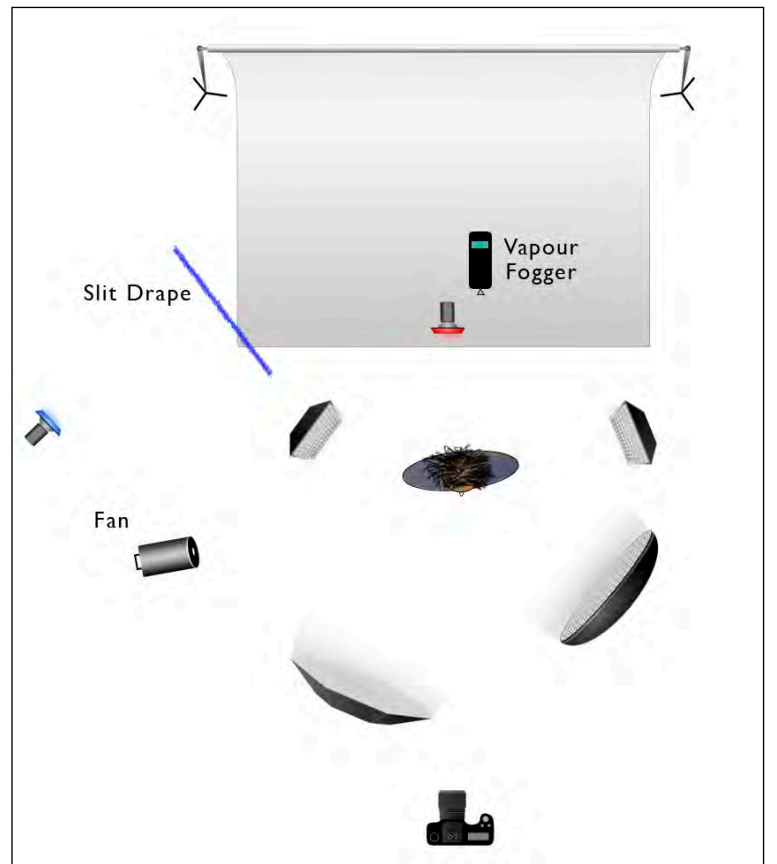
*An assistant controls the flow of the fog from the Rosco Vapour.  
A wind machine clears the excess fog from in front of Jeff.*

## She lighting & effects diagram

I've described in detail all of the parts and pieces for this portrait session. Jeff is sitting in the makeup chair of artist Jypsy Nichols. While he's getting touched up, here's a look at the set in graphic form.

## The shoot

The planning and pre-production were behind us. All of the variables that could be locked down were locked down. Jeff was in the makeup chair. I had already put two Hoodman 32 GB 1000x CF memory cards in the camera, a Canon 1Dx. It was set to record to both cards at the same time so there was a backup. The camera was tethered to a computer with external hard drive. This meant that there were three copies of each photo as it was made.



## Variables

On my shoots, there is no bracketing. I nail the exposure. The only variable I want is what my subject does in front of the camera. Bracketing means that the best pose and expression might be on the worst exposure. That's not a good way to make pictures from my point of view. So how do all of the lights come together to fit into the exposure? I always start with the exposure.

## Exposure

The workflow "win" the ColorChecker brings are settings for neutralizing any colorcast, perfecting the exposure, setting the white clipping point and black with detail that are applied to every subsequent photograph until the lighting is changes. A lighting change refers to the light on Jeff, not the strip banks or the backlight. You'll know when the lighting changed because after changing the light, you shot the ColorChecker.

## Using the ColorChecker

When I'm shooting with the camera tethered, I perfect the ColorChecker version then photograph that setup. There might be clothing changes, makeup and hair changes, different props and of course, lots of different poses and expression in a single setup. My exposure never changes while shooting a setup. I get it right at the beginning then shoot until that take is complete. In post-production, I'll apply the settings I made to the ColorChecker photo to the rest of that take.

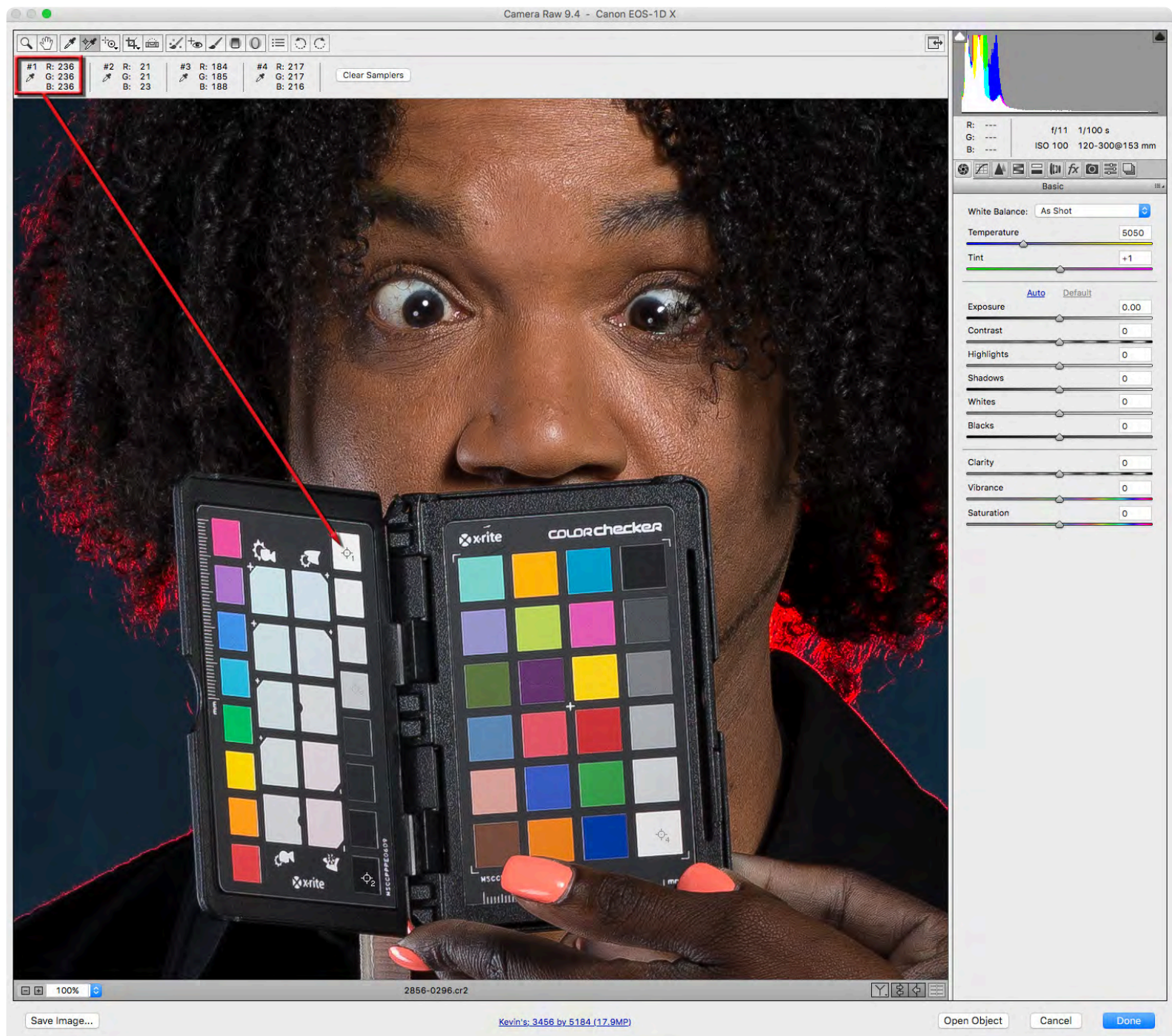


## Neutralize

I open the ColorChecker photo in either Camera Raw or in Lightroom's Develop module. First, I neutralize the color by clicking the fourth patch down from white on the ColorChecker with the White Balance tool. Press I in Camera Raw or W in Lightroom. The numbers on that patch will be almost if not exactly the same. When red, green and blue equal each other there is only a shade of gray. There is no colorcast.

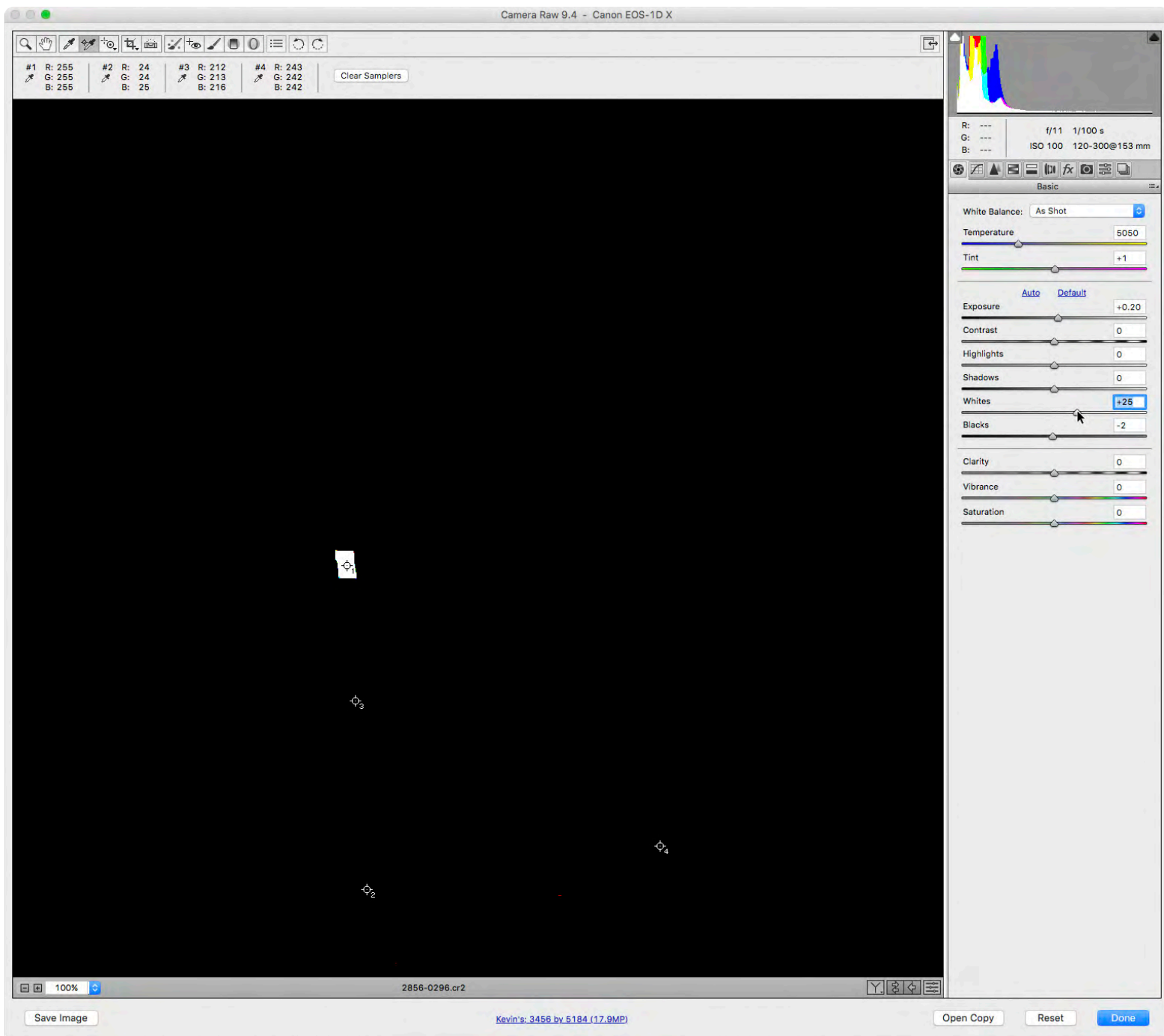
## Tweak the exposure

I wish Lightroom had color samplers in the Develop module. Since it doesn't, I'm showing this in Camera Raw. I press S to choose the Sampler tool. I click on the white swatch on the line pointed toward the beauty dish. The #1 sampler appears along with a readout for it under the toolbar in Camera Raw. I click on the black patch for #2 then on the fourth patch down from white for #3. In the example, #4 is on the other white patch. That one is not pointed at the light. It shows lower numbers than its counterpart that is aimed at the light. Next, I move the exposure slider until the #1 readouts are at 242 each for red, green and blue. Note that a +.25 increase in exposure is less than I can get by increasing the exposure a third of a stop—the smallest increment available on our cameras.



## White clipping

The white clipping point is the absolute brightest spot in the photograph. It's easy to find in Camera Raw. Hold down the Option (PC: Alt) key then move the White slider to the right. As soon as the slider is clicked, the preview becomes completely black. As the slider is moved to the right, the white patch will show white. Read sampler #1. It says 255 for red, green and blue. I'll back the slider a bit to the left until the white disappears. #1 now reads 254 or so for red green and blue. There is nothing brighter in the photograph.



*Move the White slider back to the left until the white patch disappears. The #1 sampler will read just under 255 R, G, B.*

I'll hold down the Option (PC: Alt) key again. This time I click on the Black slider. The preview goes white. This time I move the slider to the right until I see a spot of black. The slider gets moved to the right until the black disappears. Any other color showing indicates which channel or combination of channels (R,G,B) is a zero, as dark as that color can be.



## All of the rest...

I save the Presence sliders and others for after the hero photographs have been chosen. Then I refine the look in Camera Raw or LR Develop. Having the color, exposure and clipping points set means any proofs I deliver whether as PDF, web gallery or even in print will be client ready. This is part of postproduction creativity.

The additional lights: backlight, strip banks, contrast reducing fill light, background light all start out at the same power as the main source of illumination. I call this symmetrically powered lighting. I check the effect of each one on a color-calibrated monitor. I adjust the power up or down for each one after taking a photograph to see its effect. The amount of power for each of lights besides the source of illumination is a judgment of my aesthetic for the shot.

Jeff came on set; we warmed up with some portraits both close up and from the waist up. I used the waist up versions to refine the lighting and the fog effects. It was time to add the guitar.

The camera with a Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8 Sport lens to add compression was positioned almost at the far wall opposite the set. The set and lighting looked like this from the camera's position. This setup is for the "performance" portion of the session. This part was added the day of the shoot. Jeff decided, at the last minute, that he wanted a set of images that looked like he was on stage performing his songs. The lesson: No matter how well planned in advance, there will always be changes at the last minute.



Six flash heads light this concert performance photograph. The background light is off camera on the left. Something's missing.





*Add Something's missing. Do you see what's not there? Read on for the answer and the solution.*



The “performance” photos were not in the initial plan, so I chose to shoot Jeff from the knees up to avoid having to show pedals that we didn’t have and other props on the floor. The only liberty I took was raising the camera position. In a live performance, photography is done from a much lower angle caused by shooting from the pit in front of the stage.

### Shooting the original idea

The performance photographs were finished. It was time to shoot the original idea of Jeff in a misty scene lit with headlights at dusk. Here’s the interesting part: The source of illumination didn’t change. I opened up the exposure from f/11 to f/9. This added more light to Jeff’s face. This is a creative decision. Both strip banks were covered in Rosco 3407 gel. This gel converts the day-light color of flash in the performance set to warm, tungsten light mimicking the color of headlights. The warm tone of these lights spills onto Jeff. In this case, I did not neutralize the color. If I had, the warm tones would disappear. The warm light from the two strip banks are bolstered by the orange color of Jeff’s bass guitar.



AdThe “walking set” is the same as the “performance” one. Only the lighting was changed and then only slightly..



The only other change, was eliminating the red backlight on Jeff's hair. When I saw the version with just the warm gelled strips, the beauty dish with the grid and background light I realized that the photo would work better without light on the background.

Once the light was dialed in I had Jypsy add some fog. Then it was shooting until we had several choices. Tethering allowed us to review all of the photos in real time. When we finished we had several favorites captured.



*Adding light to the shadowTest photos without fog show the lighting accurately. These are two of the pose ideas.*



*A wisp of fog picks up the warm strip banks. I'm happy. So is Jeff.*



## “It’s a wrap!” Post Production

The shooting part of the project took just over five hours; from noon to about 5:30 including makeup. After the set was struck, Jypsy and Jeff headed out to play in Atlanta traffic. I headed into the postproduction suite where I am writing this. I copied the take from the hard drive on the shooting station over the network to a Drobo 5D that serves as my working drive. As a side note, it backs up to three more Drobos every night. Multiple copies are easy and very inexpensive insurance compared to having to reshoot a job. Or, may this never happen, your entire life’s work.

## Web gallery ~ the first deliverable

I imported the entire take into my Lightroom catalog. I added metadata then copied the Develop settings from the ColorChecker RAW file. I pasted it to the rest of the files. Then I made a collection of every photograph with the exception of ColorCheckers and setup photos. That collection gets made into a web gallery that uploads to a secure server. About an hour after Jeff got home, he had his proofs.

## Selects ~ postproduction

Once Jeff sent me his choices I got to work. There really wasn’t much to do. Here’s a rundown on post for two of the selects.

## “Performance”

This is the CR2 Canon RAW file right out of the camera with no adjustments.



## ExpoExposure & white balance

I nailed the exposure before the shoot began so no tweaks are needed. The first adjustments are for color balance using the ColorChecker. I transfer the reading from that photo to this one. I kick the Highlights up to +8, pull the Whites back to -37 and punch the Blacks to +30. I'll leave the Presence controls alone until after I visit the HSL / Grayscale tab.







## Color

The Hue, Saturation, Luminance tab is the creative color control center of Camera Raw. The Reds look a bit pink so I click the Saturation tab and pull the Red slider all the way to the left. All of the red becomes gray. This tells me that the Red slider is controlling the reds. The left over color looks magenta. It is actually orange. A move of the Orange slider turns all of the fog gray. There is some orange is Jeff's skin. A quick double click to that slider returns it to the zero position.



Now that I know what the Red Saturation slider controls, I double click it to return it to the zero position. Slowly, I move it to the right to 11. The red looks red to me now



Next I'll deepen the red using the Red slider in Luminance tab. A move to the right will lighten the red, while a move to the left will darken the reds. A big move is wanted here. I chose to go quite dark by using -58.



## Presence

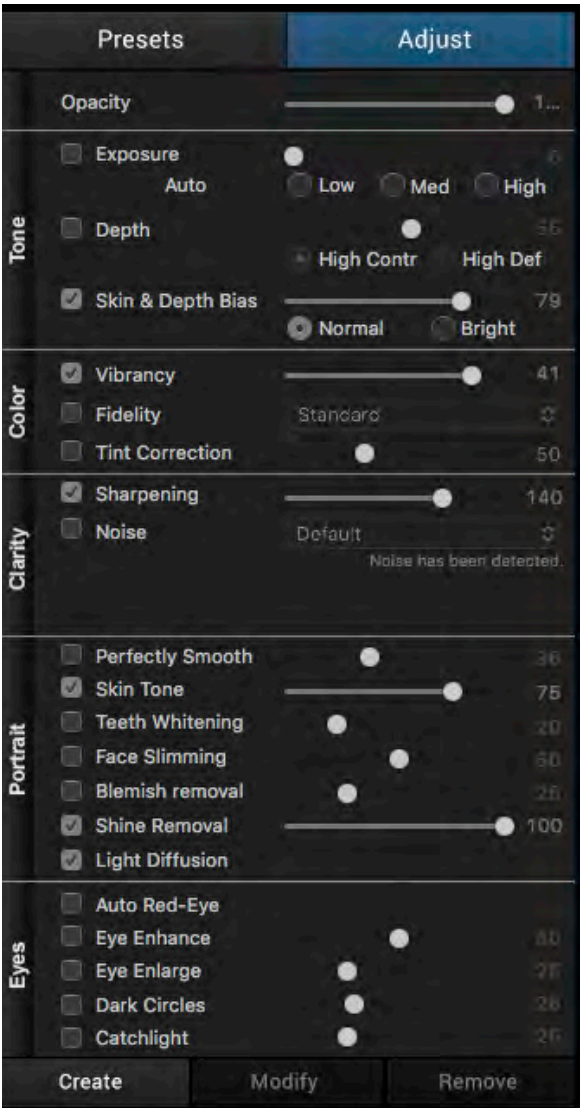
Now it's time to go back to the Basic tab to work with Clarity and Vibrance. I wanted these portraits to have a gritty look. I really pushed Clarity and Vibrance. Compare what has happened with these two grunge-makers in play. There is much more detail in the smoke. The blue light on the background really comes through.





# Perfectly Clear

This is a step that is, well, since I don't understand how it does what it does is magic. No I pretty much always run my hero photographs through Perfectly Clear. It's very good at believably smoothing skin. This time, though, I started with the Vivid preset then adjusted it to taste.







Compare the original on the left with the Perfectly Clear version on the right. Like I said, Magic! This is the final performance photo. Perfect! Right?



## Murphy loves a photo shoot

No matter how much planning goes into a shoot, no matter how many eyes are on the final before the shoot is wrapped, inevitably Murphy shows up with his law. It states: "Whatever can go wrong, will go wrong." The photographic version adds "Whatever goes wrong will do so at the worst possible time, causing the most damage imaginable."

The reason the shoot moved into the studio was to make it harder for Murphy to have an appearance. The musicians reading this already see the problem. A model friend of mine,

Amy Patterson was in the studio the next day. I showed the take to her saying it was shot "during a performance." I was sure it would pass muster. Amy looked at me, smiling she said, "No it wasn't. I can prove it." (Have you figured it out yet?)

I said "OK. What tipped you off?" I really didn't have a clue as to how she knew.

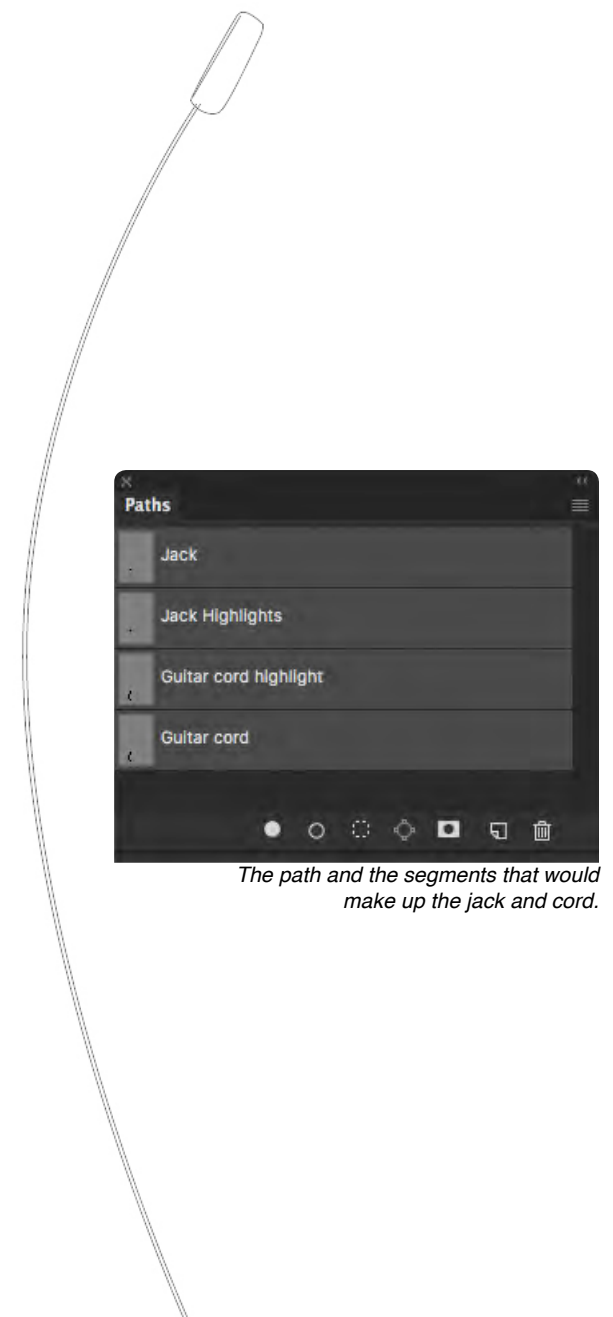
Laughing she replied, "There isn't a cord plugged into the electric guitar!"

I laughed too. Good catch! In spite of Murphy's best work, the problem was easily solved.

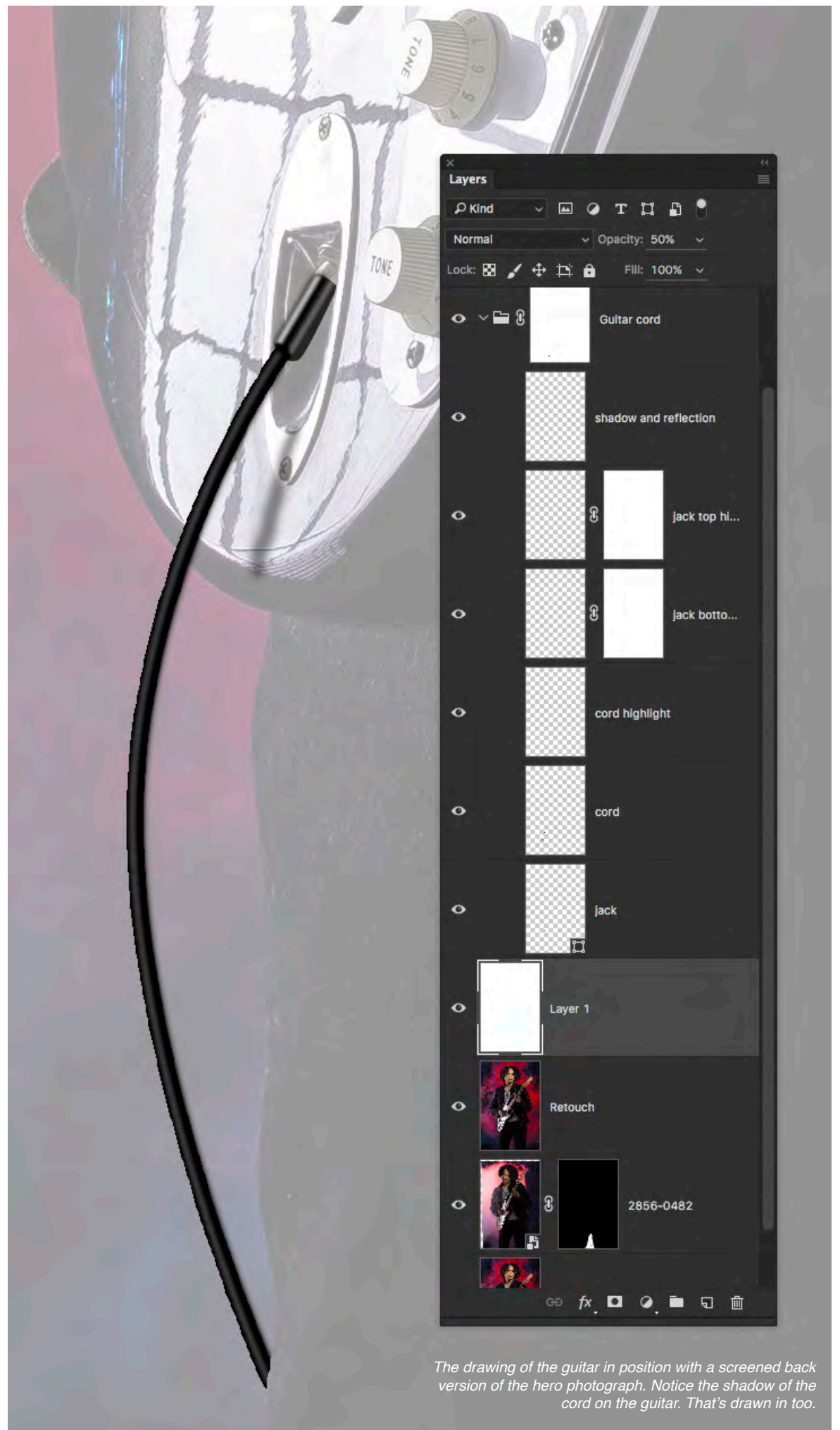
## The Pen tool to the rescue

The easy answer wasn't to find a guitar cord, shoot it in a close approximation to where it would need to be. That is certainly the most obvious solution. The answer was in using one of Photoshop's most misunderstood and, in my observation of those who would do anything to avoid it, disliked tools in the bar. It is really powerful. Beyond making editable selections, lines drawn with it can be stroked with any of the painting tools.

I zoomed in to 200% view of the guitar cord socket. Using the pen tool, I drew separate paths or path segments for each component: a path for the jack, a segment for the highlight that would make it seem to be round, one for the cord itself and finally, one for the highlight on the cord to give it dimension.



The path for the jack is filled with a very dark gray. It gets its shape from a light gray stroke that's been blurred. The cord is the same dark gray as the jack. The highlight on the cord is a darker gray than on the jack. I thought the jack would be a shinier surface than the cord. A surface with more shine reflects more of the highlight falling on it.



*The drawing of the guitar in position with a screened back version of the hero photograph. Notice the shadow of the cord on the guitar. That's drawn in too.*





I drew the cord so it would disappear behind Jeff's right leg. Even close up the cord is totally believable. The fix took about fifteen minutes. Take that Murphy!!!



## **A second pose for the “Performance” photo**

Jeff wanted a version where he was looking directly into the camera. I didn’t have to make another guitar cord. I used the existing one. All of the other settings are the same as the one where he’s looking away.





## "Original"

Not much changed in post for the original idea from the performance version so I'll move on the select and its final version for that one. Yes, there is no guitar cord. This time it's not there on purpose.

I work really hard to "get it in the camera." I love the versatility of Lightroom, Camera Raw, Photoshop and Perfectly Clear. I want to use these tools for finishing my photographs. I don't want to use them to fix anything that can be done during the shoot.



*The final version of the original idea.*



## Last words

Not all of the portraits I get to do are this involved. Some are a lot easier to plan and execute. That said, I still spend a lot of time doing my homework. I plan. I talk with my client. I explain the process of what's going to happen during the shoot to the client. I give them tips on wardrobe. Then I chat with my makeup artists about the look the client wants. I shoot everything tethered. I bring them off of the set to review the work. The makeup artist tweaks her work. Most, not all of the MUAs I work with are women. I want to hear the client's comments. I listen to them. "What do you think?" is a question I ask often. I want the client to love his or her portrait. That won't happen unless they tell me, truthfully what they are thinking about our collaboration. The more dialog they share,

the more I can refine the work at the camera. I refrain from giving my opinion. I might love one that they don't. That subtle management of expectations might prejudice the client's thinking.

The proofs are going to be mostly untouched. Occasionally when a client is really uncomfortable about how their skin looks, I will run the take through a light pass of Perfectly Clear before I build the proofing website. My goal beyond making a portrait for a client, is to be certain they have a really good time. I keep the whole shoot light (no pun intended) and easy going. I work to make the experience fun. I know the client will love their portrait when they tell me as I walk them to their car, "I had a really good time. This was fun!"







*photo by Kristina Sherk*

## Perfect Skin

**The perfect plug-in to enhance the skin of your subject**

Perfect Skin for Photoshop and Lightroom provides sixteen great presets and precise controls. You can improve skin tones, remove blemishes, contour faces and whiten teeth. Spend less time editing and have more time behind your camera.







# Social Media Headshots

**By Scott Bourne**

Everyone needs a headshot - if for no other reason than to improve their social media/online profiles.

Nearly every social media platform strongly recommends that users post a photo of themselves to increase engagement. Since we all rely so heavily these days on social media, the social media profile picture (headshot) is often the first impression that many people will have when they interact with us.

A simple vacation grab shot won't do in this situation. The social media-savvy person will want to engage a serious/professional photographer for this task.

It falls on the photographer to find out what kind of portrait the subject is looking for and this is part of a good first step for any photographer making any kind of image.



## **Know Your Subject.**

Spend a few minutes getting on common ground with the subject. Put them at ease by discussing their interests and if you happen to share one or more of those interests, engage them in a quick conversation about that and not the image. This is key to getting someone to look themselves. And getting someone to look themselves is key to making a good portrait for social media.

Once you have established rapport, then ask detailed questions about the use of this image. Which social media site(s) will they use it for? What do they want their profile picture to say about them? What side of their personality do they want to show off?

This information is all important to the rest of the shoot so don't skimp here. Spend the time you need to come away informed.



## Know Where to Shoot

Once you've interviewed the subject, your next task is to know where to shoot. Will you make the image in a studio or outdoors or on location? Each person is different and will need different location considerations in order to make a successful social media headshot.

If you don't have a studio, they are easily rented in most cities. There are many databases full of such listings on studio rentals, but here's one to get you started. [http://www.photolinks.com/Photography\\_Rental\\_Studios.html](http://www.photolinks.com/Photography_Rental_Studios.html)

In some cases, you will need to go to the subject's location. It might make sense for instance to photograph the CEO of a bakery in his/her kitchen. A motorcycle mechanic may want to be near their bike or their garage or their tools. Think about the setting here and realize that the background needs to be clean and uncluttered, but if it's appropriate you can include some hints of the subject's personality in the picture.

I have encountered people who were not comfortable coming to a studio (intimidating) and who also weren't comfortable being photographed in their office or home (embarrassed for friends, family, co-workers to be around during the session.) In these cases an outdoor shot in a neutral location may be best.

Think this through because it absolutely can impact the success or failure of your shoot.



## **Determine Clothing**

Think about the type of clothing you want your subject to wear during the session. Discuss this with them in advance of the actual shoot. In general, solid colors photograph best and most people look good in middle tones like green, blue or brown. If you're shooting in color, avoid white and flesh tone colors for clothing. Avoid patterns or accessories (including large jewelry) that direct attention away from the subject's face. The face (and the facial expression) is the most important part of any portrait.

## **Know your gear.**

Now is not the time to experiment with a new camera or lens or lighting set up. You should have all that stuff down pat before you ever start a photography session. You need to save as much of yourself and your internal processing power to engage the subject and you can't do that if you spend the entire shoot fiddling with your camera.

Practice on a friend or relative and make sure you know your gear. Pick the right lens/camera/lighting combo for your general purpose and have a complete understanding of how that all works together to make the perfect portrait.

## **Composition**

Composition is relative easy in social media portraits. Fill the frame is the name of the game. Once you know which social media sites the subject will use with this photo, you can think about their rules for profile pictures and compose accordingly. In most cases, thinking about a square format for the image is best.

## **Good Lighting**

Good lighting is crucial for a profile portrait. Remember these images show up small on most social media sites so don't get too fancy. Simple, soft light from a large light source placed close to the subject is almost always a safe bet. For younger, more edgier subjects, experiment with ring lights. With older people stay away from harsh light since it tends to bring out skin imperfections.





## Keep it Simple

. The actual portrait session should be pretty straight-forward. Here you'll want to use a decent camera and any focal length will do but traditionally, something in the 100mm range with a reasonably fast aperture will work best. Adjust the camera angle so that you tell whatever story suits your subject. If you're going for cute and cuddly shoot down on your subject. If you want to portray dominance and toughness shoot up on your subject. Make sure to focus on the eyes.

Not much else matters in a portrait and continually remind yourself that this image will appear small on the page. Think about that from the user's point-of-view and make sure you pose and position your subject accordingly.

## Ready to Edit

After capture, select the image(s) you want to show the subject. In my opinion you should never show the client an un-retouched image.

I use Perfectly Clear because it performs automatic corrections to each image that almost always get the job 95% of the way to deliverable. Using the Beautify preset as a starting point, I usually tweak the final results adding just the right amount of skin, eye, noise and sharpening enhancements to make the shot look good. I submit these images to the client and then with their selections made, bring the photo back in for final touches (if any) that need to be made in Photoshop.

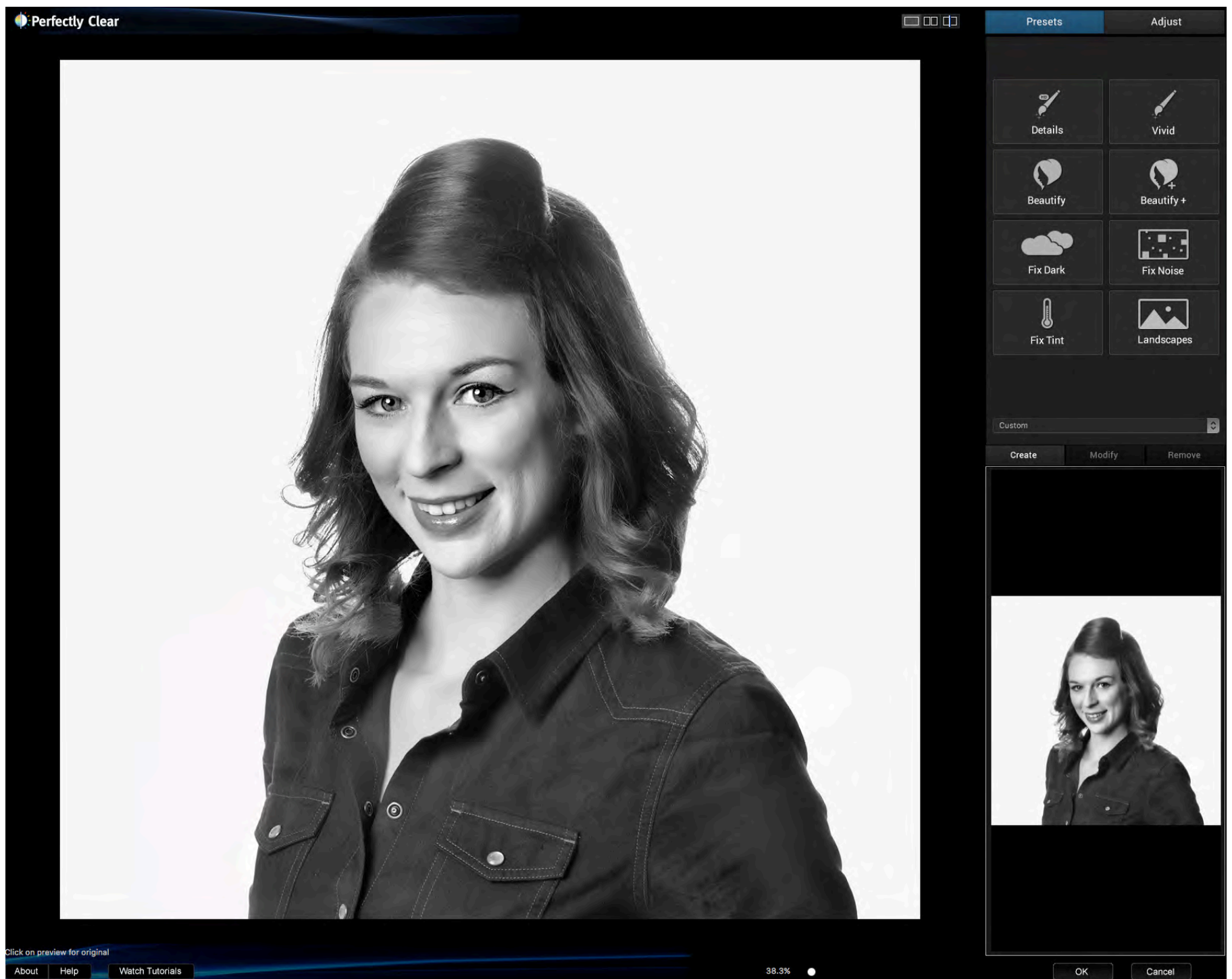
Perfectly Clear is a plug in that runs in Photoshop or Lightroom and using Lightroom, you can apply it on a group of photos (using a batch process) that makes the entire post-processing workflow super fast and easy.

## Time to Share

Sharing the final images is important and even more important is sharing them at the right size and dimensions.

On **Facebook** for instance, the profile photo is square. It is displayed at 168x168 pixels. However, it will also show up on your subject's time line so it should be shared at a much higher resolution. I suggest no less than 1024x1024. Facebook and other social media sites down sample the image to fit their guidelines. It's more important that you shoot for the right format (in this case square) than it is to get the perfect resolution.





**Twitter** uses a higher resolution image than Facebook (400x400 pixels) and also requires a square profile picture. Tumblr also wants a square image and needs 128x128 pixels.)

**Vimeo** also requires a square format picture and displays the image at 300x300 pixels.

**Google+** has the same square format requirement at 250x250 pixels.

**LinkedIn** wants a square format at 500x500 pixels, as does Instagram which uses a minimum 110x110 pixel profile picture format.

**YouTube** also wants a profile picture (they call it a channel icon) that is square and at 800x800 pixels.

Getting a good headshot for social media profiles can change the way that people interact with you or the subjects you photograph. Put some effort into studying other profile images and then decide what you think works and put it into practice.





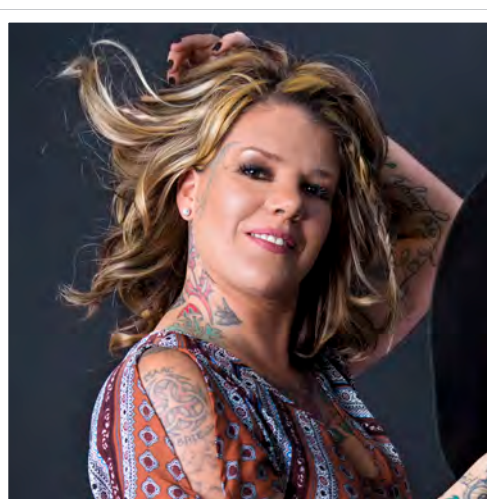
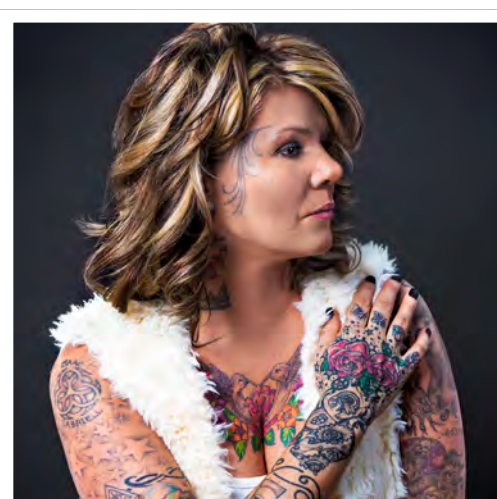


# Tattoo Portraits

**By Chamira Young**

Before going into any photo session with a client, I like to have a concept in mind. For this portrait session, my goal was to focus on capturing both the personalities and vibrant tattoos of Scott and Michelle, who are also husband and wife. They had been collecting tattoos for decades, and like

many, were quite accustomed to their body art being met with curiosity, admiration, and sometimes ill-placed judgment from others. One of my passions is to portray the story behind people who are often misunderstood or judged too quickly, so I was particularly excited for this shoot.









Whether the general public understood them or not, the fact remained that every single one of this couple's tattoos told a deeply personal story and commemorated significant events in their lives.

My job was to do the artwork – and the people behind the ink – proper justice. Prior to the shoot, I decided I wanted to go for an intimate, artistic, and somewhat editorial feel for their portraits because I sensed these two subjects needed more than a traditional style portrait. They were not traditional subjects. My plan was to keep the lighting simple and dramatic. I wanted those tattoos to pop.

## **Prepping in Advance Your Clients Are People First**

It is important to remember that, first and foremost, your clients are people first, as opposed to simply warm bodies posing in front of your camera. Michelle and Scott were recommended to me through a mutual friend, and they expressed immediate interest in the project when I told them I was looking for tattooed subjects in particular. In fact, I told the couple, the more tattoos, the better! After glancing at a few photos of them on their social profiles, I knew they had the look I wanted. We then spent some time chatting a bit online and getting more familiar with each other. Having never met Michelle and Scott face-to-face, a couple weeks before the shoot I took additional time to peruse their social media profiles further in order to learn more about their look, but also their personalities. In particular, I was interested in their photos so that I could begin to get familiar with how comfortable they were in front of the camera, along with their sense of style. This included what kinds of facial expressions they often made in front of the camera, how much they goofed around, what their candid expressions were like, and whether they generally appeared comfortable with the spotlight on them. My experience has been that the more comfortable a subject seems to be in front of their family and friends' lenses, the more at ease they also tend to be in front of the studio lens. It also gave me an idea of their general sense of style and the accessories they liked to wear.

In Michelle and Scott's online photos, I did not notice any timid expressions or shy hands in front of their faces. On the contrary, they seemed quite comfortable in their photos. In addition, their personal sense of style was downright fun and full of character. I noticed that Michelle's clothing choices were bold and reflected her adventurous personality, as were the accessories that she often wore. Scott's sense of fashion was just as fun; he seemed to be a fan of hats and various glasses. They were quite the pair and perfectly matched, as far as I was concerned. Their sense of personal style combined with their tattoos made me downright giddy for the shoot.

## **The Location**

Rather than rent a larger studio or conduct the session outside in the Michigan winter cold, I decided to do it in my home studio, which is, shall we say, cozy. The room measured approximately 10 feet wide by 20 feet long, but had a high ceiling. Interestingly, I often find that working within predefined constraints does not necessarily detract from a project. On the contrary, never-ending choices and options tend to overwhelm me. Therefore, having a set of parameters that I needed to work within was helpful in this particular case, especially since this was my first time personally conducting a session with subjects that had so much of their skin covered with intricate ink designs. My goal was to take simple, yet expressive portraits, with minimal background distractions.

## **The Equipment**

For this shoot, I decided to use my Canon 70D body with my Sigma 18-35mm F1.8 lens. I also had my Canon 50mm F1.8 prime lens on hand as a back up, but knew I would mainly stick with the 18-35 because the room we were shooting in was so snug. Despite it being notably heavier than the 50mm, shooting with the 18-35mm would give me the freedom needed to move around my subjects as necessary while still capturing their upper torsos.

For the backdrop, I used my Impact Collapsible 5x7' background, which had both a black and white side. While the white cloth was tempting, I decided to use the black option because I knew I wanted a dramatic effect that would work better with the shadows. I also had a stand on hand for the backdrop, but decided to go the easy route for setup: I simply unfolded the backdrop, and then leaned it against the wall behind it. It worked perfectly, freed up a bit more space in the room, and even saved me a few minutes of setup.

For the lighting, I made the decision to use a basic one light setup. I decided I would position my large Westcott 50-Inch Recessed Mega JS Apollo Softbox to sit on a 45 degree angle and slightly above the couple, providing ample, soft coverage. Inside the softbox, I attached my Yongnuo YN560-III Speedlight Flash. For the trigger, I used the Yongnuo YN560-TX Wireless Flash Controller. Also, I initially had my 43 inch LimoStudio Photo Reflector 5-in-1 Disc Panel on hand, which I planned to position on the other side of Scott and Michelle.

## **Test Shooting**

Previous to the shoot, I experimented on myself with on several setups just to make sure I knew the type of composition that I wanted, and also to ensure that my settings were in the ballpark of where they needed to be. It was impossible to get everything set before they arrived, especially when you account for sudden inspiration that inevitably comes during the shoot. In addition, Scott and Michelle had completely different skin tones than my own. However, given the constraints of the room, I wanted to be as prepared as possible so that I would not spend too long getting dialed in when they arrived. Using my handheld timer, I tested the limits with framing in particular, and decided it would be best that I position myself generally in front and sometimes to the sides of the couple, next to the softbox, for the best effect. After a few test shots on myself, I also made the artistic decision not to use the 43 inch LimoStudio Photo Reflector, so that there would be more dramatic shadows in the portraits.











## Deciding On a Workflow In Advance

Before any shoot, I like to make sure I know my post shoot processing in advance. For me, I knew this would involve pulling the photos into Lightroom for initial corrective edits, taking them over to Perfectly Clear for the bulk of the edits, and then back into Lightroom for additional edits. Finally, they would be exported out of Lightroom and into Photoshop for some final touches and clean up.

## Deciding on Wardrobe

Prior to the shoot, my first inclination had been to tell Scott and Michelle to bring as simple a wardrobe as possible – such as a plain shirt, and jeans – and so that is what I initially recommended in our pre-shoot discussions. In my mind's eye, I wanted the main focus to be on their tattoos, after all, and not on clothing that seemed overly distracting.

However, after further exploring their sense of fashion online, I began to second-guess this initial decision. I began to suspect that perhaps I should suggest they to wear clothing that best reflected their vibrant personalities, which could in turn work with their tattoos and produce photos that were even more visually interesting. This possibility was a constant nagging thought in the back of my mind leading up to the shoot, but I decided not to change my instructions because I did not want to overwhelm the couple.

## The Shoot Their Wardrobe

Finally, the evening of the shoot was upon us. Per my recommendation, Scott and Michelle arrived 15 minutes early in order to get familiar with both the location. After showing them where the changing facilities were, we decided to review the multiple outfits they had brought along. Michelle unzipped their large bag and began pulling out their selections.

Imagine my thrill as I came to the discovery that they had essentially ignored my wardrobe instructions. As they pulled out outfit after outfit, I was delighted to see that they had brought clothes that reflected their vibrancy and attitude. This included furs, prints, and generally expressive clothing. It was clear that their creative wardrobe would prove much more interesting. In this particular case, it would provide a three-part visual dialogue between the subjects, their tattoos, and their clothing. Rather than suppress their personalities, the better move was to use their outfits to further emphasize and express them. I couldn't wait to get started.

After Scott and Michelle had had chosen their initial outfits and accessories, I made sure to do a quick pre-shoot chat with them to learn more about their tattoos, as well as their lives in general. Although I had investigated them online, I have come to learn that social media is never enough. As photographers, some of our most useful tools are our ears and mouths when engaging with clients, and so we need to use them. Face-to-face interaction is essential. Having met them through a mutual friend, I wanted to learn more about them personally. Taking a few moments to chat before the shoot helped me begin to build a solid rapport with them, which, in turn, would help them relax during the shoot. People love talking about themselves, and I seem to have a knack at listening, so it is a great natural fit.

## **Their Tattoos**

In our pre-shoot chat, I learned that at the early age of 23, Michelle got her first tattoo from the talented Chris over at American Graffiti in Brighton, Michigan, and had stayed with him for over two decades. Michelle is a hair stylist, and therefore was free to display her body art as much as she desired on the job. Off the job, she was an avid roller derby participant, and was known as “Barbie” on the rink. As I took in her numerous tattoos, I noted the intricate portrait on her left arm, which was a memorial to her mother who had passed away. And being a self-proclaimed boho hippie, the theme of freedom was a recurring theme throughout her tattoos, such as the owl that sat on her left fist in a cage, with the actual keys to the cage in its mouth, and the cage doors hanging open. She also has the words “Born Free” on her knuckles. Other designs to pick out included the key to her heart, and a portrait of her husband and children. I could have stood picking out additional details for hours.

It was interesting to learn that Scott had a corporate day job that required him to cover up all of his tattoos while in the office. He readily admitted that a large number of co-workers had never even seen the countless tattoos that covered his body. He had also had almost all of his work done by the same tattoo artist. Scott’s entire left arm was completely military based, and included his sergeant stripes, along with his awards for Expert Rifle and Pistol, among others. He was a scout swimmer and had traveled the world. He has parts of the Philippine flag and the Iraq flag on his arm since he was previously stationed in both locations for a time. His tattoos also include the Detroit D, and his dog tags on his chest with his kids’ names on them. On his other arm he also has a complete sleeve, which included his Polish crest, his defender of freedom Eagle, and his warrior wrap. He also has his dad, who adopted and raised him as American Indian. Being an avid roller derby athlete as well, he has a train with his roller derby name, “Slim Skatey” in graffiti. They both Scott and Michelle have matching peace signs.

I asked them if people “got it” when they see their tattoos, or if they immediately made assumptions. Michelle shared that amongst their circle of influence, people were very accepting, especially amongst the hair stylists and roller derby friends. The corporate world, however, was not as accepting, naturally. Scott shared that they experienced a 50/50 mix of people being afraid and people being open about their tattoos.

Their future plans include tattooing the remaining areas of unclaimed skin. Once Michelle’s arms were filled, she plans to move onto her legs. Scott did not have anything immediate planned at the moment, but would continue as inspiration arose.











## Putting Scott and Michelle At Ease

As a general rule, I always let a client know at the outset of a shoot that the first 15 minutes or so is just a warm up as I get dialed in and test the composition of the shots. This allows them to relax a bit and not feel so much pressure. This also allows us to get comfortable with each other. With Scott and Michelle, this was no exception. However, when those initial 15 minutes were done, I conveniently “forgot” to mention that the warm-up period was over and that the real shooting had begun. I prefer to extend the comfortable period and let everyone slide naturally into a groove of shooting, which seems to put far less pressure on the client. I also continuously ask them questions and get them talking about a subject they enjoy, because then their inner passion inevitably begins to be expressed in the photos. And when working with a couple, I get a kick out of getting them to tell stories about their relationship, because then they eventually share a meaningful look or chuckle about an inside joke, which I then attempt to catch with my camera. It is what I call those “in-between moments” that hold special magic. This is when they forget the camera is even there.



### Posing

During the shoot, I gave them general guidelines as to how to pose, and then tell them to customize the position based on how it felt most natural to them. As a general rule for portraits, I avoid telling each person to do the exact same poses. Everyone has slightly different body language, even beyond gender. For example, when working with a wooden chair I brought up from my kitchen, I simply turned it backwards and told Scott to sit on it in the way that he found most comfortable. His first instinct was to plop down and drape his arms over the top. It made for a great, relaxed pose. When Michelle sat in the same chair backwards, her arms did not hang the same way. That is what I anticipated, and hoped for.

When posing them together, I just let their existing chemistry take over. This is the main reason why I love working with couples. There is a natural energy and unspoken mutual trust that's been built up by years of experience together. For Scott and Michelle, I instructed them to stand together in such a way that felt natural to them, and what inevitably followed was a gradual melting into each other's arms, seasoned by years of familiarity. Whenever they looked at each other, implicit words would fly between them and embody the years of life experience they had with each other.









It was such a pleasure working with them. Michelle had such confidence, grace, and presence in front of the camera. Meanwhile, Scott went through a transformation during the shoot. He initially arrived in a corporate style button down shirt, vest, and tie; however, by the end of our session, he was donning his baseball cap, sleeveless shirt, and a whole lot more attitude, which give him an entirely different air. The other side of him had emerged –the after 5pm version. I sought to capture both his corporate and non-corporate personas.



## Photo Processing: Saving Time With Perfectly Clear

After the shoot was over, it was time to enter the processing and editing phase. For me, the key to retouching any group of photos to the same level is to work them together. My goal was to honor the relational dialogue amongst the photos so that they all related to each other stylistically. This involved first culling and rating the raw photos in Lightroom, and then making basic corrections to the exposure and shadows to the small group of resulting finalists.



Culling and making corrective edits in Lightroom went quickly. I tend to flip through the photos rapidly and give those with any potential a one star rating. The misfires are immediately discarded, as are the photos with blank stares and accidental blinks. I then create a “Smart Collection” that filters the photos shown to me so that I only see the photos with a one star rating or more. These are the photos that made the initial cut. From there, I begin to narrow down the selection further by going back through the one-star photos and assigning two stars to the best photos appearing in the smart filter group. I then like to go through one more time and assign three-star ratings to the best photos. The resulting photos are the best handful from the shoot. In this case, I ended up with nine photos out of hundreds of shots originally taken. At this point, I like to create another Smart Collection that includes only the photos rated three stars or higher. This allows me to focus on the finalists. The whole process probably takes me about 45 minutes. From there, I applied quick corrective edits to the exposure, blacks, whites, contrast, and vibrance.





After these quick, general corrective edits were made to this small group in Lightroom, I then exported the handful of finalists as Tiffs into Perfectly Clear using the Perfectly Clear Lightroom Plugin.





Starting out, I always select one image to work on first. While the program made some helpful automatic corrections, I decided to select the “Landscapes” preset because of its vivid colors, depth, and the way it brightened the skin. Who says you have to use the Landscape setting only for landscapes? I tend to use what looks the best. From there, I made my own adjustments in the “Adjust” module using their collection of manual sliders and options. This included bumping up the colors, applying some slight de-noising, and then selectively tuning certain adjustments down, such as the skin tone corrections. Turning the Skin and Depth Bias setting to Bright was especially helpful. I also made further adjustments to the chosen photo’s exposure, vibrancy, and also fine-tuned the tint and sharpening settings. Turning on and adjusting the Perfectly Smooth slider instantly smoothed out the skin as well. My goal was not to completely smooth out their skin to the point of it being unrealistic and porcelain-like; rather, I wanted to slightly clear up their skin and make it look like they had just had a really good facial. Over-adjusting a client’s skin can be a like walking a tightrope at times – there’s fine line between under-doing it (and therefore displeasing the client), and overdoing it (which also displeases the client). Ethically, you want your photos to be retouched, but still realistic. The person needs to still be recognizable at the end of the editing session.







After completing this quick process on the first photo within Perfectly Clear, I decided to create a custom preset based on the modified Landscape setting, seeing as this set of photos were taken under similar lighting conditions. I then applied this preset to the remaining images. I then went through each of the remaining photos in Perfectly Clear and fine-tuned individual details, including their exposure using the Exposure slider. Some of the images only needed the Standard Fidelity setting, while others benefited from the Vivid fidelity setting. Others needed Shine Removal, while others did not, depending on the angle of their face in relation to the light source. Using the Catchlight option was handy as well because some images needed it added in, especially if their face was slightly angled away from the softbox. I was pleased to note that using Perfectly Clear in my workflow saved me a fair amount of time retouching the subjects' overall skin surfaces. And just as importantly, the detail and color integrity of their tattoos were preserved. The software also shortened the time it would have taken me to enhance the dramatic feel of the photos



Within Perfectly Clear, I saved the photos, and was immediately taken back into Lightroom. From there, I made further slight adjustments, depending on the needs of the particular photo. This included using Lightroom's adjustment brushes to further correct areas of persistent dark shadows in their eyes. Looking back on the shoot, I probably would have chosen to use the reflector that I initially rejected. This would have saved me some time on the processing end.







At this point, a good chunk of my editing was complete. I decided to move my small group of photos to Photoshop in order to clean up some loose ends and spruce them up further. I wanted to achieve a more stylized, artistic feel. This included filling in the backgrounds where ever the background wall showed through, doing some additional skin retouching and blemish removal using the Healing Brush tool and the Clone Stamp tool, sharpening specific areas around the eyes, and executing some non-destructive dodging and burning to sculpt their faces just a bit. For some of the photos, I also had a change of mind and decided to slightly lighten the area directly behind the subjects in order to separate them from the background a bit more. Originally, I had wanted them to be emerging from the shadows, but during processing decided that pulling them out would achieve a more effective portrait. Had I made this artistic decision earlier, I could have achieved this by using additional lights. As a final step, I decided to manually add in a very slight rim light effect to a handful of the photos by duplicating the original layer in Photoshop, cutting out the subject from the background, and then using the Inner Glow Layer effect. Finally, I called it a wrap. Their portraits were complete.

## Concluding Thoughts Seek To Streamline Your Workflow

It is important to learn from each and every shoot. For this session, it involved moments of introspection regarding my preparation as well as my processing workflow, which I am constantly tweaking.

To be brutally honest, my personal retouching workflow tends to be based on instinctual bursts of inspiration, often to the point where I sometimes become downright impatient. This is especially true when I reach the point of being able to mentally “see” the potential that lies behind an image. This often leads me to hurriedly seek to achieve that future vision, even if it takes extra



effort. As you can imagine, this can equate to a series of steps that is not always neat or tidy, and can ultimately lead to additional steps to get to the finished product than if I had spent more time planning. In this instance, the decision to both manually lighten portions of the background and manufacture a slight rim light effect in Photoshop created extra work for me, which meant additional minutes spent retouching. However, after realizing how much better the photos would look with these additional features, I couldn't not do it. But in retrospect, it would have been more efficient to simply use the additional lighting during the shoot itself. Also, I might have actually used the silver reflector that I had sitting on hand, which would have provided a touch more fill light and therefore cut down on time spent removing persistent shadows in their eyes.







Yet, considering all of this, I was pleased with the results of the shoot. Adding the Perfectly Clear Lightroom Plugin to my workflow was extremely helpful, especially early on as I set the emotional tones for the photos and made quick overall skin touch-ups. Skin retouching is something I tend to spend a great amount of time on, and it can be tricky to strike that correct balance of smoothness and reality that I constantly seek. With the Perfectly Smooth slider within the software, it made this part of the process quite easy.

When taking portraits, our unspoken job as photographers is to capture the essence of our subjects. And when retouching a group of photos, we often seek to resolve the artistic tension within them so that they come close to matching the stylistic vision that we see within our mind's eye. In my case, I sought to do this with Scott and Michelle, while also adding my own artistic touches their portraits. I am quite pleased with the results.



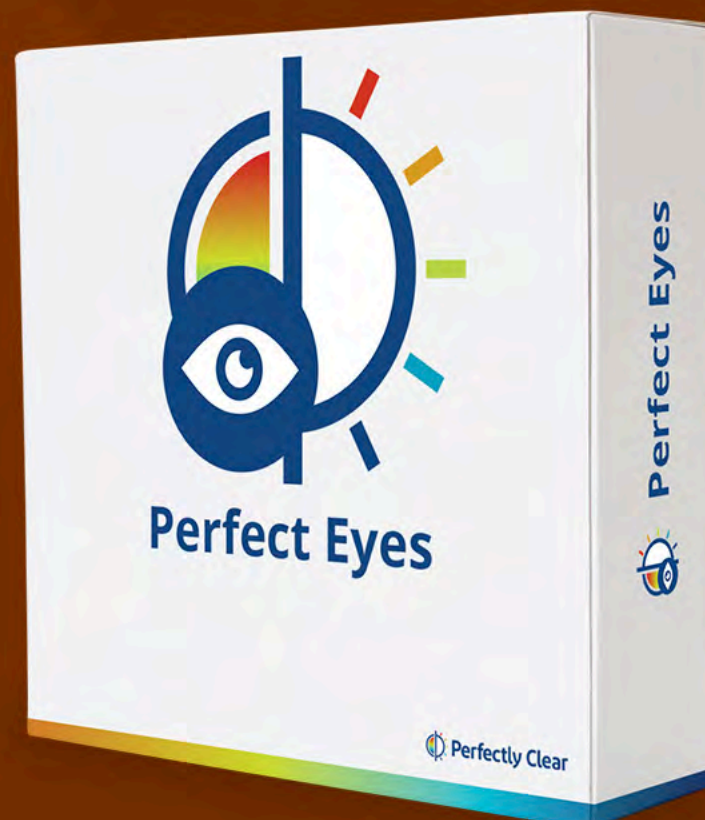


*photo by Pamela Berry*

## Perfect Eyes

**The perfect plug-in to enhance the eyes of your subject.**

Perfect Eyes for Photoshop and Lightroom provides eight great presets and precise controls to help you automatically remove dark circles and red-eye, add catchlights, sharpen details, enhance and even enlarge the eyes. Spend less time editing and have more time behind your camera.









# Actors Headshots

**By Pamela Berry**

What makes a headshot for an actor stand out? What steps can you take to ensure your actor has a headshot that sets them apart? In this chapter, I will discuss eyes, wardrobe, lighting and why they are essential components in making the headshot you take stand out. The goal of an actors headshot is to get a job. One of the best compliments I've received is when an actor comes to me and tells me that their headshot booked them a job. Headshots get an actor an audition. Without a good headshot, your actor will not even get a foot in the door. It's crucial to know the basics of how to take a great actors headshot. The most important person that sees an actors headshot is a casting director. In the film and TV industry, a casting is a pre-production process for selecting a certain type of actor for a particular

role or part in a script involving a production meant for an audience. A casting director is responsible for choosing actors to come in and audition for a role. This happens by contacting local talent agencies to submit actors headshots. The headshots are then viewed by a casting director and based off those headshots, an actor is then selected to come in and audition for a role. When an actor arrives for an audition, they must have a printed copy of their headshot and their acting resume. When an actor is in an audition, the headshot must look like the actor that is standing in front of them. When a headshot does not look like the actor, the casting director get frustrated for wasting their time. They saw something in that headshot and they want what they thought they were going to see.





I'm going to explain my approach to taking the best possible headshot for your actor that will find the the best success when they are heading into the casting room or to even get a chance to get to the casting room. There are some key specific instructions on how a headshot portrait is different from your average portrait. Keep in mind, specific markets and Hollywood often change what they like and don't like. For many years, actors portraits were always strictly black and white. Over the last ten years, color is now the standard as well as having a variety of different looks depending on the type of audition they are going in for. For example, if an actor is auditioning for a lawyer type role, have a more professional business like headshot. If an actor is playing a housewife, have a more simplified plain headshot. Right now, actors should have two to three different headshots on hand to cater to the variety of auditions they want to be submitted for. This trend can change at anytime because that's the hollywood way but knowing the trends can and will change, there are still strict guidelines that must be met no matter what the trend may be or what kind of headshot the actor needs.



**The most crucial aspect of the headshot is the eyes.**

You have to get the eyes perfect. I feel the eyes are the most important part of the headshot. I often explain to my actor that I need to see a fun story in the eyes. Pretend they have a fun secret and they can't wait to spill the beans but the time isn't right yet and that excitement has to show in their eyes. Depending on the connection I have with the actor in front of my camera, I also say it's a look of "bedroom eyes" or a sweet "sultry" look. It has to be authentic. Eyes show emotion. I can tell if someone is sad, or happy, or depressed. Here's an example image where my actor looks sad. She's not a sad person in general, but it doesn't provide a positive energy that will bring an actor into an audition. You need to connect with your subject and get that twinkle or extra something special to come through the eyes.







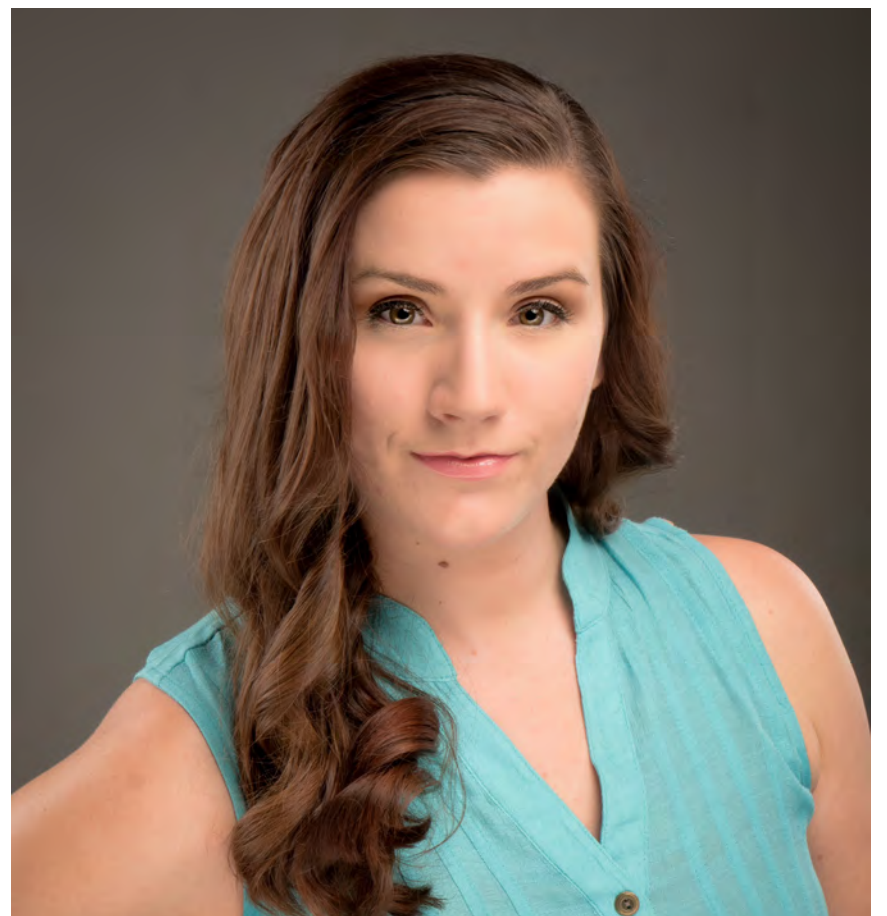
The eyes have to have that element of a story. When a casting director sees a picture, they need to feel that there is something more to that person and it is the eyes that will make that difference. Casting directors want eyes that draw them in. You could ask your subject to slightly squint to get the effect, however, I find that by using a more authentic emotion naturally brings that smirk, smile, or story to come to life within the eyes. Even use little touches like finding that catchlight from your strobes or the reflector makes a difference. Catchlight brings a sweet element that allows the casting director to be drawn into the eyes first. Hence, the perfect name “catchlight” Catch that light and allow the focus to be drawn into the eyes. It will happen naturally with how you set up your lights or by using the reflector. Or if you need the catchlight to be a bit more dramatic, I love that Perfectly Clear has catchlight in the presets that you can use to bring it out in your images.



## Clothing has to be simple.

This goes back to the eyes. You do not want your actor to wear anything distracting. Avoid stripes, odd colors, weird shapes etc. Those types of clothes only distract from the eyes and the face. This also includes avoiding most jewelry. Many times, casting directors prefer the actor to wear the same clothing as in their headshot. Casting directors see so many actors and it can be a challenge in having a casting director remember who someone is. This is why your actors need to wear clothing they plan to audition in. Having the same audition clothes, helps the casting director remember who they have in front of them. Consider darker colors instead of lighter colors, darker or mid-tone colors can allow more emphasis on your eyes and smile, helping create that eye line to look directly at the eyes. Generally try avoid lighter colors as they can make a skin look a bit more pale and washed out. It is best to have your actor wear colors that are complement skin tone. Consider helping select colors that can help to bring out the eyes. For example, if your client has blue eyes, then consider a blue or grey shirt. Or, if they have brown or green eyes, then earthy tones can be very complimentary to the eye color.

Here's a couple examples of good types of clothes to wear:



Notice the subject's shirt is fairly simple. It doesn't distract from her face and your eyes stay drawn to who she is and not what she is wearing. It's flattering and it represents her. She's not the type you would find wearing sleeveless or low cut clothing. This outfit represents her personality and is something she

can comfortably wear out on auditions.

Notice with this subject, her shirt is one color, is a flattering color and yet it doesn't distract from her eyes. Her makeup is simple and her hair isn't overdone. This is a look she can easily do for her auditions.



I also recommend men to have at least one set of images to include a suit. This allows for a more classy option for certain auditions. Many auditions call for a business professional look and making sure you have that in their portfolio is a must.

Here's an example of what NOT to wear. No-

tice the arms, the posture, the clothing all affect the quality of this headshot. The arms are causing the clothes to bunch and it creates a poor posture. The strips on the shirt are distracting. You cannot gain a good sense of who this person is unless you think they are an overgrown kid sitting for his school portrait.





**Hire an experienced hair and makeup artist.**

Having a professional hair and makeup artist will ensure your actor has clean basic makeup and hair. Truth be told, most people do not understand how makeup looks on camera. Often women put on too much makeup or use makeup that has glitter. Too much makeup not applied correctly can cause a person to look too old, it can create unflattering shadows and cause shine that highlights areas that can distract from the eyes. Glittery makeup creates a distraction from the eyes as well. Make up needs to be simple. A makeup artist knows where to create low lights and highlights that are camera friendly. When you have a good makeup artist, this helps you have less post processing time as well. Hair needs to be similar to how your actor normally does their hair when they go into an audition. This goes back to making sure your actor looks the same in the headshot as they do when they walk into an audition. I have a hair and makeup artist for men as well. Men will often be shiny in front of lights, it's always a good idea to have your makeup person on hand to help with the shine and yes even mens hair generally needs a bit of help for the camera. Avoid those fly aways reduces your time in post. Shine is not your friend on camera. Lights will bounce off of shine and you will loose detail in the image. Avoid shine by having a good makeup artist, powder and shine paper on hand. A funny tip for shine, if you are in a bind, grab some of the toilet seat protectors. Believe or not, that paper is the exact paper that is used to blot out sweat on actors and models in a shoot. I've worked on some major productions and have seen production assistants run to the bathroom to grab a toilet seat protection cover to use for removing shine and sweat off an actor. Works like a charm.









**Try and have a session in which you can do an outdoor and indoor session.**

If you are outside, you must have your camera settings at a low f-stop. You need to have sharp focus on the eyes and the blurry background begin by the ears and fall off to where the background is completely blurry. This helps focus your subject on the eyes and face rather than distract by noise in the background. If your background is sharp, the casting director will be distracted by the background noise. By allowing a shallow depth of field, you allow the focus to strictly be on the face. I like sticking to f/2.8 and sometimes smaller if the lens allows. The more you shoot, the more you will see how important it is to allow that blur start about the ears. Some pictures will turn out better in the studio and some will turn out better with natural light. If you do an outdoor photo session, always have a reflector handy. It helps catch the catch light in the eyes that I describe earlier. This particular image is shot using an equivalent 85mm lens f/2.8 and notice the catchlight in his eyes due to a reflector. Notice the blurred background allows for the focus to go straight to the face and eyes. Practice, play with your f-stop, adjust the reflectors. Find the blur and find the catchlight.

**If you are in the studio, you need to have the lighting so you have very few shadows.**

The light needs to be fairly even. Here I have 2 lights on the side, a beauty dish in front and a reflector under the subject. This creates even lighting and the reflector helps give a nice brightness to the eyes. A beauty dish is simply a shallow metal disk that attaches to your strobe light. When used up close, the beauty dish allows for a focused light source without a hot spot in the middle. It creates a semi-hard light and I set the beauty dish high and pointing downwards to create shadow which bring out and sculpt the bone structure, eyes, lips, nose and chin. I also cover the dish with a diffuser called a sock to bring in a bit more softness in the light. However, I have done headshots with one key light and a reflector. Though as long as you have nice even lighting, work with the equipment you have.







### **When it comes to posing and composing the shot, try a few things depending on their personality.**

An outgoing, energetic, social, personality will have a different feel against someone a bit more reserved and shy. A favorite power pose is one where they look straight on into the camera lens with a super powerful look into the eyes. I'm positioned slightly lower from the eyes and this captures that power. It's that slight above position of your subject that subconsciously gives a perception of power. You can even try having your subject fold their arms as some options in the pictures you create. Someone who is more reserved will feel more comfortable in an angled pose. You can do this by asking your subject to turn their body into the light but rotate their head and shoulders more towards the camera. From there you can fine tune then pose by adjusting the head and chin into a flattering position. Play with poses that included slightly bending at the waist and pushing the chin out towards you. These slight adjustments will slim down your subject and create a focus directly on the face. This is where getting a connection with your subject comes into play. You will get a feel for what will and will not work. Often, I'll start with one pose and just not feel it. After a few shots, I make the adjustment. One super pet peeve of mine is missing body parts. I dislike actor headshots in which the actor is missing an ear. I prefer seeing both ears. A headshot is just that, a HEAD shot. Having both ears in an actors headshot also help with the direction of focusing on the eyes. Casting directors don't like surprises, and believe or not, they want to know the ears look normal. Make sure you have angled their head so you can see both ears in the shot. It's much more appealing seeing the entire head as well. All of this helps to help ease the mind or eliminate any questions that may come up if you have part of the head cropped or missing ears. Often model shots can have part of the head cut off at the top. This is not the case for an actors headshot. I also make sure the arms create some sort of space between the arm and the body unless your actor is folding their arms. Space between the body, looks more natural. It prevents clothes from bunching, it's less distracting and helps with posture. You can achieve this by having them have their hands on their hips, thumbs in front pockets or back pockets. I also advise the actor to tighten their core. By having them tighten that core stomach muscle, it automatically forces great posture. When I refer to core, I'm explaining to tighten the part of the body right below the middle of the rib cage. It's where your diaphragm is located. When you tighten that part of your stomach area, notice how your subject naturally starts standing up straighter. The shoulders are relaxed and the neck straightens and the chin rests is a nice natural looking state. Not only does it force great posture but there is an authentic power that comes from strengthening that core muscle. Often trained vocalists, experienced actors, those who do yoga are familiar with this instruction. It's advice that is great beyond taking pictures. That authentic power of core strength will come through in the images.







## Editing must be kept to the very minimum.

Casting directors want to see the real person. It's okay to edit a few blemishes out but do not do a lot of retouching. Freckles are a good thing. I've seen actors headshot in which they had no freckles but in person, they clearly had freckles. This will not make a casting director happy. If the person has freckles, they want to see freckles. In fact, I've seen actors be upset over the softening of freckles. Less is more when it comes to post processing actors headshots. My basic post processing includes make sure my exposure and color balance are perfect. I very very lightly brighten eyes and teeth. So light that if you didn't know I did it, you wouldn't know that I did it. I also remove a few blemishes that normally aren't their on a daily basis. I like to refer to them having a nice spa day. Nothing dramatic needs to be done in actors headshots. Lastly, I do a quick unsharp mask that will help create a nice print. In Photoshop, unsharp mask applies a Gaussian blur to a copy of the original image and then compares it to the original. If the difference is greater than the threshold setting I've set, the difference is combined and applied.

In layman terms, it allows sharpening but blends it with the original image so it's not over done. Actors have to hand out a physical 8 x 10 print every time they walk into an audition. Make sure the image is as print ready as possible.

My workflow for my clients, I bring my images into Adobe Lightroom. I go through the images and mark the ones in focus, good story in the eyes and I delete the images which don't stand out and that aren't quite in focus. From there, I open up an image in Perfectly Clear. I do a quick two-minute edit which does a nice overview edit. I save my preset and then do a batch processing from Perfectly Clear on the rest of the images. Once the batch process finishing, I post a private gallery on my website for the actor to choose a handful of images. I love that fact I can sync my SmugMug site to my Lightroom. The actor can then go over the images with their agent to narrow down to however many you offered your client to pick. When a Client chooses the images they want, I go in each image and do a more in depth edit if needed. Being able to do a two minute batch processing for a proof of images has saved me countless hours at the computer. Here's a screen shot of a before after image in perfectly clear:





**Printing cannot be overlooked.**

I often have my actors print their images through the following site: <http://www.argentum.com/2004/index.php> Argentum is strictly dedicated to printing actors headshots. They know what is needed in every aspect of a headshot from quality, paper, borders and more. A big tip is to print during pilot season as places like Argentum run two for one specials. Pilot season is a time where TV episodes are cast and filmed. Then each summer, the major American television networks receive about 500 plus brief elevator pitches for new shows from writers and producers. Actors come to Los Angeles, Chicago or New York from around the world to audition for them. By spring, actors are cast and production crews assembled to produce the pilots. This is when labs dedicated to printing headshots have their best deals on printing. However, if your actor needs images right away, always make sure they are printed at a local professional lab versus the big box type stores. Non professional labs do not have consistent ink or color profiles that often match perfectly to your computer. Having worked in a lab for a few years, I can tell you countless times where we have had to reprint images that were originally done at a big box store. You cannot stress enough about lab selection on prints. This applies to anything you print. The more you understand and learn how to print, the more your business will grow.







### **Bottom Line:**

All this little technical things such as strengthening core, having both ears, making sure you see that story in their eyes will set those headshots apart from anyone else. It's all the little things that make the biggest difference. Get to know who you are taking a picture of. The better connection you have with your subject, the more likely you are going to nail those images and best of all, you will have a repeat client who will refer other clients to you. And lastly, nothing will upset a casting director more than bringing in an actor who ends up looking nothing like their headshot. Casting directors, agents, and directors are far more attracted to an actor who is comfortable with who he or she is. It's not about getting the "pretty" shot; it's about getting the shot that shows personality, type, age and essence. Of course there will always be reasons to break the rules. However, in order to break the rules you need to understand them and make sure the image is stronger because of it.





*photo by Richard Harrington*

## Perfectly Clear Complete

**Brings out the best in every photo with intelligent image enhancement and repair**

Perfectly Clear Complete helps you save time by unlocking the details in every image—automatically. It includes ALL of our award-winning corrections and 40 professionally created presets, all in a single plug-in.









# Infant's Portrait

**By Erica Thorness**

Babies are so squishy, fantastic, wonderful, and so much fun to photograph. Taking photos of babies is different than taking photos of newborns or toddlers; far easier in some regards. Babies are stationary, they don't crawl away, and stay where you put them. Yet they have a lot of personality that is fun and joyful to capture. They seem to come alive as individuals as they move past the newborn stage, and we start to see glimpses of who they are becoming develop.

We are focusing on babies for this chapter, as newborn photography is a very specialized skill, especially when you want the posed shots. There is an art and a formula to newborn photography that makes it very different than other types of portrait work. It requires a lot of patience and experience to pull it off well.



Toddlers are their own kind of wonderful. Often needing very fast autofocus lenses, high shutter speeds, and a sense of humor. Those kids are always moving! But babies, sweet babies, they are a nice respite between the two disparate ends of the photography spectrum, and that is what we are going to focus on here.

In this chapter, I'll walk through a complete natural light shoot from my thinking about a shot, to what I like, and what I do when I encounter a problem. We'll go over location selection to ideas for you to take what I've done and run with it. We'll go over some tips on how to find the light and modify it to your advantage as well as how to get the image to really pop using Perfectly Clear.

## Scouting Locations in a Home

Often we see our homes through non-photographer's eyes. How we view our home as a daily space for living is often different than how we'd view our home as someone who is looking for pretty spaces to shoot. We get used to seeing our home through the comfort of familiarity. We ignore the piles of paper while at the same time we might see unfinished projects, like a door jam that needs to be repaired, or an outdated fireplace. We'll discount our home as a place to shoot, when it actually has lovely places that might not occur to us without holding the camera up to our eye.

For this chapter, we are looking at capturing the light that is already in our home vs. adding light with flashes or strobes. Yes, Shooting with flashes and strobes would make any space in our home accessible for shooting. However, it is a fun adventure, and good practice to see what we can create with what is already naturally there using easy to find and inexpensive tools.







One of my old homes we lived in a few years back had a beautiful skylight in the kitchen. It poured in a ton of soft light throughout the space. I was just restarting my adventure back into photography then, but already recognized this spot as an ideal location for shooting due to the bright natural light. I'd often place the kids sitting at the kitchen island to do crafts. The light was behind me and above. It was an ideal spot as not only did I have the skylight, but I also had white cabinets. Plus, as a bonus, the skylight was opaque, and not pure glass.

Because it was frosted over, it created an even softer light, than a direct clear window would have. I would get light on my girls that was soft. This skylight provided a lot more light on them and their craft than the background. As the light fell off rather quickly, and the background that faded into shadow in the distance. The background, even though the walls behind them were cream in color, didn't have large skylights brightening the space, so it looked far darker. Sort of like if we posed our children at the edge of a cave. The background is just so much darker. Even if the space behind my kids was messy, or wasn't as fancy, as I had a very outdated fireplace, it wasn't noticed in the final images due to the fact it was so much darker behind them.

So, keep in mind spaces you think might not work because of a cluttered or unattractive background. By cleverly using light, you might be able to diminish their prominence in the final image.

Another thing to keep in mind when looking for places to shoot in our home is that furniture is often moveable. You aren't set with things as you've got them. You can move that





chair over by the window, you can remove the coffee table that is blocking the cool view. You can dump all the clutter from a desk into a laundry basket and tuck it around the corner for the shoot. Not that I've done that a few times. Or my favorite is dumping items from the countertop into the sink... If you are shooting from a lower angle, you won't see the dishes if they are sticking in the sink instead of sitting on the counter. It is a clever trick I've employed more than once when taking pictures of my kids at the kitchen table.

Now, Some people are fully into documentary photography. Some people love to keep everything exactly how it is. They won't move a thing, as they want to capture the scene organically. They often feel it is more pure of an image that way, less staged. If that is your thing, start to think about your home in terms of where the sun is positioned. Times of day change the quality and quantity of the available light in your home.

If shooting documentary style, and putting the limitations on yourself to shoot only as your home actually is that day, you still do have control of what angle to shoot from, as well as when to shoot. Morning to midday light in my living room is indirect. It is soft, it is not quite as bright. By late afternoon, my living room is full of direct sun. The difference between where the sun is shining and the parts of my room where the sun doesn't hit are much more dramatic. I'll have to select more carefully where I choose to put my subject. Do I want the high contrast of the bright window light to the darkened room? Or would I like an image where the contrast is less, so the whole image comes out softer?

The first thing I look for when picking a location in my home for portraits is the light. I look for where the light is coming from and how that will influence the overall feel of the photo. I have to think about what I want the final image to look like before I even pick up my camera. I'm more forgiving on backgrounds than I am on light. I'd rather have good





light and a cluttered background than a clean background with not so great light. For me, with that giant skylight in my kitchen of my old home, the background clutter faded into the distance because the focus was on my children under the big soft skylight. If the light was also hitting my background, my eyes would have been drawn to the clutter in the background as much as my subject. Some people try to make up for this in post processing by using vignettes and cropping to draw the eye back to the subject. If you start with good light, you won't need nearly as much help in post processing to bring out your subject.

For this project, I had an idea in my head. I wanted a portrait of my niece on colorful T-shirt rugs. I thought they were trendy, fun, and soft. Just perfect for a fresh look, that was a bit more playful than delicate.

I thought about taking the photo in front of double doors in my bedroom. While doors and windows are both great sources of light for portraits, I knew my subject was a baby, and the light coming from glass doors starts lower than with windows. So, before I started, I knew I wanted doorway light. In my bedroom, I have pretty French doors, but the light is ONLY coming from the doors. There is no other ambient light. The rest of the room is dark. It could make a beautiful photo, but the light was already pretty dim due to an outdoor canopy, and coming only from that one source, I was worried about my ISO needing to go too high. If my ISO becomes too high, my photo can become noisy as I'm pushing the camera sensor to do more work.





If I wanted a photo with soft backlight, or subtle side side lighting that was flattering to a baby, this wasn't going to work. I needed to find a spot with more ambient room light as well as light from a door. It is all about choices, and compromises, and while a single source of light might be lovely for other genres of photography like boudoir, it wasn't the style I was going for today. So, I needed to find another location to shoot.



My front living room provided the type of light I was looking for. Still very much directional light but there is a big picture window lit up the room in a way that would envelope the baby with a with a warm glow. The light coming from more than one direction creates a softer light with less defined shadows. There is also a less severe edge to the shadow when you have light





that is coming from a larger, less defined source. My dream of double french doors wasn't going to happen in my home today. But, we've got to be flexible, as for me, light is more important than the pretty french doors, so I went with the light in my living room.

I set up the fun rugs by the open front door. As you can see from the pull back, the majority of the natural light is coming from the door, but the room is still pretty light. You can also see my car parked outside. I don't need to worry about that. When I properly expose for the inside of my house, the light from outside will be blown out, or registering as white on the sensor of my camera.

The whole background will turn out pretty bright, and my car won't be noticeable in the final images, even if I aim directly at the car, out towards the street. I could have a clown playing a tuba out there, and we wouldn't notice it. Well, I would totally notice it, but you wouldn't see it in the photos. So, don't worry about what is outside your door, as long as whatever is outside is back from the door, it shouldn't be noticeable in your final compositions due to the exposure difference between inside and outside, almost the opposite approach of the kitchen skylight I was describing earlier. Once again, light is a much more important factor than background in this situation.



## Shooting with Side Light

For my first photos of the baby, I positioned myself with the door on left side of us. It happened to be how her mom set her down. I wanted to keep her as comfortable as possible, and since the mom set her like that I knew that was a position that was normal and comfortable for her.

The settings were 1/200, F/2.5, ISO 400, at 50mm. With all photography, we are balancing the exposure with three settings, the aperture, the shutter speed and the ISO. This is often called the exposure triangle. Depending on what our goals are, we want to keep the settings in this triangle within a certain range. We don't want to have a far faster shutter speed than we need for a situation, because we'd have to either adjust our aperture to be wider (with a narrower depth of field) or turn up our ISO much higher resulting in grainier/noisier images than necessary. Yes, we can always bring in more light, but we are working with natural light, so the balance does fall between the shutter speed, ISO, and aperture.



So with this, photo, my 1/200 froze the moment of the baby. I didn't need a faster shutter speed as she wasn't jumping, or running (or screaming!). My F/2.5 was a wide enough of an aperture to keep the baby fully in focus, while letting in enough light to keep my ISO low enough to capture good detail without too much noise or grain.

You can see the catch lights in her eyes from the big open door. This was just shot looking straight down on her, without doing any repositioning from where she was placed by mom. It is a pretty sweet shot. There is a sparkle in her eye from the open door, and she's engaged and happy, as we've just started (total bonus!). I often find the first images are often the best, as the whole experience is novel to the baby and they are fresh. They are so easy to please when we first start!





However I don't like the strong shadows across her face. They are a bit strong and distracting for this portrait. These can be corrected in post processing, to a point. But with babies, this light can be a bit unforgiving, even with the ambient light of this room being brighter than my original hope of shooting in the back bedroom. In the bedroom, the shadows would have been even more dramatic.

To fix this in camera, the best and easiest place to fix it. I often use a big piece of white poster board. Yup, just a white poster board, or even better: foam core. Foam core is a bit stiffer and stands on its own. Yes, you can buy a reflector built for photography but I often have a poster board at home, and I find that the flat edge mean I can set it on the ground or prop it on a chair a bit easier than I can with a reflector, plus it is a lot cheaper! Honestly, for in home images, a lightweight white board, is my go to choice over a reflector marketed directly to photographers.





Immediately, with the placement of the white board we can see a big difference in the quality of the light. The poster board fills the light in around the baby's face without me needing to change the exposure on my camera at all. The shadows have been diminished around her face, and it creates for a more cheerful, softer image. My settings were identical at 1/200, F/2.5, ISO 400 at 50mm. The only added element was the positioning of the poster board.

With this lighting I can play. I can try different positions with the poster board. I can try moving the poster board further and closer from the child. I can try different angles to see what looks good to me, and how the light hits the baby. It is a great flexible set up, and one I would have kept playing with until I got "the shot". However, remember with these little ones, we have to move quick. They aren't the most patient subjects. With babies, it is just catching that magical expression that can change from sec-

ond to second, so be sure to be ready. Sometimes, I even set my camera to be able to take multiple frames in succession, instead of having to push the shutter button each time. That way I am able to capture the subtle changes in expression that happen even faster in children than they do with adults.



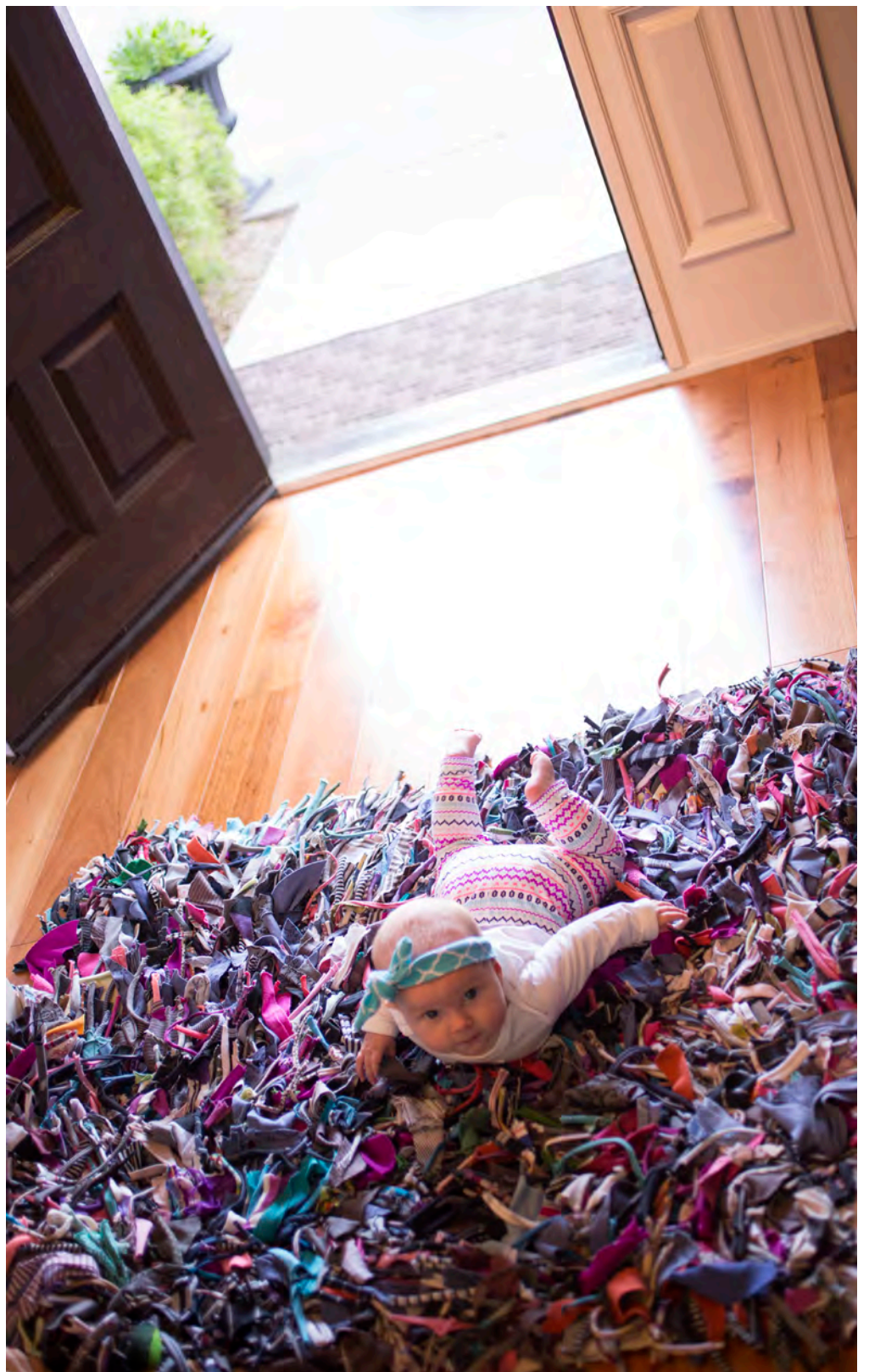


## Backlighting a Tummy Shot

It was fun having the baby lay down for some photos, but I get bored with just top down photos of babies that can't sit up yet, and I also wanted to keep the baby engaged. Some of my favorite shots of babies and kids are straight on photos of them on their tummies, especially when I am down at their level looking directly at them, even if that means I'm also on my tummy on the ground. It is easy and fun to do when they are on a bed.

When they are on the floor, I get down too. I like the perspective of being right at their eye level. Keep in mind, tummy time is a blast until they spit up, or start screaming at you from the workout of lifting their head. Not all babies like their tummy, and most can only do it for a few minutes before they start to rebel. So, be ready, and shoot fast! Here is the setup I used for my backlit portrait.

Backlighting for any type of portrait can present a challenge for the cam-



era. Most cameras won't be able to automatically compensate for the bright background and realize what you're doing. Your baby very well could become under-exposed, and nobody wants an under-exposed baby. We can correct for this using exposure compensation, or shooting in manual mode, by brightening up





the whole image in camera. Also, with some lenses shooting backlit creates a haze over the image. Some lenses do it more than others. There is a whole trend in photography that really go for this look, and want as much haze and soft light as possible, but as you can see, it can create a challenge with editing, and while a sweet image, it can be a bit flat and dull. (Baby\_tummy-10.jpg). If you are shooting with a UV filter over your lens, you might want to try taking it off for backlit photos. It will cut down on the light bouncing around on the lens optics, giving you a cleaner shot.

While this image is soft and beautiful - See how I did that... I went from calling the same image flat and dull, to soft and beautiful? It is a matter of perspective and what style you are trying to achieve. But, in all honestly, this backlit image doesn't add any life or dramatic catch lights to her eyes, and the exposure looks a little flat. Plus the color is hard to pin down well. We can do a lot to fix it in the editing stage, but it is far easier to do it in camera. To fix this exposure from the start, it might seem counter intuitive, but adding a bit more light can dramatically improve this image before we even get to the computer.

I grabbed my cheap poster board reflector that I used for shots earlier of the baby looking up at us. I propped it up a bit off center, as I didn't want it to hinder my shooting. The board bounced the light from the bright open door light back onto the baby. Because I have added the light and the light is coming from a bit off center. It gives the image more depth that it was missing in the first backlit image, as the new fill light from the board isn't coming directly onto the baby. It is going in at an angle, so it is a tiny bit brighter on the side of



the face that is closer to the board. The difference is dramatic, the settings were 1/100 F/2.5 ISO 1250 at 50mm. As you can see, compared to when we were looking down at the baby, we had to turn our ISO up when shooting backlit. This is because we are exposing for and wanting the baby, who is now the darkest part of the photo, to be brighter.

A good way to think about it is, the difference in light if you have a small flashlight in your hand pointed at your other palm. Your palm would be quite bright, and the back side of your hand would still be pretty dark. Our eyes adjust naturally to this, but the camera needs to adjust by using some part of the exposure triangle. This time, because I still wanted to not have a blurry photo due to camera shake, and I didn't want to change my F-Stop as I wanted just the baby in focus, ISO was the factor that had to compensate for the fact that I was focusing and exposing for the dark side of my palm.

Another good example would be if you've ever taken a photo of the moon when it is in a crescent shape. The whole moon is still up in the sky, but you can expose for the dark side of the moon or the lit side. When we are backlighting, we are exposing for the dark side of the moon.



I like that we used the reflector in this backlit image. This photo just looks far more delicious. The light bounces off her eyes and lips, even the drool becomes adorable when we added in the reflector.

Now, if this baby had hair, we'd also see a glowing halo of hair around her, which would make her look almost like an angel. You can see some of the glow on the edge of her hair tie, so just imagine shooting in this lighting with a slightly older child, or one that hit the genetic lottery of hair before age two. Totally fun to play with, and a huge advantage of backlighting vs side lighting.

I adore backlighting natural light portraits, and adding a bit of bounced light into your backlit images will bring them to life. That is the big takeaway. If your backlit images look dull, bounce a bit of light back on your subject. It creates depth and dimension to the image that will make it really stand out.

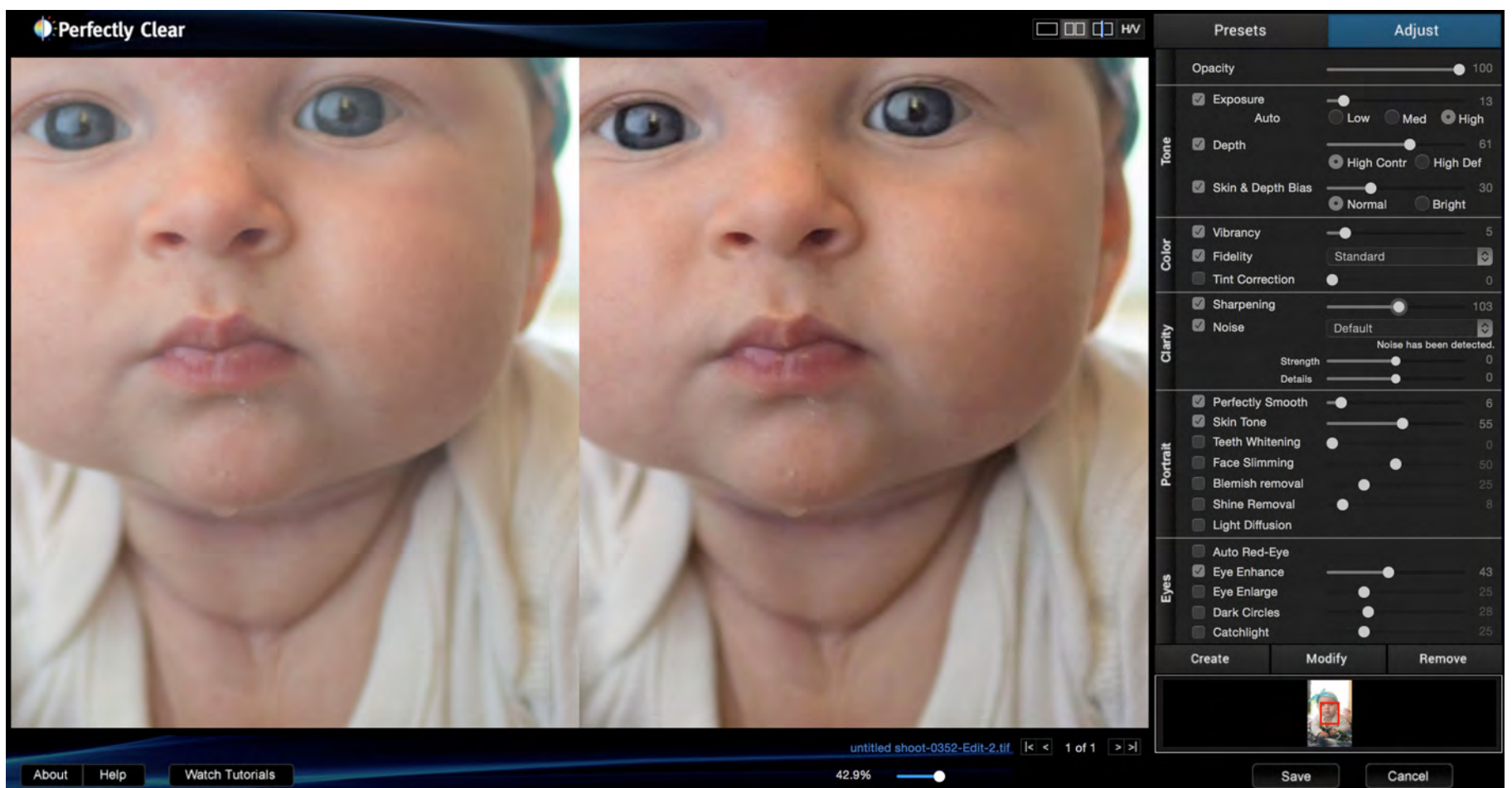


## Editing Babies

So, we've got some fun photos. We've done it quickly because babies aren't patient subjects. While we can nail a photo straight out of camera. It often can become a far stronger image with a little bit of post processing. It can take that good image to a great one. Editing is a step I never skip. Even if I have taken a photo with my cell phone, I run it through the Perfectly Clear app before I post to social media or even send in a text to my family. Why not put my best foot forward? It only takes a click or two.

For this session, since I shot with my DSLR, and not my camera phone, I imported the images into Adobe Lightroom, cropped them, and corrected the white balance using the eye-dropper tool. Then I ran them through the Perfectly clear plug in for Lightroom.

Even a photo that is pretty good, can be made better with a few adjustments in Perfectly Clear.



Notice how I upped the exposure a tad, adjusted the tone depth, and didn't apply much skin smoothing. I did brighten the eyes. I am careful not to over edit babies. They are adorable the way they are, but getting their skin tone right, as well as sharpening and brightening their eyes a bit can do a lot to enhance their portrait. It is simple to play around with the settings to see what works best. Each image has different needs and settings, so a formula doesn't always work, but do save my adjustments by creating a new preset. I often use my own presets as a starting point when adjusting photos. No need to start from scratch each time.





## Before & After

The original (on the left) is straight out of camera, even with the reflector could still use a bit of help. After Lightroom edits (center), what I imported into PerfectlyClear The last image is on the right is processed in Perfectly Clear. The resulting image has a more definition, and the eyes pop subtly more. Editing makes a difference!

## In Summary

When working with babies, keep in mind the direction of light. Try adding some fill light bounced back onto the baby in the form of a poster board. It works great if the shadows are harsh or the backlighting is strong. Work fast. And, edit carefully. But most important, have fun.

Baby smiles are the best. They grow so fast.









# Creating a Professional Portrait

**By Mike Kubeisy**

“Make it turn” is a phrase used often when I’m shooting celebrities on a Hollywood set. It’s a term meaning to give the subject some depth in the lighting.

As photographers, we capture a three-dimensional subject, something that has height, width, and depth. Yet we use a two-dimensional tool, a camera. It captures an image, an 8x10 for example, that has height and width but no depth. The way to capture depth is by lighting. The professional working photographer knows how to light for that look.

My name is Mike Kubeisy. Although I shoot celebrities in Hollywood, you can use some of the same techniques I use to capture your local celebrities. In your community you have many opportunities to photograph the Mayor, local Congressman, PTA President, realtors, accountants and lawyers. Using social media as a major marketing tool, everyone needs a professional portrait.





## Shooting the Portrait

This photograph is of a realtor friend of mine. It is lit using 3 lights and a reflector. The Key Light is with an umbrella, however you can use a Octabox or a Softbox. I prefer to use a soft white 42" umbrella. The larger the light source, the softer the light. The closer the light source is, the softer the light.

In the following image you can see the light on the camera's right side of the subject, you can see a shadow on the left side of his face. I place the Key Light on the camera right side because he prefers it that way."

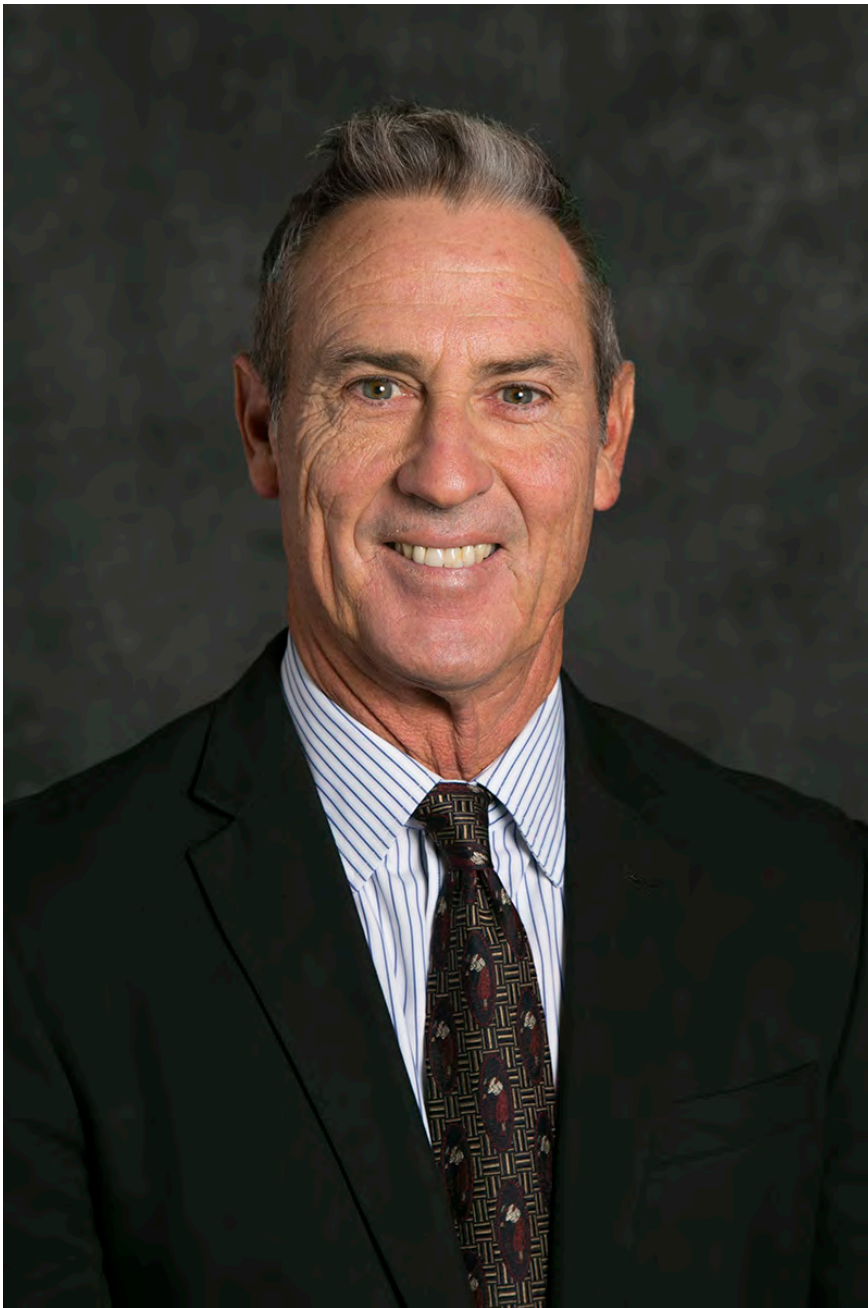
His good side" he tells me and that's fine. I will

interject and make a suggestion if there is a part in their hair that is not centered on the subject. I would then place the Key Light to the opposite side of the parted hair. I always have my subjects turn their shoulders towards the Key Light and look straight into the camera. At times I will suggest a little tilt to the head, I feel it gives a little warmth and approachability to their personality.

We will now add a 3'x4' white piece of foamcore using the white side mounted onto a stand on the camera's left side of our subject. Place it about a 1' to a 1.5' away from his face. You can see by the image how it filled in some soft light to the shadow side.





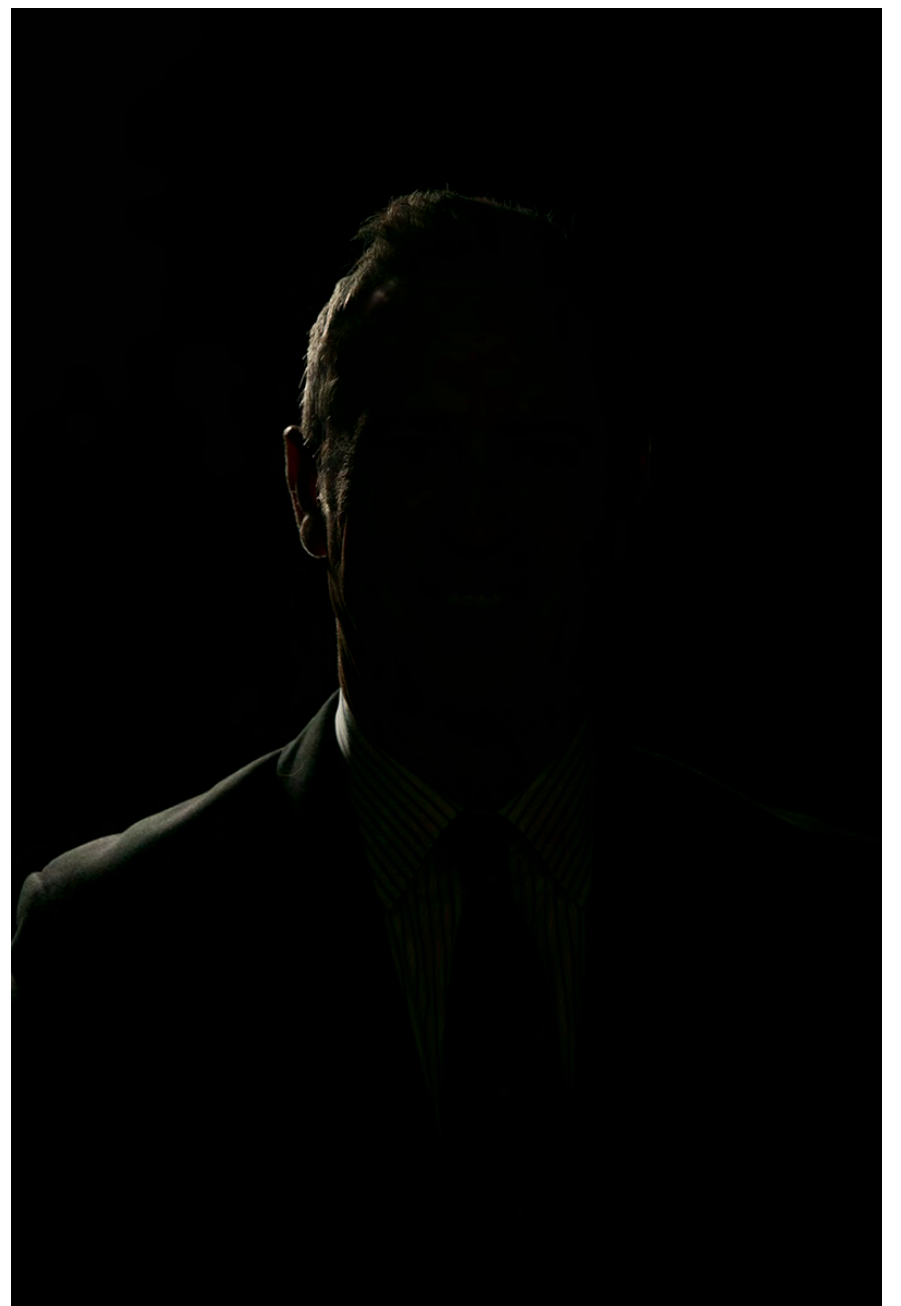


You want to be able to fill in the shadow and make the light turn giving it some depth.

Remember shadows and highlights create depth.

The next thing you'll want to create is a Hair Light. In the following image I use a 20" grid on a 7" reflector. (I wrote a blog for Photofocus regarding Hair Lights, you can view it here <http://photofocus.com/2015/10/21/hot-hair-lights/>)

Which ever side your Key Light is on you want to apply your Hair Light onto the opposite side creating more depth. You want to make sure that when you are aiming your light, it's not spilling over their cheek and hitting their nose creating a highlight on their nose. That's not a good thing.



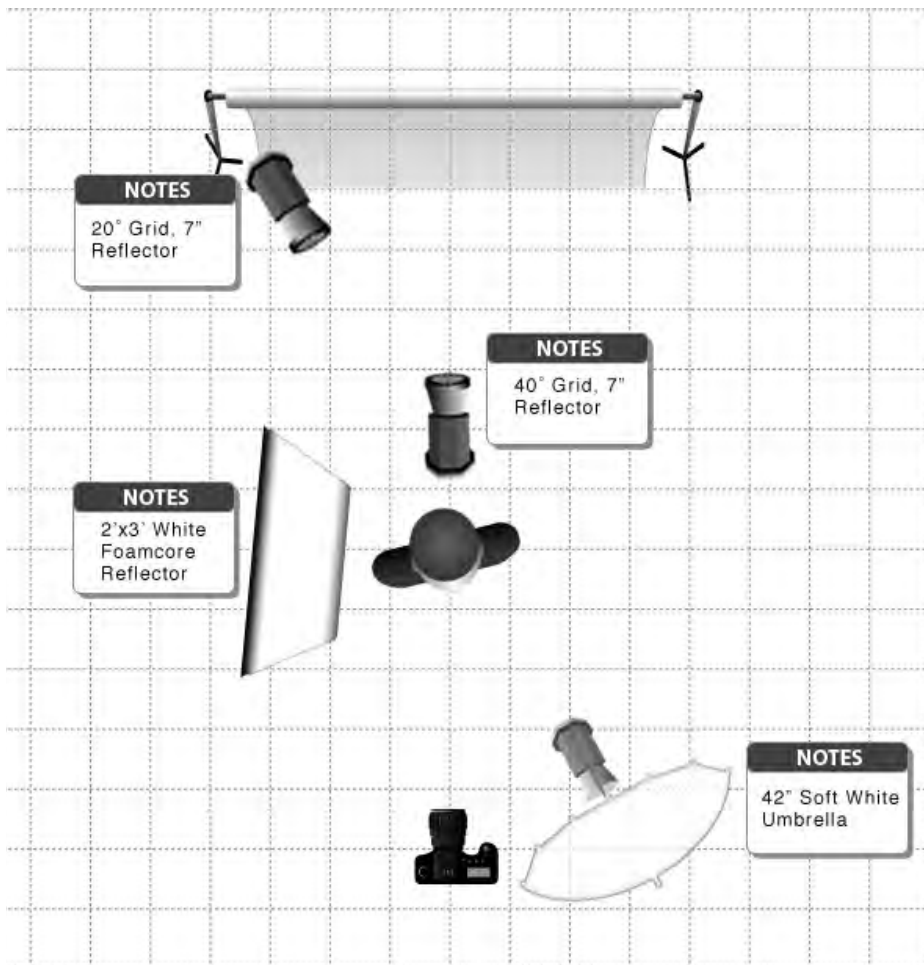




Now you need to place a background glow. Again, I'm using a 7" reflector with a 40° grid, it's centered behind the subject about 4' from the backdrop. Angled down at about 8 o'clock.

As you can see I try to get the glow just above his shoulders, again trying to create depth into the photo. I did not apply it this time, but you can add a gel to this light to add some color to your image.

Here is the image with all the lighting applied to it and a lighting diagram to show how I setup everything:



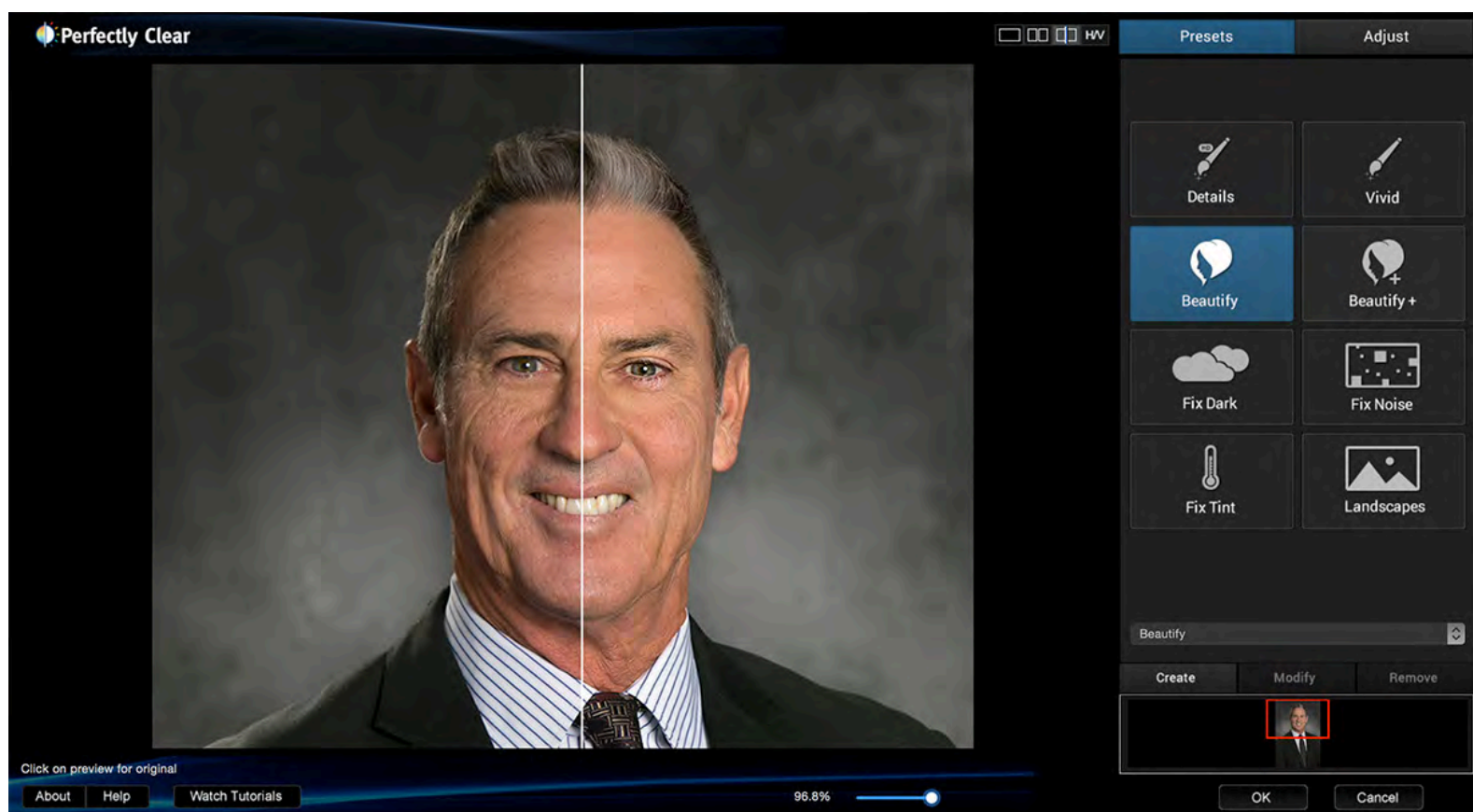


## Retouching the Portrait

Now allow me to apply some retouching to our image.

I first go into Photoshop and retouch all the heavy wrinkles. I'll use either the Stamp Tool or the Healing Brush, then I'll go into Edit > Fade and bring back the applied filter to around 50%.

I don't want to remove all the "age" so that the person looks fake or plastic. Then I Stamp out all the hair flyaways. Here is an image with the standard Photoshop retouching up to this point:

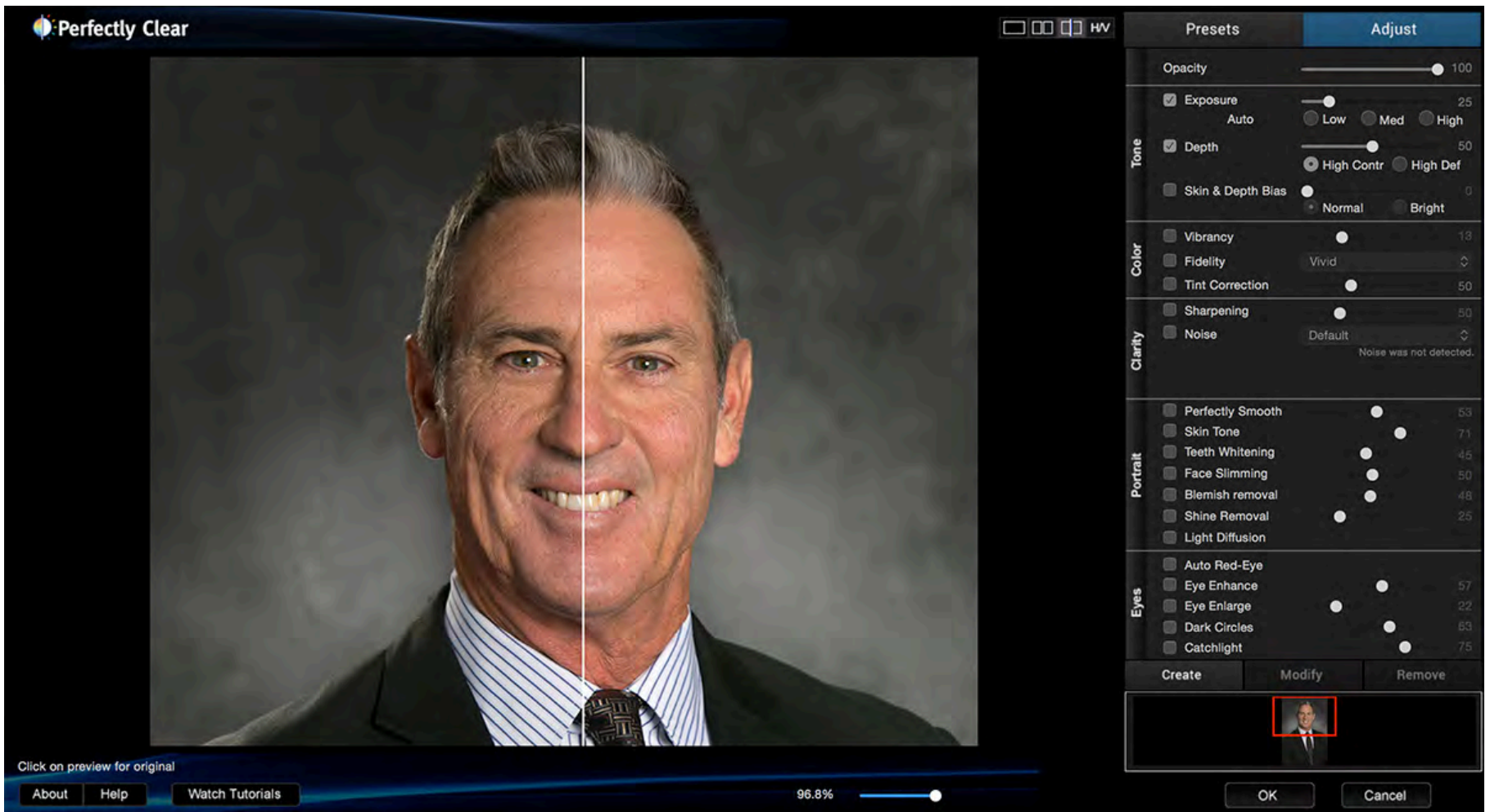


Now let's fine tune and enhance the image in Perfectly Clear.

While the image is still open in Photoshop choose Filters > Althentech Imaging > Perfectly Clear.

The Perfectly Clear window will open and you will have a choice of Preset options:





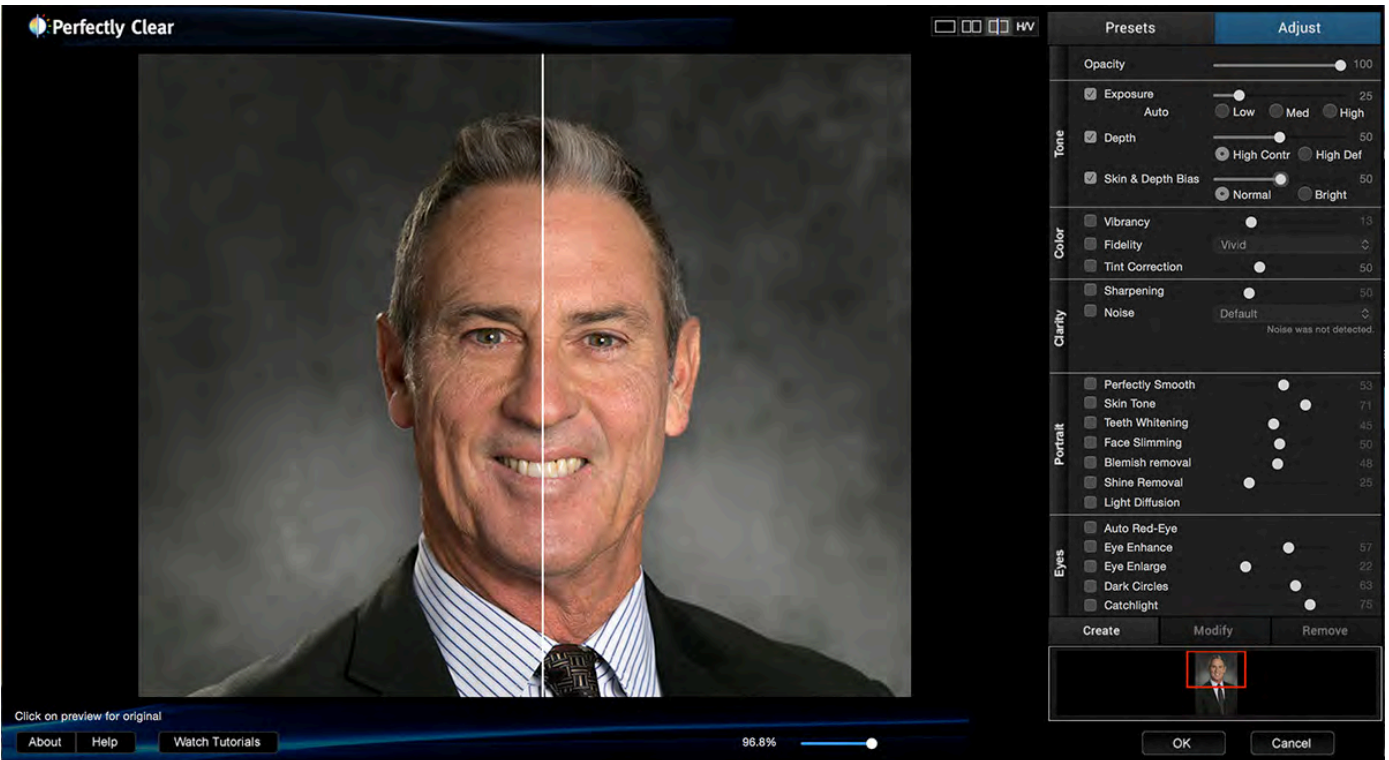
## Tone

Click on the Adjust option, that will allow you to fine tune your image to your desire.

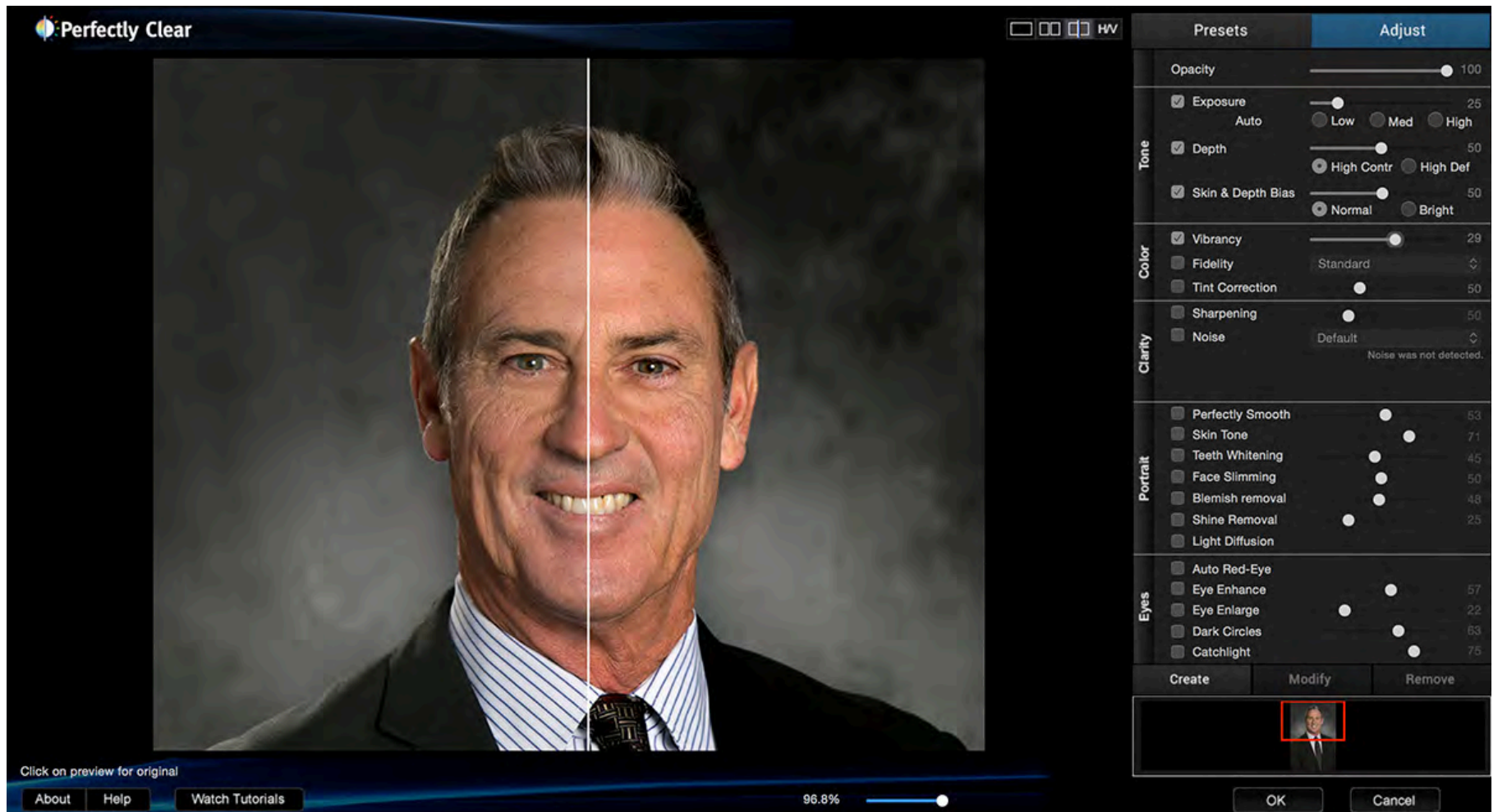
In the Tone section I begin with the Exposure adjustment. You can see I increased it to 25. Next is the Depth adjustment:

I adjusted the Depth to 50, with this adjustment it adjusts the background depth. Sometimes when I can't see the adjustments, what I'll do with many sliders is go back and forth with the sliders so that I can see the adjustment being applied. If I still can't see the change I simply won't apply it. In this image however it really helps the background standout, and I like that because it does what I wanted when I was lighting the image.

Next is the Skin and Depth Bias adjustment: It separates the skin from the background. Again I set it to 50 and Normal.





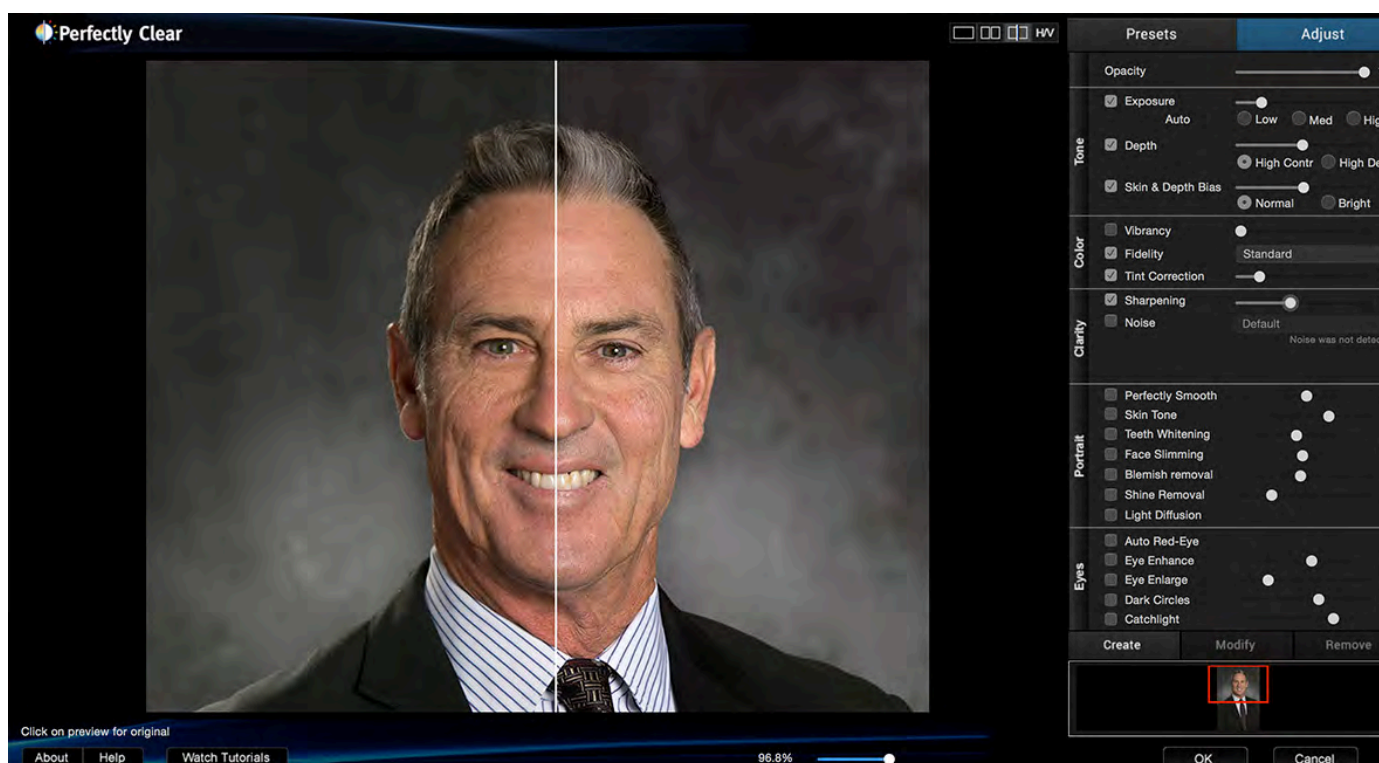


## Color

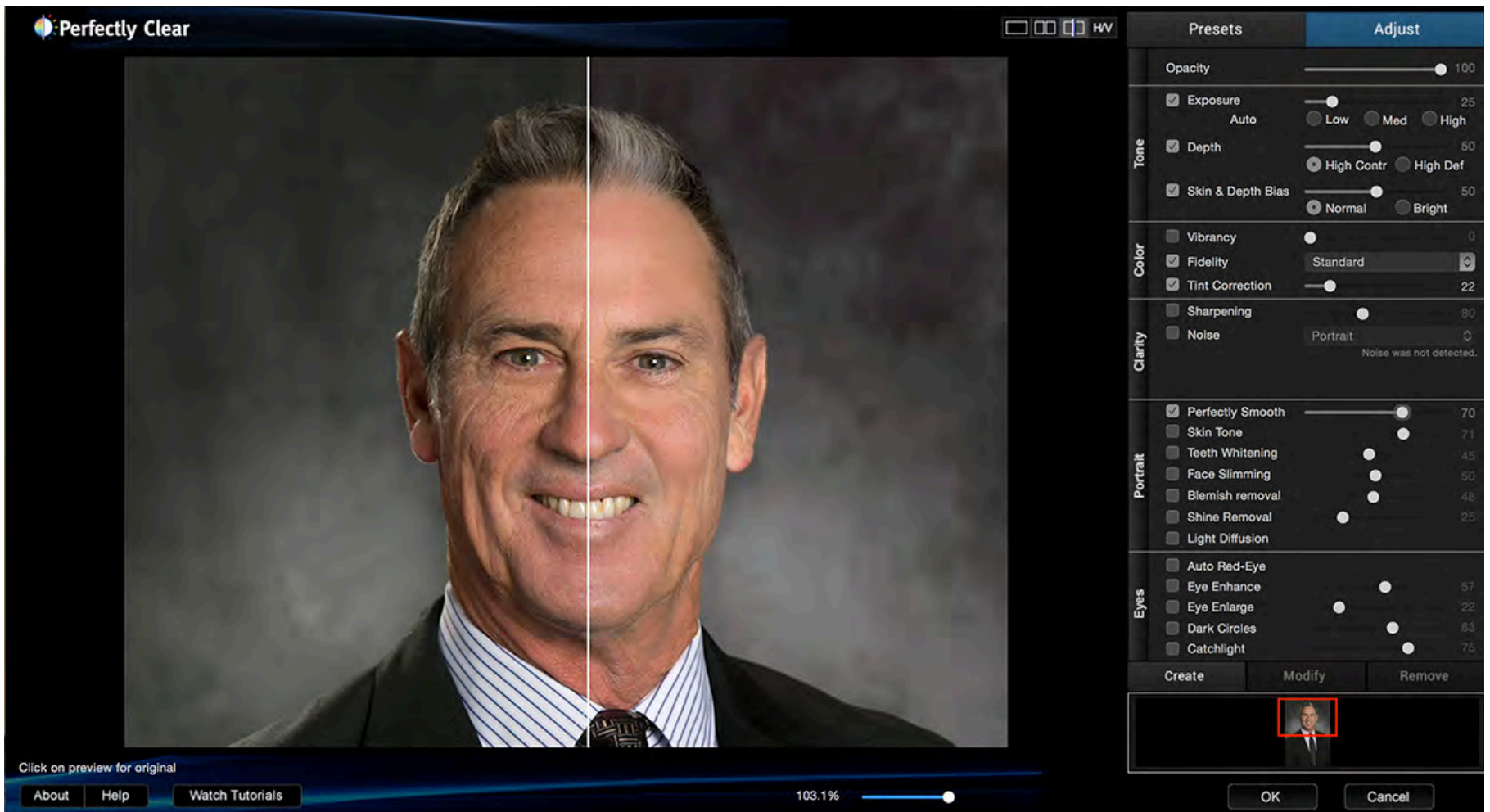
In the Color section there is the Vibrancy adjustment. It's defaulted at 20. I didn't like it for this image because the suit is very subtle and doesn't have any bright / vibrant colors, so I chose to adjust the slider to 0. Fidelity is the next adjustment:

Here I clicked on the adjustments and chose "Standard". Tint Correction is our next option:

Tint Correction allows you to adjust any color adjustments you might get from reflective clothing or any other casts that might appear on your image. You can see that I adjusted my image to 22.







## Clarity

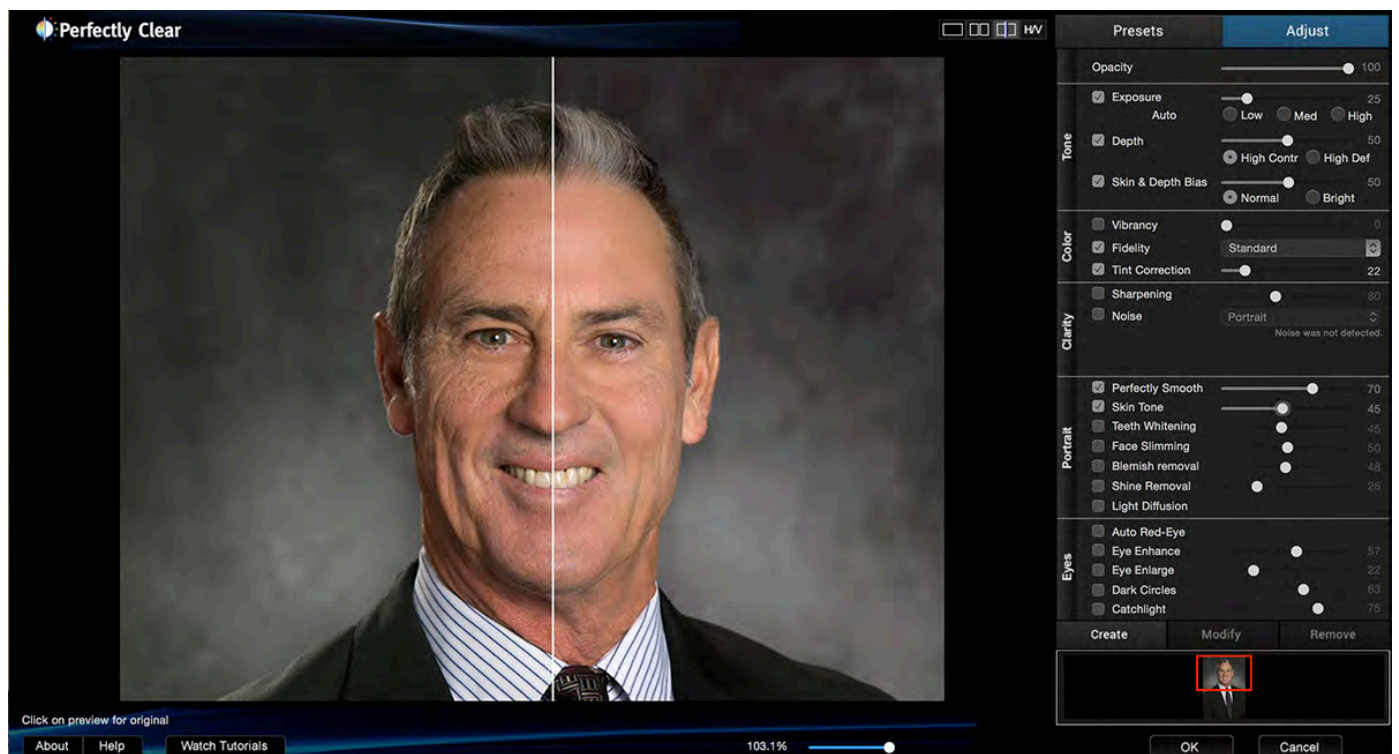
Sharpening is defaulted at 80 for this image. I didn't like it so I adjusted it to 0 and clicked it off. Noise is the next adjustment in the Clarity section:

"Portrait" was the selection I made in the Noise option window and it stated, "Noise was not detected". Of course it wasn't I only use professional noiseless cameras, just kidding, I crack myself up. This next one is huge, it's the Portrait section:

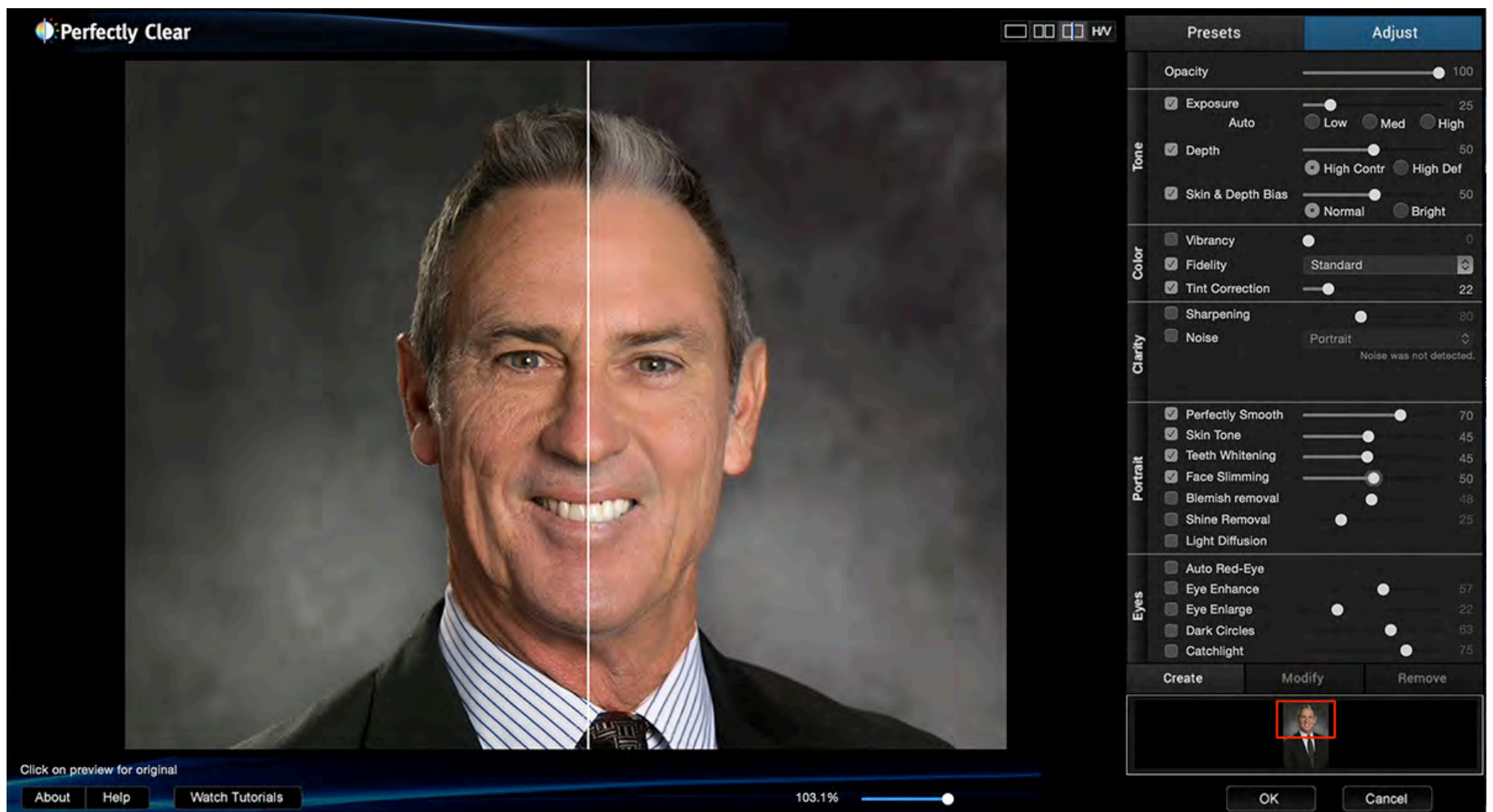
## Portrait

Perfectly Smooth is the next adjustment. I feel the need to make my subjects look great, however I also want them to look human.

Be cautious and don't over do it on this one. I selected 70 for my adjustment. Skin Tone is next:



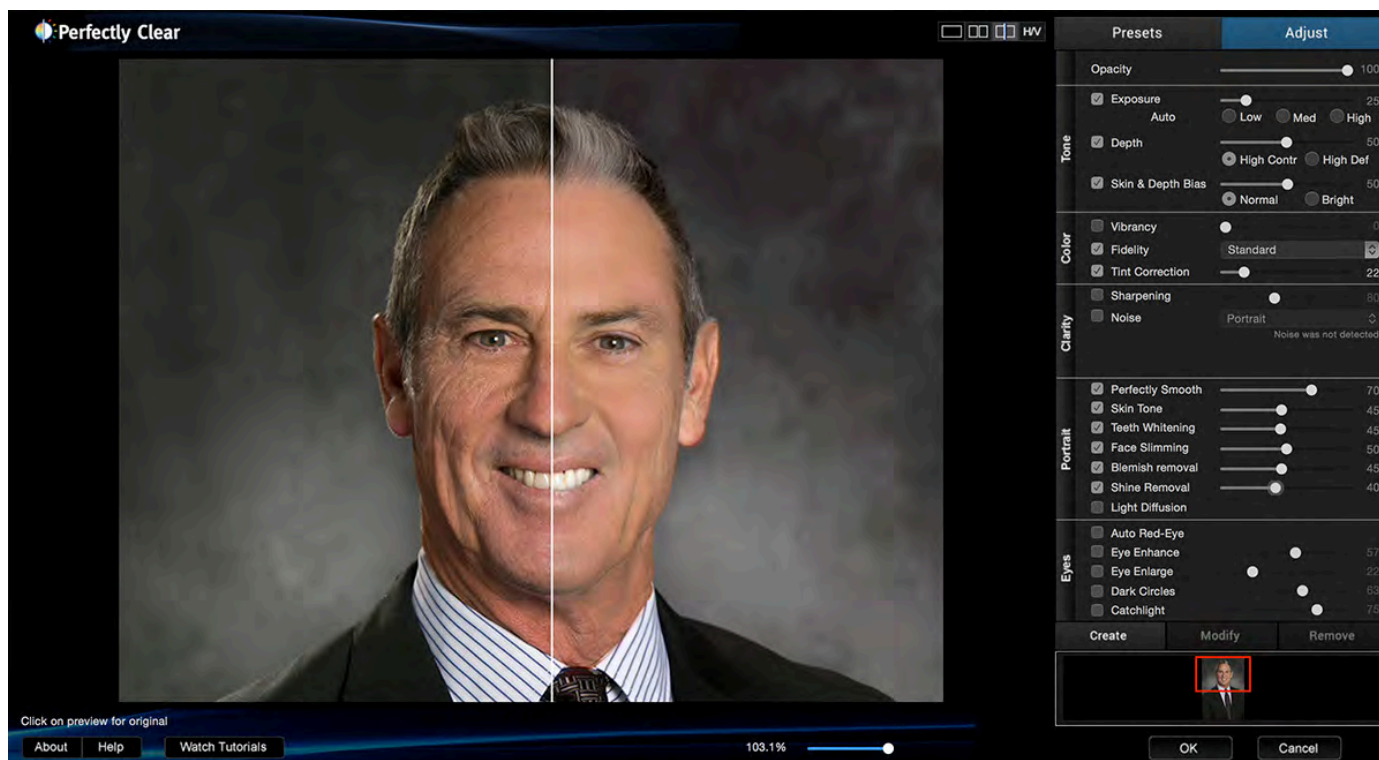




Skin Tone is a great adjustment, it can actually adjust the red from the infrared light spectrum. Unlike Tone, this is from the actual skin color and not from any casts. 45 is my choice for this one. Teeth Whitening is next:

The professional in my photo is a smoker and this adjustment works amazing! It is so easy and the way that Perfectly Clear identifies the teeth is way beyond me. I used 45 for my smoker's teeth. Another awesome adjustment is Face Slimming:

Now with this adjustment, Face Slimming like Perfectly Smooth, you have to be careful when applying them. I would love to be slimmed down, but remember to stay natural. I selected to use 50 for my weight loss solution. To much to soon will not be natural. Blemish Removal will be our next adjustment:



When using Blemish Removal be realistic. This adjustment is very powerful and you don't want a plastic finish on your subject. I felt that 45 on the slider was sufficient. The next adjustment we have is Shine Removal:





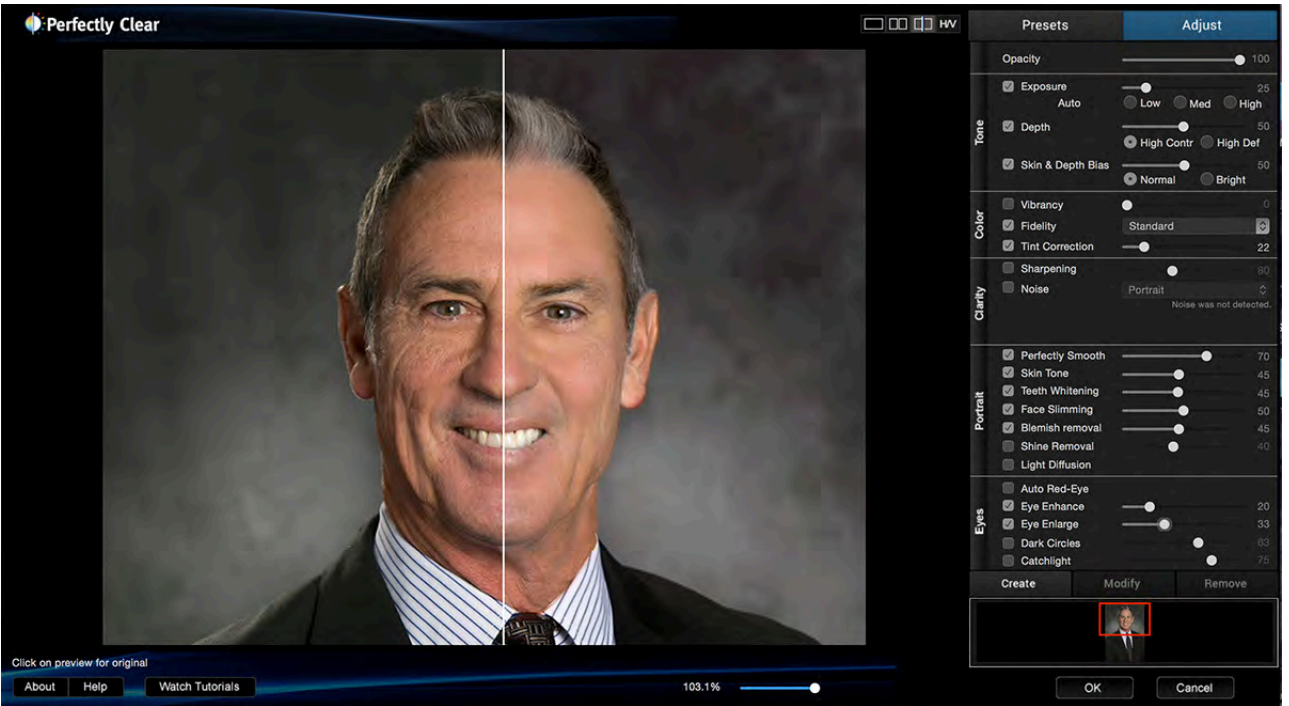
I found that with Shine Removal on my image it really matted down the subject so I decided to unclick it and not use it. Light diffusion is next:

I shot this in my studio with controlled lights. The Key Light was a soft white umbrella, therefore with the lighting I created I didn't feel I needed to take advantage of the Light Diffusion adjustment so I unclicked it. The Eyes section is next and it's awesome with what it can do:

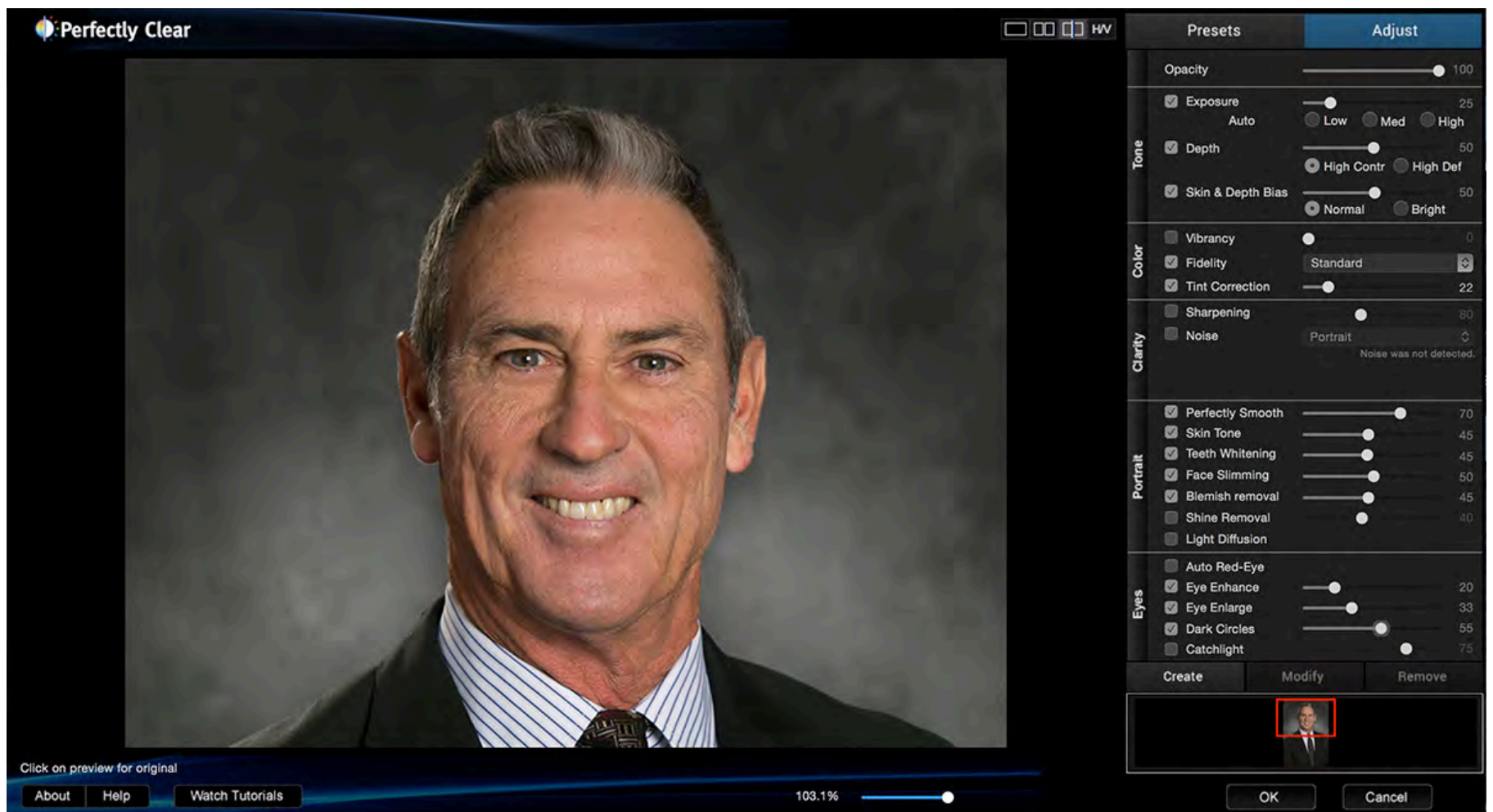
## Eyes

The adjustment for Auto Red Eye did not detect any red eye so there was no adjustment. Eye Enhance was the next adjustment and this one saves me a lot of time in Photoshop. It makes the eyes sparkle and it is a great tool! Again, remember the acronym KISS (Keep It Simple Sexy). Don't over do it or your professional subject will look like an alien. I adjusted his eyes to 20. Eye Enlarge is another subtle one that looks great:

So be careful here. This adjustment again is awesome but remember KISS, no aliens here, this is a professional portrait. With the Eye Enlarge I used 33 as my adjustment. It's a very fine tool! After a late night, Dark Circles will be our next Perfectly Clear adjustment:







Dark Circles is like a bounce card that reflects light only to the area below the eyes. It's a very nice feature, 55 was my adjustment choice.

The Catchlight adjustment wasn't needed because it was a studio portrait and the Key Light I used created a beautiful catchlight in my image.

With all the powerful adjustments made in Perfectly Clear, allow me to show you a "Before": and "After" Perfectly Clear adjustments:



I think you would agree, what a great look for a Professional Portrait. Perfectly Clear will save you time while shooting on the set, and in Photoshop retouching.





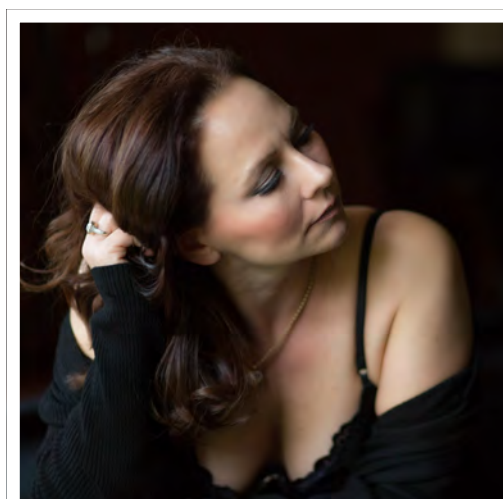
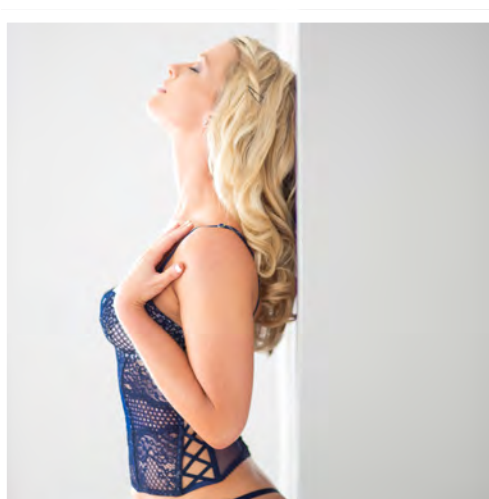


# Making Great Boudoir Portraits

**By Lisa Robertson**

Boudoir portraits are arguably the most personal of all types of portraits out there. In the past few years, boudoir has seen a surge in popularity and can be quite an asset to your portrait repertoire when executed properly. Well, in this sensitive world, what is properly? There are many approaches

to this type of photography which is a noun of French origin, literally meaning “a woman’s bedroom or private place”. However you approach it, by very definition it is a hugely personal space that your clients are allowing you to be a part of so it requires first and foremost trust.





## **Establishing Trust**

Whether you are a male or female photographer, we all can establish the trust necessary for this type of portraiture. Your passion and seriousness for boudoir has to come through to your clients. No one is going to want to be vulnerable in front of a camera operated by someone who seems ambivalent or timid with the subject matter. Ladies, I recommend trying a boudoir photo experience for yourself to become acquainted with the truly transformative and positive experience a good boudoir session can be. Gents, perhaps you have a wife, girlfriend, or close female friend you could talk to in depth about her experience in a session to get a sense of what emotions, experiences, and potential hurdles they experienced that your potential clients might as well.

After your passion and seriousness come through, trust is reinforced with open communication both verbally and in contracts. Let your clients know upfront what your policy is on publicly showing images. As photographers, we do have to advertise somehow! Maybe your policy is that you can use any photo. Maybe your policy is for a case by case basis. Either way, transparency is key.

## **Establishing Safety**

This goes hand in hand with the trust. Once your client trusts you to perform the session, you need to ensure their safety. Physically, we can do this with the environment we're photographing in. Whether it's a studio space, a home space, or a hotel space, the environment needs to be clean (no one wants to lie around in sheets that smell anything but spring fresh!) and free of hazards ("rustic" environments should look out for loose floorboards, splinters, nails, glass, etc that could easily snag delicate fabrics and skin).

Ensuring emotional safety is a little more of a "feel it out" process but very much involves lots of positive verbal reinforcement. If you're stuck with posing and you just can't find the right angle or the right light, just keep working through them as if she's the next top model. There can't be even a hint of negativity in your voice or expression because she will automatically take it as a criticism of her body and begin to shut down. While as photographers, we can be critical of something and easily say that something "doesn't work" or "is not quite right" as a critique of the framing or the light and not a critique of the person, a boudoir client will likely turn that into body issues, which is the exact opposite of what these portraits are intended to inspire. Instead, I tend to thank my client (a lot) during the session and when I'm stuck I'll say things like "I like that, but let's try this" or "I really love the light in this area, let's go play with those shadows!" Making the session a collaborative effort helps reassure the client that you're invested in creating something awesome with them rather than just taking their image as well as helps you steer clear of unintentionally having a client misinterpret your dialogue.

## **Establishing Boundaries**

Once you establish trust and safety you have a solid foundation to work from and likely a willing client who is game to try most anything you ask of them. With that in mind, as a photographer you have a responsibility to dance the fine line of maybe pushing them out of their comfort zone a little, while still respecting their boundaries. Make sure you have a conversation about where your client draws the line. Some want to push from sweet into super sexy. Some want to stay covered no matter what, others want to go nude. For my work, I tend to find most of my clients want something in the middle with maybe a handful of poses on either extreme. Keep communication open, know that things may



be subject to change (even during mid-shoot), and feel out when to push and when to not and you'll have a client that feels safe, trusting, and respected.

Now that we've established the "Holy Trinity" foundations of boudoir photography, we can start talking about actual shooting!

## **Natural Light**

I tend to prefer the look of natural light to artificial for boudoir photography because I find it conveys sensuality more readily. Plus, when I throw white sheer curtains over the windows my whole studio turns into a giant soft box! This image illustrates this giant soft box look. Regardless of how you pose her, that soft light will accentuate curves with soft shadows and flatter any skin tone.





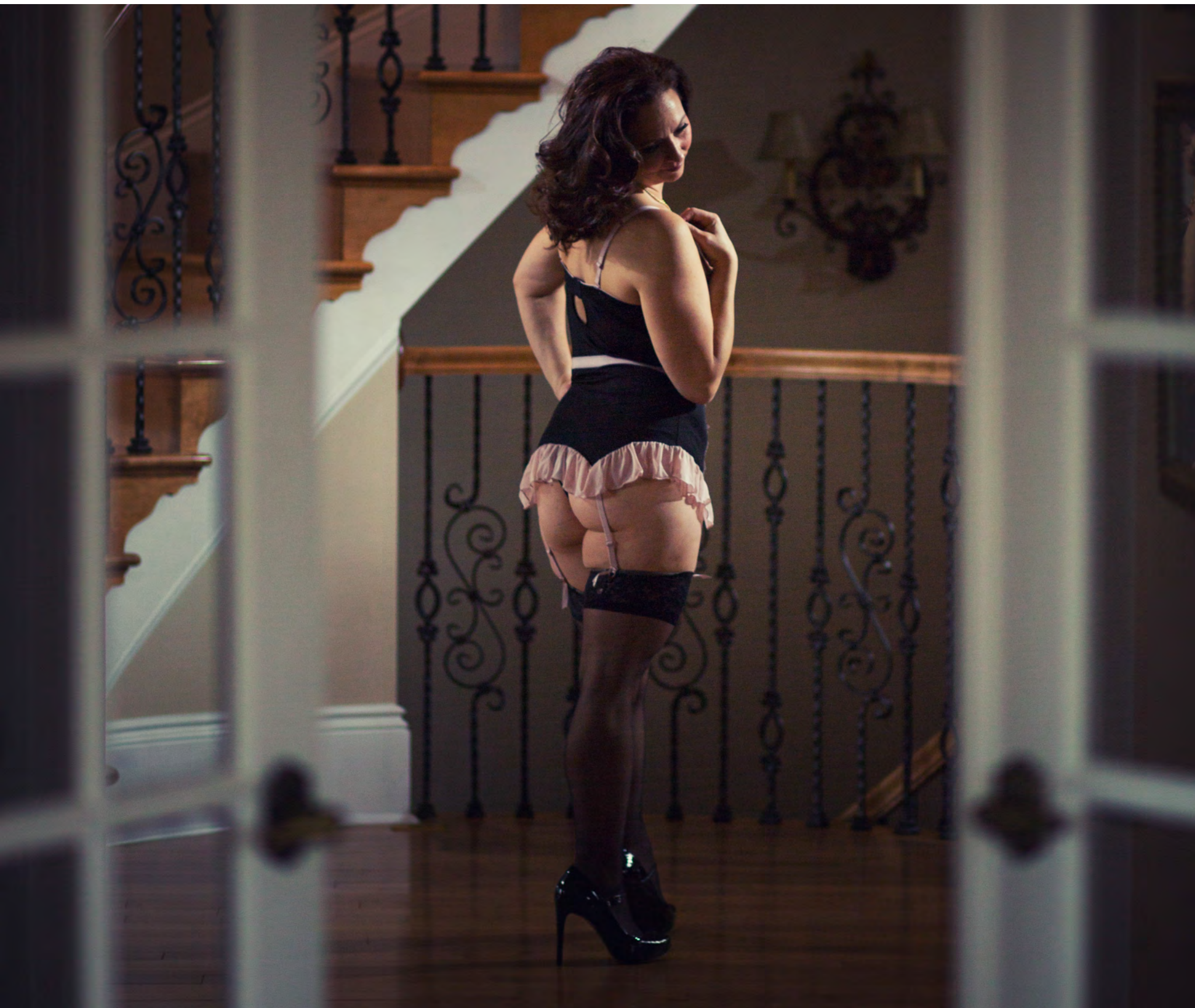


Natural light can also be incredibly dimensional. Here, there was a medium sized window, high in the stairwell that was otherwise unlit. The light was falling beautifully to land on all the right spots to highlight and shadow all the spots women tend to be most apprehensive about in these sessions (neck/chin, backs of thighs). In this image, even though the client is completely covered, the play of light and shadow create an alluring look and highlight her features, creating something breathtaking.



## Artificial Light

I don't use artificial light in my style of boudoir photography very often, however, it's the perfect thing to utilize when you're looking for an added pop of drama or to separate your client from the background. In this image I was inspired to "layer" the image with the environment. I loved the french doors and wanted them to frame my client. I also wanted the stairwell and railings to make leading lines that brought you right to the perfect spot on my client's body. However, when I exposed everything all together with what natural light was available, the result was a bit blah. Nothing really stood out. The layers muddled together a little bit. I popped two speed lights up on light stands and placed them at 180 degrees, cross lighting the client. I zoomed the flash heads in because I wanted the majority of the light directed onto the client to make her "pop" and not spilling onto the stairwell or doors. The result is dramatic light, that highlights all the perfect curves and lines of the shape of her body.







## **Backlight**

Backlight can be a great asset to your boudoir photography repertoire. To the extreme, this is silhouette. It's a fabulous way to accentuate the curvature of your client's body without worrying about a whole lot of detail. It's also a fun way to get your client to loosen up a bit because silhouettes look best with dramatic, over the top poses (you have to get separation of limbs to get the best lines). I tend to tell my clients to channel their inner "Vegas Show Girl" for the best response. For this image I happen to have a nifty/weird part to my studio where an interior window (to a dark stairwell) lines up almost perfectly with an exterior window, so I can easily "sandwich" my client between the two for an easy extreme backlit look. Many environments that you photograph in will have odd quirks. Try to use them to your advantage.



Backlight to a lesser extreme can still add drama to an image. In this image, I exposed for the midtones because I wanted some overexposure with the backlight but I still wanted some detail in the shadows. Additionally, I want to note that this image was the direct result of open communication with my client. She had told me about this window and wanting to do something in it. She also told me that she felt her best asset are her legs so she wanted to make sure to highlight them. Through a little maneuvering around the window in various positions, we finally landed on this pose, which I love. The backlit highlights accentuate the outline of her shape and while the shadows fall in all the right places to compliment the highlights and still carry enough detail for visual interest, and of course, the photo celebrates her favorite asset!







## **Front Light**

Taking the light situation and rotating it 180 degrees from back light to front light, you get a totally different situation. Depending on your background, it can give you two very different looks. If your background is light, it will give you a very sweet, ethereal look like in this photo. For this image, my client is posed on a bed with light colored linens that is approximately 3 feet from a large window with a white sheer curtain over it. She's propped under her right shoulder with light colored pillows to better the angle of her body to the camera. Also, since I shoot boudoir with a very wide aperture (f2.8 or wider) I knew the pillows would also blur out in the bokeh and contribute to the light and bright feel I wanted in the photo.



Front light can also be utilized in a sultry, alluring look when done with a dark background instead of a light. This is where you can use that dark hallway, or basement, or room that you think might be too dark to photograph in but has a window. Go to that window, put your back against it and shoot into the dark with your subject no further than 3-4 feet from the window. That's exactly what I did in this image (LovesomePhoto007.jpeg) Don't forget that you can also create this look with artificial light. Expose for the flash that's illuminating your subject and crank the high speed sync for a super fast shutter speed to control the ambient light in the background and you'll get a similar look.







## Expressions

Genuine expressions are another key component to boudoir photography. Many clients are exceptionally nervous and can exaggerate facial expressions too much and can end up being stiff. Boudoir is all about sensuality. That is not an adjective that matches with stiffness. Even “bold” poses require a feeling of elasticity in the body to feel authentic. Don’t be afraid to ask your client to keep moving their bodies. I like to tell my clients to channel the attitude of “they just can’t help being soooooo attractive” (in a pathetic, laissez-faire voice). In this image I told that to my client and as she interpreted the expression I watched as she elongated her body and looked toward the light and created the perfect body lines.



Another trick I like to tell my clients is to relax their face, part their lips slightly, and to exhale gently with their gaze on me. The instructions are intended to create a calm confidence and slight sassiness. My client in this image absolutely nailed it. One tip to note with this instruction is to watch your camera angle. If you are too high above the client shooting down on them, you'll want to tell the client to look down or close their eyes otherwise, the look can turn in to an unintended glare if the eyes are looking up and the lids are hidden from view.







Many photographers new to boudoir underestimate how much expressive power hands and feet have. You always, always, always want the hands and feet doing something. In this image it's the teeny expressions of her left hand near her shoulder strap and her right hand peeking around the side of her hip that convey sensuality of the photo. There is also a separation of the feet, putting her left leg forward, that creates a teeny open, elastic angle in her hip, which adds to the sensuality as well. Without these tiny details, her head tip against the wall would just look like frustration or boredom.



Likewise, in this image having the client be active with their hands was key. She initially sat down on the stairs and was very static. When I asked her to start alternating her right hand from leg to shoulder and her left hand hip to knee her body relaxed into a natural, sensual line that (bonus!) began to mimic the shape of the curved staircase.







Lastly, with feet, separation is key. Separation helps give curvature to the hip and really accentuate that hourglass look. In this image, my client wanted to accentuate her hips and derriere. When I had her lay on her side I saw her curves, but thought that there was room for improvement to communicate what she was hoping to show off. So I propped her on her elbow to give her arm something to do instead of just lie there. Then I had her separate her feet by drawing her right leg up past her other ankle and voila! The perfect shape was accentuated to just the right amount. This theory can be translated to sitting as well as standing. By putting the feet anywhere but side by side the elasticity increases in the image and in the client's body.



As you can see, getting great boudoir photos is not as straightforward as having a subject and a camera! There is a lot of foundational work to do in order to make sure your client feels safe and respected so that they can trust you to bring beautiful images of them to life. However, a bit of investment goes a long way in this rewarding type of portraiture. Once you do the work of laying the foundations, the sky is the limit with what you can create using very simple lighting and posing techniques.











*photo by Richard Harrington*

## Perfectly Clear Complete

**Brings out the best in every photo with intelligent image enhancement and repair**

Perfectly Clear Complete helps you save time by unlocking the details in every image—automatically. It includes ALL of our award-winning corrections and 40 professionally created presets, all in a single plug-in.









# Posing Women

**By Nicci Widener**

Every photoshoot involves some level of planning. Having at least a vague game plan in place prior to the shoot is vital to ensure everything goes smoothly. This means knowing what kind of lighting you want to work with and having a general idea of what backdrops and setups you will be using.

As a rule of thumb, it is necessary to have a good selection of setups that are easily changeable if inspiration strikes. I find that even if I have a well-planned set, it never fails that changes occur when I am inspired by the subject's poses or an outfit the client has provided. To give you an idea, during a 90-minute photo-shoot, I will use 3-5 different setups. Since I work alone, they must be quick and easy to switch out, so the session keeps a consistent tempo.



## **Planning the Session**

A good selection of backdrops consists of fabric, painted canvases, paper rolls, and v-flats. V-flats are simply two pieces of foam core taped together on the long edge, and when standing, form the shape of a V. Typically, they are black on one side and white on the other. I always keep a supply of v-flats on hand, as they are the most versatile and can be used as either backdrops or reflectors. They are very handy, so I highly recommend having 2-3 at all times. All the images shown in this section have a v-flat as the background, as well one to two v-flats used as reflectors to bounce light back onto the subject's face.

## **Using Natural Light**

Living in the Pacific Northwest, cloudy days are very common. The cloud cover creates a nice diffused light. Even so, it is still necessary to diffuse that light further with a scrim or white sheer curtains to prevent hotspots on your subject. I prefer to use window light that is diffused with one to two layers of sheer curtains. This creates a soft light that wraps around the subject and is consistently flattering. For the sample images in this section, the subjects will be lit with the natural light of a large east-facing window. If you happen to live in a sunnier region, you can achieve this look but multiple layers of diffusion may be necessary.

As you can see, the light source is coming from a very large window and diffused through sheer curtains. If the window has direct sunlight, thicker material would be necessary. A white flat bedsheet can be used in a pinch. (photo caption)

## **Understanding Your Subject**

Women have a tendency to be very critical of their appearance, so the slightest oversight in posing can create images they don't absolutely love. If a woman doesn't love how she looks in photos, it is less likely the images will result in a good sale or a satisfied client. Using proper posing techniques will take your images to the next level and ensure a better outcome in both sales and client satisfaction, which is our ultimate goal. Let's look at how slight adjustments in posing can take your photos to the next level and create images any woman will adore.







## Directing Your Subject

Without concise direction, the individual can feel confused and uncomfortable, as they do not know what your expectations are. If possible, show your subject a sketch of the pose you would like them to achieve, or even model the pose yourself. Not only does this step reduce the amount of time necessary to direct them, it will also boost their confidence because they understand what you are looking for.

While directing your subject, giving continuous direction does not give them time to worry or feel uncomfortable. The constant dialog keeps them focused on what you are asking of them, and as they strive to achieve your directions, their worries are pushed from their mind. It's hard to think about doing something correctly if you are too busy actively trying to accomplish it. For individuals that are uncomfortable making small talk, try adding a few minor directions while posing your subject. By injecting a "Good, that's perfect" occasionally into your dialog, you will ease yourself into this technique by developing the habit.





## Pushing the Arms Away from the Body

One of the more common complaints heard from women is that they dislike their arms. Finding flattering ways to pose the arms can be difficult. Models have the skill of knowing where their arms and hands look good, but those same positions do not necessarily work in portraits of the everyday woman. No woman will look good with her arms held tightly by her sides, which forces the triceps out. By paying attention to this small detail, it will avoid bulging or creasing in unflattering places.

After your subject is in position, if the arm appears to look wider than desired, direct her pull it out and away from her body. Having the arm pressed tightly against their side forces the bicep out, making the arm appear larger, resulting in an unappealing pose. If she has a large bust, the best poses for her will be ones that will position her arm away from her bust-line.

Once I had my model in position (see below image), I noticed her arm was pressed against her side and was unattractive. When lying on the stomach, it is natural for a person to prop themselves up on their elbows. While this is meant to support the weight of their upper body, the elbow is almost directly under the shoulder and has the same effect as having the arms pressed directly to their sides.

Note the difference pushing the elbow away from the body has in the upper arm area.  
(photo caption)

Overcoming this posing mistake is simple. By directing my subject to push her elbow out to the side (camera right) and bring her hand closer to her breast line, the problem pretty much disappears. Her upper arm looks much slimmer and this change of position also eliminates the crease in her armpit area. The triangle of space created between the arm and breast creates an overall slimmer appearance. It is important to create that small space between the bust and arm to show the waistline.

- If the subject is lying on her stomach, direct her to extend the arm away from the body by pushing the elbow out to the side and sliding the hand towards the breast.
- Create a triangle of space between the arm and bust-line to create the appearance of a slim torso.
- Compose the image to be flattering to the pose and woman's shape.

To give you an idea how I created this image in my studio, I've included a diagram that illustrates the subjects position in relation to the light source, backdrop, and reflectors.

<Add side\_backlight.tif>

This lighting diagram illustrates how I had my subject positioned and where my light





source was coming from. The backdrop and reflectors are all v-flats. Diagram created at [Sylights.com](https://www.sylights.com).

## **Pulling the Arms Back**

If you are posing your subject while she is standing, a great way to slim the arms is to have her pull them back. By having my model place her palms flat on the front of her upper thigh/hip area, her elbows are naturally bent and pushed back behind her. I then asked her to shift her weight to one foot and slightly pinch her elbows together behind her. Be careful that she does not raise her shoulders in the process, as that creates tension in the neck. In addition to posing her arms, I directed her to push her chin forward as far as she comfortably could and tilt it down slightly.

This combination of posing techniques and composition causes the waistline to be visible, the bust line cuts through the line of her arm, and slims her face significantly. The end result created a flattering image of the woman.





- Have the subject shift their weight to one foot.
- Direct her to pull her elbows back and slightly pinch them together around her waistline.
- She can place her hands flat on her upper thighs for comfort and leverage.
- Be sure that her shoulders aren't raised and tense in the pose by directing her to relax her neck and shoulders down.
- Finish the pose by asking her to push her chin forward and tilt her head down slightly.



## Posing a Sitting Subject

If your subject is sitting, they are most likely going to hold themselves in a position that is comfortable for them. This position is typically unflattering, as their head will be pulled back towards their spine making their face rounder, and slightly slumped over, which makes the midsection wider. The trick to slimming your subject is by posing them in a manner that elongates the body.

Keeping in mind that whatever is closer to the camera will appear larger, I posed my subject with her hips pushed away from the wall, slightly behind her front shoulder, and her feet tucked back. Notice that the apple box is not right up against the wall, but pulled approximately eight inches away.

The slight adjustments in posing have a very nice slimming effect on the subject. The woman looks considerably slimmer using posing techniques, eliminating the need for slimming in Photoshop. As a side note, this corner was created using a v-flat. In reality, the v-flat is in front of a built in shelving unit and the portion the woman is leaning on is a small portion of wall and window frame. I cannot emphasize just how versatile these v-flats can be.



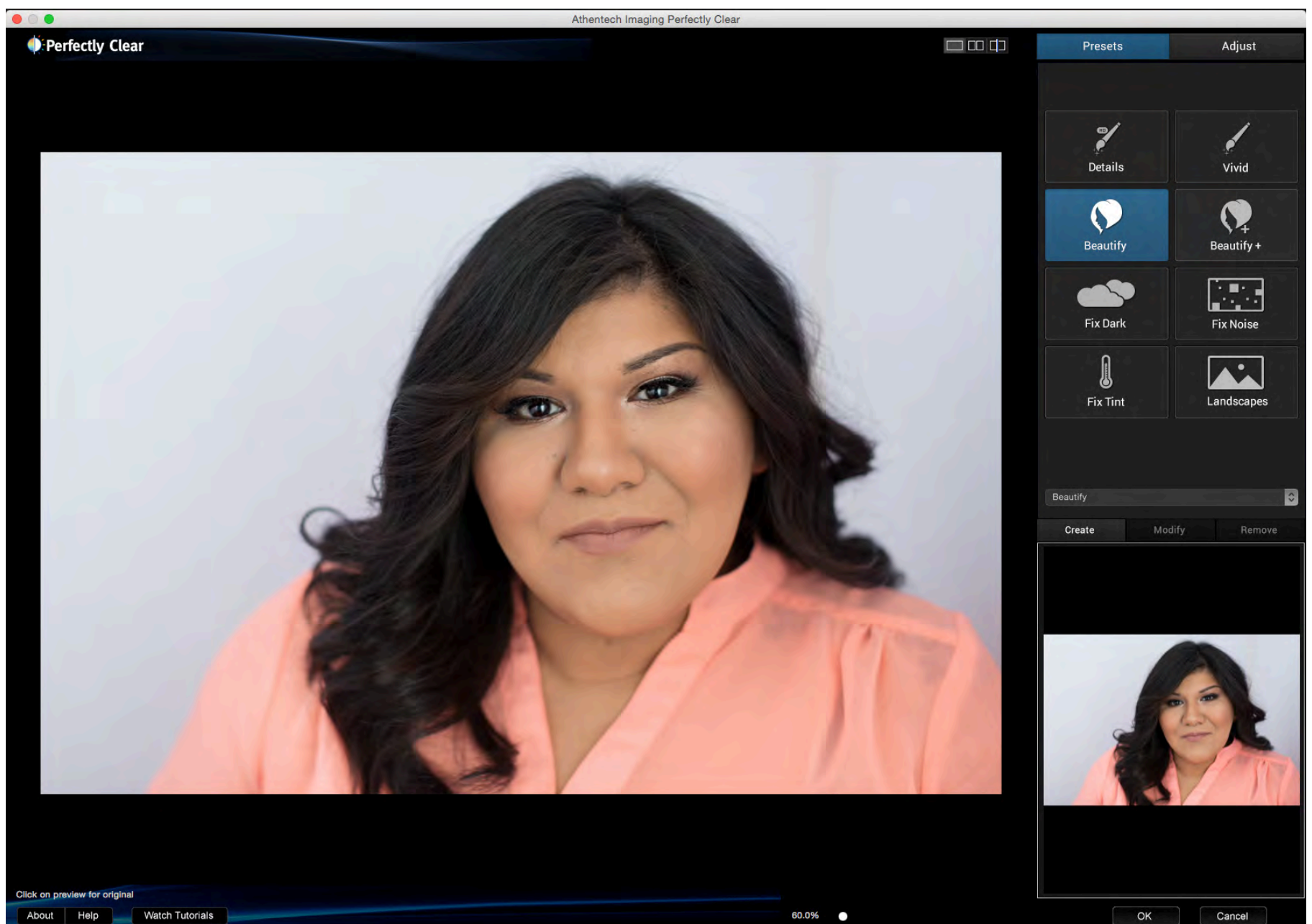


By having her lean back against the wall, it lengthens her torso considerably and slims her midsection. As an added bonus, the pressure of leaning against the wall has slimmed her arm down. While you cannot see the feet in the final photo, directing the subject to point her toes elongates the legs and stretches the pose even more. For the final touches, I asked her to push her chin forward and tilt down, and to pull her elbow away from her side. This movement also allows her waistline to be visible.

- Elongate the body by having the subject lean back against a wall with the hips pushed away from the camera, slightly behind the level of the shoulder.
- Pointed toes elongate the legs and body even further.
- Create a space between the arm and torso that will define the waistline.
- Direct the chin forward and tilted down to define the jawline and slim the face.

## Applying the Final Touches to the Images

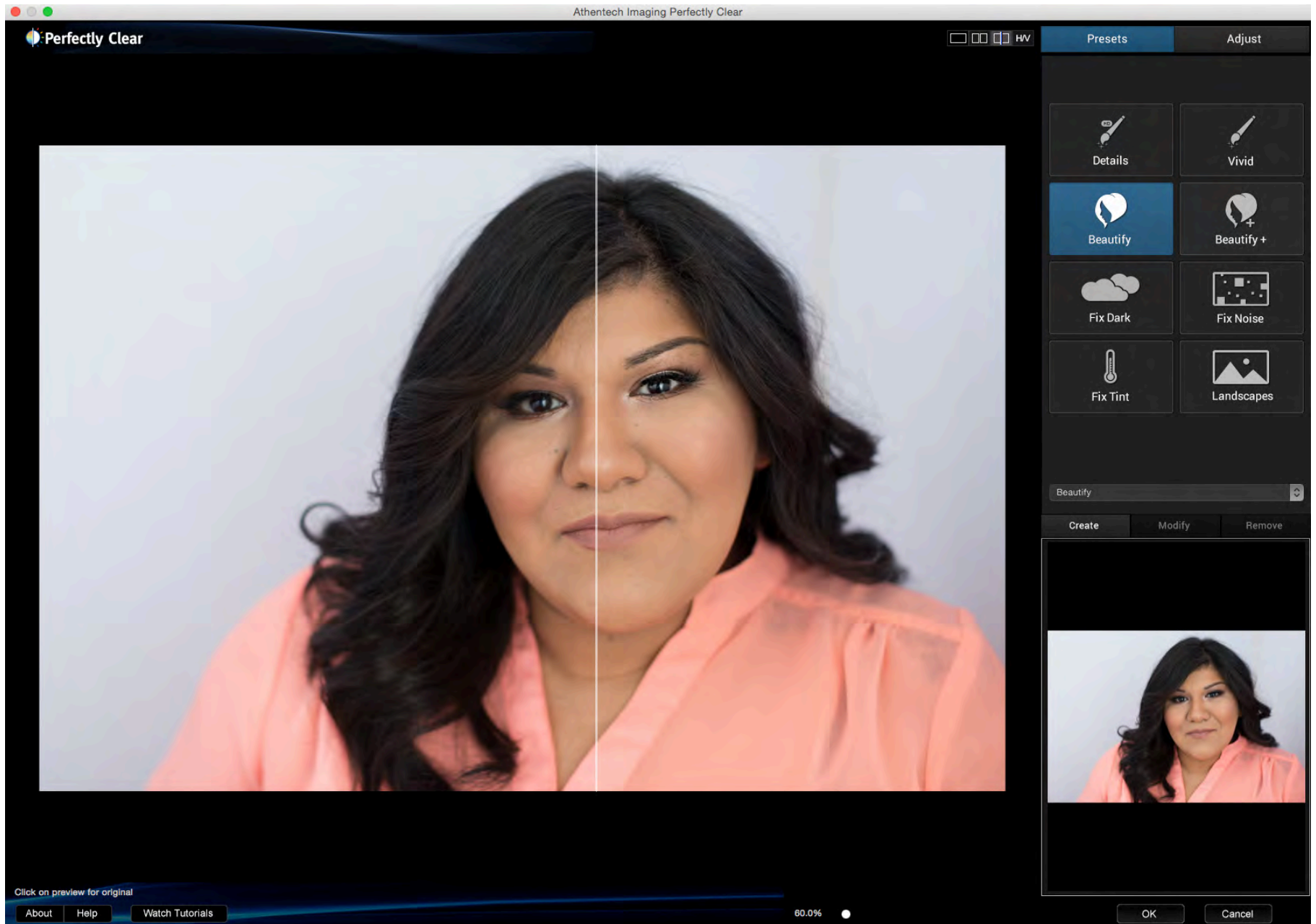
For final processing, Perfectly Clear by Athentech is a very useful weapon to have in your arsenal. Not only does it save time by having powerful presets, the ease of use and ability to make quick adjustments to create the exact look you want make this software invaluable.





Even with the talents of a makeup artist, there are corrections that need to be made, and Perfectly Clear can make those corrections in a snap. With just a click, the beautify preset does an excellent job of smoothing the skin and brightening the subjects face subtly.

As you can see, the Beautify preset works well to keep the colors true and has a flattering effect on the skin. The eyes are brightened, as well as the area beneath the eyes. The preset does not make her look plastic, which is the look I am striving for.



In this split image, you can see the difference the preset makes on her skin, evening it out without completely losing the appearance of pores. (photo caption)

The shadows of her smile lines are softened to a natural look. If you feel the preset causes the skin to be too smooth, simply click the adjust tab and move the slider back until you like the result.





The Beautify preset worked well, but the skin as a tad softer than desired. I chose to move the opacity slider to just below 60% and liked the outcome.(photo caption)

The Dark Circle Removal feature works well to remove and brighten the under-eye area without making the corrections look obvious. Along with Eye Enhancement, the Beautify preset takes this image to the next level with a minimal time investment. There are also adjustments available to slim the face, remove shine, and add catch-lights. While these were not necessary for this image, it is always good to have the option to add those adjustments with a click and a slider.









*photo by Richard Harrington*

## Perfectly Clear Complete

**Brings out the best in every photo with intelligent image enhancement and repair**

Perfectly Clear Complete helps you save time by unlocking the details in every image—automatically. It includes ALL of our award-winning corrections and 40 professionally created presets, all in a single plug-in.









# Environmental Portraits

**By Levi SIm**

Environmental portraiture is the best genre of photography to get into, and I'm lucky enough to shoot this kind of work for the majority of my clientele. It's the best because it's infinitely variable, constantly challenging, and always rewarding. When I go to a business to make pictures, I'm walking into their place, their environment, and that's wonderful because it helps them to be a little more at ease.

Also, most small business owners and their employees enjoy their work, and may even be passionate about it. Anyone working with passion is an artist—no matter what they do. I can relate to that, and I can make a great picture of a passionate person doing their work, even if it's simply entering figures on a computer. Passion always makes a great picture.





This chapter is about how I conquer the technical aspects of environmental portraiture. Consider these case studies of situations I've faced when making pictures for my clients in myriad situations. I've found one lighting setup that always looks good and is simple to create, and I'll show you how I find it onsite or mix it with available light to make portraits with various moods.

Once I've got some lights in a good spot, I try to make as many distinct pictures as possible before changing the light positions. I move the camera to get different vantage points and perspectives. I change lenses to create a different moods, alter the size of the environment, and make distinct pictures that still appear to belong together.

As I said, I try to make as many pictures as possible, which means a lot of work culling and finishing pictures on the computer. I've been using Lightroom for years, and I don't know how I'd do my work without it. I've now been using Perfectly Clear for several months, and I feel the same way about it. I'll show you how I use presets in Perfectly Clear to get all the pictures from a shoot prepared to share with my clients, and how I use Lightroom's local adjustment tools to put the finishing touch on my own favorites.

I've got several cases below to demonstrate these techniques, and I'll start with the lighting setup I use for every picture.

## **Lighting for Depth in Three Steps**

Light illuminates a subject and shows us what it looks like, but shadows show us how big the subject is, how round it is, how deep it is. When we light for environmental portraiture, we need to balance light with shadow. Using three light sources is the best way to do this, and allows us to create variety with brightness changes and we don't have to move the light positions.

Lighting a scene requires attention to three characteristics of light: direction, quality, and color. You'll see what I mean about these as we build a scene below. Also, the first factor I consider as I light a scene is where my person will be. I first find the right spot for him, then figure out what he'll be doing, then start working the light.

## **The Engineer**

### **Step 1: Ambient Light**

Ambient light just means the light which is already in a place—maybe it's the light from the overhead lights or lamps, or the windows, or the sunshine when you're outside. There are three things I do to make the ambient light look right in my picture:







Choose the lens aperture. Aperture is a creative control, and creativity is the most important thing when making pictures. I choose the right aperture to have the right things included in the focus area. When doing a portrait of one person, I usually choose the widest aperture possible for the lens I'm using.

I also keep in mind the limitations of the other lenses I'm going to use later on. My 42.5mm lens, for instance, has a maximum aperture of f/1.2, but if I later switch to using my wide 7-14mm it's only an f/4 lens—which is more than three stops darker. That's a compromise I'll have to work with later, so I keep it the back of my mind when I'm getting the picture started.

Balance shutter speed and ISO. Keeping in mind that ambient light isn't the main light for my subject, I now get it looking just about the right brightness using shutter speed. I start at ISO 200, and use the right shutter speed to get the right brightness and freeze my subject. If the shutter speed is dropping too low, I'll raise the ISO so I can raise the shutter speed, too.

For every 1/3 of a stop I raise the ISO, I can also raise the shutter speed a 1/3 of a stop. I try to keep the shutter speed above about 1/60th of a second when I'm hand holding the camera, but I usually use a tripod so I can go as low as 1/20th of a second. Much slower and my subject will be moving too much to get a sharp picture. Keep in the back of your mind, too, that you can raise the shutter speed later to darker the ambient light, or slow it down to brighten the ambient.





Control the color. Ambient light mixed with my flash can make a mess if the colors are not similar. I like multiple light colors in a picture, and we'll make that happen later, but I do my best to get one color of light on the face. If the ambient is orange light from incandescent bulbs, or green light from fluorescent lights overhead, then my white flash will not match and the colors on the face will be muddy looking and not flattering. In this case I've got a few options. I can match my flash to the ambient color by adding a gel, or I can darken the actual ambient (turn off the lights) and use another flash pointing into the ceiling to create the impression of ambient light that is the right color to work with my main light. Lastly, and possibly easiest, I can use a flag to block the ambient from falling on my subject. A flag can be anything that blocks the light. I use my 5-in-1 reflector with the black cover attached as a flag, but even a sweatshirt, or a poster-board works well. Hold it over head, or to the side—wherever the offending ambient is coming from—to get a clean light on your subject's face. By the way, a flag is a noun, but you can also use the word as a verb: "Please go over there and flag the light shining from the left..."

In the case of these pictures in the structural engineering lab, I needed to eliminate the ambient light. It was provided by fluorescent and vapor lights high in the ceiling, and they were multiple colors and brightnesses. I eliminated the ambient by using my maximum sync speed (1/250s) and a smaller aperture (f/2.8). Here's my assistant, Jesse Walker, standing in to help me dial in the settings for the backlight.





## Step 2: Backlight

The backlight is the key to realistic looking environmental portraiture. When we look around the world, there is rarely light from one direction only. There's usually a window, or a door, or a lamp giving a glint of light from behind. This light helps show the form of our subject, and plays with the shadows to create the appearance of depth for both the person and for the environment. Its color helps depict the mood of the picture, as well as the feeling of the room. A blue light from behind may feel like evening, or mysterious or cold, whereas an orange light may imply warm temperatures and late afternoon. I call it a backlight here only because it's from somewhere behind the subject, though it's generally shining from the side. Rarely will the backlight be directly behind the subject shining forward toward the camera.



How I use the backlight is often determined by the environment. If there's a window visible in the back of my picture, I'll probably try to mimic the light coming in from there, both in direction and color. Sometimes I use a modifier like an umbrella or softbox to make the light larger and softer, or I might use it bare for a harder light that reveals more of the textures in my subject's hair and skin. Sometimes, I even shine the light through that window, from outside, to create the color and direction I want, no matter what time of day it is outside.

As I read what I've written, I feel like I'm saying this is highly contemplative and intentional work. Truthfully, I'm usually flying by the seat of my pants and working the best with what I've got. The environment I'm shooting in dictates not only the color and direction of light, but also how big a light I can bring, and whether or not there's room or safety for a light stand. Half the time, I'm shooting in someone's small office with a speedlight sitting on a bookshelf bouncing off the wall, a front light held by an assistant who is standing on tiptoe in the corner trying to stay out of the shot, and me crammed up behind my tripod at some odd angle, and I've usually only got five to ten minutes to get the picture made.





In cases like this, my backlight is often also my ambient light. That speedlight on the bookshelf bouncing off the wall is putting a nice light on the edge of my person, but it's also filling the small room with light as a fake ambient.

Whatever the case, my backlight is first trying to imitate the available light, and it's always opposite the direction that the main light will come from. This is really important: put the backlight shining from the side opposite where the main light comes from. It gives better depth and looks nicer than being on the same side as the main light.

Before you ever go shoot an environmental portrait, your homework is to start noticing all the backlights in the world. While you talk with people notice the rim light from the back shining on their temples. While watching movies and TV, notice how the scenes are lit to get this kind of depth and the mood it creates. For me, how much I enjoy a movie is largely based on how it's lit, and I use the movies as examples for my real life work.

Since I've eliminated the ambient light completely, and since I'm working in a sheet metal building without windows, I'm using my flashes to create the impression of a window shining light in from behind and a big, soft light coming in from the front. Here's Jesse helping me get the Main Light ready on the front.



### Step 3: The Main Light

Now that we've got this scene ready to go, we just need the main light on our subject, the front light. This is where shadows really make an impact. I want shadows on the face, and I want them on the same side as the camera. That means I put the front light slightly to the side, so there's a little shade on the camera side of the nose.



*Note that his face is turned slightly to the camera right, and the camera left side of his nose has a soft shadow.*

Now, let's explore the direction, quality and color of light a little more. I want the shadow, so the light is generally placed about 45 degrees to the side of my subject. That gives the shadow on the face. Now, I usually want the light shining in the eyes, too, so make sure it's low enough to penetrate under the brow, but not too low—I almost always want it coming from slightly above. This is the direction of light.

Regarding quality, I want soft light. Soft light is flattering on everyone. We get soft light by making the light large in relation to the subject. So instead of shining my bare bulb flash or speed-light at my person, I'll add an umbrella or softbox to the front of the light. This makes it larger which makes it softer. Softer means there's no hard edge to the shadows cast by the light.





You can tell there's a shadow, but you can't point to a particular spot and say, 'this is where the shadow begins.' There's a subtle (soft) transition between light and dark. My favorite tool for softening light is a huge 7' umbrella. I got mine for \$40 from paulcuff.com, and I've been using it for several years. With smaller lights, I love the zumbrella from ziser.com, but any white shoot-through umbrella can work pretty well. I also have various softboxes that do the trick, but my number one tool for environmental portraits is that huge umbrella.

Regarding color, for flattering portrait light I like the light to appear like daylight. So, if I need to balance it with other lightbulbs in the room, I'll add a gel to the flash, as I described above. I strongly recommend one color of light shining on the face of the subject.

Now that the light is looking good for this portrait, it's time to work it and maximize the setup.



## Working the Shot for Maximum Results

It takes me some time to get lighting arranged just right. It may take ten minutes, or five minutes, or twenty minutes depending on the room, and the tools I'm using. Chances are, I've also got a limited time to make the pictures my client needs, so now that my lights are all arranged I need to make the most of them.

There are three things I do to maximize my setup: I change the camera, I adjust the brightness and color of light, and I move the lights and subject.

## Change the Camera

With the lights in the same position as above, I can move my subject to another place or another activity. I keep the main light up front, so I've got a similar shadow position, and keep the backlight in the same spot. Just move your camera and/or your subject. And more powerfully, change the lens.



**Shot 1: 17mm lens**

**Shot 2: 30mm lens**

**Shot 3: 75mm lens**







Notice how changing the lens affects these three pictures. The 75mm is very tight, and the visible background is very narrow—it's intimate.

The 30mm is wider and includes more sense of place. The 17mm is very wide, and shows much more environment; I also lowered the camera to give a more heroic impression of my subject (he had just won a large award for engineering) and to keep the ground out (I didn't have time to clean up the entire area).

In this next one, I simply held up a white backdrop behind my subject. Didn't move the subject, or the lights, just held up the white behind, though I did back up a step or two to get more space around him. This is the 75mm lens.

**Hint:** When you use a wide lens, get closer to the subject, and then get closer...and then get closer again. Shoot when the action is near the camera—reaching for something nearby, or doing something very close to the camera is impactful. See the examples below after I changed the light.





## Change the Light

Now change the brightness a bit. Reducing the brightness of the light, especially the back light, adds moodiness and drama to the light. In this case, I've added a reflector cone to the backlight to reduce its coverage area and direct the light so that now it doesn't shine on everything at once; you can see Jesse making adjustments in the background. Or, add a gel to the backlight and change the time of day. By adding a warm (orange) gel to the backlight I've instantly changed the mood of the photo to look late in the afternoon, like he's working hard through the day into the evening. This simple change makes an impactful difference.

I tried this full CTO gel, but it was too strong, so I swapped it for a half CTO gel (Color Temperature Orange); however, I liked the effect and ended up using it later. The light is a new setup, so work the scene again. Swap lenses, go long, go medium, go wide, and always remember to change the perspective.









## Change the Setup

Whenever possible, I also move the lights and the subject. Setting up the lights on stands, getting the radio triggers attached, and assembling the modifiers are the things that take the most time. Moving the light across the room doesn't take that much time, but it can really be worth it. In this case, I left the back light in the same position and moved the big umbrella across the room with me to work on that stanchion that was in the background of the pictures above. With the lights moved, do it all again: move the camera, change the lens, alter the brightness and color.



Maximize your setup. The time consuming part is assembling the lights and getting the base exposure down. Once those things are done you can move the camera and change lenses without changing anything else. Then, you can change the brightness and the color of light and get a huge impact again. Then, move the lights and the subject and try something new. You'll have very little time to get things done, so the more you can make out of a set up, the more profitable and productive you'll be.

**Pro Tip:** Regarding maximizing your setup, it's important to remember a characteristic of light which many photographers never have opportunity use. It's simply that the exposure setting on your subject is related to how close he is to the light source, not how close he is to the camera. That means that when your subject stays in the same place, and the light stays in the same place, no matter where you put the camera, your camera settings remain the same. If I light a person outside, for instance, and make some close-up portraits, I could actually walk 100 meters away and use a telephoto lens and make portraits and the exposure settings would be the same. Keep that in mind when maximizing your setup and look for opportunities to really mix it up and make a unique picture.



## Finishing Photos Efficiently

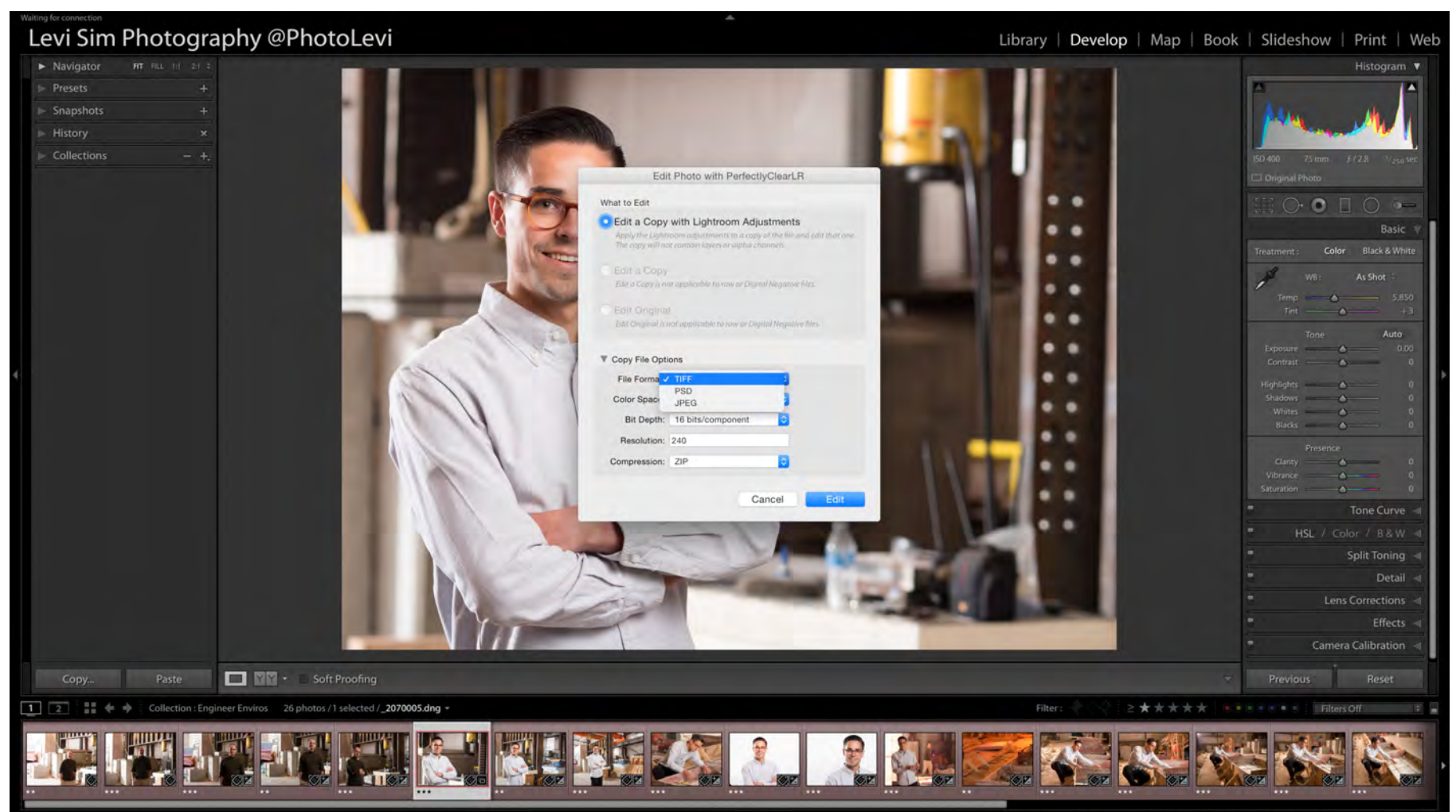
Because I'm maximizing my setups, I end up with lots of different looks to share with my client. I try not to shoot the same picture twice, but I still have lots of options to offer, which is a good value for my client. However, all these pictures need some tender loving care before delivery. What you see above are un-retouched files straight from the camera, and while I do my best to get them looking good, they still need some color and contrast adjustments.

Historically, I've done these adjustments in Lightroom and I use the Sync functions to carry settings over from one picture to the next, which has been pretty fast and useful. Unfortunately, anytime I change the camera settings or position, I also have to change the settings in Lightroom to accommodate the new setup—Lightroom doesn't consider the native brightness and contrast of the picture, it just moves the sliders to the same position as the last picture.

Imagine my delight when I learned that Perfectly Clear allows me to apply the same preset to all my pictures, and even if the exposure settings change it accounts for that and still makes my pictures look great. On top of that, Perfectly Clear also retouches the people in my pictures automatically and it does it well, and it does it quickly.

As a full time photographer, I think of it like this: when I'm clicking the shutter button, I'm making money, and when I'm clicking the mouse button, I'm losing money. Perfectly Clear let's me click the shutter button more because I have to click the mouse button less.

Here's how I'd approach the pictures we made above.



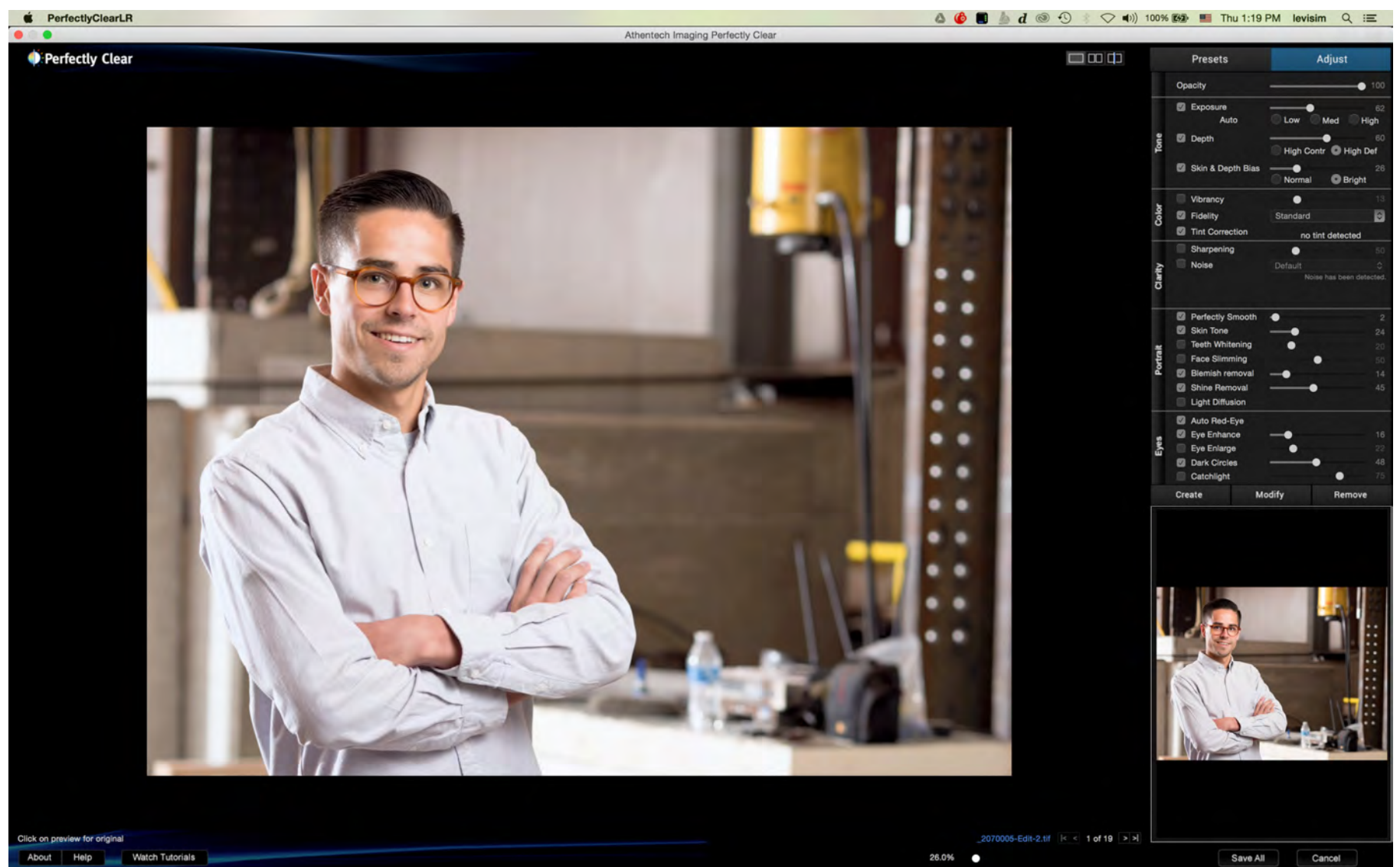
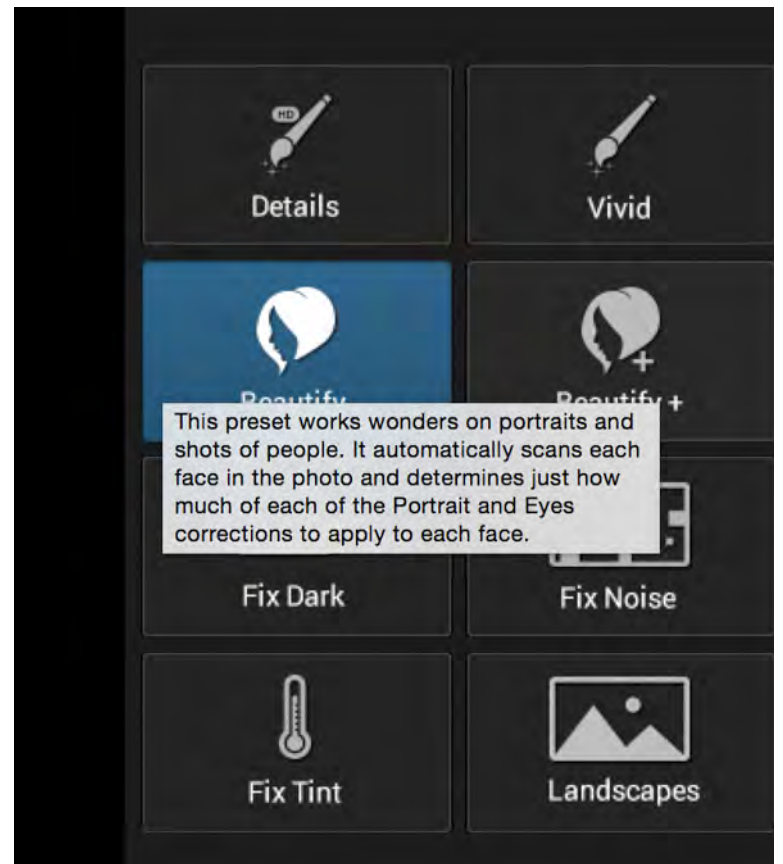


## First Stop: Perfectly Clear

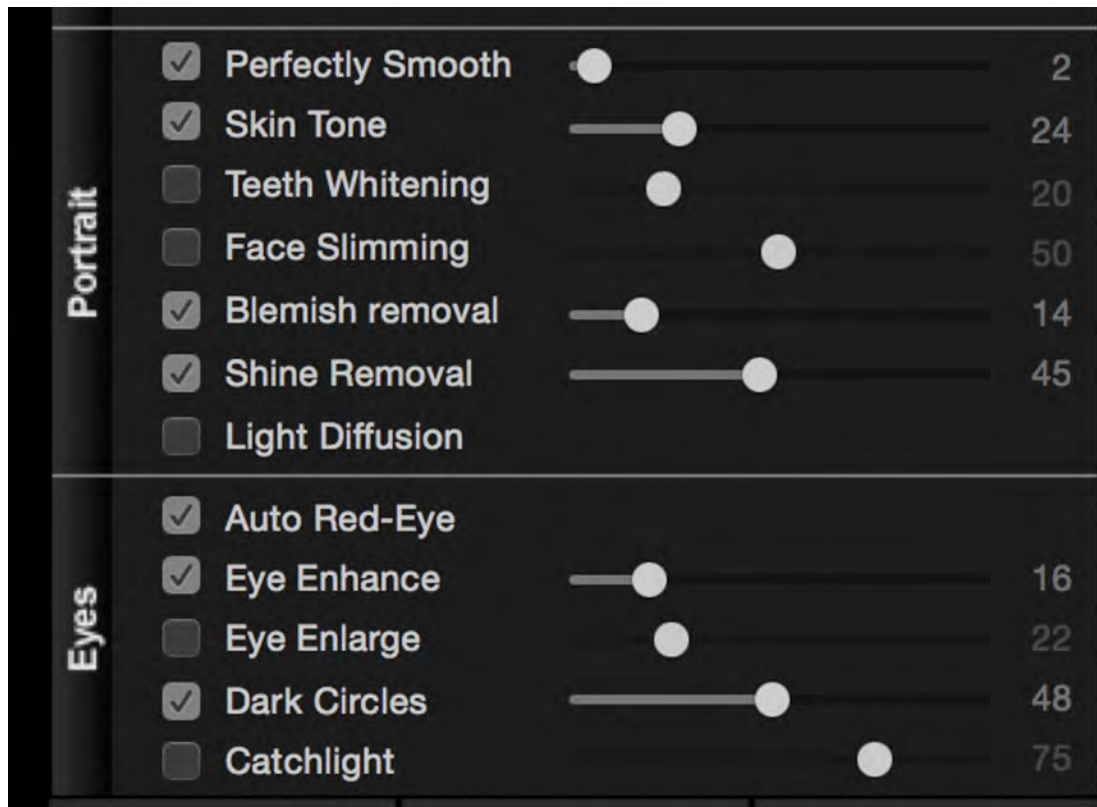
Once I've imported pictures from my memory card into Lightroom, I quickly sort through and pick the ones I plan to present to my client. After that, Perfectly Clear is the next place I go to get them finished and ready to deliver. If the white balance needs significant adjustment, I'll do that first in Lightroom, and if I were using a DSLR I might activate Lens Corrections, as well. Otherwise, I choose one picture that is a closeup and launch it in Perfectly Clear. I always choose to "Edit a Copy with Lightroom Adjustments", and I choose the 16 bit TIFF file format. Perfectly Clear is a plugin because it uses Lightroom's (or Photoshop's) RAW engine to generate a new TIFF file.

Anytime I have a person in my picture it's a safe bet to start with the Beautify preset.

As with Lightroom presets, there's nothing magical about them, no hidden secrets. The presets simply move the sliders which are in the Adjustments tab into a predetermined position, which I can alter to suit my tastes by clicking on the Adjustments tab.







## Skin Adjustments

I like the Beautify preset, but it's a little too strong for my taste. I usually pull back the smoothness, which brings back a little more fine detail in the skin, and I dial back the **Eye Enhance**, which was too sharp and bright. I may increase the **Blemish Removal** slider if my subject has larger details in the skin, like pimples or wrinkles or crinkles; this picture doesn't need it, the others in the set won't either.

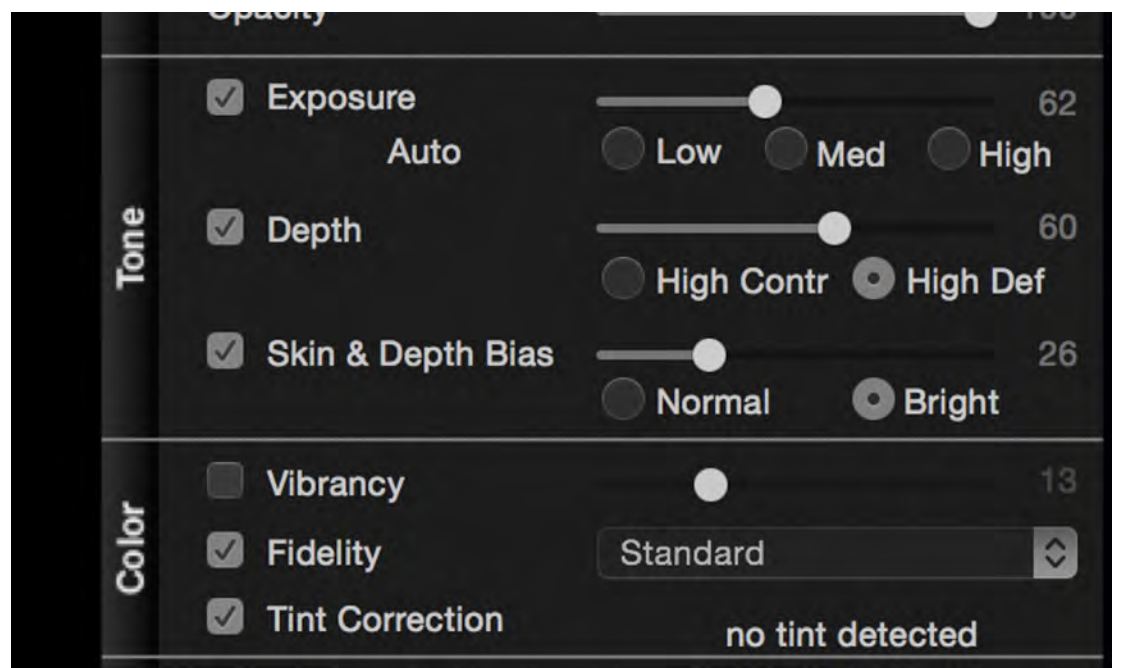
I love the **Skin Tone**—it removes redness from the skin, but at the

default it was a little too homogenous looking. I always check to see if my subject would benefit from increasing the **Dark Circles** slider to further lighten under the eyes. **Teeth whitening** is pretty self explanatory, but be gentle with it.

While the **Face Slimming** tool is powerful, I rarely use it for environmental portraiture (but it never hurts to check it on and off a few times to see I like it). I also check on the Shine Reduction and Light Diffusion settings because sometimes they look really nice. Since we've got the light off camera, red eye should never be a problem.

## Tone Adjustments

With the portrait settings looking pretty good, I'll pop up to the Color and Tone sliders. I start with the **Skin & Depth Bias**, which is kind of a contrast adjustment. I use both Normal and Bright equally frequently, but the real trick is to adjust **Exposure** with them, and the same thing for the **Depth** slider. I increase the depth, then increase the exposure, and go back and forth until I've got it dialed in.



Experiment with these three sliders and you'll soon get a feel for how they work together. Notice that increasing the exposure without activating the depth sliders usually looks pretty bad.

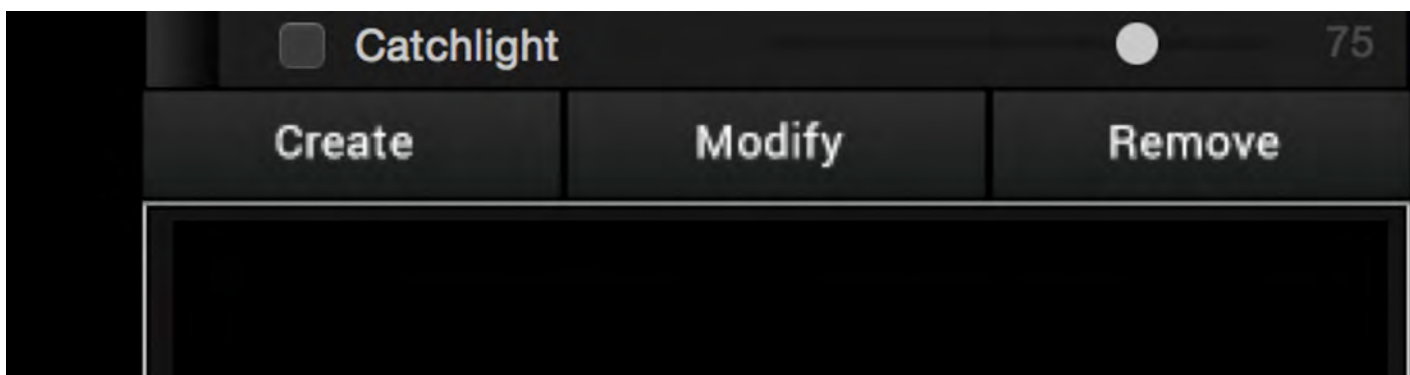


In the Color section, I always toggle the boxes on and off to see if I like the effect. The **Fidelity** check box is marvelous. It brings back the natural color range of greens, blues, and purples; I usually switch it to the Standard setting instead of Vivid; Vivid is more contrasty. Since those colors aren't really a part of this picture, it's having a very minimal effect.

I usually don't use the Vibrance slider, but I always check the **Tint Removal** box. Sometimes it has a great effect, sometimes it has no effect, and other times it makes the colors look worse. It is looking at the colors in the scene and making some decisions, but sometimes I like the colors I've chosen, so I ignore its recommendation—don't worry, the retouching police won't arrest you if it says you need tint correction and you disagree—the cops haven't caught up with me, yet, anyway.

I like to sharpen later in my workflow, so I disable **Sharpening**, and I usually disable **Noise Reduction**, as well. At any point I may go back to the portrait settings to refine them a little more. There's no set method, and no preferred order for working these sliders; you can't mess it up. If it looks bad, move the slider back.

### THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP IN WORKING IN PERFECTLY CLEAR



Before you hit save and return your picture to Lightroom (or Photoshop), click Create to save these settings as a preset. This way, you can apply these to the rest of the pictures in the set, or even use it again later on another picture. I often find myself refining the preset as I use it on other images and it evolves to fit my needs better, and it helps me keep a personal style. You'll see the presets you make available under the Presets tab in the dropdown menu below the built-in presets.

Click Create to make a new Preset, and be sure to include a simple description of what it does. Later, I click Modify to save new settings to the same preset as I refine my preferences. Now click Save and return to Lightroom.

Here's are the original image from Lightroom (top), and the Retouched Image from Perfectly Clear Complete (bottom).



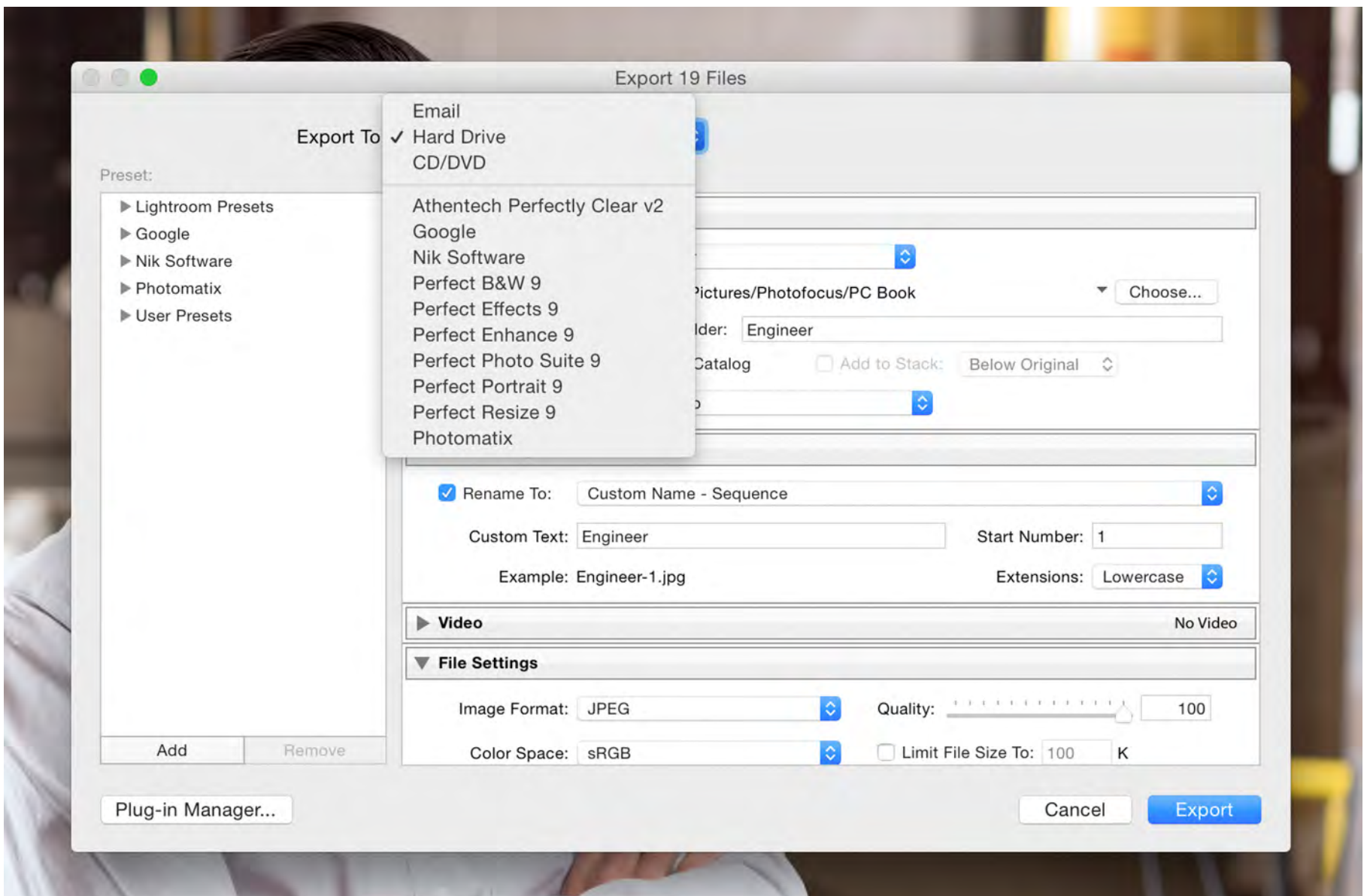




## The Magic of Batch Export

Completing this level of retouching this quickly is really remarkable, especially the skin touch-ups. It's more than I've ever offered my clients in the past because they don't usually want to pay for the extra time that service requires; now I can offer it much more affordably. Here's how we apply that Engineer preset to all the other images in the set I want to deliver to my client.

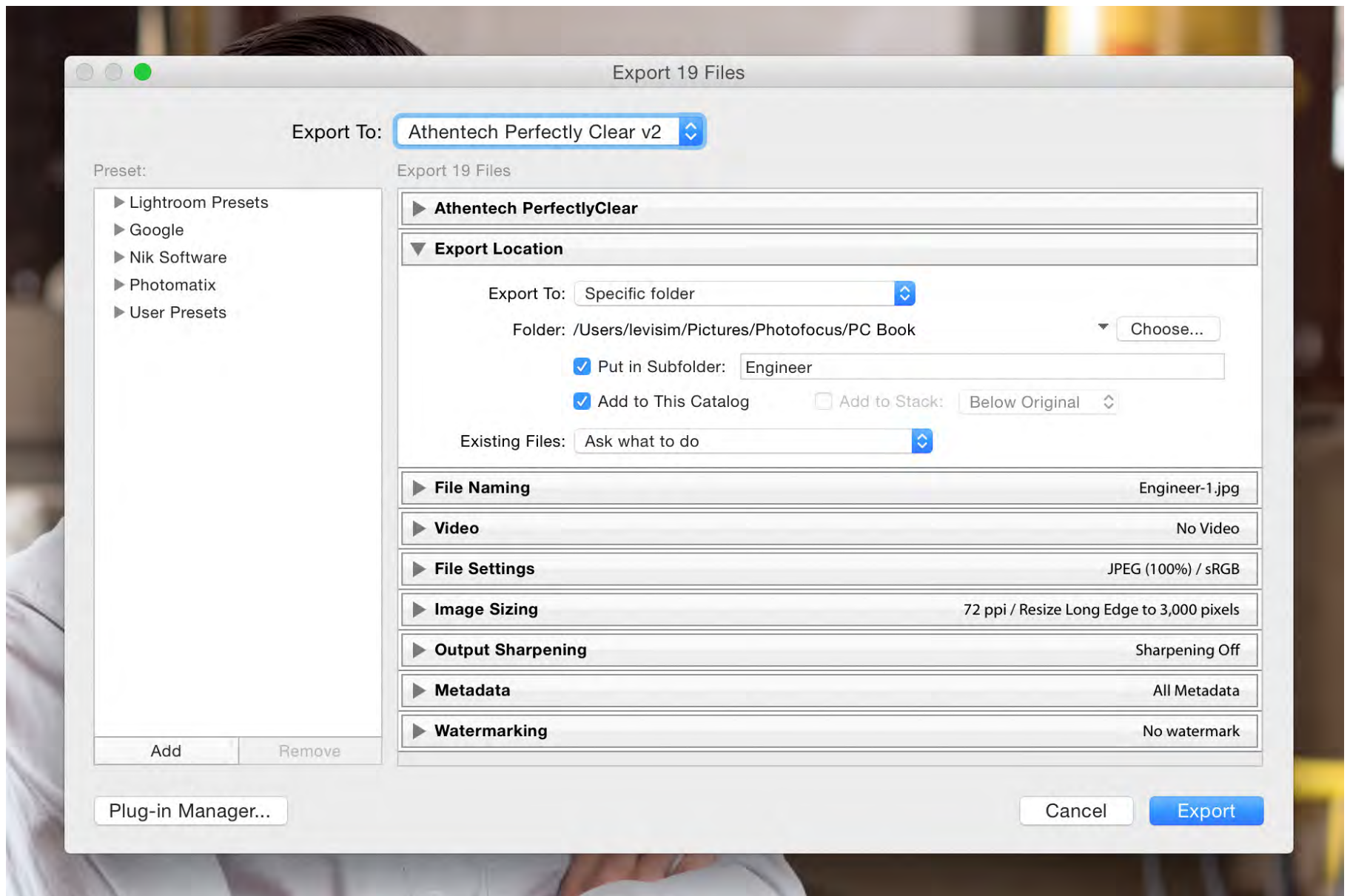
1. Select all the pictures (try Cmd/Ctrl A, or press and hold Cmd/Ctrl while clicking on each picture)
2. Enter the Export Dialogue (press Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+E, or right click on one of the pictures in the film strip at the bottom)
3. Export to: Athentech Perfectly Clear (change the topmost dropdown menu)



4. Choose your preset from the User Presets
5. Choose Hide Perfectly Clear Window to let the pictures be finished in the background without your input.
6. Choose where to save the pictures (I usually choose to make a sub folder)
7. Check "Add to this Catalog"



8. Choose the file settings (at this point, I leave it as the same file name, and I leave it full resolution as a TIFF file; this is a large file, but it leaves me options as I continue to work on these pictures)



9. I can even choose to apply my watermark.
10. Click **Export** and continue working on other stuff in Lightroom while Perfectly Clear processes these pictures. You'll see a progress bar in the top left corner of Lightroom. It's awesome that I can continue doing other things while these cook in the background. This can also be done as an automated batch process from Bridge with Photoshop, but I never use it because I find it simpler to work in Lightroom.

Wasn't that simple? Now all my pictures are up to par with the technical settings looking great, and the portraits are retouched even though my subject moved frame to frame and even though the pictures are different brightnesses. I thought Lightroom was fast, but now I know what fast really is. If I continue finishing them in Lightroom or Photoshop I'll be doing creative work—local dodging and burning, vignettes, monochrome, or even sending them out to another plugin for effects. It takes a moment for them to cook, but now the pictures are all similarly prepared, and it required minimal input from me. Less mouse clicking, more shutter clicking!

That's how it works. Light it, work it, finish it. These are the steps I take every time, and they work reliably every time. Let's take a quick look at more case studies.



# The Printer

I hate to start with a confession, but I've got to get something off my chest. When I'm examining the ambient light, I usually don't make any pictures to see how it looks. Two years ago I would have, but now...I don't need to anymore, and there's just one reason: I shoot a Mirrorless camera. The most wonderful thing about mirrorless cameras is that as I adjust settings in the camera, I see exactly what the picture will look like in the viewfinder.

## Light It

### Step 1: Ambient

Since I can constantly see the ambient light right in front of my face, I don't have a picture to show you of the ambient light getting refined. However, I knew I'd be using three lenses here, my 75mm f/1.8, my 42.5mm f/1.2, and my 17mm f/1.8, so I chose my maximum common aperture of f/1.8, which was very bright, so I chose the maximum sync speed of 1/250s to make it as dark as possible. This was still a little too bright at ISO 200, so I dropped the ISO to 160. I don't have an example picture, but here's the complete setup I used for the backlight and front light.







## Step 2: Backlight

As you can see from the diagram above, one entire wall of this room is windows. That can make nice lighting, sometimes, but in this case there were trees outside and it just wasn't quite bright enough out there. The glass of the windows is also highly reflective, so I knew I didn't want to shoot toward them or else my lights and myself would be reflected there and be visible in the photograph.

Shooting into the room was my best bet, and it gave more sense of environment as well, but I wanted to make sure that my light-stand didn't show up in the background. That's why I chose to put the backlight nearer the camera and windows, instead of farther around behind my subject. That means my front light needed to come around to camera left, opposite the backlight. This time, I was very short on time, and so I chose a bare speedlight on a stand for the backlight.



### Step 3: Front light

I placed another speedlight in a small softbox shining down onto the desk and on my subject.

The result was ok, but it was too directional—it kinda looked like a light illuminating only her.



Instead, I turned the softbox around and pointed it at the wall. This way, light bounces off the wall and comes back on my subject as a much bigger light, and it spills over the entire table and everything more evenly, and looks much more like a large window. This will be especially important when I add another person to the picture.

The trade off for bouncing it off the wall instead of directly onto my subject is that it requires a higher power setting, and the batteries drain faster than direct; always have extra batteries. I balanced this light to be slightly brighter than the window behind me so that it feels like that's the brighter side of the room.



## Work It

Like I said, I had about 20 minutes to shoot these, so Jesse and I were hurrying to get lights set up. I was able to change lenses a few times, get different perspectives, and invite the art professor in for a few frames, but I didn't have opportunity to change the mood of the lighting this time. It would have been nice to shoot a few with a warmer gel on the backlight, but I think we got some good ones nonetheless.

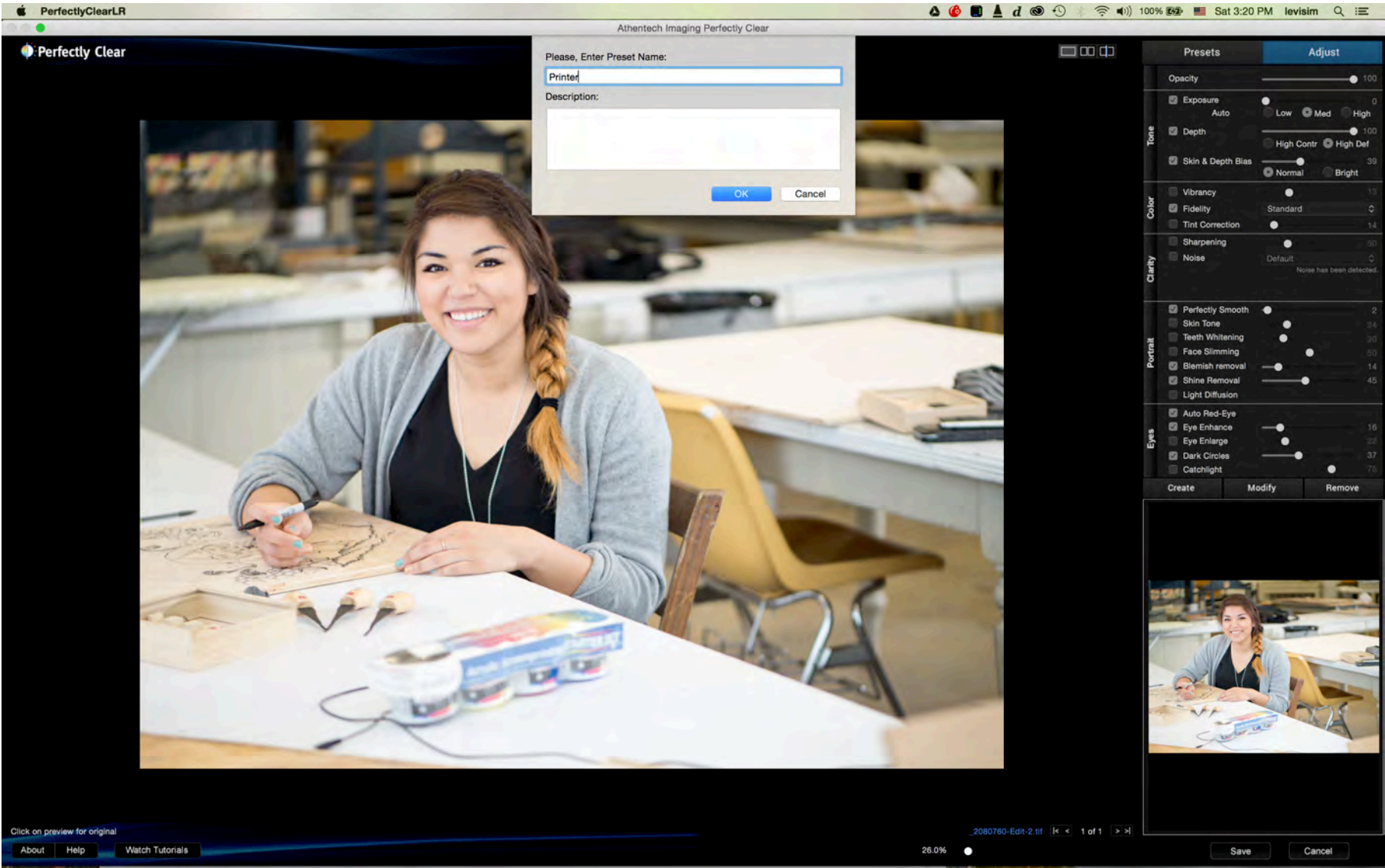




# Finish It

All that’s left now is to finish these off. Usually in environmental portraiture, it’s good to have a light touch in the finishing. I make a few artful finishes, and several black and whites, but Perfectly Clear is the best tool for getting things great quickly and with a light touch.

Here are the settings I used for my Printer preset, and the before and after images. I actually started with the Engineer preset and made adjustments and saved the new preset.





# The Four Wheeler

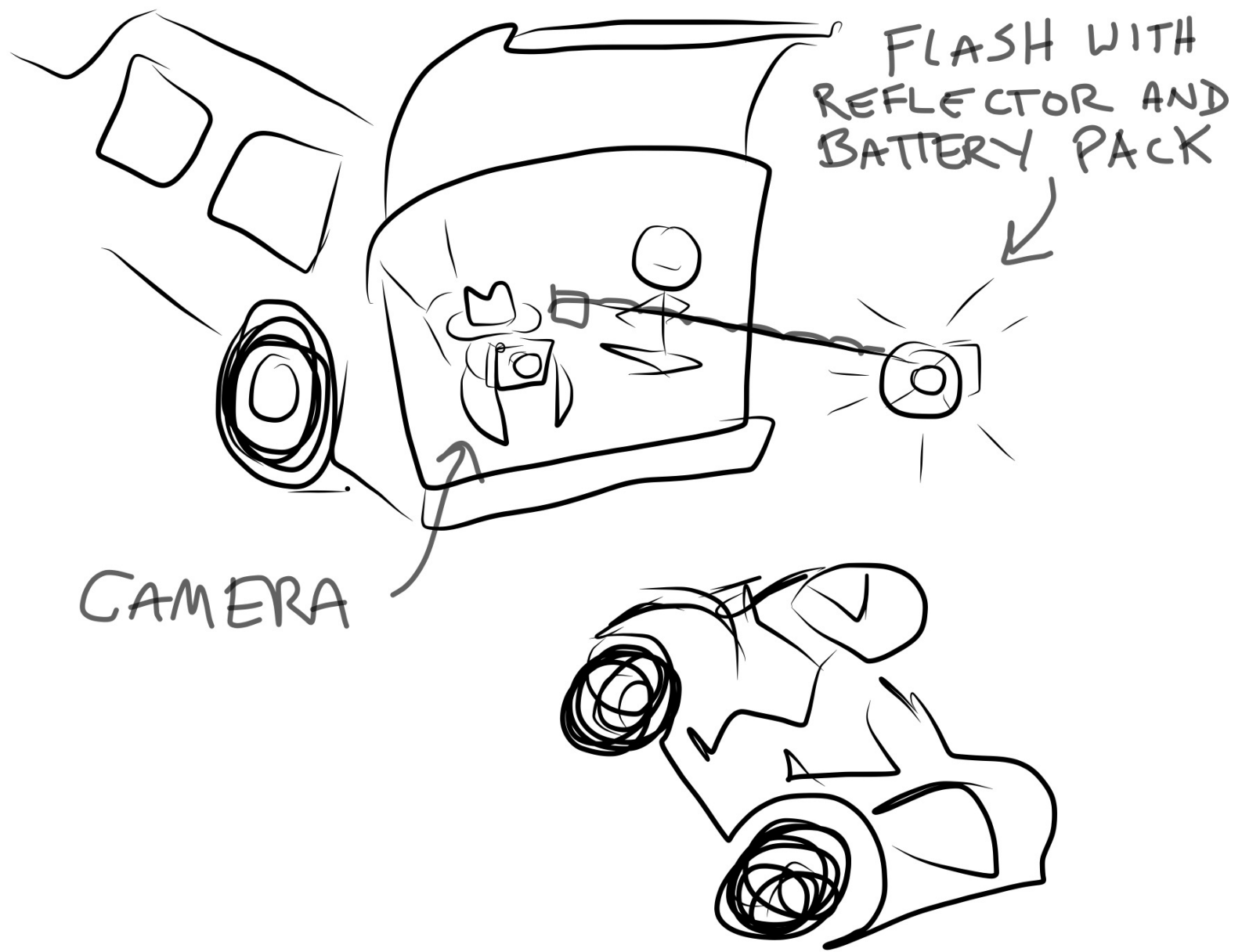
My system for lighting environmental portraits works out of doors, as well. In this case, I'm using the sun as both my main light and my backlight. Again, I used my live preview in my mirrorless camera to see the ambient light, and positioned my rider with the sun to his back so that the sunlight is also my backlight. For the front light, I've got a big, powerful studio strobe plugged into a battery positioned opposite the sunlight on the left of the frame (see it in the corner of the frame?).



The important thing in this picture is showing motion, so I knew I needed to use a slow shutter speed to show movement in the wheels and the surrounds, and I'd rely on the flash to freeze the motion of my rider and light up his face.

Getting a slow shutter speed on a bright sunny day is really tough. I used ISO 100, f/22, and that still wasn't dark enough, but once I added my polarizer (for a rich sky and reduced reflections) that dropped the brightness two more stops and allowed me to show motion in the still photos. Of course, I also had to turn the power up on my strobe to 100%. Also, I'm only going about 5mph; I'm not suggesting you go out and hang out of a car—I'm an experienced professional and I had team of people helping me on a closed course. Here's the whole setup:



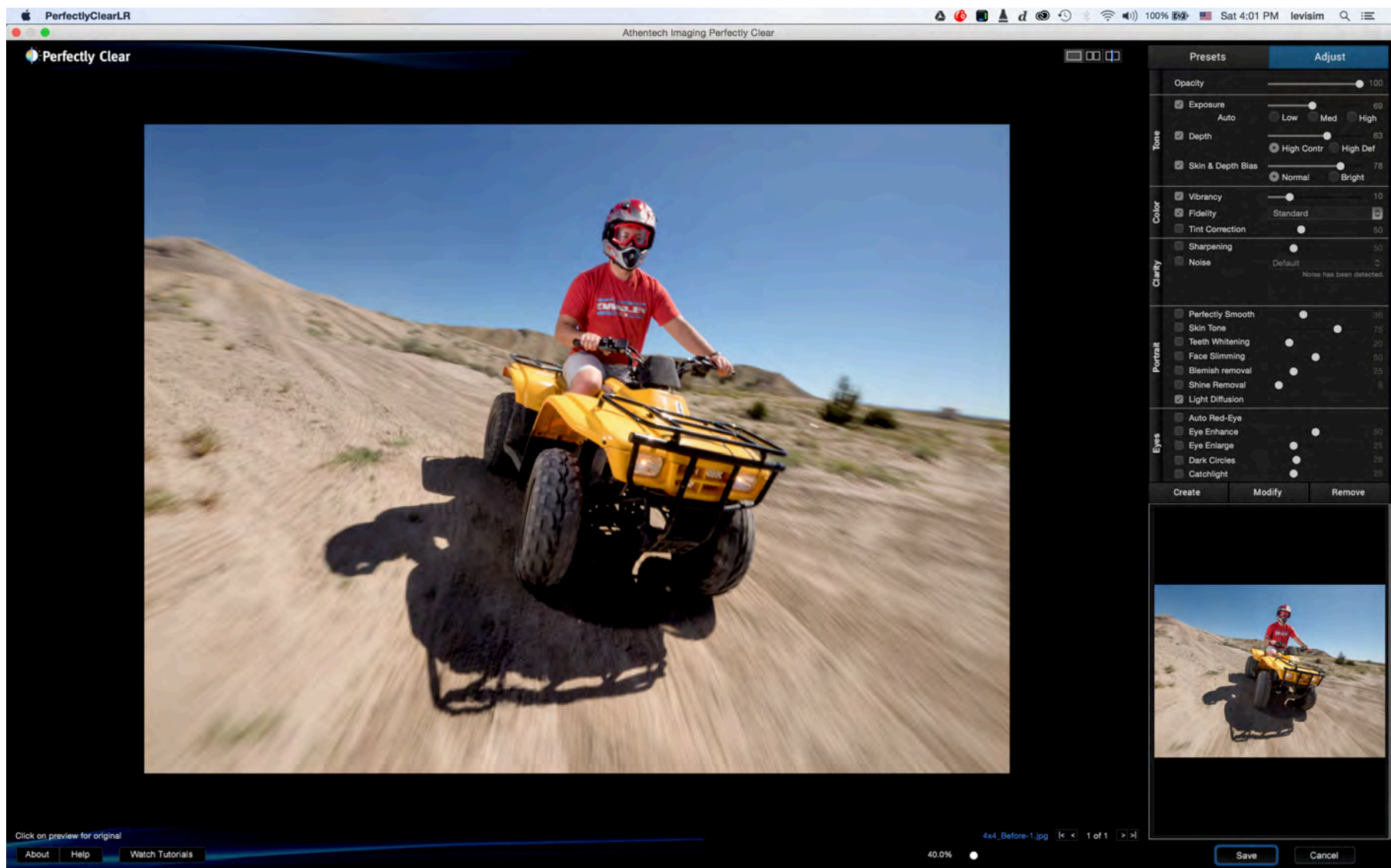


“Working it” in this case was more limited than the cases above. I’m hanging out of the van, right in the dustiest part of the road, and there’s no way I was going to open my camera to change lenses and introduce dust to my sensor (I should have had a second camera ready, though).

So, I zoomed the lens in and out, and I switched sides of the van, and we drove around finding different backgrounds.







Finishing these is simple. I started with the Vivid preset, and these are the settings I saved as a new preset and applied to all the pictures.





## The Techs

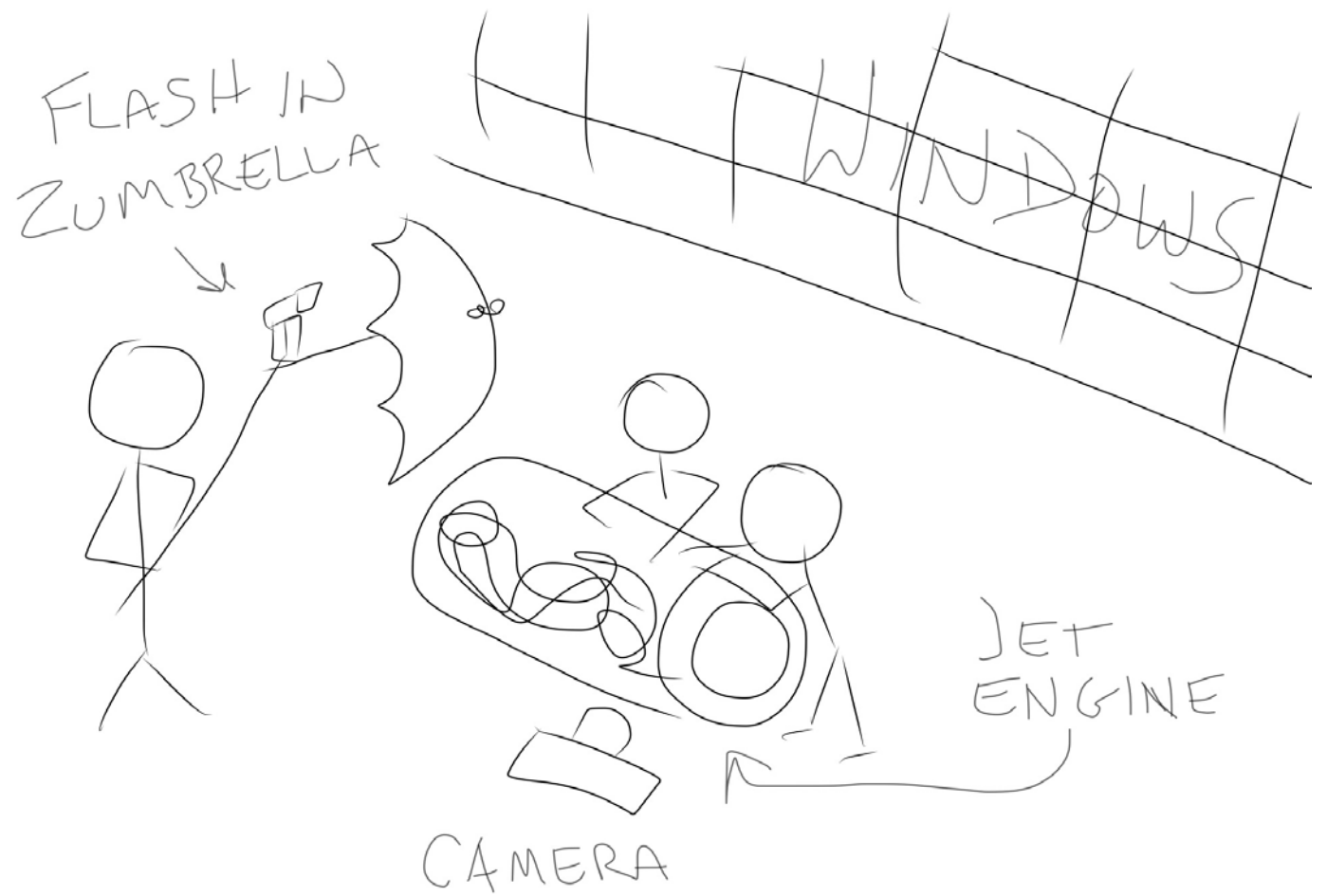
Interesting environments are like the dessert I get to eat for shooting in loads of small offices and cubicles. Shooting in the aviation lab was just such a treat. I worked on it just like the others. Here's a sample of the ambient.



It's pretty good, but I also wanted some pictures with more punch. I knew a wide angle lens in close would be nice, and I knew I needed to light at least two guys at once. I chose the zumbrella so that I'd have some dimension and could light both men without worrying about being in exactly the right position.

I put my camera on the other side of the room shooting toward the windows so the window light is my backlight. Anytime I have windows in the picture, I can get away with almost anything with light and it'll be believable. Here's my assistant Bob with the light ready to go.







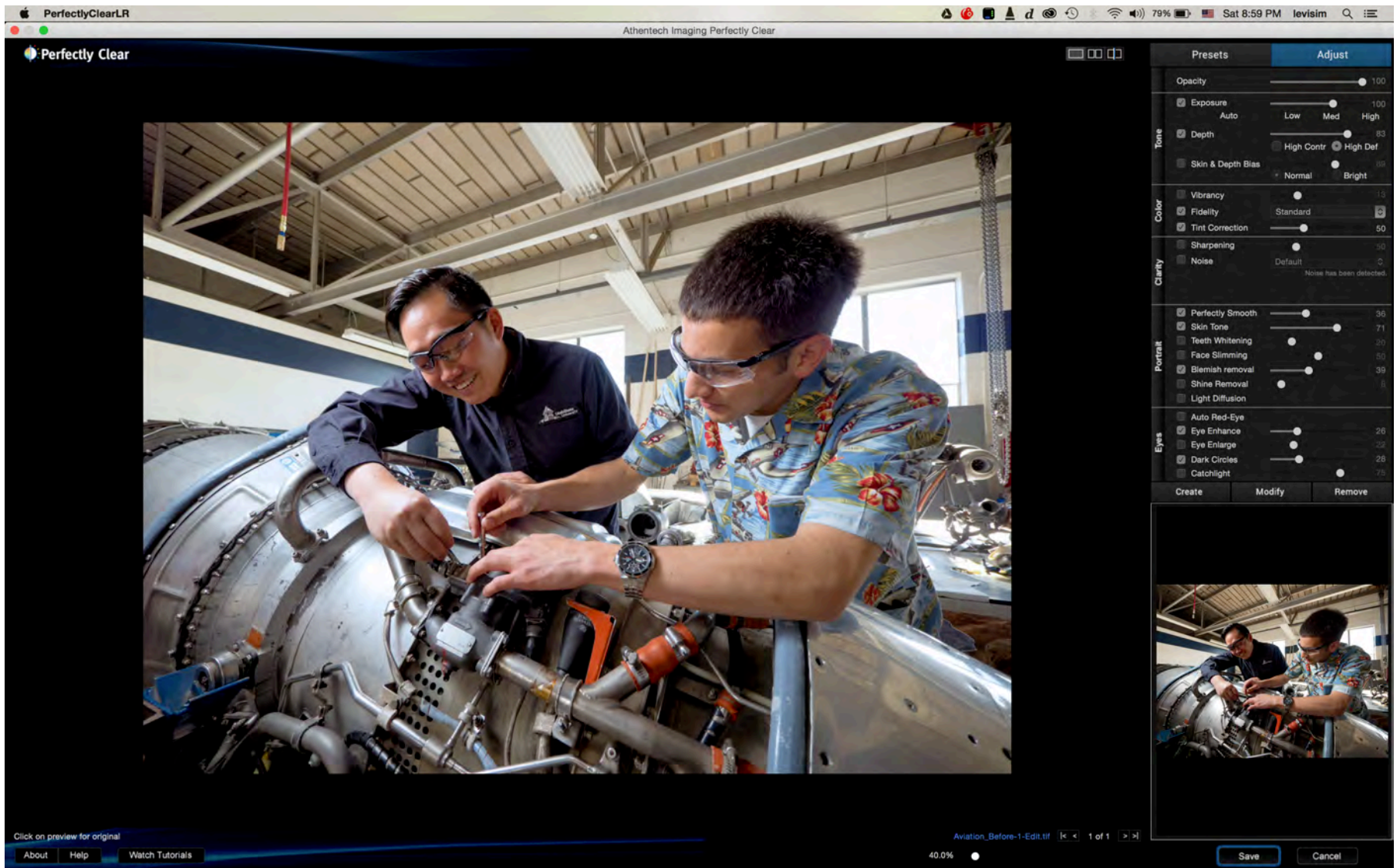


Now with the light ready, we just work it. Wide lens, tight lens, more environment, different looks.

Perfectly Clear will have these ready for sharing in no time. Here're the settings I chose for a preset and the before and after pictures.







## Conclusion

Environmental Portraiture has been my key to working in places I never dreamed I'd work. I've photographed surgeons, executives, performers, athletes, cooks, cowboys, and everyone in between. While it's always fun to see how others do their work, I've got to be on my game, ready to make a good picture quickly, and I rarely get a second chance. The lighting I've shown you above is my key to getting the basics done efficiently, and then when I get to the "work it" phase is when I get to play a little and create something unique.

Finally, Perfectly Clear makes it so simple to get these pictures finished and in my clients' hands—oftentimes on the same day. If I'm lucky, I may have time to perform additional creative touches on my favorites. Either way, Perfectly Clear is my fastest method for getting pictures ready and finished. I'm excited for you to practice these techniques, too. Try it in your kitchen or garage—make a picture of someone doing something and you're on your way to making environmental portraiture, and if you'd like to give it a go, you'll be on your way to making these portraits for your own clients, too.

### Deciding On a Workflow In Advance

Before any shoot, I like to make sure I know my post shoot processing in advance. For me, I knew this would involve pulling the photos into Lightroom for initial corrective edits, taking them over to Perfectly Clear for the bulk of the edits, and then back into Lightroom for additional edits. Finally, they would be exported out of Lightroom and into Photoshop for some final touches and clean up.





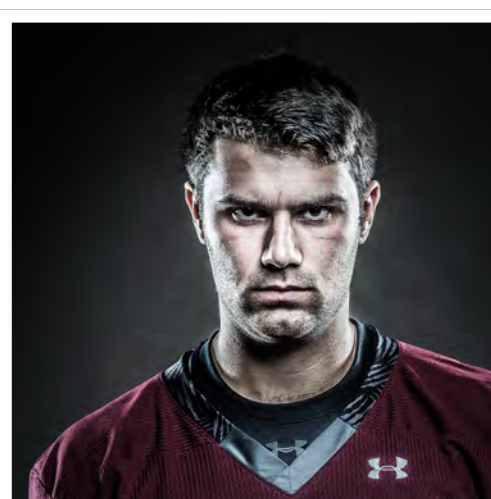
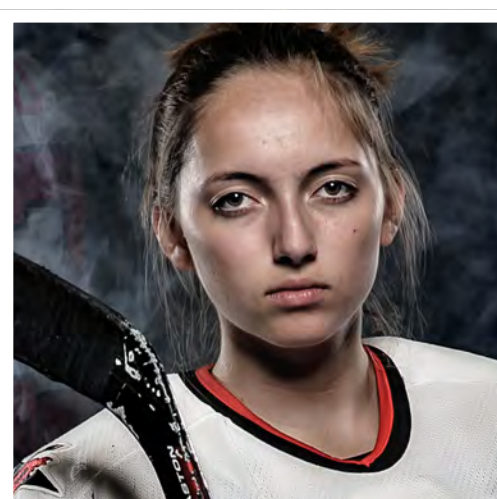


# Impactful Sports Portraits

**By Vanelli**

As a former athlete, I miss the roar of the crowd, the butterfly feeling of stepping foot into the ring. I wish back then we'd had the advancement of photography and video that we do today. So as a photographer, I want to be able to capture that for the next generation. I want to give them something to look back on, something where they can say..."Wow, that was me!"

My goal is to teach you the strategies on how to make your shoots faster and more efficient, while delivering consistent results. Whether you're a hobbyist photographer volunteering for your team or a professional photographer looking to offer more for your clients, sports portraits are a great way to create memories that last a lifetime.





## What makes a great sports portrait?

Let me set the scene... Imagine years of dedication to a sport, hours of grueling practices, countless minutes of game time, all unfolding in one frame captured by a single click of the shutter. Your goal as a photographer is to create a mood that brings out the emotion and intensity of the athlete when they step in front of your camera. Matching emotion with dramatic lighting will ensure a great sports portrait.

### Key ingredients of a Sports Portrait:

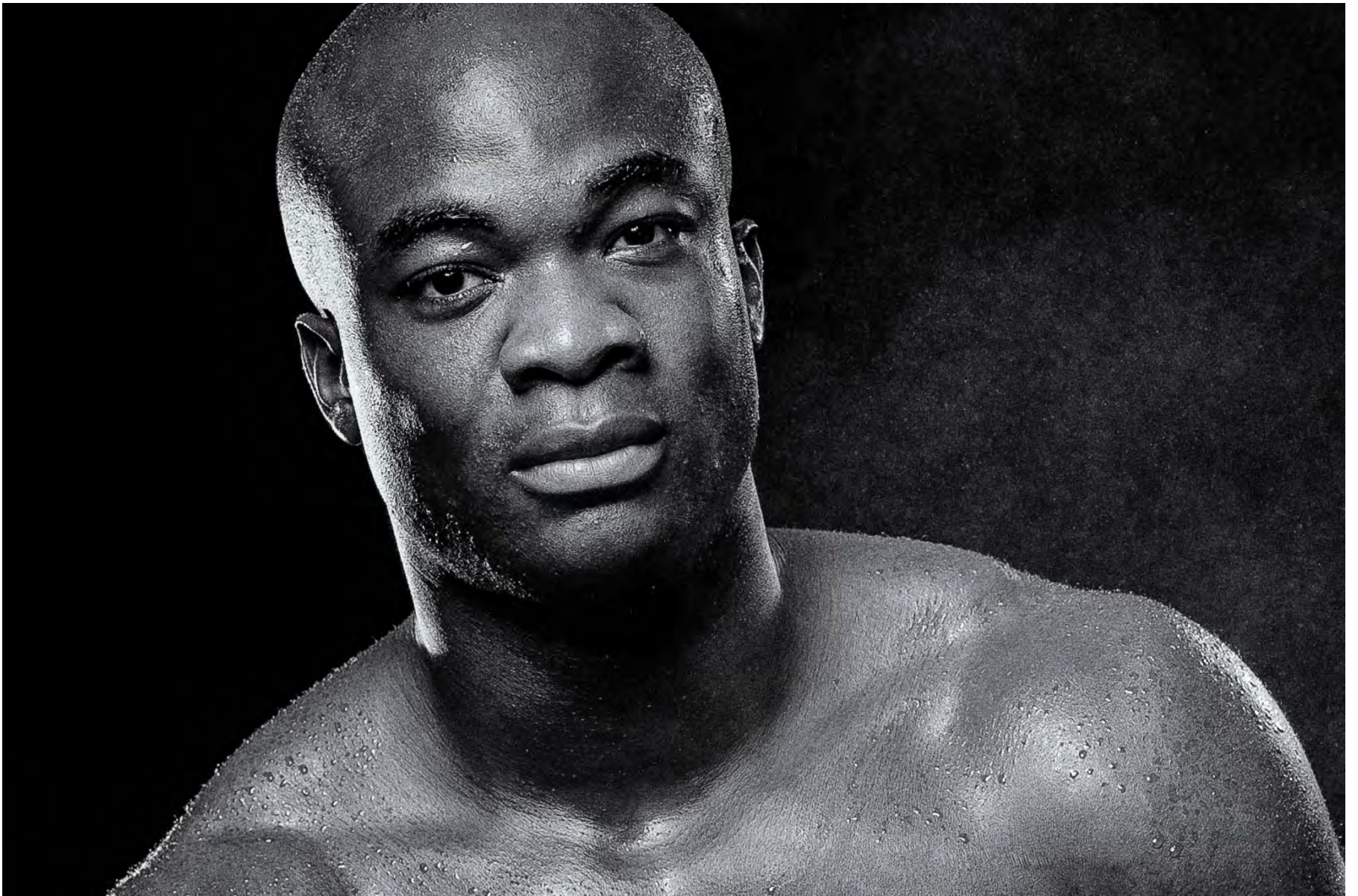
- Stylizing the scene using their uniform, gear or location
- Strike a commanding pose
- Edgy lighting followed by sharp editing
- Dialing in the Camera Settings
- Pulling emotion from the athlete
- Overly-sharp editing

### What gear do we need?

- 3 Speedlights or strobes
- Camera with a portrait lens
- 2 Stripboxes
- 1 Octagonal Softbox or beauty dish
- 3 Lightstands
- Black Backdrop







## Setting the Scene

When planning your sports portrait, it's important to include an element of the subject's sport in the scene. This can be a stick, a ball, boxing gloves, anything to convey to the viewer what the sport is. If the viewer looks at the image and wonders 'What sport does this athlete play?', the image fails.

## Planning with the Athlete

Talk with your athlete before the shoot. Get them excited and be sure to tell them what to bring. Insist your athlete brings the same gear they would use on game day, including their game uniform.

I tell them to come prepared as if they were about to step foot on the field or court. This will also get them in the mood for the shoot.

In a tight pinch, they could use their practice uniform or team jacket. While this isn't ideal, it's definitely better than a plain shirt.



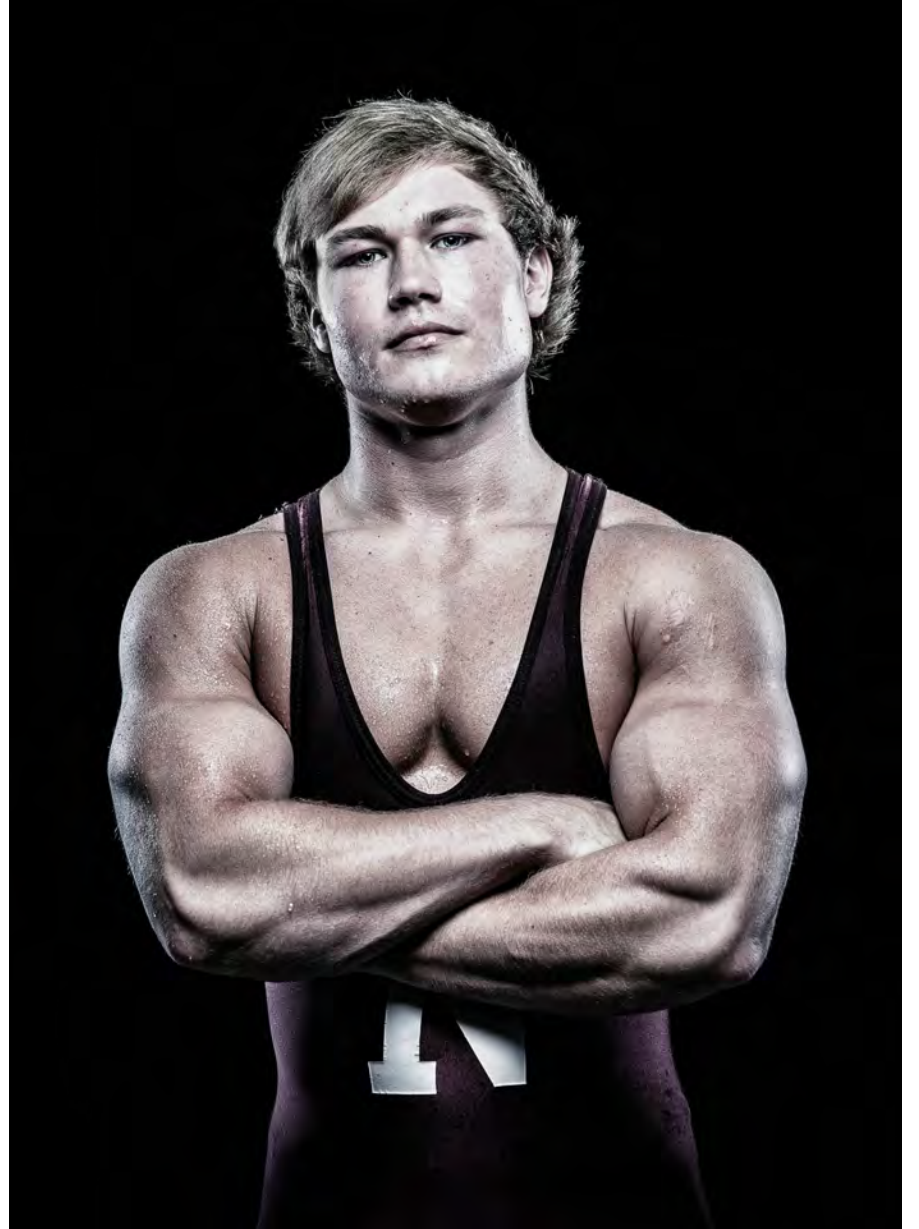




## Strike a Commanding Pose

Think of an athlete as a warrior standing strong and proud. The look on their face and body position sends a message: “Go on - I dare you. I will still win.” Directing an athlete, especially an amateur, into a commanding pose can be difficult. If you’re not familiar with their sport, ask them to show you a few stances. Once you find a stance you like, tweak it. Not only does this help the athlete relax, but it also gives them a chance to influence the final photo.

Generally, exaggerated gestures convey aggressiveness and strength, while small gestures convey a closeness or intimacy. Have the athlete square off to the camera with a wide stance, maybe arms folded or head tilted back. Look at the pose. If you don’t want to mess with them, neither will your viewers.





## Camera Settings

We're going for a gritty style, so we want to show as much detail as possible. Setting our f/stop between f/5.6 to f/11 will keep the athlete's eyes sharp and give us the detail we need in their hair and uniform. A shutter speed of 1/125 to 1/200 of a second is where we want to be. The shutter speed's main purpose is to control the ambient light in the room when dealing with flashes or strobes. Keep in mind that too high of a shutter speed will result in a black band across the image. Make sure you're keeping it below the common sync speed of 1/250th.

## Edgy lighting

Harsh light produces strong shadows for a powerful image. Your job as a photographer is to match your light with your athlete's pose and emotion. In our image, we want a gritty, edgy look. This requires controlling where the light falls on our athlete. Stripboxes and a beauty dish are perfect light-modifying tools for this style. We can take the diffusion panel off for an even harsher light.

Starting with an empty set, position the main light high and just slightly off-center to the subject. This main light will illuminate their face and uniform. An Octabox or beauty dish is a good choice. Use a larger light source to illuminate a full body. A smaller light source can also illuminate a full body if it is moved further back.

Next, adding in side lighting with stripboxes will create the edge light we need to complete the look. Looking at the athlete, position one stripbox slightly behind the left shoulder at a 45 degree angle facing into the athlete. Do the same thing on the other side. Make sure to place them far enough away from the background to avoid light spill in the background. If space is limited, applying a grid on the stripbox will control the light plus allow you to keep the light closer to the background. If you notice lens flare, angle the stripbox more toward the subject and make sure you keep your lens hood on.







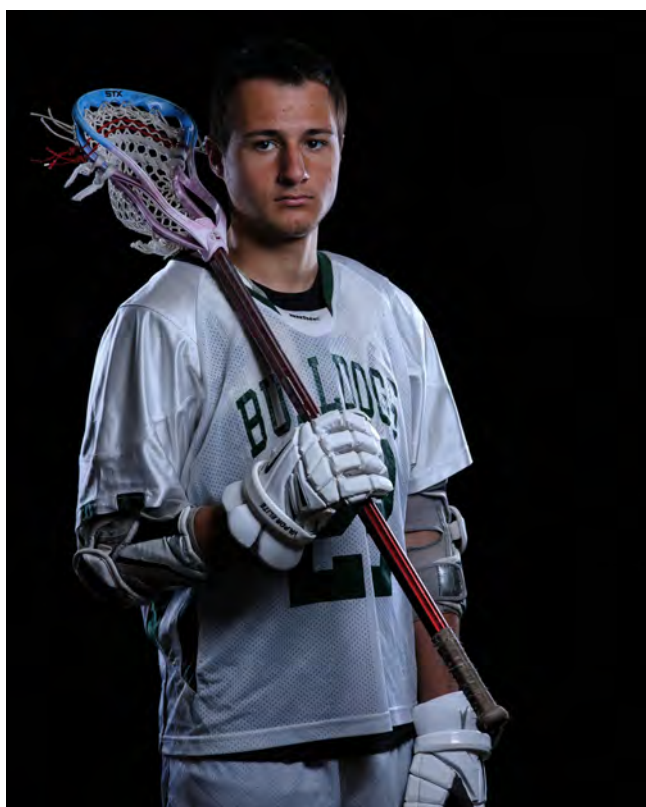
## Balancing the Power of your Lights

To pull off the look, we need to keep our main light (key light) a little stronger than the side lights. Using a light meter will ensure a proper exposure.

With all the lights off, set the camera in manual mode. Set the aperture to f/8, shutter to 1/125th and an ISO of 100 (or lowest native ISO). Take a test shot. This test shot will reveal if the ambient light has an affect on the image. Your goal is to have an underexposed image.

Turn on the main light. Using a light meter in front of the subject's face, trigger the light and take a reading. We want the aperture to be f/8. If the aperture is lower than f/8, increase the power of the light. If it's higher, decrease the power of the light. Light to subject distance – moving the light closer or away from your subject – will also increase or decrease the power of the light.

Next, turn on one of the side lights. Position the light meter on the corner of the subject with the dome facing the back stripbox and take a meter reading. Increase or decrease the power of the light to achieve an aperture of f/5.6. Do the same for the opposite stripbox.





## Pulling Emotion from the Athlete

There are six primary emotions: sadness, surprise, fear, happiness, disgust, anger. Everything else is a combination or a blend of these emotions. Asking a subject to show happiness will result with a smile on their face as their eyes open wide. Anger can be shown with a scowl and a low brow. Pretty simple. It becomes confusing when we ask the subject to show confidence, pride or intensity. How can we portray that in an image? Confidence and pride are not an emotion – they are a feeling or a belief. Intensity is an exaggerated form of an emotion. So how do we get the athlete to show confidence, pride or intensity? We get them to relive a moment during a game or a rough practice through a story.

Set the stage by having the athlete think of a time when the odds of winning were stacked against them and everyone thought for sure they were going to lose. Even with the score close, deep inside they knew, without a doubt, that they were going to win – and they did. This will cause emotions to merge, to produce a look of confidence. Be ready with the camera to capture this emotion.

Intensity is a little different. Choose which emotion you want to have them act out to an extreme or an exaggeration. To show intense anger, have the athlete think of a time where they lost a game or a match but knew they should have won.

The other team played dirty and the referees seemed to be in on it. Tell them the other team will see these photos and know exactly what they were thinking. You'll notice the athlete's face will change and their stance will get wider.





## Making Magic in Post-Production

To help develop the gritty look, we shot with harsh light. This allows us to over-sharpen the image using the clarity slider to get the rough look we desired. Every feature of the subject is enhanced including unwanted blemishes.



To avoid this problem, it's best to touch up blemishes before applying the gritty effect. The spot removal tool in Lightroom is great to fix blemishes on a single image. It becomes very tedious and time consuming when editing an entire team. Plugins, such as Perfectly Clear, are a better solution. This allows us to batch process the entire team, fixing blemishes, enhancing eyes, lips and skin. Desaturating the colors and deepening the blacks finishes the effect.





# Single Image Processing using Lightroom

Let's explore how to develop a single image in Lightroom using Perfectly Clear to speed up the process.

## Enhancing Eyes

Start by selecting a 2:1 ratio in the Navigator Panel. Focus on just the eyes using the Navigator window or by clicking and moving the image around.



1. With the adjustment brush selected, increase the exposure if needed, set clarity to 10 and saturation to 40 .
2. Make sure Auto Mask is selected. Apply the effect to the iris of the eyes. Pressing keyboard shortcut O will show a red mask on the area you are painting. This will help you see where the effect is being applied.
3. Pressing the Alt Key [PC] or Option Key [Mac] will turn the brush to an eraser tool. This will allow you to paint out the effect.
4. If Auto Mask isn't helping, you can turn this feature off by unchecking the box. Experiment and using a Wacom tablet will make you proficient.

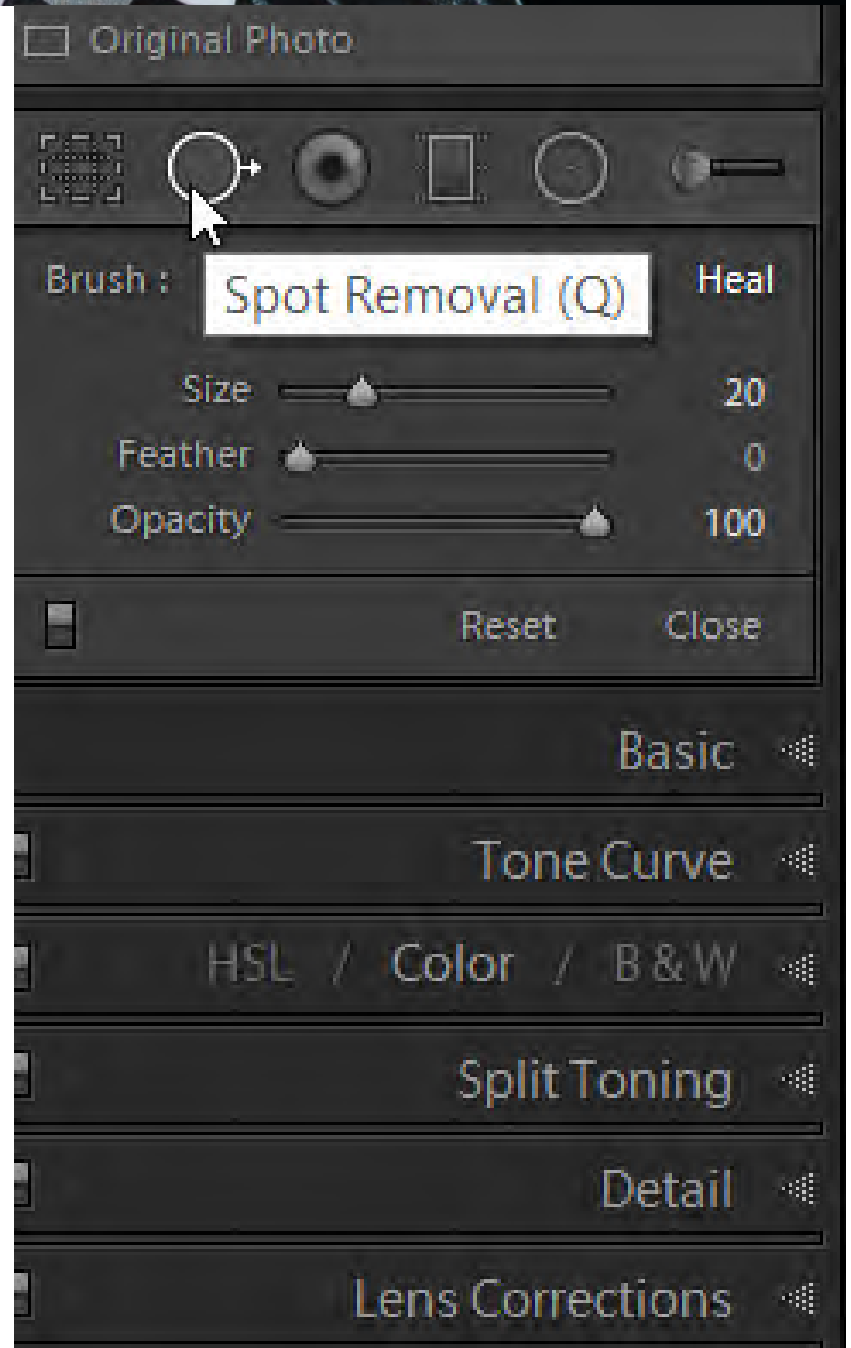




## Removing Blemishes

Start by zooming in on the image to a 1:1 view. Select the Spot Removal Tool from the tools panel or use the keyboard shortcut (Q).

1. Select Heal as the brush type and adjust the brush size to match the blemish.
2. Set feather to zero and opacity to 100. For simple blemishes, a single click will do. For a longer blemish, click-and-drag to paint over the area. Lightroom will match the area.
3. If the area Lightroom tried to match isn't perfect, click on the spot and move it to an area that looks better.
4. Once you move to a new blemish, Lightroom places a pin on the area you fixed. You can always go back and readjust an area.



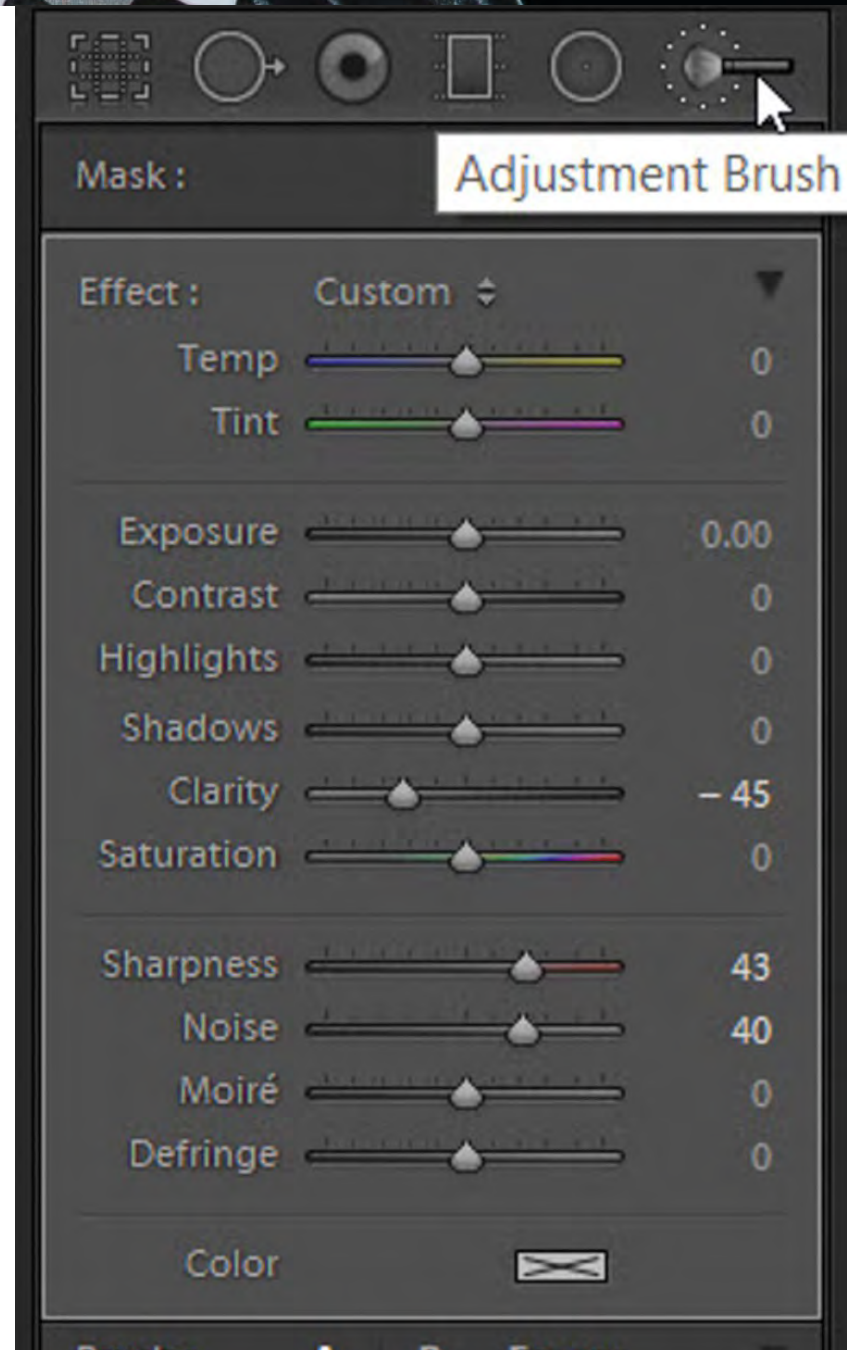




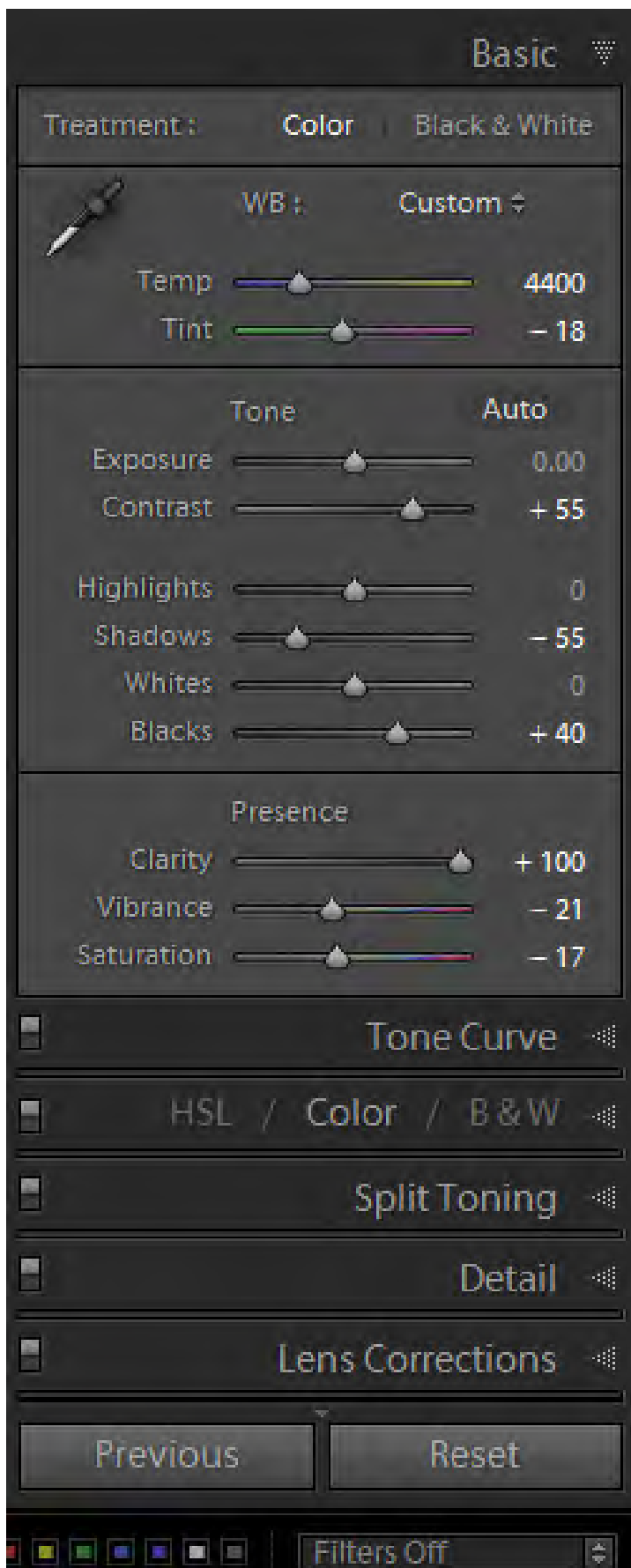
## Smoothing Skin

Start by zooming in on the image to a 1:1 view. Select the adjustment brush from the tools panel or use the keyboard shortcut (K). We want to smooth the skin without making it look plastic or fake.

1. Set Clarity to -45, Sharpness to +43 and Noise to +40.
2. Under the Brush section, adjust the brush size to a size you feel comfortable painting with. Feather, Flow and Density should remain at 100.
3. Place a checkmark next to Auto Mask. This will help you apply the effect only on the skin.
4. Start applying the effect to the skin. Stay away from the eyes, eyebrows, lips and nostrils.
5. Pressing keyboard shortcut O will show a red mask on the area you are painting. This







will help you see where the effect is being applied. Pressing the Alt Key [PC] or Option Key [Mac] will turn the brush to an eraser tool. This will allow you to paint out the effect. If Auto Mask isn't helping, you can turn this feature off by unchecking the box. Experiment and using a Wacom tablet will make you proficient.

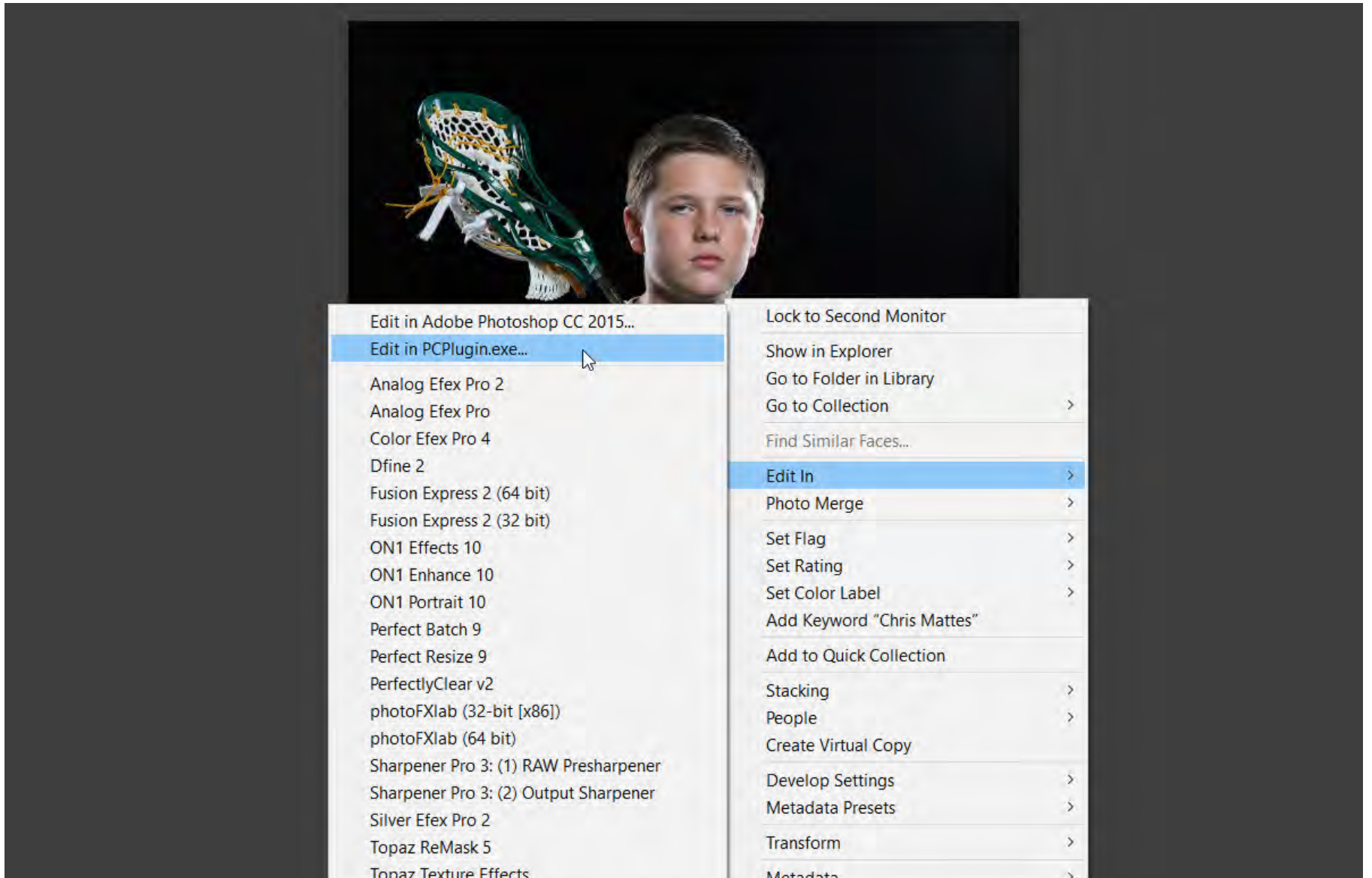
## Apply the Gritty Effect

Working in the Basic panel, apply these settings in the tone section; increase contrast to +55, decrease shadows to -55 and increase blacks to +40. In the presence section, increase clarity to +100, and decrease vibrance to -21 as well as saturation to -17. These settings are a great starting point for the gritty effect.

Once you have the look you like, use keyboard shortcut [PC] Ctrl+Shift+N, [Mac] Cmd+Shift+N, to save the settings as a preset. The gritty effect preset can be applied with a single click to future images keeping the look consistent.



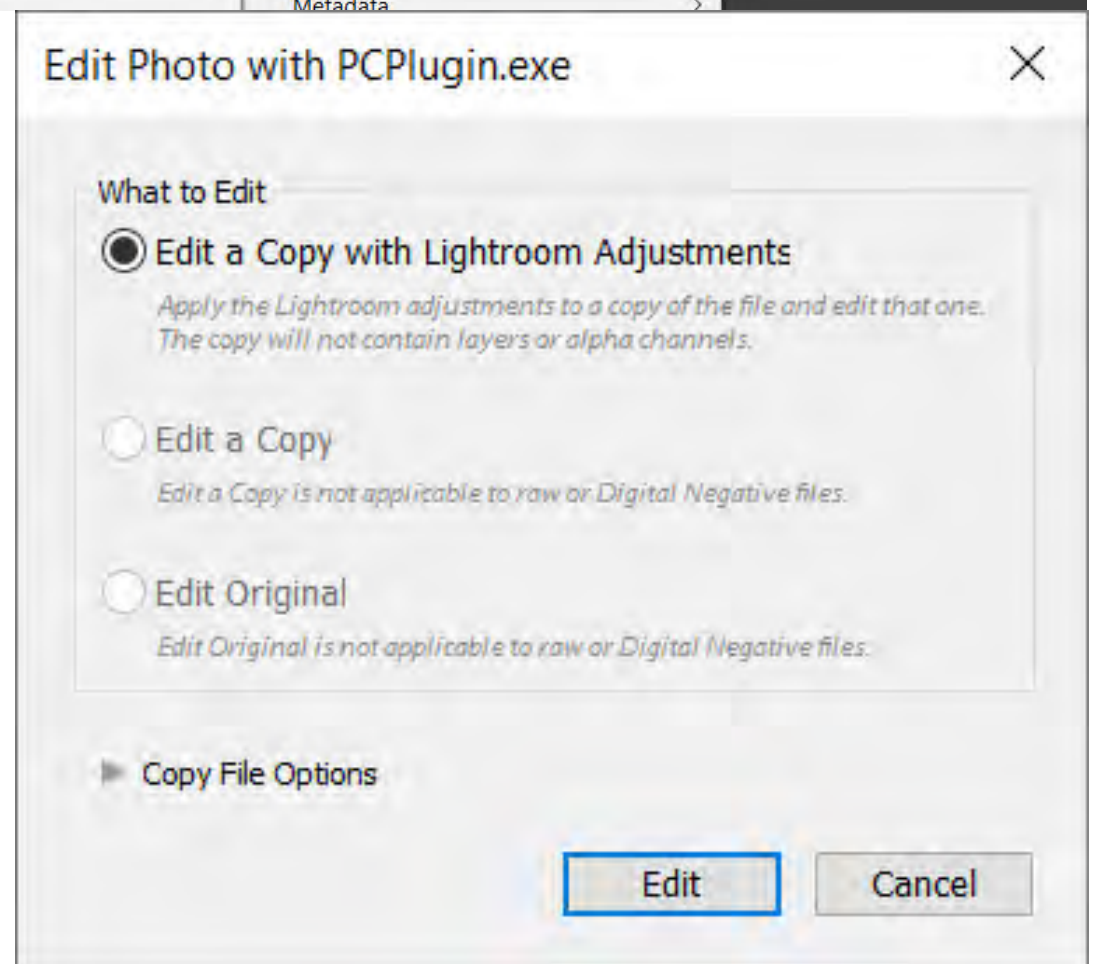




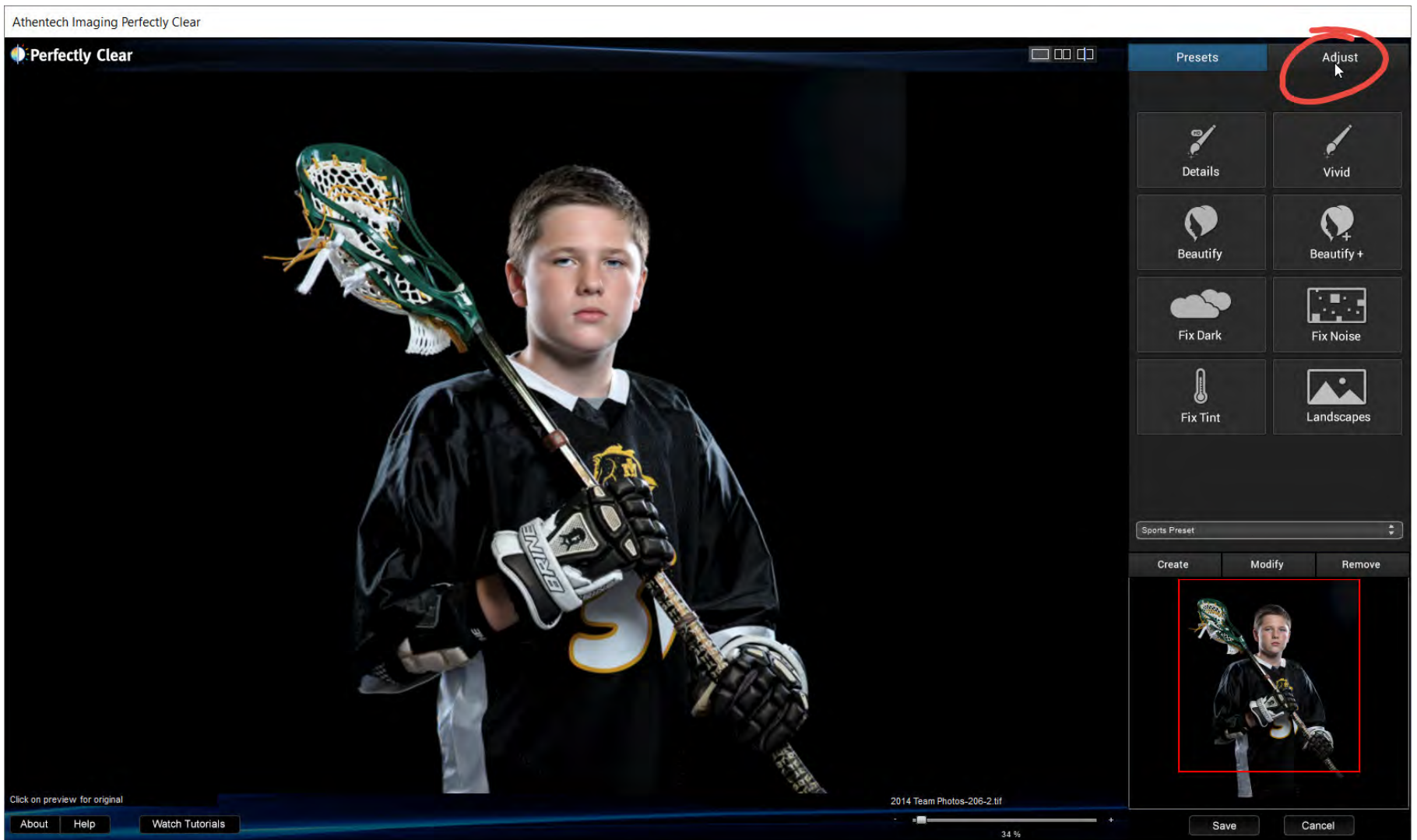
## Processing Images with Perfectly Clear

Edits we just applied in Lightroom—enhancing the eyes, removing blemishes and smoothing the skin—can be automated using Perfectly Clear.

Right click on the image and select edit in PCPlugin.exe. A dialog box appears, choose Edit a copy with Lightroom Adjustments and click Edit.





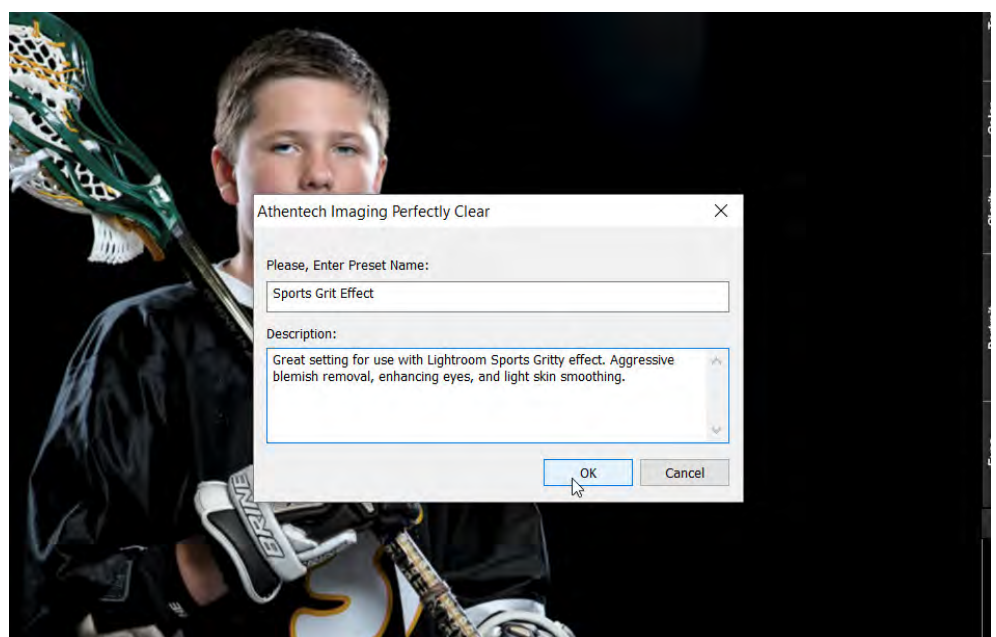


When Perfectly Clear launches, select Adjust from the top tab. For the look we need, our main focus is the Portrait and Eyes section. Use the setting in the image below as a starting point. Keep in mind, we are using Lightroom to sharpen and desaturate the image.

## Saving a Perfectly Clear Preset

Presets provide a way to save a group of settings and apply them to other photos. This streamlines our workflow and enable us to batch process images using Perfectly Clear from inside Lightroom.

1. Save the setting as a preset by clicking on the create tab.
2. When the preset dialog box appears, enter a name for the preset and a brief description.
3. Click OK when done.
4. After our preset is created, we return to the main screen. Click save to apply our settings and return to Lightroom.





## Apply the Lightroom Sports Gritty Preset

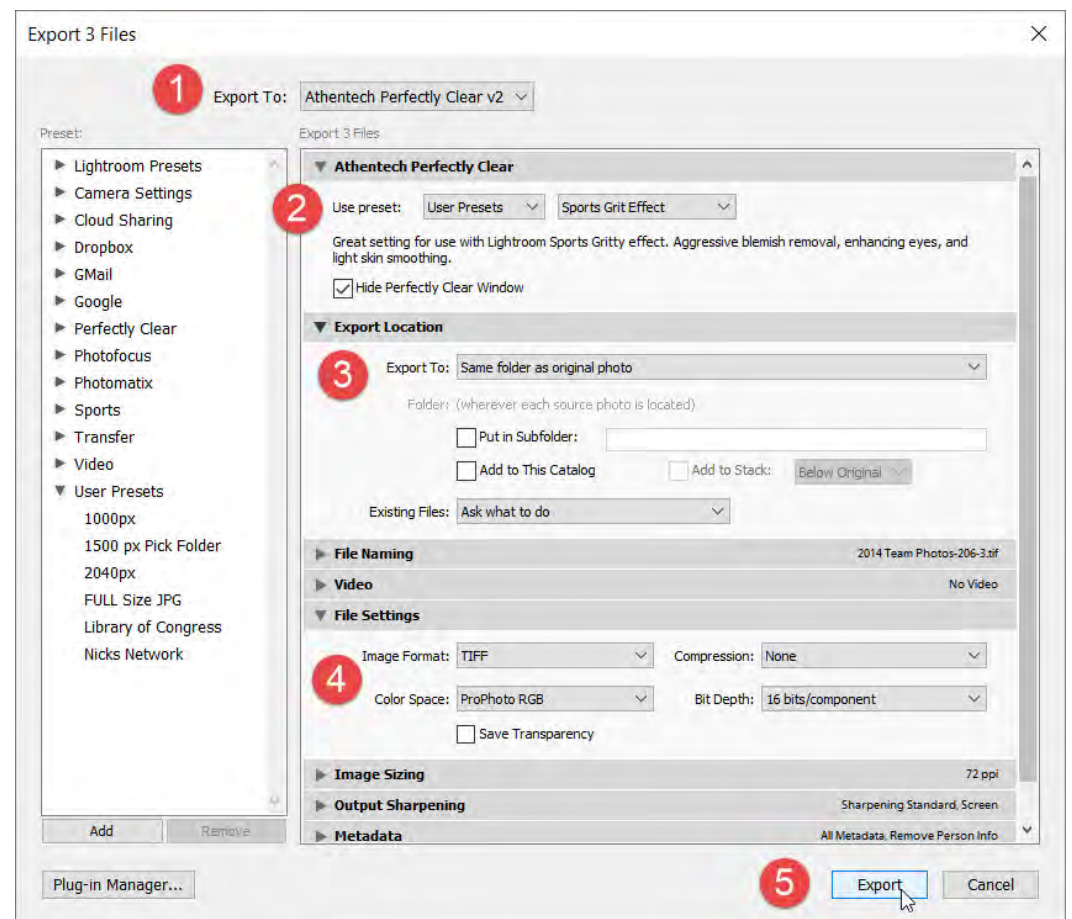
Working in the Library module, select the Sports Gritty preset from the Quick Development dropdown menu to complete our edit.

## Batch Processing with Perfectly Clear

A powerful feature of Perfectly Clear is the ability to batch process a group of images all from within Lightroom. Instead of manually enhancing the eyes, skin and removing blemishes for each image, we can select a group of images we want to process and apply the Perfectly Clear preset we created earlier.

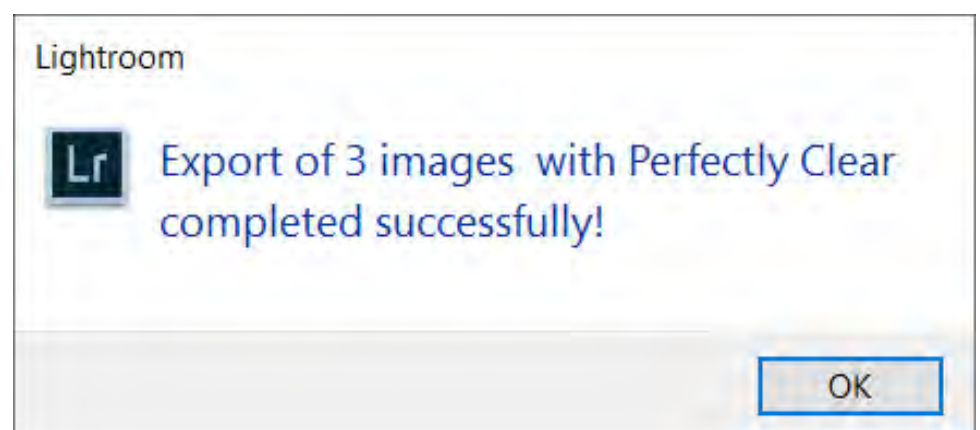
Inside Lightroom select the images you want to process with Perfectly Clear. Click on the File menu and choose Export.

The export window's title shows 3 files will be exported. Apply the following settings.



1. Select Athentech Perfectly Clear from the Export To dropdown menu.
2. Navigate to the Sports Grit Effect preset we created under the user preset. Place a checkmark in the Hide Perfectly Clear Window box.
3. Choose Export to the same folder as the original photo from the Export to dropdown menu.
4. Select TIFF for the image format, ProPhoto RGB as the color space and 16 bit for bit depth.
5. Click Export when finished.

Lightroom prepares to export the images using the Perfectly Clear preset we created. A dialog box will appear when the images have been successfully exported.







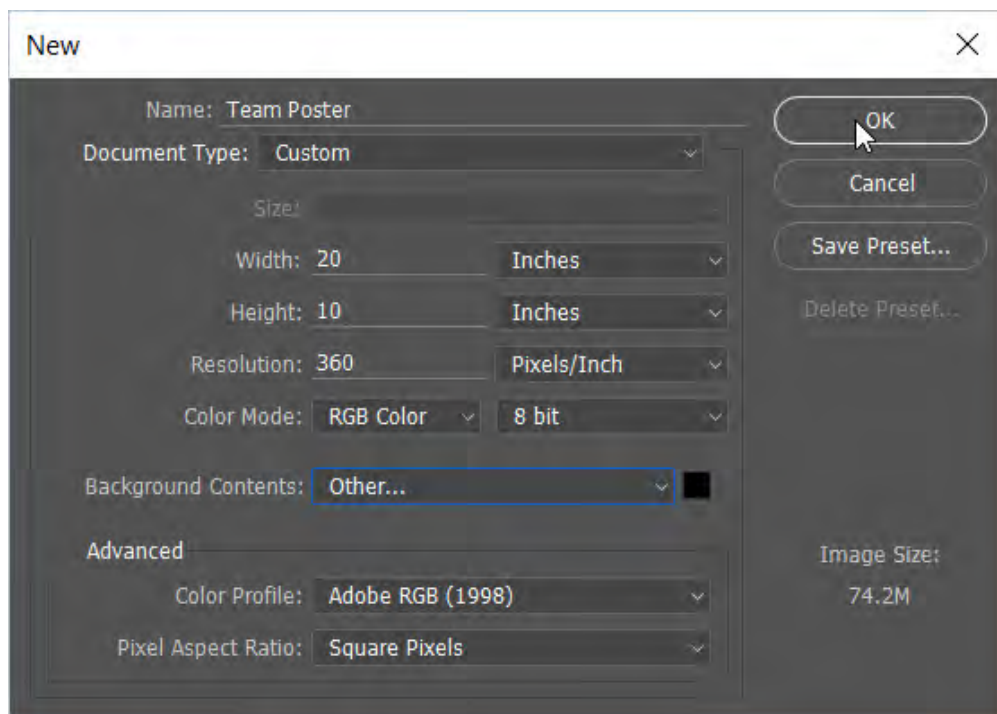
## Creating Team Posters

Imagine you spent a few hours photographing an entire team. You kept the lighting, background and post processing the same for each image producing a consistent result. Now imagine, with very little effort, you combine the images to create a team poster. Taking it one step further, you could make the leader (the middle person) interchangeable. For this to happen, we need to take a few extra photos.

After you capture your main photo, have the athlete pose as if they were on the end of the line. I'm using Lacrosse as an example with each player holding a stick in their right or left hand. This can easily be done with a basketball or a bat.







Using Photoshop, create a blank document by selecting New from the File menu and enter the value of the final poster size you want to make.

In our example, we want a 20" by 10" poster with a black background -- the same color we used for our shoot. To keep image quality high, choose a resolution of 360 pixels per inch.

Add the middle player (the captain) first. Since we shot on a black background, the background will blend in.



This looks great until we add players behind him. The captain's black background is covering the other players.

We have a few editing options. One option is to add a layer mask and quickly paint out the captain's background to reveal the other players. This is great if we are not changing out the captains. A more versatile option is to take our time and extract each player from their background. Since the end players are the last to be added, their background is fine. Using Photoshop's quick selection tool will make the task easy.





Since each player is on their own layer and their background is removed, the middle player or the captain can be interchangeable. Parents and players love this option.







## Review: Simple steps to Make a Great Sports Portrait

With these quick tips, we created a shooting and processing workflow for one athlete that could easily be applied to an entire team allowing us to shoot and process our images in record time. Following these simple tips will produce timeless images that the players can look back on and say,..."Wow, that was me!"

- Start with harsh light to create strong shadows for a powerful image.
- Stylized the shoot with a piece of sports gear and a uniform.
- Built a rapport with the athlete to create emotion.
- Retouched blemishes to make the athlete look their best, and then over-sharpened the image to get a gritty look.
- Create presets to apply to an entire set of images.





*photo by Richard Harrington*

## Perfectly Clear Complete

**Brings out the best in every photo with intelligent image enhancement and repair**

Perfectly Clear Complete helps you save time by unlocking the details in every image—automatically. It includes ALL of our award-winning corrections and 40 professionally created presets, all in a single plug-in.

