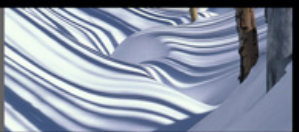


MICHAEL CLARK  
PHOTOGRAPHY



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fall 2008



## FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER

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# Tough times ahead...

## HERE AT MICHAEL CLARK PHOTOGRAPHY, BUSINESS IS BETTER THAN EVER



These last three months have been some of the busiest of my entire career. I have been in the office only three weeks since the end of August and those three weeks have been jam-packed with 14-hour days editing and processing images shot both on assignment and for my stock agency. In this tough economy I feel very blessed that my business is doing better than ever. It would seem that success breeds success and I hope it continues. You can bet I'll be working hard to make sure that happens.

I have to confess, it is becoming harder and harder to carve out time to actually put this newsletter together. The Newsletter is now sent out to over 2,300 subscribers plus another 1,500 or so of my clients. Because so many of you have emailed me and signed on to receive the newsletter I feel I have to get it out. And in terms of my marketing this newsletter is the best thing I have ever done. A fairly sizable amount of my business is a direct result of this newsletter. Hence, you can bet it isn't going away anytime soon.

You might notice in this issue a large number of surfing images from a recent stock shoot. Most every image in this issue is from that shoot - which happened last month in Ventura, California. It isn't that I don't have other images to grace these pages. I do. But because all of the other images I've shot in the last few months have been for magazine or commercial assignments I can't include them in this issue of the newsletter because of my agreements with the clients. Rest assured you'll be seeing those images soon enough once the embargo period has elapsed.

Part of my daily routine when I have time is keeping up with what is happening in the photo world. Recently there have been some excellent articles posted on blogs and photo websites about the state of the economy and how we as photographers fit into these

tough times. In particular, Vincent Laforet has written two articles that are a must read for any photographer working today. The first article is entitled, *The Cloud is Falling* and is available [here](#) on Sportsshooter.com. The second article is a recent addition to Vincent's blog and is entitled, *The Perfect Storm has Arrived* available [here](#) on his blog. If you are a working photographer today these are pretty much required reading. If you are a client reading this I am sure these articles will help you understand how photographers are coping with the economy. As for myself, I am being cautious, but since my business is going gangbusters at the moment not much has changed in my day to day operations.

Another article that caught my eye, this one by Doug Menuez that was recently posted on the Editorial Photographers website, entitled [\*On Chaos, Fear, Survival and Luck: Longevity is the Answer\*](#), is one of those rare pieces of writing that really made me stop and think about my own work. In fact it made me think so much and it is so timely for me at this point in my career that it was the inspiration for an extended editorial in this newsletter that starts on Page 8 about following your passion.

Lastly, I just want to say thank you to all of my clients and to you, the readers of this newsletter. Happy holidays to everyone!

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# Aurora Photos Action:Reaction Project

## ACTION:REACTION PROJECT CELEBRATES AURORA PHOTOS 15TH ANNIVERSARY

Recently I shot a few portraits as part of Aurora Photos Action:Reaction project which celebrates Aurora's 15th anniversary in the stock photography business. The Action:Reaction project has been in progress since June 2008 and the basic concept is that every 48 hours a

adventure photographer but I am experimenting a lot these days with portraiture and especially black and white portraiture. If you'd like to check out the project click [here](#).



new image is uploaded to the site that somehow relates to the previous image. It is a very interesting progression of images by an incredible group of pro photographers which were hand-picked by the Aurora editors.

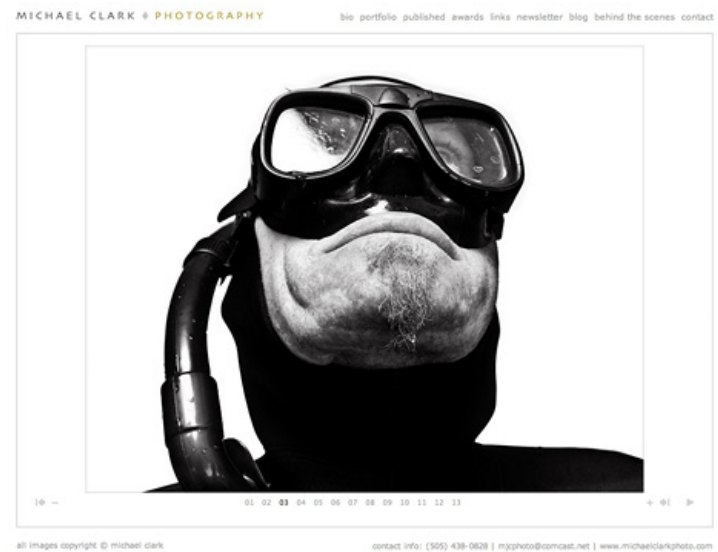
Each photographer had to produce, shoot, edit and process images 48 hours after they were notified of being included in the project. Then they were allowed to submit only three images and an outside photo editor, from a prestigious magazine or ad agency, chose the one image that went live on the project website. Part of the project is that it brings photo editors and photographers together, for instance my set of images was edited by Sadie Quarrier of *National Geographic Magazine*. Some of the other guest editors include Rob Haggart of APhotoFolio.com, Sacha Lecca of *Rolling Stone* and Miki Johnson of *American Photo Magazine*.

Sadie chose the color image (pictured above). One of the other images that I submitted appears in the Portfolio section of this newsletter on Page 10. As you can tell these images are a bit off the beaten track for an

## New Black and White Portfolio

### B&W PORTFOLIO ADDED TO WEBSITE

I have updated my website recently and added a new black and white gallery to my Portfolio section. There are now separate web galleries for my color and black and white portraits. I added this black and white gallery because these images stand on their own as a distinct collection. Since first shooting this style of black and



white portraits earlier this summer, I have been shooting quite a few on every assignment and stock shoot to help fill out this section of the website and my print portfolio. I'll be adding images to this section of the website often since this has become a personal project to photograph as many elite athletes as possible with this style. Click [here](#) to check out the B&W portfolio.

**RECENT CLIENTS:** Adobe, Nikon, Patagonia, Popular Photography, Men's Fitness, Backpacker, Outside, ALP Magazine (Italy), Workshop Magazine and Daniel Fine Art.

## E-book on Adobe.com

### ADOBE FEATURES THE LIGHTROOM E-BOOK

Adobe has been kind enough to feature my Lightroom workflow e-book, *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographers Workflow* on the Adobe website. It is a great honor to be included with other excellent Lightroom books by such well known authors as Scott Kelby, Seth Resnick and Martin Evening. This is a huge stamp of approval for my e-book. You can check out the Lightroom resources page [here](#).

I have had several people email me and ask what sets my book apart from all of the other Lightroom books out there? That is a great question. My response to that is, as far as I know, my e-book is the only book that details a complete workflow from capture all the way through to finished images. My book isn't just about Lightroom. Most of the other Lightroom books are an in-depth detailed discussion of all the features in Lightroom but none of them that I know of come from the perspective of a professional photographer and show how Lightroom fits into a complete digital workflow. Also, my book contains a lot of information on setting up the camera, a shooting workflow, detailed naming conventions, storing and archiving strategies and an overview of when I use Photoshop after exporting images out of Lightroom as well as many other topics that aren't covered in the normal Lightroom books. Basically my book fits all the pieces of digital photography together to take you from your current digital knowledge base to a much more expanded and complete understanding of the digital process. And it does it with straight talk and very understandable, concrete examples.

The latest version of my e-book has gotten rave reviews and has been reviewed independently on several blogs. It received a glowing [endorsement](#) by *Inside Lightroom* blogger Ken Milburn. My many thanks to all of you who have purchased my e-book. Your continued support guarantees that the book will be expanded and made even better as Lightroom is upgraded and when the next version comes out. And lastly, many thanks to Adobe and in particular Frederick Johnson and the entire Lightroom team. If you'd like to purchase the e-book you can do so on my [website](#).

## ADOBE LIGHTROOM WORKFLOW

A COMPLETE WORKFLOW FROM CAPTURE  
TO OUTPUT BY MICHAEL CLARK



**NEED A CUTTING EDGE DIGITAL WORKFLOW? CURIOUS ABOUT ADOBE PHOTOSHOP LIGHTROOM AND HOW IT CAN SPEED UP YOUR DIGITAL WORKFLOW?**

The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Workflow, a 124 page PDF e-book, is a workshop in book form. This workflow, while not exhaustive, will cover the main topics of a shooting workflow then move into a RAW processing workflow with Adobe Lightroom 2.1 and Photoshop CS3/CS4.

To order *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow* click on the website link below. Payments can be made with any major credit card or via your PayPal account. For more information on the workflow and exactly what is covered go to Michael's website.

**[WWW.MICHAELCLARKPHOTO.COM](http://WWW.MICHAELCLARKPHOTO.COM)**



## Elinchrom Ranger RX Lighting kit

### A LOOK AT THE STATE OF THE ART BATTERY POWERED LIGHTING KIT BY ELINCHROM

I have been using the Elinchrom's Ranger RX Speed AS set up for a couple of years now with great results. The Ranger RX is a battery powered strobe set up that pumps out a maximum of 1,100 Watt/seconds of light. There are several versions of the Ranger packs with different designations, the set up I prefer is the Speed AS which means the pack recharges faster than the normal Ranger packs and also has an asymmetrical set up with 66.7% of the power going to the A outlet and 33.3 % of the power going to the B outlet. Even at full power the unit recharges in about 2.8 seconds. As it is rare that I have to blast away at full power the recycle rate is usually quite a bit faster.

Now I can hear many of you wondering why I went with the Elinchrom set up instead of the Profoto 7B or even the brand new Hensel Porty 12 system. There are several reasons. First off, the Elinchrom set up is much lighter than the Profoto 7B. At just over 17 pounds the Ranger RX pack is ten pounds lighter than the Profoto rig while the strobe heads are roughly the same size and weight. The Hensel Porty 12 power pack (which isn't even available yet) is a few pounds lighter but the compatible strobe head weighs twice as much as the Ranger Free Lite A heads that

I use so that negates the overall weight savings. I also much prefer the digital interface of the Ranger (as seen on the next page) in comparison to the Profoto 7B. The interface allows incredible and intuitive control of the light in 1/10th stops. The digital display also lets me see exactly where I am at in terms of light output and battery power. Add to this the fact that the Ranger is

weatherproofed much better than either of the competitors, produces the same quality of light and has some fantastic light modifiers and that pretty much sealed the deal. And last but not least, the Elinchrom Ranger, while certainly not inexpensive, is a fair bit cheaper than the Profoto 7B or the Hensel Porty 12. When it comes to choosing my tools, price is one of the last things I really



Above is the Elinchrom Ranger RX Speed AS kit which comes with the Ranger RX Speed AS power pack, two batteries (which slip into the bottom of the pack), a carrying case, a charger, a Free Lite A or S head, two reflectors and the Varistar Umbrella. The carrying case is nice but it isn't quite tough enough for my tastes so I load the entire kit and my extra accessories including the Skyport radio slaves into a Pelican 1610 rolling case.

think about but in this case it was a nice bonus.

Another item that is really helpful when using the Rangers, especially for outdoor photographers, is the new Elinchrom Skyport radio triggers. With these puppies attached to the camera and the Ranger pack, I can adjust the power output of the pack with the Skyport transmitter on my camera instead of having to walk

over and adjust it on the pack directly. It may not sound like a big deal but it has come in very handy several times when the pack and head are far away from my



shooting position. I still own and use Pocket Wizards but the Skyports have become my new favorite radio slaves because of the control they give me with the Rangers and because they are much smaller and lighter than the Pocket Wizards.

Having used the Ranger kits a fair bit before I purchased one, the only real flaw I could see was the attachment system for light modifiers - or at least that was my first impression. The Ranger heads use a rotating collar and groove system that at first seemed a bit awkward. But after using the system for a few days I found the locking collar is easy to use and securely locks a reflector or umbrella to the strobe head. I have even used the Ranger set up in howling winds outdoors with one of Elinchrom's massive octabanks and everything stayed locked onto the strobe head - though my assistant was leaning heavily into the wind!

A note about the Free Lite heads that are available for the Ranger power pack, they come in two flavors: the Free Lite S and Free Lite A. The Free Lite A head (at right) has a much shorter flash duration than the S version. The A head has a flash duration of 1/3250 second while the S head has a duration of 1/1600 second. Since I shoot a lot of motion sports, I opted for the shorter flash duration of the Free Lite A head.

In use, the Ranger kit is simple to work with and the battery power lasted a lot longer than I would have thought. You can get up to 250 full power flashes but

as it is rare that you actually need full power (at least for most of my shoots) I have had the power pack last all day shooting in excess of a thousand images and at various power settings including a fair bit of time at full power.

One of the other great assets of the Elinchrom system is their own brand of softboxes specifically tailored for the Elinchrom strobe heads. When it comes to Octabanks, Elinchrom is the gold standard and they work extremely well with the Ranger kit. You even see a fair number of Profoto users with Elinchrom Octabanks mounted on a 7B set up if that tells you anything. The other nice feature of the Elinchrom softboxes is that they open just like an umbrella so there isn't any complicated setup time trying to fit rods into a speeding. All you have to do is pop it open and attach it to the head which saves a lot of time. The only downside to this system that they are a bit more fragile than normal softboxes and care must be taken when traveling by air. Aside from that, they are pretty much as good as it gets in my experience.

As many of my readers might know, I have used the DynaLite Uni400jr's for many years now and they are great for those times when I need a super light strobe setup. But they have only 400 Watt/seconds of power which is quite limiting in some cases, not to mention that the 5 to 10 second recycling time at full power (using the Jackrabbit batteries) can be a royal pain. While

the Ranger kit is a lot heavier it is also much more versatile and the batteries last a lot longer.

If you buy the Ranger RX Speed AS kit you also get an extra battery, a case and the Varistar Umbrella and reflector. The Varistar set up looks a bit funky at first but it is very handy for quick setups and acts as a small softbox. All of the portraits in this newsletter were shot with the Ranger kit and the Varistar Umbrella.



la. After using this set up extensively I cannot recommend it highly enough. So far it seems very durable. And because of its rectangular shape, the pack and head (even two heads) fit into a LowePro back pack with accessories to spare which is another nice feature when you need to lug it into a location that isn't right next to the road. For the outdoor photographer there is probably no better battery powered portable strobe system on the market that I have used.

# Following your Passion

## LONG-TERM CAREER GOALS, FOLLOWING YOUR BLISS AND DOING WORK THAT EXCITES YOU

The idea for this article is a direct result of reading an article written by Doug Menuez entitled [On Chaos, Fear, Survival and Luck: Longevity is the Answer](#) which was published on the Editorial Photographers' website ([www.editorialphoto.com](http://www.editorialphoto.com)). In the article Doug discusses the dilemma of getting paid to do what you love - or for the photographer this would mean getting paid to shoot what you love to shoot. The main question he asks himself is "how can I build a satisfying and challenging creative life in photography over the long-term?" My purpose here is not to paraphrase his article, but to discuss my own path to creating satisfying work and getting paid for it.

As freelance photographers we all struggle with what we want to shoot and assignments that we have to shoot to make ends meet. If we shoot too many boring assignments it takes a toll, both in terms of creativity and motivation. Doug's article was just one more reminder of lessons I learned earlier this year and how those lessons figure into the future of my career. To explain I'll have to back up here and give you some background so this all makes sense. When I got into photography as a kid, way back when I was 14, I loved shooting sports. Photographing sports was challenging (especially in the manual focus days) and there was never any lack of action. Years later when I started climbing mountains and rock climbing around the world it seemed like a natural fit to bring along the camera. It was through those adventures that I became passionate about photography again and decided to make a go of it as an adventure photographer. Since climbing as a sport was one of my great passions, photographing that sport in all of its forms (ice and rock climbing as well as mountaineering) was a natural progression. Over the last twelve years I have branched out and shot other outdoor sports as well - in fact, I have shot just about every outdoor sport there is which fits with the "extreme" sport motif visible on my website. And since

these sports and the outdoors in general were always my passion it wasn't hard to pursue this type of work. Photographing adventure sports and adventures in general was always very satisfying for me both creatively and professionally. In this light, the question of how I could build a



Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, 1981

satisfying and creatively challenging career was a non-issue. I was lucky enough to be already doing it. And even more to the point, I was creating images that stirred my creative juices and pretty much concentrated on producing the type of images I wanted to create even to the detriment of my wallet. I could have made way more money shooting weddings or family portraits or whatnot but I realized early on that wasn't why I became a photographer. And that is the central question one has to ask is "are you being true to yourself?" Or in photo speak, "Are your images true to your inner vision and creative spark?"

Around year ten of my career, I found myself in a conundrum that still continues. When I started out as a pro



photographer I had big dreams and big goals. In the first ten years of my career I achieved almost all of those goals. Hence, I got to a place where I was asking myself “ok, where do we go from here?” At the same time I started working with a broader range of clients that needed more than just adventure sports images. This broadened my horizons a bit and tapped into another passion of mine (I have many) which is photography and art in general. I started shooting



Malapascua, Spain

a lot of portraits - and still do. I also started to shoot a lot of non-adventure images which was a fun distraction and no doubt helped sharpen my skills as a photographer but after a few years of not concentrating solely on adventure images the “where do I go from here?” question loomed even larger. And that is why earlier this year, while covering the 2008 *Patagonia Expedition Race* I had a “eureka” moment. Of course discussing it now and writing about it in this newsletter the answer to my question seems so obvious. Basically, in the midst of one of the most adventurous and exciting assignments so far in my career, I realized that what gets me excited, what really makes my soul sing is a good adventure - and in terms of my professional career,

creating stellar images of that adventure. And the fact that adventure images are what I produce and I can make a living producing is just icing on the cake. The problem comes in when I start to think bigger and get greedy. I want it all. I want to experience and record grand adventures but I also want to experiment with other genres of photography and have a long and rewarding career. And there is nothing to say that I can’t widen my horizons to include other genres of photography as long as they motivate and inspire my work, it is more just a matter of patience. Like the Queen song says, “I want it all, and I want it now!” Perhaps it is the ambition in me asking these questions rather than the creative side. Patience is a virtue I am still learning. Even so, don’t get me wrong, I am grateful for the very successful career I have already had and I look forward to the next ten years as a photographer (knock on wood).

In the end this article is more of a musing to get the synapses firing so both I and you, the reader, can ponder where it is we want to take our work and to find out exactly what our passions are. This is another reason Doug’s article struck me right between the eyes because he hits at the heart of what makes us tick as artists. And he really nails it in terms of how to “be true to yourself” by saying no to jobs that don’t fit into your plan, letting go of the fear of financial and creative failure and lastly breaking free of categories and being categorized by your clients. The tricky part to all of this is how to remain a pro and make enough money to continue to produce the type of work that gets your creative juices amped up. As I have said, in that respect I am lucky because to a large degree I am already doing just that and as I said in the opening editorial of this newsletter business is better than ever. In these tough economic times nothing is certain but by thinking about my career in the long term I hope to do better than just weather the current storm. So in the end the answer to my question, “where do I go from here?” is to keep on shooting adventure images and expand my photography into other genres that are in keeping with my passions.

[PORTFOLIO]







[PORTFOLIO]



[PORTFOLIO]



# Under Pressure

by Michael Clark

There are a lot of times as a pro photographer that you are under pressure to come up with images that meet and better yet, exceed the expectations of your client. For many of us, we feel that pressure every time we pick up the camera whether it is an assignment or a stock shoot. I know I certainly do. I have an image in my head before I show up at any location and if I can't at least get the image I have imagined or something better then it is a huge disappointment. Often times, normally on assignment, you can't always wait around for the best possible light and you have to be creative to get images that wow the client. In these cases, photography is always about problem solving to some degree. On a recent surfing shoot in California, I was pumped to finally get some images of surfers on

**"I HAVE AN IMAGE IN MY HEAD BEFORE I SHOW UP AT ANY LOCATION AND IF I CAN'T AT LEAST GET THE IMAGE I HAVE IMAGINED THEN IT IS A HUGE DISAPPOINTMENT"**

decent sized waves. But, as soon as I showed up, the swell died and well, let's just say the waves weren't huge at all. In fact, they could barely even be called waves. Since I have not shot a lot of surfing it was a huge learning experience.

As with many adventure sports, timing is everything. But as a pro, I can't afford to go out on a shoot and not come back with salable images. In this instance, I was shooting for my stock agency Aurora Photos. If there is anything I have learned in the stock photography world it is that lifestyle sells two to one over and above action photography. Hence, while the waves were non-existent, I concentrated on lifestyle imagery. And if you have ever thumbed through a surfing magazine you'll notice that surfing photography is a fair bit more "artistic" than a lot of the other adventure sports genres. I still managed to get some decent "old-school" surfing images and even some great surfing lifestyle type images as well - as you can see throughout this newsletter.

I also recently had another shoot for Aurora Photos for their [Action:Reaction 15](#) website. Photographers were asked to produce images that relate to the image shot just before them and they had 48 hours to submit the new work. While this wasn't an official assignment, the pressure was on, especially since an editor from National Geographic, Sadie Quarrier, would be editing my submission. It is in these instances having a few tricks in your bag can come in handy. Since I had been experimenting with black and white portraits I thought I would continue that style for this shoot. The women with the wine glass in the portfolio section is one image from that shoot.

It used to be that on just about every assignment I shot I worked myself into the ground and ended up sick afterwards because of the pressure to produce top-notch images. Happily, I don't get sick anymore but the pressure is still there. If I were shooting an assignment and didn't feel that pressure I'd be worried.





Daniel Bleicher and Rich Cezelski running on the beach at sunset to catch that one last wave before packing it in at Ventura Point in Ventura, California.  
Nikon D700, ISO 1600, Nikkor 24mm f/2.8D, Sandisk Extreme IV CF Card