

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



FALL 2011



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FALL 2011 NEWSLETTER

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Cover Image: Professional surfer Dylan Longbottom inside the barrel of a sizable wave at Teahupo'o, Tahiti in French Polynesia. Opposite Page: Jacopo Alaimo nearing the top of "EL Matador" (5.10d), which he climbed in perfect style, at Devil's Tower National Monument, Wyoming. The light on the tower when this image was taken is some of the most incredible light I have ever seen.





Chasing a Wave

A self-assignment in the South Pacific

I am not a surfer. And most likely I never will be. But I have to say that the sport of surfing fascinates me. Every once in a while as a photographer; as a creative person; as an artist you have to follow an instinct and follow your dreams. That might sound a bit philosophical, but it is true. In my case, early on in my career I had always wanted to shoot surfing but I had no access to the sport. A few years ago, while writing my book *Adventure Sports: Capturing the World of Outdoor Sports*, I met legendary surfing photographer [Brian Bielmann](#) and that all changed. Suddenly I had an in; I had access and I even had a “surfing photography” mentor to guide me. If you have been reading this Newsletter for the last three years then you have seen the explosion of surfing images right here. I started out as a climbing photographer but in the last few years I have shot quite a bit more surfing than rock climbing. I am still a die-hard climber and always will be but I get bored easily and it is good to mix things up and shoot different subjects.

For years, Brian had been telling me that if I wanted to get the best surfing photos I would have to go to Tahiti. Tahiti is far away. It is expensive. When I say expensive, I mean that Hawaii feels like Mexico compared to Tahiti. If I wanted to go I would have to foot the bill myself. This was the year. I flew down to Tahiti in August just before the Teahupo’o Billabong Pro surfing competition. If you have

not heard of Teahupo’o then the odds are good you might have been living under a rock the last ten years. Laird Hamilton made Teahupo’o famous when in 2001 he rode what was then an unthinkable wave. The images and footage of that ride also made the wave famous. Teahupo’o is named after the village that sits right in front of the wave. The actual wave breaks on the reef about a kilometer off-shore. And when it gets revved up, it is very likely the most dangerous wave on planet Earth.

Just getting to Teahupo’o is difficult. Finding a place to stay there is even more difficult. There are no hotels. There is barely even a store or a restaurant. Without an in with the locals you won’t be staying long. You have to know somebody who knows somebody well. It was a lot of work to make this trip happen, but in the end the images speak for themselves. You can read all about it see a few of the images starting on page 14.

Opposite Page: A surfboard in the center of the tiny village of Teahupo’o welcomes visitors in several languages and denotes mile zero—the end of the road.

Recent Clients: Nikon, LifStil, Deltaway Energy, Smartwool, PeachPit Publishing, Patagonia, Black Diamond, La Sportiva, The National Park Service, Digital Camera Magazine (UK) and Nikon World Magazine.

TEAHUPOO

MANAVA - ようこそ 歓迎 - WELCOME - WELKOM - WILLKOMMEN

MAEVA - BIENVENUE - BIENVENIDO - BENVENUTO - BENVINDO

TEAHUPOO

0

The Newsletter featured on APhotoEditor.com

An extensive interview about using the Newsletter as a Marketing Tool

A few months ago I got an email from Rob Haggart asking if I would like to do an interview for his prestigious blog APhotoEditor.com. As a long time reader of the blog and as a photographer that worked with him when he was a photo editor I jumped at the opportunity to be featured on his blog. After all, being featured on Rob's blog is a great honor and also a great marketing opportunity since he has a huge readership. And since the newsletter is a marketing piece in and of itself it seemed like a perfect match.

The interview details how I have been able to use my newsletter as an effective marketing tool over the course of the last ten years. I have been sending my Newsletter to Rob for many years, first when he was the Director of

Photography at Outside Magazine and later when he was the Director of Photography at Men's Journal. It is a great honor to be included on his blog and my thanks to Rob for including me in the mix. You can read the interview entitled "The Newsletter as a Marketing Tool" on his blog [here](http://APhotoEditor.com). And you can also read the interview right here in this issue of the Newsletter starting on Page 28.

APhotoEditor

AUG 31 2011

“QUOTED”

Pulitzer photojournalist takes a stand for quality - Dayton Business Journal

[Larry] Price, who has served as the director of photography for the Dayton Daily News — the largest daily newspaper in the region — on Aug. 29 surrendered his job in a rare move of self sacrifice. Only three days earlier, Price was asked by management to lay off up to half of the paper's photographers, a move he simply couldn't support.

“It didn't take me long to make the decision. Before I turned out the lights Friday, I knew I couldn't go through with it,” Price said.

via [Dayton Business Journal](#) thx, David B.

The Newsletter As A Marketing Tool

0 comments

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When I give my Social Media Marketing talk to photographers I like to break up all the talk about blogging and tweeting with an example of a good old fashion newsletter. Because, as much as things change they remain the same... meaning, a blog or series of tweets or concerted effort to post things on facebook is no different than producing a newsletter to attract potential customers and win fans for your work. I use Michael Clark as my example, because in this soured economy his success continues to grow and he churns out a good old fashioned newsletter as part of his marketing efforts.

APE: Give me a history of the Newsletter: How did it start, how has it evolved and where is it now?

Michael: I created the "Michael Clark Photography" Newsletter over ten years ago in the Fall of 2000. In its early form it was a one-page, front and back sheet that was printed and sent out to a select group of photo buyers and art directors. I printed about 200 copies and sent them out quarterly to photo editors that I worked with or wanted to work with. The newsletter included updates on recent clients and assignments, equipment reviews, an editorial or two and, of course, samples of my latest work. At that point in my career a lot of the photo editors I worked with were also avid photographers so I decided the equipment reviews might entice them to actually read the newsletter. Looking back, I will say that those early issues of the newsletter were pretty rough looking compared to how it looks now.

I created the newsletter initially as a marketing tool. I was looking for another way to keep

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About:
A Photo Editor (APE) is Rob Haggart, the former Director of Photography for Men's Journal and Outside Magazine.

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[rob\(at\)aphotoeditor\(dot\)com](mailto:rob(at)aphotoeditor(dot)com)

All emails are confidential. I may answer your question on the blog but will not reveal your identity.

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An Interview with 10 professional photographers on business practices

A few months ago PDNedu approached ten professional photographers with a question, “What is the most important action you’ve taken in support of your photography business?” It is a big question. My answer was the following:

it what it is - much more than just shooting personal projects - but that is the foundation of my business. The rest is built on hard work, perseverance, passion, dumb luck and a lot of trial and error on the business side of things. Making top-notch images is just the first step of the process."

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workshops

2012 Photography Workshops

An overview of workshops coming up with Michael Clark

Each year I teach several workshops on a variety of topics including adventure photography, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2012. For the full descriptions about each of these workshops and to find out how to register for these workshops go to the [Workshops page on my website](#). I hope to see you out there in the field this year.

Surfing Photography Workshop

Oahu, Hawaii — January 12-15, 2012

Join legendary surfing photographer Brian Biemann and adventure sports photographer Michael Clark for an exciting one-of-a-kind workshop that delves into the world of surfing photography. Brian is a top surfing photographer who has been shooting the sport for more than 25 years. Michael brings his adventure photography skills and knowledge as well as his in-depth experience with digital workflow to round out the workshop.

This 4-day workshop combines daily photo shoots at world-class surfing locations and classroom instruction. We will be spending half of our time shooting in the early mornings and in the late afternoon and evenings when the waves and the light are at their best. The other half of the workshop will be spent in the classroom and our time

there will be centered around image critiques, discussions on gear, strategies and the business of photography as well as in-depth discussions on shooting surfing. We'll also cover digital workflow in detail using Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Version 3.x.

The workshop is scheduled during a period where large waves hit the north shore frequently. Though we cannot predict or guarantee the wave size or surfing conditions, the north shore of Oahu serves up sizable waves on a nearly daily basis. The workshop is being hosted at the Turtle Bay Hilton Resort on Oahu's North Shore.

The cost of this workshop is \$995 per person. A deposit of \$350 is required to secure your spot on the workshop. If you have any questions or would like to register for the workshop send me an [email](#). For more information on all of the workshops that I will be teaching in 2011 and early 2012 please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my website.

Mentor Series Photo Trek

Dubai, U.A.E. — April 20-27, 2012

Ramp up your photography skills this spring in Dubai, where change and rejuvenation are at every turn. Join the Mentor Series in this once-sleepy fishing village and now budding metropolis where Nikon professional

photographers David Tejada and Michael Clark will match that energy and more. Pack your camera and prepare for a journey you won't soon forget!

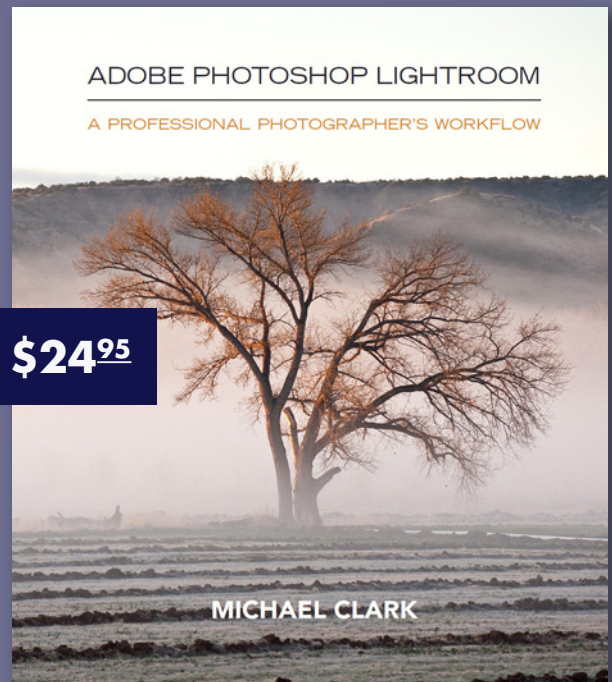
One of the world's most luxurious hotels and the city's most famous landmark the Burj Al Arab towers over the skyline like a luminescent yacht with the wind captured in its sails. The ancient city is currently riding the wave of opulence and modernity. Dubai comes alive on Al Seef Street after dark, when the temperature drops—the perfect opportunity to capture all the electric action. From a vantage point over Sheikh Zayed Road practice slow shutter speeds to show motion as the cars on the United Arab Emirates' major thoroughfare zoom past.

The adventure never stops, especially when we travel to the Arabian desert. We will explore the dunes on an off-road vehicle and take in a camel caravan against the arid landscape as the sun sets. Enjoy a bedouin dinner in the desert, complete with a belly dancer. A day trip to the East Coast takes us through spectacular mountain scenery, a local market, a picturesque fishing village, a lunch by the Indian Ocean and much more. End this exciting trek on a high note—literally!—with an early morning hot-air-balloon ride, photographing from high above as the sun greets the desert landscape.

Your experience in Dubai will not only build your portfolio and improve your photographic confidence, it will be the experience of a lifetime you won't want to miss. Sign up today! For more information on this exciting workshop and to register for it please visit the [Mentor Series](#) website.

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The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Workflow, a 353 page e-book, is a workshop in book form. Updated for Adobe Lightroom 3 and Photoshop CS5, this e-book was completely re-written and presents a workflow that can be adapted by any photographer, professional or amateur. I can honestly say that I have not seen any other book on the market today that includes as much detailed and comprehensive information as this e-book does on digital workflow.

To purchase *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

equipment review

The Nikkor AF-S 200-400mm f/4G ED VR II

An in-depth, non-technical review of Nikon's premiere telephoto zoom lens

As an adventure photographer I prefer to work with equipment that is lightweight and won't weigh me down but to get the shot sometimes you have to use a big lens. It wasn't until I starting shooting surfing a few years ago that I even considered buying a big telephoto lens – and by big I mean a 500mm f/4 or a 600mm f/4 telephoto lens. If you have ever used one of these lenses then you know they are monsters to cart around. After renting both the 500mm f/4 and the 600mm f/4 to shoot surfing I tried out the Nikkor 200-400mm f/4 VR lens thinking that it might offer more versatility than it's larger cousins. And, well, that thinking turned out to be correct. I fell in love with this lens the very first day I used it.

The Nikkor AF-S 200-400 f/4G ED VR II is quite a bit lighter than the 500mm f/4 or the 600mm f/4 Nikon options and by attaching a



The incredibly versatile AF-S Nikkor 200-400mm f/4G ED VR II telephoto zoom lens. At \$7,000 it is an expensive lens by any means, but that won't stop you from drooling as soon as you see it. There are a number of well-known pro photographers I know who have switched to Nikon because of this one lens alone.

1.4X teleconverter I can get the same focal lengths as those larger lenses, with no loss in autofocus speed or image quality that I can tell. Weighing in at 7.4 pounds this is by no means a small or light lens. But in comparison to the aforementioned beasts of burden which weigh between two and four pounds more respectively, the 200-400mm is a lot easier to deal with. For one, you don't need quite as big a tripod to support this lens (which adds up to even more weight savings) and if you are so inclined it isn't that difficult to hand hold this lens, albeit for brief periods. Secondly, it offers a tremendously versatile array of focal lengths. On my full frame Nikon D700 the 200-400mm focal lengths are great for shooting big wave surfing in Hawaii or whitewater kayaking and mountain biking just about anywhere. If I need more reach I can attach the 1.4X teleconverter and that will make this



combo a 280-560mm f/5.6. Alternatively, with my D300s, which has a sensor with a 1.5X crop factor, the lens is natively a 300-600mm f/4 zoom. And finally if I really need even longer focal lengths I can add the 1.4X teleconverter to the D300s and this lens becomes a 420-840mm f/5.6 zoom. Stop and think about that for a second. With one lens and a teleconverter I can cover a focal length range from 200mm all the way up to 840mm all with a maximum f-stop of f/4 or f/5.6. That is in a nutshell one of the biggest reasons I chose this lens. Oh, that and the fact that this lens is wicked sharp.

On the topic of sharpness: Having used the 500mm f/4 and the 600mm f/4 I would say that the 200-400mm f/4 is in the same league as those lenses in terms of sharpness. As I haven't done any scientific comparisons (they can be found online) I can't say definitively if this is the case or not but the images I have produced with this lens are certainly not lacking in sharpness and they match or exceed the sharpness of my AF-S Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8 VR II, which is a crazy sharp lens.

The 200-400 VR II is also a beautifully made lens. The barrel of the lens is all metal as one would assume with any lens in this category. The lens hood is made of Carbon Fiber and easily and securely attaches to the front of the lens. The zoom ring is silky smooth as you rotate from 200 to 400mm and it has a nice amount of resistance so that it stays wherever you set it. On the front of the lens are three autofocus lock buttons if you need to lock the focus quickly. The lens is also very well sealed from moisture and dust and has a rubber O-ring that blocks water and dust from working its way into the lens mount when mounted to a camera. And since the front end of this lens is too large for filters there is a 39mm drop-in filter bay

for polarizers or any other filters you might need to use. And last but not least, this lens also incorporates Nikon's latest Vibration Reduction (VR II) technology, which allows you to shoot at approximately four-stops slower shutter speeds than normal and still get sharp images. The top image on the previous page is a good example of an image shot with VR technology. For that image I panned with the subject using a slow shutter speed.

There are no flaws in this lens design that I have discovered. It is about as perfect a lens as can be made by human beings. With a \$7,000 price tag that level of build quality is to be expected. It comes with a heavily padded soft-shell case, which has a rigid bottom. The case is so well made that I have carried the lens in the padded pouch to several locations. The only thing I added to the lens was a Really Right Stuff replacement foot (LCF-14) that allows me to mount the lens on an Arca-Swiss type ball head.

I use this lens with one of two tripod heads: a Kirk BH-1 ball head or a Wimberley Head (Version II). The Kirk BH-1 ball head can easily handle this lens. It is my main ball head and I use it for any and all camera setups but when I am standing on the beach shooting surfing or any other sport where I know I will be spending a long time in one area I prefer to use the Wimberley head because it is a bit smoother and easier to pan with the action. It also allows me to set up the weight distribution of the camera and lens combo so I don't have to worry about the lens crashing into one of the tripod legs. In addition, when shooting surfing, the action happens incredibly fast so not having to lock down the tripod head is a major factor in getting the shot. I can just grab the camera and point it at the surfer to get the shot instead of having to unlock the ball

head before moving the camera. While we are on the topic of support systems, I have used a variety of tripods with this lens including the Gitzo 1340 Aluminum (old-school) tripod, the Gitzo GT2541 carbon fiber tripod and more recently the heavy duty Gitzo GT5541LS carbon fi-

professional camera backpack with ease. When I fly to Hawaii to shoot surfing, I pack the 200-400mm lens into my Lowepro Vertex 300 AW along with all of my other photo gear. Of course, fully packed with the 200-400mm lens included, the Vertex 300 can weigh fifty pounds or

more. You definitely feel this lens in the bag. When I pull it out on the beach all of the other surfing photographer's who shoot with Canon gear start asking questions about it. I know several photographers that have switched to Nikon because of this lens. It is a stellar lens, and if you are in the market for a telephoto lens you can't go wrong with the 200-400. If you would like more information about the Nikon 200-400mm VR II visit the [Nikon website](#). For a more technical




Above is the AF-S Nikkor 200-400mm f/4G ED VR II mounted on my D300s, which has the MB-D10 battery grip attached to it allowing for an eight frames per second (fps) framing rate. With this set up the lens acts as a 300-600mm f/4 telephoto zoom. This is possibly the most perfect set up ever invented for shooting surfing from the beach. Also, notice that it is mounted to my Kirk BH-1 ball head, which can easily handle the weight but as discussed in the review I now prefer to use a Wimberley Head with this lens because it is much better balanced and easier to maneuver the lens while shooting.

ber rig. The GT5541LS is my go to tripod for this lens as it is incredibly robust and can handle the 200-400mm lens with ease. At nine pounds, with the Wimberley head mounted on it, the GT5541LS is not a lightweight tripod set up but having the extra weight comes in handy when the winds are blowing on the north shore (of Oahu).

Yet another nice feature of this lens is that it fits into a

review go to [ephotozine's website](#) and read their review.

Captions: Page 11 (top) - A surfer riding a tube at Bonzai Pipeline, on the north shore of Oahu. This image was shot at 1/25th sec. at f/4.0 at ISO 200 with a Nikon D700. Page 11 (bottom) - The sun setting behind a row of clouds on the horizon at Bonzai Pipeline, on the north shore of Oahu. Technical info: Nikon D700, ISO 200, 1/800th sec. at f/4.0. 



ON ASSIGNMENT:

AT THE END



OF THE ROAD

TEAHUPO'O, TAHITI

Everytime someone asked about my upcoming assignments this past summer I hesitated to tell them about the planned trip to Tahiti. I don't like to incite jealousy—at least not too much jealousy. This trip elicited stronger reactions than any other trip I have ever taken. The standard response was either “I hate you” or “do you need someone to carry your bags?” While I did take an insane amount of gear with me on this trip, including a full lighting kit, I was able to manage it on my own. As I said in the editorial opening this issue of the Newsletter, Tahiti had been on my list of places to visit ever since I started shooting surfing. My good buddy, and legendary surfing photographer, [Brian Bielmann](#) had been telling me for years that if I wanted to get the best surfing images I had to go to Tahiti and shoot at Teahupo'o. Hence, when he offered let me tag along I jumped at the chance.

Teahupo'o (pronounced Tea-uh-oo-poh or “ch-oh-poe”) is literally at the end of the road on the south-west coast of the island of Tahiti in French Polynesia. It is a small fishing village with only one 7-11 type store and a few outdoor restaurants serving quintessential Tahitian food. The village, while beautiful in it's rustic way, is not nearly as exotic as you might think. There are no white sandy beaches in Teahupo'o. The coastline consists of hard black stone and a giant coral reef. The village just happens to sit in front of one of the world's greatest natural wonders – a wave so violent that it instills fear in the heart of every surfer who attempts to ride it. On a small day the wave, also named Teahupo'o, isn't that alarming but when it rears up on a big swell it is a ferocious monster that only the brave and talented even dare to ride.

The wave breaks about one kilometer from shore out on the edge of a coral reef. While Teahupo'o is not the

biggest wave in the world it is widely considered the heaviest, meaning that there is a larger volume of water cascading over the surfer than on any other wave in the world. The lip of the wave at Teahupo'o can be anywhere from a few feet thick to fifteen feet thick or more depending on the conditions—and that is just the lip of the wave. When Teahupo'o is in full rage the lip of the wave can snap your neck in a heartbeat. Add in the fact that the wave itself is moving with incredible velocity, has a very steep wave face and a wicked sharp coral reef, only a few feet under the water's surface, right in front of it and you start to get an inkling of why this wave is considered “terrifying.” Surfer's have literally had their faces ripped off on the reef. A few days after I left this year, top female big wave surfer Maya Gabiera was held down on the inside for six waves and nearly drowned. When she was rescued she had blood coming out of her ears, nose and eyes and she was foaming at the mouth. Have not doubt, this is a serious wave.

I arrived in Papeete late and went straight to Teahupo'o where I was set to stay with a local. Note that just finding a place to stay in Teahupo'o is difficult. A friend of a friend arranged for me to rent a small room from a gentleman named Alexis, whose house was right on the beach. And though I didn't know it then he was also the best cook in the village. When I arrived there was no swell and hence there was no rush to get out to wave. Nonetheless, I spent those first few days swimming in the crystal clear water, checking emails and working on a new book. I did manage to kayak out to Teahupo'o a few days later just to check it out but there was very little going on. It was the calm before the storm. Talking with locals and checking [Surfline.com](#) I knew that some decent sized swells would come through while I was there. It was just a matter of



waiting. Since I had made the journey, I spent every morning and evening shooting everything I could. The light at sunrise and sunset was unreal. As you can see on the next few pages, aside from the surfing images, there are some amazing flora and landscapes to document in Tahiti.

Tahiti is widely considered extremely exotic. The water is crystal clear, the mountains rise straight out of the ocean and are covered with thorny “manzanita” type bushes making them all but inaccessible and the coral reefs are healthy and filled with marine life. It is certainly a special place. But, sorry to say, it is also a giant tourist trap. As an

island in the South Pacific I

expected it to be expensive since everything has to be imported save for bananas, pearls and fish. But I was amazed at how over-the-top expensive it was. Paradise doesn't come cheap.

Nonetheless, the locals are

incredibly open and accommodating. They seem to watch out for the obvious foreigners (so they don't get into trouble)—and I was obviously a foreigner with my lily white skin, which stood out in stark contrast to the deep tans of the Tahitians.

A few days into my trip the swell started to rise. With the help of the Billabong crew, I made arrangements to get on a boat since the action happens so far off shore. For Teahupo'o most photographers shoot from a boat sitting on the shoulder of the wave. When it is small, you will see several photographers shooting in the water, but when it gets big no one is in the water. The amazing thing about

shooting at Teahupo'o is that you are literally fifty to a hundred feet away from the surfers and you are looking straight down the barrel of the wave. There are very few places where you can get this close to the action and not be in the water. For 90% of my surf shots I used a Nikon D700 or D300 and my 70-200mm f/2.8 VR zoom lens. Occasionally, if I wanted to get a tight shot, I would add the 1.4X teleconverter. I also occasionally shot with my 85mm PC-E (tilt/shift) lens and a 24-70mm f/2.8. Some of the other surfing photographers thought I was nuts to shoot with a manual focus tilt-shift lens but I managed to get several interesting images that were actually in focus. You can see one of them on Page 26.

“Maya Gabiera was held down on the inside and nearly drowned. When they got to her she had blood coming out of her ears, nose and eyes and she was foaming at the mouth.”

Shooting big wave surfing in Tahiti sounds pretty stinking good I will admit and it was exciting to be sure. But the reality is you are on a boat going up and down like cork on the ocean all day. I had five days where

I was sitting in a boat getting blasted by the sun for twelve straight hours. There were no bathroom breaks or lunch breaks. You got on the boat at 6 AM with everything you needed for the day, including a ton of sunscreen, and you headed out to the wave. At 6 PM you headed back to the marina in the fading light. Those were some very long days but that is just how it is—if you leave for even a few minutes you might miss the most amazing shot of your entire trip. That is surfing photography in a nutshell. It isn't quite as glamorous as it sounds but it is quite the adventure.

My last day in Tahiti was slated to be the best and biggest



Opening Spread (Page 14-15): The wave known as Teahupo'o curling over itself just off shore from the tiny fishing village with the same name in Tahiti, French Polynesia. Page 17: A flower growing out of a shallow pond near the beach in the village of Teahupo'o, Tahiti, French Polynesia. Page 19 (Above): Kelly Slater ripping down the face of a sizable wave at Teahupo'o, Tahiti.



waves of the entire trip. It was also the day before the Billabong Pro surfing competition was set to start. That morning right on cue the waves were bigger than anything I had seen on my entire trip and the light was fantastic. The waves that were rolling in were in the 6 to 8-foot range, which translates to 16 to 18-foot wave faces (see the Portfolio image on page 34 for an example). Not only were the waves a decent size but they were also very clean and with clear skies above us it made for perfect shooting conditions. I remember Brian Biemann and Peter "Joli" Wilson remarking on how they hadn't seen conditions that good in at least three years at Teahupo'o. I can't tell you how happy I was to see such magnificent waves and conditions. I got the best surfing shots of the entire trip that last day and all but one of the surfing images included in this article were shot on that last day.

One of the keys to shooting surfing is that you


have to pay constant attention to what is going on, otherwise you will miss the shot. This is a bit harder than it sounds. After spending five 12-hour days on a boat shooting what amounts to the same shot over and over it is easy to lose concentration. It is also difficult to get an image that stands out from the thousands of other images. In all, I shot over 11,000 images in a span of nine days. As you might imagine, trying to edit that many images is a nightmare. I am still editing them if the truth be told. You basically shoot every wave that rolls by because you never know what is going to happen. The opening spread for this article was shot midway through the trip. It wasn't a

particularly big wave, though it certainly wasn't small either. When I edited the images I kept coming back to that wave because it had a menacing look to it that really caught my eye. It is still one of my favorite images from the trip.

I had planned to leave the day the Billabong Pro contest started for two reasons: I had an adventure photography workshop that started the next day at the Maine Media Workshops and I was told that during the contest they only allowed "credentialed" photographers shooting for a magazine in the media boats. So it was with a little sadness that I saw on Surflife.com the day I left that a giant

swell was rolling towards Teahupo'o. Seven days after I left, on August 27th, the biggest waves ever seen at Teahupo'o rolled in—and I missed it. It went down as one of the scariest days of surfing ever and the folks that towed into that monster

"Seven days after I left, on August 27th, 2011, the biggest waves ever seen at Teahupo'o rolled in—and I missed it. It went down as one of the scariest days of surfing ever."

surf showed some serious cajones. TransWORLD Surf magazine published one of Brian Biemann's photos, one he claimed was the best surfing shot he had ever taken in 25 years as a surfing photographer, on their cover with the caption "Surfing or Suicide?: Dodging Death in Tahiti." You can see that image and read all about it on the TransWORLD website [here](#). Kudos to Brian for risking his neck to get this shot. It is indeed an incredible image. While I missed the massive waves this time around I did have a marvelous time and managed to get some very nice images myself. My thanks to Brian and the crew at Billabong for all their help while I was out in Tahiti. 

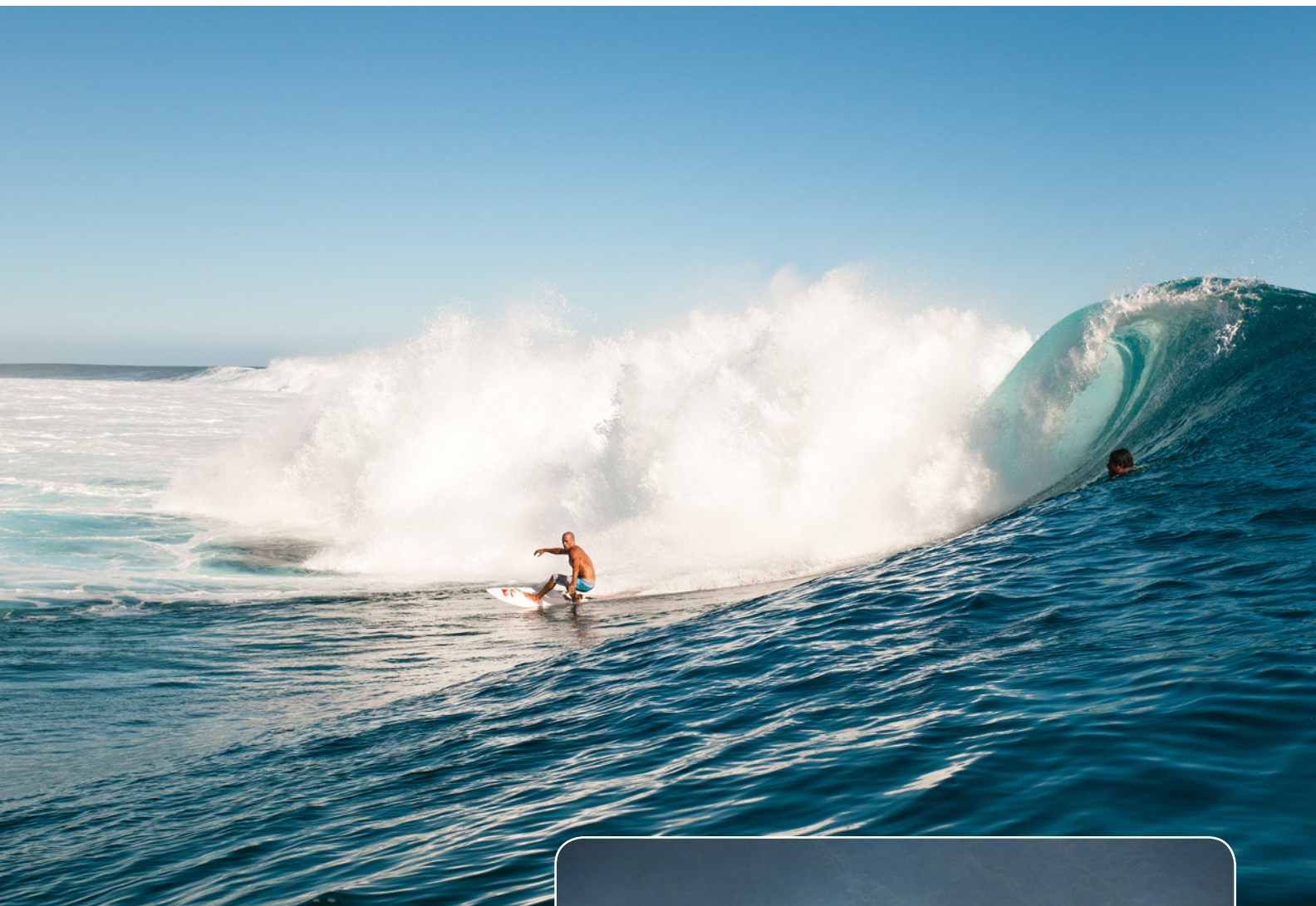


Above: Unknown surfer in the tube of an overhead wave at Teahupo'o, Tahiti. Right: The main dock at the Marina in Teahupo'o, Tahiti shot with an 85mm tilt-shift lens. Page 20: One of the Tahitian watermen coming out of the impact zone after performing a rescue of a surfer who hit the reef during the 2011 Billabong Pro Pre-Trials which took place in Teahupo'o, Tahiti on August 13, 2011.



Right: A sun star beaming through one of the very colorful trees that sits just in front of the Pacific Ocean in the village of Teahupo'o, Tahiti. Below: A group of six Tahitian kayakers rowing across the channel just in front of the tiny village of Teahupo'o, Tahiti.





Above: Kelly Slater just about to cut back on yet another big wave at Teahupo'o, Tahiti while Raimana Van Bastolaer watches from the top of the wave. Right: Teahupo'o breaking on the coral reef just in front of the judging tower during the 2011 Billabong Pro Pre-Trials which took place in Teahupo'o, Tahiti on August 13, 2011.





Above: Teahupo'o breaking and exploding on the edge of the reef, about one kilometer off shore, with the spectacular steep and daunting mountains of Tahiti rising in the background. Right: A few of the myriad of boats, sitting in the relatively safe channel, that come out each day to watch the action at Teahupo'o during the 2011 Billabong Pro Pre-Trials which took place in Teahupo'o, Tahiti on August 13, 2011.

Right: Dylan Longbottom looking for the exit at Teahupo'o, Tahiti in French Polynesia. Below: Unknown surfer swimming hard to get up and over the shoulder of Teahupo'o during the 2011 Billabong Pro Trials which took place in Teahupo'o, Tahiti on August 14, 2011. Image shot with a Nikkor PC-E 85mm tilt-shift lens from a moving boat.





Above: Unknown surfer catching an exhilarating ride on Teahupo'o the day before the 2011 Billabong Pro surfing contest was set to start. Right: The sun setting on the horizon at the end of a long day in the tiny village of Teahupo'o, Tahiti in French Polynesia. Note the channel marker on the far right side of the frame. The channel is very narrow because of the dense and shallow coral reef that fills the bay.





interview

The Newsletter as a Marketing Tool

An interview by Rob Haggart with Michael Clark, from APhotoEditor.com

When I give my Social Media Marketing talk to photographers I like to break up all the talk about blogging and tweeting with an example of a good old fashion newsletter. Because, as much as things change they remain the same...meaning, a blog or series of tweets or a concerted effort to post things on facebook is no different than producing a newsletter to attract potential customers and win fans for your work. I use Michael Clark as my example, because in this soured economy his success continues to grow and he churns out a good old fashioned newsletter as part of his marketing efforts.

Rob Haggart: Give me a history of the Newsletter: How did it start, how has it evolved and where is it now?

Michael Clark: I created the "Michael Clark Photography" Newsletter over ten years ago in the Fall of 2000. In its early form it was a one-page, front and back sheet that was printed and sent out to a select group of photo buyers and art directors. I printed about 200 copies and sent them out quarterly to photo editors that I worked with or wanted to work with. The newsletter included updates on recent clients and assignments, equipment reviews, an editorial or two and, of course, samples of my latest work. At that point in my career a lot of the photo editors I worked with were also avid photographers so I decided the equipment reviews might entice them to actually

read the newsletter. Looking back, I will say that those early issues of the newsletter were pretty rough looking compared to how it looks now.

I created the newsletter initially as a marketing tool. I was looking for another way to keep my name in front of photo editors and art buyers in addition to my other marketing efforts. I got the idea of the newsletter from the Bulletin sent out by the ASMP. At that time lots of businesses sent out Newsletters and it seemed like a good way to offer something more than just a postcard. And the response was great from the get-go. I had editors calling me every time they got the newsletter asking for certain images or just calling to talk about my latest gear review. Either way, it allowed me to create a relationship with a lot of photo editors.

In the fall of 2004, I started playing around with Adobe InDesign and realized that it would allow me to expand the newsletter and send it out as a PDF via email with no printing costs. And because it was a PDF I could send it out to a much larger audience without any additional expense. This new PDF version still had the same types of articles as the printed version but I was able to expand and enhance those articles because with the PDF, I pretty much had unlimited space. The PDF version of the newsletter includes editorials, updates on recent clients and

assignments, greatly expanded equipment reviews, a portfolio section, digital post-processing tips, feature articles on recent assignments and a lot of images. It is basically a PDF magazine that runs anywhere from 15 to 30 pages depending on the content – and how much time I have to put it together.

After I started sending out the first few copies of the new PDF version, I realized that I should offer it for free on my website and let people subscribe to the newsletter via a mailing list. Little did I know then that so many people would be interested in what I had to say. I suppose a big part of the draw for the newsletter was the equipment reviews. Early on, I got a lot of emails with questions about gear and I thought I could nip those in the bud by giving an unbiased professional opinion on the gear that I use and abuse. It proved to be quite popular, especially among amateur photographers, and it has led to a number of sponsorships with distributors of imaging software and photo equipment.

It takes a lot of work to put together. At a minimum, it takes about four days of solid work to lay it out and write the articles. I certainly wouldn't say I am a great writer but I can get the point across and I am efficient.

One of the other great things about the newsletter is that it is unique – and that counts for a lot. I have seen a few other photographers try to copy it but they usually give

up on the concept after a few issues when they realize how much work it takes. I don't know of any other photographer out there producing anything like this. I also realized a few years ago that creating a following for my work was very valuable – and the newsletter allows me to create that following and tap into it as well. I can advertise e-books, workshops and market my work to would-be clients all at the same time. And since the newsletters are linked to my website they are great for SEO (search engine optimization) because they all show up in searches on Google.

The newsletter now goes out to over 6,000 photo editors, art buyers and both amateur and professional photographers around the world. It has led to numerous assignments, sponsorship deals and other great career opportunities. My first big break, a major assignment with Adobe, was a

"I use Michael Clark as an example, because in this soured economy his success continues to grow and he churns out a good old fashioned newsletter as part of his marketing efforts." -- Rob Haggart

direct result of the newsletter, as was my first published book. The editors at Lark Books got a great sense of my writing style via the newsletter and approached me to write a book for them. That book, [Adventure Photography: Capturing the World of Outdoor Sports](#), was published in December 2009. I am currently working on a third book which closely resembles the newsletter in style and content. In fact, I'd say if it wasn't for the fact that the newsletter gets me work pretty much every time I send it out, I would have stopped producing it years ago. It is an insane amount of work to produce the Newsletter. The newsletter has been and continues to be the best form of

marketing I have ever done. I wouldn't be where I am today in my career without it.

A PDF newsletter seems so old fashioned. I'm sure you have your reasons for continuing the format, can you tell us why?

These days the PDF newsletter is old fashioned. I'll give you that. Back when I started sending out the PDF version in 2004 it was a pretty wild idea and people sat up and took notice. Maybe it isn't the most cutting edge publication now, but the reason I stick with the PDF format is that it allows me to control how the viewer sees my work and the content. I can control the layout, the fonts, how the images are presented and their resolution. It looks like a magazine and even though it is a simple

PDF document, I think it is well laid out and graphically pleasing. It is something people will remember and that is half the battle when it comes to a marketing tool.

You told me you are having your busiest year ever, can you attribute this directly to the Newsletter? Can you help us understand why clients respond to this over tra-

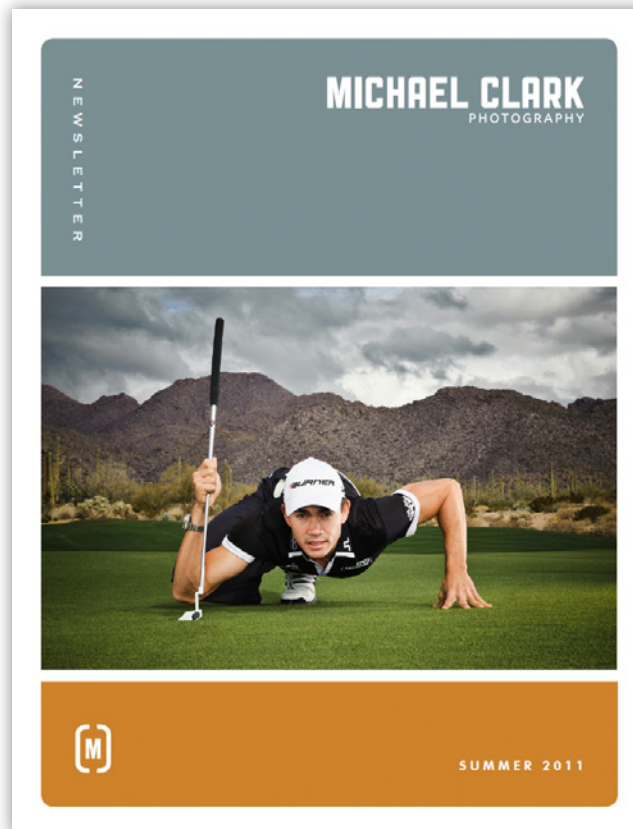
ditional marketing?

Yes, I am having my busiest year ever right now. And before this year, last year was my busiest year ever. It just keeps getting better and better. I'm not sure I can say this year's or last year's success is a direct result of the newsletter. The newsletter is just one piece of my overall mar-

keting strategy. I think my success this year is a result of 15 years of really hard work, having a book published last year, making an effort to show my portfolio around and continuing to reinforce all of my other marketing with the newsletter. However it has come together, I feel really blessed because there are still so many people struggling out there in this economy.

I think clients respond to the newsletter because they remember it, and as a result, they remember

my work. I once wrote an editorial about "Finding Inspiration" in the newsletter and one of the people I worked with at a major software company told me he quit his job after reading that article to go do what he really wanted to do. I strive to discuss and talk about current events in the industry that are timely and relevant. And, as in the case with my editorial on "Finding Inspiration," every



once in a while I really connect with a reader.

Do you do traditional marketing in addition to the newsletter?

Yes, I do a lot of traditional marketing. I send out e-promos every six weeks or so and postcards every now and then (but not as often as I should). I have a blog. I go in and meet with clients as often as possible and set up portfolio reviews. And I send out the newsletter four times a year. I also write for two other blog sites: Pixiq and Outdoor Photographer Magazine.

This is still a tough profession to make a living in so I think we have to do everything we can to get our name out there and market ourselves and our work. After all, it isn't just our work we are marketing, it is ourselves. We

are the product just as much as our work is. Are we easy to deal with? Can we come through with the goods? Are we professional? Those are all part of the equation, and the newsletter serves as a good reminder to clients that I am professional and will come through with the goods when they give me an assignment because they can read about my latest assignments and see the images I produced.

I see you've got some instructional e-books and you are leading workshops. Is education a significant part of your business model? Do you think it should be a part of most pro photographers business models?

Education makes up about 20% of my income these days. I teach anywhere from four to six workshops each year. The workshops range from two-day Lightroom workshops to week-long Adventure Photography workshops at the Santa Fe Workshops and the Maine Media Workshops (I'll be teaching in Maine later this month). I also do a few workshops in tandem with other photographers like the Surfing Photography workshop I'll be teaching in January 2012 with my good buddy Brian Biemann, who is one of the world's top surfing photographers. Teaching workshops is rewarding, tough and exhausting

but I always learn from them and it is a burgeoning business for photographers.

I'm not sure I would say teaching or education should be a part of every photographer's business model. It depends if you

enjoy it and are good at it. I will admit that teaching workshops can be quite draining. It isn't for everyone. These days there is a lot of competition in the photography workshop business. It seems like everybody and their dog is teaching a workshop and rightly so, because there are thousands of amateur photographers out there craving knowledge and yearning to further their skills. And there is a lot of money to be made in workshops, especially if you are a big name photographer who enjoys teaching and can attract students on a regular basis.

My e-book, [Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow](#), lays out my entire

"The Newsletter has been and continues to be the best form of marketing I have ever done. I wouldn't be where I am today in my career without it."

digital workflow from in the camera to delivering the final images to the client. It has been wildly popular and I don't think there is any other book like it on the market. I wrote it after working on assignment with Adobe. I am still a beta tester for them (and teach workshops on Lightroom) and that really helps me to keep my workflow dialed. I got the idea for the e-book from my newsletter and through teaching workshops. In a workshop, it is nice to be able to give the students some materials, and early on I simply outlined my digital workflow and handed it out as a Microsoft Word file. The e-book grew out of that and is in its fourth edition. Each edition was massively expanded and adapted to the new software and post-processing techniques and for \$24.95, it is heck of a lot cheaper than a workshop.

As you can see, my business model is very diversified. I think this is also a big reason things have been going so well the last few years. I learned early on not to trust any one single source of income. Hence, I do a little bit of everything: commercial assignments, editorial assignments, stock photography, books, e-books, fine art prints and whatever else comes my way. I am still predominantly an assignment photographer but all of the other income streams add up significantly .

Do you have any advice for photographers looking to create unique ways to market themselves?

I did a presentation for the ASMP New Mexico chapter here earlier this year about "Staying Relevant in the Current Economy." In that presentation I spoke about a number of topics that I think are key to marketing yourself effectively including creating unique images, perfecting your craft, being professional and making sure your

marketing and branding are up to snuff. None of those topics are revolutionary by any means, but I do think that we greatly underestimate just how important it is to create unique images right now. If you have something different from the rest of the pack then you'll go far in this industry. As a photographer I realize it is easy enough to say, "Just go out there and create unique images," but the reality is that creating something unique and different is really hard.

In that presentation, I also spoke about building a following. This idea isn't new but it also isn't obvious. In this world of social media we can now connect with people around the world and share our work, get feedback and talk about the work via a blog, Flickr or any number of avenues. Right now, I think it is very important for professional photographers to build up a group of people that follow your work. Doing so helps when you need to fill up a workshop, market an e-book or a regular book, or even for an assignment. The workshops idea is pretty obvious. If you have a following of amateur or pro photographers that want to learn from you and you have a means of connecting with them and marketing to them then you'll be able to fill up workshops easily. A good example of this is Joe McNally. The guy is killing it on the workshops front. Another good example, perhaps less well known, is Andy Biggs. He fills his very expensive safari-style workshops routinely and his clients come back thrilled with the experience.

Having 6,000 people on my mailing list is helpful when I need to market an updated version of my e-book. It also comes in handy when a publisher approaches me to write a book because they know that I have a following that might be interested in the end product and I have

a marketing vehicle (the newsletter) to get the word out – and it doesn't cost them anything. By choosing a photographer with a following, the client already has built in marketing. This is what Chase Jarvis has done so well. Some clients come to him because they want to tap into the huge number of photo enthusiasts that follow his blog. He has even done the marketing for the companies while he is on assignment by posting the behind the scenes details of a multi-day shoot as it is happening. How much is that worth to a client? If you have a following like Chase does then that is obviously huge.

Of course, having a group of people follow your work isn't a guarantee of any kind. People make up their own minds if they are interested in something or not. You have to provide something that is interesting and valuable to them. Marketing to this group and offering them quality information

and services that they want is the key. They get valuable information; you get to make a little extra money. Amazingly, once you create a following, doors start to open and new marketing opportunities will pop up that never would have or could have otherwise – and this is the real reason to create that following.

Now, the reality is this is a long-term process. You don't just go out and build a following. You have to offer up solid information or something that people want for a few years or more.


In the end, I don't think there are any real secrets in this business. There is no magic bullet. It all comes down to hard work and really, really wanting to “make it” happen. I still think one of the best forms of marketing these days is meeting with art buyers and photo editors in person for a portfolio review – if you can get a meeting set up. I think I got very lucky with the newsletter. I didn't know it would become such a great marketing tool when I started it. Early on I just had more time than money and it was a good way to promote my work. Now, I have to make time for it. Because the newsletter is a very ‘unique’ marketing

tool it not only gets me work but it also helps me to get in and set up meetings with art buyers that I want to work with. It is just one part of my marketing effort that helps support the rest of the effort.

My thanks to Rob for pursuing me for this interview and also for publishing it on

“There is no magic bullet. It all comes down to hard work and really, really wanting to ‘make it’ happen. I still think one of the best forms of marketing these days is meeting with art buyers in person for a portfolio review.”

APhotoEditor.com. It is a great honor to be featured on his blog. He has some great content on the blog, so if you are looking for great information head on over to APhotoEditor.com and dig in. You won't regret it.

Please note that I do not include this interview here in the Newsletter because I have a massive ego that needs stroking. I thought there was some very good information here that my readers might enjoy and profit from. Hence, I decided to include this interview in the Newsletter. I hope you enjoy it. Sincerely, Michael Clark 

portfolio





Giving Thanks

by Michael Clark

Today here in the United States is the day before Thanksgiving, a holiday where we reflect on the past and give thanks for all of the blessings in our lives. As I am finishing up the Fall 2011 issue of the Newsletter today I thought I would list here just a few of the many things that I am thankful for. And since this year has been an unbelievable, incredible year for me both personally and professionally there is a lot to be thankful for. After all none of us get anywhere on our own.

First off, I am thankful for a loving family that has been there time and time again to nurture and support me. I am especially thankful for my parents and their continued health. I wouldn't be here today without their love and support. I am also thankful that they chose to enroll me in all of those art classes from the age of four until I left for college. Secondly, I am thankful for an incredible, beautiful and amazing woman named Katherine who has managed to put up with my crazy life and travel schedule for over two years now. Third, I am thankful to all of the other photographers, artists and friends who have helped me out over the years – those that acted as “models,” aided me in my career and helped me to understand the scary world of digital photography. You know who you are but specifically to Marc Romanelli, Brian Biemann, Sara Stathas and Mike Cantrell, you helped push me to a higher level as a human being and as a photographer.

I would be remiss if I didn't say I am thankful for all of the clients that have hired me (and who will hopefully continue to hire me) to shoot for them and those who have licensed my work. Obviously, without the wonderful clients who use my work I wouldn't have a career. I am thankful that I have been able to make my living as a photographer for the last fifteen years and that the phone still rings and clients are willing to pay me to pursue my passion—and to create images specifically for them. I am thankful for those that take my workshops, read this newsletter and my blog. I am thankful for the cameras we have that allow us to create images never before thought possible and the sponsors who have helped me out along the way. I am thankful for living out my dream of being a professional adventure photographer.

Of course, I am very thankful for my health. I am thankful that I am still alive. I am thankful that I have been able to travel the world and see so many amazing places and meet so many amazing people. I am thankful for the sport of rock climbing that gave me the confidence to go for it as a photographer – and also for the sport of ice climbing, which helps me keep my sanity. I am thankful that I still have a zest for life and wake up every day excited about the next adventure. Most of all, I am thankful for the breath of life instilled in me by God and his generous gifts and talents he has imbued me with.



A very colorful hot air balloon rising above the fray at the 2011 Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

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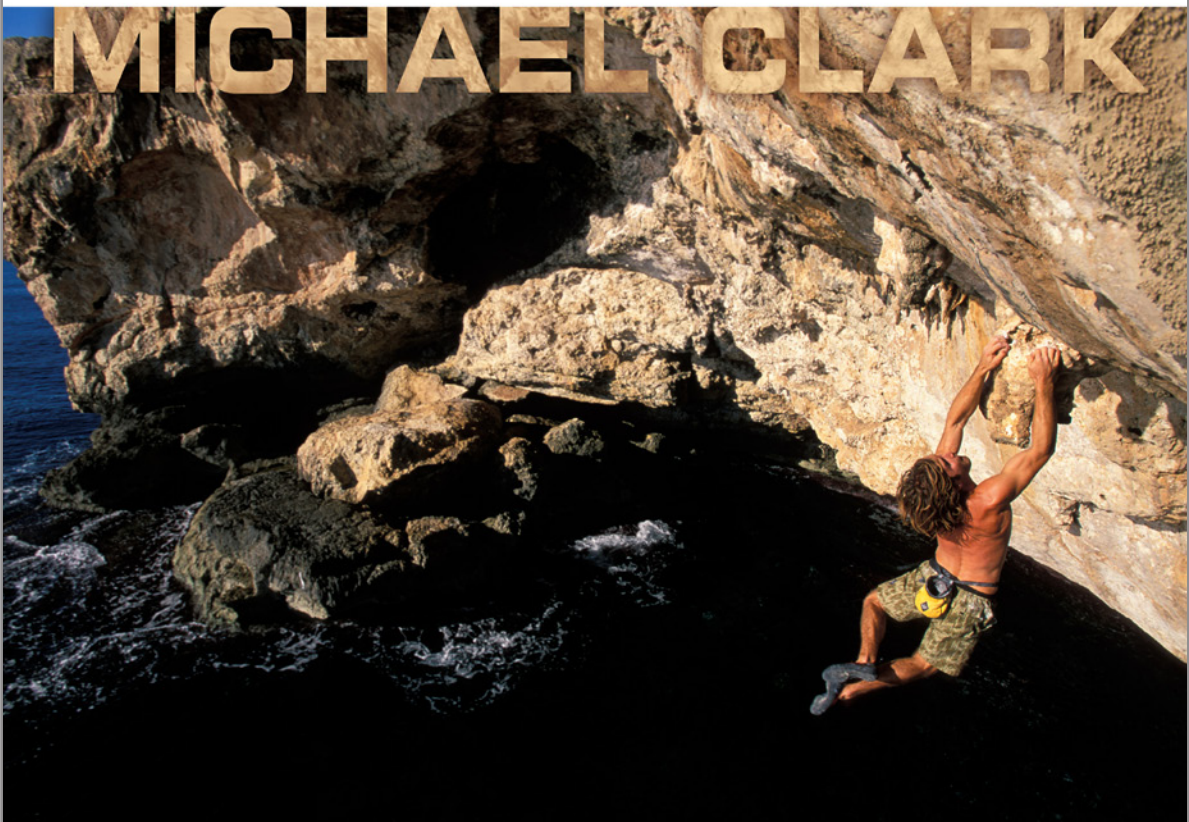


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