

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



FALL 2012



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FALL 2012 NEWSLETTER

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Stephen Leavins sea kayaking around a small island near Friendship, Maine at sunrise. This image, as with the image on the cover of this issue of the newsletter, was shot while teaching my Adventure Photography workshop in Maine for the Maine Media Workshops.

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Cover Image: Tim Sewall downhill mountain biking at the Snow Bowl, a ski area near Camden, Maine. This image was shot as a demonstration during my 2012 Adventure Photography Workshop at the Maine Media Workshops. Opposite Page: Aaron Miller climbing Crystal Clear Arete (5.12c), an exposed route with a steep arete in Diablo Canyon near Santa Fe, New Mexico.





One Door leads to Another

Looking back on sixteen years of assignment work in a variety of genres

It never ceases to amaze me how one assignment opens the door to another and then that assignment takes you in a completely different direction. Over the last year, I have had two assignments where a client hired me for an industrial shoot. One was at a plant in the Netherlands and another one, that I just returned from, was in Kansas. I am well-known as an adventure photographer but both clients in this case saw what they wanted in my portfolio and hired me to apply those skills in an industrial setting. The last assignment in Kansas, was to photograph three wind turbine sites just outside of Dodge City. I can't say Kansas is anywhere I was dying to travel to, but this assignment had me climbing up 260-foot wind turbines and hanging out on top of them in high winds. Let's just say I was using my adventure photography skills to get into position for a few of the images I shot on this last assignment—and I have a feeling that was a factor in the client's decision to hire me. Even though Kansas is a bit flat and windy for my tastes, the wind turbines themselves were beautiful and elegant.

Over the course of my career, I have had any number of assignments that were a little outside the box for me. A few that come to mind include shooting the Henry 1 Search and Rescue team for Men's Fitness, teaching a photo workshop in Dubai, where there are basically no adventure sports, and photographing professional Golfer

Camilo Villegas for a financial company. In every case, being an adventure photographer not only helps me to find interesting angles but also allows me to push the envelope physically as well as photographically. In fact, I have to say adventure photography is a great building block for shooting a wide range of images because it makes you think about wild angles and gives you the skills necessary to access those angles that other photographers may not even consider.

If you know me and my work then you have seen in the course of my career that I am always looking for new and interesting subjects to photograph. It isn't that I have gotten bored with one adventure sport or another, just that I love to explore new and exciting genres of photography—just as we all do. After sixteen years in this profession, I look forward to what comes next, and hope the next adventurous assignment gets me just as excited as the last.

Opposite Page: A doorway, which leads into two other rooms, at the Pueblo Bonito ruins in Chaco Canyon at the Chaco Culture National Historic park.

Recent Clients: Nikon, Red Bull, National Geographic, Schiesser AG (Germany), New Mexico Magazine, Backpacker Magazine, Geo Magazine (Germany), Digital Camera magazine (UK), and Nikon World Magazine.

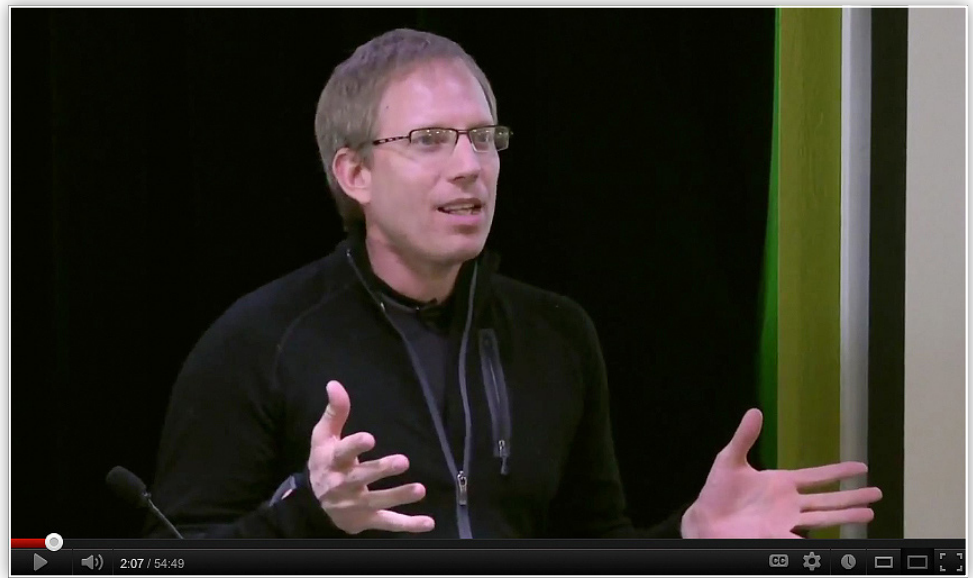


Authors@ Google Talk now on YouTube

My presentation at the main Google campus in Mountain View, California

On October 18th, I gave a talk at Google as part of their Authors@Google program. I gave an hour long talk on my work and discussed the realities of working as a professional adventure sports photographer, as well as telling some stories about specific assignments. The talk dovetailed with my new book [Exposed: Inside the Life and Images of a Pro Photographer](#), which was published earlier this year in late April. Exposed details some of my most well-known images and tells the stories behind the images including how they were created, the gear involved and how the images were processed in Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop.

I was asked to come speak at Google by Marc Pawliger, whom I met years ago when I shot an assignment for Adobe's then brand new software named Adobe Photoshop Lightroom. As always, it is exciting to visit the Google campus and see what is happening there. The campus is filled with people working, thinking, playing and coding as you might expect. Everything is free on



campus for the most part, food, snacks, coffee, laundry, car washes, you name it—all in the name of productivity.

The Authors@Google program is set up to bring in authors, artists and even politicians who talk about their work, and how they do their work. These are internal seminars that are simulcast to all employees around the world if they are interested in the topic. After the seminar, the recording is then put on YouTube. It was quite the honor to be asked to talk at Google. This was my second talk there as part of the Authors@Google program. My sincere thanks to Marc and the amazing folks at Google for bringing me out and taking the time to sit in on my talk. [You can view my talk on YouTube.](#)

Guest Blog on Scott Kelby's Photoshop Insider Blog

My guest blog post centered on a theme of "Embracing Risk"

I was honored to be asked to write a guest blog post for Scott Kelby's [Photoshop Insider](#) blog and that guest blog post was published way back on August 29th, 2012. The guest blog post talks about "Embracing Risk" and features text from my latest book [Exposed: Inside the Life and Images of a Pro Photographer](#). While the blog post is not specifically about my latest book it expands upon an idea that was presented in the book. [Click here to read the guest blog post](#).



Just to give you a taste of the blog post here are a few paragraphs from that article: "Embrace risk. That is the key to improving at anything. Without the willingness to go down the uncharted path, you will not learn, you will not improve, and you will not grow. This might sound a little preachy, but it is a life lesson I have learned again and again as a climber, a mountaineer, and a freelance photographer. Safety is an illusion. Get over it. You cannot control everything in this world. I have learned to learn from my mistakes because I learn more from my mistakes than I do from my successes. When I make a mistake I own up to it, and then plot how to avoid making

that mistake again. Making a mistake is just part of the learning experience. It makes me aware of certain possibilities and outcomes. Creative people need risk to "break on through" to the next level; if you can't embrace risk, your images will never be more than mediocre. And that is a sure way to underachieve."

My thanks to Scott Kelby, Brad and the Kelby Media Group for asking me to write for the Photoshop Insider blog, and also for helping to promote my latest book from PeachPit. I hope you enjoy the blog post (and the book) and it stirs up some good conversation.

workshops

2013 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 2013. 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 — February 14-17, 2013

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 is our second year running the Surfing Photography Workshop and it went so well earlier this year that a few of the participants have already signed up to take it again!

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 4.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.

It is expected that you know how to download images from your camera to the laptop, know basic editing techniques using your software, and are able to organize the edited images for critique. Also since surfing photography relies on large telephoto lenses, each participant will need to bring a telephoto lens that is at least 400mm. A 500mm or 600mm lens is preferred. If you don't own one of these lenses please rent or borrow one to bring with you. Please contact Michael or Brian with any questions about lens selection and rental options. Both B&H and Samy's Camera in the USA have rental houses that

can rent these lenses. We also have a special deal with Hawaii Photo Rental Oahu who have 500mm and 600mm lenses for both Canon and Nikon and will be renting these to workshop participants at discounted rates ranging from \$323 to \$550 for the duration of the workshop. Call Josh Strickland at Hawaii Photo Rental Oahu at (808) 735-3838 for more information on renting one of these lenses.

The cost of this workshop is \$1,035 per person. A deposit of \$350 is required to secure your spot in the workshop. You can find more information about the workshop on my [website](#) and on my [blog](#), including detailed info on what we will be doing each day and the equipment you will need for the workshop. This workshop is very unique and it is one of the funnest workshops anywhere. If you have ever wanted to photograph surfing, I encourage you to come join us in Hawaii. You won't regret it. If you have any questions or would like to register for the workshop send me an [email](#).

Mentor Series Photo Trek

San Antonio, TX. — February 21-24, 2013

Pack your camera gear and Speedlights and join the Mentor Series as we trek south to light up San Antonio, Texas. This historic locale will provide the perfect backdrop in which to learn the rewards of using light to create an intentional effect in your photos, as well as capture the spirit of this Lone Star destination. Allow Nikon professional photographers and illumination gurus David Tejada, Michael Clark and Dave Black to simplify techniques and help you address lighting scenarios that will convey a desired

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The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Workflow, a 409-page e-book, is a workshop in book form. Updated for Adobe Lightroom 4.2 and Photoshop CS6, 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.

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atmosphere, while capturing unique images in both controlled and spontaneous shooting situations.

Light is the essence of any photograph, and it is important to understand how to control your light and to explore which lighting is best suited to subject and scene. Take your passion for photography to the next level on this trek by practicing the Mentor Series hands-on approach and walking away with in-depth knowledge of your Speedlights and how they can work for you.

Utilize the rugged natural beauty and “days gone by” ambiance at the Enchanted Springs Ranch, a working cattle and horse ranch that boasts an authentic Old West town. This gorgeous stretch of the Texas Hill Country landscape is rich with history of the passage of Spanish and American explorers. Here you will learn the concept of lighting “on location” and have an opportunity to direct professional models, such as gunfighters, stagecoach drivers and saloon girls, and practice using off-camera flash. Your mentors will assist you in assessing a particular shooting situation and finding the best angles. You will learn to interpret any existing light source and understand how to use your Speedlight (or more than one) to render the best image.

We will continue our exploration of how luminosity can shape the mood and color of the portraits you create at the San Antonio Botanical Garden. The garden’s stunning floral displays and serene pathways will provide a backdrop for your lighting education worthy of note. Further develop your skills at one of the area’s missions as you consider the ambient light and learn to frame the Spanish architecture against a blazing blue sky.

You can’t miss with mentors Dave Black, Michael Clark and David Tejada, industry leaders when it comes to using Speedlights in their stylized images. During this trek you will bring to light the best in your photography and round up images to treasure for years to come. Sign up today!

Who Should Attend – A Note from Mentor Dave Black: If you are currently using the Nikon Speedlight system and want to advance your skills in creative Speedlighting, then this Master Trek is for you. This will be an all Nikon Speedlight Master Class that is designed to help those who already have experience with off camera Speedlight photography and want to take it to the next level. With mentors Michael Clark, David Tejada, and Dave Black you will learn how to light portraits on location with a variety of Speedlighting techniques using Nikon Speedlights, FourSquare soft box system, Speedlight modifiers, and Off Camera Remote Mode triggering equipment. This is not just flash photography, but Creative Location Lighting at it’s best. So pack up your Nikon Speedlights and we’ll see you in San Antonio.

The cost of this workshop is \$1,399. This price Includes in-the-field instruction, entrance fees, presentations, digital reviews, and transportation to each shooting location.” For more information or to sign up for this photo trek visit the [Mentor Series Photo Treks website](#).

Adventure Photography Workshop

Santa Fe Workshops — April 3-6, 2013

Adventure photography can be an adventure in itself, involving breathtaking locations, extreme conditions, and working with elite athletes in risky situations. It requires a

A participant in the 2012 Surfing Photography Workshop shooting from the beach with a long telephoto lens.



host of skills, including technical excellence with the camera, familiarity with a sport, and the ability to be mindful of your goals and your safety at all times.

This workshop concentrates on creating unique images of rock climbers, mountain bikers, and the activities of a working ranch. Using elite athletes as our models and northern New Mexico's incredible landscape as our backdrop, we explore innovative ways to express the excitement of each sport and location. Topics include research and preparation, composition and camera angles, equipment selection, use of natural light, fill flash, and battery-powered strobes, and autofocus techniques. We also learn how to work with athletes who routinely put themselves at risk, and we discover the best methods for capturing the intensity of their exploits. Location days find us

working with athletes who are as daring as they are skilled. Classroom time includes daily editing, review sessions, and one-on-one meetings with Michael. In addition, Michael shares his insights and experiences regarding career development, portfolios, and photographing for stock, editorial, and commercial clients.

The cost of this workshop is \$1,095 plus a \$120 Location and Model Fee. For more information visit the Santa Fe Workshops [website](#) or call (505) 983-1400. If you would like to register for this workshop please click on the link above.

For more information on the workshops that I will be teaching in 2013 please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my website. Hope to see you out there in 2013!

equipment review

The Lowepro Rover Pro 45L AW Backpack

A review of the new Lowepro backpack aimed at outdoor photographers

Disclaimer: In an effort to be up front with my readers about my relationships with photo equipment suppliers I want to let you know that I am “sponsored” to a degree by the folks at Lowepro and give them feedback on their gear to help improve it. With that said, in my reviews I will call it like I see it. If I thought a piece of gear was not up to snuff then I simply wouldn’t choose to review it. I was sent the new Lowepro Rover Pro 45L AW backpack to test out and use by the fine folks at Lowepro USA. This article originally appeared on my blog and can be found [here](#).

A little over two years ago I met up with Pete Hill, who at that point was the Senior Product Designer for Lowepro. During our meeting he asked me, “What product are we not making that you would like to see?” It wasn’t an easy question to answer since Lowepro makes more styles of camera bags than any other camera bag manufacturer on Earth. After thinking about my needs and the crazy number of other Lowepro bags I already own, I suggested that Lowepro create a backpack specifically for outdoor photographers. I described a pack that had a light, comfortable backpacking style suspension, easy access to the camera gear, and room for additional outdoor gear that we outdoor photographers have to carry with us on photo shoots. A few months ago, I got a call from the marketing department at Lowepro asking if I would like to test out their new photo backpack, the



Rover Pro 45L AW. Of course, since I have a long-standing working relationship with Lowepro I said yes when they asked me to test out the new pack. The Rover Pro 45L AW is basically the pack I asked for and I have to say it is great to see a concept come to fruition.

I have used the Rover Pro on a few photo shoots over the last few months and it has proven to be a comfortable, lightweight backpack that can haul a serious amount of gear. In the images included in this article, I am using the

On the hike in my good friend, and phenomenal photographer Marc Romanelli, snapped this image of me wearing the new Lowepro Rover Pro 45L AW. Image Copyright © Marc Romanelli.



LowePro Rover Pro 45L AW photo backpack on a rock climbing shoot in Diablo Canyon near Santa Fe, New Mexico. For this shoot, I had over 60 pounds of climbing and photo gear loaded into the backpack. I am not sure what the recommended maximum load for this pack is but I have a feeling I was very near to it or slightly over it. Regardless, the pack still carried quite well and was comfortable. The pack is a 45-liter pack (hence 45L in the name) and it also includes two modular equipment cases for storing your camera equipment safely in the backpack. The modular cases are heavily padded, which is key, so that the rest of your outdoor gear doesn't injure your camera equipment. Once at the location, you can access your camera gear by zipping open the large flap on the outside of the pack (as in the image below and on the opposite page). This isn't a pack for accessing your gear "on the go" like some other LowePro packs. This is a pack for getting your gear to a location where you can set up a home base and work out of the pack.

Aside from the padded camera cases, LowePro included some other smart design features in this pack. The first thing that catches your eye is the suspension system. In my experience, most camera backpacks, when fully loaded, feel like you are carrying a giant brick on your back. If you only have to carry those "giant bricks" a short distance then it isn't too bad, but if you need to carry them any significant distance they can really make your back sore. The Rover Pro 45L AW has an anatomic back panel that fits the curve and shape of your back. The pack arches away from your back and has a mesh lining that lays against your back. Because the mesh back panel is a tri-cot fabric, it automatically adjusts to your back when you put the pack on. This suspension style is a common feature in backpacking packs these days and it also allows your sweat to evaporate away instead of being absorbed by the back panel. There is also a U-shaped aluminum rod built into the back panel that forms the actual suspension system.



Above you can see some studio shots of the pack and how the padded camera cases pull out of the front zippered flap. As you can see the two cases take up about two-thirds of the pack, but of course you don't necessarily have to use both padded pouches on every trip. The last image (on the right) shows how gear can be packed into the pouches. You can pack a fair amount of photo gear into these pouches. Next page: For this shoot I found a semi-level spot and dumped all my gear there so that I could work out of the pack. For this shoot I would be shooting on the ground and above the climbers. Image by Marc Romanelli.



Maybe one of the best features of the Rover Pro 45L AW is that the shoulder straps and the torso length are adjustable so that you can custom fit the Rover Pro to your back length. This is one of my biggest issues with all camera backpacks and I asked very specifically for an adjustable torso length when I met with the Lowepro designers. As a slightly taller than average person, who is 6'3" and has a long 22.5-inch back length, I have had a hard time finding any photo backpacks that fit my torso length. Finally, with this product we have a photo backpack that will fit just about anyone. As someone who has carried a lot of packs in the outdoors this feature is a key.

In the same vein, the waist belt is also very well designed. It is well padded but is still lightweight and it incorporates a pulley system that makes cinching the waist belt tight a snap. The waist belt straps on my sample seemed ridiculously long but nonetheless they were very effective. The waist belt also has a seam running down the middle of it that allows the hip belt to cup your hips nicely. And just in case you didn't think I was a gear head, that last sentence will confirm my nerd status when it comes to outdoor gear! Lastly, I like that the designers have added small pockets to the waist belt so I can stash energy bars and/or gels where I can get to them easily without having to take the pack off. The Rover Pro's suspension, adjustable shoulder straps and the ample hip belt all conspire to make it the most comfortable photo backpack I have tried yet. [Note: The Rover Pro is not as comfortable as the best outdoor backpacks on the market, like those made by Arc'Teryx and others, but for what it is, and it's weight, it is an excellent product.]

The pack has plenty of exterior straps and buckles as well. There are places to attach extra gear, a tripod and

there is also a pocket on the side of the pack to put your Camelbak, or a similar style hydration system. As someone who has had water bottles and hydration systems leak into my packs I really appreciate the thought that went into this pack and especially the hydration pocket being on the side of the pack. There is even a little nylon strap inside the hydration pocket to hold your Camelbak in place. The camera gear sits right on top of where the hydration system would normally go so this solves the problem of having a lot of heavy camera gear pressuring your hydration system.

The pack is fairly lightweight for what it is. With the padded camera cases the pack weighs in at approximately 2,800 grams (6 lbs 3 ounces), which is a full two-pounds lighter than my next favorite photo backpack—the Lowepro Vertex 300 AW. At just over six pounds the Rover Pro isn't going to impress an ultralight backpacker necessarily, but considering I just carried 60+ pounds in this pack and it still felt comfortable, and carried my camera gear with ease, the weight of the pack is not too shabby. Of course, if Lowepro wanted to make a lighter weight version of this pack they could easily remove some of the extra fabric on the sides of the pack and also use a lighter weight pack fabric.

The pack also includes a full "All-Weather" (AW) rain cover that nicely zips into a pocket on the bottom of the pack. I have tested the AW covers extensively on other Lowepro products and can vouch that they work extremely well. The last thing I will mention here is that the pack even has ice axe loops, which may seem crazy for most photographers, but for the adventure photographer it means I can take this pack on an ice climbing photo shoot and strap my axes on the pack.



Items that I put into the LowePro Rover Pro 45L AW for this rock climbing shoot: 1 - Rover Pro 45L AW pack, 2 - Lightweight windbreaker jacket, 3 - Misc. climbing gear including carabiners, quickdraws and slings, 4 - Camelbak hydration bag, 5 - Large padded modular camera pouch. I put my Nikon D4, a Nikkor 70-200mm f/2.8G VR II lens, an extra battery, a memory card wallet and a few other small items in this pouch, 6 - Small padded modular camera pouch. In this pouch I had a Hoodman loupe, a Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8 lens and a Nikkor 24-70mm f/2.8G lens, 7 - Knee Pads, 8 - Energy Bars, 9 - Headlamp, 10 - Fleece vest, 11 - Climbing harness, 12 - Static Rope (for hanging above the climber), 13 - Rope protector, 14 - Ascenders and etriers (For use with the static rope to get above the climber). And though they are not pictured here, I also had my wallet, iPhone and keys stashed in the top pocket as well.

The image above shows everything that I carried in the Rover Pro on this rock climbing photo shoot and below the image is a caption detailing the items. Even though the pack looks a little small in some of these images this shows that it can haul a considerable amount of gear.

Of course, every first generation product can be improved and while the Rover Pro is excellent as is, there are a few

small changes that could make the pack even better. First, the top lid is sewn to the top of the pack, which doesn't allow you to overstuff the pack. It isn't a huge deal, but there are certainly those times when you want to throw in an extra jacket or gear and it is an easy fix to just attach the top lid with some sort of adjustable buckle. Second, while the camera cases are well done, they aren't very useful on their own. It would be great to see LowePro

make the cases more versatile so that you could pull one out and use it as a fanny pack with a built-in or modular waist belt. Lastly, while I could fit a decent amount of gear into the pack it would be nice to see a slightly larger version of the pack for those shoots where I need to take bulkier outdoor items like down jackets and such. This last item isn't so much a critique of this pack, maybe just a note for Lowepro to make a larger version of this pack like they do with their other photo backpacks.

Also, the waist belt is just barely big enough to fit my waist. There is a ridiculous amount of webbing on the waist belt—enough that it could fit just about anyone—but the padding on the belt ends just in front of my hip bones. I am not a huge, overweight guy so I was a little surprised by the hip belt. For tall folks, yet again, this could be an issue. If you are 6'3" or taller, I would highly suggest trying this pack on before buying it.

The Verdict: If you are an outdoor or adventure sports photographer then this pack is a good choice. It can carry plenty of camera gear and a decent amount of outdoor gear—and it is a comfortable pack. This is yet another excellent product from Lowepro. I will be using the Rover Pro 45L AW on my photo shoots where I need to haul photo equipment and a small amount of outdoor gear into the backcountry.

Of course, the obvious question is, "Why wouldn't I just use my outdoor backpack and stuff my camera gear into the pack with it safely packed into the Lowepro Street and Field series lens cases and camera pouches?" It's a good question. I have been doing this for years and it works very well—if you don't need to access your camera gear. I have a few of the top-end Arc'Teryx roll-top backpacks

that fit my back like a glove and have more than enough room for my camera gear and outdoor equipment. The Rover Pro is well made but it can't hold a candle to my Arc'Teryx pack. The one main reason that I will use the Rover Pro instead of my Arc'Teryx pack is that the hydration sleeve is on the outside of the pack and the Rover Pro allows me to access my camera gear much more easily than my Arc'Teryx backpacks. If I am headed out to shoot ice climbing or some other adventure that requires more room or a beefier pack then I will opt for the Arc'Teryx, otherwise I will use the Rover Pro.

I will say that for tall folks, the Lowepro will fit you but not as well as a pack that is made for your back size. The suspension is adjustable but that doesn't mean the rest of the pack elongates with the suspension. I found that when I adjusted the suspension, the straps that attach to the top of the shoulder straps were well below my shoulders and thus weren't very effective. For many, this won't be an issue. Nevertheless, with the suspension adjusted for my back length it still carried well. As I said earlier, I have advised Lowepro to make a larger version of this backpack. A larger version of this pack that was around 60-liters would fit us tall folks much better.

Not to be overshadowed by the new backpack, the entire point of this last excursion was to photograph some rock climbing. And as you can see on the next page, I did just that. My thanks to Aaron Miller and Amy Jordan for coming out and working with me on this photo shoot in Diablo Canyon. In the image on the next page Aaron is climbing a route named Crystal Clear Arete, which is rated 5.12c. It is a fairly steep and difficult route—and as you can see it is also quite photogenic. You can see another image from this shoot on page 3 of this Newsletter.





Above: Here I am hanging on a static rope from my ascenders, which use a camming mechanism to clamp down on the rope and hold me in place. I shot with a Nikkor 24-70mm f/2.8 lens on my Nikon D4. Having shot the route from the side, and having shot this route before, I knew the best images would be in this section just above the small overhang. Hence, I positioned myself about fifteen feet above this part of the climb. As Aaron climbed up to my position I moved up the route with him. Image Copyright © Marc Romanelli.

I photographed Aaron on the route from above and from the side by hiking up the canyon to a position that is level with the midpoint of the route. I chose this route because it is so easy to shoot from the side and because it gets great afternoon light. The hike up to this route is also quite rugged and provided a good test for the Rover Pro.

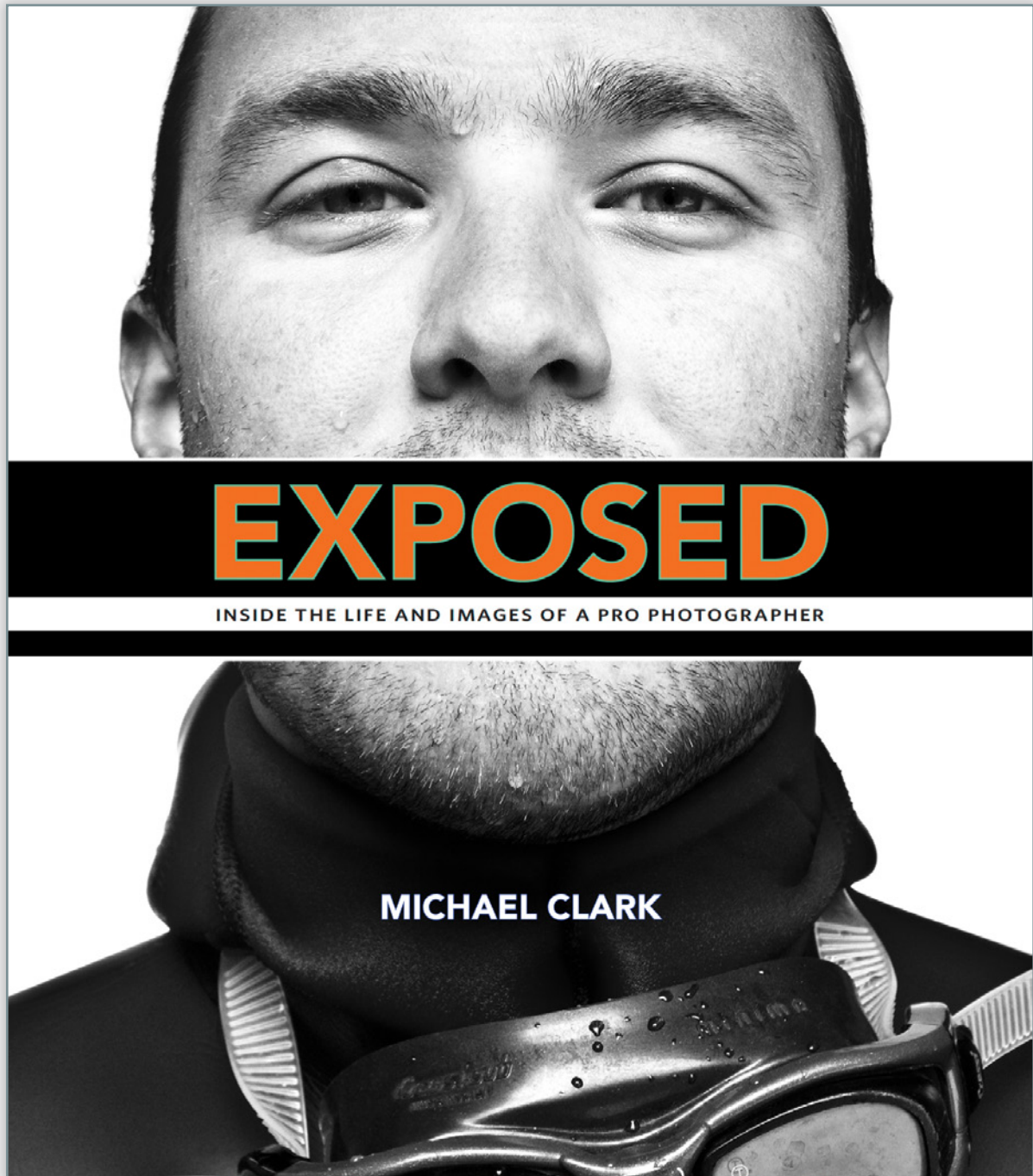
To photograph Aaron from above, I set up a rope on the anchors of the climb and used ascenders to climb the static line. The ascenders, as you can see in the image above, allow me to let go and concentrate on photographing the climb and the climber. Shooting rock

climbing from above is hard work and requires that the climber and the photographer work together to get the best images.

My thanks to Marc Romanelli who came out with me on this photo shoot and provided images of me using the pack for this article. Also, my thanks to LowePro for allowing me to test out this new backpack and for their continued support. I have a closet full of great LowePro bags and this is just one more to add to the pile. If you would like more information about the Rover Pro 45L AW visit the LowePro [website](http://www.lowepr.com). 

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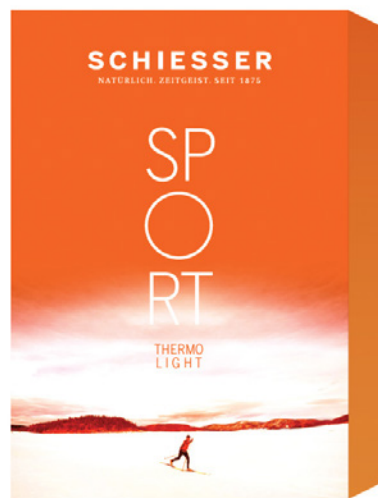
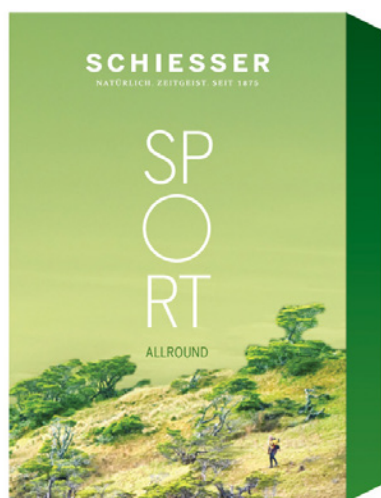


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IMAGES FOR
SCHIESSER



Images used by Schiesser on the packaging for their new line of active long underwear.

Earlier this year I was contacted by an ad agency in Berlin about a project for a company named Schiesser AG. Schiesser is basically the German equivalent of Hanes underwear here in the USA. They were looking to create a line of outdoor long underwear and needed some images to use on the packaging, website and in ads for the new underwear line. When they first approached me late last year they had already pulled several images from my website and had them mocked up in the layout for the actual packaging. Over the course of a month or so we had many discussions about which images they needed for each specific project. In the end, they chose three existing images from my website and had me go out and shoot two other images specifically for a few other products.

The assignment was to create images of a woman running on a beach and a man

cross country skiing. As luck would have it, I was headed to Hawaii and the north shore of Oahu just a few weeks after we negotiated the contract for this assignment. Hence, in January of this year, while shooting big-wave surfing and teaching a workshop I also spent some time tracking down female athletes in Oahu. When the art director and I discussed the image they wanted of a female runner on the beach she referenced a yoga image I had shot in White Sands, New Mexico, which had an amazing sky—perhaps the best sky I have ever seen as long as I have worked professionally. The art director said, “We want a sky like that one.” Hence, I was under the gun to pull a magic rabbit out of the hat—or in for some major

retouching to add a killer sky to whatever image I created on the north shore of Oahu.

After some serious work to find top athletes in Oahu, I found two women who were runners and one of them had just come back from competing in the Australian Ironman competition. Indeed they were super fit, and quite beautiful as well. To give myself a better chance of having a killer sky in the image I set the photo shoots up on separate days. On the first shoot, the weather was horrible. It had been raining for over an hour and when I met with the Mahina Garcia it was still raining. Having

been in this situation before and having scouted the location just a few minutes before meeting up with Mahina, I could see that the sun might sneak under the edge of the clouds at sunset and light up an amazingly huge and stormy looking cloud. Of course, all of this

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hinged on the rain stopping before sunset. Mahina was game to wait for a bit since we had an hour before sunset. She is a professional model as well as a runner and has worked in LA and NYC so she knew the drill. About twenty minutes into the shoot the rain stopped, but the light was a bit dull. Nevertheless, I started shooting with Mahina to figure out which angles worked best. And just as I imagined, about ten minutes before sunset the sun dipped under the clouds and lit them up dramatically as you can see in the final image on Page 25.

In hindsight, the rain was actually a Godsend. The rain cleared the beach and there wasn't a soul in sight. We

basically had the entire beach to ourselves. As you can see from the packaging, Schiesser had in mind a wild color scheme for each product to set them apart. These wild colors are all the rage in Germany these days. I had an assignment with another German company last fall where they also applied supersaturated colors to the final images. When I sent the image on Page 25 to the client they were ecstatic about it, but still I did the other photo shoot I had planned just in case the sky was even better. As it turned out the second shoot was excellent as well, but the client went with the image from the first shoot.

The second image I needed to create for the client was a cross country skiing image. Since I live in New Mexico and it was winter at the time, this image was going to be a bit easier to shoot. I spent a few days scouting out locations and did a fair bit of cross country skiing myself to access certain parts of the trails. In the end, the Valles Calderas was the optimum location. The Calderas is a massive extinct volcano just above Los Alamos, which is only an hour from my office in Santa Fe. Since I do a bit of cross country skiing myself, I contacted Clay Moseley, who is one of the best x-country skiers in New Mexico.

The day we chose for the x-country ski shoot was supposed to be the only blue bird day that week and we were up against a tight deadline. When we got to the Valles Calderas it was pretty much a full overcast day, which was not ideal and not what the client wanted. But this was it. You can't always get what you want. Hence, we


got to work and spent the afternoon skiing around to different locations in the Valle Calderas. True to form, Clay was wicked fast on skis. After an hour of skiing we found the ideal location and the clouds were even starting to roll back. I had Clay ski by my position several times and then we changed it up, creating a variety of images for the client to choose from. The final image that the client chose in on page 26. As you can see in all of these images, the client wanted a small figure in a grand, and very large landscape.

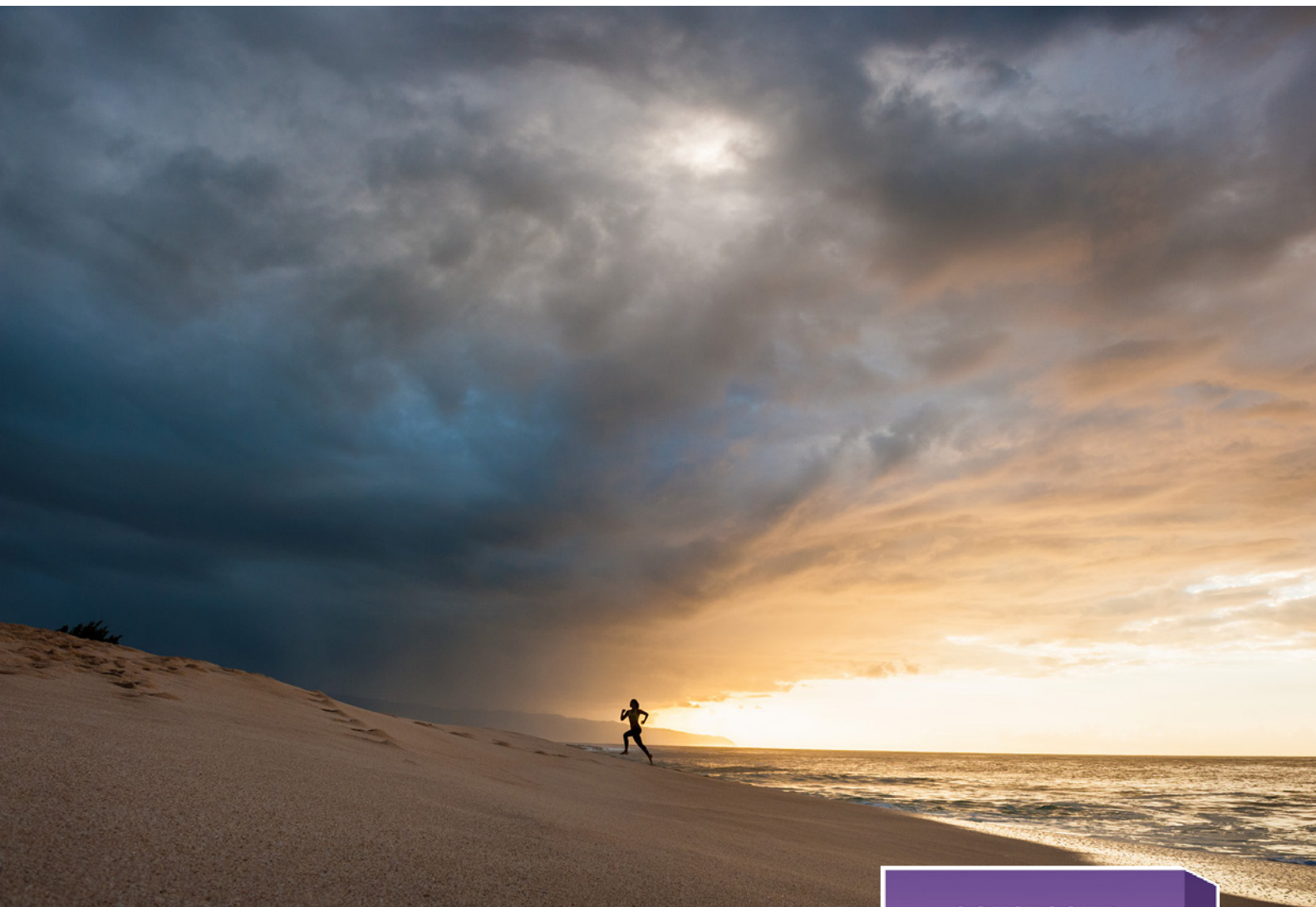
With both of these shoots the weather was the biggest challenge. But there were other factors that I had to deal

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with to get the images the client wanted. Finding the right athletes, locations and making it all come together is always a tough job when setting up any photo shoot. Being prepared and anticipating the weather are also key factors, and in this in-

stance I plain got lucky with the sky in Oahu. But part of that luck was experience and sticking it out. I certainly thought about calling Mahina and canceling the shoot, but when you are under pressure you can't give up.

My thanks to Schiesser AG and Claudia Hammerschmidt, the art director at Hatch, for hiring me to shoot this assignment. Working with Claudia and Schiesser AG was a pleasure. They were incredibly easy to work with—and I look forward to working them again. Also, my thanks to the athletes that worked with me including Mahina Garcia, Juri Ko and Clay Moseley. Some of the other images Schiesser used are on the next few pages. 



Above: Mahina Garcia running at sunset at Ke Iki beach on the north shore of Oahu, Hawaii.

Right: The same shot as it appears on the Schiesser AG underwear packaging.

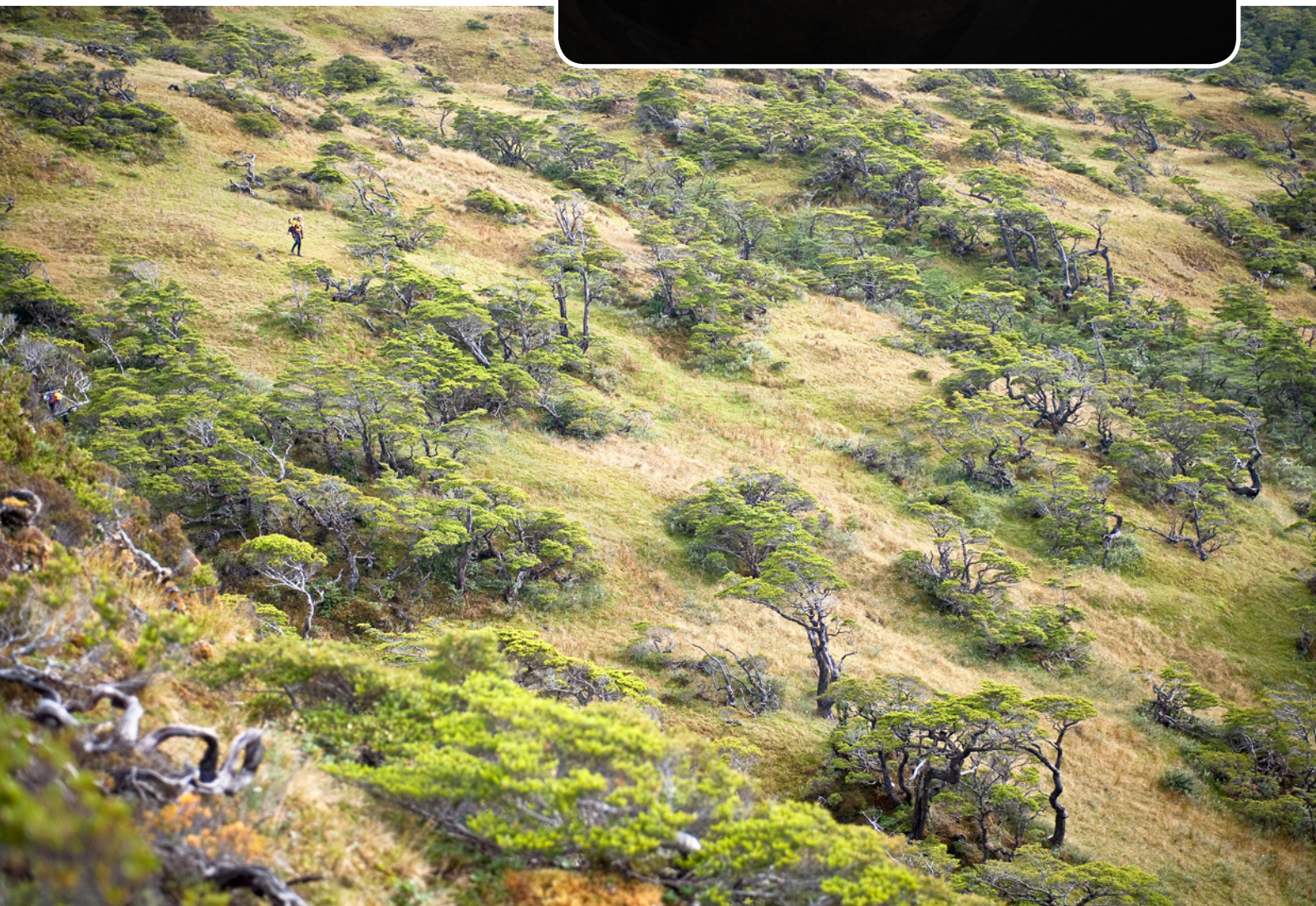




Above: Clay Moseley cross country skiing in the Valles Calderas near Los Alamos, New Mexico. Right: A hiker trekking across a large snowfield during an expedition into the Karukinka Preserve and the Cordillera Darwin with the Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race organizers.



Right: Nate McKay taking to the vertical on an 80-foot, near vertical wall ride in Canfield Canyon at Bartlett Wash near Moab, Utah. Nate was moving at upward of 80-plus mph when he dropped back into the lower bowl. Below: Team Spirit Canada navigating their way through a 120 km trekking section on the very southern edge of the Brunswick Peninsula during the final stage of the 2009 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race. Note that the trekker in this image is quite small.



portfolio





Embracing Risk

by Michael Clark

Embrace risk. That is the key to improving at anything. Without the willingness to go down the uncharted path, you will not learn, you will not improve, and you will not grow. This might sound a little preachy, but it is a life lesson I have learned again and again as a climber, a mountaineer, and a freelance photographer. Safety is an illusion. Get over it. You cannot control everything in this world. I have learned to learn from my mistakes because I learn more from my mistakes than I do from my successes. When I make a mistake I own up to it, and then plot how to avoid making that mistake again. Making a mistake is just part of the learning experience. It makes me aware of certain possibilities and outcomes. Sometimes it is only by making a mistake that you stumble onto an unexpected result, or image in this case, and by analyzing that mistake, you can create a whole new look.

Creative people need risk to “break on through” to the next level; here I am making a reference to one of The Doors’ most popular songs. The musical group creatively pushed the envelope, were unconventional (in the extreme), and took chances with their music and lyrics. I use the band as an example only to make the point that if you can’t embrace risk, your images will never be more than mediocre. And that is a sure way to underachieve.

As a climber, a mountaineer, and an adventurer, I implore

you to get out and experience your own adventures. They might just be the best motivator for your photography. Stepping out of your comfort zone provides everyone with a chance to grow. The next step is to take the knowledge you have learned and put it into practice repeatedly and as often as possible. Dare to fail. Aim high. Dream up an image you want to create and then go out and try to create it. If you don’t get the result you want, try again and again until you do. Practice makes perfect, or at least in photography it makes your images better. Get inspired, get motivated, and get moving. That is the key to photography.

The three paragraphs above are from my most recent book, [Exposed: Inside the Life and Images of a Pro Photographer](#). They sum up my credo as an adventure sports photographer. Over the last sixteen years, I have pursued my craft—and my profession—with a fervent passion. I have also been fortunate to work with clients such as Nikon, Apple, Adobe, Red Bull, National Geographic, Outside, Men’s Journal, and Sports Illustrated. I have crafted an adventurous lifestyle that has allowed me to witness and document some truly remarkable feats of physical prowess. And all of this has been possible because at the start of my career I dove into the unknown and accepted risk as part of my photography and my adventure sports lifestyle.



Stephen Leavins sea kayaking around an island at sunrise near Friendship, Maine.

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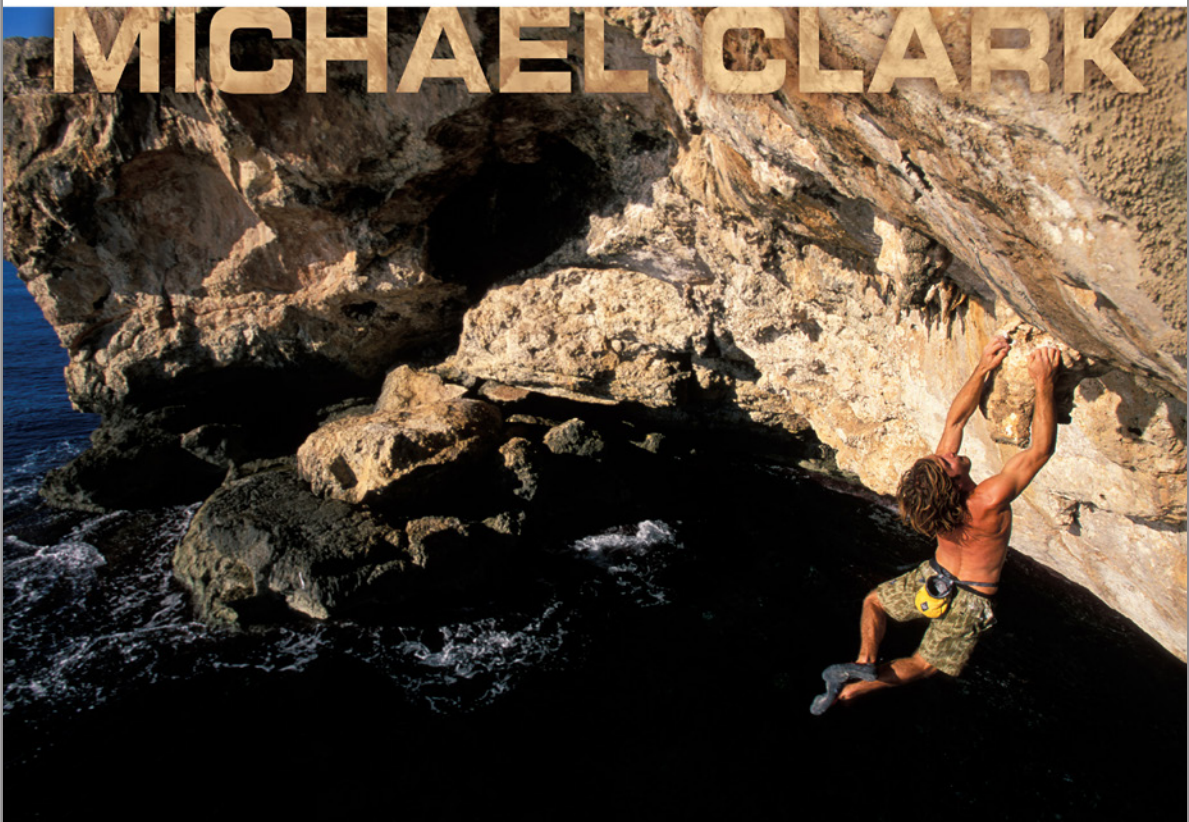


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