

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



FALL 2016



contents

FALL 2016 NEWSLETTER

4 editorial

Jet Lag, Surgery and Recovery. An introduction to this issue of the Newsletter along with a list of recent clients.

6 news

Recent news including my Annual Fine Art Print sale, an interview with Vistek's Dale Sood, and an update about revamping and updating my website.

10 workshops

Detailed information on upcoming photography workshops I'll be teaching in Louisiana, the Annapurna region of the Himalayas and Glacier National Park.

14 equipment review

Pro Media Gear's Elinchrom ELB400 cage and Matthews Road Rags. A review of a versatile top-mounting cage designed for the Elinchrom ELB400 and a review of a flagging solution for location photographers.

20 on assignment

An in-depth look at a recent assignment with New Balance, where I worked with the amazing ultra-running couple Katie and Dominic Grossman.

26 portfolio

Two portraits of Owen Haggard, an avid skier and mountain biker, created in my studio and a double page spread of Aaron Miller fighting to stay on a tough 5.12c at the Cave in Diablo Canyon near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

28 perspective

Staying Curious. An editorial discussing a quote by Julian Richards about curiosity and its relation to photography from a recent interview in Rocket Science Magazine.

29 parting shot

Richie Graham hunkering down as our helicopter pilot takes off leaving us at Kiwa Lake in the Premier Range of the Canadian Rockies in British Columbia, Canada.

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Cover Image: Chris Sheehan mountain biking under golden aspens on the Alamos Vista trail just above the Aspen Vista road in the Sangre de Cristo mountains above Santa Fe, New Mexico. Opposite Page: Sailing on a 47-foot yacht with Vertical Shot Expeditions just south of the Lofoten Islands in northern Norway in the arctic summer. Newsletter edited by Katherine Mast.



boreal yachting.com



Jet Lag, Surgery and Recovery

A whirlwind of assignments, workshops and then ankle surgery

The end of the summer was out-of-control busy, then it just kept rolling right into the fall. September kicked off with wrapping up an assignment for New Balance, then a few portfolio shoots and other miscellaneous assignments followed before jetting off for my last photography workshop of the year in Myanmar. As you can see from the image on the next page, the Myanmar workshop was pretty amazing. In ten days we travelled though a large part of the country in a non-stop effort typical of photo workshops. I am still going through the 7,000-plus images I shot on that excursion. I will say the jet-lag from that trip was harsh. It took tens days to adjust on the trip over there, which meant I had only just recovered when I had to fly back. It took a similar amount of time once I returned to the U.S.

One week after my return, I had surgery on my ankle to repair an old mountain biking injury. Surgery is never fun, but it went well and the hard part is now in full swing. I will be off my feet for another three weeks, then in a stiff recovery boot for another few weeks after that to let my tendon heal completely. I am not one who loves sitting around, as you might imagine from the work I create. But, it will be nice to have my ankle back to normal here at some point around the end of the year. By mid-to-late January, I should be fully back in action, ready for a very exciting 2017.

Over the course of my career, I have had several injuries—the worst being a herniated disk and extreme sciatica, which took around eight months to recover from. I spent most of those months on a couch taking 3,200 mg of Ibuprofen (the equivalent of an entire bottle of Advil) everyday. There have been many other injuries, but mostly minor in comparison. Being an adventure photographer is not easy on the body.

While recovering, I have had time to write up this issue of the Newsletter as well as a few new blog posts, get some serious image editing and processing done, work up some new marketing strategies, and do some serious thinking about future projects. After a few weeks off my feet, I am antsy to get back out there. I hope you enjoy this issue of the Newsletter. If you are interested in purchasing prints, this is a perfect time to do that. I currently have all of my prints on sale for 25% off. See page 6 for more details.

Opposite Page: A young apprentice monk praying to Buddha inside an ancient 11th Century temple near Old Bagan in Myanmar.

Recent Clients: Apple, New Balance, Sekonic, Mac Group US, X-Rite, National Geographic, Outdoor Retailer, and Vertical Shot Expeditions.



Annual Fine Art Print Sale

25% off of any Fine Art Print through December 31st, 2016



To get the ball rolling for the fall holiday season, I am happy to announce a 25% off sale on all of my fine art prints until December 31st, 2016. How this works is very simple, just take 25% off my standard fine art print pricing, which can be found [here](#), and [contact me](#) to order the print.

All of my images are available as Fine Art Prints. You can see which of my images are in the Limited Edition category on my website. Any images that are not shown on the [Limited Edition page](#) are considered Open Edition prints. Please note that these prices do not include shipping. If you have any questions about print sizes or available



images please don't hesitate to contact me. I will work with you to make sure the final print is the best it can possibly be and will look great mounted on your wall.

These archival prints are painstakingly created by yours truly on some of the finest papers available. I do not out-source printing to a third party printer because I want to have tight control over the quality of the final print, and I have not found a third party printer that can achieve the same level of quality that I can produce here in my office. The prints are made on Epson printers using a variety of papers including both fine art matte papers and baryta

photographic papers. The printer and paper combination is chosen specifically for each image so that image will be rendered with the highest possible resolution and the widest color gamut. Our main papers are Ilford Gold Fibre Silk, Ilford Gold Cotton Textured and Ilford Fine Art Smooth papers. Above is a sample framed print that I have made in the last few months to give you an idea of just how stunning these turn out when framed up.

Please [contact me](#) with any questions or if you would like to look at a wider range of images than are featured on my website.

Pushing the Limits Interview

A video interview with Vistek on how to make it as an adventure photographer



In October, I sat down and did an interview with Dale Sood of [Vistek](#), which is Canada's largest, professional photo, video and digital imaging store. They are also a distributor in Canada for a large number of high-end photography brands. Dale and I, as you will hear in the interview, discussed a large number of topics including how I got started, how I work with professional adventure sports athletes and what it is like to work as a pro adventure sports photographer in this day and age.

I met Dale, and a good portion of the Vistek crew, last year while presenting at the Vistek ProFusion Expo in Toronto, which is the Canadian equivalent of the Photo Plus Expo. They are a great group of people and fun to work

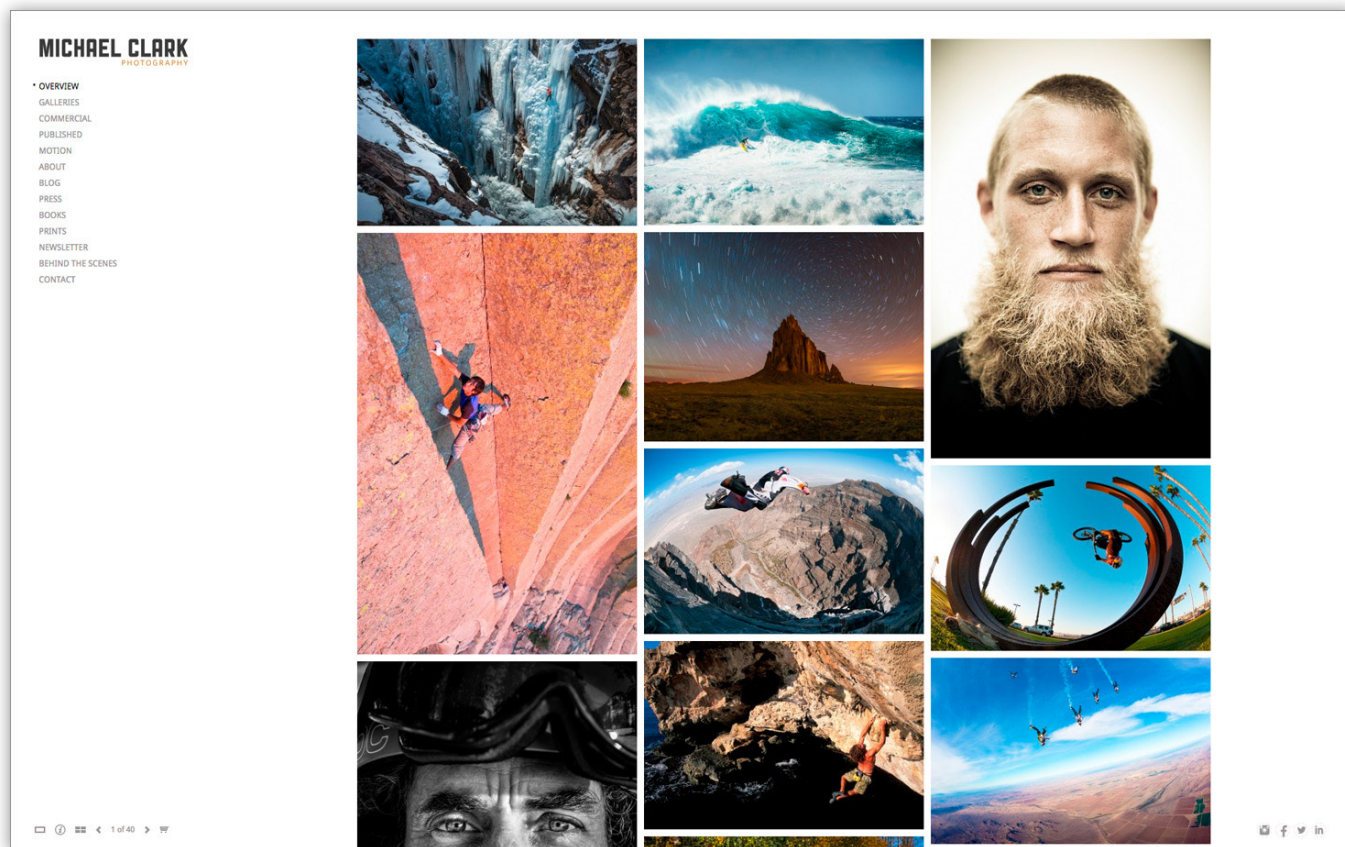
with. It was also a very fun trade show to visit.

Stay tuned to the [Vistek YouTube Channel](#) as this "World Class" series will become a regular feature with episodes dropping every other week or so. Vistek also just posted another video, "[An Evening with Albert Watson](#)," one of my heroes in the photography world, which is well worth a watch.

Click on the [video screenshot above](#) or right [here](#) to watch my World Class interview. I hope you enjoy the video and get something out of it. My thanks to Dale Sood and the fine folks at Vistek for tracking me down and setting this whole thing set up.

Website Revamp

Changing up my award-winning website, adding new images and overhauling the look



Over the last three or four months I have been working on a revamp of my website. It has been three years since I have really gone in and changed up the website and I had a lot of new images that haven't been added to the mix so I decided to overhaul all of the image galleries and take a hard look at everything on the website. To help me decide what should stay and what should go, as well as help me edit my own work, I reached out to my good friend Peter Dennen of [Pedro + Jackie](#). Peter gave me a fresh set of eyes to dig up both old and new images that needed to be seen.

Of course, editing your own work and figuring out how to

display it is always tricky. This time around, I went with a popular method of displaying a large number of images in a masonry grid, not dissimilar to Instagram. This seems to be the hip new layout that art buyers and photo editors love because it helps them find what they are looking for that much faster. Of course, you can still click an image and go through the fullsize images individually as well.

The website is still a work in progress. I will keep updating it over the next few months when I am allowed to show new assignment images currently under embargo. Check it out at www.michaelclarkphoto.com. Drop me a note or a comment on my blog and let me know what you think.

workshops

Photography Workshops

An overview of workshops and photo treks with Michael Clark

Each year I teach a few workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography, big-wave surfing photography, and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2017. For the full description of these workshops, and to find out how to register, go to the [Workshops](#) page on my blog.

Mentor Series Photo Trek - Louisiana

February 3 – 5, 2017

Founded in 1789, Saint Louis Cemetery has been the burial ground of some of the city's most illustrious citizens. With its notable above ground vaults and elaborate tombs, it will provide a ghostly backdrop for an afternoon photo shoot with live models.

Our portrait session continues at an 1823 apothecary shop on Chartres Street in the French Quarter. With its collection of old patent medicines, books and pharmaceutical equipment, the New Orleans Pharmacy Museum and courtyard will provide a characteristically French Quarter setting for a unique photo shoot.

We will also explore the wildlife areas outside of New Orleans. A sunrise shoot at Maurepas Lake will provide captivating silhouettes of cypress trees against the early

morning sky. Capture the picturesque swamplands and wildlife of the bayou as we paddle through the dangling moss and gnarled cypress trees on a boat tour to a secluded Cajun village.

We will spend our evenings capturing twilight views of the skyline at the Crescent City Connection Bridge and in the heart of the French Quarter, at Jackson Square.

Experience the rich history and haunting beauty of New Orleans and the surrounding wetland areas.

Cost: \$1,250 includes in-the-field instruction, park fees, presentations, digital reviews & entrance fees.

For more information and to register for this workshop visit the [Mentor Series website](#).

Photographing Annapurna's Secret Landscapes

Himalayas, Nepal - April 3 – 18, 2017

The mighty Himalayas: home to the world's highest mountains, sacred Buddhist monasteries and the few tribes accustomed to living permanently in the thin air. On this photography expedition, we will venture deep into the lands of the snow leopard while trekking from one stone-house village to another. This is not a standard Annapurna Circuit trek. After a month-long scouting



The mighty Himalayas and remote, less well known villages and valleys on the Annapurna circuit make up the itinerary for this exciting photography workshop with Vertical Shot Expeditions in April 2017. For more information read the description below and follow links to the VSE website. Photo by Vlad Donkov.

expedition in 2015, we noted many side-trails and places to stay that most trekkers never get to visit.

Led by adventure photographers Vlad Donkov and Michael Clark, together with one of the best Nepali guides around and a team of porters, you will have the chance to photograph some of the most interesting locations north of Annapurna and improve your photography over the course of a fortnight of shooting.

The expedition is designed in a way that lets you acclimatize gradually. At the highest point of the expedition, we will stand at an altitude of about 4,800m / 15,750ft. During the first two days of the trek, we will save a lot of time

by using 4×4 vehicles to cover the first part of the Annapurna Circuit trail, which is already connected by a dirt road and is frequented by trekkers. We will also use jeeps for one more day on the way down: this strategy will let us spend the majority of our time photographing in the high-alpine areas above the regular trail. For the remaining ten days in the mountains, we will be trekking with light camera backpacks for four to seven hours a day. We will stay in six teahouses (and a monastery) and two hotels over the course of fifteen nights.

For a detailed itinerary and much more information on this exciting workshop visit the [Vertical Shot Expedition website](http://www.verticalshotexpeditions.com).

Workshop fee: \$4,950

Please Note that this expedition is being run by Vertical Shot Expeditions, which is a European company so all payments will be made via wired transfers to Europe.

Mentor Series Photo Trek - Montana

Glacier National Park, July 5 – 9, 2017

The Mentor Series is headed back to Montana, one of our favorite destinations. Montana never disappoints, especially when the focus is on magnificent Glacier National Park along with events highlighting Native American culture. Join Mentor Series and Nikon professional photographers David Tejada and Michael Clark as we explore the many ways of capturing dramatic landscapes, along with tips and techniques for shooting action, animals and people.

Sunset along the shores of Lake McDonald will be our first stop on capturing the beauty of the park. We'll explore the majestic views along the iconic Going-to-the-Sun Road, characterized by waterfalls, jagged peaks, valleys bursting with wildflowers, and the classic red buses meandering along the highway. Be on the lookout for resident wildlife, including bighorn sheep, mountain goats and the always entertaining marmots. We've timed our drive to take in the sweet evening light as the sun dances across the peaks.

Glacier is noted for its historic and colossal hotels, including Glacier Park Lodge. Our visit here will provide photos ops of the well maintained flower gardens that lead up to the hotel, along with time to focus on the lofty interiors sporting massive Douglas fir pillars. Montana and wildlife go hand-in-hand. We'll get up close and

personal in a natural setting with a few "big critters" at the Triple D Game Farm.

The grandiose Many Glacier Hotel in the northeast corner of the park is our launching point for boat rides across Swiftcurrent and Josephine Lakes to the trailhead of Grinnell Glacier. It's a healthy hike up the trail for sweeping overviews of Grinnell Lake, or opt for an easy walk to the lakeshore. Our accommodations for this trek are at the doorstep of the very colorful North American Indian Days Powwow in Browning. We'll devote a day to capturing all the pageantry of this annual celebration, which includes an array of dancing, drumming, and stick games. Adjacent to the powwow grounds is the All Indian rodeo. Its nonstop photos ops – cowboys, bucking horses, Indian relays and racing. Working alongside David and Michael you'll experiment with a variety of ways to capture the action at both events, from slow shutter speeds for dreamy movement to higher settings for tack sharp results.

Montana should be on the top of every photographer's bucket list – join us for this amazing journey in Big Sky Country.

Cost: \$1,625 includes National Park fees & permits, transportation to all shooting locations, daily lecture series, presentations and digital group review sessions.

For more information and to register for this workshop visit the [Mentor Series website](#).

For more information on my upcoming workshops, or to read more testimonials, please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my blog. Hope to see you at a workshop here soon!

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equipment review

Pro Media Gear's ELB400 Cage

A unique add on for Elinchrom ELB400 owners looking to beef up their strobe pack

A few months ago, MAC Group—the USA Elinchrom dealer—connected me with the fine folks at [Pro Media Gear](#), which is a custom machining shop with a serious penchant for specialized photography gear. They make a wide variety of still and video accessories ranging from rugged tripods and tripod heads to video sliders as well as camera plates and flash brackets. Pro Media Gear makes a cage (of sorts) for a number of strobe kits, but the one they wanted me to try out was made for the Elinchrom ELB400 battery-powered strobe. If you have been reading my blog or this Newsletter, then you have heard me wax on quite poetically about the ELB400. This cage is named the [Aluminum Cage for Elinchrom ELB400](#) (Product #BLELB400) and it sells for \$179.95 USD on the Pro Media Gear website—and it is shown at right alone (top) and mounted on top of the ELB400 (bottom).

Initially, when Pro Media Gear contacted me, I looked at the cage on their website and I wasn't really sold on the idea of mounting an aluminum cage on top of my Elinchrom ELB400. After all, one of the great things about the ELB400 is that it is small and very lightweight. I didn't really want to add any extra weight to an otherwise excellent product. But, when I got it I realized that the aluminum cage itself is crazy lightweight. It weighs all of 10 ounces (283 grams) with everything shown at right.





Above is the Pro Media Gear Rigid Tube/Light Stand mount that screws into the side of the ELB400 and then mounts your power pack onto just about any light stand. The right hand image shows how you can unscrew one or both of the arms to mount it on a light stand. I quickly found this attachment mandatory.

Once I had it mounted, I was still not so sure about it. But once I started using it, I became enamoured with the versatility of this cage. First off, it makes the ELB400 a bit tougher. Second, the handles really come in handy for a wide variety of situations where you just want to pick it up and move it or carry it without having the strap attached. Third, you can mount a flash head on the 5/8" inch light stand adapter built into the cage, which I have already used a few times.

And if those aren't enough incentive, Pro Media Gear also makes an extra attachment, named the [Rigid Tube / Light Stand Mount](#) (Product #BLH2, shown above), which costs \$79.95 USD, fits light stands with a diameter of 19mm-42mm, and attaches to the side of the ELB400 cage. This gizmo allows you to mount your ELB400 power pack to just about any light stand. I will admit, this attachment is what really sold me on the cage. Everytime I use my ELB400s or my Ranger setup I typically have it hanging from the strap off one of the knobs on the light stand to help stabilize everything. In that scenario, the

power packs get beat up and scratched up and are sometimes hard to reach. With the stand attachment screwed onto the ELB400 cage, it is super simple to mount the whole power pack onto the light stand anywhere you want. It keeps the power pack at waist height, or any height you want it to be, and it really organizes your set-up. It also allows you to push the head up even higher, if you are using a tall stand, than if you have the pack hanging from the light stand knobs.

The gist of it is that once I started using the ELB400 cage, I didn't want to be without it. Nice work Pro Media Gear. This is definitely one of those gear items that falls into the "didn't know I needed it until I started using it" category. Check out the links in this review to get more details on these items. Looking at the rest of the Pro Media Gear website, and seeing how well this cage is made, if you are in need of a new tripod, tripod head or video slider you might want to take a look at what they offer. My thanks to MAC Group for connecting me with Pro Media Gear and also to Pro Media Gear for letting me try this cage out.

equipment review

Matthews Road Rags

A flagging solution for photographer's one the go

Do you want to know the secret to good lighting? It doesn't have anything to do with spending a fortune on lighting gear, though top quality gear definitely helps. The secret to good lighting, for portraits at least, is using flags to control the spill of the light. In lighting terms, a flag is anything used to block or reduce the light falling on the subject. You can use a cardboard box, a backpack, or a piece of foam core as a flag. I have even asked my assistants to act as a flag by standing in front of the light to break it up a bit or block the light on one side of my subject. Flagging the light while on location and when traveling

can be difficult because the normal studio-style flags are not that easy to travel with—or even to ship, for that matter. Hence, when I discovered the [Matthews Road Rags II](#), I was stoked to find a flagging solution I could actually travel with. [Sidenote: The Road Rags were

recommended to me by Keith Coleman, Albert Watson's main assistant for the last 20 years, while taking Albert Watson's workshop this past summer.]

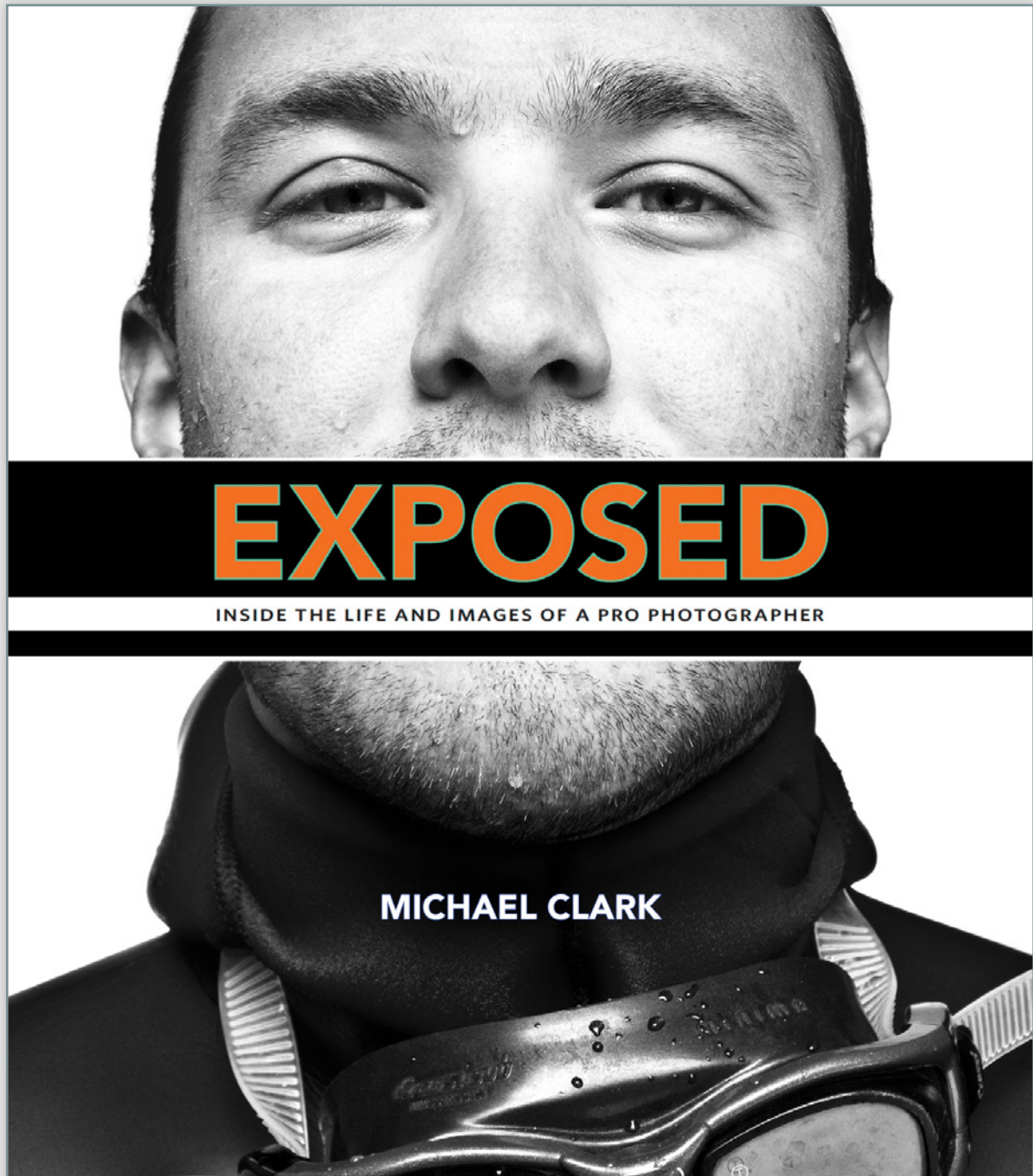


At \$482 USD (for the 24 x 36-inch option) these aren't cheap, but they do offer a whole host of flagging options and provide frames for two flags in the kit. You can order extra material and frames (as shown at left) to add to your kit as needed. The kit includes black felt, white translucent material and two neutral density options. To use these flags effectively you will need some C-Stands with grip heads to hold the

flags. If you are looking to take your lighting to the next level, I can't recommend flags highly enough, and for location photographers, these are hard to beat. You can see a few images created using flags in the Portfolio section of this Newsletter on pages 24 and 25.

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on assignment:



new balance

AN ASSIGNMENT WITH WORLD-CLASS
ULTRA-RUNNERS KATIE AND DOMINIC GROSSMAN

A full-page photograph of a man trail running through a dense forest of white-barked aspens. The man is wearing a red long-sleeved shirt and blue shorts, running towards the right. The forest floor is covered in green grass and low-lying plants. The trees are tall and slender, with white bark and dark, horizontal lenticels. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

Dominic Grossman trail running in the aspens just above Aspen Vista in the Sangre de Cristo mountains above Santa Fe, New Mexico.

At the tail end of the summer, I had the pleasure of shooting for [New Balance](#) with Dominic and Katie Grossman, two elite ultra trail runners. While this was an assignment to shoot for New Balance, we were also shooting images to promote the [Ultra Santa Fe](#) trail race, which was sponsored by New Balance and ran in September 2016 in the Sangre De Cristo mountains above Santa Fe, New Mexico. This was a two-day assignment. New Balance wanted me to create images to promote both the race and the New Balance brand, and also capture images of the race itself. The images shown here in this article are all from the first part of that assignment and were captured a few months before the race.

As you can see in the images accompanying this article, Dominic and Katie are amazing trail runners. I have never seen runners so enthusiastic about running. I have also never seen runners fly through the terrain as these two seem to do at every opportunity. Both Dominic and Katie were like gazelles bounding through rolling single-track terrain. They were literally flying on some trails with their feet spending less time on the ground than in the air. It didn't take long to notice this aspect of their running style and for the rest of the shoot I made sure to capture this where it was possible.

This assignment started well before sunrise, as is usual for most of my assignments. We drove up to a plateau next to the Quad lift at Ski Santa Fe, the local ski area, and shot before and after sunrise. At an altitude of 11,250 feet, that plateau has a stunning view overlooking the valley below. The first shot on our list was to capture Katie and Dominic running on this plateau before sunrise with glowing clouds lit up behind them in the background, as shown on the next page. We also used strobes to light up

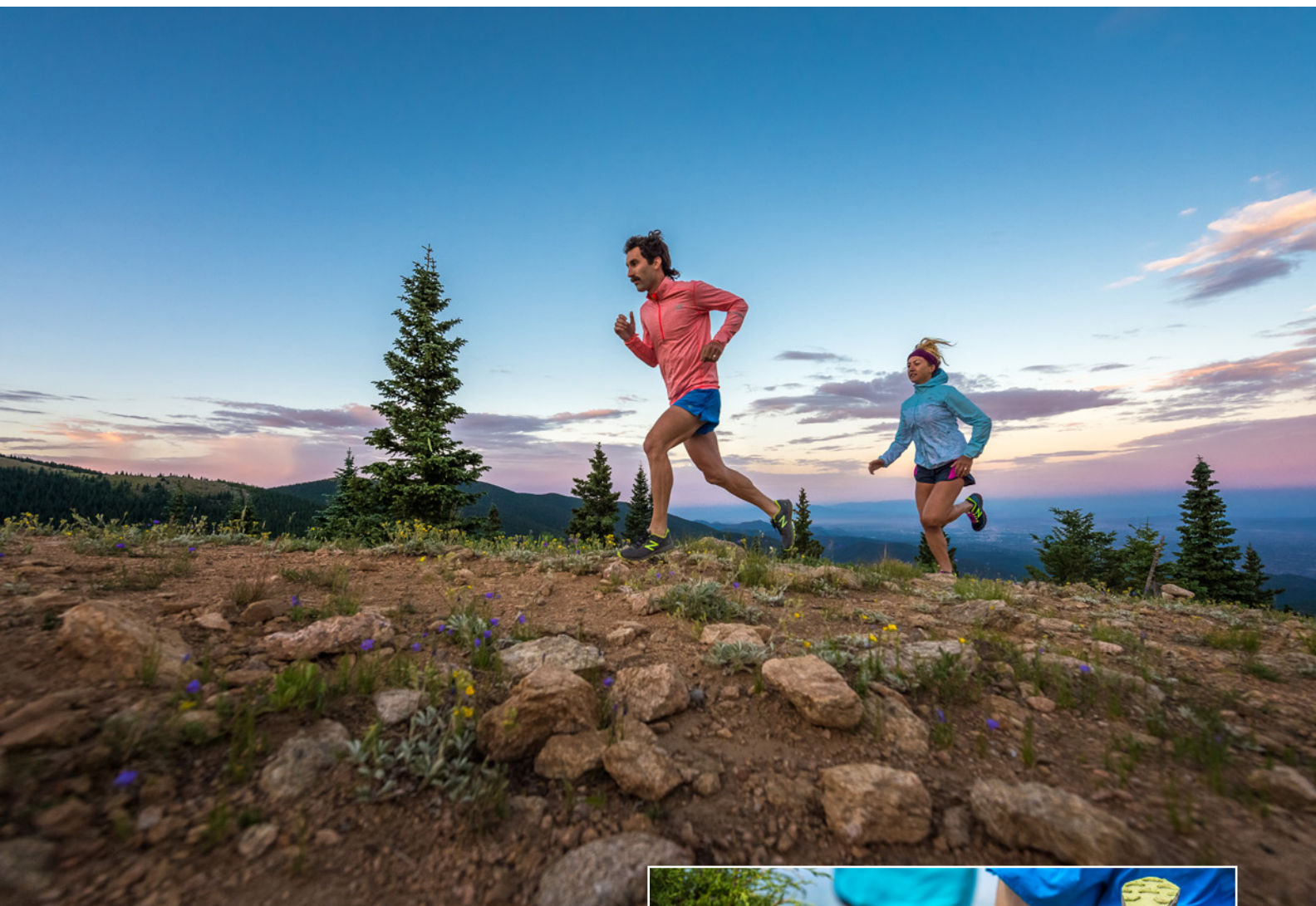
the runners in the pre-dawn light.

For this shoot, we had a big crew including a few assistants, an art director from New Balance, the owner of the Ski Santa Fe and additional trail runners to help us create images that felt like an actual race. We started up high in the ski basin and shot at a half dozen different locations to showcase the varying terrain of the race. As can be seen in the images, we worked in high-mountain open terrain, desert landscapes down in the valley and in deep aspen forests to capture a wide variety of images.

At the end of the day, we ended up on a single track trail up high in the aspens, as seen in the double-page spread that opens this article. This aspen grove is one of the most amazing tree stands in the state of New Mexico and both Dominic and Katie were keen to shoot here even after a long day running back and forth for the camera. What impressed me the most was just how fast they moved through the rocky terrain on some of the trails. I expected them to move slower to conserve energy but they seem to flow with the landscape like water flowing down a hill or a bird soaring upwards on the wind.

This first day of the assignment was one of the best days of shooting I have had all year. It was a great, easy-going crew who were excited to create interesting images. In the end, we got some amazing images at just about every location—enough to create a pretty impressive set of images for both New Balance and the Ultra Santa Fe race.

The race, which took place in early September, included a variety of distances. The longest version was a 50-mile race that included 14,044-feet of altitude gain and loss. The race started at 10,332 feet, at the base of Ski Santa



Above: Dominic and Katie Grossman trail running at the top of the Quad lift in the Santa Fe Ski basin in the Sangre de Cristo mountains above Santa Fe, New Mexico. This was the first set up shot of the morning, right before sunrise. To get to this position before dawn, at around 5 AM, we worked with the ski basin and were able to drive up to the top of the Quad lift, which as can be seen here offers a spectacular view. Right: Dominic and Katie Grossman running full steam ahead on the Dale Ball trail above Santa Fe, New Mexico.





To add variety to the set of images we captured, I shot a lot of behind the scenes images of the crew. Here, Dominic Grossman is taking in the view and taking a breather between sprints right as the sun rose over the peaks at the top of the Quad lift in the Santa Fe Ski Basin above Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Fe, then dropped to 7,218 feet before climbing all the way back up to 11,945 feet at the top of the ski basin. To say it was brutal is an understatement. The winner of the race told me at the top of the ski basin, just before descending to the finish a few thousand feet below, that he had been “puking, cramping and walking the last eight miles” up to that point. He was still in first place.

Covering the race was a lot more hectic than the first part of this assignment. The course was huge, and getting around the course involved some serious logistics and

planning—as well as hiking. The best images from the race came in the early morning hours with the 50-milers and 50K racers starting in the dark and descending a steep rocky trail. Hats off to the runners for participating in such a grueling race and persevering to the end.

My thanks to Steve Hyde from New Balance, the Ultra Santa Fe race organizers and of course Dominic and Katie for making this happen. To see a wider selection of images from this assignment visit the [New Balance page](#) on my website.



Above: Dominic and Katie Grossman were like gazelles running through a forest. I think they spent more time airborne than they did actually touching the ground, as is evidenced here in this image of them running in the aspens just below Tesuque Basin in the Sangre de Cristo mountains above Santa Fe, New Mexico. Right: Katie Grossman stretching out while trail running in the aspens just below Tesuque Basin in the Sangre de Cristo mountains above Santa Fe, New Mexico.



portfolio





portfolio





Staying Curious

by Michael Clark

I recently read a lengthy [interview in Rocket Science Magazine](#), where photographer Mark Mahaney interviewed ex-photography rep Julian Richards. This was a long and winding interview with some fairly entertaining and colorful stories, but one quote that really struck me was when Julian said the following: “Photography’s like a panda; it only eats one thing. Curiosity. Without a constant diet of curiosity, it’s dead. So when you’ve reached the point where venturing away from your living room without a business class ticket seems like a hassle, or extending an assignment in Ulan Bator when nobody’s paying for the hotel doesn’t make sense; you’ve ceased to be a photographer. You might be a high-level technician, but your photographs—no matter how much money tech companies will pay for them—are shit. Because the only thing you are curious about is the day rate.”

Julian Richards was one of the [top reps](#) for nearly 20 years in the photography industry. He decided to close his shop a few years ago. When he stepped away, he also unleashed on the photo industry with some biting words in an interview with PDN’s Amy Wolfe. Sadly, that interview is no longer online, but here is a [summation of sorts](#). All of this is to say, Julian knows the photo industry like few others, even now after being out of it for two years, and he is still as colorful as ever when discussing the industry.

Getting back to the quote; he nailed it. Curiosity is the key to creating top-end work. Trying out new techniques, continually learning and mastering the craft, and always pushing hard to find that next great image are all parts of the game. On the flip side, professional photographers can get beaten down pretty easily by the difficulty of finding work, ever lower rates, and the dog-eat-dog nature of working as a freelance photographer. It isn’t easy to stay positive in this industry. But, for most of us, we got into this business because we loved chasing our curiosity and we loved making images that communicate strongly with the viewer. None of us got into this industry dying to take images of a loaf of bread just to sell more loaves of bread.

That quote serves as a great check to make sure we are all still using our artistic abilities. We need to have an opinion. And we all need to shoot the client’s request, then take it further into another realm, a place that shows off our vision. I know this isn’t always possible, especially on big budget commercial shoots, but it is those extra images that will set you apart. This same sentiment was driven home by [Albert Watson](#) in a workshop I took with him this summer. I highly recommend if you make your living off photography that you hold onto your curiosity and the creative juices that helped you jump into this industry. For some thoughts on how I stay curious, check out the Perspective piece in my [Spring 2008 Newsletter](#).

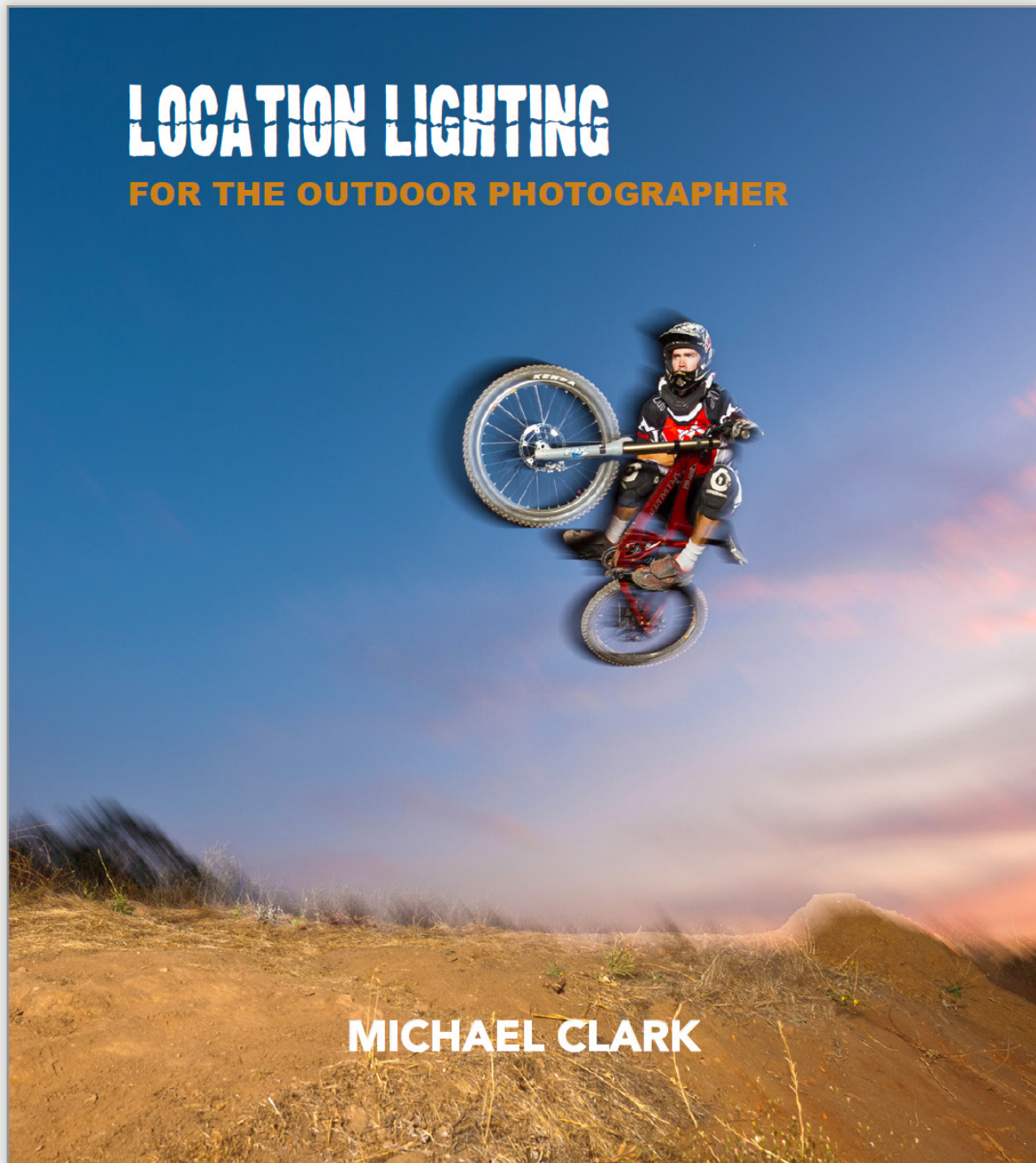
parting shot



Richie Graham hunkering down with our gear as our helicopter pilot takes off leaving us at Kiwa Lake in the extremely remote Premier Range of the northern Canadian Rockies in British Columbia, Canada.

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