

NEWSLETTER

# MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



FALL 2022



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FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

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*Cover Image: Crashing waves captured as they explode on Playalinda Beach at the Canaveral National Seashore near Titusville, Florida. Opposite Page: Red Rock towers at Ghost Ranch near Abiquiu, New Mexico.*









# To the Moon and Beyond

*Photographing Physicists, Astronauts and Bull Riders on recent assignments*

**T**his Fall issue is late, but more than that there have certainly been a dearth of Newsletters the last few years with the pandemic. This year in particular has seen a few epic assignments go haywire (not on my end) and hence, I am not allowed to show those photographs just yet, and also there have just been a lack of those salivating assignments that ended up as feature articles here in the Newsletter. But, things are getting back to normal, or at least closer to back to normal than they have been since March 2020. This fall—for the first time in three years—has seen me traveling close to pre-pandemic levels on several different assignments, which will be showcased in future issues of the Newsletter.

In this issue of the Newsletter, the feature article pulls back the curtain on a recent assignment photographing professional bull riding for Teton Ridge and the Arizona Ridge Riders. It might seem like a strange assignment for an adventure photographer but it came about from working with a top producer in the adventure sports world—and bull riding is about as adventurous as it gets in the world of sports. I spent five days with the team documenting both the action and the behind the scenes preparation. The images I think speak for themselves. Hence, the longer portfolio format of this article.

Earlier this summer, I started a long term personal

project, which turned into an actual assignment, to document NASA's Artemis program, which is headed back to the moon. As I write the forward to this Newsletter I am on a plane headed back to NASA Kennedy Space Center to photograph the Artemis 1 launch—hopefully happening on Wednesday, November 16th at 1:04 AM. I will feature an array of images from this project and a behind the scenes article in the Winter 2023 issue of the Newsletter coming out in January 2023.

Lastly, this issue of the Newsletter highlights the Annual Fall Fine Art Print sale, going on through the end of the year—December 31st. In addition, I review the new FUJIFILM GF20-35mm lens that was just released a month ago. I have had this lens for four or five months at this point and have worked with it quite a bit. In short, it is another stellar GFX lens. Thanks again for checking out the Newsletter. Here's hoping you enjoy this issue and it offers up an escape for an hour or two. Until next time....

*Opposite Page: The Artemis 1 Rocket on Launch Pad 39b at Kennedy Space Center on Cape Canaveral near Titusville, Florida.*

**Recent Clients:** Red Bull, Fujifilm, Blue Origin, National Geographic, Teton Ridge, Elinchrom, MAC Group, New Mexico Tourism, and The Templeton Foundation.





## Annual Fine Art Print Sale

*15% off of any Fine Art Print through December 31st, 2021*

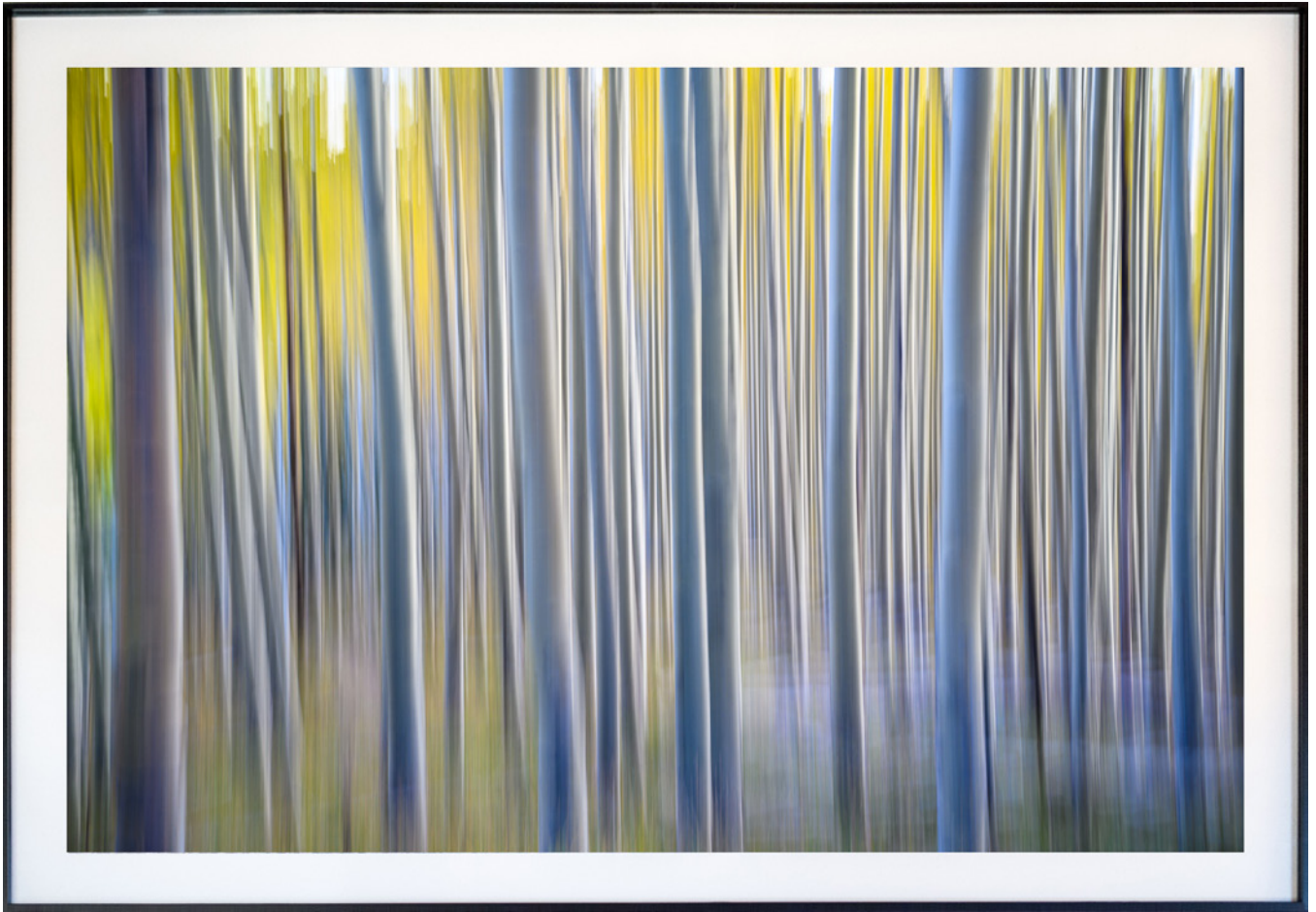


To get the ball rolling for the fall holiday season, I am happy to announce a 15% off sale on all of my fine art prints until December 31st, 2022. How this works is very simple, just take 15% off my standard fine art print pricing, which can be found [here on my website](#), and [contact me](#) to order the print. This sale includes both paper

prints and metal prints. Also, note that my print pricing includes free shipping (in the continental USA) as well as print mounting on DiBond (for paper prints). All metal prints come ready to hang on the wall.

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. Available print sizes are listed on the pricing page. 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. All paper prints are made on the finest baryta photographic papers.

Above is a sample paper print (framing not included) that I have made in the last few months to give you an idea of just how stunning these turn out when framed up.

Also, the metal prints I am offering, printed by Blazing

Editions, are absolutely stunning as well and are also on sale. Just as with the paper prints, all of my metal prints come mounted (as they are printed directly on the metal) and additionally they come with a backing or frame so that they can be hung on the wall straight out of the box. A few examples of how the metal prints can be mounted are shown on my [website](#). The metal prints are absolutely stunning, especially in the larger sizes and since these are already mounted and ready to hang on the wall they also save a lot of money that would be spent on framing.

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

## workshops

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# Photography Workshops

*An overview of workshops and online classes with Michael Clark*

**E**ach year I teach a few workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2023. For more information on these workshops, and to find out how to register, go to the [Workshops](#) page on my blog or click on the links in the descriptions below.

### **JAPAN: THE ART OF MOTION**

*Nobechi Creative - Multiple Locations in Japan  
May 2023*

*This one has been on the books for three years now, but we are finally going to make it go in May 2023. Japan is now open again for the first time since the Covid-19 pandemic began and Nobechi Creative has started to run a few in-person workshops in Japan. Stay tuned for more details and final pricing of this workshop.*

Not just a travel photo tour, not just a lighting workshop, but a unique opportunity to photograph Japan in Motion: Martial artists, theatre performers, bullet trains and festivals to create a strong, dynamic body of work that will have your friends and colleagues in awe of your photography, while learning invaluable lighting techniques courtesy of Michael, and diving deeply into the beautiful Japanese culture through George.

Japan is a country constantly on the move. With the fastest bullet trains in the world, and sports old and new, there are ample opportunities to create ambitious images of both the modern and ancient Japanese culture in motion. In this photography workshop with Michael Clark and George Nobechi we will push ourselves to create dynamic images that impart motion into the world of still photography. Using advanced lighting techniques\*\*\* with both strobes and continuous lights (not to worry if you are new to lights—Michael and George will be there to help you), incorporating motion blur, and featuring incredible athletes and martial artists we will set up a wide variety of scenarios to produce stunning images.

Michael has spent the entirety of his career capturing images of athletes in motion in remote locations for some of the most prestigious clients in the World including Apple, Nike, Nikon, Fujifilm, Red Bull, Nokia, National Geographic, Sports Illustrated and many more. In Japan we will adapt his techniques to a wide variety of traditional sports, performances, culture and events in stunning locations. The aim of this workshop is to craft images that are dramatic, unusual and out of the norm—images that stand out and grab the viewer's attention but are unmistakably Japanese.

We will start with a few days in Tokyo, where we have





*Image from the Fushimi Inari Taisha near Kyoto, Japan. Even though we won't be going to the Fushimi Inari Taisha, Japan offers some incredible photographic opportunities and in Japan: The Art of Motion workshop we will explore the possibilities of capturing athletes, martial artists and actors performing in the landscape.*

access to some phenomenal athletes and performing artists in a variety of venues. For the second part of the workshop we will head out into the beautiful Japanese countryside and work with martial artists, dancers and traditional performers. In addition we will have the opportunity to photograph an exhilarating festival, where we will be able to take the techniques we have learned and use them in an uncontrolled environment. Throughout the workshop we will have plenty of time to really get creative and explore the possibilities in each location.

Of course, throughout the workshop, Michael will also share his extensive knowledge of digital workflow and

show participants how he works up his images to a very high level. Each day will find us on location capturing powerful images in addition to image critiques, discussions on various techniques, and thinking through the types of images we hope to create that day. Michael first visited Japan in May of 2019 and enjoyed the country so much he immediately hatched the idea to coordinate with George on creating this unique workshop. George, with his extensive knowledge of Japan, and its culture, will be our guide to help us stay true to the traditions and also dial in our experience so that we not only come away with incredible images but also get to experience a side of Japan that is rarely seen by tourists. George will also

instruct you in filling out your Japan portfolio with carefully crafted landscapes, environmental portraits and still-life shooting around the main workshop photography led and taught by Michael.

Class size: 6 people (Minimum 5 people required for the class to proceed.) All lighting will be provided by Elinchrom Japan.

Cost: TBD

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

## Workshop Testimonials

"Michael certainly knows his stuff. From Capture to Print: The Complete Digital Photographer's Workflow is delivered in an easy to follow and comprehensive manner that covers many things that you may not expect – such as how to choose proper lighting to view and evaluate your prints or what color shirt to wear when you're correcting images. I really appreciated that this is a pro workflow course delivered by a pro photographer. Michael is also a superb teacher, a superb communicator, who is welcoming and inviting of questions from all his participants. I took this workshop in June of 2020, using Zoom software. I was really amazed by how Michael made it seem like he's been doing these workshops forever this way! Thank you Michael! It was a great pleasure being part of this workshop with so many other amazing photographers and a great pleasure to meet you. I learned much which is valuable to me and enjoyed doing so at the same time. And just to reiterate, as to the workshop: I'm impressed." – Stephen Starkman, Toronto

"Michael is the best instructor I have taken a workshop from." – Participant, Cutting-Edge Lighting Workshop

"Michael set an incredibly high bar for his workshop. He gave 110%, covered a broad range of topics and did an outstanding job." – Chris Council, Adventure Photography Workshop

"Within the short time I've been studying and practicing photography, I have had teachers who are good educators, but not great photographers, and vice versa, but few who are both. Count yourself in these narrow ranks. I went through four years of college and several careers getting less candid advice and encouragement than I got in four days with you. For what it is worth, thank you for that." – Brandon McMahon, Adventure Photography Workshop

"Thanks for running such a great workshop. I couldn't have chosen better photo shoot locations, and the post-shoot critiques were invaluable. It's the first time I've had my work reviewed, and I learned a ton from each session. While I didn't go into the workshop expecting to pick-up too many marketing and business tips, I've come out of last week inspired to set-up my photo website in earnest." – Jeff Hylok, Adventure Photography Workshop

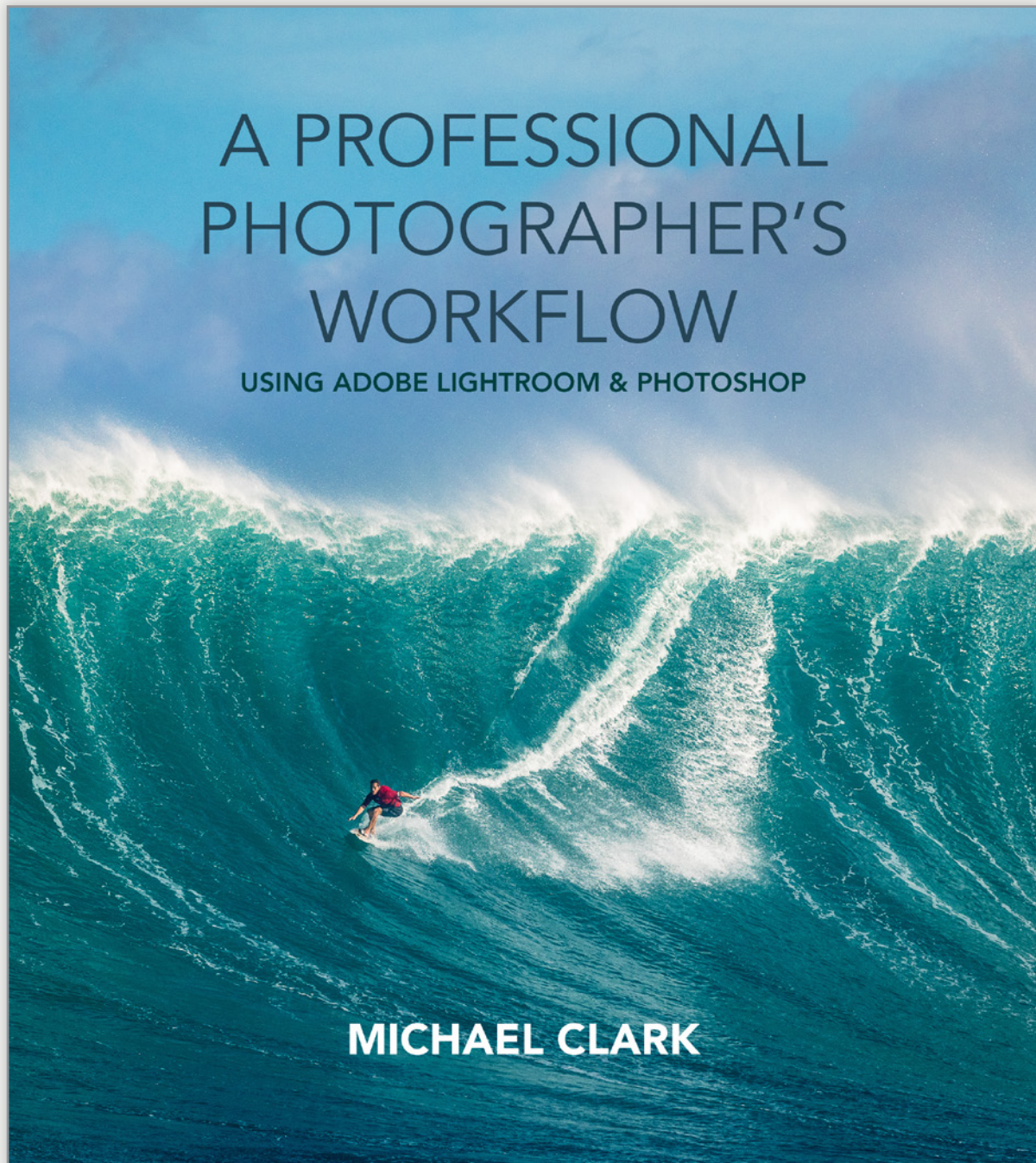
"Priceless chance to learn from the absolute best. Every photographer should take this class!" – Jill Sanders, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow available on CreativeLIVE

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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# FUJIFILM GF20-35mm Lens

*A wicked-sharp ultra wide-angle Zoom lens for the GFX system*



*Disclaimer: I was provided this lens by FUJIFILM USA. I am not an official ambassador for Fujifilm, but I have worked closely with them since 2019 when I created photographs for the launch of the GFX 100. In late 2020 I also helped create images for the launch of the GFX 100S as well. Hence, I am tight with the amazing Fujifilm family, but they did not ask me to write this review and these are my thoughts. The GFX system has been my main camera system since early 2019.*

**E**arlier this summer I received a package from Fujifilm containing the new top-secret GF20-35mm

f/4 lens. I took it with me on several assignments and personal projects including to Florida when I was out at Kennedy Space Center to cover the Artemis 1 launch. This wide angle lens wasn't the right lens to cover the launch with but I was able to take it out and shoot on the water, in the water (using an Aquatech water housing) and by the water as seen in the images featured in this review.

Right off the bat here, I have to say what everyone who has used the Fujifilm GFX system already knows—there





*This image was created while out in Florida for the NASA Artemis 1 launch. I had a few extra days and went SUP Paddling with Gil Hidalgo near Cocoa Beach. For this image I had the GFX 100S and the GF20-35 in an Aquatech water housing strapped to the top of my SUP board. My thanks to Gil for showing me the area.*

are no duds in the GFX system. All of the lenses are spectacular. Sure there are a few standout lenses like the GF110 and the GF250, as well as the newer GF80 mm f/1.7. All of the zooms are remarkable as well—and I take those on just about every assignment. The GF20-35mm lens is yet another stellar zoom lens that expands the range of the GFX system to a 15mm equivalent in 35mm.

It is a wicked sharp lens at all focal lengths. In fact it is so sharp that it might have just replaced my GF23mm lens, which used to be my go to landscape lens. The 20mm end of this zoom broadens out that angle of view to a more preferable super wide-angle perspective — and I greatly appreciate that for landscape photography. As can be seen above and on the next page, that 20mm focal



*This image was created just down the street from my hotel in Melbourne, Florida at Paradise Beach. I had the GFX 100S and the GF20-35 on a tripod and whip-panned the camera using a slow shutter speed to create the motion blur. It must of looked pretty funny to those walking by as I panned the camera hundreds of times without looking through the viewfinder. I spent nearly an hour taking shots and dialing in the tripod level to make sure the horizon stayed pin sharp as I panned.*

length offers a gorgeous frame and it is currently one of the widest lenses available for any digital medium format system.

One of the first things you notice when you pick up the GF20-35 is how light it is. The lens itself is not massive but it is large enough that you might expect it to weigh a

lot. At only 725 grams (1.59 pounds) it is incredibly light. That is a huge bonus as a lot of us are going to be hiking long distances with this lens. The lens is well balanced and because it is so light it really sits well on any of the GFX cameras, especially the GFX 100S. Aside from the weight, it is also an internally focusing lens, meaning it does not extend when you zoom or focus the lens. The

front also does not rotate so your graduated neutral density filters stay just as you placed them on the front of the lens. Fujifilm definitely thought through a lot of these issues that landscape photographers wanted when they designed this lens.

While the f/4 aperture might seem slow to some photographers, especially those not used to the medium format world, it is actually quite impressive given that wide angle medium format lenses from other manufacturers can be f/4.5 up to f/4.8. I am not sure how they pulled that off without making the lens massive but it is great to have a relatively fast wide angle zoom. That aperture provides relatively shallow depth of field—similar to an f/2.8 or f/3.2 full-frame equivalent 15mm lens.

One of the coolest set of images I have created so far with this lens are the motion blur images of the Atlantic Ocean as shown on the previous page and also in the Portfolio section on pages 40-41. I was inspired seeing what some of the surf photographers have done with longer lenses and set out to Paradise Beach in Melbourne, Florida. I set up my Gitzo tripod and took the time to level it accurately. Then I set about taking hundreds of whip-pan blurs. Basically, I whipped the camera horizontally from left to right and then back right to left and used a slow shutter speed to create the motion blur as seen here. It took a fair bit of experimentation to figure out the best shutter speed and the motion itself. I am sure it looked pretty hilarious to those walking by watching me whip the camera around. The reason I took so many images is that you have to pan the camera just so to maintain the horizon as a sharp line—and also get the right wave pattern that creates the streaks in the foreground. This surely didn't test out the sharpness of this lens, but

it goes to show that the wide angle perspective really comes in handy for making unique images. The image shown as a double page spread in the portfolio section ticked all of the boxes for me in terms of the waves shapes and the perfect whip-pan.

The GF20-35 also creates a medium format f/4 to f/5.6 holy trinity as well. The GF20-35, the GF45-100, and the GF 100-200 are all workhorse lenses. In the past, I have pretty much taken at a minimum the GF32-64, the GF80 and the GF100-200 with me on assignments. Now that the 20-35 is on the scene I will have to adjust which lenses I take with me on assignments given the needs of that gig. There is something really special about the look and feel of the images created with the GF80mm f/1.7 and I take it on pretty much every assignment no matter what. I think the GF20-35 is going to fit into that category as well since it quite unique. It feels very much like a modern version of the legendary f-mount Nikkor 14-24mm f/2.8 lens that I used for a few decades, but it is lighter, smaller and much sharper than that lens ever was and of course it is for a camera with a slightly different aspect ratio.

With an 82mm filter thread the front element is larger than normal but not that much more so. It seems most of the modern mirrorless lenses have larger filter threads and this one is no different. 82mm is a size many photographers have filters in and use step-down rings to accommodate smaller filter threads. Certainly in the GFX system this is the case, but also among many of the 35mm full-frame format camera lenses as well.

I am not sure there is that much more to say, the GF20-35 is everything you would want from a wide-angle zoom. Sure there is some very slight distortion at the wider end





*Even in low light at f/4 this lens shines. While touring the very impressive Kennedy Space Center visitor center I snapped quite a few photos with the GFX 100S at ISOs ranging from 800 to 3200. Color rendition, contrast and bokeh are all top-notch. This lens also fits neatly in an f/4 trinity with the GF45-100 and GF100-200.*

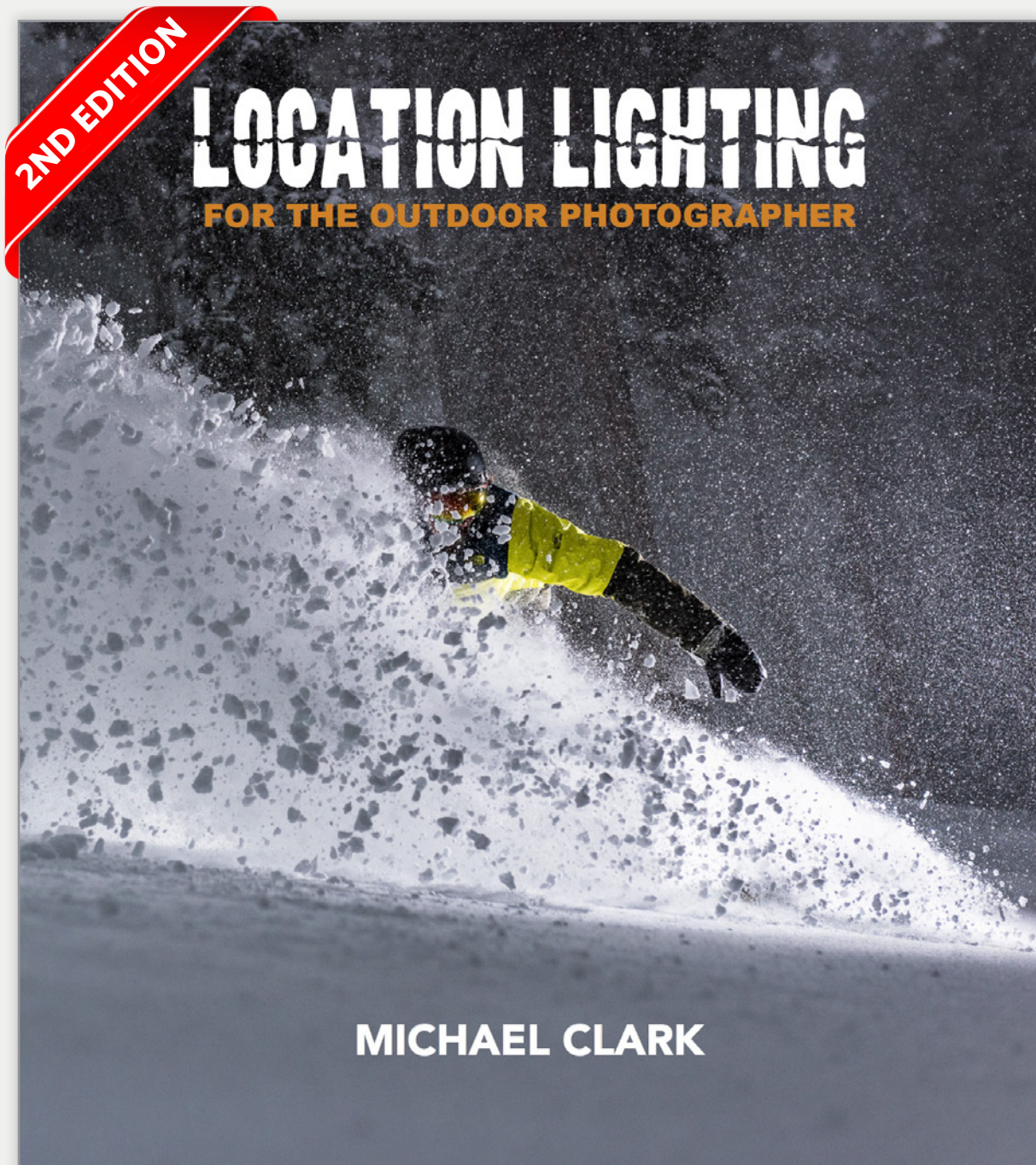
of the zoom range, but that is very easily corrected in post-processing. I haven't noticed much if any chromatic aberration. And as usual the lens is weather resistant, which I put to the test in the rain out in Florida—it passed with flying colors. The price of this lens is not inexpensive at \$2,399.00, but in the medium format world, that is pretty darn reasonable. If you are in need of a wide angle

medium format zoom for the GFX system, this is the one. You won't be disappointed. My thanks to Fujifilm USA for sending this lens my way and for all of their support these past four years—it has been one of the biggest honors of my career to be a part of their team. They have knocked it out of the park yet again with this zoom. For more information on the GF20-35 please visit the Fujifilm [website](https://www.fujifilm.com).



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*on assignment:*




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Last month I was privileged to work with a new client—Teton Ridge. Teton Ridge happens to own the Arizona Ridge Riders, a professional bull riding team based out of Glendale, Arizona. The assignment was to spend five days with the team as they competed in the PBR Teams competition—i.e. the Professional Bull Riding Teams competition, which is a totally new concept that started earlier this year. The idea is that instead of bull riders competing against each other individually, they would work together as a team and compete against other teams of bull riders from across the country. This year there were eight different teams. The Arizona Ridge Riders, built mostly from a multitude of Brazilian bull riders, came in second and very narrowly missed out on winning the entire season due to a controversial judgment call in the finals.

As many of my readers will have surmised, bull riding is not one of my usual assignments as an adventure photographer. The gig came my way through a producer that used to work with Red Bull. Over the years I have photographed a few rodeos in Santa Fe and Jackson Hole and found them fascinating in many ways—a new sport and a totally new culture as well. My grandfather had a farm in Missouri and my father worked on that farm growing up but I only spent a few weeks each summer there. I can't say I really worked on the farm, only helped out here and there and I am sure I wasn't that much help. But it did offer me a glimpse of that culture. Hence, this assignment was an opportunity—as with many other assignments—to explore another world. And honestly, this is a fascinating world.

The way it was described to me is that Teton Ridge aims to do for western culture what Red Bull has done for

adventure sports. Bull riding is just a small part of their larger portfolio. I started off with the Ridge Riders in their locker room. The scene was a photographic goldmine. The bull riders were prepping their gear, heating up a sticky orb of golden rosin and praying over their equipment for their coming encounter with an 1,800-pound (816 Kg) bull. This was bull riding at the highest levels. While this assignment may seem way out of left field for an adventure photographer, a large part of my work is documenting and creating images of athletes dealing with risk and all that entails. In that sense, this assignment fits in perfectly with all of my other adventure images.

For the three day PBR event I was given complete access to just about any area I could dream up. I started out simple, in the locker rooms and on the sides close to the pens where the bulls would launch from and then moved closer and closer into the athlete holding area right next to the bulls and later sitting just next to the TV crew filming the event in what is known as the Dragon's Den. It seemed I was the only guy at the entire event not wearing a cowboy hat, a giant belt-buckle and cowboy boots. My tennis shoes and climber baseball cap stood out but true to form in my experience with western culture, everybody was kind and courteous—and allowed me to photograph intimate moments as they prayed and prepared.

The PBR Teams events are not dissimilar to a rock concert in terms of lighting, effects, smoke, fire and pyrotechnics. This was a big time event. I only went into the athlete area where they launched the bulls for one round but that was enough to get a feeling for the power of the bulls and the courage of the athletes. In some of the photos on the following pages, you will see hooves only inches away

from the front of my 20mm lens. It seems like those hooves pop out of the picture for a few of them.

I can't even imagine what it must be like to prepare to ride a bull. The mindset and experience required obviously takes years to refine at this level—as with many other sports. Honestly, there are very few other sports I can even compare this with. Perhaps big wave surfing (on the largest waves) and the Red Bull Rampage, where world-class downhill mountain bikers descend an 800-foot cliff with tricks they have built into the face of the hillside. But those comparisons still seem to fall flat having seen bull riding at this level up close. The odds of getting injured are extremely high no matter what your skill level. I saw a number of riders get stepped on or bucked off violently and they literally crawled out of the arena over to the medical teams standing by. Watching some of the bull riders walk around the arena you could see by the way they walked, their posture or their limping that they had been injured many times before. It's certainly not a sport for the faint of heart.

My assignment was to come in as an outsider and capture images of everything, including the action, so that Teton Ridge and the Arizona Ridge Riders would have a lot of images to work with. The event was held indoors at an Arena in Glendale, Arizona—and the lighting was dark to say the least. I was happy to have brought with me some very fast f/1.2, f/1.7 and f/1.8 lenses. For most of the assignment I was photographing wide open at f/1.2 to f/2.8, depending on the lens, and at ISO 6,400. The 50mm f/1.2 lens I rented turned out to be a lifesaver in the dark arena. Never before have I shot fast-paced action like this with a 50mm f/1.2 lens. It seemed totally absurd to work with such a lens for the action when I had

no control over anything but it really paid off. The images have a look to them that I have only ever found with medium format cameras. For some of the images, I also employed a post-processing trick and added a tilt-shift filter—that looks exactly like using a tilt-shift lens—to the images so that I isolate the bull and the rider a bit more. Granted the images were shot wide open so this is a subtle trick but an effective one. My producer passed on a note to me after the first night of competition saying “in fifteen years of working on the PBR these are the first images I have ever seen that aren't just a bunch of heads...,” meaning they had a very different look and feel. My client was pretty happy with that comment. And so was I, especially since I was brought in to get something different. As the aesthetic of the team is all black and white—the uniforms, the images, and the graphics—it seemed only fitting that I deliver the images in color and black and white as well. The lighting in the arena had so many different color temperatures bouncing around that black and white solved a lot of technical issues as well. Here in this article, I am showing mostly black and white images as I like the feel of them and a few color images just to spice it up. I put this group of images together to show the comradery of the team, the preparation of the riders, and the event itself.

One of the best parts of my job as a professional photographer is to be able to step into different worlds and this assignment did not disappoint. Congratulations to the entire team on coming in a close second in the first season of the PBR teams competition. My sincere thanks to [Teton Ridge](#) and the [Arizona Ridge Riders](#) for bringing me in and allowing me to be a small part of their world for a week. At some point, once the client uses the images, I will upload a larger selection to my website. Stay tuned.























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portfolio





# On Exploration

*by Michael Clark*

**F**or my entire career I have been documenting and creating images of explorers, adventurers and athletes pushing themselves and exploring the world around them by various means. Of course, most of my work has been centered on adventure sports, which is not only an exploration of an athlete's physical abilities but also their mental capacity as well. Exploration, by definition, is risky and forces us to face our fears. I am fascinated by fear, how individuals deal with it, how they assess risk, and overcome it to reach their full potential. This exploration of the inner self and how we interact with the landscape around us is an instinct we all share. I am always wanting to go see what is over that next hill or mountain—or to tackle that new adventure.

When documenting these adventures I am often a participant in the action right there alongside the athletes. Why am I obsessed with adventure sports? Partly because it helps to discover yourself and allows me to see how I deal with risk, with danger, and with stressful, intense moments. It helps to push my own boundaries, and hopefully make me a more aware, alive human being. It also opens up different cultures and peoples; affording the opportunity to expand your perception of the world and your place in it. That is one of the beauties of working as a photographer—the ability to step into another person's world and explore what they do and how they do it. It

keeps the work fresh and exciting for me and hopefully that translates into the images. I am pretty sure this aspect of photography is also a big reason so many people are intrigued by this type of career.

I am fascinated by nature and our place in it. Creating landscape images can be just as exciting as documenting the launch of NASA's Artemis 1 rocket. In the case of creating a landscape image it is finding and isolating an awe-inspiring view—and perhaps even injecting your own creativity into the process. In the case of a rocket launching off the planet, there is a sense of awe in the power of humans to explore their planet and the universe—and sharing one small step in that process of exploration is very exciting. How I create the images here in this Newsletter and on my website is also a form of exploration. I am constantly pushing to see what I can create and how I can push that forward as well.

While these adventure sports may seem trivial and selfish to some, all humans like to play. Our curiosities and our obsessions may differ but that need to play is at the heart of exploration. We, as humans, like to imagine what is possible and try out that which is deemed impossible. Whether it is bull riding, wingsuit B.A.S.E. jumping or space exploration, it is all a form of exploration in one shape or another. That is the spice of life.



## parting shot



*Red Bull Air Force Team member Andy Farrington, skydives into the Columbus Pride Festival in Columbus, Ohio, USA on 18 June, 2022.*

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All of my images are available as fine art prints. Each image is printed on archival papers and using archival processes to insure image quality and color fidelity. Please contact me if you are interested in purchasing a print. All of my images are also available as spectacular Metal Prints.



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