

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



FALL 2023



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Cover Image: JT Hartman surfing a wave while whitewater kayaking below Lower Mesa Falls on the Henry's Fork River in Idaho. Opposite Page: Morning light on Hickman Bridge in Capitol Reef National Park, Utah.





editorial

Dropping In

Back in Action

This summer and fall has been a very exciting time—especially with my assignment for the launch of the incredible new FUJIFILM GFX 100 II medium format camera and it being officially announced in early September in Stockholm, Sweden. Fujifilm was kind enough to fly me over to Stockholm for the launch of the camera even though I didn't have any presentations to give or any responsibilities at the event. It was great to see everyone from Fujifilm again and to meet other photographers excited about the Fujifilm brand. To say I am excited about this new powerhouse camera would be a serious understatement.

This newsletter is filled with the latest updates including some images that got Honorable mentions in the 2023 International Photography Awards competition, information on a few upcoming photography workshops in 2024, and a preview of the new GFX 100 II. The main feature article in this issue goes behind the scenes on my assignment photographing whitewater kayaking with the GFX 100 II. One of the images created on that assignment is shown on the following page.

Lastly, I have included an editorial at the end of this Newsletter going into detail about the current state of the photography industry. This fall seems to be the worst time in the photo industry since way back in 2008.

Somehow assignment photography has nearly completely stopped. Many of my peers have said they have little if any work at the moment and that seems to be persisting industry wide. I am not a 100% sure why this is but my editorial tackles just one of many issues affecting the industry—and the greater economy in general. Luckily, I have had a few small assignments and also have a few photo workshops this fall. I have had three assignments this fall that were a go but ended up being pushed back to 2024. Fingers crossed they actually happen in 2024.

As I write this, the state of the World seems like it is in a very scary place. War has broken out in Israel and the news has had some especially sobering headlines. I sincerely hope that peace can be regained and we as a species can get back to a stable place.

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: JT Hartman kayaking Lower Mesa Falls on the Henry's Fork River in Idaho.

Recent Clients: Amazon, Red Bull, Fujifilm, Teton Ridge, New Mexico Tourism, New Mexico Department of Transportation and Summit Workshops.



International Photography Awards

Two images receive an Honorable Mention in the 2023 IPA competition

In the 2023 International Photography Awards, two of my images were awarded with Honorable Mentions. The first image, shown at the top of the next page, was featured in the Professional Advertising (Brand Campaign) category. This downhill skateboarding image was created for the launch of the FUJIFILM GFX100S camera back in 2021. This image has won a few different awards so it was great to see it be chosen again in the 2023 IPA competition.

The second image, shown on the bottom of the next page, was featured in the Professional Advertising (Other) category. This image was created for New Mexico Tourism down in White Sands National Park and has also won a few awards since it was created. Notably it was also featured in the 2022 Communication Arts Photo Annual. These Astronaut images have garnered a lot of praise and have sold as fine art prints—and they have also gotten me a few assignments as well.

Interestingly, both of these images were created with the FUJIFILM GFX100S medium format digital camera, which has become my main working camera until it was superseded by the GFX100 II just a few days ago. It is great to see both of these images get some recognition.

To give some context about the International

Photography Awards here is some information from the IPA website, “The International Photography Awards™ conducts an annual competition for professional, amateur, and student photographers on a global scale, creating one of the most ambitious and comprehensive photo competitions in the photography world today.

The category winners in both professional and amateur levels, compete for IPA’s top two awards, which are announced at the annual Lucie Awards Gala. The main professional prize is International Photographer of the Year, selected from the 11 professional category winners and earning the coveted Lucie Trophy and a cash prize of \$12,000.

IPA is a sister-effort of the Lucie Foundation, 501(c) 3 non-profit, charitable foundation whose mission is to honor master photographers, discover and cultivate emerging talent, and promote the appreciation of photography worldwide. The annual programming of the Lucie Foundation is funded largely through the International Photography Awards, including the signature event, the Lucie Awards.”

My thanks to the IPA awards and the judges for choosing a few of my images. I am already thinking about images to submit for the 2024 IPA competition.

Downhill Skateboarding



Photographer	Michael Clark
Prize	Honorable Mention
Company/Studio	Michael Clark Photography
Date of Photograph	November 18, 2020
Technical Info	1/6th second, f/8 at iso 200, medium format sensor

Dusty Hampton downhill skating on Stuart Road in southern California. This image was created for the launch of the FUJIFILM GFX 100S medium format camera.

An Astronaut on Planet White Sands - Image 2



Photographer	Michael Clark
Prize	Honorable Mention
Company/Studio	Michael Clark Photography
Date of Photograph	9/22/2021
Technical Info	1/2000th, f/4 at ISO 100, medium format sensor

Mike Shinkens in an Astronaut suit at White Sands National Park in Alamogordo, New Mexico. This image was created for New Mexico Tourism to promote travel to White Sands National Park.

workshops

Photography Workshops

An overview of workshops and online classes with Michael Clark

Each 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 2024. 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.

PATAGONIA CLASSIC

Visionary Wild - Argentina and Chile

Instructors: Justin Black and Michael Clark

April 2-17, 2024

Note: This will be my first workshop with the incredible folks at Visionary Wild and I am very excited to head back to one of my favorite places in the world. I have done workshops in Patagonia before but Visionary Wild has it dialed to an incredibly high level. If the weather cooperates, participants will certainly come back with stunning images.

Patagonia: the word is synonymous with awe-inspiring landscapes, and Torres del Paine National Park, Perito Moreno Glacier, and the peaks of the Fitz Roy region are the crown jewels. This hybrid program – part expedition, part workshop, led by acclaimed adventure photographer Michael Clark and Justin Black of Visionary Wild is designed to maximize opportunities to execute well-crafted

and compelling photographs that capture the spirit of this incredible place. Participants will have ample time to get to know this sublime region during its colorful autumn splendor, and your photography there will benefit from the opportunity to revisit fruitful situations to apply lessons learned and to take advantage of changing weather and light. Assuming the weather cooperates, moonless nights during our itinerary will mean excellent opportunities to incorporate the Milky Way in nocturnal landscapes. The goal is for each participant to come away from this trip with a strong body of work, a new body of knowledge, new friendships, rejuvenation, and priceless memories.

Torres del Paine National Park and Biosphere Reserve is the centerpiece of Patagonia – the ultimate distillation of the region's most inspiring qualities. It's one of those rare places that routinely exceeds the grandest dreams of even the most experienced photographers. Peaks and spires thrust abruptly upward above turquoise lakes, forcing moisture-laden winds off the ocean to form soaring lenticular clouds that catch the fiery sunrise and sunset alpenglow. Glaciers spill down from the Patagonian ice cap, depositing cobalt blue icebergs on the shores of Lago Grey. Endemic lenga tree forests glow in hues of gold and copper in the southern autumn. Rivers tumble over cascading waterfalls as condors ride thermals on the



The Cerro Torre and Cerro Fitz Roy Massifs as seen from the road coming into El Chalten, Argentina. Patagonia is one of my favorite areas in the World to explore. There are epic landscapes just about everywhere you go, but Cerro Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre are perhaps the most famous mountains in the region.

flanks of the Cordillera del Paine mountains. Guanacos and foxes range over the golden pampas, and flamingos wade the lagoons. At this time of year, the days are a manageable length with extended periods of dawn and dusk, and the sun never rises more than 35 degrees above the horizon. The quality of light is spectacular.

Our trip begins in Punta Arenas, Chile, where our local guide team and driver – good friends of ours who are regarded as some of the very best in Patagonia – will meet you at the airport and transfer you to Hotel Cabo de Hornos, a recently remodeled boutique hotel on the town's main square. We'll all gather there and go out as a group

for a welcome dinner at one of our favorite restaurants nearby to get to know everyone. The next day we proceed to Torres del Paine National Park (with lunch at a restaurant along the way) where we'll check into Hotel Lago Grey, the first of three excellent lodges in the park that will serve as our base camps for the next seven days and nights – the others are the spectacularly located Hostería Pehoe, and recently upgraded Hotel Las Torres.

After Torres, we cross the border into Argentina, for a four-hour drive to El Calafate on the shores of Lago Argentino (a.k.a. Lago General Carrera on the Chilean side of the border). Our “basecamp” for two nights will be the

beautiful four-star Alto Calafate Hotel, from which we will make excursions by van to the expansive Perito Moreno Glacier framed in autumn color, as well as other scenic highlights.

Then it's on to El Chalten in Los Glaciares National Park, the gateway to the spectacularly soaring granite spires of the peaks Fitz Roy and Cerro Torre, renowned among alpinists as world-class climbs (Justin's mentor Galen Rowell made an ascent of Fitz Roy in 1985). For four nights, we will stay at Posada Lunajuim Hotel, an excellent three-star accommodation. We will make use of this towering sublime mountain backdrop by making excursions to various vista points, rivers, lake shores, autumn forests, and more to find compelling foregrounds for our compositions. As our trip draws to a close, we will return to Calafate for another night at Alto Calafate Hotel before catching departing flights to Buenos Aires and home.

Michael Clark and Justin Black will lead the small group on field sessions adapted to make the most of the prevailing conditions each day. Emphasis will be on photography and hands-on mentoring in the field. We'll photograph when the conditions are good, and we'll gather in the lodge for presentations on light, composition, visualization, technique, and digital workflow at times when light or weather aren't as conducive for photography (during harsh mid-day light, if a rain storm passes through, etc.). We will also hold constructive critiques of participant photographs, and then head back out into the field to apply what we've learned.

Excursions will include a trip by ferry to visit the face of Glacier Grey and, in our comfortable group vehicles, spectacular locations that we have scouted in detail on

prior visits. Some locations involve short hikes, but nothing particularly strenuous.

After dusk each day, we will gather for a nice dinner and some good Chilean and Argentine wine. Then it's off to bed to rest, as most mornings we'll be out around 6:00am to take advantage of the incredible pre-dawn light. Breakfasts and lunches will be handled in relation to our photographic activities, served either at our lodges or in the field as a gourmet picnic.

The full itinerary and details on costs are outlined on Visionary Wild's website along with very detailed information on what to expect, the highlights of the trip, what's included and what's not included, and details on accommodations. Also, there is a large gallery of images on their website showing what you can expect to photograph as well. This is going to be an epic adventure.

Cost: from \$13,995 to \$15,995 USD

For more information and to register for this fantastic workshop visit [Visionary Wild](#).

JAPAN: THE ART OF MOTION

Nobechi Creative - Multiple Locations in Japan

May 16-25, 2024

Not just a travel photo tour, not just a workshop, but a unique opportunity to photograph Japan in Motion: Martial artists, sumo wrestling, traditional performers, bustling cities, bullet trains and more 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



A steep staircase from the Kimpusen-ji temple that leads down to the Noten-okami temple in Yoshino National Park near Nara, Japan. The Fall Colors of Shinshu and Hida workshop will have dozens of fascinating mountainous locations like this that we will visit and photograph.

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 Nobechei we will push ourselves to create dynamic images that impart motion into the world of still photography. Using a combination of natural light and artificial lighting techniques (not to worry if you are new to lights—Michael and George will be there to help you),

incorporating motion blur, and featuring both fast-moving and slower-moving action, we will set up a wide variety of scenarios to practice and 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 a dynamic variety of locations planned: everything from bullet trains whooshing by to sumo wrestlers in the ring on a tournament day to motion under the neon signs at night.

For the second part of the workshop we will travel to the beautiful countryside town of Takayama, known for its well-preserved old streets to work with martial artists and traditional performers. Through out the workshop we will have plenty of time to really get creative and explore the possibilities in each location, while also taking most meals together and enjoying the amazing food Japan has to offer.

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 come away with incredible images. 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.

***All lighting equipment will be provided by Elinchrom and Michael will be there to help fine tune and set up the lighting for all participants.

Class size will be limited to 8 participants

Included in this workshop are nine nights hotel accommodations, all domestic transportation by bullet train and local train, one ticket to the Sumo Grand Tournament, and all admissions, location fees, model fees.

Tuition: \$7,995 per person for double occupancy (+3% for credit card payments), \$8,695 per person for single occupancy (+3% for credit card payments).

Deposit: A \$2,500 deposit will be required to secure a booking. The balance will be due 90 days before departure.

For more information and to register for this workshop visit the [Nobechei 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



The subways in Stockholm, Sweden are a great example of using motion blur to create an effective storytelling image. For our workshop in Japan: The Art of Motion, we will explore many different ways to convey, freeze and relay the motion in a still image.

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! It was a great pleasure being part of this workshop with so many other amazing photographers. 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 im-

pressed." – 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



In this image I used the multiple exposure mode on my digital camera and synchronized strobes to create an array of implied motion. For our workshop in Japan: The Art of Motion, we will explore many different ways to convey, freeze and relay the motion in a still image.

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

“Your workshop at Santa Fe was too good and I came away with a lot of knowledge and renewed energy. The

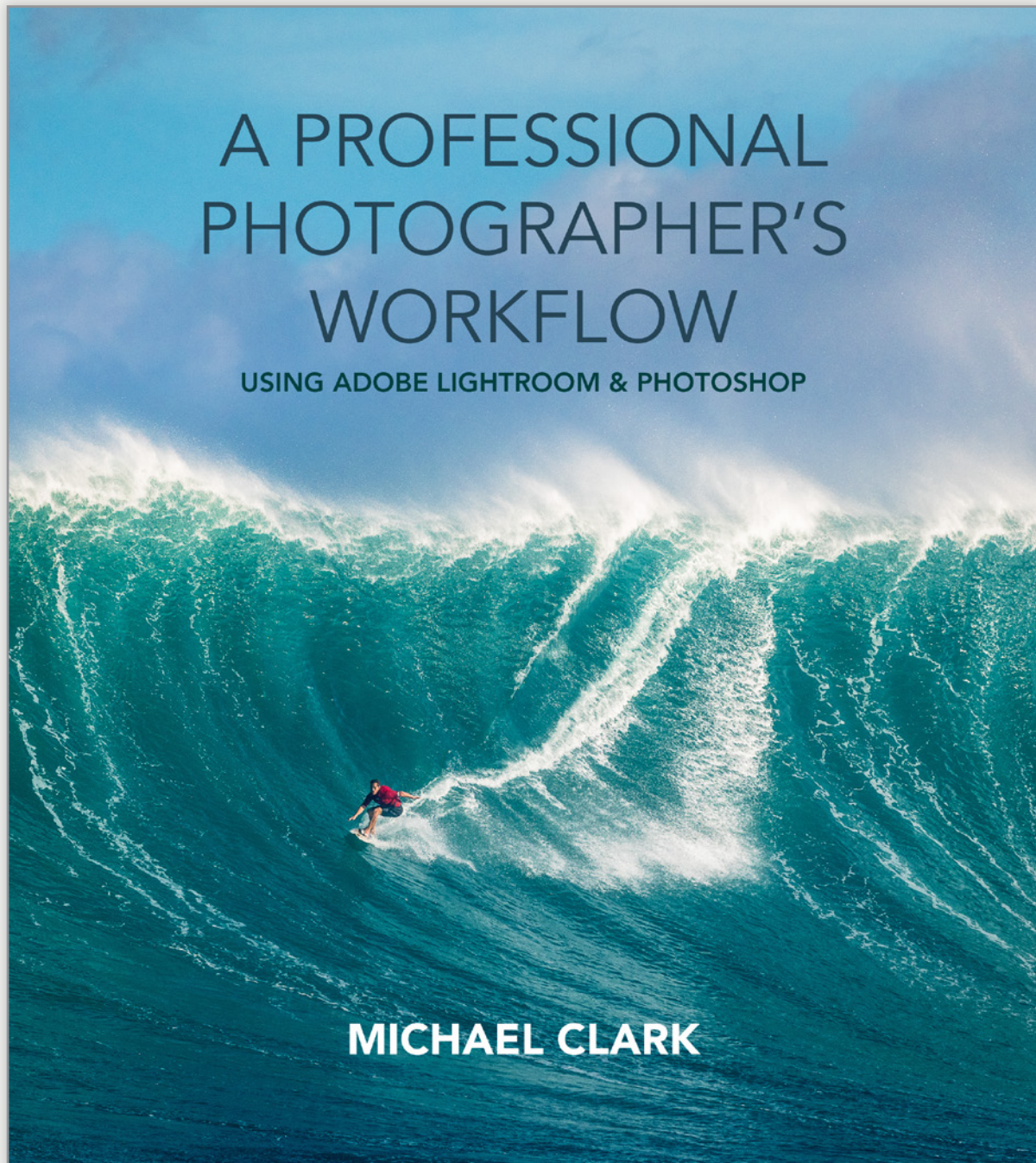
level of expertise that you and Michael shared was top-notch and I hope to repeat this experience again. Thanks for such a great workshop!” – Participant in the 2008 Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and myself.

“My mind is still spinning and I can’t help but smile every time I think of the wonderful experience garnered from our workshop. Between what I learned from the two of you, as well as from my talented classmates – this was a great experience, and I would do it again.” – Participant in the 2008 Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and myself.

As can be seen this section of the Newsletter, in-person workshops are spinning back up to pre-pandemic levels. There are some fantastic workshops and adventures on offer here and I will add more to the calendar as they are available. There are definitely a few others in the works for 2024. For more information on my upcoming workshops please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my blog.

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THE FUJIFILM GFX100 II

Fujifilm's top-tier large format camera gets a massive upgrade



Disclaimer: While I am not one of Fujifilm's X-Photographers, I was paid to work with the FUJIFILM GFX 100 II on an assignment in the summer of 2023 as part of the launch for this camera. I want my readers to be aware of this up front. With that in mind, also know that the original GFX 100 and GFX 100S have been my main cameras since 2019 and the GFX 100 II will be a very welcome addition. As such, I am certainly biased. I am always looking for the best image quality and the

best camera for my needs. For those that need or want this caliber of camera, I highly suggest trying it out to see if it will work for you and your needs.

Having worked with the FUJIFILM GFX100 II on assignment for the launch of this camera, I thought I would share my thoughts on the camera even though I was obviously working with a prototype pre-production



JT Hartman kayaking Lower Mesa Falls on the Henry's Fork River in Idaho. For this image I used the GF250mm f/4 lens along with the 1.4x teleconverter to get a focal length of 350mm (which in 35mm terms is roughly a 280mm lens). I blasted away at 8 fps to get a full sequence of the drop.

camera. The camera I worked with was handmade in Japan, expressly for the purposes of creating images to promote the production camera that was officially announced on September 12, 2023.

Once the camera is available as a full production camera—and I have had some time to work with the full

production camera—I will come back and update this preview making it a full review. As this is my third time in the last five years working with pre-production GFX cameras (the GFX 100, GFX 100S and now the GFX 100 II) I have quite a bit of confidence that the production cameras will perform significantly better than the camera I worked with to create the whitewater kayaking images

for this launch. Let's dive into the specifics.

ERGONOMICS

In my opinion, the new GFX 100 II is a stunningly beautiful camera. It has beautiful lines and the layout of the buttons and dials is just about perfect. I cannot find any fault with the ergonomics or the layout of the camera. It feels like the GFX 100 II body was milled out of a solid piece of metal and can survive just about any abuse. It is amazingly solid feeling. I would say that the GFX 100 II has the best ergonomics of any GFX camera made to date—and I say that after carefully considering all the other previous cameras.

The camera body weighs in at 1,050 grams (2.31 pounds) and seems like the most robust GFX camera they have ever made. The top plate is angled back making it very aesthetic and easy to read from the top. The rubber on the camera body has a new and unique texture that feels secure and nice in the hands. The larger screen on the top right shows everything you need to know at a glance and also has icons that signify what the three custom function buttons are just behind the shutter release.

In terms of the handling, it has a wonderful grip—my favorite so far among all the GFX cameras. The buttons are beautifully made and feel quite a bit higher class than those on previous GFX cameras. I also love that the camera strap attachment is flush with the camera so nothing sticks out and your strap just goes right through the slots. It was explained to me that this is a big deal since space is at a premium inside the camera body. The battery door and card slot door are very similar to the GFX 100S though the GFX 100 II uses both the CFExpress Type B

and SD memory cards. I would prefer if it had two CFExpress Type B memory card slots but I totally understand why Fujifilm went this route.

The viewfinder, as with the previous GFX 100, is removable. I have to say the new viewfinder looks very svelte and stylish. It fits the camera body really well and seems so well fitted that you forget it can actually come off the camera body. Well done Fujifilm. The camera body has a full HD port and a USB-C charging port as well. It also has a microphone jack, a remote jack and an ethernet port on the left side of the camera body. On the right side of the camera, there is also a headphone jack so that you can listen to your audio as it is recorded.

I did get the grip when I got the full production camera. It looks very well thought out and the ergonomics feel great to me. Attaching the grip does require removing a few covers but that is not a big deal. I am glad to see that Fujifilm left the grip as an optional accessory and didn't build it in. This is not a super lightweight camera but I appreciate the ability to take the body without the extra grip for when I want to go a little lighter—and especially when I have to hike with the camera.

AUTOFOCUS

Let's dive into the topic I am sure everyone wants to know about. The autofocus on the previous GFX 100 and GFX 100S was the best ever seen in any medium format cameras to date. I can happily report that the autofocus in the new GFX 100 II is far advanced beyond those previous versions. I can say that in my short time with the camera, it is the only medium format camera I have ever seen that can reliably and accurately track a moving subject with



Above you can see the back of the camera and the angled top plate. The camera is incredibly elegant and the angled top plate makes it easier to check settings in a wide variety of scenarios. The buttons and dials also feel more premium and the camera itself feels like it was cut out of a solid chunk of metal.

the autofocus. That is not to say that it is on par with the smaller FUJIFILM XH2s or the Nikon Z9, Canon R3 or R5, or the Sony A1. Those are in a different league. But, it seemed quite capable tracking the kayakers which is no small feat. On this assignment with the pre-production camera I had a grand total of a dozen or so out-of-focus images out of more than 3,200 images captured over the four days. That is pretty incredible.

It isn't just that the tracking autofocus capabilities are vastly improved, the subject detection capabilities of this camera are superb and are also massively improved. With the kayakers relatively small in the frame as shown on the following page, I switched the face detection mode on and it picked up their heads instantly and tracked them all over the frame as I recomposed and fired away at 8 fps. There was a lot of moving water in the



This isn't an epic image but I wanted to show this because I used the GF250mm lens with the 1.4x teleconverter and chose face detection on the camera. The camera immediately grabbed JT's face (red kayak) and tracked focus on him all the way to the shore. Not a single image was out of focus. I was pretty darn impressed.

background—a wall of whitewater—and the subject detection stayed right on their heads the whole time with no hesitation. I was very, very impressed. And there were zero out of focus shots out of the hundred or more frames I shot of them paddling to shore.

In terms of the autofocus when creating portraits, normally on the GFX 100 and 100s, I would use the eye detection but always stay in AF-S mode. I found that to be the better choice with a higher hit rate for static portraits. With the GFX 100 II, I chose to test it out and see how it

did in AF-C mode at f/1.7 on the GF 80mm F/1.7 lens. There were definitely a few shots where it caught the eyelash and not the eye, but that subject did have a pronounced eyebrow and deep-set eyes. All in all, it did way better than the older GFX cameras and very few images were not 100% tack sharp on the eyes. I will have to do more testing but it was obvious that Fujifilm has markedly improved the autofocus tracking mode.

Even the “auto” autofocus mode—where the camera selects the subject—seems quite improved. I never really

used this with the original 100 or the 100S but gave it a try on the GFX 100 II and was quite impressed. Given how well it worked I might use this a bit more often, especially for far off subjects in a similar plane of focus as were the kayakers when they descended the waterfall. Another cool new autofocus feature is you can create your own customized autofocus Zones. Any size autofocus zone you want can be created and tailored to your subject. There are so many options already on Fujifilm's cameras (in terms of AF modes) that I didn't try this out but I thought I would mention it here.

The truth is, I gave it a pretty intense round of autofocus tests on this launch assignment but I have to do more testing and have more time with the full production camera to really make an assessment of the autofocus capabilities when it comes to tracking moving subjects. But, my initial impressions are that it is massively improved from all previous GFX cameras and light-years beyond any other medium format cameras on the market. Hasselblad and Phase One's autofocus capabilities are in the stone age in comparison.

All of this autofocus goodness also works in the video modes as well. I did not test that out but I am sure there will be others who have done so if not already, relatively soon. I know in the video world that using autofocus when capturing motion footage is not the norm, but as cameras get better and better it will become the norm here at some point soon.

The reality is that everything is faster with this camera, and the autofocus is just part of that massive overhaul of the original GFX 100. It is very apparent that Fujifilm has learned a lot with the X-H2s and the X-H2 in terms of

how to dial in the autofocus algorithm and of course maximizing the new processing chips. That has been carried over into the GFX 100 II. I would say this is the first medium format action camera. And with eight frames-per-second, I will be able to photograph a lot more action with this camera than I have been able to with the previous generation GFX cameras.

FRAME RATE AND BUFFER

One of the big headlines for this camera is that it can fire at 8 frames per second (fps) in mechanical shutter mode and up to 8.7 fps in electronic mode (albeit in a cropped configuration). For me, an action camera has to have at least 8 fps. That has been the minimum standard in my mind for years. I have worked with less, but 8 fps seems to be the threshold for a serious action camera. Hence, I was very glad to see this spec in the pre-production information several months before the assignment. I also gave input a few years in advance that at least 8 fps would be really exciting, but I don't know if that was really relayed to the engineers. I am sure they had a lot of input from many different photographers on that aspect of the camera in the past.

The fact that we can have a 102 MP camera firing away at 8 frames per second in raw is pretty darn exciting—and absolutely mind blowing. I have to say I am more impressed with this than a 50 MP camera shooting at 20 fps in raw. I know the new CFExpress memory cards are a huge part of this but they are not the whole story. The readout speed of the sensor has been massively improved to allow this, the shutter has been reinforced so it doesn't blow up, and the camera's processor is much faster to help transfer all that data efficiently to the



Above you can see a sequence image where I pressed and held the shutter release as the camera fired away at 8 frames per second. The buffer on this camera can capture up to 300-plus full 14-bit Lossless Compressed RAW images before it slows down. That is more than enough for pretty much anything I will ever need.

memory card. The entire data relay chain has been souped up far better than I could have ever hoped for. Shown above is a sequence of images captured at 8 fps.

When I first got the GFX 100 II, the first test I ran was a buffer test as that would be critical to this assignment and photographing high-end, fast-paced action. I put in my Sony G Series CFExpress Type B card (their fastest card) and mashed down on the shutter release. I fully expected to get maybe 25 to 35 shots before hitting the buffer, but I was blow away when I got over 100 frames

before it slowed down—and then it only slowed down to 5 or 6 fps. As this was a pre-production camera I have since learned at the launch that the buffer for the production camera allows for over 300 images (shooting in RAW Lossless Compressed) at eight frames per second, which is absolutely astounding. In RAW compressed you can get up to 325 images at 8 fps before the buffer kicks in and slows the camera down to a slightly slower frame rate—and remember these are all 102 MP 14-bit image files. In Jpeg mode at 8 fps you can get over 1,000 frames before hitting the buffer. And at 5 fps in Lossless

Compressed Raw or Jpeg there essentially isn't a buffer and the camera will fire until the memory card fills up.

The buffer along with the frame rate means this camera is a serious action rig. Of course, this also means you will be generating an incredible amount of data and will have to have very fast hard drives to efficiently download and back up the files. Working with this camera at 8 fps is not unlike working with a RED Digital Cinema camera in terms of data. All those megapixels add up fast.

Heck, even my decently fast M1 Apple Macbook Pro took a little longer than usual to render previews for the GFX 100 II images because there were so many of them—and perhaps because I was working with a beta-version of Capture One that could actually open the raw files. We will see how it goes when the production camera gets here but this combination of speed and resolution will tax even the best computers so buyers be aware. It isn't that the files are any larger than the older GFX 102 MP images but just that you can capture so many images so quickly which can overwhelm a computer when importing and slow the workflow down a bit. The new M2 Macs are looking like a pretty solid option for those that need an upgrade. I might need to upgrade myself.

IMAGE QUALITY

The GFX 100 II has a new and improved sensor, but it is still the same 102 MP resolution as the older GFX 100 and GFX 100S. A few years ago some of the engineers and top execs at Fujifilm asked me (and I am sure many other photographers) what I would want in a new, updated GFX 100. Would you prefer more megapixels? Or would you prefer a faster frame rate and the same

resolution? They also asked about other things that needed to be improved—and I responded that I would personally prefer a faster camera with the same resolution and improved autofocus. Well, we got that faster camera with improved autofocus, but they didn't stop there.

With the new GFX 100 II sensor Fujifilm has increased the dynamic range in 16-bit mode by 30%. That is a pretty huge percentage. I tested that out with the portraits where the subject was standing in the shade and the bright, fully lit waterfall was in the background. While it was hard to assess how much of an improvement there actually is in terms of the sensors dynamic range, I can say that it handled that situation with ease.

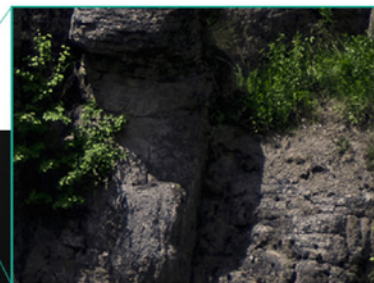
The GFX 100 II also has a lower base ISO—ISO 80. I tested this out and shot many of the portraits at this lower ISO. I haven't done enough testing to know how much of an improvement this is from the base ISO 100 in the older cameras—the new camera will have slightly less shot noise I am guessing. But also, this allows you to drop down to ISO 40 in the low mode, which is very useful for creating motion blur images and using strobes outdoors.

I have also been told that Fujifilm improved the quality of the 16-bit files more than just the dynamic range. They note that the new sensor can reproduce tough tones better than older GFX cameras. I am guessing these tough tones are neon colors, which are a problem for all digital cameras, and perhaps other more subtle tones that I am not fully aware of. I didn't test this out but thought I would mention it here so readers are aware of all the work Fujifilm has done to upgrade the sensor. Also, they have tweaked the micro-lenses to increase sharpness in the corners as well.

Improved Quality in Every Corner



©Michael Clark



Redesigned microlenses improve light coverage at the corners of the sensor, delivering better image quality and increased AF accuracy at the periphery of the lens.

As shown on the Fujifilm-x.com website, the engineers have tweaked the micro-lenses that overlay the sensor to improve image quality and light transmission at the edges of the image circle. It is small tweaks like this one that all add up to make the GFX 100 II the best camera Fujifilm has ever developed.

Otherwise, as far as I can tell, the image quality is still phenomenal—as it has been with the other 102 MP GFX sensors. The new and improved In-Body Image Stabilization (IBIS), which stabilizes the camera sensor, also helps to get sharp images at even lower shutter speeds than I was able to work with on the older models. There is now up to 8 stops of IBIS depending on which lens you use. We will discuss the IBIS more below. But suffice it to say that the GFX 100 II is not only the most advanced medium format camera on the market but the most usable in terms of performance and image quality. Sure, there are larger, higher resolution image sensors in a few other cameras (that cost more than even a luxury car) but those cameras pretty much have to be on a tripod and have such poor autofocus as to be unusable for anything but still life, landscape photography and studio portraits. The GFX 100 II is now an all-rounder camera.

On occasion, when I am teaching a photography workshop and I am tethered to a computer creating a studio portrait, I warn everyone, “Be aware, once you see this image quality you cannot unsee it.” Most photographers have no clue how incredible the images are coming out of the GFX cameras. They are definitely a serious step up from 35mm “full frame” cameras—and that is the entire reason I started using them.

VIEWFINDER

In addition to all the other upgrades, that Fujifilm left no stone unturned with the GFX 100 II and that also extends to the electronic viewfinder. The new 9.44 million dot electronic viewfinder (EVF) is absolutely gorgeous. I have never seen a viewfinder that is this big and looks so crisp in any other camera. Granted I have not looked through



every EVF out there, but I have looked through a few other 9.44 MP EVFs and they didn't look this good.

I never found it to lag behind the moving subject and there are also modes to put it into 120 Hz (fps) and additionally 240 Hz (fps) if needed. In addition, there is also a 5 fps Blackout Free burst shooting mode when using the electronic shutter if you need the ultimate viewfinder experience to capture the action. When capturing images at 8 fps I didn't see a noticeable drop in the EVFs resolution. Though at 8 fps it might be hard to really see since the camera is firing so quickly.

What I did notice is that when zooming into 100% on the images in playback mode the detail was ridiculous. Reviewing images in the EVF, it felt like you could just keep zooming in farther and farther without limits. Suffice it to say that the EVF is spectacular. Similarly, the rear LCD screen is gorgeous as well. This might be the first EVF I have seen that approaches the "real world" quality of looking through an optical viewfinder.

VIDEO

In addition to all the advances regarding still photography, Fujifilm has gone to great lengths to improve the video in the GFX 100 II as well. I did not get to test any of those features out when working with the GFX 100 II but I thought I would mention them here. My assignment for the launch was purely a stills photography project. Other cinematographers were assigned video projects—and they seem to be raving about the video capabilities.

The GFX 100 II can capture video at up to 4K 60p with no crop, and up to 8K 30p with a 1.44x crop. Additionally,

you can go up to 120p in full HD as well. Hence, the camera has quite a few more frame rate and resolution options than the older GFX cameras. Other new features are extended dynamic range, up to 14+ stops, when using F-Log2, ProRes and Blackmagic Raw recording via the HDMI, SSD recording straight to an external hard drive via the USB-C port, and it now can accept the Fujifilm cooling fan that works with the X-H2 and X-H2s as well.

Perhaps even more important is that the Fujifilm engineers have really concentrated on the sensor scan speeds so that there is a lot less rolling shutter effect. The read out speed of the sensor is an incredibly impressive (for a medium format sensor) at only 15 milliseconds. By comparison, the Fujifilm X-H2s, with a much smaller sensor, has a sensor scan speed of 11.4 milliseconds and the Panasonic GH6 has a sensor scan time of 17.8 milliseconds. On the full frame side of things the Nikon Z9, which currently has the fastest sensor readout of any camera on the market, has a sensor scan speed of 3.7 milliseconds. The GFX 100 II has a sensor scan speed comparable to the Canon R5, which is quite impressive given it is 1.7 times larger than a 35mm sensor. While the GFX 100 II sensor scan speed isn't the fastest ever, it is incredibly fast for a medium format sensor.

Lastly, perhaps the best new video feature is that you can view the waveforms in the EVF or on the back LCD. I know for most cinematographers that is critical. They have also added a Focus Map function as well. I am not sure exactly how that works or what it looks like since the camera already has focus peaking built in for manual focus. And of course, if you have cell service or internet access the GFX 100 II can also push video (and stills) straight to the cloud via Frame.io.



Above you can see the top of the GFX 100 II and the new GF55mm f/1.7 lens. I love that the new body has the strap hooks built into the top of the camera. Also, the new GF55mm lens is crazy sharp and focuses quite fast as well. I used it mainly for capturing portraits and lifestyle images during the assignment.

WRAPPING UP

If you have made it this far, then you can probably guess that my assessment of the new GFX 100 II is quite favorable—and that is a bit of an understatement. Honestly, the GFX 100 II really spoiled me in the few weeks I worked with the camera. It is an incredibly improved camera compared to any of the other GFX cameras. This is the

most exciting camera I have seen in a long time. Fujifilm really perfected the GFX system with this camera and in my mind—and for my use case—this is the best camera Fujifilm has ever released.

The new GFX 100 II is also the camera I have been looking for (in the medium format space) for a long, long, long time—since I started using medium format cameras over



20 years ago. I have a feeling that my older GFX cameras will be relegated to the backup category for the most part when I get my hands on the new camera. Now that I have one, I cannot wait to start testing it out even further.

For my current work, I have a wide variety of cameras that I use depending on the assignment including everything from GoPros up to the GFX cameras. I often take both full frame (35mm) and medium format cameras on the same assignment and use them both where appropriate. What Fujifilm have created with the GFX 100 II is a medium format camera that can really hold its own in a wide array of genres compared to a lot of the full frame contenders. Sure, it doesn't capture images at 20- or 30-fps. For most people that won't matter. With my fast full frame cameras I am often trying to dial them back from 20 fps down to a more reasonable 10 fps or even lower. Hence, I can live with 8 fps even as an action photographer in many situations. With the fast autofocus and tracking capabilities of the GFX 100 II, and the new faster lenses Fujifilm have released (the 55mm f/1.7, 80mm f/1.7 and the 110mm f/2) they have a wide variety of lenses for low light situations—expanding when and where the GFX cameras can be used even further. The GF 80mm f/1.7 has quickly become one of my favorite lenses in the GFX

system. It hits a sweet spot in terms of focal length and maximum aperture—and it is wicked sharp as well. The new GF 55mm f/1.7 looks like another stellar lens.

For years now I have been talking to quite a few folks at Fujifilm about the possibilities of a longer telephoto than the current 250mm lens. Something like a GF 500mm f/5.6 that could also work with the 1.4x teleconverter they already make would be really useful. So when I found out that it was on the new lens road map (as shown above) I just about fell out of my chair at the launch. This new lens is just about as exciting as the new camera and I cannot wait to work with this lens. I have been told that it will not be that much larger than the GF250mm lens which is quite something. With the GFX 100 II and this forthcoming lens they now have a bonified action and wildlife camera so adding a longer telephoto makes a lot of sense to draw more photographers into the system. I would love to see Fujifilm continue expanding the lens selection in the future, as they no doubt will. Another fast and even wider prime would be one of my top requests—something like a 30mm f/1.7.

Going forward, the GFX 100 II will certainly be my main camera—and I will likely be able to use it for the vast





The GFX 100 II is a very elegant camera. The new ergonomics are the best I have seen on any Fujifilm camera to date. The new rubber texture is also very easy to hold onto and looks great. I have to say that Fujifilm really knocked it out of the park with this camera. There isn't really anything else out there that competes with it.

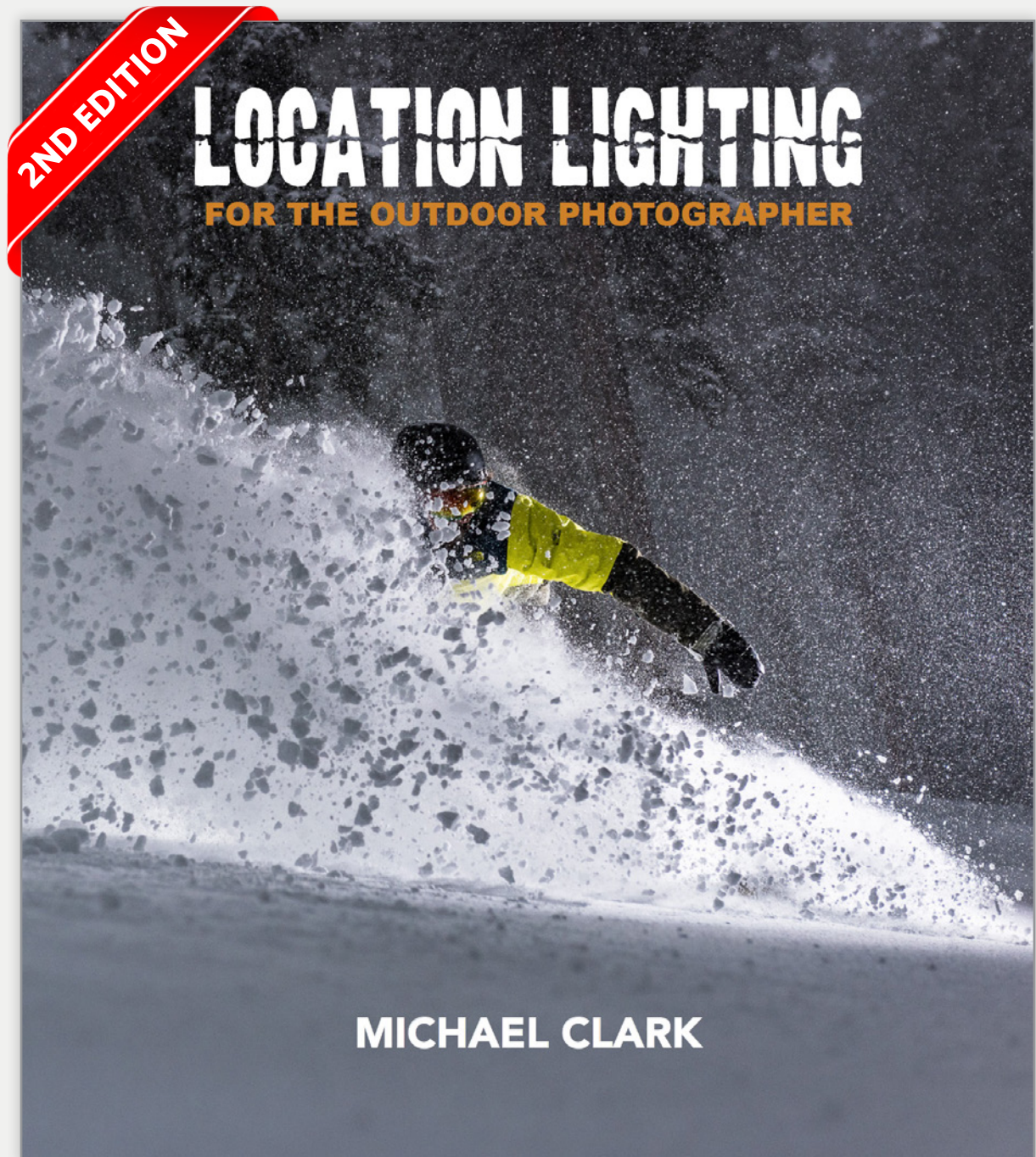
majority of my action and adventure photography assignment work. The only reason at this point to use my smaller format cameras will either be if I need a specific lens not available in the GFX lineup or if I need crazy fast frame rates for when something will only be happening once. Kudos to Fujifilm for coming up with a stellar new camera. The GFX 100 II is going to make some serious

waves in the camera industry—and I can't wait to photograph surfing with this near-perfect camera.

For more information please visit [Fujifilm-x.com](https://www.fujifilm-x.com). My sincere thanks to Fujifilm for allowing me to be a small part of the launch of this camera and for bringing me to Stockholm to be there when they announced it to the world.

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on assignment:

FUJIFILM

ON ASSIGNMENT FOR THE LAUNCH OF THE FUJIFILM GFX100 II



It has been a supreme honor to have been a part of the launch of three FUJIFILM GFX cameras in the last five years. In May of 2019, I was incredibly grateful to create images with the original GFX 100 for the launch of that camera. Again in 2021, I created images for the launch of the GFX 100S. And now in 2023, having worked with Fujifilm once again for the launch of the GFX 100 II, it has been an incredible journey to see the evolution of this digital format and how far it has come. My working relationship with Fujifilm has been one of the best working relationships I have ever had with any company. Hence, working with them again for this launch was the highlight of my year so far.

In August 2022, at the New York City Fujikina event, the specifications for this new camera were given to me as a heads up to let me know what was in the pipeline. As soon as I heard “eight frames per second and faster autofocus” I knew this was the medium format camera I have been waiting for—for over 20 years. Coming up with ideas for this project started back in late 2022, and we settled on whitewater kayaking as the sport to show off its capabilities in early February 2023. At that point we were slated to shoot in mid-to-late March or early April. After a few delays, the assignment got pushed back into late June. Because of that we had to change up our plans as most big whitewater kayaking spots rely on spring runoff. Luckily, we found Lower Mesa Falls, which doesn’t rely on spring runoff and is runnable just about year round. Lower Mesa Falls is a waterfall I had wanted to photograph for a long time so this seemed like the perfect pairing.

For this assignment the task was to really test out the camera and see what it could do. Whitewater kayaking is

a really tough test of any cameras autofocus system. I have tested out many of my prior 35mm cameras over the years on whitewater kayaking to see how the autofocus could handle difficult scenarios. So when whitewater kayaking was chosen as the sport for this assignment I was banking on Fujifilms claims that they had massively improved their autofocus with the new GFX 100 II. Because we needed the firmware and the camera to operate at the highest possible specs we were one of the very last assignments to get rolling.

Having created some pretty epic whitewater kayaking images back in 2017 for Red Bull and Elinchrom, with some of the world’s best kayakers, I reached out to Rush Sturges and he introduced me to the next generation of kick ass kayakers. James Shimizu, who is one of three kayakers ever in history to run Palouse Falls—a 189-foot (57 meter) tall waterfall in Washington state—was the first to sign on for this project. Darby McAdams, a renowned play-boater, was the second to commit to the project. JT Hartman was recommended by James since he is one of the few who has kept up with him over the last few years. And finally Hayley Stuart, an established filmmaker in her own right, agreed to work as our assistant. With our core team locked, we started planning the assignment and doing research on Lower Mesa Falls and the surrounding areas to see what was possible.

Having never been to Lower Mesa Falls, I contacted my good friend Lucas Gilman, who had photographed kayaking there more than a decade prior. He gave me some beta that helped us figure out the location. On our scout day, it became obvious that the landscape had changed a bit since Lucas was there last and we would have to hike in farther than I thought to get to a decent shooting angle



for the falls. This required hiking in with big backpacks down fairly steep large talus. The kayakers also had to assess the waterfall and how they were going to run it. Sadly, the water levels were slightly lower than normal so running the top section was much riskier than they wanted to deal with. The kayakers figured out a way to lower into the midpoint of the waterfall so they could at least run that portion. This involved a very sketchy down climb where any mistake would be fairly serious.

On the first day of the shoot, all of the kayakers ran the lower section once then James and JT went for a second go at it later that day. It took a long time to shuffle the boats out to the waterfall, and then reset back at the top of the waterfall. Inbetween drops we also created a variety of other images including portraits and your standard whitewater kayaking surf shots below the falls. With all of the volcanic rock surrounding the waterfall it also felt like we were in an oven below the waterfall with the sun blasting down on us. There was a lot of sweat equity involved to get these images.

This was a three day assignment with one scout day, but as usual with assignments where there is a behind the scenes video crew there to document the action and create a BTS story for the launch, it takes a lot longer than you might think to get all of the interviews, action shots and everything else needed to tell the story of this assignment. Dimitry “Dima” Koshutin, the director on this assignment, did a fantastic job and created a pretty epic video which can be found on [Fujifilm’s YouTube page](#).

As Lower Mesa Falls is a large waterfall, which is also quite wide, it is difficult to get a different angle on the drop. I did manage to rappel in on the side of the waterfall

but I quickly found that if I was too close, I would lose the kayakers as they dropped over the edge of the falls. In light of that, I moved back a bit. Even so, on that last run the kayakers got pushed over to the far side which meant I basically couldn’t see them once they dropped over the falls. Regardless, the cliff side angle was something that had never been done there—as far as I know. The resulting images, as can be seen on Pages 49 and 51, definitely help to give some perspective on the size of the waterfall.

In the end, we got nine runs on the waterfall and a variety of surf shots to go with them. As you can read in the preview article just before this one the camera performed flawlessly. The entire team worked well together to help create all of the content we needed for the launch and Fujifilm has been very happy with the final result. I also have to give a big shout out to Hayley, who assisted on this assignment, as she worked really hard to help get the gear wherever it needed to go.

The following pages showcase a variety of images from this assignment including portraits of the kayakers and a behind the scenes image (on Page 35) of my position hanging off the cliff, which in all honesty may look cool but was really no big deal. My favorite image from the assignment is probably the surfing shot with the blurred water shown in the Portfolio spread on pages 52-53. My sincere thanks to Fujifilm and the entire crew back at the office who helped bring this to fruition. You can find two other articles about the assignment on the Fujifilm-x.com website [here](#) and [here](#). It is a very exciting time to have such a camera—with incredible image quality—available for us to push our craft ahead further and further. For more information on the camera go to [Fujifilm-x.com](#).



We had a great team for this project. From left to right are: Omid Afshar, Michael Clark, JT Hartman, Dima Koshutin, James Shimizu, Matthew Weintritt, Darby Mcdams, Nu Nguyen, Dawn Suhyun Shim, and Hayley Stuart. These images and the video especially were certainly a team effort.

















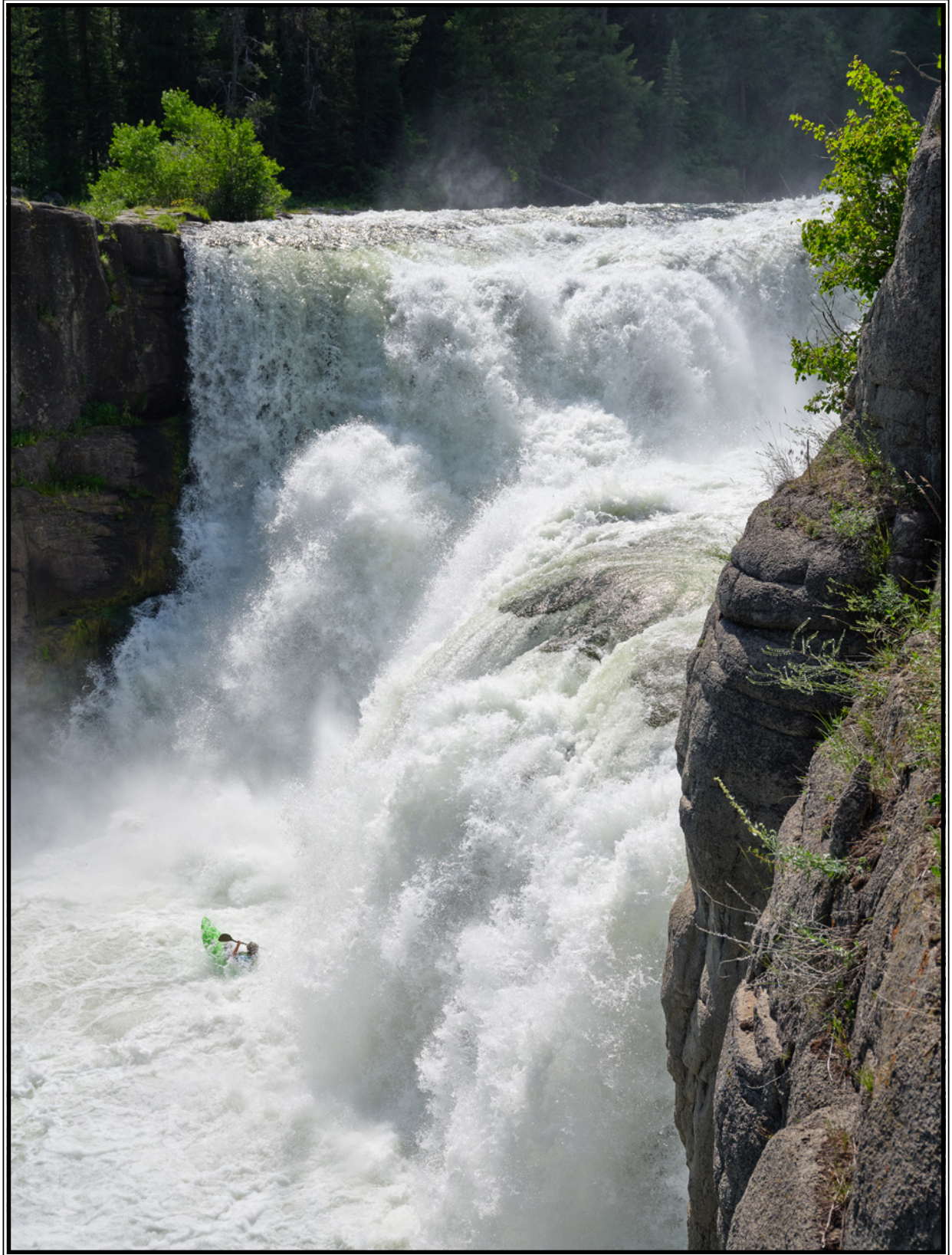












portfolio





The Inch-Worm Effect

by Michael Clark

Talking with many of my peers, and seeing a lot of chatter online, it would seem that 2023 might go down as the worst year in the photo industry since 2008. It has been a solid year for me, the best since the pandemic started, but this fall has been a fair bit slower than normal. I had no idea that so many photographers were struggling to find work this year until Rob Haggert posted a quote on his @aphotoeditor [Instagram account](#) and got hundreds and hundreds of responses reinforcing the fact that the industry was in a tailspin. At first, I chalked it up to the fact that in any year some are doing well and others not so well. But then a few top photography reps chimed in saying they were seeing an incredible drop off in assignments. This has only been reinforced talking to my peers recently.

What seems to have happened is that the effects of the pandemic are not yet over. Companies had a myriad of difficulties that challenged them during the pandemic including workforce disruption and working from home, shortages of materials to build products, and then a massive consumer spending frenzy in 2022 that created a gold rush of sorts. In 2022, many companies increased production to match the consumer demand. Along the way, many companies massively increased prices which led to exceedingly high inflation. I call this “greed-flation” as the companies wanted to make more off their limited

supplies of products and in many cases there was no real shortage of products, the companies just saw that they could increase prices to increase profits. This leads us to where we are now. With high inflation seemingly slowing many are holding onto their cash and there are products aplenty out there in the marketplace. In fact, there are so many excess products in many sectors (bikes, outdoor gear, musical instruments and so on) that the market is flooded and those products are being marked down sharply to sell them off.

Thus, with all of the ups and downs of the pandemic we have gone through the crunch time and are now in the stretching out phase, which is hopefully the back-end of the supply and demand reset. I call this the inch-worm effect. I have heard from a lot of companies that they will start ramping back up in the spring of 2024. Regardless, for many folks things are tight at the moment and that is a direct result of inflation caused by those companies that jacked up prices.

I feel exceedingly fortunate that this year has been better than the last three years during the pandemic. As a freelancer who has been doing this for 28 years, nothing really surprises me any more. Change is the only constant. Here's hoping 2024 does indeed seem to pick up and offers creatives a plethora of exciting assignments.



Red Bull Air Force athlete Jeffrey Provenzano sky dives onto a jet-ski driven by teammate Luke Aikins for the Red Bull Steel City Fountain Swoop in Pittsburgh, PA on May 25, 2023.

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