

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



FALL 2025



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FALL 2025 NEWSLETTER

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*Cover Image: Looking down into the Grand Canyon from Cape Royal on the north rim of Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona
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The Grand Canyon Newsletter

Backflips over the Grand Canyon with Aaron Fitzgerald

This summer, it was a very sad sight to see the north rim of the Grand Canyon on fire. I was there last fall, after the Red Bull Endless Skydive project and after photographing Aaron Fitzgerald doing Helicopter aerobatics in the Little Colorado River canyon (as shown on the following page). As can be seen in the cover image, I spent two and a half days on the north rim scouting various locations and hiking around. The main lodge on the north rim was seriously damaged but thankfully the rock walls remain after the fire so it can hopefully be rebuilt. In addition, over 70 other historic buildings were also destroyed in the fire this summer, which was started by a lightning strike on the Kaibab plateau. The plateau will regrow and the buildings, even though they were historic, can also be rebuilt. Many thanks to the fire crews on the north rim who worked out there almost the entire summer to suppress the fire.

As indicated in the first paragraph, I am still catching up on epic assignments from last year. That one week with the Red Bull Endless Skydive project, which was followed immediately by an assignment with Aaron Fitzgerald flying his Aerobatic helicopter, was an intense set of assignments. I have worked with, photographed, and flown with Aaron Fitzgerald a lot in the last decade or so. He has become a good friend and it is always a blast to get to fly with Aaron. As one of the best helicopter pilots on the

planet, he is incredibly humble and supremely easy to work with. Here in this issue, I am featuring the wild images from that assignment starting on page 22.

This Newsletter is also filled with the announcement of my brand new digital workflow e-book [A Professional Photographer's Workflow: Using Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop \(8th Edition\)](#), which dropped in mid October. I have included an excerpt from the new chapter in the book, which discusses some of the basics of backing up your images and data. There is also an announcement for my all fine art print sale that runs through December 31, 2025. And while tripods and tripod heads are not the most scintillating topic, I have an equipment review of my new Arca-Swiss Core 75 Leveler geared tripod head. 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: Aaron Fitzgerald flying the Red Bull Aerobatic helicopter above the Little Colorado River in the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

Recent Clients: Red Bull, Patagonia, New Mexico Tourism, New Scientist Magazine, Geo Magazine, 5280 Magazine, Mountain Gazette, Santa Fe Workshops and the Southern Ute Indian Tribe.



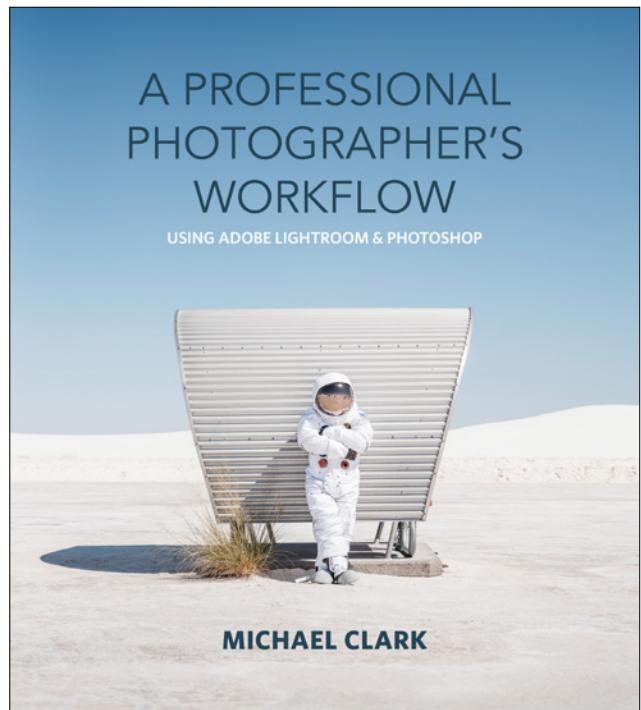
A Professional Photographer's Workflow

The updated and revamped 8th Edition of my popular Digital Workflow e-book

I am happy to announce that I have updated my highly regarded e-book, [A Professional Photographer's Workflow: Using Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop \(8th Edition\)](#), for Lightroom Classic CC and Photoshop CC. This book is a 657-page digital workflow workshop in book form with several videos included as well. This new edition was sorely needed as the last version was five years old. To purchase the e-book visit my [website](#).

This update has taken an incredible amount of work. It has been a gargantuan task to update such a huge book and to it to make it a worthy upgrade. I started revamping this book about a year ago, which gives some sense of the amount of work involved. In the last five years there have been so many updates to Adobe Lightroom Classic, I was forced to update the book to keep it current. The e-book now includes an entirely new chapter on Storage and Backup Strategies, and I have updated and expanded all of the other chapters as well. There are also links to eight new videos where you can watch me work up images in both Lightroom and Photoshop and also see many of the new features that are difficult to describe in text (like the Remove, Masking, and Lens Blur tools).

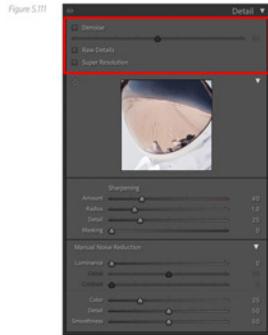
The e-book also comes with a Photoshop Action which lays out the basic adjustments I do to pretty much every image. The Photoshop Action comes with a ReadMe PDF



that explains how to load that action into the Actions palette in Photoshop.

I can honestly say that I have not seen any other book on the market today that includes as much detailed and comprehensive information as this e-book does on a complete digital workflow from setting up the camera to backing up your images and everything in-between. To purchase the e-book please visit my [website](#). If you would like to download a sample of the PDF with the table of contents and the introduction click [here](#).

RAW DETAILS AND SUPER RESOLUTION



With the latest Lightroom update in June 2025, the Adobe engineers moved the Raw Details (formerly called Enhance Details) and Super Resolution features into the Detail panel in the Develop Module, as shown in Figure 5.111. They are both located just under the Denoise AI Amount slider in the top of the Details panel. It is great to have these features now out in an easy to use panel and not hidden in a pop-out panel where you had to right click on the image to get to them as was the case previously.

The Raw Details check box engages what was formerly named "Enhance Details." According to Adobe it "Enhances detail and color accuracy without changing the image resolution." They go onto to say on their help page that it also, "produces crisp detail, improved color rendering, more accurate renditions of edges, and fewer artifacts." In my recollection, I remember Adobe adding this feature specifically for Fujifilm cameras that used a non-bayer type sensor called an X-Trans sensor and this feature was meant to draw the best image quality out of those files. In my experience I have not seen this feature really make my images all that much sharper or change the color. If you use the smaller Fujifilm cameras then I would definitely check this out and do some testing. For the rest of this, I would say checking this box doesn't hurt but I have seen

very limited improvement to my images that were created using bayer sensors like those found in my Nikon, Hasselblad and Fujifilm cameras.

The Super Resolution check box is an incredible option and especially useful. By clicking on the check box next to Super Resolution, Lightroom will double the height and the width of the image. This creates a file that is four times larger in terms of megapixels (MP). Hence, a 24 MP image becomes a 96 MP image. A 102 MP image becomes a 408 MP image. Note that Lightroom does use AI to upsize your image, but even so, the results are absolutely astounding. If you need to upres and image for any reason this is the way to do it. Like Denoise AI this is a phenomenal use of AI technology—and one that really does help photographers.



Figure 5.112

I wrote an in-depth [review](#) of the Super Resolution feature when it was first announced in Photoshop way back in March 2021. I was completely blown away by how well it worked. It is a great tool to upres older images captured with much lower

The OWC Express 1M2 is the better option since it has faster read and write speeds and is a cheaper solution—with an 8 TB version coming in at \$949 USD. The OWC Express 1M2 is a great solution for those that need a wicked fast SSD to use for video post-production or who have a giant Lightroom catalog as I do and want to put the catalog and the images you are working with on a fast external SSD drive.



Up to this point I have not really talked about NVMe SSD drives. As shown in Figure 8.25 above, these are basically SSD chips that can go into a computer tower or and external enclosure but they need a very specific type of enclosure than can work with the chip set. If you have a PC tower and have NVMe slots in the tower that can accept one of these then this is a phenomenal solution and the most powerful SSD option on the market. Above I have shown the [Western Digital Black SN8100 NVMe PCIe 5.0 M.2 Internal SSD](#), which comes in 1 TB, 2 TB and 4 TB versions. It can achieve read and write speeds up to an absolutely blistering 14,900 MB/s! For Apple Mac users these are not going to go inside any of their computers except for the extremely expensive Mac Pro tower, which is fairly out of date these days. You can build your own external SSD with one of these chips using the [OWC Express 1M2 enclosure](#). For PC users with a tower, this might be a great addition to really add some speed to your setup. I thought I would mention these wicked fast NVMe SSD chips as they are really the fastest SSDs available—albeit in limited storage capacities. For most of us, the fast SSDs I have already covered are probably going to be more than good enough for most of our uses.

ADVANCED BACKUP STRATEGIES

For those with huge amounts of data and images to back up, things get a bit more complicated. If you have more than 30 TB of data, then you can certainly still have a simple backup system with multiple hard drives backed up to another set of multiple hard drives. But at some point that will become quite cumbersome and hard to keep track of which hard drive is backed up to another hard drive. Hence, there are larger arrays of hard drives that can be combined to form one giant hard drive system and that is what we are going to discuss here. Before we dive into RAID systems, let's first discuss what is called a JBOD system.



Figure 8.26

Pictured above is a JBOD backup strategy. As an example lets say you have two 18 TB external hard drives with all of your images spread out across the first two HDDs in this chain labeled A1 and B1. To get three backups of each drive we would then add four more drives to the chain (A2, A3, B2, and B3). Hence, we now have three backups of everything. With this JBOD setup we can keep expanding the system by just adding another set of three HDDs (C1, C2 and C3). This would of course become cumbersome at some point but it is a simple way of expanding a basic backup.

As mentioned in the last paragraph, the first and simplest option to back up a large amount of data is to use a bunch of individual hard drives and back them up to multiple identical hard drives. For example, one could have all of their images on two 18 TB hard disk drives and clone those drives to four other 18 TB hard drives, thereby having three copies of all the images as shown in Figure 8.26 above. This option is

Annual Fine Art Print Sale

15% off of any Fine Art Print through December 31st, 2025



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, 2025. 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. Custom print sizes are also available should those listed on my website not fit exactly what you need. 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) 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 onto the metal sheet) and additionally they come with a backing or frame (of your choosing) 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.

All of my prints come with a 100% satisfaction guarantee. My ordering process is intentionally slow so that I can make sure you get a print that is exactly what you want. 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

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 in-person and online workshops I will be teaching in 2026. 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.

ONE-ON-ONE WORKSHOPS

In-Person or Online via Skype or Zoom

Email info@michaelclarkphoto.com to Schedule

In addition to my in-person group workshops listed here I also teach one-on-one workshops both in-person or virtually via Zoom. In the past photographers have come to Santa Fe, New Mexico for one-on-one workshops custom designed for exactly what they want to learn—these have been one day to three day private workshops. Alternatively, I have also done one-on-one private workshops in other locations as well—chosen by the photographer to meet their needs. These custom workshops are a great way to dial in your photography because we can cover way more ground specific to your needs and in a shorter time-frame than we can in a group workshop. Prices start at \$900/half day and \$1,400 per full day. Half days are five hours or less and full days are eight to ten hours. A 15% discount applies to three-day private workshops.

If you would like to set up a one-on-one Skype or Zoom session to discuss any photography related topics please [contact](#) me. From portfolio reviews to digital workflow, lighting techniques and career development and anything in between we can set up a session and cover whatever you want. If you have any questions about these sessions please don't hesitate to reach out. I have found that we can cover a wide variety of topics in these one-on-one sessions and well, like many of my peers, at the moment I have a lot more time to give than normal. Pricing for online sessions starts at \$150/hour and discounts apply for multiple hour sessions.

THE WILDERNESS OF EASTERN HOKKAIDO

Nobechi Creative - Hokkaido, Japan

February 15 - 27, 2026

Nobechi Creative is proud to welcome back acclaimed outdoor and adventure photographer Michael Clark to Japan, this time in the stunning and stark wilderness of Eastern Hokkaido in the late winter, when the pack ice flows in from the Sea of Okhotsk and the landscapes are most stunning.

The trip will be conducted via a van with a dedicated driver so that Michael and George can dedicate their full attention to helping the six participants* who will be on this



Even though this image of Dead trees near Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park on a snowy winter day is not from Hokkaido, it gives a sense of the type of images we will be able to create on the northern island of Japan. Our Hokkaido trip will be a road trip of exploration on the less touristed side of the island.

exclusive tour. The destinations are hand-picked by George, going back to his Japanese roots in Hokkaido. Careful consideration is given to winter driving conditions and driving distances between locations are kept to a minimum, ensuring the best opportunities to photograph.

Highlights include frozen lakes and ice fishing, guided snowshoeing, icebreaker cruises through the pack ice, early morning nature cruises to see Steller's and White-Tailed eagles, lakes with swans, and rivers with

red-crowned cranes, and drives on the remote peninsulas of the far eastern reaches of Hokkaido, exploring fishing villages, and stopping for foxes, deer, and other wildlife along the way.

This is not a tour focused on the minimalist trees in fields that you see from many tours, or on the birds, but instead is a strategic and curated grand tour designed to take advantage of a variety of subjects to produce a well-rounded body of work that includes elements of landscapes, "new topographic" subjects, people, animals, trees,

abstracts, mountains, ways of life and creativity. Any good photographic opportunity, with weather, light, and more, will be considered.

The activity level will be moderate+, with a couple of days of snowshoeing over mostly flat terrain, but a lot of time spent out in cold, winter conditions (with a warm van waiting).

Cost Per Person Double Occupancy: \$9,995 / Single Supplement: \$1,500

For more information, a more detailed itinerary and to register for this incredible photography tour visit [Nobechi Creative](#).

BHUTAN AND NEPAL: THE HIMALAYAN KINGDOMS

Andy Biggs Safaris and Custom Travel

January 27 - February 8, 2026

Join us on a unique Himalayan journey, as we spend time in Nepal and Bhutan, two mountain destinations with unique and distinct cultures. We will begin our trip in Nepal, home to Mount Everest, and end in the Kingdom of Bhutan, known for its monasteries, fortresses (or dzongs) and dramatic landscapes. Come along with Andy Biggs and co-guide Michael Clark as we explore and photograph our way through the Himalayas.

Andy and I have taught several workshops together over the years and they have all been amazing adventures. We both have an incredible depth of knowledge about photography (and printing images) and come from different photography genres, which gives a wide berth of

knowledge on our workshops. Andy has been leading some of the highest-end workshops available anywhere on the planet for many years now and this one will be quite an adventure—not to be missed. We will start in Nepal and then finish up the workshop in Bhutan.

Nepal has its soaring ice-topped mountains that shimmer with rainbows of prayer flags and Bhutan has its rich history and untouched culture. Both are considered to be a hiker's paradise. This is going to be an absolutely incredible voyage exploring areas of Nepal and Bhutan that don't see a ton of traffic. We will spend six days in the lowland areas of Nepal and seven days in Bhutan.

The cost of this all-inclusive safari is \$17,900 USD per person. This fee includes all in-country ground and air transportation as well as hotel accommodation (double occupancy) and all meals.

Due to the limited number of spaces available, if a solo guest is willing to share a room and we can match with another guest of the same gender, we will do so. If a solo guest is unwilling to share, then a single supplement of \$3,800 USD will be charged.

This group will be super small so space is limited. If this exciting trip has your name on it; if you're excited by the thought of becoming a member of this trip, then now is the time to register. Remember, there will be limited space available for this workshop. When they're spoken for, that's it. If you have any questions before registering, send us an e-mail with any inquiries to hello@andybiggs.com.

For the full detailed itinerary with more information and



In January 2026, I am once again teaming up with my good friend Andy Biggs to lead a photography workshop in Nepal and Bhutan. We start in Kathmandu and finish in Bhutan. Andy has been leading some of the highest-end workshops in the World for many years now so this one will be quite an adventure. Together we have an incredible depth of knowledge on photography and of course in Nepal and Bhutan we will have plenty of amazing scenes to photograph.

also to register for this incredible photography workshop visit [Andy Biggs website](#), which has the entire itinerary laid out in great detail.

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! 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 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

"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 I.

"The Adobe Lightroom Intensive Workshop in Seattle

was excellent. The two-day format was perfect-just enough time to cover all the important features but not so much time as to be draining or get in the way of work. Michael Clark was an outstanding instructor. Not only was he clear, concise, and comprehensive, but his manner was friendly and equable. The fact that he is also a working professional photographer made the instruction all the more relevant. I have used previous versions of Lightroom, but it had been a while and I had recently upgraded. I was able to review some things I knew, learn about new features, and change my perspective on some workflow steps. An absolutely great workshop that I recommend wholeheartedly." - Karen Hunt, Lightroom Workshop, Spring 2011

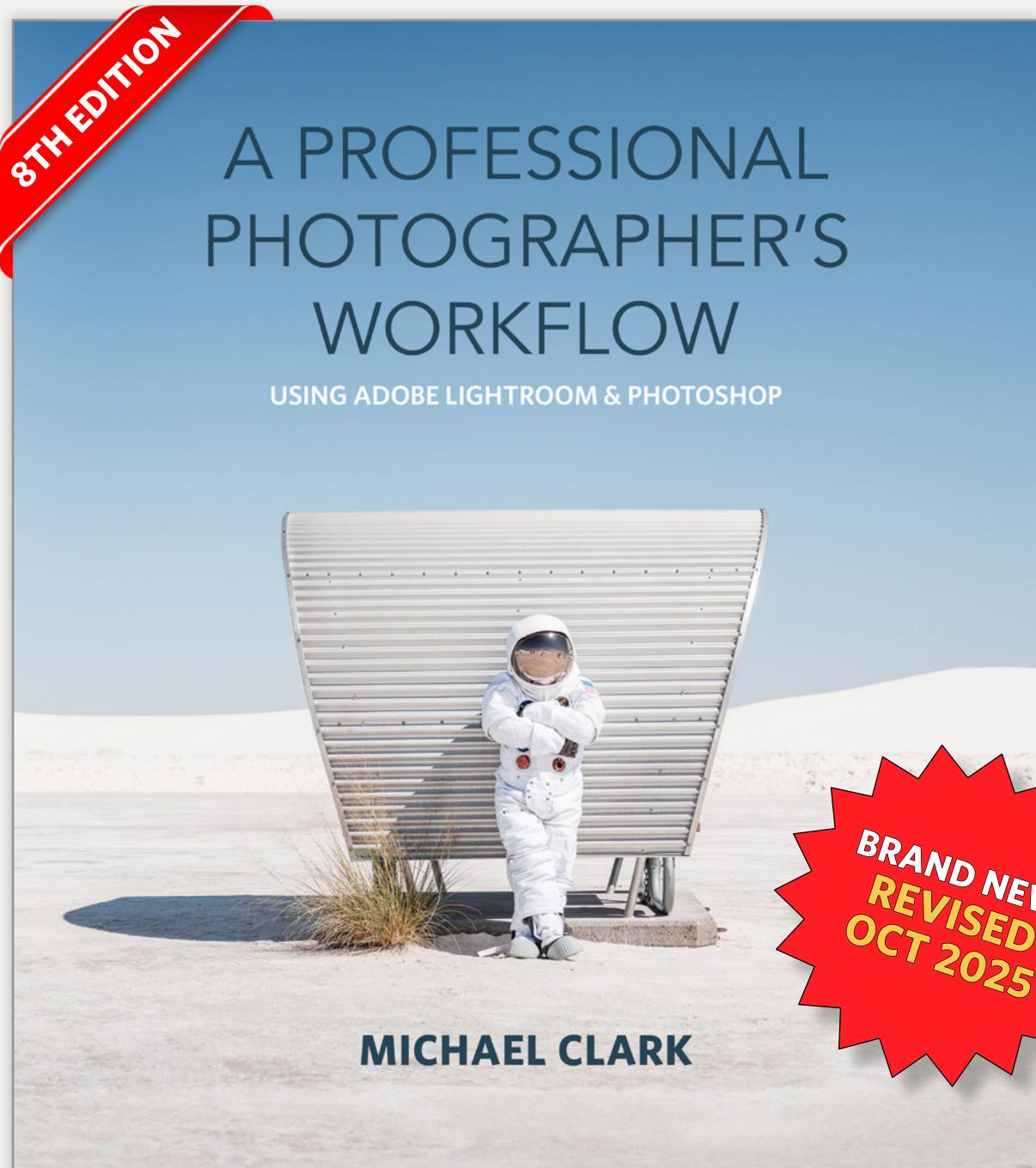
"Priceless chance to learn from the absolute best. Every photographer should take this class!" - Jill Sanders, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow available on CreativeLIVE

"Just wanted you know how much fun I had during the workshop last weekend! I learned a lot and look forward to doing other workshops with you." - Jason Quevedo, Philadelphia Mentor Series Trek

"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 Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and myself.

For more information on my upcoming workshops please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my blog. For any questions regarding my upcoming workshops please [email](#) me.

A Professional Photographer's Workflow.



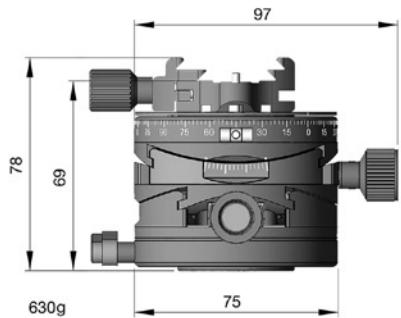
Reality Check. Make Your Images Shine.

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equipment

Arca-Swiss Core 75 Leveler Geared Head

A review of a tripod head that is not only incredibly functional, but also a work of art



A few years ago, while leading a photo tour in Patagonia with [Justin Black](#), we had a participant that was working with a 150 MP Phase One digital back on an Alpa Camera using large format lenses. That photographer, [David Chew](#), is incredibly talented and showed us every day his incredible skill creating amazing landscape images. Along with his incredible high-end camera set up he also had along with him two tripods and two different tripod heads. It isn't often that I see new, high-end gear that I am not aware of, but on this trip David had a few things I had never seen before. One of those was the [Arca-Swiss Core 75 Leveler Geared tripod head](#) and the other was the [Arca-Swiss Quick Link system](#). I reviewed the Quick link system in a recent [blog post](#) detailing various tripod systems and when I use them.

Over the course of that photo tour, David and I hung out quite a bit and it was very interesting to watch how he

chose which tripod and tripod head to take on each outing. He had with him the amazing Arca-Swiss Cube as well as the smaller Arca-Swiss Core 75 Leveler, both of which I had never seen. The Cube is a great tripod head but it is massive and something I wasn't ever going to be interested in since I often have to hike a long ways with a tripod. The Core 75 was a different story. David was aware of my interest in the Core 75 and let me borrow it on a few outings. As a ball head aficionado, I found the Core 75 to be a slower, much more methodical tripod head but I also saw that it was incredibly precise and allowed me to dial in the landscape compositions in an exacting manner I had not experienced before. David graciously offered to let me keep using his tripod setup on other occasions but I declined because I was worried I would get a little too attached to that stellar setup.

In the last few months, while using my older tripods I kept



thinking about how smooth and efficient that experience was with David's gear back in Patagonia. The seed was planted and it took a while for me to pull the trigger but here we are. I recently purchased the Really Right Stuff (RRS) TVC-24L tripod and the Arca-Swiss Core 75 Leveler Geared tripod head in an effort to level up my tripod game. As someone who has mostly used ball heads for decades now, I am very familiar with the troublesome scenario where you think you have the perfect

composition, then you lock down the ball head and it settles ever so slightly to a different position that may or may not be level or exactly what you wanted. In my experience, the better (and more expensive) the ball head the less settling there is, but even with the best ball heads they can shift ever so slightly and if you are really trying to dial in a composition this can drive you nuts. Hence, the need for something like the Arca-Swiss Core 75 leveler tripod head.



I seem to be at that point where the usefulness of a tripod head like this really comes in handy—especially when photographing landscapes. Now that I have had this tripod head for a little while, I have found it a bit faster to use than I previously thought. It is just a matter of getting used to the controls so that they become second nature. The Arca-Swiss craftsmanship I do have to say is

remarkable. This tripod head seems to be carved out of a block of steel. Even so, this geared head has a lot more moving parts than your typical ball head (like the RRS BH-55 shown on Page 20 next to the Arca-Swiss Core 75) so if the weather is going to be really bad, I usually will take a ball head that can deal with sand, rain and snow a bit better—and not need a cleaning afterwards.

I opted for the screw knob lock on top of the tripod head for tightening down the camera mounting plates--most of mine are RRS camera plates so not the standard Arca-Swiss camera plates but very similar. The screw knob lock allows for a little more adjustment depending on whether you are using Arca-Swiss plates on your camera as or another brand, like the Really Right Stuff plates I typically use. At some point in the future I might change this top mounting plate out for a RRS flip-lock attachment. Time will tell if I can get along with the one already built into the top of the tripod head. So far it has been very easy to use.



As can be seen above and in all of the images of the Core 75 Leveler, I have the tripod head attached to the tripod with the Arca-Swiss Quick Link system (shown above). This system allows for easily changing out the tripod head without having to pull out the Allen wrenches every time. To change out the tripod head you simply rotate the locking collar on the Quick Link base and the tripod head will pull straight up so that another head can be inserted and locked down. This makes for a very nice system to travel with one tripod and multiple tripod heads if needed. It also allows for hiking with just the tripod legs (without a tripod head attached) and then attaching the tripod head at the location when you set everything up.

I realize that everything Arca-Swiss makes carries a hefty price tag. They are after all a Swiss brand and anyone who has traveled to Switzerland knows nothing in Switzerland is cheap. As is usually the case, you get what you pay for. In this case, Arca-Swiss has a sterling reputation and the level of build quality in their products comes at a price. The Core 75 Leveler sells for \$725 USD (\$942 now with the tariffs), which makes it by far the most expensive tripod head that I own. I own a few \$500 ball heads (some that I have had for decades) so this is just the next step up in price. What I have learned over the years is that tripods and tripod heads pretty much last forever if taken care of. Aside from the horrible first few shaky and cheap tripods I purchased at the very start of my career, I still have and use all of the high-end tripods and tripod heads that I have ever purchased. I am certain this Arca-Swiss head will outlast them all.

In use, the Core 75 Leveler can rotate 15-degrees side to side and up and down. While this may sound quite limiting, it is easy enough to lower one of the tripod legs to extend that range. The tripod head can also be mounted onto a ball head to massively extend the movement range—as with genres like macro photography. For my work, I don't see the need to attach it to a ball head. On the head itself, there are two different tubular bubble levels that can help to level the tripod head. I tend to use the levels on the camera itself as they are easier to dial in and possibly more accurate as well. The Core 75 Leveler can also handle up to 66 pounds (30 Kg), which makes it the most robust tripod head that I have. By comparison, my venerable RRS BH-55 can only handle 50 pounds (22.7 Kg) according to RRS.

The Core 75 Leveler also has a dual panning feature

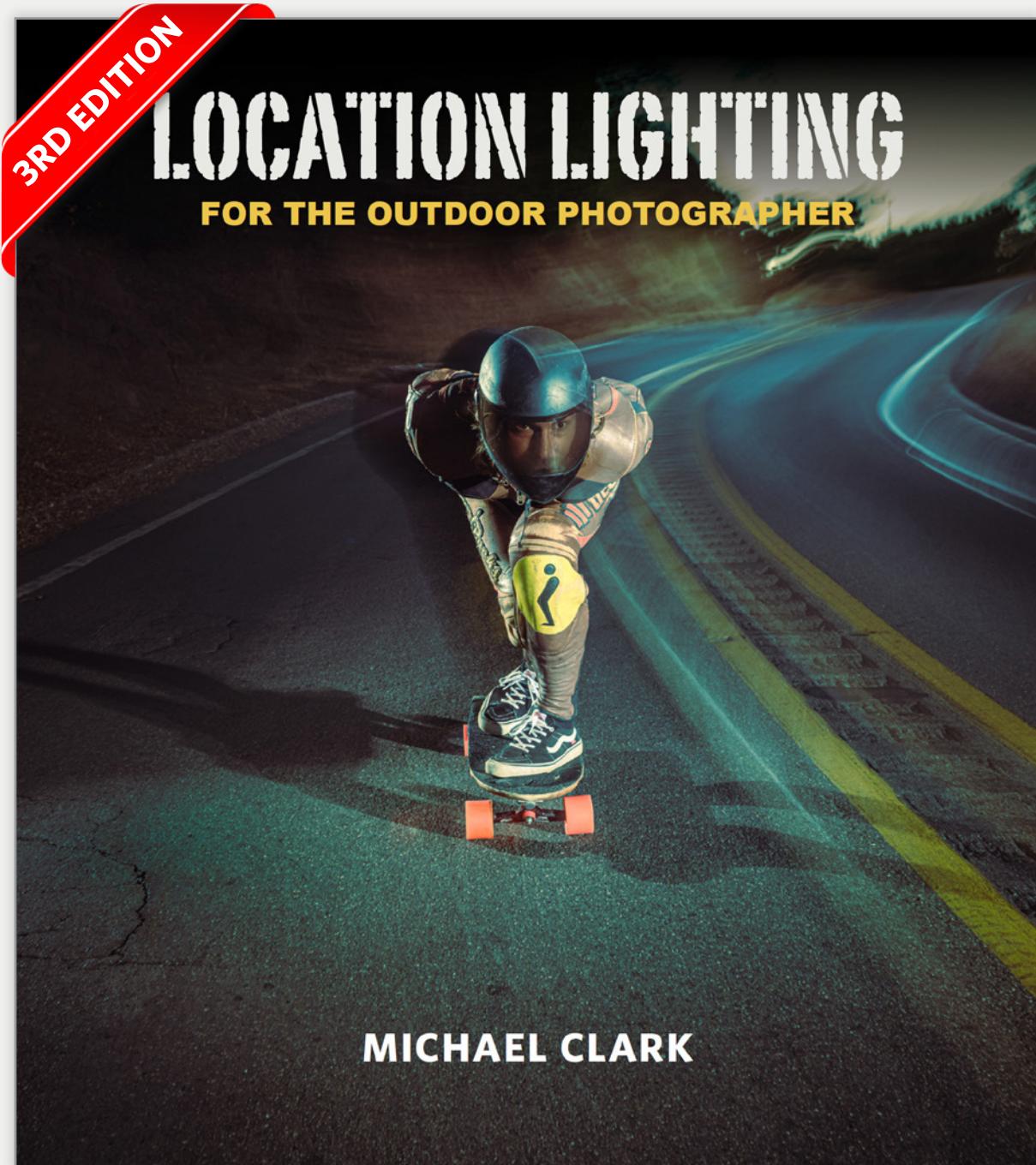


where you can pan the base at the bottom of the tripod head and also pan from the top of the tripod head. This top panning mechanism allows for very precisely creating panoramas once the camera is leveled. Of course for the best panorama images you will probably want to attach a nodal slider so that you can put the nodal center of the lens right on the panning axis. With my FUJIFILM GFX cameras and their 102 megapixel sensors I often create panorama images from a single frame by cropping the panorama from the full frame image. Especially now that we have the Super Resolution feature in Lightroom where we can upres images by a factor of four this works incredibly well and gives me a final file size in the range of 240 MP to 280 MP once the image is cropped to the panorama format.

All in all, if you need or want a geared tripod head and

want one that is fairly light then the Arca-Swiss Core 75 Leveler is an excellent option. It is significantly less expensive than the Arca-Swiss Cube or the D4 that they make, both of which are over \$1,000 USD. Arca-Swiss also makes a smaller version of the Core 75, which is the Core 60 Leveler. The Core 60 Leveler is quite a bit smaller and lighter but only has 10-degrees of tilt. I figured that the extra 5 degrees of tilt that the Core 75 offers would make it more versatile and it is still quite small and light, especially compared to my heavy-duty ball heads. The Arca-Swiss D4 is another excellent option as well but it was bigger and heavier than I wanted to deal with. Of course, there are also many other brands that make similar style heads but once you work with an Arca-Swiss head there is no going back. They are works of art. For more information on the Core 75 Leveler and the Quick Link system visit the Arca-Swiss website.

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on assignment:



THE FLYING BULLS



Last fall, after an assignment documenting the Red Bull Endless Skydive project at the Hellhole Bend canyon (an area of the Little Colorado River on the Navajo Nation), I also had a two day assignment to create images of Aaron Fitzgerald doing his Aerobatic route in-and-out of that same 2,000-foot deep canyon. I have worked with Aaron quite a bit in the last decade and have spent a considerable amount of time in his helicopter photographing the Red Bull Air Force skydive team as well as photographing Aaron doing his aerobatic routine from the ground and from other helicopters and planes. I have featured Aaron Fitzgerald here in the Newsletter a few times already including in the Spring 2022 issue and in several other issues of the Newsletter where I have documented the Red Bull Air Force training camps, which included the skydive team as well as the stunt pilots.

On assignments like this you have to pinch yourself to make sure you are awake and not dreaming. It is always a huge honor to work with Aaron Fitzgerald and photograph him flying his BO 105 aerobatic helicopter. I love working with Aaron, and to get the opportunity to photograph him in such a gorgeous location was a great opportunity. On this assignment Aaron flew a good portion of his aerobatic routine both in and above the vertiginous Hellhole Bend canyon in northern Arizona. Technically this area is a part of the Grand Canyon but lies on Navajo lands, which is how Red Bull was able to get a permit.

For this assignment, Red Bull very kindly provided a kick-ass helicopter for me to fly in and photograph Aaron air-to-air so that we could move down the canyon as he did his maneuvers. That helicopter was an Airbus AS350 B2, also known as an A-Star, which is the best performing single engine helicopter available today. The helicopter

was flown by Mitch Kelldorf of H5 helicopters based in Scottsdale, Arizona. Mitch is an excellent pilot and it was great to have such a stellar combo of great helicopter pilots to work with on this assignment. I have to say it is pretty damn cool when Red Bull gives you a helicopter dedicated just for you to photograph from and you have one of the best helicopter pilots on the planet doing back-flips right next to you. Thank you Red Bull for gigs like this one!

On each of the two days we had a morning session that lasted about an hour each day. Sadly, high winds came up on both days and we had to stop flying by midday. Regardless of the limited time and conditions, we were able to generate thousands of images in just a few hours over the two days. I had GoPros mounted on the outside of the helicopter and inside the cabin as well for all of Aaron's aerobatic flights. The GoPros on the outside of the helicopter were set to timelapse mode and captured two frames every second. For the GoPros inside the helicopter, I set them to capture raw images every three seconds because the exposure was so contrasty with the dark interior of the helicopter and the bright exterior. I placed GoPros both in front of Aaron and behind him inside the helicopter. The GoPro images really help to give a feel of what the experience is like from Aaron's perspective.

I have to say I was blown away by the image quality of the raw images coming out of the GoPro cameras. Because of the huge disparity in the dark tones inside the helicopter and the bright light outside, I had to really pull up the shadows on these images to get any detail inside the helicopter. The GoPro raw images handled all of this tweaking in Adobe Lightroom exceptionally well—much better than I thought they would.







Of course, in addition to the GoPros I also created photographs from the other helicopter and also from the ground as well. I had a long list of images Red Bull was looking to get of Aaron—and we had to work fast to get them in the limited time we had each morning. Of course, Aaron is a true pro. He flew his routine over and over for us and did so with incredible precision, which was critical since the canyon he was flying in and out of was not that wide. The consequences were high for sure. He did each maneuver multiple times allowing us in the H5 helicopter to change positions and get just the right angle. I have never had so much control while photographing Aaron doing his aerobatic routine—and it was pretty amazing to be able to be able to dial in the perspectives with these incredible helicopter pilots.

As can be seen in the previous double-page spread on pages 26-27, I wanted to show the helicopter as large as possible in the frame (so that the Red Bull logos were clearly visible) but I also needed to show the location. This was a major struggle since the canyon was below Aaron when he was at the top of his maneuvers, and there was not room in the canyon to have both helicopters below the rim at the same time. Hence, I created a variety of images with Aaron quite small in the frame (as in the last spread) and others where I zoomed in tighter to show him above and below the rim of the canyon. Some of these images, like the previous spread, feel like they need to be seen in a large format print to really feel the full impact of the image. Luckily, all of the GoPro still images had the logo much larger in the frame and also included the canyon below because they were so close to the action and had a super wide lens.

One of the key images that we had to capture was a

sequence image of Aaron doing a backflip in the BO 105 helicopter—and that sequence had to show him coming out of the canyon and diving back into it. We tried to create this image while I was in the A-Star helicopter with Mitch, where we hovered a few hundred feet above the rim of the canyon but that was challenging to pull off because I ended up shooting through the blades of the A-Star when Aaron was at the top of his arc above us. Once we landed and discussed the plan, I opted to create the sequence image from the ground as shown in the double-page spread on pages 30-31. We ended up created two different sequence images, a cropped version of the other one can be seen on page 36. These sequence images took hours to put together as I was firing away at 20 frames-per-second to capture the entire image sequence. From certain vantage points it looked as if Aaron was coming out of the ground and disappearing back into the ground because you couldn't even see the top of the canyon. To mitigate that I moved as close as possible so that you could see the top of the canyon.

While working in the helicopter, I was using a Nikon Z9 with a few different lenses, the Nikkor Z 24-70mm f/2.8 and the Nikkor Z 70-200mm f/2.8. For the wide images I used the 24-70, mostly at 24mm. The A-Star has a wide door in the back that allowed me to get a wide-angle perspective without the rotor blades in the top of the image. While I loved the wide angle perspective, Aaron was fairly small in the frame and hence, I swapped over to the longer telephoto zoom several times during these flights. Inbetween the aerobatic flights we captured a few images of Aaron deep in the canyon below us and also when he came in to land and refuel. If you have ever day-dreamed that you could float around and be in any position you wanted to photograph a subject that was exactly









what I was experiencing. I have photographed both landscapes and action from the air many, many times but in this instance the freedom was slightly overwhelming—especially knowing that high winds were coming and we had limited time each morning. I do wish we had more time to experiment and for me to try out some other perspectives but alas we got some pretty incredible images nonetheless. This is just a little insight into my angst to create jaw-dropping images and do justice to Aaron's incredible skills. The whole time we were flying and creating images air-to-air, I had a constant battle raging in my mind as to whether I was in the perfect spot of it would be better a few hundred feet higher or lower—or somewhere else farther up canyon.

One of the reasons I opted for the Nikon Z9 is that it has a phenomenal buffer that allows for capturing images at 20 frames-per-second with no limitations. The camera (with the right memory card) can continue firing as long as I hold down the shutter release. This allows me to blast away in every scenario to make sure I captured the height of the action. As far as I know there is no other camera on the market, at least with a 45 MP sensor, that can do this—and record images to two CFExpress Type B memory cards. I have used this unlimited buffer in a lot of scenarios the last few years and in some cases this unlimited buffer is the thing that allowed us to get the image we needed.

In addition to the action images I also needed to capture a variety of portraits and a few "Can-in-hand" images of Aaron drinking Red Bull. The can-in-hand images are always a request on every Red Bull assignment and while they don't often get seen by the general public they are seen internally at Red Bull HQ and end up getting used in

a variety of ways externally if they look natural. After the winds shut us down each day we would concentrate on these ground based images. While there is only one portrait image in this article, shown on page 25, we created several others as well with my FUJIFILM GFX 100 II medium format camera system. Those images were lit with Elinchrom strobes to create a more formal style portrait.

For me, one of the most remarkable images from this assignment is the following double-page spread on pages 34-35. This image was created with a GoPro mounted inside the cockpit and behind Aaron. At first glance, it is just a photo from inside the helicopter and could easily be flipped and look pretty mundane. But once your eyes see the horizon line in the bottom of the frame the wild upside down perspective kicks in. That never gets old.

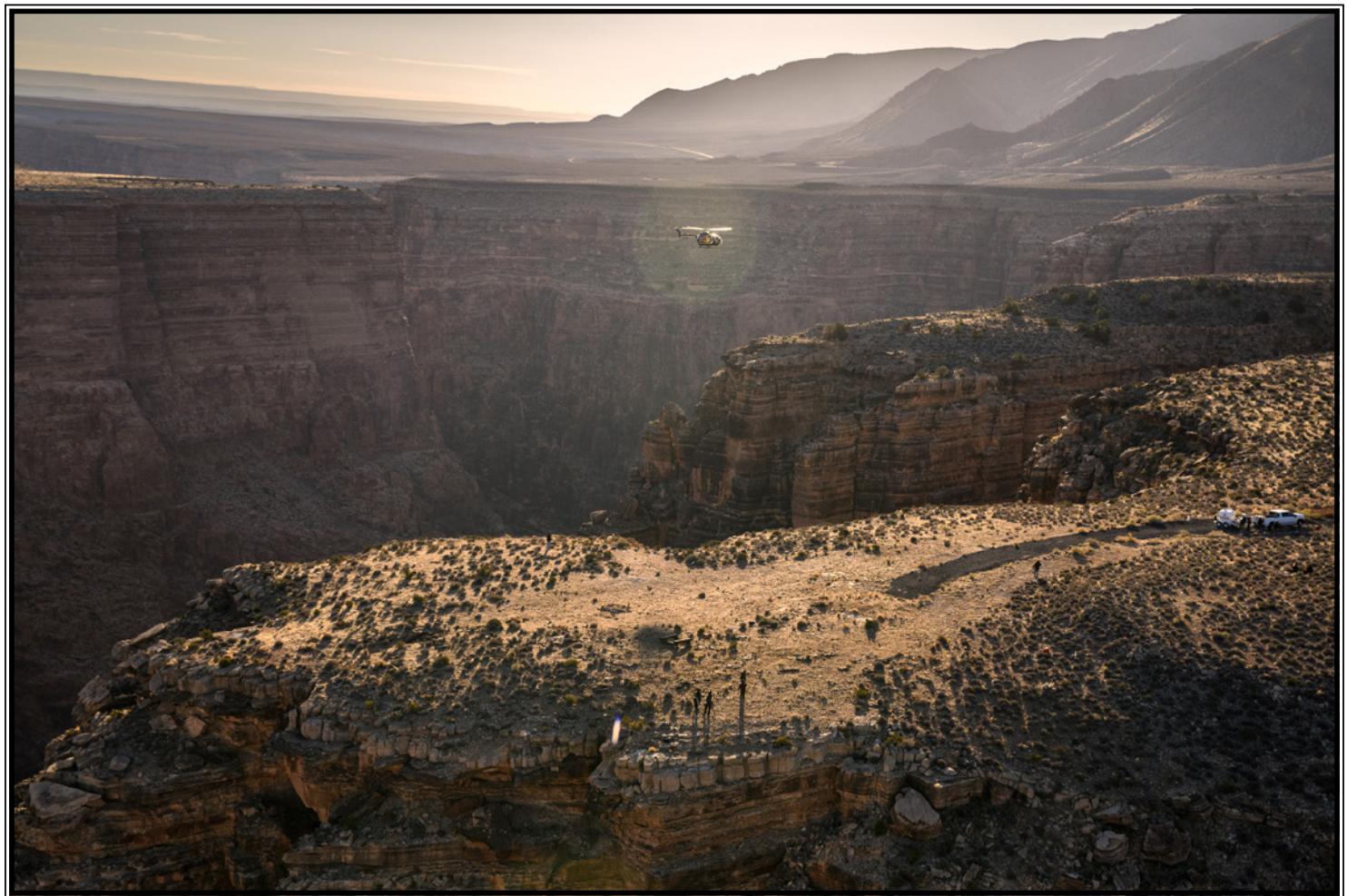
My sincere thanks to Red Bull for this assignment and especially to Aaron Fitzgerald for his incredible generosity and patience with me having him do backflip after backflip for an hour each day. I am pretty sure he had a wee bit of fun on this gig. Also, a huge thanks to Mitch and the H5 Helicopter crew that worked with us. Mitch is a super-cool guy and a great helicopter pilot. His help on this assignment was critical to the success of these images. Many of these images would not exist without his expert ability to put me exactly where I needed to go. I hope in the near future I can do another, even more extensive assignment solely photographing Aaron in another epic location. We did get some crazy cool images earlier this year in the Bahamas, which were featured in the Summer 2025 issue of the Newsletter but I always want more. Lastly, a huge thanks to Stan Gray, who was the air director on the ground for this assignment and also turned on my GoPros before each flight.

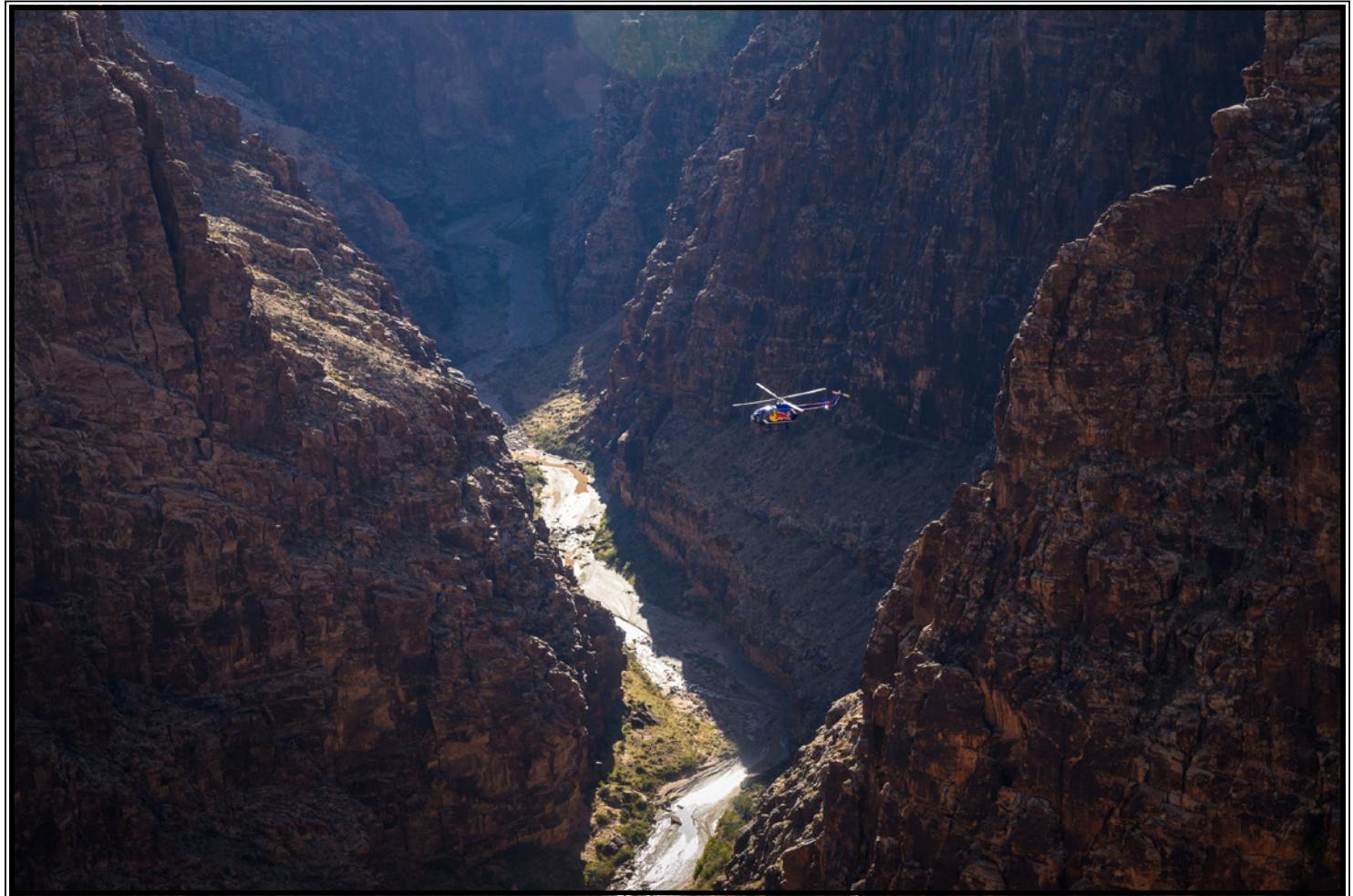
















portfolio





A Professional Photographer's Workflow

An excerpt from my updated e-book A Professional Photographer's Workflow

This is an excerpt composed of material from Chapter Eight entitled "Storing and Backing up Images" from my recently revamped and updated e-book [A Professional Photographer's Workflow: Using Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop](#). The updated e-book is a 657-page book that gets down to the nuts and bolts of a real world digital workflow. This e-book was completely revised and re-written over the last year, and presents a workflow that can be adapted by any photographer, professional or amateur. This e-book now includes an entirely new chapter on Storing and Backing up images and data. I can honestly say that I have not seen any other book on the market today that includes as much detailed and comprehensive information as this e-book does on a complete digital workflow from setting up the camera to backing up your images and everything in-between. Without further ado, here is a taste of the new chapter on backing up images and content.

THE 3-2-1 RULE

The basic rule of backing up anything important in the modern computer age is the 3-2-1 Rule. This rule states you should have three exact copies of all data on two different media types and one of those three copies should be off-site, meaning not physically close to the other copies. This is a very basic backup strategy and has been

around for quite some time. In this day and age most data is just stored on multiple different hard drives as DVDs are pretty much a thing of the past. Hence, the second part of this rule is rarely followed. The off-site backup is critical.

In my experience, three backups is the bare minimum I would recommend. At this time, I do not consider online or cloud storage to be a reliable backup. Cloud storage is risky because it takes too long to get everything off the cloud if that company goes out of business and gives customers 24-to-72 hours to get everything off their servers. This has already happened several times where customers were not able to get all of their data off the servers before they were shut down. Hence, that off-site backup needs to be under your control. I recommend using a bank safety deposit box or swapping drives with a fellow photographer.

BASIC BACKUP STRATEGIES

Let's start with a basic backup strategy. In terms of the strategy, it isn't any different than our basic 3-2-1 rule. We need to have our images backed up at a minimum on three different devices. And to insure we don't ever lose any data we also need to have one of those three back up hard drives in a different place physically than the other



CHAPTER EIGHT

STORING AND BACKING UP IMAGES

'Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which ones to keep.'

-- SCOTT ADAMS

Above is the opening spread of the new "Storing and Backing Up Images" chapter in my revamped and updated e-book *A Professional Photographer's Workflow: Using Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop (8th Edition)*. This chapter massively expands this topic in the ebook and covers everything you might ever need to know about storing, backing up and protecting your images and content. From simple backup strategies to large scale RAID systems, this chapter dives into all of it.

two hard drives. As an example of an offsite backup, I have a safety deposit box at my bank with my third set of backup hard drives. If you live in a place where there are frequent natural disasters (like hurricanes, tornadoes or floods) then I would consider a backup that is out of state or somewhere farther away—like at a relative's house. A basic backup system is just having all of your images (and data) on three separate external hard drives. A simple strategy like this works well if you have around 12 to 15 TB of images (or less) that need to be backed up.

ASSESSING YOUR HARD DRIVE NEEDS

The strategy laid out in the previous section is about as simple as it gets, but it will only be a good solution for

those that don't have a huge amount of data to back up. Before you can devise the best backup strategy, there are a few questions we have to ask ourselves. How much data do you need to back up? Do you need access to everything all the time? Are you working with Video? Are you working with super high resolution images (in the 50 to 100 MP range)? How much do you want to spend? How many copies of everything do you want to have? The answer to these questions can impact your backup strategy significantly. Let's go through each of them in detail here.

If you have more than 15 TB of data (images) to back up then you might be a better candidate for the Advanced Backup Strategies discussed later on in this chapter. The

drives are significantly more expensive and are usually much smaller in terms of the storage capacity, they are mostly used as working or travel hard drives and not as archival or mass storage drives.



Pictured above are the four different types of media storage that are available these days. These include an enterprise class Western Digital Ultrastar Hard Disk Drive (HDD) on the left, a smaller format travel-style SanDisk Professional Pro-G40 SSD (center left), a larger desktop OWC Thunderblade SSD (center right), and a 4-bay OWC Thunderbay RAID enclosure, which we have not discussed as yet, on the far right.

As shown above in Figure 8.11, there are a huge variety of hard drives to choose from. That is why we have spent so long in this chapter talking about various types of drives and the specifications that matter. All of this information will be useful when it comes time to choose the hard drives that will work best for you and your specific back up strategies. For backing up large amounts of data, the best option is to use a HDD—either a raw drive (like the Western Digital Ultrastar) as shown above in Figure 8.11 on the far left or an HDD incorporated into a custom enclosure. If you have massive amounts of data then a good option is to use a RAID enclosure (like the OWC Thunderblade shown above on the far right), which we will discuss later on in this chapter. The RAID enclosure is essentially a collection of HDDs (in this case 4 HDDs) inside a larger enclosure. For those that want the ultimate in speed, using a SSD like the OWC Thunderblade SSD as a working drive helps to make both your computer and all of your applications run faster. But because these desktop SSDs can cost thousands of dollars they are not a great option for storing and backing up images. Now that we have covered the basics, let's dive into some backup strategies.

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BASIC BACKUP STRATEGIES

Now that we have covered all of the basics on the various hard drive specifications, let's talk about backup strategies. We will start with a basic backup strategy and then move onto more advanced options in the next section. In terms of the strategy, it isn't any different than our basic 3-2-1 rule. We need to have our images backed up at a minimum on three different devices. And to insure we don't ever lose any data we also need to have one of those three back up hard drives in a different place physically than the other two hard drives. As an example of an offsite backup, I have a safety deposit box at my bank with my third set of backup hard drives. If you live in a place where there are frequent natural disasters (like hurricanes, tornadoes or floods) then I would consider a backup that is out of state or somewhere farther away—like at a relative's house.



Pictured above is a very basic backup strategy: purchase three external hard drives (all of the same storage capacity) and have them all loaded up with the same data so that backup 1 and 2 are the same as the first hard drive. The last step would be to take the third copy (i.e. the second backup) and store that offsite. In this example, I have shown the CalDigit AV Pro 2 external hard drive enclosure as an example.

A basic backup system is just having all of your images (and data) on three separate external hard drives, as shown above in Figure 8.12. This is a very simple backup strategy where you copy all of your images onto three separate external hard drives. A simple strategy like this works well if you have around 12 to 15 TB of images that need to be backed up. Hence, if you have less than 12 to 15 TB this is the strategy I would highly recommend.

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largest Hard Disk Drives available these days are around 24 TB. Hence, if you follow the rule of not filling up your hard drives more than 80% of their total capacity that means you can store around 19 TB on a 24 TB hard drive. Hence, even if you have a fairly large amount of images you could stick with this simple backup strategy and just add another set of three hard drives to the system as you need more storage. Some photographers just buy a new set of hard drives and stack them on the old ones as they need more storage. That is a perfectly acceptable solution as long as you can keep track of everything.

The second question we asked in that opening paragraph, "Do you need access to everything all the time?" is a big question. If the answer is no, then that simplifies a lot of things. You can just keep expanding your simple three drive backup system as needed and unplug the old hard drives to keep the desktop uncluttered. But for those that

do want to have access to all of their images (and data) at any given time—and those that have a huge amount of data to back up—it gets more complex and you might need to explore the advanced options we will discuss later on. The answer to this question basically comes down to whether or not there is a single hard drive that can store all of your images on one hard drive. If not, as is the case when you have 30 TB or more to back up, then you will have to go down the RAID route, which we will discuss later.

How you choose to store your images also depends on what type of photography you do and how often you need to access your images. If you are a wedding or studio portrait photographer, it is unlikely that you'll need instant access to older images since they were probably created for a specific client, normally an individual or family, and that client most likely won't be calling you

asking for those images once the job is done. If you are an editorial or commercial photographer then it is likely you will need access to your entire image archive so that you can pull images for stock submissions as they come in. The first case is much easier to deal with; the second is a little harder depending on the size of your image library.

If you are working with video or have very high resolution cameras, then that also complicates things as you will be creating an immense amount of data everytime you go out. If you are regularly recording high quality 4K or 8K video then you are going to be filling up hard drives like there is no tomorrow. Similarly if you have a 60 MP or 100 MP camera and create a lot of images then you are going to need a lot of high capacity hard drives to store all of those images and back them up. In the case of video, most people do not need access to all of their video clips all the time. If that is the scenario you are in then an expanded basic backup strategy like we have discussed here can still work well. It is just a matter of buying high capacity HDDs and adding new ones to the backup system as needed. This can become cumbersome but it can still work as long as you stay very organized.

The last two questions are interlinked. How much do you want to spend and how many copies of everything do you want to have comes down to how much storage capacity you need and how risk averse you want to be with your backups. You can purchase less expensive consumer HDDs and save some money—but that is a bit riskier than buying the Enterprise class HDDs. If you have lost images in the past, you might also want to have four copies of everything just to be extra safe. That will obviously mean buying extra hard drives and add to the overall cost. One last thing we have not discussed is how fast do your

hard drives need to be? If you are working with 4K or 8K video or high resolution cameras as discussed before, then you might want to add some external “working” hard drives to your basic backup strategy. These working drives will make it easier (and faster) to work on your images or video since they are generally SSD drives, and have much faster read and write speeds than the slower HDDs used as storage and backup hard drives. If you are working on video content in Adobe Premiere Pro, Apple Final Cut Pro or DaVinci Resolve then a fast working hard drive will be a must to playback the footage. Lightroom will also be much faster if you use a fast SSD as a working hard drive with your images on it. I recommend that everyone leave their Lightroom catalog on the computer hard drive if possible. That will allow Lightroom to hum along at very fast speeds. I realize these “basic” backup strategies might sound a bit more complex with the working drives added into the mix, but I want to make sure we cover all the bases. I generally don’t store anything on the computer hard drive aside from the applications, the Lightroom catalog and email. This is a good practice as it makes it easy to switch computers as most everything is on external hard drives and not beholden to any one computer. Now that we have gone through a few different basic backup strategies, let’s get down to brass tacks and talk about which hard drives I recommend and those to avoid.

This excerpt is just a very small portion of Chapter 8, which covers just about anything and everything you need to know to safely store and backup your images and content. From simple backup strategies to large scale RAID systems, this chapter dives into all of it. If this excerpt seems interesting, check out the full e-book, available for purchase on my [website](#).

A Seismic shift in Photography Education

by Michael Clark

Photography education is undergoing a seismic shift. In the last few years, as social media has taken hold more than ever before, photography education has radically changed. As someone who has taught in-person workshops for over two decades the last few years have seen a major shift in terms of who takes photography workshops and the intensity of those workshops. Last year, in 2024, the Rocky Mountain School of Photography closed its doors after 40 years of photography education. Just in the last month, CreativeLIVE—who basically invented the online education paradigm back in 2010—announced that they were ceasing operations at the end of the year. In my own experiences since Covid has waned, advanced photography workshops (especially those that deal with lighting) have had a very hard time getting enough people interested to even run the workshop.

Prior to Covid, I taught a workshop called “Cutting-Edge Lighting” that focused on the more advanced lighting techniques and technologies like High Speed Sync and Hi-Sync strobe work, both of which I have used to great effect in my own work. That workshop was usually a mix of advanced amateurs and professional photographers. But now we are struggling to get that workshop back on track. There are several reasons advanced photography workshops are a tough proposition these days. First, there are an incredible array of YouTube videos that have seemingly infinite amounts of information on any topic you can

think of. Some channels do a great job and others are seriously lacking in terms of accurate information. Second, AI is coming on strong and that is helping to kill off the photography industry and any interest in photography as a career. Third, as a result of these first two reasons, the photo industry is in turmoil. Rapid change, i.e. the shift to social media as the main avenue for advertising, and the rise of AI, has created a very challenging landscape for professional photographers to deal with. Hence, pro photographers are no longer taking photography workshops because they can’t afford it. Lastly, the economic downturn, at least here in the USA, has massively affected just about everyone—and that is not helping.

All of this adds up to photography education being splintered in a way I have not seen before. Many photographers (like myself) are able to produce educational content (books, videos, courses, etc.) and sell them online. My recently revamped digital workflow [e-book](#) is a great example of this. Perhaps high-end, more advanced in-person workshops will come back in the future—I am running the [Cutting-Edge Lighting workshop](#) in Maine next summer. In this transitional time, less expensive, faster-to-consume, and less advanced educational options seem like they are thriving. As an example, photo tours are still popular. The thirst for knowledge is still there, but how that knowledge is transferred and how that can be passed on is still yet to be determined.

parting shot



Clint and Wyatt Mortenson riding their horses and lassoing cattle during the 2025 Western Portrait photography workshop near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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