

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



SPRING 2010



SPRING 2010 NEWSLETTER

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When the stars align...

ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITIES ONLY HAPPEN SO OFTEN



This issue of the newsletter has been a long time coming. In fact, the winter issue of the newsletter never happened. I was just too busy - which is a good thing. And if you take a moment to look through this issue you'll see why. Because this issue is so late and I missed the last issue, consider this a double issue of the newsletter. It is the largest newsletter I have ever produced and it is stuffed with extended adventure stories, equipment reviews, workshop announcements and the latest news.

As the subtitle says above, once in a lifetime opportunities only happen so often. This winter I seemed to have several once in a lifetime opportunities and the planets and stars somehow aligned in December while I was out in Hawaii so that I could witness and photograph the largest waves to hit the north shore in over 40 years - and shoot the 2009/2010 Quicksilver in memory of Eddie Aikau big wave surfing competition in Waimea Bay, which turned out to be the biggest big wave surfing competition in history! And I planned that trip a month in advance so I had no idea of the conditions until I got there. As a result, there is a ten-page feature on the Eddie Aikau in this issue of the newsletter, which is the largest feature to ever run in the newsletter.

My intent when I went out to Hawaii to shoot surfing was to produce some more stock images since I haven't shot that much surfing and to finally get into the water shoot surfing from inside the wave. Obviously with 50-foot waves I wasn't too excited about swimming out and shooting in the water. My good buddy Brian Biemann, one of the world's top surfing photographers, put it best when he said, "that is death out there." Hence, I shot from the shoreline like everyone else.

Less than 48 hours after getting back from Hawaii, I was on another plane headed down

to southern Patagonia for an expedition into the Karukina National Park and the Cordillera Darwin with my good friends who put on the Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race. We trekked through remote, uncharted and unmapped terrain, over high mountain passes and through deep valleys for days on end. Not but a month later in February, I was back down in southern Chile on the island of Tierra del Fuego covering the race for the main sponsor Wenger. The full story on the race and the exploration are detailed in the article starting on page 22.

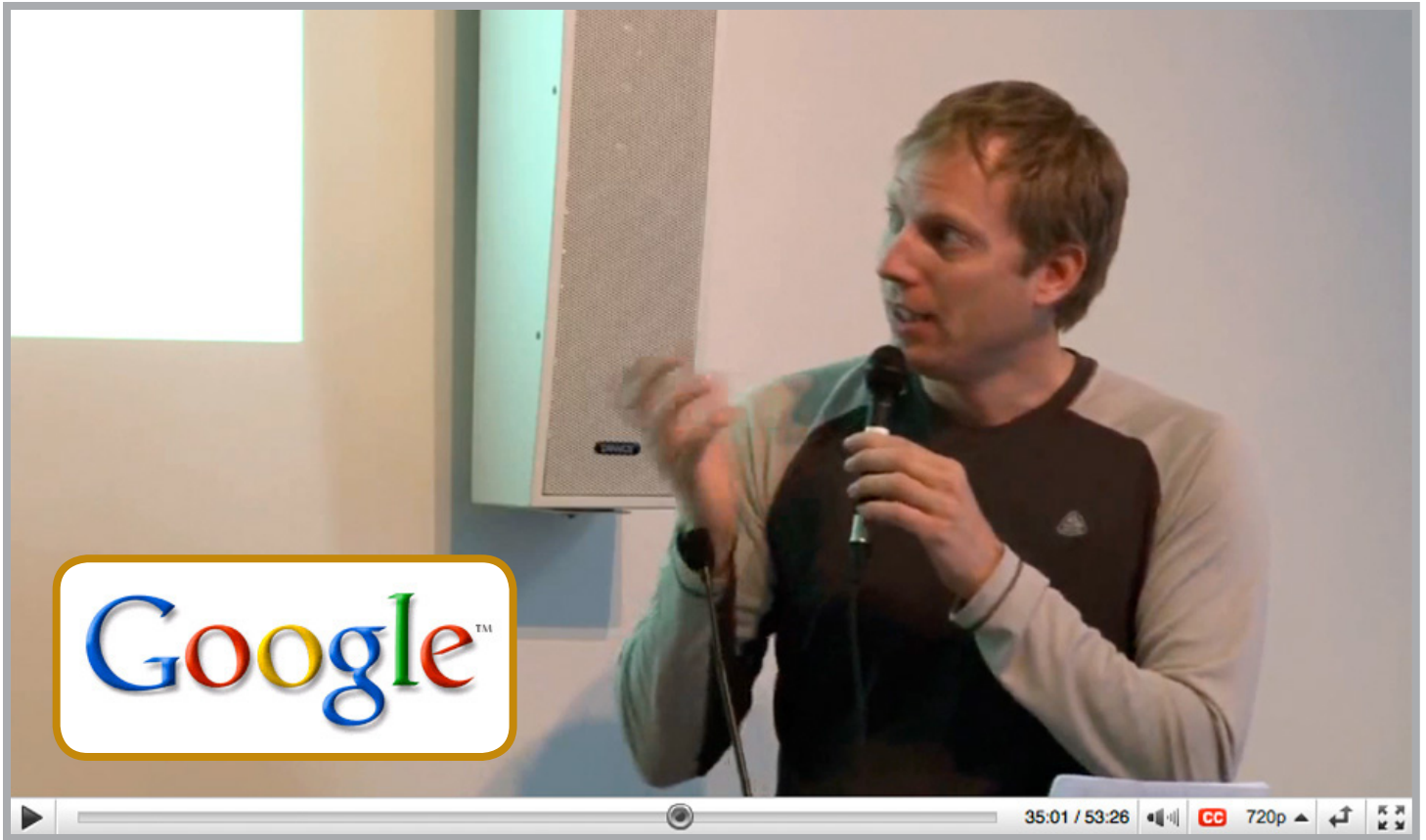
Aside from these assignments and expeditions, I have had many other smaller assignments, book signings and presentations the last few months. In January, Manfrotto Distribution (formerly Bogen Imaging) flew me out to do a mini workshop and presentation for their annual sales meeting - that was a great trip which also afforded me the opportunity to play with some of their new gear like the Elinchrom Quadra strobes, which are reviewed in this issue of the newsletter. I was also asked to speak at Google about my work and the new book which was a huge honor. Details on that are in the news section on page 4. Last but not least I did a few seminars on adventure photography and signed copies of my new book at Samy's Camera in Los Angeles. As you can see it has been a bit hectic to say the least.

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Michael Speaks at Google

MICHAEL WAS INVITED TO SPEAK AS PART OF THE TALKS@GOOGLE PROGRAM



On March 18, 2010, I had the honor of speaking at Google as part of their Talks@Google program. I gave an hour long lecture on my work and how I approach my photography. I was asked to come speak at Google by Marc Pawliger, whom I met years ago when I was contacted to shoot an assignment for Adobe. My sincere thanks to Marc and the Google-ites for bringing me out and taking the time to sit in on my talk. [Check out my presentation on YouTube.](#)

The talk was part of their Authors@Google program and is also labeled as a Photographers@Google talk. Google brings in a wide variety of speakers to talk to their employees including such politicians as Barack Obama, John McCain and Bill Richardson as well as artists, musicians, celebrities and authors. The presentation was video taped and then subsequently uploaded to the Talks@Google stream on You Tube.

Since there are so many talented photographers working at Google, I spoke about my recent book *Digital Masters: Adventure Photography*, the equipment I use and how I created specific images. The presentation

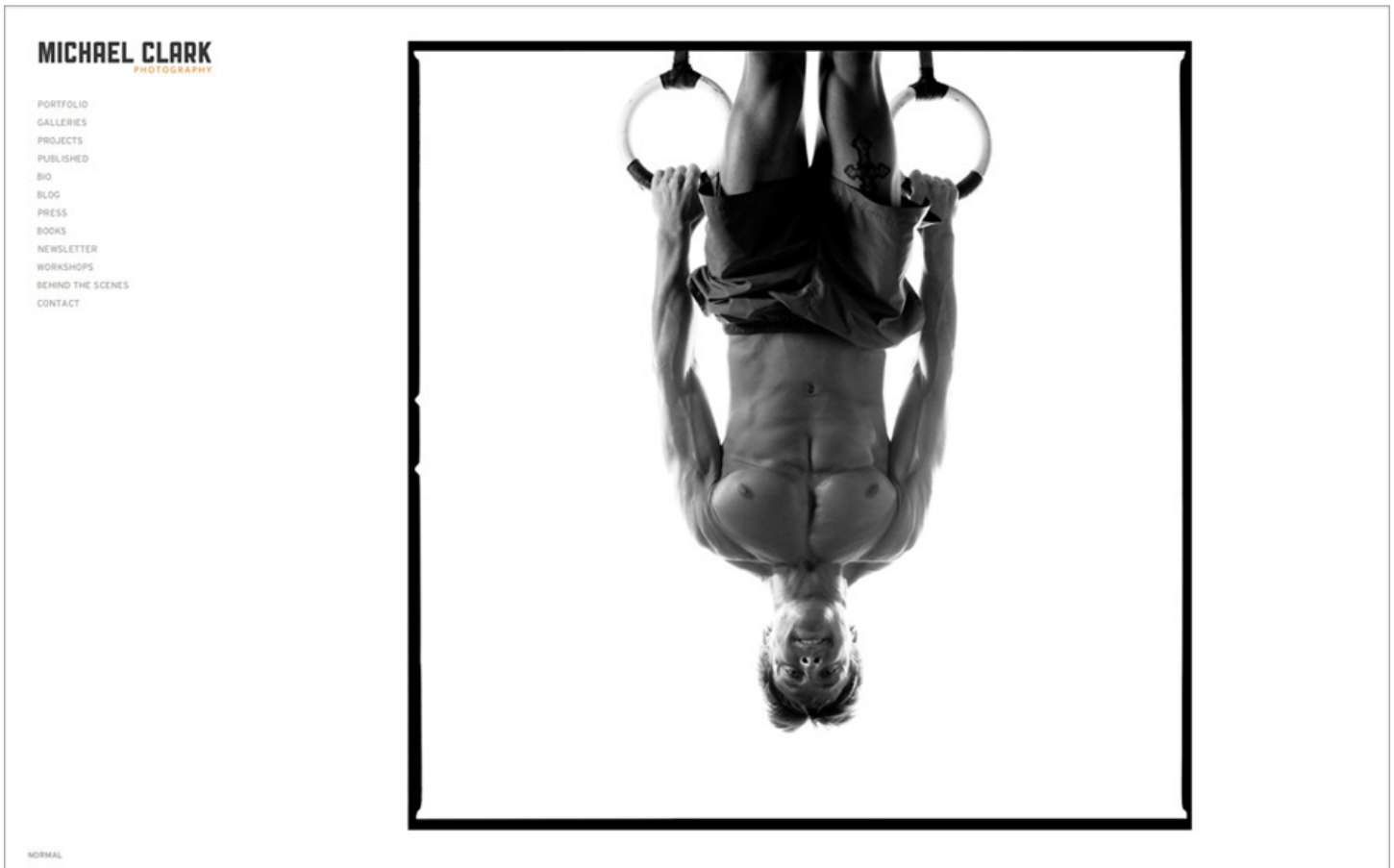
was also simulcast to Google offices around the world, hence even though there were 50 or more folks in the room listening with keen interest - there were also untold number of people watching the live feed while working in their offices elsewhere.

Oddly enough, while preparing the talk, I realized that a fair percentage of my work comes through art buyers and photo editors finding me and my work via Google. In fact, the editor at Lark Books, who contacted me to write the book on adventure photography, found me on Google and pitched the book to me. The Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race also came to me via Google. The directors of the race found me on Google and contacted me about covering the race - which I have shot the last three years! As you can imagine, search engine optimization is a serious component of my marketing.

RECENT CLIENTS: Microsoft, Nikon, Red Bull, Wenger, Manfrotto Distribution, Samy's Camera, Men's Journal, Outdoor Photographer, Nikon World Magazine and Climbing Magazine.

New Website, Blog and Logo

AFTER TWO MONTHS OF WORK ON A NEW LOOK THE NEW WEBSITE & BLOG ARE FINALLY UP



After working on new marketing materials for months now I have a new logo (at right), a new website and a new blog as well as new business cards and stationery – basically a whole new unified look for Michael Clark Photography. The new website is a faster version of the old website with images that are much larger and load even faster than the smaller images on my old website. After four years with the old look it was time for a change.

Of course I still held onto the understated and clean look of my old website. For the website, I used a template offered by Rob Haggart's company APhotoFolio.com after looking at several of his websites on a 30-inch monitor and wondering how the images could be so huge and load so quickly. Basically I was seduced by how spectacular the images looked on his websites.

One of the other features of the new website is the "Fullscreen" option which is awesome (for lack of a better word). You can find this in the lower left corner



MICHAEL CLARK
PHOTOGRAPHY

of the website. It will basically fill up your entire screen with the website and you can turn it on and off at any time. Surprisingly, even though it is a Flash based

website, all of the text carried over quite well and there is an HTML site running in the background that shows up on iPhones and on any other non-Flash compliant devices.

All of the content from the old website is still there in one form or another including new pages for Workshops and Press. The new blog has all the same content, which is now integrated into the website itself and has been molded into a single column blog which put the emphasis on the content. I invite you to check out the website at www.michaelclarkphoto.com.

Adobe Lightroom & the Fine Art Digital Print Workshop

IN TANDEM WITH THE ALBUQUERQUE BALLOON FIESTA - SANTA FE, NM - OCTOBER 7-10, 2010



This 4-day workshop will be a combined classroom workshop with outdoor photographic shoots. The workshop coincides with the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, which is the world's largest balloon festival and will certainly be one of our photographic destinations. All classroom instruction will be centered around Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Version 3.0, as well as the craft of creating a fine art digital print.

Instead of listing all the details here (which are available on my website and blog) I thought I'd include some of the great testimonials from last year's workshop participants: "Andy and Michael, I've taken several photography seminars over the past few years. Without a doubt your's has been the most informative, well organized, openly sharing event I've attended."

"Thanks again for all your help and guidance. It's clear you don't hold back when teaching and sincerely want all attendees to get as much out of the seminars as

we're able to absorb."

"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 both shared was top-notch and I hope to repeat this experience again. Thanks for such a great 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."

This is just a sampling of the feedback from last years participants. And I do have to say that is was one of the best workshops I have ever taught. If you are interested in signing on for this fall please check out the [full course description and registration info on my website](#) and [blog](#). I hope to see you here in Santa Fe this fall. If you have any questions please contact me.

Adventure Photography Workshop

ADVENTURE PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP IN SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO - JUNE 20-26, 2010



Adventure sports photography can be an adventure in itself, involving breathtaking locations, extreme conditions, and working with elite athletes in risky situations. It requires a host of skills, including technical excellence with the camera, familiarity with the sport, and the ability to keep your goals and safety in mind throughout.

Designed for intermediate to experienced photographers, this workshop concentrates on creating unique adventure sports and lifestyle images. We focus on four outdoor sports: rock climbing, white water kayaking, mountain biking, and trail running. Using elite athletes as our models and northern New Mexico's incredible landscape as our backdrop, we explore innovative ways to capture the essence of each sport. Topics covered during the week include research and preparation,

SANTA FE
photographic workshops

composition and camera angles, equipment selection and use, using natural light, fill flash, and battery-powered strobes, and autofocus techniques. We also learn how to work with

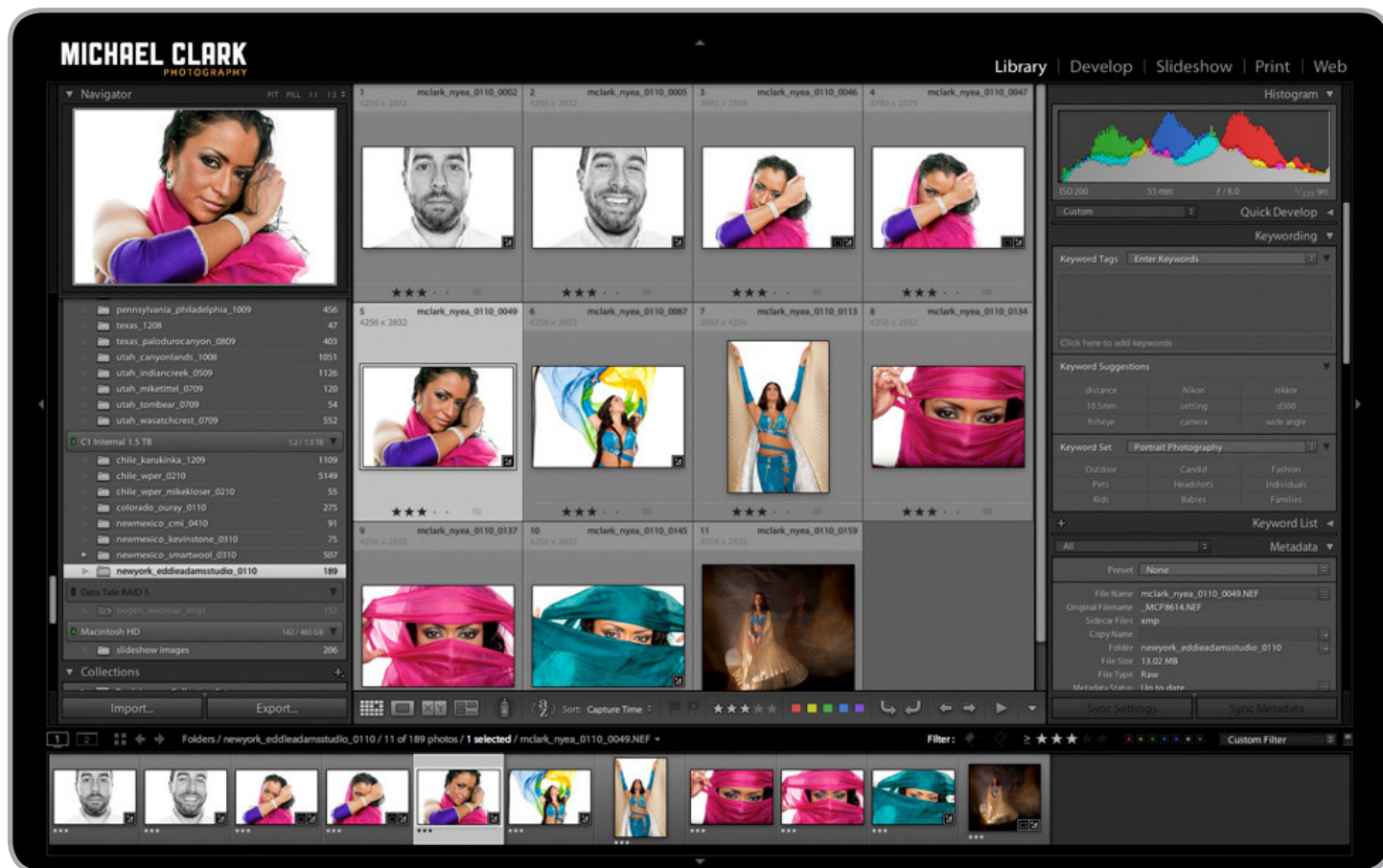
athletes who are putting themselves at risk and how to capture the intensity of the action. Each day finds us in a new location working with expert athletes.

Classroom time includes editing and critiquing images and one-on-one meetings with Michael. In addition, Michael shares his insights and experiences in the adventure marketplace, including career development, portfolios, and how to shoot for stock, editorial, and commercial clients.

This workshop is slated for the week of June 20-26, 2010 and is hosted by the [Santa Fe Workshops](http://SantaFeWorkshops.com). Check their website for registration info.

Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 2-day Workshops

START TO FINISH WORKFLOW FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS



Lightroom is the essential software of choice for digital photographers. This unique hands-on application experience is an intensive two-day workshop focused on Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 3.0, in which participants learn to download, organize, manage, develop, and present digital photography using their own laptops.

We begin with an introductory overview of Lightroom, which starts with covering the database components, catalog files, previews, the metadata structure, and the steps for setting up application preferences specific to your personal workflow requirements. Topics include digital camera setup, choosing appropriate file formats for image capture, efficiently downloading images from the camera or a hard drive, sorting, rating, editing, global tone and color corrections, critical local corrections, input and output sharpening, presenting slideshows, and printing photographic images using Lightroom from start to finish. Under Michael's expert guidance, participants come to see why Lightroom puts

deliberate focus on the word "speed". This program allows photographers to spend less time in front of their computers and more time behind their cameras.

Sponsors: Adobe, X-rite, Blurb, Data Robotics, Nik Software, onOne Software

Cost: \$395.00

[Register online at Lightroom workshops.com](http://Lightroomworkshops.com). Starting later this summer through the fall, I'll be teaching this workshop in Vancouver, Austin, Minneapolis, Calgary, Milwaukee, Memphis and Miami. Please check my website for the dates that I am teaching this workshop and for more information about the workshop.

The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom workshops are taught as part of a larger series of workshops on Adobe Lightroom via Lightroomworkshops.com. Other instructors, including Nevada Wier, George Jardine and photoshop guru Jerry Courvoisier, will be teaching the same workshop at other locations. For a complete overview of locations and instructors visit the Lightroomworkshops.com website.

The Elinchrom Quadra

AN ULTRA PORTABLE & LIGHTWEIGHT BATTERY POWERED FLASH SOLUTION



Disclaimer: In an effort to be up front with my readers about my relationships with photo equipment suppliers I wanted to let you know that while I do have a relationship with the folks at Elinchrom and give them feedback on their gear to help improve it, here I will call it like I see it. If I thought a piece of gear was not up to snuff then I simply wouldn't choose to review it. In terms of the Quadra, my first hands on experience with this product was at the Manfrotto Distribution annual sales meeting for their reps, where I was brought in to do a mini workshop and presentation in January 2010. As soon as I saw it, I knew this was going to be a product that would be perfect for my style of work.

Ever since I got the Elinchrom Ranger RX Speed 1,100 Watt/second battery powered strobe a few years ago I have wanted to get a similar setup that was lighter

for those times when I didn't need quite so much power and had to lug lighting gear way back into the wilderness. Well, Elinchrom must have been reading my mind because they made a smaller version of the venerable Rangers called the Ranger Quadra that pumps out 400 W/s, weighs only 7.94 pounds (3.6 kg) and recycles in 2.2 seconds at full power. At lower power settings the recycle time is almost instantaneous, down to a quarter of a second. Compared to the old battery-powered DynaLite's I used to use that took upwards of five seconds to recycle at full power this is a huge upgrade.

The strobe head itself is tiny and weighs less than a Nikon SB900 speedlight! In fact the strobe head without the reflector is smaller than an SB900. Of course you'll need a reflector or more likely a few other light shaping odds and ends but these are similarly lightweight. My Elinchrom softboxes, standard mount re-

flectors and grid spots can be used with the addition of a Quadra Reflector Adapter (sold separately - shown on the flash head at right) which just attaches to the Quadra head and allows you to mount any Elinchrom light modifier as usual. For my work, I usually have a soft box or a beauty dish on the strobes at a minimum so all of my heads are set up with the adapter on them all the time. The adapters add just a bit more weight but it isn't that big of a deal.



One thing I would caution though, and which was an oversight on the part of Elinchrom, is that the heads don't ship with a protective cap. The bulb is just hanging out there waiting to be nicked. Talking with the guys at Manfrotto I was assured there is a diffuser plate they are going to be shipping soon that would act as a protective cap for the strobe head. But, after thinking about it, I realized my Ranger heads have a plastic snap on cap that works just fine on the Quadras if you have the reflector adapter in place all the time as I do so I ordered a few of those and the problem was solved.

As far as I can tell there is no other strobe system out there that is this small and compact for the power it puts out - and especially when considering the great recycle times. Some other little nice features that may not grab you at first are the sweet shoulder strap that ships with the battery pack, the built-in Elinchrom Skyport wireless Transceivers, the same 1/10th stop control of the light and easy to use digital interface as with the bigger Ranger packs, a slow and fast recycle mode and a custom mode where you can trigger the strobe using a speedlight - which also allows you to use rear curtain synch. As you would expect, having the Skyports built into the battery pack makes it super simple to trigger the strobes. And with the Skyport transmitter on top of your camera, you can also adjust the power on all of

your Quadras just by pushing the plus and minus buttons on the top of the transmitter. For me this is a huge selling point as outdoors I am not always right next to the power pack. I hope that someday Elinchrom makes a version of the Rangers with the Skyport transceivers built in - that would be sweet (and I am sure they are working on it). I really do have to hand it to the engineers, they were thinking ahead when they built the Skyports and made them so small and lightweight. It creates a super portable and lightweight setup that is very well integrated.



The slow and fast recycle modes allow you to control just how fast you burn through a battery. For my part I am always looking for the fastest recycle rates I can get - especially for shooting portraits so you can fire away when needed. Hence, I have all of my battery packs set to Fast mode all the time. If I drain a battery I'll just switch it out - or if I am near a plug I'll tap into the AC current and start recharging. Speaking of which, it only takes 1.5 hours to fully recharge the unit and it only takes 45 minutes to get to 80% charge.

One of the coolest features that I have not seen on any strobe out there is the ability to synch these pup-pies with your speedlights and the ability to use them

equipment review

in combination with these strobes to augment your lighting. I shoot a lot of motion blurs with strobes and speedlights and it has always been a struggle, nigh impossible, to make a strobe rear curtain synch like my Nikon speedlights do. Now, with the Quadras all I have to do is synch the power pack with my speedlights and trigger them with the speedlight on the hot-shoe mount (as if I am triggering other speedlights) and voila, rear-curtain synch achieved. That alone is worth the price of admission if you ask me.

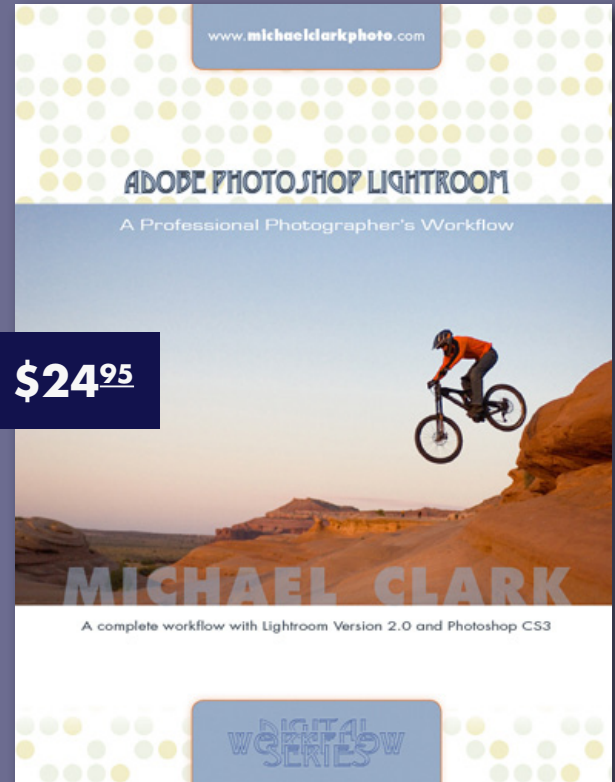


There are a lot of other features that I have totally left out at this point like super fast flash durations with the A-heads (up to 1/6000th sec.), smart battery technology, a sweet LED modeling lamp and a built in slave cell, but sadly I don't have room here to go into every feature. Now, I do have to say this is not the set up for anyone who really punishes their gear. The heads are mostly plastic and won't take much abuse, think of them like you would a speedlight. The battery seems pretty tough but the plastic clips on the side are exposed and fragile. It would be nice to see these heads made out of metal but I understand why they went with plastic - because it saves weight and this system is all about lightweight.

So, what's the verdict? For my part, this is a great set up for shooting adventure sports. It saves my back a lot of stress and fits nicely into my Lowepro Vertex 300 AW along with two camera bodies and a few lenses. Sure, there are other options out there like the Profoto AcuteB 600R, the Dynalite Uni400jr and a few others but none of them are as light and portable as the Quadra system or have such an extensive range of customizable features. In tandem with my Nikon speedlights and the larger Elinchrom Ranger battery powered strobe I can see this kit getting used a lot! For more info go to www.elinchrom.com.

ADOBE LIGHTROOM WORKFLOW

A COMPLETE WORKFLOW FROM CAPTURE
TO OUTPUT BY MICHAEL CLARK



NEED A CUTTING EDGE DIGITAL WORKFLOW? CURIOUS ABOUT ADOBE PHOTOSHOP LIGHTROOM AND HOW IT CAN SPEED UP YOUR DIGITAL WORKFLOW?

The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Workflow, a 124 page PDF e-book, is a workshop in book form. This workflow, while not exhaustive, will cover the main topics of a shooting workflow then move into a RAW processing workflow with Adobe Lightroom 2.6 and Photoshop CS3/CS4.

To purchase *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow* click on the website link below. Payments can be made with any major credit card or via your PayPal account. For more information on the workflow and exactly what is covered go to Michael's website.

WWW.MICHAELCLARKPHOTO.COM



THE 2009/2010 QUICKSILVER IN MEMORY OF

EDDIE AIKAU

A full-page photograph of a massive, curling green wave crashing over a surfer. The surfer, wearing a yellow shirt and dark shorts, is positioned at the base of the wave, riding a white surfboard. The wave's crest is breaking into a thick wall of white foam and spray. The sky above is a clear, deep blue. The overall scene conveys the power and scale of the surf event.

...THE PAST 48 HOURS OF MASSIVE SURF
IS THE LARGEST SUSTAINED EPISODE TO
HIT THE HAWAIIAN ISLANDS IN 40 YEARS.



After 25 years with most of those spent waiting, Waimea Bay delivered an event of legendary proportions on December 8, 2009 at the Quicksilver In Memory of Eddie Aikau. It was 25 years to the day since the first “Eddie” was held and waves of up to 50 feet poured in to Oahu’s North Shore as if on cue. With younger brother Clyde still in the lineup, at age 60, joined by the contemporary top guns of big wave riding, a packed arena celebrated every gutsy ride in brilliant sunshine befitting of a tribute to local hero Eddie Aikau.

When all was said and done, it was California’s Greg Long, 26, (from San Clemente) who made a late charge

in the final heat of the day to claim the \$55,000 winner’s purse. Long committed to an unbelievable never-say-die attack, securing all four of his top scores - several of them death-defying and one of them a perfect 100-point ride, in macking 40- to 50-foot waves. It was the high point of his career to-date - pretty incredible given that he only rode Waimea for the first time earlier that week.

The call to wait for this day and the ensuing result was mind-boggling, especially since many were questioning not running the event the day before in 40-foot surf. By afternoon, all concerned were stunned that 79-year-



old contest director and big wave icon George Downing had kept his cool so well and timed it perfectly for a second peak in swell energy. Those 48 hours of massive surf, on December 7th and 8th, 2009, were the largest sustained episode to hit the Hawaiian Islands in 40 years.



Captions: Opening spread and Page 14 - Greg Long on huge waves during the last heat of the 2009/2010 Eddie Aikau. Page 15 - Top: Andy Irons catching a tube in the beach break in Waimea Bay, Hawaii. Bottom: Waves exploding in Waimea Bay. Page 16 - Michael Ho outrunning a big wave. Page 17 - Top: Heli patrol. Bottom: The jet ski patrol getting some action in during the Eddie Aikau. Page 19 - Top: Pre-event surfers. Bottom: Just part of the 50,000+ crowds that stormed Waimea Bay. Page 21 - Mark Healey dropping in on a big wave at the Eddie Aikau big wave surfing competition in Waimea Bay,

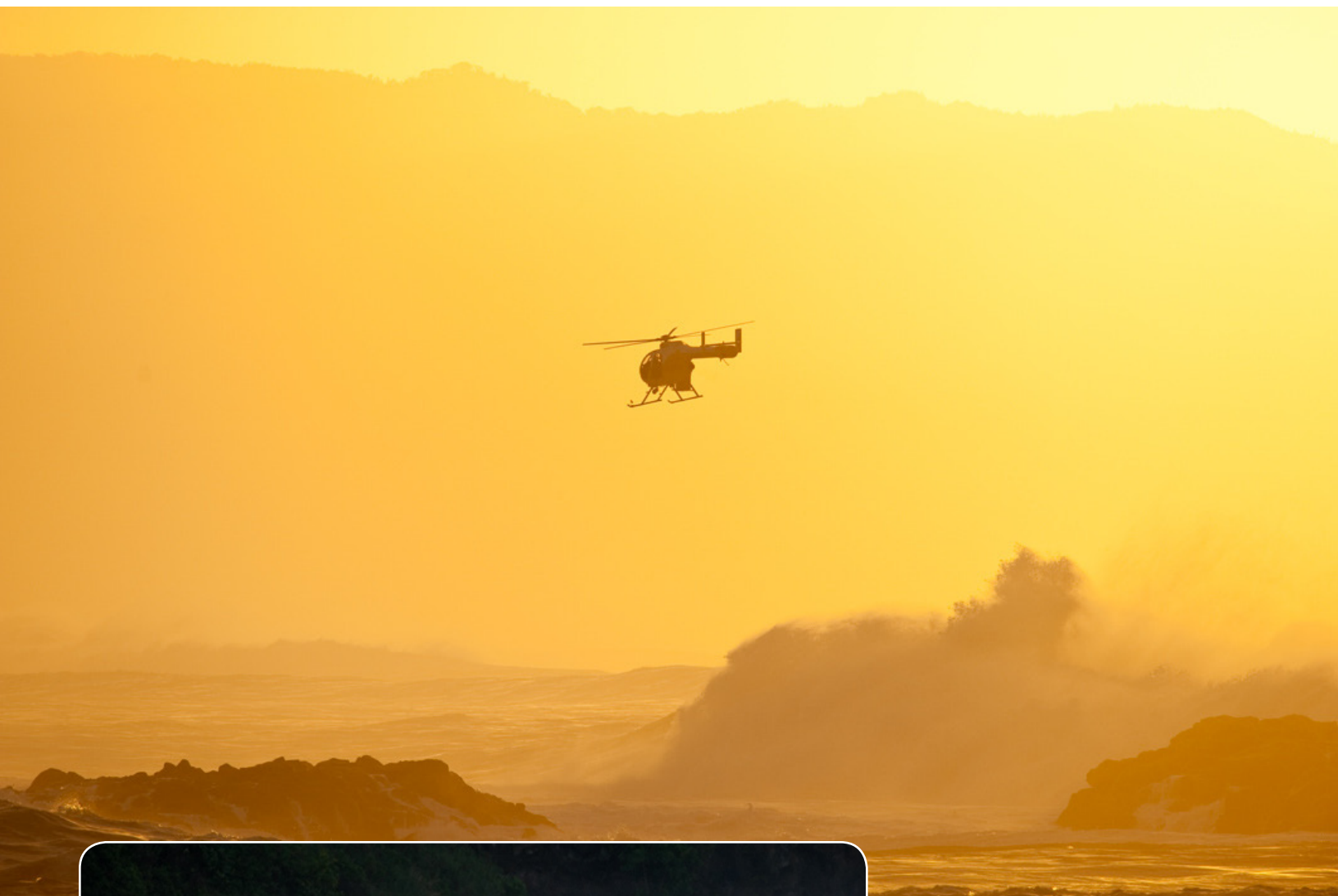


From the moment the event was declared “on” at dawn, to the final gut-wrenching wipeouts that came with the peaking swell of afternoon, the air was filled with salt spray and adrenaline. Not a square foot of sand or lava rock was empty as a capacity crowd of over 50,000 packed the natural amphitheater of Waimea Bay to experience the pairing of Mother Nature and the men who ride her mountainous surf.

The insane wipeouts that dropped like dominoes, the hairball air drops and perfect scores, the 28 surfers of the event who put their lives on the line in honor of

Aikau today - it all made for the greatest day of the Quicksilver In Memory of Eddie Aikau’s history. - *From the Quicksilver Eddie Aikau Website*

Sitting in Brian Biemann’s office a few days before the Eddie Aikau started, we were listening to the weather warnings for the north shore of Oahu. The swell coming toward us called for waves so big they would rip houses off their foundations and drag them out to sea. Brian’s brother, whose house was on the shoreline, had evacuated and boarded up his house. While there



wasn't a full-scale evacuation in effect, it was obvious that many were worried. There was a tension and excitement in the air on the north shore. Everyone was waiting to see what would happen. I asked Brian, who had lived on the north shore for the last 35 years, if he had ever heard anything like this and he said no. This was going to be something to remember.

There have only been a few times in my career that the stars have aligned as incredibly as with my recent trip to Hawaii. I had scheduled a trip to Hawaii one month beforehand to shoot some stock images of surfing. Planning that far ahead means not knowing if any big swells will be coming through during my stay – hence it was a gamble. But this time around, it was a gamble that paid off big time.

While on the north shore of Oahu I got the chance to photograph two major surfing competitions, one of which was the Quicksilver in Memory of Eddie Aikau Big Wave surfing comp. The “Eddie”, as it is affectionately referred to, is “THE” big wave surfing event and has only happened eight times in the last twenty-five years because it requires 20-foot plus size Hawaiian waves, which translates to 40-foot wave faces. The event is held in Waimea Bay, just south of the famous surfing area known as Bonzai Pipeline. (Side note: Wave sizes in Hawaii are measured from the back of the wave instead of the wave face. Hence a Hawaiian wave, which has a 30-foot face, is measured by the back of the wave approximately as a 15-foot wave. It is a bit confusing, and I am not sure why they measure waves this way, but this should eliminate some confusion to readers who are not surfers.)

Obviously it is not every day that 40-foot waves roll into Waimea Bay. The Eddie Aikau surfing competition is planned each year but if the big waves don’t show up the event doesn’t happen. The last time the Eddie was held was 2004. It is an invitational event with only 28 competitors. This years invitees included such surfing superstars as Andy and Bruce Irons, Kelly Slater, Shane

Dorian, Greg Long and many others. The event officially kicked off on my second day in Oahu on December 2, 2009. The event normally has a three-month period in which to run, from December 1st through February 28th. This year the event happened just a few days after the opening ceremonies. Needless to say I was blown away that it happened during my stay in Hawaii.

The swell hit on a Monday but the weather was rough and the waves weren’t very consistent. Waimea Bay was taking hit after hit by massive waves that were in the 20 to 30-foot Hawaiian range, with 30 to 40 foot faces. Thousands of people had clogged the roads and the beach to come watch the Eddie, hoping this was the day. This is the Superbowl of surfing. To the crowds’ dismay, the event was called off for the day because the waves were not as consistent as hoped and the swell was still rising. The next day saw some huge sets rip through the bay early on and the sky was blue and crisp, unlike the day before. At 7:30 AM the event organizers announced that the event was on.

The first heat had a few big waves, but the second heat really got things going. Kelly Slater caught a huge wave and rode it all the way into the beach, which was a considerable distance away. From our vantage point right in front of the initial big waves we could hear the crowd roaring behind us as he road into the beach break. He scored a 98 out of a hundred for that ride. While that is incredible there were three 100-point rides. Towards the end of the day, in the final heat, there was a large set of 25 to 35 foot waves, with 40 to 50 foot wave faces, that rolled in one after the other, each a bit bigger than the one before. The waves were crashing into



the bay and shaking the ground on which we stood. Greg Long, who ended up winning, caught a monster wave and rode it all the way into the beach scoring a perfect 100 points. He wasn't in contention at all before this set of waves, but his perfect timing and considerable skills put him on top – he won \$55,000 for his efforts and bested Kelly Slater and Bruce Irons.

Shooting an event like this is difficult. Quicksilver, the main sponsor, had several jet skis in the water, but only a few of them were for media use and those shooters lucky enough to get on the skis were chosen by Quicksilver. The rest of us had to shoot from the shore with big lenses. As it turned out, the best shooting position was in a backyard just off the point. The going rate was \$50/hour to shoot from their property and some were paying up to \$200/hour. I only stayed there for two hours during the best light of the day. It was front row seating as you can see in some of the images in this article.

What may not be apparent from the images here is just how wild these waves were. On the bigger waves, the surfers were essentially free-falling off the crest of the wave until they hit the wave face. The free-fall was anywhere from several feet to 15 feet below the top of the wave (see the photo on page 21 for an example). Luckily no one was seriously injured during the event but one rider, Tom Carroll, did have to pull out when his ankle was “torn apart” while surfing at Waimea the day before the contest.

As the day progressed, I moved around finding different angles and perspectives. My gear consisted of a Nikkor AF-S 500mm f/4 lens, a Nikkor AF-S 70-200mm f/2.8 VR lens and a Nikon D700 and D300, both with the external MB-D10 battery grip, which allowed me to shoot at 8 fps. By choosing the right camera for the position I essentially had a 1.5 teleconverter if I needed it with the Nikon D300 since it has a 1.5X crop factor due to its smaller than full frame sensor. And since I am not a surfer - or even a surfing photographer (since I live in

the high desert of Santa Fe) I stuck with Brian Biemann for half the day, absorbing pointers and wisdom from one of the great surfing photographers of our time.

Because I moved around, I was also able to capture an image of Andy Irons pulling into a shorebreak tube (see page 15), which I was later told was a very rare event. In fact, while editing the images I didn't even think the shot merited any ranking at all and I thought it was just ok, nothing special. It was only when Brian saw it while looking over my shoulder that I realized what I had. He even went so far as to say that was the best shot I got all day because it is so different than what every one else got. I could tell there was a bit of jealousy in his voice, which made me realize just how special the image was. As always, it helps to know a sport and how, where and when to position yourself to get the shot. In this case I got lucky, but luck favors the prepared and I was prepared for anything and everything.

Talking with Brian later that night after the event, he told me he had never seen Waimea Bay that big. Looking at the photos afterward the waves looked even bigger than we remembered. It turned out to be the biggest waves ever for an Eddie Aikau comp and the biggest waves ever for a surfing competition. The waves and the competition made national news three nights in a row. I shot over 8,000 images during my ten-day stay in Hawaii and well over 2,000 on the day of the Eddie Aikau.

As someone who has been fascinated by surfing for a long time, I have to say this was one of the most exciting experiences of my entire life. As a climber, I can re-



late to the surfing lifestyle and the passion surfers have for their sport and the ocean. It seems very similar to the passion climbers have for their sport and the rock.

I have to say thank you here as well to Brian and Shawna Biemann. I met Brian while working on my book [Digital Masters: Adventure Photography](#) – he was recommended to me by Andrew Eccles and invited me out to shoot big wave surfing in Hawaii after we did several phone interviews for the book. Without his and his families incredible hospitality I would never have had this experience. You can check out Brian's work on his

website at www.brianbiemann.com.

If you'd like to read more about The 2009 Quicksilver in Memory of Eddie Aikau surfing competition and see the final results log on to the [Quicksilver Eddie Aikau website](#).

Under the projects section of my portfolio, on my website, I have put together a more extensive collection of images from the Eddie Aikau, which you can see [here](#). Stay tuned for more big wave surfing images in the newsletter - I am hooked on this sport!

Stories from the Road: **WENGER**

2010 PATAGONIAN EXPEDITION RACE

Article and Images by Michael Clark



Hypothermia (noun): the condition of having an abnormally low body temperature, typically one that is dangerously low.

Half-way across the Beagle Channel, just south of Tierra del Fuego and not too far from the Drake passage, I learned what it really means to be cold. Jim Wedlake, Gabriela Garrido and I were in a zodiac photographing team Helly Hansen-Prunesco as they sea kayaked from the southern tip of Tierra del Fuego down to Isla Navarino. I got into the boat wearing every piece of clothing I had with me, knowing it was going to be cold. When we pulled away from the dock, I was wondering why the Navy officers were wearing neon orange survival suits and we weren't. The wind was blasting the boat from the west as we headed south across the Beagle and each time we dropped into the trough of a wave the spray would douse us with ice-cold water. I was wearing Gore-tex and several layers of synthetic insulation but it only does so much when you are being nailed time and again by small waves. After an hour or two of wind and spray, we were all starting to get a bit punchy. It took everything we had just to keep the cameras dry – and even more to keep the lens clean.

Team Helly Hansen was having no problems with the cold. They were wearing dry suits and were sweating like crazy. In fact, Bruce Duncan was so overheated that he even took his neoprene gloves and hat off. It was at this point that I started to tell the Navy officers we had to deal with Gabi and the onset of hypothermia. They didn't want to leave the sea kayaks out in the middle of the Beagle Channel since they were there to act as the rescue boat and as such weren't supposed to leave their post. But after the fifth or sixth mention of hypothermia, the officers finally got the point and could see that Gabi was freezing quite literally. I myself wasn't far behind. I

was freezing my ass off as well. Jim, who was shooting video, was dressed in a massive Gore-Tex down jacket and fared a little better but was still feeling the chill.

As it happened there was a Naval outpost in the Murray Channel, just ahead of us – and through which the sea kayakers would pass. Once we reached the channel we were kindly escorted to the outpost, greeted by a very kind family and warmed up with fresh coffee, bread and hot showers. A few hours later we rejoined the sea kayakers and tried to keep ourselves a little warmer in the protected channel. Little did I know at that point that it would take me two full days to get back to normal. Back in our zodiac, and on our way to the next checkpoint I realized we weren't far from the Drake passage and I thought about Shackelton's men who had crossed those chilly waters over a century ago in an open lifeboat. It was then that I realized we hadn't even begun to suffer, hypothermia or not. Perspective is a wonderful thing, though it doesn't stop the cold.

Such were the grueling conditions we encountered while covering the [2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race](#). As it turned out the weather was some of the coldest ever experienced for the race. And the wind, nicknamed la Escoba de Dios, which means "the broom of God", was howling pretty much the entire race. With gusts upwards of 80 mph, the racers had to walk their bikes through several sections of the race. Even standing up on some of the higher passes in the Cordillera Darwin was difficult. The wind began to play with our mental state. Even when you got out of the wind for just a moment you could still feel it and hear it in your head. Other than the wind and the cold, this year's race was at least blessed with decent weather. It only rained a few days, but it did snow over a foot one evening making trekking difficult. Even so, I'll take cold and snow any day over rain.

Andrew Wilson and Mark Humpfrey of Team Helly Hansen-Prunesco paddling their way to victory in the icy waters of the Beagle Channel during the 2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race.

wenger patagonian expedition race

This years race included massive mountain biking, trekking and sea kayaking stages as well as a short rappel into the “Valle Profundo”, a gargantuan valley formed by two 3,000-foot walls of gneiss which lay only a few hundred feet apart. The teams, each made up of four athletes, worked their way from checkpoint to checkpoint chang-

cause this years race included some difficult orienteering in uncharted and unmapped areas (as usual for this race) many teams elected to sleep in the early morning hours and save any critical orienteering decisions for daylight hours. Needless to say, after seven or eight days of non-stop on-the-go torture some teams looked like



Nicola MacLeod and Bruce Duncan of Team Helly Hansen-PrunESCO paddling their way to victory on stage 15 in the icy waters of the Beagle Channel during of the 2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race, just south of the island of Tierra del Fuego in southern Chile. At this point they were almost a full day ahead of the nearest team.

ing gear and modes of transportation roughly every 100 km. As usual with adventure races, sleep was optional. Each team chose when and where to sleep as well as how long. Some teams slept as little as two hours per night, while other slept three or four hours a night. Be-

the walking dead.

This year's race featured some rough terrain as you might expect. After the first few “warm-up” sections the racers took on a 178 km (111 mile) mountain bike ride in fierce winds, then picked up their gear and hiked through

wenger patagonian expedition race

a 120 km (75 mile) trekking stage, only then to be greeted with a 46 km (29 mile) sea kayak across the ice cold waters of the Beagle Channel. These three sections were the “meat” of the race, but amazingly by the time the teams hit the last trekking section on Isla Navarino there were still four teams within two hours of each other and

trees while having to deal with sideways rain and poor footing.

For the second year in a row Team Helly Hansen-Prunescu, who also won the adventure racing world championships in 2009, ended up winning the race by almost a full day ahead of the competition. In fact they were so



Team Nord Water from Finland hiking across the windswept pampas in the first trekking section during the 2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race. This trekking section started at the northernmost point of Tierra del Fuego and followed the coast line for 16 km (10 mi). Most teams ran this entire section of the race with lightweight backpacks.

second place was up for grabs. The main 120 km trekking section in the Cordillera Darwin this year was the hardest and longest trekking section ever in the races history but it felt pretty tame compared to last years “forest of death”, which included climbing under and over thorny

fast that they had to bypass some of the checkpoints because they weren’t even set up yet. They are indeed superhuman and masters at ignoring pain. My congratulations to them on a superb accomplishment.

While I did do a fair bit of hiking this year in the trekking

wenger patagonian expedition race

sections I was mercifully airlifted out by helicopter and spent several hours shooting from the air. As you can

wet from the waist down. And if the turba didn't get you then the river crossings would surely keep you moist. In

fact, this year some teams, depending on when they arrived at certain rivers, had to swim across them because they were so deep. Most stripped down to bare skin to avoid soaking all of their clothing in the glacier fed rivers.

Back in December 2009, just a few months before the race, I went on the exploration with the race organizers to make sure the 120 km trekking section



Chelsea Gribbon and Jason Magness of the Yogaslackers (yogaslackers.com) performing complex yoga maneuvers while waiting for the 2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race to start on the island of Tierra del Fuego in southern Chile.

imagine a helicopter in Patagonia is a dicey exercise. Our chopper was continually buffeted and pushed around by the strong winds which made holding a camera steady that much more difficult. All I can say is thank you Nikon for the Vibration Reduction (VR) technology on the 70-200mm f/2.8 lens and the low noise at high ISOs on my Nikon D700 - it made a lot of shots possible on cloudy days that otherwise would have been mush. In fact, one of the best shots I got this year was a landscape shot from the helicopter (see page 27). Even though there are no people in it, the shot shows the dense jungle of the Cordillera Darwin that the racers had to deal with.

This year's race went over some huge passes in the mighty Cordillera Darwin, a.k.a. the Darwin Range. The racers also had to deal with massive swaths of turba, a sponge like ground covering that sucks you in up to your ankles or sometimes up to your waist. Either way you are

through the Karukina Nature Preserve and the Cordillera Darwin was actually possible. It is only now that I can talk about it because the route was top-secret before the race. Nevertheless, it was an incredible adventure with my good friends (now after three years) that organize the race. Sadly I had some knee issues that forced me to drop out half way through the expedition but I did get to swim the biggest river in the trekking section and it literally took my breathe away when I jumped in. Hence, I have first hand knowledge of what the racers were going through when they had to swim the rivers. Also, when we did the exploration we were the first humans in recorded history (as far as we know) to see the Valle Profundo. We spent hours looking for ways to descend into the valley on the expedition but kept getting cliffed out and finally had to rappel. As a climber it was one of those experiences I'll never forget and it was an

wenger patagonian expedition race

honor to accompany the organizers through such a wild place - even though I was on assignment for Wenger. It was after our exploration that Stjepan Pavicic, the director of the race, gave it the name Valle Profundo, which as you might have guessed means "Profound Valley".

During the race, I was slated to shoot the teams rappel-

out which enabled us to go so light. During the exploration in December it took us two full days to get to the Valle Profundo. During the race we did it in twelve hours - mostly because I knew the route and we had much lighter packs. Sadly, only one team came through the rappel section before the helicopter came to ferry us



Trees in the Cordillera Darwin looming above the turba near checkpoint 11 from the 2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race on the island of Tierra del Fuego in southern Chile.

ing into the Valle Profundo. Jim Wedlake, a camera man shooting for Hatch Entertainment, myself and a sherpa hiked into the Valle Profundo with minimal gear. I think I had about 25 pounds of gear total including camera gear. The plan was to hike in and then get helicoptered

to the next section of the race in the Cordillera Darwin.

Shooting this years race was a bit different than in previous years because we had more helicopter support and also because the race organizers had contracted [Hatch Entertainment](#) to produce a video of the race –

wenger patagonian expedition race

and I have to say those guys were shooting around the clock and worked their asses off. The focus this year was on the video since the race organizers are trying to get TV coverage for the race. From what little I saw of their footage they should have an amazing show. Of course, I'll keep you posted when that airs later this summer

I have become accustomed to covering this race. Basically you are trying to stay out of each other's shots and the race organizers did a great job of pairing us up with the film crew so we didn't get in each other's way. Hence, that is how I ended up on the zodiac with Jim Wedlake and Gabi, who was one of the staff from the race.



Team Helly Hansen-Prunesco taking a breather inside a large tent at checkpoint 16 after completing the huge 120-km trekking section through Karukina National Park and the Cordillera Darwin during the 2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race on the island of Tierra del Fuego in southern Chile.

or fall. The aerial footage in particular was stunning – I know because I was sitting behind the aerial cameraman contracted by Hatch, as he shot out the open door of the helicopter. Working with a large video crew like this while trying to shoot stills is a learning curve – one that

Thankfully this year I didn't come back with any stories of falling into quicksand, falling into the ocean or being marooned in the Magellan Straits – only a wee bit o' hypothermia. And as I said, it took me two full days to recover from the effects of the hypothermia. Of course,

wenger patagonian expedition race

there was no time to relax, I had to keep working, but I also had to watch myself carefully and be prepared with

would feel during the race but she did just fine and in fact they were in the mix to get second place but ended

up fourth overall.

And at the closing ceremonies, Jason Magness, Chelsea's boyfriend and fellow teammate, popped the question and asked Chelsea to marry him. He said during the proposal that if she could make it through such a difficult and challenging race and still love him then they were set for life. She said yes. Of course, all of us, over 150 people, at the closing

ceremonies were amazed by Jason's bravado and it capped off an excellent adventure. My congratulations to both Jason and Chelsea. That was certainly the highlight of the closing ceremony.

All in all, this years race was a grand adventure just like last years epic. There weren't any close calls this year. No teams almost died (a good thing) and even though loads of racers and some journalists were hobbling around after the race, no one was seriously injured or required a hospital stay like previous years. I have to say a huge thank you to Ann and Stjepan who invited me back this year (my third year down there) and also to [Wenger](#) who is the main sponsor of the race.

Of course, I have already added some of this years selects to my Patagonia Expedition Race image gallery on my website. If you like to see more images from the race please visit the [projects gallery on my website here](#).



A portrait of Francisco, a local gaucho, and his horse Poncho, who happened upon the 2010 Wenger Patagonian Expedition Race at checkpoint 6 and stopped to check out the action on the island of Tierra del Fuego in southern Chile.

more than enough food, clothing and water since I was unable to really regulate my body temperature. At one point everyone was standing around the last checkpoint near Puerto Williams wearing nothing but t-shirts and shorts on a nice sunny day while I was wearing just about everything I had with me and was still freezing. Thankfully the cook made up a huge batch of indian fry bread (I can't remember what they called it) and we chowed down and I started to warm up. By the time we got on the boat to head back to Punta Arenas I was feeling normal again.

It was on the 36-hour voyage home through the Beagle Channel and around to Punta Arenas that some very interesting facts came out. Chelsea Gribbon, of the Yogaslackers team, had a miscarriage only a week before the race was to start and decided to carry on. I'll admit she is way tougher than I am. They didn't know how she

The end for the Printed Portfolio? *by Michael Clark*

With the introduction of the iPad recently, many photographers, myself included have been wondering why would anyone would want to spend a thousand dollars on a printed portfolio and slave over the prints for weeks when they can buy an iPad for \$500 and swap images out on the fly so every portfolio is customized for each client? It would be easier for the photographer and more cost effective, but I understand the need for a print portfolio and why clients still want to see them. There is a validation about seeing a photographers work printed on paper and a finely printed image is a thing to behold. A print is traditionally the final step in the photographic process and well, it also speaks to the technical prowess of the photographer. Having shown my printed portfolio many times to art buyers and photo editors in person I can verify that there are no excuses. It is what it is. The print does not lie.

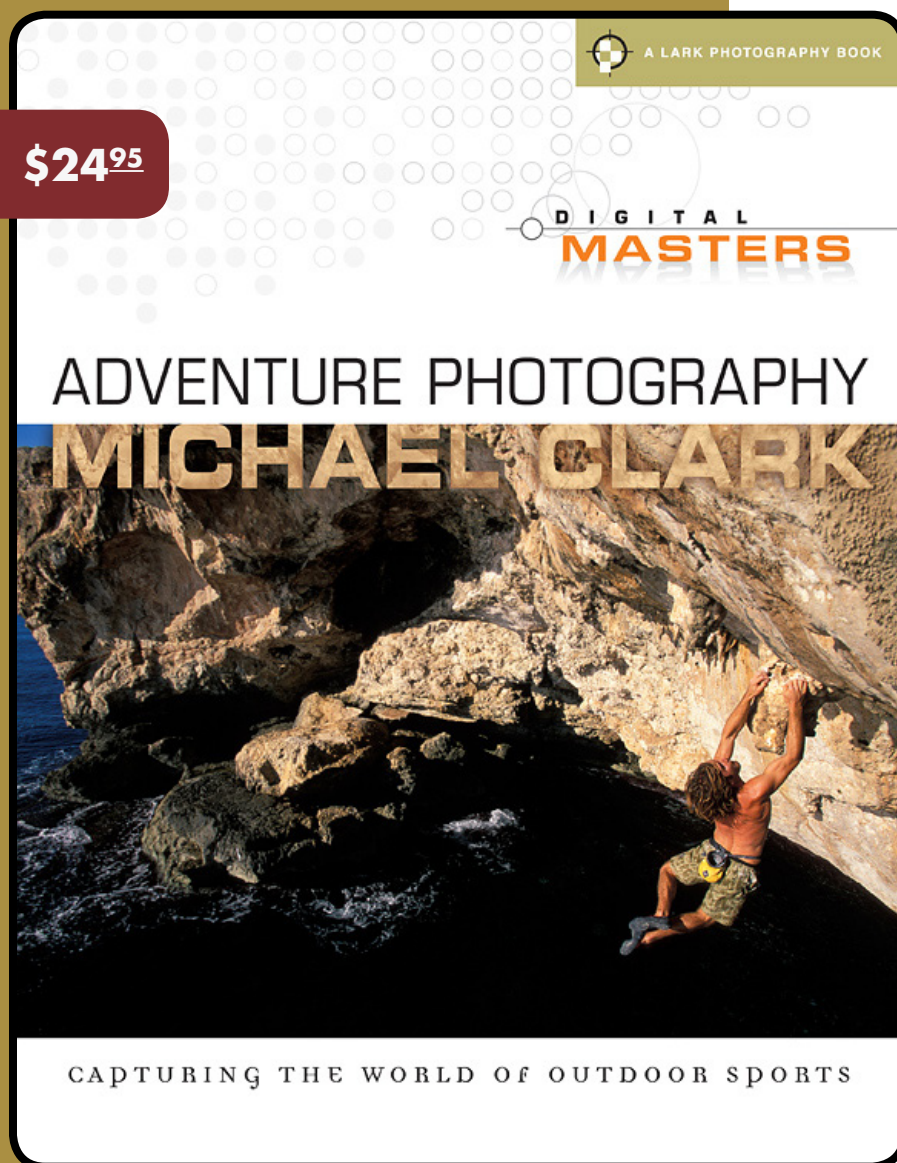
“FOR MYSELF, I WILL MOST LIKELY BE SENDING OUT BOTH A PRINTED PORTFOLIO AND AN IPAD TO ART BUYERS WHEN MY BOOK IS CALLED IN.”

That said, I am seriously looking at the iPad not as a slim on-the-go computer but as an inexpensive alternative to a print portfolio. I was talking with Rob Haggart, a former photo editor and the founder of aphotoeditor.com, about this recently since he is tech savvy and builds websites for photographers via his company aphotofolio.com (which now hosts my own website). I asked him what he thought of the idea and the only downside we could come up with is how the photographer would set it up so the art buyer just has to turn on the iPad and the portfolio would appear. I would be willing to bet that a script could be written to have the portfolio appear upon start up and I would be surprised if such an app doesn't appear on iTunes for this purpose in the next few months. Certainly an iPad is a svelte looking portfolio and gives the impression that the photographer is on the cutting edge, at least right now. It would also be phenomenal for showing video and multimedia work, which more and more will be a major component of our industry.

For myself, I will most likely be sending out both a printed portfolio and an iPad to art buyers when my book is called in going forward. Though one could ask, why would an art buyer want to look at images on the relatively small iPad when they can just peruse your website on a much larger monitor, especially when one has a site where the images look pretty spectacular even on a 30-inch monitor? Photographers will have to offer more than just a portfolio and as multimedia pieces become the norm for still photographers the iPad makes a lot of sense. A printed book shows how your work looks on paper which is a huge consideration for large advertising jobs where the end product is going to be printed. Adding an iPad will help art buyers see how your work looks online as well. As technology advances and art buyers become more comfortable with the technology you can bet that the iPad will become the de facto standard - perhaps in addition to a printed portfolio.

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This book details the ins and outs of creating top-notch adventure sports images. As far as I can tell there are no other books out there that even come close to covering as much ground as this book does. In fact there are few if any books

that specifically talk about photographing adventure sports at all. I have basically downloaded everything I have learned about shooting adventure sports over the last 14 years as a full-time pro into this book. Some of the topics covered in the book include: equipment, outdoor gear, adventure photography fundamentals, artificial lighting, how I approach and shoot each of the main adventure sports, portraiture and lifestyle photography as well as what it takes to be a pro. The book also includes in-depth interviews with photographer Corey Rich and *National Geographic Adventure* photo editor Sabine Meyer - and a whole lot more.

DESCRIPTION FROM LARK BOOKS:

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Sunny Garcia dropping in on a 50-foot wave, which he rode all the way in to the beach at the 2009/2010 Quicksilver Eddie Aikau comp in Waimea Bay, Hawaii.
Nikon D300, ISO 400, Nikkor AF-S 500mm f/4 VR, Sandisk Extreme IV 8 GB CF Card