

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



SUMMER 2012



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Cover Image: Katherine Mast relaxing in the San Antonio hot springs in the Jemez mountains near Jemez Springs, New Mexico. Opposite Page: A downhill mountain biker descending one of the downhill trails at the Silverton Mountain Ski Resort near Silverton, Colorado.





Two New Books in One Year

The tricky business of balancing assignment work and writing a book

Writing one book is an insane amount of work to take on. So when I realized that I would have to revise and update my digital workflow e-book, [*Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow*](#), right after finishing up a book with PeachPit earlier this year I was less than gung-ho about the project. Once I got into the revisions, everything went smoothly and it only took a few months to completely revise and update the e-book. Hence, in late June I released the fifth version of my digital workflow e-book and you can read all about it and purchase it by clicking on the underlined link above.

I started writing [*Exposed: Inside the Life and Images of a Pro Photographer*](#) last year in July 2011. Finishing that book took nine months with all of the edits and assignments I had in addition to writing the book. Because most of my e-book was already written and I just had to update and revise it—and add some new sections to the book—it was a much shorter process. After all that hard work it is great to see that both books are getting excellent reviews. Check out the news section starting on Page 6 in this Newsletter to read some of the reviews.

It was tricky business balancing my assignment work and putting these two books together. With *Exposed*, because it was a longer process, I was constantly switching gears. One week I would be shooting a major ad

campaign, the next week I would be sitting at the computer working on the book for seventy-plus hours. It was tough to keep all of the balls in the air. With the e-book, I had a more sustained effort without too many interruptions.

I wrote the first version of the digital workflow e-book way back in 2007, when Lightroom 1.1 was announced. Every time Lightroom was updated, I took that opportunity to update and improve the e-book. The current version has the same layout design as the best print books—and includes a ridiculous amount of information. It is an incredible resource and I am happy that many find it useful for crafting their own workflows. Now that I am finished with the e-book, I can concentrate solely on photography again. And I must say, it is nice not to have a huge nine-month long project hanging over my head!

Opposite Page: *The infamous wave named Teahupo'o, which means "Broken Skulls," breaking on the reef in Tahiti. This image was used as the cover for my e-book titled Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographers's Workflow.*

Recent Clients: Nikon, National Geographic, Schiesser AG (Germany), Red Bull, Deltaway Energy, PeachPit Publishing, New Mexico Magazine, Backpacker Magazine, Climbing Magazine (UK), and Nikon World Magazine.

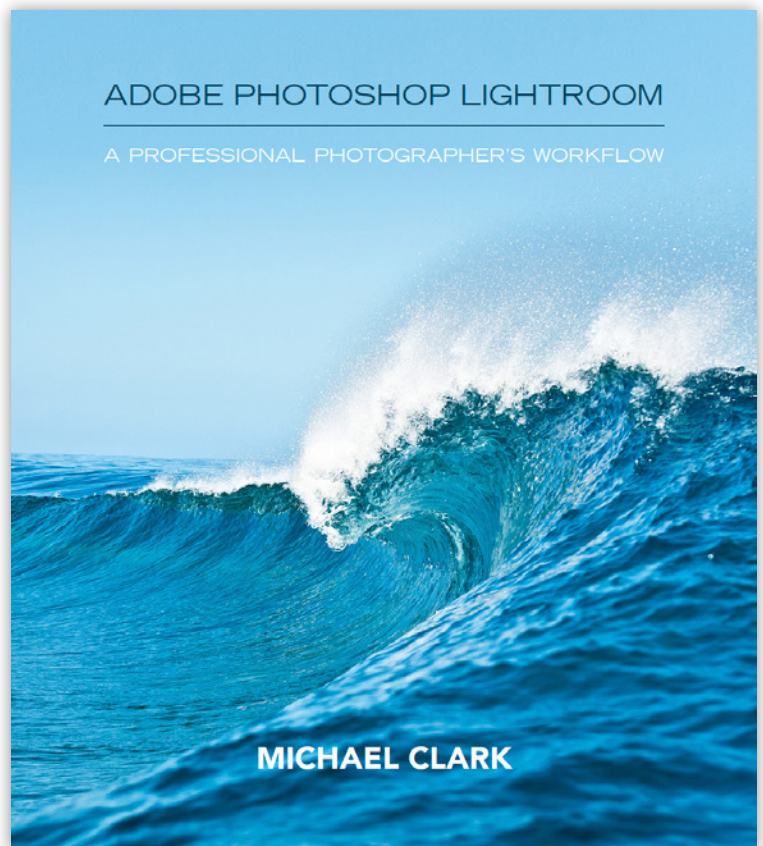


A Professional Photographer's Workflow

My e-book has been updated for LR4 and PS CS6 and is available on my website

Once again, with the release of Lightroom version 4 (and 4.1) I have updated my digital workflow e-book entitled, *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow*. The e-book has been updated for Lightroom 4.1 and Photoshop CS6 and is now available on my website. I have been working on this new version of the e-book for a few months now and have done extensive research to expand and greatly improve this new, updated and re-written version of the book. I can honestly say that I have not seen any other book on the market that includes as much detailed and comprehensive information as this e-book does on digital workflow. Click on the link above to read all about the new material included in this updated version of the e-book.

Fellow Lightroom Guru and Pixiq blogger Sean McCormack wrote a very impressive and comprehensive review of the new e-book. In that review, he sums up the book by saying: "At over 400 pages, this book is detailed. It's hard not to use that word, because it's the best descriptor for the book. There's a fantastic wealth of information in the pages. While the book was created as an e-book, it still takes design ethic from print, and is beautifully laid out. I do think this is a really good quality text



that hits a lot of points that other Lightroom and workflow books miss completely. At \$24.95 I don't think you can go wrong. This is roughly what a Kindle e-book would cost, and has much better layout. Recommended."

My thanks to Sean McCormack for the great review. You can read his full review [here](#). And of course if you would like to order the book [click on this link](#).

Rave reviews for my latest book Exposed

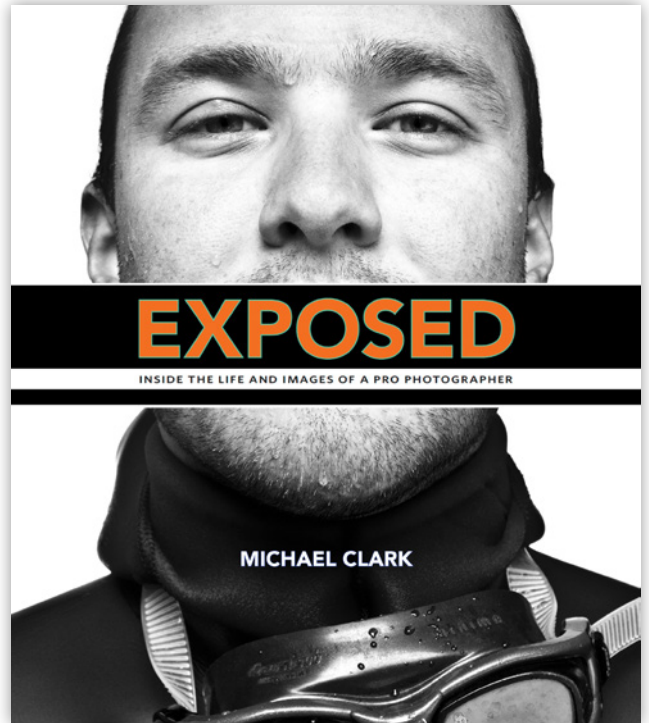
Since it's release in late April 2012, Exposed has garnered some incredible reviews

Just in case you missed my it on my blog, I wanted to share some of the amazing reviews that my book [Exposed: Inside the Life and Images of a Pro Photographer](#) has been getting. I have to say it is humbling to hear such praise, especially since this book really puts my career and images out there for the whole world to read about. Without further ado, here are a few of the reviews the book has garnered:

"I wasn't prepared for how good this book would be. It is, IMHO, a whole lot stronger than ["Digital Masters: Adventure Photography: Capturing the World of Outdoor Sports \(A Lark Photography Book\)"](#), which was the previous book by Michael Clark that I had read and liked.

Exposed is really three books in one. It is a book about the reality and business of becoming and working as a professional photographer, with an emphasis on adventure photography. It is also a book on the techniques of adventure photography and lastly it is a book about post-processing. In addition, there are about 2.5 hours of video included on the accompanying DVD that shows you how Michael processed many of the images in the book in Lightroom and Photoshop. Exposed is strong in all of these areas (or as good as a book of only 288 pages could be). It is also well written in a very engaging style.

There are many photographers who write books aimed at other photographers. Some of these produce books that are good enough to inspire readers of their previous books to place pre-order's for their newest one even



without seeing it first (as long as the topic of their newest book interests them). The current photographer/author that best comes to mind that fits this category is Joe McNally. Many people such as myself will enthusiastically pre-order a new book by him as long as the topic interests them. With Exposed, Michael Clark has entered this category for me. If the topic of his next book interests me then I will probably pre-order it based upon my experience with Exposed.

Lastly, an aspect of this book that particularly appealed to me was that it seemed to have been written for intermediate and/or advanced level photographers. It seemed to assume that you understand most of the basics of photography. IMO there is a distinct dearth of books written

for intermediate and/or advanced level photographers (and there are many written for beginner level photographers). That said, a beginner would probably find much of value in this book but will probably not get all of its benefits (or understand all of it) until they have gotten past the beginner level.” — Michael Brochstein

“I recently had the pleasure of reading this book. It was very unique in that it wasn’t just a How-To photography techniques book. In fact, the photo tips were really a side line to the positively fascinating stories of Michael’s adventures as an action sports photographer. Have you ever looked at ridiculous adrenaline sports action shots and wondered how on earth they were photographed? Well, this book explains just that. If you have an interest in both photography and adventure sports, you will love this book. In fact, my husband (who is not a photographer) insisted that I read most of the book out loud because he was so interested in the adventure sports stories. These stories weren’t just what equipment was used and how the lights were set up (although all of this information is also included at the end of each story) but Michael takes the time to really set the scene. And some of the scenes were nothing short of amazing.

Each story explains the extreme conditions and how he managed to work within those conditions. From catching the monster waves during surfing competitions and creatively shooting Red Bull’s base jumping, to only being given 25 seconds and 10 total shots to shoot a pro golfer, Michael explains what it’s like to work under the extreme pressure of high paying and high profile clients.

All of this extreme sport photography may seem glamorous, but when Michael explains the amount of stress that

this job causes it made me realize how few people in the world could do it. As much as I love adventure sports, I realized that I could never do this job. What I did take away from this book was the necessity of stoking your creative spark and creating your own body of work on self-assignments.

One of the most valuable parts of the book was the fact that Michael showed his work as it came straight out of the camera. Then he covered (in detail) any and all adjustments that he made to the photos in both Lightroom and Photoshop, until he finally showed the final picture. One of the photos that I found the most interesting was one of his surfing shots that didn’t look like much straight out of the camera. But after the post production edits, that once-dull photo scored him an account with Apple. And of course, this was a self-assignment shoot. Just proves his case even further. In addition to the technical details that he shares, he also outlined the exact equipment that he used for each shoot (including an explanation of why he choose the equipment he did) and in most cases there was even a diagram illustrating the lighting setup.

In a nutshell it was a great combination of photographic inspiration, technical details, and pure reading enjoyment. I know a picture alone is worth a thousand words, but the chance to hear the stories behind those pictures was a pure treat.” — Paula Apro, via Weekly Photo Tips

My thanks to these two reviewers for their incredible comments on the new book. It is great to get this kind of feedback after spending nine months on a massive project. If you haven’t checked out the book it is available via [PeachPit](#), [Amazon](#) and [Barnes and Nobles](#).

workshops

2012/2013 Photography Workshops

An overview of workshops coming up with Michael Clark

Each year I teach several workshops on a variety of topics including adventure photography, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching this summer and fall in 2012. For the full descriptions about each of these workshops and to find out how to register for these workshops go to the [Workshops page on my website](#). I hope to see you out there in the field this year.

Adventure Photography Workshop

Maine Media Workshops — August 19-25, 2012

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 outdoor sports like: sea kayaking, mountain biking and rock climbing. Using athletes as our models and Maine's coastal landscape as our backdrop, we explore innovative ways to capture the essence of each sport. Topics covered during the week include research and preparation,

composition and camera angles, equipment selection and use, using natural light, fill flash and battery-powered strobes, and autofocus techniques.

We will 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 out in new locations and in the classroom editing and critiquing images, and meeting one-on-one 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. For more information visit the [Maine Media Workshops website](#) or call (877) 577-7700.

Adventure Photography - The Art of Motion

San Francisco, CA — October 20-21, 2012

Adventure photographer/author Michael Clark and lead-in workshop instructor Eric Gould are teaming up for a hands-on workshop. They're bringing in world class athletes for you to photograph and refine your skills. Not only will you go home with a great education – you'll get some amazing on location photos for your portfolio too.

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.

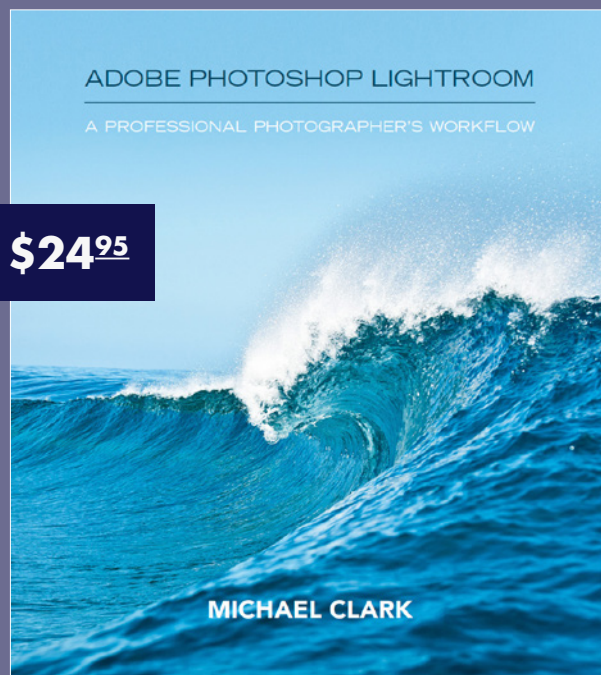
This workshop concentrates on creating unique adventure sports and lifestyle images. We focus on outdoor sports like: mountain biking, rock climbing and skateboarding. Using athletes as our models and the amazing landscape in and around San Francisco as our backdrop, we explore innovative ways to capture the essence of these sports. Topics covered during the weekend include research and preparation, 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. We will be shooting on both days of the workshop and will also be in the classroom editing and critiquing images. In addition, Michael shares his insights and experiences in the adventure marketplace. Participants will also receive a copy of Michael's e-book, *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow*. This e-book is top-notch resource on digital workflow and it discusses in great detail his exact digital workflow from start to finish.

The cost of this workshop is \$599. [Click here to sign up for this workshop](#). For more information contact Eric Gould at eric@ericgould.com.

ADOBE LIGHTROOM WORKFLOW

A COMPLETE WORKFLOW FROM CAPTURE TO OUTPUT BY MICHAEL CLARK



The Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Workflow, a 409-page e-book, is a workshop in book form. Updated for Adobe Lightroom 4.1 and Photoshop CS6, this e-book was completely re-written and presents a workflow that can be adapted by any photographer, professional or amateur. 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 digital workflow.

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

Mentor Series Photo Trek

New Mexico, U.S.A. — October 5-7, 2012

Come along for the photo opportunity of a lifetime as the Mentor Series heads to New Mexico to take in dramatic landscapes, rich cultural history and the hot-air extravaganza at the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. Indulge photographically in the visual splendor this desert locale offers, while Nikon professional photographers Reed Hoffmann, David Tejada and Michael Clark share their extensive photographic knowledge and assist you in making the images you desire.

New Mexico's enchanting scenic beauty will be evident when we turn our cameras on Kasha-Katuwe Tent Rocks National Monument to take advantage of the unusual and otherworldly scene before us. The naturally sculpted curved walls of the slot canyons reveal the intricate multicolored layers, composed of pumice and ash from volcanic eruptions that occurred six to seven million years ago. As the sun descends, head to White Rock Overlook to capture the sweeping panoramic views, which showcase the mighty Rio Grande snaking elegantly through the landscape.

Arrival at the Balloon Fiesta before sunlight is paramount, and the variety of vibrant subject matter at this world-famous event is seemingly endless. Take a step back with your wide angle to record the entire scene, or focus on intricate details that inspire you; but regardless, enjoy the ease with which you can make your photographs while walking among the balloons and conversing with the pilots. Balance your composition as you capture the process of the crews preparing for launch, or the dazzling array of color against the deep blue New Mexico sky.

After the sun sets, enjoy the breathtaking "glow event" when the balloons are tethered and fire their burners simultaneously, creating a spectacular ethereal moment. With our mentors' best advice and the Fiesta's unique access, you will have ample opportunity to creatively record the various elements of this festival, highlighting the world's oldest aviation sport, from inflation to flight.

Change your perspective and if you so choose, take to the wind and journey upward in a balloon. Be among the morning's Mass Ascension when hundreds of balloons launch together to display a kaleidoscope of brilliant hues—distinctly at eye level. Don't just imagine the possibilities for amazing aerial and balloon photographs, use what you learn to confidently create them.

If you have ever wanted to visit the Balloon Fiesta and take timeless images of this romantic pastime, don't miss this unique chance to experience New Mexico with the Mentor Series. Sign up today! For more information visit the [Mentor Series Photo Treks website](#).

Surfing Photography Workshop

Oahu, Hawaii — February 14-17, 2013

Join legendary surfing photographer Brian Biemann and adventure sports photographer Michael Clark for an exciting one-of-a-kind workshop that delves into the world of surfing photography. Brian is a top surfing photographer who has been shooting the sport for more than 25 years. Michael brings his adventure photography skills and knowledge as well as his in-depth experience with digital workflow to round out the workshop. This is our second year running the Surfing Photography Workshop and it went so well earlier this year that a few of the par-

A participant in the 2012 Surfing Photography Workshop shooting from the beach with a long telephoto lens.



ticipants have already signed up to take it again!

This 4-day workshop combines daily photo shoots at world-class surfing locations and classroom instruction. We will be spending half of our time shooting in the early mornings and in the late afternoon and evenings when the waves and the light are at their best. The other half of the workshop will be spent in the classroom and our time there will be centered around image critiques, discussions on gear, strategies and the business of photography as well as in-depth discussions on shooting surfing. We'll also cover digital workflow in detail using Adobe Photoshop Lightroom Version 4.x.

The workshop is scheduled during a period where large waves hit the north shore frequently. Though we cannot

predict or guarantee the wave size or surfing conditions, the north shore of Oahu serves up sizable waves on a nearly daily basis. The workshop is being hosted at the Turtle Bay Hilton Resort on Oahu's North Shore.

The cost of this workshop is \$1,035 per person. A deposit of \$350 is required to secure your spot on the workshop. You can find more information about the workshop on my [website](#) and on my [blog](#), including detailed info on what we will be doing each day and the equipment you will need for the workshop. If you have any questions or would like to register for the workshop send me an [email](#).

For more information on all of the workshops that I will be teaching in 2012 and early 2013 please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my website.

equipment review

The New Li-Ion Elinchrom Quadra Battery

An already excellent product improved by a new lighter, more powerful Battery

Disclaimer: In an effort to be up front with my readers about my relationships with photo equipment suppliers I want to let you know that I am “sponsored” to a degree by the folks at Elinchrom and give them feedback on their gear to help improve it. With that said, in my reviews 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. I was sent the new Quadra Li-Ion battery to test out and use by the fine folks at Manfrotto Distribution.

The Elinchrom Ranger Quadras are one of my favorite tools when I need to use a lightweight battery-powered strobe kit in the outdoors. Hence, when Elinchrom announced that they were going to make a new Lithium Ion (Li-Ion) version of their battery, which

would snap onto the Quadras, I was chomping at the bit to get my hands on one. Mark Astmann, the product manager for Elinchrom here in the USA, must have read my mind because I got an email a few weeks ago saying that one of the new batteries was on it’s way to me. Now, before we get too far into this equipment review I just want to remind everyone that I wrote an in-depth review of the Quadras in my [Spring 2010 Newsletter](#). If you would like to read the review, download that issue of the Newsletter by clicking on the underlined link. In this review, I will concentrate on how this excellent product has been improved with the new Li-Ion battery.

First off, as you might imagine, the new Li-Ion battery is smaller and lighter (as shown below) than the original



Above (left) is the Ranger Quadra (RQ) Lead Gel battery and above (Right) is the new RQ Lithium Ion battery. As you can see the Lithium Ion battery is approximately 2 cm shorter than the Lead gel battery, and it is also 850 grams (1.87 lbs) lighter than the Lead gel battery.

Lead Gel battery supplied with the Quadras. The new Li-Ion battery is 2 cm shorter and it is 850 grams (1.87 lbs) lighter than the lead Gel battery. The fact that it is shorter allows the Quadras to fit in my backpack even easier and the fact that the new battery is almost two pounds lighter means that the whole Quadra kit, with the strobe head and cable weighs just over 5 pounds total. The new battery drops the weight of the Quadra power pack from 2.91 Kg (6.42 lbs) down to 2.06 Kg (4.54 lbs).

If the weight savings were the only benefit of the new battery I would be sold, but there is more. Not only is the new battery lighter, it also allows one to get up to 320 full power flashes, which is more than twice the

number of full power flashes possible with the Lead gel battery! So not only do we now have a lighter battery, but we also have a much more powerful one as well. For my work, where I am often trying to overpower the sun I usually end up shooting with the Quadras at full power. Having 320 full power flashes to work with in a lighter, smaller package is a huge improvement!

Sadly, when I first attached the Li-Ion battery to my

Quadras it would not fire the flash head no matter what I tried. While trying to problem solve the issue, I read in the instruction manual that some older Quadra units (with a serial number below 4,000) will need an upgrade at the repair facility for the units to work correctly. I sent my power packs and strobe heads in and once the units were updated they work like a charm. So if you are looking

to get the battery check the serial numbers on the bottom of your Quadra power pack. Note that there are two serial numbers on the Quadra power packs: the one on the RQ Lead gel battery itself and the one on the bottom of the Quadra power pack (where the RQ Lead gel battery attaches). The serial number you are looking for

The Elinchrom Ranger Quadra strobe system with the new Li-Ion battery pack and A-Head attached. At just over 5 lbs and producing 400 watt/seconds of power this is an incredibly versatile and lightweight set up for the photographer on the go.



is this second one on the bottom of the Quadra power pack. I realize it is a pain to send your kit back in to get updated, and I was a little bummed out having to send it in for the update, but the fact remains that you will still have a lighter, more powerful kit once it gets updated—and you didn't have to buy a whole new rig to get it (as you do with some other brands out there).

Now let's talk about the performance of this new Li-Ion

battery. Essentially, it provides an incredible number of flashes for such a small power pack. It is like the Energizer bunny, it just keeps on going and going, especially at the lower power settings. The Li-Ion battery recycles the flash 15% faster than the Lead Gel batteries, meaning on the Fast recycle setting you are ready to shoot again in less than 2 seconds at full power. At the lower power settings you can get up to 4,000 flashes on one charge and the recycle times are crazy fast.

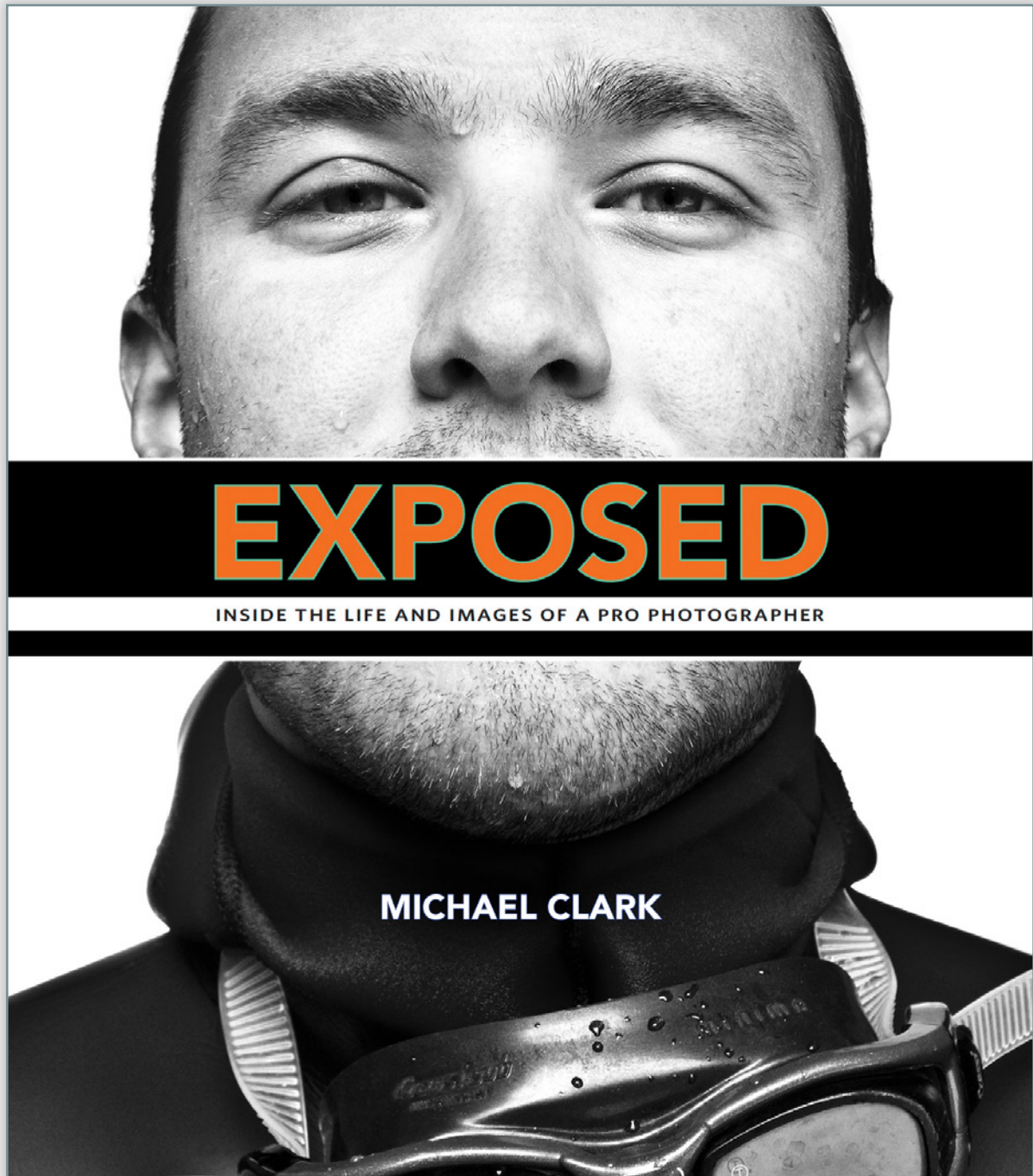
The only caveat for the new Li-Ion batteries is that they are not suitable for extreme cold or hot temperatures. If the temperature is below -10 °C (14 °F) or above 60 °C (140 °F), the "safety circuitry will cut off the power supply to avoid damage to the Li-Ion cells." In light of this, I recommend that you keep your RQ Lead gel batteries as backups. For more information on the new RQ Li-Ion batteries, and to read all the specs, visit the Elinchrom website at www.elinchrom.com.



Above (left) is the Ranger Quadra with the Lead Gel battery attached and above (Right) is the Ranger Quadra with the new Lithium Ion battery attached. The Lead Gel set up weighs a total of 2,911 grams (6.42 lbs) and the new set up with the Li-Ion battery weighs only 2,060 grams (4.54 lbs).

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HOW TO CHOOSE A PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOP



Choosing the right photography workshop can be difficult. It is difficult to know how open the instructor will be, what their teaching style is like and exactly what you can gain from a workshop. Because of the high cost of workshops doing your own research is a must. Since I teach a number of workshops, and often get asked to recommend other workshops, I thought I would layout a good strategy for choosing a workshop and also suggest some workshop instructors who I know put on top-notch photography workshops in a variety of genres.

First off, if you haven't read my blog post from a few years ago on [how to prepare for a photography workshop](#) I would suggest reading that blog post on the Pixiq website. It details how to get the most out of your photography workshop. Having taken a few workshops myself I am often amazed at how unprepared most people are when they take a workshop. Having a game plan and a set of goals at the outset of the workshop will assure that you get as much as possible out of a workshop.

Without further ado, here are some suggestions for finding a workshop that is perfect your skill level and helps you achieve your photography goals:

1. LOOK FOR AN INSTRUCTOR THAT INSPIRES YOU AND ALSO HAS THE ABILITY TO TEACH

Choosing to take a workshop from a photographer that inspires you is pretty easy. Figuring out before you take the workshop if they are an effective teacher is much more difficult. There is nothing more frustrating than paying a \$1,000 or more for a workshop with a world-class photographer and finding out they have a huge ego, refuse to give away the key information about some of their

images or just can't relate to the workshop participants. I have heard stories from some of my workshop participants of some "big-time" photographers who were so busy with their own work that they were constantly on their cell phone during the workshop. That is a worst-case scenario.

How do you know if the instructor can teach and relate to the participants? That can be tough to figure out. For the few workshops I have taken, I chose instructors that gave a presentation here in Santa Fe, NM, and who seemed very open and personable. They were also experts in a very distinct genre of photography. I realize not everyone can meet the instructor at an event previous to the workshop but in this day and age most top photographers have some video of them giving a presentation online and with a little research you can find that video and see what they are like. For instance, I gave a talk at Google and there is a link to it on my website. Joe McNally, a well-known photographer and workshop instructor (one of the best out there), has many such videos online.

2. ASK FOR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OTHER WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

Another way to find out about a particular workshop is to ask former workshop participants. When taking a workshop, be sure to ask your fellow participants what workshops they have taken and their experiences in that workshop. I have found that most people who take photography workshops have usually taken more than one. Some people take one or two photography workshops every year. Hence, your fellow participants are often your best resource for finding out about other workshops that may interest you.

3. ASK FOR A RECOMMENDATION FROM OTHER WORKSHOP INSTRUCTORS

Likewise, asking your workshop instructor for workshop recommendations is also a great resource. Most photographers that teach workshops, have done so at a variety of workshop venues like the Maine Media Workshops or the Santa Fe Workshops. Because of this, they know a lot of other photographers, the types of workshops that they teach and they know which photographers are talented at teaching workshops. I have taught at both the Maine Media and Santa Fe Workshops, and a whole host of other venues—and I have also taught a number of workshops with other professional photographers, which allows me to recommend workshops very specifically depending on what the person asking about workshops is looking for. Aside from fellow workshop participants, a workshop instructor is probably the best resource for workshop recommendations.

4. LOOK FOR WORKSHOPS THAT WILL HELP YOU GAIN SPECIFIC SKILLS

Every workshop I have taken, and I have only taken two, were chosen because I needed to learn a specific skill. For example, I took a workshop early in my career on Dreamweaver so I could learn to design my own website. At that point in my career, many years ago, I had more time than money so I had the time to create my website and taking the Dreamweaver workshop allowed me to have full creative control of my website.

If you are looking to improve your lighting skills look for a top-end lighting workshop. If you are looking to improve your portraiture, choose a workshop with a top portrait

photographer. Also, once you have chosen a workshop be sure to prepare yourself for the workshop so that you can get the most out of it. See the link at the top of this article for my blog post, “Preparing for a Photo Workshop.”

Also, make sure that the workshop is appropriate for your skill level. If you have just started shooting then an advanced artificial lighting workshop may be a bit beyond your skill level. By selecting the appropriate workshop, one that pushes you but is not well beyond your skill level, you can advance your skill set incrementally.

5. DECIDE IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A WORKSHOP OR A PHOTO TREK (OR TOUR)

There is a difference between a photo workshop and a photo tour (a.k.a. a photo trek)—and you should be aware of this before you register for either. A workshop is a class designed to inform you of every aspect of the chosen subject. In a workshop you will shoot images, but that is only a part of the workshop. A workshop includes lectures, critiques, assignments, and are fairly intensive. A workshop is meant to impart information so that you come out of that workshop knowing much more about a topic than you did when you started the workshop. An example of a photo workshop would be the Adventure Sports Photography workshops that I have taught at the Santa Fe Workshops and at the Maine Media workshops. Another example would be the Surfing Photography Workshops I have taught in Hawaii with the legendary surfing photographer Brian Biemann.

On the other hand, a photo tour or trek, is basically a tour where the instructor(s) or an organization has set up a bunch of different photo opportunities for the



Above: Andy Biggs lecturing on color management during one of our Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta workshops. Right: A workshop participant shooting at the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta.



participants. There is still some information that is being passed on to the participants, but usually these tours are more about shooting and have only a few lectures and critiques if any. Photo treks are not as intense as photo workshops, but they often do present incredible photo opportunities in amazing locations. An example of a photo trek would be the Mentor Series Photo Treks that I have taught in Philadelphia, New Mexico and Dubai.

The reason I bring this distinction up is that if you are looking for an intensive photo workshop where you can learn a lot about a specific topic, then you will be disappointed with a photo tour. And vice versa, if you just want to go out and shoot with a pro photographer in a really amazing location, a photo workshop may not be what you wanted. Hence, be sure to ask lots of questions and read the workshop materials carefully. If you are in doubt about a workshop, email the instructor and ask them what will be covered and what the workshop will be like. If you don't get a response from the instructor, that would be a red flag. I personally respond to anyone and everyone that asks me questions about my workshops. If I am away on a major assignment it may take me a week to get back to you, especially if I am in a remote location on the other side of the planet, but rest assured I will get back to you. Most photographers teaching workshops will answer any and all emails about their workshops.

6. IF YOUR DIGITAL WORKFLOW ISN'T UP TO SNUFF, FIND A WORKSHOP TO HELP YOU GAIN CONTROL OF YOUR POST-PROCESSING

In every workshop I take, there are a number of folks whose digital workflow is seriously lacking. Most amateur photographers could improve radically by learning to

work up their images in Lightroom, Aperture or Photoshop. It doesn't matter how great of an image you take in the camera if you can't work it up so that it really shines. I bring this up because if you choose an advanced workshop that concentrates on a subject like lighting for example, then you can be guaranteed that the majority of the class has the skills to work up their images to perfection (or at least to a high level). And if you don't, then you will be feel like a fish out of water. This is a basic part of digital photography so if you don't feel like you have a handle on digital workflow I suggest buying a book on that topic, like my digital workflow e-book, or taking a workshop on digital workflow so you can get a handle on your post-processing. I know it isn't a sexy, exciting workshop but trust me this type of workshop will improve your photography more than any other workshop out there if you need help with working up your images.

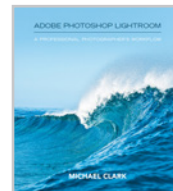
Alright, now that I have laid out some of the key things to think about when choosing a photo workshop I will recommend some of the best workshop instructors that I know and have taught with. I guarantee that the following instructors put on a great workshop and you will not be disappointed: [Andy Biggs](#), [Nevada Wier](#), [Lightroomworkshops.com](#), and [Joe McNally](#). Of course there is a long list of people I could mention here that are excellent workshop instructors. Those listed above are just a few that I know well and whom I can vouch for. There are many other great workshop instructors out there. Also, in addition to the folks I have listed above I will say that the [Santa Fe Workshops](#) and the [Maine Media Workshops](#) both put on an incredible number of extraordinary workshops. Check out their workshop listing on their websites. If you are looking for a photo trek, I highly recommend the [Mentor Series Photo Treks](#) as they set up some incredible



photo ops on their photo treks and I have had a blast working with them the last three or four years.

Of course, I feel like I do a very good job as an instructor myself. I don't say this to be arrogant. I have gotten some great feedback in all of my workshops and I am very open when it comes to sharing any aspect of my work and my life. If you are interested in taking a workshop on digital workflow, adventure sports or artificial lighting [check out the workshops I am teaching in the next eight months](#). As in the image above, a shot by Brian Biemann of myself

and a workshop participant shooting in the water at Pipeline on the north shore of Oahu, my workshops help photographers to get images they never would have dreamed of creating. Workshops are an opportunity to expand your horizons, learn new skills, get inspired and they are also a great opportunity to make connections with other photographers. Workshops are intense and exhausting but also exhilarating. As a passionate person and photographer, I love to see others pursuing their passions and perfecting their craft. Here's hoping your next workshop is a grand experience that you will never forget! 📷



excerpt

Equipment Overview & Shooting Workflow

An excerpt from Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow

This is an excerpt from Chapter 1 of my e-book [Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow](#). Chapter One is titled, "Shooting Workflow" and it covers how to set up your camera, cleaning the imaging sensor and also how to use the histogram for accurate exposures. The e-book is available on my website. [Click here to read more about the e-book and to purchase it.](#)

As I said in the Introduction, a solid workflow begins with image capture. How you expose the image, set up your camera and set the white balance all have a major effect on the final image. How you expose and shoot an image has just as much effect on the outcome as how you process it after the fact and this is the seminal point that most photographers miss and other workflows fail to incorporate into their thinking. Until you have enough experience to be confident in your shooting abilities—i.e. reading the histogram and all of the technical aspects of shooting digitally this might sound like a cat chasing its tail. But once you are waist deep in the digital photography game and read through this entire workflow the process should make sense and will become more intuitive with practice.

In this chapter, we'll cover my complete shooting workflow including everything from setting up the camera to

dialing in your white balance and exposure. We'll also cover some camera maintenance issues like cleaning your imaging sensor and I'll cover some tips to keep your camera functioning at its best. But before we jump into those topics, I will discuss some of the equipment I use to create my adventure sports images.

EQUIPMENT OVERVIEW

In this section, I want to give an overview of the equipment I own and use, so that you the reader can see exactly what cameras, lenses and gear I use to create my images. This section is not meant to be a recommendation for one brand over another. It is not my intention here to start a flame war between Nikon and Canon shooters. Both companies make stellar camera equipment and we are all better off because of the competitive nature of these two companies. Rather, by briefly discussing the range of gear I use, it is my hope that you can see the equipment behind my shooting workflow, which is much more than just the cameras themselves. As the quote by Ansel Adams at the beginning of this chapter indicates, we are all still trying to "comprehend and control" our new digital tools.

I will admit, like many photographers, I am a gear head. I am fascinated and amazed by the technology we have

today. But, when it comes down to it, the cameras and all of the other equipment we use to create images are just tools. I continually strive to produce incredible images, but I also endeavour to get the best image quality possible. To that end, I use and own the latest high resolution digital cameras from Nikon. I am currently shooting with the Nikon D4 and D800. If I need more resolution for a certain project or assignment then I will rent a medium format digital camera system like the Hasselblad H4D, which is my favorite for its ease of use and incredible image quality. As an adventure sports photographer, the slower medium format cameras are not ideal for what I typically shoot, hence I don't shoot with them very often. But every once in a while I get hired to shoot an advertising campaign, which usually involves a conceptual portrait, and requires the extreme resolution of digital medium format. As with any craft, by choosing the right tool for the job, we can make our lives easier and assure the outcome is in line with what the client needs.

I have owned and used Nikon cameras for the last 27 years. I was a Nikon shooter long before I turned pro and because of my familiarity with that system I have stayed with Nikon. I have also owned both Mamiya and Hasselblad medium format film cameras in the past. It was really difficult to sell my Hasselblad 503CW. I loved that camera, but my 12 MP digital Nikons were creating the same image quality—and didn't require me to spend hours on end scanning film. As a side note, I do work with

Nikon quite often. I have shot several assignments for Nikon and I also write a biannual column for Nikon World Magazine here in the USA. Hence, as you might imagine, part of the reason I shoot Nikon is that they are a client of mine. I am not sponsored by them and I have to buy my cameras at full price just like everyone else.

I don't want to dwell too long on the equipment here but I will say that the equipment you choose does affect the final image quality in the this new digital era. A camera with a high megapixel (MP) count and a smaller sensor will not necessarily have better image quality than a camera with a larger sensor with a lower MP count. This

might help to explain how [DxO Labs](#) ranks the 36 MP Nikon D800 as the top camera on the market (as of this writing), even surpassing the much more expensive 80 MP Phase One IQ180 medium format digital Back.

In their testing, the Nikon

D800 trumps every other DSLR on the market in terms of overall image quality—including cameras with a higher MP count. As Nikon has been saying for years now, the quality of the pixels is more important than the quantity.

Overall image quality is determined by a number of factors including the imaging sensor, the quality of the lens, the raw processor used to work up the image and not least, the photographer's technique. With today's high resolution digital cameras, the quality of the lens is a huge factor. As you can see on the spread shown on the next page, I use some of the best quality lenses Nikon has

"I am fascinated and amazed by the technology we have today. But, when it comes down to it, the cameras and all of the other equipment we use to create images are just tools."

on offer. With the newer high resolution cameras, often the lens is the limiting factor. By this I mean that most 20+ MP cameras can resolve more detail than the lenses attached to them. The new Nikon D800 is pushing their lenses to the absolute limit and I would be surprised if any of the Nikkor lenses can resolve as much as that 36 MP sensor.

One of the interesting things I learned when I first started shooting with the Nikon D2x years ago was that 12 MP packed onto a DX sensor forced me to use higher shutter speeds to get tack-sharp images. Now, with even larger MP counts, it is even more critical to understand what

you are shooting with. A Nikon D800, with 36 MP, is resolving the same detail as a much heavier 4x5 large format camera. Most 4x5 large format cameras are used while sitting atop a tripod. Hence, when you think about it, a D800 is a very lightweight version of a 4x5 camera; and as such, it will need to be held very steady to get sharp images. Factor this into your thinking when shooting with high resolution cameras at slow shutter speeds.

Now that we have discussed some of the camera equipment that I use lets move on to the pre-shoot camera check, where I discuss all of the things I do to set the camera up and make sure it is performing as it should.



Above is a screenshot of a double page spread in Chapter 1 that shows the bulk of my photography equipment, save for my lighting gear and computers. Each item is numbered and described in the captions below. I don't take all of this gear with me on a photo shoot. For most shoots, I take only what I will need.

PRE-SHOOT CAMERA CHECK

Before any major assignment I run through my camera settings and make sure everything is set up the way I want it and the camera is operating as it should. This is a very important aspect of shooting digital—just as it was with film—though it is quite a bit more involved now than it was back in the film days. With today's extremely complex digital cameras and their extensive menus, it is easy to overlook a critical setting. Hence, this section is one of the most important in the entire book. Below is a list of items I routinely check on my camera before heading out on a photo shoot:

- Make sure image comment is active in the camera with "Copyright 2012 michaelclarkphoto.com" in the EXIF metadata
- Check the camera's date and time—especially when shooting in other time zones and with multiple cameras
- Make sure that the camera is set to shoot in the Adobe RGB color space.
- Make sure file numbering is set for continuous, which is very important to avoid overwriting files.
- Format all memory cards in the camera so they are all clean and ready to go.
- Clean the imaging sensor on all cameras to avoid hours on end removing dust spots in the post-processing.
- Compare camera's LCD histogram to Photoshop Histogram to establish exposure accuracy and to judge

"Before any major assignment I run through my camera settings and make sure everything is operating as it should."

the amount of headroom in the highlights. [Note that this is usually done only once when I get a new camera and test it out before my first photo shoot.]

- Test focusing accuracy of all lenses used for an assignment. Fine tune the autofocus if needed.
- Set a custom or preset white balance color temperature.
- Make sure Autofocus is set up correctly for the shooting situation.
- Set camera to shoot only RAW image files unless JPEG's are needed, then shoot RAW+JPEG.
- Double-check camera settings: ISO is at minimum setting for lighting, exposure compensation is at zero,

High ISO noise reduction is off, sharpening is off, Long exposure noise reduction is off (unless shooting below a shutter speed of ½ second), etc.

Don't worry, if some of this sounds confusing,

we'll cover all of these topics and more in this chapter in great detail so that you have a full understanding of how to set up your camera and perfect the image while shooting. The rest of this chapter will be an in-depth discussion of these topics and other related topics.

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portfolio





Swimming at Pipeline

by Michael Clark

Over the last four years or so that I have been shooting surfing, I have had mixed feelings about getting in the water to shoot surfing. Sure, I have swam out and shot from the water in California, Tahiti and at a few spots in Hawaii, but none of those spots were anything like Pipeline. The Bonzai Pipeline, known as Pipe, is one of the world's most treacherous waves, especially for photographers. Just to put it in perspective, over the last decade more photographers have died at Pipeline than surfers.

The reason I have had mixed feelings about shooting from the water are numerous. First, you miss a lot of shots while swimming because you are constantly moving around and ducking under waves to stay out of trouble. Second, the waves tend to look smaller when you are out in the water than they do when shooting from shore. And third, there is the fact that I am not a surfer and shooting from the water is quite dangerous. I am an excellent swimmer, and I feel very comfortable in the water, but swimming safely at Pipe takes more than just confidence.

Earlier this year I swam out at Pipeline for the first time with my good friend and legendary surf photographer Brian Biemann. The waves weren't that big, maybe in the three to five foot range on the Hawaiian scale, but it was

still tough to get out there. Once I made it out into the waves, it was relatively easy to duck under waves and get into position. Avoiding all of the surfers and body boarders was an altogether different matter but I seemed to manage that ok. The first thing you notice when you are shooting at Pipe is that your fins are scraping against the reef just underneath you. The water was about six feet deep and hence, any mistake could result in getting slammed onto the reef. On the day we went out that was unlikely, but on a bigger day I could see it happening.

The other big danger at Pipeline, and well anywhere you are shooting surfers from the water, is getting hit by a surf board. This is the reason most surf photographers wear a helmet in the water. Nonetheless, with all of these inherent dangers, it was an exhilarating experience and I am keen to get back out there and get some stellar water shots. You certainly won't find me swimming out at Pipeline on the biggest days—at least not for a few years, but I would like to get in the mix on some medium sized days and get more experience.

As a rock climber, I have to say it seems much scarier to swim out at Pipeline than to hang 3,000-feet off the deck on El Cap. I know that no surfing photographer would agree with me on that but it is just a matter of experience and comfort. Stay tuned for images from the water.

parting shot



Stephen Leavins sea kayaking in calm waters just before sunrise in West Penobscot Bay near Camden, Maine. This image was shot while swimming with a water-proof camera housing.

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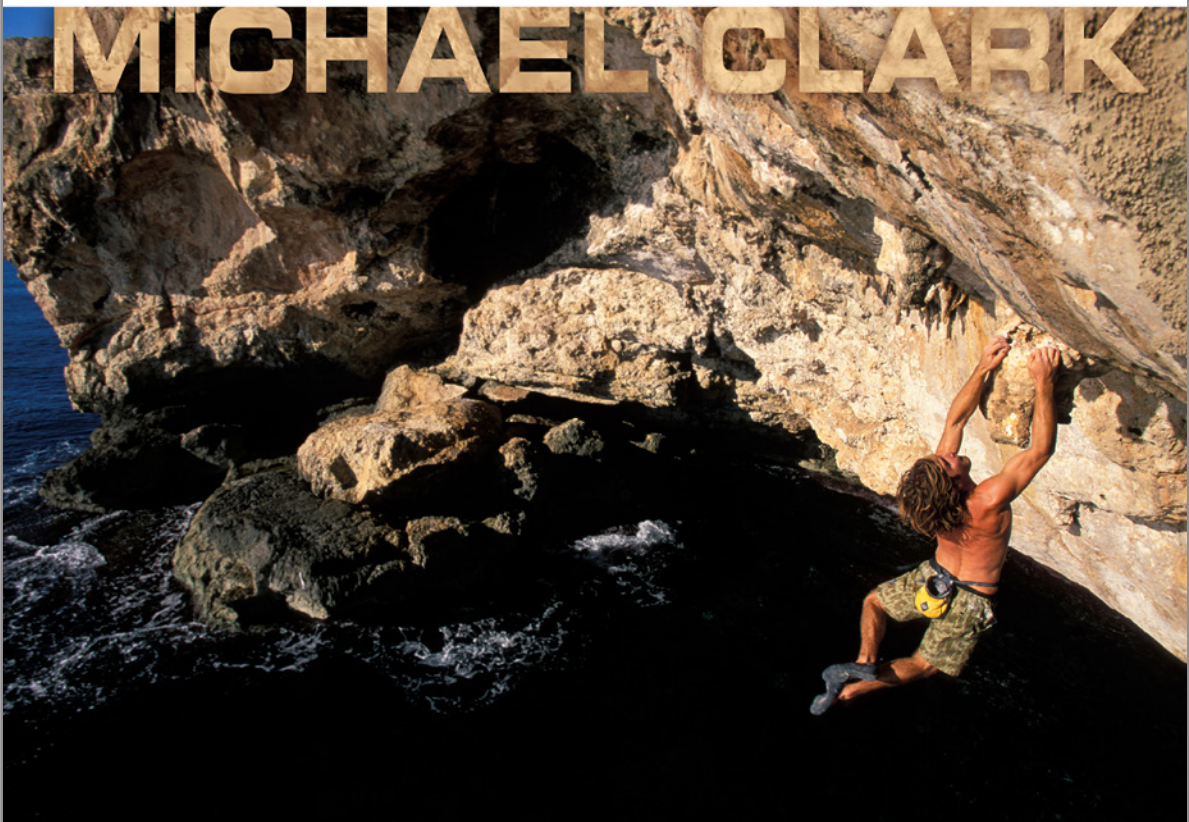


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