

NEWSLETTER

# MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



SUMMER 2024



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*Cover Image: The Cuernos del Paine in Torres del Paine basking in epic morning light as seen from Lake Pehoe in southern Chile. Opposite Page: Cerro Torre as seen from a pullout on the road into El Chalten, Argentina. This image was created using the new FUJIFILM GF500mm f/5.6 telephoto lens on a 102-megapixel GFX100 II medium format digital camera.*







## Skydiving in a Plane

*Falling from the sky and other adventures*

This spring I had several exciting assignments and was traveling for almost three months straight. As can be seen in the image on the following page, when I say exciting well...that might be an understatement. Once again I was given an assignment to document the Red Bull Air Force Training camp, this time it took place in Louisiana. Luke Aikins brought in his experimental plane that has an air brake allowing it to fly at terminal velocity—which is about 120 mph (193 kph)—straight at the ground. The skydivers had a blast circling the plane as they all dived straight at the ground. On the next go, I joined Luke Aikins as we skydived with the team in wing-suits. You can find a full debrief on this amazing assignment with a bunch of images in an article on my blog entitled [2024 Red Bull Air Force Aviation Camp](#).

Many of you might have noticed the sporadic release of the Newsletter the last few years. With the pandemic and changes in the industry assignments have not been as consistent as pre-pandemic times. Add in that I often have embargoes on what I can talk about and that limits what I can write about here in the Newsletter—and also delays issues as well. Because of that I will start posting to my blog more often and then cherry pick the best articles for the Newsletter to send out to my subscribers directly. Of course, there will be additional articles included here in the Newsletter that don't appear on the blog so

stay tuned. But if you want to stay up to date on my latest assignments please visit my [blog](#).

This spring I also had a couple of assignments for Fujifilm and taught a few workshops as well. Fujifilm sent me out to Maui to photograph windsurfing with their new GF500mm f/5.6 lens and I was lucky enough to take that along with my on a photography workshop I was co-leading in Patagonia as well. Hence, I had a lot of time with that lens and have a detailed preview of that lens here in this issue of the Newsletter. The feature article in this issue details my amazing trip to Patagonia to lead a photography workshop. This was my seventh trip to the Patagonia region and we witnessed some of the most extraordinary light I have seen in quite some time. Of course this issue also includes news and info on upcoming workshops as well. Thanks again for checking out the Newsletter. Here's hoping you enjoy this issue and it offers up an escape for an hour or two. Until next time....

*Opposite Page: Luke Aikins flying a plane in a nose-dive with the Red Bull Air Force team skydiving around him at the 2024 Red Bull Aviation Camp in Coshatta, Louisiana.*

**Recent Clients:** Fujifilm, Red Bull, National Geographic, New Mexico Tourism, New Mexico Department of Transportation, Nobeche Creative, and Visionary Wild.





## Communication Arts 2024 Photo Annual

*Image from my Fujifilm assignment included in illustrious photo annual*

I am very excited to announce that the image on the next page of J.T. Hartman kayaking Lower Mesa Falls on the Henry's Fork River in Idaho has been chosen for inclusion in the 2024 Communication Arts Photography Annual, which will be published in the July/August 2024 issue. The Communication Arts Photography Annual competition has been held for the last 65 years making this one of the oldest photography competitions in the World. From the Communications Arts press release, "Of the 2,210 entries to the 65th Photography Annual, only 129 projects were accepted, making the Photography Annual the most exclusive major photography competition in the world."

For those not familiar with Communication Arts, here is a description from the press release of the magazine, which is more like a high-end book than a magazine: "Communication Arts is a professional journal for designers, art directors, design firms, corporate design departments, agencies, illustrators, photographers and everyone involved in visual communications. Through its editorials,

feature articles and the annual competitions it sponsors, CA provides new ideas and information, while promoting the highest professional standards for the field. With a

paid circulation of 25,000, Communication Arts has a rich tradition of representing the aspirations of a continually-growing and quality-conscious field of visual communications. Now in its 66th year, Communication Arts continues to showcase the current best—whether it's from industry veterans or tomorrow's stars—in design, advertising, photography, illustration, interactive and typography."

In the advertising industry there is no other competition that high-

lights the best images of the year. The Photo Annual isn't just about advertising photography but those images, along with images created for editorial clients as well, make up the majority of the photo annual each year. The Photo Annual goes out to thousands of art buyers, photo editors and producers, which means that inclusion in the Photo Annual is not only a huge award in the industry, but it often leads to more work for those included in Annual.







For me personally, getting the email that this image made it into the 2024 Photo Annual is a confirmation that we knocked it out of the park on this assignment for the FUJIFILM GFX100 II—a groundbreaking 102 MP medium format camera introduced last year. This is my fifth time being featured in the Communication Arts Photo Annual—and this is the second time one of my assignments for Fujifilm has produced images that have been included in the Photo Annual. Big props to Victor Ha, Varina

Shaughnessy, Jackie Merry and the entire crew who worked on this gig for bringing this assignment to life and for all the hard work to help create these images. Also, my sincere thanks to Communication Arts and the jurors who chose the winning images: Kenji Aoki, Phil Copithorne, Ursula Damm, Christine Dewairy, Miles English, Jennifer Greenburg, Joe Karably, Sybren Kuiper, and Sacha Stejko. To view the images included in the Communication Arts Photo Annual visit their website [here](#).

## workshops

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# Photography Workshops

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

**E**ach year I teach a few workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the in-person and online workshops I will be teaching in 2024. For more information on these workshops, and to find out how to register, go to the [Workshops](#) page on my blog or click on the links in the descriptions below.

### LANDSCAPE AND ADVENTURE PHOTOGRAPHY

*An Online class via Zoom with Nobechi Creative*

*August 3 - 14, 2024*

*During the two week course there will be six classes with two on each of the weekends from 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM CDT and two Wednesday classes from 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM CDT. While this is an online class, for those that have time over the two weeks to create images we will also be doing a few image critiques so that participants can get as much as possible out of the workshop. All online classes will be recorded and available for the participants if you cannot attend every session.*

Mastering adventure photography involves much more than just f/8 and being there. It requires a host of skills, including technical excellence with the camera, familiarity with the environment, and mindfulness of your goals and safety at all times. Top adventure photographer Michael Clark will guide you through creating amazing,

adventurous images. Whether photographing at the local skate park, documenting a backpacking trip, or climbing a Himalayan giant, you'll come away with a broad understanding of what makes up the perfect adventure image and how to use these tools to further your next adventure. In this online course we will cover a wide range of topics to ensure that you come away with the knowledge you need to create compelling images of any adventure.

Over the two-week course, there will be time to go out and create images wherever you may be. We will make time to critique images created by participants during the course. This course will both challenge and inspire photographers of all levels. Below are a few of the topics we will cover:

### TOPICS COVERED

**Working with the Light:** In the outdoors, the action might be happening at any time of day. Being able to work with any type of light no matter what time of day is key to getting an exceptional image. We will go through how I approach various lighting conditions in detail.

**Finding Perspective and Composing the Image:** An interesting composition and perspective can make or break an image. Michael will walk you through a wide variety of





*Adventure photography isn't necessarily always extreme. As in this sea kayaking image above, sometimes it is just a serene experience in the outdoors. In this course we will dive into documenting both types of adventures and make it relevant to the participants and their interests.*

compositions and perspectives, created with both wide-angle and telephoto lenses, to help you brush up your skills on this critical topic.

**Communicating with your Subject:** Working with those taking risks, whether at the local skate park or whitewater kayaking over a giant waterfall, requires clear communication and thought towards both the subjects and the photographer's safety. We will discuss a range of scenarios and detail how Michael approached each situation.

**Exposure and Histograms:** How you expose the image in the outdoors determines a lot of the look and feel of the

final image. How the image is exposed also determines what you can do with it in the post-processing as well. We will dive deep into histograms and show a wide variety of examples so you will know what to do in each situation.

**Post-Processing and Color Management:** With digital photography at least 50% of the final image comes together in the post-processing. Color management is a key component to make sure what you see on your monitor is what the actual image looks like. We will dive into both topics so that you have a full understanding of the basics.

**Using Artificial Lighting in the Outdoors:** Adding artificial lighting to an image can take it to a whole new level. Learn how to use both small and large flashes to augment the lighting in your images. Learn the basics of lighting with flash that will open up a whole new world in your photography.

**Capturing the Height of the Action:** Set yourself and your camera up to capture the decisive moment in any situation. Understanding what is happening in front of you is just as important as how you set up your camera and how familiar you are with what it can and cannot do. Hear how Michael sets up his cameras and how he makes sure not to miss the height of the action.

**Preparing for the Adventure & Protecting Your Gear:** If you can't get yourself and your camera gear to the location then photography is a moot point. Find out how to travel with your gear safely and protect it from the elements and learn how preparing for your adventure can result in much better images.

**What's in The Bag:** See what a professional adventure photographer takes with them that allows them to be ready for any situation.

**Getting Tack-sharp Action Images:** When it comes to action photography, focusing the camera is a huge deal – whether using autofocus, manual focus or any other method. It can be difficult for even the best photographers to nail the focus on every frame. We will work through various AF methods as well as when and where to use them to help you get tack-sharp action images.

**What Makes a Great Adventure Photo?:** Discover the

critical elements that make up a stellar adventure photograph: timing, the moment, the light, the composition, and most importantly interesting content. Learn from a master as to what elements help to tell the story you want to convey and how to make that happen.

**Planning for Success:** Planning for success is key to ensure you come back with amazing images. Also known as pre-production, how you prepare for the photo shoot is just as important as what you do while creating images. We will walk step-by-step through my process of thinking through the adventure and what I do to prepare for an assignment.

## SCHEDULE

This class will meet on Saturdays, and Sundays from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM CDT, and on Wednesdays from 5:00 PM to 8:00 PM CDT, starting on August 3rd and ending on August 14th.

Sessions will be recorded so you can review them in your own time and adapt your schedule to this workshop. However, there will be a couple of live feedback sessions with Michael so we encourage you to attend as many classes as possible to get the most out of this program!

This class is for any and all photographers interested in exploring the ins and outs of landscape and adventure photography. Students should know the basics of photography, how to use their cameras, the basics of handling their images and should be comfortable using Zoom.

Participants should have the following: a camera (iPhone,





*Landscape photography dovetails nicely with any adventurous outing--whether that is traveling to a big city or hiking way back into a remote location. We will discuss the basics of Landscape photography so that you can take these skills with you wherever you go.*

Android, DSLR, or Mirrorless ILC), a Computer/Tablet, a Zoom Account (the free account level is sufficient) and of course an internet connection.

**TUITION:** \$1250 (+10% tax for Japan residents)

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

## Workshop Testimonials

"Michael certainly knows his stuff. From Capture to Print: The Complete Digital Photographer's Workflow is

delivered in an easy to follow and comprehensive manner that covers many things that you may not expect – such as how to choose proper lighting to view and evaluate your prints or what color shirt to wear when you're correcting images. I really appreciated that this is a pro workflow course delivered by a pro photographer. Michael is also a superb teacher, a superb communicator, who is welcoming and inviting of questions from all his participants. I took this workshop in June of 2020, using Zoom software. I was really amazed by how Michael made it seem like he's been doing these workshops forever this way! It was a great pleasure being part of this workshop with so many other amazing photographers. I

learned much which is valuable to me and enjoyed doing so at the same time. And just to reiterate, as to the workshop: I'm impressed." - Stephen Starkman, Toronto

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

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

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

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

"Your workshop at Santa Fe was too good and I came away with a lot of knowledge and renewed energy. The level of expertise that you and Michael shared was top-notch and I hope to repeat this experience again. Thanks

for such a great workshop!" - Participant in the 2008 Balloon Fiesta workshop taught by Andy Biggs and myself.

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

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

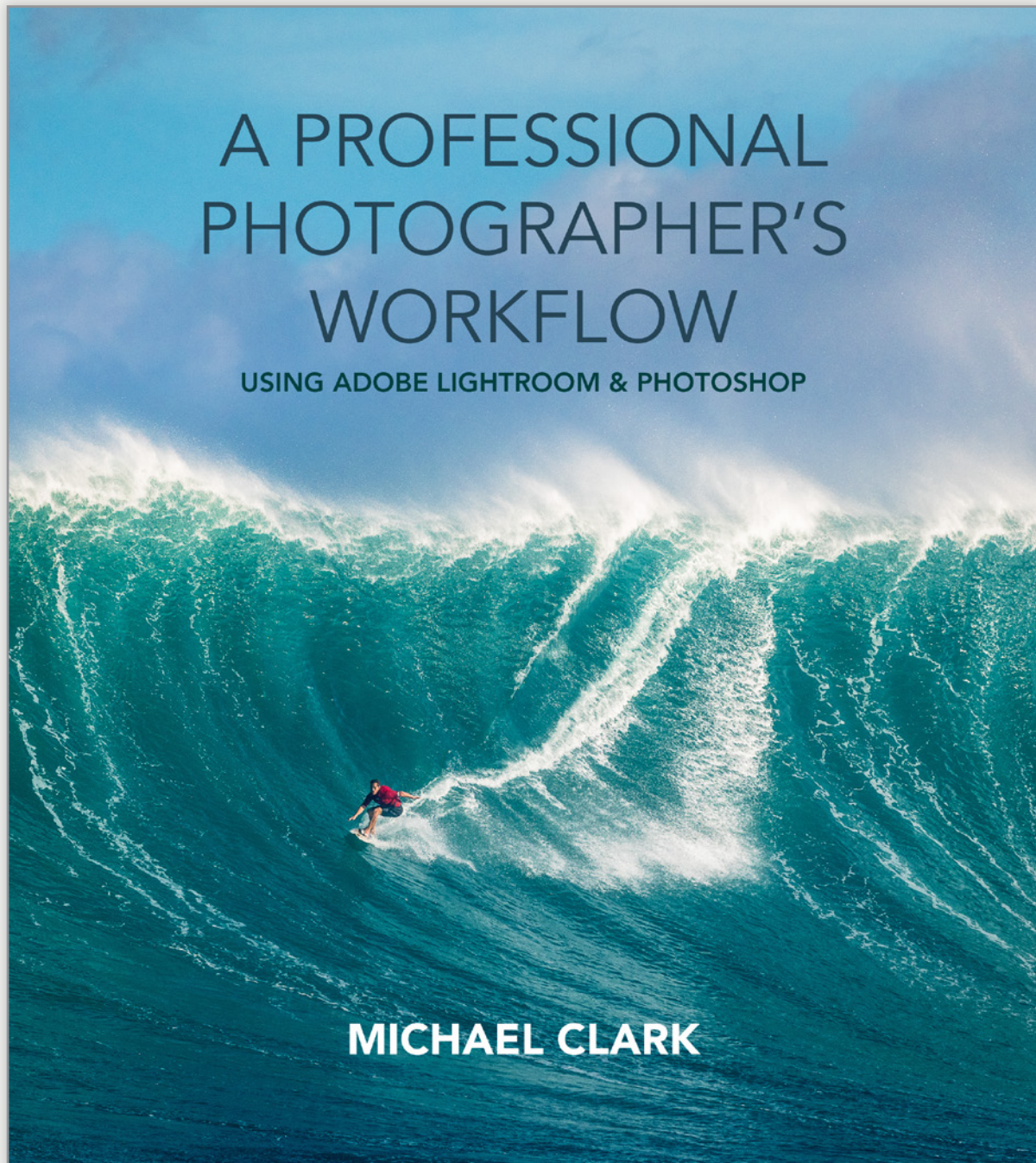
"Priceless chance to learn from the absolute best. Every photographer should take this class!" - Jill Sanders, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow available on CreativeLIVE

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



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# The FUJIFILM GF500mm f/5.6 Lens

*A preview of the longest lens ever created for a digital medium format camera system*

[Disclaimer: I am not an ambassador for Fujifilm but I have worked with them closely over the last five years or more. I have created images for the launch of the last three 102 MP GFX cameras including the GFX100, GFX100S and the GFX100 II. Check out my portfolio website to see those images and the behind the scenes videos for those assignments. I have also created images for the launch of some of the GF lenses as well—notably for the GF45-100 and more recently the GF500mm lens. As a result, I cannot say that this preview is unbiased. I am certainly biased. I hope that you find this preview at the very least informative since I do use other camera systems for some of my work and thus have similar gear that I know extremely well to compare it to. The GF500mm lens was provided to me for the assignments for the launch of the lens.]

**T**he FUJIFILM GF500mm f/5.6 R LM OIS WR lens has now been officially announced. The GF500mm focal length on the GFX cameras is the 35mm equivalent of a 396mm lens. Over the last few months from early February through the end of April, I have had a lot of time with this lens photographing action sports, landscapes and some wildlife as well. Fujifilm USA has let me work with two different prototypes of the lens and even let me take one to Patagonia for three weeks. Hence, my sincere thank you to Fujifilm for letting me have so much time to

work with this lens and to test out its capabilities. My hope here with this preview is to give you a sense of the lens and how it performs so that you can make an informed decision on whether or not it is a lens that will work for your needs.

Last year, when the GFX100 II was announced in Stockholm, the night before the announcement I was told that Fujifilm was also announcing a GF500mm lens to put on the road map. I have to say I was almost more excited for the new 500mm lens than I was for the GFX100 II. I have been talking with several different folks at Fujifilm about a longer telephoto lens since 2019 (and even specifically mentioned something like a 500mm f/5.6) so when they told me about this new lens I was over the moon. I am sure many of the Fujifilm photographers were asking for a telephoto GFX lens so it certainly wasn't just me asking for it. Hence, you can imagine my excitement to be a small part of the launch of this lens—and to get to work with it for such an extended period of time before it was officially launched. Because all of my experience so far was with pre-production firmware and a prototype lens this will qualify as a preview, not an exhaustive review.

Let's start with the physical characteristics of the lens. The first thing you notice when you pick it up is how light it is. It is easily hand-holdable. At 1,375 grams (3.03



*Above is the FUJIFILM GFX100 II with the GF500mm f/5.6 R LM OIS WR lens attached to it. On this day we were photographing rock climbing, which is why the camera and lens are sitting on a pile of rocks. At right is a photo showing the Arca-Swiss grooved tripod foot which is great for putting the lens and camera on an Arca-Swiss compatible tripod head.*



Pounds) the GF500 is actually 50 grams (0.11 pounds) lighter than the GF250mm lens, which is pretty amazing given its longer focal length. Length-wise it is just slightly longer than the GF250 at 246.5mm (9.7 inches). The way the lens elements are arranged in the lens itself also means that the bulk of the weight is towards the camera body, which means it balances on a GFX100 II quite well

— also making it easy to move when panning with the action. The front element has a 95mm filter thread so it is decently large but also not so big that filters would cost a fortune. It has an aperture ring, a manual focus ring and also focus lock/focus recall buttons. It also has the standard switches on the side of the lens that include restricting the autofocus distance, turning on and off the Image





*As part of my assignment with the GF500 I was able to photograph windsurfing with Levi Siver at Ho'okipa on the north shore of Maui, Hawaii. This provided me a great opportunity to see just how well the autofocus on the GFX100 II worked when paired with the GF500. This combination did very well as you can see above!*

Stabilization (OIS) and a switch that tells what the buttons on the lens do (i.e. autofocus lock, preset AF and initiating AF).

The locking collar on the lens also has a built in Arca-Swiss style tripod foot (as shown on the previous page) which is one of the first I have seen from any camera manufacturer. I believe Fujifilm also added the

Arca-Swiss tripod foot on the smaller format XF150-600mm lens but that is the only other lens I have ever seen that had one built-in and that ships that way from the manufacturer. This is a great addition to the tripod foot and I hope to see more of these from all manufacturers. Bravo Fujifilm! It slipped perfectly into my Really Right Stuff ballhead (and also on my Wimberley head as well) and seemed rock solid.





*While photographing windsurfing in Maui, I spent most of the time with the GF500 using it handheld as shown above. The action was moving so fast that having the camera and lens mounted to a tripod was limiting what I could catch. Luckily, the weight and design of the GF500 really allows it to be handheld easily.*

My first time working with the new GF500 was while photographing wind surfing at Ho'okipa Beach Park on the north shore of Maui in February. Ho'okipa is one of the best spots on the planet for wind surfing and I had two world-famous windsurfers to work with, Levi Siver (formerly sponsored by Red Bull) and Marcilio Browne (the current world champion). Hence, there was no lack of talent in front of the lens on this assignment. With the

tight timelines and only a few lenses to share among photographers at that time I only had two days with the lens. But I made good use of those two days and we had perfect weather as well.

I shot thousands of wind surfing images, all at 8 frames per second (fps) with the FUJIFILM GFX100 II camera body. In all, I created over 3,500 images with the GF500

in those two days—most of those were created while photographing wind surfing. With the GFX100 II, I would say that the GF500mm autofocus was pretty darn amazing, especially for a medium format camera. When it locked on the subject it would normally track the surfer all the way through the sequence unless another wave splashed up between myself and the surfer. I got around 80% of the images in focus while firing away at 8 frames per second and tracking the surfers in the continuous autofocus (AF-C) mode. While 80% may not seem like a great percentage remember that any other medium format camera (aside from the new GFX100S II) would have a much lower in-focus percentage. The older GFX100S, with its less capable autofocus tracking capabilities (compared to the GFX100 II and GFX100S II), would probably be somewhere down in the 40% range. Hence, 80% is an incredible percentage for a camera creating 102 MP image files at 8 fps. With the full production model and new firmware this percentage might improve. I will definitely test that out when I can get my hands on a full production model.

While photographing wind surfing, I also used the GF1.4X TC to extend the focal length out to 700mm f/8. With the teleconverter attached that gets us out to a 35mm equivalent of 554mm f/8. With the teleconverter the images were still very sharp. I saw barely any noticeable drop in image quality. But I did notice that the autofocus was just a hair slower. Given that this was a prototype lens I would not say that is a definitive statement. We will see how the full production lens does. Though, in general, when using any type of teleconverter (of any brand) on a lens there is usually a slight drop in autofocus speed—mostly because of the slower aperture that is a result of the teleconverter.

I will say that the GF1.4X TC fits on the GF500 very well as you would expect. There is a tight seal and the teleconverter has little if any play between the lens and body. It is great to see that the teleconverter works so well with both the GF250 and the GF500 lenses. The teleconverter doesn't seem to shift the balance that much either—the center of mass is still near the camera body. Thus, even with the teleconverter attached the whole setup still balances well and is easy to hold. I worked with the GF500 both on a tripod and also handheld. Windsurfing is a sport that moves very fast and the surfers are all over the place so I found that working handheld allowed me to get the best images.

Photographing wind surfing can also be quite miserable. Typically the best conditions are when the wind is absolutely howling — often at wind speeds in excess of 40 to 50 mph (65 to 80 kmh). With that much wind it can be very challenging to hold a big lens steady and move it without being blown off the subject. Hence, as you can see in the image on the previous page of me working at Ho'okipa, I mostly worked behind a wind break created by a sheet of plywood set up at the beach. The wind really works you pretty hard after standing or sitting in those conditions for several hours. By the end of a session I had not really worked that hard but somehow I felt very dehydrated just from the wind pulling water out of me.

While on Maui, I also took the GF500 up to the top of Haleakala (the main volcano in the center of the island). The top of Haleakala, in Haleakala National Park, is situated at 10,023 ft (3055 m) and is quite cold compared to sea level down below. Knowing I would be going up on Haleakala I brought with me warm clothes and a down jacket—not the norm for a Hawaii trip but key for this





*Another image of Levi Siver windsurfing at Ho'okipa on the north shore of Maui. Overall, the autofocus worked exceptionally well for a medium format system.*

adventure. From the top of Haleakala you could see Mauna Kea rising above the clouds on the big island of Hawai'i (shown on the following page) and also the observatory on top of Mauna Kea. Using the GF500 I was able to frame up an image with both the rim of the Haleakala crater in the foreground and Mauna Kea in the background. The GF500 also allowed me to isolate parts of the Haleakala crater for some dramatic landscapes.

While I had the lens on Maui, I hinted to Fujifilm that perhaps I should take it with me to Patagonia in April where I would be co-leading a photography workshop with Justin Black. Justin is an ambassador for Fujifilm and hence, he would be able to try out the lens as well. I never thought that would come to fruition but kudos to the folks at Fujifilm for making it happen. I got the lens the day before I was set to leave and wrapped it up in an





*Above is a telephoto landscape image created with the GF500 of Mauna Kea visible in the top right of the image as seen from the top of Haleakela on Maui.*

Aquatech rain cover to hide its identity. I also took some gaffer's tape and taped over any and all text printed on the lens to hide its identity since I would most likely be pulling it out in the company of other photographers. We dubbed the lens "Snoopy," so that when we referred to it no one would know what we were talking about.

The Patagonia trip was a three week extravaganza where

we visited Torres del Paine in Chile, and El Calafate and El Chalten, both of which are in Argentina. I mostly used the GF500 for landscape images where I wanted to isolate distant peaks as shown on page 3. We also had a few times where we photographed wildlife as well—mostly Guanacos, which are ubiquitous in that region of Patagonia. For wildlife, the GF500 was essential since I only had GFX cameras with me on this adventure—those being

the GFX100 II and the GFX100S. I often used the GF500 with the GF1.4x TC to get a longer focal length depending on where the animals were situated. The Guanaco shown on the following page was actually relatively close to us but I still used the teleconverter to fill the frame. Note that I have shared a lot more images from this Patagonia adventure in a [blog post](#) recently.

I am not sure I have had this much time with any pre-production camera or lens before. I feel like I know the GF500mm lens quite well at this point having used it every day for almost a full month. For what it is, the lens is relatively compact and fits into a camera bag fairly easily. In terms of image quality the lens is very sharp. As with any longer telephoto lens, how sharp the final images appear is going to depend a lot on heat distortion effects. When the subject was closer to the camera, as with the wind surfing and wildlife images, heat distortion was a non-issue. For the far off landscapes, even though we were freezing our buns off at dawn creating the photographs, the heat differential between where I was standing and the peak I was photographing definitely introduced some heat distortion when you zoom into the full resolution images. Heat distortion has nothing to do with the lens, it is just a factor of using a long telephoto lens like this and having a subject that is at a far distance. Regardless, the lens itself produces wicked sharp images similar to the GF250mm lens.

The GF500mm also has Optical Image Stabilization (OIS) as well. It is built into the lens and also works with the camera body to produce the best results. I did not specifically test it out as in most situations I either had the lens on a tripod or was trying to freeze the motion of the wind surfers. I am sure it works well but I will have to

test that out with a production version of the lens. The only downside, if it can even be considered a downside, of the GF500mm lens is that at f/5.6 this lens might not be the best option for use in low lighting conditions. I am sure they could have made an f/4 version but it would have weighed more than twice as much and would have cost three times more. They opted for the f/5.6 version which is much easier to travel with and much more affordable as well. And f/5.6 lens is what I asked for five years ago so I certainly can't complain on that front. A medium format f/5.6 lens also results in fairly shallow depth of field because of the larger sensor. When the subject is somewhat close, as with the image of the Guanaco on the following page, using an aperture of f/5.6 is like working with a 400mm f/4 lens on a 35mm camera. And when using the teleconverter, that combination feels (at least in terms of depth of field) like a 560mm f/5.6 lens on a 35mm camera.

Overall, the GF500mm lens is pretty much exactly what you would expect from a FUJIFILM GFX lens. It is sharp, the autofocus is snappy and it is well built. I found very little if anything to complain about when using the lens. Honestly, I think Fujifilm knocked it out of the park and produced a lens that really opens up the GFX lens lineup making the system as a whole that much more usable for a wide variety of situations and photography genres. We now have lenses that range from 20mm all the way up to 700mm (a 35mm equivalent of 16mm to 554mm) and also two excellent tilt-shift lenses as well. About the only lenses missing at this point are a fisheye and an ultrafast wide-angle prime. I would love to see a GF35mm f/1.7 lens to round out the fast primes that Fujifilm has produced in the last few years. I'd say the GFX system is rounding out very nicely right now. It is certainly the most



*Above you can see a Guanaco sitting on a hillside in Torres del Paine National Park. For this image I used the GF500 lens along with the GF1.4x teleconverter to help fill the frame with the Guanaco. While f/5.6 might not seem that fast, on a medium format camera f/5.6 can result in a shallow depth of field as seen here.*

well-rounded and versatile lens lineup in the medium format photography genre.

The price for the GF500mm f/5.6 here in the USA is \$3,499 USD, which for a medium format lens of this caliber is a great price point. Considering lenses from Hasselblad and Phase One cost nearly twice this amount for shorter focal lengths this is a relative bargain in the medi-

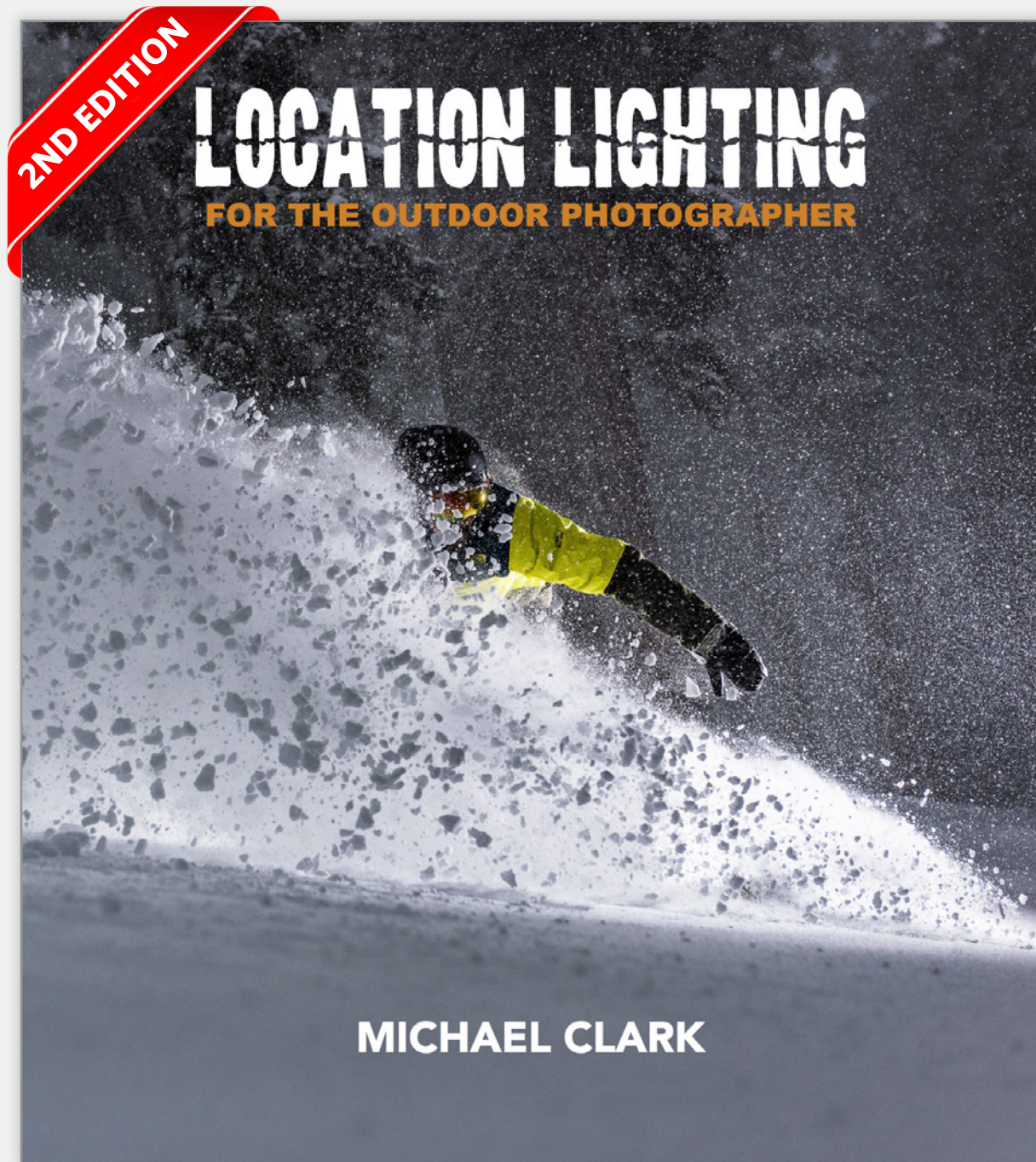
um format space—as are most of the GFX lenses.

For more information on the FUJIFILM GF500mm f/5.6 visit Fujifilm's [website](#). My thanks to Fujifilm once again for letting me be a small part of the launch of this lens and for loaning it to me for my Patagonia adventure. I look forward to working with it again as soon as it becomes available.



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*on assignment:*

# THE LIGHT OF PATAGONIA

LIGHT CHASING ON MY RECENT PHOTO WORKSHOP WITH VISIONARY WILD





In April 2024, I co-lead a workshop for Visionary Wild with their founder Justin Black. This was my seventh trip to Patagonia. It is one of those magical places that evokes a sense of wonder and awe like few places on this planet. Hence, the reason I have gone back there so many times. On most of my prior trips, I was covering the Patagonia Expedition Race or traversing the Patagonia ice cap—so there was little time to create landscape photographs of the iconic mountains and glaciers. This trip, set up by Justin and his incredible team was focused on landscape photography with a little bit of wildlife photography here and there as well.

The trip started out in Punta Arenas, where we all met up after the long flights. From there we moved to Torres del Paine, a location that Justin knew incredibly well. [Note: I too have been to Torres del Paine several times but mostly hiking in the mountains, not in the surrounding areas farther afield.] As a result of Justin's deep knowledge of the park we were setting up at phenomenal spots every day for landscape photography. Justin had enough experience to judge the wind and the weather as well so that we could shift to other locations and still get images even in the worst conditions. The wind was a continuous battle in terms of keeping cameras steady—but for anyone that has traveled to Patagonia that is no surprise. The wild weather and extreme winds helped us create some epic images—images we would not have created if the weather had been perfectly nice and calm.

The first few days in Torres del Paine, the wind really limited what we could do but that didn't deter us from going out and producing a variety of images of shrouded peaks and barely visible mountains. Luckily, this trip was also fairly luxurious—at least compared to all my prior trips

where I mostly camped in tents. We stayed at three different hotels in Torres del Paine as we moved around the park over the course of eight days. I remember hearing the wind roar outside my hotel room at Hotel Lago Grey (where the photo on the following page was created) and thinking about all those prior trips in a tent with similar winds whipping the fabric of the tent so loudly that sleep was a rare experience. Being in a nice hotel, and having dinner cooked for you each night was a far cry from trying to light a camp stove in similar wind and rain in the vestibule of my tent.

As can be seen in the image on pages 28-29 of the Cuernos del Paine as seen from Lake Pehoe (pronounced pay-way) we got really, really lucky with absolutely stunning light and interesting stormy weather. The evening before this image was created, myself and a few of the other crew went up to the lookout point on this tiny island and we were literally blown down and forced onto our knees by a wind gust well in excess of 80 mph (128 kph). On this morning at Lake Pehoe we hoped for good light and low winds and what we got was something I have very rarely seen before. The thin wispy clouds surrounding the Cuernos (literally the bull's horns) captured the morning light and wrapped it all the way around the Cuernos so that both sides of the landscape were illuminated with alpenglow. Add in the crashing waves spraying us with glacial silt on the rocky foreground and it was landscape magic.

We certainly had other days where the weather wasn't as cooperative but that just made the good light that much more incredible. Regardless of the weather, there were always a variety of moods—and wildlife—to photograph and observe. Torres del Paine is a goldmine for epic















landscape photography. And you don't really even have to hike that far off the beaten path to get something spectacular. Whether you are hiking the "W" trail or go further away from the mountains (as we were on this trip) there are endless variations of epic mountain landscapes.

The Guanacos were a constant companion everywhere we went in Patagonia as can be seen on pages 22 and 31. They are related to Camels and are even more closely related to Llamas. They generally travel and live in groups for protection from mountain lions—of which there are a quite a few in and around Torres del Paine. During the daytime, we would often go looking for wildlife and invariably find Guanacos to photograph along with condors and the occasional Puma (a.k.a. Mountain Lion).

On one of our days on the east side of the park a few of us hiked up to the Torres, which was a ten-hour hike round-trip (with time at the Torres) from the hotel at the base of the valley. We left at 4 AM and were pretty much immediately in a blizzard of sorts hiking in full Gore-Tex. The higher we went the deeper the snow got and the denser the clouds. I was thinking this might be a long hike for nothing much to see, but I had done this hike a few times in bad weather and had then somehow seen first light on the peaks as the weather cleared. Luckily the clouds parted just as the first rays of light hit the upper part of the Torres as can be seen in the double page spread on pages 32-33.

The peaks and the entire valley was bathed in about a foot (30 cm) of fresh snow—something I had never seen up there before. The snow certainly made for unique images. We also froze our buns off after hiking uphill for three and a half hours and arriving with wet layers

underneath our Gore-tex outerwear. I took off my Gore-Tex Arc'teryx jacket and put on a giant puffy and my shell froze solid in a matter of minutes. The descent was quite slippery and I was really wishing I had brought mini-crampons. It was an epic hike—especially with the snow and we got a few decent images to go with it.

From Torres del Paine we stopped in at El Calafate for a few days. Just around the corner from town are some incredible mountains and the giant Perito Moreno glacier. Having never been to the Perito Moreno glacier it was exciting to see something new on this trip. I have seen many, many glaciers all over the world and have traversed a section of the Patagonia ice cap on my last trip but it was wild to see the toe of the Perito Moreno glacier from a few different perspectives. This was also one of the places where we saw rampant selfie photography, which I always find comical.

After a few days in El Calafate we headed up to El Chalten, which I consider to be the "Throne Room of the Mountain Gods." For me, the mountains above El Chalten—Cerro Torre and Cerro Fitzroy—are two of the most iconic and extraordinary peaks anywhere. Fewer climbers have summited anything in this range than have summited Everest. These peaks require incredible skill, speed and judgment like few other mountains—save for the similar stunning granite spires in Pakistan (the Trango Towers on the Baltoro Glacier) and perhaps a few of the giant cliffs in the Ruth Gorge in Alaska (like Mt. Barrille and Mt. Dickey).

As a climber, Cerro Torre and Fitzroy (whose indigenous name is El Chalten, meaning "smoking mountain") are the epicenter of extreme climbing. If I am being honest, I have never had the skill to climb either one — very few



















climbers do. I could have possibly followed a stronger climber up one of these but even that requires a strong mind to solo over technical terrain with mind-boggling exposure below. Long runouts on sketchy gear is the norm here, and you have to be solid enough to deal with the exposure, the climbing, the loose rock, mixed rock and ice climbing and everything else while still moving upwards at breakneck speed to outrun any oncoming weather. Hence, all of this climbing history has built El Chalten and the surrounding massif into a cathedral in my mind. Just being there to photograph landscapes feels like going to church for me.

Luckily for us, we were gifted with some of the most mind-bending light I have ever seen. With our group we went to a few locations in and around the town of El Chalten several times to get those iconic views of the range. The main pullout just before you get into town offers a wide variety of options and epic views as shown on the previous page and in the opening spread for this article.

For me as a climber, Cerro Torre is the cat's meow of the El Chalten massif. Both Fitzroy and Cerro Torre are obviously glorious, but the climbing challenge of Cerro Torre and the topsy-turvy, controversial climbing history of the peak lends to its acclaim. The East face of Cerro Torre (shown on page 37) is a giant, extremely difficult rock climb while the West Face (shown on page 11) is essentially a huge ice climb with a few bits of mixed climbing on rock and ice. Either side is serious business. Torre Egger, Punta Herron and Aguja Standhart, the three smaller peaks just to the right of Cerro Torre (from the perspective shown on page 37) are similarly challenging if not more so. Hence, on a few occasions I pulled out the

FUJIFILM GF500mm f/5.6 lens and concentrated specifically on Cerro Torre as shown on page 3 and 37.

On a few occasions when we went out chasing golden-hour light sometimes the most interesting light was behind us and not over the massif. This epic landscape (shown on page 38) was in the exact opposite direction of Cerro Torre and El Chalten. Even without the iconic peaks, the river valley arcing through the pampas with wild clouds makes for a very different landscape image from Patagonia.

On a few different days, mostly when the sky was overcast, we also visited the Chorillo del Salto waterfall just up the road from El Chalten. The Chorillo del Salto is an easy one kilometer hike from the parking area and in April offers up fall foliage just below the waterfall. There are endless vantage points to photograph the waterfall from—and the trees themselves are just as interesting as the waterfall (not shown in this article).

In El Chalten, if you aren't willing or able to hike then a lot of the more famous landscape images are inaccessible. We weren't in El Chalten that long on this trip so most of our landscape images were created at relatively accessible areas in and around town. Of course, on prior trips I have done a ton of hiking—all the way around the massif. Hence, it was nice to really concentrate on a few different easily accessible locations. The most obvious shot as you drive into town is on the road itself as shown on the previous page. As we drove into town that first evening we stopped and created a few images of the mountain range since you never know if you will ever see it again for the rest of the trip—that is just how the weather works down there. This image was severely backlit but due to the

incredible dynamic range on the FUJIFILM GFX100 II, I was able to pull out details in the foreground without losing the magical light breaking through the peaks in the distance. It isn't the most epic image from the trip, but yet another solid perspective.

For this adventure, I took with me two FUJIFILM GFX camera bodies—the GFX100 II and the GFX100S. I also took along five GFX lenses including the GF20-35, GF32-64, GF80mm, GF100-200 and a pre-production version of the new GF500mm f/5.6. I also had with me the GF1.4x teleconverter as well to extend the reach of the GF500 for possible encounters with wildlife. You can read all about my experiences with the new GF500mm lens in the previous article here in this Newsletter. I also brought a medium weight Gitzo tripod not knowing how much hiking we would be doing. If I had it to do over again I would have taken my heavyweight top-end Gitzo GT5541LS tripod to help battle the wind. For those heading down, I recommend taking the heaviest tripod you have as lightweight tripods just vibrate in the hurricane force winds and are practically worthless.

My thanks to Justin for bringing me in to help lead this photography tour. Additionally, a huge thanks to our support staff and guides Ruth, Scott, Jocelyn, Zaira, Manuel and Carlos for all your expertise, help and care. Their support truly made this trip exceptional as they were always looking out for everyone and could literally (or so it seemed) make just about anything happen. Last but certainly not least, thanks to the participants that made this trip possible. We had a grand adventure not only photographing the epic landscapes but also getting to know each other and traveling together over eighteen days. For those looking for high-end photography tours to remote

locations Visionary Wild is as good as it gets. I highly recommend them and Justin is an incredible photographer with deep knowledge of the locations he visits on his tours.

There are hundreds of other images I could share. Patagonia never disappoints and this was a phenomenal trip that well exceeded my imagination. On three or four occasions we witnessed light that was utterly breathtaking. From soft pastel hues to deeply intense purple pre-dawn light we were very lucky to be able to photograph the entire spectrum of possibilities. It was also a pleasure to travel with so many talented photographers in our group. Each day we would share our images and speaking for myself it was hard to not be jealous. Sometimes an iPhone image would blow you away. Other times it was David Chew with his incredible technique using a Phase One back and an Alpa technical camera rig producing jaw dropping panoramas. More often than not it was Justin creating one masterpiece after another even in imperfect conditions. That is all just part of the fun traveling with other photographers and geeking about gear, technique and photography in general. The following pages containing a few more images thrown in to spice up this article—including the black and white double page spread Portfolio image on pages 40-41.

Every time I go to Patagonia I am itching to go back and this time is no different. There are always new places to go to and different adventures to be had. I'd love to go back and actually climb one of the smaller sub-peaks in the El Chalten massif. I'd also love to fly over the range and do a bigger adventure project down there with some world-class athletes. It is truly one of the epic playgrounds on this planet. Until next time...hasta luego.











portfolio







# A Radical Shift in Advertising

*by Michael Clark*

**W**hile this year has been medium busy for me so far, talking with my peers it is apparent that something is going on in the photography industry—and the advertising world in general. Last year was topsy-turvy as well for me, with a very busy first half of the year and a lackluster second half. It was clear last fall that parts of the economy were still recovering from the pandemic—and that may still be the case so far this year. Regardless of the economy, what has been happening in the last few years as we have recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic is a radical shift in the way companies advertise.

In the old days, just a decade ago, a company would advertise in print, online and in television ads. Those were the main options: ads in magazines, websites, online ads (i.e. banners on websites), and TV ads. With the rapid advance of social media, YouTube and streaming services younger generations stopped watching TV or reading magazines. TV is still there of course, but now it reaches an older demographic for the most part. Magazines in the last two years have all but vaporized—and those that are still afloat are barely making ends meet from what I have heard. Basically the Millennial and Gen Z groups get everything online or via social media these days. Of course, the above statements are gross generalizations—but advertising as a whole follows the crowds. And the crowds are now on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Netflix.

With this rapid change in behavior, very few companies that I work with run print ads in magazines anymore. A few of my clients, like Red Bull, still run the occasional TV ad but that is a small part of their overall marketing budget. Social media is king. Red Bull for example has the largest social media presence of any company on Earth—with over eight billion views of their content each and every month. For the advertising industry, this switch to social media is devastating. Social media demands quantity over quality—and even more than that a relatable quirky vertical video can do more for an advertiser than slick well-produced, high-end (i.e. expensive) content from an ad agency.

As many companies are bringing marketing in-house many ad agencies are in freefall. Social media and online advertising just doesn't bring in the same revenue for creatives that print ads and prior marketing strategies did in the past. As proof of this trend, I have seen a lot of my ad agency contacts become freelancers in the last few years. This isn't to say it is all doom and gloom. If anything there are more opportunities now than there ever were before. It is just a new era and everyone, from the freelance photographer up to the ad agency executive is trying to figure out how to fit into the new paradigm and make content that stands out. In that regard it is no different from the past. We are in the midst of a revolution in advertising and constant change is the inevitable consequence.





*Luke Aikins flying a plane fitted with a custom air brake, allowing for it to go into a nose-dive without breaking apart, while the rest of the Red Bull Air Force skydives around him at the 2024 Red Bull Aviation Camp in Coushatta, Louisiana.*

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