NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK
PHOTOGRAPHY

WINTER 2014

contents

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 Contact me at info@michaelclarkphoto.com. To see more of my work view my website at www.michaelclarkphoto.com.

Cover Image: Stunt pilot Kirby Chambliss flying just over the Red Bull Air Force team members while they were training at his ranch near Casa Grande, Arizona. Opposite Page: Red Bull Air Force team members jumping out of a plane while skydiving near Casa Grande, Arizona during the 2014 Red Bull Air Force training camp. Newsletter edited by Jamey Stillings and Katherine Mast.

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Separate Reality

Finding another world in my images from a recent assignment

I have had the privilege of working with an incredible variety of elite adventure sports athletes over the course of my career. To a person, all of the athletes I work with are passionate about their sport and obsessed with pushing their skills and often the boundaries of their sport. As a passionate adventurer myself, I can relate to and understand that passion and motivation. In a sense we are kindred spirits, which is why I have spent the last eighteen years documenting adventure sports and creating adventurous images. But on my most recent assignment with Red Bull I ran into a group of athletes that live in a whole other world. They live in a separate reality from the rest of us.

On a recent shoot with the Red Bull Air Force team, with whom I have shot several times, I was hired to create images of the team in Casa Grande, Arizona, where they had gotten together to practice maneuvers they use when skydiving and flying (in wingsuits) at events around the world. Working with the Red Bull Air Force is always a fun time because these guys are really pushing the envelope and they are a blast to hang out with. Trying to capture the action when shooting with the Air Force team is always extremely difficult because once they jump off the cliff or out of the airplane they are a dot in the sky within one second. For this assignment I was hired to shoot lifestyle images, portraits and the action images over the course of two days. Hence, as you might imagine, these were some very full days.

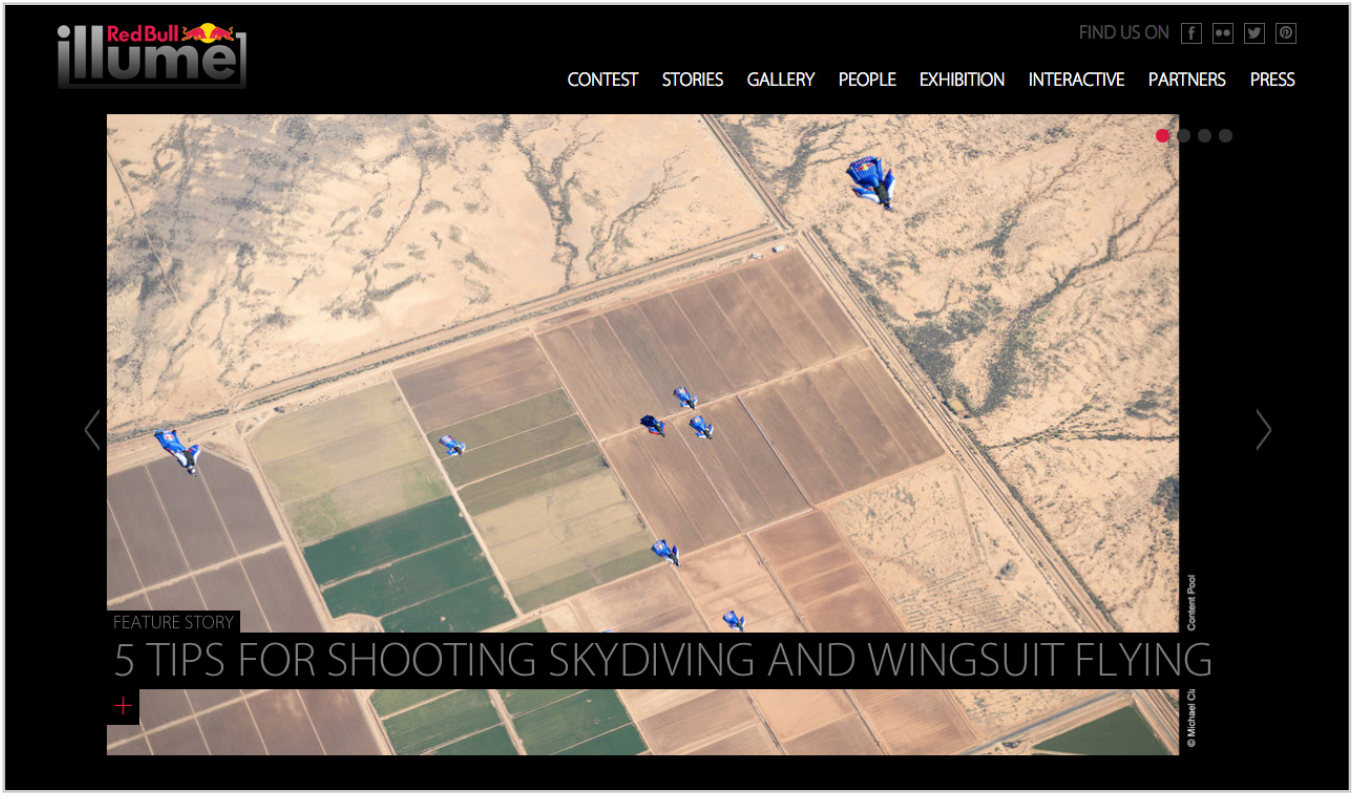
I don't exactly know how to explain it, but while shooting with the team this time around, and watching them jump out of the plane, it dawned on me what their perspective on the world, and our place in it, must be given that they can actually fly. To capture action images, I mounted my Nikon D4 on one of the team members helmets and while going through thousands of images shot from his helmet I got a glimpse at what they see and perhaps some inclination of what they feel as they fall to Earth. That perspective alone, which you will see in this issue of the Newsletter, is nothing less than astounding. For them, they are Superman. If I could see that perspective as often as they do, I would rather quickly conclude that nothing is impossible. That is their separate reality!

Opposite Page: *World Champion Red Bull Air Race pilot Kirby Chambliss putting on an utterly mind-bending display of flying talent while training with the Red Bull Air Force team at his ranch near Casa Grande, Arizona.*

Recent Clients: Red Bull, Nikon, Deltaway Energy, Pictureline, New Mexico Magazine, PeachPit Press, Wolverine Publishing, International Corporate Art, the Santa Fe Workshops and High Country News.

Red Bull Illume features latest Assignment

Five tips for Shooting Skydiving and Wingsuit Flying



On a recent assignment for Red Bull, I worked with the Red Bull Air Force team at their training camp just south of Phoenix, Arizona. Having shot with the Red Bull Air Force crew several times before I knew it was going to be an exciting assignment. For this assignment I had to come back with several portraits of each team member as well as lifestyle and action images. The team spent two days at Kirby Chambliss' ranch where he has his own private airfield, allowing total freedom and privacy for the team to test out new maneuvers while skydiving with and without wingsuits.

The folks at Red Bull Illume saw the images that were uploaded to the Red Bull Content Pool website and contacted me to ask if I could share some tips for shooting skydiving and wingsuit flying. The introduction to that article started out saying, "Photographer Michael Clark recently completed another great shoot in Arizona with the Red

Bull Air Force. Shooting B.A.S.E. jumping, skydiving and wingsuit flying is notoriously difficult even for top photographers – so Red Bull Illume caught up with Clark to discuss some pro tips." What follows are a few of the tips I offered up for the Red Bull Illume article.

#1 Use a high framing rate

The athletes are falling away from you at 9.81 m/s^2, which means within a second they are moving at over 160 km/h. Hence, it helps massively to have a camera with a fast framing rate. I'd say 8 frames per second (fps) minimum, 10-12 fps or more is a much better option.

#2 Work with the athletes to set up the shot

Before they jump off the cliff or exit the airplane, have a discussion with the athletes so that you know what they are going to do and you can position yourself accordingly. When working with B.A.S.E. jumpers get as close to the take off positions as possible or move to the side so you can get a figure-in-a-landscape type image showing part of the huge cliff and the exposure. If you are mounting a camera on a skydiver's helmet, explain what type of images you would like to get. It will usually take several jumps to help get things dialed in if you are directing the athlete.

#3 Use remote cameras to get additional images

Since the athletes become a dot in the sky so quickly, the only way to get images in the air is with a camera mounted on a helmet that is either remotely triggered or constantly shooting via an intervalometer. My Nikon D4 can shoot raw images at 4 fps until it fills up the card. Hence, I can mount it on a helmet and just let it rip for the entire descent. Andy Farrington, of the Red Bull Air Force team, uses a mouth trigger to take images with his Canon 5D Mark III. He bites down on the trigger while flying to shoot images and composes them with a custom made eye-sight.

#4 For B.A.S.E. jumping use PocketWizards to trigger multiple cameras

When shooting B.A.S.E. jumping I use multiple cameras set up on tripods to shoot the action from a few different angles. To trigger the cameras, I use PocketWizard radio transceivers. I mount one on the camera I am shooting with and then attach one to each of the other cameras so that every time I take a photo the remote cameras are also firing.

After the assignment, I had to work up not only the action images of the team, but also close to sixty studio portraits. I ended up spending a few weeks working up all of the images. The client was supremely happy and I ended up with some stellar new portraits.

My thanks to Red Bull and the entire Red Bull Air Force team for their help in making these images possible. Also, my thanks to Kirby Chambliss, a world-renown stunt pilot for the Red Bull Air Race, and Team Chambliss for their hospitality and for putting on quite a show while we were out at the ranch. For more on this assignment pop on down to page 28 and read the behind-the-scenes feature article in this issue of the Newsletter.

You can read the entire article and see several images from this assignment on the Red Bull Illume website.

Podcast Interview on Shootforthrill.com

An in-depth Podcast interview discussing my work, my career, and my background

Earlier this month I was interviewed by Chris Smith, founder & host of the Shoot For Thrill podcast. The podcast is one of the top photography related podcasts on iTunes and focuses on successful photographers that are at the top of their craft and who desire to inspire others. Other photographers that Chris has interviewed include Michael Muller, Joel Grimes, Brian Smith, Randall Ford, Andy Biggs, Dixie Dixon, and Stacey Pearsall. I am honored to be among this group of amazing and inspiring photographers that Chris has chosen to interview.

During the podcast we talked about how I got started in photography, from my roots as an artist all the way through to starting my career. We discussed how I go about shooting rock climbing so that listeners can understand the huge amount of work that goes into some of my adventure sports photo shoots. We discussed my surfing images and how I came to shoot surfing in Hawaii.

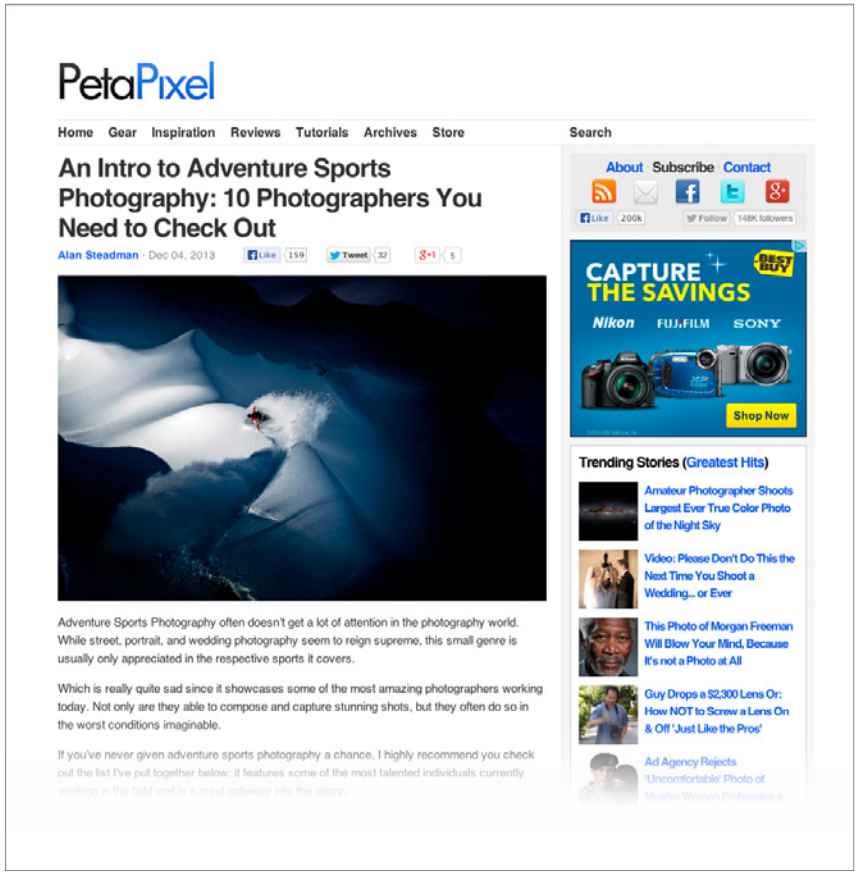
In the interview, we discussed some of the struggles I have faced while building my career as an adventure photographer, my successes, and some of the gear I use. We also covered some advice that I would give to any aspiring adventure photographer that is looking to earn a living in the field.

You can find the interview on Shootforthrill.com or you can also find it on iTunes.

Thanks to Chris and Shoot for Thrill for tracking me down for this interview.

10 Photographers you need to check out

An Intro to Adventure Sports Photography: 10 Photographers you need to check out



PetaPixel.com published an article on their website entitled, An Intro to Adventure Sports Photography: 10 Photographers You Need to Check Out. In the article, they feature some of the top international adventure sports photographers including Scott Serfas, Tyler Stableford, and Lorenz Holder. I am honored to be included among some of my peers in this article.

The article is introduced with the following text: "Adventure Sports Photography often doesn't get a lot of attention in the photography world. While street, portrait, and wedding photography seem to reign supreme, this small genre is usually only appreciated in the respective sports it covers. Which is really quite sad since it showcases some of the most amazing photographers working today. Not only are they able to compose and capture stunning shots, but they often do so in the worst conditions imaginable. If you've never given adventure sports photography a chance, I highly recommend you check out the list I've put together below; it features some of the most talented individuals currently working in the field."

My section is introduced with the following: "Michael Clark has many talents but perhaps the most powerful weapon in his arsenal is his ability to accurately capture the grand scale on display in front of him. You can feel the enormous scale in every sport, stunt, and activity he shoots. Looking at his photos, you can feel how long the fall will be if the climber slips, or if the rider misses his jump. This skill is equal parts impressive and important, as it allows us to share in the rush of the adrenaline-inducing sports he shoots. Except, you know, without risking our lives."

Thanks to Alan Steadman, the author of the article, and PetaPixel. As always, it is an honor to be recognized, especially among such great photographers in this genre.

2014 Photography Workshops

An overview of workshops coming up with Michael Clark

Each year I teach several workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography, big-wave surfing photography, camera technology, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2014. For the full description of these workshops and to find out how to register, go to the Workshops page on my website. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me. Note that these are the workshops I have on the calendar right now and others might be added throughout the year.

Nikon D800 4-Day Intensive

Santa Fe Workshops — April 1-4, 2014

Consider the Nikon D800. Housed in this professional-level camera body is a sensor with astounding resolution that takes your images to the next level. But the D800 is so much more than just a fancy imaging sensor. Michael dubs it "the best camera I have ever used in terms of handling and image quality," and over the course of four days, he shows you how to get the most out of your own D800.

While creating portraits and photographing the landscapes of Northern New Mexico, we discuss the camera in detail and work with the D800's advanced features, including its interface with Nikon Speedlights. (Be sure to bring a Speedlight or two if you have them.) We cover topics such as lens selection, camera handling, shooting with Speedlights and strobes, autofocus options and techniques, metering modes, custom functions, and video shooting capabilities.

Classroom time comprises daily critiques and the working up of a D800 raw image file in Adobe Photoshop Lightroom. (Michael also gives each participant a copy of his e-book, *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow*.) You leave with the confidence to get the best image quality in a range of photo scenarios. Join Michael and see for yourself why the Nikon D800 is regarded as a technological marvel.

For more information or to register visit the Santa Fe Workshops website or call (505) 983-1400.

Nikon D800 Intensive

Santa Fe Workshops Seminar in Austin, TX — May 17-18, 2014

"Michael knows this camera from every vantage point, taught us a lot and was so well-prepared." —Nina Callanan, past participant, D800 Intensive.

The Nikon D800 is a marvel of technology. In terms of handling and image quality, it is unsurpassed. Housed in

this professional-level camera body is a sensor with astounding resolution that can take your images to a new level. But the D800 is so much more than just a fancy, high-resolution imaging sensor.

Spend this in-depth, two-day seminar getting to know the many features of your Nikon D800. Michael discusses the camera in detail on both days and we head out to iconic Austin locations to photograph at sunset on Saturday evening.

Among the topics Michael covers are getting the sharpest images possible, lens selection, camera handling, autofocus options and techniques, metering modes, the D800's custom functions, working with camera flashes and strobes, and capturing video footage with the D800. We explore not only the camera itself but also how it interfaces with Nikon Speedlights, so bring a Speedlight or two if you have them.

Our classroom time includes a technical critique on Sunday morning of your images from the evening shoot, and a demonstration on working up a D800 raw image file in Adobe Photoshop Lightroom. In addition, Michael gives each participant a copy of his digital workflow e-book, *Adobe Photoshop Lightroom: A Professional Photographer's Workflow*. You leave with an excellent understanding of your D800's capabilities, knowing how to set it up in almost any scenario, and how to get the best image quality possible from this stellar camera.

For more information or to register visit the Santa Fe Workshops website or call (505) 983-1400.

Adventure Photography Workshop

Maine Media Workshops — August 10-16, 2014

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. The workshop focuses on outdoor sports such as rock climbing, sea kayaking, and mountain biking. 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 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 participants 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. Participants do not need to be adventure athletes themselves as all of our shooting locations and vantage points are easily accessible.

For more information or to register visit the Maine Media Workshops website or call (877) 577-7700.

Surfing Photography Workshop

Oahu, Hawaii — Early November 2013 [Exact dates TBD]

The Surfing Photography Workshop is back! Join legendary surfing photographer Brian Bielmann and myself for an exciting one-of-a-kind workshop that delves into the world of big-wave surfing photography. Brian is a top surfing photographer who has been shooting the sport for more than 25 years. I will bring my adventure photography skills and knowledge as well as in-depth experience with digital workflow to round out the workshop.

This 4-day workshop combines daily photo shoots at world-class surfing locations on the north shore of Oahu 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 discuss digital workflow in detail.

The workshop is scheduled during a period where large waves hit the north shore frequently. Though we cannot predict or guarantee the wave sizes 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.

Since surfing photography relies on large telephoto lenses, each participant will need to bring a telephoto lens

Aryeh Pettit taking the high road in the humongous pipe at the Lake Cunningham skate park in San Jose, California. This image was created during one of my Adventure Photography workshops and shows the exciting types of images we create in my workshops.

that is at least 400mm. A 500mm or 600mm lens is preferred. If you don't own one of these lenses please rent or borrow one. Please contact Brian or myself with any questions about lens selection and rental options. We also have a special deal with Hawaii Photo Rental Oahu, who have 500mm and 600mm lenses for both Canon and Nikon.

The cost of this workshop is $1,295 per person. A deposit of $500 is required to secure your spot in the workshop.

You can find more information about the workshop on my website, including detailed info on what we will be doing each day and the equipment you will need for the workshop. This workshop is very unique and it is one of the most exciting workshops anywhere in the world. If you have ever wanted to photograph surfing, I encourage you to come join us in Hawaii. It will be a trip to remember. If you have any questions or would like to register please send me an email. Also, note that we will have the exact dates up on my website here in a few weeks.

Workshop Testimonials

"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, Summer 2010

"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, Summer 2010

"I just finished Michael Clark's Adventure Photography Workshop at the Santa Fe Workshops in April 2013. I had a terrific time with the group of people - one from China, another from Seattle, another from Wyoming, me from Michigan - you get the picture that we came from everywhere. We came because of the Santa Fe Workshop's reputation of presenting an intense learning experience guided by fantastic instructors. We got both. Michael Clark really knows his stuff and has a lot of excess energy, which he focused on us, and he can also teach. He read our skills and weaknesses quickly and went to work to improve each of us technically. He sorted out our individual goals, even when we couldn't really articulate them. Then he gave us plenty of time to address those goals and ask question after question after question. The rough environments in which we photographed were great fun to explore. Couldn't be better." - Tania Evans

"The recent 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 Huntt, Lightroom Workshop, Spring 2011

"Thanks again for such a terrific workshop. I have taken one other two-day Lightroom workshop, but your's is the best!" - Vance Thompson, Lightroom Workshop, 2011

"Just wanted you know how much fun I had during the workshop last weekend! I learned a lot and look forward to doing other workshops with you." - Jason Quevedo, Philadelphia Mentor Series Trek, Fall 2009

"I really enjoyed the surfing [photography] workshop! It was great on every level. I really can't thank you enough and I hope to take another of your workshops in the near future." - Ben Reed, 2013 Surfing Photo Workshop

For more information on my 2014 workshops, or to read more testimonials, please visit the Workshops page on my website. Hope to see you out there in 2014!

The Nikon 1 AW1 Mirrorless Camera

A review of Nikon's new waterproof, shockproof and freezeproof camera

Disclaimer: I have worked with Nikon for over twelve years now shooting advertising campaigns for new cameras and providing images and text for their marketing. This camera was given to me by Nikon, along with several accessories, to shoot images for one of their upcoming marketing strategies. Regardless, my assessment of this camera is still an honest opinion of it's capabilities and shortcomings.

Last fall, Nikon announced a new Nikon 1 hybrid-style, interchangeable lens camera. Normally that wouldn't be on my radar, but the new Nikon 1 AW1 was quite different than your run-of-the-mill, hybrid-style camera. The AW1 is waterproof down to 49 feet underwater, it is shockproof up to a 6.6 feet, and it is freezeproof down to 14°F. I am not sure exactly what freezeproof means, as most digital cameras do just fine in the cold, but the first two specs made me sit up and take notice. I am guessing freezproof means that the LCD on the back of the camera won't freeze up if the temperature is 14°F or above, which is a good thing since the AW1 has no optical viewfinder.

Nikon hasn't really made a waterproof, interchangeable lens camera since the Nikonos underwater film cameras back in the 80s. To my knowledge no one has made such a camera since the Nikonos, until now. In a word, this little camera is tough. As the old Timex commercial used to say, 'It can take a licking and keep on ticking.' Hence, as an adventure photographer, who frequently shoots surfing, I was very much interested in what this camera could do and especially how it would work in the water.

The AW1 sports a 1-inch 14.2 megapixel CMOS sensor and can shoot raw images at up to 60 fps. In addition, it can also shoot 1080p video and full HD stills at the same time. In terms of the frame rate, when shooting raw images and setting the frame rate to 60 fps you only get half a second or so of images before the buffer locks up. Also, when shooting at 60 fps, the focus is fixed. The AW1 will be more useful at 15 fps or less, as the buffer takes longer

Casey Shaw topping out on a warm up climb in the Ouray Ice Park in Ouray, Colorado. Tech Specs: Nikon AW1, NIKKOR AW 11-27.5mm f/3.5-5.6 zoom lens, f/5.6 at 1/1600th second at ISO 800. If you zoom in on this image you can definitely see some noise since this image was shot at ISO 800. I have printed this image at 13 x19 inches and it look quite good at that size. I could see blowing images shot with the AW1 up to 16x24 inches easily if they were shot at lower ISOs.

to fill up and the autofocus will track your subject. When shooting raw images at 15 fps, the camera will fire off 27 images before it locks up to clear the buffer. When shooting raw images at 5 fps, the camera will fire off 33 images before it locks up to clear the buffer.

Before we get too bogged down with camera specs lets back up and discuss how the camera is laid out. First off, this is a hybrid camera, meaning that it is mirrorless and there is no optical viewfinder, as stated earlier. At this point, Nikon only has two waterproof lenses that can be used with the camera, those being the Nikkor 10mm f/2.8 fixed focal length lens and a Nikkor 11-27.5mm f/3.5-5.6 zoom lens. Nikon sent both of these lenses to me with the camera. Both of these all-weather (AW) lenses are designed to seal the lens mount tightly and as such, they require a significant amount of force to get the lens on and off the camera. Any other Nikon 1 lens can

also be used with the AW1, but they won't work underwater and won't be shockproof.

The AW1 also has a pop-up flash on the upper left corner of the camera and amazingly the flash is waterproof down to 49 feet underwater. Sadly though, there is no hot shoe or flash sync connection so that an off-camera flash can be attached to the camera. I realize that creates another point where water could get into the camera but it also massively limits what you can do with this camera.

For my part, I found the Nikkor 11-27.5mm f/3.5-5.6 to be a fairly boring focal length range. I much preferred the 10mm f/2.8 lens that Nikon sent along with the camera, which is the equivalent to a 25mm lens on a full-frame DSLR. Coming from massive, heavy DSLRs, the AW1 with either lens attached was tiny and super-lightweight. For most of my outings with the camera I didn't even bother to put it in a camera bag because it is tough and lightweight. Skiing with this camera felt like I didn't even have a camera with me, even though it was hanging around my neck. Hence, it was easy to access unlike a big DSLR.

In terms of how waterproof it is, I can only say it seems to work as advertised and then some. To test this aspect of the camera I set up a whitewater kayaking shoot and shot some images of a kayaker playing in a surf spot. I mounted the camera on the end of a monopod and used the self-timer to trigger the camera. During this session, I put the camera right at the front of the wave and then dunked it in the fast moving water to capture the action (as can be seen on the next page). Since I was shooting at the end of the day, and the sky was overcast, I even popped up the on-board flash to help light the scene. Before the shoot, I read that Nikon did not recommend working with the camera in "fast moving water." All I can say is the camera did just fine, even with the flash up, in some pretty intense water. I will admit the kayaking image on the next page is nothing to write home about but this was a good test of the cameras capabilities. To capture more frames in a shorter period of time, I constructed a jury-rigged system with a nylon strap and a ball of tape to trigger the camera without having to set the self-timer for every shot. In my experience, this camera is perfect for those POV type images, similar to how a GoPro is used. The fact that there is no intervalometer built into this camera is a major flaw. If Nikon had added a hot shoe or some way to remotely trigger the camera and a flash, that would be a major improvement. Overall, this is my biggest issue with the AW1—the fact that it is difficult if not impossible to remotely trigger the camera.

Aside from the issues I have laid out above, I also have to say that I am not a fan of using an LCD screen on the back of the camera to compose images. In bright sunlight, the LCD display is almost impossible to see. While shooting x-county skiing, I couldn't see the image on the back of the LCD at all and ended up just guessing as to where the subject was. While shooting the ice climbing image on the previous page, I strapped a Hoodman loupe on the back of the camera so I could see the LCD more clearly. I would love to see an actual viewfinder on this camera even if it uses an OLED electronic viewfinder.

All my nitpicking aside, this camera can capture some amazing images given the right conditions. Coming from pro-caliber 16 and 36 megapixel DSLRs, I had to reel in my expectations for this camera in terms of the image quality. As expected, the image quality is not in the same realm as my Nikon D4 or D800. But, for such a tiny

Above: A landscape image shot at dusk in the Bisti Badlands in a very remote region of New Mexico. Tech Specs: Nikon AW1, NIKKOR AW 11-27.5mm f/3.5-5.6 zoom lens, f/5.0 at 1/200th second at ISO 800. Right: John Fulbright whitewater kayaking at Sleeping Beauty, a surfing spot on the Rio Grande river near Taos, New Mexico. This image was shot with the camera on the end of a monopod using the self-timer and the on-camera flash. I dunked the camera into the water, which was moving very fast, and it had no problems at all dealing with the dousing it got—even with the tiny pop-up flash engaged. Tech Specs: Nikon AW1 with built-in flash, NIKKOR AW 10mm f/2.8 lens, f/2.8 at 1/60th second at ISO 1600.

camera, I was pretty impressed with the 14.2 MP images that it produced. It has excellent dynamic range (as shown in the landscape image on the previous page). There was also a bit of noise in the images as can be seen in the ice climbing image on the next page, which was shot at ISO 1600. At ISO 800 and 1600, I found the noise could be cleaned up using noise reduction in Lightroom. In my testing, I would not shoot with this camera above ISO 1600 because of the noise issues. I have printed images from this camera at sizes up to 13x19 inches and they look fantastic. Looking at 13x19 inch prints of images shot at ISO 800, I could easily see these images being blown up to 16x24 with no problems at all. Coming from such a tiny camera, that is quite impressive.

Aside from image quality, working with the camera is not unlike any other point and shoot type camera. Most of the settings are achieved using the menus. There are some settings that are easily accessed using buttons on the back of the camera, but many of the key settings are found in the menus. I can't fault Nikon for the menu system, like every other digital camera they just take time to learn. There is a separate shutter release button and video start and stop button on top of the camera, which is a very nice touch. The autofocus, from what I can tell is wicked fast. Even the autofocus mode where the camera picks the focus points, named Auto-area mode, seems to nail the autofocus 99% of the time.

In terms of video, the AW1 can shoot 1080p at 30 fps and 720p at 60 fps. There isn't a 24 fps option. It would be nice to have more options for the video recording. The video quality is decent, meaning that it is on par or better than most point and shoot cameras. It looks good on the web at 720p. Audio recording is as you would expect, nothing spectacular. And since there is no audio-in jack, for truly solid audio you would have to record that separately and sync it with the footage in the post-processing. As I have yet to see a decent audio solution for any point and shoot type camera this isn't a dig on the AW1 really, just the reality for these types of cameras.

I can't wait to try out this little camera at Pipeline, where I think it would be a great water camera for shooting surfing. I have swum out at Pipeline with a Nikon D4 in a huge waterhousing and that is like swimming one handed in a washing machine. With the AW1, I can just clip the camera to my waist and swim out unencumbered, using both arms to swim, and then once I am out I can shoot away at 15 fps and still have decent image quality. Whether or not the AW1 can survive the punishment that it will surely endure while shooting surfing from the water is still an unknown. I wish Nikon made a waterproof fisheye lens for this camera but the 10mm f/2.8 lens is a good start. All in all, I like this little camera and how easy it is to bring along on adventures where I don't want to take the full DSLR kit. This might just be the best camera ever made for mountaineering, where every gram counts. For rock climbers who want to take along a small, lightweight camera I would seriously look at the AW1.

As you might surmise from my comments here, this is a first generation camera and as such Nikon got a lot of things right with it but there is certainly room for improvement. Right now the Nikon USA website even has a survey for AW1 owners to see how they can improve the camera so they seem to be serious about this line. There are of course a lot of other specs and functions I have not discussed here. You can find a complete list of the camera specs for the Nikon 1 AW1 on the Nikon website.

Casey Shaw leading a WI 4 ice climb in the Ouray Ice Park in Ouray, Colorado. Tech Specs: Nikon AW1, NIKKOR AW 11-27.5mm f/3.5-5.6 zoom lens, f/5.6 at 1/400th second at ISO 1600. If you zoom in on this image you can definitely see some of the noise since this image was shot at ISO 1600.

The Eyelead Sensor Gel Stick

Possibly the most useful DSLR accessory since the advent of digital cameras

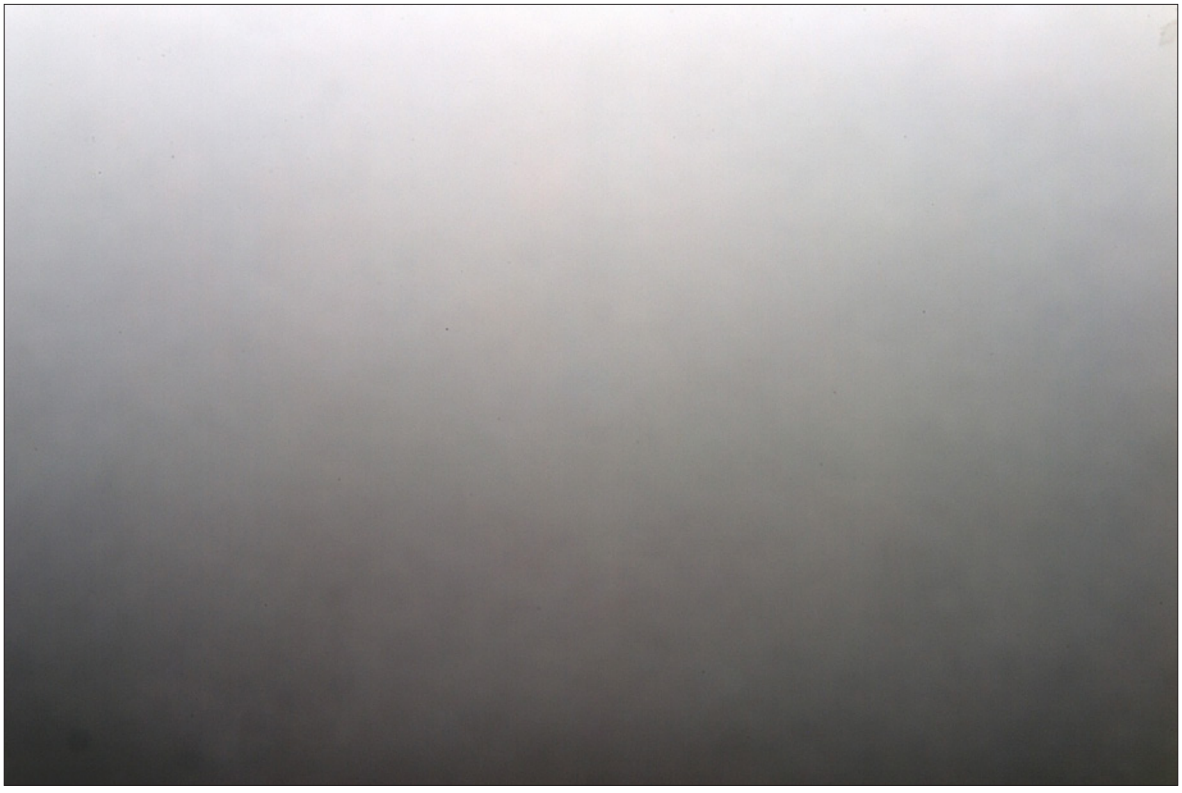
As a bonus, I thought I would include this review of the Sensor Gel Stick here in the Newsletter. Originally, I posted this review to my blog as I wanted to get the word out as fast as possible for those that are in need of a stellar sensor cleaning tool. Get ready for some serious gushing because I am going to praise this product like few others.

I would like to introduce you to the Sensor Gel Stick. Now I know sensor cleaning is not a very exciting topic, but for those that are serious about photography and especially for those shooting video with an HD DSLR, cleaning the camera's sensor is a huge deal. I have spent way too many nights cleaning my sensors at 1 AM for the next day of shooting on an assignment. When I am exhausted and bleary eyed, having to do a wet cleaning several times to get your sensor clean for the next day of shooting is pretty much the last thing I want to be doing.

Before I get into reviewing the Sensor Gel Stick, let me give you some background on my experiences cleaning DSLR camera sensors. I have been shooting with digital cameras since 2003. I started out with a Nikon D70 and very quickly realized that I would have to learn how to clean my camera sensor in the field if I wanted to continue shooting digital. The reality is that sending your camera back to the manufacturer to have them clean the

sensor isn't always an option. My experience has been that when I do send a camera back to Nikon, to have them clean the sensor, it will usually come back with just as much dust on the sensor as it did when I shipped it out. The reason for this is that there is dust in the shutter chamber that can and will fall onto the sensor as the camera is bounced around in shipping. Aside from that issue, I have had to clean my sensors while on assignment where sending it back to Nikon just wasn't possible. Hence, I have been cleaning my camera sensors since I started shooting with DSLRs.

I have used just about every sensor cleaning product out there. For years, I used VisibleDust products like the



The top image shown above is an image of my Nikon D4 sensor before it was cleaned with the Sensor Gel Stick. As you can see, it was quite dirty. There are huge chunks of dust on the sensor and some of these were also oil spots. As you can see in the bottom image, after one cleaning 99% of the dust was removed from the D4's sensor. There are still a few dust spots on the sensor but for a 20-second cleaning this is phenomenal. The last few remaining dust spots were removed with a second targeted cleaning with the Sensor Gel Stick. ***Click on the images above to see a high resolution version of these images.***

Arctic Butterfly brush, the Sensor Brush and all of their wet cleaning solutions. While their products work well, they are quite expensive, and since I clean my camera sensors often, i.e. before every assignment, I tend to go through a lot of sensor swabs and solution. Before I got my Nikon D800 and D4, the VisibleDust products were working just fine for me. But with the D4 and D800 there seems to be a lot more oil around the edge of the sensor, which can massively complicate the cleaning process. With these new cameras, I opted to switch to Sensor Swabs and Eclipse cleaning fluid last year in order to cut back on the massive expense of cleaning my camera sensors.

I also had a very frustrating experience last summer cleaning my Nikon D800. While cleaning the sensor with a Visible Dust Arctic Butterfly brush, I accidentally pulled some oil from the sensors edge onto the sensor. This had happened before so I just grabbed the wet cleaning kit and used some swabs and Visible Dust's Smear Away solution to remove the oil. After a few tries with the Smear Away, I could not get the sensor completely clean. I tried everything I knew and the oil just kept moving around on the sensor. I tried cleaning the sensor over twenty times and used up over $200 worth of sensor cleaning supplies. To say I was frustrated would be a major understatement. This wasn't my first rodeo cleaning sensors. I had never had anything like this happen while cleaning camera sensors. After a few hours working on the camera, I ended up sending it back to Nikon to have them clean it. Mind you, this was before a major trip that I wanted to take that D800 on. I ended up taking just my Nikon D4 and no backup camera, which was not optimal. Luckily, it was a personal trip, but still, I wish I would have had the D800 on that trip.

[Note: Nikon did do a great job cleaning the D800 sensor and the entire camera. It did come back with a bit of dust on the sensor but I have since learned to live with a bit more dust on my sensor than I used to with my older model cameras. I must say that it seems Nikon has put more oils around the sensor on the D800 and the D4 than they have with past camera models. I don't think it is as bad as the stories I have heard with the Nikon D600, but as my experience above might indicate, it is an issue with these new cameras. I never had any issues with oil on the sensor with my Nikon D2x. D300 or D700.]

Getting back to the Sensor Gel Stick, when I saw the blog post about the Sensor Gel Stick on the F-Stoppers website, I was very much intrigued. I had never heard about a sticky gel "sensor stick" before and trust me I had done some serious research after my epic sensor cleaning session with the D800. Seeing that Nikon, Canon, Leica, Pentax and many other manufacturers use this same product to clean sensors when camera are sent back to them was all I needed to hear to give it a try. I watched the video on the Photography Life website before I ordered the gel stick and I watched it again before using it on my own cameras. I will say that pressing a sticky gel surface to my camera's sensor seemed a bit sketchy at first, but seeing a Leica technician do it in the video on the F-stoppers blog helped me get over my reluctance.

The first test was to clean my Nikon D4 sensor. As you can see in the top image on the previous page, my camera sensor was quite dirty. Before this cleaning, I had just returned from a big Red Bull assignment and apparently the sensor got quite dusty while changing lenses in the windy conditions and mounting the camera on the helmet of a skydiver. Click on the images to see a larger

version of these before and after images online and to see exactly how dirty my sensor was before it was cleaned.

As is aparent in the images, with one 20-second cleaning the Sensor Gel Stick removed almost all of the dust spots (that were huge I might add) on my Nikon D4 sensor. There were still a few small dust spots on the sensor after this first cleaning but those were easily removed with another cleaning, where I targeted those areas specifically. Just to be clear here, the cleaning time to get my sensor this clean was less than one-minute. With previous dry or wet cleaning options (as described above) it would easily take 15 minutes or longer to clean my sensor—and that is the best case scenario. With the D4 and D800, I would rarely get the sensor clean with one cleaning using my old wet and dry methods. Another great thing about the Sensor Gel Stick, aside from how well it works, is that it is very difficult to drag oils out onto the sensor because it can't really get into those areas in the first place. It can also remove oils as well as dust so it has you covered even if you do somehow get oil on your sensor.

Above is a video where Nasim, the owner of the PhotographyLife.com website and the seller of the Sensor Gel Stick, demonstrates using this tool and answers many of the frequently asked questions about using it. This video is very thorough and even demonstrates how to check your sensor for dust, though he doesn't show the best possible method as I discuss at the end of this review. ***Click on the screenshot to view the video on YouTube.***

So, I am obviously smitten with this product. Is it the perfect solution? Well, it is a great solution but it isn't perfect. When I cleaned my D800 sensor, it did a similarly awesome job but I did have to do a wet cleaning to get the sensor fully clean. So, don't throw out the old methods of cleaning sensors but I do highly recommend this product and it will save me a truckload of money when it comes to cleaning my camera sensors. At $44.99 per Sensor Gel Stick, this is a hell of a deal. They will last quite a while from what Nasim at Photography Life says, and since it was $45 per box of 12 Sensor Swabs, $45 for the Sensor Gel Stick is looking mighty cheap. Thanks to Nasim and Photography Life for bringing this product to the USA. When I ordered my Sensor Gel Stick a few weeks ago they had over 900 in stock. Now there is a note on their website that they are out of stock on this product so it is obviously popular. You can watch a video of Nasim talking about the Sensor Gel Stick and demonstrating it in a video by clicking on this link.

As this product is highly popular, I would suggest putting an order in right now on the Photography Life website. This is now my go to sensor cleaning tool and I am overjoyed that we now have a decent way to clean our

sensors that is quick and easy. This might just be the best tool to come on the market since the digital camera. I know that is a big statement but it is ridiculous that photographers have to go to these lengths just to clean a camera sensor. In this day and age of high-tech gadgets, Nikon and Canon should have a wiper blade, or some such device built into every DSLR, that automatically swipes across the sensor and cleans it perfectly with the push of a button. Until that happens, the Sensor Gel Stick is the best tool I have yet found to get your sensor clean.

Above is a screenshot of a video showing a Leica tech cleaning a Leica M9 sensor with the Sensor gel Stick. So, just in case you wanted proof that the big camera companies use this tool to clean sensors when you send a camera back to them, here it is. ***Click on the screenshot above to view this video on YouTube.***

Before I wind up this review, I also want to detail how I check for dust or oil on my sensor. First, set the camera to aperture priority at the lowest ISO setting possible. Then set the aperture on the lens to the lowest setting, i.e. f/22. Take a photo of a white piece of paper filling the entire frame with the paper. Note that the camera doesn't have to focus here since it is imaging the sensor, not the paper. I usually turn the autofocus off. The resulting image will be gray since the camera's exposure meter will make the white paper gray. Now, take that image and download it to a computer, open it in Photoshop and select *Image* > *Auto Tone* from the top file menu. Selecting *Auto Tone* in Photoshop will automatically adjust the levels to more accurately show what is on your sensor. This is the technique I use and have been using for ten years or more to see what is on the sensor. The *Auto Tone* setting will show many more dust spots on the sensor than can be seen on just that gray image. I will say that the demonstration shown in the video on the Photography Life website and on the F-Stoppers website is sub-optimal for checking the amount of dust on the sensor. I highly recommend using the Auto Tone feature to see everything on the sensor. Also, as a warning, never touch the mirror inside the shutter chamber. I do not recommend using the Sensor Gel Stick to clean the mirror as shown on the F-stoppers website. I hope this review has been helpful and that the Sensor Gel Stick is available again soon. I am going to order a second one!

on assignment:

Red Bull AIR FORCE

2014 TRAINING CAMP

Red Bull Air Force team member Charles Bryan coming in for a landing while training at the Kirby Chambliss ranch near Casa Grande.

If you've read this Newsletter in the past then the odds are high that you have read about some of my adventurous assignments shooting for Red Bull. A month ago, I got the call to shoot with the Red Bull Air Force team at their 2014 Red Bull Air Force training camp near Phoenix, Arizona. At the training camp, the team practiced maneuvers and invented new ones that they would use at upcoming events around the world. The Red Bull Air Force team consists of a thirteen skydivers, B.A.S.E. jumpers, wingsuit flyers, pilots and paragliders. They are aerial acrobats and most of the team are experts at all of these genres of flying. They are some of the most elite wingsuit flyers and B.A.S.E. jumpers anywhere on Earth.

Having shot with several members of the Air Force before, I knew this was going to be a fun and exciting assignment. Red Bull needed fresh portraits of all the team members, new lifestyle images and of course some action images. As you can see from the image on the next page, I shot the athletes on a white background. I also shot portraits of each athlete just after they landed and on black backgrounds as well so that Red Bull would have a variety of portraits to work with.

For the two days I spent with the Air Force team, we were based out of Kirby Chamliss' private flying ranch—basically his hanger and backyard. Kirby, as I found out, is one of the world's most accomplished pilots and he flies in the Red Bull Air Race competitions all over the world. As you can see from the cover of this issue and in several other images in this Newsletter, Kirby can perform amazing feats in a plane. On the first day, he went up and put on an air show of sorts that had all of us spellbound. At one point he was falling out of the sky nose over tail with smoke coming out of the manifold. If a bystander had walked up and didn't know what was going on they might have thought that a plane was tumbling out of the sky and about to crash at any moment. Kirby is able to control these unbelievable maneuvers with such ease that he can do things like fly upside down 20 feet above the ground and not even feel like he is pushing the envelope. In fact, on some of his flights he is pulling over 14 Gs, and he isn't wearing a G-suit. To put that into perspective, 14 Gs is more than the astronauts deal with when the Space Shuttle launches! We were at Kirby's flying ranch so that he and the Air Force team could practice some new maneuvers with them flying together—Kirby in his plane and the Air Force team in wingsuits.

Once the Air Force Team was in the air, Kirby flew his small stunt plane in and around them at close proximity. Once while in the jump plane, I was clipped in just next the door when Kirby flew up underneath us and was only ten or twelve feet away. If I had extended a long monopod I could have reached out and touched the nose of his plane. I remember a few of the Air Force guys being a bit concerned that he was so close. Someone said, "I hope he doesn't sneeze." After the team jumped out in the wingsuits, Kirby was doing barrel rolls around them only 30 feet away. This illustrates the caliber of talent and nerves of steel in this small group. As I wrote in my opening editorial on page 4, these guys live in a different reality than the rest of the world, and it is easy to get sucked into that intensity.

Shooting action images of the Red Bull Air Force members is always a difficult task. Once they launch into the air, there is literally one second before they are just a dot in the sky. Since I was strapped into the plane, I only had one second on each of three or four jumps to get any


Red Bull
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action images at all. To get something different, I mounted my Nikon D4 on team member Andy Farrington's helmet. Andy graciously let me mount my camera where he normally mounts his Canon 5D Mark III. You can see a shot of my camera on top of Andy's helmet on page 37. With his Canon 5D Mark III, Andy has a mouth trigger that he uses to snap photos during his flights. Since I didn't have a mouth trigger, I set up my Nikon D4 using the intervalometer to shoot 4 frames every second for the entire flight. I tested the camera the night before the assignment and found that at 4 fps the camera kept shooting until it filled the memory card, which was a 32 GB Sony XQD card. At 5 fps the D4 would hit the buffer after a minute or so and then the camera would fire sporadically. Hence, I stuck with 4 fps so that we could capture images during the entire four-minute flight. To start the intervalometer, I went up in the plane and sat right behind Andy. About 30 seconds or so before they exited the plane, I turned on the camera and started the intervalometer, which was preset. To frame up the images, Andy used a small round viewfinder that he has mounted to his helmet. All of the aerial images in this Newsletter were shot with the Nikon D4 and a 16mm fisheye lens mounted on Andy's helmet and were composed by him. Hence, I cannot claim these images as my own, but the collaboration seemed to work out incredibly well. My thanks to Andy for letting me mount my camera on his helmet and for composing these images.

If you do the math, 4 fps multiplied by four minutes results in a truckload of images. Now multiply that by a few flights and I had a few thousand aerial images to edit on top of everything else I shot. When I returned, I spent four days just editing the 6,000 images from this assignment down to a manageable number. I ended up with over 60 portraits to work up and 150 or more action images. In total, the editing and post-processing took almost two full weeks, mostly due to the nature of the portraits and the amount of retouching they needed to get them to the state you see here.

There are so many amazing images that came out of this assignment, it feels like an injustice to only show a few of them here in this article. But this gives you a taste of the action and a bit of the behind-the-scenes story. The detailed captions for these images will help to tell more of the story. When I submitted the final images, Red Bull was very pleased and Red Bull Illume even published an article on their website with a selection of the images.

Thanks to Red Bull for this assignment and the entire Red Bull Air Force team for their help in making these images possible. Also, thanks to Kirby Chambliss and Team Chambliss for their hospitality and for putting on quite a show while we were out at the ranch. I hope to work with the Red Bull Air Force again here soon...and it is high time I went skydiving myself.

Previous Spread : Red Bull Air Force team members falling out of the sky and into formation while skydiving at the Kirby Chambliss ranch near Casa Grande, Arizona. Above: World Champion Red Bull Air Race pilot Kirby Chambliss putting on an incredible display of flying talent while training with the Red Bull Air Force team at his ranch near Casa Grande, Arizona. On this flight he actually grazed the bushes before pulling up and rocketed skyward just over this Saguaro cactus. Right: Red Bull Air Force team members wingsuit flying in formation as Kirby Chambliss flies right underneath them near Casa Grande, Arizona.

Right: Andy Farrington, who is hanging outside the plane, leans over to speak with Miles Daisher while training with the Red Bull Air Force team. Note that Andy has my Nikon D4 mounted on his helmet. I set the camera to shoot at 4 fps for the entire flight. Andy composed the images with a round viewfinder, which can be seen on his helmet. Below: Red Bull Air Force team members exiting the plane while training near Casa Grande, Arizona. In this image Sean McCormack has just pulled the pins to "pop smoke" so that the skydivers are visible from the ground.

Big Prints and the Nikon D800

A discussion of camera resolution, image quality and print size for Fine Art Prints

Last month, I finished up a big fine art print job for a local client here in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The client was a group of doctors who ordered twenty-five prints to display on their walls to inspire their clientele to get out and exercise. This order included both Limited Edition and Open Edition fine art prints, which were printed at sizes ranging from 16×24 inches all the way up to 40×60 inches. The majority of the prints were either 24x36 inches or 30x45 inches. All of the images were printed on an Epson 9880, which can handle roll paper up to 44-inches wide. The prints were mounted on DieBond, an archival aluminum backing material, and then they were covered with an archival lamination.

In the process of printing the larger prints, I was completely blown away by the image quality of the Nikon D800 and how well it responded to enlargement. For the 40×60-inch prints shot with the Nikon D800, I only had to enlarge the images 147% to get up to 40×60-inches at 180 dpi, which is the resolution I use to print huge prints on the Epson 9880, as seen on the next page.

I printed four 40x60 inch prints. Two of the 40x60 inch prints were shot with the D800, while the other two were shot on 35-mm film and with the 24 MP Nikon D3x. The D3x image was shot with a tilt/shift lens and had a very thin plane of focus, which is why it was able to go up to 40x60 inches. If it was just a straight 24 MP image, I am not sure it would have looked that great at 40x60 inches and I would have probably had the client choose another image for that size print.

As this is the first time I have printed my images at such a large size, it was both an educational experience and a jaw-dropping, astonishing experience. The 40×60 inch kayaking image shot with the D800 (shown on the next page) looked very similar to the 13×19 inch print of this same image. When I saw this print roll off the printer, I was so blown away it took me a full hour to pick my jaw up off the floor. Honestly, if the D800 could shoot at 8 fps I would never shoot with any other camera. I know I am gushing here about this camera, and the printer to some degree but you would have to see the print to understand. Because you can't see the print, you'll just have to trust me. Having seen this D800 image at 40x60, I can say that the image could easily be printed at 52x72 inches and still look fantastic.

Making such huge prints mase me acutely aware of how careful I need to be with my camera technique. Any tiny error in camera handling results in less than wicked-sharp images, and that becomes obvious when printing at such a huge size. Seeing my images printed this large is going to help me craft technically better images. Some of my

Above is a shot of my office and my Epson Stylus Pro 9880 large format printer. Pictured in this image are the printer, an Eizo CG243W high-end Adobe RGB monitor and a Just-Normlicht print viewing box. Rolling off the printer is one of my Nikon D800 images being printed at 40x60-inches. Note the smaller test prints in the viewing box that were created to check colors before printing out this huge print.

D800 images wouldn't look as stellar as this image of the kayaker (above) because I didn't use perfect technique—basically I didn't lock the camera down on a tripod or use a high enough ISO or shutter speed to get the highest level of sharpness possible. I am not saying those images are not sharp, but when printing at this size there is sharp and then there is *incredibly* sharp and I can see the difference. This is a topic I discuss at length in my Nikon D800 workshops.

To achieve the sharpness required for prints of this size, I feel that I have to use a very high shutter speed or use strobes. In terms of shutter speeds, it depends on the lens that I am using. For example, if I am shooting with a 24-70mm Nikkor lens, I would strive for a shutter speed of at least 1/800th second to insure a sharp image. With the Nikkor 70-200mm lens, I would aim for at least 1/1,500th second minimum. Using a strobe with a fast flash duration also helps when it comes to overall image

sharpness. In the studio, I have noticed that shooting at 1/250th second with a strobe may or may not lead to a sharp image. The 1/250th second shutter speed in some situations can be a bit on the slow side. Hence, here again if I want the sharpest images possible I need to put the camera on a tripod.

In the process of making all of these prints, I learned a lot as to how big I could go with all of the cameras I have shot with in the past. For images shot with an older 12 MP Nikon D2x, I couldn't really go above 24x36 inches before they started to look fairly soft. With my 12 MP Nikon D700 images 40-inches on the long side was about as far as I could push them and even that was probably a bit too far for my taste. For images shot with my 16 MP Nikon D4, I could easily print them up to about 30x45 inches, but that was the absolute maximum I would go with those files. And as you already know, the D800 was just fine at 40x60 inches and even beyond. Please note that the sizes I have noted here are for images printed on a semi-gloss Baryta type paper. If I were printing on a fine art watercolor type paper or on canvas I could probably go a bit larger since those papers will hide the detail a bit more than the Baryta-type papers I used to print this job.

Speaking of papers, for all of the prints for this job, I used Ilford Gold Fibre Silk, which is one of my favorite papers. About a year ago, Ilford sent me a sample pack of some of their top papers. Included in that pack was a few sheets of Gold Mono Silk and Gold Fibre Silk among other papers. For black and white photography, the Gold Mono Silk it pretty spectacular. Ilford's Gold Mono Silk has a glossier, pearl-type bright white finish that really works well for black and white images. With that said, I love the way my black and white images look on Gold Fibre Silk as well. Gold Fibre Silk isn't a glossy paper and it isn't a fine art paper. It has a semi-glossy type surface but really it feels like printing on old-school Ilford paper in the darkroom—and it kind of smells like it as well when I open a fresh box of it. Gold Fibre Silk also has a very nice warm tone to it. Note that even though Ilford sent me a free sample box of their top papers, I still have to pay for all the paper I print on. I also love Canson Baryta Photographique, which is technically almost the exact same paper as Ilford's Gold Fibre Silk.

Also in that box of Ilford test papers from was a fine art paper named Gold Cotton Textured. This is a very warm toned, heavily-textured fine art paper. I have printed on Moab Entrada for years now but I have to say that I was blown away by how nice some of my images looked when printed on Ilford's Gold Cotton Textured paper. This paper is quite thick and heavy. It really feels like an object and lends a feeling of incredible quality to the final prints. This paper has a heavily dimpled texture that is similar to Epson's Signature Worthy Cold Press Bright paper, but I much prefer this paper to Epson's Cold Press Bright. My images have a glow to them on this paper that I have never seen before. Not all of my images work well on this paper but those that do, like landscapes and images with a lot of texture, really do have a look and feel that is different from any other paper I have tried. If you are looking for a new fine art paper I highly recommend trying out both the Ilford Gold Cotton Textured and Gold Cotton Smooth offerings.

All of the image processing, including the enlargement and sharpening, was done in Adobe Photoshop. Before printing this job, I did a test between Photoshop and Lightroom to see which software would lead to better

Above is a print, which was printed on Ilford's Gold Cotton Textured paper, hanging in my print viewing box. This is my new favorite fine art textured paper. Even though you can't see the heavily textured surface of the paper in this image, you can see that the print looks pretty amazing. This paper works very well for landscape images and images with a lot of texture. I highly recommend this paper to those looking for a fine art type paper.

overall image quality. The results were that while Lightroom had excellent sharpening techniques it also added quite a bit of noise to the images when they were enlarged. Using Photoshop allowed me to get better overall image quality with less noise and the same dead on sharpening.

Also of note, I also printed a 35mm film image at 40×60 inches. I fully expected it to look pretty rough, but because I had a huge resolution film scan it looked quite good. Indeed, it had a lot of grain up close, but overall it looked pretty incredible. It wasn't anywhere near the quality of the Nikon D800 image up close but even so I was pretty impressed.

To order a print, please check out the details on my website and give me a call or send me an email. Check out Ilford's offerings at www.ilford.com.

portfolio

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Red Bull

On Being an Artist

by Michael Clark

The word "artist" is a word I use very sparingly. Somehow, that term seems to be very much overused these days. Most artists that I know and respect never call themselves artists at all. I have been in and out of the art world my entire life, having produced my first work at the age of three and a half, and then spending most of my upbringing in one art class or another. I started out drawing, then branched out into just about every other form of art I know of including painting, scratchboard, woodblock prints, lithography, glassblowing, sculpture, photography and others too numerous to list here. After a brief stint in the physics world, I returned to art in the form of photography. But, as an adventure photographer, I have never felt like my images were art.

While printing the huge prints I discussed earlier in this Newsletter (on page 38), I felt more like an artist than I have in a long, long time. There was something familiar about putting ink onto paper and producing a tangible thing that would make people stop and stare. Modern digital photography relies on a wild array of high-tech tools to create the final image. There is certainly a completely different feeling with photography than I had in my early teens when I painted an image or molded an orb of molten glass. With photography that feeling of connection to the final piece isn't as immediate. After all, for any photograph I've created I didn't sketch every contour of the image and render it by physically touching the paper or canvas. Instead, my camera captured the light, then I toned and worked up the image on a computer and the printer laid down the ink using very sophisticated technology on high-tech archival paper. Nevertheless, when the finished peice is on the wall and I watch people interact with it, the end result is the same. The viewer is transported to another place, another state of mind, and one hopes, is also inspired by the image.

In the Summer 2011 issue of the Newsletter, I discussed an interview with legendary photographer Kurt Markus. I was struck by one of his comments in the interview where he said, "It takes guts to make a print. You know you have to convince yourself that this is you, that you've made this and that you're putting your name on it, and you also have to believe that maybe somebody else either can appreciate the work you've done or can appreciate the fact that this is you." Kurt went onto say a lot more about the importance of printing your work. Click on the link above to read an editorial about that interview. My point in quoting Kurt here is that when of the prints were hung, it was fascinating to watch people react to the images. Many had strong reactions, and a lot of questions. Often, working as a pro photographer I forget about being an artist with the stress of the work. I need to remember that fact and let that influence my work more often.

parting shot

The Santa Monica Pier lighting the evening sky with a wild variety of colors in Santa Monica, California.