

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



WINTER 2020



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WINTER 2020 NEWSLETTER

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Cover Image: Tom Van Steenberghe rides during the Red Bull Rampage in Virgin, Utah, USA on 25 October, 2019. Opposite Page: Jeff Fox on Jedi Mind Tricks (V4) in the Pollen Grains at the Buttermilks near Bishop, California.





editorial

Time Off

After nine months of back-to-back assignments it is good to be home

The last year has been one of the busiest periods in my career by far, which is why there was no Spring 2019 or Fall 2019 edition of the Newsletter. In the last twenty years that I have been publishing the Newsletter I have never missed two issues in any prior year—this is a first. It has been quite some time since the Summer 2019 edition came out in last August and I know many of my readers have been wondering what happened to the Newsletter. It is still going? The reality is that I just didn't have time to put one together until now. Luckily, I have had a month or so at home and I am really enjoying being in one place for a while.

While I am home, I have been ice climbing as often as possible and skiing when we get a decent powder dump. Winter is a great time for adventure in the southwest and particularly in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which is where I live. The image on the opposite page gives a good sense of our more relaxed outdoor activities up in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains above town walking our dog. Luckily, it has been a great winter so far in terms of snow, meaning we have lots of it so the skiing is great.

In this Newsletter is a review of the FUJIFILM X-Pro 3, a detailed article about covering the Red Bull Rampage and an editorial about finding that Work-Life balance that is so elusive in the freelance world. There are quite a few

other stories I am really excited to share here in the Newsletter and elsewhere but those will have to wait until they come out on the clients end—and I get approval to share them. Last year was an incredible year for me as several dream assignments came my way and several bucket-list trips also came to fruition.

As for New Years resolutions, I am hoping to find that perfect work-life balance and also think less about photography gear—though readers of this Newsletter will understandably imagine that last one will be a tough task. I seem to be obsessed with gear, both the perfect photography gear and climbing gear, and having that equipment dialed in to an extremely high degree for each situation I find myself in. Happy New Year to all of my Newsletter readers. I hope you enjoy this long overdue issue of the Newsletter. 2019 was a wild ride! Bring on 2020.

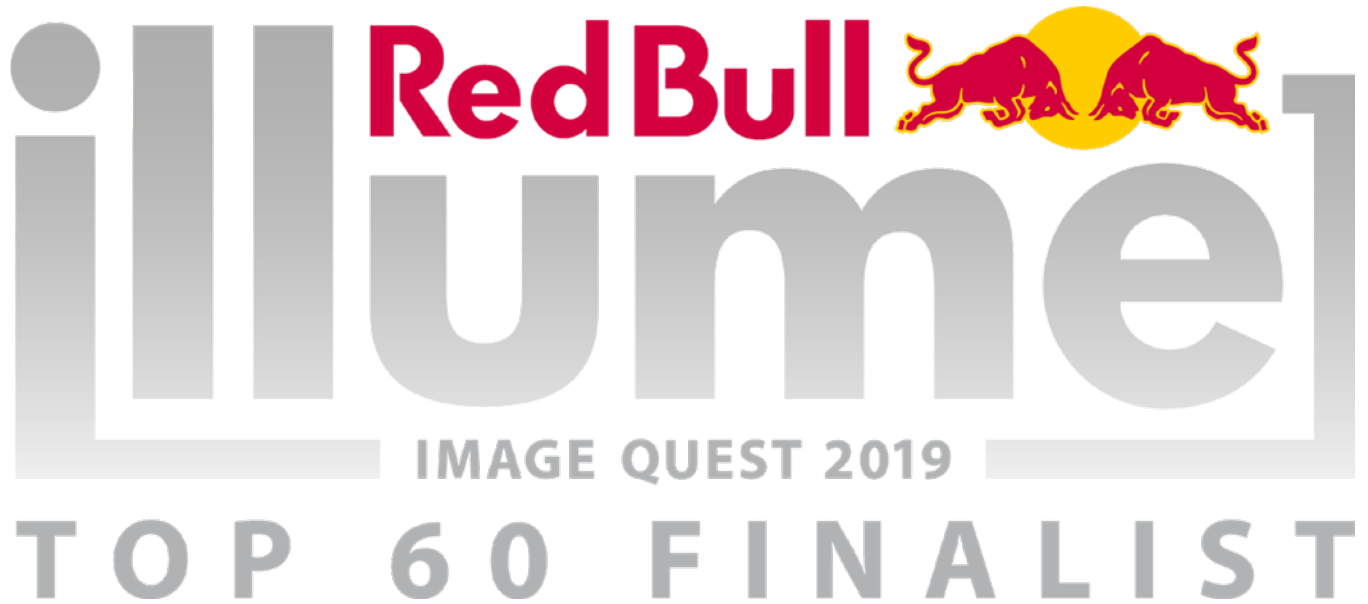
Opposite Page: Katherine Mast walking our dog Yuki in the Santa Fe National Forest on the Alamos Vista Trail above Santa Fe, New Mexico on a cold wintery day.

Recent Clients: Fujifilm USA, Bayer (Eylea), Red Bull, Colonial Systems, InLight Productions, Santa Fe Institute, Karsh & Hagan (Colorado Tourism), *Orleabar Brown*, *National Geographic*, *Photo World Magazine (China)* and *foto-MAGAZIN (Germany)*.



Red Bull Illume Finalist

Two images were finalists in the Red Bull Illume Photography Competition



In the fall of 2019, I was honored to have two images that were finalists in the 2019 Red Bull Illume photography competition. The Red Bull Illume according to their website “is the world’s greatest international imagery contest dedicated to adventure and action sports. It showcases the most creative and captivating images on the planet, while illuminating the passion, lifestyle and culture behind the photographers that shoot them.”

In 2019, 59,551 images were submitted by thousands of photographers from all around the world. The judging panel consisted of 50 photo editors who selected the sixty Finalists, eleven Category Winners and one Overall Winner. Sadly, I did not win the competition (and I did not

expect to with the images that made the cut). Nevertheless it was great to be in the running. The two images that were considered in the end are shown on the following page. The top image was a finalist in the Energy category and the bottom image was one of the top five images in the Raw category. Both are published in the Limited Edition 2019 Red Bull Illume photo book and will also travel the world as part of the Red Bull Illume outdoor exhibition.

My thanks to Red Bull and the judges for selecting a few of my images. Amazingly, while I was in the Himalayas on a climbing expedition I had enough cell signal to watch the award ceremony online in the middle of the night.



2019: Year in Review

Best of the best images and highlights of the year featured on the Blog



As usual each year for the last six years, I have published a long blog post detailing what I think are the best images of the year as well as career highlights from that year. My [2019: Year in Review](#) blog post is the latest of these year-end highlight reels. It details one of the best years I have ever had in my career, both creatively and business wise. I realize these “best of” type blog posts are a dime a dozen but they serve as a reminder for me how well the year went and also I hope they inspire a few photographers (and possibly adventurers) as well. 2019 continued to be a year of transition where I was working more with

mirrorless cameras than I ever have and also working on more video projects than ever in my career. As my readers know, I am on the never-ending search for tools that help me push my photography to the edge of the envelope technically. With the FUJIFILM GFX 100, I am still riding that bleeding edge (as are my hard drives) and it is a fantastic time to be a photographer.

So long 2019. My thanks to Red Bull, Fujifilm, Bayer, *National Geographic* and all of my other clients with whom I worked in 2019. Bring on 2020! Happy New Year!

Michael signs on with GNARBOX

After using the GNARBOX 2.0 in the Himalayas Michael joins the GNARBOX Pro Team



I am excited to announce that I have joined the GNARBOX Pro Team. [GNARBOX](#) introduced their GNARBOX 2.0 backup hard drive solution last fall and I had the chance to try it out on a month-long Himalayan climbing expedition. I was so impressed by the GNARBOX that I signed onto their Pro Team when I returned. This little device is so helpful when you are on the go or are working in extremely remote locations and need to back up images or help speed up your workflow.

I wrote an extensive equipment review of the [GNARBOX 2.0](#) on my blog. Overall, the GNARBOX 2.0 is a home run. It will always be in my camera bag so that I can download images on the run and be ready for the next step in the workflow once I get back to the hotel or my office. The GNARBOX 2.0 is kind of a no-brainer product. It is easy to use and does exactly what it needs to do with very little fuss. For more information on the GNARBOX 2.0 visit the [GNARBOX website](#).

workshops

Photography Workshops

An overview of workshops and online classes with Michael Clark

Each year I teach a few workshops on a variety of topics including adventure sports photography and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2020. 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.

CUTTING-EDGE LIGHTING TECHNIQUES

Santa Fe Workshops - Santa Fe, New Mexico

March 15- 20, 2020

How do you separate your work from the pack? Do you want to break down the barriers that are keeping your photography from standing out? In the last seven or more years, flash manufacturers have added some incredible technology to their strobes. Michael has been working with these new flash technologies for more than seven years and has even helped perfect the technology. High-Speed Sync (HSS) and Hi-Sync (HS) allow us to freeze action like never before, light subjects from ridiculous distances, and easily create lit portraits with incredibly shallow depth of field. In short, we can create images that were never possible before.

Designed for intermediate to experienced photographers, this 5-day workshop concentrates on creating unique

images using cutting-edge lighting technology. Working with elite athletes, dancers, and models both in the studio and on location, we aim to create images that are not easy to duplicate. Topics covered during the week include high-speed sync flash techniques, multiple exposure flash techniques, freezing motion, stroboscopic lighting, advanced portrait lighting, motion blur and rear curtain strobe techniques, and mixing continuous lighting with strobes.

Classroom time includes daily editing, group critiques, and one-on-one meetings with Michael. In addition, Michael shares his insights and experiences in the photo industry, including career development, portfolios, and how to shoot for editorial and commercial clients.

Cost: \$1,995 plus a \$325 Model and Location Fee

For more information and to register for this workshop visit the [Santa Fe Workshops website](#).

JAPAN: THE ART OF MOTION

Nobeichi Creative Workshops - Multiple Locations in Japan

May 11 - 19, 2020

Not just a travel photo tour, not just a lighting workshop, but a unique opportunity to photograph Japan in Motion:



Japan is an amazing country with many different incredible photography opportunities like the Fushimi Inari Taisha near Kyoto, Japan shown above. In our Japan: The Art of Motion workshop we will be photographing some incredible Japanese martial artists, dancers and performers.

Martial artists, theatre performers, bullet trains and festivals to create a strong, dynamic body of work that will have your friends and colleagues in awe of your photography, while learning invaluable lighting techniques courtesy of Michael, and diving deeply into the beautiful Japanese culture through George Nobechi, our workshop coordinator and second instructor.

Japan is a country constantly on the move. With the

fastest bullet trains in the world, and sports old and new, there are ample opportunities to create ambitious images of both the modern and ancient Japanese culture in motion. In this photography workshop with Michael Clark and George Nobechi we will push ourselves to create dynamic images that impart motion into the world of still photography. Using advanced lighting techniques with both strobes and continuous lights (not to worry if you are new to lights—Michael and George will be there to

help you), incorporating motion blur, and featuring incredible athletes and martial artists we will set up a wide variety of scenarios to practice and produce stunning images.

Michael has spent the entirety of his career capturing images of athletes in motion in remote locations for some of the most prestigious clients in the World including Apple, Nike, Nikon, Fujifilm, Red Bull, Nokia, *National Geographic*, *Sports Illustrated* and many more. In Japan we will adapt his techniques to a wide variety of traditional sports, performances, culture and events in stunning locations. The aim of this workshop is to craft images that are dramatic, unusual and out of the norm—images that stand out and grab the viewer's attention but are unmistakably Japanese.

We will start with a few days in Tokyo, where we have access to some phenomenal athletes and performing artists in a variety of venues. For the second part of the workshop we will head out into the beautiful Japanese countryside and work with martial artists, dancers and traditional performers. In addition we will have the opportunity to photograph an exhilarating festival, where we will be able to take the techniques we have learned and use them in an uncontrolled environment. Throughout the workshop we will have plenty of time to really get creative and explore the possibilities in each location.

Of course, throughout the workshop, Michael will also share his extensive knowledge of digital workflow and show participants how he works up his images to a very high level. Each day will find us on location capturing powerful images in addition to image critiques, discussions on various techniques, and thinking through the

types of images we hope to create that day. George, with his extensive knowledge of Japan, and its culture, will be our guide to help us stay true to the traditions and also dial in our experience so that we not only come away with incredible images but also get to experience a side of Japan that is rarely seen by tourists. George will also instruct you in filling out your Japan portfolio with carefully crafted landscapes, environmental portraits and still-life shooting around the main workshop photography led and taught by Michael.

Cost: \$4840 USD +10% tax per person for double occupancy when paying via a bank wire transfer. Single supplement is \$700 USD + 10% tax when paying via a bank wire transfer.

For more detailed information and to register for this workshop visit the [Nobeche Creative website](#).

ADVENTURE SPORTS PHOTOGRAPHY

Summit Workshops - Jackson, Wyoming

September 12 - 17, 2020

Instructors: Dave Black, Bo Bridges, Jen Edney, Ryan Taylor, Savannah Cummins, Ted Hesser, Mark Kettenhofen and Michael Clark

Action and Adventure Junkies Rejoice! Set out on a photography journey in the Grand Tetons with our faculty of adventure photographers and editors from National Geographic, Red Bull, The North Face, and more. Work with expert photographers and learn the shooting and scouting techniques that they use to land their images in top publications, meet the editors behind some of the world's most daring photography expeditions and learn how they

hire photographers, and even spend a night camping with the faculty as you network with them throughout the workshop.

In this workshop, you'll be exposed to every aspect of adventure photography, from adventure and outdoor sports photography to product and outdoor commercial photography. The Adventure Workshop is for any and all photographers.

This will be my third year as an instructor for this workshop and I must say it is an excellent experience and a golden opportunity for those looking to jump into the adventure genre. There is no other workshop out there (on the topic of adventure photography) that gives you access to so many top pro photographers in a single workshop. Additionally, where else can you hang out with a top-end photo editor like Marv Watson from Red Bull and sit down with several working pro adventure photographers? This workshop has literally started careers.

Cost: \$1,995.00

Go to the [Summit Workshops website](#) for the specifics on what is covered and what isn't. Please note that this workshop is taught by nine outstanding photographers and photo editors and offers an incredible opportunity to learn from not just one but many experts. This is by far one of the best adventure sports photography workshops out there, especially if you are looking to go pro.

ONLINE WORKSHOP CLASSES

Over the last few years I have taught a number of online classes for CreativeLIVE, which are available for

download on their website. These classes are in-depth, online two-to-three day courses. Hence, there is a lot of information and they are a very cost effective way to learn about various photography skills. Below are a listing of my most recent classes.

The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow

CreativeLIVE (www.creativelive.com)

This digital workflow class covers everything from image capture to the final print. This is not just a class on how to process your images, it is a detailed class for any and all photographers looking to take their photography to a whole new level, stay organized and make sure that they are getting the best possible image quality. This CreativeLIVE class won't cover everything contained in my digital workflow e-book, but it will cover a good portion of the key basics. The course takes a deep dive into color management, sensor cleaning, image organization, file and folder naming, processing images in Lightroom and Photoshop, printing, backing up your images and much more. To watch or purchase this class visit www.creativelive.com.

Cost: \$99 USD

Note that CreativeLIVE often runs sales so the class might be discounted below this price.

Advanced Lighting for Adventure Photography

CreativeLIVE (www.creativelive.com)

A few years ago I taught a two-day live class on advanced lighting techniques for CreativeLIVE and Red Bull Photography, which was broadcast live on July 17th and 18th, 2017. This advanced lighting class covers Hi-Sync (HS)

lighting techniques for outdoor and adventure photography and also includes a section on capturing portraits of outdoor athletes. As part of this course, we photographed rock climbing, cyclocross, and trail running.

This class is available for download on www.creativelive.com. While this isn't an in-person workshop, like the others listed here, it is a resource that is available online and can be downloaded and watched anytime.

Cost: \$79 USD

Note that CreativeLIVE often runs sales so the class might be discounted below this price.

WORKSHOP TESTIMONIALS

"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 4 years of college and several careers getting less candid advice and encouragement than I got in 4 days with you. For what it is worth, thank you for that." - Brandon McMahon, Adventure Photography 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

"I just finished Michael Clark's Adventure Photography Workshop at the Santa Fe Workshops. I had a terrific time with the group of people. 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

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

"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

"Michael is a true professional and readily explains all of the nitty gritty issues of a photographer's digital workflow, including important things like Color Management, Lightroom workflows, Printing, and more. He is eager to answer your questions and has a thorough knowledge and passion that he loves to share. He can get way deep into the subject, which I found fascinating. You can tell Michael has great experience in teaching and also likes to learn from his students. He is very authentic, honest, and direct. I highly recommend this class, and look forward to another one of Michael's courses in the future!" - Kristen, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow on CreativeLIVE

For more information on my upcoming workshops, or to read more testimonials, please visit the [Workshops](#) page on my blog. Hope to see you at a workshop here soon!

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equipment review

The FUJIFILM X-PRO 3

A review of Fujifilm's latest rangefinder-style mirrorless camera



Disclaimer: I have a working relationship with Fujifilm, and as many of my readers already know I shot some of the marketing materials with their flagship GFX 100 camera last year. I originally tried out the X-Pro 2 for a few weeks in May 2018 while speaking at the launch for the GFX 100 in Japan. While working with that camera, I grew to love the smaller form factor and eagerly awaited the X-Pro 3. For the month of

November, I was loaned an X-Pro 3 prototype and took it to the Himalayas on a climbing expedition to test it out. I was not paid for this review or to try out the camera. My thanks to Fujifilm for loaning me a camera and a few lenses.

The FUJIFILM X-Pro 3 is a departure from my normal cameras. Most, if not all of my cameras have



The Boudhanath Stupa at sunrise in central Kathmandu, Nepal. The stupa is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the largest stupa in Nepal. On an early morning walk I spent an hour or so photographing this stupa with one lens—just a 16mm lens. The X-Pro 3 is such a small camera it was a fun time cruising around and snapping a few hundred images while the light came up at sunrise. Tech Specs: FUJIFILM X-Pro 3, XF 16mm f/2.8 R WR lens, 1/280th second at f/5.6, ISO 800.

been chosen specifically to capture fast-action or for their ultra-high-resolution sensors. While the X-Pro 3 does have very respectable AF capabilities (identical to the venerable FUJIFILM X-T3) it is a different kind of camera that blends an old-world form factor with a modern mirrorless camera design to create a unique, elegant and more considered style of camera.

The X-Pro 3 is also an aesthetic choice, much like the Leica M series rangefinders. While the X-Pro 3, like the Leica rangefinders, is designed for photojournalists and street photographers specifically, it also performs exceptionally well in outdoor adventure situations where a

lightweight, tough-as-nails camera can lend itself to storytelling and also keep the photographer somewhat inconspicuous. I have been eyeing the FUJIFILM X-Pro series of cameras for years now—long before I ever started working with Fujifilm on the GFX 100. The old-school look and feel of the X-Pro series cameras, paired with an incredible optical and electronic viewfinder makes for a very unique feature set offered by no other camera manufacturer. I think many photographers drool over the Leica rangefinder cameras (both the older film models and the new digital versions) but few of us can afford them and also if and when you actually use one with the manual focus lenses you realize fairly quickly just how slow

and limiting those cameras actually are to use compared to modern digital cameras. By comparison, the X-Pro series seems like a modern update to the manual focus rangefinder cameras and it is eminently easier to use than any manual focus rangefinder.

I realize many might be asking why would I work with an APS-C camera like this one—especially considering the other cameras at my disposal, notably the FUJIFILM GFX 100 and the Nikon D850. As a working pro, the X-Pro 3 may not be my main working pro camera but there are certainly times when I want to take a smaller, lightweight camera on a shoot (like on my recent mountaineering trip in Nepal). I could have easily taken my Nikon Z6 along with a small 24-70mm mm lens with me but when you are cutting off the end of your toothbrush and counting the ounces in your pack, no full-frame 35mm mirrorless camera can compete when it comes to weight versus image quality to a high-end APS-C camera that is dialed in to this level. With that said, choosing the X-Pro 3 isn't just about having a lightweight, small camera. When you pick it up, there is an immediate tactile feeling and responsiveness that makes me want to go out and shoot with this camera. That is hard to explain but there are only a few other cameras on the market that share this effect.

ERGONOMICS

Similar to other rangefinders the main feature and overriding design element is an optical viewfinder on the left side of the camera. On the X-Pro 3, the viewfinder works as both an optical and an electronic viewfinder depending on your preference—and in large part depending on what lens you have attached to the camera. The optical/

electronic viewfinder is one of the main reasons I love this camera so much. It gives me both options and the choice to go back and forth or stick with whichever one suits the situation and the lens I have on the camera. At the same time, I can still see the histogram in both the optical and the electronic viewfinders, which is a key element of a mirrorless camera. With the X-pro 3 you also have the option to use the Optical viewfinder and have the electronic viewfinder visible down in the lower right corner so you can see what the image will look like. This versatility is incredibly useful.

As shown below, the camera is stealthy. For the most part, the top and back of the camera are home to most of the critical control buttons, knobs and dials but notice that it is a simple layout, which helps keep the focus on the image and not on the camera itself. I much prefer the X-Pro series Fujifilm cameras over the X-T and X-H series of cameras because the X-Pro cameras simply have fewer dials and buttons to mess with. For the way I work, it just feels like I can get to the right exposure settings faster with the X-Pro series cameras. I love that Fujifilm gives us varying options for the style of camera that works best for us as photographers—and even various styles that might work best in different scenarios.

Of note, as has been hotly discussed on the internet, the rear LCD screen is by default hidden and can only be viewed when folded down. Having shot a fair bit with the X-Pro 2, which did not have a hidden LCD screen, and now for several weeks with the X-Pro 3 I have to say that at least for me it is a non-issue. In use, the hidden LCD just means that you aren't distracted by the LCD screen or tempted as much to chimp on the back of the camera. Instead, you stay focused on what is in front of you. In



Various aspects of the FUJIFILM X-Pro 3 showing the simple nature of the camera, the hidden rear LCD screen and the optional hand grip that can be mounted to the camera giving the photographer a larger purchase on the camera. The simple interface is one of the big reasons, along with the optical and electronic viewfinder, that I love working with this little camera—especially when traveling or when weight is a big concern.

reality, the EVF is so much higher resolution than the LCD (this is the same on most other cameras as well) that you can simply push the play button to view the images in the EVF without having to flip down the LCD screen. With your eye to the viewfinder, the “PLAY” button is easily visible so that you can push the right button and no matter which viewfinder mode you are in (optical or EVF) the EVF will appear with the last image you captured. For

those that shoot with a camera at arms length and use the LCD screen most of the time to shoot images then this may not be the camera for you. Maybe I am old-school but I find holding a camera away from my face and composing the image with just an LCD screen on the back of a camera to be difficult at best. There are certainly times when that works, as in low or high angles but for the most part, I use good handholding technique and



Himalayan Vultures flying high in the Khumbu Valley of the Himalaya. While hiking into and out of the Khumbu region of the Nepalese Himalaya over several days the X-Pro 3 was always clipped to my backpack via a Peak Design Capture Clip. It was quick on the draw allowing me to capture images along the way. I took this camera with me on a climbing expedition because I needed a tough, weatherproof, lightweight camera to take up with me on the mountain. Tech Specs: FUJIFILM X-Pro 3, XF 50mm f/2 lens, 1/1,100th second at f/5, ISO100.

a huge part of that is having the camera viewfinder pressed against my eye.

Also of note, I have purchased the X-Pro 3 along with the Metal Hand Grip ([MHG-XPRO3](#)), as shown on the previous page attached the X-Pro 3 in the lower right corner. I really like the way that grip improves your purchase on the camera. This may be more a matter of having large hands than anything else, but it definitely helps to

balance out the larger lenses like my XF 16mm f/1.4 R WR lens. It is such a lightweight camera (at least compared to my other giant cameras) that I often carry it without a big camera strap and the grip just makes it easier to hold.

Depending on which lens I have on the camera I tend to go back and forth between the EVF and the optical viewfinder. With a 23mm or 35mm lens, I usually go for the

optical viewfinder because the square box outline inside the viewfinder (showing what will be contained in the image) is relatively large in the viewfinder and also allows me to see what is coming into or going out of the frame. When using wider lenses like my 16mm f/1.4 lens and anything longer than 50mm (or a zoom lens) then I opt for the EVF. In both cases I have the histogram visible at the bottom of the frame.

IMAGE QUALITY

In this age of full-frame cameras (technically a misnomer for 35mm cameras as no camera is really “full-frame” these days), anytime you pull out a camera with a smaller sensor the camera geeks—of which I could call myself one—recoil in horror at an APS-C sensor. Have no doubt, my main camera these days is the FUJIFILM GFX 100 so I am a total convert to huge megapixel cameras and I love getting as much detail as possible so I can make giant prints. But not everything has to be shot with larger, heavier and higher resolution cameras. The X-Pro 3 has a 26 MP sensor, which for most folks, including most professional photographers, is more than enough resolution. 26 MP is well beyond the resolution of 35mm film. It is likely approaching the resolution (or beyond it) of medium format film.

In my testing the image quality on offer in the X-Pro 3 is as good if not the same as that offered by my Nikon Z 6, which similarly has a 24 MP sensor. I was curious how the brand new X-Pro 3 would compare on several specs compared to the Z 6, which has very clean noise at high ISO settings. To test out and compare the high ISO noise, I shot still life images at every ISO setting with both the Z 6 and the X-Pro 3. I also tested the FUJIFILM XF 16mm

f/1.4 WR lens against my Sigma ART 24mm f/1.4 lens at every aperture from f/1.4 up to f/11. My Sigma ART 24mm lens has consistently been a wicked sharp go to lens for me over the years so the Fujifilm lens would be up against one of the sharpest lenses I own.

The upshot is that wow, the X-Pro 3 holds its own in terms of noise at high ISO settings. I couldn't really see much if any difference up to ISO 3200. At ISO 4000 and above the Z 6 seemed a little smoother but even so it was very difficult to see much of a difference. It seemed that the noise just looks slightly different on each camera. Once I applied noise reduction to the raw image files, the X-Pro 3 looked ever so slightly better than the Z6 at ISO 6400—or at least I liked the way the noise was dealt with better. I remember testing a FUJIFILM X-E1 against my Nikon D4 years ago and being pretty shocked at how well the X-E1 did compared to the D4. So I wasn't totally surprised by this finding. Folks seem to get all worked up about smaller sensors and how they can't keep up, especially when it comes to noise, and this showed me at least just how dialed in these sensors are in X-Series Fujifilm cameras. Also, the two different lenses seemed roughly comparable. That FUJIFILM XF 16mm f/1.4 lens is a beauty!

The biggest difference I noticed between the formats is the depth of field. The smaller sensor has slightly more depth of field at every aperture setting, which is to be expected and would be an advantage for landscape photography. Other than that, there wasn't a whole lot of difference in image quality. Of course, if you wanted a higher resolution camera then you would have to step up to a larger sensor like the Nikon D850, the Z 7, one of the Sony cameras (like the new A7R IV), or a medium format

rig like the FUJIFILM GFX cameras. And note that I have all of those options (save for the Sony) and still I sometimes opt just to take the smaller and lighter X-Pro 3.

As usual with Fujifilm cameras, the color output is excellent. If you shoot jpegs then these cameras are very hard to beat as they produce some of the best jpegs from any manufacturer—as you would assume since they were (and still are) one of the largest film companies in the world. I pretty much always shoot in raw, but even in raw mode the X-Pro 3, like my GFX 100, outputs excellent color. For portraits I really love the Neg Standard color mode and for everything else I stick to the Standard color profile (Provia). Regardless of the camera setting, this can be adjusted in post when working with raw images.

In terms of output resolution, I have made prints up to 24×36 inches from a 12 MP camera, and they still looked quite nice. I have made prints up to 17×22 inches from the X-Pro 3 and they are gorgeous. I wouldn't really print images larger than 30×45 inches from the X-Pro 3 but that is already quite large. Would a 20×30 inch print look better if it was shot with the GFX 100 versus one captured with the X-Pro 3? Well, yes, if you want to walk up to it (like a lot of photographers do) and check it out from three inches away but from standard viewing distances the X-Pro 3 prints will hold up just fine.

AUTOFOCUS & FRAME RATES

Similar to the Fujifilm X-T3, the X-Pro 3 can blast away at up to 11 fps using the mechanical shutter and up to 30 fps using the electronic shutter. The buffer depth using the mechanical shutter is approximately 42 lossless-compressed raw images or 145 jpegs. In the 20 fps or 30 fps

mode the buffer drops to around 35 lossless-compressed raw images before the camera slows down, which means you have about one second of shooting time. When engaging the 20 fps or 30 fps modes using the electronic shutter there is a 1.25X crop, but even so the fact that this little camera can blast through that many frames is quite remarkable. Of course, as usual, the read and write speeds of the memory card plays a huge factor in just how fast the camera can operate and how quickly it can clear the buffer. My favorite SD cards these days are the Sony Tough 128 GB SD cards, which also happen to have the fastest read and write speeds of any SD card I have seen.

I have not fully run this camera through it's paces yet in terms of the continuous autofocus, but I have used it in all of the different autofocus modes. The X-Pro 3 has the same autofocus algorithms as the X-T3, which is to say it has exceptional autofocus capabilities. In AF-C mode it can track subjects at frame rates up to 11 fps, which is faster by a large margin than my Nikon Z6 can manage. I haven't tested it fully yet but the camera autofocus specifications say the X-Pro 3 can continuously track a subject in the 20 fps mode as well. Most people are not talking about this as a sports camera—and it might not be the one I reach for when I have an action assignment—but it is still a very capable camera in that department. In the image on the following page I tracked focus on my two friends as they walked down main street in Lukla on our way into the Khumbu valley. While this isn't by any means fast action, the camera nailed focus on every image in the sequence.

The X-Pro 3 also has Face Detection and Eye AF, which is very useful when photographing people. It seems to work



While staying in Lukla in the Nepalese Himalaya, I used the X-Pro 3 to capture a few images of my friends as we hiked through town. In this image I tested out the continuous autofocus and had it locked onto my friends as they walked by one of the many gear shops in town. Tech Specs: FUJIFILM X-Pro 3, XF 16mm f/2.8 R WR lens 1/640th second at f/4, ISO 400.

quite well. At f/1.4 it nails focus on the eye quite effectively. It is not as fast or as accurate as the Sony A9's Eye AF, but at this point no other camera manufacturer has Eye AF that can match what Sony has developed. For a camera like this, meant for photojournalism the Eye AF is more than good enough. For faster moving subjects, where having the eye sharp isn't the issue, I would suggest switching into continuous AF and using the Wide Tracking focus mode along with the appropriate custom AF-C setting. For even faster AF and better focus tracking I highly recommend setting the camera to Boost mode in the Power Management menu. To some degree, the speed of the AF is also dependant on the lens used.

The X-Pro 3 can also autofocus down to - 6 EV, which means it can grab focus in near pitch black darkness. My Nikon D850 can only autofocus down to - 4 EV and at that low light level it isn't what I would call fast. The X-Pro 3 might be the best autofocus camera in low light of any mirrorless camera on the market. In dark situations where I am having serious trouble seeing anything, the camera (using the EVF) picks up focus without any problems, which is rather incredible for any camera, much less a mirrorless camera. This low-light autofocus capability is not something I have heard a lot of folks talking about but it makes the X-Pro 3 a great camera for those situations where this comes into play. The X-Pro 3 does not have

IBIS (In-Body-Image-Stabilization), which would pair up quite nicely with this low-light AF capability but the small size of the camera does allow for handholding the camera at relatively low shutter speeds. I have gotten sharp images all the way down to 1/15th second while handholding the X-Pro 3.

DURABILITY & WEATHER RESISTANCE

As Fujifilm's top-of-the-line X-series camera, the X-Pro 3 is incredibly durable and weatherproof. It also comes in three different flavors. As shown below there is the standard black (left), Dura Black (center) and Dura Silver (right). All three have Titanium top and bottom plates but the last two options have a "DuraTect" coating that makes the camera nearly impossible to scratch. I opted for the standard black option (when I purchased the camera) as I wanted the least intrusive camera possible, but I tested out a Dura Silver prototype in the Himalayas. The Dura coating definitely makes the finish a fair bit tougher. It also holds onto finger prints and grime that comes into contact with the top and bottom plate—but that is easy to wipe off. The Dura Silver was beautiful but I just prefer a more understated camera that will fly under the radar while using it. It just comes down to personal

preference—though I will note here that the Dura versions are an extra \$200 more expensive than the standard all black model. Regardless of the color, they all have the same features.

Titanium has been used on occasion to manufacture cameras but normally in special versions of a camera model like the Nikon F3/T back in the 1980s. Titanium alloys are a difficult material to work with but they have incredible corrosion resistance and a strength-to-weight ratio that makes them stronger than a similar piece of steel. The weather sealing that Fujifilm has incorporated into this camera is also quite robust. I would not say the X-Pro 3 is "waterproof," but when used with a WR lens, it can handle pretty much any weather without the need for a rain cover. The X-pro 3 is a camera I would have no qualms working with in rough weather, which also makes it perhaps the perfect mountaineering camera as it is tough as nails, lightweight and small enough to take on pretty much any climb—and have it hanging off your pack strap on a Peak Design Capture Clip.

BATTERY LIFE

The small NP-W126S Li-Ion battery used by most of the



Above are the three versions of the FUJIFILM X-Pro 3: Black (Left), Dura Black (Middle), and Dura Silver (Right). I had the Dura Silver version with me in the Himalayas and it was gorgeous but I opted for the all black version when I purchased the camera since I prefer a less flashy, more understated camera that doesn't draw attention to myself or the camera. All three versions are beautiful. Note that the DuraTect coatings do make the Dura Black and Silver options a bit more durable.



A porter carrying a huge load back from Cholatse basecamp down to the town of Phortse in the Khumbu Valley of Nepal. The X-Pro 3 is such a small, compact camera that I carry it with me everywhere when on assignment—which is part of the reason I was able to get this image on the fly as our porters came by us. Tech Specs: FUJIFILM X-Pro 3, XF 16mm f/2.8 R WR lens 1/400th second at f/8, ISO 200.

latest Fujifilm X-Series cameras has been a point of complaint for many users. In use, I have not found the small battery in the X-Pro 3 to be an issue. Using the optical viewfinder definitely helps to save on battery power, and having the hidden LCD saves a lot of battery power as well since you are likely chimping less than with a normal camera. The reality is that you just carry backup batteries—and they are so light and small that it isn't that big of a deal. I am easily getting 400 to 500 images per fully charged battery if not more when using the optical viewfinder. That is significantly less than what I get with my Nikon Z6 but those batteries (in the Z6) are almost twice the size of the ones in the X-Pro 3.

The reality is that if they made a bigger battery for a small camera like this then it would be a larger camera body. Hence, there is a give and take and I would prefer to have the smaller camera body. I always have a few accessories with me anyway like an extra memory card, a lens cloth and a few other items so tossing in one extra battery is not a big deal.

XF LENSES

Having used a wide variety of the XF lenses (and just about all of the GFX lenses) I am consistently amazed by the quality of Fujifilm's lenses. Fujifilm doesn't seem to

make second tier lenses like most other manufacturers. Even the kit lens that comes with a lot of their cameras, the XF 18-55 f/2.8-4 lens, is remarkably sharp. Fujifilm also has an extensive lineup of APS-C lenses for their X-series cameras because they have been making the mirrorless X-series cameras for quite some time now. There are also quite a few lens options with both faster primes and slower primes in the lens lineup. Depending on your needs one can opt for the lighter, smaller and typically faster focusing f/2 or f/2.8 lenses or if you want better low-light options there are also fast f/1.2 or f/1.4 lenses in every focal length up to 50mm (75mm full-frame equivalent).

I do not currently have a wide selection of lenses for my X-Pro 3 as I just bought into the system. I only have two prime lenses for it at the moment—those being the XF 16mm f/1.4 R WR and the XF 35mm f/1.4 R lenses. I will definitely be expanding my lens selection in the next year or so but this is not the camera I feel the need to put a longer telephoto lens on (like the XF 50-140 f/2.8). Like the Leica rangefinders of yore, this is a camera where a 56mm (an 85mm full-frame equivalent) lens seems giant mounted on the front of this camera. Hence, at least for the moment, I am looking to keep the lenses I use with the X-Pro 3 within the 10mm up to 56mm range. If I do opt for larger lenses, then at that point it might be time to put those on the X-T3 or X-H1 camera bodies for the optimum balance and ergonomics relative to those longer, heavier lenses.

CONCLUSION

The idea behind the X-Pro 3 is that the camera frees the photographer from distractions and helps them “stay in

the moment” to capture the image. Does it actually achieve that? After a few months with the camera I have to say that the X-Pro 3 does help you stay in the moment and concentrate on the image—or at least that is my opinion and experience so far. To be sure, one would have to work with the camera for a significant amount of time to get to know it and understand its layout so that everything becomes second nature (as with any camera). Given the simple layout, the Face Tracking capabilities and the hidden LCD it does provide a platform that helps you to concentrate on the image. The X-Pro 3 has fewer dials and controls on it than any of my other cameras and the layout of the camera is conducive to quick, on the spot reactive situations, which is a big part of why I purchased the camera.

The X-Pro 3 is one of those rare cameras that gets me excited to go out and create images. Most of my other cameras are tools to get the job done, which is no slight against them, but the X-Pro 3 has a special something that really makes photography fun and fluid. The distance between what you want to capture and the act of doing so is a design feature that most photographers don't think about that much—but I am sure engineers and designers of the cameras think about this a lot. Sure, this camera has a lot of features available in the menu but in reality, once you have it set up, all you need to concentrate on is the composition and the exposure, which makes the process quick and easy when on the run.

All in all, the X Pro-3 is an excellent camera. In fact it is so good that it has me wondering if I even need a “full-frame” camera in my kit. Perhaps working with smaller APS-C cameras like this in tandem with my GFX 100 medium format kit is all I really need. To be sure, just typing



FUJIFILM X-Pro3

16

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160



As shown above, and on the first page of this review, currently I only own two lenses for my X-Pro 3: the XF 16mm f/1.4 R WR and the XF 35mm f/1.4 R. I chose these because of their relatively small size and fast maximum aperture. Fujifilm makes smaller, lighter versions of these lenses, which I have tested, but the fast aperture options seemed more versatile for those situations when I would use this camera. I'll be adding more lenses to my kit this year as I build it out.

that out here in this review is a big statement. I'll need more time to figure out if that could work. A huge part of my hold on the 35mm format is legacy—I have been using that format since I started shooting with film back in the early 80s. Regardless, having a smaller format camera with incredible image quality is really going to work well for some of my adventurous assignments.

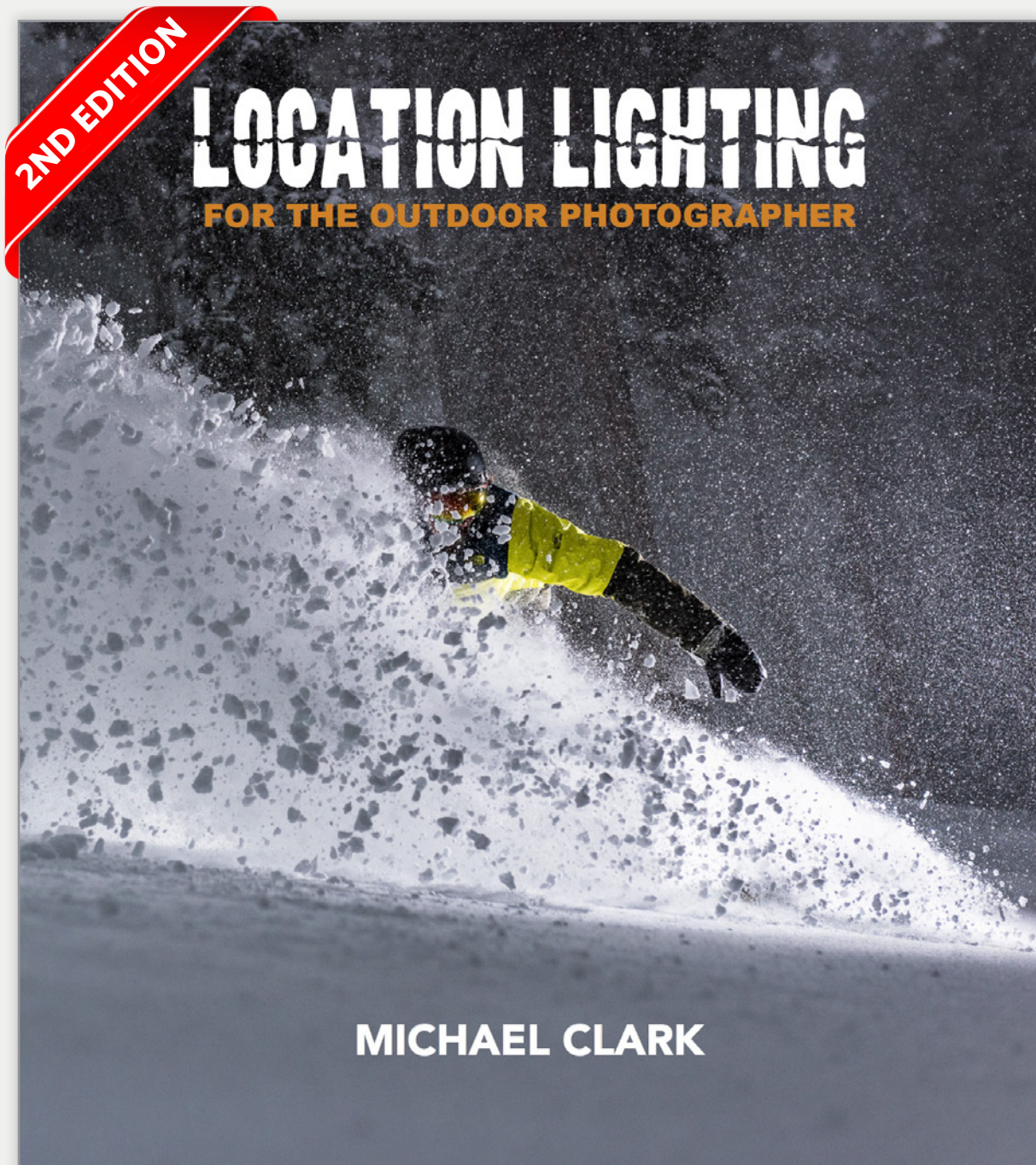
Summing up, this is a camera I won't be selling ever—even when Fujifilm releases a new, better version in three

or four years. That is about as high a recommendation as I can make for this beautifully-made camera. It is one of my top-five favorite cameras I have ever used.

My sincere thanks to [Fujifilm USA](#) for loaning me an X-Pro 3 and a few lenses for a full month to try out in the Himalayas. For more information on the FUJIFILM X-Pro 3 visit www.fujifilm-x.com. Stay tuned for more reviews of the X-system as I will be adding lenses and accessories to this kit in the coming year.

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on assignment:



DOCUMENTING THE
RAMPAGE WITH THE
FUJIFILM GFX 100

The Red Bull Rampage is the Mount Everest of downhill mountain biking. There is no other event in the mountain biking world that pushes the riders to such an intense level. To be invited to the Rampage is a supreme honor and recognition of incredible skill, but it is also a huge undertaking for the riders themselves (as can be seen here on these opening pages). Riders save themselves for this event each year, in the hopes that they can lay down the magic line that wins the contest and also come through unscathed. This is not an event for the light-hearted. It takes serious chutzpah to carve your line out of the cliff and push hard enough to win the event.

For an adventure photographer, photographing this event is a supreme honor as well. I started photographing downhill mountain biking over twenty years ago with some of the pioneers of the sport in and around Moab, Utah. Some of the riders I worked with were Josh Bender, the Godfather of this sport, who is also a judge at the Rampage, as well as Ryon Reed, Nate McKay, TJ Cowern and many others. More recently I have worked with Carson Storch and Dusty Wygle for the FUJIFILM GFX 100 launch campaign. I have seen the evolution of this wildly dangerous and exciting sport throughout my career, so it was an exciting day when I was asked to photograph the Rampage for Red Bull.



Of course, the Rampage is a huge event. It is one of the very few adventure sports contests that are actually televised on National TV here in the USA. As such, no one photographer could hope to cover the entire event. Red Bull instead hires a team of photographers to cover the event—and for the last fifteen years or more that team has been super tight. I have wanted to photograph this event for a long time but couldn't find a way in to get the access I wanted. With Red Bull hiring me on assignment, I was now part of the amazing team that covers the event each year. The incredible photographers that have covered the event for years include: Christian Pondella, Paris Gore, Garth Milan, Peter Morning and Long Nguyen. Christian, a good friend and one of the best adventure sports photographers on the Planet, has photographed every single Red Bull Rampage since it started way back in 2001.

I was the newbie. This event is very tough to cover as the riders are all over the place and you have very little time to get into position. I also came in to this event late this year. Most of the other photographers had been at the site all week capturing images of the riders and their teams as they built up their lines and jumps. Hence, pretty much everyone else photographing the event had a much better idea of where the riders would be and where their line was than I did. As with everything, experience matters. On top of that, I was asked to shoot the event with my FUJIFILM GFX 100 medium format digital camera. Red Bull was aware of my previous work with Carson Storch, from the GFX 100 launch earlier in the year, so I was apparently top of mind when they went looking for a new photographer to add to the team.

The Rampage event site is essentially a steep mesa edge

just outside of Virgin, Utah. I spent the first morning hiking around the event site to get a sense of it and see where the lines were. Just walking up the bluff is an adventure in itself. Thinking about riding a bike down the steep fins and features of the cliff is a truly mind-bending concept. I was a bit sketched out in some areas with the loose dirt and huge exposure and I am a climber and a mountaineer! Luckily, my first day capturing images, which was the day before the event, the riders tried out various parts of their lines to dial them in, which allowed me to see where everything was happening and also get a sense of what we were going to see the following day. On that first day I saw some incredible riding, but often found myself out of position to get the best image. Most of the images in this article were taken on the day of the actual event, in large part because the riders went huge on that day and held themselves back (so they didn't get injured) in the days prior to the actual event.

Each rider had a crew with them to help build their line. Some riders shared jumps and sections of their lines and worked together, but each rider had a completely different and unique line that they rode. This was the second year that the event was held at this same site. Hence, some riders had unfinished business from the year before and made their line bigger and better than it had been the year prior. Others created entirely new lines and new features. As the images here show, there were no lack of giant drops and jumps. Fifty-to-sixty foot drops were everywhere. Just about every rider had multiple huge drops on their lines (like the one shown on the prior pages and the one on the following page).

As usual with Red Bull events, once the action is over, each evening the photographers start downloading



Kyle Straight launching off his biggest drop on his run during the 2019 Red Bull Rampage in Virgin, Utah. Opening Spread (pages 30-31): Carson Storch launching into a 360 off "The Republican," one of the biggest drops at the event, during the 2019 Red Bull Rampage in Virgin, Utah. Sadly Carson blew a tire on this jump at the end of what could have been a winning descent. He took the bad luck with style and grace even though it had to sting.



Graham Agassiz checking out the airy exit for one of his jumps the day before the 2019 Red Bull Rampage. Walking up this ramp you could not see the landing, which makes for a very spicy mental game. He placed four rocks on the end of the ramp (just to the right of his feet) that mark the line he needs to take. This photo helps give a sense of just how steep and committing these riders lines are on the cliff face. Imagine riding a bike down this!

images right away and it is a frenzy to get the best of the best images edited, worked up and online as soon as possible. Working with the GFX 100, the 102 MP image files are of course massive and take a bit more time to download and import. Since the GFX 100 is limited to five frames per second, I captured considerably

fewer images than my peers who were blasting away at ten-to-twelve frames per second with their Canons and Nikons. I always seem to be the last guy to get my images uploaded but that is because I don't photograph many events. Nevertheless, checking out each others images each night back at the hotel was a



Ethan Nell blasting off one of the lower trick jumps at the bottom of his line during the 2019 Red Bull Rampage in Virgin, Utah. This is one of the few situations where I engaged the continuous autofocus on the GFX 100 to track the riders motion as there was nothing to pre-focus on with a long lens like the GF 100-200mm f/5.6 lens. Even at f/5.6 that lens has fairly shallow depth of field on a medium format sensor.

masterclass in adventure sports photography—and particularly painful if your images were not up to snuff as I felt a few of mine from that first day were subpar.

On the day of the competition, we were each assigned a general area to work in so that we could cover the

course. My assigned area was the lower and middle portion of the course, which gave me a lot of room to run between the huge jumps in the middle of the course and the trick jumps just in front of the finishing gate. Once the event started, and the winds subsided so the riders weren't blown off their lines, we had ten minutes



Kyle Straight committed to big air midway down his run during the 2019 Red Bull Rampage in Virgin, Utah.





As you can see here, the Rampage event site is quite dusty and a fine grained silt-like dirt seemed to cover everything including all of our backpacks—seen here loaded into the back of Christian Pondella's pickup truck. My pack weighed in at around thirty pounds, which didn't feel too bad early in the day but seemed to get heavier and heavier as the day went on as I was hiking and running to and fro around the course.

on average before the next rider started down their line. This time crunch meant that we were moving fast and sometimes running with full photo backpacks to get into position. At this point I hadn't seen any rider run their entire line so I was somewhat in the dark as to exactly where each rider would end up. Luckily, Red Bull had an app that I downloaded on my phone which overlaid the riders line on the landscape using my iPhone's camera. Talk about technology to the rescue! That app allowed

me to see the riders line, get into position and have a pretty good idea what was about to happen—and where I should move to so I could capture it. There were a few times where I was skunked and misread the app but for the most part it seriously helped me predict where the action would happen. Of course, there were quite a few photographers documenting the event as dozens of other (non-Red Bull) photographers were allowed down around the base of the event site and were covering the event for



My kit for covering the 2019 Red Bull Rampage was the FUJIFILM GFX 100 and four lenses: GF 23mm f/4, GF 32-64mm f/4, GF 100-200mm f/5.6 and the GF 250mm f/4 with the GF 1.4x teleconverter. Red Bull requested that I cover the event using my medium format rig so they could get a different look and feel. The GFX 100 certainly did give a different look to the images and forced me to shoot a bit differently than I might have with a smaller format system.

various sponsors and publications. My fellow peers and all of the other photographers were quite helpful for predicting the action.

The Rampage is one of Red Bull's largest and most well-known events anywhere—and after seeing it in person I totally understand why. The riders are going for it in a way few athletes ever do. Backflips over a giant canyon? Check. 720-degree spins off a 60-foot drop? Check. Even

though I have been around this sport for a long time, the brass balls these riders had to even attempt some of these radical maneuvers was jaw dropping. The fact that most of them pulled them off was even more astounding. Amazingly, very few riders crashed or got injured.

In the end, I only saw and photographed a small sliver of what went down. From my position in the middle and lower section of the course, in some cases I couldn't even

*Graham Agassiz catching some big
air during the 2019 Red Bull Ramp-
age in Virgin, Utah.*







The above image is an extreme crop of the image at right. Having such a huge resolution 102 megapixel camera allowed me to capture images in the upper part of the course where the rider was quite small in the frame and then crop in on those images and still have more than enough resolution left over. The full (uncropped) image at right is 102 MP and the cropped image above is 16 MP. For this image I used the incredibly sharp FUJIFILM GF 250mm f/4 lens.



see what was happening above me. In fact, a few days later I watched the video feed online to see all the action. Covering the event, you had to be on your toes and hike your ass off to get into position for a sequence of each rider—hopefully at a spot where they pulled off an amazing trick. In some cases the riders never made it down to where I was in the middle or lower portion of the course.

Trying to cover such a huge event, especially with a 102 MP medium format camera, was challenging—as I have already relayed. Even so, I found that having such a huge resolution camera came in handy—in a bizarre way. The extreme resolution allowed me to capture images high up on the course and then in post make an extreme crop on that image so that I could capture images from the top section of the course and also down at the bottom of the course. As an example of this, the images on the previous page were shot using the GF 250mm f/4 lens (200mm full-frame equivalent). The full, uncropped image (the bottom image on the previous page) is 102 MP but with an extreme crop the final delivered image (top image) is a 16 MP portion of that image, which is more than enough resolution for just about any usage Red Bull needed.

In terms of how these images were captured, for the most part all of us were pre-focusing the camera on a nearby rock or cliff and then switched to manual focus. Riders were suddenly appearing such that trusting the autofocus was tricky. Also, using depth of field with apertures like f/8 or f/11 allowed for a bit more forgiveness in terms of where the rider was as they moved through the frame. I shot handheld as we were moving too quickly from spot to spot to use any camera support.

As can be seen on Page 38, the event site is quite dusty.

Our cameras, and our camera bags, were coated in this fine silt that made it's way into everything. After the assignment, I literally gave my camera bag a shower to get all of the fine grained dirt off. For the cameras, I used a damp cloth to clean them off each night and then sent the camera back to Fujifilm after the assignment for a full clean and check. While photographing the event I was also very careful to wait until the dust blew past me and then made quick lens changes.

It isn't often that I work with a team of photographers to cover an event. When I do, it is always a great time to hang out with your peers over diner and talk shop. It also ramps up the pressure I put on myself. We are all competitive—or we would not have gotten to this level in our careers. Seeing the images my peers had already created by the time I got there, and those they created while I was there and during the event made for a great learning experience. Seeing the stellar images my peers produced made me a bit jealous if I am being honest, but it also helped me out a lot so I could see different ways of documenting the action. While I got a few decent images, I think my peers captured better images—and a lot of that comes down to experience and their knowledge of the course and the riders.

My thanks to Jorge Henao, Marv Watson and the crew at Red Bull Photography for bringing me in on this assignment. Fingers crossed I get to photograph it next year as well. To see some of the best images from the event check out the [Red Bull Rampage 2019- Best of Article](#) on the Red Bull Content Pool. That article also has a short interview with me on my experiences photographing the event, though a lot of that has been reiterated and expanded upon here in this article.

portfolio





Work-Life Balance

by Michael Clark

After nine months of travel last year for assignments, I am so excited to be home for several weeks both to recover and to spend some time ice climbing and skiing. I traveled on average eight to nine months a year early in my career, mostly during the first ten years once I went full-time. Around the time I started shooting more commercial work the assignments got shorter and paid better, and they were typically three-to-five day affairs, not month-long expeditions. Hence, that meant travelling five-to-six months of the year.

Last year was an outlier. Nine months out of the office is just too much time away to keep relationships healthy and in all honesty the stress of back-to-back assignments makes it tough to create your very best work on every assignment. Last year, I found myself seriously exhausted at the end of the year. Over the summer, after extended trips to Japan and New Zealand within the same month I found my self permanently jet-lagged for six weeks. I woke up in hotels in the middle of the night genuinely not having a clue as to where I was in the world. In November, I spent a month in Nepal. It took me the first half of that trip to get over the initial jet-lag and I was sick for a good portion of the trip as well. To cap it off, my immune system was so worn down that I caught some sort of respiratory infection on the plane coming back to the USA, which took three weeks to recover from.

For any freelancer, or business owner, finding a work-life balance is tough. Without a steady paycheck, we basically jump at everything that comes our way—within reason. I am at the point, twenty-four years into my career, that I can be a little more choosy about the assignments I accept, but I still need to pay the bills and save for retirement like everyone else. In 2020, I am hoping to scale the number of assignments back to the normal five-to-six months on the road. We will see how that goes. It is always difficult to turn down big adventures like those dream trips last year to Japan, New Zealand and Nepal.

I find that I have to recharge my batteries to some degree between assignments to really produce my best work. That isn't to say I can't work on back-to-back assignments, just that (as I assume for most of us) having a little time off to fill up the coffers of creativity goes a long way to help me produce something unique and inspired—something beyond the clients expectations. Living in Santa Fe, New Mexico offers rich culture, great food and an amazing array of outdoor activities to choose from when I am home. Additionally, going on personal photo trips, without any official responsibilities, to create images just for the pleasure of creating new images is also a great way to unwind. Figuring out the work-life balance is a neverending process. But hopefully this year, I can find that balance. Happy New Year!



North Face VE25 tents glowing in basecamp below Cholatse, a 6,440m (21,130 ft) peak in the Khumbu region of the Nepalese Himalaya.

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