

NEWSLETTER

MICHAEL CLARK

PHOTOGRAPHY



WINTER 2021



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WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

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Cover Image: Dusty Hampton downhill skateboarding on Stunt Road in southern California. This image was created while shooting images for the launch of the FUJIFILM GFX 100S. Opposite Page: Daniel Coriz stopping for a portrait while riding motocross (MX) at the Santa Fe Motocross track just off Highway 599 in northern New Mexico.





Mt. Everest Bump Edition

Playing guitar, testing camera gear, and waiting for the vaccine

As I write this, we here in the USA are going through yet another epic giant wave of Covid-19 infections. The hospitals are overwhelmed—and I fear we are not really even into the main thrust of this winter bump. There are new strains of the virus emanating from the UK, South Africa and Brazil that threaten to create an entirely new and even more dire outbreak here and abroad. We are certainly not out of the woods.

Last fall was the busiest period of 2020 for me with a flurry of assignments for New Mexico Tourism and one big one for Fujifilm with their new camera the GFX 100S. My assignment for Fujifilm was the biggest of the year for me—and the most exciting. This newsletter includes a preview of the new FUJIFILM GFX 100S medium format camera and also a behind the scenes article about the assignment working with downhill skateboarders in southern California. Luckily, we were able to squeeze that assignment in just before the Covid numbers started climbing in early November last year.

With all of the downtime, I have picked up the guitar again and have been playing regularly. I started playing guitar when I was a teenager and played in a few bands during my time at university in Austin, Texas. It has been oddly comforting to crank up the amp and let the distortion wash over like a warm blanket, especially in the

turbulent political black hole we found ourselves in here in the USA in the last six months (or four years depending on how you look at it). It has also been great to really open up some new forms of creativity in addition to photography, which when work is cranking leaves little room for anything else.

Here in the USA, the vaccine is being disseminated rather quickly it seems. I know several people who have already gotten both doses of the Pfizer vaccine and I am registered to get it when it becomes available for my age group. I am expecting that to be another month or two at the earliest. Fingers crossed I can get the vaccine and then get back to work in a more normal fashion sometime this spring. Honestly, it has been amazing to be home for such an extended period of time but I do miss the travel and the excitement of assignment work. Hang in there everyone. We will get out of this sooner than later. Here's hoping you enjoy this issue of the Newsletter and it offers up an escape for an hour or two. Until next time....

Opposite Page: Ryan Farmer downhill skating on Mulholland Drive in southern California near Malibu.

Recent Clients: Fujifilm North America, Adobe, New Mexico Tourism, National Geographic, Outdoor Retailer Magazine and Nobeche Creative.



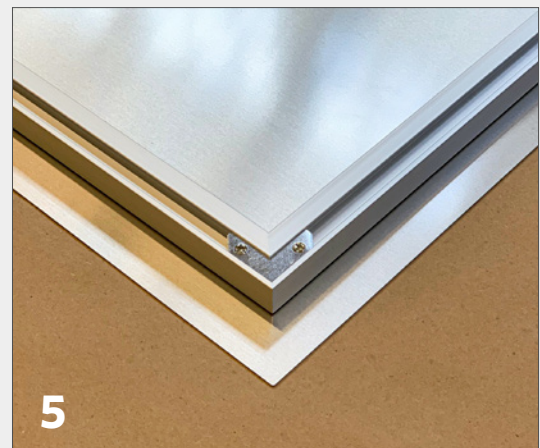
Metal Prints

After years of trying out third-party printers I can now offer spectacular Metal Prints

I am very happy to announce that I am now offering metal prints (in addition to paper prints) for both my Limited edition and Open Edition prints series. For years now, I have been looking for a print house that can produce metal prints that are color accurate and I have finally found [Blazing Editions](#), based in Rhode Island, who makes glorious metal prints—as seen on the following page. In addition to printing on metal, they also have a wide variety of mounting and framing options, which means that if you order a metal print you can literally pull it out of the box and hang it on the wall straight away. This will save my clients a lot of money in framing costs—and it will be way easier to get a finished print instead of having to seek out a decent framer and work with them to create the finished product.

Blazing Editions is one of the premier printers here in the USA and works with a wide variety of artists and photographers. Among their clients are Jay Maisel, Robert Farber, and Seth Resnick to name just a few. I am very excited to be working with them so that I can offer this new print option. As shown on the following page, these metal prints come ready to hang right out of the box. There are a variety of options for how the print is mounted and/or framed. In the examples #1 and #2 on the following page, the images were framed using a white or black wood float frame. The pricing for Metal Prints (for both Limited

Edition and Open Edition prints) can be found on my [website](#). The basic price for the metal print includes having it mounted as shown in image #5 on the following page with the “Inset Backing” option. The inset frame allows the print to go on the wall straight out of the box. As shown in the image #3 on the following page, the standard inset mounting allows the image to float off the wall making for a very modern and elegant presentation. And since these are metal prints, they are extremely durable and can be wiped off with a soft rag. If clients would like a different framing option they can choose the Wood Float Frame (#1 and #2), or I can work with them to customize the framing. Image #2 is a detail shot showing how the image is floating inside the wood frame. This is a very elegant framing option. These metal prints are gorgeous. Of course, since they cost a bit more to create they will be a little more expensive than the standard paper prints I offer. Even so, in the end, after framing costs are factored in, the metal prints may actually be slightly less expensive than framing a paper print. Paper prints are still available and will come mounted on DiBond (see image #4). I am excited to be able to offer an end-to-end option so that clients can get a finished product without having to worry about the framing. For more information about my print pricing and options visit my main [website](#). If you are interested in purchasing a print please drop me an [email](#) and we can get the process started.



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, digital workflow and artificial lighting. Below is a listing of the workshops I will be teaching in 2021. Of course, with current events all of my in-person workshops have moved to online classes. For 2021, all of my workshops will be held online until the Covid-19 pandemic starts winding down and the vaccine has been widely distributed. Hopefully by the end of the summer here in the USA most folks will have received the vaccine and no other strains of the virus have mutated. 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.

ONE-ON-ONE VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS

Online via Skype or Zoom

Email info@michaelclarkphoto.com to Schedule

With the Covid-19 virus running freely here in the USA, I am doing quite a few online tutorials and workshops. If you would like to set up a one-on-one Skype or Zoom session to discuss any photography related topics please [contact](#) me. From portfolio reviews to digital workflow, lighting techniques and career development and anything in between we can set up a session and cover whatever you want. If you have any questions about these sessions

please don't hesitate to reach out. I have found that we can cover a wide variety of topics in these one-on-one sessions and well, like many of my peers, at the moment I have a lot more time to give than normal.

Pricing for online sessions starts at \$85/hour and discounts apply for multiple hour sessions.

FROM CAPTURE TO PRINT: THE COMPLETE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHER'S WORKFLOW

Nobechi Creative -- Online

February 22 - March 5, 2021

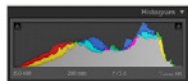
Six 3-hour live sessions conducted via Zoom

Digital photography is far more complicated than shooting film ever was. Knowing the best practices for a digital workflow will make you a better photographer. A complete digital workflow is also much more than just how you work up your images. How you set up the camera, expose the image, color manage your monitor and your work environment, as well as how you fine tune and print that image all have an effect on your final output. In this workshop we will cover the entire digital workflow process step-by-step so you can understand exactly what it takes to create the best possible images. At the end of this incredibly detailed, far-ranging course, participants will know more about a complete digital workflow than

are being added with every new update. Since this is the most complex panel in Lightroom we'll discuss each set of sliders individually. I will hold off talking about the Local Adjustment tools until we have gone through the rest of the right panel sliders.

HISTOGRAM

Figure 5.16



The Histogram dialog (Figure 5.16) resides at the top of the right panel. It contains an amazing amount of information—and it is one of the most important tools we use in Lightroom. I always have the Histogram panel open when working with images in the Develop mod-

Figure 5.17



Above I have selected both the Shadow and Highlight Clipping indicators in the upper left and right hand corners of the Histogram panel. The shadow areas that are clipped are highlighted with a blue color and the highlight areas that are clipped are shown in red, as indicated by the arrows.

ule. It shows the ISO setting, lens focal length, shutter speed and f/stop that the selected image was shot at just underneath the histogram. The Lightroom Histogram displays the averaged histogram (gray) and histograms for the red, green and blue channels.

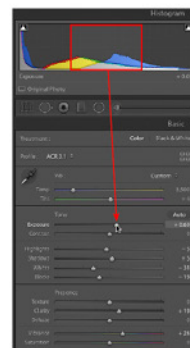
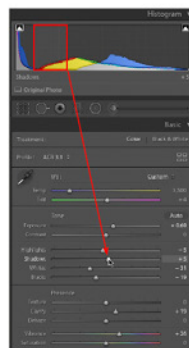


Figure 5.18 (left)

Figure 5.18 (right)

In the upper corners of the Histogram dialog, there are still the Shadow and Highlight Clipping warnings (Figure 5.17 on the previous page), which show the clipped shadows or highlights in the image. These indicators can be clicked on and off by clicking on the small triangles in the upper right and left corners of the Histogram display. The Shadow Clipping indicator is in the upper left corner and the Highlight Clipping indicator is in the upper right corner. The shadow

A double page spread from my book, *A Professional Photographer's Workflow: Using Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop (7th Edition)*, which will be given to participants of my online digital workflow workshop starting on February 22, 2021. Like the book, the course covers digital workflow from A to Z.

many working professional photographers. In this course Michael covers:

- A discussion on equipment selection.
- Best practices for a shooting workflow from setting up your camera to understanding histograms and exposure options.
- How to clean the sensor on your DSLR or mirrorless camera.
- A fully color managed workflow including your work environment, monitor choice and monitor calibration.
- A deep dive into processing your images in Adobe Lightroom Classic CC.
- Finalizing your images in Adobe Photoshop CC.
- Making fine art prints, choosing your printer, paper, and understanding ICC printer profiles.

- Backing up your images, storage options and strategies, and much more!

This online course via Zoom will incorporate six 3-hour sessions covering a complete array of topics concerning digital workflow for photographers seeking to create the best possible image quality. Note that we will be working with both Adobe Lightroom Classic CC and Photoshop CC.

Class level: This class is appropriate for anyone from novice digital shooters to professionals who want to improve efficiencies in their workflow, color calibration and printing techniques. This is the most comprehensive, detailed digital photography workflow online offering out there. In addition, the class size is small for an online workshop

(Max of 20 participants), allowing plenty of opportunity to ask Michael questions, and the video recordings allow for participants flexibility for missed sessions.

Price: \$675

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

JAPAN: THE ART OF MOTION

Nobechi Creative - Multiple Locations in Japan

May 11 - 19, 2021

Instructors: Michael Clark and George Nobechi

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

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 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. Michael first visited Japan in May of 2019 and enjoyed the country so much he immediately hatched the idea to coordinate



Image from the Fushimi Inari Taisha near Kyoto, Japan. Even though we won't be going to the Fushimi Inari Taisha, Japan offers some incredible photographic opportunities and in Japan: The Art of Motion workshop we will explore the possibilities of capturing athletes, martial artists and actors performing in the landscape.

with George on creating this unique workshop. 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.

Class size: 6 people (Minimum 5 people required for the class to proceed -- Note that this workshop has already

met its minimum.) In terms of Covid-19 and this in-person workshop we will be making that call here soon.

***All lighting equipment will be provided by Elinchrom and Michael Clark will be there to help fine tune and set up the lighting for all participants.

Cost: TBD - We are still figuring out if it is possible to run the workshop but no matter what, we will run this one at some point as soon as we can safely travel overseas.

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

Workshop Testimonials

"Michael certainly knows his stuff. From Capture to Print: The Complete Digital Photographer's Workflow is delivered in an easy to follow and comprehensive manner that covers many things that you may not expect - such as how to choose proper lighting to view and evaluate your prints or what color shirt to wear when you're correcting images. I really appreciated that this is a pro workflow course delivered by a pro photographer. Michael is also a superb teacher, a superb communicator, who is welcoming and inviting of questions from all his participants. I took this workshop in June of 2020, using Zoom software. I was really amazed by how Michael made it seem like he's been doing these workshops forever this way! Thank you Michael! It was a great pleasure being part of this workshop with so many other amazing photographers and a great pleasure to meet you. I learned much which is valuable to me and enjoyed doing so at the same time. And just to reiterate, as to the workshop: I'm impressed." - Stephen Starkman, Toronto

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

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

"Within the short time I've been studying and practicing photography, I have had teachers who are good educators, but not great photographers, and vice versa, but few who are both. Count yourself in these narrow ranks. I went through four years of college and several careers

getting less candid advice and encouragement than I got in four days with you. For what it is worth, thank you for that." - Brandon McMahon, Adventure Photography Workshop

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

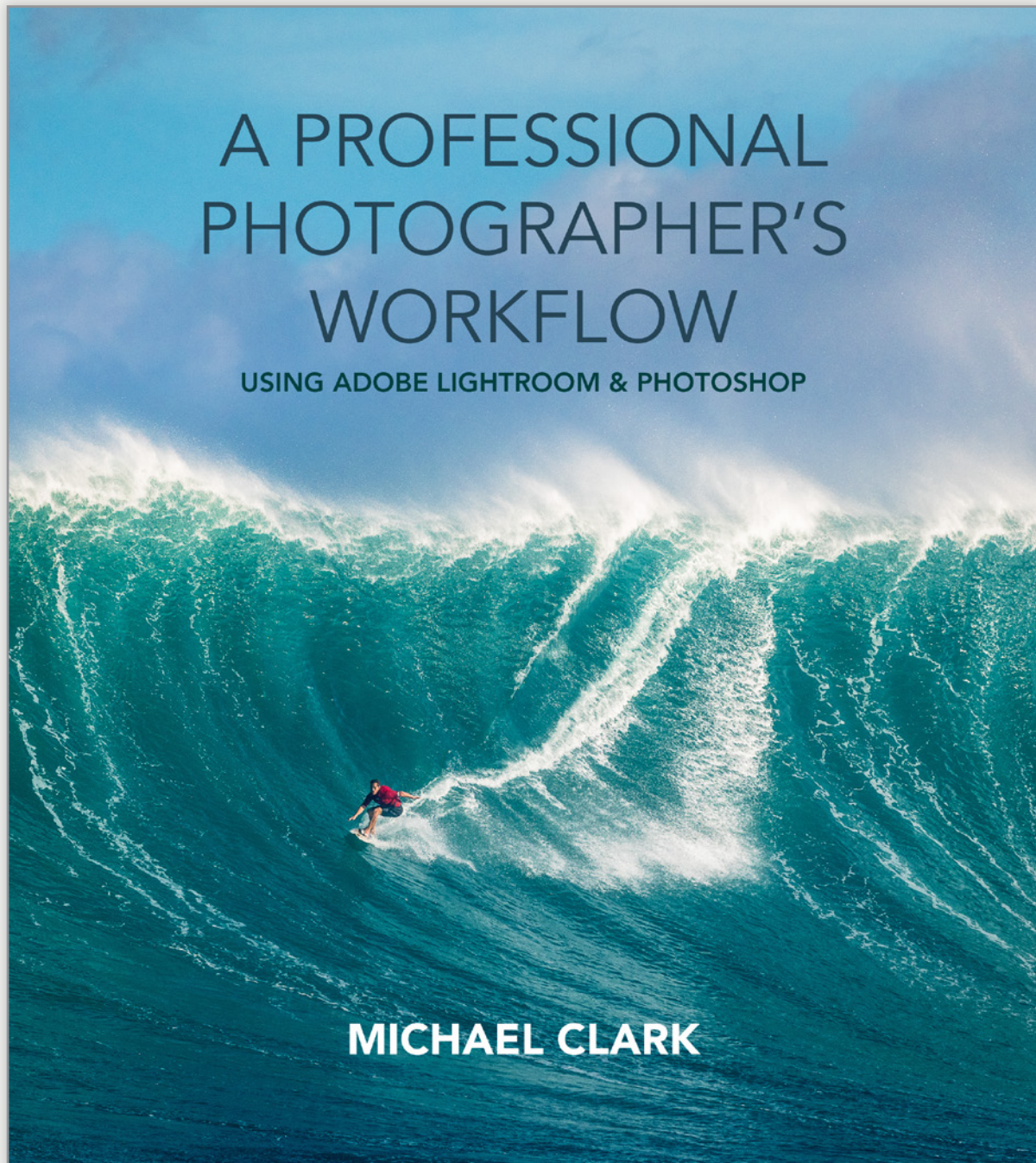
"Priceless chance to learn from the absolute best. Every photographer should take this class!" - Jill Sanders, The Professional Photographer's Digital Workflow available on CreativeLIVE

"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 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 preview

FUJIFILM GFX 100S

A smaller, lighter but no less capable GFX 100



Disclaimer: While I am not one of Fujifilm's X-Photographers, I was paid to work with the FUJIFILM GFX 100S on a recent assignment as part of the launch for this camera. I want my readers to be aware of this up front. With that in mind, also know that the original GFX 100 has been my main camera for the last two years and the GFX 100S will be a welcome addition. As such, I am certainly biased. I am always looking for

the best image quality and the best camera for my needs. For those that need or want this caliber of camera, I highly suggest trying it out to see if it will work for you and your needs.

Once again, I was lucky enough to work with Fujifilm on the launch of a major new product, in this case the FUJIFILM GFX 100S. The GFX 100S is the new



Image above provided by Jonas Rask/FUJIFILM: The new GFX 100S is a pro-caliber, rugged camera with extensive water sealing as shown above. The GFX 100S will become my main camera as it is so much smaller and more portable than my larger GFX 100. I can't wait to get a full production version.

baby brother to the larger GFX 100 released in mid-2019. Essentially, the GFX 100S is a smaller, lighter, and less expensive version of the GFX 100 with essentially 99% of the same capabilities of its big brother and a few notable upgrades. The GFX 100S sells for \$5,999.95 USD, which is a remarkable price given the resolution and sensor size. The new camera body has great ergonomics and makes for a phenomenally powerful 102 MP camera in a package about the size of the Nikon D850—or even just a bit smaller. In fact, the GFX 100S is 15 grams lighter than the Nikon D850!

Here in this blog post, I am not going to posit this as a review of the GFX 100S, but speak to my experiences with the camera while capturing images on assignment for Fujifilm. I only had the camera for a week before I had to give it back to Fujifilm. I was also one of the first

photographers in the USA (or anywhere for that matter) to get my hands on the camera. At the point in Mid-November that I was using the camera, the firmware was in daily flux, and I was using a very early version of the firmware. As a result, I do not fully know all of the capabilities of the GFX 100S. Hence, I will refrain from a full review until I have had time to work with a production version of the camera.

Of course, my familiarity with the GFX 100, gives me a lot of insight into the capabilities of the GFX 100S. In my time with the new camera, it seems every bit as capable as its larger sibling. In fact, there is very little in terms of specifications that separate it from the GFX 100. The only specification I could find that differentiates the GFX 100S from the GFX 100 is the lower resolution, fixed electronic viewfinder (EVF). The EVF on the GFX 100S is 3.69 MP



Multiple views of the FUJIFILM GFX 100S. This camera is a mini-me version of the venerable GFX 100, but in use the new GFX 100S refines the entire GFX system into a camera with the best ergonomics and the best user interface of any of the GFX cameras—at least in my opinion.

versus the 5.76 MP EVF in the GFX 100. Comparing both cameras there was little if any major difference between the two viewfinders save for the fact that the GFX 100 has an extra adjustable EVF option, which in some cases

is quite useful. The non-detachable EVF on the GFX 100S is a major reason that it is so compact—and honestly, I rarely use the adjustable EVF on the GFX100 so I might even prefer the built-in EVF on the GFX 100S.

Amazingly, Fujifilm has figured out how to significantly reduce the size of the IBIS mechanism [In-Body Image Stabilization] and fit it into this small medium format camera that is only a little larger than the FUJIFILM X-T4. The IBIS, which stabilizes the image sensor, is key for a camera of this type since 102 MP is very sensitive to camera shake. Without the IBIS stabilization this camera would essentially require a tripod at all times. With the IBIS mechanism, the shooting envelope where this camera can be used, is massively expanded. I haven't done testing yet with a production model (no one has), but during the assignment was I pleasantly surprised at how effective the IBIS worked. It is at least as effective as that in the GFX 100 and it might even be a bit better. And seeing the announcement it does indeed seem that they have improved the IBIS in the GFX 100S over and above the GFX 100.

The overall size and feel of the camera is pretty much perfect—especially considering this is a medium format camera. The grip is sculpted more than that on the GFX 100, and fits my hands quite well. Fujifilm has also smartly crafted a base-plate (shown at right on the bottom of the camera body) that extends the hand grip and also has an Arcs-Swiss type dovetail cut for tripod heads like those made by Really Right Stuff (RRS). As that is the predominant tripod head used by professionals and high-level amateurs that is a very welcome accessory. Notably, the GFX 100S will not have any other battery grip options. This was part of the plan, and part of how Fujifilm was able to keep the price reasonable (for medium format cameras). Since the intention is for the GFX 100S to be a lighter, more portable version of the GFX 100 I have no issue with that and would never put a battery grip on it even if it was an option.

Speaking of batteries, the GFX 100S uses the NP-W235 Li-Ion battery designed for the X-T4, which is a 7.2 Volt battery. The regular GFX cameras use a 12.6 Volt battery. Thus, the GFX 100S uses a smaller battery, and because of that it also gives you fewer shots per charge than the other GFX batteries, but in use I didn't see any major issues. I think we are all starting to get used to mirrorless cameras going through batteries a bit faster than their DSLR counterparts. I always have at least one or two spare batteries with me whenever I take a camera out on an assignment. If I have multiple camera bodies then usually I have a bag full of batteries unless I have to hike in a ways for the shoot.



In terms of image quality, the GFX 100S offers identical image quality as that found in the GFX 100. Working up the images I could see no difference at all, which is to say that this camera (along with the GFX 100) has the best image quality of any camera on the market that doesn't cost upwards of \$40,000 USD. The new camera uses the same 102 MP sensor so that is what I would expect. For those looking for the ultimate image quality at a relatively



Ryan Farmer skidding by me at high speed while downhill skating on Stunt Road in southern California. For this image I asked the riders to buzz me as close as they felt comfortable. On some runs the riders got within a few inches of me while doing nearly 50-mph (80-kph).

affordable price (for what it is) this is the best deal ever offered in the medium format space. Hell, back in the film days buying a Hasselblad or Mamiya medium format film camera was around the same price (or even more expensive) as this vastly superior digital camera. I realize six grand is by no means a small amount of money, but keep in mind that just seven years ago I paid over four times this amount of money for a 50 MP medium format camera that had the slowest autofocus I have ever seen. In terms of image quality versus price, Fujifilm owns the medium format market.

In terms of the autofocus, for subjects that weren't moving that quickly and for portraits the autofocus seemed accurate and fast enough. For fast action, which I have shot with the GFX 100, the GFX 100S was in such an early state of development that it was not really dialed in for advanced focus tracking when I had it. Hence, I will have to get back to you on the AF focus tracking. But in the announcement Shin Udono, one of the Fujifilm executives, said the GFX 100S has autofocus tracking capabilities that will "blow you away." That is very exciting news. I did use the eye and face detection AF options for several



At the beginning of the day we concentrated on motion blur images. For this image of Dusty Hampton I was hanging out of the back of a pickup truck with the camera held just above the ground. My assistant held a 1,200 Ws strobe head on a huge boom arm out in front of Dusty illuminating him from the front.

portraits and I can report that the camera did an excellent job focusing accurately on a subjects eyes—even with the new GF80mm f/1.7 lens wide open at f/1.7, which I was also able to use on this assignment. Once I get a full production camera, the first thing I will be testing out is the autofocus tracking and rest assured I will publish the results of that testing in my full review of the camera.

Speaking of that FUJIFILM GF80mm f/1.7 R WR lens, which is shown on the camera in multiple images throughout this article, it is yet another wicked sharp lens

in the GFX lineup. It is also the fastest aperture lens ever built for any medium format camera system. An 80mm f/1.7 medium format lens for the GFX system is equivalent to a 63mm f/1.35 in 35mm format (i.e. full-frame). While that may not seem like much compared to the latest f/1.2 lenses out there, the background blur is quite spectacular (see the portraits in the following article for examples). I'd say the new 80mm lens is easily up there with the GF110mm f/2 and GF45mm f/2.8, two of Fujifilm's sharpest GFX lenses. It might even be a bit sharper than those. The image quality is simply stunning. I'll

The new FUJIFILM GF80mm f/1.7 R WR lens is another masterpiece by the engineers at Fujifilm. It is one of the sharpest lenses I have used in the GFX lineup and rivals the 110mm f/2.0 and the GF45mm f/2.8, which is to say it rivals or exceeds the very best Fujifilm lenses. Image provided by Jonas Rask/FUJIFILM.



definitely be adding this lens to my kit as soon as it becomes available. Once I have a full production lens I will also write a review of it here in the Newsletter as well.

On this assignment, I was tasked with shooting still images. As such, I did not have an opportunity to shoot any video or dive deep into the video offerings. I am guessing that the video output is just as spectacular as it is in the GFX 100. As this is a smaller camera, it might even be a better option as the GFX 100 built-up with an external recorder and other accessories can get quite heavy. Capturing video with the GFX 100S and the smaller lenses, everything from the GF23mm f/4 up to the GF80mm f/1.7 is going to make for a very compact and easy to handle package even with an external recorder attached to the hotshoe or attached to a cage.

Having used the GFX 100S for a week, I have to say I am really looking forward to adding it to my kit. A smaller, lighter camera body with the same stellar image quality of the GFX 100 will be a welcome edition, especially for those times when I need to hike a considerable distance and still want the best image quality possible. Back in late 2019, I hiked into Cholatse over the course of three or four days in the Himalayas and the weight of my GFX 100 with several lenses added some serious weight to my backpack (as would any large camera kit), which I felt more at the higher altitudes. Having a smaller camera for those types of trips, where the camera body weighs no more than a DSLR, will help me to go farther and faster. It also means I can carry this camera, along with a smaller zoom lens like the GF32-64mm lens, in a small accessible top-loading pouch on the hipbelt of my backpack.

For the professional photographer looking to invest in





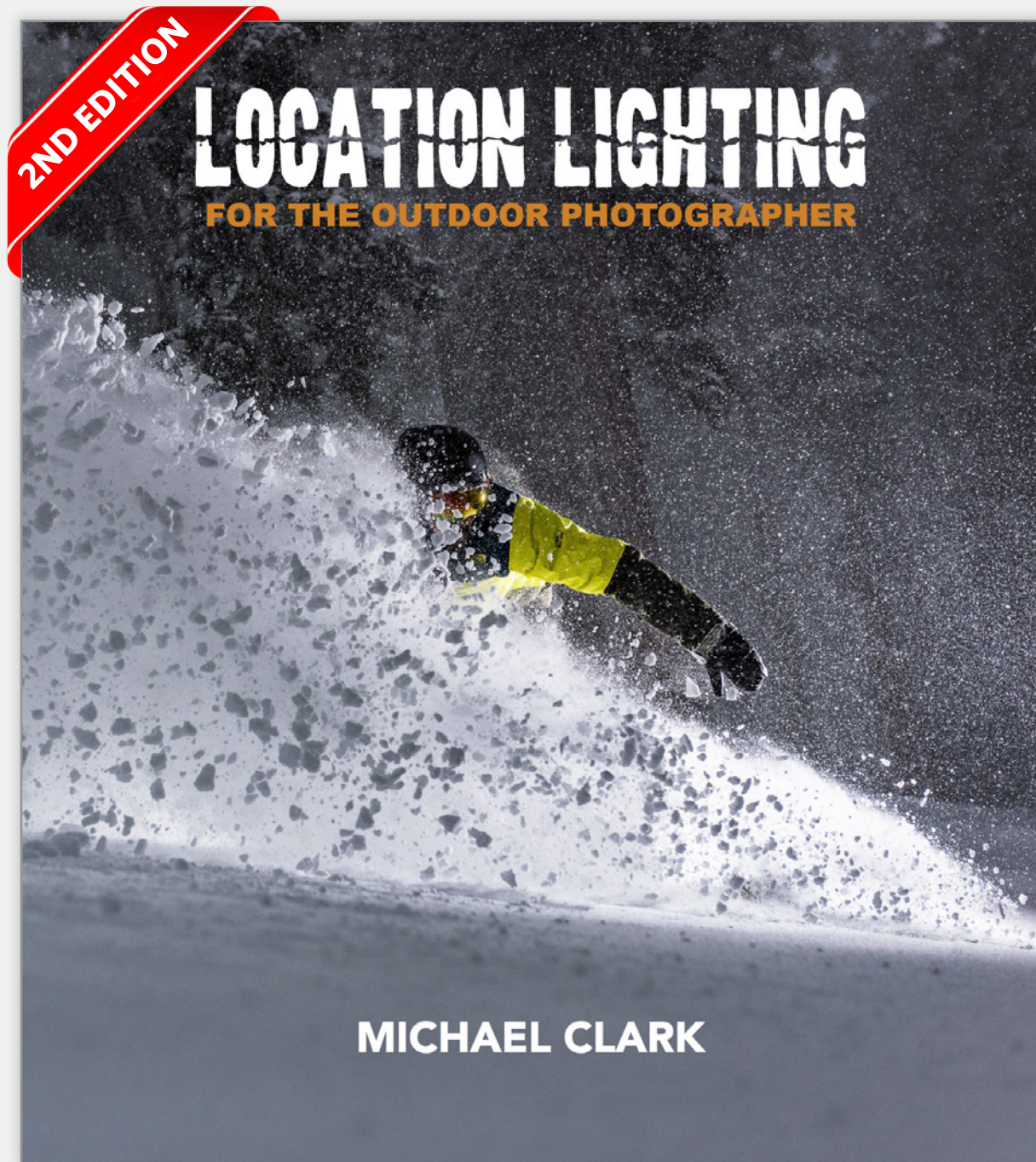
For this portrait of Joshua Newman I used the new GF80mm f/1.7 R WR lens and captured this image wide open at f/1.7. At 100% the image is tack sharp right on the eyes and the GFX 100S did a great job finding the eye and focusing on that, not the eyebrow. That new lens is wicked sharp!

gear that will serve them for an extended period of time and represent a good value for their money, the GFX 100S is an incredible value if it suits their photographic needs. With essentially the best image quality of any camera on the market (save for the Phase One 150 MP sensor) and in a relatively affordable, small package the GFX 100S is a camera no professional looking for the best possible image quality can ignore. After having shot with medium format, or what Fujifilm terms Large Format cameras (with good reason as they are the new digital equivalent of Large Format cameras), I have come to realize that

these high-megapixel larger sensor cameras live a much longer life in a photographers camera bag before they are superseded by new technology. With that taken into account the extra expense of the GFX cameras and lenses can actually represent a savings for those photographers that need cameras of this caliber because you won't be replacing the camera (or the camera system anytime soon). The GFX 100S is not an inexpensive camera, but in the medium format world it is the best deal ever offered. For more information on the stellar new GFX 100S visit the [FUJIFILM website](https://www.fujifilm.com).

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on assignment:

FUJIFILM GFX 100S

MALIBU, CALIFORNIA



Last summer I got a call from FUJIFILM North America to start discussions about the forthcoming GFX 100S camera and possible assignment options. We were in discussion about this assignment for many months before deciding on the sport and the athletes we would work with. As usual with large assignments like this, figuring out what we could do, what would show off the camera's capabilities and the budget were all part of the equation. As an adventure photographer, and in this time of Covid-19, we knew it was going to be an outdoor action shoot of some sort. When the marketing director brought up downhill skateboarding I instantly thought that would be a really cool sport to capture.

For this assignment, we captured images of downhill skaters ripping down steep roads just above Malibu, California—and thankfully we were able to capture all of the images in mid-November just before the Covid-19 numbers started to rise dramatically. This assignment was a one-day shoot, and we took all precautions necessary to keep everyone involved safe—including having a Covid officer from the State of California on the shoot to oversee our interactions. Previous to this assignment, I had never photographed downhill skating so it was a new sport to wrap my head around. Luckily we got some world-class downhill

skaters for the assignment including Ryan Farmer (the 2017 world champion), Joshua Newman and Dusty Hampton. As you can see here in this article, we were able to capture a wide a variety of images on the day of the assignment.

Back in 2019, I was lucky enough to shoot an assignment as part of the launch for the FUJIFILM GFX 100. You can check out a behind the scenes article on that shoot in my [Spring 2019 Newsletter](#). The GFX 100 has served me incredibly well over the last few years, and is still my main camera system. In light of that, it was great to get the call to work on the GFX 100S launch as well. In my discussions with Fujifilm, I knew something was coming down the pipe for quite some time, but when we started to get more details the new camera became that much more exciting.

For this assignment, we worked months in advance to find athletes, locations, and to work out all of the logistics. Since I had never photographed the sport of downhill skating it took a while to find the right skaters—who had to live in southern California near the location so as not to create travel headaches. Downhill skateboarding seems to be a reclusive skate genre that doesn't like to call too much attention to itself—due to the nature of the sport (i.e. flying down remote roads on a skateboard). In hindsight, I feel incredibly lucky that we found these three athletes and were able to make it all work. Kudos to Fujifilm for expanding the budget slightly to allow for three athletes, not just one.

I suppose “timing” is the key word for this assignment. We scheduled the shoot day just a few days after the new GFX 100S would be shipped to the USA. And we were

also trying to time the shoot as soon as possible to avoid what seemed to be a looming giant boom in Covid-19 cases in the USA. As it turned out California started locking down the day after our shoot so we eked this out just in time. Additionally, getting a film permit in the Los Angeles area proved to be very difficult as they were not issuing that many permits due to fires, Covid and a variety of other reasons. In the end, we did not get our permit until the night before the shoot. It was a nail-biter on that front.

We also didn't get our first choice for the road we really wanted to shoot on. In fact we didn't get our first, second, third or fourth choices. Finding a road that the county, the LA Film commission and the local police would even allow us to permit for road closure was like playing whack-a-mole. We kept going back to the athletes to get list after list of roads that could work. And then trying those out with the county to see if we could even get a permit. This went on for weeks. In the end, we landed on Stunt Road, which worked for the shoot but wasn't an ideal location because of its aspect and lack of extensive golden hour light. Regardless, as a working pro, this is part of the game and you adjust how you will create the images you want to get according to what you have to work with.

Lastly, the camera shipped a little later than anticipated and once it got to the Fujifilm offices in New York, they basically slapped a new Fed Ex label on it and shipped it to me—so I was the first person in North America to actually see the camera. I took some photos of the camera on my patio to send to the folks at Fujifilm North America so they could see what it looked like. Until I received the camera, I didn't realize it used a different battery than the standard GFX batteries so Fujifilm also had to overnight

A portrait of Dusty Hampton created using
the new FUJIFILM GF80mm f/1.7 lens.
Previous Spread: Dusty Hampton sliding
into a skid on Stunt Road.



some X-T4 batteries and a charger to me to actually use the camera. The timing worked out perfectly. Kudos to the Fujifilm team here in the USA for their efficiency and ability to make it all happen.

When using a pre-production camera like this the firmware is always in flux. I got daily firmware updates the last few days before the assignment was slated to start. I believe that I was one of the first photographers to shoot with the camera as the firmware was still in the early stages. Of course, this camera has the same sensor as the GFX 100 and essentially the same firmware, so it wasn't that big of a deal. Having gone through this same process with the GFX 100, it seemed smoother this time around.

Luckily, the day before the actual shoot I was able to go out with Ryan Farmer (thanks Ryan!) and shoot with him on a road that was closed due to automobiles but open to cyclists and hikers. This two-hour session allowed me to test out the GFX 100S autofocus (in beta) and see how it performed and also work with Ryan to learn about downhill skateboarding. It also allowed me to capture some images that looked quite different than those we created the following day—as can be seen on pages 34 and 35. I also found out the autofocus tracking, while better than I thought it would be, was still in the early beta firmware stage. This is all just part of shooting with a prototype camera. The pre-shoot turned out to be key for the next day as it really gave me a sense of how the camera performed and what was possible in terms of creating images of downhill skateboarding.

Having worked as a pro for 26 years now, I have shut down a few roads—but never one in such a high profile

neighborhood. On the morning of the actual shoot day, I was chatting with the policemen about the road closure. They informed me that we could shut it down for only two minutes at a time. When they said two minutes, my jaw dropped. Normally (at least in my experience), when shutting down a road, we would have 20-minutes or so each time. They went on to inform me that this neighborhood is surrounded by multi-million dollar homes and “the locals have the LA Film commission on speed dial.” If the drivers, many of whom were driving Mercedes or Porsches, had to wait more than two minutes they would call the Film commission and have our shoot shut down. Hence, we had to work within these limitations. What that meant for the shoot day was that over the course of an ten hour day we essentially got one hour of time to create images. We would get set up and then shut it down for two minutes, open it back up for ten minutes or so to let traffic flow through and then shut down again for another two minutes.

My point in detailing the nitty-gritty details here is just to give you a sense of what it is like on a larger scale assignment like this. As the photographer, you often have to work within a lot of limitations. Of course it was not just me, on location we had a video crew, a producer, the police, a Covid officer, my assistants, an professional driver and a rep from Fujifilm. This made for a total of thirteen people on set, which is fairly small given the nature and location of the shoot. We kept the number of people on location as small as possible to keep the Covid risk low.

Given that this was a one day shoot, I had a long list of images I wanted to capture showing off different aspects of the camera. Having scouted the road with the athletes the day before we made a solid plan to knock out as many



Ryan Farmer wearing his Darth Vader aerodynamic helmet for, which he uses for downhill skateboard racing. We didn't use this helmet for the action images but it was too good not to get a portrait of him in the rig. This image was captured using the amazing new GF 80mm f/1.7 lens.

shots as possible. The plan was to start with motion blur images shooting out of the back of a pickup truck. Then move onto portraits and lifestyle images, break for lunch and then come back and shoot action images all afternoon until it was too dark to see—or skate.

Having photographed a number of other sports where

the subject moves past the camera at high speed, as in road biking, mountain biking, skiing and snowboarding, surfing, etc., my first inclination was to incorporate motion blur and wicked fast strobes to both show the motion of the skater and also freeze them in place. Just capturing images of the skaters frozen and tack-sharp on a road relies heavily on body position to really communicate the



Dusty Hampton buzzing my camera position at high speed. For this image it was a matter of timing the shutter release just as Dusty came into the zone where the strobes were aimed.



action. By adding the motion blur it really helps to communicate just how fast these riders are flying down a steep road. Early on in my career, I shot a lot motion blur type images and many of those incorporated flash as well. Hence, this assignment felt like going back to my roots.

In addition to the motion blur techniques, even before the assignment got too far along, I could tell that this sport in particular might feel right with some fairly heavy-handed color casts added to the images. From the start, I was playing with a variety of color palettes to see what would work. As a photographer who for his entire career has shied away from color casts and tried to make every digital image essentially look like the scene as it was photographed this was a fairly massive departure. Last summer, I had a portfolio shoot with a motocross rider and shot a lot of that using Fujifilm's "Classic Chrome" color simulation. I really liked how those images turned out so I used that color simulation and accentuated the color casts even further in the post-processing for this assignment. In some images the color casts are quite subdued and in others, as shown in the previous spread and on the following page, I added much bolder color casts to the images in post. It was pretty much a gut feeling as to how far to take each image. But every image has at the very least a slight color cast added to the image.

The morning session of motion blur images went easily enough. To light these images, one of which is shown on Page 19, I laid down on the open tailgate of the pickup truck and held the camera over the edge just a few inches off the ground. I used the flipped up rear LCD to compose the images and had my assistant in the bed of the truck just behind the cab holding a twelve-foot boom arm with

my Elinchrom ELB 1200 strobe head on the end of it. With this long boom arm, this allowed my assistant to hold the flash out in front of the skater while I shot from the side. To gauge exposure, we dialed in the flash and camera exposures while stationary. Again, timing the speed of the skater with the truck and staying together took some figuring out but we snapped off several images on each pass before we had to reset and open up the road again. While these initial motion blur images were interesting they were not quite what I was hoping for and so, after an hour or so we moved on to the portraits.

For the portraits I wanted a clean background so we headed up to the top of Stunt Road, which looked out over the Pacific Ocean from a high vantage point. You can see a few of these portraits we shot up there on the side of the road on pages 22, 27, and 29. In addition to the GFX 100S, I also had the yet to be released FUJIFILM GF80mm f/1.7 lens along with me for this assignment. This lens is the fastest medium format autofocus lens ever released by any manufacturer. While f/1.7 may not seem that fast for those who haven't worked with medium format cameras, it offers ridiculously shallow depth of field. The portrait on page 27 is one of my favorites. At f/1.7, you can see that the shirt is out of focus where the shoulders are set back from the plane of the eyes. With the addition of very subtle color tweaks it has a classic look and feel that makes me think back to skate magazines I read in the 1980s. At 100% the eyes are just wicked sharp. To say I am blown away by that new 80mm lens would be an understatement.

Ryan Farmer had this wild Darth Vader aerodynamic helmet with him as well and it only seemed appropriate to do some sort of Darth Vader type portrait of him wearing

Dusty Hampton skating behind the pickup truck I was shooting from. This image required some serious coordination to pull off as Dusty essentially pushed off the back of the truck just before we went through the zone the strobes were aimed at. I had the camera pre-focused and everything dialed in so I could concentrate on my timing. Luckily it only took us a few attempts when we tried this scenario to get some cool shots.







Previous Page: Ryan Farmer downhill skating on Mulholland Drive in southern California near Malibu. Above: Ryan Farmer putting his hand down to navigate the tight curves on a section of Mulholland Drive. For both of these images I used the GF100-200mm f/5.6 lens on the new FUJIFILM GFX 100S.

that helmet (see page 29 to view that image). We never ended up photographing him skating in that helmet as it didn't really fit in with the street clothing we had all of the skaters wearing. But it did make for some cool, wacky portraits.

In the afternoon, we started in on the key action images I had been dreaming about since I first heard the words "downhill skateboarding." I immediately thought of a motion blur image created right in front of the skater and lit with strobes on either side of the rider. After talking with the skaters, pulling off that image started to sound harder and harder. First, having a car in front of the skaters presents a serious hazard when they are skating at high speeds—so that driver would have to be someone they trusted and had worked with in the past. Because of this,

we ended up hiring a professional driver, whom the skaters knew and felt comfortable with. Initially I was thinking that the two other skaters would skate on either side of the main skater in the image and hold the strobes. Talking with the skaters, that option seemed incredibly difficult to pull off—especially given our two minute road closure limits. In the end, we went with a less difficult option, where the lighting was set up on the side of the road and one skater riding behind the truck. After a few tries we figured out that if the skater held onto the back of the truck's tailgate, where I was laying down, they could push off just before going through the lighting setup and then it would be up to me to time the shot at the right time and place when the skater would be lit up perfectly. Of course, this took a few tries to get it dialed. We got a few cool images and then it seemed like a skating scenario where



Above: Joshua Newman cruising Stunt Road with some serious style. Next Page: Ryan Farmer skidding past my position in the middle of the light trap. For both of these images I was in a fixed position and let the riders flow through the lighting setup. The camera was pre-focused and I just had to concentrate on the timing.

the rider should be in an aero suit. Since Dusty Hampton had the coolest looking aero suit, he became the main subject for this shot. It only took us a few more tries to get the key image used for a lot of the GFX 100S marketing as shown on page 33 and on the cover of this issue of the Newsletter. The final image turned out better than I could have imagined. As soon as I saw the image (shown

on the cover of this Newsletter) I knew we had the main image that would be used for marketing the camera.

As it started to get dark we re-set the lighting for a group portrait of the skaters on the road. I laid on the ground to get that superhero angle of view and made an image using a slow 1/20th second shutter speed. The camera's



in-body image stabilization (IBIS) was key to getting a sharp portrait in such low light. At around the same time the video crew stopped shooting saying that the light was too dark even for them to continue recording video. That seemed like the perfect time to wrap so we got one last portrait (see the next spread) and then started packing up in the dark. All in all, for an intensive one day assignment we came away with a good assortment of images. My sincere thanks to the athletes Ryan, Joshua and Dusty

for all of their hard work. And my thanks also to the rest of the crew as it took a village to make all of these images come to life. Fujifilm has just released a [behind the scenes video](#) from this assignment that will really help show how we pulled off these images and crazy timing required for many of them. My thanks to FUJIFILM for creating such an amazing camera with the GFX 100S and for this assignment. For more information on the new FUJIFILM GFX 100S visit [Fujifilm-x.com](https://www.fujifilm-x.com).





portfolio





Riders on the Storm

by Michael Clark

Throughout Covid this past year, I have been lucky enough to be a part of a program dubbed Evenings with the Masters. This event is the brainchild of George Nobechi, a fine art photographer based in Tokyo, Japan. I was lucky enough to meet George when I went to Tokyo in May 2019 for the launch of the FUJIFILM GFX 100. Last March, George emailed to ask if I would be willing to give a presentation as part of this series for free—all the proceeds would go to a charity of my choosing. He followed up saying that this was a series of Zoom talks by photographers that were masters in different genres and listed off some big name photographers that were already a part of the series. At the time, Covid was in full swing and it was obvious all of us in the photo industry were going to have some free time.

As all of my assignments literally evaporated overnight, I signed on not really knowing what I was getting into. I opted to go early on in the series as I hoped the world would be getting past Covid in three or four months. In all, the series consisted of seventeen talks by some of the most legendary photographers to ever pick up a camera. I am still not sure how I fit into that bunch—thankfully I didn't have to follow up Arthur Meyerson, Sam Abell, Greg Gorman, Stephen Wilkes, Gerd Ludwig, Nevada Wier, Jamey Stillings or any of the other greats. During the series, every Wednesday evening I found myself on

Zoom chatting with many of my heroes in the photo industry. The talks were attended by hundreds of folks that had signed up and gave their money to charity. And soon enough, high profile art directors, art buyers and other luminaries from the photo industry were also sitting in to watch the talks. In the end, George raised over \$50,000 for a wide variety of charities.

Now in 2021, the second season of Evenings with the Masters has already started. There have been several amazing talks already this round from well known photographers around the World. I confess that I have taken advantage of this community to get to know some of my heroes. It felt like we, the presenters and those watching, were riding out the covid storm in a giant tight-knit photo community. Each week we would hear from folks in different places around the World to see how they were coping with the latest events. The series has massively opened my eyes to a wide range of photography and given me a lot to think about in terms of my career and the craft of photography. What has become clear is that the bounds of creativity are endless and I need to tap into that playful side of things to get those creative juices flowing more regularly. More to come on that front. It was a true honor to be a part of this and all kudos to George Nobechi, who had the vision and put in a ton of hard work (for free mind you) to put this all together.



The black sand beach at Waianapanapa State Park at sunrise near Hana on Maui in the Hawaiian Islands.

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