

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS OF
CALIFORNIA
PRO PHOTO WEST

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Community

Communication

Education

Technology

Creativity

Opportunity

CONTENTS

FEATURES

8 Owing Your Own Domain Name

10 In It For The Long Haul - by Craig Holt



12 Member Focus on
Joy Strotz

18 Relevance - by Cayce Newman



20 Think You Know
Donna Jirsa?



24 Thinking Outside
The Box
Selling Your Business Model



36 Hands On:
WACOM Cintiq 20WSX

DEPARTMENTS

5 EDITORIAL
Steven & Peggy Roosa

6 AFFILIATE LISTING

7 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
Tim Meyer

19 TECH CORNER

26 EXPO 2009
Paul Speaker

29 WESTCOAST SCHOOLS
Kip Cothran

30 QUICK BOOKS PRO (series)
Robin Swanson

33 MARKETING
Michael Collins

34 CALENDAR OF EVENTS



ON THE COVER
"Amanda"
By Joy Strotz

www.strotzphotography.com

Member Focus

Strotz Photography



*J*oy Strotz combines her passion for photography, over a decade of modeling, experience in television production, and the journey of raising three boys to bring a creative edge to her photography.

Joy received her broadcasting degree at San Francisco State University where she received the acclaimed Albert Johnson Award. At SFSU she specialized in directing live television, and was trained in cutting edge digital video editing and production. Prior to her time in San Francisco, Joy modeled in Chicago and was seen on magazine covers, in catalogs and television ads. Her many years of experience as a model helps her coach clients, putting them at ease in front of the camera, & giving them just enough direction to make them look like pros.



Some folks might question why a Nevada-based photographer would be a member of the Professional Photographers of California. It's really not so surprising when you realize there's presently no active PPA group in Nevada. So I joined the closest active organization. After all, the border is only 5 miles away!

My family can truly take all of the credit for my success.

My interest in photography started when I was quite young. As a child, my brother Ryan had an extensive darkroom in the basement of our old southern Illinois home. I remember watching him work, and being fascinated by the entire process. My mother, Joyce, always had a camera in her hand, and by seemingly accidental genius, always managed to capture the

genuine spirit of people and create really incredible images.

In the end however, it was my mother-in-law, Marianne, who repeatedly urged me to get into professional photography, making statements such as, "If you don't get into photography you'll be doing a disservice to the world!" She was, and still is, the ultimate confidence booster, and the real reason I started my professional photography business.

As for training - I received my bachelor's degree at San Francisco State University, in Broadcast and Electronic Communication Arts, a fancy term for video production. I loved ad copywriting and directing live television at SFSU. I was offered a job at a prestigious post-production firm, but quickly switched gears and followed my true love to Lake

Continued Next Page



by Joy Strotz





Tahoe, where I proceeded to settle down and have a family which now consists of three boys - ages 5, 8 and 9.

My SLR camera skills are self-taught for the most part, and I continue to learn more about my craft wherever I can through print competition, seminars, conventions, reading trade magazines and online forums.

Many photographers have inspired me, and to go into that list would make for a very long article. But, I must admit my greatest inspiration comes from my subjects. As each photo session progresses, and as we develop a rapport with one another, the moments where the subject's spirit really shines just magically appear. I crave capturing those moments.

When photographing architecture, I thrive on soaking up every aspect of the building's beauty. A lot of labor and care has gone into designing and creating these buildings, and to *not* appreciate this is to really miss out. When I take photos for an ad agency, I thrive on working as creatively as possible "inside the box" and under inevitable time constraints. Fun, fun, *fun* under pressure! For portrait sessions, a very different and relaxed photographic experience is created, which ends up being quite reciprocal. Portrait sessions not only provide my subjects with images that they will enjoy for generations, but they also fulfill my personal creative passions as an artist. My typical portrait session lasts about two hours. We usually have the opportunity to take some traditional portraits, get some photojournalistic images, and I also





allow myself the opportunity to experiment and test new ideas in imagery.

I have to admit, I am the type of person who tries to force myself to take a break from taking photos every so often, mostly to avoid overdosing my family with the experience. I'll take a hike or go to an event with my family, and I'll find myself "seeing the moments" almost non-stop. Sometimes I feel it's like a curse because I can't escape turning most of what I see into a series of still-frame images in my mind. I am constantly seeing the light, seeing the angle, and seeing the moments of life all around me. Other times I feel like my *curse* is quite a *blessing* because I realize that I am truly appreciating the beauty of my surroundings, and the spirit of many moments that might otherwise go unnoticed.

I feel my ability to make an immediate connection with my subjects helps make my work unique. They often become comfortable and relaxed quite early in their session. When we are having a wonderful time, their spirit really shines through. I believe my work shows the true spirit and personality of those I photograph; sometimes it's a serious or subtle side of that person that comes through - or sometimes a more playful side. Another saleable aspect of my work is that I turn nearly every session into a test shoot at some point during the session. This gives

each client something truly unique to take home, but I'm also careful to create images with techniques that are tried and true. I love to experiment with some new element in every session. This really helps me stay fulfilled in my work. I believe that if you don't feed your own spirit and passion for creativity, your growth as an artist is likely to suffer.

During studio sessions, I primarily use Profoto lights and modifiers. My rule of thumb is *generally less is more*. Simple lighting gives me the results I find most pleasing. However, I do use a wide variety



of light modifiers to accomplish my work. Often I use just one light such as a strip light with a reflector. Alternatively, I love the all-lit-up look of my five foot Profoto Umbrella, and have a lot of fun with the beauty dish as well. My 10-degree grid spot gets regular use, and sometimes I enjoy throwing in a back light toward the subject to create a fun effect/splash of light.

Continued Next Page





When working outside, I always try to use natural light. I always have a portable sunbounce reflector on hand, and a battery-operated Lowel id light for use in the early evening, or during impromptu indoor sessions.

I live in a very small town, and a lot of my business comes right from here. I pride myself in giving excellent service, an outstanding product, and having great customer relations. So, word of mouth has been the primary source of my rapidly increasing business. Recently I enlisted the services of an ad agency to create a variety of individual marketing pieces that will appeal to my distinctly different clients, including high school seniors, architects and builders, lifestyle commercial photography, and wedding clients.

A recent and fun addition to my marketing program has been the addition of a www.facebook.com page. It's a great place to stay in touch with some of my younger clientele, as well as magazine editors and ad agency reps.

I charge standard industry rates for my commercial and architectural photography. For portrait photography, I charge what many would consider a very high sitting fee; a rate I've derived from calculating the worth of my time, the cost of baby-sitters, post-production time, time spent meeting with the client, time fulfilling orders and overhead.

I know I have a different strategy from most. The object of my game is to have only top



quality clients who are willing to pay top dollar for my talent (thus the high sitting fee). I do not wish to be overwhelmingly busy, and I plan to steadily increase my rates to limit the number of clients, allowing me to give them outstanding personalized service. I work hard to produce and distribute top quality marketing pieces so that I stand out as a high-end service and product provider/photographer.

Within a week or two of my portrait sessions, I meet personally with my clients to share a slideshow of highlights, and to select images for ordering using the ProSelect presentation and ordering software. I highly recommend ProSelect for all portrait photography businesses. I made enough profit from my very first transaction using this software to pay for a new 30" Mac monitor, my first Profoto light, AND to cover the cost of the software itself. It's a wonderful tool no photographer should miss out on.

After the client selects and orders their top images, typically between 30 and 60 frames from a two-hour session, I lightly retouch and upload the images to a private web gallery that I create in Showit Web. Showit Web is a software program created by David Jay that allows you to easily create slideshows from a folder of images. Just be sure to use royalty-free music in your slideshows. Reasonably priced music can be obtained from sources such as stock20.com. I then make the photos available for online ordering from Pictage upon request, but most orders are placed through me directly. Images 5"x7" and larger get full retouching at no additional charge.

Unfortunately (or fortunately), I don't have a niche!

Continued on Page 39



“MEMBER FOCUS: JOY STROTZ”
(CON’T FROM PAGE 17)

I enjoy a wide variety of work, and am not ready to give up any type of photography just yet!!

In fact, I believe constantly performing a wide range of work keeps me fresh and enthusiastic for each successive job. Also, it really improves my *on the fly* skills. You would not believe how much my architectural photography knowledge has increased my capabilities for on-location commercial shoots and portrait sessions.

If you have the time to break out of your shell and try your hand in an area of photography that is new to you, you might find it considerably rewarding!

I recently began entering PPC and WPPI print competitions, and have been lucky enough to win several Awards of Excellence and Awards of Merit. I would not say that I’ve taken the scene by storm, but I am developing a firm foundation for creating merit images, and my print competition knowledge is causing rapid improvement in the overall quality of my photography.

I highly recommend every photographer taking advantage of PPC print competitions. To make participating worthwhile, you must actually go to the competition and sit through the judging. For the last two years I’ve actually gotten on a plane, gone to San Diego, and watched the entire judging process.

What I’ve learned by sitting in on print competition judging is *invaluable*.

Anyone who applies what they learn from competition, will definitely take their photography to the next level. You could call it a course in *advanced fine tuning* of your photographic images.

Maybe I’ll see you there?! ◇◇◇

O STROTZ
PHOTOGRAPHY

Want to see YOUR
name in lights?

Contact us at editor@prophotowest.com to be included in a future edition of Pro Photo West.

“HANDS ON - PRODUCT REVIEW: CINTIQ MONITOR”
(CON’T FROM PAGE 37)

Overall, our review of Wacom’s Cintiq is a positive one. Despite its slightly higher price point and additional weight, the device delivers on its promise to let users accurately and directly translate their vision onto the screen with little error or re-work. Nothing else in our arsenal comes close.



So, now you may be asking yourself “Should I buy one?” Well, the answer is “It depends”; depends on your style of post processing, the amount of post processing and creative Photoshopping you do, and your workflow needs. In our case, we were already investigating the purchase of a second monitor, which took a big portion of the price’s sting out of the cost for us. If you are considering purchasing a new monitor or adding a second one to your system, then we highly recommend you take a look at the Cintiq series. - P.P.W.