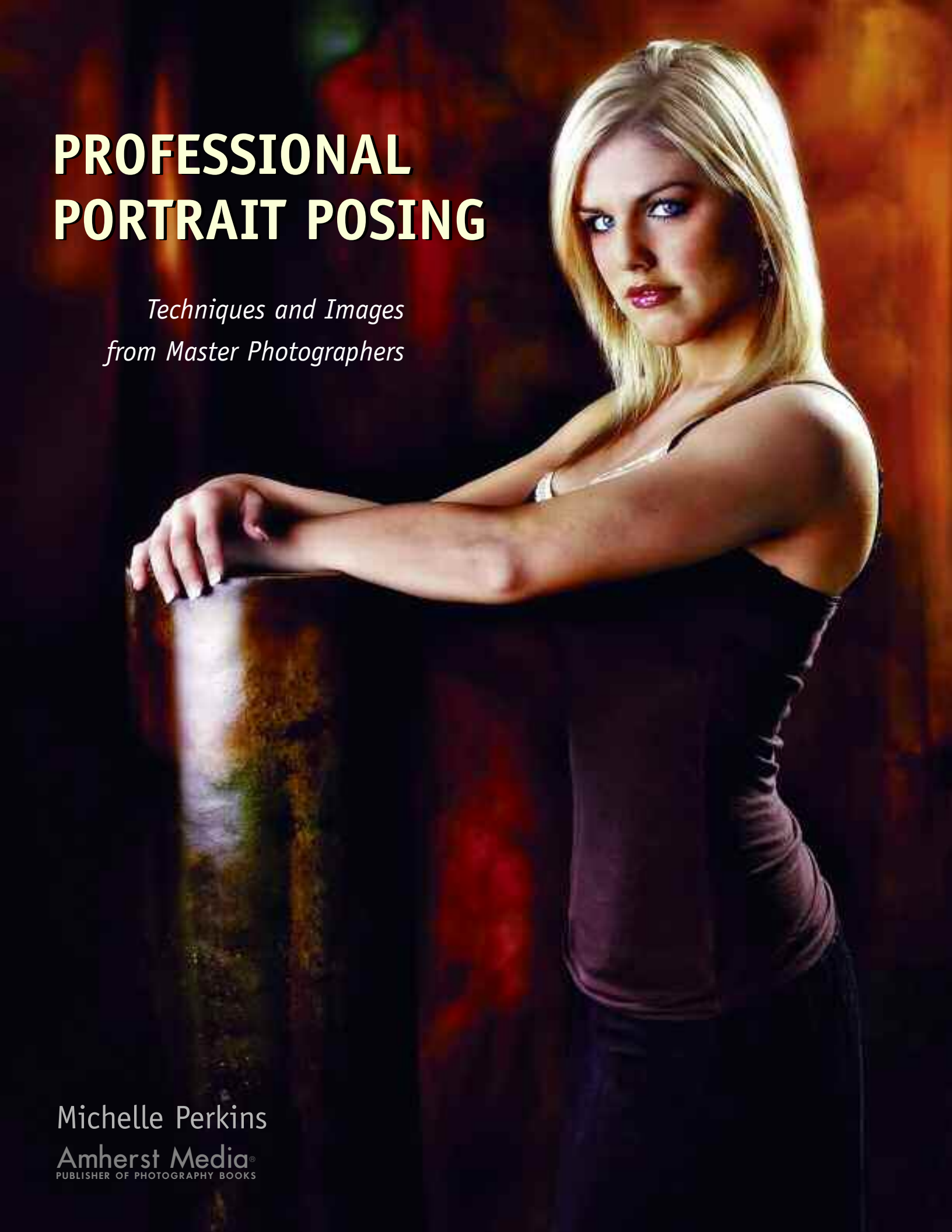

PROFESSIONAL PORTRAIT POSING

Techniques and Images from Master Photographers

Michelle Perkins

Amherst Media®
PUBLISHER OF PHOTOGRAPHY BOOKS

ON THE FRONT COVER—Lafayette, LA, portrait photographer Tim Schooler picked up this clay pipe with a metallic finish from a Mexican import shop because he thought it would make a great prop. While Tim cautions his clients to avoid short-sleeved tops for their portraits, many still elect to wear them—and Tim must find some way to make them look good. For even thin subjects, bare upper arms can look thick when captured in a portrait. Here, Tim minimized the issue by creating a dramatic pose that lengthens the arms and lifts the torso, yielding a long, slim line that runs the length of the subject's body. To learn more about Tim's techniques, turn to page 71.

ON THE BACK COVER—Tight three-quarter-length portraits like these are among Lake Mary, FL, portrait photographer Tim Kelly's best sellers. "People like big heads," he says. "When they're looking at the images and making selections on a monitor, they 'ooh' and 'ahh' when a big, beautiful face comes up. This is my way of giving them more face—plus the design element of hands. I just bring the hands closer to the face. Then, you have a headshot feel but with the elegance of a three-quarter length image." To learn more about Tim's techniques, turn to page 82.

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INTRODUCTION

Amherst Media's Pro Photo Workshop™ series is designed to provide professional photographers (and aspiring professionals) with an inside look at the working practices of leaders in the industry. In each chapter, you'll find a detailed look at the way one photographer has conquered the challenges of his or her market to build a successful business while still producing images that are creative and personally satisfying.

In this particular volume, the challenge in question is portrait posing. As you'll see, each of the profiled photographers approaches this in a unique way, based on their personal tastes, the requirements and tastes of their clients, the realities of the location, and much more. But in the end, their goal is almost always the same: to create a portrait that says something about the subject and satisfies—hopefully even thrills—their client.

From commercial imaging, to fashion photography, to traditional portraiture, the looks that are in style are constantly evolving. In this book, you'll see how some of the most successful photographers around are using these changes to enhance their work and produce ever more appealing and marketable images.

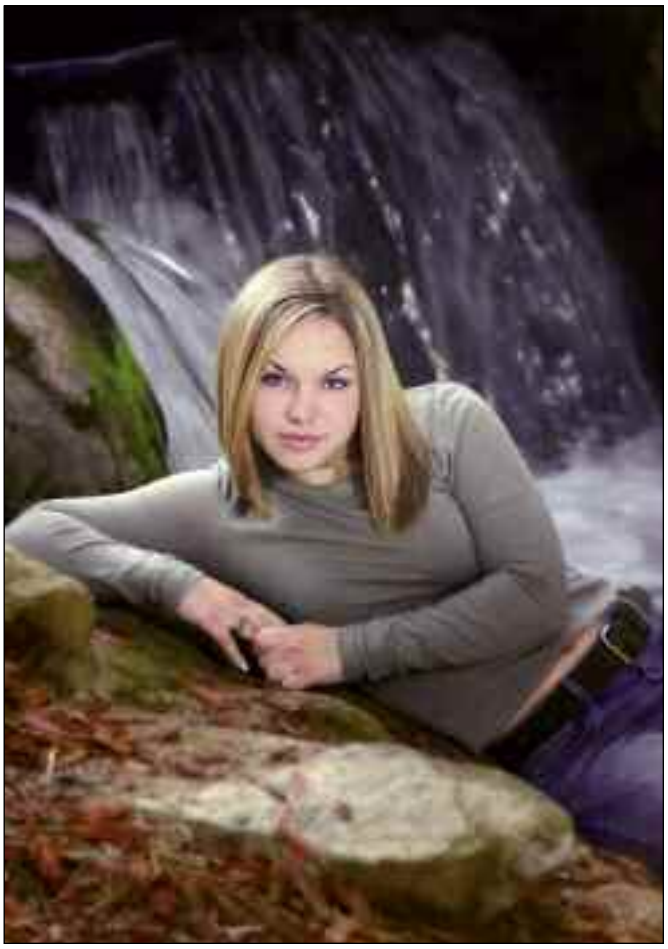
Thanks go out to the photographers who generously contributed their images, time, and knowledge to create this book. Without them, it wouldn't have been possible.

1. JEFF SMITH

Corrective Posing Makes the Sale

Jeff Smith is an acclaimed portrait photographer who specializes in senior portraits. Yet even when working with these subjects—people who are probably the slimmest and most attractive they will ever be—he approaches each shoot with one question in mind: What would this person *not* want to see in his or her portrait?

It may seem like a negative way to approach a session, but Jeff actually has his bottom line in mind. After all, regardless of the style, the props, or the composition, people ultimately *buy* portraits that make them look *good*. The easiest way to accomplish that goal is to identify potential problem areas and minimize or disguise them. And keep this in mind: whether the appearance issues in question are real or imagined from the *photographer's* point of view, it's the *client's* point of view that matters. Even if you think her nose looks just fine, if a woman feels it's too big, you'd better de-emphasize it in her portrait if you want to make the sale.



If there's one thing that all portrait subjects have in common, it's the fact that they all want to look good in their pictures. As Jeff notes, these are also the portraits that people ultimately buy, so making subjects look their best is also critical to photographers.

JEFF SMITH is an award-winning senior photographer from Fresno, CA. He owns and operates two studios in Central California and is well recognized as a speaker on lighting and senior photography. He is the author of many books, including *Corrective Lighting, Posing, and Retouching for Digital Photographers* and *Jeff Smith's Lighting for Outdoor & Location Portrait Photography* (both from Amherst Media), and *Senior Contracts* (self-published). He can be reached via his web site: www.jeffsmithphoto.com.

ABOVE—One way to minimize the appearance of a double chin (top) is to have the client stretch their chin forward (bottom). **FACING PAGE**—A pose like this can also be useful for concealing a problematic neck or chin area—plus, it has a glamorous look most women will love.

IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS

According to Jeff, there are two general types of problems that you will come across when working with your clients: imagined problems and real problems.

The imagined problems are usually very slight. "Most of the time," says Jeff, "the person who has these 'problems' is the only one who can see them." Since no problems are readily apparent, these are the problems most photographers fail to correct. "A typical imagined problem," says Jeff, "is something like, 'One of my eyes is smaller than the other,' or 'My smile is crooked.'"

The real problems are the issues that almost every one of us has. Says Jeff, "We are never as thin as we would like, we think our noses are too large, our ears stick out too much, and our eyes are too big or too small, etc." These problems are more easily identified as things that need to be disguised in the portrait.

Fortunately, a client's problems can be evaluated in a matter of seconds. "When you sit someone down with the main light turned on," says Jeff, "you can immediately start to see what that person's strengths and weaknesses are." As you sum up the problems that need to be addressed, you can start to make decisions about what poses you can use to hide this individual's flaws, which of the client's outfits would give you the most to work with (in terms of disguising problem areas), if the person should do full-length images or not, etc.

Once you have identified a flaw, you need to adapt the subject's pose to cover, disguise, or cast a shadow on the areas of the body and/or face that are problems. "Fortunately," says Jeff, "many of the more relaxed poses that you will find already hide some of the most annoying problems that your clients have."

THE HEAD AND FACE

For a natural look, the client's head should be slightly tilted (not rigidly straight). This tends to happen naturally when you position a client and have them turn toward the main light. "The only time the head usually needs to be repositioned," says Jeff, "is when the client is extremely nervous. When this happens, they tend to drop their head too far toward the higher shoulder."

Double Chin. A double chin (or the entire neck area) is easily hidden by resting the chin on the hands, arms, or shoulders. "Be careful that the subject barely touches his or her chin down on the supporting element," warns Jeff. "Resting on it too heavily will alter the jawline."

GET CREATIVE

"Some photographers are so stuck in what they have always done that they bitterly resist any change," says Jeff. "I once took a class on senior portraits. There was another photographer attending this class who was just starting out. Every time the photographer conducting the class wasn't talking, this photographer would ask me all kinds of questions. At lunch, we had some extra time, so, with permission, I went into the camera room and started showing my newfound friend some of the different poses we use with seniors. He loved it. Everything was going fine until the photographer conducting the program came in. I was doing a yearbook pose that had the subject reclining back, to make the shoulders run diagonally through the frame. The photographer conducting the class remarked that this pose was more suited to boudoir than seniors. To reply, I simply asked both photographers if the subject looked beautiful in the pose. They both responded affirmatively. I said that was all that mattered." The moral of the story? People just want to look great—and not like mannequins.

Another way to make a double chin (or loose skin on the neck) a little easier on your client's ego is to stretch the skin under the chin. To do this, turn the body away from the light, then turn the face back toward the light. This will stretch out the double chin so that it will not be as noticeable.

When a head-and-shoulders pose is needed (for a yearbook, business publication, etc.) it is sometimes impossible to use the hands or arms to hide this problem area. Posing the body to make the neck stretch can only do so much to hide a large double chin. In a case like this, Jeff recommends doing what some photographers call the "turkey neck." To do this, have the subject extend their chin directly toward the camera, which stretches out the double chin. Then have them bring down their face to the proper angle. Most of the time, this eliminates the double chin from view. It is especially helpful when photographing a man who is wearing a shirt and tie. Men who have large double chins often also have tight collars, which push up the double chin and make it even more noticeable.

Ears. Corrective posing is also the best way to combat the problem of ears that stick out too far. Ladies who have a problem with their ears usually wear their hair over them. In this case, make sure that the subject's hair isn't tucked behind her ears, as this will make them stand out. Larger ears can also stick out through the hair, making them appear *really* large.

Without hair to conceal them, the best way to reduce the appearance of the ears is to turn the face toward the main light until the ear on the main-light side of the

In most portraits, your clients will want to see eye contact—and they want their eyes to look as big as possible.

Paired with a flattering pose, a relaxed, natural expression can produce a portrait that virtually sells itself.

face is obscured. Then, move the fill reflector farther from the subject to increase the shadow on the visible ear, or move the main light more to the side of the subject to create a shadow over the ear.

Noses. The nose is only seen in a portrait because of the shadows that are around it. "By turning the face more toward the light or bringing the main light more toward the camera, you can reduce the shadow on the side of the nose and reduce the apparent size of the nose," says Jeff.

Eyes. "Most people want their eyes to look as large as possible," says Jeff. "By turning the face toward the main light and bringing the subject's gaze back to the camera, the pupil shifts more toward the corner of the eye opening and gives the eye more impact as well as a larger appearance."

With a person with larger eyes that tend to bulge, the face needs to be directed more toward the camera. You must also make sure that no catchlight appears on the whites of the eye, as this will draw a great deal of attention to this area and make it much too bright.

Expression. Proper expression depends on the age of your clients. With babies and small children, parents love laughing smiles. With children, moody, more serious expressions are salable. In dealing with teens and adults, the best expressions are more subtle.

"While squinty expressions are cute on a baby, not many adults really want to see themselves with no eyes,

Turning the subject to an angle from the main light naturally enhances the bustline.

Posing the subject with their torso at an angle to the camera produces a slimmer view of the waist.

LEFT—When they slouch, even trim subjects can seems to have rolls at their waist. **RIGHT**—Instead, have the subject sit up straight—almost to the point of arching her back. This makes a big improvement; not only does her stomach look flatter, but the pose also provides a space between her waist and left arm, making her entire torso look slimmer. Notice, too, the change in the position of the subject's feet. Simply by having the subject lift one heel, as in this image, her legs look much more shapely.

huge chubby cheeks, and every tooth in their mouth visible," says Jeff. "Large smiles are unflattering to adults for these reasons, too—but also because this expression brings out every line and wrinkle on a person's face." While retouching can reduce the appearance of these lines on the face, it often results in subjects that don't look like themselves.

With smiling, timing is important. Once your client smiles, it is up to you to decide when the perfect smile occurs and take the pictures. When most people first start to smile, it is enormous. "If you take the shot at this point," says Jeff, "you end up with a laughing or almost-laughing smile." A moment later, the expression starts to relax. "It isn't that big a change," he notes, "but it is the difference between a laughing smile and a smile that is pleasing to an adult client."

SHOULDERS

"This is the anti-stiffness rule," remarks Jeff. "When you see a portrait of a person in which their shoulders are perfectly horizontal and their spine is perfectly vertical, the person looks rigid." By placing the subject at an angle to the camera and having them recline slightly backwards, or lean slightly forward, you can create a more relaxed look.

ARMS

Most women worry about their upper arms appearing too large or about hair showing on their forearms. Men generally worry about their arms looking too thin or too flabby. The best way to avoid problems with arms is to cover them up with long sleeves. When short sleeves are worn, your choices are: compose the portrait above the problem area; use shadows or vignettes to make the area darker and less noticeable; or, if the client has long hair, use the hair to soften the problem area.

BUSTLINE

The bustline isn't a problem in most portraits, but if it will be noticeable in the frame, you must make sure that it appears even.

When a low-cut top is worn, the size of the bustline is determined by the appearance of cleavage. Cleavage is nothing but a shadow. Increase the shadow by turning the subject toward the shadow side of the frame and

Demonstrating poses to your client is often the quickest way to get the pose you have in mind (above). It's also sure to put the subject more at ease.

you will, in turn, increase the apparent size of the bustline. If a client's top is too low-cut for the type of portraits she wants, turning her toward the main light will reduce the shadow in the cleavage area.

WAISTLINE

The widest view of any person is when the person is squared off to the camera. By turning the shoulders, waist, and hips to a side view—preferably toward the shadow side of the frame—you create the thinnest view of the body. "This works well as long as the person has a somewhat flat stomach," says Jeff. "If you do this with a person who has a bulging stomach, you will put the bulge in silhouette. It's like doing a profile of a person with a big nose."

When someone does have a tummy bulge, the easiest way to hide the stomach area is to pose the client in a sitting position, then elevate the leg closest to the camera. This partially obscures the stomach area. "Having subject rest an elbow on their knee (or knees) will completely hide this area," notes Jeff.

However, sitting positions cause significant waist problems of their own—even for thin people. When the subject is in a seated position, their clothing and skin wrinkle over the waistband of their pants, giving even the thinnest person a roll at the waistline—whether it be

ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—When the subject's heels are flat on the floor (left) her legs don't look as slim and toned as when her heels are lifted (right). This is why women whose legs will show in their portraits are advised to wear high-heeled shoes (facing page).

of cloth or skin. If the person is thin, have her straighten her back, almost to the point of arching it, to correct the problem. If the person is heavier, hide this area as described above.

Also, when the arms are allowed to hang down to the sides, the body isn't defined. It is one mass, making the subject appear wider than he or she really is. When the elbows are away from the body, the waistline is defined and appears smaller.

THIGHS AND LEGS

Thighs and legs need to appear as thin and toned as possible. This isn't a problem for most men, because it's normally only athletic men who ask to take a photograph in clothing that shows their legs or thighs. Women, however, are often told they should wear dresses, tight skirts, and tight pants—even when it would be in their best interest not to.

"When posing female subjects in a full-length pose, I always have the person sitting or laying down. Unless a person is very tall and thin, she will always look better posed in this way," says Jeff. "Whenever I have a woman seated, no matter how thin or heavy she is, I don't have her sit flat on her bottom. Instead, I have her roll onto the hip that is closest to the camera. This is slimming, because it hides a good portion of the seat and thigh areas behind the subject."

Anytime the legs are going to be showing and not covered with pants, Jeff recommends having the subject wear the tallest heels she owns. "There is a reason why women who want to have the greatest impact when wearing a dress wear very high heels," he says. "When the heel is pushed up, the calf and thigh muscles flex, making the legs appear longer and firmer."

If the woman is going barefoot, have her push up her heels just as high-heeled shoes would do.

Additionally, just as the arms shouldn't be posed right next to the body, the legs shouldn't be posed next to each other in standing poses. "There should always be slight separation between the legs," says Jeff. "In standing poses, this can be done by having the client

LEFT—Unconventional poses can work very well—but you still have to make sure that your subject looks his or her very best from head to toe, or you won't make a sale.

ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—No single pose will work for every client, but when you find one that does work, the results can be spectacular.

LOOK FOR OBSTRUCTIONS

Whether on location or in the studio, Jeff often employs props to hide his subjects' problem areas. When sitting backwards on a chair, for instance, the subject's stomach area will be concealed by the chair back. Sitting your subject on the ground amidst some low foliage will help to obscure the hips and thighs. You could even pose your subject half behind a column or other architectural structure to reveal less of the width of the body, creating a slimmer look.

put one foot up on a step or cross one leg over the other. In seated poses, have the subject lift one knee higher than the other or cross their legs."

Because the legs are easy to pose incorrectly, Jeff has formulated a list of his "six deadly sins" of leg posing. They are as follows:

1. In a standing pose, never put both feet flat on the ground in a symmetrical perspective to the body.
2. Never position the feet so close together that there is no separation between the legs.
3. Never do the same thing with both legs (with a few exceptions, like when both knees are raised side by side).
4. Never have both feet dangling; at least one foot should touch the ground or another surface.
5. Never raise a knee so high that it touches the abdomen.
6. Don't expect one pose to work on everyone.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The last of Jeff's "six deadly sins" of leg posing ("Don't expect one pose to work on everyone") is a concept he urges photographers to take more broadly. "You need to understand what you are creating to be able to plan your subject's session appropriately," says Jeff. "If you just go into the camera room and zip through the same five poses with each client, you lose and they lose. When you take control of your photographs, you can better produce exactly what your client is looking for—and when clients are truly satisfied, your bank account will grow with your ability."

2. LORI NORDSTROM

In a Family Way

Lori Nordstrom is an acclaimed photographer who specializes in children's and maternity portraits. Like many professionals, her life behind the camera is actually a second career. Lori's first business was as the owner of a hair salon, which she ran for ten years. As a mom and hobbyist photographer, Lori often displayed images of her own kids in the salon—and soon clients began asking her to photograph *their* kids, too. "Eventually, I began enjoying it more than my job," says Lori, "so I made the decision to quit and went to

RIGHT—A crossed-arm pose works well for topless shots, since it's a very natural position. Lori is conscious to have the subject relax her hands, however, and to ensure that they are posed gracefully. **FACING PAGE—**While the majority of Lori's images are created in black & white, sometimes a subject's vibrant personality just begs for color—and lots of it. That was the case with the mom-to-be featured in this image (as well as the photo on page 18). A profile pose captured the shape of her belly, and her right hand is folded across it in a natural position. Notice the incredible S curve Lori created in this pose by having the model tilt her head forward.

LORI NORDSTROM owns and operates a portrait photography studio in Winterset, IA. Her unique approach to capturing her subjects has led her to be featured in numerous publications, including *PPA* magazine, *Kodak Pro Pass, The Lens, Rangefinder,* and *Studio Imaging and Design*. Additionally, Lori has earned several Kodak Gallery and Fuji Masterpiece Awards for her images and albums. Lori is also an acclaimed educator who has presented seminars to professional photographers around the world. To learn more about Lori and see more of her inspiring images, visit www.nordstromphoto.com.

FACING PAGE—Here, Lori created a different look by photographing her reclining subject from above. The subject's crossed arms create strong diagonal lines, but her relaxed hands and demure expression keep the pose soft. **ABOVE LEFT—**Handcolored images have been an important part of Lori's repertoire since her early days in photography. Here, the delicate colors complement the subject's soft wrap and the scattering of tiny flowers in her hair. Lori chose a two-thirds view of the body to show the shape of the subject's tummy, which is framed by her arms. The subject's figure creates an S in the frame, a shape well suited to this very romantic, feminine image. **ABOVE RIGHT—**Here, Lori took her hand-colored style in another direction, creating an image with a bit of a fashion flair. The mom is at a slight angle to the lens, but by choosing an elevated camera position, Lori still showed the roundness of her belly.

work for a studio in my area. In 1998, I started out on my own."

Since then, Lori has committed herself to creating images with a "real life" look—a style that both appeals to her own aesthetic sensibilities and perfectly suits her principle subjects. It is this natural look that has made her images a favorite among portrait clients and professional photographers alike.

Of course, while she makes it *sound* easy, anyone who's held a camera will recognize that there's nothing simple about the results that Lori creates with her delicate lighting, clean backgrounds, casual poses, and engaging expressions. Eliciting these looks from clients takes a skilled eye, solid technical skills, and a truly winning personality.

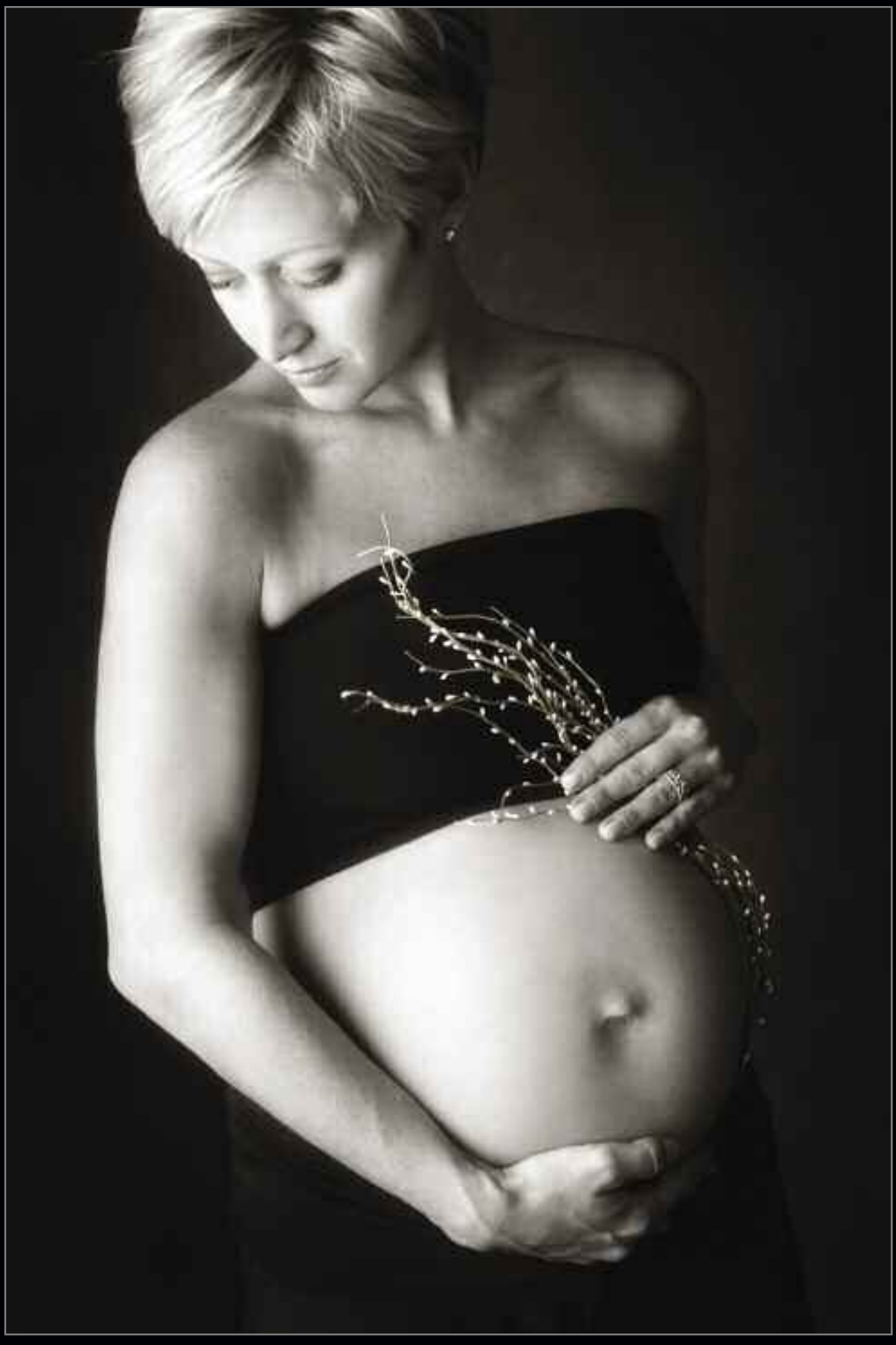
"I try to do as much 'un-posing' as possible, but with maternity portraits and newborns, you have to pose a little bit more than you would with families or kids," she says.

Making a relaxed system like this work relies largely on Lori's ability to put people at ease in front of the camera—something that can be a challenge when photographing women who are eight months pregnant and feeling self-conscious about their bodies. Therefore, Lori starts off with a phone consultation. (Because she is located at least thirty miles from most of her clients,

Lori often likes to add flowers to her images, and she tries to have fresh ones on hand for all of her maternity sessions. They add a soft, feminine touch to the images and symbolize the blossoming of a new life. **LEFT—** This subject, adorned with and surrounded by daisies, has a real "earth mother" feel. Lori had the subject at an angle to the camera with her hands gently clasped down around her belly. Tilting the camera created nice diagonals in the frame, while shooting from an elevated position allowed her to fill the frame with the flowers in the background. **FACING PAGE—**One of the reasons Lori started doing maternity portraits was that she wanted to experiment with light and form more than she could when chasing an excited child around the set. This beautifully crafted image clearly demonstrates that attention to detail. The subject is sculpted with light that emphasizes her elegant pose—from the tilt of her head, to the framing placement of her hands and arms. Here, flowers are added in the form of budded stems, clasped gently and trailing down around the subject's belly to accent its silhouette.

a studio consultation is usually impractical.) "Somebody else has booked the appointment and made that initial contact," says Lori, "so my priority when I make that phone call is to build the relationship. I want them to know that I care about them and that I'm excited about them coming. I talk with them about their kids, or their pregnancy, or whatever it might be. To me, it's all about who they are as a person, so this is more important than planning out the shoot. My goal is for them to hang up feeling good and looking forward to the session."

For a maternity session, Lori also asks the client to bring a strapless bra (into which she can tuck the fabrics used in her characteristic draped images), and the skimpiest pair of underwear they can find. "I actually retouch this off after the shoot," says Lori. "I don't ever have them completely nude. Almost nobody is com-



FACING PAGE—While many moms-to-be end up doing nude or seminude images, others are clear from the outset that they aren't comfortable with nudity. This woman and her husband had a naturally romantic relationship, so that's what Lori wanted to capture in the image. Posing the couple close together, with their heads touching and his hand raised to her belly, created just that feeling. It is emphasized by their dreamy expressions. Additionally, notice the S shape created where there bodies meet—a line that draws you to their faces. **RIGHT—**Compare this image with the shot on page 17—a portrait of the same subject. Here, Lori used a similar pose, but the mood is softer and more romantic. This is partially a result of the subject's gentle smile but also stems from the change in hand position. Here, Lori had the subject raise her arms to cover her chest. Her hands are remarkably graceful, gently turning in toward her body and creating a soft leading line to her face.

pletely at ease doing that, and I want them to feel as comfortable at the session as they can be—and to know that I'm really sensitive to not showing anything they wouldn't want their kids to see. That's what it's really all about—we're creating their new baby's first portrait," she says.

Most women have concerns about their appearance during pregnancy, and Lori is sure to address them. "It comes up during every session—they are concerned about stretch marks, or fat spots, or seeing cellulite for the first time," she says. "When the topic comes up, I remind them that pregnancy is so natural and wonderful that none of those other things matter."

Lori also uses that moment when the client expresses concerns to introduce the topic of retouching. "I'll ask, 'Do you want your stretch marks retouched? Because some moms don't,'" she says. Some women consider them their battle scars and they don't want them gone. Lori continues, "The vast majority *do* want them retouched, but

I would never want to *offend* someone by taking them off, so it's nice to have the discussion when it comes up naturally. Then, we can laugh about it and I can make them feel comfortable. Plus, if they don't have any, I can say, 'Oh my gosh, I see pregnant women all the time—you are so fortunate not to have stretch marks!'"

When it comes to the mechanics of posing, Lori laughs, "Well, there aren't a hundred-and-fifty-two ways to pose a pregnant woman." Still, she has some tips to offer. Usually a side view is better than straight on. Lori tries to get her clients in for their sessions about a month before their due date. "I like that nice, big, round tummy—but I want them in before that day it goes everywhere," she laughs. "At one point, you're pregnant in your nose, and toes, and everything! So four weeks before the due date is a good time. Even then, most women will just look big when photographed straight on, so I try to angle them at least a little to the side—and the profile view is very popular."

Lori also likes to do shots with her subject laying on the floor. This raises another issue unique to photographing pregnant women: subject mobility and comfort. "I always ask, 'Are you comfortable sitting? Are you comfortable getting down on the floor?' I make sure, always, that the session is about them," says Lori. If the subject has trouble getting up from the floor, Lori recommends offering a sturdy chair. "It's better to give her something solid for the extra help she needs rather than to try to help her yourself and fail," she says.

Lori doesn't go into her sessions with a preconceived image or pose in mind, so the images she creates are usually directed both by issues of the subject's

Lori is well known for her outstanding album designs, one of which featured this layout. The series of images at the bottom of the page were created with the subject in a camisole and boy shorts, reclining comfortably on a couch. As you can see, just by having her subject adjust the pose of her head and arms, Lori was able to produce a wide variety of looks.

While crafting maternity portraits is a rewarding pursuit in and of itself, it also plays a big role in the success of Lori's business. A great maternity session is just the first step in building a lifelong relationship with a client who will invariably come back to Lori for photography as their baby (and family) grows. **TOP RIGHT—**Lori carries a black fleece to her location sessions. Here, she threw it over the family's couch and used window light to create an outstanding image. **BOTTOM RIGHT—**Shooting from a high angle creates a natural perspective with subjects who are laying down. When posing a group like this (and the top image on this page), Lori gets the adults where she wants them, then adds the infants. The challenge is usually keeping the subjects close enough. "I tell them, 'When you feel like you're too close, you're just close enough,'" she says.

comfort and by the nature of their personality. "Some moms, right away, are funny—or maybe even just nervous—but I can tell it's going to be a fun session because we get to laughing," she says. "So I might get the fan going and have the mom play with her top—maybe having her lift it to look at her belly," says Lori, noting that she usually starts the session by photographing her subject in whatever she was wearing when she arrived.

"Other moms are just more romantic; that's just the way they are in this whole experience," says Lori. "Pregnancy is one of those times when nothing in the whole world matters; it's all going on inside your body. You relate every single thing back to that baby, and sometimes that really comes out; that's all we talk about. When that's the case, the images also come out a little bit more quiet and serious."

This level of sensitivity and flexibility is especially important since most of Lori's maternity clients don't actually come to the studio seeking maternity images. "I'm still talking people into it," says Lori. "People will call to get

information on a newborn session or to ask if we have a first year collection. Some have seen maternity portraits and say, 'My friend had hers done, but I don't know if I'll be that brave.' I just tell them, 'You have to come in. It's a special time, you have to remember it.' I will do a free session if I need to—I just think it's the best thing I can do (in terms of marketing) for my business. I'm building a relationship. By the time I'm done photographing them, and they have their images back, and they love them, and they look great, and we've made a connection . . . they're not going anywhere else. So I do a lot of free sessions—if I had to, I'd *spend* money to get them as lifelong clients," she says.

In photos of Mom with her new baby, a little more planning and posing is used than in some other sessions—but the overall intent is the same: to show the close connection between the subjects. When posing, Lori takes a natural approach, starting with positions that moms naturally use when holding their babies, then tweaking them to make the look more photogenic. Even with a sleeping baby, however, this can take a little improvisation, though. For the image on the facing page, Lori had planned to have the baby's knees tuck up (like in the shot below)—but this little one would only drift off to sleep when stretched out and rocked on Mom's knees.

Lori designs mom-and-baby poses to show the natural closeness between the pair. A simple pose like this shows the subjects as they are in real life, capturing a seemingly candid moment. Of course, "candid" poses like this only happen when the subjects are totally at ease—and only become truly effective portraits when carefully captured by a photographer who has great timing and great compositional sensibilities.

When it's time for the newborn session, Lori continues to provide client-centered services. She starts by asking the moms to wait to feed their baby until they arrive at the studio. "I tell them, 'You're used to quiet car rides—but this is not going to be one of them!'" Lori laughs. Having the baby fed at the studio gives the subjects a little time to settle in after their drive and invariably puts the baby deeply to sleep for the shoot.

Lori also warns the mother in advance that the baby *will* cry for the entire session. "Then, when they *don't* cry—and most don't—the mom feels like her baby is the best baby in the world. And if the baby does happen to cry, she's prepared and doesn't feel upset about it," says Lori.

From start to finish, Lori keeps her client and their needs at the heart of the session. In terms of posing, that's the key to getting the natural looks she wants; she brings out the best in everyone by getting them to relax and be who they really are. But this concept goes further: by creating a fun and inviting atmosphere at every shoot, she ensures great word-of-mouth reviews—and plenty of return visits for more wonderful images.

3. BILL LEMON

Communication is Key

Bill Lemon thrives on capturing beauty—and with the ever-changing variables that photographing models presents, his pursuit is both challenging and entertaining. "While there are certain constants in this line of work, each day is different than the last and each session is filled with unique rewards," says Bill.

Rising to those challenges starts with a clear plan—especially when doing location shoots, which are one of Bill's specialties. "When going out in the field," says Bill, "it's a good idea to have a few poses and locations in mind. These should be concepts you think will make good use of the model's assets (a beautiful face, long legs, great eyes, etc.), and produce the kind of images she is looking for (softly sensual, artistic nude, fashion, etc.). It is also a good idea to

Sometimes a pose is all about mood. Here, the model's body is posed to produce diagonal lines and soft curves. Her parted lips, tussled hair, and unzipped jeans all contribute to the softness and sensuality of the image. By tilting the camera, Bill transformed the vertical wood beams into softer diagonal lines that complement the look.

BILL LEMON is a professional photographer who specializes in nude and beauty images. Over the years, his images have appeared on fifteen magazine covers. He has also authored three books: *Black & White Model Photography, Professional Secrets of Nude & Beauty Photography,* and *Professional Digital Techniques for Nude & Glamour Photography* (all from Amherst Media). For more on Bill, please visit www.billlemon.com.

FACING PAGE—This model sent Bill an e-mail with some ideas she had for her session, because she didn't want to do any nude images. Bill felt that this concept, inspired by an image that was once made of Marilyn Monroe, would work well. The image is modest and simple—but its playful, sensual qualities make it extremely effective. **ABOVE—**There has long been an association between beautiful women and automobiles. Here, Bill posed his model in the passenger seat, then shot in through the open driver's side door. The rigid lines of the car provide a perfect contrast to her soft, natural pose.

keep in mind the model's energy level and enthusiasm, as well as her level of experience in front of the camera. Having a point to start from can be very helpful in making the model feel comfortable and in developing a rapport with her."

Bill considers developing a rapport with his models to be one of the key factors in producing the images he wants. Communication with the model is especially critical when it comes to posing. "You've got to give the model praise for what she's doing," says Bill. "Carefully watch what she is doing, and fine-tune the image by telling her to turn her head a bit or showing her how to gracefully position her hands."

As the shoot progresses, Bill recommends talking to your model and asking if she's comfortable. If she's not comfortable in the pose you're using, it's time to rethink your strategy. "Discomfort on the model's part is almost always obvious in the final product," notes Bill, "and it doesn't reflect well on you."

In nude and glamour photography, the poses tend to be somewhat exaggerated and more theatrical than those required for more traditional portraits. As a result,

FACING PAGE—Sometimes an interesting prop or location is all that's needed to inspire a great pose. In this case, Bill and his model were on their way to another location when they spotted this culvert in an open field. From there, it was a simple matter to seat the model in the open circle. Her arms were used to cover her chest and her legs were lifted and posed at slightly different angles to highlight them in the photograph. As Bill notes, "You don't need to travel to vast landscapes in exotic locales in order to get unique and artistic images. Since creating this image, I've revisited the location with other models, and it is always a hit." **TOP RIGHT—**This is a great pose for a model with long, slim legs who wants to create a sensual image but doesn't want to pose nude. The high French cut of the underwear lengthens the visual line of her leg, and the wealth of vertical elements in the background increases the visual sense of length you get when looking at the photo. Having the model lift the knee of her leg closest to the camera gives the most prominent leg its best shape and creates a beautiful S curve through the length of her body. Her arm is kept away from her waist, creating a dark space that emphasizes this curve. **BOTTOM RIGHT—**This image is a variation on the same theme. Here, the model was willing to pose seminude, but she didn't want to expose herself to the camera. "Because she has a beautiful face and great legs," says Bill, "I decided to pose her in a way that would show off these two great features at the same time. To make her legs look their best, I had the model stand on her toes and point the toes of her raised leg. This tightens the legs and makes them seem even longer and thinner. To capture the beauty of her face, the model's eyes look straight into the camera, and her expression is soft and sweet." Notice, too, how the model's left hand is raised to her face, drawing your eye to this additional area of emphasis. **NEXT PAGE—**If there's a word to describe the look of this image, it's "classic." The model's pose and expression are subdued, and her knee is drawn up to cover most of her body. The lighting, from a 4x6-foot softbox placed 45 degrees to camera left, enhances this natural look by allowing much of her body to fall into deep shadow. Notice how her left hip is posed to take advantage of this; it is moved partially out of the light, creating a slimmer look.

Bill often enjoys working with experienced models. "Professional models are well trained in using their body language in a way that adds to the story you are striving to create," says Bill. This does not mean, however, that he doesn't work with amateurs—far from it.

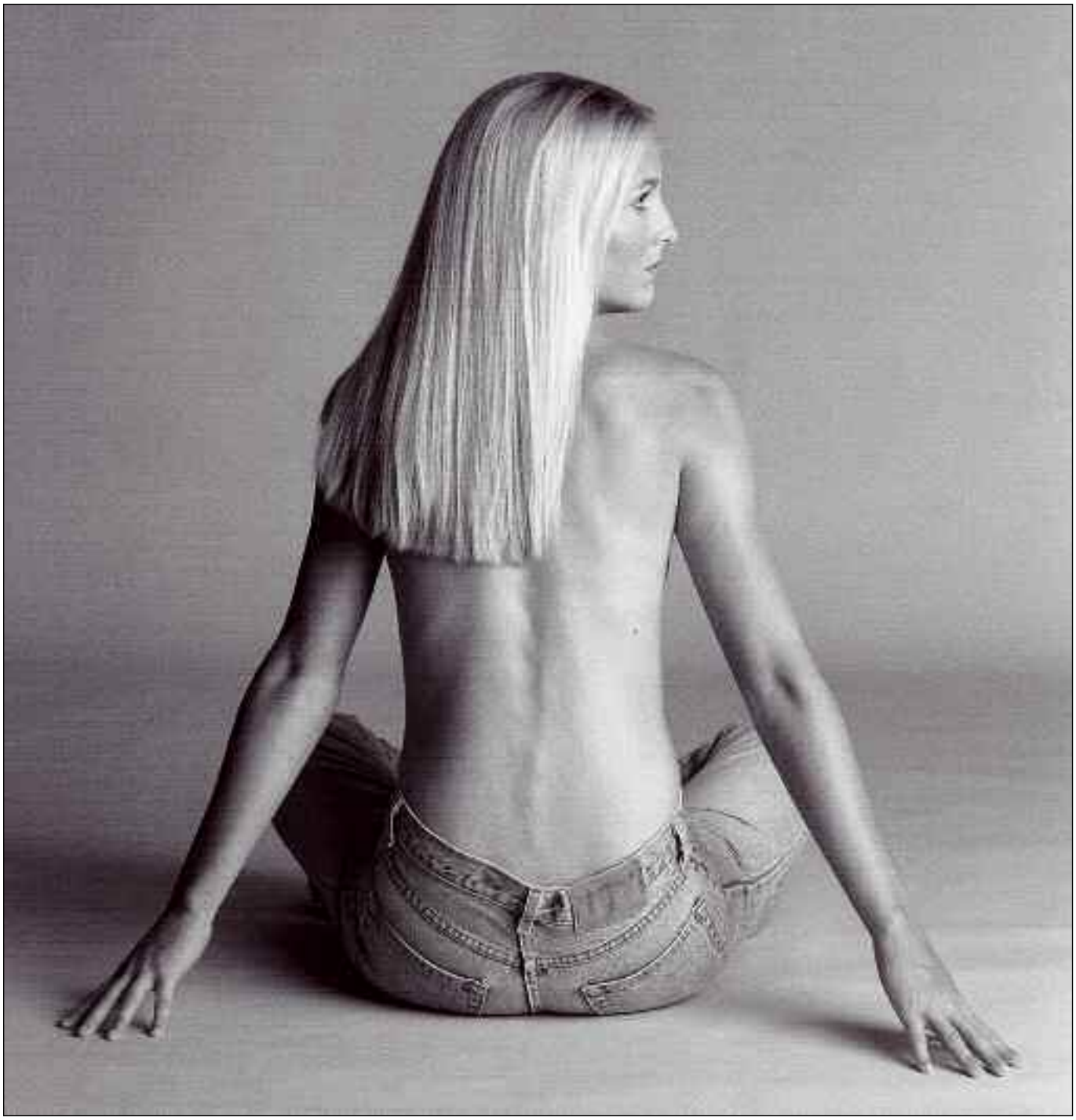
With models who are less experienced in front of the camera, some extra steps are required when selecting poses. First, Bill recommends going through your portfolio with the model before the shoot. Note the images that appeal to her, and use these as the basis for designing her poses.

Bill also feels it's a good idea to keep your eyes open and watch how your model moves, sits, and behaves when she's *not* in front of the camera. Being in front of the camera makes many people nervous, which will

impact their ability to pose naturally. "Above all," says Bill, "it's important to talk with your model and discuss her comfort level with various clothes and poses."

Keep in mind that new models may feel more comfortable creating lingerie or seminude images. You can even suggest nude images where the model's arms and legs, parts of the set, or even shadows are used to obscure private areas. This gives the model some much-needed security while she is getting used to working

ABOVE—"This photograph was created in my studio with a background of black velvet spread out on a platform," says Bill. "As you can see, it makes the model almost seem to float in the frame, and emphasizes her beautiful, smooth skin." Raising a model's arms also lifts her chest. Here, you can see how it also emphasizes the model's toned musculature and creates diagonal lines that frame her face. **FACING PAGE—**Water can take a central role or "accessorize" a scene. It can even serve as camouflage for a model who wants to create an implied nude image. Here, the model was positioned right under a waterfall at the far end of the pool. Her pose suggests she has been interrupted while bathing, giving the image an intimate feel.



In this symmetrical pose, the model's body forms a triangle in the frame. By keeping the pose simple, Bill has encouraged the viewer to look at all the other details—the delicate position of her hands, the model's smooth skin, her silky hair, and her striking profile. "When photographing a model in profile, keeping her eyes in line with her nose produces a natural, flattering look," notes Bill.

with the photographer and to being in front of the camera. "Creating a sensual image isn't about nudity," says Bill. In fact, you may note that none of the images featured in this chapter reveal more than a bikini would. Instead, the pose and expression are used to emphasize the model's beauty and suggest sensuality.

By communicating with his models, Bill Lemon has been able to develop creative partnerships that yield stunning images. For the models, this means a fun shoot and some breathtaking shots for their web sites and portfolios. For Bill, it means having the opportunity to achieve his artistic goal: capturing beauty.

4. BILLY PEGRAM

Flawless Fashion

THE CHALLENGES

"Over the years," says Billy, "I've realized that there is an art to posing models—an art that all photographers, in order to be successful, must develop."

Indeed, this is probably especially true when posing a model for fashion and commercial images where the demands are many—the model must look her best, the pose must complement the composition, the client must like the look, the image must create the intended emotional response, and the pose must showcase the product the model has been hired to display.

With such exacting standards in place, it's no surprise that fashion photographers have developed ways to glamorize and accentuate—or, conversely, downplay and minimize—just about every imaginable part of the human body.

Because fashion photographers work with models, many of them professionals, you might expect the subjects to do much of the posing themselves. Yet, the photographers are, in fact, highly involved. "Beginning

In fashion photography, the pose must serve a number of functions—from making the model look great to highlighting the product being sold.

BILLY PEGRAM is a professional photographer whose diverse clients have included Fila, Swatch, and the Goodwill Games. He has also directed over a hundred videos for the American College of Sports Medicine in conjunction with major sponsors like Reebok and Gatorade. Billy is the author of *Professional Model Portfolios: A Step-by-Step Guide for Photographers* and *Posing Techniques for Photographing Model Portfolios*, both from Amherst Media. For more information on Billy, please visit www.billypegram.com.

Beginning models depend heavily on photographers for direction when it comes to posing—and even experienced models rely on photographers to help them fine-tune their poses and emphasize their best features.

models especially must rely on the experience of the photographer to guide them to flattering poses," notes Billy. "Experienced models, although they usually develop a rather extensive repertoire of poses and move gracefully through a series, still rely on the photographer to fine-tune their poses, emphasizing their best features while minimizing the weaker ones."

Also, just like many portrait photographers, Billy is often faced with the challenge of assisting a nervous subject who simply stands in front of the camera, waiting to be told what to do. "If you are an inexperienced photographer, it can be difficult to direct the model," he says, "especially since photographers tend to be better at *visualizing* a pose than *communicating* it clearly to a subject."

SET OBJECTIVES

To make the posing process easier, Billy suggests setting some objectives.

If the image you are creating is designed to showcase a product (whether it's a can of soda, an evening gown, or a diamond necklace), ask yourself what it is that you are trying to show. Is it the unique shape of the soda can? The delicate beading on the back of the gown? The

sparkle of the diamonds? Are there features that need to be hidden (perhaps the clasp on a bracelet or the zipper on a dress)?

If your image is designed to showcase the model or subject, your questions will be much the same. What do you want to show off? What are the person's best features? What features need to be de-emphasized?

DESIGN THE CONCEPT

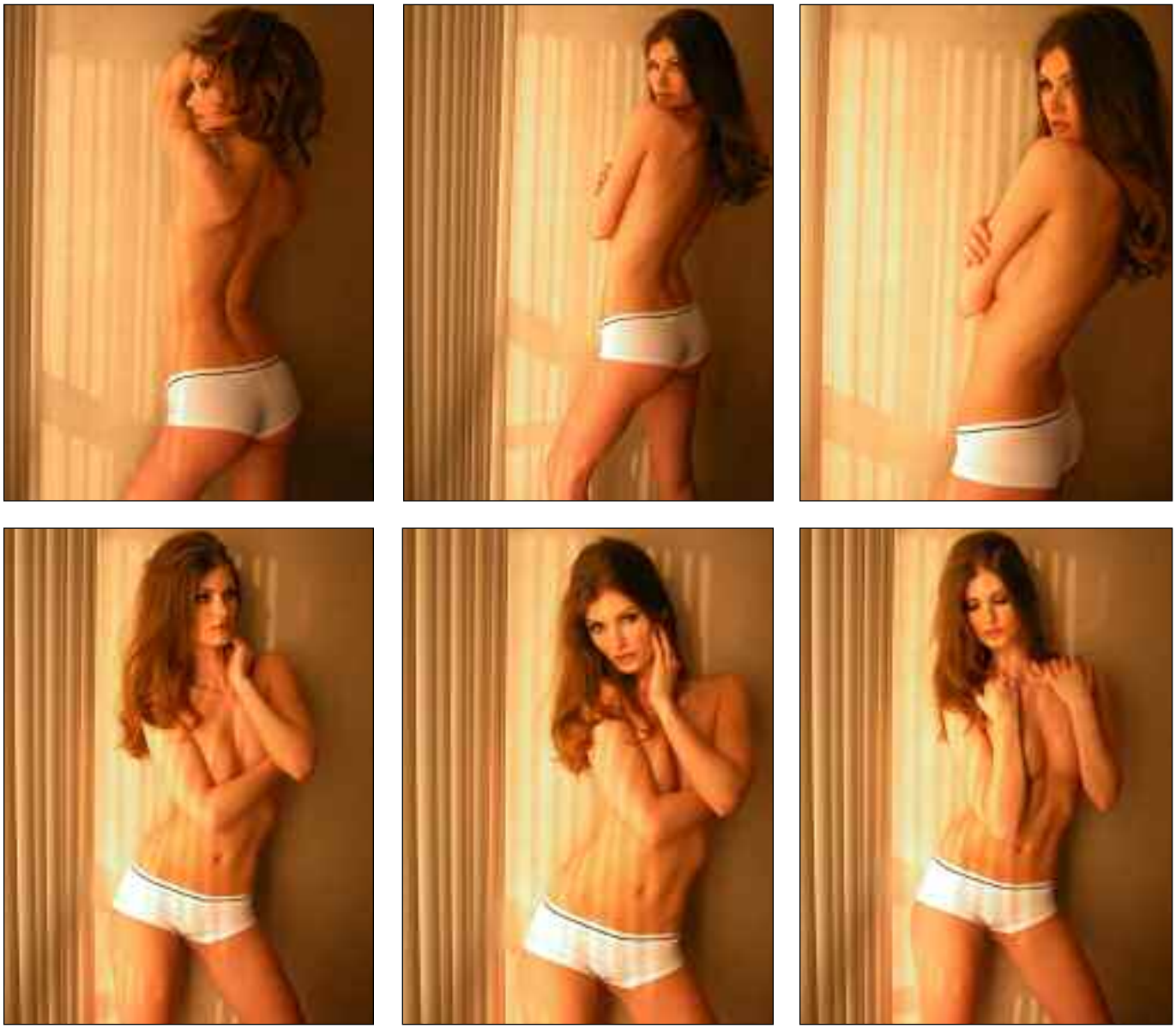
Once you have determined your objectives, you can decide how to reach your goals. This means creating flow and directing the eye.

"'Flow,'" says Billy, "is the term I use to describe how the viewer's eye is directed through a photograph. The eye will 'enter' from the lower-left corner. Then, it will search for the brightest thing in the photograph. The arrangement of lines, shapes, colors, and tones in the frame will guide this search—and the photographer must use these elements to control the flow, directing the eye to the intended subject of the image (the product, the garment, the model's face, etc.)."

"One of the most important tools for achieving this goal is the positioning of the model's body," says Billy. "For example, the viewer's eye may follow the line of a leg up through the body to the face. Alternately, the body might be posed so that the viewer's eye is drawn up the model's arm to her diamond bracelet. Similarly, the whole body might be posed to draw your eye to the product the model is holding.

"A helpful way to practice achieving the right flow in your images is to look at some photographs or magazine ads and diagram the flow of your eye to the subject of the photo (or to the logo in an ad shot). It may help to turn the image upside down. This makes it less recognizable; instead of a body, the subject is rendered more as a series of shapes and colors."

What does your image need to showcase? If you want to show the comfort of athletic wear (left), a different pose will probably be required than if you want to display the seductive cut and sheer fabric of some lingerie (right).



During the shoot, ask the subject to change one small element per shot. That way, you can refine the pose with each variation, rather than trying to cope with something totally new every time.

Stopping the viewer's gaze is the objective of creating flow—but where should the eye stop? "It might be the client's logo, the detail on a garment, or the eyes of the model," says Billy. "It all depends on the intent of the image." Ensuring that the pose accomplishes this successfully is the responsibility of the photographer. For example, a well-executed leg pose will draw the viewer's eye up the leg, through the body, and to the face—which is the ideal. Incorrectly posed, however, it can easily misdirect the eye up the body to a portion of the anatomy not intended as a point of focus by the model, client, or photographer.

COMMUNICATE YOUR IDEAS

"After settling on an idea or concept, you must communicate it to the model before you start working," says Billy. Being able to do this effectively will establish your credibility with those on the set and allow the whole team to work in a unified direction—critical for making the session run smoothly.

"Keep in mind that being in front of the camera can make people nervous," says Billy, "so being clear with your instructions and making the session professional can also increase your chances of success by putting the model at ease."

One way Billy suggests for communicating your intent is to show sketches or sample photographs of the style, the poses, and the overall feel of the photograph you want to create.

"Another trick is to have someone stand in as the subject and allow the model to look through the camera so she can see what you are seeing and understand the posing," he says.

Finally, you may even try having the model pose without the camera in place—that sometimes helps to relieve anxiety about the shoot, according to Billy.

REFINE THE BASIC POSE

"Once the shoot is under way," he notes, "don't have the model change poses dramatically for every shot. Rather, ask her to change one small element per shot—the tilt of her head, the position of her hand, the angle of her hips, etc." That way, you can refine the pose with each variation, rather than trying to cope with something totally new every time the subject moves. The following are some of the critical elements to look for.

Posture. When a model slumps, it accentuates the shoulders and leads to the "turtle" effect (where the subject doesn't appear to have a neck). It also makes the bustline appear to sag.

"To straighten a model's posture," advises Billy, "have her imagine a string attached to either the center of her chest or the top of the head. Then, ask her to pretend that someone is pulling that string up to the ceiling. This straightens the spine upward, almost to the point of arching the back. It will lengthen the neck, lower the shoulders, firm the bust, and create a much more pleasing photo."

Some models also have a tendency to hunch their shoulders up toward their ears. This is not a good pose, as it also creates a "turtle" effect. "Keep a good distance

LEFT—Too many photographers allow their subjects to slump, resulting in the visual emphasis being placed on the negative space between the neck and the chest. With female subjects, this also makes the bustline appear to sag. In short, poor posture does not present any subject at her best. **RIGHT**—Good posture leads to a much better image.

Women's legs look their most shapely when the toes are pointed. Presenting a side view of at least one leg is also better than seeing the fronts of both legs. Finally, when cropping the legs, Billy notes that you should never crop at a joint. As shown here, legs should be cropped mid-calf or mid-thigh to avoid an unsettling appearance.

between the shoulders and the ears," says Billy. "This will make the neck appear longer as well."

Feet and Ankles. "Selecting a good pose for the legs and feet is vital when creating a full-length shot or a shot where the model is just one element in a wide image," says Billy. "The feet and legs contribute so much to the overall feeling of the photograph—from the tilt of the hips, to the position of the feet, to the casualness of the stance, or the relaxed angle of a seated model."

A good way to learn how to pose the feet and legs is to tear out photographs that you like from magazines. Then draw lines on these images indicating where the bones are positioned in the model's legs. ("This is a good exercise for posing the rest of the body too," Billy notes.) Then, step back and evaluate the feel of the photograph. Does the position enhance this feel?

Legs and feet rarely look their best when shown straight on. "When photographing a model, I am constantly asking her to show me a heel," says Billy. "Even when I am cropping the feet out of the photo I have the model make sure that one heel is always visible to the camera. This ensures that the viewer is seeing the front of one leg and the profile of the other. It also forces the model to position her hips at an angle to the camera."

Billy also suggests that you try to avoid showing the model standing flat footed. Shooting the feet with the heel raised adds height to the model, makes her legs

look more toned, and creates a more graceful attitude. When the toes are pointed, the foot instantly becomes an extension of the leg, making the legs appear longer.

Hands. A basic rule for hands is to make sure they are never both at the same level in the photograph. "The space between the two hands creates an imaginary line," says Billy. "If the hands are at two different levels, this line will be a diagonal one, which is much more interesting than a horizontal line."

In general, you should also show the profile of the hand. The palm or back of the hand is quite large and will demand too much attention—often drawing the viewer's eye away from the subject's face or the product the model is selling.

Billy also advises keeping the fingers together and in a slightly bent position. "Spread fingers create too many lines for the viewer's eyes to read," he notes. "And don't crop or hide those fingers. When this happens, the hand looks amputated, leaving the viewer to wonder if the model has all her fingers."

Keep the wrists either straight or bent slightly. When the wrist is bent, the hand should lift slightly upward toward the shoulder. The hands should never be allowed to flop down; this will make them look lifeless.

"Also," says Billy, "keep the hands at the same distance from the camera as the body. Extending them out closer to the camera will make them look too large in proportion to the body."

If the pose you have in mind calls for the model to have her hand(s) on her hips or thighs, the pose you pick will depend on the attitude you want to convey in the image—it could be relaxed (left) or have a little more attitude (right).

"To establish a connection, I remind the model to focus on the lens," says Billy. "I ask her to imagine she is placing her face on the film (or, today, the digital image sensor!) and look *through* the lens to the film."

Finally, be careful to keep the subject's hands away from any problem area of her body. "Placing hands there only draws attention to the flaw," Billy cautions.

Eyes. "In photography, the eyes are possibly the most vital element of the image," says Billy. "They create a sense of communication with the viewer, they can show mood, reveal character, or create tension. They literally create the flow of the photograph. Eyes can give a photograph a sense of power, depth, and intimacy."

In commercial shots, the model generally looks off camera, since the product takes top billing. For portraits (or in images for a model's portfolio), however, the eyes should be looking at the camera, and the photographer should always focus on them. "This is what draws the viewer to the image and forms a connection that can make the difference between success and failure," says Billy. "To establish a connection, I remind the model to focus on the lens. I ask her to imagine she is placing her face on the film (or, today, the digital image sensor!) and look *through* the lens to the film."

Inexperienced subjects often stare at the camera in a "deer in the headlights" manner. "To avoid this," says Billy, "I suggest the person periodically look away, then return their focus to the camera in order to maintain a fresh, spontaneous look. If the head is at an angle I don't want to lose, I'll instruct the model to simply lower her eyes, then slowly raise them to the camera."

Lips. "Lips are second in importance only to the eyes," says Billy. "When training a beginning model, I have them use their hands to cover everything except

ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—Lips are second in importance only to the eyes and are critical in creating the mood intended in the image.

their lips, then give them words to demonstrate, using only their lips—happiness, anger, pride, softness, etc. This way they see the importance and use of lips to create the intended mood."

"Sometimes it is helpful to direct the model to open her mouth so that she can just slightly feel the air across her lips," suggests Billy. "This will make the lips appear larger. It will also relax the jaw, since she cannot clench her jaw with her lips slightly open."

Expressions must look natural and spontaneous. The photographer can help accomplish this by creating an environment that will evoke the desired expression.

Expression. "Expressions must be spontaneous," says Billy, "even though they are planned to obtain the desired result." An experienced model can counterfeit an emotion, but often the photographer must assist her to make it happen. This is accomplished by creating an atmosphere that will evoke a "natural" expression.

When a model is struggling with expression, direct her to use words to both help create expression and draw her concentration away from her struggle. "I often use 'hot.' This has a two-fold benefit. First, in saying the word, the mouth will take four shapes. If the photographer is quick, at least one of these will photograph well. Also, this word tends to make the model giggle, further relaxing her. Another word I have used is 'true.' This creates a bit of a pout."

"Sometimes a model gets really nervous and her upper lip may stiffen and quiver," says Billy. "When this happens, I will ask the model to say, 'alfalfa.' The first two syllables will relax the mouth, and the '-fa' syllable produces a nice shape for the mouth."

FINAL THOUGHTS

"While there are many skills that will help you to establish your reputation in this field," says Billy, "really understanding how to pose a model to make her look her best is one of the most critical. Even with the best lighting, clothing, makeup, and hairstyling, an image in which the pose looks awkward or unflattering will never be a success."

"If you have a photogenic friend, try scheduling a test session to focus on honing your posing techniques," Billy suggest. "Or if you are already working as a portrait photographer, consider adding a few 'fashion' poses to your portrait sessions—your clients will undoubtedly like the results!"

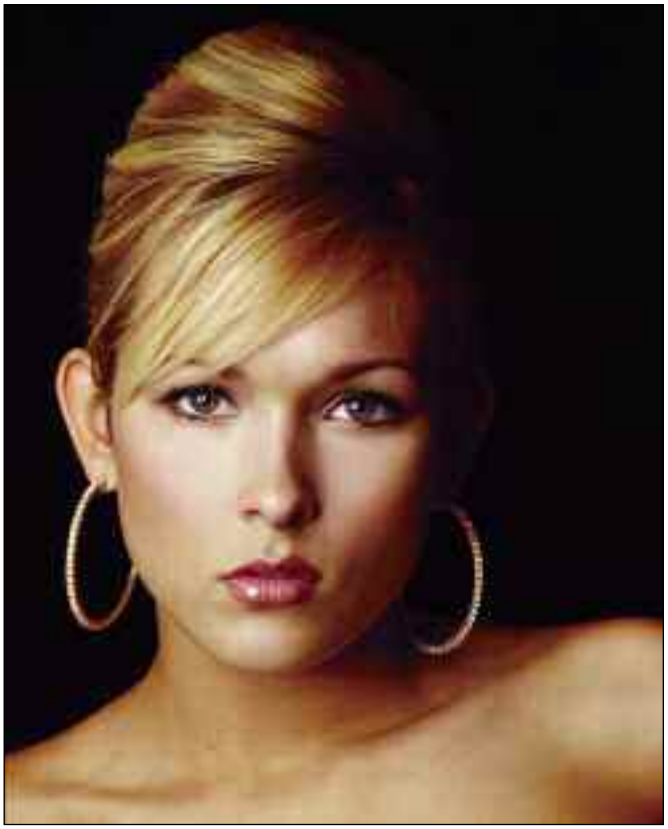
5. ROLANDO GOMEZ

Success with the Glamour Edge

For the past ten years, Rolando Gomez has been on the forefront of glamour photography, tirelessly working as a defender of the often-disdained art-form he is passionate about. It finally seems like people are taking notice.

Once the black sheep of the photography industry, glamour has cast off most of its "cheesecake" reputation, gotten back to its elegant Hollywood roots, and lost some of its stigma. "A good example is the photography of Jennifer Aniston in *Vanity Fair* a few years ago," says Rolando. "The images were sensual, sultry, and seductive, but with class. That's glamour today."

Recapturing this classic legacy has also helped glamour influences slip into just about every genre of photography, from fashion and editorial work to wedding photography and portraiture. Driving this trend are magazines like *Maxim*, *Stuff*, and *FHM*, as well as fash-



RIGHT AND FACING PAGE—Glamour photography isn't about nudity, it's about idealizing the subject. In both of these images, the model's direct gaze locks with the viewer's eyes and slightly parted lips add a sensual quality to the shots.

ROLANDO GOMEZ is a former combat photojournalist turned glamour photographer and the founder of the popular web sites www.garageglamour.com and www.glamour1.com—visited by over 500,000 people each month. He has been a guest speaker at the PhotoImaging & Design Expos and Photo Plus Expos, where he drew standing-room-only crowds. His work has appeared in Playboy Special Editions products, *Studio Photography & Design* (where he is a contributing editor and writer), *Peterson's 4-Wheel Drive, Stars & Stripes,* and newspapers nationwide. Gomez is a Lexar Media Elite Photographer, a guest instructor at The Palm Beach Photographic Center and FotoFusion, and the author of *Garage Glamour: Digital Nude and Beauty Photography Made Simple* and *Rolando Gomez's Glamour Photography: Professional Techniques and Images*, both from Amherst Media. To learn more, visit www.rolandogomez.com, www.glamour1.com, or www.garageglamour.com.

ion icons like Victoria's Secret, bebe, and DKNY, which have now made glamour photography mainstream.

GLAMOUR DEFINED

"Glamour photography is probably the most powerful form of photography when it comes to its essential subject," says Rolando. "Unlike fashion photography, which relies on the model to display a dress or accessory (the real subject of the photograph), in glamour photography the model is the subject of the photograph." The other qualities that define a glamour photo have to do with the visual idealization of the portrait's subject—creating an image that, like a classic Hollywood portrait, turns a mere mortal into a star.

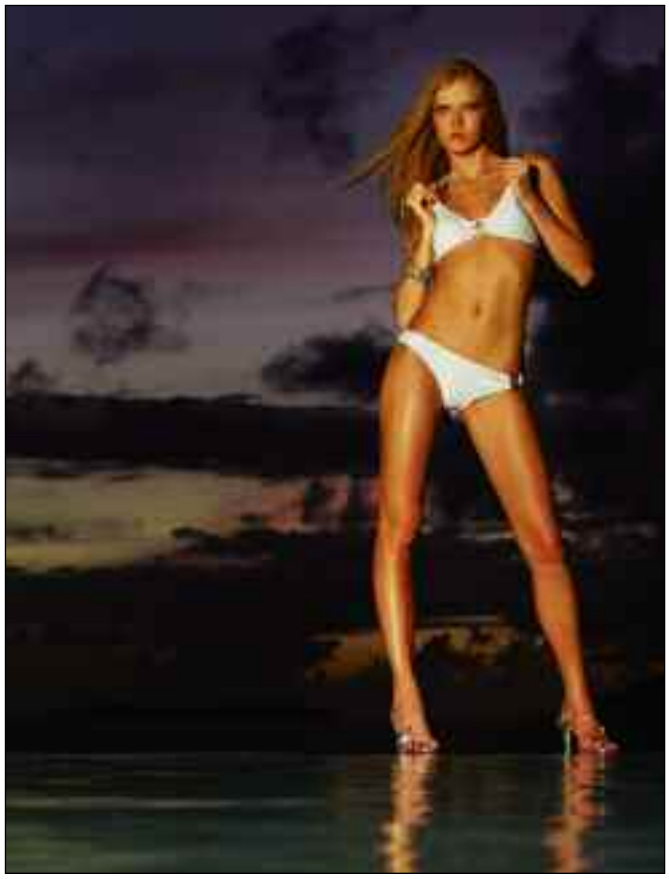
EYE CONTACT

"What's the big deal about eye contact?" asks Rolando. "It's simple—when a model looks at the camera, the viewer naturally tends to look straight back into her eyes. Think of it this way: as a vendor of a product—say, a jeweler—I want to sell you my necklace, so I don't need you looking at the model's eyes first; I need you looking my product. As a result, most art directors and photographers avoid eye-contact shots for fashion images. Therefore, if you do see eye contact in a headshot, consider it a glamour image."

POSING

Because glamour photography seeks to idealize the subject, posing is critical. To ensure success, a careful and detailed evaluation of each pose is needed. "In glamour

Today, glamour and fashion photography have become intertwined. Each genre borrows from the other—and the more extreme "fashion" images are actually more sexy and suggestive than some "glamour" photos. In both of the images shown here (above and facing page), the model is at the edge of an infinity pool. On the facing page, the model is on her knees with her legs and hands forming the base of an asymmetrical triangle. The imaginary lines that form the sides of this triangle draw your eyes up the model's body to her face. Notice how having the model lean forward accents her cleavage. The image above also features a triangular composition with the model's feet placed just outside of shoulder width. By shifting her hips and shoulders, Rolando also created a smooth S curve that runs the length of her body.



These images are all about the models' long legs. To make them look their best, Rolando selected high heels for the models. By lifting the heels, these provide a longer look to the leg. They also cause the muscles in the calf to tighten, giving a more toned and shapely look than when the foot is flat. There's one more trick at work here: a low camera angle. Even with a tall model who has great legs, photographing her from above can make them look short. By getting down low, the legs are rendered in better perspective. Depending on the lens selection, they may actually look even longer than they really are.

photography, especially with private glamour photo sessions, your subject often relies on your professional expertise as a photographer to guide her to great poses," says Rolando. "Most models feel lost during a photo shoot unless they have a good photographer who can direct them."

Lines. For Rolando, good posing begins with lines. Some lines (called "implied lines") are created by our minds through the perceptions we hold in our consciousnesses. "A good example," says Rolando, "is the implied lines that are formed when knee or elbow joints are cropped out of an image while the upper and lower limbs are both still visible. As viewers, we don't even think twice about the missing joints—in our minds, we create a continuous line of the entire limb."

Imaginary lines, on the other hand, are lines that make an image appealing to view and come in various shapes—the most common being the S curve formed by the upper and lower torso, and diagonals formed by the body, lighting and shadows, or even props. "One of my favorite poses," says Rolando, "is to have the model bend her legs or arms. This automatically creates diagonal lines that are pleasing to the eye. The fundamental rule is simple, 'If it's meant to be bent, bend it.'"

Diagonal lines may also be produced by simply tilting the subject's head. "'Chin to shoulder' is one of my favorite phrases when helping a model pose," Rolando says. "By angling the chin toward the shoulder closest to the camera and tilting the forehead toward the same shoulder, you get a natural diagonal across the face. This makes a great vertical image."

One important point while working to form these imaginary diagonals with the head, chin, neck, and face is to avoid shooting up the nostrils and avoid poses where the subject's chin is buried directly into their chest. "Think about how we walk and look in our

What woman wouldn't love a photo like this for her significant other? The pose is sultry, but less revealing than many swimsuit shots. Notice how Rolando posed the subject's arms to create diagonal lines that frame her face and draw your eye in a circle through the image—always back to her dramatic eyes and sensuous expression. The pose is also paired realistically with the background, a critical element in the success of any photograph.

everyday lives—those with pride walk with their head up high in a charismatic fashion, not down low as though ashamed," Rolando notes. "This is typical in Hollywood glamour photography; celebrity shooters like to make their subjects appear as though they are up on a pedestal, slightly higher than their audience."

Comfort. "The key to posing is this: if it looks comfortable, it will probably photograph well; if it feels uncomfortable to the model, it will probably photograph even better," says Rolando. "Now, that's not to say we'll make the model stand on her head, but sometimes we'll position her so she'll photograph better in the light and with the specific scene and focal length—even though the model feels it looks funny. This is one of the great advantages of digital: you can now show the model what you mean right away so that she will be comfortable—even in an uncomfortable position."

"For example," continues Rolando, "I like to have models in a chin-to-shoulder posture that creates a natural diagonal of the face [see page 55]. However, while this type of pose *looks* great, it often *feels* awkward for the model—particularly if she's inexperienced. To overcome this, talk her through the pose and then show examples as you shoot. If you do this, she will quickly feel comfortable with the pose."

Individualized Posing. Posing is the portrayal of the subject's body. Does she look tall, short, fat, thin, curvy, etc.? Poses can affect most of these physical traits.

Height. A taller model can look short if you employ a downward shooting angle and place her in a dress. "Instead," suggests Rolando, "have her sit on the corner of a couch. Then, ask her to hike up her skirt past her knees while bending her legs at the knees. Presto! You have long legs again."

With a shorter model, Rolando recommends having her wear heels and place one foot up on a rock, step stool, etc. Pair this with a low shooting angle and you'll make the model appear taller. "Some shorter models also appear to have longer legs if you simply sit them in the car with the door open (legs to the side) while wearing shorts," he notes.

Another simple pose Rolando recommends for shorter models is to have them in lingerie or a bikini while resting on their hands and knees. This works great at the beach with a model in swimwear and for models

in lingerie on a bed. Carefully explain this pose to the model. If need be, demonstrate it or show her some images from your portfolio that employ the same pose.

You can modify this same hands-and-knees pose by having the model go down more on her arms. This will naturally prop her buttocks higher, which can be very provocative.

Hips. If you are photographing a model in lingerie, nude, or especially in swimwear and she is standing upright on her feet or knees, make sure to turn her hips away from the camera slightly. This will slim the hips for a more flattering image. Use the same technique if you want to capture more of the model's backside in your image. "Whatever the pose," says Rolando, "it's usual-

Headshots with a glamour edge are popular among both men and women. In the image above, diagonal lines are created by the subject's arms and shoulders, as well as her face. Her direct gaze and slight smile give the image a sultry air. In the portrait on the facing page, the model's shoulders and lapels create strong, symmetrical diagonal lines that suggest a powerful physique. His head is also at a slight angle and his sunglasses complete the look, adding a bit of mystery.

ly best to turn the hips slightly away from the camera or the light source. It makes them look slimmer."

Breasts. "Breasts are similar," says Rolando, "except we turn them slightly away from the camera to make them look as *full* as possible. Most female subjects won't be happy with your photos if you make their breasts appear smaller than they are—especially if the subject has augmented breasts. The easiest way to ensure the breasts maintain their curves, or to enhance the shape of smaller breasts, is to have the model turn her upper torso slightly away from the camera.

"There are two things you need to watch out for when posing a model this way," says Rolando. "First, if the model's bust is turned in the direction of the light, it can make the breast closest to the camera appear too bright—especially if the subject has light-colored clothes on. Second, if the model's breasts are turned away from the light source, you'll get great defining chiaroscuro, but you can wind up with a distractingly bright upper arm or shoulder if the model is wearing something without sleeves."

USING THE LCD SCREEN

"The beauty of shooting digital glamour photography," says Rolando, "is that you can check your progress and make adjustments as you shoot. It never hurts to 'chimp,' or view your LCD screen on the back of your camera and say 'Ooh!' and 'Ahh!' Besides, when a model hears you remarking in favorable tones, it carries a psychological impact that helps build her confidence. From time to time, you can also show your subject the LCD screen to keep her in the loop and boost her confidence."

In these images, you can clearly see how chiaroscuro can be used to accentuate a subject's cleavage. In the image on the left, this is accented by having the subject lean forward. This makes her breasts look fuller and places her chest closer to the camera, which further accents it. Notice, too, the S-curve pose—perfect for accentuating a curvaceous figure. In the image to the right, the effect is much more subtle, but the appearance of cleavage paired with a sultry expression creates a portrait with undeniable sensuality.

Hands. "Poor posing of the hands can kill an image outright," says Rolando. "Yet, the hands are probably the body part that is most overlooked by photographers." Hands can be ugly, but more importantly, they can even look bigger than the face. Sometimes, this is a natural attribute of your subject's hands, but more often it is the result of poor posing and lighting, combined with the effects of lens distortion.

"The simple rule for posing the hands is to look for the 'karate chop' (or sides of the hands)," says Rolando. "You don't want to see the front of the hand; this is the least attractive part. The open palm, of course, when held up means 'Stop!' (or 'Stop looking at me!'), so stay away from such poses." If you can't avoid showing the front of the hand, try to hide or subdue the area with shadows or clothing. You can even use the hands in the image to hold or pull something; hands tend to look more natural when they are doing something.

"If the hands are posed on the hips," says Rolando, "make sure they are not cupped in such a way that light passes through a gap between the hands and the body. Instead, have the model place her hands flat against her body in the natural pockets of her upper hips. Again, the sides of her hands should be facing the camera."

"The hands and arms can also help you when a model is lying down and her upper leg is bent down in front of her lower leg," Rolando adds. "This pose is common, but it can appear unflattering if the upper thigh looks thick. Often, placing a hand to follow the thigh will reduce the natural thickening of the area."

"The key to posing is practice, practice, practice," says Rolando. "And thanks to digital, you can now do this inexpensively and instantaneously." As the images in this chapter show, Rolando takes pains to make all his subjects look amazing—and they thank him for it with their repeat business and glowing recommendations.

6. MONTE ZUCKER

Classic Style

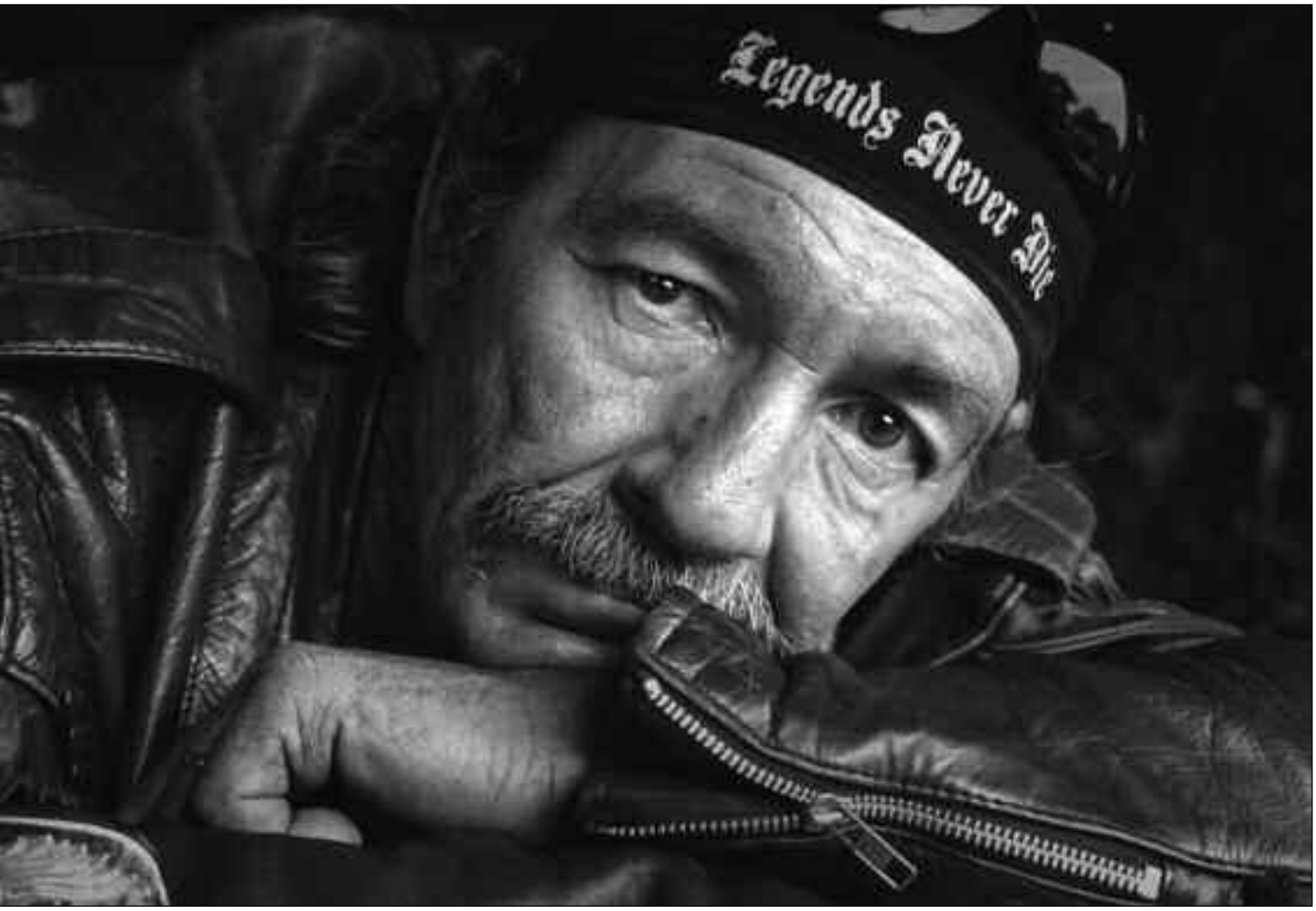
When discussing portrait posing techniques with professional photographers, one of the names that always seems to be mentioned is Monte Zucker. Monte's timeless portraits have earned him international acclaim, and his thirty-five year commitment to educating other photographers has made him an important and often-mentioned influence among today's leading professionals.

Although it's not always easy to nail down what makes a "Monte Portrait" (the term he uses for his images), there's something about his work—and the posing in particular—that stands out as uniquely his own. Never gimmicky or overwrought, Monte's images are, nonetheless, almost instantly identifiable.

"A Monte Portrait," says Monte, "is simple, elegant, void of distractions, and flattering to the subject. It makes a statement mostly about the subject, but at the same time reflects my interpretation of that person. A Monte Portrait is one that shows the subjects naturally but also depicts them as I would like them to be. I can photograph reality when it suits the subjects, or I can

Monte Zucker's portrait's have a classic quality that makes them timeless in their beauty.

MONTE ZUCKER was a professional photographer who specialized in wedding and portrait photography. During the course of his career, which spanned over five decades, Monte was bestowed every major honor the photographic profession can offer, including WPPI's Lifetime Achievement Award. He was also an acclaimed teacher, and is the author of *Monte Zucker's Portrait Photography Handbook* (Amherst Media). To learn more about Monte and his work, visit www.montezucker.com.



ABOVE AND FACING PAGE—A great pose rarely calls attention to itself; it simply enhances the composition and supports the expression.

idealize them when I feel it is appropriate. Either way, it is a simple statement. I want you to *feel* a Monte Portrait as well as see it. If you are emotionally connected with my subjects when you see their portraits, I feel that I have done my job."

Monte feels strongly that this is the goal you should strive for with every person in front of your lens. This is not a goal that you are likely to achieve by stumbling around blindly, trying this and that. Instead, you must master the technical skills that will enable you to concentrate on each subject.

FACIAL ANALYSIS

In his teaching and writing, Monte provides a simple methodology for mastering these critical skills. When it comes to posing, he begins with an analysis of the subject's face.

"When I ask photographers what goes through their minds when they begin to create a portrait, I usually hear vague comments but nothing with substance," says Monte. "You should begin by studying your subject's face—and a few specific features in particular. After just a few moments, you will know exactly how to photograph each and every one of your subjects."

Monte suggests beginning your analysis with the subject turned straight toward you. Look at the full face. Then, turn the head and body slightly, viewing the face from an angle. Finally, turn the subject still more to see the side view. You can accomplish a similar effect by changing your own viewpoint, rather than asking the subject to move. Repeat this evaluation to view the other side of the subject's face.

"What you're looking for," he says, "is how the face seems to change as you view each specific angle. When

viewing the full face, be sure to have the subject facing straight at you. Examine the hairstyle, the size of both eyes, and how a change in their expression changes the size of the eyes and the outline of the face.

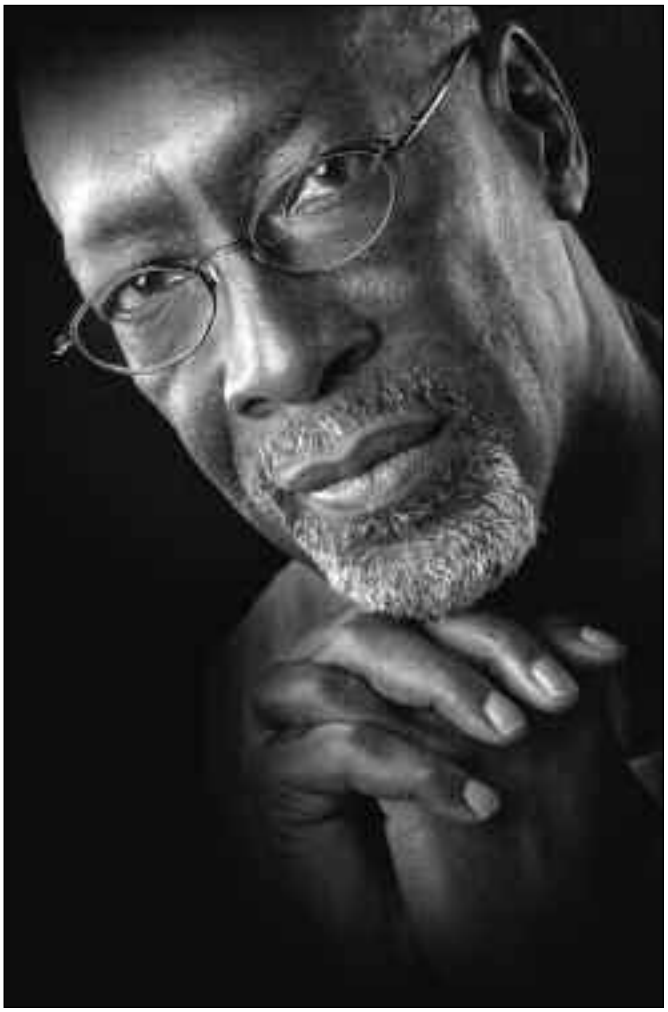
"Eventually, you will be able to do this analysis while holding a conversation with the person. Of course, this makes your subjects more comfortable than when they are aware that you are studying their faces."

Although, each face has its own special characteristics, there are basically only three angles of view to consider. First is the full face view, with the subject looking directly into the camera. When not covered by the subject's hair, both ears will show in this view. "Even if you're beginning a portrait sitting with a full- face view," says Monte, "you should think about which way you're going to turn the face for the two-thirds view. Think about the easiest way to go from one facial view to the other without having to switch the main light from one side to the other."

Second is the two-thirds view, with the subject looking at an angle toward the camera—either to the left or the right. "The two-thirds view usually slims the face, making the cheekbones stand out more," Monte notes. "In this view, the eye on the far side of the face should go almost to the edge of the outline of the face, but a small amount of flesh should still separate this eye from

POSTURE

"Just before the exposure is made, the subject should lift to his or her fullest height to achieve better posture," says Monte. "Be sure that the person's shoulders are still relaxed downward, however. In the desire to sit erect, people tend to lift their shoulders. Be aware of this, and gently tap them to relax their shoulders."



There are three basic views of the face available to portrait photographers. These are the profile view (facing page), the full-face view (above, left), the the two-thirds view (above, right).

the background. The tip of the nose should also be contained within the outline of the cheek; it should not come close to the edge of the face or cross over the outline of the face and protrude into the background. Additionally, the bridge of the nose should not cover any of the eye on the far side of the face. If the subject's nose has a high bridge and begins to cover the eye, ease the face back toward the camera position."

Finally, in a profile view you see exactly half of the face. "To achieve a pure profile," says Monte, "turn the face away from the camera until the far eye and eyebrow both disappear. If they are long enough, you may see the eyelashes of the second eye, but this is unimportant. All that really matters is that you see an exact profile. Once you have your subject posed for a profile, be sure to reposition any hair that may be showing on the far side of the face—especially below a woman's chin."

Whatever view you decide to use, Monte recommends sticking with your decision. "If you photograph a person from every conceivable angle, you will only confuse them when it comes to making a selection. If you're totally unsure, of course, then go for both sides of the face—but I rarely do that."

FUNDAMENTAL POSES

Once you have determined the desired facial view, you can decide on the pose to use. For teaching purposes, Monte divides poses into two basic categories, drawing on characteristics that seem to repeat in art forms from across the centuries. "For simplicity," he says, "I have named them the basic pose and the feminine pose."

The Basic Pose. "The basic pose is sometimes referred to as the masculine pose," says Monte, "but it is actually good for everyone—male or female. It is partic-

ularly useful for people who are heavy, because when the head is tipped to the low shoulder, the fullness around the jawline and neck disappears."

The basic pose is one in which the head and body go in the same direction—toward the main light. In this pose, the head is also tipped toward the lower shoulder so that it is perpendicular to the slope of the shoulders. Notes Monte, "A common mistake is having the head straight up and down; this tends to make the subject look uncomfortable."

For the basic pose, the subject's shoulders should always be at a 45 degree angle to the camera. "Less of an angle tends to broaden a person's body too much in the final portrait," says Monte. "Conversely, turning the body more than 45 degrees away from the camera would necessitate turning the subject's face back to the lens so much that it would be impossible to keep the face flowing in the same direction the body is facing—making the basic pose impossible to create."

The basic pose works only for full-face and two-thirds view portraits. When photographing a profile, you must switch over to the feminine pose (for both male and female subjects). "A profile needs a broader base," says Monte, "which is achieved only with the feminine pose."

SEATING

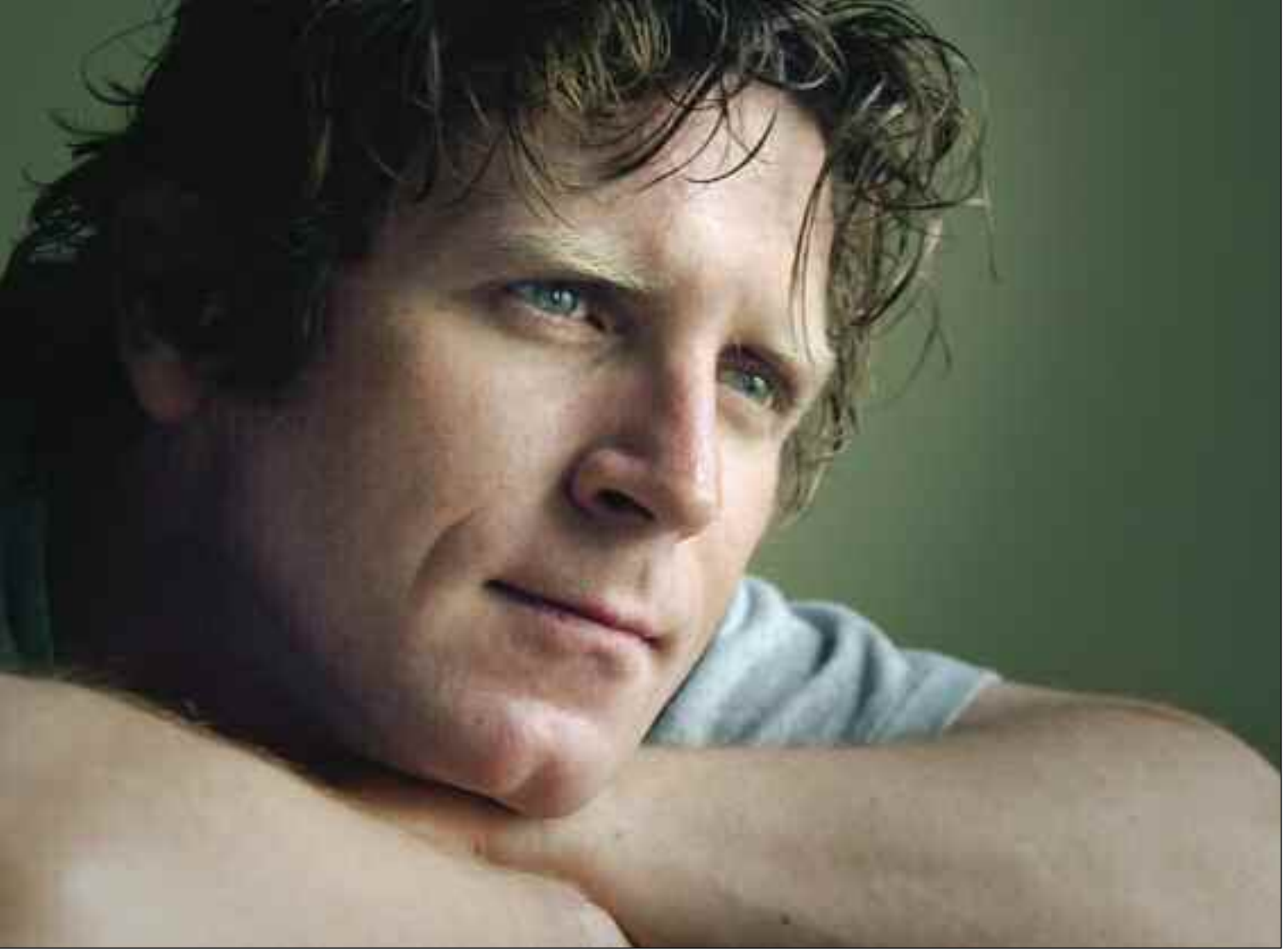
Tell your subject exactly which way to face when they sit. "Most photographers ask their subjects to sit and then rearrange them," says Monte. "You will look a lot more professional when you are very explicit: 'I'd like you to sit down facing this direction—without moving the stool, please.'"

The Feminine Pose. The feminine pose is one in which the head is turned and tipped to the high shoulder. The body is then tipped forward at the waist, leaning slightly in the opposite direction from the way the face is turned. The position of the shoulders remains in a fixed relationship with the position of the head, regardless of the angle at which you are photographing the face. "Once you pose and light someone in a feminine pose," says Monte, "you can leave the subject alone and simply move the camera position to photograph a full-face view, a two-thirds view, and a profile."

The feminine pose creates a very elegant look for slim women. "However," notes Monte, "it does not work for heavier women, because the tip of the head

Shoulders are always at approximately a 45-degree angle to the camera for pictures using the basic pose. Note that for both the left and right profile views, the pose switches from basic to feminine; the feminine pose is always used for profiles. The basic pose is not just used for men, of course—as seen in the portrait on the facing page.

Shoulders are at approximately a 45-degree angle to the camera for most pictures using the feminine pose. The exception is the two-thirds close-up view, for which they are turned directly toward the camera.



ABOVE—Expression can make or break a portrait—and serious expressions seem to have a more enduring quality than big smiles.

toward the high shoulder can create folds around the jawline." Other than for the profile, you should also avoid the feminine pose for men. The best way to do this is to make certain that the male subject's body is turned toward the camera enough that he will not have to turn his head back in the opposite direction from his body to look into the lens.

The only exception to the women-only rule with the feminine pose is when you are shooting a profile. This is because a face in profile needs the support of the body turned at an angle to the camera—whether the subject is male or female. "If you try to create a profile with the subject's body facing directly toward the camera or their back straight into the camera, you will produce a very strained appearance," says Monte. "I've seen this mistake made many times, and I want to spare your subjects the agony of having to twist their necks more than necessary."

THE EYES AND EXPRESSION

Once the pose is in place, you must work on creating the desired expression. "You can have flawless posing and lighting, but if you don't have a good expression, the photograph just won't make it, says Monte.

This begins with the eyes. "Undoubtedly, the strongest insight we have into a person's character is through his eyes," says Monte. "Direct eye contact, with the subject looking straight into the lens, provides the most powerful connection between the subject and the viewer of the portrait. Unfortunately, I have often found that when people look directly into the lens their eyes appear to be slightly closed. When this happens, direct your subject to look at a point slightly above the

FACING PAGE—Direct eye contact creates the most powerful connection between the subject and the viewer, as shown in the large image. When the subject looks off camera, as shown in the inset image, the mood in more subtle and demure.

"So, what would you have done in this case?" asks Monte, referring to the above image. "Would you have asked for more of a smile or shot when I did? This photograph is one of my favorites. Once in a lifetime do you catch something this fun!"

lens. Often, their eyes will look much better if they're gazing at the top of your head rather than into the lens. There have been many occasions when I've had people looking even higher—yet, when viewed through the camera, they seem to be looking straight into the lens."

"It's also a good idea to ask your subjects whether they prefer themselves to be smiling or more serious in their portrait," Monte suggests. "A more serious expression is usually more comfortable—and serious portraits also seem to last longer.

"If you feel that the subject will look better with a smile, though, ask for a slight suggestion of a smile, not a complete smile—especially if it appears to be a forced smile. 'Smile with your eyes!' is a good prompt to have up your sleeve. When they do that, they forget about their mouth—and that's usually when I get the most natural expression."

IN CLOSING

"An effective portrait makes a dual statement," says Monte. "First, it makes a statement about the subject. Second, it makes a statement about the photographer. If you look at a person's portrait and you are drawn into his or her personality—if you feel that you know something about that person just by looking at the picture—then the photographer has accomplished his or her goal." By that standard, it's clear that Monte's portraits, with their classic appeal, hit the nail on the head.

7. TIM SCHOOLER

Senior Portrait Success

Most high-school seniors will never have a chance to be professional models, but when a senior arrives at Tim Schooler's Lafayette studio, in the heart of Louisiana's Cajun country, they get a taste of what it would be like. "We treat them like models for a day," says Schooler. "We don't limit them in clothing changes and we take them to exciting locations that lend themselves to the fashion style of my work." The success of this strategy is evident in the sheer length of his waiting list for senior portrait sessions; it often has as many as *three hundred* names on it.

A self-taught photographer, Tim has made it an ongoing practice to study the work of photographers he admires; this is how he learned photography and how he continues to evolve as an artist. "My biggest influences when it comes to posing have been Don Blair,

For this senior portrait, Tim had his subject kneel behind a set that features paned windows. She then leaned forward to rest her elbows on one of the openings, with her forearms and hands elevated to grasp the edges of the window frame. This separated her arms from her torso, creating a slim look. Tim shot the portrait from a standing position. This, combined with the forward-leaning pose, allowed the subject's body to recede slightly into the background, keeping the emphasis on her face.

TIM SCHOOLER is a professional portrait photographer who specializes in high-school senior portrait photography. His successful studio offers a blend of traditional posing and lighting with more of a fashion edge, producing images that appeal to both teens and parents. While Schooler is especially well known for his location lighting techniques, he is also a master of studio lighting. To see more of his acclaimed images, visit www.timschooler.com.

ABOVE—Despite explicit advice to wear long-sleeved tops, many of Schooler's clients arrive for their sessions in short-sleeved or sleeveless shirts. As a result, Tim is constantly looking for inventive ways to hide their upper arms. "Even with thin subjects, the upper arms can look heavy when they are bare," Tim notes. One solution is to create a tight image like this. Here, Tim used the girl's forearms to guide your eyes to her face and soften the look of her upper arms and shoulders. Paired with some diffusion and vignetting in postproduction, the result is extremely flattering. The pose also gave Tim the opportunity to showcase the girl's ornate bracelet. "I love when kids bring stuff like this; accessories can add impact to an image—especially with bare arms," says Tim. **FACING PAGE—**This young lady is an aspiring country-music singer, so she wanted a senior portrait that could do double duty as a promotional image for her music career. "She wanted a Shania Twain type of image," said Tim, "but not quite as sexy—something appropriate to her age." Tim selected this setting of urban decay to contrast with her beaded dress and high heels. In many ways, this pose follows the traditional rules. First, it has the subject's face turned into the light, while her body is turned away from it for a slimming view. Second, her left arm is separated from her waist, revealing a flattering curve. Additionally, her face is not in line with her torso, but turned to an angle. On one count, however, the pose is a rule-breaker: notice that the young lady's weight is actually on her *front* leg. "Normally, I'd have the weight on the rear leg and cross the other leg in front of it rather than behind," says Tim, "but she fell into this pose naturally and is thin enough to pull it off, so it works."

who was the king of posing, and Monte Zucker, also a master at posing," says Tim. "I really feel strongly that a lot of people today are struggling with posing because they need to learn the traditional rules of flattering the human form. *Then* it's okay to go and do something different—to do funky stuff, try different things, and break the rules. But you have to remember that those rules were created for a reason."

Tim adds, "That's why I studied the masters. I read every book I could find, watched videos, and attended workshops, because I really admire what they did. Once I learned the rules, I tried to adapt them to what I do—a more dramatic, edgy type of portraiture. Essentially, I've blended those traditional techniques with the work of high-fashion photographers."

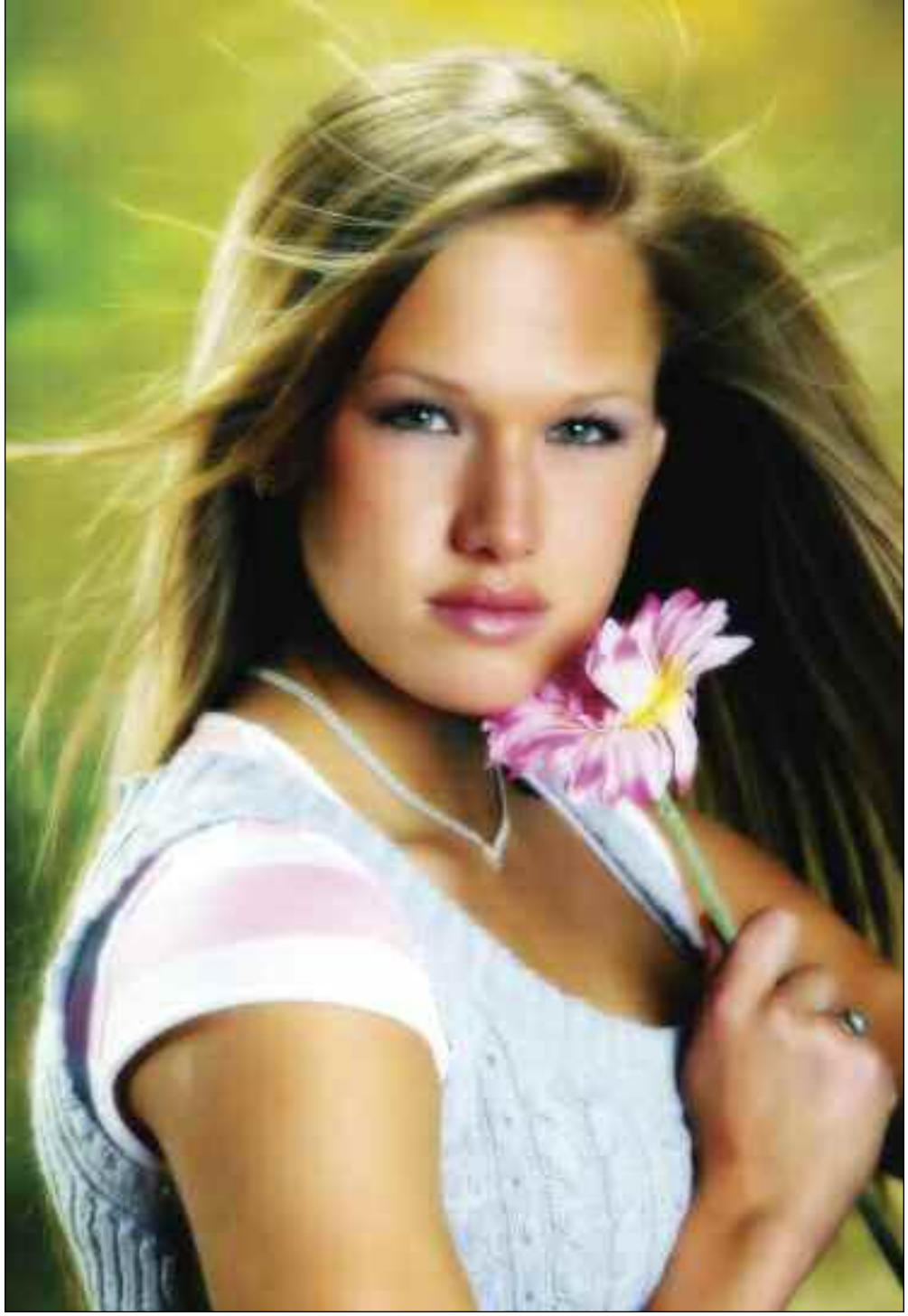
Because fashion photography is an ever-evolving field, Tim keeps up on the latest styles by reading magazines like *W, Glamour,* and *Vogue*. "I try to see what they're doing, and a lot of times the posing is really cool—really interesting and different," says Tim.

It's important to note that Tim's constant study of cutting-edge looks isn't just a self-gratifying creative

exercise; the kids that Tim photographs have grown up in a virtual deluge of media—magazines, web sites, videos, and movies that all set the bar very high when it comes to imagery. As a result, these teens demand something beyond the traditional senior portrait.

"The one thing that we hear over and over again is kids complaining that their friends went to so-and-so and all their photos look the same—and they want theirs to be different," says Tim. "It's hard to go out every day and stay within the confines of the rules that you know are going to make them look good, but still do something different—something that doesn't look like anyone else's images. In the busy season, it becomes almost impossible to do more than just nice, salable images that the parents will love and the kids will be happy with. We really push the envelope at the slower times, when we have time to experiment freely and take more shots."

Pushing the envelope is one thing, but Tim knows he also has to push it *in the right direction* for each client in order to ensure a good sale. "It's not mandatory, but it's very strongly suggested that, before they come for



LEFT—Reclining on a triangular set element, this pose is all about the curves. "In a woman's portrait, that's what they want—it's what shows the femininity," says Tim. "We have a nice curve from the head to the neck, and a nice curve at the waist." Another S curve was created by having her drop her top knee down in front of her bottom knee, a pose that also slims her hips. **RIGHT—**Here is the same subject in a dreamy image. Tim turned her body at a pronounced angle to the camera, then used her raised hand and the flower to draw your eye to her face.

their session, we have a twenty- to thirty-minute consultation with them," he says. "We show them a slide show of images set to music. We let them see our latest work—things we may not yet have had time to put on the web site. Then, we sit with them and talk about what they liked and what they didn't. We determine if they want indoor images, outdoor images, or a combination. Do they like bold colors or muted colors? We make notes on all of this and put it in their file. When they come back, we go over it again, so I'm sure I can shoot something they will like."

When it comes to posing, Tim's approach is similarly tailored to the subject. Sometimes he may have a specific pose in mind for a given subject and scene, other

FACING PAGE—Tim created this outdoor portrait in a spot where he found almost perfect natural light. This is yet another solution to photographing clients in short-sleeved shirts: hide them behind a prop or set element. In this pose, even with a trim subject like this, the rear can appear a bit large, so Tim had her bend at the waist, twisting around so that her right shoulder (and the hair pulled out across it) would conceal this area. **ABOVE AND RIGHT—**"As soon as they see it, everyone wants a shot like this," says Schooler. In the image above, Tim added a pom-pom wrap to minimize the chest area and keep the attention on his subject's eyes. In the image to the right, Tim used the same basic pose but spread out the skirt of the girl's prom dress to form the background. In poses like this, he notes that you must tilt the subject's head up slightly to keep the plane of the face parallel with the lens plane. Otherwise, the chin will become too prominent.

times it develops more organically as the session progresses. "I'll ask them what they want in each scene. Do they want close-ups? A full-body shot? About 85 percent of our clients are young females, but as thin as most of them are, many are still self-conscious about their figures and don't want a full-length image," says Tim. Students in Tim's area also make good use of his web site, so many come to the consultation or session with ideas about images they'd like to create.

Most of Tim's clients aren't experienced in front of the camera and need help to look their very best. "I'll demonstrate a feminine pose for them—and I'm a big guy, so that always makes them laugh. It relaxes them, and they stop seeing me as intimidating and realize that

FACING PAGE—This young woman wanted a "country girl" image. Tim selected a chair that complemented the rustic theme, then had her adopt a casual, cross-legged pose. While the pose reads as natural, note that Tim had her roll onto her far hip, eliminating any flattening on the hip closest to the camera to produce a slim, shapely view. **ABOVE—**A New Orleans resident who was displaced by Hurricane Katrina, this subject wanted an image with an urban feel that reminded her of home. A casual pose on a fire escape near the studio fit the bill—and having her raise one arm gives the image a fashion edge that adds to its urban flair.

they're going to have a good time. Then the whole session is just great."

"If they're still not doing quite what I want," says Tim, "I'll ask permission, then move their hand or guide their foot into position by touching their knee. We have to honor those basic rules to flatter their form, but still do something a little bit different."

Tim also notes that, while comfort is important, poses that look great often feel a little awkward. "A lot of times, a subject will say a pose feels weird," he says, "but then I show them the image on the back of the camera and they love it. I explain that, yes, it feels awkward because you don't normally stand or sit like that—but the reason we're doing it is that we want to create S curves, or it's flattering to the figure. I always explain that to them; it's part of keeping them involved in the session. I don't want anyone to come in and not like their photos because they aren't what they wanted, so I try to get feedback as we go, reading their expressions and listening to what they are saying."

ABOVE—Here's an unusual pose—and one that requires a very trim subject. Tim had the young woman lean back on her elbows and cross her legs. He then shot from a high camera angle to keep your eyes locked on hers. Note the role of color in the effectiveness of this composition. **FACING PAGE—**The waterfall shooting area behind Tim's studio is popular with seniors. Here, a high camera angle pairs with effective tonal blending (the dark clothes recede into the setting) to keep the face the center of attention—even in a fairly complicated scene.

What Tim's clients ultimately want is as different as the individual subjects. Given that the vast majority of his clients are female, Tim is well suited to identifying their needs—he has two grown daughters and grew up with only sisters. "I've always had girls all around me, so it's helped me to become a little more empathetic to their concerns," he notes. "Having said that, though, I can usually tell the differences in their personalities by the clothes they wear and bring for the session. If their outfits are traditional, they'll want traditional images. If they come with clothes that are edgy or sexy—low tops or short skirts—I know they want something that's a little more fashion style. They want to push the envelope a little—keeping it PG or better, of course."

"I think posing is critical to the success of an image," says Tim. "No matter how good everything else is, if the pose looks awkward, the image won't work. Some photographers promote lifestyle photography—people just standing around. I think my clients need posing. They don't understand what will look good and what won't. It's up to us to use our experience to create the poses that will flatter them the most. Posing is *important*. We're trying to create stuff they're not going to get from Mom's camera, and good posing is one of the things we can use to help us."

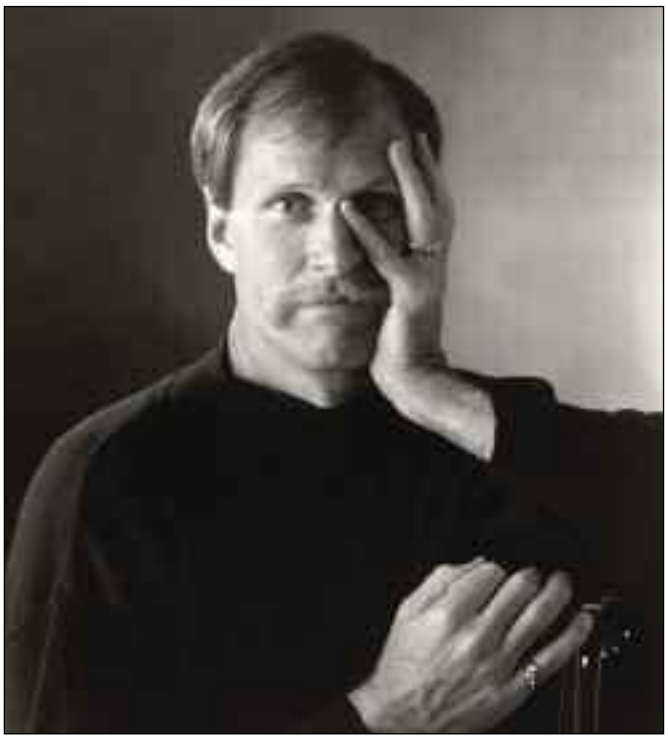
As the fashion-inspired images in this chapter show, Tim has already more than exceeded this goal. It's no wonder his clients just can't get enough.

9. TIM KELLY

Timeless Simplicity

For more than twenty years, portrait photographer Tim Kelly has been recognized throughout the industry as a master printer, digital pioneer, and esteemed educator. At the heart of his acclaim, however, is an exceptional body of portrait work—images that eschew gimmicks and special effects in favor of clean lines, subtle tones, and delicate simplicity. Melding classic lighting and composition with a contemporary sensibility, Tim's portraits have a quality that makes them almost timeless.

When it comes to posing, Tim's techniques are rooted in his training in classic techniques. "I worked in a studio back in the '60s and '70s—and then precise posing *really* mattered, more than today. When we were doing portraits, we had to do it by the rules because lighting was much more narrow and film was much more expensive. It was very structured, and there were foundational things you had to know so you didn't waste your time or your film."



RIGHT—Tim's subject for this portrait was a singer and radio personality. "He was interesting to me, so we shot a lot of different things," says Tim. The pose turns what would otherwise be a very traditional portrait into something a bit more avant garde. Note the alternating pattern of light and shadow from left to right (shadowed background, to highlight side of face, to shadow side of face, to highlighted background). **FACING PAGE—**While Tim gives his subjects plenty of advice on clothing selection, some clients opt for their own choices. This young woman chose a colorful sleeveless top. Through careful posing and lighting, Tim made it work—and work so well that he was able to create an entire album from the session.

TIM KELLY owns a portrait studio in Lake Mary, FL. He holds the Master of Photography and Photographic Craftsman degrees and is a longtime member of Kodak's Pro Team. In 2001, he was awarded a fellowship in the American Society of Photographers and named to the Cameracraftsmen of America. To learn more about Tim and his work, visit www.timkellyportraits.com—where you'll also find an extensive selection of Tim's acclaimed instructional materials for professional portrait photographers.

Tight three-quarter-length portraits like these are among Tim's best sellers. "People like big heads," he says. "When they're looking at the images and making selections on a monitor, they 'ooh' and 'ahh' when a big, beautiful face comes up. This is my way of giving them more face—plus the design element of hands. I just bring the hands closer to the face. Then, you have a headshot feel but with the elegance of a three-quarter length image." In the examples shown here, the subjects are both posed backwards in a chair, with their arms folded across the chair back. This looks natural in the portrait and feels natural to the subject when posing. Notice that Tim has elected to hide the hands in both portraits. "That's just personal taste. In an arms-crossed pose, I don't really like the traditional fingers-up-the-arms pose. I don't see people standing like that. That's what it really comes down to. I follow a more normalized look."

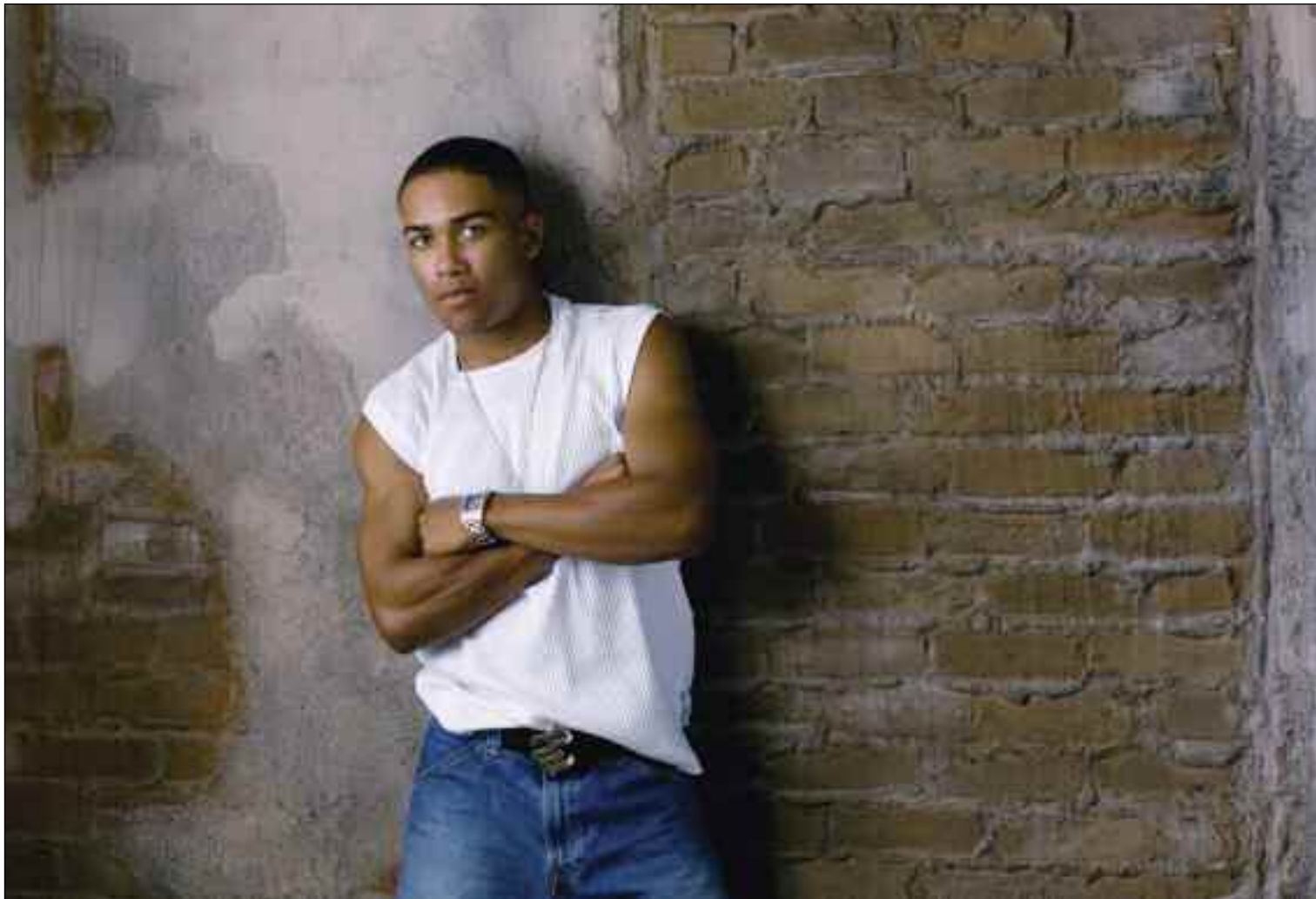
"With the light being smaller and narrower (we were shooting with parabolics, barndoors, or small umbrellas) the subject had to be *precisely* placed. You couldn't just have your subject moving around at will. With large boxes simulating window light, we can now get away with a lot more—but at that time we had to be very precise. You had to get that patch of Rembrandt lighting, the catchlights at 10 o'clock or 2 o'clock—everything had to be just so."

In the years that have passed since those foundational experiences in his career, Tim has worked to blend his own tastes and sense of creativity with those rules. "Like

everything else, it's an evolution. It seems like with all that structure and all that training, ultimately, the things that pleased my eye the most were very natural-looking images—meaning something like window light. I made it my goal to re-create window light, because it's very forgiving, but also very believable to the viewer."

In the early 1980s, large softboxes became his way to accomplish this goal, and are still the modifiers he uses most today. "With that light, I can more easily pose my subjects in what are, visually, more natural-looking situations. I don't want my images to appear artificially lit. I want them to seem very natural, so I try to keep the light in my portraits visually simple. Then, I can pose the subject into that light."

This is a scenic background that Tim likes to use with many senior-portrait clients. Since he couldn't choose a single background to coordinate tonally with this white-and-denim outfit (his normal practice), he went with one that fit the urban feel of the clothing. "This was a tiny slice of the pie for his senior session, but I felt it was pretty intense and it worked for me," says Tim. When posing guys, Tim says he tends to let them do their own thing. "Girls are pretty easy," says Tim. "Girls are concerned with how they are going to render. They generally want to do more, and they have more hair and clothing options. In fact, I have to structure my session and pace myself so I don't end up shooting all my in-head designs on the first outfit that comes out. With guys, on the other hand, we're often lucky to get one alternate outfit." As a result, senior boys could be done with their sessions in about fifteen minutes, while girls' sessions typically require an hour or more.



While he sometimes meets with his subjects in advance of the session, Tim says he really likes to discover people when they arrive. "My studio is set up in such a way that, technically, the image is already going to be a winner as far as the lighting, background, and capture system. The retouching is going to be great, the printmaking is going to be great—so it's up to me to make a good interpretation of the sitter."

"The way to ensure success, for me, is that I tell folks to bring several outfits—more than I'm going to use." Some people know exactly what they are going to wear; others need some guidance. In this case, Tim

"Portraits like these are the easiest thing in the world to do once you know what side of the face to shoot," says Tim. "This is determined by studying the face, looking at the sizes of the eyes, etc. For me, more often than not, the side of the face left open by the part in the hair is the one." Both portraits were shot on simple gray backgrounds. The portrait on the facing page features an Indian dancer. "I seem to do a lot of those because I did a few well, and now lots of dancers come here," says Tim. Notice that he selected a three-quarter facial view. Tim normally places the face at no more than a two-thirds view, but for her, a greater angle seemed to work.

advises them to bring in anything long sleeved and dark. "If they do that, we'll have a great session," he says. Beyond that, Tim emphasizes the need for them to bring a selection of looks. "If we ask for enough, we'll always end up with something nice," he says.

Clothing is an important starting point when determining how to present a subject. "The clothing dictates where you're going with the pose," says Tim. "If the clothing is formal, we're going to go with a formal pose. Formal poses don't have to be stiff, but they have to be done in such a way that the clothing, the background, and the attitude all match."

"I also analyze the face and the hair to determine how I'm going to basically begin my design," Tim con-

"When a subject is sleeveless, it's more of a challenge—I can always win, though," Tim laughs. Here, Tim opted for a square frame. He then posed the arms to create a square, raising her left hand to her face so that your eye keeps turning back to the focus of the image. "Normally, you can't get away with a pose like this, but in a square-in-a-square image, it works," Tim says.

Long sleeves, black shirts, soft lighting, and a background that's in key with the clothing—it all adds up to a good start for a portrait. Both of these images were created during shoots for Tim's instructional videos, which are sold on his web site. "We were really just showing how we could control the lines and the background to force the eye to go where it needs to go," he says. In both portraits, the body is at a pronounced angle, leaning toward the main light, but the head remains vertical. "Photographers are always taught head tilts, both masculine and feminine," says Tim. "Those rules do apply if you choose to use them—but there are higher laws. I find that leaning bodies are my best friends in terms of design. With any subject, male or female, if you can keep the head vertically straight, you can put the body in any direction you want. That's a 'rule-breaker' that always works for me."

tinues. "I'll usually start with a basic two-thirds headshot on both sides of the subject to figure out where I want to go. After I get an idea which side of the face I like better, I often spend the rest of my session on that one side. Though there are many interpretations of it, if somebody has a good and bad side (or a good and better side), obviously you're wise to spend your time on the better side. If you can assess that in the first three minutes, why not?"

During the session, the poses and design concepts Tim uses tend to build gradually in complexity. "You *can* go into the dramatic things early in your session, but I don't. I work my way into the more artistic, interpretive, or looser poses. I start with headshots, then get some good three-quarters, and if it's a young person I might do some standing poses."

When it comes to the mechanics of posing, Tim adheres to the traditional "rules" . . . at least to some degree. "In general, I do follow the traditional rules—skinny hands, weight on the back leg, tops turned away from the light—and those things definitely do count for shaping the face and rendering the body. But then you also learn how to flatter a subject, their form and their face, at the same time."

It's also important to Tim that the pose not look stiff or forced. "I'm trying to make it so people don't

Designing a pose starts with the clothes. If, as is the case in these two images, the clothing is formal, Tim creates a corresposondingly formal pose. Still, however, the pose must look natural and not stiff. As you can see in these images, "formal" posing can range from quite traditional (facing page) to rather casual (right).

In the bridal portrait on the facing page, Tim wanted to capture the detail and texture on the back of the dress. "I actually shot this on Polaroid," says Tim. "Shooting a large piece of film is actually one of my favorite fine-art release valves. You have no cropping, no burning or dodging later—that's it. I like a lot of stuff I get on this old medium." While this bride is posed in a traditional manner, her profiled face is actually turned to face away from the main light. "I wanted a timeless, black & white art image, so I made the mask of the face less important than the dress," says Tim.

In the portrait to the right, the clothes again dictated the mood. The girls are posed in a chair, but this is almost totally obscured—what's more important is the dramatic lean in the pose. This creates a gentle S curve that leads your eye to the faces. Tim particularly calls attention to the hands in this image. "Really, the arms and hands would not normally be considered elegantly posed," he notes. "What matters, though, is that we get to the face first, then the hair, then the hands. If it goes in that order, it's going to work. This had the facial expression I wanted, the color harmony is there, and the hands are close, as far as the positioning is concerned. The diagonal bodies are so strong against the diagonal face tilts—there are so many zigs and zags—that you don't really notice the hands."

ever feel posed. In fact, the greatest images are the ones where we allow them the freedom to move and lean and be comfortable. That's one of the real secrets for me—to put them in a place where they can be relaxed and feel comfortable. Then I can just look for the moment, the angle, the expression—the other things.

When refining poses, Tim doesn't see a problem with direct assistance. "I definitely handle everybody and move them around," he says. "I don't try to do it from afar. I have no qualms about going up there and fixing things for folks. I go in there and put things where they need to be, telling them what I'm doing and why." The key moment then comes when he lets the subject relax the pose. "If you have someone holding a pose for more than thirty seconds, it gets stale," he says. "I often have people take the pose apart and redo it. That's usually when it's right."

In the overall success of a portrait, Tim feels that posing ranks very high, right under lighting and overall design. "The images that I show most often—whether I'm selling them, or hanging them, or publishing them—rely very heavily on corrective posing. I have so many little rules of my own that it's incredible," he laughs. "For example, I never put the body closer to the

ABOVE—"As we work, there are always outtake moments—fun, laughing pictures. I never want to be accused of having everything have the same look, like, 'Oh, you're the guy who makes everyone look serious.' That's not true at all," Tim says. "It happens to be what I show a lot of, and what I sell a lot of, but every session comes complete with smiles—after all, you have to have something for grandmothers. And as much as I love the classy, formal pose, I also love people being crazy." **FACING PAGE—**The posing Tim uses when employing props must feel natural to the subject but also look very refined. "Every digit is taken care of," he says. "It's all intentional, but it has to feel very good to them. Even without props, you have to do this, or it's just going to look sloppy. So the hands are carefully placed, but they are intended to read as utterly believable." Notice, for example, how Tim had this young lady push her left wrist in to create a graceful curve.

main light than the face, so all my images have the face leaning into the light. This minimizes the body, which is ideal for the average subject."

Such refinements lead to a great consistency in Tim's portraits—in fact, it's often impossible to tell if a given image was made twenty years ago or last week. However, that doesn't mean that his work stays the same—far from it. "I'm continually changing it and coming up with new versions of the look I like. Over the years, I've learned to do better facial analysis, to flatter people more, and to be more dramatic."

Overall, Tim's goal is to create portraits that people feel good about. "I like to feel like I can get great things of any person—any size, any shape, any age—and I know I can because I've done it a thousand times and I know how to correct every feature. That's why people come here. That's why photographers are paid what they are—we know how to make people look great."

10. CHRIS NELSON

Senior Style

Wisconsin photographer Chris Nelson got his start in professional photography as a photojournalist, although he also studied fine-art photography as a minor in college. As a result, he brings a unique set of skills to his portraiture. Since then, he has continued to expand his skills, studying within the photographic industry under such notable photographers as Monte Zucker, Don Blair, Larry Peters, and Michele Gauger, who has been his mentor for more than a decade. "Classes I've taken from photographers that I admire have really accelerated my learning," says Chris. In fact, his learning has progressed so well that he himself has become a respected teacher.

As with all of the artists profiled in this book, the foundations of Chris's photographic style are evident in the images he creates, portraits that honor the traditional techniques used to flatter the human form, while simultaneously striving to capture something genuine and unique about the subject. "I do not feel like all images in a senior session should be trendy or right off an MTV commercial," says Chris. "Classic images that display the face and figure in a timeless manner are also an important part of my sessions."

Also evident in each image is Chris's awareness of what clients want to see in their images (and what they don't). This is particularly important when creating work for the style-conscious high-school senior market. Chris, who is particularly well known for his images of teen subjects, markets his senior portrait services with the phrases "Faces that Speak" and "Styles that Show." These are portraits that Chris says are "designed to reveal expression, mood, personality, and imagination." They are portraits that "portray the essence of a person doing what he or she loves."

THE "FACE FIRST" RULE

"Making your client look his or her best is a sincere form of flattery. I always go by the 'face first' rule, because there's nothing more important than the face," says Chris. The image on the facing page is a good

CHRIS NELSON is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, where he earned a B.A. in English (applied writing and journalism), plus minors in philosophy and fine-art photography. In his days as a photojournalist and reporter, Chris supplemented his small-market wages shooting weddings, advertising images, and senior portraits. In the process, he found that he enjoyed his sideline work more than his day job. In 1991, he quit his newspaper gig and started a portraiture business, which moved to Fall Creek, Wisconsin, a few years later and became Fall Creek Portrait Design. Since then, he has also earned his Accolades of Photographic Mastery and Outstanding Photographic Achievement from WPPI (Wedding and Portrait Photographers International). Chris is the author of *Master Guide for Glamour Photography* (Amherst Media, 2007), which details his unique approach to creating and marketing glamour photography. For more information on Chris Nelson, please visit www.fallcreekphoto.com.

example of this principle, but you can see it as a guiding force in all of the images in this chapter. For this particular shot, Chris posed his subject in front of a crumpled gold mylar background that complements the other warm tones in the image, letting you focus on the subject's face.

The young woman's face was posed in a two-thirds view, while her eyes were directed back toward the camera to lock the viewer's attention. For this image, Chris had the subject turn her face away from the main light, creating a slimming short-light pattern (although ample fill produces a low lighting ratio, so the effect of the short lighting is very gentle).

Note the posing of the subject's hands. The young woman's arms are raised and her fingers intertwined with her hair. This creates leading lines that draw your eyes up the frame to her face. The hands, in a mirrored pose, also frame the subject's face, while the soft lines of her cascading hair and relaxed fingers help maintain a gentle, feminine quality (which is reinforced by the use of soft focus).

THREE VIEWS

"There are only three correct angles at which to photograph a face: full, two-thirds, and profile," notes Chris. "In magazine photography, we see lots of full faces—but keep in mind that they're working with perfect faces and flawless makeup."

"For most people," says Chris, "a two-thirds view is generally most appealing because of its slimming effect." As you can see, most of the images in this chapter are created in this view.

"Profiles are a good variation, because they're not often seen in snapshots," he adds, "and when they are, they are usually lit incorrectly, giving them a police lineup look." An example of a back profile appears on page 103.

Again referring to the image shown on the previous page, Chris also advises, "Don't try this pose without long sleeves." As you can see, he has used his subject's sleeves to actually conceal the bulk of her forearms and hands, allowing them to read, visually, as part of the sweater. If the hands and arms were bare, the skin would compete for attention with the face—and that's something you definitely want to avoid.

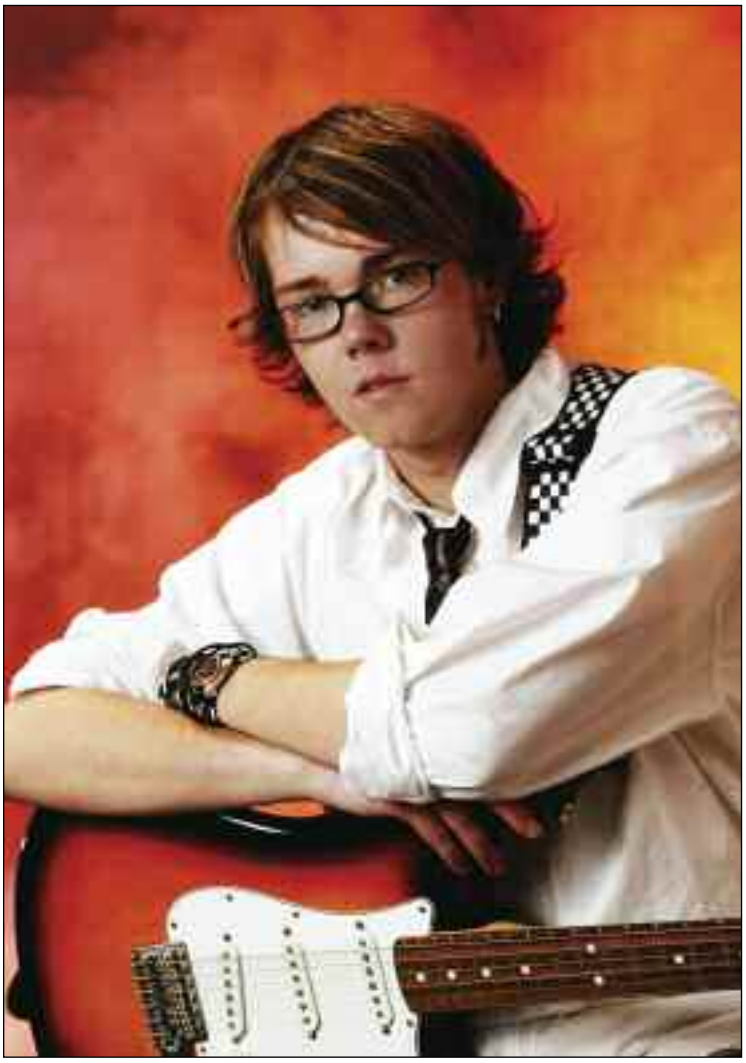
BEYOND THE HEADSHOT

As with most senior-portrait photographers, headshots are an integral part of Chris's photography—but he also strives to offer something beyond just a flattering view of the face.

Consider a Horizontal. "Horizontal headshots look different and will set your work apart from your competition," says Chris. While this is especially true with guys' images (as shown on the facing page), Chris says this type of image is a big seller for both male and female subjects. When it comes to the pose, Chris gives the eyes prominence by ensuring they fall at the top one-third line in the frame. Chris cautions against using the folded-arm pose he typically employs for such images with subjects in sleeveless tops or with heavy arms. If you do, the arms will be too prominent or look too thick. In either case, they will overpower the subject's face.

Include the Hands. One technique Chris employs to make his work stand out is including the arms or hands in many of his headshots. The portraits on this and the facing page fall into that category. Notice, however, that Chris is careful to use these added elements to create diagonal or curved leading lines that draw you to the face. In the images where the arms are crossed (facing page and top right), Chris notes that it is important to cross the hands *away* from the camera so they do not become too prominent. In the top-left image on this page, notice how well the hand functions in the composition; your eyes enter at the bottom left of the frame, follow up the forearm, then trace the curved line of the subject's fingers to his eyes.

Work the Angles. In the images above, it should also be noted that the subject seems to be leaning at a sharp angle into the frame. In the portrait on the left, the camera was tilted to accentuate this angle, and the



tip of the head toward the low shoulder. In the image on the right (previous page), the angle was created by having the subject pose laying down on a mirror (which also acts as a secondary main light).

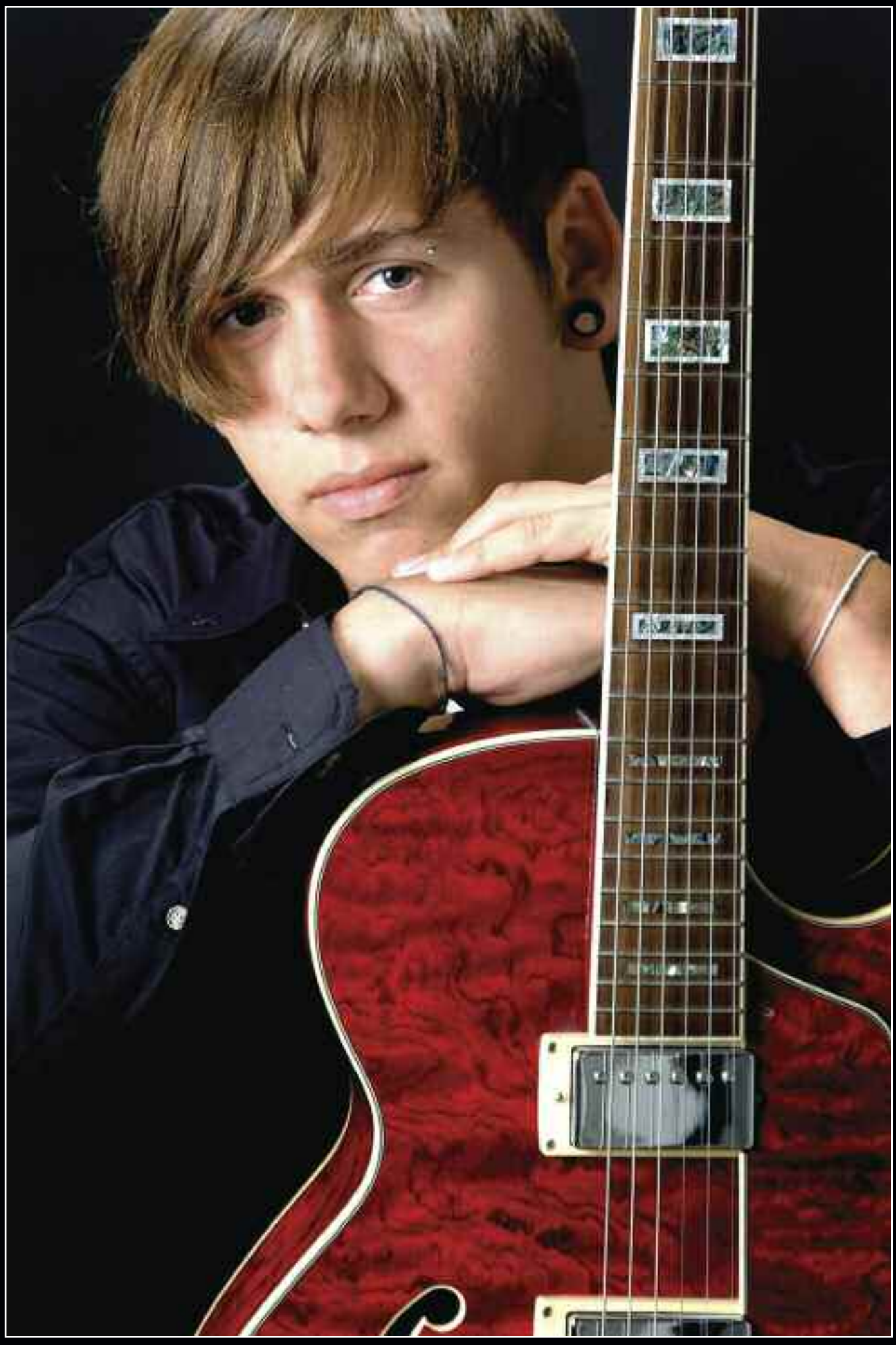
MAKING THE TRADITIONAL NONTRADITIONAL

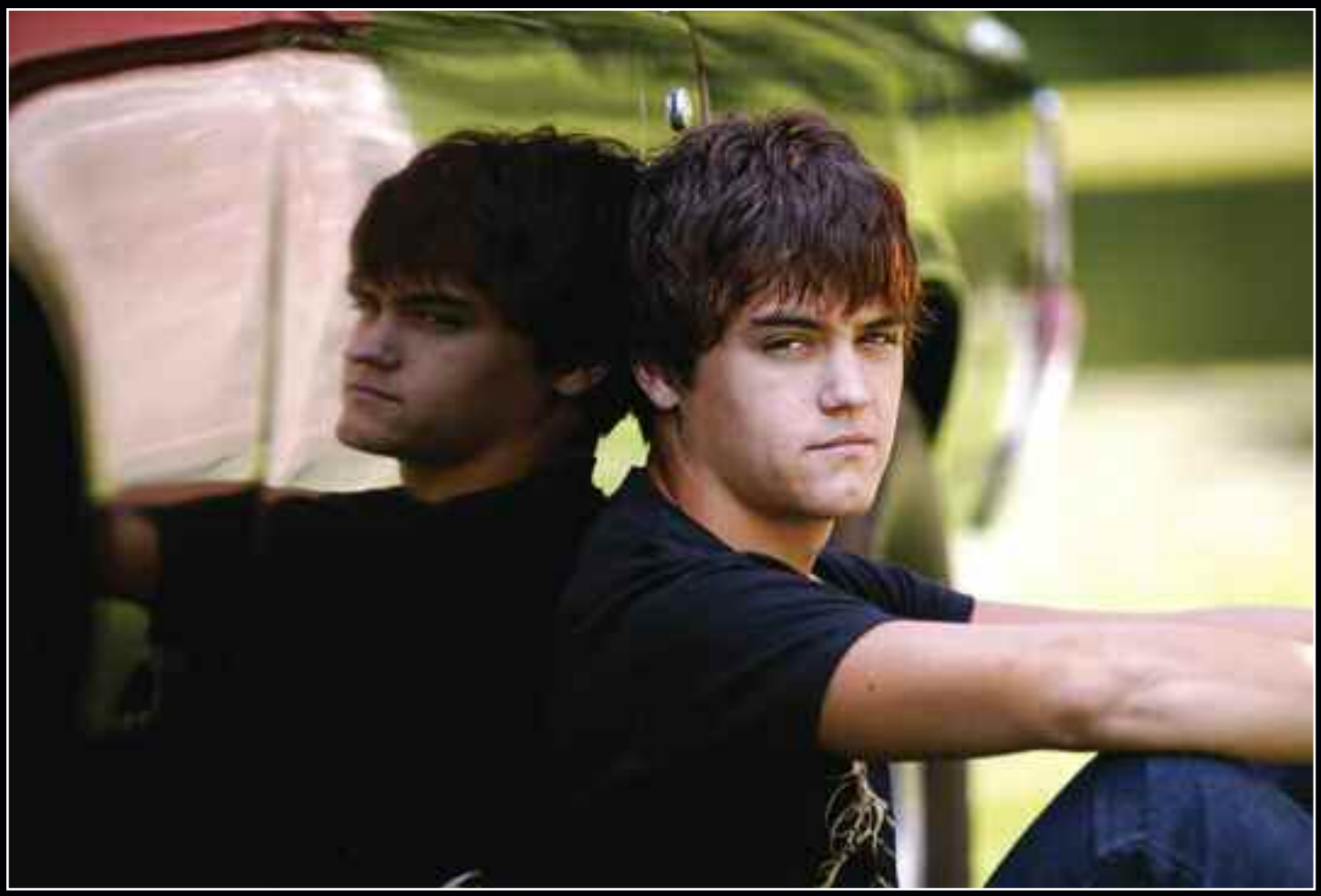
"Bombarded by advertising, pop culture, and fashion images, today's seniors are increasingly sophisticated," says Chris. "The girls want to look like models—and for that matter, so do the guys."

Ironically, while his goal may be to produce the edgy images that teens demand, Chris knows that success requires a solid grounding in the traditional—the techniques that he can rely on to flatter the human body. Of course, while a flattering rendition is critical, he must also go beyond that; Chris's clients demand images in a contemporary style, and they don't want their photos to look like all of their friends' senior portraits.

In traditional posing, male subjects are generally posed in what is called the "basic" style. "In a basic pose," says Chris, "the subject's body and face are both turned toward the main light. The head is then tipped toward the lower shoulder. The degree of the head tip varies." In the three images shown above and on the facing page, this traditional pose is at the core of the portrait—but Chris has found ways to update the look, making it more suited to the tastes of his teen clients.

"Guys prefer a natural, relaxed look rather than a posed one," says Chris, "so have them do something natural." In this case, he had the guys pose with their instruments, but poses with sports equipment or other props work equally well. The props not only help the subject pose in a way that looks and feels natural (something that is especially helpful when posing the hands), they also add another level of personalization to the image, helping it to stand out.





SETTING THE SCENE

Chris is well known for his location portraits, which are part of most seniors' sessions. He offers students a choice of locations, but all have a look that fits in with his studio's image. "Everything about my studio, from marketing pieces to location selections, shouts 'Fall Creek images are cool!'" says Chris.

Posing on location, however, introduces a new set of challenges. Though some of these can be overcome by using flash to supplement the natural light, location portraits still tend to include a wider view of the scene and more of the subject. This means there is more to pose, and more potential distractions. As a result, precise tonal control and careful composition become all the more important—and posing becomes a critical tool for keeping the focus of the image on the face.

In the top image on the facing page, Chris keeps your eyes on the face by showing it *twice*. In the second image, the figure is small in the frame, but everything points toward the young man's face. Here, the subject's bare arms, surrounded by darker tones, act as leading lines. Equally important is the guitar; while the pose reads as very natural, the guitar is placed so that its bright colors attract your eyes, which then follow the neck of the instrument to the subject's face.

A FEMININE PERSPECTIVE

"In terms of appearance, what makes men and women different?" Chris asks. "The answer is curves! Men's bodies are typified by straight lines and angles; women's bodies look feminine because of their curves and roundness. Therefore, you don't want to make straight lines in the poses you create for women's portraits."

In the image above, we have the same basic ingredients as in the images on the facing page—subject, car, and guitar—but here they are interpreted in a different

manner. While the masculine poses are all about straight lines, this pose is made feminine by the curves it features. To create these, Chris had the subject adopt a wide stance, then shift her weight to her back hip. Her right shoulder was dropped and her head was tilted toward it. Finally, she pulled her arm across her body. The result is a look that conveys, as Chris describes it, a "stylish, scrappy attitude."

The images above show the same type of curvy pose used with both casual and more formal attire. When photographing women, says Chris, "Our goal is to make or emphasize a classic hourglass shape for her upper body and join this shape to long, tapering legs. If you look at fashion magazines, you'll see that the models are almost never posed standing straight up with their shoulders square to the camera."

From this, Chris has developed what he calls the "rule of twos." "According to this rule, body parts that come in pairs shouldn't optically be on the same plane," he says. "This applies to the breasts (they'll do what the shoulders do), as well as to the arms, hands, hips, legs, feet, eyes, and ears. From this, it follows that the most *unflattering* thing you can do to a female body is pose her straight up and down, feet shoulder-width apart, and shoulders square to the camera. That would create straight lines, and that's not what we're after."

The C Pose. "There are basically two poses to flatter a female body: the C and the S," says Chris.

"Both poses start with the feet, which should be at about a 45-degree angle to the camera with the weight on the back foot," says Chris. "Her hip should be kicked out slightly, as if she were carrying a sack of groceries in her arms. With her weight on her back foot, her front foot will be free to swing in an arc a little less than 90 degrees. That foot can be placed in different positions along the arc to create the look you want.

"At this point, her shoulders will also be at an angle to the camera. This will make the far shoulder appear

lower, because it is receding optically. You can have her relax and drop that shoulder and/or raise the near shoulder for emphasis. Having the subject tilt her head toward her high shoulder completes the classic C pose."

The S Pose. The S pose is all about accentuating a woman's curves. "As in the C pose," says Chris, "the subject's weight is on her back leg, but her front foot is placed almost directly in front of the back foot. This forms the bottom portion of the female hourglass, narrowing the appearance of the calves and accenting the curves of the model's hips."

"The subject's back is then arched and her front shoulder is pulled down (you can simply tell your client to pull her hip and shoulder together on the side of her body closest to the camera). The combination of back, hip, and shoulder movement slims the waist, while the shoulders then complete the hourglass. Finally, the head is tipped toward the high shoulder, completing the S. This head tip generally projects some attitude; the more pronounced the tip, the more attitude."

REVERSE PROFILES

As noted on page 96, profiles (especially properly lit ones) are something you rarely see in nonprofessional photography, making them instant standouts. Even more rare is the back profile, as seen below. This type of pose is especially appropriate when photographing a woman in an outfit that has an interesting back. It creates a classic, yet stylish look.

To create this pose, the shoulders are placed at about a 45-degree angle to the camera (otherwise the subject will be unable to comfortably turn their face back far enough to produce the desired view). This naturally makes the far should seem to drop, as it recedes from the camera. Watch the neck in this pose; it may show folds or wrinkles. Covering it with the hair, as Chris did

in this image, can be a good option for disguising this problem if it occurs.

To correctly light a profile, says Chris, "The main light should be placed at a 45-degree angle to the side of the subject's face opposite the camera. This means it is actually angling back toward the camera, so shade your lens to prevent flare."

RECLINING POSES

Sometimes, success lies in devising something unusual, as in the image seen on the facing page. "This isn't how you normally see someone," says Chris, "and that's why it's interesting." Note that the subject's arms and raised leg are posed to create diagonal lines in the frame, softening the look and making it more feminine.

The image above also presents an unexpected view; it's one of Chris's favorite poses. To make the pose flattering, says Chris, "make sure she tips her chin back toward the camera—double chins are not allowed!" He also notes that the subject should be instructed to pull her close shoulder down, creating a space between the shoulder and her chin.

A key to the appeal of both of these images is the use of a mirrored surface below the subject. Chris uses both mylar and mirrors for images with this effect (see page 97 for another example). In the image on the facing page, the distorted inverted triangle of the reflection adds soft visual interest without distracting from the face. In the image above, a smoother surface provides a more precise reflection.

In both of these poses, note that Chris has adjusted his lighting to accommodate the unusual angle of the face to the camera. In the image on the facing page, where the subject's face is upside down, the main light

was placed low and to camera left. In the image on page 105, the main light was angled down toward the subject from camera left. In fact, if you turn this book so that the faces are right-side up, you'll see that the catchlights in both images are in the correct positions—either 2 o'clock or 10 o'clock. This is part of creating a professional-quality image that renders the face in a realistic and flattering way.

EXPRESSION

While most people know that the expression is often what sells the portrait, it's also important to make sure that the body language and facial expression agree with each other. In the images above, you can see that Chris has taken care to do just that.

In the image to the left, the subject was posed with his close foot raised up on a stool, leaning his forearms across that raised knee and dropping his far shoulder. His head is tipped in the same direction, creating a classic masculine pose. This relaxed posture calls for a similarly casual expression, like the relaxed smile on this young man's face.

In the image on the right, the subject is in a similar pose, leaning forward on his elbow. Here, the high contrast and assertive hand position communicate a sense of confidence and intensity. The young man's direct, subdued gaze was a perfect match.

As you can see, Chris Nelson is careful to refine each aspect of his portraits. This enables him to produce the edgy looks his clients demand while maintaining a classic quality that allows them to be enjoyed for years.

11. CHERIE STEINBERG COTE

An Ongoing Experiment in Style

For Los Angeles photographer Cherie Steinberg Cote, every day she spends behind the camera is an experiment—and she wouldn't have it any other way. "I can't do the same thing every day," she says. "That's why I chose to be a photographer; that's just my personality."

In fact, asked to define her area of specialty, Cherie is reluctant to narrow it down, ultimately saying, "I get calls every day, and if the job appeals to me, I do it. If it doesn't, I don't." As a result, her images are more diverse than many other photographers' work. While this is appealing from an artistic standpoint, it also has some disadvantages professionally.

"People have told me that they like looking at my images because they're all different—and that's a result of my personality," she says. "But I don't know if it's the best thing for photographers to do. As a matter of fact, when I speak to photographers, I tell them to try

A member of this band had Cherie photograph his wedding, and the group later returned to her when they needed new promotional shots. Cherie used a symmetrical grouping for the five subjects, and everything in the photo leads your eye to their faces—the ceiling beams, the guitars, and the legs of the seated and outside subjects. Shooting from a low angle with a wide-angle lens enhanced the effect, making everything converge toward the center of the frame.

CHERIE STEINBERG COTE began her photography career as a photojournalist at the *Toronto Sun,* where she had the distinction of being the first female freelance photographer. She currently lives in Los Angeles, and has recently been published in the *L.A. Times, Los Angeles Magazine,* and *Town & Country*. In addition, she is an acclaimed instructor who has presented seminars to professional photographers from around the country. To learn more about Cherie and her work, visit her at www.cheriefoto.com.

to do the same thing all the time. That way you develop a signature look for yourself, and that's a good thing. If you think about it, that's what all the great photographers have done. They developed a formula, they stayed with it for many, many years, and they became famous for it."

Cherie notes that, in some cases, the diversity of her work is an obstacle to hiring her. "People come to me and say, 'But can you shoot a *normal* portrait—like for a wedding? Can you do something without their heads cut off?' I'm like, 'Are you kidding, that's easy—of course I can shoot that.' But a lot of people don't get that. They need to look at something and say, 'I want a

THIS PAGE—Cherie's shooting partner, Hedley, is a frequent subject for her photographic experimentation. In these sessions, she works on lighting and posing, playing with new concepts and testing out her ideas. **FACING PAGE, TOP—**Sometimes getting the right pose and expression is all about timing. As a former photojournalist, Cherie knows how important it is to be prepared for happy accidents—like a little dog's yawn. (The dog, by the way, was almost literally roped in off the street; Cherie saw his owners out for a walk and invited them to bring him in for the shoot. The rest is history!) **FACING PAGE, BOTTOM—**This image was created as a promotional shot for the helicopter company, but the subject is a longtime friend of Cherie's. She is a volunteer firefighter who has a part-time job buying and selling helicopters. "Owning a helicopter is even more prestigious than having a personal plane," says Cherie, "because they can land anywhere. We wanted to show the kind of elegant woman who might have just stepped out of this one." A confident walking pose communicates the needed sense of beauty and affluence.

Some time ago, Cherie photographed a wedding and really connected with the bride, Anjale. "She's beautiful, and an artist," notes Cherie. "And she's one of those L.A. girls who are just great in front of the camera." After the wedding, Cherie decided she wanted to do another shoot with the bride in her gown. One of the resulting shots from that session made the cover of *Nikon World*—and since then, they have done many sessions together. **FACING PAGE—**During Anjale's pregnancy, Cherie gave her a maternity session as a gift. For this collaborative image, the mom-to-be was wrapped in tulle and photographed holding flowers, things that both she and Cherie like. The pose is modest, with the hands covering her breasts and the tulle gently softening any detail. Yet, because she is posed in profile, the image still emphasizes her round belly. As a whole, her body creates an elongated S through the frame, leading you to her tilted head and demure expression. **ABOVE—**After the birth of her son, Anjale returned to the studio. Cherie was, at the time, experimenting with the looks she could create using simple white backgrounds, so that's what she selected for this portrait. Again, Anjale is shown in an S-shaped profile—but this time with her little boy's body creating the lower curve. Both Mom and son are shown in a two-thirds view that draws your eyes to theirs.

picture like that on my wall of me and my kids.' If they can't see an example of it, they can't imagine it."

This begs the question: why doesn't Cherie herself develop a concrete style and just stick with it? It comes back to personality. "Once I get something down I get bored with it," she says. "Ten years ago, I looked at wedding photography and said, 'If I'm going to do wedding photography, I need to do something different with it.' So I started to do things like cross processing and infrared. I got really good at those techniques, but the minute I mastered them, I thought, 'Okay, I know how to do this, I don't want to do it anymore.' So that's my problem as an artist—I always want to move on and learn something new."

THIS PAGE—Cherie always enjoys the opportunity to experiment, as she did in these shots. In the top image, the model was posed sitting on a large urn and leaning over another. In the bottom image, the model was actually laying on the floor of Cherie's studio with her head against the wall. A sharp tilt of the camera rendered the image as an almost vertical portrait. Cherie used a LensBaby to create both images. **FACING PAGE—**This portrait was commissioned before a wedding. However, it was not the first marriage for either the bride or groom, so they didn't want traditional "couple" portraits. Instead, they wanted images of their new family. Here, the groom's daughters are posed with their new stepmother, with whom they have a close relationship. The idea for the portrait arose from the enormous vase in the family's home. After clearing a table out of the way, Cherie had the ladies change into white clothing for a white-on-white look. The identical outfits and interlocking arms make it clear that they are part of a close-knit family.

Of course, being open to new experiences and ideas has its advantages, too. "I'm always willing to say yes. It's a 'if I don't know how to do it today, I'll figure it out for tomorrow' kind of thing. I like a challenge." This attitude, paired with a sense of fearlessness and good timing (earned in the fast-paced, push-and-shove world of photojournalism) lets her walk into any shoot confident that she can capture memorable images that the client will love. Of course, those good instincts don't totally replace the need for good planning and preparation.

"Before a session, I talk with the client, I learn who they are, I discover what kind of personality they have, and I find out what I'm going to get out of them," says Cherie. "Some people come in, and I discover that they are very laid back and casual. They're going to show up for their session in blue jeans—that's their personality, and that's what they're going to do. On the other hand, I had a client come in the other day who was excited about the session and suggested taking a couch to downtown Los Angeles (her husband was a

FACING PAGE—Relationships have many unique dimensions. Tuning in to this can allow you to capture some diverse moments—as evidenced by these very different images of an engaged couple. In the top image, you see a classic romantic pose. "They both had great features," says Cherie, "so I used a profile pose to show this." Presenting the image as a silhouette lets the viewer concentrate on these shapes. Just enough detail is visible, however, to reveal their locked gaze. With the faces at slightly different heights, the imaginary lines between the eyes and lips are rendered as diagonals for a more engaging composition. What's missing in the romantic portrait? This couple's goofy, playful side. "They goofed around like brother and sister," Cherie laughs. "They were constantly trying to strangle each other and making faces." As a result, she has some very atypical engagement portraits from this session, as seen in the bottom photo. **BELOW—**While some clients have a dramatic flair that comes out in their images, others are more relaxed and prefer an image that reflects that casual, comfortable sensibility. Here, Cherie used a clean blue background and a simple pose to capture this couple's engagement portrait. The bride-to-be, seated behind her fiance, simply leaned in and placed her chin on his shoulder. She wrapped her arms around his waist, and he lifted his left hand to caress her arm. Their relaxed postures and genuine expressions tell the rest of the story.

cop and could get the street shut down). She wanted to dress in a boa and suggested that her child could dress in a ballet costume—and I was like, 'All right! You go girl!' So it really depends on the client. If they are reserved or camera shy, we'll work with that. If they are flamboyant, we'll do some cool stuff."

When it comes to posing, Cherie's approach is equally relaxed and open to experimentation. "To be quite honest, every session is an experiment. I'm testing things out all the time," she laughs. "That's really what I do. Every time I shoot, I'm thinking, 'Okay, I have this new subject in front of me, and these new lighting conditions—let's check it out.'"

As a result of this spontaneous approach, subject interaction often plays a significant role in Cherie's images—and she loves working with people who take an active collaborative role (such as Anjale, seen on pages 110–11). If her subject(s) are confident in front of the camera, she doesn't do any more directing than

ABOVE—Some people just light up in front of the camera. Cherie met this couple when they were guests at a wedding she photographed. "They just kept coming into my field of view," she says. She loved the way they interacted with each other, so once she had finished her wedding images, she pulled them aside. "I knew if I put them in a beautiful location with beautiful light, something great would happen," she says. And she was right—the couple quickly fell into this sweet pose. **LEFT—**Not all subjects are as comfortable and dynamic in front of the camera, of course. This couple came to Cherie for an engagement portrait. They decided on a location—and once there, the bride fell in love with this lily pond. To capture it, Cherie had the subjects lay down with their heads together. She then shot down toward their faces for an appealing composition.

is necessary—and often the results are wonderful (see the top image on this page). With subjects who are a little more reticent, creating the right mood on the shoot can often loosen them up. "We make it an experience for them," says Cherie, "They get professional styling and lots of personal attention—and by the time you have the subject(s), me, Hedley, and a makeup artist on the set . . . well, that's pretty close to a *party!*"

Looking at Cherie's work, this try-anything-once approach is obvious; in a thousand images, you'd never see a double. Each portrait is a unique expression, a special moment transformed by Cherie's creative vision.

CONCLUSION

When photographers discuss portraiture, lighting is usually the favorite topic—after all, photographers tend to be gadget junkies, and new lighting tools (or new ways of using existing tools) appeal to these sensibilities. Yet, most of the photographers I interviewed for this book reported that posing can actually be more challenging than lighting. It often took them longer to learn and now takes much longer to teach to their apprentice photographers.

This is probably because the variables involved are so incredibly diverse. Not only are there a large number of body parts to be showcased in an appealing manner, those body parts are different for every subject. Unlike lighting setups, which tend to fall into a few major categories, the ways in which you might successfully pose your client are almost limitless. Additionally, the pose of the image plays a huge role in the mood and composition of the portrait, adding additional concerns beyond simply flattering your client's figure.

As a result of these challenges, there are almost as many approaches to posing as there are photographers. Some adhere to rigorous guidelines; others adopt a more intuitive approach. Some involve the subject in creating a pose that "feels" natural; others prioritize showing the subject looking his or her absolute best over being totally comfortable in the pose.

If there's one constant, however, it's that successful photographers never stop learning. The artists featured in this book have a great deal to teach others about posing, but they all remain students of the art as well. They attend seminars, read books, and study the work of other photographers whose images they admire. Not only is this continuing education critical to keeping up with the ever-changing demands of the marketplace, it's also important for continuing to evolve creatively. If you stop learning and trying new techniques, it can be hard to maintain your enthusiasm—and it will show in your images.

Thanks again to all of the photographers who graciously contributed their time and images. And to readers: study their advice and experiment with the techniques that work for them; they are an excellent starting point and source of inspiration. Ultimately, however, they are all tools—tools that are best used in helping you to refine and achieve your unique creative vision. Good luck!

APPENDIX I

Individual Posing Basics

This section covers the fundamental rules of traditional posing—techniques that are referenced by various photographers throughout this book. While these rules are often selectively broken by contemporary photographers, most remain cornerstones for presenting the human form in a flattering way.

TYPES OF POSES

There are three basic types of poses, each defined by how much of the length of the subject's body is included in the image. When including less than the full body in the frame, it is recommended that you avoid cropping at a joint (such as the knee or elbow); this creates an amputated look. Instead, crop between joints.

Head and Shoulders or Headshot. A portrait that shows the subject's head and shoulders. If the hands are lifted to a position near the face, these may also be included.

Three-Quarter-Length Portraits. A portrait that shows the subject from the head down to the mid-thigh or mid-calf.

Full-Length Portraits. A portrait that shows the subject from head to toe.

FACIAL VIEWS

Full Face. The subject's nose is pointed at the camera.

Seven-Eighths. The subject's face is turned slightly away from the camera, but both ears are still visible.

Three-Quarters or Two-Thirds. The subject's face is angled enough that the far ear is hidden from the camera's view. In this pose, the far eye will appear smaller because it is farther away from the camera than the other eye. The head should not be turned so far that the tip of the nose extends past the line of the cheek or the bridge of the nose obscures the far eye.

Profile. The subject's head is turned 90 degrees to the camera so that only one eye is visible.

THE SHOULDERS

The subject's shoulders should be turned at an angle to the camera. Having the shoulders face the camera directly makes the person look wider than he or she really is and can yield a static composition.

THE HEAD

Tilting the Head. Tilting the head slightly produces diagonal lines that can help a pose feel more dynamic. In men's portraits, the traditional rule is to tilt the head toward the far or low shoulder. In women's portraits, the head is traditionally tilted toward the near or high shoulder for a feminine look. This rule is often broken.

Chin Height. A medium chin height is desirable. If the person's chin is too high, he may look conceited and his neck may appear elongated. If the person's chin is too low, he may look timid and appear to have a double chin or no neck.

Eyes. In almost all portraits, the eyes are the most important part of the face. Typically, eyes look best when the iris borders the eyelids.

ARMS

Whether male or female, the subject's arms should be separated at least slightly from the torso. This creates a space that slims the appearance of the upper body. It also creates a triangular base for the composition, leading the viewer's eye up to the subject's face. Virtually all portrait photographers request that the subject wear long-sleeved tops; even if the subject is thin, bare upper arms rarely render attractively in portraits.

HANDS

Keep the hands at an angle to the lens to avoid distorting their size and shape. Photographing the outer edge of the hand produces a more appealing look than showing the back of the hand or the palm, which may look unnaturally large (especially when close to the face). Additionally, it is usually advised that the hands should be at different heights in the image. This creates a diagonal line that makes the pose more dynamic.

Wrist. Bending the wrists slightly by lifting the hand (not allowing it to flop down) creates an appealing curve that is particularly flattering in women's portraits.

Fingers. Fingers look best when separated slightly. This gives them form and definition.

Men *vs.* Women. When posing women's hands, strive to create a graceful look. When photographing men, an appearance of strength is generally desirable.

Props. Hands are often easiest to pose when they have something to do—either a prop to hold, or something to rest upon.

CHEST

In portraits of women, properly rendering this area is critical. Selecting a pose that places the torso at an angle to the camera emphasizes the shape of the chest and, depending on the position of the main light, enhances the form-revealing shadows on the cleavage. Turning the shoulders square to the camera tends to flatten and de-emphasize this area. Good posture, with the chest lifted and shoulders dropped, is also critical to a flattering rendition.

WAIST AND STOMACH

Separating the arms from the torso helps to slim the waist. In seated poses, a very upright posture (almost to the point of arching the back) will help to flatten the stomach area, as will selecting a standing pose rather than a seated one. It is also generally recommended that the body be angled away from the main light. This allows the far side of the body to fall into shadow for a slimming effect.

LEGS

Whether the subject is standing or seated, the legs should be posed independently rather than identically. Typically, one leg is straighter and used to support the body (or in a seated pose, to connect the subject to the floor). The other leg is bent to create a more interesting line in the composition.

Standing. Having the subject put his or her weight on the back foot shifts the body slightly away from the camera for a more flattering appearance than having the weight distributed evenly on both feet. Having a slight bend in the front knee helps create a less static look.

Seated. When the subject is sitting, the legs should be at an angle to the camera. Allowing for a small space between the leg and the chair will slim the thighs and calves.

One Leg in Profile. In portraits of women where the legs are bare, it is desirable to show the side of at least one leg. This better reveals the shape of the ankle and calf.

HIPS AND THIGHS

Most female subjects are concerned about this area. For the slimmest appearance in a standing pose, turn the hips at an angle to the camera and away from the main light. In a seated pose, have the subject shift her weight onto one hip so that more of her rear is turned away from the camera.

FEET

Feet often look distorted when the toes are pointed directly at the camera. It is best to show the feet from an angle. In portraits of women, the toes are often pointed (or the heels elevated, as they would be in high-heeled shoes). This flexes the calf muscles, creating a slimmer appearance and lengthening the visual line of the subject's legs.

APPENDIX II

Group Posing Basics

This section covers the fundamental rules of posing groups. These rules must be considered in addition to those presented in Appendix I for posing the individual. In a group portrait, each subject must be posed individually in a flattering way, and the grouping as a whole must also appear interesting and attractive.

BASIC CONCEPTS

Bookending. Subjects in group portraits should, like individual subjects, be posed at an angle to the camera. In portraits of couples, the subjects may both be posed facing in the same direction. In most other portraits, however, groups look best when the flanking subjects face in toward the center of the frame. These inward-oriented faces serve to bookend the composition, constantly directing the print viewer's eyes back into the image.

Head Heights. In group portraits, the heads of the subjects should not be at the same height or directly on top of each other. (*Note:* The exception to this rule occurs when photographing regimented groups, such as sports teams and military- or law-enforcement personnel. In this case, the subjects are frequently posed in matching lines.)

When posing two people, a good starting point is to position the higher subject's lips even with the lower subject's mouth. If the height difference between the subjects is not sufficient to produce this (or is too great), it can be quickly accomplished by having one subject seated on an adjustable posing stool while the other subject stands next to him/her. Alternately, one subject might sit in an armchair while the other sits on the arm of the chair.

In larger groups, the heads should be arranged so that the individual faces create a dynamic pattern throughout the frame. For example, the subjects may be posed on stairs so their faces form a diagonal line through the frame. Alternately, subgroups might be arranged so that their faces form a series of linked circles or diamonds in the frame. Other popular shapes that can be created with the faces in group portraits are S curves and pyramids.

Hands. In group portraits, hands can be a problem. If the hands will be shown, strive to follow the rules covered in Appendix I. Additionally, check to ensure that any hands appearing in the frame are clearly connected to an arm (i.e., they do not seem to be either floating or coming out of nowhere). Often, the best strategy is to hide as many of the hands as possible. This can be accomplished by putting them in pockets, obscuring them with other subjects, or concealing them with props or set elements. For example, a group of bridesmaids could be photographed holding their bouquets rather than with their hands free and visible.

GROUPING SUBJECTS

Proximity. When posing subjects, placing the subjects relatively close to each other conveys a sense of warmth and intimacy. Allowing for more space between the sub-

jects allows you to employ more intricate, indivualized poses and may lend a sense of elegance.

Whatever strategy you choose, the subject's faces should, in most cases, be roughly equidistant. If they are not, subjects who are visually closer to each other will appear to be related in a way that others in the image are not. Similarly, a subject who is visually farther from the others in the portrait may seem to be removed from the group.

This principle can be used to great effect when, for example, photographing an extended family. In this case, each nuclear family may have its members tightly clustered. Providing a bit of additional space between these smaller groups will provide a cohesive family-portrait look, while still showing the relationship between the members of the grouped nuclear families.

Focus. Focus is an additional concern when determining the spacing between subjects. In order to keep all of the faces in focus, they must fall within the plane of focus at the working aperture. With all but the smallest groups, this means that the subjects must be posed so that the faces of those in the back are as close as possible to those in the front.

To accomplish this, it may be necessary to have subjects in the back lean slightly forward. To maximize the zone of focus, you can also elevate the camera and angle it slightly down so that the lens plane is parallel (or close to parallel) to the plane of the subjects' faces. Keep in mind, however, that this can also cause lens distortion.

In large groups, it may also be difficult to keep subjects at the edges of the frame in focus. This is because they are more distant from the lens than subjects at the center of the grouping. To resolve this issue, you can have the center subjects move back slightly and the subjects at the edge move forward slightly to bow the group around the lens. By posing the subjects along an arc in this manner, you can ensure that they are equidistant to the lens.

Hierarchy. There are two basic strategies for determining where individuals should be placed in a group portrait.

The first strategy is to group the subjects into logical units (nuclear families, office departments, teams, etc.). This is often done to allow the idividual subgroups to be photographed separately from the larger group.

The other strategy is to group the subjects by size and shape. Taller subjects might be placed in the back, for example, while children might be posed in front of the group.

An overarching principle when grouping subjects is typically to place the most important figures in the center of the frame. For example, in a family portrait, the oldest members of the family are typically central in the frame. In a wedding portrait, the bride and groom are the central figures.

FINAL CHECK

When photographing group portraits, it is especially important to do a final check of the posing before taking the picture. It can be hard for people to hold the desired pose, so some refinement will likely be needed from time to time.

Particular attention should be paid to the edges of the group, where improper posing (such as a leg or arm seeming to project out from the group) will be particularly obvious in the final images.

Ultimately, each person in the image must look good. Keep in mind that, even in a large group, everyone looks as themselves first and must be satisfied with what they see.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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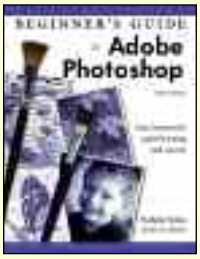

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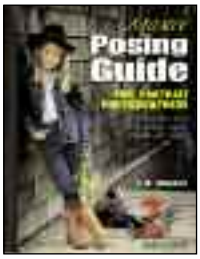

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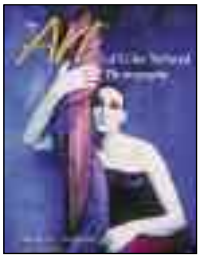

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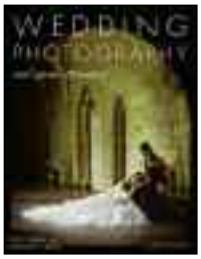

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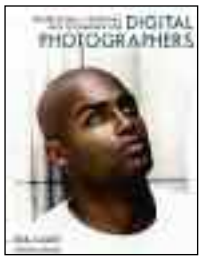

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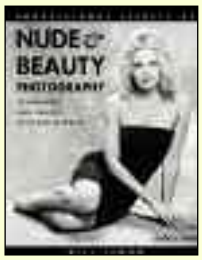

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