

SUSAN STRIPLING

the think book : issue six



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issue six
the think book
all images and text
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welcome to the think book issue six

Every time I blog I get requests : How was this shot done? Where was this taken? How did you light this? Process that? How do you get that much time with the bride and groom? What lens did you choose for this image and why? So on and so forth.

That is why I've created this : the think book. Welcome to issue four, I'm glad you're here (for the first time or hey, welcome back)! Each think book issue will detail several weddings or events with a writeup on the timeline, issues of the day, and other things I think you will find helpful. Each event will also detail 5-7 images along

with as much technical detail as I can give and insight into how the image was captured and processed.

Each issue will also include an article about something : be it travel to a destination wedding, how I'm structuring my packages to combat our difficult economy, how to leverage social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook to your benefit, and so forth. Suggestions for articles is always welcome!

At the end of each issue will be a vendor list of who I've been working with (both long-term vendors I adore a new things I've

tried) along with links to their sites.

I hope you all find this helpful, educational, and a little bit fun. Thanks for being along for the first step of what I hope will be a long ride!

- *susan*

wedding 1 : natalie and matt philadelphia, pa

January 02, 2010

This wedding was the first of the year and I was super excited....until I looked at the weather the day before and realized that I totally wasn't in Florida anymore! It was going to be about twenty degrees outside (yes, to me that's cold, no, you are not allowed to call me a wimp!) and that it would be dark by about 4:15pm.

I met Natalie and Matt about nine months before their wedding and they asked the question that has become very commonplace these days : "Is there anything you can do about the price?" To negotiate or not negotiate, this is the question of the day.

First of all, I'm never offended when anyone asks this. If people flat out ask for a huge discount without compromising anything in the collection they want then there isn't much I can do. But negotiating is simply a part of business and either you can or can't. For me, I can't and won't negotiate for prime Saturdays (April-November-ish) but for Fridays, Sundays, and off-peak Saturdays if adjusting the price a bit books me a wedding when I most likely won't be working then I will take it into consideration.

What I was able to do for Natalie and Matt was twofold : first I offered a small discount on overtime. The collection they purchased was for eight hours but they needed a ninth and possibly a tenth hour. I offered those hours at 1/2 off (\$200 instead of \$400). I don't mind this negotiation because I am

"To negotiate or not negotiate, this is the question of the day."

already receiving full price for the collection and am just discounting the overtime. The second thing I did was allow them to break up their payments : A retainer with the contract to book the date, a payment ninety days before the wedding, another payment thirty days before the wedding, a payment when the DVD was ready, and another small payment when we begin on their album.

Normally I won't move payment plans around because I'm sure we've all heard horror stories about photographers never being paid their final balances. The balance left on the DVD delivery was small (\$500) and the balance for the album is small as well (\$500...incidentally that is about the cost to produce the album itself!). These two concessions were little, still allowed me to make a good payday, and helped spread out the cost of the collection over time, making it an easier investment to handle.



wedding 1 : natalie and matt

image one

January 02, 2010

Natalie was getting ready at a pretty ordinary hotel - a Sheraton in old city Philadelphia. It was an overcast day with not much light and I wanted somewhere to put her dress and photograph it. As an added bonus Natalie had a fur-trimmed cape to wear in the cold January weather and I wanted to showcase that as well.

I am always thinking "How can I shoot this in a way that no one else would?" but sometimes you're very limited with your scenery and location. In this instance the only really great place to put the dress and cape were in the window and I feel like I often put dresses in windows. I kept canvassing the room, looking for anything I could do in order to jazz up the image, and noticed that the closet door opened flat against the wall with a full-length mirror on the back of the door. When I pressed my entire body against the wall and the lens against the glass I could get a reflection of the dress. The space wasn't big enough to get a reflection of the cape as well but I like the symmetry of the shot with the cape in the center and the two dresses.

The processing of this image was very simple - in Lightroom I added an additional ten points of contrast and ten points of blacks, an exposure mask around the

Camera : Nikon D3

Lens : 24-70mm at 24mm

Aperture : f3.5

Shutter Speed: 1/200 sec

Exposure Program : Aperture Priority

Exposure Bias : -0.3

White Balance : Cloudy

ISO : 200

edges of the image at minus one stop, and about fifty points of additional temperature warmth.



wedding 1 : natalie and matt

image two

January 02, 2010

It's no secret that I love a good ring shot - it's almost always the first thing I shoot once getting into the bride's getting-ready room. I've mentioned in past ThinkBooks that I like to put the rings in a compositional setting that will be meaningful to the bride and groom when they look back on the image in years to come. If I'm not able to do that then I look for a simple clean background and place to set the rings in good lighting and just take a straightforward image of the bands and engagement ring.

For Natalie and Matt's wedding some of the reception decor was in Natalie's getting-ready room. She had a seating chart that she had created herself and the edges of the chart were wire-strung pearls. She had extra pearls and wire in the corner of the room and I grabbed a handful of them and put them on the ottoman near the window.

I made sure the sheers of the curtains were closed. Even though there wasn't a lot of light outside filtering in it was still a little too directional for my taste so the closed sheers softened the light and spread it out just a bit.

Then I propped the ring on the pearls and turned the diamond until it caught the light just right, illuminating the entire stone. If you look at the exif data you can see

Camera : Nikon D3

Lens : 60mm 2.8 macro

Aperture : f6.3

Shutter Speed: 1/125 sec

Exposure Program : Aperture Priority

Exposure Bias : -1.7

White Balance : Cloudy

ISO : 1100

that my aperture was at f6.3 so that the entire diamond is in focus. When working with a macro lens you have to be careful with your aperture because shooting wide-open leaves *such* a narrow plane of focus and I want to make sure that the whole diamond is in focus and really pops.

The only additional processing is added temperature in Lightroom and about fifteen extra points of contrast. I also take the clarity mask and pass it once or twice across the face of the diamond for extra punch!

