I really love how the flare came through the back of her hair in this shot.

TWO BARE SPEEDLIGHTS
LIVING DANGEROUSLY

This Tech Sheet looks at a way to use two simple speedlights for a very dramatic look. The many ways this look can be altered to create even more drama is up to the individual photographer.

The placement of the speedlight is the most important factor when doing a shot like this. You will notice that Briana's face doesn't have the hard shadow look you can sometimes see on direct flash shots. It is the careful work between the model and the photographer that can help mitigate the harshness and use it to advantage.

What you will need:

- two speedlights
- two stands
- a bit of diffusion (typing paper)
- a way to trigger both lights
  (we used a cactus wireless and
   an optical slave for this shot.)

IMPORTANT:
Positioning the light with respect to the model. I keep the model turned into the light using the nose as an 'axis'. If she is turned to the light as an axis for her, it creates very little side shadow. I can move the camera position, but she keeps turned into the light and shadows are mitigated.

I wanted to shoot at a limited DOF for this shot, and I chose the 100mm Macro Canon for the lens. It is a wonderfully sharp lens and the depth of field at a wide aperture is fairly small at this distance.

I set the lights up with a 430EX behind her about 3 feet and sighted it to the back of her head, slightly lower than the top of her head so I wouldn't get flare from the top. I wanted to try to get some flare from the side of her head so that is the place I put the strobe height wise. It is set at 1/32 power and is triggered with an optical slave. Opticals work well in the studio where there is very little ambient light to confuse them.

In front I used a 550EX with a cactus wizard and a modified Gary Fong thing. I have a round reflector (mine was left over from an old Sunpack strobe that died a long time ago) with a sheet of diffusion in the back of the reflector to add a slight bit of softness to the edge of the shadows. I also like how the round reflector gives me a round pattern of light instead of the rather oblong square from a bare speedlight. This strobe is down to 1/32 power and is about 4 1/2 feet from her. It is aimed straight on to her face a little above the center of the nose.

The low power is allowing me to shoot at f2.8 at ISO 100 and also gives the speedlights almost instant recycle. I wanted to catch that hair in motion, so the fastest little wink of light I could get would work perfectly.

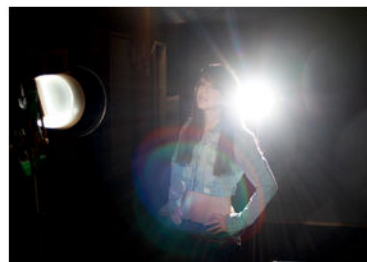The modified "Fong" on the 550EX

You can see the height positioning of the lights here.

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Notice the nice round look to the main light due to the modified round reflector on the front.

Flare can be a problem if it is not dealt with carefully.

PHOTOSHOP FOR THIS IMAGE:
This shot has very little Photoshop other than the basic skin repair and color/contrast work. I do use the layer masks for isolating the contrast on most images and this is no exception. I desaturated it by 25% at the end.