

LIGHTING ESSENTIALS

tech sheet



FLARE::

I wanted some flare to make the shot warm and add some texture to it. Working with flare can be a little tricky. Good lenses make it easier, but this kit lens did a pretty fair job with it in this case.



Here is the setup for the shots. It only changed when I would move the side light in or out a bit dependent on having one or two girls in the shot. It was important to catch both girls legs from the back with that light.

SPEEDLIGHTS IN LATE DAY SUN

SKATERS IN THE DESERT

As a professional photographer, one of the things that keep us sharp and prepared is being familiar with the tools and the practice of our art. And that helps so much when undertaking a new assignment. This tech sheet is based on a test that I am doing for a client whom I pitched a month ago for a set of portraits. I have the job and wanted to produce an initial shot for a point of reference as we continue on the quarter long shoot schedule.

It showed the client my direction and I got buy-in for the concept of athletes and artists in areas that are incongruent to their sports. In this case, ice skaters in the desert.

FOR THIS PORTRAIT:

- two speedlights (am using a 550 and 430 Canon)
- one small/medium beauty dish (small umbrella optional)
- a boom for the main light
- a medium stand for the back light
- tripod optional

Finding an old dirt road south of Phoenix near the town of Maricopa, I then scouted a direction that would place the sun directly down the road. The sandy two lane path had no marks or footprints on it and I wanted it to remain that way so I was very careful to walk on the perimeter of it to get the shot lined up.



The shots above show the road as I worked to find the angle that would place the sun directly behind them and 'down the road' for the metaphorical shot.

When having them approach the shoot space, I had them go down the road and come up in a very straight line. That made it easier to hide the footprints from the camera.

The set in this case is a fragile one. If someone walks out across it, the sand gets footprints and we have to move on down to another location. Not a big deal sometimes, but a shot killer other times. The sun moves really dang quick at this point of the day, so working carefully and smart is your best option.

You are in control not only of the shot and the lights, but the entire set. Keep it in your mind and in the mind of your team.

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SKATERS IN THE DESERT pg2



In these horizontal images you can see the play of the sand and how well the sun backlight adds to the texture of the shot. The camera is very low at this point and it can be quite a challenge to compose and focus with the flare coming in and filling that viewfinder.

I caught this little bit of flare and liked it right away. This one is by far the best. It highlights the skates and maybe helps make some sort of statement about the relationship a skater has to her skates... or maybe it's just cool. Whatever works is also a good plan.

Here are the two lights used for these shots.



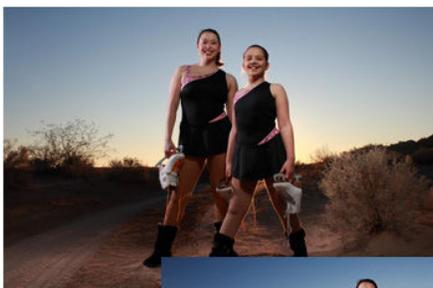
A 430 Canon on the ol' 'Wizwow special' light mount. Save, sturdy and fast... really fast.



A 550 in a small beauty dish. This wonderful little modifier was a gift from Just Fab. I do believe there is some sort of injunction keeping me away from any kind of power tool.



Testing the lights before putting them in position can save some fiddling and the possibility of spoiling the set.



Right from the Raw File as it was shot. No processing alterations from Raw.

Final image out of Photoshop. Better color and contrast.



PHOTOSHOP CONCEPTS

I used very few 'tricks' in Photoshop to achieve this look. I wanted it to be pretty natural.

After processing from Raw, I bumped the contrast up a bit by duplicating the layer and converting to "softlight" for the blending mode. That can be pretty strong, but taking it down to about 30% can control it. I also use the Luminance Masks from Tony Kuyper. Link is on website

I will use a layer of 50% gray over the top of everything, blend mode at "softlight" and paint in highlights with a soft brush at 10% opacity. White for highlights, black for shadows.

There are many ways to darken the sky, and I use whichever is appropriate for the shot. In this case, I took a layer and duped it, lowered the values and painted it in with a layer mask.

Thanks for taking a look at this tech sheet. I hope you got something out of it that will help you make images.

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