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Photographer Morgan Maassen Hits the Waves with the D7500

Featuring **MORGAN MAASSEN**



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Trevor Gordon, sliding on a perfect wave at Santa Barbara's famed Sandspit, a man-made wave at the harbor. D7500, AF-P DX NIKKOR 10-20mm f/4.5-5.6G VR at 13mm focal length, f/7.1, 1/1600 second, ISO 200, +.3 EV

In photography, as in life, Los Angeles, CA-based photographer and social media influencer Morgan Maassen prefers the road less travelled.

An avid surfer and world traveler, 28-year-old Morgan has used a lot of Nikon equipment in building a career that has taken him to, among other places, Mexico, Japan and Australia in search of the perfect wave, and the perfect shot.

Known for his adventure photography—especially surfing—Morgan has

established himself as a go-to photographer for various companies, including Urban Outfitters, Virgin Records, Delta Airlines, Facebook, Mini Cooper, NBC Universal, Monster Energy and Verizon Wireless, among others.

Originally from Santa Barbara, CA, Morgan ironically found his passion for photography after getting injured while surfing.

“I borrowed a camcorder from a family friend to learn how to shoot and edit video. The result was a nine-minute short film that was terrible! However, the excitement I felt from exploring cinematography, video editing, music, and documenting the beautiful waves and talented surfers of my hometown became a passion I had to pursue.”

He soon began using a Nikon D50 “with a couple of old manual focus lenses, and immediately became engrossed in the transition from storytelling with motion to freezing it in 1/1000th of a second.”

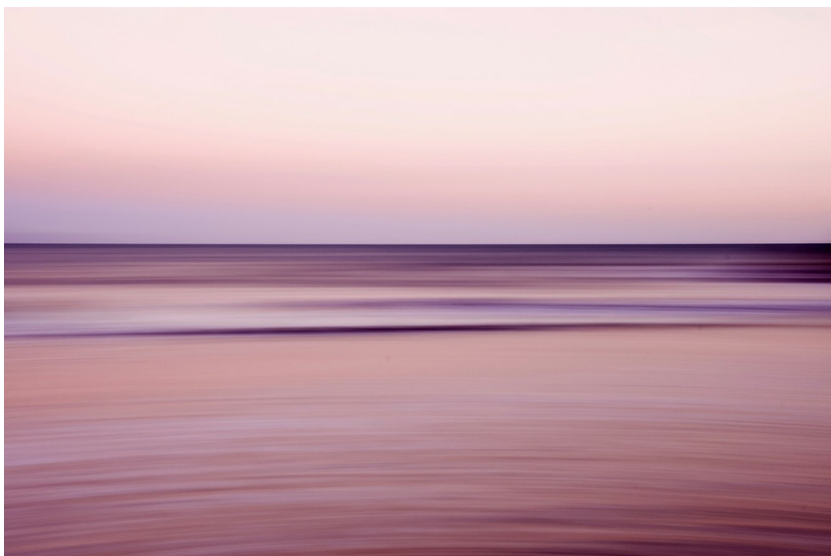
“I quickly changed gears and began shooting photos every day, of everything I could point my camera at,” he says.

Those themes now include lifestyle, people, night, travel, profiles of surfers, whimsical beach landscapes and water videos accompanied by dramatic music.

The results have earned him over a quarter of a million followers on Instagram.

“My photography is largely guided by my curiosities of the real world. I love textures and low light from an observational standpoint, so that’s what I always find myself capturing. Surfing is a lifelong passion of mine, so it was only natural to shoot it when I found photography,” he notes.

He concludes: “I can rarely premeditate what a surfer or the environment will do. However, I’m always dreaming of places to go and compositions to capture. So, in that regard, I will constantly try for certain images I imagine. Often times I come close, or get something unexpected but equally as gratifying, which is the beauty of the creativity in photography.”



A slow pan of the beach at dusk. D7500, AF-S DX NIKKOR 35mm f/1.8G, f/18, ¼ second, ISO ISO 250, +.67 EV

Hitting the Waves

Recently Morgan photographed some stunning surfing images with the [Nikon D7500](#).

The results of these photo shoots include shots that are sometimes dreamy, and other times heart-pounding in their ability to capture the action close up with enormous detail. Think little drops of foamy water and spray kicking up from the surfer and coming right at you!

He explains: “I wanted to set out and create a body of photos that captured the perspectives and energy of surfing on and amongst the waves and the challenge of capturing the moment from such an intense angle, and the amount of fun to be had while making the picture. The additional images, from the beach and of the sea, are ancillary detail shots that help document the feeling and experience.”

And, he says, the small size and light weight of the Nikon D7500 is ideal for traveling the world and for active photo shoots such as this one.

“I primarily shoot on the Nikon D5 and D4s, which are full frame FX bodies. Having the D7500 in my bag—which works with all my FX lenses with [a 1.5x] crop—was actually rather fun. It allowed me to get a little extra out of my longer prime lenses and telephotos. The small size of the D7500 helped it slide into my camera lineup to serve the purpose of casual shooting and lightweight applications,” he says.

He adds: “I’m so used to working with larger, heavier cameras, so I was able to create the tiniest configuration I’ve ever worked with to get the images and video I wanted to capture in the water. Every inch of size and pound of weight matters when you’re surfing on a wave with a camera in your hand, especially considering it’s in a glass and aluminum waterproof housing.”

Morgan’s background shooting both video and stills served him well while using the D7500 too.

“For stills, the ISO performance of the camera is remarkable. It’s been a treat shooting slow shutter [speeds] on the camera, both in the last minutes of light and also under the full moon later at night. It may seem trivial, but how the camera processes the images and delivers the final file is everything to me, in the colors and tones it captures when working with limited light,” he says.

For video, he specifically compliments the speed of which the D7500 has performed for him.

“Being able to turn the camera on and engage video capture within one second was like a dream,” he says.

He concludes: “The SPL waterproof housing for the D7500 and NIKKOR 10-20mm ([AF-P DX NIKKOR 10-20mm f/4.5-5.6G VR](#)) are now invaluable to my shooting in the water, so I can’t wait for next winter to hopefully bring some good swells to Santa Barbara. I’m excited to travel with it to Australia and Hawaii, where I can put it through the paces in bigger surf.”



© Morgan Maassen

Trevor’s last wave of the evening, a flawless peeler that reeled down the point. D7500, AF-S DX NIKKOR 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR at 80mm focal length, f/6.3, ¼ second, ISO 400, +.67 EV

Hanging Loose

Morgan has also become a social media influencer with 264,000 followers on Instagram to date.

“Years ago, I had a blog that I ran, on my daily adventures, musings, work and inspiration. I saw my blog and subsequent website as a bottleneck for my work and voice, which brought in clients when my photography got to the point that brands wanted to hire me around the age of 19,” he explains.

“It wasn’t until Fall 2013, when I won several categories at the *Red Bull Illume* in Hong Kong, that I started receiving so much attention on social media that I had to recalculate my outward appearance on Facebook and Instagram. It was fascinating becoming a content channel on these outlets, and as my following grew, the amount of opportunities that opened up became immeasurable.”



© Morgan Maassen

Trevor, one of my best friends and favorite surfers, is notorious for being the last one in. Here is he is basking under the full moon, as he contemplated the perfect waves that still marched past us, despite the bitter cold. D7500, AF-S DX NIKKOR 16-80mm f/2.8-4E ED VR at 16mm focal length, f/10, 10 seconds, ISO 400, +.67 EV

He adds: “Whether it’s brands asking to collaborate, creative directors noticing my work, or being able to share media that I create as it happens, all interactions on social media have truly helped strengthen my business and ‘brand,’ he says.

So what’s on the horizon for Morgan?

Currently he’s working on post-production of several videos and commercials, and prepping for a trip to China and Indonesia, as well as Chile and Tahiti, capturing life one wave, and one image, at a time.

To see more of Morgan's work, visit his website at www.morganmaassen.com.

Featuring

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