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INTERMEDIATE

Strategy Sessions

Featuring **DOUG GORDON**



© Doug Gordon

"I'm telling a story using the importance of the background, and everything leads into that story." D3X, AF-S NIKKOR 70-200mm f/2.8G ED VR II

When Doug Gordon shoots a wedding, neither the bride nor the groom is the star of the show. That role belongs to Doug Gordon. Which, in the world according to Doug, is exactly the way it should be. It's a world where imaging skills combine with brilliant strategy to tell idealized stories.

"A wedding...it's a fairy tale," Doug says, "and everyone sees through rose-colored glasses—but the camera does not, and my job as the photographer is to identify all the good points and the not so good points. I have a choice then—I could show them as they are, or I can show them as they want to be."

Posing allows him to do the latter. "Posing allows me to flatter them. I can make them look slimmer, sexier, even angelic. The great thing about posing is that I'm creating the moment, and when I'm doing that, I'm the writer, the director, the producer, the storyteller." Like we said, the star of the show.

"I believe it's what happens in the pose that creates the naturalness of the moment," Doug says.

Sounds like a contradiction: pose and naturalness. “I pose you,” Doug explains, “but of course I pose you to look natural. I tell my clients, ‘I’m going to put you in the most uncomfortable positions you’ve ever been in, but I’m going to make you look better than you’ve ever looked.’ Why does that work? Because the truly natural moments aren’t the moments they want in a wedding album. No bride looks at her husband-to-be and says, ‘Oh, my god, look at the way the light is hitting us. Let’s frolic!’ Or, ‘Let me spin and have the light hit me so beautifully.’”

Doug makes it work because he’s smart, quick, confident and personable. And, he says, because he remembers what most others have forgotten. “Wedding photography has become so technology based that photographers forgot that the photography is based on personal relationships, on connecting with the client. If people like you, they’ll love the photos.”

In his photos is the total of what he’s seen, what he’s learned and what he knows works best. “When I see a once-in-a-lifetime moment, whether in life, in a movie or a photo, I know I need to find a way to do it, and then do it again.

By posing I create consistency, and most important I create a guarantee that my client will get what they expect. No client has ever walked in my door and said, ‘I love your website, I love your sample album. Now, could you make sure my pictures look nothing like that?’ I do what I show them.”

And in order to do it, he has to be in charge: “I think 99 percent of photographing a wedding is really about psychology, about basically getting people to do what I want them to do.”

What he wants them to do is pose. He calls his technique “flow posing,” and it’s mostly about Doug getting into the groove. “I want to be able to perform,” he says, “to get the subjects to flow together naturally, quickly and efficiently. With subtle movements of the camera and the subjects’ placement and expressions, I’m able to create a ridiculous amount of poses in a very short time. From the bride and groom just standing in a traditional pose, I can get 70 different images of them in under five minutes. It’s fast and it’s precise, and as I’m doing it I’m three poses ahead, always seeing what I’m working toward. It’s like being on stage; most of what I do is performance.” So while the bride and groom may think they’re in the spotlight, what they’re really doing is reacting to Doug.

He often combines his posing techniques with unusual in-camera cropping and angle choices. In many photos half the bride’s face is missing, heads are cut off, couples are pushed into the corner of the frame, buildings are heading north by northwest.

“There are several reasons I tilt the camera or crop an image,” Doug says, “but in most situations I’m doing it to remove an element or solve a problem. Maybe I’m simply getting a better composition, or I’m thinning out the subject, or telling a

better, more interesting story, or creating an unusual look.

“And, of course, I want people who see my photos to stop and study them.”

Doug’s website, at www.douggordonworkshops.com, features a selection of his wedding images, a link to his blog and information about his tutorials and coast-to-coast workshops.

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