

HORIZON NEWS #33

IMAGES, THOUGHTS AND NEWS FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

Film remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.
--Aaron Siskind--

STUDENT PHOTOS: CLOSE-UP



Wedding photography is a specialized field, yet the demands it makes upon the photographer have much in common with many other photographic genres. Understanding what makes a good wedding photo is probably relevant to your work, even if you've never shoot a wedding. This Horizonews focuses on skills and techniques required for weddings...and beyond.

We begin with several student photos of the identical situation: a wedding couple at the edge of the C & D Canal, just a few feet from Horizon headquarters. Some pros and cons of each image.

Ben Hoffman's shot (top left): Pros: neutral water backdrop brings eye to the couple; bride looks comfortable; groom has a natural grip on her. Cons: Groom looks emotionally detached; his hold on her makes her bottom look a bit large; cropping on left is a hair tight. **Brooke Von Brandt's** shot (lower left): Pros: Captures a spontaneous moment; good use of water background...and including the other side of the canal gives sense of place; bride's body looks properly proportioned. Cons: Too tightly cropped; bride's expression ambiguous...is she laughing or afraid she's going to fall?; groom



seems somewhat detached from bride; his lean makes it appear he's buckling under her weight. **Pat VanHorn's** shot (lower right): Pros: bride is animated; cocked arm, as it she's going to throw the bouquet, adds energy. Cons: Groom's eyes closed; background slightly distracting; bride's backside looks disproportionately large.

Some tips: 1. Shoot a ton – use the motor drive – to catch that just-right moment. 2. Whether through your verbal or non-verbal communication, help the couple relax and focus on their interaction. 3. Pay special attention to body language and eyes, making sure the couple looks connected. 4. Avoid backgrounds that distract, especially from faces. 5. Be wary of postures that are unflattering to the bride's body. 6. Don't crop too tightly...with megapixels to spare, you can always crop later on.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

>**Donna Harding** has joined Horizon as marketing director. **Sandy Butkus** is our new all-purpose utility player.

>Horizon Director **Steve Gottlieb** just put the finishing touches on a revised edition of his book, *Washington: Portrait of a City*. In conjunction with publication in early November, there will be an exhibition of his images and a "gallery talk" at the University of the District of Columbia. Details to follow.

QUICK TIP: CAPTURING AN EVENT'S ENVIRONMENT



Couples often spend serious money on a wedding photographer, and for good reason. Quality photographs keep memories vibrant. As the years pass, the memory of the event can become inextricably linked to the photographs of the event. A significant part of the photographer's responsibility is to capture the look and atmosphere of the venues that are the backdrop to the wedding. Here are three highly successful efforts at doing that.

First, and most obviously, the church interior. It is properly lit here, we assume, by shooting in Manual Mode using a relatively slow shutter speed so the background receives ambient light as well as flash. (Photo by **Leah Casto**.)



Next, a stroll along the town's historic main street, Bohemia Avenue. Placing the couple slightly left of center gives added weight to flag and facades on the right. (It's easy to imagine the couple's conversation decades in the future: "Wasn't that the cutest town...and the weather was so perfect.") Notice the speckled light, especially on the groom's face and the bride's upper chest. The light-dark differential isn't too extreme here, but light coming through trees on a bright sunny day can create distracting contrast. Fill flash to brighten the shadow areas can minimize this...and save a lot of Photoshop fixing time. In the background, right between the couple, you can see a photographer with a big telephoto lens; depending on your taste, that can be an annoying distraction or a humorous punctuation. People with cameras getting in the way of your shot is not a problem limited to a photo workshop; guests are constantly snapping away—and sometimes getting in the way—throughout the event. (Photo by **Pat VanHorn**.)



Finally, a shot of the B&B where the couple might have stayed if this had been a real wedding. The overcast light made for a smooth, soft look. Bright sunny days create contrast problems...and the area is probably too large for single flash flash-fill to help much. If the sky is overcast, to avoid a blueish color cast you should either put your camera on "cloudy day" white balance or make the appropriate adjustment after-the-fact in Photoshop. (Photo by **Pat VanHorn**.)

Scout in advance of the event whenever possible, and creating a shoot list; this makes it easier to cover every important venue, plus it gives you an opportunity to plan your shots. Example: for the couple in front of the B&B, the photographer might have planned to shoot the couple closer to the camera. That would enlarge them relative to the B&B. Since there would undoubtedly be plenty of close-ups of the couple, we prefer Pat's approach...but having the couple closer helps solve flash-fill problems. Scouting gives you time to think through your options.

END FRAME



The 180 degrees of coverage (approximately) of the fish-eye lens far exceeds any other wide angle lens. Voila, the whole church interior in a single shot! Fish-eyes "see" in a way that's so different from the human eye, they always produce a dramatic visual punch. But the lens must be used thoughtfully. They unnaturally bend everything except what's near the center of the frame, so keep the couple in that area. Also, foreground elements are disproportionately large (as with the church pews) so this lens exaggerates perspective fall off. **Harold Buckner's** shot used the fish-eye perfectly.