CREATIVE BRIEF - SUMMER 2015

- Summer 2015 Creative Brief -

Welcome to Summer 2015 we hope you are enjoying the warm weather and the opportunity to shoot, shoot, shoot. We are going to keep this quarters brief short so you can all keep shooting but we wanted to cover a couple of fun topics that might get you thinking of new ways to increase your portfolio as well as your earnings. So, to keep this short and sweet, like we mentioned, lets get this thing going.

- Focus For Fall -

We don’t want to sound like a broken record but the list of wants and needs has changed very little over the past year. Here is a list of must haves for Spaces buyers that correspond with the summer/fall season. If you have access to anything on this list we would love to work closely with you to help in producing the best possible results from your efforts. There is nothing we love more than helping make your shoot the best it can be, it is by far the most exciting part of our job. We have added a few images from each of these categories to help motivate and inspire you to consider adding one of these topics to your next upload.

- Wineries -

Please pay close attention to all of the grapevine shots, there is not one ugly leaf or grape in the bunch. We need to take the time to focus on every part of our image frame. One rule we always follow “when in doubt, take it out“. If you see something in your image that is grabbing your attention and you have to ask yourself “should I remove it?“, you have already answered your own question… take it out. We have room for dirt and anything that gives us the impression of healthy but a dead leaf on an otherwise perfect image of a winery is not the sign of health. Make sure to style all of your shots to be the most desirable to your final buyer.

- Gardening -

Gardening at home, local community farm gardens, or greenhouse production is becoming very popular as our society moves towards a cleaner healthier life style. To keep your work ahead of what already has started to mold in the market we suggest you focus on home gardens, family gardening, community gardens and any form of commercial hot house production. Here are a few images that we feel lend themselves to a more natural feel that is fast becoming the norm in todays advertising markets.

- Camping -

From back yard to mountain tops everyone is moving outdoors and advertisers desperately need new ways of sharing “getting away from it all“. It can be a simple blanket fort in the living room or the highest level of equipment in the harshest conditions, there is such a strong need for well crafted outdoor images yet the selection is very slim indeed. When it comes to finding creative images that say “getting away from it all" there are nothing like camping images to help share a buyers message.

Like we mentioned, blanket forts in the living room, RV’s with family and friends, glamping for the not too serious camper, as well as our old stand by adult camping. There are plenty of ways to express freedom and escape in your next production, here are a few images to get you thinking.

- Adult Camping -

- Glamping -

- Kid Forts -

- RV Lifestyle -

- Creative Portraits -

We don’t want to spend a great deal of time on this topic but we all need to have fun to keep our brain working at it’s peak efficiency. Why not consider making your work extra fun for one afternoon. First off find your talent. We need to find the talent first, as we can only fashion a creative portrait to best suit our talent. Now that you have your talent, the only ingredient left is creative thinking to start having some fun.

Be it angles, props, action, lighting or all of these, start to think about how your personal life experience can bring a new twist on a family or group portrait. We suggest you get the serious photos out of the way first hand then bring out your notepad full of ideas, your bag of props and

make everyone involved feel a part of the excitement.

We have added one of our own images that reflects a fun and clever way to have shot our son Andersen at his high school senior prom a few years back. Just a few t-shirts under their tuxedos and BAMM! We had this image shot in 10 minutes and started their evening off with a lot of laughs. Below that we have included other works that we feel offer unique fun ways to change up that old boring group photo. Take the time even if your results are not exactly what you had in mind there is no way you won't have a blast with some good people.

Senior prom image

Other images for inspiration

- Small Business -

We have mentioned this several times but it is always worth bringing back to the table. We all have our regular set of shops and services we rely on to get all our daily needs met. Yes, there are the big guys that you could never get a release from, but to be honest buyers aren't interested in images involving the mega corporations. What we knows sells and sells well are small business portraits and locations. We know from personal experience that your town is littered with people who own and operate their own business and would love to do a trade out to get fresh new images for their shop.

Take a look around you and stop and take the time to get to know your local folks, there are many that will welcome the opportunity. Again, when we do our job well we walk away with not only paying our bills but also enjoying a new life experience. You might work the deal so you are set for coffee for the month to come, make it a worthwhile trade and everyone wins.

Here are some colorful images that help share the flavor of the local small business community. We have added both small business and environmental portraits into one image category as they are both very similar in their applications.

- Environmental Portraiture -

What makes a strong environmental portrait? It is difficult to come out and draw a line in the sand and say this is good and this is bad as the still image is very subjective. However, when we are discussing portraits that sell in stock photography that line, although not completely clear, starts to become at least something we can dissect.

Let’s cover a few areas that can help guide you in creating images of your friends family and co workers that will assure strong returns. These are images that should only take your time and in trade a finished print to your subject for participating in helping your company grow. Yes, if you present to your friends and family that they can aid you in your companies prosperity there are few that I know that would not feel honored as well as empowered to assist in such an endeavor.

Work with your talents talent. One of the best ways we know to make someone unaware they are being photographed is to have them focused on something that keeps their attention away from the ever looming camera lens.

If your friends have hobbies or crafts they love, consider starting to build out your shot list around these subjects. Take the time before approaching your talent to work on finding visual representations to share with them. Most likely they are not as visually gifted as you are so a picture can truly be worth 1,000 words.

We think that Pinterest is an excellent place to not only find motivation for your talent but also for yourself. We have always spent a great deal of time studying others work to not only inspire but also teach a great deal about posing, lighting, and composition. Pinterest is a great resource for motivation as well as being just a fun place to browse with a cup of coffee. Be warned, sharing your own work on Pinterest comes at a price, please make sure you read their user agreement in great detail before posting any of your most precious creations.

Let’s start with a working example, if your subject is a violinist take the time to find some images that will help explain the concept you are trying to achieve together. If it is a melancholy mood then the right photo to share could save you and your talent a great deal of frustration trying to communicate such an emotion through words alone. With photos these ideas become much clearer within our mind as well as those we are trying to convey our vision.

Below we are going to make an example out of one of our sons. Andersen is a musician yet we have never shot him before doing what he loves. We will share the Pinterest photos that served as motivation as well as the final results from our shoot. We are excited to spend this time with someone we know really well, it is by sharing this personal journey that we will help explain the vision to all of you.

- Photographing Andersen The Musician: Control Without Control -

Our son will always be our son and with that our roles are very well established. If we want this to be some kind of a collaborative effort it will be up to us to make sure we don’t play the heavy hand of parent. It will be very important for us to stay loose, carefree, and try to control as little as possible more a friend or co worker than a parental figure.

If we start to take the wheel too aggressively he will revert to being a son and keep us from collaborating and allowing him to be who he truly is when his parents are not around. Being his parents we will get close but it is his friends that could really get the most out of him when it comes to his music and personality.

We can't stress this part of our business enough, we need to stay cognitive as much as possible when we are working with talent. It is through our own awareness of ourselves that we are able to for lack of a better word "manipulate" the relationship to create the environment that is best suited for our talents comfort. This isn't a difficult recipe but it does require that you remove yourself from your own needs at all times, that is by far the most challenging part of this manipulation recipe.

The challenge is to focus completely on your talents needs, whatever they require to make them relaxed, and at ease. We can assure you if you can allow yourself to keep your own ego in check and focus on your talent's feelings and needs, not only will you keep a dear friend you will see the results in your work become more and more personal. It is that personal relationship that captures our eye like nothing you can pay for.

We were watching a group of professional photographers working a couple months ago and one thing that jumped out more than any one thing was the way they manipulated their talent to make their models produce the very best results. When it is done well your talent will never notice how at ease they were and how uninhibited you made them feel.

This one factor over anything else was what made beautifully strong images over others approach. Even though all the photographers present were strong lighters and skilled professionals it was very interesting to watch the way they worked with talent and the results they obtained from their efforts. We saw stronger work from some photographers that were not nearly technically as strong but their people skills were off the charts.

Rather than try to explain everything in text we feel this information is more easily shared by presenting our own experience on this subject with results from a photo shoot with one of my direct family. We took a few hours out to work with our son Andersen, he is studying music in college yet we have never photographed him practicing his art before.

If we can get what we set out to do as well as make him excited and empowered from the time we spent together then we have come away with a very positive experience. Not only did the time spent service everyones needs, it was also an excellent vehicle to bring all of us closer as equals in each others eyes, for us that is by far the most valuable result from time spent.

These first two photo's were maybe the easiest to create but might just be the strongest sellers out of both sets. By incorporating Andersen's bedroom into the story we do just that, create a story about the subject. It is all the extraneous information that helps tell a very real story about your subject that buyers can relate to.

We do not have to use expensive lighting to make an image have impact it can be through simple story telling and editorial style production that an image comes to life for a particular buyer. More and more these days companies are relying on honest, real representation of subjects to connect with their buyers. We have added no extra light to these two images this is completely raw natural light, with the exception of some well placed props to create a sense of order to his disorder, just our son behind his music and the camera on a tripod.

We see this every day we enter into his man cave to us it is a regular occurrence but to the outside viewer that doesn’t have access to this lifestyle this is a very private moment that can produce a strong emotional connection. Look around your life, you have so many intimate stories you can share with your viewers, it is up to you to decide how much of your personal story you want to reveal.

Oh, don’t forget to make this image into a portrait version as well, change up your lens and pull in tighter to offer your buyers a solid selection to choose from. Here are two different poses from the same location that both send a slightly different message to the final viewer but we did not shoot the portrait versions :(When you take the time to set a shot make several strong poses and images from your location, don’t make our mistake :)

Before and after photos playing drums in bedroom

BON JOVI
GRETSCH

Here is Andersen at his newest favorite instrument, the drums. We chose to use available light as the room is tiny and the natural light can be beautiful at the right time of day when a little control is used. We had to bang on those toms for a good 10 minutes until he started to drift off and forget about the camera. We shot over 200 frames in 15 minutes just watching over the top of the camera to grab a pose that looked focused and read well. The post work consisted of some neutral gradation filters to add more direction to the lighting, motion blur to his cymbals, darkening of the foreground keyboards to direct the eye into the subject. Oh, we also darkened down the face of the clock to keep from competing with Andersen. Total post work 15 minutes.

Before and after photos playing keyboards in bedroom

RIOT
RAGE AGAINST THE MACH
KISS
BEATLES
ABBEY ROAD
ANDERSEN AVE

Once again we used available light turning the blinds on the back window to control the light through the tie died cover and opening the window just off frame (camera left) to add light to Andersen. We pulled the clock off of the wall as it was competing with Andersen's face. We added just enough props to the front desk to read "music" but also a touch of childhood (trophies mixed with medicine bottles on desk to support the concept of turning from boy to man). Tie die cover added to his usual white bed, the white was distracting, keyboard usually sits off to the side, we set his room up to support the feeling of being immersed in music. Along with these changes on set there was additional post work done to craft the final frame. We changed out the front of Andersen's desk to be darker as the white panel was very distracting, added neutral density filters to create light fall off across room. Total post work…10 minutes.

Garage Band Shot

This image is more of a classic theme for youth and music. These classic themes when done well will sell for a very long time and constantly need updating for todays change in culture. Because these images are classic in nature the time to research and produce a fresh spin is what will make buyers take notice.

When you have your subject picked out and your location decided on take some time to research

your subject matter with some of the leading stock agencies. By adding in keywords you will not only find inspiration for your shoot you will also find what has been done and is clearly dated in it’s production. Stay very far away from the cliches of yesterday, we need to incorporate today into these classic themes if we ever expect someone to buy off on them.

We have included a set of images we found when researching this garage band shoot. Some were motivating in giving an idea but what we saw most of all was there was no strong commercial representation of this classic concept. Something that had a slightly editorial feel to it but still lent itself to a higher production in lighting and environment. The time taken to style this image was 95% of the work. There is a fine line between styling and over styling, keeping that honest editorial mood while removing any distractions that might pull the eye off the subject is going to help. Clutter was a big part of styling this image, controlled chaos was the ongoing theme.

Being that Friday night was also band practice here at our house it made casting a snap. Little did they realize they were gong to sit in for a photo shoot so we were ready and waiting and only took 20 minutes of their precious practice to create this very fun image of “jammin' in the garage“. They got an image for their band and it only took them 20 minutes. Us it took two hours of set up and tear down but we had so much fun, made some memories, and hopefully put some cash in all of our pockets over time.

We started by looking at the available set (our Garage) and deciding what need to go and what needed to say. Our biggest concern when crafting a set is to try and eliminate anything that might pull the eye away from where we want it to go and at the same time keep that sense of chaos.

So where did we want it to go? First we wanted to engage the viewer with our talent, we did this through lighting and composition. Next we needed to support that talent with an environment that not only supports our concept but will also offer the viewer an opportunity to do a little scavenger hunting. Most of the time you will find that “less is more“ when styling your sets this is one of those rare concepts that breaks that rule. Breaking that rule takes a lot of decision making of where and when to add or subtract information this can be the most challenging of sets to style.

Once the environment was ready to go the rest was easy, set the lights and wait for talent to arrive. We shot for 20 minutes while they just played one endless jam session. The lighting was fairly simple as we wanted to stay with the editorial feel we had mentioned in the beginning. To accomplish that we tried to replicate the single source light that is used to illuminate our dreary garage. We used a single bare bulb strobe head and wrapped it out with Cinefoil to help control the spill of the light. This was a three light set up, quite often when we want to recreate reality with lighting we take the time to look at what the available light is producing in our chosen location as it will offer strong clues as to how to approach the lighting scheme.

The lighting for the final image consisted of one over head bare bulb, one separation light set behind the drummer on a floor stand with a 12 inch reflector pointing at the camera and one 7’

octa box behind the camera to add fill to the shadows.

To complete the image, first a composite had to be shot if we wanted the final to look realistic. We had to keep the outside of the garage from being overfit from the fill so two exposures were needed. We shot a separate exposure of the image without strobes and dragged the shutter to expose the outside of the garage. We then striped in the interior into the exterior to create the feeling of evening on the exterior of the garage while still filling the shadows of the models and the interior of the set. We then managed to capture the guitarist and the drummer in the same frame but added the bass player from another frame as his posture was more appropriate.

Since the camera was locked down during all of the exposures post work was about 30 minutes to compete, even stripping in the bassist was easy as we only had to cut a square out that included him and realign the edges when merging it into the final, no time extensive path was necessary. We have added all of the original images to share the composite and how easy it was to complete. First and foremost you must have a clear game plan to keep the post as simple as possible, once you have the map the post work is not only quick but it is consistent with the entire frame.

Below is the group of images that was used to produce the final image. We have also included some images that were used to give motivation and to try and communicate the vision with the talent.

Images used for final composite

Final Image

Garage Band Concept Photos

Here we liked the loose editorial feel, this image will help to convey this feeling we were trying to create to the talent

Here we like the camera angel

This image shows the casual nature we wanted so we shoed it to the talent before the shoot

Helped us to understand the placement of one person in the environment

This image shows a casual environment that we could use to help stylize our version

The idea to use secondary lighting from Christmas lights

Again the use of secondary lighting separate from our own lights, this helps set the mood

- Excellence -

The work that has been coming in as of late is truly amazing. We cannot begin to tell you the positive comments from agencies and buyers. Along with that Spaces revenue from all our newest work just continues to grow. Last year we had a 500% increase in sales and this year we are up another 200% so far with the best part of the season ahead of us. To all of our contributors we want to say Bravo, you continue to produce content that raises the bar every year. Please take a minute to click through on this link to witness what we believe is some of the strongest work in the stock industry.

CLICK HERE

These images are so inspiring to all of us here at Spaces we hope you find just as much inspiration from the selection we chose. We could have made this gallery massive there are so many strong images coming in every month. These past 4 months have witnessed the strongest months of submissions we have received in Spaces existence.

When we combine the strong growth in sales with the excellence you are providing with your content, we are very excited for the coming months.

- Jesse -

To make sure we get your content out in front of buyers eyes more than ever before we have added a new representative for Spaces to work closely with both buyers as well as contributors.

Jessie Cowan joins us with an extensive background in the photography world. She has over 12 years of experience in the stock industry and has worked as a freelance creative consultant, curator, editor and producer for companies like Disney, AT&T, Acura, The Lucy Foundation, Jupiter and Getty Images. She is multifaceted creative with an eye for great photography. We are excited to have teamed up with Jessie so that we may all continue to build this amazing collection of images.

Jessie will be getting in touch with all of our resellers on a regular basis as well as reaching out to our contributing photographers to see what she can offer to help make your job of working with Spaces that much easier. You may reach her at jessie@spacesimages.com

- Closing Notes -

As this new change starts to become part of regular operations here at Spaces we want to assure everyone that now more than ever before we are here to help service our contributors needs first and foremost. If there is anything you can offer us in creative feedback or something you feel will help your communication with our agency please let us know.

We are all very excited about the growth of Spaces and it is your feedback that will help us insure you are as excited about the future of stock as we all are. Thanks again for taking the time out of your busy schedule to read this quarters creative brief, as to your requests from the survey we tried to keep it a bit more BRIEF :). Enjoy these hot summer days ahead but don’t spend all your time by the pool… get out there and SHOOT!