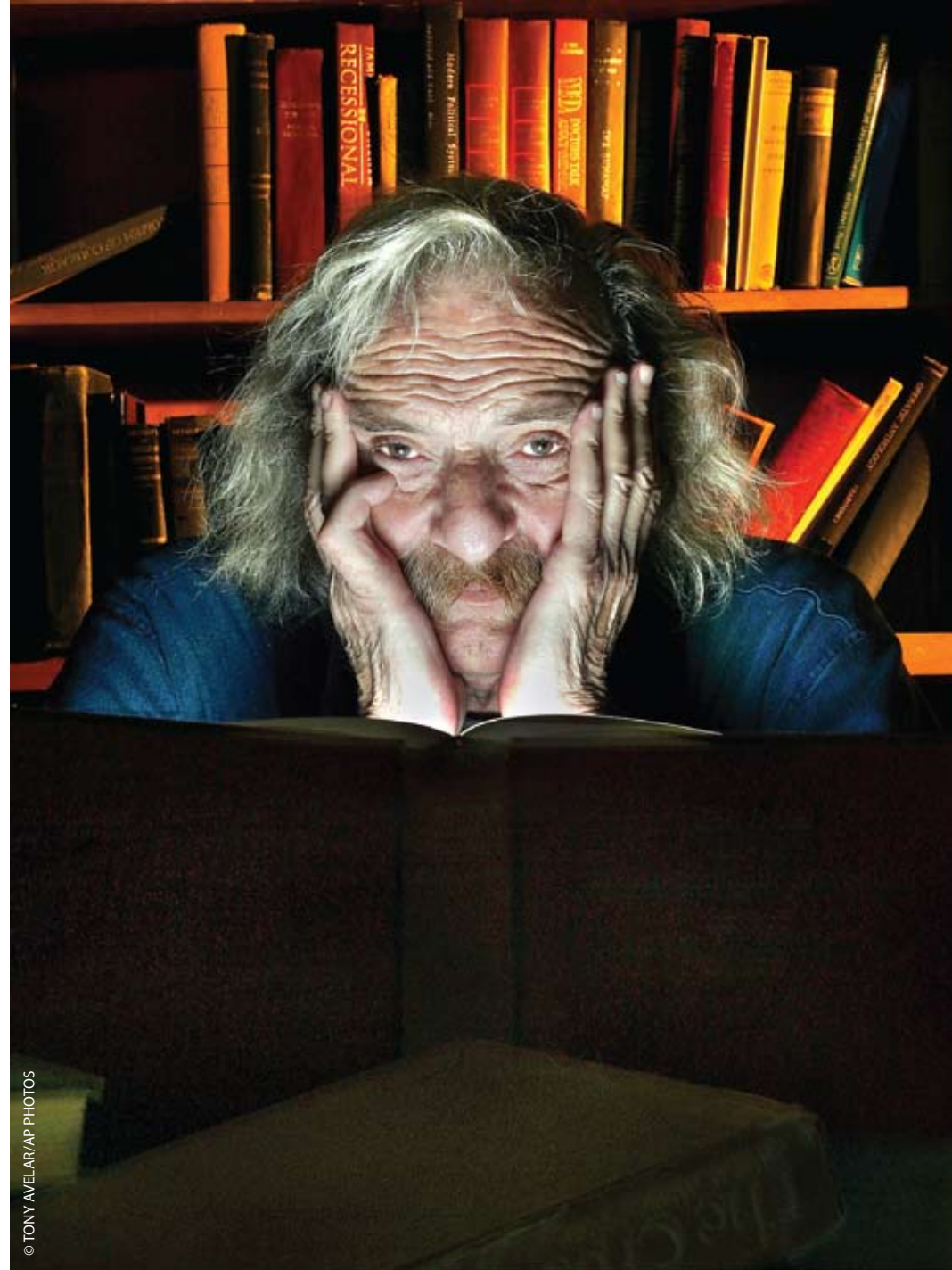




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Tony Avelar The Portraitist

B y J o e F a r a c e

In a word, Tony Avelar is reliable. A freelance photographer located in Santa Clara, CA, Tony's work frequently appears in magazines, newspapers and books and for the past 19 years he has traveled extensively throughout the United States, South America and Europe. Tony specializes in editorial work, sports and portraits with an emphasis on location photography. Whether shooting in a CEO's office or in the middle of an oil field, he takes his studio along with him. Tony's goal is to provide clients with the best in imaging, taking his and their ideas and translating them into compelling photographs.

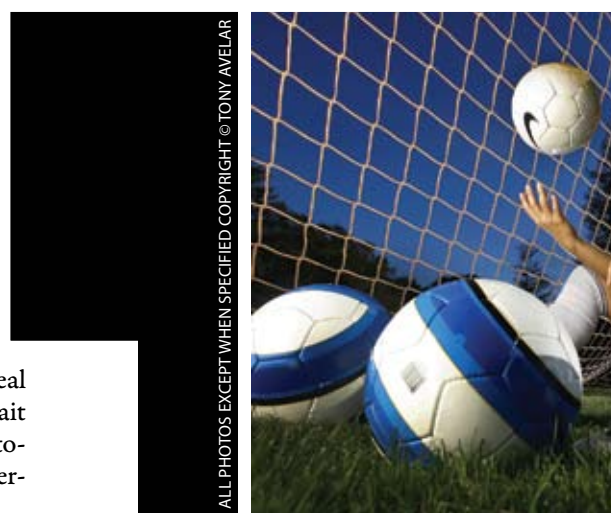
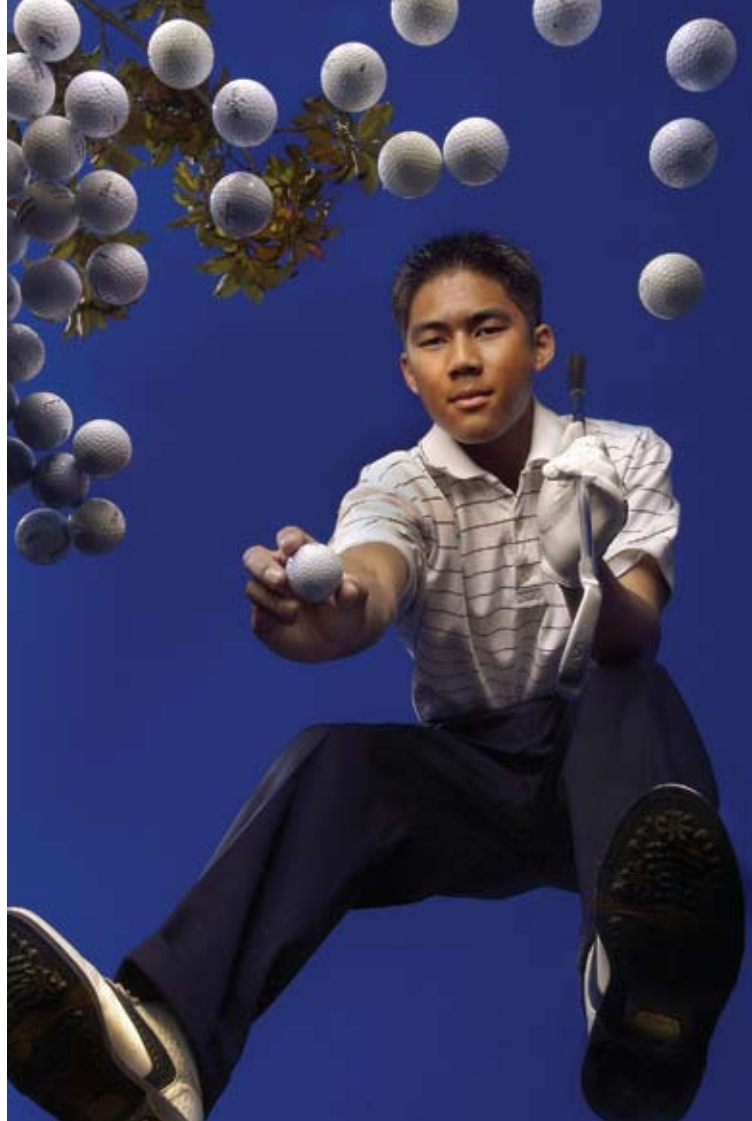
Exceeding Expectations

When looking at the quality of his portraiture you might be surprised to learn that it's a new pursuit. In 2000, Tony attended a workshop in Colorado Springs where he photographed different types of sports at the Olympic training center. While he was there Tony met Joey Terrell, a Los Angeles-based corporate

photographer who introduced him to portrait lighting; immediately Tony became fascinated with what he could do with light, shaping it to create a mood that brought out the athlete's vitality. When he got back home after the workshop Tony purchased some lighting gear and began doing portraits of high school athletes. Now each month he produces a cover for *ESPN/RISE*, a magazine that celebrates high school athletes and covers high school sports news.

Tony's primary clients are news organizations such as Associated Press, AFP, Bloomberg News, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and sports and corporate clients such as Yahoo, Google

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Opposite left: A young golfer appears to have been photographed from inside the cup. **Opposite top right:** High Flying senior Adrian Oliver from Modesto Christian High School. **Opposite bottom right:** Cal Bears receivers Lavelle Hawkins, Robert Jordan, DeSean Jackson and Craig Stevens (back). **Left:** Y.A. Tittle, legendary NY Giants quarterback, poses for a portrait at his home in Atherton, CA, with one of the most famous photos in sports history. **Below:** Stanford-bound soccer player Teresa Noyola became the girls high school soccer player of the year. **Below right:** 16-year-old Gunn High Martin Trainer is a star golfer in the San Francisco Bay Area, thanks to his win at the San Francisco City Championship last March.

Magic Wand and then adds color to those selected areas. Next, he renames images based on user-definable templates and burns a Blu-Ray DVD for storage in an off-site location, just in case something happens to the hard drive. Image files are delivered to clients based on their needs. They may only want JPEGs and some will prefer RAW images; he will either FTP (File Transfer Protocol) the images to the client or burn a DVD of the final edited images saved in TIFF format.

Moving Forward

Tony's career began as a photojournalist and when working for a newspaper he finds you get different types of assignments from spot news to portraits. During that time he started to migrate toward the portrait side of that type of photography. "So when a portrait needed to be done, I was the one for the assignment."

Tony promotes his photography through his online portfolio and feels that during these challenging economic times you have to have a Web presence. Once a month, he sends out an

and Apple. His preference is for editorial portraiture, which gives him the opportunity to create an image that tells a story.

When I ask what three words define him, Tony replies, "Creative, loyal and receptive." He continues, "My clients tell me my work is different because I am receptive to any and all suggestions for a photo shoot. I like to take chances on new angles when taking routine portraits." Take a look at his Web site (www.avelarphotography.com) and explore the images found in his portrait gallery. Whether he's photographing YouTube founders Chad Hurley and Steve Chen or a collector of Elvis memorabilia, Avelar's approach to each portrait is completely different and creatively defies what you might ordinarily expect.

Behind the Scenes

The YouTube shoot was one of Tony's favorites and was made when the company was in its infancy (see pg. 27). Tony arrived at the YouTube offices, located over a pizza parlor. He didn't know what the company did because it was so new at the time but while talking with the founders he had an idea to feature one of them on the computer while the other held a video camera. From start to finish the entire shoot took one hour—though you would never know it by looking at the results. Tony attributes the assignment's success to the fact that the two subjects were comfortable and enjoyed the shoot.

Many of Tony's portraits show a fondness for using wide-angle lenses in his portraiture, a technique that brings the envi-

ronment into close proximity with the subject, helping to reveal more about the person's life. While not a traditional portrait tool, the wide-angle lens has a great many advantages in editorial portraiture, where the story usually revolves around the person and his or her environment.

One of the reasons for his success making these kinds of inspired portraits is that Tony does his homework. Before he meets or talks with a subject he tries to read everything about the person or group he'll be photographing. After looking at his finished images, editors have later told Tony, "I didn't know that about the subject." For his editorial portraits, his editors want to see a creative image along with a well told story, but for Tony exceeding his client's expectations means more future assignments as well as the personal satisfaction of a job well done.

Digital Workflow

As a photojournalist, Tony initially shot film but switched to digital about 12 years ago. He is currently using Canon's EOS-1D Mark II N and EOS 5D Mark II cameras. "In my field of photography," he explains, "you only have a few minutes to get the images you need. The advent of digital has definitely helped streamline the process." For lighting equipment he uses Dynalite gear.

When explaining how he works after a shoot, Tony shares, "I actually feel like my photography workflow is pretty simple." He always shoots assignments using a RAW+JPEG fine file and

when returning to the office transfers the image files to his computer using a high speed USB card reader. He imports all of the images into Apple's Aperture 2 and copies the files onto a Drobo (www.drobo.com) external hard drive. In addition to Aperture he uses "a little Adobe Photoshop on the side."

After sorting and rating the images Tony applies caption and keyword search information. To streamline the process he adds copyright information to all the images he shot using a metadata template that already contains the necessary information. While sorting, he identifies the images for the story that he wants to tell while asking questions such as, "What is the essence of the picture, what sets the scene, what makes it special or unique, what is unnecessary in the shot?"

The next steps include sharpening, brightness, contrast and exposure adjustments. "I always start with Auto and then tweak the levels from there." After Tony adjusts the brightness he usually finds a minor flaw in the photo that jumps off the screen, which he then touches up using the Healing Brush or Patch Tool. Finally, he explores color saturation. He likes Photoshop's ability to select multiple areas on the photo using the



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email promo and does follow-up calls with editors. He also likes to come up with some photo ideas that show editors he is interested in working with them and feels that it is always a joy seeing his work published. He adds, "Being creative and having fun is always good for work. It is a pleasure to do what you love for a living." The only pitfalls, he finds, is when subjects are difficult and unwilling to try something new.

"I don't think I experience a personality change when I shoot but shooting does require me to be more focused and attentive than when I am driving," he adds with a laugh. It is obvious by his body of work and outgoing personality that Tony is passionate about it. "I think that comes out when I have a camera. When I'm not behind the camera I just like to spend time with my wife and two daughters and try not to think about work. Playing golf helps too." View more of Tony's work at www.avelarphotography.com. CC

Joe Farace is a Colorado-based photographer/writer and author of thirty-one books about photography and digital imaging including Digital Monochrome Special Effects published by Lark Books, available from Barnes & Noble and Amazon.com.