

KIRK VOCLAIN: Trash the Dress



PHOTO COPYRIGHT © KIRK VOCLAIN

In the New Orleans area, Kirk Voclain is known for doing just about anything to get the shot. So when this particular bride asked him if he would mind messing up her dress, well, how could he say no?

His style is a simple one. He wants people to look at his images and say, “Wow!” That’s why he jumped at the opportunity to photograph this charming young bride, stretched out on the beach, with the Gulf waters lapping at the edges of her gown.

It was after six in the evening when Kirk and the bride arrived on location and he knew it would be a challenge to balance the soft ambient light of the setting sun with electronic flash. So he started by taking a spot meter reading of the blue sky immediately to the right of the bride’s face. His Sekonic light meter indicated an exposure of $\frac{1}{160}$ at $f/5$ to make a perfectly exposed image of the sky. However, with the sun’s light coming from behind the subject on the left, Kirk knew she would be in the shadows unless he provided some fill light on the right. So he set up a portable ProFoto AcuteB 600R power pack on the right and added a 27-inch Soft Silver Wescott umbrella to the flash head—softening the light and making it more like the ambient light from the sun.

Another flash meter reading off the umbrella indicated that Kirk should lower the flash power to half and adjust the distance between the subject and flash until he had an $f/5$ reading off the

subject’s face (pointing the meter back toward the camera). This balanced the light from the sun with the light from the AcuteB 600R and gave him an evenly illuminated scene.

One of the cool things about using the Sekonic meter with the ProFoto flash system is the built-in Sekonic RT-32 Radio Transmitter Module that wirelessly triggers PocketWizard-enabled flash systems. That way they can talk to each other and Kirk doesn’t have to carry as much equipment on location.

The camera he used was a Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III with a 14mm $f/2.8L$ lens. He set the color temperature at 5400K, to ensure a neutral color balance, and hand-held the Canon as close to the sand as he could, without actually putting it on the ground. The fill flash on the right created a small light trail on the sand, which he removed in Photoshop. The careful camera settings and critical lighting setup gave him a dramatic portrait that makes people say, “Wow!”

Kirk Voclain will present a platform program at WPPI 2010 on Monday, March 8 from 8:00 am to 10:00 am in Rooms 309–310 of the MGM Conference Center.

Kim Brady has been a writer and editor in the photo-imaging market for more than 28 years. She was editor of the first digital imaging magazine, Photo Electronic Imaging (PEI) and executive editor of The Professional Photographer. The Atlanta-based writer continues to write for imaging magazines and websites around the world.