



Jason
and
Kori
Hudson

Right Time By Harvey Goldstein Right Place

When asked to give one reason for their success, Jason Hudson answers, "Be nice." Before they started dating, Jason met Kori, who was working as a newspaper/magazine photographer at the time. He was respectful and courteous so she recommended him to her employer to photograph their magazine covers. Several years later Jason is still shooting the publication's covers, having enjoyed the opportunity to photograph a number of high-profile celebrities. "All of that came about by me simply being nice instead of gruff. Treating

people like important individuals can go a long way in our business," he says.

When Jason Hudson went to work for a portrait studio in Fayetteville, AR, in 1996, he also bought his first 35mm SLR. He immersed himself in the educational process of studio photography, learning how to schedule appointments, how to light subjects and backgrounds, and how to make pictures. He also learned the production side of the business. This well rounded foundation would eventually come in handy when he opened his own

studio. He is a self-taught photographer, learning from his former employer, from workshops, DVDs and books. "To be a studio owner, you have to be a people person and know a lot about the psychology and thought processes of people," Jason says.

Photography had been a hobby of Kori Hudson's since she was a young girl; however, her primary vocation was originally journalism. As the bridal editor for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, she wrote a column called "Right Time, Right Place" about couples and how they met. When

the newspaper realized that she was also a good photographer, she was given assignments photographing and writing feature stories, and covering events and high profile weddings for the society section. She met Jason at one of these weddings; she was writing and photographing for the newspaper and he was covering the wedding for the bride and groom. Eventually, Kori moved from the newspaper to a statewide magazine—her primary job as a photographer and not a journalist. In January 2006, Jason, now the owner of an established studio, needed another photographer to help cover his schedule. Remembering the woman from the newspaper and magazine whose work impressed him when he saw it in print, Jason called Kori and offered her a job. They began dating in February and married six months later.

Also a self-taught photographer, Kori enjoys the challenge of figuring it out on her own. "It allows me to approach situations with fresh eyes, rather than to take the same pictures in the same way everyone else does. I live for the challenge of showing up in a location I have never seen, with people I have never met and managing to mix up the personalities, lighting and

available angles to come up with shots that I know no one else could get in the same circumstances. Photography is my job, but it is also my hobby."

Jason and Kori have built their wedding business through their Web site, word-of-mouth referrals and networking with photographers both locally and nationally. Their growing destination weddings have come from referrals from past clients as well as future brides searching online. A Maryland couple hired them to photograph their wedding in the Dominican Republic and a couple from Texas hired them for their Hawaii wedding. "Thanks to the Internet, we can contract clients from all over the world, regardless of where our house physically sits. All that matters is if a bride can look at our images and know she wants to see herself in them." The Hudsons don't have an outside display or even a sign outside their studio. Their billboard is their Web site, www.hudsonphotos.com.

While most of their weddings are in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma, they have photographed weddings in Phoenix, Arizona; Kauai and Kona, Hawaii; Los Cabos, Mexico; the Dominican Republic; and Barbados.

Kori gets a rush from photographing a wedding. "It is everyone's best day and I relish being a part of it. I love the frenzied pace, the beautiful backdrops and the joy-filled faces of all the people we meet. It's a lot of fun, but it is also a huge responsibility. The adrenaline kicks in as I drive to the wedding. I am 'on' for the entire day, looking for the best light, the best angle, the best moment, knowing that I only get one chance. This is their special day and if I don't capture it, it will be lost. I remind myself that these photos are the ones that will be displayed in elegant frames at their grandchildren's weddings in 50 years, just as their grandmother's black-and-white photographs are on display now. Photographing a wedding is a thrill, but not something I take lightly."

When asked why their clients choose them over the many photographers in the Fayetteville area, the response is that their wedding photographs speak directly to their clients. They don't target the mainstream weddings. The majority of the brides in their area want the traditional, well lit photographs of them and their wedding party standing at the altar. The Hudsons strive to be different. They



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believe that what sets them apart is their ability to make art out of the moments that other photographers might overlook. They attract the 10% of the brides in the area who are looking for creative wedding photography. "We only want to photograph the brides who 'get' us. The rest have plenty of options. We have sent several brides to more traditional photographers if we get a sense that they are only in our office because of our reputation and our name." They try to gauge the brides' style by having them browse through the galleries and packages on their Web site prior to a meeting. If the bride likes the funky, edgier style of wedding photography, they move on to the next step, which is meeting in-person. If they don't like it, both parties save a lot of time.

Their wedding packages come with the option for either one or two-photographers. Jason and Kori prefer the two-photographer scenario because it allows them to be in two places at the same time and it provides more complete coverage of the day. A team of a dozen second photographers assists the three primary photographers—Jason, Kori and Ame-

lia Phillips. Before one can become a second photographer for the Hudsons they must complete an unpaid internship program that allows them to become familiar with the Hudsons' lighting techniques and their philosophy. Jason and Kori also utilize four photo assistants on larger weddings and some portrait sessions. Their function is to help with the lighting, styling and equipment. In addition, they also have two hair and makeup artists who they contract on a regular basis who are familiar with their style and work with Jason and Kori on their bridal fashion sessions and other assignments to help them create really funky, fun looks for their brides.

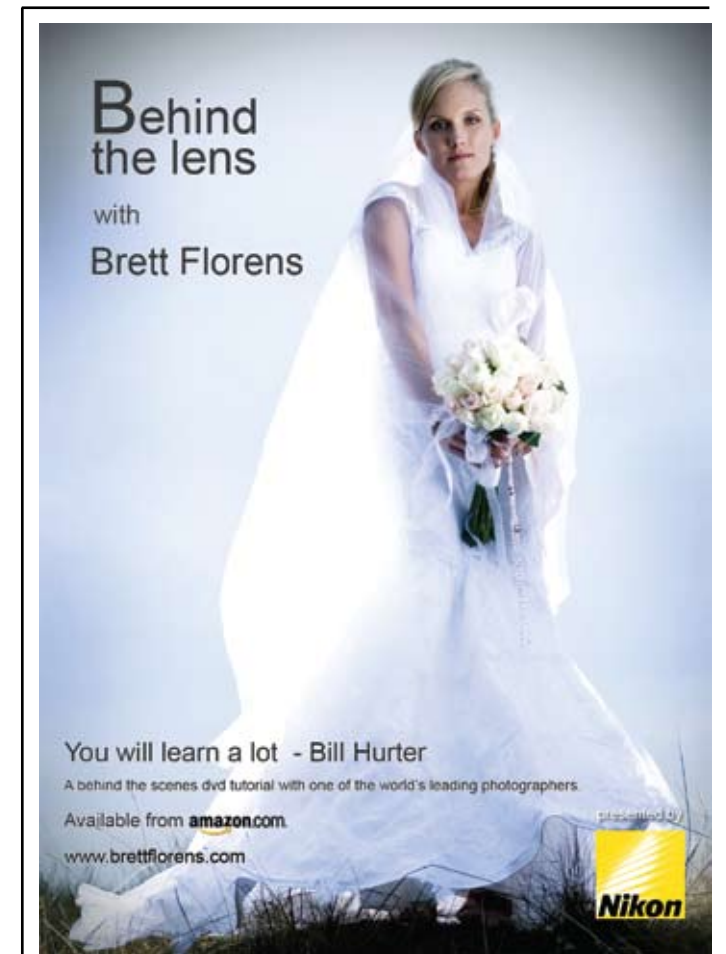
The post-wedding workflow involves retouching every image the bride and groom receive. Jason and Kori do all of their own editing. "Our images are strong enough out of the camera that we are able to upload the unretouched proofs to give our brides a first peek at the results of the day. When we were using film, postproduction was almost nonexistent, but now we know that with a little extra attention, our photos can be great, instead of just

Hudson Photography Camera Bag

Their primary wedding photographers arrive at each wedding with two Fuji Finepix S2 Pro cameras and a variety of lenses that include: Nikon 17–55mm f/2.8; Nikon 70–200mm f/2.8; Nikon 50mm f/1.4; Sigma 70mm Macro; Sigma 35mm f/1.4; Sigma 10–20mm f/4-5.6; Sigma 24–70mm f/2.8; Sigma 20mm f/1.8; Lensbaby version 1, 2 and 3 with wide-angle and telephoto macro. Their second photographers are required to provide their own equipment.

They light their weddings using Nikon Speedlights SB-28, SB-80DX, SB-800 and SB-600 on Nikon remote flash cords. They photograph with the camera in their right hand and hold the cabled flash with their left hand, never attaching a flash to the camera's hot-shoe. Working in this manner with some form of side lighting rather than full-on frontal light, they are able to control the lighting angle and get their desired outcome. Their flash lighting is used to complement the existing light, not to replace it. The images are edited after the wedding using Photo Mechanic, Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop CS3.

good. It increases our creativity on the wedding day to be able to envision the final edited image as we photograph. With Photoshop, the possibilities are limited



To request more information see page 249



"Don't skate by on mediocrity. If something can make the image better, do it! Always be nice to your brides and take the time to do just a little something extra for each of them; it will be noticed."



The Hudson's Advice for Newbies

Photograph, photograph and photograph some more. Constantly. Every day. Photograph everything that moves or doesn't move. Photograph so much that you feel like the camera is an extension of your body and you no longer have to think about the technical aspects. Photograph constantly and find your own style. If you try to duplicate someone else, you will be obsolete when you get there. The old adage that says anything worth doing is worth doing well holds true. If someone or something is worth photographing, it is worth doing everything you can do to make it as strong as possible. Don't be lazy. Don't skate by on mediocrity. If something can make the image better, do it! Always be nice to your brides and take the time to do just a little something extra for each of them; it will be noticed. Brides talk. Be nice, work hard and take good pictures and be different. To quote Coco Chanel, "In order to be irreplaceable, one must always be different." Your brides will thank you.

only by your own creativity and imagination."

Jason and Kori have created their own actions so that their images are not carbon copies or even similar to those that they see on wedding forums. If they use a particular treatment on a regular basis, they will save it as an action to save them time; otherwise they retouch each image step-by-step. They believe that these images have more impact because the process was not mass-produced. Small orders and those needed quickly are printed in-house, but the majority of their work is printed by their professional lab. While the coffee-table books are popular with their brides, the Hudsons also offer custom, hand-made art books in an effort to offer products that most brides in Arkansas are unable to purchase at other studios.

Jason and Kori Hudson's work is different, edgy and in demand by those who appreciate artistic weddings, not

just in Arkansas, but across the country.

To view more of their work or learn more about the shooting duo visit www.hudsonphotos.com.

Harvey Goldstein from Branford, CT, has been in the photographic industry for almost 35 years. He is a former studio owner and presently edits numerous association newsletters and magazines, as well as being a freelance writer.

