



Rick Sammon's Complete Guide to Photographing People

face to face



Discover the art of making people pictures

In this beautifully illustrated book, travel and adventure photographer Rick Sammon shares the techniques he uses to make extraordinary photographs of people around the world and close to home. Here you will find important tips and strategies for engaging your subjects and setting up photo shoots, as well as an array of techniques to capture quality images. To demonstrate these methods, the book includes a large collection of Rick's original photographs, complete with technical and creative notes.

Whether you're interested in studio photographs, or "environmental" photos of individuals where they live, you'll learn the preparation and attention to detail required to make alluring people pictures.

"Rick's endearing portraits will have universal appeal and remind us that we are all one global family. He uses photography as a way of seeing, a way of showing, and a way of sharing."

—Dr. Richard D. Zakia
Author, *Perception and Imaging: Photography—A Way of Seeing*



Face to Face offers hundreds of tips and strategies that include:

- **Rick's original photographs** with notes explaining techniques and principles
- **Outdoor techniques** for photographing in low light and bright light, as well as capturing action, shooting profiles, taking group shots, and more
- **Indoor techniques** for using a flash and strobes, shooting silhouettes, working with mirrors, and other techniques
- **Philosophies and creative advice**, such as how your attitude and energy are reflected in a subject's picture, and the value of developing a sense of place
- **How to photograph people in different cultures**, along with fascinating behind-the-scenes stories of many photos in the book

Rick Sammon has published 27 books, including *Rick Sammon's Travel and Nature Photography*, *Idea to Image*, and *Rick Sammon's Complete Guide to Digital Photography 2.0*. The producer of seven interactive DVDs for photographers and users of Adobe Photoshop/Photoshop Elements for rickpixelmagic.com, he gives more than a dozen workshops and presentations annually around the world and holds online classes on xtrain.com and Kelbytraining.com. Each year, Rick travels in search of new images. He's covered more than 100 exotic destinations, including the Arctic, Antarctica, Africa, Bhutan, Brazil, The Galapagos Islands, India, Indonesia, Nepal, and Papua New Guinea. Rick is a Canon Explorer of Light and a member of the prestigious Explorers Club.

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Capturing Action





One of the cool things about digital SLR cameras and cameras that offer full creative control is that you can choose the shutter speed to stop or blur action. The choice is yours, and that choice makes a big difference in the feeling of a picture.

First let's talk about blurring the action, as I did for this horse-and-rider picture that I took in Marrow Bone Springs, Texas. Blurring the action creates a sense of motion and speed in a picture. For this picture, I used a technique called *panning*. Here's how to do it.

Select the shutter priority mode on your camera and set a slow shutter speed, perhaps 1/15 to 1/30 of a second. The best shutter speed to use will be determined by how fast the subject is moving. So, you need to experiment with different shutter speeds to get just the right effect. That may take several "runs."

You want to shoot in the shutter priority mode because even if the light level changes, by the sun going in and out of the clouds, the shutter speed will remain constant while the camera changes the aperture to maintain the correct exposure.

Once your camera is all set, it's time to shoot. Basically, you want the fast-moving subject to move in front of you from left to right or right to left. You want to photograph the subject when he or she is directly in front of you.

To begin the panning process, you need the subject to be far enough away from you so that he or she can gain speed. As the subject starts to move, start to follow the action in your viewfinder. When the subject is almost directly in front of you, start shooting. Setting your camera on a rapid frame advance (several frames per second) will help you to get the shot you want. After the subject moves past the point directly in front of you, keep following the action for a few seconds and keep holding your finger down on the shutter release button. If all goes well, you'll get a picture in which the background is beautifully blurred and the subject is relatively sharp.

To help steady your shot during panning, try using an image stabilization lens or a tripod with a panning head.

For an evenly blurred and streaked background, it's important to envision your shot with the subject against a relatively plain background.

In addition, to ensure a good exposure in tricky lighting conditions (a light subject against a dark background in my horse-and-rider situation), before I started the actual photo session I asked the cowboy to move into the position at which I was going to take the shot. Then I asked him to stand still, took a meter reading, and set my camera accordingly. By predetermining the exposure at the

point of action, the only thing I had to think about was getting a good pan and capturing the peak of the action—the horse with all its hooves off the ground at the same time.

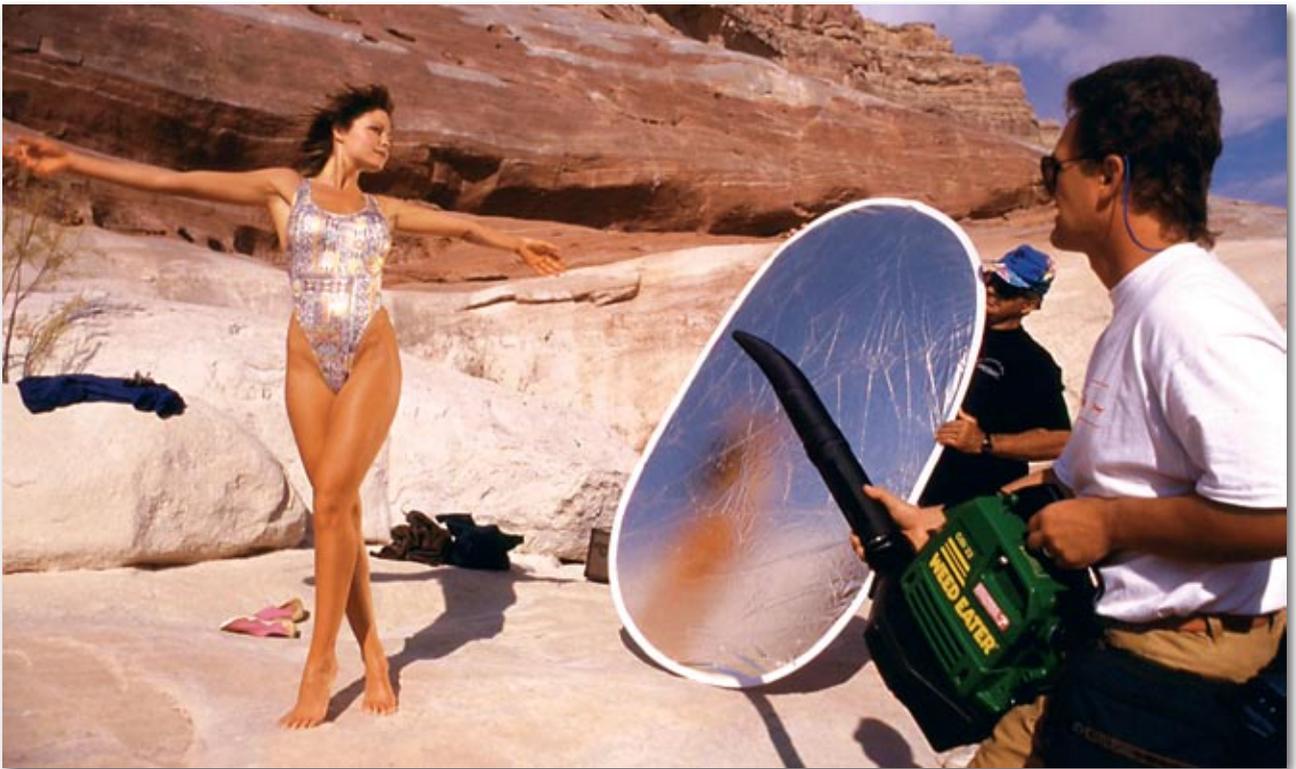
Here is a shot of the same horse and rider in the same location. Here I used a shutter speed of 1/500 of a second to “freeze” the action. Sure, it shows a clearer shot of the cowboy and horse, but I think you’ll agree that it does not convey the same sense of speed and motion as my slow-shutter-speed shot.





Freezing or blurring is your choice. Think carefully about which effect to use to capture a subject. In the case of this young baseball player, freezing the action was the only way to go, in my mind anyway.

Using Reflectors





Reflectors, which collapse to about one-half their full size, are invaluable accessories for serious people photographers. Reflectors usually have two sides: a gold/warm-light side and a silver/cool-light side. When angled correctly, reflectors bounce light onto a backlit subject or a subject who is positioned in the shade. That bounced light adds color, contrast, and brightness to the subject's face. It also adds a nice "catch light" to the subject's eyes, making the eyes sparkle.

The cowgirl, whom I photographed at the Double JJ Ranch in Rothbury, Michigan, was standing in the shade when I took her picture. The photo on the left is bright thanks to a reflector.

As you can see in the photo on the right, without the reflector, the picture looks flat—the brim darkens the girl's face and there is no "catch light" in her eyes.



Here's a behind-the-scenes shot that shows my assistant holding the reflector. Again, positioning the reflector at the proper angle is important. You need to have the sun either behind the subject or off to the subject's side, and you need to watch the reflection on the subject for the optimum amount

of illumination. On an overcast day, when there is no direct sunlight, a reflector is virtually useless. (Unless you want to use a reflector as a big bounce source for a daylight fill-in flash shot. See Lesson 29 for information on daylight fill-in flash, and Lesson 25 for information on bounce flash.)



Reflectors are available in different sizes, from about 3 feet in diameter to about 8 feet in diameter. For full-body shots, such as this model shot I took near Lake Powell, Arizona, you'll need a large reflector, as shown. For head-and-shoulders shots, a smaller reflector, like the one you see my assistant using in the previous photo, is fine. For full-body shots, 6-foot reflectors are available.

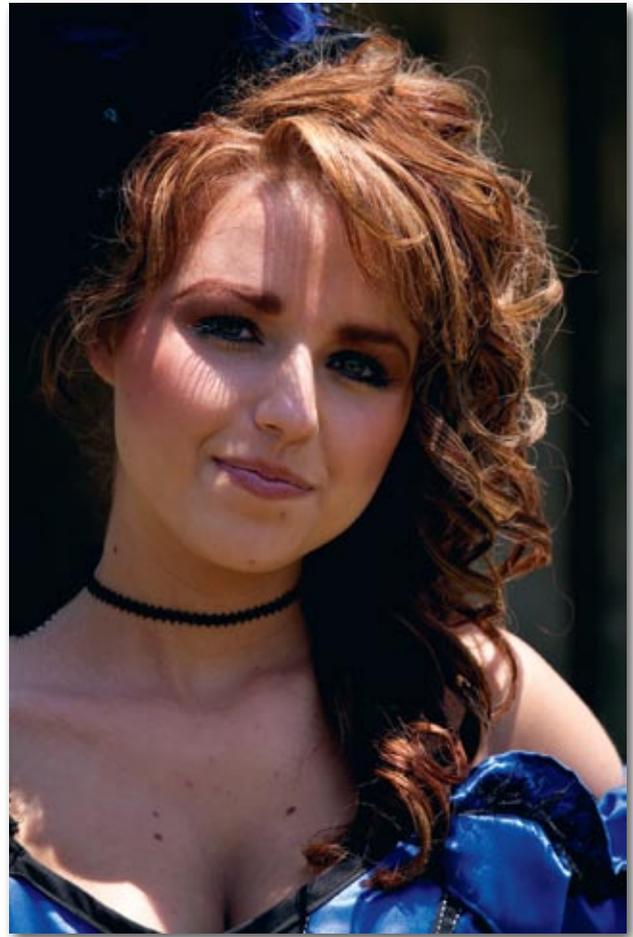
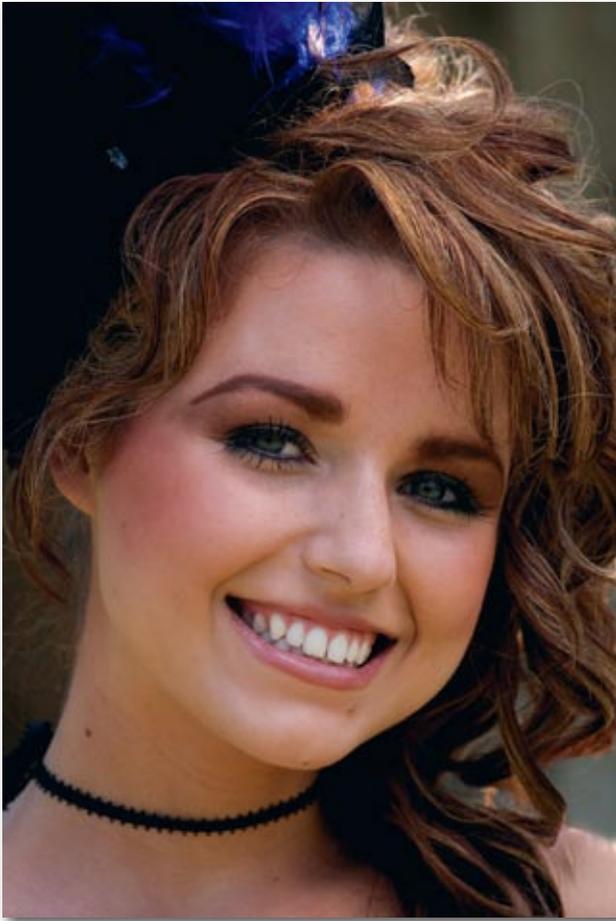
In the photo on the left, you see the effectiveness of using a reflector. The model is backlit by the water (also Lake Powell). However, thanks to the reflector, you can see the details on her body and face.

Reflectors often come in kits with diffusers, which we'll cover in the next lesson.

Don't leave home without either accessory!

The Beauty of Using Diffusers





In Lesson 1, you saw me holding a diffuser for my friend Jack during a portrait session in Mongolia. You also saw the dramatic results that using a diffuser offers.

To reinforce the importance of never leaving home without this accessory, I'll share some more illustrations. The two pictures on this page were taken in Marrow Bone Springs, Texas. To soften the harsh light of the midday sun, I had an assistant hold a diffuser between the sun and the subject. The result was soft and flattering lighting.

The photo on the right shows what could happen if you don't follow my suggestion ... and you leave your diffuser home, again on a sunny day.

Like reflectors, diffusers are collapsible and come in different sizes, from small (3 feet in diameter) to large (6 to 8 feet in diameter). And as I mentioned in the previous lesson, they often come in kits with reflectors.



If you are out shooting on a sunny day and don't have a diffuser, or if you don't want to look too "professional" (which can be intimidating to a subject), you can use a natural diffuser: position your subject or subjects in the shade, as I did with this mother and child whom I photographed in Bhutan.



On an overcast day, you don't need a diffuser, as was the case when I photographed this musician performing at a festival in Bhutan.