



Rick Sammon's Digital Photography Secrets

Rick Sammon



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Rick Sammon's Digital Photography Secrets

Published by

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

10475 Crosspoint Boulevard

Indianapolis, IN **46256**

www.wiley.com

Copyright © **2009** by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

ISBN: **978-0-470-42873-3**

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections **107** or **108** of the **1976** United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, **222** Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA **01923**, **(978) 750-8400**, fax **(978) 750-4744**. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Legal Department, Wiley Publishing, Inc., **10475** Crosspoint Blvd., Indianapolis, IN **46256**, **(317) 572-3447**, fax **(317) 572-4355**, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: The publisher and the author make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this work and specifically disclaim all warranties, including without limitation warranties of fitness for a particular

purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales or promotional materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for every situation. This work is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If professional assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for damages arising herefrom. The fact that an organization or Web site is referred to in this work as a citation and/or a potential source of further information does not mean that the author or the publisher endorses the information the organization or Web site may provide or recommendations it may make. Further, readers should be aware that Internet Web sites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read.

For general information on our other products and services or to obtain technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at **(800) 762-2974**, outside the U.S. at **(317) 572-3993** or fax **(317) 572-4002**.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books.

Library of Congress Control Number: **2008938484**

Trademarks: Wiley and the Wiley Publishing logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley and Sons, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. Wiley Publishing, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

About the Authors



Rick Sammon

(lower tandem jumper), falling to earth at **125** miles per hour, during one of the few times that he was not photographing, writing a book, leading a workshop or giving a seminar.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Credits

Acquisitions Editor
Courtney Allen

Project Editor
Mimi Brodt

Technical Editor
Joe Farace

Copy Editor
Mimi Brodt

Editorial Manager
Robyn Siesky

Business Manager
Amy Knies

Senior Marketing Manager
Sandy Smith

Vice President and Executive Group Publisher
Richard Swadley

Vice President and Publisher
Barry Pruett

Book Designer

Erik Powers

Proofreader

Laura Sinise

Media Development Project Manager

Laura Moss

Media Development Assistant Project Manager

Jenny Swisher

Acknowledgments

As you saw on the cover of this book, I get credit for writing this book. Sure, I put a ton of work into it, but the truth is I had a lot of help – just like every author. It's the same for all artists. Take Tom Cruise, for example, he gets top billing, but he has dozens and dozens of people – including make-up artists, lighting directors, set designers, acting coaches and so on – who make him look good.

So I thought I'd take this opportunity to thank the folks who helped put together this work, as well as those who have helped me along the path to producing this book, which is my 31st.

The guy who initially signed me up for this book is the same guy who made my Canon Digital Rebel and Basic Lighting DVDs happen: Barry Pruett, Vice President and Publisher at Wiley. Barry has a quality that every author needs: faith in the author's belief that someone actually wants to hear what he or she has to say!

Once I was signed up, Courtney Allen, an Acquisitions Editor at Wiley, took over the project, helping me big time with everything that you see between the front and back covers. Not an easy task, especially considering that the book was produced in just a few months.

More help was on the way! Joe Farace, my technical editor, also added his expertise, especially in the digital darkroom section. Thanks, Joe!

Getting back to Wiley, I also want to thank Mimi Brodt, freelance editor, for her work as Copy Editor and Project Editor, Erik Powers of Creative Powers for his phenomenal job at designing and producing the book, and Mike Trent for

his work on the front and back cover design. Thank you all for your eagle eyes and artistic flair!

Someone who has been helping me for **58** years also worked on this book. My dad, Robert M. Sammon, Sr., who is **90**, actually read each and every word, using his wordsmith skills to improve my words! I could not have done it without you, Dad.

Two more Sammons get my heartfelt thanks: my wife, Susan, and son, Marco. For years, they both supported my efforts and helped with the photographs. Thanks, Susan and Marco, for all your help and love.

Julieanne Kost, Adobe Evangelist, gets a big thank you for inspiring me to get into Photoshop in **1999**. Addy Roff at Adobe also get my thanks. Addy has given me the opportunity to share my Photoshop techniques at trade shows around the country.

Some friends at Apple Computers also helped me during the production of this book by getting me up to speed with Aperture **2**, the application I use most often to import and edit my photographs. So, more thank you notes go to Don Henderson, Fritz Ogden and Kirk Paulsen.

Other friends in the digital imaging industry who have helped in one way or another include David Leveen of MacSimply and Rickspixelmagic.com, Mike Wong and Craig Keudell of onOne Software, Wes Pitts of *Outdoor Photographer* and *PCPhoto* magazines, Ed Sanchez and Mike Slater of Nik Software, Scott Kelby of *Photoshop User* magazine and Chris Main of *Layers* magazine.

At Mpix.com, my on-line digital imaging lab, I'd like to thank Joe Dellasega, John Rank, Dick Coleman and Richard Miller for their on-going support of my work.

Rick Booth, Steve Inglima, Peter Tvarkunas, Chuck Westfall and Rudy Winston of Canon USA have been ardent supporters of my work, as well as my photography seminars. So have my friends at Canon Professional Service (CPS). My hat is off to these folks, big time! The Canon digital SLRs, lenses and accessories that I use have helped me capture the finest possible pictures for this book.

Jeff Cable of Lexar hooked me up with memory cards (**4GB** and **8GB** because I shoot RAW files) and card readers, helping me bring back great images from my trips.

I'd also like to thank Christine Keys of ExOfficio for supplying me with clothing for keeping me comfortable in the field, which is actually very important to me – because I went to Catholic grammar school and was very uncomfortable in my uniform for years (which seemed like a lifetime).

Of course, all my photographer friends who sent me photographs and tips for the “With a Little Help from My Friends” chapter get a warm thank you. Don't miss a single tip here!

My photo workshop students were, and always are, a tremendous inspiration for me. Many showed me new digital darkroom techniques, some of which I used in this book. During my workshops, I found an old Zen saying to be true: “The teacher learns from the student.”

So thank you, one and all. I could not have done it without you!

*Dedicated to the four people from whom I have learned
the most in life.*

In order of appearance . . .

*My mother, Josephine, and dad, Robert. My wife, Susan,
and son, Marco.*

"We are a part of everyone we meet."

TABLE OF CONTENT

About the Author

Credits

Acknowledgments

Foreword

Preface

intro

A Digital Photography Recipe for Smokin' Photos

Interesting Subject

Good Composition

Creative Cropping

Careful Focus

See the Light

Fine-Tune Your Exposure

Control the Light

Check Your Camera Settings

Work and Play with Light

Have Fun

Part I: Digital SLR Must-Know Info

Data Contacts and Mirror

Auto Focus vs. Manual Focus

Be Sensitive to Your Image Sensor

A Shutter's "Mileage"

Your Eyes vs. Your Camera's "Eye"

Brightness Values and the +/- Exposure Compensation Control

Control What Your Exposure Meter "Sees"

LCD Monitor Info

Customize Your Camera

Cooling Off and Warming Up Images

sRGB vs. Adobe RGB and RAW vs. sRAW

Get It All in Focus

F-stop Info

Internal Filter Flare

When Pixels Bloom

Memory Card Info

Full-Frame Image Sensor Advantage

Firmware Updates

Camera Care

Check Out Your Camera's Software

Recovering "Lost" Files

Cameras Don't Take Pictures, People Do

The Camera Looks Both Ways

Part II: Landscape and Scenic Photography

Be Prepared, Be Patient

Get It All in Focus

Pack a Polarizing Filter

Establish a Sense of Place

Think in Three Dimensions

Watch the Edges and Know Your Boundaries

Crop Creatively

Watch the Horizon Line

By the Light of the Moon

Shooting Sunrises and Sunsets

More Tips on Sunrise and Sunset Shots

After the Sun Sets

When It's Hazy, Hot and Humid

Golden Hours

Favorite Wide-Angle Zoom

Favorite Telephoto Zoom

Rules of Composition

Shooting from Above

Compose for a Cover or E-Card

Move Around a Subject

RAW Rules

Play with Picture Styles

Shooting on Overcast Days

Must Use a Lens Hood

Take Fun Shots

Using ND Graduated Filters

Convert to IR

Check Out a Postcard Stand and Get a Guide

Shooting by the Sea

Shooting at Night

Blurring Night Lights

Shoot for a Panorama

Don't Forget the Details

Envision the End Result

Photographing Fireworks

Always Look Up, Down and Back – and be Careful!

The Self-Assignment

Landscapes in HDR

Take HDR Inside

Part III: Photographing People

Fun Facts for Better People Pictures

Drag the Shutter to Create a Sense of Motion

Fine-Tune Flash Exposures with Exposure Compensation

Nice Nighttime Shots Using the Night Portrait Mode

Make Pictures, Don't Just Take Pictures

Position the Subject in the Foreground

Go with the Grain

Wonderful Window Light Pictures

Daylight Fill-in Flash Photos

Painting with Light

Soften the Light with a Diffuser

Fill in Shadows with a Reflector

Get Everything in Focus

The Classic Head Shot

Watch the Background

Capturing Sports Action

Always Look Back

Get Up Close and Personal

Add Catch Light to the Subject's Eyes

Don't Crop at the Joints

Choosing a Background

Pan to Create a Sense of Action

Avoid Hard Flash Shadows

Dress for Success

Evaluate Shooting at Eye Level

Break the Rules

When You Hand Over Your Camera

Don't Be a Dummy

The Home Studio

Get Involved

Create the Dis-Equilibrium Effect

Part IV: Picturing Animals

Stopping Action

Focus Tracking Mode

See Art in Nature

Shoot for the Peak of Action

When Bracketing is a Good Idea

Make Fences Disappe

Place the Subject Off-Center

Steady as You Shoot

My Favorite Wildlife Telephoto Zoom Lens

My Favorite Wildlife Wide-Angle Zoom Lens

Shooting Silhouettes

Using Tele-converters

Noise and Sharpness

Don't Cheap Out on a Telephoto Lens

Shoot Sharper Pictures with a High Frame Rate

Expose for the Highlights

Shoot RAW Files

The Eyes Have It

Shooting in the Snow

Keep Both Eyes Open

Displaying Your Prints

Envision the End-Result

Play with Plug-ins

Part V: Exposure Fusion with Photomatix

Launching Exposure Fusion

Adjusting Your Images: Highlights & Shadows Adjust

Adjusting Your Image Part II

Exposure Fusion with Help from Photoshop

True HDR with Help from Photoshop

Look Closely and Carefully

Part VI: Get the Best Image Quality: RAW and JPEG

When RAW Rules

When JPEGs are Okay

Settings for JPEG Image Quality/Compression

The Importance of Seeing the Light

RAW Really Rules with Panoramas

Part VII: A Case for White Balance

Individual White Balance Settings

Auto White Balance

When White Balance Goes Wrong

When the Wrong White Balance Can Actually be Right

Correcting White Balance in Camera RAW

Part VIII: Flash Settings: On, Off and Partial

Sunny Day Flash Shots

Fill Flash Outdoors in the Shade

Add Just a Touch of Flash

When Flash May Not Be Good

Adding an Accessory Flash

Part IX: The Zoom Lens Advantage

Closer or Wider, It's Your Choice

Compose Creatively

Blur the Background

Blur the Background by Changing Position

Cool Close-Ups

Part X: Setting the Mode

Fully Automatic Picture/Exposure Modes

Full Auto Mode

Portrait Mode

Sports Mode

Landscape Mode

Close-up Mode

Night Portrait Mode

Flash-Off Mode

Creative Exposure Modes

Program Mode

Shutter-Priority (Tv) Mode

Aperture-Priority (Av) Mode

Manual Exposure (M) Mode

Exposure Bracketing

Metering Modes

Average

Center-weighted Average Metering

Spot Metering

Focus Modes

One-Shot

Focus Lock

Focusing Tracking

Manual

Drive Modes

Single Frame Advance

Rapid Frame Advance

Self-Timer

Part XI: The Wonders of Infrared Imaging

From Drab to Fab

Black-and-White IR

Have Fun with Filters, Too!

Seeing in IR

Panos in IR

Part XII: Photoshop Elements Confessions

#1: Quick Look at the Quick Mode

#2: The Full Mode is Full-Featured

#3: Save a Copy

#4: Crop Creatively

#5: Love Those Adjustment Layers

#6: The Touch of a Brush

#7: A Look at Levels

#8: Brightness/Contrast Basics

#9: See What Hue/Saturation Can Do For You

#10: The Super Shadow/Highlight Control

#11: Select Your Selections Carefully

#12: Do It with the Dodge/Burn/Sponge Tool

#13: Resize the Right Way

#14: Check-Out Canvas Size

#15: Heal with the Spot Healing Brush

#16: Copy and Fix with the Clone Stamp Tool

#17: Wow 'em with Black-and-White Images

#18: Have Fun with Effects

#19: Play With Plug-ins

#20: Sharpen as the Final Step

#21: Reward of RAW Files

Part XIII: Expand Your Vision with HDR Imaging

Take at Least Three Shots

Generate HDR

Do It with Details Enhancer

The Fun Never Stops

Take HDR Inside, Too

Part XIV: Shooting Panoramas

Getting Started

Pano from Adobe Bridge

Shoot Verticals

More Fun Awaits You

Expect Surprises, Too

A Truly Amazing Match

Shooting Panos in a Tight Spot

Experiment with Layouts

Expect to Crop

Part XV: HDR + Panos = Way-Cool Imaging Fun

Shooting for an HDR Pano

Generate an HDR Image for Each Set of Images

Enter Photoshop Elements

Play in Photoshop Elements

Part XVI: Make a Better Print

Shoot It Right

Calibrate Your Monitor

Adjust Your Photo

Size your Photo for Printing

Sharpen your Photo

Working with the Printer

Test Your Print

Wiley Publishing, Inc. End-User License Agreement

Download CD/DVD content

Foreword

For most of us, daily reality includes raising children, mortgage payments, aging parents and career obligations. To balance these demands, many of us enjoy creative pursuits including photography, painting, gardening or visiting museums and galleries. Have you ever wondered, “What would it take to leave your day job and dedicate yourself to making art full-time?” If this seems like a drastic move, consider developing a parallel professional career that allows you to follow your dreams. Whatever your profession, leading a dual life allows you to experience the best of both worlds – financial security and ongoing creative development. Teaching is a natural pursuit for many artists, but sadly being a talented artist doesn’t mean that the person is an equally talented teacher.

I’ve had the pleasure of meeting Rick Sammon and more importantly, seeing him teach. The man is a lightning-fast, silver-haired energy bundle, and the first thing that strikes you is his sparkling eyes and ready smile. Rick loves life, which is very apparent in his passion for music, travel, family and photography. But Rick has one more passion we all benefit from – teaching. He loves to inform, inspire and enlighten, and the idea that this book is called Rick Sammon’s Top Digital Photography Secrets is wonderfully absurd. Rick doesn’t believe in secrets; if he did he wouldn’t have written this book! Part of enjoying life for Rick is inspiring and sharing with others, and as an educator I know how much he benefits from teaching. Perhaps Rick wrote this book for himself – that is how much he loves to teach and share!

In exchange for reading this book, I challenge you to share one “secret” you learned that helped you to make better images with two other people. Show, explain and inspire

your passion to your friends and family with the same energy that Rick put into these pages. Believe me – teaching will make you a better photographer and image-maker.

Best regards,

Katrin Eismann

Artist, Author and Educator

Chair, MPS Digital Photography

School of Visual Arts

Preface

First off, thank you for picking up a copy of this book/DVD set. Your interest in my ideas about taking digital pictures is much appreciated. I hope you learn a lot, and I hope you have a lot of fun capturing your reality with your imagination.



Reality leaves a lot to the imagination. – John Lennon

Let's talk about the book first.

This book is packed with more than 200 ideas for taking pictures indoors, outdoors, in bright light and in low light, with and without a flash and with reflectors and diffusers. I'll also share some ideas on how to take pictures by candlelight and how to paint with light.

You'll find one tip per page. How easy and cool is that!

In some cases, I've included two or more pictures per page to illustrate a before-and-after technique or how an effect can enhance a series of pictures.

You may want to start with the Introduction, where you'll find my *Digital Photography Recipe for Smokin' Photos*. If you want camera tech talk, I think you'll enjoy the *Digital SLR Must Know Info* chapter.

If you like photographing landscapes, animals, close-ups and people, you may want to jump to those chapters. I've included my favorite tips and techniques to get you started.

I've also included chapters on *My Photo Gear* and on *Home and On-Location Digital Darkrooms*. Check 'em out to learn about the kind of gear I use and the gear I recommend.

And speaking of the digital darkroom, the chapter *Top Digital Darkroom Techniques* includes, that's right, my top tips for digitally enhancing pictures. What I've done here is to make the enhancements as easy to follow as possible. After you learn my techniques, experiment with them on your images.

One of my favorite chapters in this book is *With a Little Help from My Friends*. There you'll find great tips from great photographers whom I am lucky - very lucky - to call my friends. Don't stop with their tips! Check out their Web sites to continue your digital photography learning experience.



Also check out the Web sites in the chapter, *Cool Web Sites*. Yup! More photo – and digital darkroom – learning and fun!

Okay, here's the scoop on the DVD.

Pop the DVD into your computer's DVD drive, click on the different QuickTime movies, and you'll get personal digital photography lessons from yours truly. Hey, it's the next best thing to taking a workshop with me (which I hope you can do someday).

Because they are QuickTime movies, you can start and stop them whenever you like, and even fast-forward and rewind if you want to skip or review a segment.

The movies – which cover flash, focus, lenses, portraits, shooting in low light and more – are a sampler of the videos from some of my other Wiley DVDs, which cover lighting and how to use Canon Digital Rebel cameras. Check them out at www.wiley.com. If you shop at amazon.com, you can find my DVDs by typing in Rick Sammon in the Search window.

So, you'll find a ton of tips, tricks and technique in this book and on the DVD. You'll also learn about some of my favorite photo philosophies.

In going through the material, please keep this adage in mind: *I hear, I forget. I see, I remember. I do, I understand.*

Hey, you will hear me say a lot and you'll see a lot in the book and on the DVD. The real magic happens when you start to "do" and understand.

So go out and do it – and don't forget to have fun in the process.

I began this preface with a favorite quote and a photograph I felt illustrated the quote, so I thought I'd end with another favorite quote, illustrated by two pictures. The idea is that as a photographer, it's important to keep changing, growing and evolving.

Rick Sammon
Croton-on-Hudson, NY
October **2008**



Intro

A Digital Photography Recipe for Smokin' Photos ***10 Ingredients for Dishing Up Successful Images***

Hey all, as you'll see on the following pages, I've packed this book with my favorite digital photography secrets – a full-course meal on digital photography, if you will.

But if you can't wait to dig in, and want to quickly cook up some sumptuous photographs, here's a quick, 10-step recipe that I think you'll find appetizing.

To illustrate the results of my recipe, I'll use some photographs that I took on a recent trip to Papua New Guinea. My guess is that many of you probably will not get to (or even want to go to) that exotic destination, but that's okay. The same ingredients can be used to create images