

Capturing Better Photos & Video with your iPhone®



J. Dennis Thomas



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J. Dennis Thomas

J. Dennis Thomas is a freelance photographer and author based in Austin, Texas. He has more than 25 years of experience behind the lenses of cameras and has been using the iPhone camera since Apple first released it. His photography has been published in many regional and national publications, including *Rolling Stone*, *SPIN*, *Country Weekly*, and *SXSWorld* magazines.

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*For Henrietta and Maddie
who always make me smile...*

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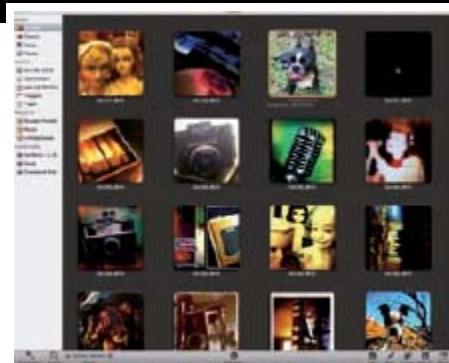
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Introduction

Building a camera into a phone makes total sense. These days, nearly everyone carries a cell phone with them at all times; and nearly everyone owns a small digital camera to take snapshots of things that are happening in their life. So putting the two together was a no-brainer. Why carry two things when you can carry one?

A fundamental problem with most camera phones is image quality. It's often pretty bad. The sensors are incredibly tiny; the lenses aren't very good; and the range

of light they can capture is pretty small ... even in comparison to an inexpensive compact digital camera.

Well, the iPhone has pretty much revolutionized camera-phone photography. Of course, before the iPhone, there were other phones that had cameras built in; and now there are phones that have more advanced cameras than the iPhone has. Still, the iPhone has a cult-like following, and lots of photographers, even seasoned professionals, are using the iPhone to make great and compelling images. In fact, some iPhone photos shot with the Hipstamatic app recently ran on the front page of the *New York Times*!



Why all the fuss? Plenty of people ask why the iPhone is commanding such attention from photographers. In my opinion, the answer is short and simple: It's the apps.

The iPhone apps make the iPhone a viable instrument in photography. To be 100% honest, the camera on the iPhone isn't the greatest. The iPhone 4 has dealt with some of the issues by upgrading to a higher resolution sensor and adding the HDR option, but the camera falls short—even when compared to other phone cameras. The apps take a photo with mediocre image quality and make it cool by adding different effects. The fact that these apps are sometimes designed in part by photographers really makes a difference; oftentimes, people with no photo experience design photography software, and practical issues are not considered. Input by real photographers makes a big difference. In this case, the effects are more realistic.

It bears mentioning that the best iPhone photography apps don't *hide* the shortcomings of the iPhone's camera; instead, they *add* something to a picture that makes it better. Whether it's simulating a toy camera, converting the image to black and white or sepia, adding a photo frame or other enhancement, a good app improves your iPhone photos.

This isn't to say that you need an app to make a great iPhone photo. The iPhone can and does produce some great images straight from the camera. This is where the other—more important—part of the equation comes in; that's you, the photographer. To make a good image, a scene has to be compelling. The composition, lighting and subject all have an impact on this, and these elements are all in the control of the photographer ... for the most part.

The purpose of this book is to help you develop the skills and the vision of a photographer. A lot of the concepts in

this book go beyond just iPhone photography and relate to all photography. This is not only a book on how to take better pictures with your iPhone, but how to take better pictures all-around—with any type of camera. Tips on composition, lighting and subject matter are applicable to all photography.

Yet, within the coverage of general photography is specific information on how each topic relates to the iPhone ... and to the different versions of the iPhone, if there's a relevant difference among the models.

I hope this book will help you enjoy your iPhone camera even more than you already do, by giving you tips and ideas to create better photos and videos all around.





Chapter 1

Get to Know your iPhone

As the popularity of the iPhone steadily grows, we're seeing more and more iPhone photos—everywhere. The reason for this is simple: Not everyone wants to carry around a camera, but nearly everyone has their phone with them at all times. And iPhones take decent photos.

Many people, even professional photographers (including me), rely on an iPhone to catch everyday snapshots and to make great images on the fly. Although the quality of photos made with a cell phone camera, like the iPhone, isn't nearly as high as those made with a DSLR ... or even a good compact camera, your iPhone has the advantage of easy access.