

Rob's hints and tips for using continuous lighting

At the workshop we used two main light sources and played around a bit to get optimum results. Here is a quick summary of the main points we discussed.

Continuous lights are generally significantly less powerful than studio lights or speedlights so work out in advance how to maximise your image for the best light. Buy the brightest lights you can afford because you will be using different techniques when you shoot (e.g. diffusion) that will lower their light output. We discussed the following aspects of the exposure triangle:

- 1) Shoot in Manual
- 2) Shoot in RAW
- 3) Don't go wider than f4 as you will need the image to be sharp from the tip of the nose to the back of the head.
- 4) Use a tripod to avoid camera shake as you may have to shoot at slow shutter speeds to maximise the light (e.g. 1/50 or less)
- 5) Lift your ISO if you still haven't got enough light in your image. Digital noise may increase with higher ISO levels, but this can be rescued in post processing whereas nothing can rescue a blurred image.
- 6) At the workshop, most images of Loren were taken at ISO 400, f4 and shutter speed of 1/80
- 7) Diffuse the light if you can (this will make the image a bit darker but the softness of the light is much better if you do)
- 8) Move the light close to the model (6-12 inches) to maximise the available light
- 9) Turn light away from model (towards yourself) to add to the softness of the image – the edge (penumbra) of the light falling on the model can be very flattering. Use a lens hood to prevent flaring.

I always set the white balance using a grey card once I've got a basic lighting set-up. Most cameras allow custom white balance.

When using continuous light you have to control any ambient light in your working space. Try to eliminate all and unwanted ambient light: turn off overhead lights, close the curtains etc.

The key thing is to play around with different settings and light positioning. Placing lights very close to model is worth getting used to. Multiple layers of diffusion should eliminate any burnout on model's face and give you a nice soft 'atmospheric' light but the best set up will only come with trial and error: don't be afraid to experiment and have fun.