

Wow 50! Well not me but my 50th article for *Professional Imagemaker**. How did that happen so fast? It seems like I started writing for PI a couple of years ago, but I guess not. As it turns out I started in 2005 with my first article 'Photoshop Impressionism – Parasol Gossip' (see Image 01). I've really enjoyed putting together these writings and I have found that it has made me a more thoughtful teacher and it has helped me to figure out a lot of things in terms of general communication. Trying to put across complex concepts in type for someone to read on another continent without the benefit of you standing there explaining what you 'really' mean is quite an exercise. There is so much we take for granted when we communicate with one another, we unconsciously assume that the person we are talking to already knows most of what we know.

**The feature is tagged 49, the numbering regime started after the first article and was not introduced until Dave's fifth article. It only seems like yesterday! Ed.*

Years ago, my mother told me a cute story that early one morning her little sister, my aunt, told her about the dream she had just woken up from. As my aunt laid out her story, my mother stopped her to ask a question about the dream. She became impatient with this interruption and scolded my mother saying, 'Why are you asking me this? You were in my dream!' And that is sort of where we all are in our own heads – without really thinking about it, we assume that because we have experienced something or know something, that everyone else has too, and because no one wants to look stupid, they usually don't ask what you are on about. So, we end up with people in a position of authority, who are very insecure in their lack of knowledge, and try to brass it out by acting tough and self-important employing some sort of mild intimidation, because they are afraid that they will be found out. That's all of us, myself being one of the worst!

Often being on the receiving end, it made for lots of stressful shoots dealing with art directors and designers that were in charge but had no idea of the process, they were supposed to know, but they never got to ask their questions during their formative training and so never got the chance to really learn. For us photographers we have to be sensitive to directing people in front of our cameras, with some people you really have to break it down for them because they have trouble equating words with movement and haven't spent years learning posing as you may have. So, I do my best to direct, write, and teach, as though the person I'm trying to communicate is all alone in a room and knows nothing about what I'm talking about. But every so often you work with people who are 'on your wavelength' and they just get it. My *Professional Imagemaker* cover shot on the June/July 2015 issue (see Image 02) of Vancouver BC model Kelsey Barnwell clad in a red dress was a collaboration with Vancouver BC Haute Couture fashion designer Sam Stringer. Sam is a pretty smart cookie and is totally engaged with whoever is in front of her. No A.D.D. here and she isn't afraid to ask questions, she wants to know—the possibility of looking stupid doesn't even seem to enter her mind. Kelsey too was easy to work with, she was so body-aware, talented, and experienced that almost no direction was necessary once the concept was discussed. But these two are the exception, it's usually more of a struggle, but on the positive side, working with those that aren't on the same wave length will really hone your communication skills. Shooting for advertising as I have done most of my career, you get to work with bigger budgets and so have access to really top-notch talent. This is great but it doesn't teach you much about directing, I have learned much more about communicating and directing from shooting portraits of 'real people'. There nothing can be assumed, more often than not the subject is uncomfortable with being in front of the camera and is very inexperienced. Therefore, you really have to break it down for them.



92 »

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Trouble is, developing good communication skills takes time. I find that I need time to ponder and time to absorb – something few of us allow ourselves today. I found that if I carved out a little time on a regular basis, that is unstructured time where you might even get a little bored (boredom is the best fertilizer for creativity – DM 2017), your imagery will be the better for it and your life will run more smoothly. Like Narcisa (Kelsey Barnwell's character in Image 02), I too have fled the big city. I now live in my old 1914 schoolhouse home-studio (see Images 03 to 06) by the ocean at the foot of a mountain in the countryside on the edge of the vast British Columbia wilderness and as a result have much more down time and way less distractions allowing me to hone my craft further! Mind you that didn't happen overnight, my wife and partner Sylvianne and I (see Image 07) have worked towards this dream for the last 20 years, and that plan came about through lots of rich ponder-filled down-time (see Image 08). My home/studio is just a few kilometres out of a small town called Courtenay on Vancouver Island which has a population of 38,000. There are lots of photogenic people around but none are very experienced so I have a plan to do some free shooting exercises with some of this local talent to help them get better in front of the camera and to develop my directing skills. Having shot lots of portraits I find it very easy to get genuine smiles, but getting green models/actors or real people to portray different emotions is a tough one, that's a 'vast wilderness' I want to explore next!

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dave MONTIZAMBERT'S creating with light

