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# **Studio & Location Lighting Secrets for Digital Photographers**

**Rick Sammon and Vered Kashlano**



Wiley Publishing, Inc.

# Studio and Location Lighting Secrets for Digital Photographers

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## About the Authors



### Rick Sammon

Rick Sammon has published 34 books, including his latest four: *Digital Wedding Photography Secrets*, *Rick Sammon's Digital Photography Secrets*, *Face to Face* and *Exploring the Light*—all published in 2008! His book, *Flying Flowers* won the coveted Golden Light Award, and his book *Hide and See Under the Sea* won the Ben Franklin Award.

Rick has photographed in nearly 100 different countries and gives more than two dozen photography workshops and presentations around the world each year. He also hosts five shows on [kelbytraining.com](http://kelbytraining.com) and writes for *PCPhoto*, *Layers* magazine and [photo.net](http://photo.net).

Nominated for the Photoshop Hall of Fame in 2008, Rick Sammon is considered one of today's top digital-imaging



experts. He is well-known for being able to cut through Photoshop “speak” to make it fun, easy and rewarding to work and play in the digital darkroom.

When asked about his photo specialty, Rick says, “My specialty is not specializing.”

You can catch Rick at Photoshop World, which he says is a “blast.” See [www.ricksammon.com](http://www.ricksammon.com) for more information.



## Vered Koshlano

New York City-based professional photographer Vered Koshlano ([www.byvk.com](http://www.byvk.com)) specializes in fashion, beauty, glamour and studio photography.

Combining her experience as an actor in front of the camera with her technical know-how, Vered produces technically exquisite photographs that convey the feeling and mood of the subject...something that she strives for in each and every image.

Recently, Vered teamed with award-winning photographer/author Rick Sammon ([www.ricksammon.com](http://www.ricksammon.com)) for a book (Rick's 34th) on studio lighting: *Studio Lighting Secrets*. Throughout this book, you'll see dozens of photographs taken in Vered's studio, illustrating different lighting techniques as well as tips on how to work with models and create different moods in a photograph. Posing, makeup and props—other Vered specialties—are also covered.

Recently, Vered was a featured instructor at the Lepp Institute of Photography and was commissioned by Canon USA for a series of portraits featuring well-known photographers/ artists for its Print Master program. She is also Rick's co-host in his Wiley Publishing how-to DVDs: *Canon Digital Rebel XS*, *Canon Digital Rebel XTi* and *Basic Lighting and Portraiture*.

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## **Rick's Acknowledgments**

In Vered's acknowledgements that follow, she begins by saying, "It's not easy being an artist." I agree one hundred percent.

To this I add: It's not easy being an author. Once you put something in print, that's it—forever. Kinda scary for someone as sensitive as myself. I am my strongest critic, and I have been known to change my mind a time or two.

It's also not easy working with another person on a creative project ... simply because every artist and author has his or her own creative expression and way of doing business. For example, at the time I get up in the morning to work, Vered is just going to bed!

When I began this project with Vered, she was my co-host on several Wiley how-to photography DVDs. The first thing I said her was, "I hope we are still friends when this project is completed."

Well, not only are we still friends, but it turned out that Vered was the perfect partner for this book. She not only supplied wonderful images and information, but she was also extremely accommodating and flexible during the entire process. So my first "thank you" goes to Vered, who is sleeping while I write this at 5:30 am.

There are many others who helped me along the path to producing this book, which is my 34nd.

The guy who initially signed me up with Wiley is Barry Pruett. Barry has a quality that every author needs: faith that someone actually wants to hear what (s)he has to say!

Thanks to Barry, I have four DVDs with Wiley and now three books.

For all of these Wiley books, Courtney Allen, a super-talented acquisitions editor, helped me big time—with everything you see between the front and back covers. Not an easy task, to say the least.

More help was on the way at Wiley's end!

Alan Hess, my technical editor, added his expertise and made sure no one receives the wrong information here. Thanks Alan!

I also want to thank Jenny Brown of Brown Ink for her excellent 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 ... and for patience working with me!

Someone who has been helping me for 59 years also worked on this book. My dad, Robert M. Sammon, Sr., who is almost 91, 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.

Westcott, producers of an extensive line of lighting equipment, played an important role in producing this book as well. They supplied studio and on-location gear for several of the shoots. A big thank you goes to Kelly "Wonder Woman" Mondora for all her support over the past year.

Westcott's David Piazza and John Williamson, with whom I've worked at trade/ consumer shows, get my thanks, too. You guys rock!

Bogen's Kriss Brunngraber also helped big time with this book, supplying us with the best tripods and stands for lights in the world. Thanks Kriss, you da man!

Much appreciation goes to Joe Brady, field marketing manger, MAC Group, for supplying the text and PocketWizard photos for the Unleash Yourself chapter and to Alan Hess, the wonderful tech editor on this book who suggested that we mention that PocketWizards also work with Nikon flash units. And thanks to Jenny Brown, my editor, who suggested that you can also use PocketWizards for wildlife photography. Me? I supplied the other photos in this chapter.

In the Student Studio Lighting Experiments chapter, you'll see some wonderful work by several student photographers at the Hallmark Institute of Photography. I'd like to thank these individuals for sharing their work and lighting secrets. I'd also like to thank Hallmark's Vern McClish and Lisa Devlin Robinson for coordinating the student's work for this book.

The photographers who contributed images and tips to the With a Little Help From Friends chapter also get a big thank you. Their works is amazing, and I encourage you to see more of it on their web sites.

Other friends in the digital-imaging industry who have helped in one way or another include 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.

Rick Booth, Steve Inglima, David Sparer, Peter Tvarkunas, Chuck Westfall and Rudy Winston of Canon USA have been ardent supporters of my work and 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, which helped me bring back great images from my trips. Thanks Jeff.

And not to be forgotten, my photo workshop students were, and always are, a tremendous inspiration for me. Many have shown me new digital-darkroom techniques, some even used in this book. I find an old Zen saying to be true: "The teacher learns from the student."

So thank you one and all. This book could not have been produced without you!



## **Vered's Acknowledgements**

It's not easy being an artist. Although it may be satisfying on a personal level, getting "outside" approval means a lot- and not just from a financial standpoint. If no one applauds at the end of the show, the actor is likely to be devastated...no matter how good he thought his performance was. So when Rick asked me to do this book with him, I was more than just happy

I have known Rick for a few years now, and we collaborated on a couple of his DVD projects, so I knew working with him was going to be fun. But as Rick says: "Having fun is hard work!" Turns out, this is true. And I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for bringing me on board for this wonderful adventure!

Rick has been working with Wiley publishing for a long time, and when he suggested me as co-author on this book, they simply trusted that he found the right person for the job and welcomed me graciously!

A big thank you goes to Canon for making amazing picture-taking machines that allow me to make beautiful images effortlessly, so I can concentrate on the creative side of the project rather than be a "heavy machinery operator."

Speaking of Canon, I have been very fortunate in meeting a few wonderful people who, throughout time, have offered their support, technical guidance and trust in my abilities: Mr. Hitoshi Doi, David Sparer, David Carlson, Corinne Cortez, Steve Ingle, Chuck Westfall, Rudy Winston and the guys entrusted with the expensive toys, including Joe Dolora, Steve Losi, Frank and Paul from Canon Professional Services (CPS). I am proud to be part of the Canon family!

In these times of digital everything, photographers wouldn't do very well without the digital darkroom afforded to us by companies such as Adobe (Photoshop and the whole creative suite), OnOne, Nik, BreezeBrowser and lots of other software manufacturers that make it easy to manage and publish our digital work—a big warm thank you to you all!

A special thank you goes to Westcott for generously lending us top-of-the-line lighting equipment to experiment with. (I love everything!) Kelly is my wonder woman!

I thank all of our photographer friends who took time out of their busy schedules to share a lighting tip with our readers. Make sure you look them up and keep learning.

Finally I would like to thank the talented people (makeup artists, hair and wardrobe stylists, models and assistants) who collaborated with me to make wonderful images!

*After writing 34 books, I've run out of family members,  
friends,  
workshop students and research foundations for a  
dedication.*

*So this one is for the person who said:  
"He who writes lives forever."  
Unfortunately, that person is dead.*

*—Rick Sammon*

*For my wonderful parents Rina and Zalman Koshlano, who  
still wait  
for me to become a doctor, and to the one soul that's a part  
of me,  
my beloved Jonathan: "Separation is but an illusion."  
—Vered Koshlano*

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Rick Sammon



## Introduction

Those of you who know my work know that I specialize in travel photography ... and often jaunt off to places such as Mongolia, Thailand, Kenya, Namibia, Central and South America, Fiji, Morocco, the Arctic, Antarctica, Galapagos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Italy's Venice (where the photograph on the left was taken) to make photographs for my books, magazine articles and web sites.

So you may be surprised to find me doing a book on studio lighting. Heck, I don't blame you. As recently as May of 2008, while I was photographing Huli Wigmen in Papau New Guinea, this book was not even a concept. But as I began thinking about lighting techniques, it became clear that there are definitely tools and methods that work well ... and some that don't. This book contains ideas, techniques and ways to use equipment in various types of photography studios as well as out in wide world of on-location photography.

But here's the thing: Photography is always about, well, *photography*. The principals of lighting, composition,

exposure and working with subjects (in the case of photographing people) remain the same. The three images above were taken in different locations by different photographers and span 31 years; they illustrate my philosophy well.

So when Wiley Publishing asked me to do a book on studio lighting, I jumped at the chance. What fun, I thought .... keeping the following expression in mind: If you want to become an expert on something, write a book about it. That is, while I don't consider myself a lighting expert per se, I do know that it's critical to understand the tools and fundamentals of studio and location lighting in order to capture the images you foresee.

To begin the project, I dug out some old issues of *Studio Photography* magazine. I served as editor of this magazine from 1978 to 1980—before being hired by a NYC advertising/ public relations agency to head up a major camera account—so I had a bunch of back issues! The cover you see here is one of my favorites. It captures my constant appreciation for the magic that one can create in the studio. For this and other issues of the magazine, I ran articles on the Best of the Best when it came to studio photography, and I learned much about the craft of studio shooting along the way—absorbing tips, tricks and techniques that I would later apply to my people-based travel photography.

The next step was to get a co-author. That decision took about half a minute. Vered Koshlano, who took the studio portrait on the right (previous page), was the logical choice. Her expertise in all aspects of studio lighting and working with models is incredible. She's among the best. This, you'll discover for yourself throughout this book.

On the following pages you'll find photographs and tips from not only Vered and myself, but also from some of the top studio pros in the country. It was totally awesome to get them, as well as some talented individuals from the Hallmark Institute of Photography, involved in this project. I have been giving four seminars at the Institute over the past four years, and I just love the work these dudes produce. Talk about learning a lot!

I think you'll like the layout of this book, too. There's one tip per page (in most cases), so you really don't have to read this in any particular order. Find picture you like, check out the technique and try it (or a variation of it) in your home, professional studio or on location.

And let us know how it goes! Vered and I would love to hear from you. You can contact me through [twitter.com/ricksammon](https://twitter.com/ricksammon)—a short and sweet method of communication. You can also reach us through our web sites: [www.ricksammon.com](http://www.ricksammon.com) and [www.byvk.com](http://www.byvk.com).

Before I go, I'd like to leave you with one of my favorite expressions. It is one that makes great sense when it comes to photography:

*I hear, I forget  
I see, I remember  
I do, I understand*

Have fun doing it! Enjoy the process.

**Rick Sammon**  
**Croton-on-Hudson, NY**  
**August 2009**



# Part I

## Studio Starter Kits

You don't have to use thousands of dollars of studio gear to get professional quality results—although, no doubt, it can make your photographs look more professional. In this chapter, find out how to shoot on a budget ... and still get professional results.



## **Basic Home Studio**

Here's a look at a very basic home studio. It can be set up in about 15 minutes for around \$700.

In the picture of my den (on the right), the light on the right side of the subject is a hot light (constant light source) mounted in a softbox (to diffuse the light). To the left of the subject is a reflector, which bounces light from the hot light onto the opposite side of the face. In the background is a black cloth, the kind you can pick up at a fabric store.

I took the photograph on the left with this simple and affordable setup.



© John D. Williamson

## Basic Hot-Light Kit

Hot lights are called *hot lights* because, well, they get hot. They provide a constant light source so that you can see in real time the effect (shadows and highlights) of using one or more lights and changing their positions.

Hot light kits can cost thousands of dollars, but there's a three-light PhotoBasic kit from FJ Westcott that sells for about \$500. The 11-piece PB500 kit includes: two main lights, two umbrellas to soften the light, a background light, three stands, a background, a floor mat for easy light placement and a carrying case.





© Eric Eggly

## Basic Strobe Kit

Strobe lights work like an accessory camera flash, firing in the blink of an eye. They have photocells that allow them to be fired from a main strobe that is tethered (attached by a wire) to a camera.

Professional strobe light kits can be pricy though, costing several thousand dollars. Rather than spending these big bucks, you might want to start with a three-light PhotoBasic kit from FJWestcott. The 12-piece Strobelite Plus 3 Light Kit #231 costs around \$700 and includes: three lights, two softboxes (to soften the light), two adaptor rings (to swivel the softboxes), three stands, a carrying case and a Westcott instructional DVD.



## **Simply Beautiful**

Here is an example of how you can create a beautiful portrait with a very simple lighting setup.

For the top left photograph, a strip light (no grid) was positioned in front of the model and to camera left. This provided the main light source. A strip light was positioned behind the subject and to camera right to provide the accent light on the model's left arm. Half of the model's face is in a shadow, which makes for a dramatic image.