# Capturing Better Photos & Video with your iPhone®

J. Dennis Thomas

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Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Capturing Better Photos and Video with your iPhone®

Published by
Wiley Publishing, Inc.
10475 Crosspoint Boulevard
Indianapolis, IN 46256
www.wiley.com

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Published simultaneously in Canada

ISBN: 978-0-470-63802-6
Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2010942337

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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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# Acknowledgments

Thanks to all the folks at Wiley, especially Courtney, for being so patient. Thanks to Jenny and Erik for all their hard work under pressure. An extra special thanks to the crew at Thunderbird Coffee @ Manor for keeping me energized.

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

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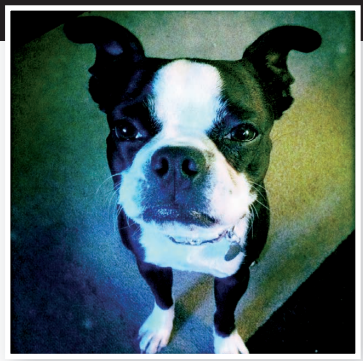

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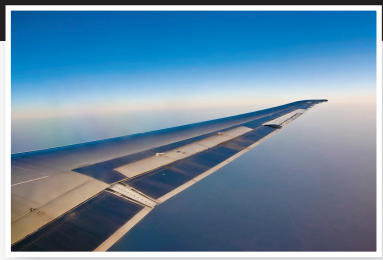

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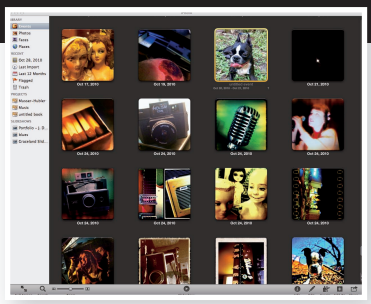

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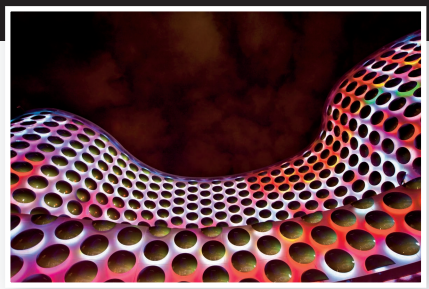

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# Introduction

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 different. 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.