

Studio lights and professional models

Why pay for a model?

On the whole, experienced models are very much at ease with being looked at in the studio, and being the focus of attention. Inexperienced ones, though, may be shy, and nervous of you, as you are probably much older than they are, and very possibly of the opposite gender.

Consequently, employing a professional model, who can go straight into posing, and who carries a good wardrobe with her is a great way to increase your success rate. Combine this with working at a studio where the manager will set up lighting for you, it provides a 'quickstart' approach to portrait, fashion and glamour.

I've been working with Joceline almost since she started modelling, and she is, frankly, the best model I've ever worked with – she's been on of the top models working with amateurs in the UK for more than a decade, and has worked extensively abroad. I hope that you'll see why she's so successful this evening.

Finding models and studios

The current go-to for amateur photographers is <https://purpleport.com>. It caters for photographers and models of all levels and experience, and has replaced the small ads in the back of Amateur Photographer and Practical Photography. Both Joceline and I are members.

There are some good studios in the Walsall/Birmingham area, and plenty of models – if you don't want the bother of joining a website, contact me for suggestions. I can provide contact details and comments on the facilities available. My email address is photo@johnduder.co.uk.

Interacting with the model

When you first make contact with the model, be really clear about what sort of pictures you want to take, and what you will use them for. Make sure that you tell the model in advance where you'll be shooting, and for how long. Give them your mobile number, and ask for theirs, in case of last minute emergencies. However, don't ring unless it's very urgent: normally, use texts. Models have personal lives, too!

Producing a 'mood board' is a popular idea: collecting a series of images that you like, either digitally or on paper can provide a jumping-off point for each sequence of images. If you send this to the model in advance, he/she can bring appropriate changes of clothing.

The model's view

I interviewed Joceline for <https://www.ephotozine.com> a few months ago, and it's worth reading this to get some more understanding of practical interactions, and how models think of the world. See the interview [HERE](#). (Note – the article includes nude images, so don't read it at work!) Joceline also runs a YouTube channel.

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Exposure and settings with studio flash units

Set the camera to Manual mode: exposure is controlled by the brightness of the flash, the flash-to-subject distance, the aperture and the ISO setting. The shutter speed has no effect, unless it is too

fast for synchronisation (giving cut-off, with a black band along one side of the picture) or slow enough to allow ambient light to affect the exposure (which rarely happens in the studio, as light levels are generally quite low, apart from the modelling lamps).

A safe shutter speed is anywhere from 1/60 to 1/250 or so, depending on the camera model.

All but the most basic of studio flash units will have controllable power, and you can adjust this, your aperture, and your ISO to get good exposure in almost any circumstances. However, I find that 100 ISO, 1/100 second and f/11 is always a good place to start, and often doesn't need a lot of alteration.

The best way to work out the exposure is to use a hand-held flash meter – a light meter that is designed to measure the light for a fraction of a second, but digital cameras offer immediate review of the image, so you can simply look at the result and adjust the next exposure if it is not perfect.

The histogram is invaluable as an aid to getting studio flash exposure right. The look of the picture on the screen is easily affected by ambient light (which is low in most studios, making the image appear brighter than it really is).

Camera setup - important for mirrorless owners

If you use a mirrorless camera, you need to set it to 'setting effect off' – as you are using manual exposure, and the flash is much brighter than the ambient light, using the usual mode will give a very dark viewfinder image. This may be hidden deep in the camera's menus, and it's no fun finding it while a model is standing tapping a foot...

Lens choice and camera height

There's a reason that the 85mm lens is the traditional choice for portraits on 35mm – and this translates into a 50-70mm lens on a crop-frame sensor, 45mm on four thirds. It avoids distortion – a wideangle lens can exaggerate perspective, giving big noses and ears. If you're shooting the model full length, a wideangle lens can work – but beware of distortions.

It's more flattering to a model if you shoot from around waist height for full-length images – easy with Joceline's six-foot height and heels, but it may require crouching or sitting with shorter models.

Bios

Joceline Brooke-Hamilton studied ballet at school, and trained as an actor, before deciding that she wanted to work more of the time without being an office worker. She's never looked back since she became a model, and is in demand across the UK, and worldwide. She travels around half the time, working with her husband at home in between.

She works with both professional and amateur photographers, and reckons she's got the best job in the world.

John Duder has been taking pictures as a hobby for fifty years, and specialises in black-and-white images, portraits, and nudes. He's been a member of the Ephotozine.com Critique Team for several years. He's keen to share his cumulatively acquired knowledge and experience (CAKE) with others: and who can resist CAKE? He runs lighting workshops at a couple of local studios and offers one-to-one coaching.