

Shooter Profile

Stuart Heir

“It needs some dirt.” The “dirt” Stuart Heir refers to is what elevates a precisely controlled, constructed image from the realm of predictable execution to imperfect perfection. “It has to have some grit, some textural dirt to make it believable.” But this “dirt” is not just random detritus, it is controlled chaos — and it comes only with the ability to finely control the image. When he was introduced to the Phase One H 25 at Digital Transitions, Stuart recognized that the system would give him the precise control in the delicate highlights and moody shadows that are so important in his stylized art.

Stuart’s excitement about photography and how he uses his Phase One system from Digital Transitions is infectious. His gestures and focus demonstrate how the highly visual artist sees an imaginary still life set as clearly as we see any real three-dimensional object. He moves the imaginary lights in the air with the same speed and accuracy as if he were actually on set — a set with a lot of lights. One of Stuart’s shots can easily require more than a dozen different lights.

Before he could consider Phase One, Heir had to be confident in the system’s ability to handle not only tungsten light, but also a mixed environment of hot lights and strobes. With exposures varying from a fraction of a second

to a minute, Heir was equally concerned about getting a system that was consistent across both the spectrum of light and a broad range of exposure times. Mark Lawrence of Digital Transitions was able to match Stuart’s need for precision and control with an H 25 and an electronic shutter system. “When I met Mark he helped me with everything, from computers to the lens. I trust him.”

Heir was relieved to be able to speak with someone who understood photography and genuinely wanted to make sure that he got the system that was right for his signature style. At one point, he felt that the only way to capture the exacting detail



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PHOTOGRAPHER *Stuart Heir*
STYLE *Studio Still Life*
HARDWARE *Phase One H 25
Hasselbald 500CM
Sinar 4x5 Norma*
SOFTWARE *Capture One PRO*
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and the right amount of “dirt” he needed for his images was to use an 8x10 Deardoff. But Lawrence and the team at Digital Transitions helped him find his digital match. Heir explains, “For someone like myself who has come from an 8x10 film world, it’s a big leap to be able to trust the digital capture.”

Reflecting on the decision to embrace the H 25, Stuart Heir hasn’t looked back. “My life is centered on my work and family. I am always working on new ideas. Technology has changed to make everything faster. I like that. The sooner I can see results, the more quickly I can refine them and move on to the next image.” Heir continues, “I was shooting a lot of jewelry, which is retouching intensive. For still life, Phase One is perfect. I can shoot layers and combine all my elements. No more testing film stock. No more labs. No more waiting.”

And his clients couldn’t be happier with the result. “Stuart can start with nothing and the image still comes out beautifully,” explains one satisfied customer. “That’s the ultimate compliment,” Heir says with a smile, “Those shots are also the most difficult, because you have no place to hide.” What does this mean for Stuart? More productivity, more time for family and more time for creative thinking.

Luckily, Stuart Heir doesn’t need to hide because he knows where to turn for help. “Your relationship with DT is like the one you have with your family doctor. It is personal, and they are concerned with the health of your livelihood. In an emergency they are there for you. It happens... something breaks or there’s a glitch you can’t work out. The DT staff is professional and knows what’s up. Who else does that?”



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