

In the last issue of Good Light! Magazine, we demonstrated a great way to shoot bright, dynamic high key photos of models showcasing an assortment of stylish jewelry. We covered various posing and lighting techniques straight out of the high-fashion jewelry advertisements from your favorite magazines. In this issue, you'll learn how to take your skills even further with 3 new techniques.

First, you'll learn a simple method for shooting gorgeous product stills that easily overcomes the reflection issues often found on jewelry and similar shiny products. After that, you'll be able to download some free Photoshop templates that can easily turn your model and product photos into advertisements that would look right at home in the most high-profile fashion magazines. Once you've mastered the techniques from the previous issue for bright, high key photo shoots, you'll learn how to switch things up with some techniques for low key shoots. Low key shoots bring out the dark and sensual side of both your models and your jewelry, making them perfect for creating intimate moments. It's a lot to cover, but if you're like us, you'll want to start immediately – so let's dive right in!

Easy Jewelry Product Photos

Once you've completed your lifestyle photoshoot, it's time to zoom in on the jewelry your model was wearing. Even if you've never experimented with any type of product photography before, this project is a great opportunity to learn some useful techniques that work with a wide range of products. Whether you're shooting jewelry for an ad campaign or the rings from your latest wedding party, you can get beautiful results every time using a very simple setup.

As in all photography, lighting is the most important concern, but the reflectiveness of jewelry requires special consideration in the construction of your light setup. Obviously, the reflective surfaces will reflect the area of your light source and the backdrop they are placed on, so for best results, use a plain white backdrop and a large diffuse light source. A black, gray or colored backdrop tends to create unflattering reflections on most reflective surfaces, instead of the bright sparkling highlights that look so enticing in magazines. It's possible to use them, but for the sake of simplicity use a white backdrop for now, as it creates nice reflections and makes it much simpler to isolate your product later on. If you're not sure what material to use, the unprinted side of a poster or large piece of photo paper works quite well, and it allows you to quickly reposition your product for different compositions.

Some photographers prefer to work with as many as four different lights for a shoot like this, but it's possible to bathe the piece in lots of light with a simple softbox

containing two Speedlights at 50% power. This overhead lighting style creates beautiful soft shadows without any complex post-production Photoshop work, which can look fake even in the best circumstances. It's far better to get the best possible results in-camera and keep the post-production work to a minimum. If you're using the softbox from your model shoot, be sure to remove the grid to avoid any unintended reflections on your jewelry. Tilt the softbox so that it's hanging horizontally right above your jewelry, just high enough to angle your camera at 45 degrees without interfering in the shot. Use a tripod if you have one, especially when shooting multiple pieces, as this will help you create a consistent visual style from start to finish.

This setup creates quite a lot of light, but that's exactly what you want, as it will allow you to stop down to f/22 in order to maximize your depth of field. If you're fortunate enough to have a tilt-shift lens, it would be perfect for this technique, but f/22 or below should provide sufficient sharpness from front to back for those of you without one. Post-production in Photoshop can be used to add some extra sharpness later, if you think it's necessary, but avoid the temptation of depth of field stacking as the effect is never looks as good as simply stopping down.

In order to create an engaging sense of perspective, use a wide-angle lens with a focal length of 28mm. This creates the feeling that the viewer is quite close to the jewelry, while also gently guiding their attention across the entire image. A longer focal length will compress the perspective, and decrease the dynamic effect of the piece. You can experiment with the perspective effects of different focal lengths, but 28mm is a great starting point. It's also important to experiment with different methods of laying out your jewelry, depending on the feeling you want to create. Use a curved, whimsical layout for a playful feeling, or a more serious atmosphere by arranging the piece perfectly straight and geometric. Finally, don't forget to polish your jewelry with a micropore cloth right before you shoot, and then use that same cloth to arrange it on your backdrop so you don't waste time removing dust and fingerprints in Photoshop!

Professional-style Advertising Mockups

Now that you've got both your lifestyle model photos and your product close-ups, it's time to start combining them in Photoshop. To start, first visit <http://www.goodlightmag.com/jat> and follow the instructions to download the appropriate template files. You'll see that there are six different templates to choose from, each with its own unique style that will let you quickly create a beautifully designed advertisement with your lifestyle model and product photo pairings.

When working with professional advertising and marketing agencies, briefs are often extremely specific about how the final advertisement should look – but for more semi-professional environments, these templates provide a beautiful style for effortlessly showcasing your chosen photos to the marketing team. Even if you're only shooting for fun, it can be quite impressive and inspiring to see your photos placed in a professional context. The mockups are perfect for both your portfolio and for your model's, often creating more exposure for both of you than traditional presentation styles.

Each Photoshop template file is constructed in roughly the same way, broken down into a few separate layers: your model photo on the bottom, then a product canvas layer, then your product photo, then your text layer, then your personal logo. For those of you who haven't developed a logo yet, there are a number of places where you can have one custom-designed, such as Fiverr, Elance, or 99 Designs. It adds an extra layer of professional appeal to your work, and can help give your photography projects a consistent brand. Some of the templates have additional layers for creating black and white effects or more complex product canvasses, but they all work in the same general way.

Once you've selected a template style that goes well with your shoot style and color palette, the first step is to import your model photo and arrange it using your own compositional flair. Next, create your product canvas layer. This can be done in several different ways, depending on your model photo and the template you've chosen to work with. The simplest method is to use a solid white background, so use the marquee tool to select an appropriately-sized area and fill it with white pixels. A slightly more complex method is to stretch a solid color chosen from the edge of your photo to fill in any blank space, using the copy or clone stamp tool to create a seamless background. If your product is gold or a similar color, you may want to experiment with an even darker product canvas that features a delicate central gradient laid overtop for highlighting. No matter what you choose, don't be afraid to let the canvas overlap part of the model photo if you feel it makes a better composition.

Next, import your jewelry product photograph, scaling and positioning it to integrate nicely with your ad layout. To quickly remove the product's white background, double-click the layer to open the Layer Style window, and find the section titled 'Blend If'. Ensure the dropdown is set to 'Gray', hold down the Alt key, and adjust the white 'This Layer' slider. You'll note that the slider splits in half, allowing you to quickly mask out your white background. You can compare this to the effect of moving the slider without holding down the Alt key, but with the Alt key you get much smoother edges to the blending effect.

In some cases, using the Blend If tool doesn't produce a perfect result for all areas of the image, but this can easily be corrected using a layer mask. Simply create a layer mask on your product layer, and using a black brush quickly mask out the areas where a slight white overlap may be visible. Since the linear edges of the product photo are most likely to catch the eye, do a quick sweep around the edges of the product layer to remove any other potential issues you haven't spotted yet. Because you originally shot your product on a white background, this task is incredibly quick to complete once you become comfortable with the steps, and it can be used in many different situations to achieve a simple masking effect in seconds.

Intimate Low Key Mood Shots

Once you've mastered the bright, high key style you learned in the previous issue, you may want to try turning down the lights to add a little mystery and some more intimate styling. The darker atmosphere is perfect for shoots that feature nude models, as the increased sense of intimacy and overall tone go quite well with bared skin. This allows for almost all of the image to be focused on the jewelry, instead of forcing it to compete for attention with fashion choices and noisy backgrounds. The extra clarity also allows the model emphasize facial expressions and emotive poses without taking away from the jewelry itself, creating a more powerful and emotional image.

To start creating the low key effect, you can continue to use the same general setup you used for your bright, high key shoot - two 60 x 90 softboxes with a grid and a single Speedlight in each – with only a few minor adjustments. Reduce the power of each Speedlight to 25% of full, and lower the stands until your model is lit from each side instead of from above, which creates deeper and more dramatic shadows across the model and beautiful sparkling highlights across the jewelry.

Start your exposures at f/11 and ISO 320, but adapt these settings if needed until you reach an exposure that creates the right atmosphere for your jewelry. Darker shoots like this are best suited for models with blonde or light hair, as post-processing can become much more difficult when shooting a black-haired model against a black background. When posing your model, ensure that the piece or pieces of jewelry are always located at least partially in a highlight area, as they can easily start to fade into the background if not properly lit. The dramatic shadows that result from side lighting can often cause your jewelry to suddenly disappear if the model moves in a certain way, so make sure you check your images in-camera during the shoot, and keep a close eye on posing. At the same time, make sure that the jewelry doesn't become overexposed – it's far better to have properly exposed jewelry and an underexposed model as background than to lose the detail of your

jewelry in a hot spot. On these darker shoots, many photographers are tempted to boost the power of their lights for the model, but you should resist the urge and maintain the dark, dramatic atmosphere. In any product shoot, you generally want to keep the focus on the product itself rather than the model!

With these new techniques in your photographic repertoire, your creative horizons will expand dramatically. Remember, each technique works quite well for more than just jewelry! The product photography skills you learned will work beautifully with almost any small objects, and you can combine any type of product photo with a model or still life photo to create stunningly professional advertising mockups in next to no time. Even the dark and atmospheric low key style you learned last works well with a number of different types of shoots, both for products of various types and any other kind of modeling, not just jewelry! Experiment with the techniques, and see how they can be expanded and extended to cover a wide range of projects, whether they are just for fun or completely professional.