

Meet Larry Stone of 12 North Photography

Written by Christina Silvestri

Best Of Our Valley 2011 Best Family & Portraits Photographer winner Larry Stone of 12 North Photography talks to Arizona Foothills about the creative process of his work and gives us a peak at the talent behind the lens. Just within 5 years, Stone has made a name for himself, recognized for his creativity and originality in his portrait-taking techniques. "I like to think of myself as a storyteller," he said. "Only instead of using a pencil and paper, I use a camera and a lens." Stone captures the essence of his subjects, highlighting their unique personalities in a single frame. The Valley's Best winner gives us some tips on what to look for when booking a photographer for family and portrait work, how to come prepared to a shoot, and some extra advice for aspiring photographers.



About yourself - what made you decide to become a photographer?

I have always been interested in photography, but it wasn't until 5 years ago that I picked up my first camera and started to take pictures. I couldn't put it down - I took pictures of everything. It was a new and fun experience to create art that one could admire rather than being just a spectator of it. I got my first client kind of by accident; she was a friend of my sisters who needed senior portraits done and she didn't want to pay for the same old photos everyone else was paying for, so she asked if I would do it (Keep in mind at the time my photography experience consisted of fruit trees and miscellaneous objects). After the shoot was done I nervously pulled up her photos on the computer screen and to my surprise, she loved them. I think I decided to become a photographer in that moment. I was actually being paid to create art for someone and not only did it make me happy, but it made them happy.



What are your favorite subjects to shoot/what do you specialize in?

My favorite subjects to shoot are people. No matter if it's just straight portraits, family portraits, fashion, theater or editorial; just everything that involves the human element. I would say that I specialize in moment-to-moment storytelling. I try to tell a story about my subject's life and personality in a single frame.

What inspires you?

I find most of my inspiration from the people that I photograph. It could be anything from the way the sun shines on their face to the way a breeze brushes their hair. I always find the best inspiration the moment before I snap the shot.

What should clients look for when booking photographers?

In the renaissance people would commission painters to paint their portrait based upon the style of the artist's art. Therefore, they would choose the painter whose art best fit the image they wanted to convey to all who would look upon it. Photographers are the modern day version of this and that is why when looking for a photographer one should look for an artist whose art best suits their own personality and lifestyle, choosing the one whose art best fits the image they want to share with the viewers.

Are there any things/questions that clients should come prepared with upon first contacting a photographer?

Absolutely, when paying for any kind of creative service you should always ask questions to insure that you get exactly what you're looking for. The three most important questions that come to mind are as follows:

- What locations do you have in mind that fit the style I'm looking for?
- Do you have a makeup artist or do I have to do my own?
- What is your turn around time?

Should clients come prepared with certain things on shoots?

Being prepared is very important for the client as well as the photographer. Bring flats for women because sometimes walking is required and

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heals can be a killer, a bottle of water because we are in Arizona, a small mirror to do touch ups and a towel to wipe any perspiration off of your face.

If you could shoot anyone/anything, who/what would that be?

That's a good question and a hard one to answer because there really isn't one specific person I want to photograph. I want to photograph everyone; everyone has a story to tell and I want the opportunity to tell it.

Have there been any challenges you have faced as a photographer?

Tons. In this technological age we live in, anyone can buy a nice camera, [have access to] Photoshop and other numerous filters that can be purchased online that will give a photographer a chic creative edge at a push of a button. This has made the photography business very competitive especially for a photographer like myself who takes great pride in taking time with each photo, insuring my clients get photos that are not only artistic but are custom to their own style and taste.

Your most favorite moment as a photographer –

I have had so many great experiences as a photographer, but if I had to pick one it would have to be the time I did a friend's wedding and engagement photos. When we first met she would always tell me that she hated having her pictures taken because it is "impossible" to get a good photo of her. She even went as far as being jumpy every time I brought my camera anywhere, insuring that I wouldn't snap a shot of her when she wasn't paying attention. But when it came time to have her pictures done formally, there was no escape. Long story short, she was so happy with her photos that she still uses them as her profile pictures a year later.

What techniques/tips/advice would you give to aspiring photographers?

I would have to say to always stay true to your art and never fall into the trap of mimicking someone else's work. There are a lot of photographers out there and it is your uniqueness that sets you apart from the rest.

Find out more about Larry Stone and 12 North Photography at <http://www.12north.com>