

PTCC 2015 - BLACK & WHITE PORTRAITS

GROUP AA

21 images from 10 members

01. bad hombre

Technically great lighting! You did wonders at getting light under the hat and into those eyes! And what a handsome dude. This feels like a "set", however, with the background being a hugely different texture, light direction and quality. Hard to visually reconcile the man and background, because the background is so sharp that my eyes keep running back up the hill. Which is why you usually want a shallower depth of field. But his white beard saves it and keeps pulling me back to the face. One weakness is the white siding boards just behind the man, which you probably couldn't do much about. Also, we don't want the distraction of fragments that intrude at the edge of the frame, and in this case you can quite easily remove the dark fragment at bottom right in the frame, and a light-colored one up by the shoulder. It's amazing how distracting little 'edge ditties' like this can be!

02. Barnyard Cat - **First Prize**

Fluffy here is an all-around excellent image. Technical quality, composition, flow, texture and light are all excellent. Love the high angle, and how selectively sharp the eyes and whiskers are. The black space along the bottom, with fuzzy hair coming into it, bespeaks the fluffy serenity of a cat. The whiskers act as 'leading lines' -- lines that direct the viewer's attention. The visual pull of a line is strongest if the line enters from the left, as these do, at least for those of us who learned to read from left to right. And diagonal lines are very dynamic, as here where they really invigorate the picture. My only regret is that the ear was amputated!

03. Bill

Hi, Bill! Is this a "Selfie"? It's very fun. And ... it's very close as well. Cropping right at the edge of your chin bothers me some -- I'd like to see it cropped either closer or further out a bit more, but not right on the bottom of your chin. And, think I would photoshop out a few spots that are distracting.

04. conductor no. 2

What a face! And, it tells a little story, since we know he's a conductor. Good job on your density, since it's in a difficult lighting situation. I would take out those distracting spots on his jacket, and taking out the edge distractions on the left edge of the print will make it stronger.

05. Emily

Emily, I wish you were sharper! The maker captured 'the moment', complete with wind-blown hair and fun sunglasses. It's an endearing shot! I would take out a few

spots on her sweater (I hate dust spots), and that one little wispy hair hanging down alone under one ear.

06. Gnome Scarecrow

The textures show well, and it's a cute expression. Sorry, but it doesn't really feel like a Portrait to me.

07. Maiden Scarecrow

A still life, really. Another cute expression on the sculpture. Lighting is softer on this one. I would definitely and absolutely take out the white squarish thing in background on the right. Beware of these "false attachments" - background objects that merge confusingly with the subject. I would also take out the blob area above her hair thing, which is distracting. Remember simplicity. Including only the essentials is one of the most important keys to good composition.

08. My Nephew - **Second Prize**

A nice character study, and innovative! Usually you want to compose so people and things face into the frame - that is, they should have the most space in the direction they are looking. That said, it's good to have knowledge of the 'rules' of composition, but don't be afraid to break them knowingly. Which you did here. It works that you have him looking out of the photo rather than into it. Also, I like your diagonally-driven background from lower left to upper right. Diagonal lines are very dynamic and can invigorate a picture. I also like that you haven't tried to make him out to be a "handsome" man -- you've unabashedly shown his squinty, sleepy eye, his crooked teeth, and his "I haven't even had my first cup of coffee yet" grumpy smile. He doesn't seem like a happy camper, but that's OK -- it's an honest and straight-forward portrayal. It grows on me!

09. Old Man at Moss Landing - **Third Prize**

Technically a very high quality image. With the boats in the background, this photo tells a complete story. Regardless of the photographer, equipment, or history of the shot, the photograph should speak for itself. And this one does. It is also really nicely composed. The goal of composition is to direct the viewer's eye, keeping it interested and moving around the frame and not out of it. The composition of your photograph should also support the idea you had in mind when you decided to take the picture. This does that, too. The only thing that throws me on this image is the dark shape that interferes with the mast right in back of his beard. That break in the mast is visually disturbing to me.

10. Olive Oyl Scarecrow

It's a cute expression. Unfortunately, however, the details are lost with this overly-hot lighting scenario. I have trouble seeing it as a portrait instead of a still life!

11. Pelican

Nice textures! I like that one shoulder is higher than the other. Though placing the subject off center almost always makes a more powerful and pleasing picture than centering it, one thing that DOES work well when centered is a single subject that fills the frame. If you centered him it will be a stronger image. Vignetting (darkening edges) will help a lot, too.

12. Pinky with Shotgun - 2

Ok, this wakes me up. Nice job!! Great angle, great selective focus, and great idea! Wish Pinkie's mouth had been shut, but otherwise I love it!

13. Pinky with Cigar - 2 - **Honorable Mention**

This has character! Love it. Cigarette ash about to fall is a great touch, too. It adds drama. Wish the background were a bit more subtle, especially that light area coming into the hat band at upper right. And I would take out some distracting dust spots, but otherwise it's great.

14. Pinky

Although the textures and lighting are very good, the cropping has me lost on this one. It's not a good idea to crop the ears of an animal, or someone's nose. If you're going to crop, crop a substantial amount so it doesn't look like a mistake. Also, my eye keeps bouncing around trying to find the center of interest, but without success.

15. Portrait of Stacy

Ah, right in the center. GREAT! Works for me. This has wonderful energy and pizzazz! For even more strength, I would vignette it's edges all around, & take out a few blemishes. Also, I would personally take out that little distracting triangle between her hand and shoulder so that your eye doesn't go there.

16. Sabrina - **Honorable Mention**

Nice! Gotta love that light in her eyes! The cropping is bold, and it works. The more we look at this image, the more we come right back into her eyes, with the 'Rule of Thirds' in full swing here. Although I rather like the stray light hair coming into her cheek, the two hairs around her eye distract me. Also, if I were playing with this one I would try a warmer version (a bit more sepia-like), and would play with the contrast some to see if I might like a bit more contrast.

17. Scarlett Starr

SUCH a cute baby! Your cropping is really excellent, and the black space behind keeps me coming back to her eyes. Just wish those eyes were sharp, but you could sharpen them up some in photoshop.

18. Serious Pearl

Good job! Another cutie baby. Keeping her centered in the frame was a good idea, and I like that you got her little hand in there. Think I would crop in even more from the

left of frame, which would help rid you of that distracting white band at center left. That would bring you more into her eyes as the center of interest. I would also print it a little darker, and perhaps not vignette the edges quite so much.

19. Shannon

Good use of the 'rule of thirds'. Intersecting and converging lines are especially strong in leading the eye, and here the bow and strings cross paths at just the right place in the photo. With the higher angle, you can see the violin's scrolls and shapes very well. And, I like that you photographed her doing something active! Unfortunately, this print has many technical problems that are hard to overlook. Primarily, it isn't sharp. Also, the composition needs help. Try cropping it up to about the girl's waist and into a horizontal print, eliminating the distracting legs. Then we'll notice her face much more!

20. Stacy's Eyes - **Honorable Mention**

I really like your composition here - tight cropping but not too tight, with the hands and fingernails pointing me back into her eyes. I find it a really strong image, so good on you! In addition to the fingernails, I love the light on her shiny lower lip! Three things would help this tons. Darkening the hands and arms quite a bit would keep us from being distracted by the lightness of the inner arms and palms, and take us more into her eyes, the focal point. Second, vignetting (darkening down) your edges would help. And lastly, Photoshop is a wonderful tool! Take out those pesky little dust spots all over her jacket and neck, and there are a few stray lines under the right side of her glasses.

21. Street Musician - Quebec no. 4

This photo-journalism kind of portrait tells a story, which it does pretty well. The busy background adds to the on-location feel of the image. I like that you've captured him actually playing, too -- not just standing around. The ivory keyboard has lost its details, and I would darken his hands and the ivory keyboard a little (not too much, because I like that we're drawn there by the white). I would also dust-spot a little, taking out the distracting hairs on his jacket. Also I would darken down the distracting little white blob just above his shoulder. OH, and I would crop down into his hat. Keeping the whole hat in makes my eye wander up to the top of his hat, and distracts me from his eyes. But overall, this is very pleasing!