

# Blaine Franger

boundless energy & unique vision

By Peter Kotsinadelis

A photographer with a knack for making the ordinary look extraordinary, Blaine Franger is constantly striving to find something different in whatever he sees. Blaine says, "I always think about how I can make the subject unique using alternative techniques and compositions and make it not only different, but hopefully better."

A native of San Diego, CA, Blaine moved to Oregon at a young age where he became fascinated with the outdoors, in particular snowboarding. "Although I enjoyed skiing, snowboarding was a natural draw for me as a teenager." Wanting to capture the action of snowboarding, Blaine started out with

several waterproof disposable cameras. "I remember thinking 'I'm going to be a pro photographer with disposable cameras.' Of course, several years and thousands of dollars later I laugh when I think of that."

As his fascination with photography grew, Blaine began reading all he could find on the subject. "I remember starting with a huge stack of books from the local library. When I got through those I went to the next town and took out all their photo books." His life took a turn during his senior year in high school when he started playing with his father's SLR. "When I turned the shutter speed to one second,

**Opposite:** Groomsmen at a wedding who knew how to jump and pose really well. I found the location, which was actually the wall of a Meineke Muffler shop.

**Above:** I'm proud of this image because it's my original idea (as far as I know at least). On a full moon, late night, I set up the tripod as high as it would go, and set the shutter speed for 30 seconds. I backed the car up to the tripod, started the exposure, ran to the car and turned the lights on one click so only the taillights were on. Then I stepped on the gas and swerved back and forth to get the windy effect. My camera only allowed 30-second exposures so I had to try and get over the hill in 30 seconds... all the while hoping no other cars came from behind and accidentally hit the camera.





**Above:** *Knapp's Castle in Santa Barbara is a really popular place for all the Brooks students to shoot. For this shot, I exposed for 15 minutes, and lit a very small campfire outside the frame to light up the rock remains.*

**Right:** *This was one curious ostrich in Santa Barbara who kept pecking at my camera lens and trying to eat it.*

pressed the shutter and heard the click of the shutter opening and another when it closed, I started thinking of the endless possibilities with flash and moving lights. Since I've always been nocturnal, I started playing with long exposures at night."

Blaine eventually enrolled at the San Francisco Academy of Art College, but his time there was short. "I loved the city of San Francisco, but all the students were either shooting high fashion or blurry black-and-white art stuff. My style was quite the opposite." A teacher at the school noticed Blaine's work and encouraged him to look into Brooks Institute. "I drove down one weekend and fell in love with Santa Barbara and Brooks. It was one of the best decisions I ever made!"

At Brooks Blaine met his future wife and business partner, Bethany. The two



married after graduation and decided to move to San Diego. As Blaine explains, "We decided a large city would be the best place to find work as a photo assistant." As his unique style continued to evolve, Blaine began to assist less and shoot more. Soon the couple decided to partner their creative talents into a business, aptly titled Blaine and Bethany Photography, and move to

Hood River, OR, near where Blaine grew up. "We are both passionate about photography and strive to create the best possible images. So we decided to start our own photography business but in a more rural setting."

They began shooting weddings and portraits. Their business quickly grew as their distinctive storytelling style drew praise



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**Above:** An interesting tiny little fish I photographed in Florida.

**Right:** Motion shot of a WaveRunner in Lake Saint Clair, MI. I used my underwater housing to protect the camera from the water.

from their clients. “We believe that the variety of subjects we shoot helped to develop a style that creates a unique look for each wedding, something our clients seem to like,” Blaine says. Hood River has also become a Mecca for the outdoor crowd and couples seeking non-traditional outdoor weddings. “Hood River is becoming increasingly popular as a wedding destination with all the beautiful scenery and mountains that surround it,” Blaine explains. “Plus there is so much outdoor activity to choose from. Couples never need to worry about their guests getting bored.” Destination weddings outside of Oregon are a growing area of their business. In the



last year alone Blaine and Bethany have photographed weddings in locations ranging from New York to Mexico and, most recently, the Dominican Republic. “We expected winter to be a quiet time for us, but we are getting more requests to travel and shoot weddings in the warmer states and the Caribbean.”

While some might call their portraiture style photojournalistic, Blaine prefers to

call it lifestyle photography. “We place subjects in their day-to-day surroundings, but use different perspectives than one would normally see.” Blaine also takes on any commercial work that comes his way and shoots for an ever-growing stock collection—both of which, he notes, have their ups and downs during the year.

Last year, after a full summer of shooting, Blaine and Bethany found themselves embarking on a six-month journey that began in Australia and New Zealand and traversed much of Asia, including the countries of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. “Australia had incredible landscapes, especially in the Outback, while Southeast Asia offered amazing sights, culture and people,” says Blaine. They also traveled through much of the Indian subcontinent. Blaine continues, “India






**Left:** This is early morning at a park in San Francisco, right next to the Golden Gate Bridge. The light and fog all came together for a beautiful shot.

**Bottom:** This is a beautiful full moon night in San Diego, CA. A 30-second shutter speed captured lots of movement in the water and clouds. For an extra touch of weirdness, I walked though the photo with a flash pointed at my feet.

was a personal favorite of mine. I was awestruck by the people and culture. Every corner you turn, you see something you never thought was possible and it just blows you away. It is an intense country full of poverty, riches and stunning sights.” The couple also visited Bhutan and Nepal with a final stop in China before returning home. Blaine explains, “The idea for the trip was really Bethany’s idea. We saved enough money and decided that it would be a great opportunity to see countries we had only read about and get some great images for our stock portfolio.” Overall Blaine estimates they captured more than 100,000 images, storing them on four small USB hard drives they carried in their backpacks. “I made sure we looked after those drives since everything we carried except the images could be replaced.”

The couple had little rest when they returned home having just a couple of days before they had to be in Michigan to shoot two weddings back-to-back. “This was a tough one as we were still suffering from jet lag and getting used to American culture again. But once we started shooting, everything was fine and we felt right at home again.” Currently, Blaine and Bethany are booking more business than ever. Not only is there a growing list of wedding bookings in their hometown, but surprisingly, an increase in the number of destination weddings. “We are busier than ever right now and although we wish the busy season was more spread out over the year rather than just the summer, we can’t complain because we love what we do!” Between weddings, portrait sessions, and trying to sort through their vast number of travel images, Blaine is also trying to get a new updated website off the ground for his commercial and stock photography.

With a growing business and a new website in the works, it would seem Blaine has come a long way from the time he first picked up a disposable camera to shoot snowboarding. If a unique vision and never-ending energy are the keys to success, then Blaine Franger is certainly well on his way.

For more of Blaine Franger’s work visit his personal website, [www.blainefranger.com](http://www.blainefranger.com). To see more of his and Bethany’s wedding and portrait work visit [www.blaineandbethany.com](http://www.blaineandbethany.com). 



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