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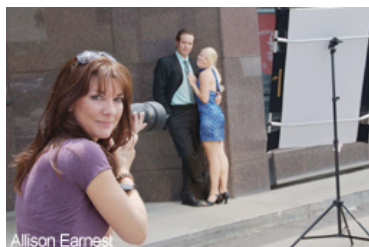
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A destination for dealers to stay current within the industry, and a forum to share ideas.

IN THE NEWS

What's on Their Shopping Lists? Pro Photographers Share Their Buying Strategies

Photographers' buying habits are as diverse as their capture styles, personalities and clientele. I recently interviewed six wedding/portrait and commercial shooters to find out their favorite brands, where they buy their staple products, what they expect in customer service, and what's on their shopping lists for this fall and winter. Here's some of what they said.



Jeff and Julie Gandy own Gandy Photographers

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Strategy Sessions
The PRO Group: A Specialty Dealer Has



to Be Special
by Jerry Grossman

Jeff Neal, vice president of Sales and Marketing for the PRO Group, is the "master" of the PROMASTER line of products. I caught up with Jeff during a break at the 50th Annual PRO Convention & Trade Show in Fort Lauderdale to talk ...
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People On The Move

Dynalite, manufacturer of lightweight, portable flash equipment, appointed Peter Bradshaw as their director of Design & Marketing.

Bradshaw comes to Dynalite with over 30 years of sales, marketing and design experience in ...



To Story



Christopher Appoldt



(gandyphotographers.com), a wedding and portrait studio in Valdosta, Georgia. They buy most of their staple products at B&H Photo - Video in New York City. Among the products they use “everyday, all day long” are the Canon EOS-1D Mark III, 1D Mark II and 5D; a range of Canon lenses; Canon 580EX II Speedlites; and SanDisk Ultra II CF and SD cards. Their White Lightning X800 comes from Paul C. Buff, Larson Soft Boxes from Larson Enterprises, and Tanner Backgrounds from Mayhew. Their Owens Originals backgrounds, Manfrotto 3021 BPRO tripods and Tamrac Big Wheels are all from B&H. The studio purchased Dell Workstations 660 and 690 from the Dell website; Apple Cinema Displays and a MacBook Pro from Apple’s website; and a Minolta QMS color laser printer from Office Max.

“We expect great customer service from any company we deal with, which includes a friendly staff, easy ordering, a knowledge and understanding of the products they are selling, consistency over time, business stability so we can count on them long-term, fast turnaround times and expedited shipping options for last-minute purchases,” says Jeff Gandy.

They plan to buy a Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III and another Canon 580EX II Speedlite from B&H this fall. “We’ve bought most of our equipment from B&H since we’ve been in business and have always had a good experience,” adds Julie.

Christopher Appoldt, of Christopher Appoldt Photography (christopherappoldt.com), a portrait studio on Long Island, New York, buys many of his essentials from B&H Photo - Video online. Among his staples are the Nikon D200 and D300, Nikkor lenses, a Tokina lens, Bogen light stands, Photoflex light modifiers, SanDisk and Kingston CF cards, LaCie hard drives and X-Rite screen calibrators. “If I need something, B&H likely has it—at a price that can’t be beat, considering the superior customer service that comes with the product, including a reasonable return policy,” says Chris Appoldt.

Appoldt also shops at Berger Bros., a local photo retailer, for camera bodies, Savage background papers, and last-minute event accessories, such as Nikon SC cords, Stroboframe brackets and impulse buys. “Berger Bros. offers an incredibly knowledgeable sales staff and support. Their prices match those of B&H, and if what I need is in stock, they’re my solid go-to,” he says. He plans to buy a Nikon D700 when one becomes available. His shopping plans also include a laptop, monitors and a RAID system, which he’ll buy from the manufacturers, who can best meet his service needs.

Allison Earnest, of Ae Photography (allisonearnest photography.com), is a commercial and advertising shooter in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The author of the upcoming book *Sculpting with Light: Techniques for Portrait Photographers*, she includes several lighting accessories among her staple supplies, among them Hensel Monolights, LumiQuest flash modifiers and Sunbounce reflectors, scrims and gobos. Other product essentials: Epson Stylus Photo 2200 printer, Nikon D300 and Nikkor lenses, Lexar CF cards and Kubota Image Tools products.

“I generally shop at Samy’s Camera, B&H Photo - Video and Staples, and often make purchases at photo conventions because they offer great prices and a chance to talk directly to key sales staff,” says Earnest. “The stores all offer the customer service I expect: a knowledgeable, helpful, friendly staff, and a good return policy.” She plans to buy another Nikkor lens and Nikon camera body this fall, either at Samy’s Camera or B&H.

Falcon is senior partner of NyghtFalcon Studio (nyghtfalcon.com), a wedding and fine art studio headquartered in Greensboro, North Carolina. NyghtFalcon purchases their Canon cameras, lenses and accessories from their favorite retailer—17th Street Photo—in New York City. “Dov sold me a Canon EOS 10D five years ago,” says Falcon. “He was patient, immensely knowledgeable, and the price was very good. His advice remains on target and their service, impeccable.” Falcon buys lighting equipment and accessories from Calumet, also in NYC. Consumables, such as Canon ink, come from Printworks USA, NextWarehouse and Adorama. They also purchased a Canon Pixma Pro9500 printer from Adorama. Tripods come directly from the Chinese manufacturer, Jinhua Support Imaging Equipment.

NyghtFalcon receives many of their staples from companies with whom they have built partnerships: fine art paper from Museo; camera bags from Think Tank Photo; CF cards from Hoodman USA; digital tablets from Wacom; and software from DxO Labs, onOne, Nik and RealViz. “We have very specific standards, so we build our own desktops,” says Falcon. “Most of the components come from NewEgg.com because of great price, service and delivery.” Alpine Graphic Apparel supplies their branded T-shirts, jackets, duffel bags, etc. They plan to purchase three Canon EOS-1Ds Mark IIIs this fall from 17th Street Photo and may buy a Canon iPF8100 in early 2009.

Scott Proposki is owner of Photos in a Minute (photosinaminute.com), an event photography business based in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Topping his list of staples are his Nikon D1X bodies and Nikkor lenses, Fujifilm FinePix S5 Pros, Sony UPD-150 and Shinko 1245 printers, Lenovo laptops, ExpressDigital software and a Noritsu M300 dry lab, all from Image Tech Marketing. “Some years ago, owner Doug Schirripa won my business during a very busy ‘Santa Photo’ season,” says Proposki. “We ran out of paper for our Sony UPD-150 on a Friday night and he managed to ship paper to us for delivery early the next morning. That weekend we had over \$10,000 in sales, thanks to Doug—and UPS.”

Proposki’s 16 Photogenic studio lights are from Ruben Gama at FotoClubInc.com, as are the Epson inks and paper for his Epson Stylus Pro 9800 and 4880. His Larson soft boxes are from Larson Enterprises; his new HD DVD Blu-ray disc rewriter and HD DVD-ROM drive are from PC Max, a local retailer. He’s now looking for backgrounds for schools with 600-plus students from SayCheeseBackgrounds.com, his usual backdrop vendor.

Mike Fulton and Cody Clinton, partners of TriCoast Photography (tricoastphotography.com), a wedding and portrait studio in Lake Jackson, Texas, place a premium on companies that do their best to resolve issues that may arise. Their key staples are Larson 4x6-ft. soft box and strip boxes, Denny’s new Freedom Cloth backgrounds and Canon cameras. For camera gear, they choose Houston Camera Exchange, where dealer Mike offers “amazing customer service, is fun to talk to and is one of the best people we know.”

“Since our shooting bays are small and Larson’s large soft boxes are shallower than most, the added space makes things so much easier,” says Fulton. “A 4x6 soft box for our main light kicks enough light around that a 5-foot reflector is all we need for the fill. Then I use their small strip boxes for hair light and rim light, to complete our fashion look.” They’ve found Denny’s Freedom Cloth a lightweight, wrinkle-free, smell-free material. “Our first two smaller Freedom Cloth backdrops were so popular we bought six 10x20s backgrounds in wild patterns and colors that suit our studio look and style. Their customer service is amazing.”

The studio plans to buy Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III bodies and lenses from Houston Camera Exchange; a 52-inch Flying Starfish for high-key lighting from Larson Enterprises; and Bourbon Street and holiday/Christmas sets from Denny’s. They’re still searching for fun, edgy packaging and portrait frames for samples of their senior portraits.

Six photographers, six shopping strategies, one bottom line: customer service still trumps price even in this challenging market.