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The Story Behind The Shot

Bruce Dorn
Canon Explorer of Light



Bruce Dorn, a Canon Explorer of Light based in Arizona, has enjoyed a photography career that spans photojournalism, editorial and award-winning ad campaigns. He is also a leading figure in the motion picture industry, known for his expertise in state-of-the-art visual effects and cinematography. An active member of the Directors Guild of America since 1984, he has garnered Mobius, Clío and Cannes awards, among many other honors. Dorn is passionate about creating a supportive environment for photographers to thrive creatively.



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Is the DIY approach always cheaper than buying something off the shelf? Most assuredly not. But it's definitely more fun. For this test shot for a marionette series I'm developing, I made a beauty dish out of a 1950s hubcap—specifically, a Mooneyes Disc, which is essentially a shallow bowl made from lightweight aluminum. I cut the center out of a 22-inch Moon Disc and added some slim aluminum tubes to mount a disk of milk-white glass over the resulting hole. I had the disk powder-coated white when I was satisfied with the construction. And yes, I did just have the hubcap lying around. I'm a hardcore gearhead and have built numerous hotrods, racecars and custom motorcycles over the years, so my "garage-mahal" is a veritable treasure trove of hotrod paraphernalia.

Speedlights were essential to this project. I design and sell mounts and accessories for these, along with HD video gear, through my manufacturing company, iDC Photo Video. I used two 580EX II Speedlites mounted on an iDC Softbox Double-Header II bracket behind my hubcap beauty dish, which diffused the direct illumination of my Speedlite while also bouncing the illumination back into the bowl of the disk. I also used a Speedlite-friendly softbox that I designed and licensed to the well-known lighting manufacturer F.J. Westcott. (To learn more about my work with Speedlites, visit the Canon Digital Learning Center, which is hosting a new series of instructional videos I produced.) To shoot each element of this panorama, I used my Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III because I wanted to have a massive file—one capable of life-size reproduction on my Canon imagePROGRAF iPF8300 large-format printer. Each slice of this panorama is 22 megapixels in size.

I've had the idea to do a marionette series for some time now, and this was my first foray into testing the mechanics of rigging a person to be a puppet. I plan to take this series into the streets, where I will rig all sorts of people in all sorts of environments. Perhaps a commentary on our contemporary lives?



Dorn used a Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III and a Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM lens. He exposed at f/6.3 at 1/125 of a second at ISO 100.

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