



BEHIND THE SHOT



Chuck France

Chuck France is a freelance photographer based in Kansas. His work has

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appeared in Time, The Wall Street Journal, Business Week and Healthy Living magazine. He works regularly for the Associated Press and The Kansas City Star. He also works with a variety of corporate and nonprofit clients including the American Federation of Teachers, the University of Kansas, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and CVS/Caremark.

In the fall of 2008, I was assigned to make a portrait of Shawn Edwards, a movie critic who works for Kansas City's Fox 4 News station. I was shooting the image for the *Pitch Weekly*, Kansas City's alternative weekly newspaper. Shawn and I met at Screenland, a small, independent movie theater in Kansas City.

I started off by doing the typical "movie critic" portrait shots: we went into the theater itself, and into the projection room. Those shots didn't work well; they were boring. I started getting a bit desperate, and I had to think on my feet. Suddenly it occurred to me: this is the guy who uses little popcorn bags for his movie ratings, instead of stars or thumbs-up signs. So I found someone who works in the theater and asked, Do you have any popcorn? He said, Sure, I have lots of stale popcorn that I save to feed the birds. And he brought out a huge trash bag filled with popcorn.

I made a big pile of popcorn on the concession stand, and we positioned Shawn behind it and gave him two popcorn bags to hold. Shawn's very outspoken and outgoing; he was happy to perform for the camera. I asked him to do a growl and he obliged. It looks as though he's about to gobble up the pile, which fits his personality really well.

To get this shot, I used the Olympus E-3 camera with the Zuiko 35-100mm f/2 lens, which is just a razor-sharp lens, it's the best. There were large windows behind me, so a nice, diffused light was falling on Shawn. Still, I felt I needed a bit more punch on Shawn's face, so I positioned an Olympus FL-50R wireless flash to my left on a stand and a Bogen Justin clamp. I put another FL-50R behind Shawn, also on a stand and a Bogen Justin clamp, to give some separation between the background and the subject. The ISO was 100, the f-stop was 2.8 and the shutter speed was 1/160th of a second.

As a photographer, I love it when a shoot allows for some spontaneity, like this one did. I'm fine with art direction, but I also like the idea of just going forth and doing something on the fly. After I shot Shawn at the movie theater, we went to the Fox 4 station and I shot him in the studio doing his reviews. But the paper

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really liked this shot the best, and so did I.

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