



SHOOTING MODELS IN A STUDIO

Based on the meeting on 25th November 2016

Notes by Rhys Jones

CAMERA SETTINGS

Aperture

Don't need much depth of field unless there are props or important detail in the foreground or background. f/5.6, f/4, or wider

Shutter Speed

Not looking to freeze fast movement, but the model may move, you may move, or there may be camera shake. Minimum of 1/100, 1/250

ISO

Studio lights are not as bright as daylight. Decide on aperture and shutter speed and check ISO. As low as possible. Not too high to avoid grain / noise. Typical ISO about 400 or 800.

White Balance

Incandescent? Daylight? Custom setting? Use live view to get as accurate as possible. Can adjust later if shooting in RAW.

Metering

I suggest centre weighted. Matrix / Whole Scene will confuse the camera as there will be a lot of white / black in the backdrop. Spot metering could be too narrow.

EV

Adjust exposure + for high key, - for low key. Adjust by 2 or 3 stops.

FOCUS AND DEPTH OF FIELD

Focus point

Use single or multiple focus points in camera settings? I prefer single point. Focus is usually on the eyes. May have to pre-focus (on eyes) and reposition the camera. Slide the camera up and down rather than tip. Mirrorless and some compact cameras offer touch focus setting on the camera live view screen.

Depth of Field

A matter of personal style. If face turned, eyes will be different distances from the camera. My 50mm lens at f/1.4 gives very narrow depth of field (one or two inches), so set appropriate aperture.

DISTANCES

Backdrop / Background to model

Do you want detail in the background such as props? Short distance from backdrop will give strong shadows. Increase the distance from backdrop reduces shadows

Model to camera

Consider area of interest. A detail? Part of the model? The whole scene? Consider focal length. Ideally 50mm to 75mm, maybe 100mm. Wide angle may give distortion of feet, hands, and nose.

Lights to model

Obviously the shorter the distance, the greater the light. Increase the distance for less light. The amount of light is not in direct proportion to the distance. Halving the distance will quadruple the amount of light. Doubling the distance will reduce the light to a quarter. Avoid burnout and reflections, especially on dark skin. Try to obtain a catch light in the eyes.

USING LIGHTS

Shadow

A single light will always produce a shadow. A softbox gives a more even light and softer shadow. Use a reflector? A second lower power light can be used to reduce shadow but be careful of contradictory light and shadow. Avoid two shadows from the nose. Avoid double catch lights in the eyes. Could use the second light to illuminate the backdrop, not just the model.

Angle

Light in direct line with camera and model will give even but flat lighting. About 45 degrees will give texture, but shadow across the face. Light level with model? Below? Above? Do you want a catch light in the eyes? About 90 degrees will give strong dramatic side lighting. Placing a light behind the model will give rim light around the hair, but make sure the lighting unit is out of shot.

POSES

Models

Professional models know how to pose. Give them a theme or an idea, and they will offer poses.

Body Shape

I prefer natural to a contrived pose. Aim for S or Z body shape. Look for angles, triangular shapes. Consider placement of feet and body weight. Less experienced or young models may feel more at ease holding an object or doing something.

Eyes

Open or closed? Do you want catch lights?

Engagement or Candid

For a candid shot, the model needs to look away and be in a natural pose. For engagement, the model looks at the camera lens. Avoid squint by not standing too close. Tell the model to look “through” the lens, not at it.

Hands and Feet

Don't cut them off by accident. Hands in the foreground will look big, so turn them edge on, not flat to camera. Feet in foreground will look big. Turn slightly, tuck back.