

Digital Photo Pro went along for the ride on an all-digital Hollywood photo shoot

By Christopher Robinson >> Photography by Jill Greenberg

# On the set!

Think of it as SPF 20-20.

Prescription Sunglasses.

LENSCRAFTERS<sup>®</sup>  
make an appearance<sup>™</sup>



#### What's it like on a Hollywood photo shoot?

To find out, *Digital Photo Pro* recently spent a day with Jill Greenberg as she did a shoot for Fox Television. At the Quixote Studios in Hollywood, Greenberg and her staff set up for a day of shooting a steady stream of models who came through the spacious studio. The team consisted of Greenberg, her producer, three assistants, a team from Industrial Color, a DJ and a caterer. This was a moderately sized project by Hollywood standards, but for the photographer, the stakes were still high. After all, if you don't get the shot, you won't get the call next time.

Greenberg is a veteran photographer, and her success has allowed her to organize a core crew who works efficiently and expertly. She relies on this group to make everything go well during the day. Considering that it's not a huge job, the inclusion of a DJ might seem like an expense that could have been bypassed, but it quickly becomes clear that his role in the shoot is key. He's providing an energetic atmosphere in addition to helping the models get into the shoot. With a carefully chosen playlist, the DJ isn't turning the shoot into some sort of rave; instead, he's setting the stage so that each model who steps in front of the camera can identify with the part. One of the models, "the country boy," is greeted with a little John Denver (*Thank God I'm A Country Boy*), and so it follows for successive models. It might seem extravagant when an iPod attached to a couple



of good speakers can provide music all day long, but in Greenberg's experience, a good DJ knows how to work with the dynamics of the shoot, and this day is no exception.

While she isn't a stranger to digital technology, Greenberg brings in a team from Industrial Color when she's doing a digital shoot to be sure everything goes smoothly and she can concentrate on shooting, rather than her gear. For this project, Industrial Color supplied the Phase One P25 digital back for Greenberg's Mamiya RZ as well as a pair of Macintosh G5s, a Cinema display at the shooting station and two more at the editing station and a printer in case there's a need to crank out a hard copy during the shoot. The two technicians are well versed in all of the gear, and the presence of redundant computer systems ensures that there won't be any problems.

With all of the high-powered technology and accumulated experience on the set, it's more than a little amusing that the day starts with a two-hour delay as an assistant is sent on a run to the store because the seamless has a crease and a new one is needed. It's always the little things. With models waiting in makeup, the new seamless roll is finally delivered and the final lighting check is done—the shoot gets underway.

The rhythm of the day begins to unfold. The shoot moves along at an efficient, but not at all rushed pace. Greenberg is an expert. She offers direction when some of the models don't seem to be giving the look she wants, but she's also happy to sit back and shoot without comments when the models are doing a good job in front of the camera. A moment after each exposure is made, the image appears on the Cinema display next to Greenberg. The technician who manages the files as each one is imported keeps up with the pace, and he per-



Jill Greenberg is a top-level photographer based in Los Angeles. The distinctive look of her images means she's sought out by a constant stream of clients for jobs that take her around the world. In the summer of 2006, *Digital Photo Pro* spent a day with Greenberg on the set of an all-day shoot in Hollywood. Seeing someone like Greenberg at work is a rare privilege—you get to watch a pro in action, dealing with models, clients, technicians and assistants in an organized ballet of controlled chaos. The images on these pages are from a shoot for LensCrafters, and Greenberg's signature style is on display.

forms a critical focus review of each frame. From the camera a few feet away, Greenberg glances at the monitor every so often to get a sense of how the images look on the large monitor compared to the small viewfinder of the RZ.

Considering the scope of this shoot,

there's a considerable amount of computing power plugged into the walls. The redundancy of the two G5s naturally raises the question of how often one fails during a shoot. In a moment of downtime between models, the head digital technician from Industrial Color tells me that redundancy is important, but he's quick to add that he has never had a problem with a system on a set before. As if on cue, one of the G5s completely locks up about two minutes later. Nonplussed, the Industrial Color team changes out the bad unit for the backup and the shoot goes on—not a single lost frame.

It would be nice to think Industrial Color staged the crash just to impress me with how fast they could get the backup system in place, but that wasn't the case, of course. The simple fact is that digital gear can fail. For Greenberg, having Industrial Color's service on the set

makes her feel secure knowing that when a problem comes up, it will be little more than a minor irritant.

Keeping the energy level up on the set is key for this shoot. As one of the models works in front of the camera, the looks aren't working for Greenberg. Garments are adjusted, hair is tweaked, but it's just not coming together. Greenberg doesn't stop shooting. She keeps the action going and works through to find the shot. During situations like these, maintaining the momentum on the set is a challenge, and rather than letting the model become frustrated or disheartened, Greenberg continually tries new things until she gets what she wants. The energy on the set never diminishes.

By working with the same group of assistants over time, Greenberg's lighting is set up and ready to go when she walks into the studio. Still, she takes the

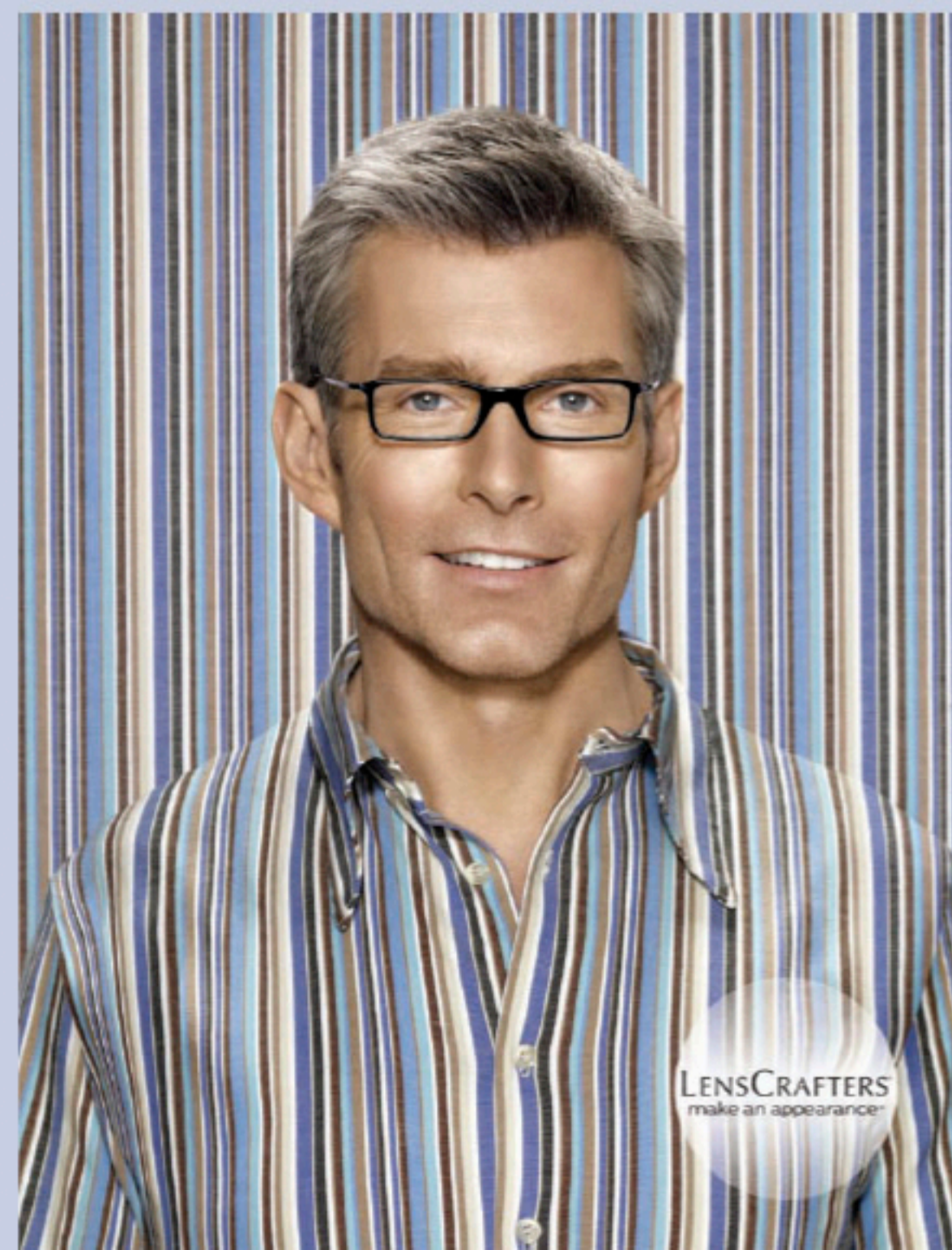
time to change a few settings and she meticulously ensures that everything is perfect. Of course, during the course of the day with some 10 models of different shapes, sizes, colors and wardrobes, the process of lighting is constantly adjusted. The only time for complacency is when the job is done.

Greenberg's signature look is a product of lighting technique and digital post-production—and it's what grabs the attention of art directors and landed her this job when it came up. On the set, the kit for this shoot consists of four Profoto strobe packs with their respective heads as well as a range of modifiers.

As this is a completely digital shoot with a big monitor out in the open, a team from the client is not only observing the project, but also scrutinizing every shot as it pops up on the Cinema display. This can make for a nerve-racking day as comments filter into the photographer's ear, but Greenberg handles it easily. She's alternately able to tune out conversation around her and focus on shooting as well as chat with some of the assembled executives from time to time. The client is paying for Greenberg to be the photographer. While everyone can turn into an art director on the set, she's clearly the one calling the shots.

It's late in the afternoon when the last model returns to the dressing room and the assistants begin to break down the equipment in what looks like photography's version of a race car pit stop. It's been a long day, and by just about any standards, everything went off smoothly. Sure, there were minor hitches, but that's expected on any shoot. One thing that distinguishes the best professionals is their ability to handle and diffuse a problem. This wasn't a huge-budget shoot, but Greenberg put the resources in place so that small problems would remain small problems. It's just another day at the office for a Hollywood pro.

DPP



To see more of Jill Greenberg's photography, visit [www.manipulator.com](http://www.manipulator.com).