

Monday, October 12. 2009

2009.05.05: Avenue Magazine Edmonton's Style Q&A with Sam Abouhassan

This day's shoot for Avenue magazine was my first shoot for an editorial publication. I met with Rob Machida and our subject, the renowned tailor Sam Abouhassan before shooting to look at his store and to discuss ideas for the shoot. Rob knew that we needed a photo for a double page spread and we were also shooting with the intent to generate a few options for the cover. Admittedly, nothing went as I had expected (including the issue for which we thought we'd be shooting) but after seeing the published piece I was pleased with the finished product and how Rob put the design of the pages together. Rob was there to do art direction and Nikolas Seyhatheb imaged Sam by helping to piece together some of his outfits after Sam had picked out the major items. Nikolas also handled hair and makeup allowing me to deliver the photos unedited save for a minor eye tweak and the removal of an electrical socket in one photo. Sean Traynor, Corey Thompson, and for a short time, Lillian Patz, were on set to help out with the photography end of shooting.

I brought along my Rollei 6008AF w/ Phase One back and Schneider Xenotar and also the 75/4.5 Calumet Caltar-N II and the 210/5.6 Schneider Symmar-S but all photos selected for publication were shot with the Nikon D3 and either the 24-70/2.8 AF-S Nikkor or the 135/2 Defocus Controll Nikkor. Shots with the 135 were done at ISO 1600 or above and still looked really clean.

Our last shot this day. Sam's tailoring room in the back of his main floor Commerce Place retail front had a lot of interesting artefacts including this wall of thread spools. Lighting was mixed with a longer shutter speed to allow some ambient fluorescent lighting to "contaminate" the purer daylight-balanced light two Bowens Esprit Gemini 500's. One used with the Chimera Pancake to fill in shadows and another with the Calumet Illuma Medium to key light and contour Sam and to help separate him from the wall.

Part of the first look that we did this day. I used my Bowens Explorer to drive two Quad X heads. One was used with a Chimera small strip and 40degree Lighttools Soft Egg Crate for separation light and the other with a Calumet Illuma Medium for key. Filled with a white reflector. I considered swapping the Illuma Medium for a Large but thought that too much light would spill into the background area. I wish we had more room to back up and light with but we were lighting from the entrance of the store and Sam and the mannequins were already as far from the back wall as we could get them. A photo from this set was chosen as the cover of the July/August issue of Avenue Edmonton.

Another simply lit shot with a single Bowens Esprit Gemini driving a Calumet Illuma Medium soft box with a Lighttools 40degree Soft Egg Crate to prevent spillage.

I was concerned that we didn't give Rob and Avenue a solid cover option so I discussed with Sam the possibility of a reshoot at a different location. Sam agreed and felt it was important that I had created a cover option so we booked some time to shoot at his home after business hours. We experimented with some of the locations in his gorgeous home on Saskatchewan Drive but finally settled on shooting in his mud room because I liked the light gradient cast against the wall leading to his basement. Light was enhanced with a Bowens Esprit Gemini monolight with a Calumet Illuma Medium and 40degree Soft Egg Crate to help spread the light around a wall facing our subject. The exposure time was pretty long even at ISO 1600 and F/2 so this shot was shot with camera mounted on the tripod.

Immediately after the first day of shooting I vented to Corey over supper with some of my frustrations from the first day of shooting. There were some judgement calls that I later realized that I should have made but failed to. I should have insisted on a different location and I should have recognized that the subject would be more comfortable shooting in a different location. I am glad that we were able to reshoot and will know better for next time. Shooting in Sam's home was so easy. The subject was fully relaxed and we weren't distracted by the high volume of pedestrian traffic crossing outside his store. Surprisingly a photo from the first day of shooting made it to the cover. To be completely honest I was a bit disappointed by the selection at first but after seeing the finished layout for the cover I was very impressed with what Rob managed to pull off. This issue would be Rob's last with Avenue. Shortly after completing this issue of the magazine Rob relocated to Vancouver with his fiance. A huge thank you to Curtis Comeau for introducing me to Avenue. At time of blog posting, Curtis has referred me to two Avenue art directors. Curiously, as a photographer competing for the same market share, Curtis has done a better job promoting me than I have done for myself and I will always be grateful for that. =)

Posted by Klyment Tan in Shoots at 20:01