

On Location, It's a Take!

Colleen M Sauber

Lighting was set, reflecting screen in place, camera on its tripod, music playing. Alec Tremaine Photography was on site at the 2017 Council of Science Editors (CSE) conference in San Diego and ready to roll with attendee portraits. After a successful run at the Denver conference last year, Alec Tremaine, owner of the 7-year-old company, was a known entity to many attendees. That year, Alec was the star of many conversations, including chats at award luncheon tables. His demeanor, style, and ability to make his subject feel comfortable were much appreciated.

Alec aims to provide for his clients "something that truly depicts them. We wanted to leave them with more of an experience, not just a photo—that it's enjoyable." Music is always part of his photo shoot. "I will have them choose their music if they're more nervous. If they control their music, they have something special for them" personally. Left to Alec, the music is an upbeat selection because on site, "you need a little beat in the background."

Alec's company specializes in on-location photography, and the 2016 CSE conference was "the first time we took our approach to a conference experience," Alec says. CSE's Tim Bennett had seen Alec Tremaine Photography online at headshotcrew.com and contacted Alec through Head Shot, of New York, Alec explains. "Tim asked whether we'd be interested to take the job."

To a location, Alec and his coworker, Sean Carroll, bring their own equipment, fitting it in three large bags. "We can do it in about two bags, but we like to come prepared. I like to have extra tools. Everyone's face is different; everyone's complexion is different. White skin will reflect, black skin absorbs." In this aspect, Alec can craft the shades to catch the person in best light.

He has always enjoyed portrait photography. A while ago, a friend acknowledged his skill saying, "I think you're a head-shot photographer." The comment is definitely accurate; for Alec, "shooting head shots is my biggest passion." He adds, "My favorite part of my job is to have the ability to get someone to trust you. Some people take more time, some don't . . . Even the overly extroverted and confident still want to look their best and find that position. Sometimes they see themselves differently, and I want to portray them as they are." If they wear glasses more than



Photo sample from Alec Tremaine Photography.

60% of the time, Alec recommends they wear glasses for the shoot, to appear the way they usually look.

At a conference, a photo shoot that is given 2 hours in the company studio is allowed just 5 minutes on location. Working fast and efficiently is the name of the game.

Observers of Alec at work in Denver in 2016 and in San Diego in 2017 can attest to his skill in putting people at ease. He may give a sincere compliment about a person's eyes. He pays attention to the hair, sometime gently fixing an unruly stray and adding a spritz or two of hair spray. He shoots a series of poses, smiles, and lightings. "When you see someone in their shells, [you know] there is something that makes them excited," Alec says, and he strives to bring that something out and capture it in the head shot. In his effort to put subjects at ease, he might shoot while they're still laughing. With a smile, he says, "I get to see the lover in you, the serial killer in you, the mother in you, the father in you."

Afterward, Alec and his clients look at their photos. If they hesitate when choosing which is the best shot, Alec will help filter down the options. They might narrow their choice to two shots. Then, when Alec sends his work for downloading after the conference, they see both picks for the final selection.

One photo subject was John Sack, founding director of HighWire Press, Inc. "I get asked every other month, 'Do you have a head shot?' I have head shots, but they're old, from before I had gray hair." As a CSE conference speaker, John needed a head shot a week earlier. A coworker took eight cell-phone photos, and John chose the one that

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looked best, placing it on a flyer about his presentation. Of the shoot in San Diego, he says, "I thought, 'This is a great idea!' It's inexpensive; it's a nice service." He adds, "Alec did a credible job—he knew how to do it. He didn't ask me to pose; he posed me. He had it worked out." In 5 minutes, John had a photo he liked—complete with a smile *and* his gray hair.

Unlike many companies, Alec Tremaine Photography doesn't stamp its photos. "In theory, I could," Alec says.

"But it's your face; it's not mine. There's no reason for me to stamp, and I feel like it's distracting sometimes."

Alec seems a natural to photo shoots, which have taken him across the country and to as exotic a location as Cape Town, South Africa. Through all his experiences, he loves what he does. "From an emotional standpoint, the most beautiful thing in the world is when one is themselves. The best thing about my job is to let people be their true selves—true to self and true to nature—and it's all captured behind the glass."