



Marc Gouguenheim

Shooting with the Safari in the wild west

This is a shoot I did in the South of France on 16th October, on a fairly cold but sunny day with model Coralie Sedira, better known in my area as "Erytheia". Make-up artist for this session was young but talented Clélia Guilbot-Billon.



I shot in both full-resolution 21MP raw and small jpegs. The images shown in this article are the jpegs - straight out of the camera with no retouching, just scaled down to suit the webpage.

There are many things to think about and organise on an outdoor shoot.

Clothing for that day consisted in 2 furs, an off-white one with various brown-colored spots, and a black one, both of which had, in order to stand out well, to be matched with white pants.

For this particular session, we wanted a red haired **model** because blonde or dark haired models wouldn't look equally good with both the white and the black furs. And so the choice of the model was obvious: there aren't many red-haired models around here, and she's the only one I know who could remain elegant while taking acrobatic poses.



The **Concept** was to show the fur in a natural environment, a place where animals live. Preferably a place that would remind people of American landscapes, so the location I decided on was a place about 20km from my base in Marseille, with rocks as red as the Grand Canyon, and almost as red as the model's hair!

Props : A sub-machine gun, to make the whole thing a bit wilder with the dark fur...
As for **the light**, sunlight was bright but not quite good enough, and you'll soon see why...

Light is always last on my list, because although it is at least as important as anything else, it is the easiest to control – or at least it is easy if we have the right equipment. But if we do not have the right equipment, then we just have to hope that the available light will be the right quality, the right intensity and will come from the right direction. Obviously, the chance of all these things actually happening is so poor that we cannot risk a shoot without the proper equipment.



These first two sets of two pictures shows you the same shot with both natural light and then with the lighting that I created.

In each set, the shot on the left is natural light, with very harsh shadows and a background that is just too light (first set) or the model's side just too dark (second set), depending on the aperture selected. The shot on the right still has the natural light and the shadows created by it of course, but my key light, a beauty dish to the left, is powerful enough to overwhelm the sunlight, and to weaken the natural shadows.

The 600 joules added by the beauty dish and my ring flash – both plugged into the same Lencarta's Safari powerpack - also allowed me to close my aperture by two to three f-stop, and so the background could appear darker, while still keeping the model in bright light. Now, if you compare both pictures, would you possibly hesitate to tell me which one is better...? I guess not. And this is why key and fill-light equipment is simply essential on location, whenever you want controlled lighting. Asking the model to turn to the sun's direction would not be possible in this case, because I'd then need to stand more to my right so as to still face the model, and both the tree on the left and the background would then offer a far poorer composition.



The only real choices, when we are out in the wilds and have no mains electricity, are hotshoe flashes used off camera, mains powered studio lights operated from a battery, or a professional portable power solution such as the Lencarta Safari.

Hotshoe flashes don't have anywhere near enough power on their own, because most of them only have 1/10th the power of the Safari, so to get the same power I would need to use 10 of them together, which would cost me over £3600, plus a lot of batteries – and really, who wants to shoot with 10 flash-guns when you can't even get the accessories you'd need for the right lighting quality?

Mains powered lights operated from a battery are good in theory, but they can only power a few flashes, and I usually take hundreds of shots, so... I love my Safari !

The first job is to choose the background I want to use, and having lighting means that I don't have to worry too much about the position of the sun to light the model, as long as the sunlight is at the right angle for the background. I just set up lighting, so that I can light the model exactly the way I want. All the shots on this photo session were set up like this : no hesitation, no waste of our time.

In this picture, you can see me with my camera and ringflash, and the beauty dish is much closer – about 3 meters away from the model -, which means that it produces much more light than the ringflash.

The ring flash was only used for fill. You can see my Safari powerpack next to the honeycomb for the beauty dish. This equipment gets taken everywhere and sometimes gets used in mud or sand. I should clean it someday and make it look nice again, but... it still serves me fine !

All the shots that show me in them were taken by my assistant, who was not connected to the lighting so these shots are just with daylight.

Here (4) is the same shot, taken by me with the lighting:

Of course, the makeup is done before the shoot starts but my makeup artist is expert in changing or repairing the makeup during the shoot and my model is expert at holding the most impossible poses, even when the make-up artist is retouching her!

Here are three more shots, that were part of our final selection for the light fur:

The first one was meant to offer a “cute” expression and pose.



The shot below offers a more “dynamic” alternative – and it is shown here, just as it was taken, with no retouching whatsoever.



It is technically interesting to note, that using strobes on that day also allowed me to get a sharp picture of the model jumping. The beauty dish was aimed a bit higher for this one, so that the top half of the model's body would get most of the flash light. Then shutter speed was 1/125s with an aperture of f/22, so as to get just the foot blurry, while retaining sharpness on the model's top half.

Why would the foot be blurry, whereas the rest is sharp, you may ask? Well, simply for the two following reasons : A) the foot is moving faster than the rest of the body. B) A shutter-speed of 1/125s would not be fast enough to freeze the action, whereas the Lencarta flash head used here freezes the entire action, thanks to its very short flash duration. This particular action could have been frozen with available light alone and a shutter-speed of at least 1/1000s, but then it would have been difficult to get the foot blurry while retaining sharpness on the rest of the model. Using Lencarta's Safari kit, on the other hand, allowed us to freeze the top half of the model thanks to the flash, while using a slower shutter-speed that would let the foot (lit by sunlight mostly) be blurry.



This is another option for a more elegant pose – this time showing off the fur perfectly.

And now... the black leather jacket with brown fur...

I took this shot below, so the make-up artist would be lit, besides the sunlight, by the ring flash, and the model by the beauty dish. My make-up artist is standing exactly where I was when taking the actual pictures shown below.



The beauty dish was aimed a bit high again, so as not to affect the white pants and the ground too much You can get a good idea of the power from the light that is catching the tree.



This is a little close-up I couldn't resist, but it helps you see exactly where the beauty dish was aimed.

And finally, here are the few shots that were selected for the black clothing:
In this picture the model shows off her jacket:



Photo Marc Gouguenheim



Photo Marc Gouguenheim

And now, above, the model shows off her tattoo!

And now she shows off her most terrible weapon: a sub machine gun !

Just get your Lencarta Safari kit as soon as you can, and start shooting – but remember: with your camera, not with a sub machine-gun!

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Marseille