

dan
morris
photography & video
2012
Year in Review

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Fusebox and Switches. Uttaradit, Thailand

The Year in Review



The last 18 months have been fascinating, taking me on adventures throughout Asia and the United States. I've been able to work with a diverse group of clients, each with very different needs and it's been an incredible experience applying my skill set to so many different projects.

Feetures!

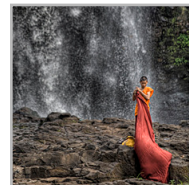
At the end of 2011, I had the fortune of working with Feetures! Feetures! manufactures some of the most comfortable sport socks on the market. If you've never tried a pair, I highly recommend it. Running in them is sheer pleasure!

I recommended Salt Lake City as the shoot location due to its reliable weather and numerous, varied locations within a short drive of Salt Lake City. Their desire was to shoot as many locations as possible in 2.5 days. Our location team was able to arrange for 5 different locations to be shot in 5 half-day segments. We ended up selecting 12 different models, generally using 2 per shoot segment. The logistics involved in arranging for this many models in such a tight time frame were complex, but we managed to pull it off without a hitch.

I know from experience that October in Salt Lake City creates amazing conditions to capture adventure. We absolutely nailed the fall colors in the mountains surrounding Salt Lake.







Thanksgiving Point

Thanksgiving Point is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the community through a variety of venues, including gardens (above photo), farms and some great museums. This Summer, I was contracted by TP to photograph their facilities, specifically, their expansive gardens and Museum of Ancient Life, which happens to offer the world's largest display of mounted dinosaurs.

Dinosaurs have always held a special place in my heart. As a child, I marveled at the thought of massive predators roaming a foreign landscape more than 100 million years ago. While shooting, I couldn't stop from thinking about what an incredible resource this museum is for wide-eyed kids marveling at dinosaurs like me.

Especially challenging was photographing the Tyrannosaurus Rex. This required me to get inside a wobbly "elevator" to bring me to eye-level with the T-Rex. As there was no room in the shaky elevator for a tripod, I was forced to rely on fast lenses, a steady hand and ISO 3200 (thank you Adobe Lightroom noise reduction!).

Powerful

Automation
&
Integration



LANDesk

Video now represents approximately 50% of my work. I recently produced a series of marketing videos for the IT software giant LANDesk.

The LANDesk Chalk Talks are a series of educational videos designed to help potential LANDesk customers understand and appreciate the advantages of LANDesk solutions. Several IT experts, including one from England were flown in to do the presentations.

Our setup involved three CFL lit softboxes. We placed the speaker against a white background, knowing that we would be adding a fair bit of text animations in the negative space to the left of the speaker. Using a 5D MKII shot through a teleprompter, we were able to make pretty good time on these shoots and reduce our post production work.

As with all video, the real time spent comes in the post-production. Apple's updated Motion 5 provided the tools we needed to bring the text animations to life. A hot pixel which appeared on



the 5D sensor on the last shoot was problematic. But it was easily fixed in After Effects using the built-in Wire Frame Remover tool. This is a handy fix, but significantly added to the rendering times for the final videos. It is worth noting that a simple re-install of the 5D firmware re-mapped the pixels, removing the offending hot pixel.



was a great team that worked hard to overcome many of the difficulties photographers encounter when photographing inanimate objects.

Gary was able to quickly source a number of materials and backdrops to give several of the product shots an earthen, “woody” feeling. Michael was always ready with the right tools to cut foam core, build light tents and do the grunt work of positioning strobes. Having Wesley on hand as on-site art director was invaluable.

We worked as a great team. The results of a long day in studio are some outstanding images. I must also note here the job my retoucher Michael Cornellison did on the kitchenware shot. As always, he delivers great results on time.

I look forward to working with this crew again in the coming year!

Overstock.com

One of the greatest challenges in any business is completing a last minute project on a tight deadline. Overstock.com needed a cover shot for their holiday catalog as well as several “golden highlight” shots for the interior of the catalog.

We were able to throw together a team to shoot 16 products (a daunting one-day task) in just a few days. The products were shot in studio with a team that included my assistant, Michael Kunde, our product stylist, Gary Vlastic, and the talented graphic designer Wesley Thomas. This





Current Projects



Loong Nan

Loong Nan (Uncle Nan) is a documentary short film I began work on early in 2012. Nan is a hardworking “red truck” driver in Chiang Mai, Thailand’s second-largest city. In Chiang Mai, red trucks, or “rot-daeng” assume the double-function of bus and taxi. Loong Nan began working for a local rock climbing company in Chiang Mai around 8 years ago. He ferried the climbing company’s customers out to the “crag” every day. Not content to just sit around during the day waiting to drive the customers back, he embarked on a self-styled near-obsessive construction project that continues today and has resulted in one of the nicest rock climbing areas in the world.

The climbing area is called Crazy Horse Butress. Climbers come from around the globe to climb there in the beautiful Northern Thai countryside. Very few of them realize the luxurious bamboo lounges, immaculately groomed trails or functioning dirt roads are the result of his incessant hard work. He is known to most climbers who visit the area as the rot daeng driver who jabbars quickly at them in heavy Northern Thai (he doesn’t speak a word of English)

An inspiration to all, he is motivated to do much more than his job description requires. This short portrait aims to tell his unique and fascinating story.

I am close to finishing production and hope to begin post-production early in 2013. A Kickstarter project ([my profile link here](#)) for Loong Nan will be launched soon to raise funds for post-production. Please check my [website](#), [Facebook](#) page or [Twitter](#) feed for updates if you would like to



contribute.

Ting

Ting is a deaf sex-worker in the red-light district in Chiang Mai, Thailand. She lives alone and takes care of herself. She communicates with her Thai coworkers and foreign customers with a combination of sign-language, charades and a smartphone on which she spells words in Thai and English.

This project is currently in pre-production. It has been a fascinating experience for me as I try



to communicate with her. To say I speak reasonable Thai and write and read it at an elementary school level would be generous. We communicate by writing in Thai on a piece of paper, by typing on smart phones or by using Google Translate (about 50% accurate). My favorite example of Google Translate's accuracy happened recently. "We are eating at the restaurant Palad Tawanron at 20:30. The reservation is under Chiang Mai Rock" was the proper translation of the Thai original. Google Translate's result? "This is not news. Slopes at 20:30 hours in the tropical

rock my world." Needless to say, I'm currently in the process of securing a sign-language interpreter to assist with the documentary.

This project will also be launched on Kickstarter in the next few weeks. Again, please keep an eye out on my [website](#), [Facebook](#) page or [Twitter](#) feed for updates if you would like to contribute.





Rugrats

I hadn't thought I would be interested in child portraits as my focus and interest has always been adventure, product and corporate photography and video.

This year, however I was pleasantly surprised when both my brother and close friends both had babies. I've had the opportunity to watch both my niece and friends' baby grow and begin to experience life. Watching them daily has been an exciting new endeavor and much like they are exploring the world I have found myself exploring this medium.

I had the opportunity to shoot images of baby Coco's first time eating sour yogurt and it was one of the most rewarding (and hilarious) shoots I have had this year.

Similarly, spending time with my niece has been incredible. Capturing the beginnings of her life on video has been a pleasure. Stay tuned for the finished video "Kamine" to be posted in the next few weeks.



Reviews: Essential Tools



Xero.com

Like many photographers I used to dread my monthly accounting chores. I cringed at the thought of piling up my receipts and manually entering them into Quickbooks Pro. But it didn't end there. I then had to download transactions from my bank, import them and then go through the laborious process of reconciling my accounts. Those of you who have used Quickbooks Pro or other desktop based accounting software are likely familiar with its far from user-friendly interface and usability.

At the beginning of this year, I encountered Xero.com, a product that seems to be taking the small business accounting world by storm. Not only is this online accounting software beautiful to look at, but it is easy to use as well. All bank feeds are automatically pulled into my [Xero.com](https://www.xero.com) account, giving me a real-time view of my cash flow. Items pop up for reconciliation daily rather than monthly. This makes reconciliation a pleasant task as you may only have to reconcile one or two items per day, rather than an entire statement's worth at the end of each month. Rules can be created, enabling Xero.com to automatically file your recurring transactions for you.

Xero.com allows you to grant differing levels of access to your staff, your accountant, etc. It allows for two tracking classes, making it easy to track different areas of your business. And it's API friendly approach links with a number of other online services including Freshbooks.

The screenshot displays the Xero.com dashboard for 'Hornblower Limited'. It features a navigation bar at the top with options like 'Dashboard', 'Accounts', 'Reports', 'Admin', 'Contacts', 'Settings', and 'My Bank'. The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Getting started:** A green banner with instructions for new users.
- Bank Accounts & credit cards:** A section with three sub-sections: 'USD PayPal Sales', 'UK Visa', and 'Hideway Savings'. Each has a 'Manage Account' link and a small line chart showing transaction history.
- Account Watchlist:** A table listing accounts with columns for 'Account', 'Due ID', and 'YTD'. It includes 'Statement (USD)', 'Printing & Stationery (USD)', and 'Sales (USD)'.
- Money coming in:** A section with a 'Money Coming In' chart and a table for 'Add Receivable Invoice'.
- Money going out:** A section with a 'Money Going Out' chart and a table for 'Add Payable Invoice'.
- Expense claims:** A section with a 'Expense Claims' chart and a table for 'Add Receipt'.

When I made the switch at the beginning of the year, I saw an opportunity to completely revamp my accounting system. Brandon Smith and his staff at [Insight Business Advising](https://www.insightbusinessadvising.com) helped me with this. They simplified my account structure and created useful tracking classes so that I am better able to see where my income and expenses are coming from. I highly recommend getting some professional advice if you are planning to make the switch from Quickbooks Pro (which I, of course, highly recommend).

It is rare that I take so much pleasure in leaving a software product behind. But I trust I will never open Quickbooks Pro again! Give Xero.com a shot and spend more time shooting and less time accounting!



Thinktank Photo Speed Racer V2.0 Hip Pack

I've been running a Speed Racer V2.0 through the paces while working on a project in Northern Thailand for the past 12 months. I've come away impressed. The Speed Racer V2.0 is the largest in Thinktank's Speed Convertible hip-pack series. It has a comfortable, breathable belt and a detachable, padded shoulder-strap. The belt has attachment points for Thinktanks' add-on components. The shoulder strap is necessary when the bag is fully loaded with gear. If you prefer to use the bag as a shoulder bag, the belt straps stash into zippered pockets.

This is the first non-Loweepro bag I've used that has a similar build quality. The zippers are beefy. The stitching is heavy-duty and appears bartacked in most places. I tend to hang my bags while shooting climbing. I don't want the bag to break as: A) It might fall on someone and kill them and / or B) It will destroy my gear! That is not an issue with this bag. This bag meets all of my requirements and more...

The Speed Racer has become my go to bag for climbing shoots. It has a secure handle at the top that offers an easy way to hang the bag from the cliff, a rope or a harness. The fully loaded bag tends to hang perfectly, almost like a working table or bucket for my gear. A zippered front pocket contains the rain fly (would be nice if this were accessed from underneath like Loweepro bags) and has room for numerous accessories. There are elastic pockets on either side with drawstrings for extra security. I'm able to fit 10 AA batteries and two Pocket Wizard II's in just one side pocket.



Image courtesy Thinktank

The interior is fully customizable with standard, velcro-secured, padded section-dividers. When fully loaded, I'm able to fit a DSLR with battery grip, a 70-200 f2.8L, 50 1.4, 16-35 2.8, speedlite, a light meter, rocket blower, batteries and two Pocket Wizards without things getting too crazy (note: a 70-200 f2.8L won't fit if attached to the camera).

Conclusion

I'm definitely a fan of this bag and will look at more Thinktank products. My only gripe is that the bag does not come with a Fastex quick lock system for the main compartment. I like to work with my bag open, but secured by two fastex buckles. This makes it easy to open the bag up quickly. The Speed Racer doesn't have buckles, rather it has a zipper down the middle of the main compartment. This is useful, but I find it difficult to reach everything inside through this small opening. That said, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend this bag!



Vanguard Alta Pro 283CB 100 Tripod

My tripods have seen their share of abuse over the years, whether checked in airplane cargo holds or steadying my camera, chest deep in the ocean. My oldest Manfrotto tripod is almost like a travel valise, tagged with customs and security stickers from 17 years of travel around the globe. As much as I regret having to retire said travel companion, it seems I have found its replacement in the Vanguard Alta Pro 283 CB 100.

The Alta Pro 283 CB 100 is a package that includes the Alta Pro 283 CT carbon fiber legs and the SBH-100 fluid-ball head. The legs easily extend from quarter-twist leg locks. My Manfrotto tripods all have lever releases on the legs. That said, I adapted to the twist-locks quickly. A built-in level makes positioning the legs easy in rugged terrain. Depressing thumb pads on each of the legs enables them to be easily moved from 25 degrees all the way to 80 degree angles. The included non-slip rubber feet are easy on hardwood floors. If you need a little more bite, simply screw in the rubber feet a few turns and metal spikes emerge – nice.

The central column can be moved from a 0 degree angle to 180 degrees, allowing for ground level photography (in case you were planning on photographing ants...). My Manfrotto legs also do this. This is where I ran into my only snag. The Manfrotto center column is designed so that it can't be removed while rotating it on its long axis. While taking my Altapro for a test drive, I rotated the center column with a 5D MK II and L lens attached. As I raised the column, I failed to notice



+ Stone Bag
+ Carrying Bag

Image courtesy Vanguard USA

the marking “stop here” (it was on the opposite side of the column). I suddenly found myself unexpectedly holding tripod legs in one hand and a center column with \$5000 of camera gear attached in the other. Now that I am aware of this, it won't happen again. That said, it would have been nice if it were marked better, or some documentation about this included in the package.

The SBH 100 is an elegantly finished quick-release ball head. It utilizes a small mounting plate (ships with two – a nice feature) that snap into place and are then tightened with a locking knob. While a quick-release lever may be faster, I found this system to feel more solid. To release the camera, simply loosened the knob and then press the release button. The position of the head is indicated by the degree marks on its base allowing for precise control when rotating horizon-



QS-39 1/4-20UNC



VANGUARD®
SBH-100

180 225

783CT

PRESS



tally – great if you are trying panoramic and want to return to your exact starting point. There are two knobs on either side of the head. The smaller knob controls the lateral rotation while the larger knob enables the ball's fluid motion. Both knobs are easy to tighten and release – no need to lose skin cranking them down. They function almost like a fine focus, making it easy to find that sweet spot where motion in the ball head is possible, but the camera stays locked in place when the hands come off.

Conclusions:

The Altapro 283 CB 100 is an outstanding all-around tripod. Its full-size legs and solid ball-head allow for demanding professional work and for heavy pro lenses. Its light weight makes it a great travel companion (although a bit large). The build quality and functionality is outstanding. The three levels are a welcome addition that will rid you of your horizon problems – especially when the camera is close to the ground. The center column rotation could use some improvement – specifically to prevent it from popping out accidentally. That said, being aware of this problem will likely prevent this from happening. I would not hesitate to recommend this tripod! I look forward to covering it with airport security stickers from new adventures!

Things I Love:

- High quality machining.
- VERY lightweight – as light as smaller, travel tripods.
- Levels on both legs and head make for easy horizon adjustments.
- Locking knobs are smooth and make fine tuning position a snap.
- 360 degree markings allow for easy, accurate head positioning and panoramic.

Things to Improve:

- Does not come with a warning that the center column can easily pop out when rotating along its axis. WARNING! Detach camera before manipulating the column axis!
- View more information about the product on Vanguard's website [here](#).



Portfolio









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