



# SHOOTING TO WIN

Shooting a photographic collection is a dream that many stylists and colour technicians have, whether it be to enter awards, form part of a marketing campaign – or to capture a creative vision. Communication is absolutely essential to the success of any shoot – and has to start at the very beginning of the process to ensure the team involved are clear about the expected outcome.

## Creating a moodboard

Award-winning photographer and hairdresser from Hooker & Young, Michael Young says: “Hairdressers are hugely creative individuals and need

to focus on the hair as well as the concept for the shoot. You need to ensure the team have clarity in what you are creating.

Mood boards are critical from the start of the process, and I ask any stylist I am shooting for to present their mood board to me, talking through the feeling they want to create. I will then digest this and present back how I see the shoot to ensure we are on the right path, and if questions are not forthcoming, that’s a red flag. It is essential to strike a great relationship with your photographer, and as I am on both sides of the camera, I know that some hairdresser/photographer relationships will not work, and it is best to part at this stage as there has to be synergy for success. The process

has to feel natural with real honesty and trust, and if you get this, everyone will enjoy the shoot from start to finish and you get the desired result.

“Mood boards are also a pre-requisite from the make-up artist and stylist as every element has to work together; pre-shoot meetings are essential and open conversation critical. It is too late to leave these conversations to the day of the shoot, creating potentially expensive mistakes – a shoot is the telling of a story, and everyone who has an input has to share the same vision. As a hairdresser you need great model(s), a make-up artist and a confident clothes stylist. Less experienced hairdressers may ask for all black, and the stylist has to be prepared to challenge this – the brief is too wide and will inevitably lead to confusion and disappointment.”

## How to spend your budget

Budget is a key factor in model choice and Michael has firm views on how to spend it, “If you have budget for four models or more then great, but if not, get one or two good ones and use them repeatedly. This does not mean using wigs. Research and practise your looks time and again so that you can execute numerous looks on one model – having one great experienced model who has chameleon-like ability in front of the camera, is the best use of the budget. We practise repeatedly for Hooker and Young shoots and I expect stylists I am shooting for to do the same – you cannot waste time on shoot day practising hair. The stylist needs to perfect the looks and ensure the hair work can be completed in the time constraints.”

Creating the right ambience is also important and needed to keep the energy high. “Having the right soundtrack on the day helps the whole team feel the vibe we are wanting to create in the images – asking a model to be edgy and confident works with a Blondie track, but Celine Dion is not your playlist. Equally if you want vulnerability and serenity with wind blowing through the hair, that feeling will be helped by the right music,” says Michael.

## Avoid expensive mistakes

Don’t be afraid to admit that it hasn’t always gone right, Michael explains, “I have been that hairdresser on his own shoot who trusted people to get my vision and didn’t ask for anything prior to the day. I hated the clothes, the make-up wasn’t what I wanted which meant the hair that I had planned didn’t work – the images were not cohesive and although the individual elements were fine – it was an expensive mistake to make, and one you do not make twice. We are living in a time where you can share moodboards on Zoom and communicate freely with your key people – you can chat and brainstorm. Communication and research are critical to getting a great result and the tools we have now make this part easier. Research is also easier with Pinterest and Instagram both great platforms for inspiration and giving cohesion between the elements.”

For those looking to undertake their first shoot, Michael’s advice is not to be over ambitious, but this doesn’t mean that the effort is any less, as you need to put maximum effort in to ensure



By failing to prepare, you prepare to fail – an adage that can be applied to many situations, and never is it truer than when planning a photographic shoot. *HJ* talks to two photographers who have grown up in the hairdressing industry

beautiful execution. “It is better to do something simple and perfectly than be over ambitious and not 100 percent happy with the result.”

#### Choosing the right team

“Who you have in the room is crucial to the success of any shoot – everyone has to connect, share and understand the same vision. There has to be trust and a desire for the outcome to be the best it can be. As for me, the project is a shared passion and if my name is on it, I’m absolutely vested in it,” says Alex Barron-Hough. “This is not just a set of pictures – it is a relationship and the magic happens when you work with a team you want to hang out with.”

Alex’s love and respect for hairdressing came from working alongside Anthony Mascolo, and this is where his photographic skills grew organically, and the importance of teamwork was so apparent. “Everyone involved in a shoot has a collective responsibility to ensure the best outcome – it is not just down to the hairdresser. If you don’t have the passion and commitment then you are not in the right room, and this becomes evident very early in planning meetings – and that is where any issues need to be addressed.”

#### Preparation is key

“The shoot is not just a day – it is often three to four months of planning and you can’t rush this organic process. I still have sleepless nights prior, where I am thinking of every eventuality, as the success of the shoot is as important to me as it is to the client that has booked it. Every element has to tell the same story – from the music on the playlist,

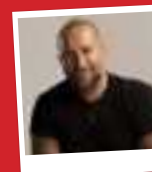
through to the styling and make-up to ensure the images are complete. Honesty is key and I believe you should trust your gut – it will tell you right from wrong. Be confident and prepared to say what you think. It is always better to do less well, than more and not be satisfied with the outcome.

“When shooting for awards, it is important the hairdresser builds their own identity and vision than trying to recreate what has been done before and to quote Anthony, you should ‘just do good hair’. Don’t be swayed by what you think you should do, shoot what you believe in as this will have authenticity and you will be proud of the outcome. Believe in your talent – you have to know what you and everyone in that room is expected to do, and what their skills are – and have your references for everyone to see. You’ve built a relationship with these people so get the best out of them.”

#### Give your absolute best

“Working alongside great hairdressers is an honour and all creatives have an ego and want to be wanted. When you are booked for a shoot this fuels the passion as you realise you are being recognised for what you do. We are only as great as the opportunities we are given. I always walk away from a shoot and feel I have given it my absolute best.” Alex adds: “Great shoots are about the right team coming together. You can never arrive underprepared. As you develop your ideas in planning meetings, you have to practise, practise, practise to ensure perfection on the day. As Anthony once said to me: ‘You would rather die than fail,’ and this is a mantra I hold on to.”

### THE PHOTOGRAPHERS...



#### MICHAEL YOUNG

One half of the award-winning Hooker & Young salon group, Michael is a member of the British

Hairdressing Awards Hall of Fame for his own hairwork and has shot finalist and winning collections for his own team, and other salons. Growing up in hair, Michael has an understanding of hair and what makes a beautiful image where light and shade and composition are so critical. Watching and working with great photographers, he has immersed himself in photography in the same way as he has hair.

#### ALEX BARRON-HOUGH



As Anthony Mascolo’s assistant for many years, Alex learnt from one of the undisputed icons in the hairdressing industry. A three-month work experience placement in the BedHead Studio led to him becoming the assistant photographer’s assistant until Anthony gave him a camera and told him to document the event they were working on, and there has been no looking back. From hair shoots to Fashion Week, reportage and runway, Alex is in demand worldwide, but his passion for the hair industry remains.