

CLICK. CLICK. BOOM.



JEANS: HUDSON
SHIRT: BUCK MASON
DENIM SHIRT: H&M
SHOES: COLE HAAN
LEATHER BRACELET: HERMÈS

Photographer John Russo gives us a lesson on how to be a hotshot. Take notes.

WORDS BY VANESSA PASCALE · PHOTO CREDIT: JASON BUSH

If the world of entertainment were high school—and let's be serious, sometimes it feels like it is—then John Russo is that handsome, cool senior who's nice to everyone, including the freshman, even though he's hanging with the Brad Pitts and Kate Hudsons of the school. Which is literally what he's doing. He is one of the cool kids, who refreshingly doesn't have an ego that matches his status.

This tall, handsome man with those piercing light eyes could have easily made a living being in front of the camera, but John enjoyed being behind it. As a kid from Ventnor, New Jersey, John was always taking photographs of his friends and family. "I thought 'wow, maybe I could do this for a living!'" His fascination with the "world of celebrity" led him to Los Angeles in 1995, he knew this is where he needed to be if he wanted to make a name for himself. "So after I graduated from college, that's what I did. I began the arduous process of targeting publicists to photograph their clients."

Becoming the successful photographer he is today was a gradual process, he shares. His impressive portfolio is fraught with innumerable gorgeous cityscapes as well as luxe fashion and lifestyle shots, but what he is best known for is his captivating celebrity photos. This talented photographer's client list includes major powerhouses in entertainment and publishing—from Sony Pictures and 20th Century Fox to *Esquire*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Vanity Fair*. Rather than name the endless list of stars he has photographed; it'd be easier to list those he hasn't shot. Simply scroll through his

Instagram and you'll find myriad photographs, like a dapper Patrick Dempsey, sultry-looking Rhianna, and serious Leonardo DiCaprio.

How do you get your subjects to relax, so that you can get the perfect shot? "I just talk to them like they are real people. After all, they really are!" says John, who has worked with every big name in show business. I'm sure it must be hard to pick a favorite subject, but if you had to choose two, a male and a female, who would you say you enjoy working with the most? "I love working with Cindy Crawford. She's such a wonderful person, always collaborative, always gracious. As for guys, Matt Damon would be my #1. Same thing, super friendly and genuine."

John, who splits his time between Los Angeles and Montecito, California, will be in Las Vegas at the end of this month (October 27th and 28th) to teach a Master Photographer Class at the Palms Casino Resort. "I'm finally putting my master's degree to work!" he states on his Instagram. What do you think sets you apart from other photographers? "I don't take myself too seriously," he says. It's that relaxed élan that enables him to produce images where his subjects' natural energy shines through. You feel as though you've walked in on an intimate moment when looking at his photographs. John knows how to set up a shot that captures his subjects' essence and vulnerability. Like with most art, it's not always easy to pinpoint what makes you attracted to a piece. I've found myself staring



What philosophy do you live by?
 “There are no victims,
 only volunteers.”

at his work and thinking: Beautiful. It’s absolutely beautiful. Simply put, John’s work is magnetic.

Currently, John is working on his book, *100 Making a Difference* — slated for release February 2018. “*100 Making a Difference* is a collection of passionate human beings who are dedicated to improving the lives of others through their tireless charitable work. I’ve shot some really amazing people for it, like Elton John, Maria Shriver, Malala Yosafzai, and representatives from organizations such as TOMS Shoes, Green Peace, Autism Speaks, and Charity Water.” Full of beautiful black and white photographs and inspiring stories, this book is a definite must-have. He is also working on another book, a collection of his work from the last twenty years. “Hoping to have it out mid-2018, but I am holding out on its release until I shoot Madonna!”

A savvy entrepreneur, John’s brilliance and creativity transcends the world of photography. He has his own fragrance named, John Russo, and has developed over 40 colors of nail lacquer and 15 lipstick colors. “It’s a passion project of mine. I am currently working on a line of candles based on my fragrance. It’s always good to keep busy and keep creating.” An avid tennis player, you’re likely to find him on the court in his spare time. So, if you could play against anyone, who would it be? “I would play my girl Serena Williams, but only when she’s 9 months pregnant, so I could maybe ace her.” Seriously, who doesn’t John know? And I’d like a front seat to that match! **ML**

For more on John,
 visit <https://johnrussophoto.com>
 and keep up with him
 on Instagram @JohnRussoPhoto.
 For information on his
 Master Photography class in Vegas,
 visit <http://worldwidecovermodel.com>.