

Q&A with Carlo Ricci

Photographer for Arrested Developments: Steve Fonyo

Winner: 2014 Best Photograph: People & Portraiture

Vancouver Magazine, October 2013



TMS: *Were you very familiar with Steve Fonyo and his story?*

CR: No. I had no idea who he was. I'm Italian. I moved to Vancouver in 2012. I had shot for Vancouver Magazine before. They called me and were like, "We have this really cool story about Steve Fonyo." They assumed I knew who it was. I didn't, so I looked him up and I read the story [I was taking photos for] by Guy Saddy — amazing article. It helps a lot when the magazine sends me the story beforehand so I can read and get an understanding of the subject.

TMS: *After you read the story, were you excited or apprehensive about the shoot?*

CR: I was excited because it was a good story. Steve Fonyo has this aura where he doesn't really care what people think and he just goes his own way. The majority of the time you're shooting editorial, it's a doctor or a politician or whatever. How interesting can the story be? It's very rarely interesting. I was a little bit apprehensive too, but to be honest I always am before a shoot regardless of who the subject is. I'm always apprehensive about approaching the whole thing and trying to do something cool that the editor is going to like and I'll like too.

TMS: *What was the shoot like?*

CR: They (Steve and his wife, Lisa) were very lovely to work with. It wasn't hard. I had a bunch of ideas, which is something that I always do. I write notes before every shoot. I had 25 ideas for different shots and we only ended up doing I think six or seven. Obviously on the day, some shots didn't work for a bunch of reasons. The winning photo was written before we shot it. I didn't know who Steve Fonyo was, but I knew by reading the story that he didn't have a leg, obviously. So visually, the first thing that jumped to my mind is it would be hilarious if he's under the car trying to, I don't know, put the transmission back on and all you see is the two legs sticking out from the car. We thought about that before. We were pretty prepared. We were not in and out. It was more than three hours there. So every shot took its time.

TMS: *What equipment do you take on a shot like this?*

CR: I use a Canon EOS 5D Mark II. The vast majority of the time, when I go to an editorial shoot, I always have a 24 - 70mm or 24 to 105mm lens just because it's easy. There's not enough time to change lenses or set up tripods. It's easier if I have a zoom lens because I can get a bunch of different variations and angles. You never know. You go shoot editorial, you come back and you give the pictures to the art director. The art director goes, "OK, this works but do you have something wider?" So every time I shoot editorial, I try to get a variety of options rather than sticking to one fixed image.

TMS: *What made this one shot so successful?*

CR: That's the funny thing. This won an award, but I feel that technically, this is one of the poorest photos that I shot for the magazine last year. It proves another point: the technical aspects really don't matter so much. Regardless of how interesting you can make the lighting, at the end of the day, it's about what you're taking a picture of. In this case it was easy, because the subject was very interesting regardless of what I did with him. There's nothing technical about this shot. It reflects the work that was done before. Research the person you're taking a picture of. Write the ideas down, and don't go into a shoot going, "Let's just take a picture." It was the preparation behind it that made this successful; the execution is absolutely average.

Jeremy Klaszus conducted this interview for TMS.