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THE STOCK ISSUE

NEW RECRUITS TO STOCK

At a time when it is increasingly difficult for photographers to land stock agency representation, we asked some stock agencies to tell us about a few of the photographers they have signed in the last year and a half, and what made these new recruits stand out.

It's not easy to get stock photo agency representation. With their collections overflowing and their prices falling, stock agencies are admitting far fewer contributors than they once did. So what does it take to get into a stock agency these days? To find out, we asked several agencies who they have admitted in the past year, and why. It turns out that newly signed photographers have not only creative talent, but a photographic specialty, an understanding of stock buyers' needs, good people skills and a strong work ethic. Meet the fresh faces of stock.

UPPERCUT IMAGES: JUSTIN LEWIS, JAY REILLY, SOPHIE PANGRAZZI

If editors at UpperCut Images like the images a photographer submits, they always follow up with an in-person meeting, or at least a phone conversation, says vice president and creative director Benjamin Winters. That's because the Seattle- and London-based agency is looking for photographers with qualities beyond strong imagery. Winters says, qualities such as "clear objectives and an understanding of the business we're in, a willingness to take direction and creatively evolve." UpperCut Images currently represent around 130 photographers and has taken on only a handful of new contribu-

tors in the past year.

Among them is Justin Lewis, a San Francisco commercial photographer who shoots luxury travel. "Justin's work translates well in response to the needs of destination and travel clients, and credit card companies, for example," Winters says. Since signing with UpperCut late last year, Lewis has contributed about 200 images to the agency's collection.

Jay Reilly, who signed with UpperCut in September of this year, has about 100 images in the collection. Winters describes the California-based photographer's work as "quintessential loose and natural lifestyle imagery."

Winters adds that Reilly's images have broad applications in a variety of markets; "this is tried and true content," he says.

One of UpperCut's newest additions, signed in September, is Sophie Pangrazzi, a French born, Los Angeles-based advertising and editorial shooter. Her clients range from banks to beauty magazines.

Winters says her work has "a level of sophistication that fits well with the tone of our rights-managed offerings." Though Pangrazzi has yet to submit images to the agency, Winters says, "I think the information that we have about what works and what's successful, filtered through her esthetic, will produce some successful images."

—Holly Stuart Hughes

BELOW: © JAY REILLY/UPPERCUT IMAGES; BOTTOM RIGHT: © SOPHIE PANGRAZZI/UPPERCUT IMAGES; BOTTOM LEFT: © JUSTIN LEWIS/UPPERCUT IMAGES





VEER: C.J. BURTON

Calgary-based photographer C.J. Burton, who specializes in photo-illustration, describes much of his work as "hyper-real" and playfully out of balance. An image of a man sitting in front of a wall covered by framed certificates appears dwarfed in comparison; a pajama-clad young man has his face partially obscured by a ring of sheep circling around him; an office worker in a cubicle is plopped into the middle of a lush field of trees with a cityscape looming in the background, etc.

After a few years of minor sales with one online stock agency, Burton set his sights on Veer, an agency whose motto—"See things in a new light. Hint at potential. Invent contexts. Create concepts."—resonated. Burton says he first left an e-mail on the agency's Web site submission page and within a week he heard back from Heather McNeill, senior manager of creative photography.

McNeill says it didn't take the agency long to decide to represent Burton. "C.J.'s collection of images is very unique in that it is so conceptually driven. He's able to tell very specific stories, his work is very relevant and he's very active with both [advertising] and editorial assignment work."

Burton has been submitting images from assignments as his clients' embargoes expire. Currently, he has close to 100 images on file with Veer. "We edit very tightly," says McNeill, "and quality is paramount, so we can't accept everything photographers submit, even once they're signed, but C.J. has a great selection rate."

"One advantage to being with Veer," Burton says, "is that I'm selling a heck of a lot more than I was before [with my previous agency], mainly, I think, because Veer has a better business model and a better branding and ad campaign. The returns I'm getting are much greater, I have a much better working relationship with Veer and I feel like I have more say and control over my work."

McNeill emphasizes that when it comes to how many photographers Veer takes on each year, there are no hard and fast rules. "It's definitely not a numbers game with us," she says. "There are no quotas to fill. We are absolutely 100 percent about the quality of the work and we're just constantly looking to work with great photographers."

—Jacqueline Tobin

MASTERFILE: TY MILFORD, MICHAEL EUDENBACH, THEO ALLOFS AND NICK ONKEN

Lifestyle images are always in demand, but they're also the most common type of imagery that the Toronto-based Masterfile receives from photographers who hope to join the agency.

"In lifestyle, we're looking for a real authenticity: a certain spontaneity and realness, [images that are] less posed, showing captured moments," says Linda Crawford, manager of artists' services. For example, in October the agency signed Oregon-based photographer Ty Milford, who shoots what Crawford calls "good lifestyle, with a bit of flair."

"He has some lifestyle images that we know are sure sellers," including images relating to health, beauty, wellness and fitness, says Susan Morrisette, Masterfile's vice president of content management. In addition, Crawford notes, Milford's work demonstrates a skill at directing models. "That communicates through straight-on eye contact with the photographer, or a couple interacting with each other in a real, natural way."

Michael Eudenbach of Newport, Rhode Island, who joined the agency in March, also offered a depth of fitness and exercise imagery. "He had very nice sports material, and that's something we're always looking for," says Crawford, who adds, "I like the angles he uses. They're not run-of-the-mill sports images—they're very graphic."

Masterfile also receives many e-mails and promos from photographers with travel images. If the work looks appealing, the agency does "an enthusiasm check." Says Morrisette, "We have to talk to the photographer about upcoming travel plans, because sometimes they just take some vacation pictures and that's it."

Theo Allofs first approached the agency with work he had just shot in India, and said he was planning another trip to New Zealand. Shortly after signing with the agency he traveled to Africa. Typically, he travels six to eight months of the year, often shooting wildlife, a specialty Masterfile does not represent in large numbers. Another recent recruit, Nick Onken is a

