

# Perfecting Commercial Art

A background image that suited the campaign more was then sourced and combined with the rider image to achieve the final result.



Amit graduated as a Software Engineer but Photography was always his calling. He started shooting commercially in 2003. The world of Advertising and Fashion Photography soon embraced him for his sharp technical acumen, meticulous planning and execution and down-to-earth personality. Over the years, Amit has worked on various projects with some of the best advertising agencies and clients worldwide. He has been involved in creating images, ranging from automobiles to fashion, concepts to fine art and many things in between. Cherishing his artistic freedom, he loves to experiment, and refuses to be tied to any particular genre or style. He has also shot editorials for Verve, Hello!, Hi Blitz, Asia Spa, Millionaire Asia, Elegant Magazine UK, Feroce Magazine Scotland, Obscurae Magazine US and Elléments Magazine NY. His images have been awarded at Photography Masters Cup, International Photography Awards, International Color Awards, International Loupe Awards, CLIO, Goafest, Adrian awards and Px3. His work can be seen at [www.amitdeyphotography.com](http://www.amitdeyphotography.com).



**Amit Dey**

As told to **Andrea Rodrigues**

■ **As an advertising photographer, do you prefer to shoot fashion or automobiles? Why?**

I am a person who likes challenges. I like variety. I am always itching to do new things. I don't have a preference – my only criterion while taking up a shoot is "Is it interesting enough?"

As for fashion and automobiles, both have their own fun. I love shooting people. When you are doing fashion, you are working with a lot of

people, including models, make-up artists and stylists. There is always a buzz on the set, which I find very energizing. Shooting automobiles, on the other hand, is very technical. Getting the right angles, lighting, reflections on the car or bike body, these are very critical. They take a lot of time, and it is a game of patience. Here, I feel, it's your internal energy which drives you.

The best is when you shoot people with bikes, be it racing shots or lifestyle shots. That is when you



The bike was shot in studio and combined with the background image.



The bike and the model have been shot separately and combined with the background.

have to apply all your knowledge and experience, and that is the most satisfying.

■ **What were the problems you faced in the early stages of your career?**

I started in 2002. At that time, people shot on film cameras. You couldn't see instant results, so the agencies and the clients didn't want to take risks with new photographers. A lot of money and time is involved in advertising shoots, so their hesitation is quite understandable. The other problem is the same that young photographers face today also. Clients do not give you work because you do not have experience, and you don't get experience because clients don't give you any work. It becomes a catch-22 situation. The solution to this is to do some fantastic work personally, and then approach agencies or clients. If they see even a small chance of getting something extraordinary from you, you have a good chance to get work.

Another small issue I had was that I didn't know anybody in advertising. And there was no Google to help. It was difficult finding the first few contacts. But whomever I met, I would request for more contacts and they would give me. My experience is that most people are quite helpful if you would just ask.

■ **How do you plan your assignments?**

Most of my work happens with advertising agencies. They normally have a creative team working on a concept. So when I am approached for an assignment, I have a discussion with the creative team to understand their needs exactly. I would say this is the most important part of the planning. Once I know what they need, I sit with my production team to decide how best to go about it. Depending on the requirements, we look for models, locations, props, stylist, make-up artist etc. Models are auditioned. Locations are scouted. If a set is to be made, then a drawing of the set explaining the elements in it is made.



The two bikes have been shot separately and combined with the background.





Composite image

All this is then put in a presentation, and we have a final meeting with the agency and the client. Any minor chinks are sorted out at that meeting and then we go in for the final shoot.

### ■ What role does image editing play in your professional work

I find image editing very important when shooting automobiles. Automobile companies are very secretive about their new products. So how do we show them on locations? Many times, we shoot the bikes in studio and place them on background images.

However, image editing cannot salvage bad photography. Also, image editing (specially compositing 2 or more pictures together) needs detailed planning before the shoot. If you shoot without planning, your foreground and background lighting will not match, and it will look very odd.

My advice on image editing is this – at the time of shooting, if you know what you will do in edit later, then go ahead with it. Otherwise, correct your shot there and then till you get what you want.

### ■ How do you scout for your shooting locations?

When a client or an agency comes to us for a shoot, they have a general idea of the kind of look they want. Whether the shoot has to look urban, rural, adventurous, rugged, etc. For eg, a client may want to shoot a clothing line for young people. The brief says it should look rugged. So we come up with a few ideas. Would an abandoned factory work? Or a street full of graffiti? Or maybe a bikers club? We discuss this and filter down to a kind of look we want. The production then finds such locations and shares pictures with us. Once I like a location, I go there and have a look myself. I shoot

different angles to decide if it is good enough for our shoot, if it will provide us with enough variations. If it works, then fine. Otherwise we repeat the process till we find the perfect location. Sometimes, we like a location but it needs to be supplemented by some props and art from our side. We may like a house, but we may not like the furniture. So we might get our own furniture for the shoot.

### ■ How flexible are clients with regards to their brief vs your creative freedom?

A photographer is hired for his creativity. Mostly, the client/agency will depend on your expertise in selecting models, locations, stylist, makeup etc. They will rarely interfere. If you have an idea, it is important to put it across. A photographer who contributes ideas is more valued than a photographer who just executes them.



Composite image

At the same time, you have to understand that the client is selling something. They have come up with an idea after a lot of market research and thought. As long as your creativity helps in furthering their idea, in projecting their product or service better, they will

not interfere. In fact, I have found that a client is always willing to listen to a photographer's ideas. But there are certain things they are not willing to change. And you have to know that. Because if you change those particular things, the client will reject your shoot and it will

never see the light of the day.

For eg, most automobile companies have very strict safety guidelines. You can't have a guy riding a bike without a helmet just because it looks great. They will reject it. Looking at the location example

mentioned earlier, now if the client is marketing his clothes for youngsters, and I tell him that we will shoot in a corporate glass building because glass will look good in the background, most chances are he will resist my idea.

There are times when you feel that an image will turn out awesome if you shoot it in a particular way. But the client is not able to see your point of view. In that case, plan your shoot in such a way that you have time to do two shots – one the way the client wants, the other the way you want. If your shot turns out great, the client will happily use it and will also trust you more from then on.

### ■ What advice would you give to beginners in the field of advertising photography?

First, be technically and aesthetically sound. This is important. That doesn't mean you have to wait to be perfect. But you should be able to handle most kinds of technical challenges, be it lighting or camera.

Second, experiment! Keep creating interesting images. Don't wait to find models, or production support, or a great bike or car to shoot. Shoot whatever is available. Shoot building, trees, the kids in your neighbourhood or whatever appeals to you. But shoot it in an interesting way.

Create a portfolio of at least 40 images. And then meet as many people as possible in agencies. Show your work around. When you show it to 20 people, maybe 5 will remember it and one among them will shoot with you. That's the kind of ratio you are looking at. It's not an easy field to break into, but if you keep trying without giving up, you will be successful. |SP



The bike and the model have been shot separately and combined with the background.

