

# Commercial Photography

Successful use of Photography in Advertising and Press Releasing

Words and Pictures by Sarahphotogirl.com

**M**any companies ruin a perfectly good press release with poor photography. Just by understanding a few basic things, you can turn your press release from a media missed opportunity into an eye-catching and unmissable campaign!

The first thing I strongly suggest you do is get hold of some magazines from within your industry – ideally the ones you are going to be printing your adverts and/or press releases in. Take a look inside. Research how others do it, but by no means follow their lead because be rest assured – 99% of the press releases you come across will be illustrated with dry and unimaginative photographs. Remember this; the photographs *you* choose for *your* press release will be the first thing your potential clients see. That image will mean the difference between them turning the page and moving on, or giving up some of their valuable time, to read what *you* have to say.

Standard product shots are boring, stale and clichéd so why are people still using them in this age of endless possibilities? Digital manipulation software now enables us to create wonderful, striking images, not to mention sceneries

## To Advertise a Training Course

What we could have done:

Taken a photograph of lots of people in a room taking notes and trying to look interested as the guy at the front of the room lectures them on the ins and outs of health and safety.

What we did:

To emphasise the success rate of the training courses we thought of the phrase – ‘You can’t teach an old dog new tricks’ and then we showed that you can! ■

we’d have thought impossible a few years ago. You don’t have to be literal in your advertising either. A great recent example is the Cadbury’s Dairy Milk campaign. A drumming Gorilla has little to do with a chocolate bar and yet it’s an amazing advert which had everyone talking about it! The same applies with your press release. No matter what the size of your company, you need to think big if you’re to be successful. Grab their attention with clever photography and reel them in.

Over the next couple of pages are some examples of commercial work I’ve recently undertaken. The companies in question wanted to stand out from the crowd so we came up with a few fresh ideas. In my opinion; when it comes to photography,

it’s really important to think off the peg. Remember though, if you do opt for an unusual take on the pho-



tography, then it's important you find a way of interlacing your image into the story. There's no point in having a striking image which has nothing at all to do with your press release. Make sure the text explains the image and if this explanation takes place in the title then make sure the editor of the magazine doesn't change the title! I recently shot a lemon juicer for one company – the idea being that the product was easy to use, hence the press release came hand in hand with the title 'Easy Peasy Lemon Squeezy'. Unfortunately, the editor of the magazine in which the press release was placed, took it upon himself to change the title, rendering the press release pointless.

If you do want to use a product shot – and don't get me wrong – there's a time and place for them – then you have two choices. The first one is to sprinkle the shot with a pinch of imagination either by using the way you integrate the product into the shot or by playing with



the product or products themselves to give a little twist. With the image below we wanted to show the wide range of products one company sold, so we shot the products separately in the studio and then amended a liquorice allsorts box by using digital manipulation techniques. Finally I arranged some of the products digitally so that they appeared to be bursting out of the liquorice box. The end result: a company who provide 'allsorts' of things!

If you really do want a straight forward product shot then there are still right and wrong ways of doing it. The wrong way is thinking that it will save money to photograph your product on your desk in your lunch break. There is a reason why professional photographers are professional and that's because they excel at what they do.

You might think that product photography is easy but it's possibly the most difficult type of photography out there. Your lens needs to be good if you are to get the perspective of your product correct, and reflections on glass screens and reflective surfaces are a nightmare. The lighting has to be precise, clean and bright and various techniques will be adopted by your photographer to prevent unsightly shadows, burnt out highlights and ugly, off-putting reflections. If your photographer is skilful with photographic manipulation software such as Photoshop, they can even make your product look



## To Advertise a Pocket Noise Meter

What we could have done

Illustrated the press release with a scene depicting a warehouse with the product sticking out of a worker's pocket.

What we did

Take two photographs – one with a girl wearing jeans with the meter in her back pocket and one with the girl wearing no jeans. We then stuck these two images together and faded the girls skin so that the pocket and product stood out as the main focal point of the image. I'll guarantee that when reading this page this image is the first thing that caught your attention! ■

**RIGHT:** A standard product shot should be clean and bright with perfect perspective. Moving parts give this shot its added dynamic.



stylised and art-deco by adding blocks of colour at the post processing stages.

Remember; when people read your press release, the photography is not only the first thing they see - they look at it again when they read the parts of the story that's relevant to it, and then again at the end. There are so many things you can do to make your press release stand out. So spend a little bit more thought on the photography and book a photographer with an imagination too!

**...click here to go to the  
Sarahphotogirl website!**

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