



# Moonlighting to Follow His Passion



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By Linda L. May

**B**y day, he crunches numbers, and on nights and weekends he moonlights as a portrait photographer. Kamran Malik from Orlando, FL, works full time as the director of pricing for a large health insurance firm, so his regular job keeps him plenty busy. However, two years ago his love of photography led him to start shooting portraits in his free time.

“For several years I have been thinking about pho-

tography, lighting and composition nonstop,” Kamran says. “I finally decided I’d better incorporate it into my life on a more steady basis. I’m not doing [photography] for fame or fortune, but because I love it. Seeing the joy on my clients’ faces when I show them the final images makes it all worthwhile.

“I don’t think anyone should do a job just for the money, especially photographers. They’re not doing



their clients a real service if they are not producing their best work. For me, the fun part of photography is that no two sessions are ever the same. Each image is unique from the others.”

Kamran works mostly on location, at clients’ homes, nearby parks or even in the busy Orlando streets. However, he has converted three areas of his home, including his garage, into a working studio space. He shoots a variety of work, including catalog, engagement portraits, models, headshots and families. However, his favorite subjects are babies and toddlers. Occasionally his wife Kimberly assists him with larger jobs (she also does the bookkeeping), but she has a full-time career as a mutual funds accountant.

“A while back I photographed a 16-day-old baby girl and the parents were shocked to see the final prints. The baby was looking at me and smiling, which is rare for

such young babies. If she could actually see me or not, I don’t know, but you’d never know this from looking at the pictures. It appears that she is paying attention to the camera. Babies and small children can feel a photographer’s energy and quickly determine whether or not the person truly cares about them and is genuine or phony. Kids rarely do anything fake. They are carefree and happy, natural and real. I just play and interact with them, and always try to bring out their true personalities,” Kamran says.

Even though Kamran just recently started shooting professional portraiture, he’s been associated with photography for the past 30 years. His father is an avid photographer, as is his cousin (who owned a traditional studio), so Kamran was surrounded by photography growing up. He got his first Kodak 110 Instamatic at age nine and blasted

through film as fast as his parents would buy it for him. During the summers, he worked for his cousin at the studio, where he also learned darkroom techniques and photography skills. For several years Kamran has been traveling around the world capturing landscapes and cityscapes, although it was children’s portraiture that most intrigued him.

Working two jobs would be too taxing for many people, but he loves taking pictures enough to make the sacrifice. In reality, he doesn’t see it as a sacrifice, but instead as a great privilege.

Kamran graduated from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln with a degree in mathematics. Part of his actuarial job involves looking at data and figuring out what it is telling him—he has studied demographics and figured out where he needs to market and how. Once he found the correct formula to reach his target



market, his business began to flourish. He also has an impressive Web site and Facebook blog that bring in new clients. One of the best ways he has found to increase sales is through direct-mailing campaigns, where his return is much higher than average (about 10–12 percent, instead of the usual one percent). Unlike most full-time photographers who want to attract as many clients as possible, Kamran has to limit the number of sessions he books because of his restricted time schedule. Normally he likes to take no more than 10 sessions per month, but over the past two years his business has continually grown, mostly through word-of-mouth and referrals from happy clients.

Because he can only shoot in the evenings and on weekends, Kamran has to be flexible in his approach and be able to compensate for any lighting conditions he encounters. Often he finds himself having to shoot at high noon, which can be a tricky time to capture good images.

“I don’t care what time of day it is. No time is a bad time for me to shoot. Lighting makes me conform to the conditions and find a way to get my image, no matter what. Lighting changes every second. You move one foot in any direction and everything changes, so you’d better know how to perform. In photography, there is not just one formula. I’m a self-trained photographer. I didn’t take





24–70mm telephoto and 70–200mm telephoto. Like many photographers, Kamran prefers natural light, but when extra illumination is necessary, he uses Canon 580EX II flashes, with the California Sunbounce and other reflectors as well as umbrellas. He likes keeping it simple so he can get along without using assistants whenever possible.

Kamran currently has an exhibition hanging in local galleries and is selling the prints to further supplement his income and also plans to exhibit his landscape photography more often. However, for now, he has no plans to transition to full-time photography. He enjoys his day job and feels blessed to be able to moonlight as a photographer. Doing children's portraits and seeing the parents' happy reactions is the greatest reward for him, and keeps him going.

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any courses, seminars or workshops but learned from experience. Of course, being exposed to photography my whole life also prepared me for this profession. My father and cousin were influential in training me

through the years.”

As far as equipment, Kamran uses Canon EOS 5D Mark II bodies with a variety of focal length lenses. The lenses he uses most often include an 85mm f/1.2L,

