



# The Backgrounder

News and Information About Turning Backgrounds into Profits!

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April 2006 Issue

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## 2006 Virtual Backgrounds Workshop Schedule

- May 8-9-10
- June 12-13-14
- July 17-18-19
- August 14-15-16
- September 18-19-20
- October 16-17-18
- November 13-14-15

Click [here](#) to view our new workshop brochure containing valuable information on our Virtual Backgrounds training workshops.

It's time to start to get your prints ready to enter into **Virtual Backgrounds' Annual Print Competition!** The prizes will be bigger and better than ever this year. Keep an eye out for further information in the May 2006 edition of *The Backgrounder!*

## Virtual Backgrounds—A Huge Presence at WPPI

Virtual Backgrounds played a major role at **WPPI** in Las Vegas, both in platform programs as well as at the trade show. Virtual Backgrounds was a major portion of **Rick and Deborah Lynn Ferro's** program (see Featured Photographers). The Ferros recently began using their VB system and are producing outstanding results. **Larry Peters** spoke about his special application with custom designed props where Virtual Backgrounds illuminates his props resulting in a totally new look that his high school seniors love. **Greg Stangl** discussed his applications for using Virtual Back-

grounds to make his work different and to help win lucrative contracts.

In the trade show booth, **Joseph & Louise Simone, Trevon Baker, and Monte Zucker** all demonstrated their unique ways of using the VB system. On the last day of the show, the Simones brought in a 20 x 24 enlargement taken the previous day that caused everyone who saw it go "WOW!"

As photographers look for ways to fight the *Perfect Storm*, large crowds gathered in the Virtual Backgrounds booth and became enthusiastic about

adopting Virtual Backgrounds.



This image was captured by Joseph & Louise Simone in the 10x10 shooting area of the Virtual Backgrounds trade show booth at WPPI. *Imagine what you can do in your own studio!*

## Rick Avalos—Guest Speaker at April's Workshop

Pueblo, Colorado photographer Rick Avalos was the guest presenter for the April Virtual Backgrounds



ity, service and innovation. This is why he began using Virtual Backgrounds...to be different from other photographers and to better please his clients. He ordered a system, attended the Virtual Backgrounds school in Texas and the rest is history. He uses his Virtual Background system for much of his studio work. One application he tested was in his volume school photography. When he took three shots of every child, each one having a different background, his sales *zoomed* up 25%. Rick plans to expand the program this fall to push sales up still further.



2006 PPA Merit Print



workshop in San Marcos, Texas. Holder of the degrees of Photographic Craftsman and Master of Photography, he began talking about how professional photography is in a revolutionary period. Many photographers are feeling like Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz when she says, "Toto, I don't think we are in Kansas anymore." Quoting Rick, "Some studios didn't embrace color and they fell by the wayside. Today, we have new technology like Virtual Backgrounds that we need to capitalize on."

Avalos' studio always embraces qual-

Rick places special emphasis on education because there is so much to a Virtual Background system. "Without attending the workshop, I would have been struggling."

Rick showed a wide variety of images he has created with his Virtual Background system, a number of which have received merits and even PPA Loan Collection status. Recently, he had an assignment to photograph the local Catholic bishop. He photographed the interior of the church from many different angles and then had the Bishop come to his studio where he had total control. The results were spectacular.

He is proud of the fact that Avalos Studio is at the cutting edge of technol-

ogy. "Why would I roll backgrounds up and down when I can simply turn a little wheel and have so much more variety and control?"

It is indeed a revolutionary period for photographers and Rick Avalos is right at the front line when it comes to bringing his clients the very latest in creative contemporary photography.



2006 PPA Loan Collection Print

*Studio Photography & Design Magazine*

Studio Photography & Design magazine has changed its format beginning with the April edition to one that places direct emphasis on how to make money in photography. Most of the professional magazines have adopted a "Popular Photography" look which does little or nothing to help photographers' bottom line.



The Virtual Backgrounds process is getting new exposure in the April edition. An article about Trevon Baker titled, "Shifting Scenery – Outshine the Competition With Virtual Backgrounds," can be found on page 58 or by clicking [here](#). Trevon describes his history with Virtual Backgrounds in his Montana studio both in terms of a creative photographic tool and also a powerful marketing tool to help build his business.

**VB People Spotlight: Maria Batte**

In this month's VB People Spotlight we highlight one of our international consultants, Maria Batte. Maria has become an important asset to the company. A native of Mexico, Maria spends much of her time cultivating relationships with people from Spanish-speaking countries such as Mexico, Ecuador, Spain, the Dominican Republic and other countries. With her friendly and upbeat personality and her "go-getter" mentality, Maria is dedicated to educating people both here and abroad about Virtual Backgrounds. Maria works diligently to help each photographer and each studio find the right fit to help them grow their business. Maria also serves as the company's Spanish interpreter when our guests attend one of our monthly workshops. Feel free to [contact](#) Maria Batte with questions. She is eager to help!



*The Professional Photographer's PERFECT STORM Hits*



A new book that promises to raise the eyebrows of many professional photographers has just been released. *The Professional Photographer's PERFECT STORM* presents a detailed analysis of the powerful effects of new technology, including digital cameras, on professional photography. The 75 page book was written by Virtual Backgrounds founder and president, Dr. Henry Oles. He is also the author of the comprehensive book on backgrounds titled *Back-*

*ground Power!* and more than 100 articles for *The Professional Photographer* magazine.

The material presented in this new book has never been presented elsewhere. *The Perfect Storm* shows how professional photography is facing it's most serious crisis ever as millions of amateurs purchase digital cameras and adopt a "do it yourself" attitude towards capturing their own images instead of using a professional studio photographer. These amateurs now have tens of thousands of places to have their prints made or they can make their own prints at home. As a result, many professional photographers are seeing a definite decline in sales as amateurs fulfill their own photographic needs.

*The Perfect Storm* views the problem as being made more serious by professional photographers who promote the photojournalistic approach to weddings and portraits, thus making their professional images more like amateur images. The public can't see the difference. Another complicating factor exists when professional photographers,

instead of working in their studio where they can deliver a decidedly superior product, choose to work outdoors in the same environment that is equally open to amateurs.

In the book, Dr. Oles offers a wide variety of suggestions for combating the Perfect Storm with a key factor being the use of Virtual Backgrounds in a controlled studio environment. It is only with Virtual Backgrounds that a professional photographer can offer the customer a wide variety of looks that cannot be duplicated by the amateur.

*The Professional Photographer's PERFECT STORM* is available by request and **without charge** to professional photographers. [Contact](#) Virtual Backgrounds to request your **FREE** copy today!

*The Professional Photographer's PERFECT STORM* could very well become one of the most important operational books written for professional photographers.

**Simone Book Getting World-Wide Acclaim!**



*The Portrait... Mirror of the Soul* by Joseph and Louise Simone, an oversized deluxe book which represents years of work by the Simones, is available from Virtual Backgrounds. It is viewed as a masterpiece book that is not only beautiful to look at but which also provides photographers with an infinite variety of ideas for highly creative and distinctive portraiture. The Simones have taken professional portrait photography to a new artistic level. It serves as an example of what a professional portrait photographer can do to create

products that clients love.

In their workshops and presentations, the Simones stress the importance for the professional photographer to take their work to a new level, well beyond anything that is created by the average studio and infinitely beyond anything that can be done by the hoard of "do it yourself" amateurs who are armed with their new digital cameras. While Joseph and Louise are a one-of-a-kind in terms of their creative skill and artistic expression, it is possible for the photographer to study their examples and work to incorporate various elements into their own daily studio work.

While the book presents examples of work from the past 20 years, much of their work over the past 3 ½ years was done with Virtual Backgrounds. Before using the Scene Machine, the Simones paid considerable attention to the background in their images but were restricted by the amount of time it took to create large custom backgrounds for each customer. The



Scene Machine has enabled them to greatly expand their creative use of backgrounds. They have also created a wide variety of background images that reflect their own unique style. Virtual Backgrounds offers three sets of Simone backgrounds with 10 backgrounds in each set.

The Simones report that many of their books, which have been sold worldwide, have gone to non-photographers. People who appreciate fine art photography are purchasing the book as a "coffee table" book.

To obtain a copy of this extraordinary book, [contact](#) Virtual Backgrounds.

FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHERS: Rick & Deborah Lynn Ferro (Jacksonville, Florida)

## Discovering the Power of Virtual Backgrounds



Jacksonville, Florida photographers Rick and Deborah Lynn Ferro didn't give much thought to acquiring a Virtual Backgrounds system until Rick attended a Joseph and Louise Simone workshop two years ago. He was very impressed with the Simones' use of Virtual Backgrounds but Deborah wasn't so sure. Then, last year Deborah attended a Simone workshop and she too got excited over the unlimited potential for more creativity through paying more attention to the background by using a Virtual Backgrounds system.



Geddes of New Zealand and how she uses flower images with her subjects. She wanted to do something with children and flowers but something that reflected her own style and was not a mirror image of Anne Geddes' work. So, she went through thousands of slides and began coming up with selected images such as close ups of flowers that she could modify with her digital tools and use as backgrounds.

Now, the Ferros have had an epiphany. They really "get it." They have absolute control



them apart, not only on a business level but also in competition. The photograph is no longer just about the subject but the background compliments and the subject and the total image becomes one work of art.

They started working with several models and then began using Virtual Backgrounds with regular customers. Both the Ferros and their customers

*"With studio space becoming more and more expensive, the Virtual Background system makes perfect sense. With the money you save on purchasing and storing multiple backgrounds, you can have one system and infinite backgrounds providing you with ease of use and creativity that sets you apart from your competition." Deborah Lynn Ferro*



They both realized that their 1000 square foot studio was crowded with backgrounds and props. They needed a way to do more with less. So together, they made the decision to get a Virtual Backgrounds system.

Initially, they were so busy with their other activities, including studio appointments, a full [speaking schedule](#), and their own [school](#), the new

machine sat untouched in a corner. Rick and Deborah later took advantage of the opportunity to receive training at Virtual Backgrounds in Texas and from there were off and running. Through training they quickly became comfortable with the technical aspects of the system.

They realized that dropping backgrounds in was "cool," but they wanted to be more artistic.

Before becoming a photographer, Deborah was a painter and she wanted to find some way to incorporate her artistic skills into creating her own distinctive backgrounds. Deborah was always an admirer of Anne



over the total image...the subject and the background. No one else, especially the competition, would have their identical backgrounds. The backgrounds were now totally theirs. This was very important to the Ferros. In using the Virtual Background system with their own photographic slides as backgrounds, it sets



have been blown away. Now, Rick and Deborah are teaching other photographers how to use Virtual Backgrounds through their presentations, live demonstrations and at the [Ferro Photography School](#). It was also a significant part of their WPPi feature presentation. The Virtual Background system is now a fundamental component in their studio operation. Visit their [website](#) and [speaking schedule](#).

## Upcoming Schools & Conventions

Are you interested in seeing the Virtual Backgrounds system up close and personal but can't come to San Marcos to attend a workshop? Check us out at one of the below events. Chances are we'll be coming to a town near you!

**For more information click on the title of the event!**

**PP of Michigan w/ Greg Stangl**  
 April 21-24, 2006  
 (Kalamazoo, Michigan)

**Professional Photographers of Canada**  
 May 6-10, 2006  
 (Halifax, Nova Scotia Canada)

**BC—Canada School**  
 July 16-20, 2006

**Texas School w/ Simones, Larry Peters and Rick & Deborah Ferro**  
 April 23-28, 2006  
 (College Station, Texas)

**Power Marketing Super Conference w/ Greg Stangl**  
 June 4-7, 2006  
 (Mt. Hood, Oregon)

**Terry Deglau in Tampa**  
 August 8, 2006  
 (Tampa, Florida)

**Trevon Baker—VPPA Spring Seminar**  
 April 30, 2006

**Kerrville Summer Seminar**  
 June 25-28, 2006  
 (Kerrville, Texas)

**Florida State Convention**  
 August 27-28, 2006  
 (Florida)

**MARS School w/ Greg Stangl**  
 April 30—May 5, 2006  
 (Cape May, New Jersey)

**Houston—Simone Seminar**  
 July 11, 2006  
 (Houston, Texas)

**Photokina**  
 September 26-October 1, 2006  
 (Germany)




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