# The Backgrounder

### News and Information About Turning Backgrounds into Profits!

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**January 2006 Issue**

## Special points of interest:

- Virtual Backgrounds 2006 Workshop Schedule
- Speaker Sponsorship Grows
- VB Spotlight: Christian Feigl

### 2006 Virtual Backgrounds Workshop Schedule

February 6-7-8
April 3-4-5
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.

## The Backgrounder Goes Monthly!

Due to a high demand from photographers to know more about how to enhance their profit and grow their business through backgrounds, starting this month, *The Backgrounder*, an electronic newsletter by Virtual Backgrounds, will become a monthly publication.

Starting just two years ago as a quarterly eNewsletter, *The Backgrounder* is going monthly because there is so much interest in backgrounds as well as new news and information. Long overlooked by most portrait photographers, the background is taking on new emphasis as photographers discover its power to enhance their creativity and increase their profits.

Each issue of The *Backgrounder* will present a capsule of information about new developments in backgrounds as well as stories of how individual photographers have incorporated background technology into their studio operation to enhance their bottom line. Currently, *The Backgrounder* is distributed to over 5500 photographers world wide.

Have you missed previous issues of *The Backgrounder*? Click here and you will be directed to back issues.
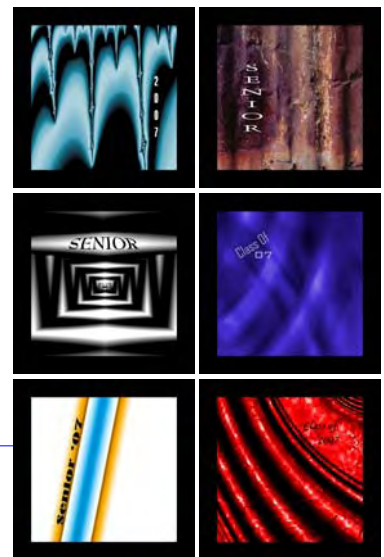
## Senior 2007 Slides Available Early This Year!

It might be the first few days of 2006, but Virtual Backgrounds has just released the Senior 2007 background library collection made up of 20 new backgrounds. We are getting these out early so that photographers can start creating promotional samples to help them capture the '07 contracts.
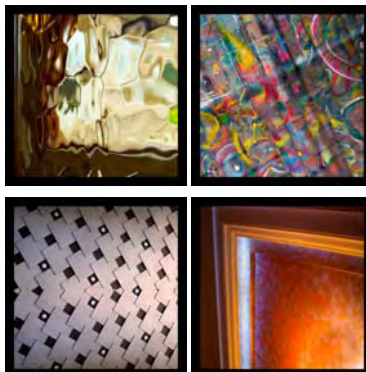
In order to keep up with the changing contemporary thinking of today's youth, this new set is quite different from the senior backgrounds offered in the past. All of the Senior 2007 backgrounds are glass-mounted square super-slides.

Most Virtual Background users use the Senior background collections as special enticements to not only secure contracts but to also attract seniors for photo sessions when the studio doesn't have the official contract. Seniors love the additional variety provided by the senior collection of backgrounds. Click here to view the entire set of Senior 2007 slides and watch your profits go through the roof!

## NEW Trevon Baker Collection II Gets Rave Reviews!

**Trevon Baker has done it again!!!** He has created a second outstanding collection of background library slides which are available exclusively from Virtual Backgrounds.

This new set is a unique blend of abstract images coupled with recognizable objects that make outstanding Virtual Backgrounds. Trevon has been using these slides for a while in his own studio and has decided to compile a second collection to share with Virtual Backgrounds photographers.

This new contemporary collection is in stock and ready to ship! The set is compiled of 15 background slides and sells for $149. That's less than $10 per background! Click here to see the entire set of the Trevon Baker Collection II.

Keep an eye out for a Trevon Baker III to be released in the upcoming months!

## Speaker Sponsorship Continues to Grow

Virtual Backgrounds is expanding its program of sponsoring well-known speakers/educators who are themselves using the Virtual Backgrounds process to create images and who are anxious to share their knowledge with others. The program began with three of the world's most respected photographers, Joseph and Louise Simone of Canada and the late Don Blair of Utah. Other speakers include Trevon Baker of Montana, Terry Deglau of Florida, Roy Madearis of Texas, Rick Avalos of Colorado, Chris Wunder of North Carolina, and Pat Riley of Canada. A number of others speakers will be added in the near future.

If you are looking for a program that has a lot of new information for your association or school, contact Virtual Backgrounds.

## VB People Spotlight: Christian Feigl

In this month's VB People Spotlight, we highlight Christian Feigl who is in charge of international sales, is a domestic consultant and runs our sister company, Web Photo Supply. Web Photo Supply focuses on all aspects of photography equipment from props to lighting to camera stands and much, much more. Click here to view the WPS website.

This German native has been with Virtual Backgrounds for over five years. He has spear-headed the creation of WPS and has helped to expand Virtual Backgrounds far beyond US borders. Now VB systems can be found in many countries throughout the world! Look for Christian at various trade shows and upcoming conventions.

Feel free to contact Christian with questions about international sales and dealers or Web Photo Supply products.

# PPA's Imaging USA Convention Held in VB's Back Yard!

See us at booth #542

This year's PPA Annual Convention, Imaging USA, is January 22-24, 2006. The location for the convention is in Virtual Backgrounds' own back yard—Austin, Texas.

Virtual Backgrounds will be exhibiting in the trade show in Austin (see us at booth #542) *AND* we will also be open for business before and after the convention for people to stop in to have a look around !

In our trade show exhibit, Trevon Baker and other photographers will be conducting live demonstrations complete with shooting of live models. You would be amazed at the spectacular images that photographers can capture within a 10 foot x 10 foot work space! Imagine what *you* could do in *your* studio!

Contact us via email or give us a call (1-800-831-0474) if you would like make an appointment and take the short drive from Austin to San Marcos.

Virtual Backgrounds is located just 30 miles south of Austin (only 1/4 mile from Interstate 35).

### *Kill two birds with one stone!*

San Marcos is also the home of two of the largest Outlet Malls located side by side (Tanger Mall and Prime Outlets) in the country. Shop around for great deals at the Outlets AND at Virtual Backgrounds! We hope to see you there!

# Comparing Polystyrene Props with Virtual Backgrounds

We often get asked what the fundamental differences are between polystyrene sets such as those created by Off The Wall or Scenic Design and Virtual Backgrounds. Both are methods to create backgrounds to enhance portraits of individuals and even groups. Both methods are complementary. They are not really competitive. In fact, Virtual Backgrounds can be effectively used to complement polystyrene sets and vice versa. However, it is true that Virtual Backgrounds can replace entire polystyrene sets so it is no longer necessary to spend $5000 to $15,000 for a complex set. Instead, with Virtual Backgrounds, the background set is projected, but it can be enhanced with polystyrene props.

For example, a polystyrene set of columns, arches or windows can be enhanced with a projected general background. Or, a set of brick steps and a brick retaining wall made of polystyrene can be used with a projected general background combined with artificial plants, trees, etc. Therefore, there are many advantages to using Virtual Backgrounds with polystyrene enhancement. These advantages include the following:

1. Drastically reduced cost
2. Infinite ability to vary the general background
3. Minimal storage area required
4. Ability to instantly change the general background
5. More variety for each individual customer

A major advantage of projected general backgrounds over polystyrene sets is that the photographer can instantly vary the brightness, focus, proportional size and even the color of the projected background to fit the specific situation. Plus, he can capture his own backgrounds simply with a film or digital camera.

So, in summary, it's not a matter of which method of creating backgrounds is best overall. Instead, it's a matter of the photographer being able to choose from both methods to help him or her create the best possible product for the client that will result in the greatest amount of convenience and profit.

# Talk to People LIVE at Virtual Backgrounds

One of the most frustrating things for consumers today is to try to reach a manufacturer for support and get nothing more than a series of recordings. Press 1 if you want this. Press 2 if you want that. You won't get that when you call Virtual Backgrounds. During the day, you might get our recording ONLY if all lines are tied up. It will ask for a message and someone will call you back quickly. You can also leave a message on the recorder at night. Otherwise, you will talk to real people who are dedicated to helping you whether you are a photographer just inquiring about Virtual Backgrounds or if you are a system owner. We are dedicated to helping you!

Our company founder and president, Dr. Henry Oles, even makes his home telephone number readily available to anyone who feels they need to talk with him directly after hours. Virtual Backgrounds is a company dedicated to customer service. *Period*!

## FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER:  Dave Filler of Stillwater Photography

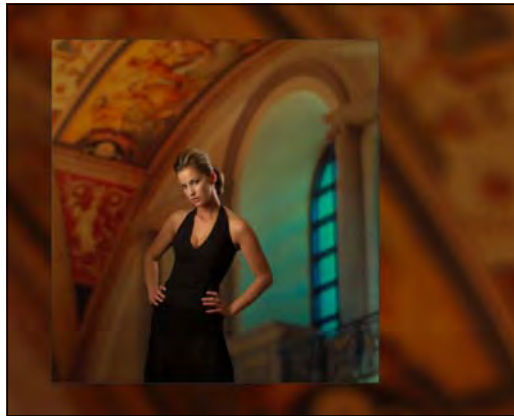### Creating Custom Backgrounds, Making Money, and Having Fun!



*Dave Filler*

> *"I can't imagine any professional photographer not falling in love with Virtual Backgrounds. It's so cool!"*

Dave Filler can't imagine working without his Scene Machine Virtual Backgrounds system.  In the two years since he got it, it has become a very important component of his Kalispell, Montana studio operation.  It has enabled him to greatly expand the scope and variety he is able to deliver to his clients…and they love the results.

Dave didn't start out as a photographer. Initially, he was a geophysicist and traveled the world for oil companies taking pictures along the way. When he decided to slow down a bit, he chose Kalispell and opened a studio.  Two years ago, Dave attended a Joseph and Louise Simone workshop at the Montana State Convention and saw what they were able to do with their Scene Machine.  Dave immediately decided that he had to have one for himself, so he purchased a system



he can do so much more year round. "When I work outdoors,  I have a very short season,  I have the trees and rocks for backgrounds, just like every other photographer or amateur, but with the Scene Machine, I can do so much more and the customers love it."

> *"You can do some of what I do with pained backgrounds and spend many extra dollars, but I can do things with Virtual Backgrounds that I just couldn't do any other way.  I love it!"*

and the rest is history.  Dave says, "I can't imagine any photographer owning a  system like this and not using it.  Ordinary backgrounds are just not as flexible as this thing is. Now I am unlimited.  I like to think of my studio as a fantasy land."

His studio is located in a home immediately  adjacent to his own home and includes several acres. The camera room was originally the garage and is only 12 feet wide.  Therefore, without his Virtual Backgrounds system, he would be quite limited in what he could do.  In the summer, he does a lot of outdoor portraits, but with his Scene Machine





He often does not tell his clients exactly what he is doing in the studio.  Instead, he likes to just work with them and then surprise them when they see the results on the monitor.  "I like to let the mom's look in th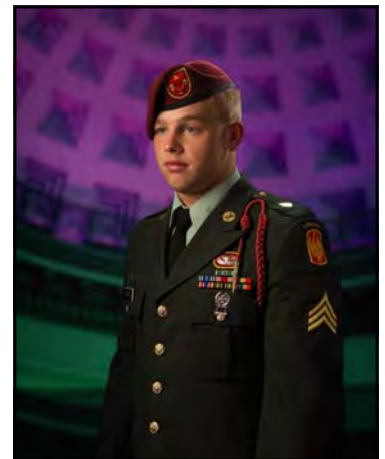e camera…it's so much fun to see their eyes get big and say, 'wow…where did that come from?' and I tell them, 'It's magic!'"

Dave likes to create as many of his own backgrounds as possible.  He says, "When I go out and make a slide…I kind of pre-visualize it. I then keep the background slide until the right situation pops up."  Dave uses a Contax camera with a Kodak Pro Back.  He prefers to use either a fixed 80 or 140 mm lens.  Many of

the wall enlargements Dave sells were created using Virtual Backgrounds. He has also been winning a number of awards with his Virtual Backgrounds portraits.

In summary, Dave says, "You can do some of what I do with pained backgrounds and spend many extra dollars but I can do things with Virtual Backgrounds that I just couldn't do any other way.  I love it!"

## 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!

**Business Class with Attitude!**
January 17-19, 2006
(Richmond, Virginia)

**Imaging USA—PPA National Convention**
January 22-24, 2006
(Austin, Texas)

**Business Class with Attitude!**
February 13-15, 2006
(San Francisco, California)

**Business Class with Attitude!**
February 20-22, 2006
(San Marcos, Texas)

**PMA Convention & Trade Show**
February 26-March 1, 2006
(Orlando, Florida)

**Mid-East States Convention**
March 1-6, 2006
(Dayton, Ohio)

**PP of North Carolina Convention**
March 3-8, 2006
(Raleigh, North Carolina)

**South Dakota Winter Seminar
w/ Trevon Baker**
March 5-6, 2006
(Sioux Falls, South Dakota)

**Children & Family Photo. Convention**
March 5-7, 2006
(Austin, Texas)

**Simone Class w/ Michael Koska**
March 7-10, 2006
(Columbia, South Carolina)

**Business Class with Attitude!**
March 14-16, 2006
(Boston, Massachusetts)

**SW PPA Convention**
March 18-22, 2006
(Arlington, Texas)

**Simone Class w/ Suna Lee Photo.**
March 26-28, 2006
(McLean, Virginia)

**Triangle School w/ Trevon Baker**
March 26-31, 2006
(Greentree, Pennsylvania)

**Heart of America Convention**
April 1-5, 2006
(Omaha, Nebraska)

**WPPI Convention & Trade Show**
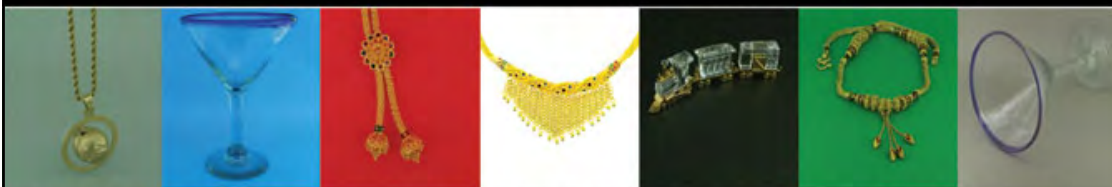April 7-11, 2006
(Las Vegas, Nevada)

**Texas School w/ Simone Class**
April 23-28, 2006
(College Station, Texas)

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