

Star Shots Photography

*Photographer Star Dewar Spins Her
Magic To Capture Timeless Moments*

By Jim Brumm

Sitting with Star Dewar in her photography studio nestled in the hills above Santa Rosa, I was struck by how peaceful and inviting the setting was. Upstairs in a building adjoining the home she shares with her husband, Star's studio smells of pine from the trees rustling in the late spring breeze outside. The counters are festooned with photos of clients past; tripods and lighting fixtures stand waiting for the next clients.

Paintings of dolphins adorn her walls along with a large mirror in the shape of Texas. But you don't need the mirror to know Star is a Texas girl; speak to her for a moment and you'll hear the soft, Gulf-Coast drawl that infuses her speech.

Star grew up in Houston, Texas, where, from age three to 14, she studied dance (at a school run by Patsy Swayze, actor Patrick Swayze's mother). "I always thought I would be a dancer," said Star. She was also self-described "surfer girl," hitting the waves along the Gulf Coast. After finishing school Star began a self-study course in interior design. "I knew I was a creative person," she said. "I started going to the library to learn everything I could about design."

At age 23 she found a job as an interior designer for Sears, while continuing to teach dancing on the side. From there she moved to a higher-end interior design studio for four years while still teaching at a large dance studio at night.

When she was 29, she came to California on a motorcycle trip and discovered

Armstrong Woods in Guerneville. She fell in love with the area and moved to Sebastopol in 1979.

Star had always been interested in photography, and in 1975, she bought her first professional-grade 35 millimeter camera. "It



Star Dewar

was another form of expression for me," she said. While teaching dance she would often photograph her students in action; photography became as large a part of her life as dance. After teaching ballet, tap and jazz dance for seven years in Sonoma County, Star suffered two ruptured discs in her back that put her out of commission for a quarter-year. She had to quit dance in order to recover.

After her injury healed enough to work again, Star found a job working for a corporation taking photos for catalogues and advertisements. She stayed for nine years, honing her technical skills with a camera. Later, she was hired by Robert Pierce Photography Studios as a manager. After years of working for others, Star, already having built a photography studio at home, decided to pursue her passion and start her own photography business. In 2004 she stopped teaching after 27 years and struck out on her own with Star Shots Photography.

Every home has a camera. We've all taken pictures of friends, parties, scenes we want to remember. The difference is, most people pick up a camera and take a snapshot. Star Dewar picks up a camera and captures magic.

The problem is that so many people are uncomfortable with a camera pointed at them. They try to smile, and come up with a grimace; just knowing they are being seen through a lens makes them stiff and uncomfortable. Star, with her soothing persona, easy-going attitude and generous people skills, turns self-consciousness into self-esteem, tension into peacefulness and a potentially uncomfortable situation into a fun, magical time.

“People often don’t want to come in for head shots,” said Star. “They’re doing it because they have to. The highlight of my life is to hear them say afterward, ‘wow, I look pretty good!’ I ask them to go to that beautiful place in their hearts; the sweet spot in their soul. And when they do, something changes in their eyes. It’s so much more than just being a technician.”

Those who come to Star thinking they are just going to get a boring head shot, find instead that Star has managed to capture their truest form—their essence—with her camera. “My vision when I started this was to spend more time with my clients,” said Star, “to take the time we need to get the perfect shot instead of running everyone through on a tight schedule which lets no one relax.” She offers a popular style of photography she calls “Goddess Shots,” a fun, lighthearted session for women to capture their true, inner beauty. “When I’m photographing women, I take plenty of time, offer more clothing changes, lots of playfulness and fun. *I can see how beautiful they are. I want them to know they’re beautiful.*”

In addition to portraits and corporate head shots, Star excels at photographing weddings. Being a wedding photographer is a true art. The photographer must capture all of the necessary staged photos without being obtrusive, then must circulate through the crowd capturing as many beautiful, candid shots as possible, again, without being a pest. If the guests become too aware of the photographer, they will stiffen up for the camera. “At weddings, after we do the formal shots you won’t know I’m there,” said Star. “I get kudos from guests and clients that I was almost invisible.” Photos of past



Star Dewar specializes in capturing the essence of her clients with stunning portraits



Wildlife photography is one of Star’s passions

weddings sit framed in her studio, each more stunning than the last.

“I love connecting with people and letting them know how good they look,” she said. “When someone looks at an image of them I’ve created, sometimes they don’t say anything, but their

eyes tell it all. I love making them happy and getting them the image they always wanted.”

Star excels at weddings, family portraits, bar and bat mitzvahs, boudoir photography, goddess shots and corporate head shots. In addition, she is a talented and passionate wildlife photographer. With a lifetime affinity for animals, Star is the administrator of the Wildlife Center in Kenwood and an avid advocate for marine mammals. Twisting a silver dolphin bracelet on her arm, she speaks passionately of her work with dolphins and other marine mammals. “I first photographed whales and dolphins underwater in nineteen-ninety-four,” she said. “Doing that made it clear to me that I was supposed to teach children to save the ocean. Working with animals made me feel that they were telling me that I could change the world.” Star frequently does presentations to school children and organizations on the subject of marine mammals and ocean ecology.

In some primitive cultures, people feel that a camera captures the soul. In Star Dewar’s case, they would be right. Her intuitive skills with a camera enable her to capture the soul of whatever subject she’s photographing, no matter who it is, or what it is.

You can reach Star Dewar and Star Shots Photography at 707-539-8974 or visit www.stardewar.com