

Breaking into The Biz

Check out our exclusive interview with celebrity photographer Christopher Ameruso from the Angela Kinsey photo shoot.

Full name: Christopher Ameruso Age: 41 Residence: Los Angeles, Calif.

What sparked your interest in photography? How/when did you know that was what you wanted to do? I have always had an interest in photography. My dad was always great with the camera and I always loved what he did with photos. I was in a rock band with my three brothers most of my life. Up until about six years ago, I decided to make photography my new career. I first approached Janeane Garofalo with her dog Dew about doing a shoot. From there it was the snowball effect for the next two-and-a-half years. I photographed just about everyone I asked in the Hollywood area.

How did you get into celebrity photography? I would imagine like the rest of the industry that it is very difficult to establish yourself in that community. Oh it was so hard to get started! If I had a dime for everyone that told me it would be impossible to do what I'm doing now, I would be rich. Lord knows I can't get rich from the publishing world. This is one of the toughest businesses to be in. It is so hard to keep track of your images and what people are doing like selling and syndicating your photos without permission as well as selling your work. But I love what I do.

Who has been your favorite person to photograph and why? I have many favorites that I have photographed so that would be really hard to pin down. Each shoot I have done has a personal and special meaning to me. I do remember just about every shoot I have done to date. Considering I'm in the 300s, that is pretty special in itself. People are so different when they are around their pets; I get to see that gentle side of everyone.

Do you have any pets? Tell us about them. I had a grey-cheeked parrot named Peewee for 15 years. He has just recently passed on. It was one of the hardest things I have ever experienced in my life. I have one dog now. Her name is Stella Blue. She is my angel. She is a Hairless Chinese Crested. I have had her for eight years now and I don't know what I would do without her.

What equipment do you love and why? I love using Olympus cameras. They have been very supportive of me and my work from the start and they make a great product. Now I use the Olympus E-volt. I shoot only digital and do all my own retouching. Retouching is an art in itself and that is something I really love to do. All you need is the basic photograph that will be your canvas and then you can create the masterpiece.

What advice do you have for aspiring photographers? I give advice all the time for what it is worth. I have received numerous emails from aspiring photographers telling me that they have been inspired by my work and are fans. I'm glad that I can contribute to other peoples lives. People ask me how I got to where I'm at with my career and I tell them that there are a lot of discouraging people out there. Just follow your instinct and do not let people get the best of you. With all the new technology today there is no reason why you can't get your work out there for the world to see. Find what it is that you do best and stick with it.

What are your future career goals? Currently I am working on my next special for Animal Planet, Behind the Lens II Stars and Their Pets. That should be finished in the next month or so. I'm also working on tying my work into television specials and I plan to produce more television shows and start my own magazine. But I will always be working in the photography field.

How did the Angela Kinsey photo shoot go for you? Angela was great to work with. I have been a fan of the show The Office so it is always a treat for me to work with someone I like to watch on television. Photographing cats is very difficult and people have to understand that cats are very finicky. So you need to have a lot of patience while photographing them. Angelas cat was a bit intimidated so it took a bit more work but we did get some great shots.

How do you work differently with pets versus people in photo shoots? With pets I try and work quickly. I try to get what I need within the first 20 to 30 shots. Otherwise the pets get really restless and it shows in the photo.

If you could photograph anyone or anything who/what would it be and why? There are a handful of people that I would really like to work with, like Bono from U2, Tim Burton and Johnny Depp to name a few, and I'm sure one day I will. I would really love to go to a place like Africa and venture on a safari and just get some of the wildlife that I would



encounter. I would also like to visit Australia and do some shooting there; I hear that it is amazing.

To see more of Christopher Ameruosos amazing works and projects, go to www.chrisphoto.com. Posted: June 20, 2006, 5:00 a.m. EST