

Keep Calm and Carry Storage: Inside the Workflow of Celebrity Photographer and Educator Jeremy Cowart

"Limited only by his imagination, which is ever growing, Jeremy continues to push the boundaries of what's possible by mixing photography with cutting edge technology and distribution of that content. You would be hard pressed to find someone with their finger on the pulse of the future more than Jeremy Cowart."

— Mike Vogel, star of *Under the Dome* and *Cloverfield*

When you scan through the video lessons offered at Jeremy Cowart's new education site for photographers, [See University](#), you'll find one lesson missing. Yes, there are dozens of technical tutorials covering everything from the rule of thirds to skin retouching to Adobe® Lightroom® workflow. He has advice on production planning, taking risks, and how to see light. But there's one secret to being a wildly successful and innovative professional photographer that he keeps to himself, perhaps because it's so hard to articulate: how to control chaos.

A cursory look through Jeremy's portfolio reveals a who's-who of celebrities. Kelly Clarkson, Ryan Seacrest, Emma Stone, Sting, Nathon Fillion, Tim Tebow, Taylor Swift, and many others have all taken their turns before his camera. On-set, Jeremy has to be the ringleader of a frenzied circus, supervising everything from equipment and client calls to model posing and makeup. Through it all, he has to be the eye of a creative storm. His mind must stay clear in order to recognize opportunities and create excellence within the moment's flow.

Under the best conditions, a shoot is an intense environment. It can feel like a race car with the gas jammed to the floor. Part of Jeremy's job lies within his ability to remain rock steady and project calm in the midst of that chaos. His subjects appreciate this and respond well to it under the lights. It helps to keep his crew focused and directed. Certainly, some of this easy calm springs from his nature, but some is intentionally cultivated. Jeremy's peace of mind comes from removing as many sources of worry and distraction as possible, often by having the perfect tools on hand to keep his workflow moving smoothly.

Peace of mind can keep a career on track and provide a force field against chaos. Just look at Jeremy, a guy who nearly flunked college photography and, through personal insight and quiet determination, now runs his own photography school. Peace of mind can be the foundation against which an artist might push off and lift up the world.



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Zen and the Workflow of Art

Whether in the field or studio, Jeremy shoots with his camera tethered either to a Mac Pro® or a MacBook Pro®. Files stream into the system's hard drive and copy in real-time to either a G-DRIVE® mini or a G-DRIVE® mobile with Thunderbolt™. This way, there is never a single point of failure for storage. Practically as soon as Jeremy snaps the image, there are two copies. Moreover, capturing straight into the editing system allows Jeremy to apply color treatments and other basic filtering immediately so that on-site clients have a better idea of how images will look at the post-production stage. Many times, clients will request an untouched copy of the shoot's RAW files, and in such cases a dock-based duplication system, such as G-Technology's G-DOCK ev® with Thunderbolt™ system, makes having a full copy ready to travel out the door effortless and all but instantaneous. Meanwhile, Jeremy's crew never has fewer than two copies on hand.

Of course, Jeremy's team faces many more storage challenges. For most assignments, crew members also shoot video, both as secondary assets for the client as well as other projects, such as video lessons on See University. When drives come back into the main office, they get copied into a live editing drive, Jeremy's recently acquired G-Technology G-SPEED® Studio XL, and images whisk straight into post-production.

"On any given day, there can be multiple different shoots that are in production," says Jeremy. "Plus we've always got requests for things coming from other shoots, too, even from shoots that happened two years ago. We have to be able to pull up from our library — instantly — the original edit, reprocess those shoots, spit them out if they need changes, or just send them an entire library again. Having everything immediately accessible is critical, especially when content like celebrity images, TV shows, and advertising stuff gets used over and over."

Even ignoring the video, Jeremy's capacity and throughput needs are substantial. He generally shoots medium format digital cameras, which capture RAW images in the 80MB range. A typical shoot will generate three to four thousand such images. One shoot alone requires a significant amount of processing, but multiply that by the scores of shoots Jeremy's team will crank through in a year. Multiply again by the need to duplicate many files several times throughout production, backup, and archiving. Also realize that heavy days may involve having to work on several projects at once, multi-tasking within each project.



G-SPEED® Studio XL with Thunderbolt™

It would all be more than any person or even team could manage without the right gear making the mad juggling act possible.

"Everything's about time," Jeremy says. "Think about burning twenty minutes, half an hour for a transfer. That's time you aren't spending processing something. You're just waiting for data to move. That immediacy of file availability is a huge change in mindset from my old workflows. That's partly why the G-SPEED Studio XL has given me quite a bit of peace of mind and stress relief."

Peace From a Paradigm Shift

An entire section on Jeremy's site showcases his Polaroid photography. It proves the point that, in talented hands, art is never so much about the tool as how the tool gets used and the vision behind it. On the surface, the G-SPEED Studio XL is a direct-attached storage (DAS) box. Roughly the size of a game console, the unit can accommodate up to eight hot-swappable drives, reaching a current top capacity of 64TB. With all of this Enterprise-class hard disk capacity teamed into any of the enclosure's many available RAID levels, the G-SPEED Studio XL can reach throughput speeds of up to 1350 MB/s over its dual Thunderbolt 2 ports.

If he needed it to, Jeremy has enough bandwidth with the G-SPEED Studio XL to support multi-stream compressed 4K workflows, and he does see his business growing in that direction. Today, most of his work remains still images, so his priority is less about live editing bandwidth and more about capacity and achieving the shortest possible transfer times.

"Before the Studio XL," Jeremy says, "I had eight drives piled on my desk — three or four RAID boxes, then backups of those, then stray drives coming in and out. It was visually chaotic and very annoying, because I couldn't remember what was where. I would always be mounting drives just to see what was on them, so it was



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JEREMY'S DRIVES

G|DRIVE[®] mobile ⚡
with Thunderbolt™
MOBILE CAPTURE



G|DOCK[®] ev[™] ⚡
with Thunderbolt™
STUDIO TRANSFER



G|DRIVE[®] mini
BACK UP



G|SPEED[®] STUDIO XL ⚡
with Thunderbolt™
WORK ARCHIVE





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super inefficient. I've always wanted a drive that was crazy fast and had enough capacity to contain everything I've ever done, whether that be design work or photography or family shoots. I want everything, ever, in one place. That wasn't possible until the Studio XL."

All of the old, laborious synchronization that used to invade Jeremy's workflow vanished as soon as he had a single solution able to deliver all of his needs from capacity to RAID protection. Naturally, he understands that accidents still happen, so he brought in a second identical G-SPEED Studio XL to keep at home. Periodically, he will bring the second unit in to clone from the first, but even this represents an improvement over his past approach. With all data centralized, his team is finally able to implement a coherent, consistent file naming system and a greatly streamlined workflow that has resulted in untold hours saved and markedly higher project productivity.

"The Studio XL allowed me to reorganize my entire workflow in terms of how my files are structured and how I organize them," he says. "I brought over my pieces from my family drive and my celebrity work drive and past weddings and the work I've done around the world. All those things were living separately. Now I have them together. I can go into Lightroom® and change all my keywording, keep my masters on Dropbox matched to my G-SPEED Studio XL... Everything about my storage workflow is better now."

Searching for the right metaphor, Jeremy can do no better than to tell the story of someone who recently toured his studio. Surrounded by a dizzying collection of photographic gear, the visitor asked which one of the toys was Jeremy's favorite. Without hesitation, he pointed to the G-SPEED Studio XL on his desk.

"That's your life. It's like Michelin tires. That's your life riding on your hard drives."

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