

The "Y" and HOW to Simple Studio Lighting

Making Studio Lighting simple again

With

John Chandler, CPP

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The most daunting task for any new or aspiring photographer who wants to add “Studio” lighting to their repertoire is understanding where and “Y” you place your Studio Lights. What I will present here is a simplified reduction of this complex task. You have to start somewhere right? So here we go.

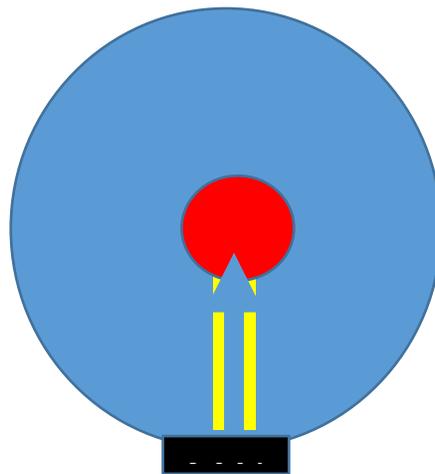
The “Y” and How of Studio Lighting begins with understanding facial lighting patterns. These lighting patterns describe the lighting patterns (highlights and shadows) on the face of your subject. These lighting patters and main light placement are:

Butterfly	Main light is placed directly in front of and 18-24” above the face of your subject
Loop	The main light moves either camera left or right and is placed the same distance from the subject as you used for Butterfly (imagine an arc).
Rembrandt	The main light moves even further left, or right, from the Camera You will see a patch of light in a V shape on the cheek opposite the light,
Side	The main light has now moved to the side of the subject. The light will bright on the light side and very dark opposite the light. Remember the B&W album covers from the 60s? This is also called “Split Lighting” if a reflector, or fill light is not used.
Rim	The light now moves even further around and to the left or right rear corners of the subject. Very dramatic. Excellent for capturing B&W silhouettes. Also, great placement for additional lights that serve as “Kickers.”

Metering your light. If you use Flashes I strongly recommend you purchase and learn how to use a light meter. BUT you may choose to use the new LED Light Sticks. If that is the case simply use the meter in your camera and meter on the forehead, or brightest spot, in the image.

Butterfly Pattern

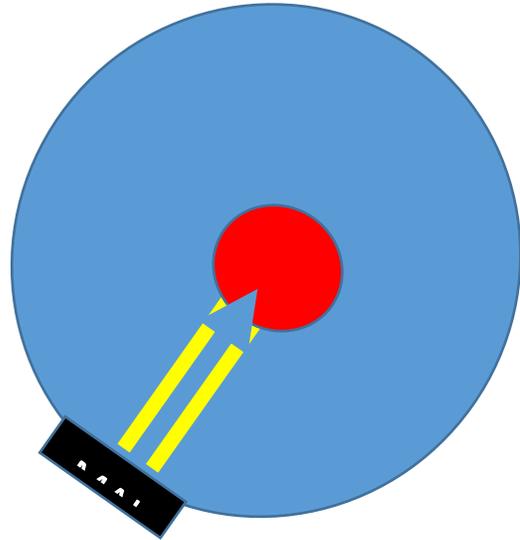
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Butterfly

Loop Pattern

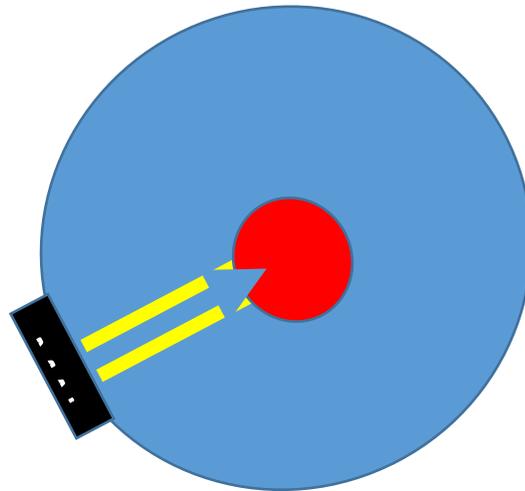
The main light moves either camera left or right and is placed the same distance from the subject as you used for Butterfly (imagine an arc). You will see a shadow dropping down from the side of her nose on the left side of her nose.



Loop Pattern

Rembrandt

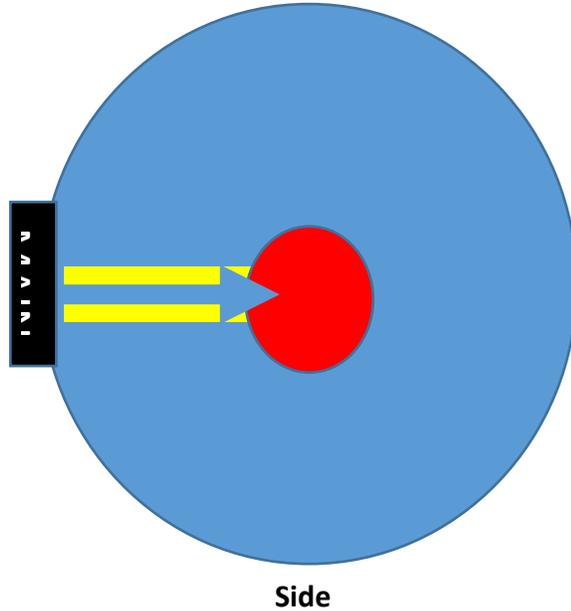
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Rembrandt

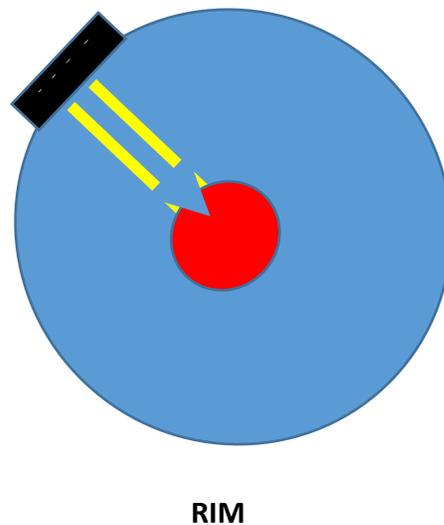
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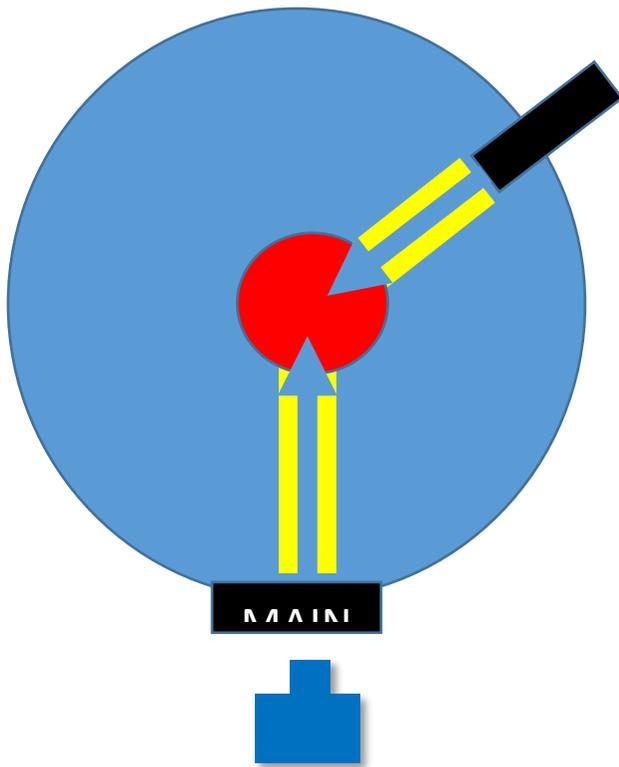
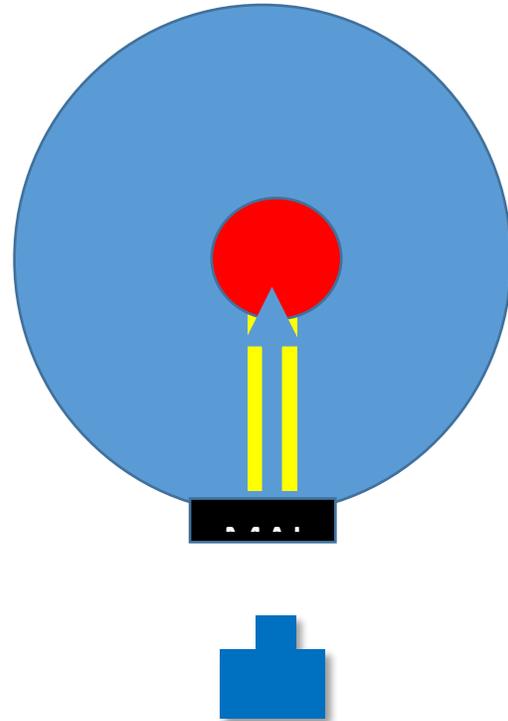
Rim

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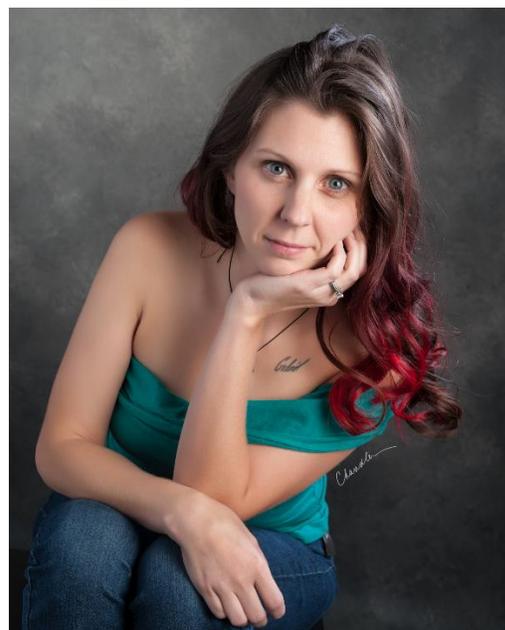


That was the “HOW” you do lighting patterns. Now for the “Y” of Studio Lighting.

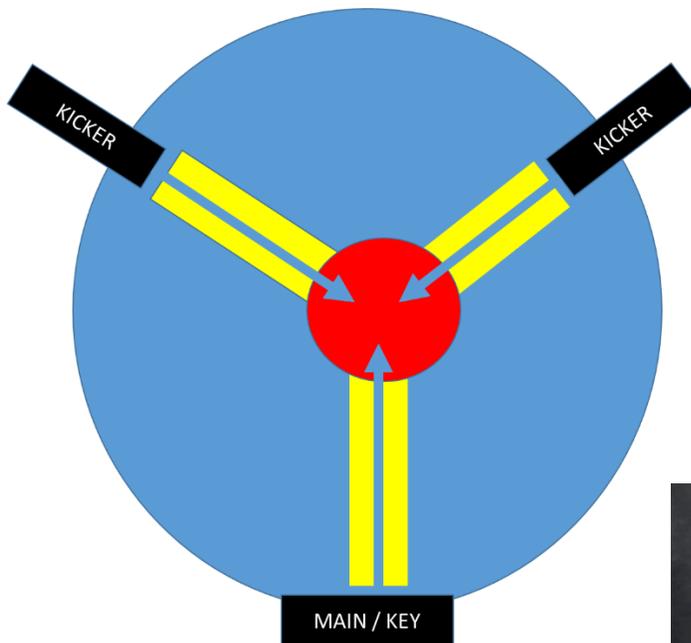
We start off very simply with a single light “BUTTERFLY” lighting set up. This will produce a wonderful image of the subjects face, but may be “FLAT.” Meaning that the image does not have a 3D look and could resemble an ID Card photo. To correct that we add a “Kicker” Light.



Here we add our FIRST “KICKER” light. This can be an inexpensive strobe that works in SLAVE (meaning the light from the Main light trips it) This light is placed at a 45 deg (or less) angle with the Main. It will light up the back and side of the subject “separating” the subject from the background. A very professional look.



Now we complete the basic “Y” of the image and add another kicker. This kicker will go on the side opposite our first kicker and look like this.



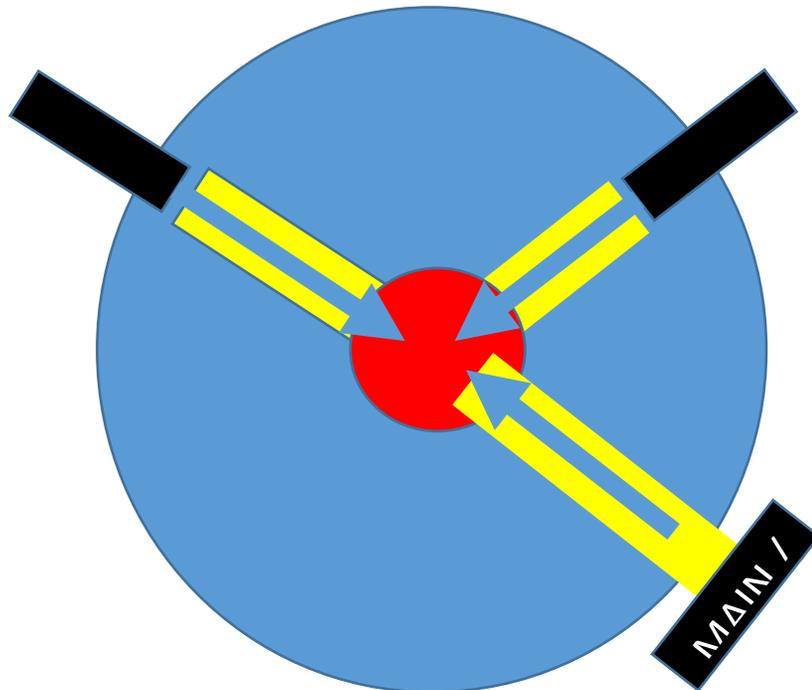
When you set your light up like this you have to now begin to learn about LIGHTING RATIOS. Let explain. The Main light, on the base of the Y will be your brightest light. Meter this to be F.8. Then meter your kickers to be at least ONE F.stop less than your main. Meter them to be F 5.6 (or less). The great difference between your main and kickers the more contrast you may capture.



You can now understand how simple the “Y” and how is so simple for Studio Lighting. This will get you started in a confident manner that you can easily replicate over and over.

NEXT? We learn how to move the Main light to adjust the lighting patterns.

Moving the “Y” to suit your creative needs. The important thing to remember here is to move one thing at a time. Don’t start moving ALL the lights or turning your subject. Posing now becomes a big part in your lighting. REMEMBER these three easy things; POSE IT, LIGHT IT, SHOOT IT! It is not any more complicated than that right?



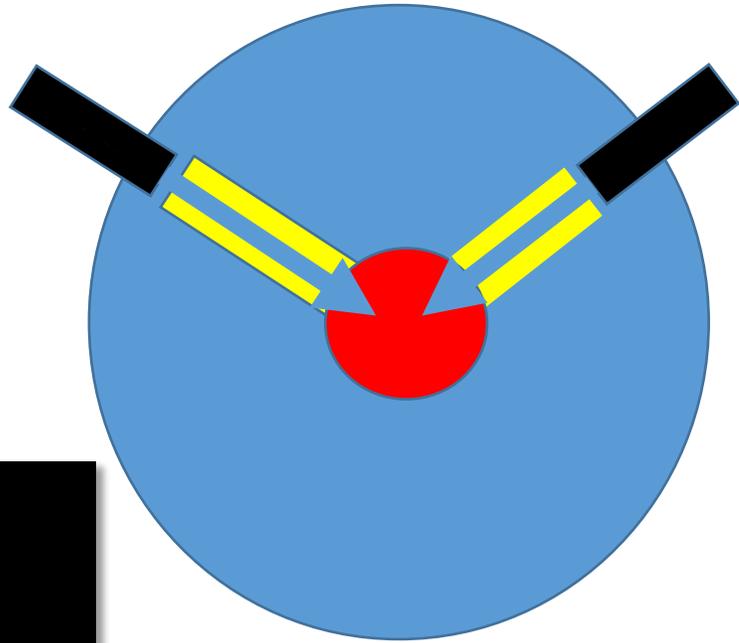
All we have done here is move the Main Light to camera RIGHT into a LOOP Lighting pattern. You can shoot many kinds of wonderful images with this lighting setup.



So learn to move the MAIN light to suit your Pose is a big step forward. Minor moves, left or right, with the main light can create the drama you want to add to your images. Remember you POSE your image before you light it! Posing is creating the look you want, or if you were a chef, Posing is how you want your image to “Taste!” Lighting is how you cook that recipe. There must be a combination of Posing and Lighting to create that masterpiece you strive to capture.

AND now for that very simple silhouette!

To make quick, simple and impressive silhouettes all you have to do is turn off your Main Light and light your subject with your Kickers. Remember to adjust your aperture to match the light of your Kickers, OR increase your kickers to match what your main setting was. Expect that you may have to underexpose the image to get the drama you want.



Silhouette

