

Hekaya Digital Storytelling

Cumulus Testimonial - Greg and Leonie Marinovich



Hekaya Digital Storytelling is a non-profit organisation focused on training people in *Digital Storytelling* based in Johannesburg South Africa, founded by Leonie Marinovich.

Background

Born in South Africa in 1962, Greg Marinovich is a Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer and is co-author of *The Bang Bang Club*, a nonfiction book on South Africa's transition to democracy (currently being made into a feature film, starring Ryan Philippe). He is currently Editor-in-Chief of *TwentyTen*, a pan African training project.

Greg has spent 18 years doing conflict, documentary and news photography around the globe. His photographs have appeared in top international publications such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian of London*, among others. He is chair of the World Press master Class nominating committee for Africa, and was a World Press Photo judge in 1994 and 2005, as well as convener of the FujiFilm awards in 2000. In 2009 he was the recipient of the Nat Nakasa award for courageous journalism.

His passion for storytelling led him to the documentary film world, and he has produced, directed and shot numerous short films covering subjects such as child soldiers and Pygmies in Cameroon and Uganda. He travelled to Afghanistan to interview Ahmed Shah Massoud shortly before his death.

Married to photographer, Leonie Marinovich, they founded *Hekaya Digital Storytelling* in 2009 to stimulate and promote documentary photography on the African continent. They are currently in the process of starting up an African based agency, storytaxi.com.

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Cumulus Solution

During 2008 we were commissioned to produce a photography book on the DRC, documenting life in a country that has been riddled by social problems. Trying to manage the work produced by 5 photographers, drove us to search for an archiving solution. We had realized by then that the sheer volume of work generated by the advent of digital cameras necessitated a software solution that was not available bundled with picture editing software.

After a period of trial and error and some capital investment, we came to the reluctant conclusion that the product we had invested in, could not cope with the volume of raw images and we had to find an alternative solution.

Greg recalled using Cumulus during his career as a newspaper/wire photographer and we were delighted to discover that there was now a single-user license available.

We now use Cumulus to manage not only all our RAW pictures, but since we have started doing multimedia, we use it to manage our media files and audio files.

Challenges

Audio files have proven to be quite a headache since we couldn't figure out a way to add metadata to .mp3 and other audio files. With Cumulus it is easy, we allocate categories and keywords, the same way we manage the picture information. We can now finally find all data related to a specific category, RAW, mp3 and mov files.

Workflow with Cumulus

Our workflow is as follows, since we are mainly documentary photographers, most of our work is generated in the field, in terms of volume, it means that on a recent week-long shoot in Benin, Leonie generated 4,000 (that added up to 50GB) photos that had to all be edited into various stories as required by the client:

We ingest pictures from the cards and convert them immediately to .dng, using ImageIngester Pro, a standalone application that allows us to capture in the field on our laptops, and create simultaneous backups. We also use this software to add GPS tagging data that is extremely useful for clients who are adding projects to Google Earth.

From there the photos are opened in Lightroom where a basic edit is done, a rating assigned and captions fine-tuned.

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When we return to the office, these files, using a consistent naming convention that might look like this: GREGM_003435.dng

They are then copied to the backup drives in the office, and then logged using Cumulus. During the logging process, files are allocated further to specific categories, for instance. We have a Main Category: Sport, but a sub category: soccer, and so forth.

In the case of Benin, the 4,000 pictures had to be subdivided into 3 major photo stories as well as stock pictures for the NGO this was done for. So my Category tree will look like this:

Client Name

- Child Protection
 - o Vulnerable Children
 - o Child Labour
 - o Child Trafficking

Where we have a significant client with a lot of recurring work, we create a category just for them because they are most likely to come back to you sometime in the future and request re-edits. The edits are added to Collection Baskets reflecting the client's different requirements, i.e. Multimedia shows, Advocacy Stories, Education Stories, Fundraising Stories, Funders' Reports etc. We export the dng files to formats the client can work with, sized appropriately for its purpose.

Keywording will further fine-tune the categorization of media files. This is much more specific than assigning categories. The nice thing about Cumulus is that you can create hierarchies of keywords. For Instance, the Africa keyword structure appears like this:

Africa

DRC

- Kinshasa
- Goma
- Kolwezi
- Lubumbashi

Zambia

- Copperbelt
- Lusaka

Backups

We use a triple backup system: 1 hard drive will contain working files which are manipulated

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using Lightroom & Photoshop, from that we have 1 Hard Drive Backup mirroring exactly that drive, 1 Hard Drive that is archived off-site and DVD copies also mirroring the directory structure. We suffered a break-in last year during which all our hard drives were stolen but the DVDs saved us. It is a tedious process but one I will never neglect again. Again, Cumulus can log all the data from all these diverse media.

The Future with Cumulus

We are on the cusp of starting a fair trade agency for African photographers – Story Taxi - and we are planning to use Cumulus in that venture though we are still figuring out the best way to do that efficiently and easily. We look forward to getting support from DataBasics the distributor of Cumulus as we go forward.

Technical Specifications

Cumulus 8.1 Single User

Desktop: Mac 10.6.2

Hard drives, various, mostly Seagate drive inside various boxes.

In the field we use portables, and at home we have desktop external HD and also a 6 Tb server.

Cumulus Single User Distributor : DataBasics <http://www.databasics.com.au>

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ADDENDUM A – References

Greg Marinovich Portfolio: <http://www.photoshelter.com/c/gregmarinovich>
<http://globalassignment.gettyimages.com/Greg-Marinovich/Portfolio-08/Default.aspx>

Leonie Marinovich Portfolio: <http://www.photoshelter.com/c/leonie>

Alex Duval Smith: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/alexduvalsmith>
<http://www.france24.com/en/category/tags-auteurs/alexandra-duval-smith>

Documentary Work: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO7jt4KOo3o>

A moving account by a former ANC militant, Linda Bayi, about growing up without a father and the aspirations he have for his own family. Filmed in Thokoza as part of a longer documentary following ex SDUs (members of Self Defence Units) - Director: Greg Marinovich, Camera: Dusko Marovic, Editor: Zana Marovic, Producer: Leonie Marinovich

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nEjTPQh7NVA>

A multimedia presentation of photographs about the Aids epidemic in South Africa. It ranges from the years before the introduction of antiretroviral drugs when the disease was a death sentence to today.

Publishing & Print : <http://issuu.com/lmarinovich/docs/prospects> OR <http://www.prospectsofbabel.com>