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Another year gone by...

I can't believe it's been a year since my last post.

2021 hasn't exactly been easy for all of us. I was hit with Covid-19 in January. I had a high fever, joint aches, chills, migraines, and difficulty breathing. I was stubborn and didn't go to the hospital. As I was nearing the end of my infection, I also caught Covid Pneumonia, so that was great for my lungs as well.

Here we are, near the end of the year, and I still have to catch my breath at times. I guess the best I can describe it, is I feel like I'm seriously out of shape and catching my breath. I weigh 170-173 pounds and 6' tall. The cold weather feels better on my lungs than the hot and humid summer weather.

my hairstyle is normally a very short, almost military style buzz. After recovering from Covid, I started shaving my head completely bald. Maybe it was a subconscious thing about germs (Howie Mandel anyone?), but I've kept it nice and smooth. I have to shave every morning, and let me tell you... keeping it smooth takes more work than my old buzz cut lol.

in any case, I haven't done much this year in terms of photography. Of course when the holidays come around, everyone starts asking me what my cars will be this year. It's sort of turned into a tradition, and people come to look forward to it. I can't let my fans down. ;)

I went and looked back over my increasingly growing photo files. I started doing these fun Christmas cards back in 2013, when my son was 2 years old. That's 9 years!

We went on a family vacation this year to Florida. We didn't hit up Disney World or Star Wars Galaxy's Edge (much to my dismay). We went to Sea World, Discovery Cove (highly recommend), and Universal Studios.

my wife is a huge Harry Potter fan, so of course we visited the areas devoted to that franchise. Neither of my kids had seen any of the movies, but of course upon returning home, they went on a Harry Potter binge watch. Ever since, every weekend when we let them watch movies on the projector, one of the movies is always one of the eight Harry Potter movies.

so of course this year's theme had to be Harry Potter inspired.

like always, I procrastinated. Both parents working full-time jobs, 2 kids in school, my son also in a gifted program, and my daughter part of the Student Council Association. She's in dance twice a week, and in the fall and spring, my son is in soccer. Parenthood and adulthood consume more hours than there are in the days.

my thought process is, if I'm going to build a surreal or fantasy atmosphere or world, I like to get my scene setup before I produce any photographs. I scoured the internet looking for items, scenery, etc that I could use as part of my image. Places like [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com) and pngal.com are great places to find images you can use.

it can be easy to just open Photoshop and start pasting bits and pieces all over the place, but you have to make sure they work together, and look like they were actually part of the scene. I would go through each piece and make sure the lighting was correct in relation to where the item was placed. When I was finished, my image had 61 layers, and that was after merging several layers together.

For our photos that I was going to incorporate, I took my son and daughter's photos individually, and then my wife and I together. It was a simple 2 light setup. I used my Fuji XT-3 and 23mm f/1.4 lens for all of the portraits.

The image I used for the main setting had a lot of frames hanging on the walls. I didn't want to leave them as-is with random paintings, so I made sure to stick photos of us (and our dog), to fill them in.

Overall I'm happy with the results. I should have started on this project back in November, but again, I procrastinated lol.



I hope everyone has a safe and happy holidays, and hopefully 2022 will be something for all of us to smile about.