

Dec 10, 2018 · 3 min read

Surprise for Santa

Updated: Dec 14, 2018

Every year I'm tasked with coming up with a fun picture for our family Christmas cards we send out. In years past I've done my two kids out in the snow trying to hitch a ride to the North Pole, My son levitating several ornaments while dressed like a Jedi, etc.

My two kids are... mischievous. They are darlings, but they tend to do things on an urge, my son especially. Of course little sister wants to do everything big brother does, so you see my dilemma. :)

As always, I'm running late with projects I want to do. We've already received a few holiday cards, and here I am still not done. Just so happens this weekend we had a nice winter storm and accumulated around 8-10" of snow in our area. Work was shutdown today (well, the office was closed. Being in IT, I'm still working regardless of where I physically am). I finally broke down last night to set things up and get the picture done. I didn't have to get up early to go to the office as I could work from my laptop in my pajamas lol.

My house is small (1,200 sq. ft), so I don't have a lot of room to setup a photo shoot. I'll move furniture around the living room to clear space. I setup a roll of thunder grey seamless in the living room, and two 32" soft-boxes. I used Flashpoint/Godox ad200 strobes for this shot, as well as my Fuji XT-3 and 23mm f/1.2 lens.



I found a great desktop background I used as the setting at <http://1zoom.me> that was Christmas themed.

So my whole idea was to have the kids being mischievous with Santa Claus. I wanted poor Santa over-powered and at the mercy of these two kids. Now the background I used, though beautiful, didn't have a lot of space to work with. If I were going to put my two kids into the frame, I wouldn't have a lot of room for the big guy, so I decided to just have part of him in the image.

I had bought some baggy Santa pajama pants some time ago, for use specifically for this shot (and to actually wear as pajama pants). I had my wife put them on and sit down just out of camera view. I wanted the legs and boots to be in the frame, and nothing else. I wrapped her legs with some Christmas lights, as if Santa was tied up.



Next, I wanted my daughter, being the small-fry that she is, to look like it was her that over-powered jolly ol' Saint Nick. We had a plastic toy bat we used as a prop.



Blue isn't her favorite color, so I changed the bat a bit to make it more purple. :)

Next up, my son. Going after the spoils of war. I wanted him to look like he had grabbed Santa's toy sack, and was happy with his loot. I had a light inside the bag that I was going to use to shine up at his face, and later post-process it as maybe a "magic" effect, but I liked the original shot as-is. It still gave a soft glow you can see in the bag.



After all of that, I had to figure out how to combine them all so they looked like they were all part of the picture.



So after all that, my wife said we needed a "family" picture to put on the cards. Trying to wrangle two kids and get them to look at a camera I'm not standing behind is a chore.

After many takes, we ended up with a somewhat decent one. Here is all of us trying to act normal...



And then the real us comes out.



Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season!