How four top dog photographers capture unforgettable images

By Katie Ingmire

Whether they capture the bliss of a sleeping Weimaraner puppy, the piercing gaze of a Siberian Husky’s blue eyes, or the fierce determination of a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel chasing a tennis ball, dog photographers give us imaginative — and sometimes unimaginable — views of the canine world. Each offers a unique perspective and artistic expression that celebrate our four-legged friends. We talked to four of today’s most prominent dog photographers and share some of their favorite photos.

Miguel Betancourt
In Focus by Miguel • Mechanicsville, Va.

Q: How did you get started in dog photography?
A: I was showing dogs in South America. I bought a camera just to photograph, and people started to approach me (during the shows). With a camera, you can share the photos that you’ve taken. To have that experience (of seeing photos of their dogs), people get really excited.

Q: What do you like most about photographing dogs?
A: I like the traveling part. I travel a lot for my photo shoots. I go to California, Washington state, Canada a few times a year, and visit Florida a few times a year, and New York. I enjoy finding the location and trying to make things work. I also enjoy all the challenges I have to go through to get the photos (such as weather, dog behavior, and traveling). I also enjoy con-
ncting with the people and with the dogs.
Q: What is your favorite type of dog to photograph?
A: It really doesn’t matter to me (in terms of breeds).

Q: What is one of your most interesting dog photography experiences?
A: I had this new client who contacted me to go to Boise, Idaho. My camera bag got lost in Cincinnati. I was flying to Salt Lake City, and then (going to) drive to Idaho. When I arrived, my cameras were not there. I complained to the people there. They gave me a coupon for $10. ... In a few minutes, I had to make a decision (to call the client or try to find a camera). I talked to people in the airport. In Salt Lake City, they have a huge camera store. I called in and said I needed to buy a camera. I was able to get it and drive hours to the location to photograph the dog. I was charging the battery while I was driving. Nobody found out until after the fact. I go through things like that all the time.

Q: What is your secret to a great dog photo?
A: There’s no one secret. It’s very complex. Studies are involved, science is involved, and art is involved to make really good photos.

Finding a good location is really important — a location that will compliment the dog. Also, I like to get unique locations for each dog. If I photograph a Rottweiler, I don’t want a German Shepherd Dog named Fifi to have the same location.

I want to make the dog feel really comfortable. Connecting with the dog is really important. (So is) studying the subject. If I’m photographing a dog, I like to look at recent photos and go to the dog show to understand more about the dog (such as his strengths and weaknesses). It will help me understand more what I have to photograph.