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# Another Inspiring Conversation with David duChemin

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Today I'm incredibly pleased to be able to share a wonderfully inspiring conversation with my friend David duChemin. David is a world & humanitarian photographer and best-selling author, and international workshop leader. I am always inspired by our conversations, but today's hit the mark for me on so many levels, as you'll hear. I won't give away any more at this point, other than to say that I hope you enjoy my conversation, with David duChemin.

### Transcribed Conversation

As conversations with David are so valuable, I had this episode transcribed. Here is the transcription for your reference, and I hope you find this useful. Please let me know if you do find this useful. I'll get more done in the future if that's the case.

**Martin:** David, welcome back to the show. It's been too long, my friend.

**David:** Martin Bailey, it has been way too long. It's good to hear your voice again.

**Martin:** Yeah, we were just chatting before we hit the record button. It's probably been a good three years or so, and that just seems way too long. But it's nice to be back chatting with Mr. duChemin. We've got a lot to talk about and we've planned virtually zero of it. So, it's going to be fun.

**David:** This is a wing and a prayer, baby.

**Martin:** That's how I like it. I always enjoy my conversations with you, both in person and over the ether. So, I'm looking forward to this.

**David:** It's 5 o'clock here. So, this has perfectly coincided with happy hour. I realize you've probably only had your

first cup of coffee over there in Tokyo, but I've got a dram of whiskey beside me. So, who knows where this is going to go?

**Martin:** I would love to have a dram of whiskey. What's your favorite whiskey these days?

**David:** Do you know I'm drinking an actual Scottish whiskey right now, but my favorite whiskies hands-down are the Japanese whiskies.

**Martin:** Oh, these some good ones.

**David:** Oh, very good. Yeah, the Yamazaki is nice. My favorite are from the Nikka Distillery.

**Martin:** Yeah, oh, excellent.

**David:** I love them. They make probably five different whiskies that I think are just exceptional.

**Martin:** Hmm. I have a friend in Hong Kong. He sent me a book, 101 Whiskies to Try Before You Die or something like that. It's an amazing book. He got me a little bit into various whiskies and the best one that he recommended to me, if I can remember what it's called, I think it was Talisker.

**David:** Yeah.

**Martin:** I'm on my second bottle now this week and it's absolutely amazing. He also told me to drop a couple of pieces of ice in and just a splash of water to open it up. That's now become my favorite way to drink and probably my favorite whiskey as well.

**David:** Yeah, you'll get kicked out of some whiskey bars for putting ice into your whiskey in some places.

**Martin:** Yeah.

**David:** I say, it's horses for courses and

like you, I like to put a little bit of ice, in the summer anyway. Talisker is beautiful. I spent some time at their distillery on the Isle of Skye, Scotland. They make a very nice-- I used to not jokingly call it my daily whiskey, but I've learned that people that don't know me, somewhat misunderstand the concept there. So, my question about a book that is 100 Whiskies to Drink Before You Die, what are you going to do with the other 265 days in the year and how short is this lifespan going to be really? It seems like there should be many more whiskies in there if we're going to take it to the end of our lives.

**Martin:** Yeah, the thing, Nick, the gentleman that I mentioned, he has 20 or 30 bottles put by all the time and he'll just have one drink a day, but he's really enjoying it. I've only got one or two bottles. One cheap one that I'll mix with Coke and stuff and then another one that I'll drink either straight or on ice. I just like to have something nice put by. I think that's the thing. He went like a bull at the gate at it, trying to drink as many as he could, not in huge volumes, but he was trying to get this and that and it's just a nice thing to do. It's almost like a collection. It's got to be better than train spotting.

**David:** You know some people collect postage stamps, right?

**Martin:** Yeah, right. Excellent, though. So, what have you been up to?

**David:** Well, Martin, like everyone, I've been staring at the four walls of my office and studio and most of my time is given over to completely losing my mind at this point.

**David:** I stare longingly at photographs of Kenya and think why did I take it for granted.

**Martin:** Oh, no.

**David:** It's just the last few-- but it has been really productive and I'm very conscious of the fact that the pandemic has affected people in some very different ways, some of them very difficult. We've been very lucky in the sense that we're not desperate for making rent or finding groceries or anything. So, I spent the last year riding my bike and swimming and getting into shape. I figured once the writing was on the wall for how long we were all going to be stuck wherever we are, I doubled down. Usually, if my doctor says, "Are you active, David?" I would say, I crossed my fingers by my back and say, "Well, yeah." Meaning, I had a very active imagination perhaps, but not actually doing things and I decided this was it.

So, I've been swimming 6 to 8 kilometers a week and cycling 100 kilometers a week and just taking care of my physicality, which, I think, has really helped my state of mind. Right at the beginning, I don't know exactly the day all of this dropped for you in Japan, but in North America, it was March 17th and the reason I remember that date is because that was the official date that my most recent book was released to the world. It coincided exactly with the day that Amazon said, "We're not going to be sending a lot of books right now." So, it was just literally the most inauspicious time I could possibly have launched a book.

And that started it off. I've made a couple of courses and I've just stayed busy feeding my audience. The people that come to me for photography help and something that on my better days might be called wisdom. I've been concentrating on writing articles. Like you, I've been doing virtual lectures for

camera and photography clubs around the world, which has been really fun. I tell Cynthia, usually it happens around this time in the 5 o'clock in the evening on the West Coast and I will tell Cynthia, "I'm heading down to the studio and I'll be in Trinidad and Tobago for the next hour and a half," or "I'll be in Luxembourg." I've been everywhere. I've been in Australia. It's been pretty cool. There are limitations, of course with Zoom, but just to see some people and talk to people and feel like you're not totally cut off, I don't know about your experience, but I have found it just completely liberating. It's been wonderful.

**Martin:** I'd not really done any remote teaching or those kind of presentations until this. I think the first one I did was for a camera club in Canada last year and it was great. Just to get into that and meet people that I would have had no chance of meeting before really until that. But even this year, did a few sessions at the Out of Chicago Live Event. They invited me in the past but needed me to be there. This year, the whole thing was online, so it's actually open doors for me there.

Unfortunately, business-wise, with all of my tours going away, I'm probably 80% to 90% down. We're just finalizing the last fiscal year's books. A couple of months ago, I woke up and I literally fell to pieces in front of the mirror as I had a shave because I started to think about the fact that I was going to be talking with my accountant that day and he was going to show me how bad my books are. The first thing I did when I got onto Zoom with the accountant was said, "I don't want to look at my books until the end of the year, because this is killing me." So, I literally-- we stopped doing that. But like you said, it's opened up the doors. Being able to meet people around the world, make

a little bit of money doing that as well, I've noticed. It has been liberating in some ways. I've managed to build a lot of things and do a lot of things that I really wouldn't have time to do unless this had happened. So, it's the silver lining thing. As we are both founding members of the Almost Dead Photographer's Society I think that we're both in many ways, terminal optimists.

**David:** Yeah. I think you and I both have had enough experiences with our bodies failing us or us failing our bodies that there's a gratitude there when you train yourself to be grateful even when things are hard. It's not blind optimism. It's not turning your eyes to the reality of things. It has been a really hard year and I've woken up at times and thought, "Oh, man--" when all of this happened and the writing was on the wall for some very big opportunities that I'd created for myself, tours, conferences that I was producing, and the amount of money that went out the door to refunds and even just flights that I booked that-- I've just found out that Air Canada is finally saying, "We'll actually send you money instead of these credits you can't use."

But yeah, I can picture myself in your shoes and thinking as a lot of photographers have this year, things are changing and the so-called markets that we've relied on, the opportunities that we have pursued to make an income and by doing so, be able to do more of what we make, make more photography, make more books, make whatever it is that we do. Things have definitely changed. I've talked to a lot of photographers who are feeling like, "Ooh, I know that they've changed, but I don't know what they've changed into yet". They're changing, but the future is a little foggy right now and I'm trying-- I'm sure like you, I'm trying to put together a safari in Africa. I know you

do Namibia, I do Kenya and I'm dying to get back. Even though so many of my clients are-- they're Americans, now they're almost fully immunized and they're saying, "Let's get back to it," I'm like, "Yeah, it's not that simple." We still don't know what things look like in Kenya. We still really don't know what it's going to look like in six months, coming back from Kenya into our-- and I have a very international audience, so it's not just people returning to US, but Canada and France and England and who knows where. It's very complicated. Even people that don't do that kind of photography work are, I think, looking around and going, "Well, thing's dried up." What do I do now? That seems to be my prevailing question this year, is just every day I wake up and go, so, "what do I do now?"

Specifically, not in a hopeless way, but in today, what do I do today? Not just to engage in busy making work, but actually to move the needle on my business and my craft too. This has actually been a really good opportunity for me to look at old work and consider my next move. I like to put a fine art book out every couple of years as opposed to-- by that, as opposed to a teaching book. I actually today made contact with the printer and said, "So, how does this work with us not being able to meet in person, but I really want to start this new project?" and I think it's been a-- I'm not a glass half empty, or half full guy. I'm more like, well, it's probably both at the same time in some ways and the glass probably has a crack in it anyways.

I'm a much more complex person than that, but I do like to look at things and go, "How can we turn this? How can we at least make something of it?" So, in that sense, it's been an interesting year. I know a lot of people have done books. You're getting into, mic-- what would you

call it? Microscopic, microphotography?

**Martin:** Yeah, I'm still not really comfortable with the terminology. A lot of people call them micrographs, or micrography. But to me, it seems more like microphotography. Without the photo part in there, because it's still the current way I'm doing this, we're still capturing light. So, I prefer the word 'microphotography' but a lot of people use Micrography.

Kind of back to the mental state thing, I've been having nightmares for the last six months that I was in a particularly beautiful location with 12 to 14 participants, which is usually the situation in reality. I will be sitting in a hotel or somewhere and for some reason, the scene outside cannot be photographed. I've either lost my gear and I start to get people complaining to me, because this is not going well. It's all of the things that I worked so hard to not let happen on my tours.

They were all being forced on me every night. It was getting really, really bad. The moment I started shooting the first of these photographs through the microscope, the nightmares stopped. The last few weeks have been bliss, because I'm actually creating, I'm making images that I feel for the first time in a while are pretty creative and they're feeding my soul. So, the nightmares have stopped which is great.

But another part of it is because having the time to do it-- I was working way too hard on my app. I've still got to do an Android version, which I've started studying up on. But to me, when I start doing app development, it's creative in a way, I'm making things. Of course, it helps to keep the roof over our head, which is exactly the reason why I'm trying

to make that work as well. But I find that I go heads down or I say down periscope. Once I'm down periscope, I'm almost unreachable. I can be sitting on the sofa doing it and my wife can be talking to me, and, this is probably a problem with most men anyway, but my wife can be talking to me and I'll be miles away. I'll be in some four-dimensional code somewhere. So, it's not great for my relationship with my wife, which I value more than anything. I thought, you've got to do something that is literally purely creative and feed your soul again. And that's why I've scratched a childhood itch that I'd never looked into a microscope before and I thought, "You know what? I'm just going to get one!" and I ended up getting two different types. I've felt more creative these last few weeks than I have in many months. So, it's been great.

**David:** I love hearing that. That's fantastic. That's great.

**Martin:** So, I said when we started that we have no plan. We've already started to touch on this a little bit, but we had one word that we were going to work to and that was marketing. So, let's take a deeper dive into that and literally, that is all we said. What are your current thoughts? I know that you've got a few things that you're into, but as you were saying, things are changing and the way we're working is changing and that of course is going to lead into a natural result that the way we market is probably going to be changing as well. What are your thoughts on this at the moment?

**David:** Yeah, well, I have a lot of them. About 10 years ago, I had a book published called Vision Mongers. For a lot of photographers, maybe some of those of you that are listening, that was their introduction to my teaching. The subtitle was Making a Life and a Living in

Photography. It was essentially about how do we run a business, how do we market ourselves as photographers. I've been itching to re-explore that topic, because so much has changed since then. Back then, I would have said, "You're crazy [not] to be on social media." Now, I'm not on any form of social media and that's not that I would tell other people, "You shouldn't be on social," but the environment, the context in which many of us put our work out into market has changed dramatically. So, I've been looking at new ways of exploring that and things have really changed. Even over the last year, things have really changed. Especially in individual predicaments, people that have had a certain business model that I've seen it completely disappear on them. This is not new. Several years ago, I think it was around 2014 that Facebook, just all of a sudden, the organic reach began to plummet.

So, people that had built businesses, photography or otherwise, on the idea of Facebook reaching an audience for them, all of a sudden, were like, "I'm floundering here. What do I do? Facebook's disappeared." Functionally disappeared in terms of its usefulness. We always, when we bring our goods to market as it were-- and I'll be the first to say I hate the word 'marketing.' I hate talk about markets, because it reduces people to a rather abstract concept and that's someone from whom we have the opportunity to earn money. So, I like to think more in terms of audiences. But just for being unambiguous about what we're talking about, most photographers, if you're going to make a living part time or full time, you definitely need to consider it.

Even those that are like, money is not the big thing, what I really want is impact, you

still have to market yourself, because while you're not asking people for money, you are asking for time and attention, frankly of the three non-renewable resources in our life, money, time and attention, money is the easiest to get. It's the time and attention that people really hold on to and so if you're in that position, you're probably right now beginning to realize that things have changed.

Social has made a lot of photographers-- and I speak from experience, made a lot of photographers really lazy. I would talk to photographers, I do some coaching and consulting and I would talk to people and they're struggling and I would say, "So, tell me about what you're doing in terms of putting your work out into the world," and they're like, "Well, I'm working really hard on my social presence." I began to realize people were mistaking the idea of a marketing plan for I post on social. It's made people very lazy in terms of all of the other opportunities.

There was a statistic I read in a book recently, Martin, that said, 7%, it's a legitimate book, it's a few years old, so, the numbers may have changed a little bit, but I don't think too much. 7% of word of mouth happens online and the implication is only 7%. And 93%--so let's say that's off even by 20%, still 75%, somewhere in that area, is happening--. Word of mouth, which everyone across the board agrees is the best kind of marketing. No matter what book you read, no matter what their specialty is, word of mouth is still going to be the best, 75% of it is happening offline. So, any "marketing plan" that doesn't adjust for that and doesn't understand, I could be doing a lot more to engage my audience, even just if all we do is take that first step and go, "Let's get our so-

called marketing off of--" not off of social to the exclusion of social necessarily, but let's go beyond social.

I have a whole sermon about why I'm not on social anymore. But I know a lot of people still like it, they still, they're convinced that they're not distracted by it the way that they are, and I'm going to leave that one alone. But if you're sure you want to stay on social, if you're sure it's got benefits and some kind of return on investment for you, then I would just urge you, "Fine, keep social around, do whatever you like." As we said, some people collect postage stamps. So, do your thing. But go beyond social.

You've got to get into the real world. When's the last time you sat down and asked yourself, "Really who am I to my audience and what do I provide for them?" So, that's one area of clarity that I think a lot of people-- and a lot of people say, "I don't have any clarity, I don't know who my audience is," and if you're saying that, you don't actually have a business plan. You don't have a business unless you can say, "I know who my audience is and what I provide for them," because that's the foundation.

Then, how do we build on that? How do we reach those people who aren't on Facebook and those who are on Facebook, how do we reach them in a way that's frankly, much more attention getting than Facebook? When's the last time for those of you who are listening? When's the last time you were on a podcast relative to your specialty and talking about your passion for that and the experience and the feelings and when's the last time you did some good old-fashioned storytelling? When's the last time you just got 12 magazines in areas that are relevant to what you do as a photographer and took down the



submission information and started making contact with editors so that a couple of them might feature you this year or do an interview? When's the last time you found a writer that writes for these and said, "Hey, I loved the piece that you did on Martin Bailey. I actually do something different, but I thought you might be interested. Here's my story." and get them to go to bat for you with an editor and say, "I really think this photographer needs some airtime in our magazine"? When's the last time you were out in the world in some other way than, "Well, gosh, business isn't coming and I better put a Facebook ad together"? Oh my god, I'd just rather stab myself in the eye with a fork, and I value my eyes.

There's this line in Zoolander where, the older Maury, the agent, he's like, "I feel like I'm taking crazy pills." I feel like that sometimes when I'm talking to photographers that just-- they have either forgotten or they never knew that there are so many more opportunities out there. Because we're talking about people reaching people and the people that love your wildlife art will be also showing up elsewhere. They will be looking at certain kind of magazines. They will be watching certain kind of TV shows and I don't really think that any of us are all of a sudden going to be in a David Attenborough special or anything like that, but you've got to think of the whole gamut of all of the podcasts and the magazines and especially the online stuff, because let's face it, if you're on a radio show, that's nice, but it's on and then it's gone. If you're on a podcast, that's going to last-- people will be listening to the archives of Martin Bailey's podcast long after I'm around. Unless, Martin, your estate shuts it down, these things really do last a long time.

So, I'm not really concerned about people trying to hire me when I'm dead. But certainly, if I'm going to spend an hour on air with someone, I'll spend it with someone like you, who I know people are going to find this interview for years to come, and that's going to increase my SEO for whatever that's worth. That could be a whole other conversation. People spending time and money, just fretting about SEO, honestly, it doesn't matter. I don't know, Martin. Are you full on in SEO or do you just rely on the fact that you're developing relevant content and that it's just going to happen? How many years of this podcast have you got?

**Martin:** 16.

**David:** That is astonishing. That's more time than I've even known how to use a computer. It really is astonishing and when you think about all of the people that first appeared on your show, there are 16 years of people, new people that are discovering them. They're going on and they're searching for a certain thing, or they're hearing your podcast and they like your kind of focus and so, you're interviewing people that about topics that interest you and that would appeal to your audience. So, I get people coming to me and becoming a part of my audience, simply by speaking to your audience. That perspective is really helpful.

**Martin:** Yeah, regarding SEO, similar to the social networks thing, I understand how they work and I will do things in my own way often to the point where-- with SEO, I understand that having people linked back to you helps to build trust and that is only going to happen by doing things like what you're saying. I'm going to link to your website now and I know that you've linked to mine in various times. Those links are valuable. Also, I

put systems in place. Being technically minded-- I've got a good IT background. So, what I do is, whenever I'm going to do anything, I try to figure out a way to get the most bang for my time, but not necessarily for my physical money, but what I do is I make sure that I've got systems in place to help me do a good job with minimal effort.

So, when I release a podcast, I build the post, I put all of the text in and the photos and I make sure that a few things are in place. I've got plugins that enable me to assign the photograph that will be linked to the post. If someone links to a post, then Facebook, Twitter, anywhere, they'll all automatically include a photograph that I've assigned as the featured photo. I make sure that I spend a few minutes to write a description about what the post is about and that also gets fed in and included with the photo. I do all of these things that are going to help people to spread the word and I guess that's coming back to a word-of-mouth thing, but it only serves only 7%. I do all of these things that take a little bit of effort, but then when once it goes out, I use a system called Zapier, that will then take my feed and send it to all of the social networks that I'm into.

I spend the time to automate stuff. That all helps with my SEO-- It helps to build trust. I remember one of the big moves that I did years ago. Having regular content over a long time, like 16 years of almost weekly posts, is another thing that the search engines like to see. So, for the first few years of me doing my tours, I used to have all the tours on a separate website. I thought, you know what, with a little bit of extra effort, I could bring this all into the same website. Then, my tours are going to benefit from all of the links and posts about my podcast. I'm putting all of this work into the podcast as a

marketing vehicle, so I needed to get that in. I closed down my workshops website and I built it all in as just a part of my own site and that instantly got me more people looking at my tour pages, because it was related to a website that was higher trusted than my nobody-knows-about workshops website.

I did those things and I think I've done a good a relatively good job. It helped me to build a business that is supporting me until the virus came along and changed everything and we had to start thinking about things differently, but I've been very happy with the fact that my business has grown to what it has and it's partly down to an understanding of SEO to the point where I know how to do enough to make it work for me. But I don't spend hours online trying to figure out how to do it better. I do the things that I can do relatively easily and with a good understanding of how it all works, but I'm not fanatical.

Like I said, it's the same with SNS. I'll do one post a week sometimes where it's literally that automated post that I've released a podcast and that goes out to the social networks. But at the moment, I'm getting into this micrography thing and I'm posting once or twice a day with new photos that I'm creating. It's partly for me at the moment, because I'm trying to gauge whether or not people actually like this work, because ultimately, I want to sell some as wall art and I think it makes really good wall art. So, that's a part of it.

My wife said to me, "Do you think people that have been enjoying your landscapes and your wildlife work, do you think they're going to like this?" I said, "I don't do anything based on what I think people are going to like. I do everything based on what I want to do," and it sounds



selfish, but at the end of the day, if I have an emotional connection with what I'm doing, if it's feeding my soul, then there's a good chance that it's going to connect with the audience that I have built over the years and based on trust and a lot of content that I've put out and it's all from the heart. So, that to me is a big thing. I'm finding that a lot of people are reacting very, very well to it. So, for me, it's helping to gauge how my audience feels about what I'm doing now.

But like I say, I can walk away from SNS. The first thing I do in the morning when I get up is not open Twitter and see who's eaten what. I don't follow people that post about what they're eating. I follow people that, again, feed my soul in some way. Probably because I'm in my mid-50s now, I find it harder to sleep than I used to. So, even this morning, I'm opened my phone at 6 AM and taking a look at stuff. I can find myself sitting there in bed while my wife's still asleep and crying because someone's talking about how they spoke to someone who's on a respirator, or hooked up to a machine. They're pretty much in a coma. Yet, this person is speaking to them, because they know that there's a good chance that although everything else has shut down there, ears are still working and the brain is getting that conversation. So, it's feeding my soul. That to me is a big thing about SNS. But I can walk away from it and not touch it for another week when I'm not engaged in that way. So, that was a long way to get back to you about the question about SEO.

**David:** You said a couple of really important things in there, I think two that I want to just speak to. One is, you're very aware that you do what you do and you're not out there worrying about "Oh, is my audience is going to like this?" You're aware, I think, a very important

reality that audiences choose themselves. If you are faithful to what you are doing and you understand if it's feeding your soul, audiences will choose themselves. And yes, at some point, audiences, they change. The faithful listener of U2 might really enjoy the early stuff and at a certain point, go, "You know what? They just don't do it for me anymore." That's fine, because other people are going to [find them]. But the worst mistake Bono and gang can make is like, "Oh, my God, Martin Bailey is not listening to us anymore. We should probably go back to the old stuff. We should probably stop changing and evolving and just put out a box set for Martin."

That's the kiss of death for any artist, not understanding that your audience chooses you and then based on that decision going, what are they getting out of this? How can I engage with them? How can I serve them? The other thing that I thought was really interesting is that, in terms of your use of SEO, is you just understand that it's about relevance and that it's about a long-term thing. I read somewhere once that someone compared it to a bad hair comb over of marketing. It's like because you've got all these other deficiencies and everything else isn't working, it's like, "Quick, go fix my SEO." You understand some of the tools that maybe non-techie people are never going to get into and I think that's a strength. But if you're not that person and you're out there fretting about this, just really understanding how SEO works. The spiders out there will index your site, the more relevant it is and the longer it is there. So, if you're putting out consistent content and people are linking back to it and you're engaging with those comments and you're in it for the long haul. It's not a quick fix like, "Oh,

my God, the bottom fell out of whatever it is I'm doing. I've got to change my marketing." Changing your marketing has to happen-- It's a long game. It has to have happened a year ago for it to really be making any difference now.

The other thing is that you're making really solid choices about your social. If you're going to be on social and rely on it, you've got to work it. In order for it to work, you've got to be on there at least twice a day, preferably using all of the most recent tools. Instagram last year released like-- I don't know, a sequel or something to Stories, it's now Instagram Reels. If you adopted that and started using Instagram Reels, you were immediately getting rewarded for that. Your posts were being seen by more people, the algorithm was favoring you. And if you weren't, if you were like me content with just posting a picture and a couple of comments a couple times a week if you had something to say, the algorithm penalizes you. It's like, "Well, he's obviously not as relevant" and you will find right now they are saying that you're lucky to get on, and I'm speaking about the Facebook world, so Facebook and Instagram, you're lucky to get 3% to 7% of your audience that are following your stuff, 3% to 7% only are going to see your work as kind of like-- that's your average.

That's atrocious, for the amount of time and energy people put on their social and that's not including ads. You can boost your posts and sponsor your posts and all of that, but who looks at that? It just organic reach, 3% to 7%. I don't even know anyone that's using email, which I think is the biggest missed opportunity. I don't know anyone that's using email really badly and isn't still getting 10%, 15% open rates. When you think about how social has changed and become-- Social,

it doesn't exist for you and I, Martin. It exists for Mark Zuckerberg and his friends. As a result, the minute you put a post up that says, "Hey, I've created some new work. Check it out at martinbaileyphotography.com," the minute you put an outbound link to not social Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg gets a call and he's like, "Oh, no, he doesn't." And presses the red button and Martin Bailey and nobody-- I don't mean nobody, very few, even the last people will see your comment linking to outside material. So, I can understand why people are frustrated with it because you put your heart and soul into it. As you said, you do this for your soul and yet, there's this gatekeeper going, "Yeah, I don't think so." You just put a book out and you think, "Well, I'll just tell people on Facebook," and Zuckerberg goes, "Ah, I don't think so."

**Martin:** The way that works now is-- You're 100% correct, of course. The way it works now, and probably the big change that has really made it the thing that you're turning your back on to a degree is that if you want people to see an outbound link now, you've got to pay for it.

**David:** Exactly.

**Martin:** That's the sad thing. It used to be, "Okay, I'm going to work hard. I'm going to do all of this stuff and I'm going to link back," and your audience that are directly connected and who are looking at a feed that you are part of, there's a good chance that, a number of them are going to see it. But really, the only way now to get your work out with that link is to pay for it. I do think that they're still relevant-- You said earlier about sticking a fork in your eye as opposed to, yeah, rather than building a Facebook ad. I think that for a relatively small amount



of money, you can reach a wider audience, but I don't know, out of how much of that audience is actually going to come back and buy something from you. You pay to reach people. If a good percent of those people aren't going to actually buy something, then it's just wasted money. So, it's difficult to do use that model now.

**David:** You have to ask yourself, because you are right, you spend money on ads and more people will see it. But it happens in a context that is not favorable for-- In the marketing world, we use the word 'conversions' which drives me crazy. But it's not an inaccurate word in the sense of converting passivity into action. Someone who's just there and you're converting-- they click a thing, they buy a thing, they do the thing you've asked, they fill out a form or subscribe to whatever. I think the real concern for me and one of the reasons I left was because, yes, you can do all that. The amount of time that it takes-- I've got a manager who used to do my Facebook ads and he knew this stuff and I still found it confusing. Unless you're willing to give a lot of time, unless you are, like you, Martin, someone who's got strong technical inclinations, which a lot of artists don't, the idea just of permeating the Facebook ad world is difficult. But you still have to ask yourself, "Is that ad on a medium that is good for converting to action?"

And it really isn't. Certainly, the people that I've spoken to in photography specifically, one, people don't go to Facebook to do that thing. They go to do the doom scroll. They go to just look and be entertained and the minute we see that it's a sponsored post or a boosted post, I think people's little radars go up and they go, "Ah, I don't know if I want to

click on that." I'm not saying it can't be effective and I know for some-- If I was a woman selling handcrafted silver earrings and silver jewelry, I'd probably have a killer Instagram account and I'd link it to like an Etsy store and I'd probably do just fine. But for photographers, for most creatives...

I guess what I've been trying to lead people towards is a sense that it is not the strongest foot forward in terms of building and engaging an audience. It can be one tool and I think especially at the beginning as you're trying to engage people, you're trying to find out maybe a little bit more about who your ideal audience is and why they come to you, I think great and if you can still handle all the other the disadvantages. I found social a bit of a time suck. So, when I left, I suddenly had two hours in a day that I could do actual productive stuff with.

So, a lot of it has to do with how you use the tool. But I just think there are other things we need to go-- Like I said, whether you stay on it or not, it's not the point for me. It's that you're willing to embrace bigger possibilities and ask yourself, "Could I be getting a much higher return on investment, whether that's of my time, my focus or my money by also or predominantly being somewhere else?" I would say unreservedly absolutely. Absolutely, you could be spending less time on this stuff, less time freaking out about and the whole context and social and many of us are prone to comparing ourselves with others, and it can be a bit of an emotional rollercoaster. There are ways of serving an audience that are much more intimate, that have much higher conversion rates attached to them and that are not quite the emotional rollercoaster.

Mostly, here's what I think one of the most important things is, when you build your audience on any social platform-- let's say, I'm a big fan of social at which I'm not, but let's say I was. Even if I was the most rabid fan, the big danger is building your house on someone else's land. You don't own, you do not own that platform and you don't own that audience or access to that audience. So, you may have 100,000 people that are like, "I am full on into Martin Bailey's stuff," and you're thinking, "This is great. I love my Google+ account," and then boom."

**Martin:** I was just thinking the same thing.

**David:** And then it's gone. Unless you did something, which some people I'm sure did, but unless you did something on an ongoing long-term basis, not on the last minute like, "Oh, my God, G+ is disappearing," but unless you do something strategically on a long-term basis to migrate people from that platform, which is borrowed or rented at best to your own platform where you can control the engagement, where you can directly speak to them when you want to, how you want to, you can link them to what you want it-- and it's also a much stronger conversion. I think the number one thing that creators of all stripes need to be thinking about if an audience is of concern to you and it might not be, is how do you move them? How do you move that audience that loves what you do and wants more of it onto a platform of your own, that no matter what happens to Facebook? because let's face it. Facebook could change their terms of service tomorrow and you'd be like, "Oh, I'm not willing to be part of that anymore." Or, you might be willing to, but your audience suddenly goes, "Mm-hmm, I'm out." It does not take much for all of a sudden for the business plan or the terms of service of people running these

platforms, they might do really well for-- You might have a killer YouTube channel and all of a sudden, the business model changes and you're left going, "Well, what do I do now?" If you are still serving those people, but you are also consistently moving them, I call it the VIP room, if you're consistently moving them to a platform that you control, that is again more intimate and you don't lose that.

The worst thing that can happen when you're speaking to and engaging your audience on email, the worst thing that's going to happen is Gmail might throw some of your emails into a promoted emails tab or something like that. But they're still generally speaking going to get it and stack up an average good open rate of 25% to 40% on emails, stack that up against what do I say 3% to 7% of your audience seeing it on Facebook, in a context, when people read emails, unless they just delete them, they do give their time to it. They're not in a context where they're currently scrolling to see something else. They open it, then they give their attention to it, it is a much higher engagement process, because it's just a more intimate medium.

So, I'm not really hating on social. Just as a creative person, I don't like it. But in part, I think that's just because it changed so much that I'm like, "It used to be so good and now it's just not the tool for me." But if you are sure that you love social and it's working for you, just don't let it be the only way that you engage and grow your audience, because that's where-- to come back to all of this, yes, things have changed.

So, a couple of years ago, Martin, as you well know, I run a publishing house called Craft & Vision. I was selling eBooks. I was making my living selling eBooks. And



then, all of a sudden people's appetites changed. People, my best customers, my most loyal fans were saying, "We love your stuff, but man, I've got an iPad full of your books I'll never get to. There's just too many. I've got Craft & Vision including some of your books," at the peak, we had 100 eBooks titles in our catalog.

So, imagine this. You've got people, photographers, they've got 100 eBooks and they're like, "When am I going to ever read all of these?" And so, the sales dropped off at a certain point. I went, "You know what? I'm still in the education business in this part of what I do, but the eBooks are not going to do it for me," because what was most important to me, my biggest business asset was my-- to put it in really plain talk was my, the mailing list that represents the ability for me to touch and reach that audience. I could turn around and say, "Okay, I can still serve them with something that'd be valuable to them," and I started doing courses and that has been, when the bottom was falling out and I was wringing my hands and waking up looking in the mirror and literally, just collapsing in fear, I could turn and adjust my business model. I could, in the language of the day, pivot. You can always pivot if you have a real sense of, "Here's why people come to me. No, maybe they're not buying big wall prints right now, but maybe they're buying books. Is there something else?"

If you're listening to this and you're thinking, "Everything I did has now changed," I would just urge you to go back to the basics. Do whatever else you're doing. That's fine. Do it on social. Do whatever. But go back to the basics and ask yourself, "Why do people come to me? What longings am I fulfilling? What desires? What needs am I meeting

through what I do?" It could be a feeling, it could be-- We all do, whether you're a poet or a musician, we're basically trafficking in feelings and experiences. And if you can be very clear on who you are to your audience and you have a way to reach them and to serve them and to engage with them, to ask them, hey, if you're struggling right now and you do have an audience, when's the last time you sent an email that said, "How can I serve you better?" Not like, "Oh, well, then they're going to answer me and I'm going to have to change everything I do." It still has to be authentic to you. It still has to feed your soul. That's why they come to you. But they may suggest something that you had no idea was even possible. They may say, "Well, gosh, I'd love to get you in front of my camera club."

Just that one idea, Martin, getting myself in front of camera clubs, because I'm asking myself, "Where are other people? These audiences of mine, where are their friends? Where are other people like these?" They're in camera clubs. And all of a sudden, there's camera clubs that can't meet. Even if they were, they maybe couldn't afford to bring me in, to fly me from Canada just to do an hour and a half presentation, but now they can. There are ways-- but again unless you are engaging with your audience, how would you seize that opportunity? And then how would you say to your most loyal fans, "Hey, check out. I registered a site called [inspireyourcameraclub.com](http://inspireyourcameraclub.com)." I couldn't believe it was available, but I registered it. So, I can send an email to my audience to say, "If you're part of a camera club, and you'd like to introduce them to me, send whoever does these meetings, send them to [inspireyourcameraclub.com](http://inspireyourcameraclub.com)." My calendars are full of bookings to speak

at camera clubs. There's still room, but I'm having to push out the dates a little bit further, but that's only possible, that's only really truly possible with the intimate engagement that you have on mediums that are more personal, that aren't social and being willing to-- because if I put something on social, very few people-- until I start running ads and, ugh, but all I had to do-- literally, all I had to do was send a couple of emails to my audience and say, "I'm offering this and hoping that it serves your needs." Of course, you say it in a different language. You're basically saying, "I made this for you. I made an experience for you that I'm hoping will meet your needs and would you share it with whoever?" The amount of people that have been like, "I've been waiting to for something like this for so long."

Here's what's beautiful about this. The lecture is based on that book that I told you launched on the first day of the pandemic, I have created a virtual-- I'm not trying to sell the book, I'm just letting people know that the content that I talk about in the lecture is more fully addressed in the book. So, I'm not trying to pitch the book, I give away a couple of eBooks, so everyone gets high value. Not only have I made some money on it, not only have I reached a whole new audience, and in the presentation, I give them away to get on my mailing list and get a couple of eBooks that-- Excuse me, that normally I charge like \$42 for. So, my mailing list is growing, there's money coming in, and I'm reaching a whole new audience and on top of that, my publisher is thrilled because I'm actually selling books. People are going to Amazon. I don't make anything. I make \$2 a copy or something, but Amazon's thrilled, they're making money.

All of this to say if I could say one thing to

people that are wringing their hands a little and certainly the pandemic has changed things, it's made us a little more aware of how vulnerable we are, and by that I mean our businesses as well as our physical wellbeing, but if you can shift your thinking from this, "I hate--" because if we hate doing marketing, you're not going to do it and you're not going to do it with your whole heart. It's not going to feed your soul. I found a way to do so-called marketing and I reframed it as building and engaging an audience, but it feeds my soul. I wake up in the morning and the first emails I get are, "Ah, I just read your latest thing and I want to tell you how it changed my life. I just listened to your podcast while my wife was taking a nap because she's going through chemo right now because of--"

The intimacy that is happening with-- I get a lot more email now. So, that two hours I saved by not being on social, I'm spending in answering-- But the personal emails, people that are pouring their guts out to me, that connection-- and I'm never going to forget them. When I get the next email, I'm going to be like, "Ah, I remember Steve. Steve told me this about his--" That is, I don't want to be pragmatic about it, because I'm not doing it for that, but it's gold. That's how the best businesses in the world have made their money, by earning trust. You've said that a couple of times in this conversation. Earning trust and engaging and bringing so-called marketing back to this profoundly human activity of offering people value and giving them invitations to experience more of what you make.

It's really not that complicated. It requires a lot of hard work and creativity, but it doesn't require you to be an expert in SEO. It doesn't require you to



figure out Facebook. Not to simplify it, it just requires you to send an old-fashioned letter to people by email, rather than in the post, because imagine handwriting all those emails, all those letters, your tongue would be worn out just from licking stamps. But the ability to reach an audience on a much deeper human level has been profoundly-- It's what I've built my business on. Like you, we're down from last year in a way that makes my eyes water a little bit, but the last few years, we've been smart with our money, we've been able to pay our taxes and save and so, yes, this has hurt, but at the same time, we still have a relatively thriving business and people are still-- My mailing list is still growing, my engagement is growing and while I have a little bit less in my bank account, imagine the people that are struggling to find their rent right now and wondering, "God, how am I going to pay the bills?" So, I'm very grateful for that. I have now just spoken way, way too long. So, I'm going take a breath and let you chime in.

**Martin:** No, not at all.

**David:** I get very excited about this stuff, I've got to say.

**Martin:** And that comes across and that in itself is golden. So, I'm sitting here-- Like I said earlier, I love talking with you and you always give me a different perspective. The thing that I love about the conversations that we have is that you help me-- and I said this about how, with photography, you gave modern photographers, a vocabulary with most of your books-- Well, I say most, that's sound like some of them are crap, but that's not the case. I was thinking that some of your books are teaching and some of them are art. The art ones give people beautiful art, the teaching ones gave us a vocabulary. I'm sitting here

and thinking the same thing.

I do a lot of things instinctively and I realized, as you were speaking there that, I don't really like the analogy I'm going to use, but I feel as though I've built an audience that is like a swarm of bees and they're not busy swarming around fanatically, that's not what I mean. But if I take myself to a different place, I find the same people gradually swarming across. When I was on Google+ the people that I had meaningful conversations with, were the people that I've also had meaningful conversations with on other platforms and also by email.

So, I'm sitting there thinking that, "Yeah, okay, I've been on various places. The majority of people that I communicate with are the same people in different places." And so, I feel as though the cornerstone of all of this for me from the very start has been my podcast. So, doing that regularly has been something that has helped me to build everything pretty much that I have. My wife said to me-- you mentioned earlier that doing marketing, you have to have started a year ago to get results now. I remember in the first year of business when I first quit my day job, I'd be up in the office every day, working hard and then I go downstairs and what I do, I sit on the sofa working hard. So, my wife would say to me, "You're working 16, 18 hours a day. When's the money going to start coming in?" She said, "Show me what you're doing and how that relates to a certain amount of money coming in." I said to her, "That's not how it works. What I'm doing now may never directly result in a dollar arriving in our PayPal account. But it will result in people finding my tours better and people finding my products more easily, because of the benefits of the SEO and the links that come in and the benefits of

having relatively regular content is going to help me to reach other people."

And so, the reach that I found, as you say, it's the audience that has built around what I've been doing. Just continuing to do that-- there are weeks when I sit down, and I think to myself, "What I'm going to talk about this week? I've got nothing to talk about." But then, I'll pick up a microscope and all of a sudden, I've got a few more weeks of posts to put out, and I'm feeding my soul at the same time. So, I'm doing things organically. I called my podcast The Martin Bailey Photography Podcast, instead of something catchy. I did that in some ways to my detriment, because I know that some people are going to say, "Okay, I'm not going to follow that. He's just talking about himself." That's not the case. I'm talking about what I'm doing in photography in a way that helps people with their photography and hopefully to a degree with their creative lives. So, it's built me an audience that has been very loyal in many ways, but it's also over the years, I've not been stupid, I've also built a mailing list. I send out an email to everyone that is registered for blog post notifications, they get an email each week. As you were saying, a lot of the time, one of the things where people will get in touch with me more than anything is, I'll just get a quick email saying that was a great-- but I don't actually fill the email, the email goes with a featured photo and a few words about what I've just posted on the blog. So, again, it's bringing people back to the blog. That again helps SEO, because Google sees people moving around the ether into all of the various places. So, it's building back into itself, feeding back into itself.

But those email that I get about the post that the email that I send out are amazing, because it shows me that I'm

sometimes doing the right thing. It keeps me in touch with an audience that I value highly. I remember speaking a few years ago with someone and they were talking about, "When you build an email list, don't ask for names." Because I used to ask for first and last name. Now, the first name is necessary, the last name is optional. Sure, that results in some people saying, "I'm not going to give you my name." But if someone can't give me at least their first name, how much trust is there in that relationship? Again, you might have different opinions on this, that's fine. But I feel that I may have built a smaller email list, but it's with people that at least trust me enough to give me their name. So, I found that really valuable and it's kept me closer to the audience that I've built.

I'm listening to your semi-monologue there about all of this, and I'm sitting here thinking, "Yeah, okay, great. You're doing this right." And for me, that's really valuable, because I do a lot of what I do in a vacuum. So, when I talk with you and you say things like what you've just said, I'm sitting here nodding, thinking, "Okay, great, this is great. You're doing things right." Because I feel as though I've organically and instinctively put myself in a position that I feel is very much in line with what you've arrived at as well. So, it's really valuable to me to hear what you're saying and it wasn't monotonous or anything in that way. It was great. Literally, I really enjoyed what you just said. So, that's all good stuff. I feel as though I'm doing things right.

The one thing that I know I've got to do a better job of is to communicate more with the people that have not necessarily registered for blog notifications. I don't send out enough email to my general audience that just wanted to know to find out what I'm up to. So, that's probably



something that I need to put more effort into.

**David:** Yeah. I would encourage anyone that has a mailing list-- Actually, I was just writing something about this for another project that I'm doing called The Audience Academy, which you can find if you're interested at [theaudienceacademy.com](http://theaudienceacademy.com). There's my marketing pitch. Really good pitch.

I was just writing a thing about this very thing. I know artists because I do consulting, because I do coaching, and frankly just because this is my world, the only people I know are artists and creators of some kind. I know people that have got mailing lists of hundreds and thousands of people that have said, "I want you to stay in touch with me. I want more of what you make in whatever form that is, whether it's a blog post, or I want to see more of your art, be apprised of educational opportunities, whatever." There are people out there that have said, "Not only am I open to it, I'm not just giving you permission, I am asking you to send me an email," and they have spent the last year, I'm thinking of a couple of people in particular, that have sent nothing over the last year of pandemic. Nothing. So, you imagine, let's say you have thousand people on the mailing list that have said, "I want more of what you make," and you haven't reached out and said, "Here's something that I created," or "I haven't created anything. Just like everyone else, I'm in a funk, and here's why." Some personal connection just once a month-- I think once a month is a little too infrequently for me, but just the opportunity to reach out and really touch other people and say, "I'm here. You're not alone. Here's something I made for you."

You can do this whether you're a

comedian, whether you're a photographer, frankly, whether you're doing business to business, or person to person, because even B2B sales are still person to person. You're still talking to individual humans that are coming to you for certain things, to fill certain needs, certain longings, whatever. And if you miss the opportunity over the span of a year, a tough year at that, to say, "I care and I'm here. Like you, I'm struggling to make it." I often will just say, "You know where to find me if you want to reach out. At the end of my podcast," A Beautiful Anarchy, most often I will say, "This conversation's a little bit one sided, but if you ever want to flip the script, if you ever want to talk to me, ask a question, tell me a story, here's how to get to me." That personal touch almost once a day, I get an email just from that one thread of someone reaching out and saying, "Thanks for what you do and telling me a story," and I cannot-- in a world where all of this has become so-- there's ads and there's algorithms and it's so overwhelming, all you do is come back to the humanity of this and say, "With an email today, I can send something to thousand people that have asked me to do so, I can send them something great."

So, with my audience, only my email subscribers, so my blog people don't get this, because I've promised my email audience that I will send them something specific, an exclusive. When I do new work or in the case of the pandemic-- I've gone back. I did one on Hokkaido, Martin. Our couple tours together, I had reimagined what that might look like as a body of work. I sent out a PDF, a really nicely laid-out PDF of a Hokkaido monograph, and just said, "I haven't traveled for a while, I'm pretty uninspired, but maybe this will inspire you," and the amount of emails I get just

saying, "God, it was beautiful just to see something new. I can't travel right now. So great." It cost me nothing. I put together a PDF in InDesign. It took me a couple of days because I'm kind of thoughtful about it, I can't just mail it in, and then I included it. I've got probably a dozen of those that on a regular basis-- because I get new subscribers, I just put a couple at the bottom of my email, just, "If you're looking for some inspiration, here's something." I often will get people-- because that's not educational, but people will send me a thing and say, "God, I'd love to know how you did that. I want to do something. You've inspired me to do something with my photographs. How can I make a monograph like that?"

It all comes back to that human thing, Martin. If we can just remember that these-- that's why, to go all the way back to the beginning, it's why I object to this idea of marketing, the market won't do this, or the market won't pay this. It's not a market. There are no markets. There are individual people. If you can look at them as individual people, if you can look at them as audiences that gather around your work and want more of what you do, it becomes so much easier to serve them, to engage them, and yes, to use the word, to love them. Those are the people that are going to stick around. Again, coming back to my email, I get emails all the time going, "David, I'm a 70-year-old man and I've been doing photography for longer than you've been alive, and I've been getting your emails for 12 years and I read every single one of them. Thanks for what you do." That tells me that I'm doing-- So, that's not a result of marketing, that's a result of people touching people and to go back to your idea of, "I do this to make my soul happy," if you can make your soul happy while doing this very deeply

pragmatic stuff, your business will grow, your income will grow.

**Martin:** I'm infinitely happier after this hour of conversation than I was when I started, and I wasn't unhappy. I wasn't unhappy when I started, but what I mean is that again, I'm repeating myself here, but everything you've said today has helped me to understand that I'm not just banging my head against the wall and my instincts have served me well. So, I'm not going to try to say anything about what you just said. You've said it all perfectly and I understand that. We've been talking for an hour and 10 minutes now, so I don't want to keep you much longer. What I do want to just reiterate is you just mentioned [theaudienceacademy.com](http://theaudienceacademy.com) is the URL that you just mentioned.

**David:** That's right.

**Martin:** Is there anywhere else that you would like to send people to connect or is that it?

**David:** Yeah, at the very beginning you asked what have I been occupied with, just before this all started, I asked myself, "Do I want to do a podcast?" The answer was abso-freaking-lutely not. Then I started thinking because I couldn't do what you do. I could not do-- I just don't have the questions. I'm the world's worst interviewer. But then I thought, you know what, what I really want-- because I'm not a podcast guy. I don't listen to a lot of podcasts. I'm very spotty at best, very sporadic. But I thought if I could do at the most a 15-minute creative kick in the pants for photographers and other creators, makers, and artists, about the creative life-- and you've just basically said that the last hour, it gave you hope and I think hope is so missing these days, especially for those of us who are doing--



We're lone rangers. We do what we do in isolation. It is nice to have a voice that says, "You know what? You're not alone, if you're struggling with this." So, I take issues about the joys and challenges, mostly the challenges and resulting joys of the creative life and I put that out three times a month as A Beautiful Anarchy, stealing the title shamelessly from my book of the same name. But it's given those ideas that were in that book, a life beyond themselves.

I would love it if this hour has given you some hope and if you feel more connected to the idea of doing things that make your soul happy. Even if you've got all the way through this and you're like, "Yeah, but I don't do this for a living," and the idea of engaging an audience is not really your thing, I would love to introduce you to A Beautiful Anarchy and you can find that on iTunes, or literally, any of the podcast places or you can go to [abeautifulanarchy.com](http://abeautifulanarchy.com). I would just love it if I would know that was serving you in some way. Because I really do think that-- creative people, we get so into our own thoughts and into our world and we sometimes wonder, like you said, "I feel like I'm banging my head against the wall." I think if we all got together and said, "I've kind of felt that way," it's just nice to know we're not alone. And that's what A Beautiful Anarchy is about. That is what the Audience Academy is about too. It's just more about, "You're not alone if you find this so-called marketing stuff a little challenging. Here's a way to make it more human."

**Martin:** Hmm. Excellent. Well, you've definitely made it very human today, David. I've thoroughly enjoyed the conversation.

**David:** Thank you.

**Martin:** I can't believe that-- I feel as though I could sit here for another three hours, but I understand that it's your evening, there's whiskey awaiting and I'm probably going to just sit now and edit this and push it out today. So, we'll start to wrap it up there. I can't wait-- Hopefully not another three years, but I can't wait down another chat.

**David:** I'd like that too.

**Martin:** Yeah, it's always a pleasure. Is there anything else that you wanted to leave us with?

**David:** No, I'm just so grateful for the chance to talk to you again. As you say, it has been far too long and at some point in the not too distant future, we need to do this in person over a bottle of sake.

**Martin:** Oh, yes.

**David:** Or a bottle of whiskey. So, thanks so much for giving me the opportunity to spend time with you again.

**Martin:** Not at all. It's always a pleasure, David, and I definitely have enjoyed the last hour very, very much. Thank you for your time. We'll catch up again pretty soon.

**David:** I can't wait.

**Martin:** All right, thank you very much.

**David:** Thanks, Martin.

### Connect with David

David's photography can be found at [DavidduChemin.com](http://DavidduChemin.com). His podcast about the creative life, A Beautiful Anarchy can be found at [aBeautifulAnarchy.com](http://aBeautifulAnarchy.com), and you'll find The Audience Academy [here](#).

I hope you enjoyed this conversation.







MARTIN BAILEY PHOTOGRAPHY K.K.

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