

Featuring APA Pro Photographer Tatsuro Nishimura

Where did you get the idea for the exploding banana?

This shot was for *New Scientist Magazine* in the U.K. and the idea came from their Creative Director. The story was about the Big Bang.

How did you start planning for the shoot? How long did it take to set up?

The initial concept called for an exploding banana. My initial shooting plan was to use liquid nitrogen to freeze a banana and shoot it with a pellet gun. However, when I realized there was not enough time to prepare the device and it would be hard to control the composition, I switched to Plan B, which was to create a fake explosion.

I worked with an amazing food stylist, Ali Nardi (www.alinardi.com) to assemble the elements that went into this shot. First, we cut the banana into small pieces and cracked the banana skin. To give the image a more three-dimensional look, layered a couple of clear thin pieces of plexiglass atop one another so Ali could composed the banana elements as if they were truly exploding in all directions. Finally, we used flour to mimic dust and debris from the violence of the explosion.

What specialized equipment/props did you use (if any)?

I used a set of studio strobes as main lights on the banana. The key was an additional light - I hid a

tiny portable flash just right below the center of banana, where I wanted the center of the fake explosion. That small flash made the banana look like it is exploded by itself.

How many bananas did you end up going through?

Only a couple of bananas surprisingly. So I had a good amount of bananas in stock after the shoot.

What sort of post production was involved?

Just a basic Photoshop. Cleaning unwanted dust, adding contrast, cleaning up the background, etc.

What lessons did you learn and want to pass on to others?

I learned it is important to be flexible and prepare options. If I was stuck in the initial plan (nitrogen idea), I would not be able to achieve this shot given time and budget. In the end, Plan B worked out much better than Plan A.

And most important thing I want to pass on to others is communication. The creative director and I communicated very well. When I found I could not do the plan A, I told her that right away. Then I showed her my quick fake explosion test. She was happy with the test and gave me great advice on how to make it even better. Also I communicated with the stylist. We all shared the idea/plan and I think that made this shot successful. ■



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