

# The PhotoMode

Issue 18



# THE LAST OF US

ANNIVERSARY EDITION



## THE PHOTOMODE TEAM

OUR PAGE IS YOUR STAGE



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## About The PhotoMode



Whether it's via Instagram, Twitter or this eMagazine, we dedicate our pages to you, the Virtual Photography community.

### Our Goals

- **To support** the artistic minds and digital creators by giving a glimpse into the personalities behind the work, and helping people to connect with each other in different ways.
- **To help** push the art form in new directions that seek to give virtual photographers more opportunities to earn from their work.

### Share Your Passion

If you like any of the featured screenshots seen within these pages, **click the artists' names beside the grey logos** to explore more of their work.

**We encourage** building a supportive community, something that starts with you and your pages. Try searching the following community tags daily as a way to create connections and support others.

**#VirtualPhotography #ThePhotoMode #VGPUnite**



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**Want to be featured?**  
Tag us or use #ThePhotoMode  
on social media platforms!

If you enjoy this magazine and want to check out our previous issues, visit our website by going to:

<https://thephotomode.com/>

# FEATURED ARTISTS



Aquelyras  
Brounoun\_  
ccf\_photomode  
Chris25551  
cloudfoxdie  
CornedBeefBrad  
DaT\_dD\_dOeS\_aRt  
EdMarquez817  
eveygamephoto  
GSmind89  
jules\_vp\_  
MindJackedJimmy  
miss\_clemen3  
PastelN0ir  
Photoingame  
sbartgame  
scottoka1  
Tanfoi  
theonlyjess\_vp  
TheWorldsof1  
Toringtino  
z3rr3r  
znakiznanki

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a\_pvq  
bookieandbrookie  
escorpiana\_gamer  
hannya\_vp  
its\_joans  
megapixal.memories  
mersey\_red\_vp  
photo.in.game  
photomode.one  
still\_thelastofus  
the\_eighteenth\_vp  
theingame  
photographer  
thelastoftes  
tirasgauntlet  
tlou2bysj  
virtualmiky



EVEYGAMEPHOTO

AQUELYRAS



**SBARTGAME**

@sbartgame



MISS\_CLEMEN3



THEWORLDISO1



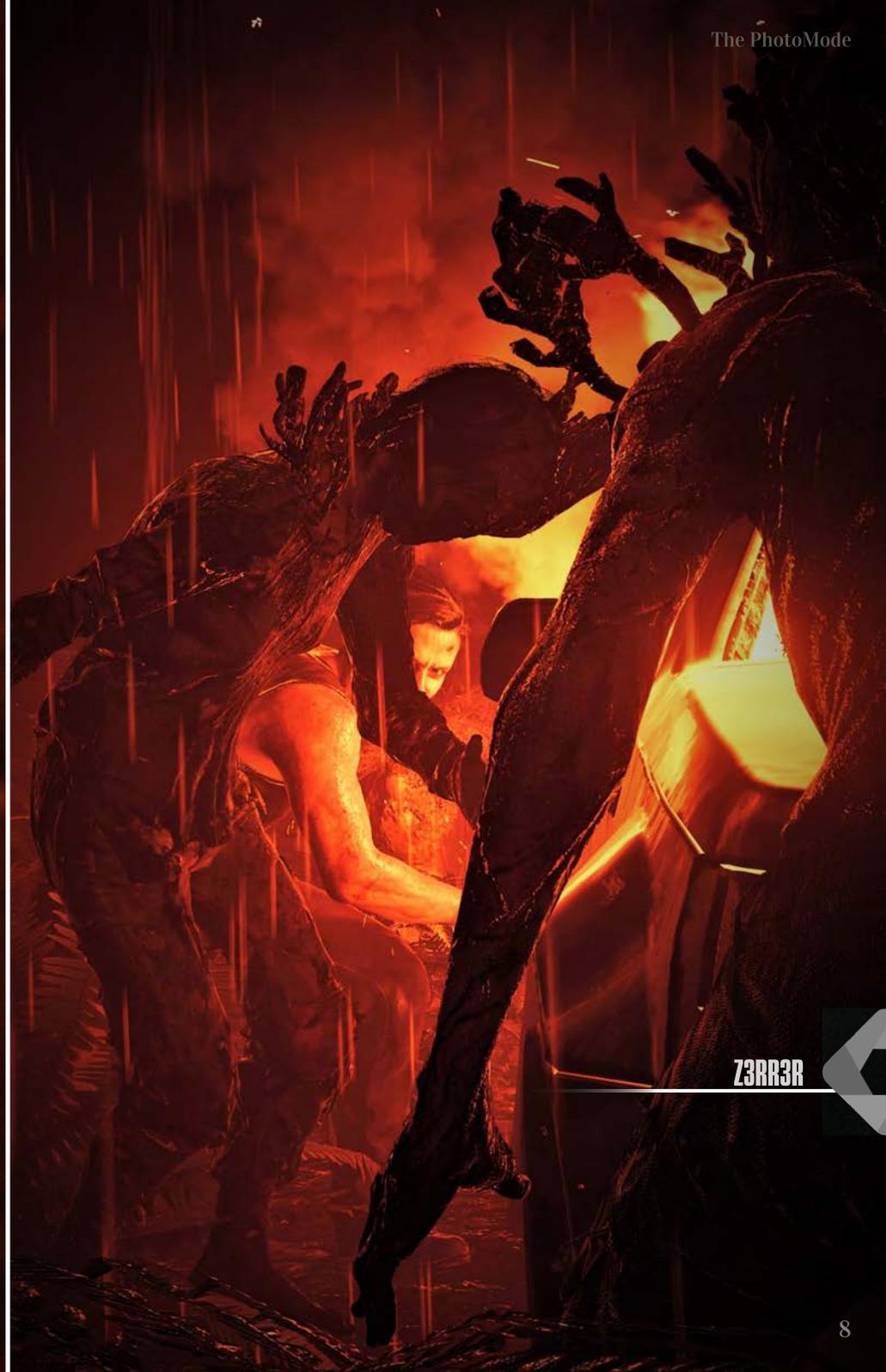
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GSMIND89



CORNEDBEEFBRAD



Z3RR3R



PASTELNOIR



TORINGTINO



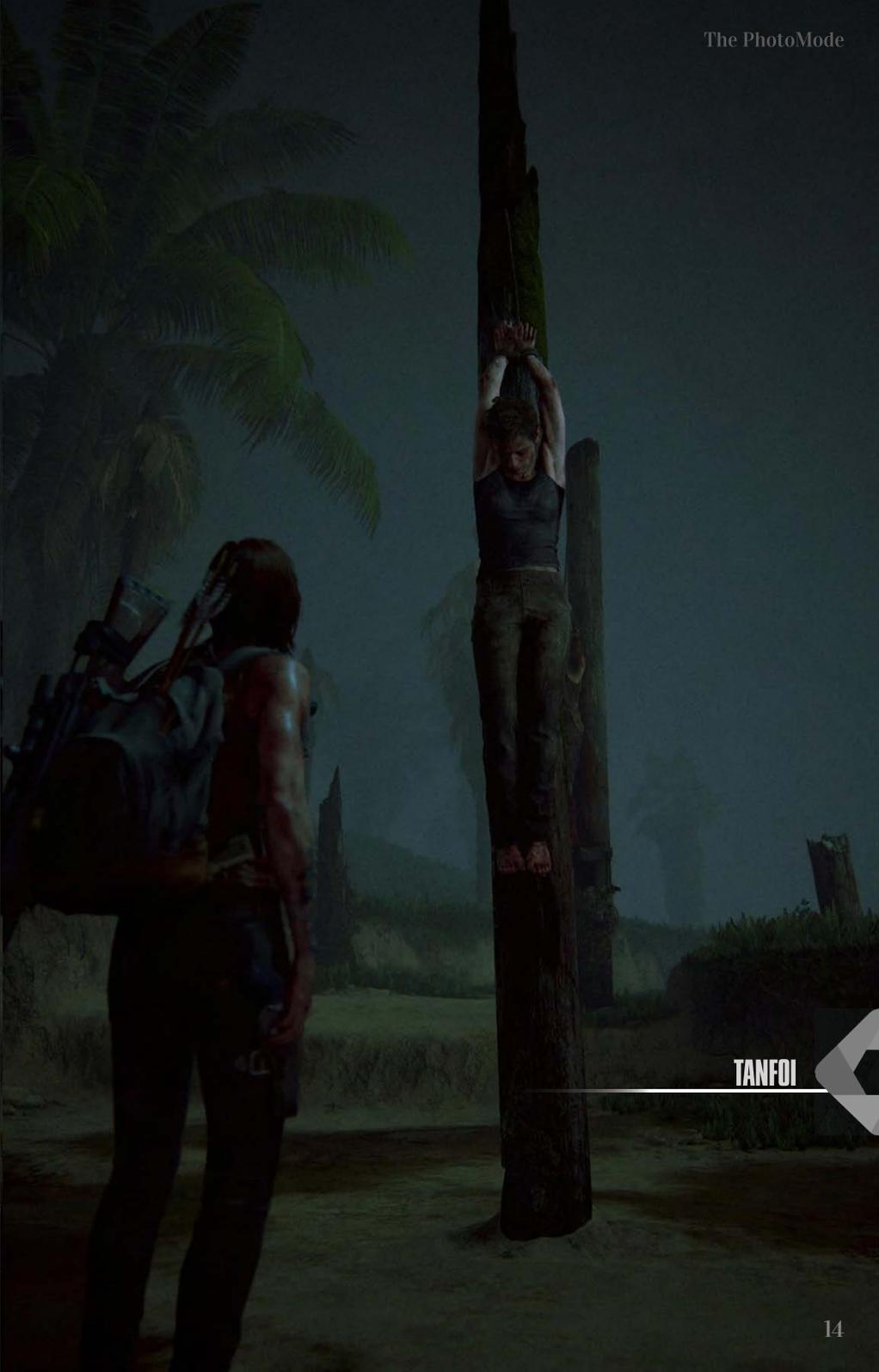
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**BROUNOUN**



**TANFOI**



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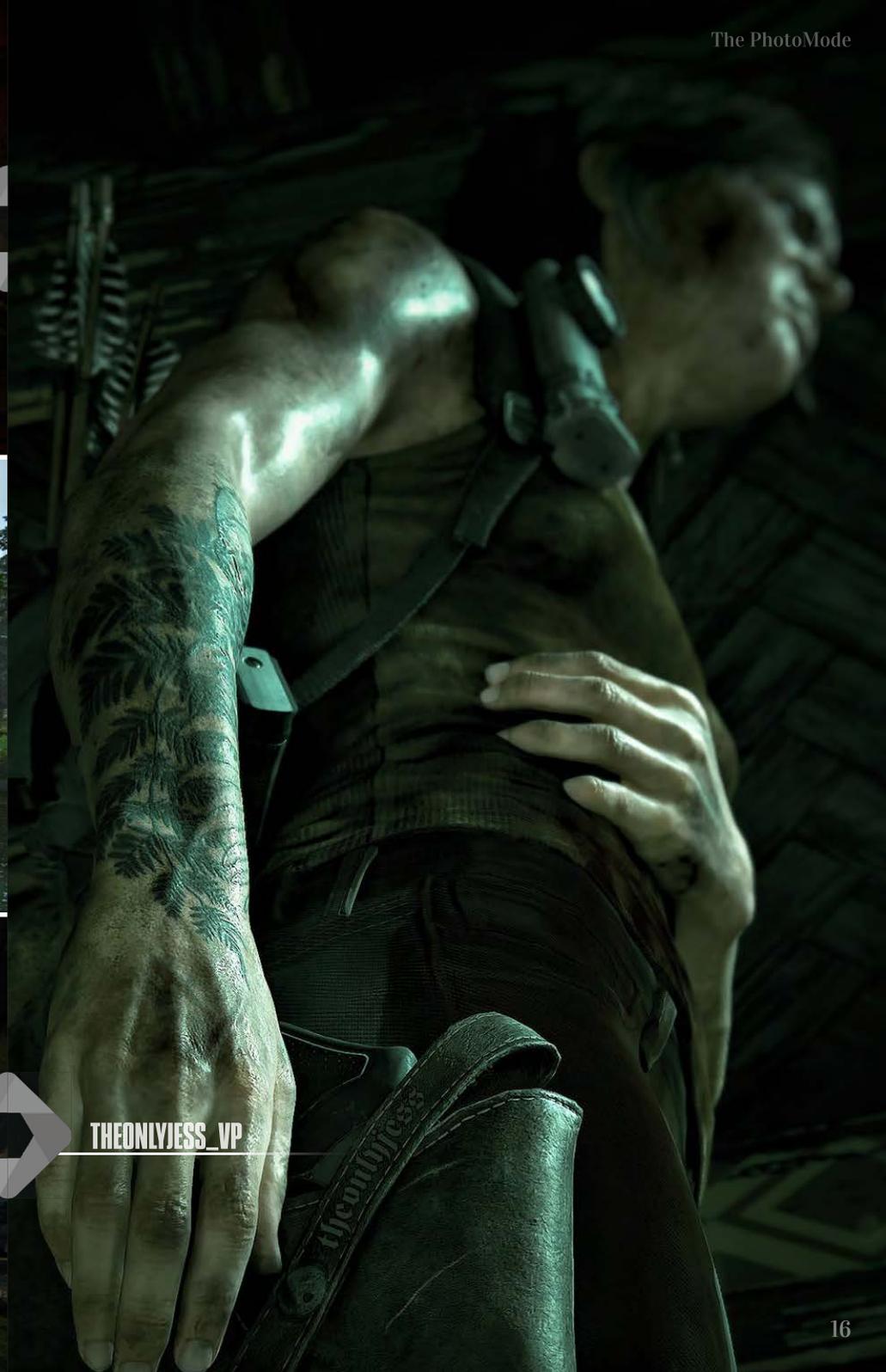


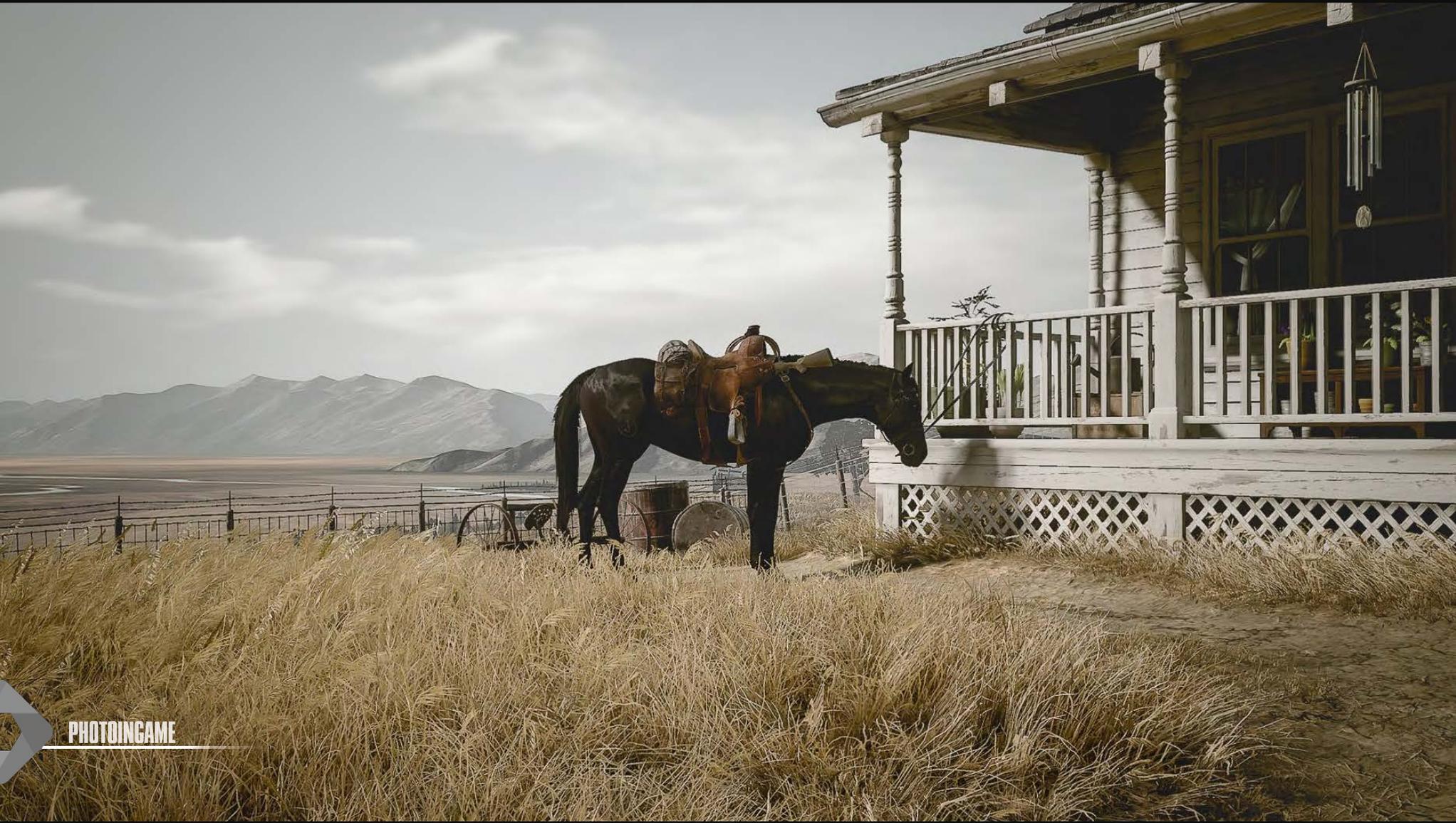
JULES\_VP



DAT\_DD\_DOES\_ART

THEONLYJESS\_VP





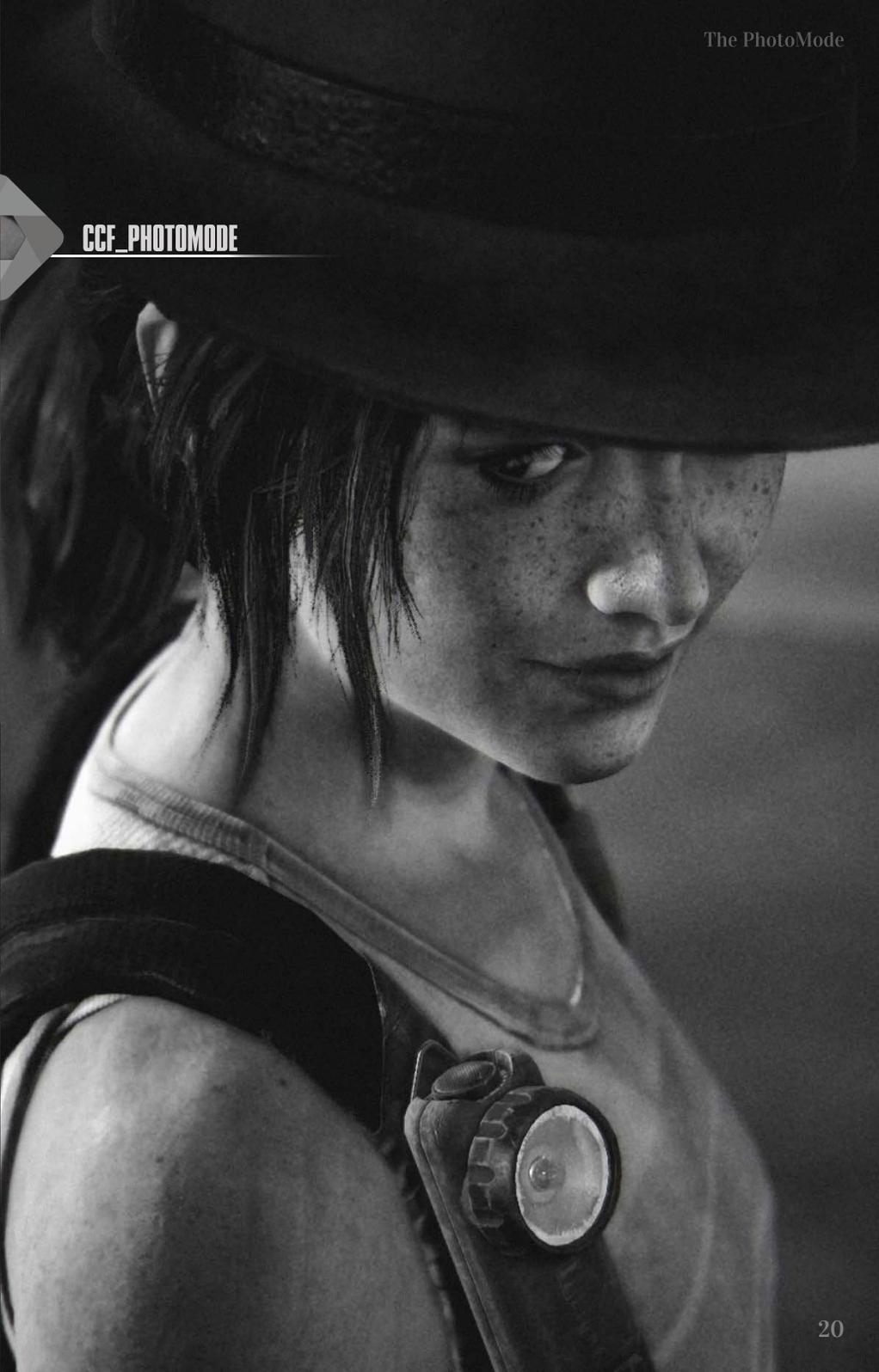
PHOTOINGAME



TORINGTINO



CCF\_PHOTOMODE





MINDJACKEDJIMMY



CHRIS25551



EDMARQUEZ817



CLOUDFOXIE

# THE LAST OF US

## Q&A WITH NAUGHTY DOG

Last month, **Naughty Dog** hosted a month-long virtual photography event as part of the anniversary celebrations for **The Last of Us**. After the event had concluded, we spoke to Naughty Dog about the landscape of video game fandom, and where virtual photography lies within it.



**You've just had a fantastic event in which you've shared some great virtual photography from the talented community. VP has been a thing for several years now, but it's really become a prevalent aspect of video game fandom more recently, right?**

Firstly – agreed, the event was a blast! It was such a privilege to collaborate with you (@PoachiIN), @eveygamephoto, @EclipsedFantasy, @Photoingame, and @MindJackedJimmy. The VP community is so talented, supportive, and kind. The camaraderie and enthusiasm is energizing and inspiring.

To your question: virtual photography is absolutely surging in popularity among the video game community. There are likely myriad reasons, but the inclusion of an in-game Photo Mode definitely makes learning, experimenting with, and sharing virtual photography far more accessible.

Even if someone isn't familiar with virtual photography prior to playing, Photo Mode provides an additional avenue to explore and interact with the in-game world. It's rewarding because there's no "Game Over" in Photo Mode. The main goal is to be creative, experiment, and take a shot that excites you.

As with photography of all kinds, if you're stoked about what you captured, you'll feel compelled to share it with the world, and it's incredible to see how many people feel that sense of excitement and pride in their shots.



**The event** was a great exercise of interpretation, with many virtual photographers coming up with some unique takes on each theme. Does the talent within the fanbase no longer surprise your studio?

We regularly post fans' submissions that range across a variety of mediums, including art, cosplay, and more, so for quite some time, we've been blown away by fans' immense talents. That definitely includes virtual photography, and the shots we've seen in submissions and on socials are extraordinary.

We've admired, liked, and shared VP posts around social media, so we were aware of the talent within the VP community and this event truly gave us a glimpse into something special.

The **#TLOUPhotoMode** tag provided a centralized place to truly see a collective "album" across thousands of people, whether they were seasoned pros or new to the medium.

This bird's-eye glance was powerful because it exposed us to the diversity of approaches, visions, and styles across all of the individual photographers. This is especially impressive considering how massive the VP community is. It felt like every photographer had their own visual DNA.



**HBO** has pinned their Goliathan production capabilities on a very strong video game franchise with *The Last of Us*. This is likely credited to the strength of narrative within the games you've created. The game has a linear, cinematic feel to it, do you see this influence within shots that the VP community conveys?

We're privileged to see that the story-driven, cinematic vision we have for our games is expressed creatively and skilfully by the VP community. The incredible parallel between the studio's game developers and virtual photographers is that we all consider many of the same cinematic visual elements in our work: color stories, lighting, composition, and layout, to name a few.

We can't speak for every individual virtual photographer, but it's very possible that a strong emphasis on storytelling influences the subject matter and moments people are drawn to or ultimately return to on subsequent

playthroughs. We aim to flesh out this storytelling not only narratively but also in the scenery and environments our characters navigate. Taking *The Last of Us Part II*, for example: Ellie has her journey and moments, but she's made even more real by how she interacts with the world around her.

It's fascinating to see a virtual photographer's unique digital lens, whether they're drawn to a major story beat or a moment in nature. Their captures are a concrete representation of what resonates with them, excites them about the game, and evokes emotion.



**When we spoke to Arne several months ago about some of Evey's shots, he continually referenced the talent and strength within Naughty Dog's team. Are there any special shout-outs you would like to give to your teammates who have built this franchise from the ground up?**

Thank you to **Neil Druckmann** and **Bruce Straley** whose ambition and creativity brought the vision, what would become The Last of Us, to our studio and, ultimately, the world.

Thank you to our studio leadership **Evan Wells**, **Christian Gyrling**, **Alison Mori**, and **Arne Meyer** for your support and trust.

We also want to thank the studio and the hundreds of talented, ambitious game developers who brought the vision of

• The Last of Us to life  
• and contributed to  
• the innovation and  
• technology that helped  
• build these games: the  
• artists, the animators,  
• the programmers, the  
• designers – everyone.

• Finally, we'd like to  
• thank Sony Interactive  
• Entertainment who  
• supported and continues  
• to support The Last of Us  
• franchise.



**The sobering examination of blurred lines that differentiate right from wrong is one of the themes that makes The Last of Us a critically-acclaimed title, yet all of the shots that you shared for the month were completely right!**

---

Thank you! That's high praise. We can't take all the credit, though. While we scoured and admired so many of the submissions, you (@PoachiiN), @eveygamephoto, @EclipsedFantasy, @Photoingame, and @MindJackedJimmy were all incredible and provided shots around the community that stood out.

It was undeniable that in addition to mad VP skills, you all also had an eye for great work!

It was definitely tough to not share every single submission, but, in the end, it ended up becoming a stunning gallery full of incredible people and their work.

**Playability, accessibility, strength of narrative, solid level design and memorable characters are all columns that prop up a fantastic game, with the increase in interest of photo modes could the interpretability of a title and agency to shoot, also become important metrics too?**

---

To reference your first question, we're seeing this massive boom in Photo Mode's popularity within the video game community. As more

people pick up virtual photography, agency and interpretability become more limitless and unique to each VP.



As a metric, interpretability of a title and agency to shoot are tough to measure because those are so subjective. Photographers of every discipline have unique toolkits and skill sets, so it's no surprise that game developers are expanding and diversifying options in games' Photo Modes to provide players that freedom, flexibility, and adaptability to capture the look and composition they're envisioning.

The diversity of features has benefits beyond virtual photography. Photo Modes allow players to explore games' details even further or linger on a special moment slightly longer. For example, The Last of Us Part II's combat is intense and fast-moving. On a typical playthrough, most players aren't necessarily taking a stroll and admiring the scenery when they're trying to survive and

avoid a Clicker bite. With that in consideration, Photo Mode is a chance to pause, take a closer look, and metaphorically breathe – or even get a chance to zoom in on those enemies that would otherwise fly by in a frenzied moment of in-game combat. The more options a Photo Mode provides, the more possibilities are afforded to players to express their unique take or find exciting details they'd overlook otherwise.

**Images by:**

Elsfuturedays  
BNNXP  
Pscaptures1  
97Floyd  
MomentVP  
Emilli96  
SindyJB



# Theme: CLOSE UP/DETAILS

THEME SELECTOR: **Eclipsed Fantasy**



VOLDSBY

“When Naughty Dog approached me regarding their Photography event, I was blown away...Not only for choosing me, but because they loved my work. When they asked me for a theme, it took me a while but I finally reached my decision - ‘Close-Up’.

I landed at that theme due to my love of getting up close with the characters in The Last of Us, with most of my captures being portraits. As of writing this, I’ve clocked up 210 hours in The Last of Us Part II. The story of Part II has stuck with me ever since I first played it.”

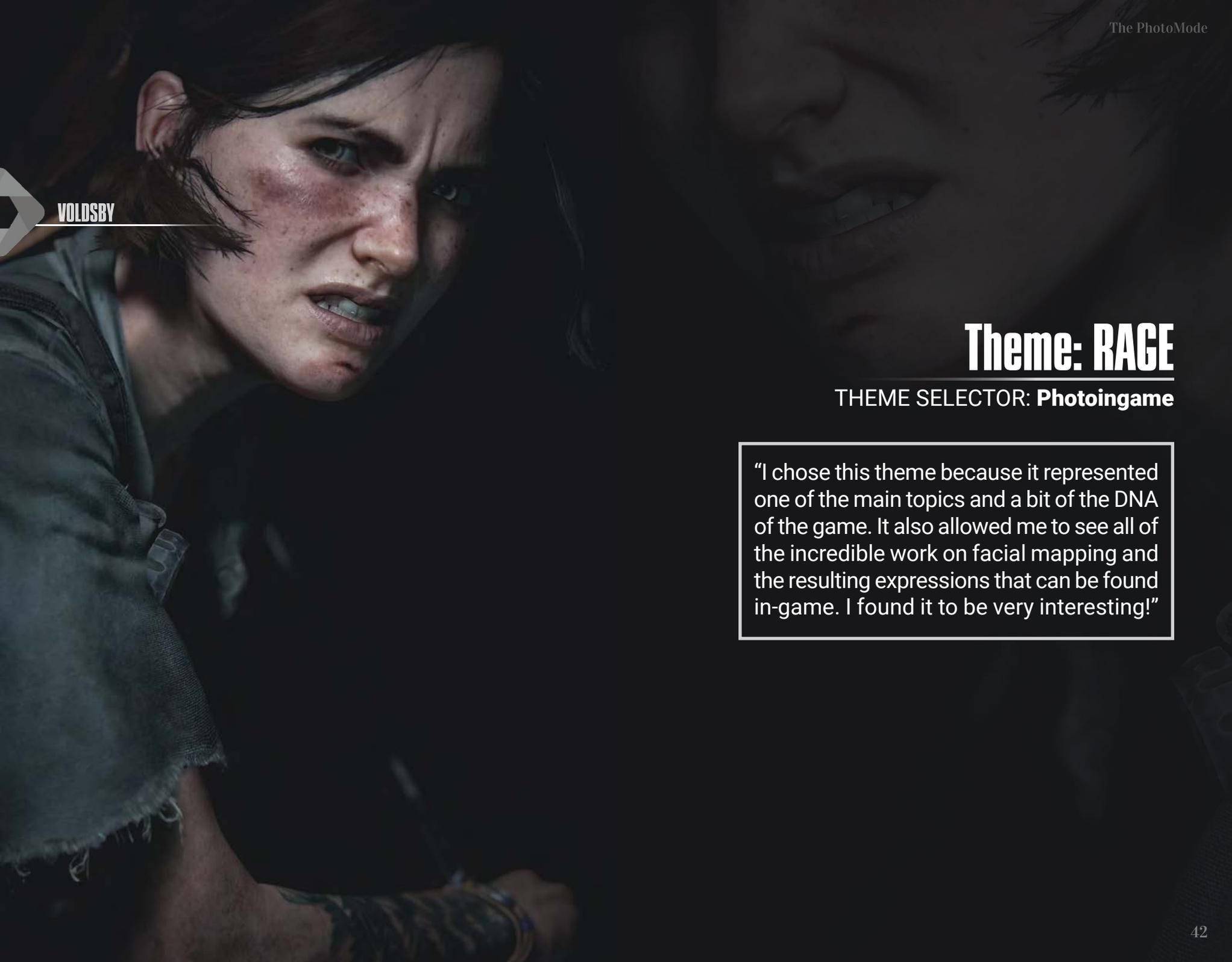


CRYPTIC\_VP



PHOTOINGAME





VOLOSBY

## Theme: RAGE

THEME SELECTOR: **Photoingame**

“I chose this theme because it represented one of the main topics and a bit of the DNA of the game. It also allowed me to see all of the incredible work on facial mapping and the resulting expressions that can be found in-game. I found it to be very interesting!”



# Theme: FORTITUDE/STRENGTH

THEME SELECTOR: **Poachiin**

“I was honoured to be asked to pick a theme for Naughty Dog’s Photo Mode event, and decided on one that can be expressed in a multitude of ways. Strength can be an expression conveyed in a portrait, or a physical action in a landscape of violence. In many ways fortitude, to bear adversity with courage, is a key theme. We’re told a story about two diametrically opposed characters on the surface, but both characters are driven by their losses as much as by their convictions. Neither character curls up and decides to die. It’s their fortitude that ultimately leads them to each other, their motivations transcending survival and becoming about rectifying the adversity each has faced and gifted to each other.”

GSMIND89



MINOZUM



EMILLI96

@EMILLI96

# Theme: NATURE PREVAILS

THEME SELECTOR: **eveygamephoto**

“One of the main reasons I always come back to The Last of Us Part II, is the connection I feel to it’s characters and the masterfully written story. I just want to spend as much time with them as possible, and the countless hours I’ve invested in photo mode allows me to do just that. Surrounded by a haunting, atmospheric environment, I feel completely immersed.

I picked the theme “Nature Prevails” because even though this world is harrowing and punishing, there is beauty left in it. It’s the small details I love paying attention to. Society as we know it may have fallen apart, but nature remains intact. Perhaps to me it serves as a metaphor, or a testament to the resilient survivors of the brutal and harsh circumstances in which they now live.”





MINOZUM



YURIC83



# Theme: A MOMENT OF PEACE

THEME SELECTOR: **MindJackedJimmy**



**VOLDSBY**

“Being asked by Naughty Dog to be part of the TLoU Photomode event was incredible and so unexpected. Being given the final week, I guess I had a bit of time to decide upon a theme and although I’m really into portraits, I didn’t really want my choice to be that simple.

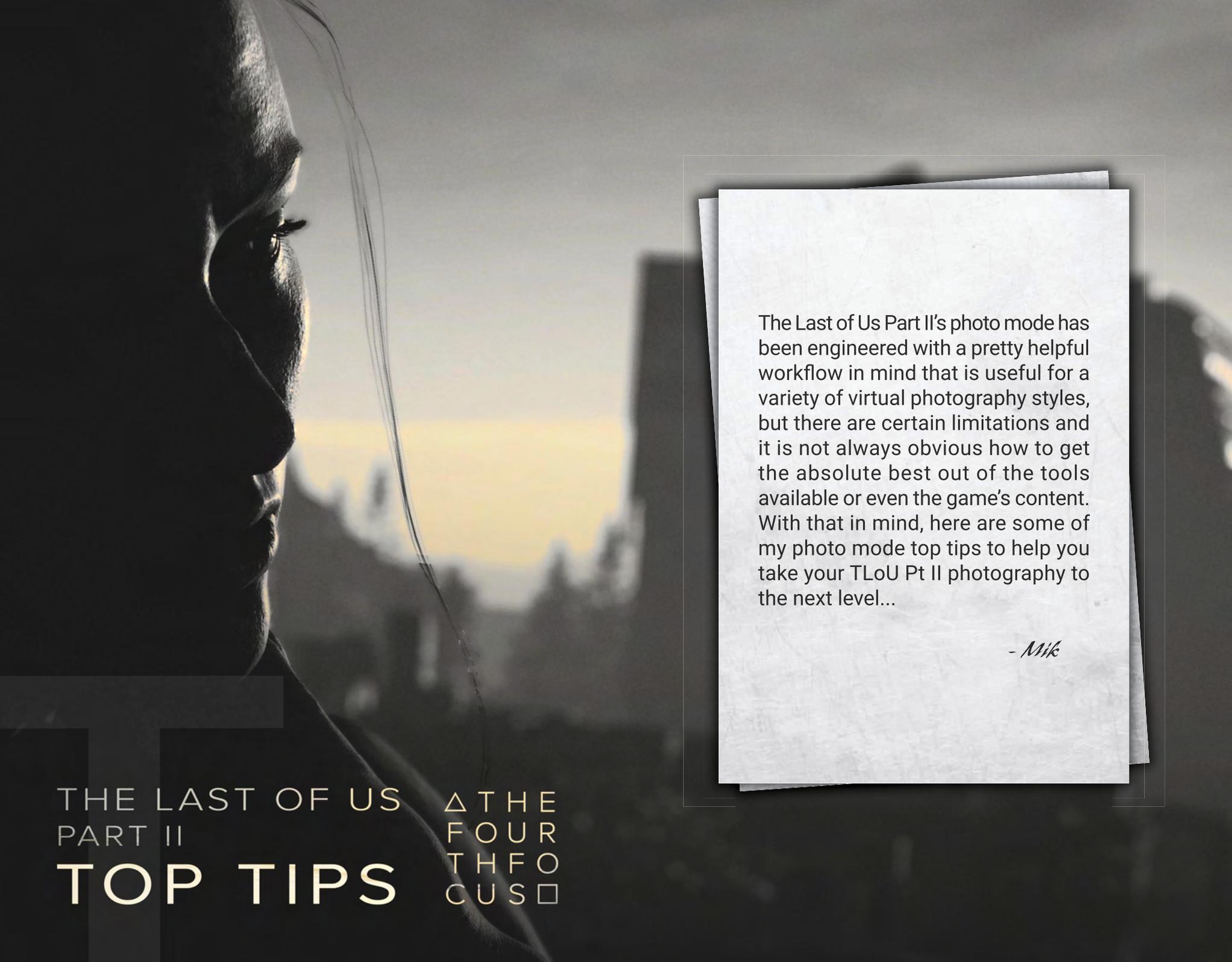
In the game I prefer to focus on the softer moments with these characters and finding a story behind their eyes. I decided upon A Moment of Peace as my theme, which allowed me to focus on the style I enjoy but gave room for others to find their own moments... I think it capped off the event pretty well and I enjoyed working with ND throughout the week!”



NUKA\_BLISS



JUNKYARDVERTIGO



The Last of Us Part II's photo mode has been engineered with a pretty helpful workflow in mind that is useful for a variety of virtual photography styles, but there are certain limitations and it is not always obvious how to get the absolute best out of the tools available or even the game's content. With that in mind, here are some of my photo mode top tips to help you take your TLoU Pt II photography to the next level...

- *Mik*

THE LAST OF US PART II  
TOP TIPS

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## MASTER THE ORBIT CAMERA:

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Perhaps the hardest thing to get to grips with here is the use of a tethered orbit camera. Fixed at one end to a point on the playable character and moving in circles around them, this restrictive camera mode requires a bit of creativity when it comes to composing a shot.

Be sure to use the limited vertical crane & horizontal truck adjustment to shift the position of your subject within the frame, and play with the length of the tether to bring the camera in closer to the character or to put some distance between you. The maximum range varies by scene and your surroundings, so always try it out in different areas if you are looking for wider shots.



To overcome the orbit tilt for low level shots, crane the camera fully down and then slowly move it backwards while narrowing the field of view to maintain framing. This can be a bit hit and miss depending on the terrain, but get it right and you will notice that the camera reacts to the ground and settles to a slightly lower level as you go.

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT FIELD OF VIEW:

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Just like selecting a longer or shorter focal length lens for different shots in real life, changing the photo mode's field of view influences your image in more ways than just zooming in on the subject. A narrower FoV brings your subject closer but also compresses the scene, making the perceived distance between foreground and background appear shorter and de-cluttering the frame.

Use this in combination with a more distant camera position to isolate a subject in a portrait or make use of an interesting background region. Use wider FoV settings when wanting to capture an exaggerated perspective from a closer position, or to give a panoramic view of a vista.

## CHOOSE THE RIGHT DEPTH OF FIELD:

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Much like the field of view options, the photo mode's depth of field setting replicates the use of different real world lenses, or rather different lens aperture settings, to influence the look of your image. The DoF Intensity slider determines how much of the scene appears in sharp focus and controls the amount of defocus that occurs in the foreground and background on either side of it.

Use a high Intensity setting to create a shallow DoF that can remove background distractions and make the intended subject really pop out of the image. Thanks to Naughty Dog's authentic implementation, this will also create a beautiful circular bokeh effect, so look out for specular light sources to add interest to a defocused backdrop



THE  
LAST  
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PART II

## USE THE AVAILABLE LIGHT:

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Light is perhaps the most crucial aspect of any type of photography, and this game has some truly wonderful light to take advantage of. From pre-calculated indirect lighting and subtly diffuse shadows that give a beautifully natural look, to more dramatic point sources that can create highly contrasting subject illumination, choosing the right light is key to achieving an interesting shot.

Always pay attention to the type of lighting that is available to you, work with what is there or go looking for something more suited to what you're trying to achieve. Oh, and don't forget about the stunning multi-element lens flare, the character's flashlight beams or the fully rendered reflections in mirrors to add a little something extra.

## WEATHER AND TIME OF DAY:

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Seattle sees its fair share of wet weather and *The Last of Us Part II* certainly has that covered. Although the weather and time of day in the game are not dynamic, they do vary by chapter with different sections set amidst different conditions. Not only can you find a variety of lighting in these conditions, but you can also take advantage of the slippery-looking wet shaders by venturing out into the rainy chapters with your virtual camera; that, or just throw your character into some standing water, either way it is a great chance to add some gloss to your shots.

## GET THE BEST CHARACTER MODELS:

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As shown in the cinematic cut-scenes or the Model Viewer found on the main menu, Naughty Dog's character models are amongst the very best, though you won't necessarily always see that during gameplay. Like any game, the level of detail will scale to maintain performance, such as during a large open battle or while on horseback. Choose quiet scenes in less expansive areas to see the most impressive LoD in the character models and capture the highest quality intimate shots.



## IGNORE THE CHARACTERS:

The character models are not the only thing that you should think about pointing your camera at with beautifully crafted environments and detailed interiors that tell their own stories.

The orbit camera doesn't help here but place your character in the intended line of sight, hide them from view via the Filters tab and get involved with the plethora of minutiae that are just waiting to be found.



## USE EDITS SUBTLY:

The Last of Us Part II includes a reasonable set of basic editing options and making use of adjustments such as brightness and saturation is a great way to change the character of your shot. These combine excellently with the various colour filters which can also be toned down to blend with the original image for subtle tonal adjustment rather than an overriding colour cast. The Sharpness slider should be used with particular care; while a little sharpness can enhance fine details, too much will result in ugly edge artefacts and exaggerated jaggies. Something to avoid.



## USE EDITS TO THE EXTREME:

But wait, you just said... Yes, yes I know and the above is true when aiming for realistic shots, but virtual photography also lets you embrace convenient ways to experiment with an image. Test the limits of each photo mode setting and discover how they can be combined. The result may often be disastrous, but sometimes you might stumble across something particularly abstract or unique.

## ADD SOME DEFECTS:

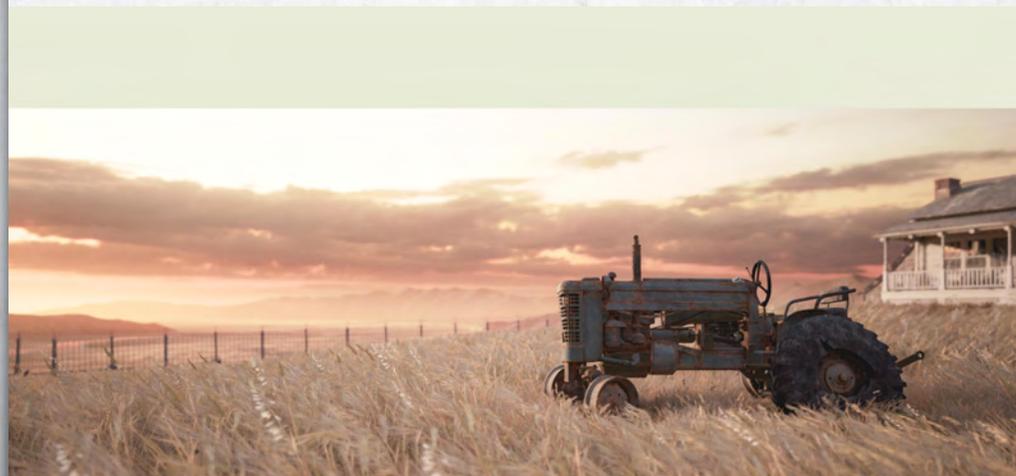
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Professional photographers may go to extreme lengths to remove imperfections with low ISO settings to reduce noise and expensive glass to minimise vignette and chromatic aberration, but that doesn't mean you always have to follow the same theory. In fact, making an image imperfect can help to replace that "gamey" look with a bit more realism. Adding a little film grain to low light shots or enabling an amount of motion blur to enhance movement can take away the overly clean look and lend a sense of realism that your eyes are used to seeing with regular photographs.



## UNDERSTAND LOGO PLACEMENT:

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**THE LAST OF US**  
PART II

It can be tempting to plaster every shot with the game logo, and game branding can lend itself to a more promotional or poster style or even help to address the visual balance of an image, but don't feel like you have to include one every time to identify where the capture came from.

Interestingly, the logos in this photo mode will also drop out of the frame to sit inside the crop borders under the right conditions. To achieve this, put the logo at the edge of the frame and drop the size down until you see it jump across and even switch between white and black for maximum contrast.

## USE CAMERA COLLISION:



Another area that lets the camera down is that it doesn't let you get close.

Even at the shortest camera distance and narrowest FoV, the camera in this photo mode struggles to get close enough to really benefit from the extraordinary details of the game's character models. However, you can use the fact that the camera avoids collision with walls and solid objects to force it into an otherwise unreachable position and achieve a better view.

Simply position the character near to a wall and spin the camera around into the gap between them. Notice how it bounces forwards to avoid collision and gets much closer than is ordinarily allowed. Precision is out of the window, but the glorious details mean that it's worth making the effort.

## A LITTLE EXTRA:

Sometimes you can find a little help outside of the photo mode itself and Naughty Dog's industry leading accessibility options have a few extra tricks you can make use of. Not only is there a Camera Distance setting under the game's Motion Sickness options which moves both the in-game and photo mode cameras slightly closer to the character, but with a swipe of the touch pad, you can also apply a high contrast colour filter for novel two-tone shots or put the game into slow-motion, great for timing action shots.



Whatever shots you come up with, to make sure you get the best quality, why not check out my earlier article on [The Photo Process: From Capture To Share...](#)

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VIRTUALPHOTOGRAPHY  
NEWSLETTER



PHOTOMODE ONE





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MERSEY\_RED\_VP





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HANNYA\_VP



THE\_EIGHTEENTH\_VP



PHOTOMODE.ONE



PHOTO.IN.GAME



ITS\_JOANS

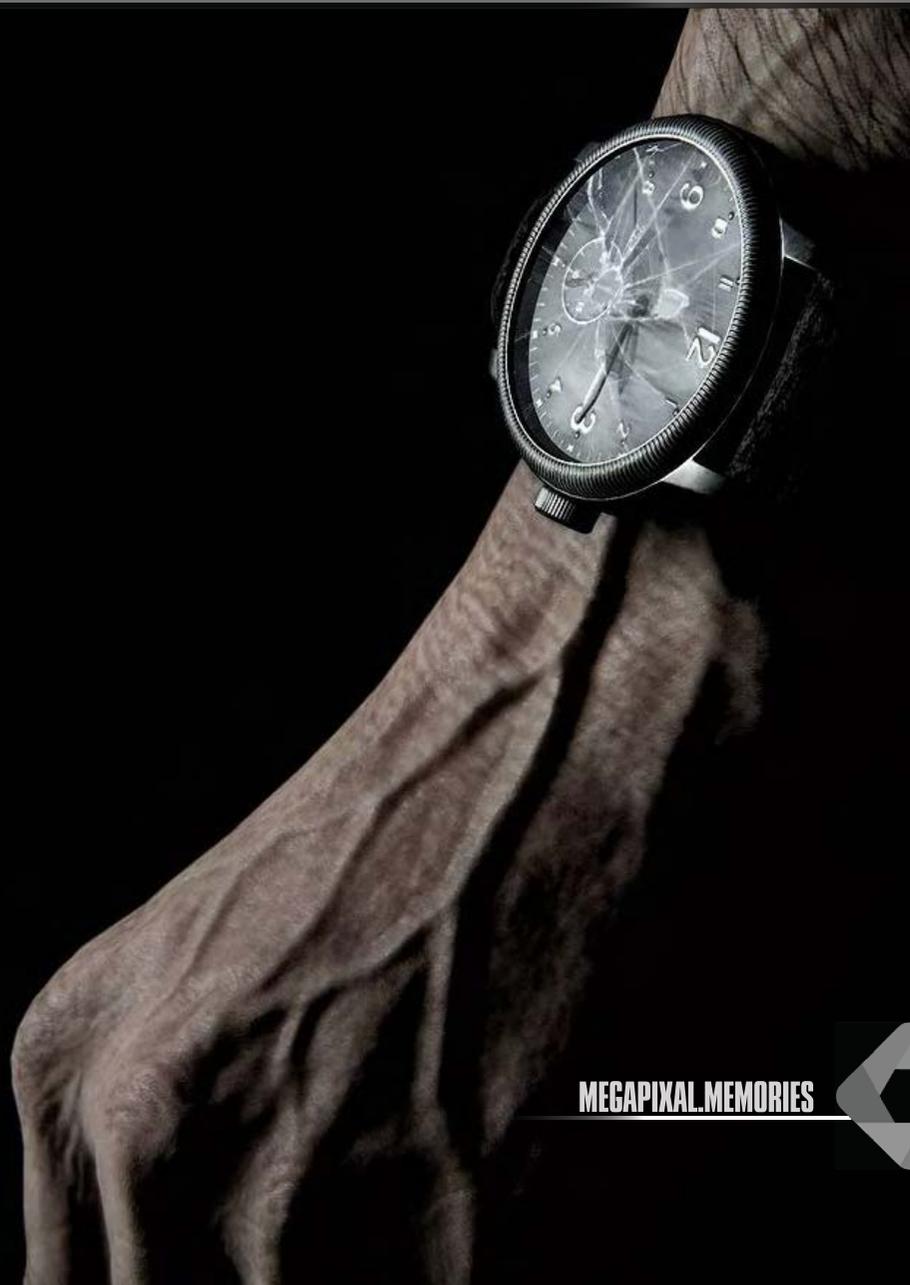


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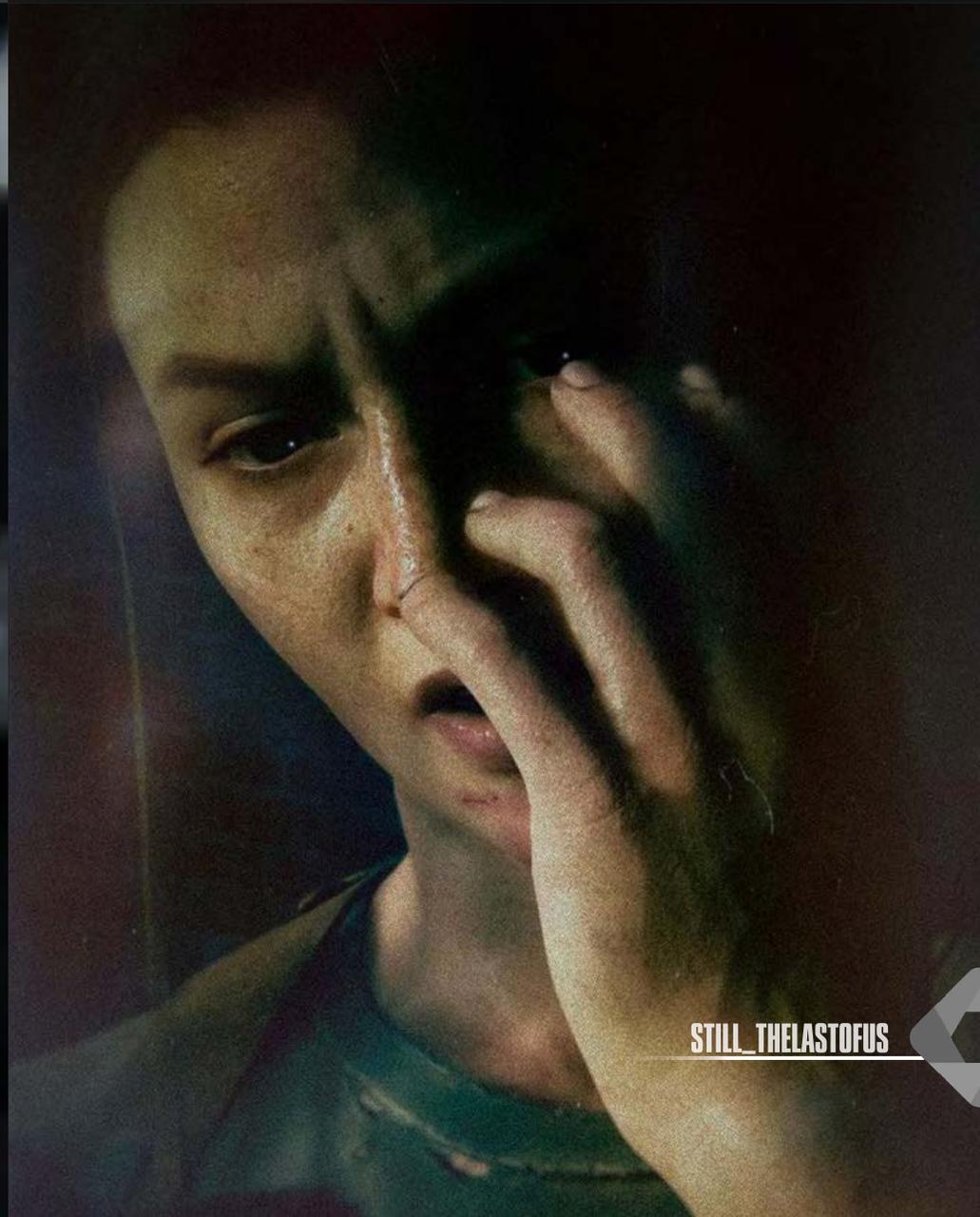
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