

Photographers turn island negative to positive

A dream contract on a Caribbean island which would have pushed an emerging photography business on to new heights ended in a dramatic evacuation because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rod Penn and Jodie Mann believed landing work from a large international client for an advertising campaign for a 5-star resort was the breakthrough which would underpin Pennmann which they launched last year.

However, just one day after arriving in the Dominican Republic, Rod and Jodie and their creative team of hair, makeup, models and support crew, were forced to return home as international borders closed.

Rod said: "Our big break came when we won a pitch to work on an advertising campaign for a very large international client and we knew this job would catapult our business forwards in so many ways.

"It was by far the highest profile job of our careers and we worked on the project exclusively for a month prior to the shoot. The pandemic seemed to be growing rapidly, and there were reports about borders closing, people being quarantined on ships and in hotels. We were very concerned, but we had our sights and ambitions set on fulfilling this job.

"We made it out to the Caribbean as planned, and started the two-day prep for the production but sadly on the first day it

was decided that there was simply too much risk of the whole cast and crew being trapped or quarantined on the island, so it was cancelled and we were flown home almost immediately.”

Jodie added: “It was a very close call as the day we began our journey home, America swiftly cancelled all transit visas and we were the last flight allowed to transit in the USA before the border closed. We got home by the skin of our teeth.



The Swell Mob – www.pennmann.co.uk

“Everyone completely understood and agreed with what was a very difficult decision, but it was a big disappointment for us all. When we arrived back into the UK, we all had to face the disappointment and the financial anxiety of the looming lockdown.”

Pennmann was launched last June from a studio in Leith after Rod and Jodie decided to leave their jobs as head photographers with fashion and beauty specialists with a makeup academy. In their first year they worked with local designer brands, a large American client, and shot a campaign for the National Museum of Scotland.

A Scottish Enterprise grant has helped keep the business afloat during Covid-19 and the creative pair have devised two

online tutorials for fashion, beauty and portraiture photographers.

Rod said: "We go into great depth about the methods, tips and tricks we've learnt throughout our combined 20-year career, giving our customers a real insight into how to produce high-quality imagery they can be really proud to show to a client. We believe that both tutorials compliment each other well, and with practise studying the techniques a photographer or editor could go from complete beginner to high-level very quickly."



Meraki – photo by www.pennmann.co.uk

Rod studied photography at university, later specialising in portrait photography. His work has appeared in The Guardian

and The Independent and he won the emerging talent award in the 2017 Retina Photography Festival and was a finalist in the Scottish Portrait Awards.

Jodie started her own photography business when she left school and has a strong background in makeup, fashion and visual arts. She was shortlisted for an art award with leading art publisher Washington Green, has been published in leading fashion and lifestyle magazines, and was mentored by one of the world's most influential photographers, Nick Knight.



Focus – www.pennmann.co.uk

Both online tutorials focus on building skills and understanding of high-end retouching and post-processing of

fashion, beauty and portraiture imagery. Rod's tutorial is aimed at beginner to intermediate level with the aim of making it an accessible class that explains the tools and techniques he finds key in portrait retouching.

Aimed at a more intermediate to advanced level of photographers/editors, Jodie teaches her favourite techniques for perfecting makeup, hair and skin as well as revealing some of the styling tricks she learnt from Nick Knight.

www.pennmann.co.uk/tutorials