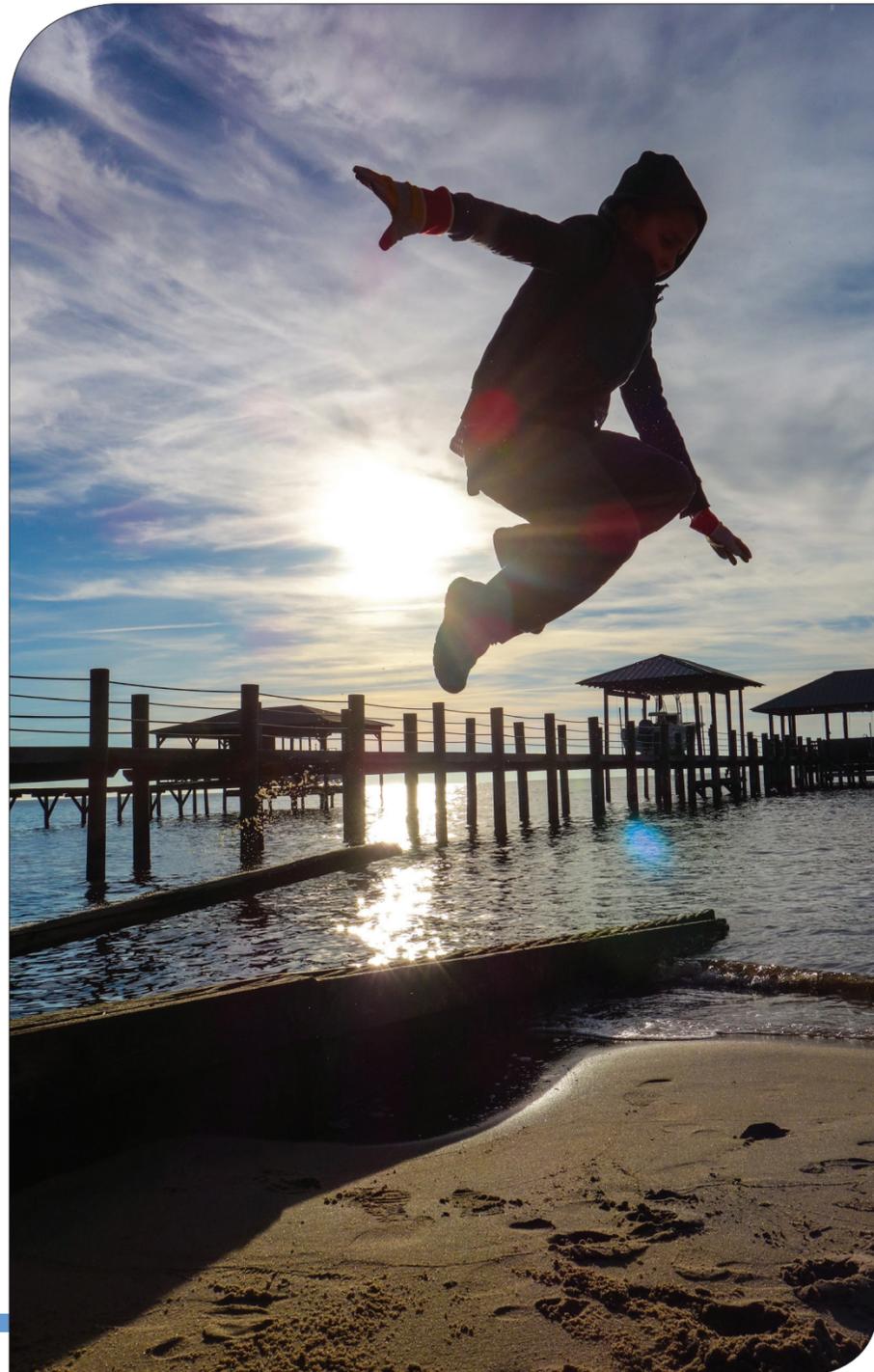


About Face»

What happens when a star photographer shifts his focus from fashion models to the fascinating features of his own kids? Magic, of course. *The Face's* Nigel Barker lets you in on some tricks of his trade—get your cameras ready! Photographs by Nigel Barker | Text by Melanie Baker



Nigel Barker has lived in New York City for 17 years and has “photographed all over the city for all kinds of reasons,” he says. As the host of the mentoring reality show *The Face*, Barker taps his expertise as a widely respected fashion photographer—but during his off hours, Barker’s a father of two who, like any parent, wields his camera to preserve memories, to capture special moments and freeze them in time. He says he is partial to too many NYC spots to pick just a few as favorites.

Barker identifies two main types of pictures parents generally take of their kids. The first he calls “that award-winning shot”—the picture of an accomplishment, a milestone, or a holiday: “when your kids do something like paint a painting they’re proud of, or build something, find something, catch something...and there’s that moment when they’re really excited. Their chest is puffed out, they have a glow on their face, they’re happy, and it’s all real. They will pose for you then because they are really proud,” Barker says.

Then there’s “a completely opposite type of photograph,” Barker says, that’s equally if not more authentic: the one you take without your kids’ knowledge. “You’re a voyeur in their life” then, shooting away while your child plays or laughs or, as Barker’s son Jack, 8, did on vacation, sits on a dock playing his guitar. The images that result from these surreptitious snaps are full of honest emotion, Barker says.

When it is time to get your kids to pose, don’t ask them to “Say cheese!” You’re more apt to elicit a smile if you’re not *telling* them to smile, Barker says, rather inspiring them to do so: “So think about what sort of photo you want to take—happy, sweet, action, or just a timeless portrait—and by empowering the subject with an action bring the whole moment to life. Ask them, for example, to imagine a piece of chocolate melting on their tongue as they look at the camera. Remind them how delicious it is, and ask them to tell you how yummy it is—but not with words, just with their eyes—and *voilà!* You have a portrait where the eyes do the talking.”

Style Quotient “I think that in this day and age it’s much easier to get into photography because everyone has a camera to some extent, even on phones. You don’t have to buy film and all of these things that were restrictive and very expensive when I was a child,” Barker recalls. “Now you can shoot, edit, delete, and re-shoot on the spot. Honing your eye is key. One of the most important things is to have some kind of style or look to your photographs. There are many people out there who have cameras and can take pictures, but if you want to be a photographer, someone has to look at your picture and say, ‘Oh, that’s a Nigel Barker picture.’ There’s a trademark element to it. When you’re young, say 15, you don’t need to have a style, but that’s the concept to work towards.” *Left:* Barker’s contemporary style shines in this photo of his son—the almost-silhouetted image of young Jack doesn’t show much detail in the boy’s face, but it memorably captures his spirit at that moment.

Hide and Seek

How can parents get memorable action shots? “We all want to capture the energy and spontaneity of our children in photos, yet we constantly ask them to slow down, stop, smile, look at the camera, stop fidgeting, stand still, etc., etc.,” Barker says. “Some of my favorite shots of my kids are ones where I literally capture them in the moment—voyeuristically shooting away with them unbeknownst to me even being there. Set your camera to rapid-fire, zoom in from a distance, and don’t censor them—well, not too much at least! And remember, it’s often the moment right before and after what seems like ‘the’ moment that is in fact the best shot.” *Right:* Barker’s children, Jack and Jasmine, 5, frolic with a furry friend in Michigan. *Below:* Barker used his zoom lens to surreptitiously snap Jack playing his guitar while on a family getaway—being far away and zooming in, he says, is “a great way of getting an avante-garde but also beautiful, artistic, and authentic shot.”





Bottoms Up

“Something fun is to shoot quite low and look up at the kids. It makes them seem regal,” Barker says. “You get a whole different dimension. I do that in parks quite often when kids are running, their hearts are beating, and they’re full of feeling and expression. All of that emotion is natural—it’s right there.” So just get down on your knees outside, or crawl around a little bit on the nursery floor—it’ll be worth it for the sake of the larger-than-life portraits that’ll result—“they’re classic,” Barker says.



Paramount Pictures One thing to remember: Sometimes *you* need to get in the frame, too. If you’re the designated family photographer, don’t let your family’s pictorial history leave you out! Hand the camera to someone else and spend some time with your kids with the lens aimed at you. In this shot, Barker’s wife Crissy turned the tables on Nigel and Jack on a visit to her home state of Alabama. When your camera’s not handy, trust your iPhone or tablet to capture moments worthy of remembering. Check out which apps Barker recommends for getting the most out of your mobile device’s camera on the opposite page.

Nigel Barker returns as a fixture for season 2 of *The Face*, a competition-based reality series that focuses on finding up-and-coming modeling talent as well as on personal branding. The show primes its contestants by teaching skills from walking runways to shooting TV commercials. World-renowned supermodel Naomi Campbell, Anne V, and Lydia Hearst serve as mentors to their own teams of aspiring models, grooming them for success in their trademark ways. As the show’s host, Barker lends his expertise both in front of and behind the camera as a “confidante and advisor” to the contestants. *The Face* airs Wednesdays at 8pm on Oxygen.



Opposites Attract

Sure, you can take pictures of your kids skateboarding at the local park, but why not go for a more unexpected juxtaposition, Barker says. “In order to get something a little more iconic, a little more fun, take them out of their environment—photograph them in action on their board with the Empire State Building behind them,” he suggests. This image of Barker’s son, Jack, was taken at New Jersey’s Castle Point Skateboard Park, “which is right on the water, so you get the New York skyline in the back of the shot. It’s very urban, something you might see in a fashion magazine with that juxtaposition.” Think of other recognizable locales near your home where you might stage a similar shoot—picture your child playing his saxophone on the Staten Island Ferry, say, or dribbling a soccer ball at Croton Gorge Park in Westchester with the Croton Dam spillway behind her.

Fave Photo Apps

- “My go-to app is **Camera+**. Often I’ll photograph within Camera+ and tweak the photo there. The Clarity Pro tool in Camera+ is really useful for contrast, and can make your photo punchy. You can build all these elements on top of each other in layers—this app allows you to do all sorts of professional things easily.”

- Barker also likes **InstaFrame**, which is an Instagram tool. “Sometimes you take a photograph of something but you don’t want to crop it for Instagram, so this gives you a way to frame the picture with a hundred different frames, shapes, and sizes without having to crop it,” he says.

- “**Fx Camera** is another fun tool that has all these features such as Toy Cam and Fish Eye,” Barker says.

- Want to experiment more? “**Afterlight**, **Flipagram**, and **Vintage** are pretty cool, too,” Barker suggests.