

PAGEANT STYLE LIGHTING BREAKDOWN

Intent Behind The Shoot

The purpose of this setup was to create a pageant-inspired beauty portrait that feels elegant, confident, and premium without making the lighting look overly dramatic or harsh.

The focus was on:

- Giving the face a clean beauty glow
- Maintaining dimensionality in the outfit
- Creating separation from the dark background
- Adding a luxurious blue shimmer effect to support the styling and crown
- Keeping the overall frame polished and high-end

This setup works especially well for:

- Pageant portraits
- Beauty campaigns
- Crown or fashion editorials
- High-end portfolio shoots
- Glamour portraits



LIGHTING SETUP

1. BEAUTY DISH WITH GRID, FRONT

Placed directly in front of the model.

Purpose:

This light adds punch and clarity to the face. The grid helps control spill and keeps the focus concentrated on facial features instead of lighting the entire scene flatly.

What it adds:

- Catchlights in the eyes
- Crisp skin texture
- Defined facial structure
- Controlled contrast
- Premium beauty look



2. MAIN KEY LIGHT, CAMERA LEFT, OCTA WITH GRID

Placed from camera left as the primary shaping light.

Purpose:

This is the main directional light responsible for sculpting the face and body. Using a grid keeps the light focused and prevents unnecessary spill on the background.

Why this matters:

Without the grid, the setup would lose depth because the background would start getting brighter.

What it adds:

- Shape on the jawline
- Controlled highlights on the gown
- Depth and dimensionality
- Elegant shadow transition



3. WHITE THERMOCOL FILL, CAMERA RIGHT

Placed opposite the key light.

Purpose:

The thermocol reflector softly opens up the shadows without destroying the contrast.

Important detail:

The reflector was intentionally kept at a slight distance so the shadows stay rich and controlled instead of becoming flat.

What it adds:

- Soft fill on the shadow side
- Better skin tone retention
- Balanced contrast
- Cleaner beauty finish



4. STRIP LIGHT WITH GRID, BEHIND MODEL, CAMERA RIGHT

Placed slightly behind the model from camera right.

Purpose:

This light creates separation from the dark background and highlights the outline of the body and hair.

What it adds:

- Hair light
- Edge separation
- Shine on the hair
- Definition on the silhouette
- Cinematic layering



5. BLUE GEL LIGHT ON SHIMMER SURFACE, BACKGROUND EFFECT

A separate light with a blue gel was aimed at a shimmer reflector/surface which bounced textured blue light onto the background.

Purpose:

Instead of directly lighting the background flatly, the shimmer creates an uneven reflective texture, making the background feel more alive and luxurious.

Why this works:

The blue tone complements the outfit styling and helps separate the model visually from the black backdrop.

What it adds:

- Premium pageant mood
- Background depth
- Color harmony
- Subtle visual drama
- Luxury feel without distraction



CAMERA SETTINGS

Camera: Canon R6 Mark II

Lens: 24-105mm f/4

Shutter Speed: 1/160

Aperture: f/9

ISO: 100



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Light it up
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FINAL RESULT

The combination of controlled grids, reflective fill, beauty-focused front lighting, and textured background lighting helped create a portrait that feels:

- Regal
- Clean
- Luxurious
- Dimensional
- Beauty-focused
- Pageant-ready

The biggest advantage of this setup is control.

Every light has a specific purpose:

One shapes.

One enhances.

One separates.

One supports the mood.

That is what makes the frame feel polished instead of overlit.

