

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

August 5, 2007

Where art thou my BumDog?

Filed under: vernacular & Flickr — alecsothblog @ 11:34 pm

Because I have a blog, you might think I'm Internet savvy. I'm not. Not only am I clueless about HTML or RSS, I've barely spent any time on Flickr and YouTube.

But a couple of monhs ago someone told me about some videos of me on YouTube ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). This caused me to check out Flickr, where I was amazed to find an entire tour of my studio ([here](#)).

For a minute I thought I was hot stuff. Then I learned that there is an entire Flickr fan group devoted to Martin Parr ([see the highlights here](#)).



photo by Sirio Magnabosco

The photographer Jim Goldberg recently told me that someone had made a video about his book, *Raised by Wolves*, on YouTube. The video is made by a homeless man who calls himself BumDog007. He writes about his motivation for making the video:

I was in LA County jail for some offense (I think it was for battery). In the newspaper that they provided the cell, I saw a review of an exhibiton at the LA County Museum of Art called "Raised By Wolves" by a photographer named Jim Goldberg. The whole exhibition was photos of homeless teens living in Hollywood and

San Francisco. I realized immediately that that was the kind of photography I was looking for to make "Like a Rolling Stone".

When I got out I was living in an alley in Santa Monica. and it just so happened that right across from the parking lot I slept in there was this guy named Andrew, who I always used to say hello to coming in and out of his alley adjacent apartment. One day I struck up a conversation with him, and it turns out he worked on commercials and short art films. I told him the idea I had for "Like A Rolling Stone", and he said he that he could actually help me realize it.

He in fact had what was known as then as a Ken Burns machine. The device Ken Burns made famous with his documentaries. It created motion with still photography. It costed \$10,000 at the time. It really blew my mind that just by coincidence I would be sleeping in the same alley as a guy who own such rare equipment.

So outta of the library I got a catalog book of the exhibition. and with stickies I marked out all the pictures that went with particular lyrics of the song, and gave it back to Andrew.

And outta of that he created a video of "Like A Rolling Stone", directed by Bumdog. My first credit as a director. I was so proud. I sent it out to some people thinking maybe I could get some work as a video director with it but it came to naught.

Like a lot of photographer friends, Jim Goldberg and I share a bit of unspoken competitiveness. I'm happy that Jim recently won the HCB award, but I confess to being downright jealous of his homeless admirer. Will somebody out there be my BumDog?

1. just want to point out that was just for fun :) not trying to imitate nobody. but if i have to give credit to the guys you mention both of them agreed to have a portrait taken (<http://www.mrsirio.com/goldberg.jpg> and <http://www.mrsirio.com/parr.jpg>) but when you came to berlin and i wrote you for that you just didn't answer. so that's maybe why you're not that hot stuff.

(of course, i'm just teasing)

Comment by sirio magnabosco — August 6, 2007 @ 4:06 am

2. Alec,

Bumdog: be careful what you wish for...

best —

alun

Comment by Alun Severn — August 6, 2007 @ 6:14 am

3. "I confess to being downright jealous of his homeless admirer.

Will somebody out there be my BumDog?"

(???)

Comment by pguerv — August 6, 2007 @ 8:35 am

4. Alec – I had a rather strange thing happen to me a few years ago. I don't know if you are familiar with the John Water's film "Pecker", but it was a film about a young guy(played by Edward Furlong) who photographed his friends and family in a small neighborhood in Baltimore. Through a ridiculous turn of events in the film, he winds up becoming a big star in the NYC art scene. I did the black and white photographs that were featured in the film, and received a small amount of press about them when the film came out. A few months after the film came out, a friend of mine approached me and asked an odd question. He had been photographing strippers in Baltimore's red light district known as "The Block" for at least 10 years. While shooting a portrait of a girl one evening, she said "you have some competition around here." My friend Joe said "what do you mean?" She said, "that guy who shot the photos for that Pecker movie has been down here taking pictures of lot's of girls asking them to pose nude for him and promising them that he will

introduce them to John Waters which might lead to a part in one of his movies." Joe then replied, "what does this guy look like?" After she told him, he said that is NOT the guy. I know the guy who shot those photographs for John Waters and he looks nothing like you described, so spread the word, so no more girls will pose nude for this jackass. I thought it was pretty pathetic that some guy would pose as me just to be able to photograph strippers.

Comment by chuck shacochis — August 6, 2007 @ 9:03 am

5. Sirio, sorry about the missing email. Sometimes they slip through the cracks. The picture of Jim is outstanding. By the way, the work in Iran is lovely.

Chuck, I LOVE Pecker. It is my favorite movie about photography. Even though your impersonator is pathetic, the story is kind of perfect. Do you have examples of your pictures online?

Comment by Alec Soth — August 6, 2007 @ 9:15 am

6. Alec – Not yet. The only thing I have online is the stuff from Pecker <http://finelinefeatures.com/pecker/>. I kind of got out of photography right after I worked on John Waters' Pecker(Sorry, i couldn't resist wording it like that. While working on the movie, John used to threaten us and say that he was going to have baseball hats made that said "I worked on John Waters' Pecker" and force us to wear them). I did a lot of editorial work before and after the film and I got severely burned out, so I kind of laid low for a while. I have been working on a new series of color photographs for about 7 months now that I hope to show somewhere or hopefully publish in book form. As soon as I have some images ready, I'll email you.

Comment by chuck shacochis — August 6, 2007 @ 9:42 am

7. chuck — OMG! i've always loved Little Chrissy's Sugar Fix!

Comment by lexi — August 6, 2007 @ 1:08 pm

8. Wow, we are in my neighborhood, downtown LA. Saw some friends and some familiar faces. Funny, for such a sprawled out place downtown is really close nit.

Comment by w robert angell — August 6, 2007 @ 2:01 pm

9. love the ape girl banner

Comment by Amy — August 6, 2007 @ 2:37 pm

10. Nice clean studio Alec. Was that because company was coming? Enjoyed your work @ Bekman.

Comment by mark — August 6, 2007 @ 2:52 pm

11. I don't know if accidentally finding your tripod holes makes me a bumdog, but:

<http://michaelveit.blogspot.com/>

Comment by Michael — August 6, 2007 @ 3:00 pm

12. I too agree that Pecker is the best movie about photography and than after that it's Blow Up.

Comment by mike — August 6, 2007 @ 7:25 pm

13. Bumdog's story is amazing, thanks! His other projects are remarkable as well, esp. this one:

Just today i read another story about a creative homeless person, who came to a sad end. He was something of a poet and musician, and apparently touched a lot of lives.

<http://apesmaslament.blogspot.com/2007/08/legend-of-mister-butch.html>

Comment by mark s — August 7, 2007 @ 4:43 am

14. So at some point we will find Niagara pictures with It's Not Unusual by Tom Jones on Youtube?

Btw, some of the Raised by Wolves look more as if they were in the right context with the music that inside the book. I have it at home and I always end up perusing it from one side to the other to find the pictures that fit with the piece of text that I'm reading. With the music, on the other hand, the pictures almost always fit with the lyrics. I don't know if this is an annoying characteristic of Raised by Wolves, as it makes it a book that takes longer to digest... but some of the pictures improved as pictures also when I checked them in the magnum webpage (due to the captions!). Not sure if I'm being clear, but to me it looks like the ambiguity of the book maybe improves the book, but diminishes the power of the individual pictures it contains.

Comment by Joni Karanka — August 7, 2007 @ 6:58 am

15. If it makes you feel any better, I choose to write a paper about you for my photography class =)

Maybe you could help me out?

Comment by Michelle King — August 7, 2007 @ 11:50 am

16. With the mainstreaming of photography, the homegrown success of Parr's Flickr group confirms people's interests in what is around them vs. photographers documenting crack houses, shooting galleries, famine, genocide and disaster in faraway places.

Comment by PeeWee — August 7, 2007 @ 3:40 pm

17. Well said PeeWee. I've met people from all over the world on Flickr and can now live vicariously in those cities through their photographs. Flickr can be a wasteland but it's very entertaining to follow the passionate photographers...

peace.

bryan

Comment by bryanF — August 7, 2007 @ 4:33 pm

18. I have been summoned from the depths. What does thou will of me Master?

Comment by Bumdog — August 12, 2007 @ 5:41 pm

19. There you are. I posted an assignment here.

Comment by Alec Soth — August 12, 2007 @ 11:13 pm