



# AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH BOBBY SHEEHAN

PRODUCER, DIRECTOR, WRITER & PHOTOGRAPHER

BoWery Boy Series:  
Bobby Sheehan (Left)  
and Nigel Cook.  
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BY JOSÉ JEULAND

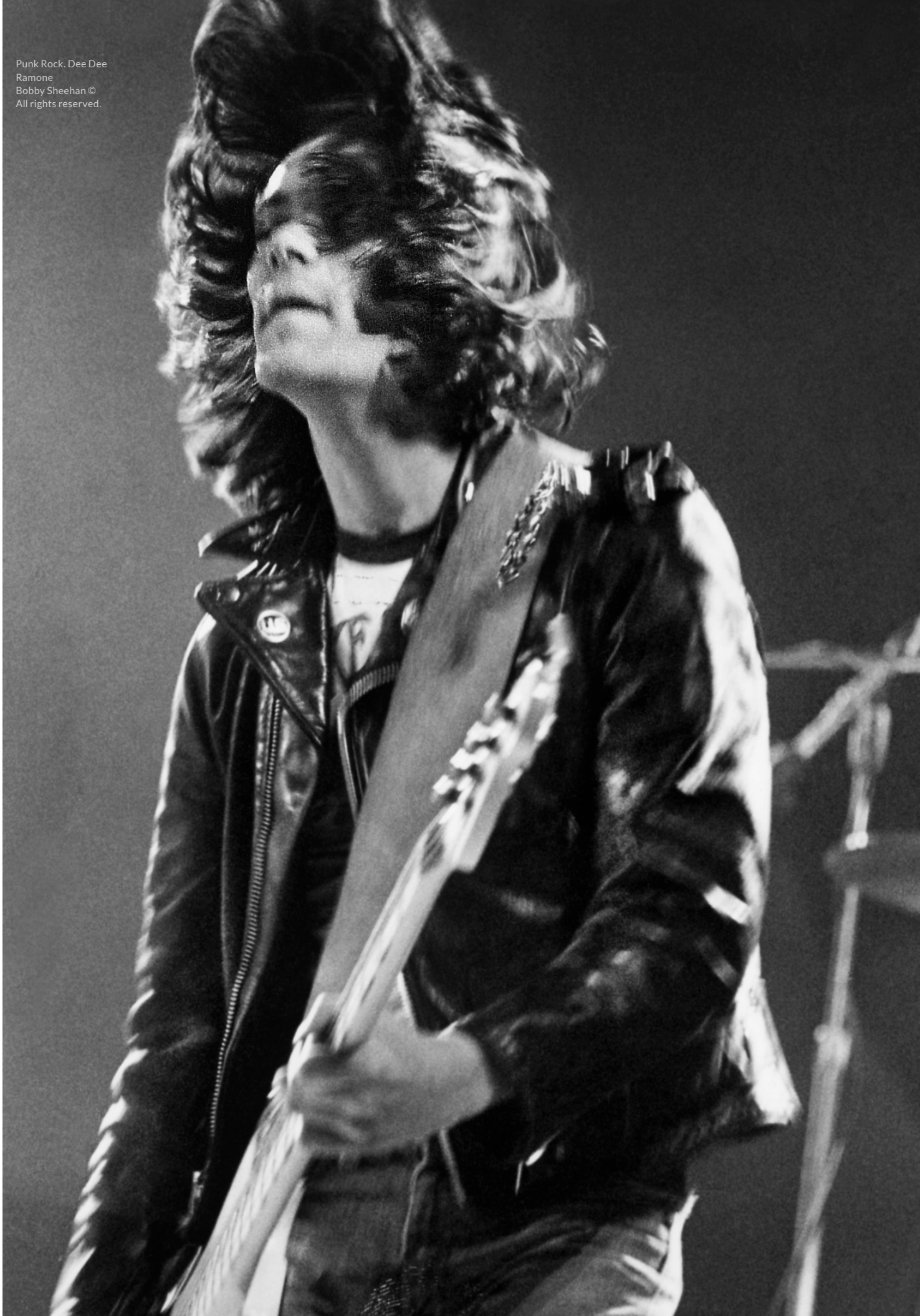
The co-founder of Working Pictures, Bobby Sheehan, is an established director, writer, producer, and cinematographer with over 100 hours of film, television, and digital content credits. These include veteran documentary projects Quest, The Mad Man, Mercy, Love & Grace, and feature documentary projects Seed and Mortal. Bobby's television credits include The Talent Collector (AMC), Repo Men (Discovery/TLC), Jeff Koons: Beyond Heaven (Ovation TV), Mr. Prince (Ovation TV), and others. Bobby also directed Arias With a Twist: The Docufantasy, which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival and was shown at the Tribeca Film Festival. In addition, he is a co-founder of The Backbone Network, a free streaming platform for veterans to share their stories and bridge the gap between veterans and civilians.

It is a great pleasure to speak with a fascinating person, one of the most experienced people in the industry, about creativity, passion, and life experience.



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Punk Rock. Dee Dee  
Ramone  
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**JOSÉ JEULAND:** Hello Bobby, It's a pleasure interviewing you in our Lens Magazine. Could you share with our readers about your life? Where are you living, grow-up, etc? Did you grow up in an artistic environment?

**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** Thank you, Jose; it is a pleasure! I didn't grow up in an artistic environment; on the contrary. I was born on Henry Street in the Lower East Side of New York City – the Bowery. My alcoholic father threw me and my teenage mother out of that apartment. So she and I moved into her mother's apartment on 4th Street and Avenue D. The Lower East Side of New York City in the 1960s and 1970s was like a war zone—lots of poverty, violence, and trauma. Junkies were literally dying in the streets.

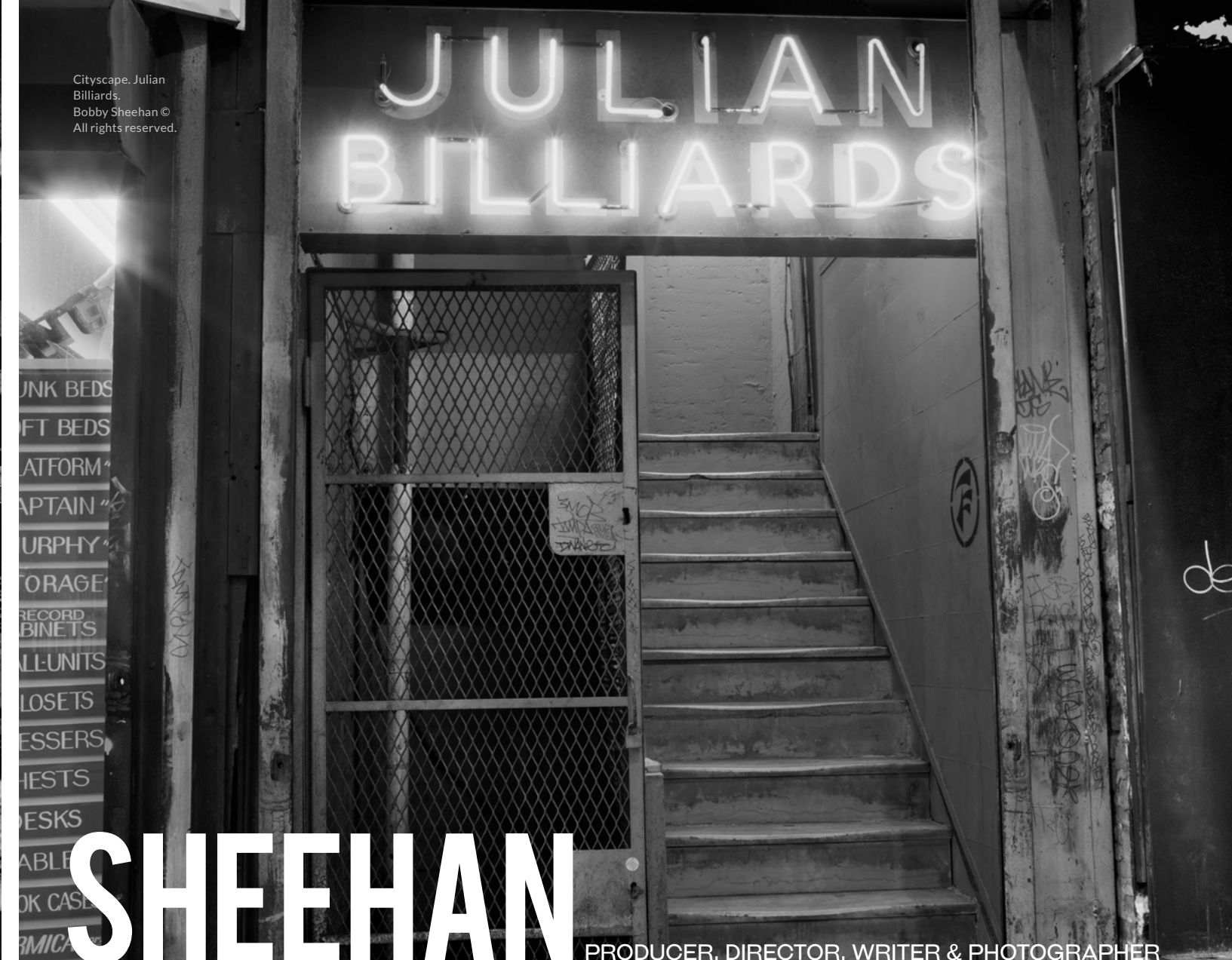
My mother met her second husband while working at the Lyric Movie Theater in Times Square. They both worked at the concession stand. When they got married, he was a pot-smoking and acid-taking hippie. We moved to Canarsie, Brooklyn, which was the armpit of Brooklyn. One day, my hippie stepfather decided to return to his roots as a Jehovah's Witness. Maybe too many bad acid trips? He wanted us to all become Jehovah's Witnesses, which would never happen. We intensely hated each other.

Obviously, my childhood was far away from any artistic environment. That said, I developed a love of old movies and TV shows. I could control my reality by changing the channel on the TV, but I couldn't handle anything else in my life.





Cityscape. Meat  
Packing District.  
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Cityscape. Julian  
Billiards.  
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I had also been obsessed with cameras... not photography. I just wanted to have a camera. I didn't think about what to do with it, but I would look in catalogs and beg my mother to get me a 35mm camera. Finally, as a high school graduation present, she and my Jehovah's Witness stepfather gave me \$150 to buy an old Pentax with three lenses.

At this point in my life, I had already started to have dead friends: overdoses, car crashes, and murders. In fact, my first "girlfriend" was shot in the head by another teenage girl at a party in Canarsie. So, I decided I didn't want to end up dead or live that harsh, impossible life. I went to Kingsborough Community College and devoted myself to becoming a photographer.

Then it happened; disco music consumed Brooklyn at the same time I discovered that taking the L train from Rockaway Parkway (the last stop on the train in Brooklyn) to 14th Street in New York would bring me within walking distance to CBGBs

and Max's Kansas City. The timing of discovering my creative weapon (a camera) was perfectly aligned with the punk rock movement of the mid-1970s. Once I got hooked on creating images, I never stopped. I still get the same sense of self-worth by using cameras today as I did as a teenager.

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** You are a producer, director, writer, cameraman, and photographer. You are multi-talented; how did you start? Do you have preferences in these different mediums? Where do you think you are the most talented, and from which field do you most enjoy?

**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** It all started the moment I got my hands on my first camera when I graduated high school. It was like the entire universe made itself available to me... or telling me it was time to pay attention to my potential future. As a student at Kingsborough Community College in Brooklyn, I consumed everything photographic. I elected myself the

photo editor of the school newspaper and the yearbook, which gave me unlimited free access to the darkroom and all the photographic papers and chemicals. I experimented with anything. I learned about street photography, nudes (the school paid for the models), black and white and color infrared, abstraction, solarization, multiple exposures, long-time exposures, and surrealism. Most importantly, I had access to more professional equipment (Nikon cameras and lenses and a Mamiya RB67) to photograph rock and punk bands in New York City during the punk rock explosion. My fascination with still photography immediately opened my mind to the

potential power of motion pictures. My love of storytelling started when I was a young boy watching TV and spending countless hours watching adult films in the movie theaters where my mother worked. So when I realized I could use a motion picture camera to express stories of my creation, there was no stopping me. I excelled in all my classes, and with straight A's and a very eclectic portfolio of photographs, I got a full scholarship to study film at New York University.

While at NYU, I opened my own production company and started producing what was being called "fashion videos." MTV was consuming creative culture, and fashion designers

saw an opportunity to use this new form of short videos to sell their clothing. My first client was a company called Parachute, which was an enormous store in Soho. It was so huge they had a football stadium section of bleachers that occupied less than 25% of the store. Nom Jun Paik was becoming the first celebrated "video artist" with his multi-patterned TV monitor installations playing abstract motion pictures. I took a cue from him and played my fashion videos on my version of a video art installation on the bleachers in the store. This installation got much attention in the exploding New York art scene of the 1980s. Andy Warhol was so impressed that he reached out to me and suggested we





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Cityscape. Trains  
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create something together. We scheduled to work together with Erte, the legendary illustrator, sculptor, and fashion designer, at Erte's summer home in Majorca, Spain, in the summer of 1987. Sadly, Warhol died in February 1987. Working with Warhol and Erte would have been an extraordinary life event for me, but it wasn't meant to be.

Early in my filmmaking obsession, I became acutely aware that I was most fascinated with the stories of unique human beings. And I wanted to explore the gamut of our complex

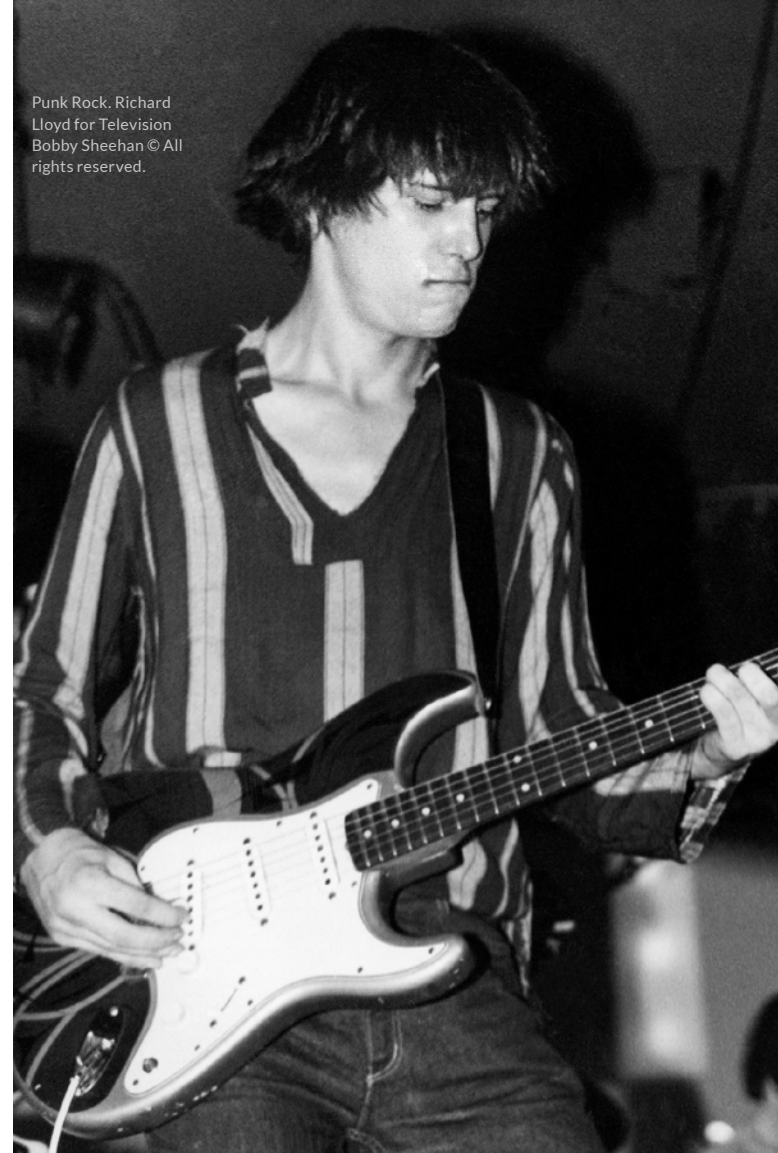
species. Through this lens, I have worked with everyone from all ethnicities and social classes: from homeless people to genius artists, from drag performers to special forces combat veterans, and from newborns to dying people. The topics range from healthcare, politics, the arts, spirituality, and bondage. You name a flavor or type of human, and chances are that I have pointed some camera at them. I am most proud that I can make people comfortable enough to bare their souls in front of my cameras. By making myself vulnerable and honest to my

**“ I BELIEVE I HAVE A NATURAL EYE FOR COMPOSITION AND LIGHT. I LOVE RECTANGLES AND SQUARES, AND I LOVE TO LIGHT EVERYTHING IN MY FRAME. I'VE HAD MANY INTERESTING CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LIGHT WITH VARIOUS PHOTOGRAPHERS AND CINEMATOGRAPHERS. SOME LOVE USING AS MANY LIGHTS AS THEIR BUDGET PERMIT, WHILE OTHERS PREFER MINIMAL OR "NATURAL" LIGHT. FOR ME, IT'S ALL OF THE ABOVE. I TREAT EVERY LIGHTING SITUATION AS ITS OWN UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY.”**

- BOBBY SHEEHAN



Punk Rock. Lou Reed  
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Punk Rock. Richard  
Lloyd for Television  
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subjects, they feel they can trust me to tell their stories authentically. Again, I've been able to do this with the gamut of humanity, whether within a documentary structure or a scripted story. I do this by always being aware of my intentions and never exploiting anyone who has given me their trust. Honestly, I cannot say that I enjoy one form or another. I am most happy when I have a camera by my side... or I'm seeing the world through a viewfinder.

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** Living in New York City, a rich culture and home to many amazing people in the field. How does the city inspire you? What about the opportunities for subjects and potential collaboration with artists?

**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** I have traveled worldwide, most of it for professional reasons. From remote Alaskan glaciers to just about every European country, 49 of the 50 US states, across Canada from Vancouver Island to Halifax, all across Mexico, Indonesia, and the Soviet Union when there was one. And no place on this planet is as interesting as New York City. Period. You can find any artist, business, religion, food, attire, and whatever else we humans do, wear, eat, and perform on this little island. And the 8 million plus inhabitants traverse the city that never sleeps each and every day. With such diversity comes the unlimited potential for creativity. There isn't a type of artist that you cannot seek out. Whether you want to learn about or collaborate with them, they are usually walking distance away.

Another remarkable fact is that you can find creative inspiration everywhere in NYC. All you need to do is pay attention and let your mind absorb a passerby, an object, or a fleeting shaft of daylight, the glow of a streetlight, and the sometimes overwhelming sounds of the city. It's no wonder the wide-eyed tourists walk around with their mouths open. If you can't find inspiration in New York, you can't find it anywhere.

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** In your work, using the long exposure photographs, raise questions about where this creativity came from. I believe that any creativity comes from past experiences in our life. Can you share some challenging periods professionally or personally during your professional career?





Cityscape.  
Blind Folded  
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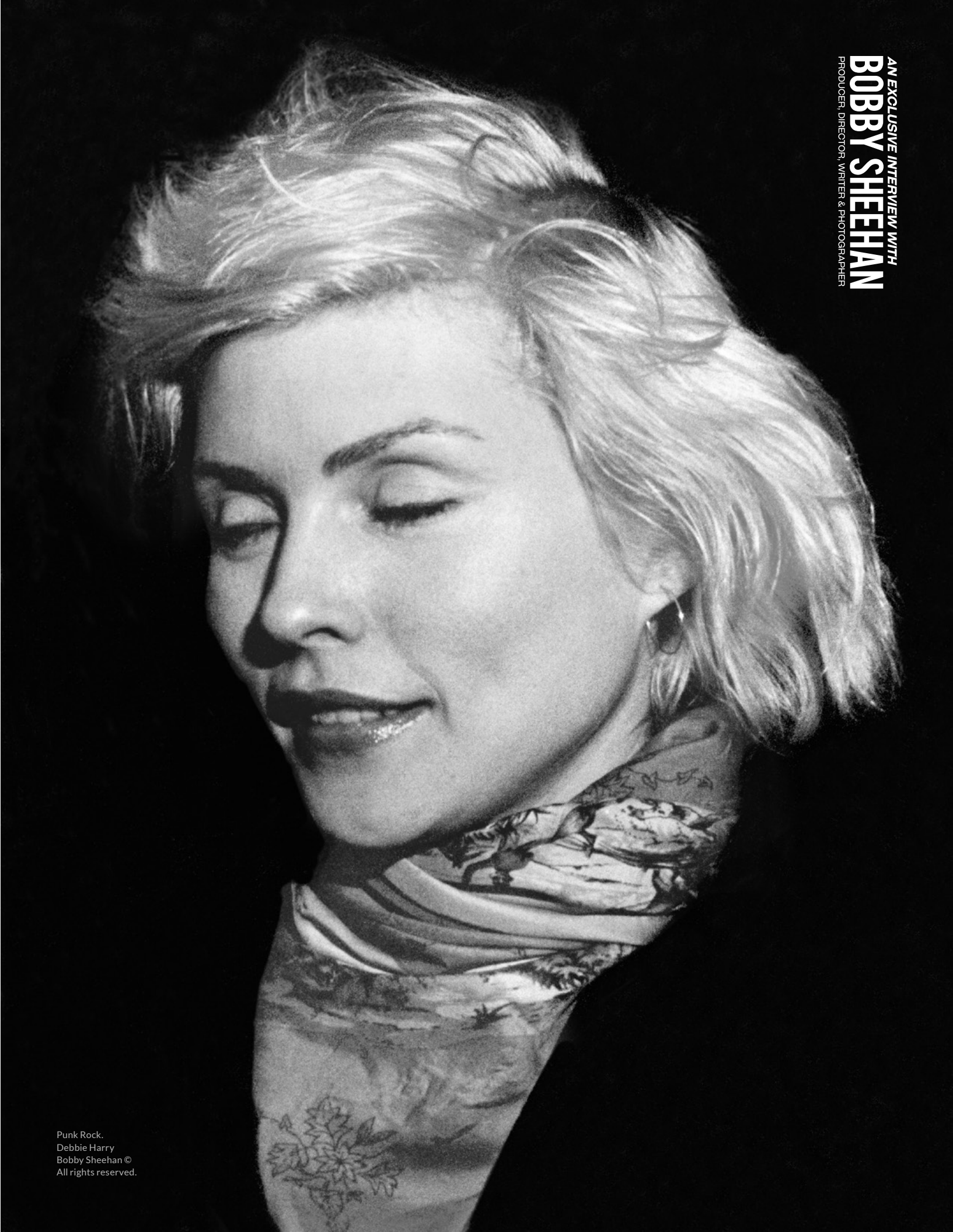
**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** I'd be dead if it weren't for creativity. Once Sara was dumped by a drunk ass, I went straight into outpatient rehab. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford to check into an expensive clinic for several months and wanted to keep working. Although I had given up MANY great career opportunities, I continued working as a commercials director. During the daytime, I kept busy working, but nighttime was scary as hell. All my friends, the ones still alive, were very active substance abusers. My entire social network was too dangerous to hang out with – if I wanted to stay sober and get Sara back. Detoxing and loneliness are frightening bedfellows. Photography came to my rescue and was literally lifesaving.

Dean Chamberlain was a photographer from the 1980s that I greatly admired. He had a strong and unique vision and was a master light painter. He was an enormously successful fashion and music photographer. His fashion photos and portraits of artists like Francesco Clemente, Kenny Scharf, Keith Haring, Jeff Koons, and musicians like Paul McCartney, David Bowie, Debbie Harry, and many more were beautiful works of art.

His use of his magic lights was like nothing any of us had seen before. He opened my eyes to the concept of photographic timelessness. His works were not long exposures. He was painting with light in dark rooms with the shutter of his vintage Graflex Speed Graphic 4x5 camera open. To say he was an inspiration would be an understatement. I called Dean when I was just about to buy my own Graflex Speed Graphic 4x5 at the iconic Olden Camera store in NYC, and I asked his permission to create my timeless images. I did not want Dean to think I would emulate his light painting technique. I explained I needed to walk around NYC – night and day – looking for images I could only see. And since he opened my eyes to the fact that a camera shutter is not limited to fractions of a second, I wanted to have more control of my shutter. Dean was a little confused because I was only months sober, so it probably wasn't making any sense to him. But he didn't seem to care, so I took that as an approval.

In the fall of 1989, I hit the streets of NYC – day and night – looking for reasons to open my shutter.

Punk Rock.  
Debbie Harry  
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***BOTH SARA AND I ASSUME MULTIPLE ROLES. WE BOTH EXECUTIVES PRODUCE, PRODUCE, DIRECT, CAMERA OPERATE, SOUND RECORD, AND WRITE. I OFTEN JUMP INTO PRODUCTION ASSISTANT MODE WHEN WE NEED OUR CAFFEINE FIX (MOSTLY, I NEED IT). WE ALSO TRAIN ALL OF OUR CREW TO WORK MULTIPLE POSITIONS. MOST OF THE EDITING IS DONE WITH CREW MEMBERS OUT IN THE FIELD WITH US ON PRODUCTION. WE CALL IT "EATING WHAT WE KILL."***

- BOBBY SHEEHAN

Cityscape, Mona Lisa  
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I wanted a flat, graphic image where all the shapes would be in focus – foreground, and background.

And I wanted the film to be grainless.

This meant fine-grain film with the aperture shut way down to f.45 on the vintage lens of the Graflex. My exposure length during daylight was minutes, but some of the night exposure would be hours. I was also obsessed with printing a perfect negative in the darkrooms I would rent. This meant going back to several locations and "speculating" the proper time exposures.

The most difficult/painful image was photographing the smokestacks of the Big Allis powerplant in Long Island City from the FDR across the Manhattan side of the east river. My goal was to get exposure at daybreak when the sun would subtly backlight the smoke coming from all four smokestacks. It was winter, sunrise was about 7 AM, and twilight started about 6:30 PM. This meant I needed to get myself in position with my Graflex on the active FDR (yes, it is always active) at about 5:30 AM. I wasn't sleeping much in early sobriety, so the time wasn't such an issue, but it was freezing cold. The variable working against me was having a clear day, releasing the shutter before the sunlight dominated the gray sky, and whether or not all four smoke stacks were creating smoke. Unfortunately, I learned that having the powerplant operating where all four stacks were generating smoke was infrequent. It took me several months to get a single plate worthy of printing. The great news was that all the effort of getting proper exposure and making prints in the darkroom kept me away from my drunk friends and out of bars. Again, the process of creativity saved my life.

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** You are the Co-Founder and President of Working Pictures. Could you share more information about your company? For example, how many people are on the team, and what are their roles?







**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** Sara and I have been producing a wide range of projects together since 1993. Independent films, documentaries, TV shows, commercials, and all kinds of "content." This is easily over hundreds of hours, if not a lot more. I'd get a headache if I actually attempted to add it all up. On principle, we like to work as small as possible because it allows us to move quickly, and it's easier to create a calm set experience with fewer people. People tend to come with "issues" and "drama." This is absolutely true of our documentary work. Both Sara and I assume multiple roles. We both executives produce, produce, direct, camera operate, sound record, and

write. I often jump into production assistant mode when we need our caffeine fix (mostly, I need it). We also train all of our crew to work multiple positions. Most of the editing is done with crew members out in the field with us on production. We call it "eating what we kill." It sounds aggressive, but the shorthand of knowing the material in the editing room before you even open a computer because you were the person shooting is an enormous advantage for good reasons. First, you already know what you would need to learn if you weren't on set. Second, you are already emotionally invested in the stories before the editorial process. It could be argued that starting with a fresh canvas

in an edit is better than starting a project with preconceived ideas set in motion while filming is valid. However, I've been producing for decades, and having intimate collaborators as soon as possible, has only been a massive advantage in getting to the heart of every story.

Sara and I focus on our roles as executive producers, producers, and directors for unionized larger productions. I can't say that I miss schlepping gear all day, but I am often frustrated with the tempo of having a small army work in unison, move from location to location, and then feed all day long. But I love being able to use



cranes, and helicopters (before there were drones), lighting massive structures with big lights, and shooting with high-end state-of-the-art cameras and lenses. I find ways to love whatever I am shooting – small or big.

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** Let's talk about photography; how do you describe your artistic style? What do you enjoy the most about photographing? What is the camera for you, from a more emotional and creative aspect...

**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** More than anything, I love pointing cameras at

people and things. I enjoy working with all formats – still and motion. I still use large format, 35mm millimeter, medium format square still cameras. I use all types of digital and high-end cameras for motion pictures for commercial work, and I've invented my own hybrid way of shooting documentaries. Running around for long days on end with heavy cameras really wears and slows you down, and it limits how quickly you can change your positioning to the changing environment. For example, you can't jump off a table after positioning yourself to get a high angle to the ground, so you

can get an upward angle within seconds with a 30lb handheld rig. But you can do that with a digital camera that weighs less than 3 lbs. The reality of weight and flexibility has come into play for me in extreme situations when shooting on boats, small prop planes, in prisons, and on the streets with gangbangers (you really want to be able to move quickly), and I don't get me started with chasing around kids and animals with cameras!

**SO, MY SECRET WEAPON TO GET HIGH-END IMAGES WITH LIGHTWEIGHT CAMERAS AND LENSES ARE THESE MIRACULOUS THINGS CALLED ADAPTERS.**

Over the decades, I have accumulated close to 30 old Nikon lenses. These lenses are just metal and glass, and the glass is beautiful. Of course, expensive modern lenses might be optically superior, but 30 of them would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars and weigh a lot more than my old Nikon lenses. I've done many jobs where I intercut footage captured with my homegrown digital cameras with old Nikon lenses and the most expensive high-end cameras. No collaborator and/or client has ever noticed any difference in the quality of the intercut footage. I started this form of integration in 2010 when we filmed "Arias with a Twist: The Docufantasy," and I was nervous that there would be noticeable inferiorities in the footage when the film premiered internationally at the Berlin Film Festival and then domestically at the Tribeca Film Festival. These were theatrical screenings; if my footage was subpar, I would have died in my seat. To my absolute joy, the quality of my coupling of new digital cameras with my old school lenses looked beautiful. I'll go a step further and state that I'm not too fond of super high-resolution footage.

There are specific digital cameras that I would never use again because the quality of the footage looks like "video." Fortunately, there are enough films being shot by cinematographers who also prefer less electronic imagery. Last comment on this subject: I recently shot with a 16mm Aaton movie camera. I still love the creative possibilities of transferring film – 16mm or 35mm – with a talented telecine artist.





I think you can never beat the magic of light landing on an emulsion. You can create incredible imagery that gets close to this magic, but the purity of light on film is unbeatable. Financially, it's impossible to justify most projects, but you can always dream.

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** You have various photography series like punk/rock, color, Parachute, faces, etc. Would you describe the variety of subjects as an exploring journey?

**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** Wow. I confess to being all over the place. There isn't a style that I have stuck with. I have intentionally varied what, how, and even why I photograph. I love the intimacy of taking someone's portrait, fashion, rock, "speculating" exposures for what I call "Cityscapes," cross-processing 35mm films, shooting with 1000mm lenses to get sneak peeks into the eyes of unknowing New Yorkers, doing multiple exposure large format compositing, and painting varied objects to be photographed. For me, it's more about the process of creating images than perfecting a style or technique. I wouldn't disagree with someone who might discount my body of work because it lacks concentration. However, I'm still looking for that next body of work to create. So, maybe I suffer from a refusal to grow up as a photographer and stick with one discipline. I do not want to be disciplined. I'm not looking for approval from anyone. As long as I can dream up something to shoot and enjoy the process of learning how to shoot that new dream, I am happy. I'm going to keep on looking.'

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** What are your thoughts about today's industry? The changes in our society have developed rapidly in the past twenty years. From social media, movie, and documentary platforms, to online media ... everything goes so quickly.

**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** The great news is that there is a huge need for content – films and even documentaries. Not that long ago, there wasn't a massive interest in documentaries. So, from an opportunity perspective, there has never been a better time to be a creator of images.

“*"I'D BE DEAD IF IT WEREN'T FOR CREATIVITY. I WENT STRAIGHT INTO OUTPATIENT REHAB. DURING THE DAYTIME, I KEPT BUSY WORKING, BUT NIGHTTIME WAS SCARY AS HELL. ALL MY FRIENDS, THE ONES STILL ALIVE, WERE VERY ACTIVE SUBSTANCE ABUSERS. MY ENTIRE SOCIAL NETWORK WAS TOO DANGEROUS TO HANG OUT WITH – IF I WANTED TO STAY SOBER AND GET SARA BACK."*

- BOBBY SHEEHAN

Cityscape.  
Chinatown Alleyway  
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***I THINK YOU CAN NEVER BEAT THE MAGIC OF LIGHT LANDING ON AN EMULSION. YOU CAN CREATE INCREDIBLE IMAGERY THAT GETS CLOSE TO THIS MAGIC, BUT THE PURITY OF LIGHT ON FILM IS UNBEATABLE. FINANCIALLY, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO JUSTIFY MOST PROJECTS, BUT YOU CAN ALWAYS DREAM."***

- BOBBY SHEEHAN

Right: Bowery Boy  
Series. Gangbangers  
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The bad news is that everyone and their dead grandparents have decided to quit their day jobs and become photographers and filmmakers. So, there are more and more content buyers, but it is a buyer's market for a few reasons. First, when there is too much supply, the buyers can offer less content. Second, broadcasters "used" to commission content creators to produce spec work before committing to a series. Nowadays, production companies, producers, and directors are financing their own films and even series before pitching them to buyers.

One of the most significant contributing factors is film festivals. When I graduated from NYU in the 1980s, there were film festivals, but it hadn't become a cultural delusion for wannabe filmmakers. I've only had a few heartbreaking rejection letters from film festivals during my career, but I remember the profound disappointments. I've also had a few successful

experiences with film festivals, so there is no lingering bitterness about film festivals per se. However, the delusion that all you need is a passion and some money to have a sustainable career as a filmmaker is plain old stupid. For instance, there were over 17,000 submissions to the 2023 Sundance Film Festival. When I first learned about Sundance in the early 1990s, they received 2,000 to 3,000 submissions. Now, 17,000 people think their careers will start or sustain by getting into Sundance. Well, yes. Unfortunately, only 99 films were accepted.

A majority of those films will never find distribution. The problem isn't just all those disappointed people but also that some of those people bet it all on black and lost.

The system for deserving young filmmakers is so cluttered with people who shouldn't be on the playing field – yet. There is no longer a barrier to entry. The idea of learning and apprenticing before you call yourself a director is no longer a



prerequisite. Anyone can throw their name in the hat. Why not? Who cares if I waste time and money... it's my time and money. Besides, somebody must win big. There will always be big film festival winners, but the odds are just increasingly problematic. Perhaps, the next Martin Scorsese will never become a director because he is just a poor kid from Little Italy with a dream and innate talent to tell stories. But the gatekeepers

might not see his potential genius because they need to watch thousands of films in a short period of time. I've had many conversations with both gatekeepers and young filmmakers.

Perhaps the silver lining is image creators' potential to control their destinies by building their own platforms. There are more and more ways to get your creations out there. You might not get into major film festivals and

make a killing that jumpstarts your career, but you can create your own YouTube or Vimeo channel and amass a large enough audience to get subscribers and sponsors. Self-distribution of films and art books was once a thing of fantasy. Today, it could be your best-case scenario. I've seen people become massively successful with "affiliate partnerships." With your network of partners, you can sell films, series, books, photographs, and art. You can sell almost anything if you are as smart as you are creative. The days of winning the lottery are even less likely, so you should focus on learning how to become an image creator and

adapt to the changing media consumption landscape. Streamers are hungry, but you shouldn't rely on becoming part of their diet. There are lots of menus for them to choose from. The future can be bright, but you need to have realistic strategies. Savvy is the "new black" for all of us.

The above said, what really scares me is AI. We were filming with Nan Goldin for our "Bowery Boy" series, and her fear of AI is pretty jarring. We started talking about AI's potential to create images and writings, which could replace us humans trying to make a living as artists. Her concern, and she's lived

through challenging times, is that AI will have access to nuclear codes. Let that sink in. Creative people have imaginations, but you do not need the vision to fear what a smarter form of intelligence might think about whether or not the planet would be better off without us, the people who currently do more harm than good to our world. Hopefully, AI will cut us some slack and not put us all out of work.

**JOSÉ JEULAND:** What are your plans for the future? Is there a new project you are working on at the moment?





Bowery Boy Series.  
Joey Arias  
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**BOBBY SHEEHAN:** For the last year and a half, I've been concentrating on this deeply personal project called "Bowery Boy." Through the organizational and discovery process, I found rolls of film of punk/rock bands I shot at clubs like CBGBs that I haven't seen since the mid-1970s, including the Ramones, Johnny Thunders, Television, Lou Reed, and a slew of unknown rockers who never made it onto a big stage. In addition, I had dozens of films, and TV shows digitized and transcribed, so I could write what would become my life story through the lens of my work. Also, this life excavation project coincided with Sara and I packing up our house of 26 years and temporarily becoming houseless until we decided where Life Part 2 would start. While throwing away mountains of

accumulated "stuff," I found several old boxes that had "stuff" that was moved from my mother's various apartments over the years. I kept my old film reels from NYU in some of those boxes with her. While I was searching for specific films I made (which I found), I discovered an old 8mm reel. I knew it wasn't mine, but I had it digitized anyway. Well, I get back to the digital file, and I'm watching very shaky cam footage of an NYC Parade, drive-by footage within a car on the FDR, and then boom, I see the two-year-old me. I'm running into and out of a movie theater when I notice a frightening figure that appears from within the shadow area. It was a man with a large paper bag on his head with what appeared to be a skeleton face. He's wearing a white beater shirt, and his hairy arms are exposed. I'm smiling

away, so it must have been someone simply playing a peek-a-boo game or something with me. But the adult me registered this image as my very own demon that has been haunting me my whole life. This might sound dramatic, but it felt cathartic nonetheless because I wasn't afraid of the image. It was somewhat liberating to visualization of a form that would no longer affect me. The real lightning bolt was the question of who the person behind that camera was. I called my mother, and she refused to believe it was the man/my father who had abandoned us. However, she has no clue who the shooter was. By the way, the shooter pans by my 20-year-old mother, so whoever it was was very intimate to us.

A few weeks later, after clearing out our

basement, I found another mysterious film reel in a box of my mother's possession. This time it's a 16mm reel that could have been one of my NYU student films. I am sending this reel to be digitized. When it comes back, another lightning bolt. It wasn't one of my films. It was "Cityscape" type footage of NYC in the 1960s. This footage was shot on a tripod and was graphically composed. This person clearly had a decent eye and a real interest in shooting motion pictures. This person was committed enough to shoot on the east river during a storm. There was footage of violent waves, which only happen in a storm. Then another lightning



Top: Bowery Boy  
Series. Roger Spark  
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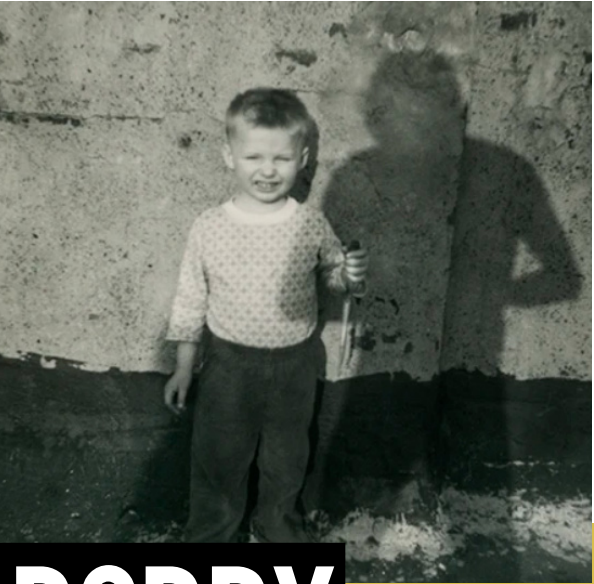
Bobby Sheehan in his  
childhood.  
"Bowery Boy."  
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bolt. This shooter was part of a construction crew that was working on the Twin Towers as they were being erected. This is evident not only because this shooter was within the work areas, but he was also able to get up onto one of the towers and film towards the north of NYC. I called my mother immediately and asked her if her 1st husband (my father) worked on a construction crew. She remembers that he worked

sewage or was a truck driver or something. When I tell her about the reel of film, she says it couldn't have been within her things. But it was. We hung up, and she called Sara to ask if I was either dying or losing my mind because why else would I drudge up the past? Sara remembered that my father's occupation was listed as a truck helper on my birth certificate. I found my birth certificate, and low and behold; my father worked as a "truck helper" at some point in his life. So, I can never say 100% that the person behind the camera that cast that shadow across me was holding a knife when I was less than two years old or was the shooter of the 8mm reel and the 16mm reel of the film, actually my

father. But I can absolutely agree with my son Lukas that the shadow figure pointing a camera at me was the flame that ignited my lifelong obsession with cameras.

I'll close by saying that telling a comprehensive story of my life as an image maker from the past tense will become the foundation of any new work I create.



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