



PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

Over 10 years, Daniel Boud has seen and shot it all, proving that when it comes to challenging briefs, there's no mountain he cannot climb. Words by **Jason Round**



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In the world of young gun Australian photographers, Daniel Boud stands out for all the right reasons. He has a portfolio most veterans would kill for – he's worked with celebrities, musicians and quirky characters galore in almost every scenario you could dream of, whether that's in his freelance role or day-to-day in his main job as chief photographer for *Time Out Sydney*. His work has been published in *SPIN*, *Rolling Stone*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Nylon*, *Drum Media* and more, with commissions from major organisations like The Sydney Festival, Foxtel, Vivid Sydney, EMI, Destination NSW, General Pants, Sydney Opera House, MTV, University of Sydney and many more.

It's a long way from 2003, when Boud was working as a web designer with a passing interest in photography. Ten years later, with no formal training to speak of bar a short course in lighting, he's well on the path to photographic enlightenment.

For Boud, this path was largely a natural one. “I bought a camera and started taking pictures,” he says. “It sounds simple, but that's it. I'd dabbled with film photography, but the feedback loop of seeing the results plus the expense of developing film meant I never took it very far. So, it was my first point-and-shoot digital that really kicked off the obsession. I just shot everything in my everyday life and put pictures on my blog. I took my camera everywhere and over the years I got better, upgraded my gear and eventually bought a digital SLR. That was when I started getting more serious.”

STEPPING UP

Boud's big break came when he travelled to Austin, Texas for the South By Southwest festival in 2005. He touched down and bought his very first DSLR, a Canon Rebel XT (AKA 350D) plus 50mm f1.8 lens. He'd shot shows with his ordinary point-and-shoot, so largely knew what he was doing, but the DSLR provided new opportunities and freedom.





“At the festival I managed to talk my way into getting a media pass, which gave me access to photo pits for the performances there. I shot Kings of Leon, Phoenix, Kaiser Chiefs and dozens of other bands. I was just an amateur and put the photos on my website. Shortly after I had *SPIN Magazine* in the US and *Australian Rolling Stone* get in touch wanting to run my photos they’d found online. So, coming home as a published photographer with credits like that helped open up more doors for me.

Personal style is something Boud believes he’s still working out, but when it comes to lighting, he’s a chameleon, effortlessly moving between natural and studio light. “If you want a natural look, then find the best natural light on your location. If you want punchy and well lit, then get the studio lights out and control the light to your desires. It really depends what you want. I’m not a photographer who has one lighting look and sticks to it.”



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As for making his subjects comfortable, “I sometimes liken being a photographer to being a dentist or a surgeon,” says Boud. “Your subject more often than not is nervous and apprehensive about what they're about to go through, so it's my job to instil confidence in them that I know exactly what I'm doing, they're in safe hands and I'm going to make them look amazing. Your bedside manner is very important. Just talk to your subject about the process and look out for any signals from them they're uncomfortable, and work them out.”

Most importantly, Boud believes in being prepared for anything in terms of the gear he brings to a shoot, really thinking about what one frame might capture the essence of the event and keeping his eyes peeled for unique perspectives others might miss. These three factors have largely kept him ahead of the game and at the top of his field. “If you're well prepared and have your wits about you, it's really out of your control after that. You're at the mercy of the event you're shooting.”

WORKING IN THE LIMELIGHT

Boud's shot many high-profile celebrities, noting, “celebrities are just regular people who have a high-profile job. The ones that leave a good impression on me are the ones who understand that, as a photographer, I need a compelling photo of them in order for them to best promote whatever it is they're selling. That's the trade we're making. I take their photo in order for it to run in the media and sell tickets/albums/books or whatever it is they're in the business of promoting.”

As a minimum, Boud always takes two camera bodies to a shoot (typically Canon 5D MkIII and II) along with two or three lenses and two flashes. He's a big advocate of prime lenses, especially the 50mm f1.2, which he loves for its shallow depth of field and sharpness. “But about six months

ago I got the Canon 24-70mm f2.8L II and it's hardly left my camera. It's such a versatile all-rounder, and the sharpness rivals what I get from a prime lens."

Perhaps Boud's best weapon is his ability to move between markets so seamlessly, whether it be shooting editorial work for magazines, people, events for PR companies, food and drink, campaigns for tourism bodies, music labels and more. Variety is the spice of life and Boud's portfolio is jammed full of it. "I guess my advice would be to throw yourself into any opportunity that presents itself," he says. "Over time it pays to specialise, but I don't think you should be a snob when it comes to photography."

What many may be surprised to learn is just how little post production goes into Boud's images. He imports images into Lightroom, selects his favourites and works the sliders until



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they look right. “It’s not rocket science and I don’t do a lot. I very rarely use Photoshop.”

Shooting across so many fields, the ability to nail a portrait and capture the essence of a subject within a limited timeframe is essential, but Boud takes it in his stride. On what makes a great portrait, he says that, while cliché, it should capture an aspect of the subject’s personality, whether it’s their cheekiness, their swagger, their pride, their insecurity – whatever it may be.

Difficult subjects, of course, provide their own challenges. “I find if someone’s being difficult it’s because there’s a problem I’m not aware of. So, I won’t be afraid to ask what’s bugging them and if there’s anything I can do to make it better. If you just ask someone ‘is everything okay? You seem a little uncomfortable/annoyed/distracted’, then it allows them to air what’s on their mind and hopefully bring them back inside. But if the subject is difficult because they’re a kid, or they’re just very easily distracted, then I’ll make sure

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to be very specific with what I want and perhaps ask them to role play in some fashion.”

PREPERATION AS KEY


Boud makes sure he clearly understands the objectives of the client and brief before diving into a shoot. Again, it comes down to careful preparation. “I’ll prepare reference images to show the client to gauge whether that’s the right style. We may storyboard to shoot so everything is locked in and ready to go on the day so that we’re all working together and not having to make great changes on the shoot day.

“Like most businesses, I think the number one driver is word of mouth, and I always aim to exceed my client’s expectations in terms of the quality of images I deliver and the way in which I communicate clearly and promptly. I’d think 90 per cent of my clients have been referred to me by another client, so it really just starts with one client and builds from there.”

As for inspiration, Boud finds it everywhere, including websites, magazines and any media that may provide for arresting photos. If he likes what he sees, he’ll look up the photographer and browse their work. He follows a number of photo-heavy Tumblr sites and keeps an inspiration board on Pinterest. Of course, it’s always handy to have a partner who’s a photographer, with Boud not shy when he admits he’s pinched many of his significant other’s best ideas.

Suffice to say, if you need a perfect example of how a photographer’s website should be set up, simply navigate your way to boudist.com. From the layout to the About page, it’s an ideal showcase. Like most modern photographers, Boud also embraces social media – not that he believes it’s essential. “Using social media feels very natural for me,” he says, “even though I’ve curtailed my use as I’ve gotten older. I’ve had a blog almost 10 years now, I’ve had an online portfolio for less than two years and I use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and Pinterest.

“But with all those things, I don’t think of them as promotional tools; I think of them as ways to share work I’m proud of. I never present a sales pitch. It’s just ‘check out this photo I took’. I don’t think any of them are essential promotional tools. Many very successful photographers have no social media presence, and there’s a good argument to be made that all those things are just distractions from the act of actually getting out there and taking good pictures.”

At the moment, Boud’s looking forward to a well-earned break to Hawaii, but after that it’s back to the shooting grindstone. It’s hard to believe Boud’s portfolio could be better or more diverse, but he’s never satisfied and always pushes to better both himself and his photography. That is the sign of a true professional. 

IN THE BAG

CAMERAS

CANON 5D MKIII
CANON 5D MKII

LENSES

CANON EF 16-35MM F2.8L II
CANON EF 24-70MM F2.8L II
CANON 70-200MM F2.8 IS
CANON 50MM F1.2
CANON 85MM F1.8

ACCESSORIES

CANON SPEEDLITE 580EX II
CANON SPEEDLITE 600EX
CRUMPLER CORK AND FORK
THINKTANK RETROSPECTIVE 30
MULTIBLITZ STUDIO LIGHTING KIT

SWIPE FOR MORE

TO VIEW A GALLERY OF DANIEL'S WORK SWIPE ACROSS

BACK TO
TOP