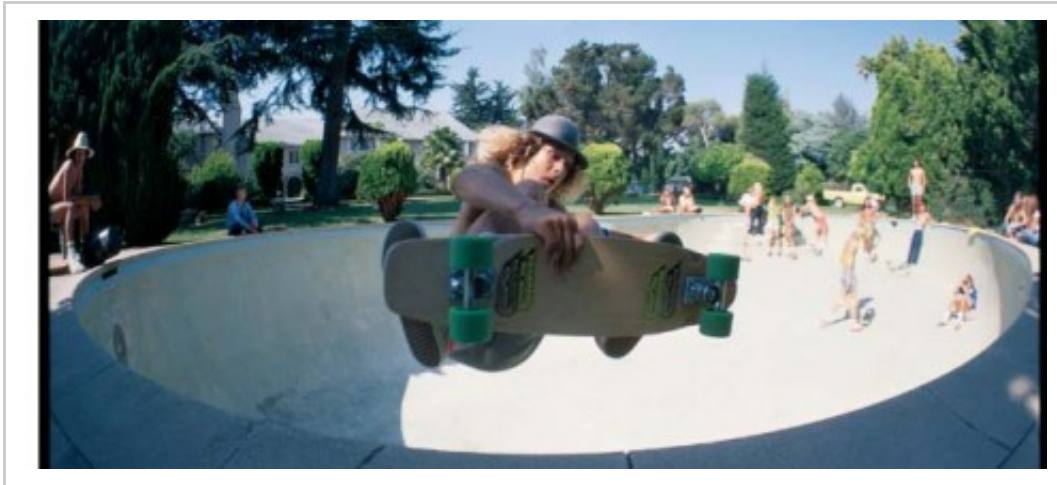


Thursday, 08 July 2010 05:53

# Glen E Friedman - Let The Kids Shoot Them Now

Written by [Siobhán Kane](#)



Siobhán Kane spoke with **Glen E. Friedman** ahead of the opening of an exhibition of his work in the Lighthouse Cinema.

Born in 1962, **Glen E. Friedman** grew up in an era of heady change for America, both politically and culturally, and his work often feels like a kind of alchemy of the two. His particular alchemy is arrived at through the love and understanding of the art of photography, and the often special relationship he has with his subjects. Photography is deeply linked to memory, and Friedman echoes figures like St. Augustine who regarded memory as 'a storehouse' and Freud, who called it 'a mystic writing pad', and there is something very profound at its root, when approached respectfully and passionately.



Friedman is one of the great photographers, and his images are so powerful and iconic partly because they are built on the foundation stones of integrity, character, and beauty. Like most of the great artists, Friedman has never compromised, and his work is at turns thrilling and challenging because of that fact, and also because he is not only capturing a moment, but a movement, of which he believes in and is part of.

From his work with the Dogtowners and skateboarding culture, (of which he got his first photograph published at only fourteen years old in Skateboarder magazine) through to his relationship with the punk rock and hip-hop communities, Friedman has been present at either the inception or most exciting times in those movements' evolution; and luckily for us, his ability to 'tell' those stories of rebellion and inspiration, passes on not only ideas but ideals, rooted in philosophy and politics, social and cultural history; a platform for a common ground for the underground - the only ground, really.

It is almost overwhelming to trawl through his books *Fuck You Heroes* (1994), *Fuck You Too* (1996), *The Idealist*

(1998), Dogtown - The Legend of the Z Boys (2000), Recognise (2005), Keep Your Eyes Open (2007), (all published by Friedman's own Burning Flag Press) because there is something about his work that has a different kind of vibrancy contained within, it is as if that image of Public Enemy or Black Flag is asking you a question, or suggesting that you 'do something', and the DIY ethic is something Friedman grew up with and could not live without, propelling him on to various diverse experiences such as managing Suicidal Tendencies, working closely with Def Jam in the era of Rick Rubin and Russell Simmons, to capture some of their most interesting artists (such as Run DMC, Public Enemy and The Beastie Boys), self-publishing the seminal photozine My Rules in 1982, which is in a sense a document of the ethos that Friedman has never abandoned, and which features some of the most iconic bands of that, or any other period, such as Bad Brains, The Misfits, Black Flag, and Minor Threat.

His work is synonymous with interesting outsiders, which is why in the last number of years he has photographed people such as the fascinating Cornel West - philosopher, critic and civil rights activist, because he seems to have a gift for prophecy, not only capturing important moments and people, but also individuals that will come to be known as pivotal and significant through the march of time. In essence, he is capturing history, but it could also be said that he is making it, every single day - Siobhán Kane talks to him.

**You have always been so prolific, do you think that it is partly because you came up in that punk rock community?**

It had everything to do with punk rock, quite frankly, well maybe not everything. I think I always felt that I had to do stuff on my own, if you want something done right, then do it yourself, I kind of figured that out on my own, I never had people as motivated around me as I was. You know, we didn't have the internet back then and you just didn't have access to things, but once I got really involved in punk rock, you got a whole other perspective on the world. I was just telling a young guy the other day who is helping me with my website, how things have changed so much, we had to work so hard to make things happen back then, it was a whole different thing, and a subculture in the way that people wouldn't understand now. People can't even imagine that because of the way you looked, people wanted to beat you up, even with skateboarding, first off they thought it was a toy, and girls weren't attracted to skateboarders, they thought you were infantile, until a few years later all of a sudden it became attractive to them, but for the most part everything that we were doing in the beginning people looked down upon, but some of us had this instinct that it was very worthy of our time, was certainly making us happy and we didn't really care, so we just kept on going and following our hearts and doing what we had to do. Growing up in America in the years that I did was interesting, but I never read Marx until I was in college. If every tenth grader read him then our political perspective might be so different. Kids now might get to read a little bit more as things are opening up, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, but back when I was growing up the Cold War was still strong and you couldn't read about so many things, so when I did read it finally in college and about political philosophy, my mind was just blown, that things had been hidden from me, it was a kind of a mind expanding experience. Not many kids my age were big readers, and I certainly wasn't at the time, but then being around the Dead Kennedys and Black Flag every day, and learning about politics every day, when punk rock started and I started getting involved in '78, it was like a whole new world, it was so interesting to see people rebelling in a way that was really rebellious that no one had ever done before. Kids think that smoking cigarettes and drinking and going out to parties is a rebellious thing but it is quite the opposite isn't it? As it is just what your parents did and is all controlled by corporations, you are paying money to these cigarette companies and drug dealers and alcohol companies and all they are doing is dulling your mind and poisoning your body. I thought that way before straight edge, I just thought it was a backwards situation going on, you know, I was very inspired.

**And you were doing it all yourselves, fully embodying the DIY ethos.**

In the days of Black Flag, I was inspired by how they did all their own flyers, and created all this stuff through their own little unit, there were no managers, all the bands were like that at the time. Anyone who had a manager was laughed at, it was just like 'why don't you just do it yourself?', and for a long time I thought anyone who had a manager was a joke, including in hip-hop, I was like 'why is this needed?', but eventually you understand that when people get a certain amount of exposure or fame they can't handle all the business themselves, but you know, I still handle all my own business, I am not a rock star or anything but it has always been about handling it myself. It takes up a lot of time, but I remember in the late eighties, some bands, and friends of mine got involved with record companies and couldn't sign their own cheques, I couldn't imagine not following it precisely and keeping control of everything, and it is not about being a control freak, it's just being responsible for all your own stuff.



**There is that brilliant Errol Morris documentary Fog of War about the Secretary of Defence for John F. Kennedy (and later after the assassination, Lyndon B. Johnson) Robert McNamara, which illustrated to some extent how he was such an idealist as a young man, but through entering politics lost hope, and eventually lost his way. Your work comes to mind in this context because it is so political, and often challenging, but more about outsiders who have the principles we expect our politicians to have; your work is more about retaining those ideals and hope, isn't it?**

I think that it is. The thing is, I am so strident about it, that people think I don't have hope, that I am cynical and negative, it is a great misinterpretation - just because I am angry about something doesn't mean I am an angry person, it means that I want better. The truth is I am generally quite happy, but I am upset for a lot of good reasons, there are a lot of bad things going on and we only know about a small fraction of them in the world. You need to argue, you need to yell and you need to speak up when there is something going on, otherwise people don't find out about it. I am just trying to point things out so that they become positive. A lot of people don't understand that. All the punk rockers that I knew were very positive people, and to this day the ones who had the integrity are some of the sweetest people you'll ever meet, contrary to what people believe. They are angry because shit is fucked up and they want to fix it. They care.

---

**Do you think that every piece of art to some extent should be making a statement, as well as being beautiful?**

I think that making something beautiful is the responsibility of the artist, that is a given, it should be beautiful to attract people to look at it, it should be composed in a beautiful way, that is what a good and talented artist does, otherwise I wouldn't even consider them an artist or creator. The beauty is second nature to the artist, then the other part should be about making a statement or what is the point of it? That is why I can't stand so much of the photography that is out there today, as it is just empty and nothing - making a 'statement' about how bland society is? I mean give me a fucking break! It is disgusting what passes for photography nowadays, and in large part that is thanks to digital photography, but even before that you had the Terry Richardson's and other people out there taking pictures of their daily lives that they think are shocking, but if you look at history, we have been seeing pornography since before Christ, it's nothing, it's boring, it's been done, and it's repulsive because it's pathetic, what people do in their personal lives and bedrooms. I'm not a voyeur, if I am interested in something I am going to go and do it myself and see it myself. If I didn't have an opportunity to do those things, like live in those times, then I would like to see pictures of it, see how it was portrayed, these 'personal moments' are a little perversion. That's not art to me, or communicating, that's not having a message, it's just entertainment for a particular mindset or particular aesthetic, it's just a waste of time to me.

I like entertainment, I watch a couple of TV programmes a week, I enjoy the series Lost [laughs] I'm not such a hard-ass, I mean, I am, but I love going to see Star Wars and some of the big pop movies sometimes, they are very exciting, and who doesn't like a James Bond movie? But the truth is, in photography, I think it's just really been abused. Film has been abused as well, but not quite as much as it is too expensive to do it, it's not as easy, but

anyone can call themselves a photographer now, and quite frankly I have never called myself a photographer. Photography is what I do, but if I had to put a label on it, I would call myself an artist - I don't want to sound like a weirdo calling myself an artist, but I do believe in art and love art, but I am very particular about the art I like. I don't like much contemporary art at all, I think graffiti is incredible, I love it on the walls, but does it belong in a museum? No. It's made for the street. Is it worth buying? No, I don't believe in that, don't make it more than what it is, these guys are fucking scribbling on the walls, and that's the end of that! They don't have the skill of a Rembrandt, or even a Shepard Fairey, most of them. I like things that are precise. I like a technician, someone who is a craftsman who really has a skill that no one else has.

When I learnt to take photographs I thought about how I would get my pictures into the magazines. It had to be different, because if it wasn't different or better then there would be no reason to publish it. When I was growing up I was looking at National Geographic and Sports Illustrated and Surfer Magazine, these magazines in the seventies, the photography was breathtaking, and compared to what you see today that's so dime a dozen, mediocre, nothing, it's like news photography, where I'm like 'oh you were there? So what?' After the moment it's worthless unless you happen to catch a funny moment or something. Photography is a dying artform, even though it's growing in leaps and bounds every day, the quality of it as an art is falling off into nowhere. A friend of mine, the old photo editor of one of the magazines I worked with, recently told me that eighty per cent of the photographers today couldn't expose a photograph properly if they had to use film. Quite frankly they are lucky, because it's not easy shooting with film, and I am a bit envious of some of them, I wish I didn't have to lose so many photos because the exposure was bad, and maybe some of them are being rescued by photoshop now or something, I don't know, but it's like, you don't learn, you don't know what light is or focusing, shutter speed, depth of field, how much it all comes into play. They are only snapshootists, then, aren't they? And that's okay, there's a place for that, but it shows in the work, it's lifeless, not interesting, there is so little character in the work.

#### **And capturing character is one of the driving forces behind all of your work.**

Sometimes by luck people will get a moment, but even the famous photographers like Annie Leibowitz and that ilk, their productions are as big as movies, they better take good pictures! But they still don't, they still lack character, it's all acting, it's fake character. And I feel with my photographs, it's all about character, it is one of the most important issues of all, but like we stated earlier, the composition is a given, so if I didn't compose a perfect beautiful picture, I'm not a fucking photographer, I'm just an idiot taking pictures, right?

#### **The difference is also in the fact that these subjects, these compositions, also form part of your everyday life, the way you live, what you believe in.**

I think that is the most important part, and the exact opposite of most photography, because these things are my life, I live them every day and these people were my heroes, and people I looked up to, and who I thought other people should get inspiration from, and therefore I didn't want to take pictures of people sitting around, and the fashion of the day, I wanted to take pictures of people that were ticking my brain and inspiring me, not a document of the 'scene', I never shot the 'scene', I shot people who had character and integrity, I believe in these things. I was a skateboarder, punk rocker and I was into hip-hop music. I went to clubs where I was the only white kid there for years, or one of the only few, I was excited by them and motivated, and had opportunities to get there because of who I was and I hustled. I worked really hard at getting the stuff, people say I was in the right place at the right time, well sure I was, but there were a lot of other fuckers there too! And they didn't get the shots I did and they didn't work as hard as I did. I took a lot of shit for it too, I paid my dues, I really did. When I was hanging out with the Dogtowners, I would get harassed, to no end sometimes, they were all my friends, but now the guys who were the meanest to me are the nicest, because they knew me when I was a teenager, and have such respect for me, it almost made me cry when I saw them thirty years later at how nice they were to me, and saying 'God we were so tough on you, and look what you became', they are proud of me because it became my life, and I kept their legend alive. It was a great thing, and because of my books then there have been movies and so much more interest over the last twenty years since Fuck You Heroes came out. It really helped a lot and I am proud of that because I have finally, for lack of a better term, paid off all that time I devoted to it. It is inspiring people now, it didn't inspire the people who I thought I was making it for, I was making it for my own generation back then, and it did to a degree, but it has done a hundred times more in the years that followed, and who would have known? Half my photos have been lost, because after I took them I didn't think they would be worth anything two months later. That's why I put them in book form, and now it is much easier to do that than ever, but back in '94 and '91 when I started making it, it was still pretty unheard of. Fuck You Heroes was the first of its ilk, no-one wanted to publish it, I brought it to every single publishing house, but now they would die to have had that book.

**Someone who you have photographed and that I find particularly interesting is Cornel West - how did you get to know him?**

He is an incredible speaker and human being. I have followed Noam Chomsky for as long as I can remember, for maybe twenty years, though for the most part he is too sophisticated for me as I don't have the background or knowledge, but through following Chomsky, it led me to others like Cornel West, and Ralph Nader, who I had known of since I was a child. When The Buzzcocks mentioned him in their song Fast Cars in 1977 I was like 'Why the fuck are they talking about one of our American heroes?' and that was really great to me. I have been into politics ever since I can remember talking. Growing up in the sixties in America, giving a peace sign was one of the earliest things I ever did in the car on the highway. It was more to do with my environment than my family, as my family wasn't very political, but growing up in that era was. The elementary school I went to was mainly black, in Inglewood, and when Martin Luther King got shot, I got a really interesting perspective, and my best friend was a Native American, and I remember him coming in to school with a fucked up haircut because the barbers made fun of him when he went to get his hair cut. I saw some really sad and interesting things, it made me care about stuff. I was drawn to the kid that got the least attention in the class, I was quite shy myself, but I cared about those that were the least taken care of, I had a sense of compassion, and it is what drives all of my anger and angst and excitement when I do see something great, to 'uplift the race' as they say - some people might not understand, but if you are involved you know.

Getting back to the meat of your question, though I shouldn't say meat [laughs]....the core of your question, I met Cornel West by accident while Ralph Nader was running for president the first time George W. Bush was running, and the day before the election, I was up in the Reverend Al Sharpton's offices in Harlem, as my friend Russell [Simmons] knows him really well, and I said we had to go to meet Ralph Nader. So we went there early and met Al and had a fun time talking with him, he was telling great stories, and then Ralph Nader came in and I was talking to Al, I don't even remember what it was about, and I was introduced to him, and he says something to Al almost exactly as I had, and Al said 'Brother Friedman just said that', and I thought 'oh my goodness, he has just met me, and just introduced me to one of my heroes as Brother Friedman', it kind of blew my mind, I could have died happy then, and then trailing behind him was Cornel West, and he joined in the conversation later on. I had seen him on TV a couple of times, but hearing him that day, about how he got involved in that election supporting Ralph Nader, he inspired me, and I loved how intelligent he was, so any time I manage to see him I do. That photograph that I did with him and Al Sharpton was when they were having an argument, Cornel still claims they were laughing together, but I know they were arguing, it was a great moment I happened to catch. I wanted to put him in The Idealist, and asked him to write something, and he was very excited to do it, he is also very inspired by music of his generation, as well as classical philosophers, and just the way he speaks, he is an amazing dude. So I got him to write this thing for me, and since then we are in touch, but I go and see him speak whenever he is in New York, the last time was when he was speaking at this thing the Communist party had up in Harlem, and I asked him could I take some photos, and I got five minutes in a room with him, and took his portrait, which is exactly what I wanted to do. Even the light being as weak as it was, the fact that it came out on film made me so happy, and Shepard Fairey, who I collaborated with, made a portrait off of that, it is the first 'modern' portrait I took, whereas all the others are from my archive.

**You have collaborated with Shepard Fairey, who is such an interesting artist, and was featured in the recent documentary Exit through the Gift Shop, have you seen that film yet? Banksy and Shepard are really illustrating what is wrong with the art world.**

I haven't seen it yet, Shepard is a real craftsman and is really intelligent and articulate and is trying to do something as opposed to the other guy they are kind of making fun of in the movie [Mr. Brainwash]. I haven't seen it because I think I'll be sickened by it. I am suing that guy right now actually, because I am sick of people being able to take people's work and make a picture of it and call it their own - he has used and stolen my work, he used my Run DMC image as a flyer for his first show; I want to shut this shit down. I know that Banksy was showing how fake the whole art world is, and how pathetic it can be and it is a great statement to make, I have thought it for a long time. Shepard and Banksy are always trying to make political statements, and Shepard is a commercial artist, he is not going to try and hide from that, he makes a living, and employs a lot of people, but he uses a portion of his money to make political statements, and is never going to stop, sometimes when he is on probation he mellows out a little bit, but he is a grown man who still climbs up poles to put stickers up, you know? Again he is very articulate and can speak well, I wish I could speak as well as he could.

.....

**What do you think about the idea of mythology and iconography, that so many of the people you**

**portray are outsiders, but by virtue of being photographed by you, they themselves become iconic, in essence you make a mythology about them?**

Shooting these photographs of other people that are not as iconic is perfectly fine, but what makes me an artist and not just a photographer is that I am adding something to it, making it greater than it is very often - the truth of it, but also, I do it in a way to make it even bigger. I have the skill to do that, and make someone look cooler than they are very often. I compose an image to make them look more significant than they may be, as I want people to look up to them and be inspired by them, I don't even need people to be followers, I don't want a herd mentality, I want people to come up with their own ideals, but by reading about other people's ideals and looking deeper. Where some of these people have gone after I have shot them is disappointing, and people say 'why don't you shoot them now?' And I just feel that I shot them when they meant something, and they don't mean anything anymore. I did it when it mattered, now it's time to move on. Fugazi still inspires throughout their whole career because they never lost any of it, they got stronger and stronger and as older men are still very inspiring, I don't want to mention people by name, but do I want to shoot 'so and so' now? Hell no! I'm embarrassed to, but did they mean something back then? Yes, and it was something very significant and what they were saying was significant, and I am still carrying the flag, to make something better. The mythology that you mentioned is part of what I am doing, my style, I am trying to create something more iconic because I want people to be inspired, and spread the inspiration, and it can inspire rebellion and thinking for a better way of life. I don't shoot bands that much anymore, because it has become kind of ordinary and commonplace. When I was shooting stuff it was extraordinary.

There are bands now inspiring people just as much as when I was a kid, so let the kids shoot them now, I will if I love them, but nowadays everything is so overexposed that there is no need for me to do it necessarily. If I feel a personal responsibility to do it then I will, I mean I shot a band a couple of years ago, they weren't anything special at all, but I liked how they sounded and they were very nice people, so I shot them, and it wasn't Black Flag! They were a bunch of young kids from Vermont, and were very kind and motivated in the music they were making. They were decent people, and I envisioned a really nice image for them, so why not? Then that portrait of Cornel that I mentioned was a year ago, I saw the opportunity, and I called and hustled and pushed my way through, I asked the right people, and I got to him and got this perfect portrait, and for the past few years I have been shooting pictures of my son, and I find that inspiring.

**When you were becoming more interested in hip-hop, did you see a sharing of information between both the punk rock and hip-hop communities? Was there a shared respect and ethos?**

When hip-hop began, there no understanding of punk rock, only perhaps Public Enemy had a little, which is why I liked them and they liked me from the beginning. Around then punk was changing in weird ways by hip-hop coming along, it was becoming kind of generic, but people in punk rock were quite open minded and were always looking to what was new. We soon discovered that hip-hop was basically a black kids version of punk rock, but I was so closely tied to both of them, early on, from Black Flag to Run DMC to Public Enemy to The Beastie Boys, and there weren't too many people like that. I couldn't believe it when I went to my first hip-hop show, there was no band, just people playing records, it was very disappointing, but then I learnt how that was part of the culture. Hip-hop didn't have integrity at first as there was no understanding of it, by lack of education, because of the circumstances of their neighbourhoods and culture, it was disappointing. I remember bringing Jam Master Jay to Bad Brains, he was so excited, that these were guys were black and in such a band, he was one of the really open minded guys in hip-hop, and it is a real tragedy he got killed. I saw the parallels there, and that is why I demanded in my book that the photographs be shown together, everyone had this rebellious spirit, it was different but the same deep down in a lot of ways, and it was more than just me that tied it together. It took about ten years before everyone finally saw it, which might be hard to imagine now as everyone knows it, but back then they didn't want to believe that, publishers wanted to publish three different volumes, but I said no, that there should be one book saying 'Fuck You' on the cover.

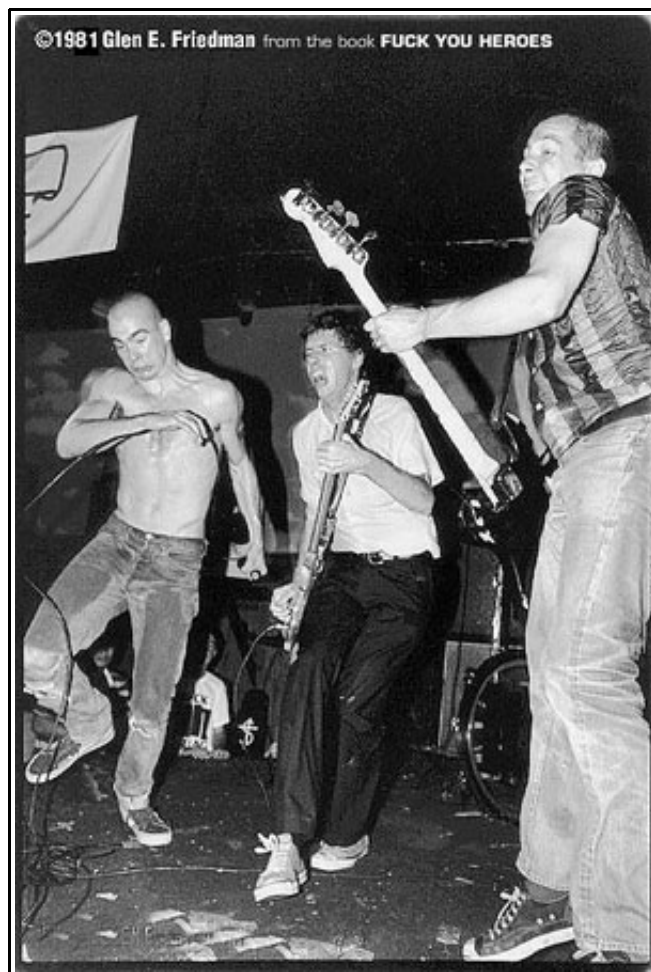
**What are some of your personal favourite images from over the years, the ones you constantly go back to?**

That's an interesting question, because a lot have become quite iconic ones, and I love them, but there are some that aren't as well known and mean a lot to me. The picture in The Idealist of Jay Adams, where there is a palm tree leaf coming in to the frame and Jay is at the centre, and it is composed so perfectly, that was the first day I used a 35mm camera. I was fourteen when I took it, and it was a perfect image but wasn't published ever, instead they picked a more radical image, a guy that was aggressive looking, and was falling down really, and it was the first picture I had published, and was a full page, it was mind-blowing but disappointing in a way, because he was falling. I got a lot of attention for it, and it gave me a reputation straightaway, but the picture from the same roll



was the Jay one, and it was never shown until The Idealist, and has a special meaning to me to this day, I still can't believe I composed such a perfect picture as a fourteen year old!

And another one that actually is famous is the one of Black Flag, it has been used on a lot of fanzines and is a shot of Greg [Ginn], Henry [Rollins] and Chuck [Dukowski], and is a vertical shot. When I would shoot back then I wanted to get a full, not half page. I still think it is one of the most incredible photographs of all time; they are all going insane, the guitars are pointing and framing Henry perfectly, he looks like a cartoon character, he is flailing, his face looks insane, and they look completely crazy, it was one of Henry's first shows and they were my favourite band. Those are the two photographs that come to mind, but I have so many pictures, so many of The Beastie Boys that people haven't seen that are hilarious. They always used to make me laugh, it was really fun, during the days when I was teaching them what the wide angle lens was and the fisheye, then they went crazy with that. The first photo session we ever had together was when they came to Los Angeles, I took a couple of rolls, it was amazing, good stuff. Other times where I had the chance to shoot people and hang out was with Fugazi, and that book is like one photograph, a twenty year image, I mean there are beautiful books of Bob Dylan and The Beatles, but I don't think any of them have the depth and variety of Fugazi, it is probably the greatest book of a band ever made, it was the relationship I had with them. When I would get bored I would try different ways of shooting them, and then stopped using a flash altogether. I haven't used a flash since 1990 because I wanted to work with what was available, and the flash demands so much attention, and lights up the thing artificially. The kids can use digital now, and don't need flash anymore, and I really envy that actually, but the moments we captured can't be duplicated and I am very proud of that, but we lost a lot of photos too.



**You never seem to stop learning or being your own harshest critic; always striving to be better.**

You have to be, otherwise people will just let you get away with anything, especially when you become well known, people either want to bow down to almost anything you do or do the opposite and try and tear you down, but I am my own harshest critic and have to be a perfectionist. I am always disappointed in human beings when they don't do the best they can, where they don't put their full effort into it, which is why some parts of the world are in such a sad state. I watched a documentary recently called Gasland, about natural gas and America drilling and destroying all the water, it was so sad, the greed and laziness in this world is beyond all belief, we have to fight against it. Look, I don't go to lots of protests anymore, I'm forty-eight, I used to take a lot more risks, but I'm older now, I don't want to get hurt, I don't want to spend a night in jail, but I'll do what I can, If you are young though, you should risk getting hurt, should risk spending a night in jail. You need to fight for your future, and if you are too afraid that's okay, you just do what you can. I used to be much more fascist and tell people that if they were eating meat they were a fucking piece of shit, a worthless body bag. I was a real vegan fascist, and I still am vegan, have been for over twenty years now, and I have respect for people who are and who are not, okay I have got slightly less respect for people that aren't, but if they don't know any better, that's their choice, and I am not as harsh as I used to be. What I find hard is if people know and don't care, that's the worst.

**Did you find it quite a hard battle to accept that some of the people you shot lost their integrity over the years, and veered away from the principles you hoped they stood for?**

Unfortunately it comes with life, and there are so many disappointments. I didn't get that upset, because sometimes when I got so close to people I knew that was coming. I did idealise some of the images, I knew that some of the people weren't as good as I was making them, but I saw a way to pass on a message, and I used them to make

them into what I thought they were and more. I didn't want to show their ugly side because I truly just wanted to inspire. If people want to make a documentary or book about a truly inspirational person then why tell the bad parts? You can choose to do that, as it shows they are human, but if you choose to do that be careful, because everyone has their faults, and sometimes those faults can inspire, but that's not my business, mine is to show the good parts, that is my responsibility, the gossip person's responsibility is to talk about the bad shit. If I saw an artist and knew they didn't have much integrity when I was shooting them, I just hoped for more and in some cases I would shoot an image of a person and they would become that, because they would want to live up to that, but then the opposite happened to The Beastie Boys, not because of my pictures, but they always had a lot of integrity, but were also pranksters, then they took this joke about 'fighting for their right' to party, but then they became that image. Then they learned and flipped back.

**You have had such a long relationship with that band.**

I still play softball every week with Adam Horovitz, he is the most talented and sweetest and works so hard. They are very creative guys but number one they are pranksters and began taking themselves seriously but took it in a different way. Check Your Head was a landmark, and I was inspired to shoot that photograph on the cover by the music. I hadn't seen them for three years, and then we hung out in Los Angeles and had a fun time, they always make me laugh, and are so funny, and we were in their studio, and they played me the demos, and I was so excited, and said 'let's take some pictures before I go', they said they already had an album cover, but we drove around for a day and then I faxed them the photos, and they called me up and said they loved the photograph so much that they were going to use the fax of it on the cover. The original vinyl has the fax on it, but the CD used the photograph, but the vinyl is cool as it is all pixelated. That particular photograph was one where Adam Yauch asked me to make it feel like that photograph of Minor Threat for Salad Days, and I had them sitting on a curb with their instrument cases, and it was three or four frames, and I said 'that's your Salad Days shot right there', and even though we were going to Adam's house and shooting on his porch, I knew that the earlier shot was the Salad Days shot.



We worked pretty well together back then. It's funny, the other day I was looking through my files and saw so many pictures I forgot about, I could do a Beasties book, there are so many pictures. I probably will in the next five years when my son goes to school, but books are so expensive to produce, the shipping companies make more on my books than I do, but maybe in the next two or three years I could do them digitally and special order them for people, but I do hope there will be one on the Beasties, and Run DMC and maybe a Black Flag one, but it's so prohibitive right now with books, it's really tough. With Recognise, I told myself that I was putting money aside and was making a book, and if people bought it then great, and if not, then fine, it was a statement of photography. We didn't sell many of them, it was a big investment in that artistic statement, but I had to do it.

**That's part of it isn't it? The impulse to keep going and not compromise? And though things have been a struggle in many ways, you have never let yourself be defeated. Who now inspires you on?**

I look to anyone who is making a lot of noise - screaming and yelling and making a fuss about how fucked up the world is and trying to make it better. There are a lot of people making environmental documentaries, and people who are critical about what is going on and making a big stink about it, they are standing on the ledge, and are risking things to change things. People at protests are so inspiring to me, if I read about it, and see their pictures, I get inspired, but some of the people in bands? Not many are inspiring me these days.

**Though then I think of someone like Henry Rollins, who keeps travelling, engaging, challenging. Again, he has never let himself be defeated.**

Henry is a very interesting guy, and I think what he has done with his life and where he has gone with it...I could never have predicted. I didn't know him that well. We talk once in a while, but rarely because he is so into what he does, I think he is like a shark, they say if a shark stops it dies, I think that's Rollins in more ways than one, that's



Henry Rollins. I think we should make a drawing of him, his face on a shark's body, I'm not great at drawing, but I might have to tell Shepard about that.

- Siobhán Kane

Details of the Glen E Friedman exhibition running in The Lighthouse Cinema from July 8th are at <http://thumped.com/latest/headline/glen-e-friedman-exhibition.html>

Last modified on Saturday, 11 December 2010 17:13

Tweet

0

Like

Be the first of your friends to like this.



### Siobhán Kane

Over the years, Siobhán Kane has written for various publications on music and culture including The Irish Times, Thumped, The Event Guide and Consequence of Sound. She occasionally contributes to radio, including the arts and culture show Arena on RTE1, and amidst trying to write her doctorate and teaching, runs the collective [Young Hearts Run Free](#), putting on music, literature and arts events in unusual spaces, raising money for the Simon Community in the process.

**Website:** [www.myspace.com/youngheartsrunfreeevents](http://www.myspace.com/youngheartsrunfreeevents) |