

JIM MARCHESE PHOTOGRAPHER

POINT BLANK : PB40 INTERVIEW by Dan French, spring 2021



RECORD SHOP WINDOW, Europe, April 1981 – by Jim Marchese

Jim, thanks so much for doing this interview, it's greatly appreciated.

Firstly, how have you and your family been coping during the pandemic? Are you still based in the Long Island area?

We are okay, thanks. I hope all is well with you too. Yes we are in New York.

Could you give us some background on where you were born and brought up, and what your early life was like?

Born in New York City, I first lived in the Bronx until I was 9 years old. My relatives all lived in one area, along the same block, and some in the same building: grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. It was wonderful: we saw each other all the time. Kind of like Bruce's family, only we were in apartments. And then my family moved to Long Island. Right after I saw the Beatles on The Ed Sullivan Show, my Dad bought me a Silvertone acoustic guitar (which I still have). I took a couple of lessons but didn't like the teacher – he didn't like the Beatles! So I stopped lessons and learned on my own. I had a band in junior high school and we played for school dances. Years later, I renewed my interest in playing, and bought a '60s Telecaster.

What were your earliest musical influences?

Oddly enough, initially country music, but then mainly rock. My Dad was a big country fan. I remember hearing "Please Help Me I'm Falling" by Hank Locklin and loving it. Now I have a band with my wife Mary, and we play in the New York tri-state area (and I still play that '60s Telecaster). We got a call one day asking us to perform all over Mainland China. We were the first American country act to tour there - pretty incredible.

At what age did you start to take an interest in photography? Are there particular photographers who influenced your style?

I started out drawing. My Mom and Dad always took photographs of my sister and me. In high school I had great art teachers who were a wonderful influence. I loved all the French impressionists. And photographers I admired included Jay Maisel, Pete Turner, Gordon Parks, Art Kane, Ansel Adams, Douglas Faulkner, Alfred Eisenstaedt, John Dominis, Irving Penn, Andy Warhol and many more.

When did you decide it was something you wanted to pursue as a career? I believe you trained in New York City.

I decided in high school, and went for a photographic degree at Fashion Institute of Technology in New York.

What was your first professional photographic commission?

I was lucky enough to get an appointment with the award-winning designer Milton Glaser, whom I greatly admired – he was at New York Magazine at the time (and was a co-founder of the magazine). Milton was responsible for getting me hired to photograph author Helen Van Slyke at her home in Manhattan. That photograph is on my website. Several lighting set-ups in different areas of her apartment. Then the sun came briefly through a window behind her, and reflected on the manuscript in her lap, which reflected onto her face. That was the shot.

I also read a book on Andy Warhol and learned he had illustrated shoes for a large NYC department store's windows, so I started bringing my personal "Fog Horses" photo series (some are also on my website) around to stores in Manhattan. Saks Fifth Avenue chose to use large versions for their Ralph Lauren Fifth Avenue window displays.



Fog Horses – by Jim Marchese

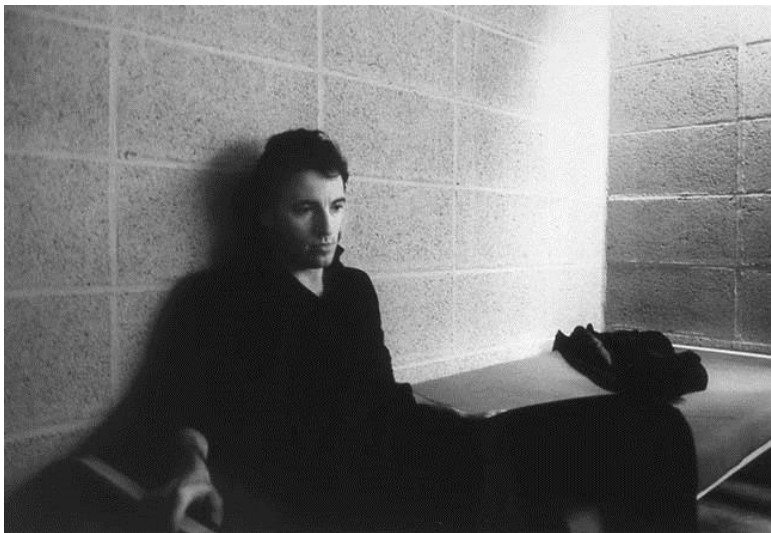
Tell us about your preferred camera makes.

My Dad had a Ricoh camera that he gave me when I moved to the city for college.

Unfortunately it was stolen from my first apartment on the Lower East Side when I was attending FIT. I've used Nikons ever since.

How did you first make contact with Bruce? Were you already a fan of his music? What was the process that led to you becoming the tour photographer for Bruce's European tour in spring 1981?

Yes, definitely a fan, but had never been to a Bruce concert. Someone in Bruce's camp I had known for a long time, but hadn't seen in a few years, called from the tour in Germany. He asked me to be tour photographer for the next few weeks and asked if I could be there the next day. I bought a ton of film (remember film?) and boarded a plane.



RESTING BEFORE THE SHOW, Munich, April 1981 – by Jim Marchese

Had you travelled to Europe previously? If not, what were your first impressions?

My first time overseas and it was everything I imagined it to be. And exploring each city with Bruce made it all the more incredible.

As well as documenting the concerts themselves, you had a unique opportunity to photograph Bruce and the band backstage, offstage, and travelling around Europe on their first major tour there, apart from the brief initial visit in 1975. What are some of your best memories of that historic experience?

Meeting Bruce for the first time, he was friendly and down-to-earth. I was brought out on stage just after sound check to meet him, and he shook my hand and said they had already gotten over jet lag, and why don't I just watch the show and get a feel for everything and start shooting next show. But as the show started that night, of course I had to shoot – it was too incredible.

The response to Bruce's shows was overwhelming everywhere we went, and magical to witness. As we walked around many of the towns he played, fans couldn't believe they were meeting him on the street – and he was happy to stop and speak with all of them.

What are some of your favourite images from the European tour?

One of my favourites is the picture of Bruce travelling (through Germany I believe) in a train carriage, with a newspaper, and he might be reading or asleep; but it suggests he was interested in learning about this new territory. We've heard that Stevie particularly found that tour a turning point in his international awareness. Was that your impression too?

Some of my favourite images are the ones on my website. In that shot you mention, Bruce was reading. He wanted to absorb everything around him.

Re awareness: It was a turning point for all of us. The Berlin Wall was still up at the time: I ran into Max at Checkpoint Charlie one morning. And Barcelona was amazing: Bruce was the first American rock & roll act to perform there. That audience after all the years under Franco...Dave Marsh said it best in his "On Tour" book when he wrote: "You could smell freedom busting loose in the air." And Bruce brought that out in them. That show was the best – very moving.



READING ON A TRAIN, Frankfurt, April 1981 - by Jim Marchese

I've looked closely at your Frankfurt soundcheck photos taken looking out at the hall, as I was lucky enough to be one of the few there that afternoon (before my first ever E Street show) – I must have narrowly missed being in shot, as I took the chance to sit near the front to listen!

Sorry I didn't catch you, Dan – my focus might have been elsewhere :)

Thanks to my German friend Rena bringing a camera, we have a photo of you from the time we met you briefly in Frankfurt, which I think I sent you.

I don't have many photos of myself on the tour, so much appreciated, Dan! I do have a photo that was taken by Bruce with my camera.



JIM IN GERMANY, April 1981 - by Rena Huerttlen

Have you had the opportunity to return to Europe much since, either for assignments, exhibitions, or vacations?

Mary and I returned a few years ago for a gallery exhibition show I had in London. And Mary and I have visited Italy and Ireland for vacations.

Was it that 1981 tour that led to you working with Stevie on the 'Men Without Women' sessions, and of course his wedding to Maureen in 1982?

Yes. And also Stevie's second album "Voice of America." Stevie's such an amazing talent in his own right.

Your work has been used in Bruce's albums, box sets, books, tour posters, Spotify playlists, and the ongoing live archive series of releases; and no doubt will be called on for other Springsteen projects. Have you supplied a complete portfolio that gets drawn on as needed?

Yes, requests are usually for a specific image.

Jim, you are one of the few major Bruce photographers who haven't published a book of their Springsteen work, and a visual chronicle of the legendary 1981 European 'River' tour

seems such an essential gap to fill. Can we hope for this to happen at some point?

I do hope to put together a book someday.

How and when did you meet Mary?

We met in the mid-'70s through a friend. She was modelling at the time, then worked for Crawdaddy Magazine, as well as music management and booking. We've been together ever since.

Jim, thanks again for your time. Here's to your continued success, and I hope you'll get the chance to visit and exhibit in Europe again when circumstances permit.

Thanks Dan, and congrats on 40 years! Hopefully our paths can cross in person again.



BRUCE & JIM, Göteborg, May 1981 – by Jim Marchese

Jim's photographs can be viewed on his website:

<https://jimmarchese.com>

Limited edition signed prints can be purchased through:

Morrison Hotel Gallery: New York / LA / Maui

<https://www.morrisonhotelgallery.com/photographers/NI65sZ/Jim-Marchese>

Analogue Gallery: Toronto

<https://analoguegallery.com/collections/jim-marchese>