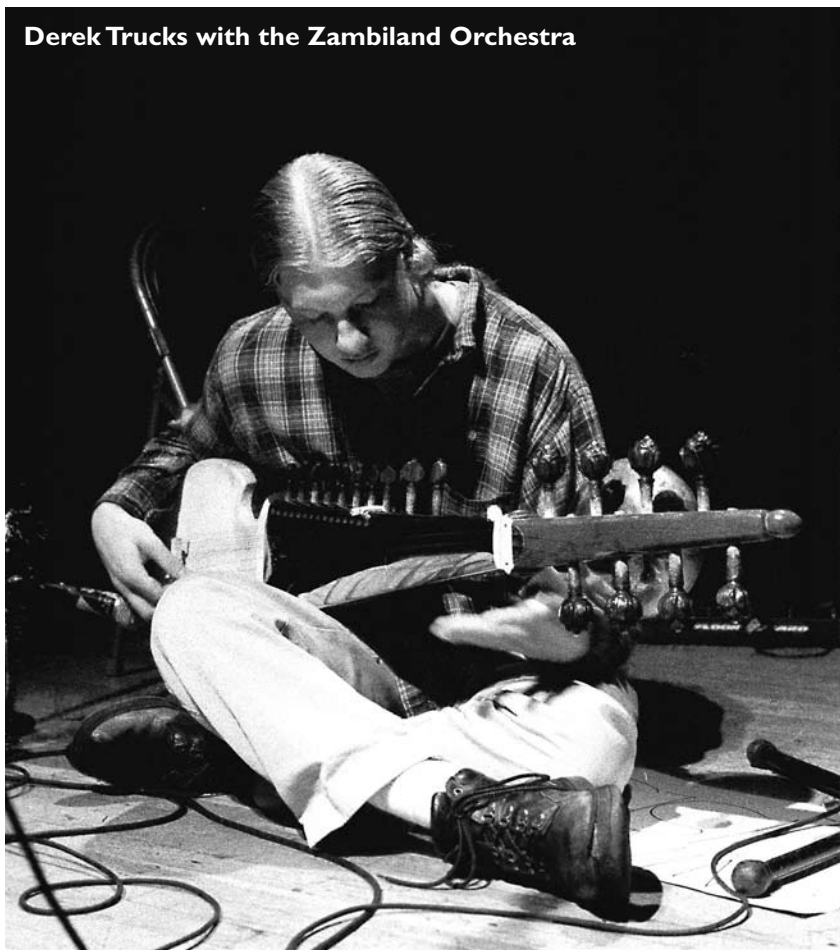


Photo Session: Michael Weintrob

by Brian Shupe

Derek Trucks with the Zambiland Orchestra



In an effort to showcase both up-and-coming photographers and veterans of the craft, Hittin' the Note brings you the words and works of photographer Michael Weintrob. In the last five years, Weintrob has put together a "Who's Who" portfolio while shooting in Colorado and New York City, or anywhere music is played. The way the story goes, however, his contributions to the scene have run deeper than just his images. Word has it that while Gov't Mule was planning the Deepest End, Weintrob was on a photo shoot for the Headhunters. Michael put Headhunters bassist Paul Jackson, Jr. in touch with Warren, who arranged for Deepest End tickets for Mr. Jackson. When Billy Cox had to back out of the concert, Warren asked Mr. Jackson if he would perform "Chameleon." "Just another confirmation that, in life, you can always make the most of every opportunity that comes your way," as Michael Weintrob might say.

Beginnings

I got started as the house photographer at the Aggie Theater in Fort Collins, Colorado. I used to photograph live bands there five nights a week, and I would go and meet the groups. Then they would come and play different venues around Denver and Boulder so I would photograph those shows, too. I was able to establish relationships with managers and the different musicians, and all the people at the different clubs. Then I started going to music industry conferences like Pollstar Concert Industry Consortium, The Aspen Artist Development Conference, and the Emerging Artist Technology and Music Conference. So I was meeting all these people in the industry and establishing contacts.

After the first time I went to Pollstar, I met a guy in the elevator who had a tag

that read "City of Denver Theaters and Arenas." I started talking to him and it turned out he was the head of marketing for Red Rocks. I wanted to work in the music industry at the time as a publicist, and I needed any kind of internship that I could get. He gave me a chance.

That got my foot in the door with City of Denver Theaters and Arenas, and I went on to become a house photographer at Red Rocks, Denver Convention Center, Boettcher Concert Hall, Temple Hoyne Buell, and so on. That opened a lot of doors for me.

At Red Rocks, we would do a lot of backstage photos with the bands; they would receive a piece of the rock with their name engraved on it. I was able to shoot Widespread Panic, the Allman Brothers, the Dead, Erykah Badu, Arturo Sandoval, Diane Schuur - the list goes on

and on. It was an amazing experience, and it took me up to another level.

The first magazines that ever published me were *High Times*, *Relix* and *Downbeat*. I started developing relationships with all these different publications and things started to snowball. I started getting published every once in a while in *Rolling Stone*, and I shot Bonnaroo for them every year that Bonnaroo has been in existence. I guess I just try to take advantage of every opportunity that comes in front of me.

Bonnaroo

Every year at Bonnaroo has been wonderful. The guys at Big Hassle, including Ken Weinstein, always really take care of me down there and give me full access. It is usually Danny Clinch, Taylor Crothers, Jeff Kravitz and me who have the most



Bonnaroo



Widespread at Bonnaroo

Hittin' the Note



Man with mud wall

wanted to see his pagoda. He basically took me all around the grounds and showed me where they live and where



Five young Buddha boys, Cambodia

access. I felt that I was really respected throughout the industry. I was able to get onstage during Dave Matthews, and I was like one of ten people who were up there, and I was able to shoot some great photos.

So it felt good to be respected by a lot of these folks and be given the access I have been given. Bonnaroo is an incredible thing for me and all these musicians; everyone's getting a lot of exposure being there.

Backstage

If I am shooting in a club or a venue, and I am shooting live images, I prefer to be in a photo pit where I have room to move around. I have spent too many hours of my life stuck up against the front of a stage. I prefer being backstage getting behind the scene shots, making myself invisible, kind of "fly on the wall" stuff.

I think that you have to know when the moment is right to approach people. Five minutes before a band is going to go on the stage is not the time to go up to them. I just kind of like to hide in the corner and document what is going on and keep my eyes open. And I am lucky enough that people trust me to be in the same room as a Gregg Allman or Branford Marsalis, Harry Connick, Jr. or whoever. I just feel lucky to have the access and the trust - it's all about the trust.

Buddhists

I got hired this past summer to photograph the Telluride Blues and Brews Festival as their staff photographer, and the Fire Lake Festival in Gaffney, South Carolina as their staff photographer. I brought one of my friends down as my assistant, and I owed him some money for shooting the events for me. Last year he was in Thailand, and he met a girl and they were getting married there. So he told me that instead of me paying him his fee, I should buy a ticket to Thailand and he would take care of me once I got there, and I would photograph his wedding. I was able to get to Thailand, and I extended my stay for two weeks. I was there a month and ended up traveling all over Thailand and Cambodia and photographed a lot of Buddhist monks at their temples, which was an amazing experience for me.

I went to photograph Angkor Wat. Angkor Wat is this big temple that is centuries old. I guess it was discovered about

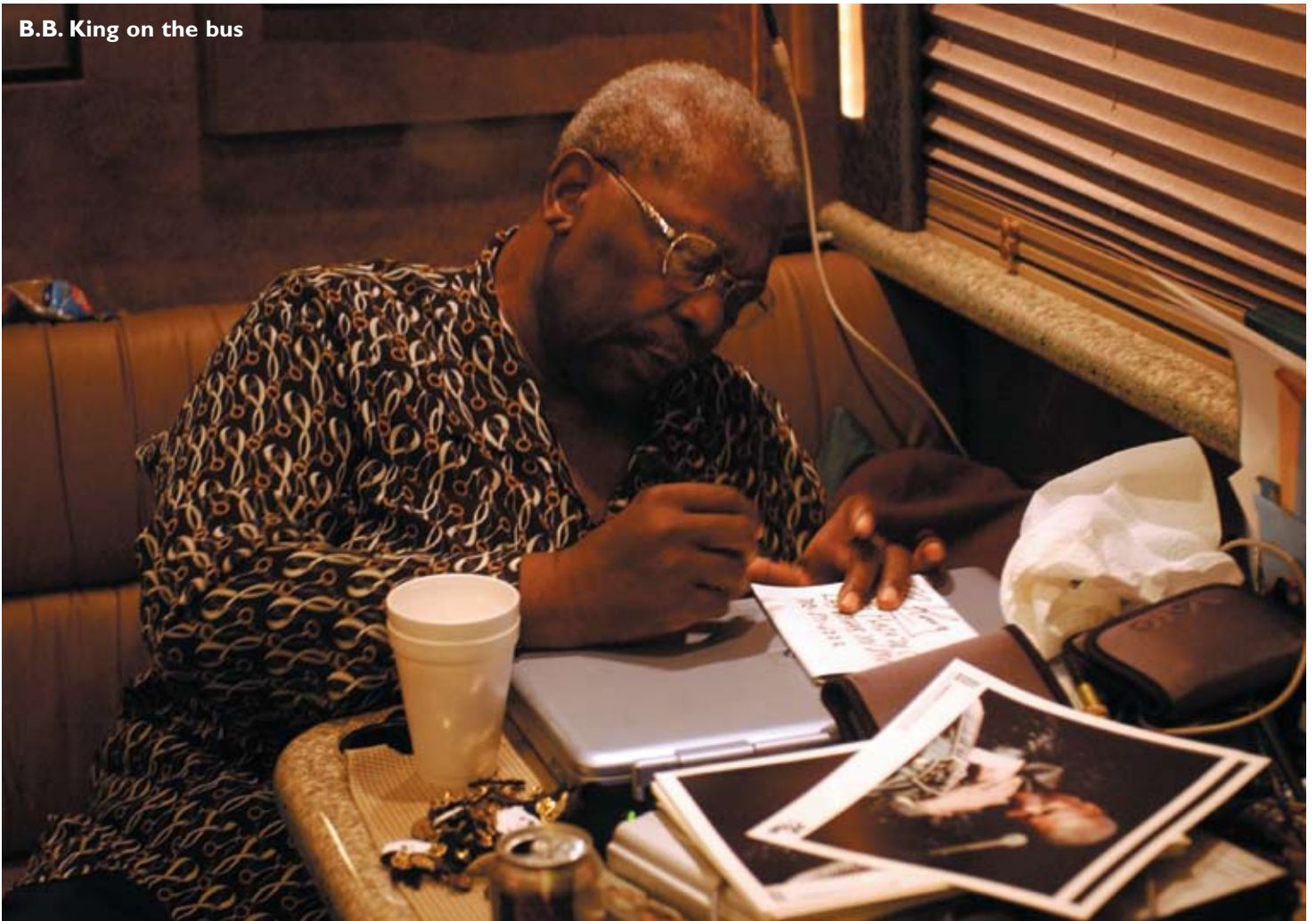


Dr. John

150 years ago. It is a huge landmark. I went there to photograph the sunrise at 5:30 in the morning. I walked through the temple and took a lot of photographs of the ruins, and I heard some chanting coming from beyond a wall. So I wandered

through this field, and I came across this Buddhist temple. The monk was there with all the nuns and they were praying and blessing the food in the morning, and I started photographing them. This young monk came up to me and asked me if I

B.B. King on the bus



they eat. And I was able to photograph something I would never have been able to see if I hadn't trusted my instincts and walked up there.

Below the stage

I got a chance in 2000 to photograph Ray Charles at the Paramount Theater in Denver. We were allowed to shoot the

first song and the last song. What a lot of people don't know is that security brings you into the photo pit for the first three songs and then they make you leave. But for this Ray Charles shoot, we were allowed to shoot the first song and the last song. So for the last song, all the other photographers had left by this point, I was the only one up there and I was kneeling down below the stage, and Ray comes out and he was standing at the foot of the stage, hugging himself, bowing to the audience. I was right below his feet shooting up at him. It was just an amazing experience. I feel so lucky to have been able to photograph him before he passed away.

Bus trip

One of King Sunny Ade's managers contacted me; I had met him four years ago at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and had always kept in touch with him. They needed some images to use for press when the band returned for a US tour. I asked if I could go on the road

Jack Casady



Ray



Matt Abts



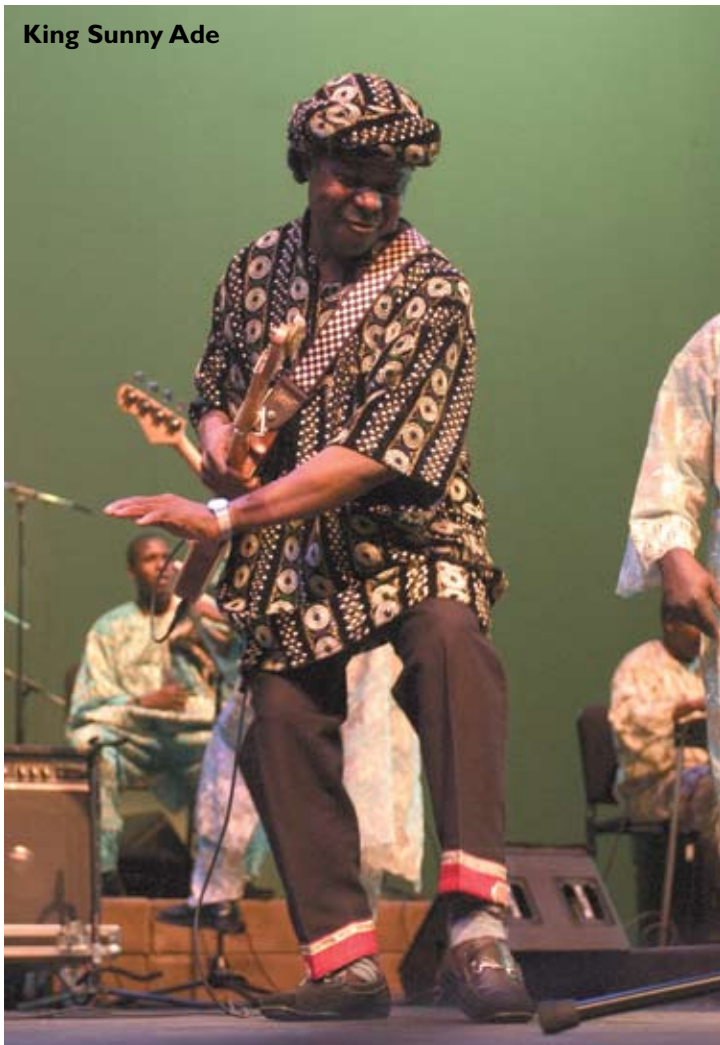
Thank God for Fats Domino





Bernie Worrell

King Sunny Ade



R.L. Burnside



Some other country music



The Rev. Al Green



Bill Payne



I feel lucky to have the access and the trust - it is all about the trust.

with them, and he said yes. I went and met the band in New York City and hopped on the bus. We then traveled to Albany, Toronto, Quebec and Detroit. On this bus were 20 Nigerians, myself, a tour manager and a soundman. It was the most amazing experience. We got to the Canadian border and the bus driver didn't have his passport. He claimed he had lost his driver's license the day before, and ... I think he had a criminal record. They wouldn't let us through. The tour manager had to charter a new bus from Quebec to come down and pick us up. So we sat on the side of the road in the original bus watching *Live and Let Die* and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* with 20 Nigerians. It was so bizarre I couldn't believe it. Once the new

bus showed up, we had to move all of the musicians and their gear. We made it to the gig just in time for soundcheck, so it all worked out.

Background

There is a photographer in Boulder, Colorado. His name is Tim Benko, and he taught me about the business of photography. He is the staff photographer for the Telluride Bluegrass Festival. I owe a lot to him. I met a lot of famous rock photographers, like Baron Wolman and Henry Diltz, who were really nice to me. I love meeting these older guys because they are really great. Danny Clinch has always been a mentor to me and always given me great advice, so I really appreciate everything he

has helped me out with.

The first big job I got that catapulted me to the next level was doing all the photos for *The Deepest End* album for Gov't Mule, so I want to thank Jason Bau, Stefani Scamardo, Warren Haynes, Jim Walsh and Chris Tetzeli from ATO records for the opportunity they gave me. From that point, I went on to photograph the Warren Haynes Christmas Jam and develop a lot of relationships, so were it not for that, I don't think I would probably be talking to you right now. I really appreciate the chance they gave me. 🙏

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