

STAGE CRAFT

Ian Jorgensen started out shooting shows, then became a tour promoter, festival manager, bar owner and publisher. Now he's returning to his roots.

IAN JORGENSEN, BETTER known as Blink, spent his teenage years hanging out in the laundry of his family home—that's where he'd built a darkroom. Starting with his high school band, he spent the next 15 years shooting New Zealand musicians.

Music photography wasn't particularly crowded in the early 2000s when Jorgensen was finding his feet. He's seen the rise of a few icons, partly because he was the first one on the scene. "I had access to bands because I was watching them when no-one else was," he says. He photographed Liam Finn messing around in a hotel room before he became a household name, tagged along with the Mint Chicks' first national tour—they played to a crowd of four in Whanganui—and shot album covers for The Datsuns and Shihad.

Jorgensen loved shooting in black and white, but monochrome images weren't wanted by music magazines of the day that had splashed out on full-colour printing. So he started his own music magazine, *A Low Hum*, to publish his photos. The first issue was a Xerox-and-staples job, but it eventually acquired better

production values and a broader scope.

Meanwhile, Jorgensen was discovering he could do a lot more for bands than photograph them. "I was also releasing their records, booking their tours, organising shows, making videos," he says. "As my profile built within that industry I started working with bigger and bigger bands. I just diversified heaps, developed a whole bunch of other skills."

He started an annual music festival, Camp A Low Hum, which ran from 2007–2014 in Wainuiomata, and opened a Wellington bar and venue, Puppies.

He stopped picking up his cameras. True, he had a lot going on, but mostly he didn't enjoy the process of digital photography. Sifting through hundreds of similar images killed creative impulse.

It took a return to shooting on film for Jorgensen to rediscover his love of photography. "I just like the way light interacts with emulsion, and not knowing until the week after you've taken the photo whether you were successful or not," he says. "I still get really excited waiting for my negatives to come back." >>





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one would pay that, Jorgensen started a ‘book club’ via Kickstarter where for \$15 a week, subscribers receive a new volume each fortnight. “People love getting stuff in the mail, and once it finishes you get a box to put them all in,” he says. It’s been so successful he’s going to start another one when the first finishes.

Meanwhile, in true Jorgensen style, there’s a 25-event tour kicking off on the books’ release date, March 16: live shows, a one-day festival, film screenings, stops in book and record stores around the country. “Originally it wasn’t going to be this big, but then I realised I’ve spent the last 10 years of my life organising tours for bands to release stuff, so now that I’m finally releasing something of my own, I should make some effort,” he says. “I found that in the early days of *A Low Hum* I couldn’t afford to advertise or promote the magazine, but what I could do was organise a tour that broke even.”

New Zealand is a great environment for small publishers, he adds, because there are only a handful of bookshops, newspapers and magazines nationwide. “So if you want to self-distribute your thing, you just call up 12 people, and send them copies,” he says. “People don’t realise how cheap publishing is, even short-run stuff. The last couple of books I did, I was printing those in runs of 50, and then those would sell out and I’d do another 50. If people want to start putting their stuff out there, short-run digital printing is the way to do it.” **RW**

ianjorgensen.com



Above: Members of The All Seeing Hand at Jorgensen’s Wellington gig venue, Puppies, April 2014. Below: Michael Prain of Die! Die! Die! photographed a decade earlier, in August 2004. Opposite: Blindspott’s Damian Alexander in May 2003, and Jon Toogood, better known as Shihad, in November 2002. Previous spread: Kody Nielson of The Mint Chicks on a New Plymouth summer’s night in 2004.

Nowadays, when he shoots digital, he imposes tough restrictions on himself. “I only let myself take 40 shots. There are only so many shots of a lead singer screaming that you can take anyway—it’s always the same photo.”

Making a book out of his music photography had always been in the back of his mind, but he had 40,000 negatives to sort through. It was an enlightening exercise in which images had lasting power and which didn’t. “I found that when I was shooting too close, I was missing a lot of that interesting archival information—the spaces they were in, the people that were watching. That was actually the most interesting thing about the photographs I was looking at: being able to place them in a time. It took me

years to realise that.”

Shooting close-up is tempting because it removes distractions from the frame. “It makes it so much harder when you have to start thinking about composition. There’s so much crap on stage: mic stands, cables, equipment, and it’s all happening so fast, the light’s changing.”

Jorgensen whittled his photographs down to 1000, self-published as 10 books of 100 images each. He’s calling the whole thing *A Movement*. “This is a crazy project! I’ve done books before—I wanted to do something ridiculous.”

Each volume has a loose theme, from key music scenes—pop, garage, underground—to his band scouting expeditions overseas.

The whole set costs \$300, but figuring no

