

Capturing a movement

Adrian Hatwell talks with photographer Ian Jorgensen about his encyclopaedic personal project covering a decade-and-a-half of passionate music photography



Countless personal projects die at concept stage. A flash of inspiration gives birth to an exciting idea, only to quickly be subsumed in the work of making a living and living a life. For Ian ‘Blink’ Jorgensen, one such idea remained dormant for some 12 years as he busied himself with a diverse career of

photography, publishing, band management, music videos, and event management. While his planned book of early music photography never did come about, the ensuing years proved fertile ground for the idea to germinate, coming to full bloom this year in an impressive 10-book box set.

A Movement is the (“thoroughly pretentious,” according to Jorgensen) name of the hefty project, chronicling 15 years of the photographer’s work shooting bands. The 10 volumes feature some 1000 photos of 300 bands, mostly local but some international, organized around varying themes. It’s a huge





endeavour, but Jorgensen says he simply couldn't figure out how to make it any smaller.

"I wanted to have multiple shots of the bands I worked most closely with over the period, and really struggled choosing who to leave out. I will eventually get a really nice online archive together showcasing a bunch more of the work I couldn't publish, probably in another 15 years."

Jorgensen started his first photography business after leaving high school, initially with an aim to work as a real-estate photographer while shooting bands as a hobby. It was after getting a surprisingly positive response from the band Shihad upon offering to shoot a concert that he felt the serious tug of music photography.

"Pre-digital days there weren't the throngs of hipster bloggers up the front of every show, I was one of just a handful of photographers in

the country who were photographing music, as such I very quickly got established with the magazines at the time and was able to easily find low-paid work."

Jump forward 15 years and Jorgensen has worked with many of the most important acts to come out of New Zealand during that period in a number of different capacities, but never without camera close at hand. The resulting archive he has created is likely the most comprehensive visual record of that scene, and *A Movement* handsomely collects the essentials.

Releasing a single photo book in today's market is no easy feat, but a box set of 10 is almost unheard of. Jorgensen was acutely aware of the unwieldy economics, and devised a way to more palatably spread the cost to readers, combining crowd-funding with a good old-fashioned book club.

"The full retail cost of the box set is around \$300 and, frankly, nobody has that sort of spare cash floating around, especially to pay for ridiculous projects like this. I realized that the key way I was going to sell these books was by creating a book club where members paid a small amount every week and received a book in the post every second week. Receiving mail is awesome, and also it's kind of overwhelming trying to navigate your way through 1000-odd photos all at once, so having two weeks with each book felt right to me."

The photographer attracted around 60 members to the book club with its initial Kickstarter launch, enough to make the project happen, and he'll run another membership drive when the set is released in March, for those who also want to get in on the mail-order action.

For Jorgensen, one of the biggest



achievements in getting the project completed was being rid of the boxes of unorganized negatives that would act as a cluttered daily reminder of his unfinished ambition. He had accrued in the area of 40,000 negatives, but a couple of Nikon Coolscan machines from the US and a decent workflow made the scanning process fairly painless. Negative touch-ups were a different matter, but Jorgensen took advantage of the online platform fiverr.com, on which you can get almost any service done for \$5, to spread the tedious load. Tracking down accurate info about what was pictured in any given image was another laborious task, but the finished product was well worth the effort for the photographer.

“When I first saw all 10 books sitting in a box together, I got a little choked up. I’ve completed a lot of projects in my life, but this is a massive personal achievement, made sweeter by knowing how difficult the entire process was and being hands-on the whole way. I

always dreamed of publishing my musical photographs; to see it done is a bucket list-type moment.”

Without a budget to advertise or promote the book in the traditional ways, Jorgensen will fall back on his considerable touring experience to get the word out about *A Movement*. He has organized a swathe of 25 events around the country, beginning March 12, which will include an exhibition, appearances in book and record stores, a companion film screening, many live shows, and a mini one-day music festival.

“It wouldn’t have seemed right to release something as ridiculous as a 10-book box set without doing an equally stupid number of release events,” he explains.

To sign up to the *A Moment* book club, find information on the numerous events planned around the release, or to check out more of Jorgensen’s work visit ianjorgensen.com or alowhum.com.

