

Photographing First Responders



by **Wouter du Toit**

March 29, 2017

 10 Comments



Photography isn't something you decide as a career path. You rather find photography and then setup your life to do it as a job. It has that effect and it's why it's such a beautiful art form. You'll never be a successful photographer if you are not passionate about it, which is different to deciding a financial adviser or insurance broker. I might be stereotyping, but I am sure there are many who love their job, but also many who do not, but at least get a good paying salary at the end of every month, so they keep at it.



This can be said for photographers like Matt Chesin, who takes photos of first responders. He does it, because these members of society go to help out when others are in need. When there is a fire or a crime that needs assistance, these people are the heroes. And, by being there to take the photos, he's able to provide some sort of idea of what it was like for newspapers, and the agency leaders like the captains and deputies who often need to manage these scenarios from a central office.

Therefore, Matt is also a hero for being there and using his skill to show what it is like, what the experience was for the guys rushing into the burning building to save a mother and child. Here are some of his photos.

He's 25 years old and shoots with a Canon 60D. His lens of choice is the [Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II](#) and [Canon 70-200mm f/2.8L II](#). He's been shooting since 2013 and have been a Fire Department photographer volunteer since then. He would get a ride in the van and be there when a call comes in.

Arizona First Responder Photos



It's often you're not thinking about why you are doing something, but rather just doing it because you enjoy doing it that make for great images. And, in the future, it's possible that these photos can become the start of your style development and part of your expertise as photographer.





My advice is to take initiative and go out and shoot. Once you're back at home or in the office, go through your images, take your favorite ones, do your corrections and editing, and publish them where others can see them. Build a body of work within your niche, just like Matt is doing, and you'll soon get the respect of your community leaders as being the person to go to when photos or video are needed.

You can check out more of Matt's work [on his website](#) and follow his work [on Instagram](#).



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Wouter runs a retouching agency, Contact Digital. It's a boutique post-production studio based in Paris. We pride ourselves on delivering a personal service to individual artists - respecting and guided by each client's unique vision and style. We balance the details in a modern world to create images that renders a feeling.



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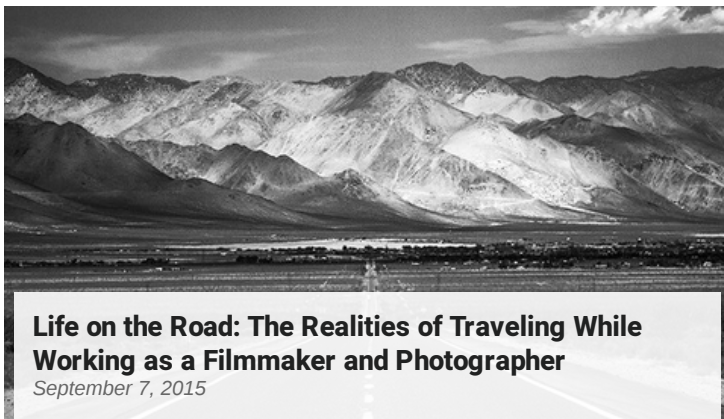
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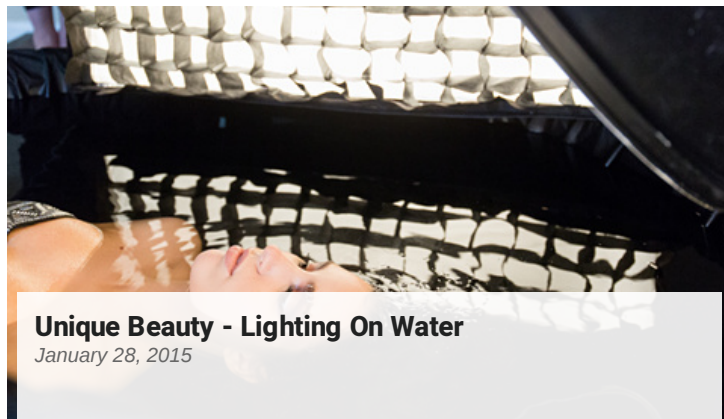
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Dusty Wooddell - March 29, 2017

I can tell you from first hand experience (5 years as a FF/Paramedic in AZ) that being a first responder in Arizona is a tough job to say the least. My hat is off to those who do it full-time



michael buehrle - March 29, 2017

i think that the term hero is thrown around way too easily these days. firemen are yes but " Therefore, Matt is also a hero for being there and using his skill to show what it is like". come on really ? he is photographing from outside of a burning building, not from inside.



Wouter du Toit ↩ michael buehrle - March 29, 2017

I don't think you need to put your life in danger to be a hero.





michael buehrle ↩ Wouter du Toit - March 29, 2017

taking a regular pic does though ? so i guess we are all heroes everyday then ? see how silly that sounds ?



Peter Brody ↩ michael buehrle - March 29, 2017

Hero: 1. a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.

Wouter is correct.



Jacob Colmenero ↩ michael buehrle - March 29, 2017

Exposing a hero for free seems like a pretty heroic move to me lol



Peter Brody - March 29, 2017

Beautiful shot of that beautiful F-16.



Duane Wooters - March 30, 2017

Great shots! Was wondering if you needed to get releases from the people in the photos?



Wouter du Toit ↩ Duane Wooters - March 31, 2017

Hi Duane, the images are mostly used internally, for reporting and giving an idea of what the event was like during training. I know newspapers also call on him for images to add to their articles, and in that case there is maybe some permission he needs, and therefore must get from the featured parties. Thanks for your input, keep shooting!






Bjørn Aakre - March 31, 2017

Big ups for getting close to the action when shooting fires - the temperatures are no joke. That heat radiation reaches far. I stayed safe, and shot in a studio - dropping in another background in post. Doesn't give the same real look, but no risk involved for gear or people.





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