

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN WILLIAMS

NICK CAVE>>
Latitude Festival 2009



STAGE SETTING: (Clockwise from top left) Nick Cave, photographer John Williams at Riverside Studios, Laura Marling (who lives in H&F), Belle and Sebastian, and Grace Jones
PICTURE ABOVE BY JUSTIN THOMAS

FRAME GAME

► EMI man takes to the pit at gigs for his photography
► Solo show brings pics to Riverside

CAROLINE BUTCHER

CAPTURING the raw energy and sweaty passion of live music from a crowded photographers' pit isn't easy, but one Hammersmith snapper reckons he has got it down to a fine art.

Self-taught gig photographer John Williams, 27, will unveil a selection of his best concert images during a new show, *Captured Live*, at Riverside Studios from September 1-17.

The avid music fan, who fits his photography around a day job in marketing for EMI in Kensington, will showcase 14 framed photographs from a range of festivals and gigs.

"The thing with shooting bands is that you're working in low light and it's fast-moving, so you're really in the deep end," John said.

"Shooting at festivals is great because you get to see the real pros at work, with cameras dangling off from all sides. That has been a real eye-opener for me. On a big main stage there can be 25-30 photographers

there, but there is rarely any competitiveness or jostling. It's really just about getting your position and getting your shot."

But with snappers usually only allowed in the pit for the first three songs of a set, John admits the pressure is on to find the perfect shot.

"You know that little moment is coming and it's great when you get it," he said. "I really pick my shots to try to capture a moment where they are either in the height of an emotion or a peak note, or just a little shot where they are maybe glancing at someone in the audience. Some vulnerability is good onstage as well."

"And then I combine that with some fairly dramatic shots with great lighting. I've tried to get that across in the exhibition."



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The show, which is John's second solo display following a smaller exhibition at the Tricycle Theatre in Kilburn last year, depicts fledgling bands such as the unsigned Black Dove Experiment alongside major acts like Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Florence and the Machine, Arcade Fire and Grace Jones.

"The Grace Jones shot is really striking. What she is wearing is dramatic and the lighting is equally strong," John said. "Nick Cave is another quite striking image. He only allows photographers in for the first song but he's quite dramatic, so it's easier to pick out the good moments."

John shot most of the artists at festivals but two acts, OK Go and Richard Hawley (formerly of Pulp), were shot locally at the Shepherd's Bush Empire – where John has been a familiar face for the past decade.

"I've worked at the Empire since I was 17, doing casual box office work," he said. "I haven't really worked there for a while now, but I'm still on the books!"

John has also lived locally in Queen Caroline Street – just around the corner from Riverside Studios – for the past five years but said he didn't really investigate the venue until he met his girlfriend Heather Ruck three years ago, who was working there as a programmer.

"I come here a lot now and I really like Riverside Studios – it's just got so much going on," he said. It's got a strong focus on theatre, but with music and arts there is a lot of crossover."

John's framed 18in by 12in photos will be on sale for £150 during the exhibition and unframed prints can be ordered for £70.

• *Riverside Studios, Crisp Road, from 10am-10.30pm daily. Visit: www.riversidestudios.co.uk or johnwilliamsphotography.co.uk*

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