



Neal Preston

Neal Preston's career spans almost 50 years. His legendary music images include some of the most memorable ever made of rock's most iconic stars. His photographs have appeared in every conceivable media outlet: on the covers and pages of world-class magazines and newspapers, to books, television shows, feature films, Broadway show programs and billboards, vinyl, CD and DVD packages... literally everywhere. His client list is a virtual who-is-who of rock royalty. Preston's archive, a body of work created over four decades, is regarded as one of the music industry's most extensive and significant photo collections. It was the key source of photographs for VH-1's acclaimed "Behind the Music" documentary series, providing over one thousand still photos used in 50 episodes.

Rock fans best known Preston as the legendary photographer who has toured not only with Queen but also with Led Zeppelin, The Who, Fleetwood Mac, Bruce Springsteen and countless others. In 1985, Preston was chosen as one of the official photographers for Bob Geldof's "Live Aid" concert at London's Wembley Stadium. In 1988 his association with Bruce Springsteen helped land him the job as

official tour photographer for Amnesty International's landmark "Conspiracy of Hope" tour.

Aside from his elite status as one of music's most important photographers, Neal Preston has done much more than shoot musicians. He is also a gifted sports and news photographer and remains the most-assigned photojournalist in the history of People Magazine with almost 700 shoot days to his credit. Preston is a member of the International Cinematographers Guild and has worked as unit and special photographer for feature films including "Almost Famous" and "Vanilla Sky", both directed by Oscar®-winning writer/director Cameron Crowe, and most recently the 2018 re-make of "A Star is Born", directed by and starring Bradley Cooper. In 2017 his monograph "Neal Preston – Exhilarated and Exhausted" was published by the British publishing house Reel Art Press which now also is responsible for the new official Queen book "QUEEN – The Neal Preston Photographs".

Roger Taylor Surrey, Juli 2020

So many memories from so many corners of the world. A young, fresh faced, curly haired Neal Preston – seemingly everywhere with his big lens – providing us with so many great shots and capturing the moments. Of course, not all of these moments really need to be aired all these years later. This is the reason I'm writing this note. Gotta keep Neal's mouth shut somehow! In actual fact Neal's omnipresence on Queen's rampaging around the world was an absolute joy as he was such a fun and positive person to have around. These are great pictures; everyone tells some kind of story – I hope you enjoy them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Taylor". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Brian May
London, Juli 2020

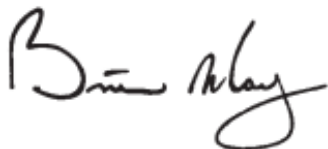
Neal is one of my oldest and greatest friends. Some of the stuff we have been through you wouldn't believe! It can be difficult to have a photographer on the road with you all the time. If they're around too much they can get in the way but if they're not in the right place at the right time they can miss the good stuff. Neal just has the knack, or the skill, to always be in position at the right moments. He became part of the life of the band.

As a bonus, Neal had on other occasions been part of the life of other bands – notably Led Zeppelin. So, after a few beverages of a night, we enjoyed hearing Neal's yarns about his adventures in similar situations to our own but with our heroes. Neal became a very trusted companion.

Many of my favourite Queen pictures are in this book, many of which haven't previously been published. Some of them are incredibly evocative, summoning up memories of those fleeting moments; things were moving too fast at the time for us to really take them in.

There's that amazing shot of Freddie and myself, apparently connected by an invisible force, explosions all around – didn't we use that on an album cover? Then the one of the four of us from behind stage at the end of the show than – king the audience.

That's been widely emulated since. Before, during and after many amazing shows, all around the world, Neal captured the essence of Queen, live and dangerous, while we quietly and unexpectedly got on with becoming, perhaps momentarily, the biggest band in the world.



Neal Preston
Los Angeles, March 2020

As a fan of Queen, I loved the music, but as the band's photographer, I loved the productions. The theatrics, the lighting, the pyrotechnics, the staging – I'd never seen anything like it.

From day one, every single Queen concert I've ever shot can only be described as a massive assault on my left frontal lobe (the part of the brain that governs creativity). The minute I'd walk into the venue something strange would happen. It was as if some futuristic artificial intelligence had taken hold of me and my Nikons suddenly had minds of their own.

I don't recall any Queen gig that was not fun to shoot. They were all fun. Big fun. I'm not a critic but I am saying right now that the band brought it every night. Visually, it was a feast beyond words.

There was never a bad angle or camera position. These were big-time, world-class level musicians at the top of their game and I couldn't have asked for more.

It's as good as it gets. I would just let my camera bodies take me where they wanted to go. I'd burn through film faster than my dog inhaling a piece of roast beef.

Each tour, from 1977 on, got bigger and bigger. They had become known for their bombast, and the fans came fully prepared

for anything the band dished out. At some point (don't ask me when) the bombast seemed to turn into bomb blasts. I recall a night that I was particularly focused on getting a specific photograph and didn't realize I was standing about three feet from a fully loaded pyro casing tube that was set to ignite during "Bohemian Rhapsody". I was in another zone and had forgotten all about where I was standing and what was about to happen... but one of the crew members pulled me away from it with not more than seven or eight seconds to spare. (I think it may have been Parnelli, since the other of the crew would have barely noticed me, if at all.) A major bullet was dodged.

Freddie would certainly be the most animated and least predictable of anyone else in the world while on stage. I always had to be on my game with Freddie, and in fact all of Queen.

These were four intelligent, headstrong, opinionated and brilliantly talented Alpha males. They were the hardest workers I've ever seen on tour, perfectionists on every level imaginable. Playing, rehearsing, sound checking, not to mention attending band meetings (sometimes during soundcheck, and that's all I'll say...), press interviews, planes, trains, and trying to get away from a certain pain-in-the-ass photographer named Neal. To me it felt like a World Series game, two or three times a week.

Many of the pictures in the book have never been seen, and as a fan, I was amazed at the treasure trove of unseen gold I uncovered in the files. It is some of the best work I have ever done. Taking these photographs allowed me to get to know Freddie, Roger, John and Brian in a different way than other people because I watched through a camera, which does not lie. It doesn't have to. It's invisible.

I think Freddie would be proud of this book. I can picture myself walking down the airplane aisle and he's looking at it very intensely. I ask him if he likes it and he looks right at me and says, "It's beautiful darling, it just needs to be bigger."

I can literally hear him saying that as I write this.



Neal Preston
Los Angeles, 2020

When I was 16 years old, I started my career as a professional photographer. At that time, I immediately gravitated towards working with musicians. To me it seemed to be a perfect marriage, and I've been fortunate to have had some measure of success in my chosen profession.

Within a few years I found myself being hired to photograph rock musicians on tour. Needless to say, these gigs were heady experiences for me. I began to realize that touring with any big rock band, despite the implied perks, is gruelling. As much as I loved music, there were other aspects of touring that weren't much fun. Stress and fatigue became my constant companions. Those camera bags can get awful heavy after a couple of shows. There have been plenty of times on tour I did not want to get out of bed. I'd have paid any amount of money for another hour of sleep. But at 22, 23 years old, youth and resilience take over like the afterburners on a jet fighter.

But working with Queen was different. I was welcomed with open arms and encouraged to go for broke . . . and I did. Both the band and the crew seemed happy to have a photographer along who could blend in

seamlessly with all concerned and not only get the job done but roll with the punches. The more time I spent with them, the more I realized this was a dream job for me. And that job continued on and off for many years.

Photographically I couldn't have asked for more. The scale of each production, from the '77 tour through the '86 tour, grew almost exponentially. The productions were full of thunder and lightning and bigger was definitely better. Year after year, bigger lighting rigs and bigger stages were the norm. For me it was like being a kid in the ultimate candy store, and many of the photographs in this book bear that out.

I'm not a music critic and I certainly don't regard myself as an expert in the field of rock music. I'm just a photographer (first) and a fan (second) but I've seen and heard enough in my life to know what I like and why I like it. I also know that spending as much time as I did around Queen taught me something extremely important: good is only good enough, great is only great, but there is always room to excel.

I know how hard every single member of Queen worked every night. They always strove for pure excellence and when the pressure was on, they were at their best, crushing everything in their path. Going on tour was serious business for them. Every aspect of each show had to be perfect. All bands I've worked with have one thing in common: they're never quite happy with a gig when it's over. Ask any member of a big rock band after they come off stage what they thought of the gig and you'll rarely get anything close to a positive response. I recall one particular gig in 1978 that I thought was truly amazing. When I asked Brian afterwards what he thought of it he said, "It was shit, the sound was crap." . . . After that I asked Roger the same question and his answer was the same but his language was far more colourful. I didn't have to ask Freddie — I heard him express himself at the top of his lungs from the next room. And John had a look on his face that said, "Don't even think of talking to me." I couldn't believe it because I knew how good the show had been. But I came to understand that what I was really hearing from each guy was, "It could have been better." I was dealing with four world-class perfectionists. Night after night they

reinforced the idea to me that you should never settle for anything less than your best and never take your job for granted.

Before I started writing the text for this book, I decided to watch a tape of the band's performance at Live Aid. I hadn't seen it in years and I'd never really watched it as a fan would watch it because I was too close to it, having been on that stage with them. I played the tape three times in a row and I've never heard Brian, Roger and John play like that. Freddie was, of course, beyond amazing but something much bigger was happening during those 30-odd minutes that I never hear anyone talk about. They were simply possessed.

