

CLASSIC DRIVER

Instagram Takeover - Behind the camera with Tom Shaxson

Lead

In a new regular feature, we'll be profiling automotive photographers and inviting them to take over our Instagram account, giving you a glimpse of the characters behind the camera. The latest subject is West Sussex-based youngster Tom Shaxson, whose eye for capturing the moment belies his age...

At the tender age of 21, Tom Shaxson has established himself a leading automotive photographer, predominantly specialising in classic cars and historic motorsport - a by-product of growing up within a stone's throw from the Goodwood Motor Circuit. Since he burst onto the scene three years ago, he's not only become a regular contributor to Classic Driver, but has also secured a residency as Goodwood Road & Racing's lead photographer.



How would you describe your signature style?

I like to think my style has a documentary-type vibe to it. I rarely pose shots - they're almost always natural and taken without instruction, which is the way I prefer it. Post-processing plays a prominent role in my photography, and I think the 'vintage' tone I've inherited suits my subject matter really well.

From where do you draw your inspiration?

The first photographer I really followed was John Alexander. I was instantly drawn to his game shooting photography, with its subtlety and natural style. He was the first photographer I saw who used natural obstacles in his surroundings to frame and enhance his photos.



When I started working in this field, motorsport and action photographers such as Larry Chen, Jamey Price and Drew Gibson formed my main inspiration, and helped me to pursue this career. I still find it quite bizarre to work alongside Drew at the Goodwood events - to have been following his work for so long and then to be working with him is really awesome.

Since working for Classic Driver and for Goodwood, Amy Shore's photography has been a great inspiration. Amy's work flipped what I thought automotive and motorsport photography was on its head. She manages to find details and angles that really shouldn't work, but somehow do. This encouraged me to focus more on this documentary style of photography, focusing more on the people behind the cars and the general atmosphere.

Why did you start shooting cars, what was the first car you shot?

I realised I wanted to shoot cars while I was at college. While everyone else was focusing on abstract, portrait and landscape photography as per the curriculum, I wanted to do something I actually enjoyed. It was then that I met my good friend Conor Murphy, who was racing in the Champion of Brands series in an old Formula Ford. He invited me to a couple of rounds, and that was that. I eventually used some of those photos in my final college project, so I suppose the first car I shot was a Van Diemen RF83.



Describe your most memorable photo shoot?

It was probably when I first got press accreditation for the Goodwood Festival of Speed, when I had just turned 18. I was working for 'Lifestyle' magazine, a small boutique publication, and I was completely overwhelmed by the experience. I was three-years-old when I first went to Goodwood, and it was such a huge achievement for me to work there for the first time. I'm so grateful for all the people who gave me the chance.

Which pieces of equipment in your camera bag could you not do without?

I've only recently purchased some polarising filters for my lenses, and I'm not sure how I coped without them before. They're the ultimate accessories for automotive photography, because they remove the reflections on the car, increase the contrast and add a little saturation, too. Handily, they're also relatively inexpensive compared to the other items in my kit bag!



Which editing software do you use, and why?

I predominantly use Adobe Lightroom. It's the perfect all-in-one package, as it catalogues all my images, which is really useful for reference. Everything from the import process to the export process is simple and intuitive. If I need to remove distracting images, I'll use Photoshop CS6.

Describe your dream photo shoot?

It's a tricky question, but my dream shoot would probably involve taking an Eagle Low Drag Coupé on a weeklong tour around the Scottish Highlands. The Eagle may well be my favourite car, and the Highlands would prove the perfect backdrop to showcase its extraordinary lines. Perhaps one day Classic Driver could help make this a reality!

Gallery

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