

matt.txt

Matt Grum: hi!

Me: hey

Matt Grum: Haven't been able to sort out a head set

Me: ah, no worries

Matt Grum: so we'll have to do it by text if that's ok

Me: totally fine

Matt Grum: should make it easier to transcribe!

Me: ya, i had a call recording and was just going to run it through a speech-to-text

Me: no worries though

Me: so, lets just start off with some background

Matt Grum: ok

Me: when did you start photography and what got you interested in it?

Matt Grum: my parents were both amatuer photographers, and I was given an old

olympus OM as a present when I was about 11 or so

Matt Grum: I remember learning how to use an SLR, and I was particularly interested in double exposures

Matt Grum: and doing long exposure photos of fireworks etc.

Me: did your parents style of photography influence you?

Matt Grum: I guess not, my dad was more interested in the technical side, being an engineer, my mum would shoot mostly nature and landscapes

Matt Grum: even at that age I was more into setting up shots and experimenting

Matt Grum: rather than shooting what;s around ,e

Matt Grum: me

Me: ic, is that the kind of photography you still do..'experimental'? how would you describe your current style?

Me: i've been to your site, but i'm interested to hear how you classify yourself

Matt Grum: wow you've stumped me there

Matt Grum: ive never really thought of it

Me: haha

Matt Grum: I guess it's quite clean and crisp

Matt Grum: i'm very into colours, and spend a long time trying to get the right

Me: you do alot of portrait work though, yes? Seems like alot of events, band photos, weddings, etc

Me: huh uh. i've either lost you or stumped you again lol

Matt Grum: yeah. I must admit I at least try to be broad and do as much as possible, but you have to try and present a certain image on the web, towards the sort of work you want to get

Matt Grum: ha, no I was just looking something up

Me: oh ok lol

Matt Grum: but yeah, there's stuff I wouldn't put on my main site

Matt Grum: like this

Matt Grum:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/matt_grum/2064359396/in/set-72157603293003008

Matt Grum: I don't think you'd hire that guy as a wedding photographer

Matt Grum: I've got a lot of edgier stuff that's never seen the light of day, as I don't really know what to do with it

Me: hahaha, ya, its definitely a different look

Me: is that the kind of stuff you *want* to do, but can't as a mainstream photog?

Matt Grum: well you can do both

Matt Grum: you just have to market them separately

Me: ok, sure

Matt Grum: I find that sort of shot more interesting as there's more you can do creatively

Matt Grum: at some point i'll set up a different site not in my real name where I can put that sort of image

Me: ok,so taking that in a different direction - given that you'd like to be more creative like that, and you have a long history in photography - you're currently in computer dev as a large part of your income, yes?

Matt Grum: i wanted ninjaphotography.com but it's parked

Me: lol, ya i like the ninja shot a lot

Matt Grum: yeah my background is in software engineering

Matt Grum: (like a lot of folks on photo.se)

Me: so, you're doing photography professional 'on the side' then?

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Me: yup, we do have a rather technical crowd since our roots are from SO
Me: *professionally
Matt Grum: yeah, i know lots of people who are living on photography, but I prefer my situation for now as it means I don't have to compromise on quality, i can be picky
Me: sure, only taking the jobs that you like
Me: do you find it difficult to balance with your tech career?
Matt Grum: not really
Matt Grum: the two can complement each other
Me: in what way?
Matt Grum: going back a little, before i did any software engineering I did a CS degree, then a PhD in computer science
Matt Grum: my thesis was in constructing 3D models from photographs
Me: well thats cool
Matt Grum: so there was lots of image processing stuff going on
Matt Grum: as a result i gained an insight into how things like photoshop work
Me: right
Matt Grum: i think that definitely helps when you're processing photos
Matt Grum: but coding skills come in handy from everything from scripts to batch process photos to building your own website
Matt Grum: a lot of photographers pay good money for websites and other IT support
Matt Grum: it's nice to be able to do it all for yourself
Me: given the PHD in CS, what prompted you to go semi-pro in photography then, instead of just an active hobby
Matt Grum: i love doing it, more than can be contained within a hobby, i think
Matt Grum: it also helps justify huge investments in gear
Me: lol ya, photography certainly isn't cheap, gearwise
Matt Grum: it can be if you're clever
Matt Grum: but once you get past a certain point, it costs a lot for a small improvement
Me: sure
Me: many pro photographers have made note that the business and marketing of being pro/semi-pro in photography is just as much or more work than the actual photography portion - is this true for you as well?
Matt Grum: yeah unfortunately!
Me: in what way for you? what marketing methods do you employ?
Matt Grum: I seem to spend most of my time buying jewel cases for CDs and speaking to people
Me: lol
Matt Grum: I don't do much in the way of direct marketing at this point
Matt Grum: I let the photos speak for themselves and rely on word of mouth
Matt Grum: why is it you never have any of those CD cases?
Me: how did you 'break into' the scene professionally? did you shoot second for somebody, or gigs from friends, or?
Matt Grum: most of my record collection has been plundered now for the cases, but i digress
Me: i know! those cases get legs and walk away
Me: haha
Matt Grum: you always do your first gig as a favour, and then realise you're good enough to get paid
Matt Grum: i've never assisted a professional
Me: i gotcha. So just start 'putting out the word' so to speak.
Matt Grum: yeah I did a lot of photography at uni for the campus papers and magazines. Lots of people knew me
Matt Grum: and then when they graduated...
Me: ah, ok, that makes sense now
Me: i was like...there had to be slightly more to it
Me: any business is about connections
Me: since it seems so easy to 'put the word out' and many people considering themselves a photographer just for owning a DSLR - have you been affected by the flood of the market, or has your connections and body of work shielded you? has it affected volume and/or prices?
Matt Grum: whilst it's true that there are lots of people offering cheap photography

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services with a consumer DSLR

Matt Grum: quality always speaks for itself

Matt Grum: if the flood were doing work of the best quality then prices ought to fall

Matt Grum: that's the way a healthy market works

Me: sure, assuming the consumer/client understands the difference in quality

Me: do you think most clients approaching you understand the difference in quality, or do many simply look for the lowest price?

Matt Grum: they've either seen my website or been recommended

Matt Grum: either way they know what they want and what to expect

Matt Grum: there are certainly people who are on a limited budget, I appreciate that, but i'm unwilling to compromise

Matt Grum: but there are other people who offer services at lower prices, and that's fine

Matt Grum: that's about as tactfully as i can put it

Matt Grum: !

Me: hmm ok

Me: lol

Me: do you have any advice for any of the photo.se crowd that many be looking to go semi-pro? things to consider, watch out for, warn about, etcc

Me: looking back, the 'if only i'd..."

Matt Grum: my advice would be: "don't"

Me: protecting business eh? ;)

Matt Grum: and if that's enough to put you off, then you're probably not cut out for it!

Me: lol

Matt Grum: haha no

Matt Grum: you'll get a lot of people telling you not ot

Matt Grum: tp

Matt Grum: to

Matt Grum: so the most important thing you need is determination

Me: ok, thats sound advice.

Me: so, what draws you to hang around photo.se? you're an answering machine!

Matt Grum: after I learned how to use a manual film SLR I fell out of love with photography, developing was expensive and I had limited funds and I slowly stopped taking photos

Matt Grum: I got back into it when digital photography started becoming affordable

Matt Grum: at that point i read up on anything and everything i could get my hands on

Me: about when was that for you?

Matt Grum: coming from a technical background i found it all fascinating

Matt Grum: i bought my first digital camera in 2000, after extensively borrowing a friends

Matt Grum: i've always liked education/learning, i just have a massive appetite for knowledge

Matt Grum: i wanted to be a university lecturer for a long tim#

Matt Grum: time

Me: ok, so it fits in with your technical background and your educational need

Matt Grum: yeah I've just always been inquisitive

Matt Grum: i remember actually why sparked it off for me with photography

Me: oh ya?

Matt Grum: was that I knew from being taught to use an SLR by my parents that closing the aperture increased your depth of field. One day I suddenly realised that I had no idea *why*

Matt Grum: so i dutifully looked it op

Matt Grum: up

Matt Grum: and then everything else that i didn't know about photograph

Me: lol ya, i snapped alot with various point and shoots and never really understood much nor got interested until I took a close up picture of a rose and *noticed* the difference in depth of field and then that sparked it for me...and I ran with it

Me: so i understand where you're coming from there

Matt Grum: I had all the rules kind of ingrained, but i never questioned them until that one da

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Matt Grum: u
Matt Grum: y
Me: sure
Me: so, in terms of the photo.se - is there a direction you'd like to see it go? do you like where its at? anything you'd like to see change?
Matt Grum: I think it's going quite well, it's one of the more sucessful stack exchange sites
Matt Grum: this will be controversial
Matt Grum: but i'd like to see questions on videography
Me: well you know avp.se is up
Me: audo & video
Matt Grum: there's a huge overlap when it comes to lenses, lighting and processing
Matt Grum: yeah i've been keeping an eye on it, but it's very small at the moment
Me: very true
Matt Grum: there's loads of stuff I haven't a clue about when it comes to videography
Matt Grum: ive never really done it
Matt Grum: but some stuff that's releated to lenses that i could answer
Matt Grum: so I'd like to both ask and answer questions
Matt Grum: and i think the larger crowd on photo.se would be beneficial
Me: i think also, in terms of lighting, lens, etc - many of us (myself included) had decided recently to start trying to accept them as long as they related well to DSLR videography - but that was *just* before avp.se came up
Me: so i don't know where that stands now
Matt Grum: i dont think the influx of video questions would dilute the site too much
Me: i don't either, but you're right in that its controversial, many users see a clear distinction
Matt Grum: that's the thing that bothers me a little - it seems like an arbitrary descisionask questions but only if
Matt Grum: I can ask a video question, if i can relate it to a feature of a current camera capable of stills photography
Matt Grum: what about video cameras that can capture stills?
Matt Grum: anyway rant over i think the site is doing fine
Me: sure, i can understand that, i think, if anything the 'as it relates to dslr's was a starting point...from not accepting any, its a big leap. so first you make that jump, then if we do well there, start accepting the general pool of video
Me: but like i said, avp threw a kink there
Matt Grum: yeah i guess I just want to learn more about video, so seeing questions come up on photo.se would be convenient
Me: lol sure
Me: well i think that kinda wraps up the interview
Me: thanks so much for doing it! i know you're a busy guy!
Matt Grum: i also think some people might confuse avp.stackexchange.com with a question and answer site about the Alien vs. Predator franchise
Matt Grum: thank you!
Me: hahaha, ya believe it or not, that was brought up on their meta!
Me: many users have stated that they'd love to see you more around photo.se meta or chat, so always feel free to stop in
Matt Grum: i don't know why i never find my way over to meta
Me: lol
Matt Grum: there's always other stuff to distract me...
Me: ya, i understand that
Matt Grum: everytime i've been it seems there's already been a huge discussion which has mostly been resolved
Matt Grum: unless you go regularly you dont see new stuff coming up
Me: hmm, i never thought about that, but i guess you're right
Me: well, thanks alot! i've got to head!
Matt Grum: ok take care