

## **The Before We Begin Guide to Street Photography.**

Before we begin you will need some very specific equipment.

1. A Camera – ideally a Leica M8 or Olympus Pen. Bulky SLR users must be prepared to use subterfuge and guile. Medium and Large Format users are kidding themselves.
2. Suitable clothing. Avoid Long Dirty Macs, translucent cagoules and body stockings. Always wear fast trainers.
3. Laminated CRB Check certificate.
4. A copy of Photography and The Law.

Before we begin you should join your local Martial Arts Club and equip yourself with a few handy moves. NB – The Vulcan Death Grip is not real.

Before we begin you will learn the ways of The Ninja.

Before we begin you must become skilled in Urban Camouflage. 1. Wear a red T shirt and paint your face to look like a brick wall. 2. Disguise yourself as a Golf Sale Sandwich Board Man with the camera cleverly hidden in the O of Golf. 2. Hide a small compact in a Big Mac...or Whopper (hold the mayo) 4. Wear a Victorian Morning Suit and fit the camera inside the top hat. NB..if you see someone dressed as Benjamin Disraeli on your high street, smile or hide behind a newspaper. Finally there is always the Art of Converse Urban Camouflage. Purchase an orange high-vis jacket and make yourself highly visible. If questioned simply tell them that you are surveying the high street for the new dual carriageway.

Before we begin you should realise that although you are about to partake in one of the oldest and purest forms of photography, no one is interested in your photos unless you stumble across an armed robbery. If asked in non-photographic company what your hobby is, tell them you

collect dead owls. Never, ever say that you hang around on street corners with a camera.

Before we begin if all you are interested in is up-skirt photography, then you are two blogs ahead of yourself. Come back later.

Before we begin remember that any photo you take can be made more relevant, exciting and just plain good by being in black and white.

Before we begin you have to understand that taking photos of street buskers is alright in the beginning but to be taken serious you will have to eventually move onto normal people. Similarly this applies to tramps and people on crutches.

Before we begin are you only doing street photography because you have always liked shopping and think you can combine the two? If so I am sorry to tell you that a man with a camera in the lingerie section of New Look will be seen in the wrong light and in Mothercare will be arrested.

Before we begin you must be prepared to be 1. Stopped and questioned. 2. Be arrested. 3. Have a body cavity search. 4. Serve 15 years for terrorism. Please note for those who are interested in 3, you have to have 1 and 2 and may have to endure 4. Is it worth it?

Before we begin you must abandon any pre-formed notions concerning the invasion of privacy. As a Street Photographer you have the right to invade what you like and this is written into The Constitution or something along those lines.

Before we begin you must remember at all times that objects in a wide angle lens are often closer than they appear. This applies to baseball bats, fists and Bull Mastiffs.

All in order – then we'll carry on.

You will soon begin saving for a trip to Thailand where posing for candid street photography is now a major source of local income. You will take a photo of an old wrinkly man and woman, a child riding an Ox, a group of Monks..... and honeymoon back at home.

You will start frequenting coffee shops in the certain knowledge that a photo of a man/woman drinking a cup of coffee is a must have in the world of Street Photography.

You will soon get yourself a Billingham camera bag for a number of reasons. 1. It is a proper camera bag, classical in design and very practical. 2. They no longer look like a camera bag and people will think that it's your flask and sarnies. 3. It is a non-aggressive bag and likely to induce the Roy Cropper effect on your potential subjects, i.e., they will not see you as a threat in any way shape or form. Ergo, the Billingham Bag is more Ninja than a Kata.

You will develop a range of excuses for when challenged by suspicious members of the public. 1. "I am a journalist." 2. "Go away or you will blow my cover." 3. "I am working for the council." 4. "I am Cartier-Bresson." 5. "Parlez Vouz Hungarian?" 6. "Piss off, I am a trained Ninja."

You must understand that if photographing children, you must be at least 300 yards from them, never show their faces, always get a model release form signed and never ever photograph anybody under the age of 25.

You will learn the advantages of being drunk. 1. People do silly things. 2. They often are oblivious of your presence. 3. They are less able to chase after you. Disadvantages are 1.

You may be sucked into drinking with them. 2. If they do catch you, you are more likely to be beaten shitless.

You must promise never to engineer or influence the moment. If you miss that woman's dress blowing up in the wind, it is no use chasing after her blowing up her skirt – the moment has passed. Similarly, the man who has just smashed into the lamppost seconds before you got your camera out will not react kindly to being asked to repeat the nose busting exercise. In the same vein you must not have lampposts erected as obstacles or hide high powered industrial fans under drain covers. NB – banana skins do not really work like you have been lead to believe.

You will need to know how to react when approached by Police Officers. Many Street Photographers prefer the Scare Technique. 1. Spread your arms out wide. 2. Stare straight at them and do not blink. 3. Repeat the phrase 'Want some, want some,' whilst walking towards them. This will have the effect of either scaring the officers away or.....something else. NB... The effects of Captor Incapacity Spray wear off after about twenty minutes.

And remember these words – I am a Ninja and therefore invisible.

And let's stay safe out there.

Members of the Public please read: If you are lucky enough to spot a Street Photographer please refrain from silly walks, smiling and waving. Under no circumstances should you create what you believe to be a photographic opportunity. You may be endangering your own and the lives of others. It is best that you mark the occasion in your diary and carry on in the knowledge that you spotted one.