

Gathering Moss

Questions on Rolling Stone Images of Rock & Roll

1. What does Anthony DeCurtis write regarding the willingness to damage yourself as proof of commitment and consolation?

No one can ever treat you worse than you are willing to treat your self.

2. What do images caught at times which document the crafting of an image, or the act of refining in private the version of the self that will be presented to the public prove about identity?

That activity can be a process of discovery, a means of experimenting with possibilities, a justification of the conviction that identity is not fixed but endlessly malleable, subject to our desire to make who we are who we want to be.

3. What is the element of artifice a part of and what does it become a medium for?

The element of artifice is part of the performance to come, part of the medium through which the artist and the audience engage.

4. What is now the primary visual medium of rock and roll and why?

Videos are now the primary visual medium for rock and roll because they can have that kind of commercial impact. A photograph cannot.

5. What three things can photographs tell us that videos can't?

A moment about who we believe that artist to be, how he or she wants to be seen, and how the photographer perceives that person. (For the artist, the photographer and the viewer, a photograph is a journey into the self. The moment captured in a photograph can be about the whim of an afternoon or the heart of an artist's vision.)

6. What must rockers never appear to be aspiring to?

Rockers must never appear to be aspiring to success as artificially defined by the society at large. (selling out)

7. To the fans, what are the only unforgivable sins?

The only unforgivable sins in their eyes are pretension and bad taste.

8. What two things can images involve?

Images can involve the elaborate construction of a persona, metaphor made visible, or they can simply be a minute on the street, an easy instant of posing and moving on, the photographic encounter forgotten the second it is over.

9. What separates the first type of image from the second?

The first type of image can entail costumes, historical journeys, a submergence of the self into characters, the evocation in the still photograph of an implied, ongoing drama.

10. What does the second type of image rely upon?
The other relies on the viewer's knowledge of the photographic subject; ignorance of the person being shot drains the image of all significance.
11. Why do people smile in impromptu pictures and what are they doing specifically?
People smile or laugh in impromptu pictures, not necessarily because they are happy but because they are being photographed. They are playing a role – the role of someone whose picture is being taken – as surely as if they were on a stage.
12. What happens when an artist allows a trusted photographer into his/her personal life?
The secret world becomes known, revelation yields to the ordinariness of everyday life, and the look of domesticity becomes as much a part of the artist's iconography as the most hyped publicity shot.
13. What two things can the retreat tell us?
I am just a person. Or it can be a challenge, pointing out how far from reality we let these beings live in our imagination.
14. What is the paradox of images of the secret world?
Seeing the secret world is simultaneously reassuring – “they're real, just like us” – and suggestive of betrayal.
15. How do images shadow artists once the audience grants an artist's wish?
Artists seek life but once a person has trespassed onto the symbolic order, there can be no true return to life and life only.
16. What is the paradox of images made in quiet moments and those made in maddening ones?
In portraits of quiet moments we can sense the explosive drive within artists. And as we stand in awe of their impressive might onstage, we remember the resonant images of their quieter selves.
17. How does it become possible to have three different levels of observation in a shoot when private moments are made public?
In seeming isolation, the artist is, in fact, twice being observed, first by the photographer, then by us. To the degree that the artist conspires in the shaping of the shoot, there may even be three levels of observation, with the first taking place in the artist's imagination.
18. What are celebrities in our culture unbelieving of?
They do not believe that their souls will be trapped in the camera or in the photograph – at least not in so many words.
19. What, in fact, are they afraid of?
They are afraid of losing their souls and their selves to the machine, however willingly they may have sought the warm gaze of the public eye.
20. What two things do they understand?
They understand how important images are in our culture, and, more to the point, they understand that however hard they try, they will never be able to control that power.

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