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Behind the lens with Arnaud Taquet

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👤 Arun M. Nair (http://www.crankandpiston.com/author/arun-m-nair/)

Arnaud Taquet, bored with schoolwork, began his own commercial photography business aged just 17 years old. Since then he has worked with some of Europe’s biggest automotive publications and manufacturers, including McLaren (http://www.crankandpiston.com/tags/mclaren/), Pagani (http://www.crankandpiston.com/tags/pagani/), BMW (http://www.crankandpiston.com/tags/bmw/) and Honda (http://www.crankandpiston.com/tags/honda/). He even introduced ‘Crush’ magazine to his native France. We ask crankandpiston.com follower Arnaud about his work and how he finds life behind the lens (http://www.crankandpiston.com/tags/behind-the-lens/).



Arnaud, you're only 20 years old, and yet still you made the decision to run your own company. What's fueled the decision to go so far into the deep end?

"I've actually been invited to press test-drives all over Europe, and while I was supposed to listen to my teachers and follow their advice to get a job, I largely used my own ideas. I knew I that if I worked hard and quickly, being an employee, I could launch my own company. A few months before getting my final exam, I really wanted to abandon school in favour of automotive photography.

"Rather than doing than that though, I decided to start my company whilst I was still a student, but had to wait for the 2011 French law that gave young people under 18 years old the chance to do so. So I completed my final exam and had the opportunity to think about my new company in the meantime. Of course, I only had 365 days to show that my company could produce a decent income to earn a living. Otherwise I'd have to reconsider my career and go back to university, or something."



That’s quite a transition from schoolwork to commercial photographer. How difficult was that? Do you ever think you should have stayed in school for longer?

“To be honest, even if I wasn’t that into my schoolwork, I tried to follow as many economy/political sessions as possible to prepare myself for the real world. But I always wanted to do something with cars and photography. I’ve been in love with sports cars since I was very young, and mainly looked at school as a way of finding a boring job so I could buy my very own. Of course that’s still difficult to do. Today, my work as commercial photographer is maybe not as exhilarating as my ex-status as a press photographer, but I get to spend so much time with my customer’s sports and supercars. Who wouldn’t love that?!

“Regarding the transition, the fact that I’ve gone step-by-step I think has been very helpful. I found myself a few customers who owned supercars, and they basically gave me the freedom to shoot their cars as I like. My work as a press photographer (first with national magazines and then international publications) meant working closer with designers for the sake of layouts, so that was a little more compromised. And that’s understandable, but it’s nice to have the freedom.”



Working with the brands directly then must have been a big change...

“Actually my work was the same, but I learnt so much about lighting techniques, copyright legislation, the importance of professionalism, etc. And there’s a lot of competition from other photographers, so it’s really tough trying to make yourself stand out. But that kind of adds to the excitement of it all.

“I’m lucky enough in that I get to choose my customers. Fortunately, most of them know me and my way of life very well, and so let me relatively free. That’s why I’m so happy with my professional life and have to thank McLaren, Hyundai, BMW Alpina, Pagani and Mercedes-Benz to trust me and believe in my work.”



You mentioned a step-by-step process during your career. Did you have a plan in your mind did you simply take opportunities as they arose?

“I didn’t really think about what would be the next step. If opportunities came about, then this was just the way things were meant to happen. When I left school at 17 for instance, I knew that life is measured in achievements and that I’d have to follow a wishlist to fulfill my dreams as and when opportunities arose. You can’t hesitate when they do.”

With dreams though come sacrifices...

“Oh very much. I’ve had to commit so much of my private life – now and during my teenage years – to get to where I am now, and I’m still looking to climb further. That made making relationship a bit difficult too. I never chose between my working and personal life, but melding them is pretty intricate.”



Photo Credit: *Arnaud Taguet*

I’m going to go Liam Neeson from *Non-Stop* on you and ask what’s in your (camera) bag...

“Ha! Funny you should ask that actually because I’ve never worked with so many camera bodies, lenses and lighting equipment before. I actually learnt my trade using my humble Nikon D700 before moving to a Sony A7R in December. In terms of lenses, I rarely use more than my Zeiss 24/70 and 35mm F2.8. For lighting, I used to work with just natural light and cheap flashes or neon tube lights. Now I’m waiting on some new Profoto B1’s, so that’s going to be exciting.”



Photo Credit: *Arnaud Taguet*

So, you’ve got the equipment and you’ve got the enthusiasm. How do you use them? What makes your work special?

“I’ve had the opportunity to work with some in-vogue photographers in the past, and having seen their methods makes me respect their work that much more. I think that being a good photographer means having a ‘special eye’ rather than just taking a good shot, even though most of my favourite photographers are ‘photoshop ninjas’! Feelings, emotions and global atmosphere can only be rendered properly by a natural and true image.”

‘Photoshop’. It’s seen as a dirty term in photography circles but what are your thoughts on it?

“Okay, have a look at this Pagani image, shot in the south of France. The background is incredible and it’s a phenomenal car. The light is soft and it’s a very natural image. Still people who think that this image has been processed. No CGI or 3D renderings have been used to create this photo. It’s just taken some careful editing and my own particular touch.”

crankandpiston-behind-the-lens-Arnaud Taquet-07



Hypothetical question for you...2020, where do you see yourself?

“Well I’d never imagined that one day I’d work so closely with brands like McLaren or Pagani (and actually McLaren is still my biggest customer), but I also know that life changes and so does the work that goes with it. I just prefer enjoying what I have at the moment rather than thinking what might be around the corner. I can’t promise that I’ll be doing this kind of work forever, because when the willpower is gone, then that’s it.

“For now you’ve just got to put your head down and go for it. Without belief and self-confidence, nobody can make headway. Never hesitate when it’s your emotions speaking.

Or else you might end up back in school!

“Exactly!”

– Shots courtesy of Arnaud Taquet (<http://www.prestigesportcars.eu/>)

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The man with a light capturing device and a burning desire for crankandpiston.com to publish more motorbike stories, Arun M Nair holds a degree in animation, gets bored sitting for too long behind his desk, and always has a plan B... even if it includes climbing a mountain for that ‘epic shot’.

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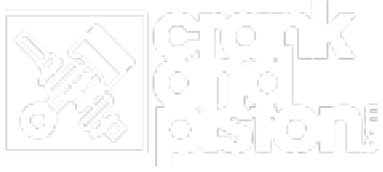


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