

BEN EVENSTAD - Confessions of a Paparazzo

By Talitha Linehan
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Although he prefers to describe himself as “a freelance photographer with the Bauer Griffin agency”, Ben Evenstad is a paparazzo. He spends his working day **stalking**¹ film stars in Los Angeles and elsewhere, hoping to take **the ultimate shot**² which will then **earn him several thousand dollars**³. He has captured many stars with his camera and he’s quite famous **for having snapped**⁴ and **elderly**⁵ Marlon Brando a few days before his death.

Evenstad’s work involves a lot of surveillance and **tip-offs from insiders**⁶. Indeed it isn’t surprising to know that this 26-year-old Bush-loving Republican’s original plan in life was to become a police officer. When he met with *Speak Up* we asked him how different celebrities reacted to his presence:

“I think it’s a matter of who deals with the media attention appropriately and who believes they have the absolute right to privacy when they’re in public. And the ones that understand the role of the media and how that’s going to affect their everyday lives tend to, to me, seem to be the nicer ones. Those are the Ben Afflecks, most of the time, J-Lo for the most part. It’s a lot of your younger stars, **a lot of your Paris Hiltons**⁷, your Britney Spears, I think, very well understands the role that everyone plays. Also, a lot of the very, very big stars, like your Tom Cruise: when he goes to the park with his girlfriend, or fiancée, to watch his son play soccer and he sees photographers there, **he knows getting mad and throwing a fit doesn’t make a good picture**⁸. So what does he do? **He grabs**⁹ his girlfriend and kisses her ‘cause he knows that’s a good picture and in the magazine he’s going to look like the hero and the nice guy and the good dad and all that. So... so if you want to call that nice, or you want to call that just **aware of their image is going to be portrayed**¹⁰ **when they’re perceived to be in a private time**¹¹... There’s a lot of stars that aren’t nice and that... when they would greatly prefer not to be photographed: let’s say your Bruce Willises, let’s say DiCaprio”.

About Bruce Willis, he had this to say:

“Well, Bruce Willis has this thing that I’ve seen him do a lot of times, which is he’ll come out of a club or a restaurant and he’ll smile and, **under his breath**¹², but loud enough for everyone to hear, he’ll say, **“Fuck you”**¹³”. He’ll say, “Fuck you! Fuck you!” But the picture looks great ‘cause he’s smiling and everyone’s “Oh, cool, Bruce Willis is smiling, cool, he was in a restaurant.” But he was telling us to go fuck ourselves, which is kind of creative... **I gotta give him a credit for that**¹⁴, that’s pretty cool.”

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Yet his most exciting adventure involved Britney Spears:

“**I was assigned to the story**¹⁵ that Britney Spears was staying in Las Vegas at the Palms Casino Hotel. And so I went out there with another photographer on the team. And we went to Vegas. And we didn’t see anything in the first day. And the next day we woke up and we looked out the window with binoculars and saw she was **by the pool**¹⁶, but, from the room, it was very, very far away. And there was no way to get a nice, clean, **tight picture**¹⁷, which is what we want. So I went around the hotel to the park and **climbed on top of the roof of the spa**¹⁸ - at the Palms there’s a spa that’s adjacent to the pool area -

and they'd closed off a part of the pool area just for Britney and her friend. And she had all her bodyguards out there watching. So I climbed onto the roof of the spa and, from the roof, and I actually sat right underneath the surveillance camera, but the great thing about a surveillance camera is I could see it was only directional. It was... it could only go 360 degrees around me, but **it couldn't shoot down**¹⁹, so it was really the perfect place to be. And I think I shot 350 pictures there and my partner, who was still in the room, finally called me and said, "**you've been spotted**²⁰", 'cause he saw all the security kind of running towards the roof. So I ran down, got off the roof, got back in my car and, as I was driving away, I passed 10 security guys' cars going up to where I had been. And I went back into the room and, as they were searching the roof, we were sending the pictures back to Los Angeles!"

Who's bad?

A new law in California makes it easier for stars to **sue**²¹ paparazzi who assault them. This follows a year of bad news stories about paparazzi there:

- Lindsay Lohan **blamed**²² paparazzi for two car accidents she had while they were **chasing**²³ her in Los Angeles last year (although Ben says "women aren't very good drivers!")
- Scarlett Johansson also blamed a photographer for causing an accident outside Disneyland last August.
- In September Reese Witherspoon said she saw a photographer assault two people who were trying to protect her.

The Death of Di

Although conspiracy theorists say it was the British secret services, a lot of people blame the paparazzi for causing the car accident that killed Princess Diana in Paris in 1997. There are often news stories about paparazzi assaulting stars and vice-versa. However, Ben says that people shouldn't **assume**²⁴ that, just because paparazzi are there when an accident happens, they caused it.

Glossary

- 1 *stalking* – seguindo escondido.
- 2 *the ultimate shot* – o melhor clique.
- 3 *earn him... dollars* – que lhe renderá milhares de dólares.
- 4 *for having snapped* – por ter fotografado.
- 5 *elderly* – idoso.
- 6 *tip-offs from insiders* – dicas de pessoas "do meio".
- 7 *a lot of your Paris Hiltons* – as várias Paris Hilton, ou seja, celebridades como ela.
- 8 *he knows getting mad... a good picture* – ele sabe que ficar bravo e fazer cena não rende uma boa foto.
- 9 *he grabs* – ele agarra.
- 10 *aware... to be portrayed* – ciente de como sua imagem será retratada.
- 11 *when they're perceived... time* – quando eles são flagrados em um momento particular.
- 12 *under his breath* – à voz baixa.
- 13 *fuck you* – foda-se.
- 14 *I have to give him credit for that* – eu tenho que lhe dar crédito por isso.
- 15 *I was assigned to the story* – eu fui escalado para a história.
- 16 *by the pool* – próximo à piscina.
- 17 *tight picture* – imagem nítida.
- 18 *climbed on top of the roof of the spa* – subi em cima do telhado do spa.
- 19 *it couldn't shoot down* – não podia filmar para baixo.
- 20 *you've been spotted* – você foi avistado.
- 21 *to sue* – processar.
- 22 *to blame* – culpar.
- 23 *to chase* – perseguir.
- 24 *shouldn't assume* – não deveriam presumir.