

Joel Bernstein - Biography

"As a photographer, Joel shoots like a fellow musician. Bernstein blends in, using all the resources of his understanding of the songs, the instruments, the subject, and the people. There is soul and movement and most of all, music, in every one of Joel's images. This is what it looked like, and this is what it felt like. These are truthful angels." – Cameron Crowe, director of "Almost Famous" and "Jerry Maguire"

Joel Bernstein is an acclaimed photographer whose work, spanning more than three decades, chronicles the inner lives and public moments of some of the most important singer-songwriters, performers and musicians of our time. They include Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, David Crosby, Stephen Stills, Graham Nash, Prince, Jackson Browne, Laura Nyro, Tom Petty and many others.

A self-taught photographer and printer, Bernstein's perspective on these artists is unique. He has been part of their intimate circle since age 16, when Joni Mitchell, then at the beginning of her exceptional recording career, asked him to be her photographer. Since then, he has become the most comprehensive photographer of Ms. Mitchell's life and work, and shot several of her album covers, as well as being the acknowledged expert on her guitar compositions. Bernstein also became a close friend and musical collaborator with many of his other subjects, playing and singing on their albums and concert tours. But his most important work remains his up-close-and-personal photographs of these singular artists. His preferred method has been to spend as much time as possible with his subjects until the right instant—the perfect moment of intimacy—reveals itself.

Bernstein's work is well known within the world of music, and is included in the permanent collection of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum. He has been published in a wide spectrum of books on music, musicians, and the music business, as well as in The New York Times, Time, Rolling Stone and Vanity Fair.

Bernstein's many album covers are commonly listed among the most influential in rock's visual history. His first, at age 18, was Neil Young's *After the Gold Rush*, often cited in Best Album Covers Of All-Time lists. His work was featured in the album cover for Joni Mitchell's *Hejira*, nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Album Cover. The next year, he extensively documented Jackson Browne's 1977 concert tour for the cover and package of his iconic album *Running On Empty*. Bernstein's photos of Tom Petty for the Refugee single sleeve inspired the singer's influential music video. Bernstein's work was also the inspiration for the look of Cameron Crowe's well-received rock film *Almost Famous*, in which many scenes were precise re-creations of Bernstein's photographs.

Bernstein has continued working with the above artists as archivist, editor and producer of their CD boxed sets and DVD retrospectives, researching and editing both music and artwork. His work as archivist and co-producer of the Buffalo Springfield box set, a history of the '60s band Buffalo Springfield, was hailed by the San Francisco Chronicle as "setting new standards of excellence for archival CD releases." Later, he was co-producer of *Woman of Heart and Mind*, an Emmy Award-winning documentary on the life of Joni Mitchell for PBS' American Masters series that was met with critical and audience acclaim and became a worldwide DVD release. From 1990-2010, he served as archivist for Neil Young, including his historic multi-disc Archives Volume I, as well as on subsequent Archives releases, including 2008's acclaimed *Sugar Mountain—Live at Canterbury House 1968*. He has also co-produced Greatest Hits (2005) and Demos (2009) discs for Crosby, Stills & Nash; career-spanning multi-disc CD box sets for David Crosby (2006), Graham Nash (2009) and Stephen Stills (2013); and a 4CD+DVD box set of Crosby, Stills Nash & Young's historic 1974 concert tour (2014), all of which were released by Warner Music.

Joel's photos of Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers were included in the acclaimed 2008 film biography of Tom Petty, *Runnin' Down A Dream*, directed by Peter Bogdanovich and in 2012 by David Grohl in his best-selling documentary film, *Sound City*.

Since 2012, limited edition fine art prints of Joel's photographic work of musicians have been represented by galleries in New York City, Hollywood, Santa Monica, London, San Francisco and elsewhere.

In 2015, Bruce Springsteen chose 75 of Bernstein's images to be included in the book, package and video documentary featured in the Columbia Records/Sony Music box set *The River Collection—The Ties That Bind*, the highly acclaimed expanded edition of his 1981 2-LP album *The River*, released in December 2015. Joel has lived in California since 1970, and currently lives in Oakland.

In October 2018, Bernstein was awarded the 2018 Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Award for his photographic work and inducted into the Hall of Fame of the International Photography Hall of Fame & Museum, St. Louis.

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The Cameron Crowe quote is excerpted from his essay "The Photography of Joel Bernstein: the Perfect Accompaniment to a Timeless Album," included in the package of the DVD-Audio disc of Jackson Browne's *Running On Empty*, October 2005. ©2005 Cameron Crowe. Used by permission. All rights reserved.