



The Boss on film

Worcester studio focuses on Springsteen



T&G Staff/PAUL KAPTEYN

Mark Doyle, owner of AutumnColor Digital Imaging in Worcester, holds up a negative of a photo of Bruce Springsteen shot by photographer Eric Meola in 1975.

By Martin Luttrell
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WORCESTER — When New York photographer Eric Meola got the idea to publish a book of previously unreleased images of Bruce Springsteen and his band taken for the 1975 breakthrough “Born to Run” album, he turned to a small digital imaging studio near Webster Square to scan the negatives.

After 350 hours of work and a short tug-of-war over a borrowed \$50,000 scanner, AutumnColor Digital Imaging on Webster Street last month provided Mr. Meola’s publisher with about 700 ultra-high resolution black-and-white images, some of which will go into an 88-page 12-by-12-inch hardcover book containing more than 100 photographs. Insight Editions, the publisher, plans to release the book in September.

AutumnColor works primarily with commercial and fine arts photographers, creating scans of their images for use in books, calendars, posters and other projects, said company owner Mark Doyle of Leominster.

Mr. Meola wanted the company to reproduce the Springsteen images as 16-bit grayscale scans, a process requiring the creation of huge files for each strip, Mr. Doyle said.

“Three hundred and fifty hours or so later, the project was complete,” Mr. Doyle said.

Mr. Meola, who had worked as an assistant to photographer Pete Turner, knew Mr. Doyle from jobs he had done for Mr. Turner years ago, both men said. Mr. Meola said the 30th anniversary of “Born to Run” would present an opportunity for a book of photos taken in one day during a break in recording the band’s third album.

Mr. Meola, 60, who lives on Long Island, said the 1975 photo session with Mr. Springsteen and the E-Street Band had been repeatedly delayed due to the hectic recording studio schedule. He had seen the band several times in the previous years and took photos, striking up a friendship with Mr. Springsteen and band members, he said. In the summer of 1975 he got a call from the band’s manager, asking him to take photos for “Born to Run,” which was being recorded over several months.

“They were virtually locked in the studio week after week, and it kept getting delayed until I was afraid it wasn’t going to happen,” Mr. Meola said of the photo session at his 18th Avenue, New York studio. “All the photos in the book were taken in that two and a half hours.

“One of the big plusses was that they were exhausted. They had a break from the recording studio. It was symbolic, like the end was near. I told Bruce I wanted to shoot in black and white, and told them to bring things that were black and white. I wanted to shoot him against a white background, and make it tight and gritty.”

He said that during shows Mr. Springsteen and saxophone player Clarence Clemons had choreographed moves that made the audience laugh.

“The order of the day was for me to capture that,” he said. “I knew I wasn’t going to get a second chance. I had to nail it and shoot a lot of different ways. There was a stark wall with shadows from a fire escape, and I used that in the back for some. I shot with an electronic flash, and some with high-speed black and white.”

For the book, Mr. Meola wanted to use the whole negative strips, including the film sprocket holes, and knew it would be too big of a job to scan by himself.

“I met Mark through Pete Turner, and I learned pretty quickly that Mark is a careful, precise guy. I needed really high resolution, and he was the only one that came to mind.”

The job could not be done with the equipment Mr. Doyle had, and Mr. Meola arranged for AutumnColor to borrow a \$50,000 Kodak Creo EverSmart Supreme II high-end flatbed scanner directly from the company, Mr. Doyle said.

“Within 48 hours they had the scanner sent here,” Mr. Doyle said. “A technician came here to help me set it up. He stayed here a couple of days. We had to scan a half a strip (of negatives) at a time. The files were giant. I would burn DVDs as a backup.”

Halfway through the job, Kodak called and wanted the scanner back, he said, and over the next couple of days the company became more insistent, until Mr. Doyle explained the situation to the photographer who called Kodak. Kodak relented, and the scanner stayed, he said.

Mr. Doyle was director of digital imaging at the former Evercolor Fine Art, which used the same location until filing for bankruptcy seven years ago. Mr. Doyle purchased some of the equipment and opened AutumnColor, he said.

“They went from a company of 30 employees down to three of us,” he said of the current operation. “All of us are trained as photographers. We know the history of photography. We’ve all made pictures with enlargers. We do a lot of work just to make one print.”

The book will be sold in two editions, with the trade edition listing for \$39.95, Mr. Meola said. The limited edition, which will come boxed, with a leather cover and signed by the photographer, will retail for \$195, he said. The publisher will print 1,350 copies of the limited edition, he said.

Mr. Meola said his share of the proceeds will go to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey.

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