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Not His First Rodeo – Interview with Actor/Photographer James Storm

Alexis Rhone Fancher · Wednesday, December 7th, 2016

Actor/photographer James Storm comes from a third generation theatrical family. (He has worked in films and television for over fifty years, most famously as a member of the cast of *Dark Shadows.)*

Storm wanted a first baseman's glove for his eighth birthday, but instead was given a darkroom kit by his father, a "literary guy" whose sense of commitment and work ethic made a lasting impression on young Storm. From the moment he saw his images emerge on photo paper, Storm was hooked. Influenced by photographers of the WPA era—Walker Evans, Marion Post Walcott, and Dorothea Lange, as well as mid-century master, Robert Frank—Storm has traveled from L.A. by Greyhound bus to Montana, Nebraska, and South Dakota, camera in hand.

This is definitely *not* his first rodeo, as the photographs of these extraordinary athletes and their animals prove**.** "The open road is the heartbeat of America," James Storm always says. These photos are from trips made between 2014 and 2016, down that open road.

All photos were shot on the Professional Rodeo Circuit in Montana, including Helmville and Darby, the Nile Rodeo in Billings and the Crow Rodeo, which was held on land surrounding the Little Big Horn River near Billings. Except for the Nile Rodeo, all events were held in summer, outside, in the late afternoon.

Storm shot with the Canon 50D and the Canon 7D. For the Canon 50D, the focal length was 150-500mm, and 28-135mm. For the Canon 7D, the focal length was 28-135 and 70-200mm. Occasionally, he used a tripod with the 500mm focal length.

"I first encountered the rodeo while making a film in and around Billings, Montana in 2013. Have to say, walking to the back staging area, what struck me was the physical and mental preparation necessary to compete. I was also impressed with the camaraderie. No matter what the event, these people have each other's backs.

"Some cowboys ride for their livelihood. Some only for the summer to make money for school, either college or high school. Some finish their ride and move on down the road to the next rodeo, sometimes working in three or four rodeos a day.

"I hope these images show rodeo riders' unrelenting courage, fortitude, and the compassion they show their competitors and their animals. For these folks, it is truly not about the money, it's about

that big, Silver Belt Buckle.”

All photos and captions by James Storm except as noted.

jimstormphotography.net

Email him at: jvstorm1@yahoo.com


Pensive bareback bronc rider with a lot of hope but…Nile Rodeo, Montana, 2014.

Saddle bronc rider with theatrical flare. Ranch Rodeo, Montana, 2014

Just beautiful cowgirl demonstrating full on control in the Barrel Racing Competition, Helmville Rodeo, 2015

Athenian athletic gracious mythological cowgirl in the Helmville Barrel Racing Competition, 2015

Flying eagle coming to the finish in record time at the Helmville Rodeo, Montana, 2015

It ain’t the money, it’s eight seconds of glory and most prized possession, the belt buckle. Darby Rodeo, Montana, 2015

This cowboy is sitting on top of the world at the Darby Rodeo, Montana, 2015

“David and Goliath” in reverse in bull riding competition, Nile Rodeo, Montana, 2014

Born free with hell to pay. Nile Rodeo, Montana, 2014

Fearless, determined, courageous even when it doesn’t go right. Bareback rider competition, Helmville Rodeo, Montana, 2016

Hard day at the office. Crow Rodeo, Montana, 2016

Portrait of James Storm by Alexis Rhone Fancher, November 2016

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