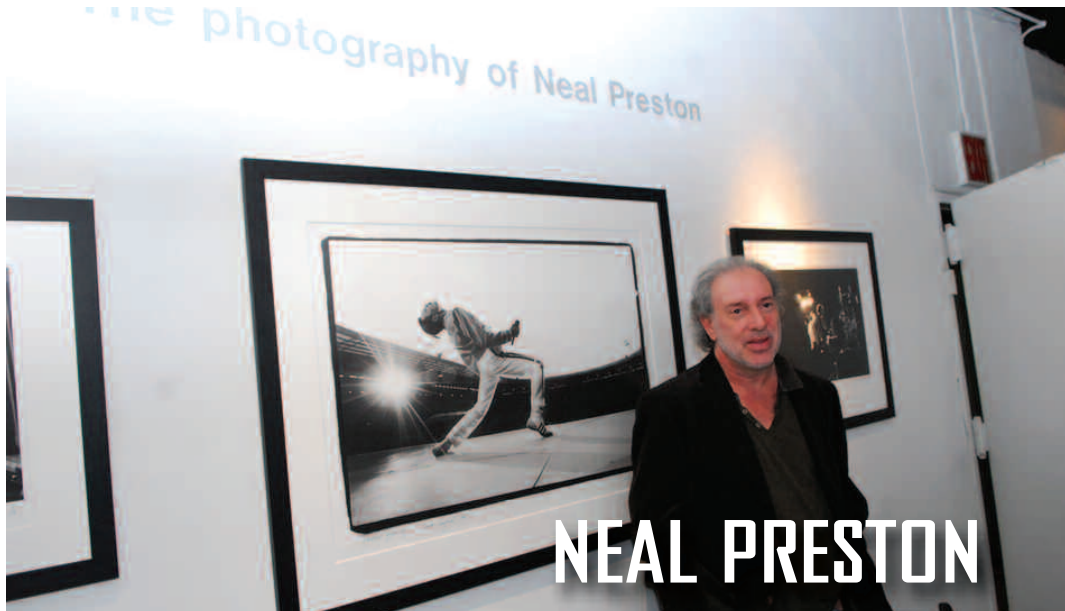


THE SOUND AND THE FURY, MORRISON HOTEL GALLERY



NEAL PRESTON

PHOTO BY GLYN EMMERSON

**Neal Preston: The Sound
And The Fury**
Morrison Hotel Gallery

November 10, 2011

—by Glyn Emmerson

NEW YORK, NY—"Tell me how he didn't break his ankles!" Neal Preston shouted out at one of his shots of a grimacing Jimmy Page performing with Led Zeppelin.

It was a night of storytelling at the Morrison Hotel Gallery where rock photographer Neal Preston told the tales behind some of the most iconic shots of the '70s with an hour plus slide show presentation that went by way too fast. Best known for shooting Led Zeppelin, Preston's list of rock and roll royalty includes Queen, Stevie Nicks, Sly Stone, Dylan, Springsteen, Pink Floyd, The Who and even the Doors. He also worked with best pal Cameron Crowe on the gorgeously heartbreaking 2000 film *Almost Famous* that chronicled the '70s rock scene before it became big business and casualties started dropping like flies.

Some of his best photos are from backstage, including Jimmy Page downing a bottle of Jack Daniels. A baby faced Robert Plant and Jeff Beck walking past a U-Haul truck at the Singer Bowl; wide-eyed, bushy-tailed and eager for action, Ozzy's weddings, Queen on tour in South America being escorted by the Argentine secret police force, The Who imploding onstage and Stevie Nicks in her garden all combine for an eclectic take on the era.

The photograph of Freddy Mercury arching his back towards a sea of humanity at Wembley Arena is a shot for the ages. Robert Plant's pic holding a dove from

the 1973 tour in San Francisco adorned dorm walls in an era before Farrah's nips and beaming whiteys took over. According to Preston, after the grand finale of "Stairway To Heaven," two sets of doves were set free onstage. One circled then returned back to the hands of Plant and he got the shot.

Pink Floyd's were taken at a dress rehearsal for the *Wall* tour in 1980. Playfully hamming it up for the camera like the Marx brothers, the pics play like time capsules to an era when friendships and music went together. One of the shots of the Doors shows Morrison leaning back in quiet contemplation at the Fillmore East to Robby Krieger's silhouette in front of him.

Some of Preston's most impressive were resurrected images taken from damaged negatives that included James Taylor in his dressing room, Tina Turner and Janis Joplin—all shot when he was still in high school. They showcase the keys to outstanding rock photography early on including aggressiveness, knowing when to step back and a keen eye for capturing the moment.

Other gems included a shot of Lynyrd Skynyrd onstage at the Fox Theatre lounging about. A shot of Ray Charles playing pool with Preston, who confided that the blind pianist whopped him in seven moves straight! A hilarious one of Eric Clapton ducking for cover behind a chair from Keith Moon. Kiss on a "winter shoot" in a studio with polyethylene snow that almost got everyone sick. The tales were endless and flowed like war stories from a favorite long lost uncle on leave from party central.

One of his earliest shows a teenaged, long-haired Cameron Crowe and Gregg Allman in conversation. Preston added that the main character of *Almost Famous*, played by Billy Crudup, was based on Gregg Allman and that everything in the film was based on a true story. There's a line when Crudup turns to the Crowe character and says "Hey, are you an undercover cop or something?" since Crowe didn't party. Preston admitted that *really* happened and that *he* was *never* questioned about being undercover... with a nod and a wink. For more on the gallery, check out morrisonhotelgallery.com



LED ZEPPELIN

PHOTO BY NEAL PRESTON