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- 1 Ed had to second-guess his subjects' movements in order to capture them
- 2 Despite appearances, Ed's images are never posed and are a result of him quietly taking the shot and walking away
- 3 Blending in is the key – Ed ensures that he is dressed appropriately and is using a concealable camera
- 4 In shots like this we can see how Ed's time shooting in markets and the London Underground have influenced his current work
- 5 The Nikon D7000 was a necessary choice while working in low light
- 6 Even though each image is taken quickly, composition and framing are still clearly at the forefront of his mind



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# The lower level

How do you find the captivating beauty in something as everyday as a car-boot sale? **Ed Walker** talks to **Oliver Atwell** about his series taken in a car park in Edinburgh

## Why did you feel car-boot sales could work as a photographic project?

Actually, the car boots are not really the subject. It's more about the location – the car park. The seeds of this project were sown when I was shooting street photography in Borough Market in London, which then led me on to shooting low-light portraits on the London Underground. When

I moved to Edinburgh, my main concern was that there wasn't any low-light subject matter that interested me. I mentioned this to my girlfriend and she said she knew where she could take me. One Sunday morning, we went to a massive underground multi-storey car park. It's on level -4 and in there they have a massive car-boot sale. It was perfect.

I love low-light photography,

particularly the fact that there's a kind of studio-portrait level to it. You have the whole thing where people are lit by artificial light and that's especially true of this car-boot sale, where each bay had a light above it. There were also lights down the middle of the lane, so there were these beautiful pools of light everywhere. Sometimes I'd see sellers who didn't have a good enough light above

them, so they'd use their own. I didn't have control over the illumination at all.

## Did you take a lot of the lessons you learned from your time shooting at Borough Market and on the London Underground to this project?

Absolutely. There's a lot of low-light photography to be had in the market, particularly in the winter. I took those images when I was testing a new camera. I was deciding whether or not to upgrade my Nikon, so a friend lent me his Nikon D7000. I did a lot of close-up portraiture and that meant I was always looking out for the way people were going to be illuminated. You're working in an environment where you have to second-guess what people are going to do. That put me in the habit of noticing the light and when people are going to step into it.

One of the things I liked is that the images looked staged. All my favourite shots are the ones that appear as if the person has stopped and allowed me to take the picture. Actually, I don't talk to my subjects before or after they are photographed. The only time I'll engage with them is if they chase me down the street.

## What is it about the Nikon D7000 that worked so well?

At the time, it was because of its low-light capabilities. Before that, I was using a Nikon D90, but that really didn't cut the mustard. Also, the D7000's speed of focusing was much better because in those situations I need to focus very fast. The camera I have now is a Sony Alpha 6000 and the reason for this is that it has such a fast autofocus. But the D7000 still has the best low-light capabilities. The main problem is that

it's such a big camera and I need something a little more discreet.

## Did you restrict yourself to using a single lens while shooting the car-boot project?

I did. I actually used three cameras for this project, because I was experimenting with each model's capabilities. With the Nikon, I just use a 50mm f/1.8 lens. I also use a Fujifilm X100, which has a fixed 23mm lens. And then there's the Sony Alpha 6000, which has a 35mm prime f/1.8 lens. I really try to practise this whole thing of taking a camera out with one lens. I've never really got on with the idea of taking several lenses and switching back and forth throughout the day. When you're working with street photography, you have to focus on what you're doing and not concern yourself with swapping lenses.

## Can you tell me a little more about your lack of interaction with the people in your images?

I've never engaged with my subjects. I wear earphones and listen to music when I'm taking photographs. I'll walk up, take the shot and then walk away. I guess I just have a certain manner, which is very quiet, and people almost don't realise I've taken the picture until I've gone. I don't have a strap on my camera and I just look very normal. There's definitely something about the way you dress that is very important.

## You've presented this series as a newspaper. Why did you make that decision?

I've been aware of the Newspaper Club [a service to help people make and print their own newspapers] for a couple of years and had always wanted to make one. It's reasonably cost effective, actually. When I did the project it was clear that a newspaper was the best medium for the subject matter. Also, I think it makes the images a little more approachable. I didn't want a glossy art book, because that's not necessarily right for the audience. I'd rather it was presented in a way that the people who visited the car-boot sale would find comfortable. I really wasn't trying to elevate the car-boot sales to a level of high art.



Ed Walker is an Edinburgh-based photographer. His previous images concentrated on marketplaces and the London Underground, while his latest completed project deals with car-boot sales in Edinburgh. You can see more of his work at [www.edwalkerphotography.com](http://www.edwalkerphotography.com). For details about the Newspaper Club, visit [www.newspaperclub.com](http://www.newspaperclub.com)