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← EXIT



CRAIG FITZGIBBON

Coach of the NRL's Cronulla Sharks

Cafe Reporter spoke with Craig Fitzgibbon on the eve of his fourth season as coach of the NRL's Cronulla Sharks.

“We have a certain way of doing things, I feel, at the Sharks. We have an internal philosophy that we use consistently, so we don't get off track, and focus on four key areas. We don't change too much. At the end of the day we're a small community club in a big city, so we rely on that closeness, on that connection; being connected to our community, our club and each other.”

“On one hand it's a results-driven industry, that's pretty obvious. But supporters for most clubs are fairly tribal; they want effort and for people to turn up and give the best account of themselves every time they play. We try to simplify: we can't control the broader game, the broader fanbase; we can only control how we prepare to the best of our ability, and the fans jump on board when that's going well and get frustrated when it's not. But sometimes the most rewarding parts of the job aren't the result: relationships, experiences, the things you go through together, and developing those relationships to get the best out of people is incredibly rewarding.”

League is a team sport but for Fitzgibbon, that extends off the field and to the people behind the players. “I feel my job is to connect the dots between the staff, the players, the way you prepare, the way you play; the way you act, firstly, the way you prepare secondly, and the way you play. With the staff, we're such a team. If we're going to ask our players to play as a team and we act as a bunch of individuals - you can't ask them to act in a way you're not doing yourselves.”

“What we enjoy and what's happened is, the staff and the coaches we have walk in the door and constantly try to get better. We love working together; we get along so well. It has challenges from time to time and everyone has their own little hiccups, but the initiative of our staff and the constant hard work and ethic, the comradery and team work we have as a staff, I think that then flows through your team. But I get as much energy out of watching the staff deliver as I do the team.”

“To use an analogy: you've got your architect and you've got your builders. I'm not too creative when I'm looking for the next new piece of architecture but I reckon I might be a decent draughtsman; we set some framework out, we set some plans in place, but then I want the staff to plan within those plans. They've got their initiatives, they can put their stamp on it, they can do it their way. That suits me and we work well together doing that, but I'm always offering a framework and a set of principles that we follow. You've got to offer some boundaries for them to have some freedom to create.”

“We always try and acknowledge and honour a performance that's been well put together, well done, but usually you go straight to improving the plan. We're not overly analytical but we do have a standard of performance we want to hit. I'll sit with the performance guys and see where we're at; I'll use it [information] as a form of a guide, as it's measurable. But we know when we've played well and a standard that we want to keep, and others that we want to

improve upon or never see again. You want to be consistent. In the NRL, anyone can beat anyone on any given day if you don't turn up and you aren't consistent.”

Part of the pre-season involves playing in Las Vegas, an NRL initiative Craig supports. “At the end of the day we're in the entertainment industry. We want our game to grow; we want our game to be revered, admired, respected. Do we get more viewers? Subscriptions? If it benefits our game, promotes the game, then I think it's a good concept.”

Upon their return from Vegas, the Sharks will go from one extreme to the other: from an American winter to tropical Far North Queensland. “We really enjoy travelling together; we enjoy our time away. You get to connect, and we're grateful for the opportunity to travel as Sharks and get to hang out and represent our colours in different territories.”

“You'd be lying if you said you don't pay a physical price, the intensity of it [the season], but so do the players. If you want the players to keep turning up in a consistent fashion and enjoying it and being grateful for it, you have to do the same thing.”

Cronulla Sharks
www.sharks.com.au



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MARGO KEEGAN

GEORGE ST LOFT

Local Business

In her second-go-round as a cafe proprietor in Windsor, Margo Keegan brings her wealth of experience — in both food and fashion — as well as her love of community to George St Loft

Margo and her mother originally opened a cafe in Windsor (in the same location) in the 2000s. “I fell in love with this little cafe way back when, when mum and I had it,” she recalls. With a gap of six years in between that cafe selling and the opening of George St Loft some 10 years ago, Margo feels she has “come full circle”. “The last 10 years was when I finally decided it was my time to do my own business. I realised Windsor needed some really good, healthy, local food that’s got soul and food that really shows love, love on a plate, because Windsor was lacking that in a big way.”

Prior to Windsor, Margo’s career began in fashion before detouring into merchandising and then finding her niche in hospitality. “I’m a creative person; I come from a creative background. My mother was a fashion design and textile teacher and I studied fashion, so I’m all about the visual,” Margo states.

“Fashion is what you see, and food has a very similar aspect. If you like what you see you will want to buy it. You eat with your eyes, the same as when you dress.”

To that end, George St Loft is an inviting space with displays of jams, marmalades and relishes; freshly baked sweet treats; and a menu boasting yummy dishes made from locally sourced produce, including honey, and coffee from Underground Coffee Roasters in Penrith. “We do a lot of home-baked and seasonal food; whatever’s in season, we tend to gravitate to it. Our menu is fairly standard but we try to introduce specials through each season,” Margo explains.

George St Loft also boasts cosy, indoor seating, a communal table, and an outdoor courtyard, not to mention friendly staff. “I think it’s really important you feel comfortable the minute you walk

into a space; that’s the most engaging thing. If you walk in and you are greeted not only by really good staff but by a really good environment, that’s the initial start,” Margo says. “Once you follow that through with the visual presentation of amazing food — as long as that follows through onto the plates and then into the mouths — that’s it in a nutshell.”

“I think I’ve created a family within my work place. We call them ‘the community’ but so many of my customers are like family,” Margo says. “I think it’s important that the people who come here feel like family.” And no doubt the George St Loft regulars feel exactly that way.

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TONY SERGI

TONY SERGI MUSIC

Local Business

Tony Sergi knew from a young age that he wanted to be a singer. It was 2003, he was six years old and *Australian Idol* had just made its television debut.

“When I started, I just jumped up on stage and that was it. I haven’t stopped since. My uncle was organising at the Italian Festa and I said I wanted to jump on stage; I followed him around all day until they let me up on stage - and the rest is history,” he explains. “I think it was more of a shock when I told my parents, at six years old. By the end of primary school, I was pretty much gigging by that stage; doing shows with bands and getting up on stage. It was definitely something I was comfortable with.”

Although Tony describes his original music as soul-pop, his early inspirations were rock. “For me, growing up it was your Bryan Adams, your Bon Jovi. Then at 12, 13, 14 you shift from doing Bryan Adams and Bon Jovi to Bubl , Sinatra, and Dean Martin,” says Tony, who is both classically and contemporarily trained. “When I started writing, it was more drawing influences from all those artists as well as the likes of Teddy Swims, Allen Stone, and Leon Bridges, and morphing that style into what I wanted to write, record and bring to the table.”

“My original music is more soul-pop, if you want to call it that. It takes influences from a lot of people, not only those I’ve played with. You take inspiration from other artists, but I’ve been fortunate to work with a lot of great musicians.” That includes Matt Beckley, son of Gerry Beckley of the band America; and some of the boys from Aussie band Taxi Ride play guitar and provide harmonies on some of Tony’s tracks. “It was an incredible

experience,” Tony says, recalling his time recording in LA.

“We were in LA for just under a week to write and record two songs. In a situation like that you work day and night; it really depends on who you’re working with and what they bring to the table. I don’t think there’s a real methodology to making music, I think it’s just getting the nuts and bolts down and what you want to write about; working with different people, bouncing ideas off each other.”

“I’m a solo in the original side of things; I work with a couple of

bands, covers-wise, around Sydney as original music doesn’t pay the bills. It’s a tough gig. But your own music, watching that go from an idea to a demo - session musos coming in and putting their stuff over the top of it to make it all come together - to mixed, mastered, released is something I don’t think can ever be beat.”

Tony’s most recent release is the song *Try*. “It means a lot to me. It’s about not knowing where you’re going but knowing where you’ve been.”

Tony Sergi Music
Instagram @tonysergi



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SHAUN SMITH

BEVERLEY PARK GOLF CLUB

Local Business



“I was a golfer from a very young age, and I guess if you want to work in golf you’ve got a couple of choices: you either have to be good enough to be a golf professional, which I’m not, or you can work in the golf administration side of things. So I’ve worked in golf clubs, more or less, with a couple of diversions, ever since I left school.”

Shaun is now the general manager of Beverley Park Golf Club, following his previous GM role with Kingston Beach Golf Club in Hobart and a year at Royal Queensland Golf Course before that. Not surprisingly, managing a golf course leaves little time for playing it. “I haven’t been playing golf as much as I should, but it gives me a fresh pair of eyes on the course when I do. I get a different perspective; instead of hearing about it, I get to see it for myself.”

What he does see on a regular basis is the growth of Beverley Park Golf Club. “We’re finding the

place is becoming far more family friendly and community driven. For example, on Sunday we had some music here and there was a group of about 20 local residents who came to pass the time over a couple of drinks, some food, and listen to some music - it was good!”

Locals, and indeed everyone is most welcome at Beverley Park Golf Club. “Golf has an image problem that is causing all manner of grief at the moment; it is seen by a lot of people as elitist, when nothing could be further from the truth. We’ve just had a guy walk past wearing a hi-vis work shirt; we’ve got a group of ladies on the 18th green whom I’m quite sure are not multimillionaires,” Shaun points out. “Golf is a great equalizer: you can spend as much or as little as you like to play the game. Golf is a great leveller between all demographics.”

“We’ve got a women’s pathways program which we’re currently in

the process of remodelling at the moment. Basically, that’s a way to introduce golf to women; for one reason or another, a lot of women don’t take up golf until a little later in life and that’s a shame. That’s something we need to address and push along, and it’s definitely a good opportunity for us to increase our female membership,” Shaun explains.

“What I love about being at a golf club, whether someone is here as a once-off or whether they’re here for 30 years as a member, is giving them the best experience possible. I like doing the little one-percent things for people which they may not even notice, but I know they happened,” Shaun says. “That’s one thing in particular I’ve always loved about doing event management: just giving people the best experience I can.”

Beverley Park Golf Club
Your Community Golf Club
www.bpgc.com.au

MOE HARIRI CHICKENS

Local Business

From satiating the appetites of regular patrons to sponsoring local sporting teams, Moe and the team at Hariri Chickens have very much become an important fixture in the Kogarah community - growing to meet its culinary and social needs.

“The community is forever adapting, especially here in Kogarah. You’ve got this entire pool of different ethnicities and people coming and going; with major medical and work hubs nearby, you get to see all walks of life,” Moe says.

“It’s funny when you have a cuisine such as Middle Eastern cuisine, it’s so broad, and people come in and see something they recognise; if not from their cultural background, then an alteration of their cultural background. We have that connection, that bridge that brings us all together,” Moe observes.

“The Greeks, the Italians, the Lebanese, they all come in and they see something they’ve either grown up with or it’s in their culture of food. And it’s forever adapting, and that gives us the opportunity to grow and adapt; expand on menus, expand on ideas.”

“What’s good to see is that the simplicity has such a high effect. What we make is very simple stuff, right? Yes, it’s unavailable and rare because we make household dishes that only your mum would make, but we retail those things,” Moe says. “The gratification comes from when a customer or patron walks in and says ‘Oh my god, you sell that?! I haven’t had this since my mum passed away’ or ‘since I was home’. The nostalgia kicks in.”

Of course, when Moe says ‘simple’, he means to the eye. The food is very detailed. “For example, our hand-cut breast fillets. They’re crumbed in their own special blend; we hand cut the lettuce; we make the Frankie mayo. The buns are my buns! I call the baker and say ‘this is how I want them: a white milk bun with black and white sesame on there and a high shine on top.’”

Always looking to improve, Moe is buzzing with ideas - literally, since he begins and ends most days with a Red Bull. “One thing that I’m in the process of doing is creating a dessert bar in the courtyard. Plus from 4-5pm onwards, there’s not a lot open [in the area] any more, so maybe I can close that gap from 5pm to 10pm.”

Moe also gives back to the community; sponsoring a junior rugby league team (Kogarah Cougars), two soccer clubs (Roselands Raptors and Bankstown Football Club), and UAF charity fights. Hariri Chickens also do post-match meals for the St. George-Il-lawarra Dragons, and there could be no greater endorsement of the menu for the locals than that.

Hariri Chickens
Sydney’s Best BBQ Chicken Shop
Haririchickens.com.au



ARTS AND OSCARS

By D.R. Lennox

With the (US) fall film festival circuit over, the awards race — particularly as it relates to the Oscars — has begun to take shape, with one film very much ahead of the pack. For now. Awards season is long — too long — and anything can happen between now and the Oscars ceremony in March 2026.

But for now, the film favoured to win the Best Picture-Best Director double is *One Battle After Another*, Paul Thomas Anderson's Pynchon-inspired comedy-action-thriller about US domestic revolutionaries. Leonardo DiCaprio, Sean Penn and Benicio Del Toro all give award-worthy performances, as do lesser known names Teyana Taylor and Chase Infiniti; expect all of them to be present throughout the awards season and seated in the front row come Oscar night.

As for Anderson, the writer-director (*Boogie Nights*; *There Will Be Blood*; *Phantom Thread*) has been nominated 11 times without a win, and there is very much a “it's his time!” narrative forming around him.

Anderson's strongest challenger at this early stage is Chloe Zhao, who achieved the Picture-Director double with 2020's *Nomadland*. After a slight detour with Marvel's *The Eternals*, Zhao appears to have returned to what she does best with *Hamnet*; the story of the grief experienced by William Shakespeare and his wife Agnes at the loss of their son, which in part inspired the Bard's writing of *Hamlet*. Adapted from the bestselling novel of the same name (by its author Maggie O'Farrell and Zhao), Paul Mescal (*Aftersun*) and Jessie Buckley (*The Lost Daughter*) are said to give incredibly moving performances as the grieving parents; Buckley is the current Best Actress favourite.

Released earlier in the year, Ryan Coogler's *Sinners* has been locked in as a contender almost since day one. Its box office success, enthusiastic word of mouth and audacious storytelling and filmmaking seem to be enough to overcome its genre roots; *Sinners* is essentially a vampire movie but unlike any you've seen before. Coogler, the director of 2018 Best Picture nominee *Black Panther*, wasn't himself nominated that year but could score a double nomination this year (three if you include Original Screenplay).

Promising to be as big at the box office as *Wicked: Part 1* last year, *Wicked: For Good* has not been receiving the glowing reviews of its predecessor. *Wicked: Part 1* scored a swag of nominations last year, including Best Picture, Actress (Cynthia Erivo) and Supporting Actress (Ariana Grande), and looks to repeat in those categories (Grande is currently the Supporting Actress favourite even if she is technically the co-lead) as well as scoring several below-the-line crafts nominations.

Similarly, the third instalment in James Cameron's *Avatar* series, *Avatar: Fire and Ash* could do the same. The previous two films were both nominated for Best Picture and Cameron for Best Director for the first in 2009; he previously won the honour for 1997's *Titanic*. At the time of writing, *Fire and Ash* is the only major awards contender that hasn't been reviewed by any major outlet, but you can expect a ton of below-the-line nominations (Production Design, Editing, Sound, Visual Effects) if nothing else.

Another film the craft divisions of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS who award the Oscars) are sure to go all-in on is Guillermo del Toro's *Frankenstein*. Yet another adaptation of Mary

Shelley's classic tale, del Toro's film starring Oscar Isaac (*Dune*) and Jacob Elordi (*Euphoria*), and financed by Netflix, at the very least promises to be beautifully mounted.

Netflix are actually responsible for a handful of awards contenders this season: Noah Baumbach's *Jay Kelly*, starring George Clooney and Adam Sandler; *A House of Dynamite*, Oscar-winner Kathryn Bigelow's nuclear doomsday thriller; and *Train Dreams*, a meditative drama which could very well land Aussie actor Joel Edgerton his first Oscar nomination (fingers crossed).

And speaking of Aussies, Rose Byrne (*Bridesmaids*) is very much in the Best Actress conversation for her nerve-rattled performance as a mother having a very bad time of it in *If I Had Legs I'd Kick You*. Best Actress is a much smaller but no less competitive field this year with Renate Reinsve (*Sentimental Value*), Jennifer Lawrence (*Die, My Love*), Emma Stone (*Bugonia*), and Amanda Seyfried (*The Testament of Ann Lee*) very much in the conversation with Buckley, Byrne, Infiniti and Erivo.

The Best Actor field for 2025, however, is stacked and super competitive with Timothee Chalamet the current favourite for his all-out performance in *Marty Supreme*; him not winning last year for his turn as Bob Dylan only helps his cause. Apart from DiCaprio, Clooney and Edgerton, there's Michael B. Jordan (*Sinners*), Ethan Hawke (*Blue Moon*), Jesse Plemons (*Bugonia*), Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson (*The Smashing Machine*), and Jeremy Allen White (*Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere*), although those last two films underperformed at the box office.

HELEN KARATZAS

Food Blogger

A Melbourne-based food blogger who fuses her love of food with tradition, family and motherhood, Helen Karatzas channels her passion and creativity into her online presence, inspiring and connecting with others in the process.

“Cooking has always been my way of expressing love, creativity, and connection, not just to food itself, but to my family, culture, and community. I wanted to create a space where I could share that passion openly, where each recipe and photo could tell a story and inspire others to find joy and comfort in their own kitchens,” says Helen, explaining how her blog came about. “It wasn’t just about sharing food, it was about sharing a piece of my soul, a way to celebrate everyday moments and special memories alike. Through my blog, I found a voice to honour the traditions I grew up with while exploring new ideas and flavours. It became my creative sanctuary and a bridge connecting me with people all over the world who feel the same magic that cooking brings.”

Helen’s Greek heritage plays a major role in her love of food. “For me, food is the living thread that connects generations. My journey through past and present food traditions, especially my Greek heritage, is deeply rooted in love, respect, and curiosity. Growing up, I was surrounded by the aromas of olive oil, fresh herbs, and slow-cooked stews that carried the stories of my ancestors. My mother’s kitchen was a classroom where I learned more than recipes; I learned about family history, resilience, and the joy of sharing.”

“Through my blog, I embark on a beautiful exploration of these

traditions, breathing new life into ancient recipes and adapting them to modern tastes and lifestyles. It’s a celebration of how food evolves, yet always holds onto its soul. This journey fuels my creativity and reminds me daily that cooking is more than a task, it’s a form of honouring who I am and where I come from,” Helen says. “My drive and passion for food come from the incredible women in my family; my mother, grandmother, and aunts whose hands and hearts transformed simple ingredients into expressions of love and culture. Watching them cook was witnessing art and devotion in motion; they taught me that food carries emotion, memory, and identity,” Helen says.

Helen calls Melbourne home and finds the city inspiring. “Living in Melbourne, a city bursting with culinary diversity and innovation, has exposed me to a vibrant community of chefs, home cooks, and food lovers who inspire me daily. Their passion and authenticity push me to continuously grow and share my own voice in the food world. Food, to me, is a never-ending journey fueled by love, tradition, and the excitement of discovery.”

“Melbourne is a city of incredible food diversity, but when it comes to those heartfelt meals shared with family and friends, Northcote truly shines for me. As my home and inner-city suburb, Northcote is bursting with creative energy and a vibrant food scene that’s constantly evolving. It’s where local cafés and eateries embrace fresh, seasonal ingredients, and where community spirit shines through every shared meal. I love the mix of modern Australian cuisine alongside multicultural influences

that reflect Melbourne’s diversity. Whether it’s grabbing a coffee at a beloved local spot, enjoying a casual dinner with friends, or sharing home-cooked meals in my own kitchen, Northcote feels like a place where food connects people and creates unforgettable memories.”

Helen isn’t just a food blogger - she is also a mother, and that role influences her work and vice versa. “Right now, my life beautifully weaves together motherhood and cooking in ways that are both challenging and deeply rewarding. Being a mother has reshaped how I approach food; I’m more intentional about creating meals that nurture not just the body, but also the soul and family bonds,” Helen explains.

“I involve my daughters as much as possible, teaching them the stories behind our recipes, the importance of fresh, wholesome ingredients, and the joy of creating together. Cooking has become a way for us to connect, laugh, and pass down traditions in the most organic way. At the same time, through my blog and Instagram, I share these moments, the triumphs, the messes, the simple everyday rituals, hoping to inspire other families juggling similar roles. It’s a balancing act that fills my heart. Every dish I make and share is infused with love, culture, and a desire to keep family traditions alive while embracing the new.”

Helen Karatzas
Instagram @helens.kouzinaki



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JIM MARSHALL

From the vault by D.R. Lennox

At 73 years of age, Jim Marshall can be forgiven for being set in his ways. The veteran music photographer, with a career spanning 50 years and a portfolio containing some of the biggest names in music — Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Johnny Cash — works only on his terms, resists technology (he continues to shoot on film not digital), despises the paparazzi, and has lived in the one apartment since 1965. He knows what works for him.

What does work for Marshall, and which has been the foundation of his photography process, and ultimately its success, throughout his career, has been his access-all-areas policy. In the days when he shot the likes of Hendrix and Joplin, this was a mere request; one always granted due to a mutual respect, trust and, in most cases, friendship. “If the artist trusts me there is never a problem,” Marshall says. “I tended to be a part of the wall.” This is a rather modest assessment of a how Marshall, once having gained access to the subject, managed to capture such unaffected and ‘real’ moments in the subject’s world.

Today, in a world of paparazzi (“whores with their cameras”, Marshall spits), and posses of agents and hangers-on, Marshall has to stipulate, if not demand, access-all-areas when musicians and celebrities request his services. It’s not always agreed to, but Marshall is unperturbed: it has got to be his way or not at all. “Fuck ‘em. I really don’t need the work.”

If all of this makes Jim Marshall sound like a cantankerous old man, he really isn’t. Speaking from his studio in LA, where he personally doesn’t use a computer (longtime assistant Amelia Davis

handles all email), his phone manner is jovial and he is forthcoming when speaking of the past. Marshall may be shouting a little but understandably, at 73, his hearing isn’t what it used to be. Conversely, his mind and, more importantly, his eye are as sharp as ever. He recently did some photography for friend Billy Bob Thornton, country singer Shelby Lynne, and an album cover for The Doobie Brothers, whose first album cover he shot back in 197?.

But it is not album covers for which Jim Marshall’s photography is celebrated. Rather, it is the intimate, mostly black and white portraits of some of music’s biggest names, most of who are sadly no longer with us. Johnny Cash at San Quentin prison, Janis Joplin in a light mood, a young Bob Dylan on the streets of New York, and the now iconic (colour) image of Jimi Hendrix setting fire to his guitar on stage at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967.

“Johnny Cash and Jimi Hendrix were two of the most charismatic people I ever met. When Johnny walked in the room you knew he was there. And Jimi was amazing,” Marshall reflects. And what about Joplin, one of the many musicians whose home phone number (this is in a time long before the mobile) Marshall had? “She wasn’t the prettiest girl in the world but she was not afraid of the camera,” he says, honestly but affectionately. Marshall subscribes to the theory that regardless of appearance, if you are not comfortable in front of the camera you will not take a good picture: confidence is key.

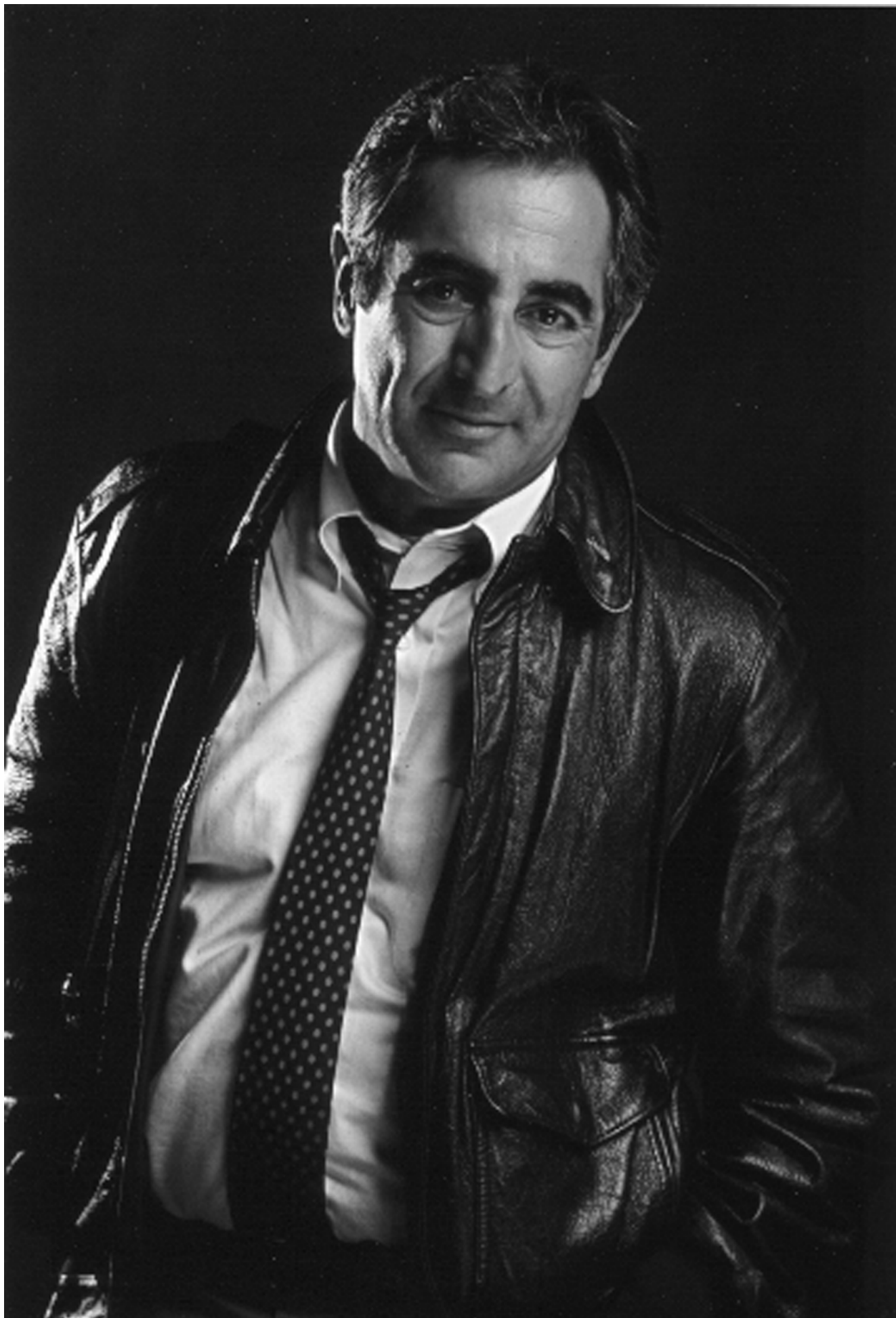
Jim Marshall is somewhat of an oddity in today’s world of digital photography, Photoshop and facebook. He continues to shoot on film, does not stage his shoots

(preferring to discover the “gold” afterwards) and only releases images he himself is happy with. And Marshall has had the same dark room assistant for 28 years, the same amount of time since Marshall himself has been inside one. “I would rather watch re-runs of Quincy than go in the dark room again,” he laughs. Since he doesn’t doctor his photos, Marshall believes his work is done once the shot is taken.

Marshall also prefers to work in black and white (“I just like it better”), believing it to be more aesthetic as well as having a more “editorial” look; a legacy, perhaps, of his early days as a photojournalist covering events such as the US Civil Rights movement in 1960s Mississippi. But he does work in colour and a book of Marshall’s colour photography, *Trust*, will be published later this year.

But Marshall isn’t totally resistant to change or technology. He carries a portfolio of his work with him on an Ipod and he does have a cell phone; how could he live in LA and not? Marshall has lived in the same LA apartment since 1965; he has too much “stuff” to even contemplate moving. “It’s a fucking nightmare to think about. They’ll bury me in here!”

Not that thoughts of the grave have been occupying Marshall’s mind. He has already made plans for his 75th birthday, to be held on a friend’s vineyard, and there is the colour photo book to come this year. And so long as the likes of Billy Bob Thornton and Shelby Lynne are requesting his artistic services, Marshall will continue to shoot but because he wants to, not because he has to — and on his terms.



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