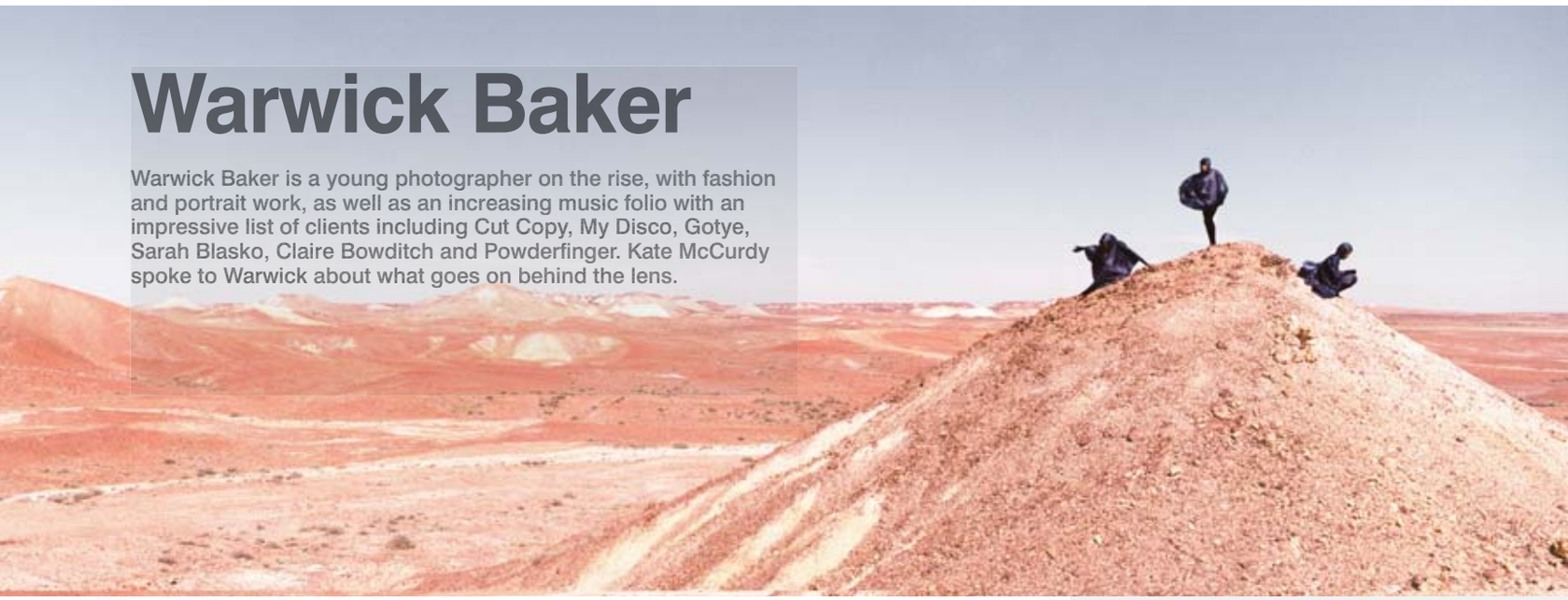
Warwick Baker

Warwick Baker is a young photographer on the rise, with fashion and portrait work, as well as an increasing music folio with an impressive list of clients including Cut Copy, My Disco, Gotye, Sarah Blasko, Claire Bowditch and Powderfinger. Kate McCurdy spoke to Warwick about what goes on behind the lens.



My Disco, *Paradise*

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Cut Copy, *In Ghost Colours*

DJ Knightlife

I Am Afraid

‘...it is like having a license or passport to anywhere you want to visit...’

Why photography?

Warwick learned the social aspect, and the fun, of photography when he first studied it at Belconnon High School in Canberra, before moving to Melbourne to complete a BA in Photography at RMIT University. In addition to this, Warwick believes that he has learned more about photography from working part time at the Camera Exchange in Melbourne and from assisting Glasgow artist Paul Knight for two years.

Warwick recalls that he was first attracted to the camera because ‘it is like having a license or passport to anywhere you want to visit’. It also allows him to indulge his curiosity in human nature by allowing him to approach complete strangers on the street, who then consent to him photographing them in their home environment. ‘I could only do that being a photographer’, he acknowledges.

Film vs digital

Warwick shoots with both film and digital cameras, but will use them in different ways in different circumstances. When working for clients he says that he only shoots in digital because of its immediacy and its cost effectiveness. Alternatively, for his own projects he chooses film with a large format 5x4 inch camera ‘for its incredible detail and stillness’, as well as the nature of the photography itself.

‘I love the therapeutic process of using a large format camera and that every picture is considered. I also like the anticipation of waiting for the film to get processed,’ something that seems somewhat out of time in the digital age. Indeed, in the two weeks after Warwick bought a new digital camera he was astonished that he had pumped 10,000 frames through it; ‘I wouldn’t even do that in a year of shooting film.’

The shoot

When preparing for a photo shoot, Warwick explains that this is where most of the work takes place.

‘There is always heaps of preproduction. Taking pictures is probably one-tenth of the process.’

He prefers to have a preconceived concept and structure behind it, and makes sure that the ideas are accepted by everyone involved before anything happens. With that security in place, Warwick does enjoy having an element of spontaneity and improvisation in the shoot, such as what happened on the shoot for Cut Copy’s ‘In Ghost Colours’ album, as the two-day duration of the shoot allowed him the time and the freedom to experiment more with his subjects.

Most often Warwick has creative freedom with regards to the concept of the shoot, although it is always subject to the client’s approval. When working with bands, his inspiration comes from extracting themes from the music, which was the case with My Disco’s album ‘Paradise’.

‘It is a very minimal, sparse and cinematic record so I wanted to have My Disco in the barren landscape looking very insignificant in contrast to the unforgiving landscape.’

The landscape, and indeed the whole environment in which he photographs someone, has a great effect on the atmosphere and mood of a shoot.

‘I’m really over the studio because it is a very lifeless and uninspiring place,’ he says. ‘It is so important that everyone is comfortable in the space where the pictures are being made.’

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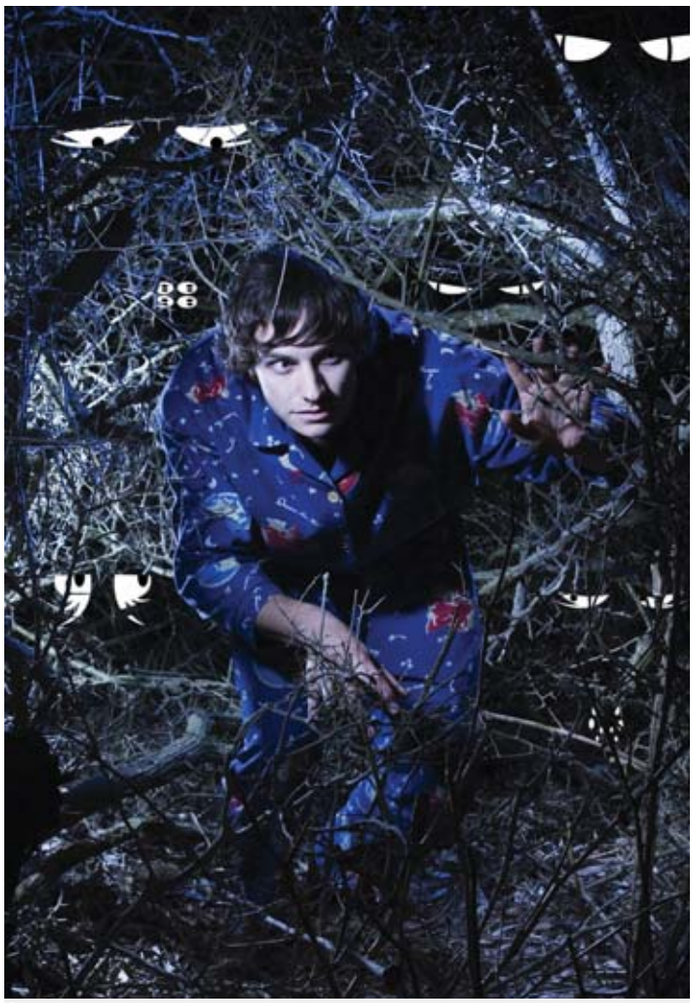

Gotye

Introducing new characters

The concept for a series of promotional photographs for Belgian-Australian artist Gotye came from a discussion between Warwick and Wally de Backer (Gotye) about dream states in *Where the Wild Things Are*. Together they came up with the idea to include the darkly animated creatures from the 'Hearts a Mess' video clip, by Brendan Cook, in the photos.

'I was really excited because I am a great fan of Brendan's clips and I have never added graphics before.' The result is an exploration of a dreamscape, as the pajama-clad Gotye gives the photographs a sinister yet childlike quality.

While at this time not interested in venturing into the world of music video production, Warwick continues to create interesting artistic concepts for his work with musicians and bands, with a dream to one day photograph Nick Cave.

'I would love to photograph [him] somewhere in the desert in South Australia or Western Australia,' he describes. 'I would like to present him as a lost, disillusioned and lonely explorer from the 1800s.'

Creative influences

Warwick lists among his creative influences the work of Rineke Dijkstra, Alec South, Wolfgang Tillmans, Steven Shore, August Sander, Jacob Holdt, Robert Frank, Luc Delahaye and Paul Knight. 'I also have a letter written to my grandfather by Max Dupain in 1939 in his Bond Street studio discussing surrealism that I find incredibly inspiring.'

While he doesn't think that he has a particular style, Warwick says that he loves the ways in which the medium of photography allows him to explore new subjects, themes and aesthetics: 'I look for subtlety and hidden elements when I am creating pictures.'

Warwick has recently been involved in the 'I am Afraid' exhibition at the Uber Gallery, portraits from which are currently hanging in Alter. He is currently working on a new body of work that will be published in a book by And Collective, 'Every place tells a story'.

www.warwickbaker.com.au

My Disco, *Paradise*

Warwick Baker - My Disco, 'Paradise'

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