

Cover: Ritchie Blackmore, 1970

Below: Ringo Starr, 1969; Diana Ross, 1965

All photographs in this brochure © Barrie Wentzell



Bob Dylan, 1965

# No Sex, No Drugs, Just Rock'n' Roll

The Photography of Barrie Wentzell

*“This is when we were young.  
Now you're young, what are you going to do about it?”*

*Barrie Wentzell*

In the spring of 2010, Colgate University invited Professor Mary Warner Marien from Syracuse University to lead a seminar on photo history. Rather than the expected research paper, students were asked to curate an exhibition of their own. Jumping at this chance, the class worked collaboratively to research a collection of 100 photographs by Barrie Wentzell that had been given to the Picker Art Gallery by the Rosen Group in 2000.

The project allowed students to participate in every aspect of the exhibition. We met at the Picker Art Gallery to see the photographs and make selections for the exhibition and the catalogue. Also, we were given the chance to work on the advertising and design of the exhibition with the help and guidance of Stephanie McClintick.

While the entire process has been an incredible experience, the most memorable moment was our phone interview with the artist himself. Talking with him gave us a glimpse into his personality and his wonderful sense of humor. He offered this advice

to us as young people interested in the arts: “Pursue your bliss.”

We are grateful for all of the wonderful people who helped guide our class through this process, from writing the articles for the catalogue to selecting which images to display in the gallery. We are grateful to Professor Mary Warner Marien and Professor Linn Underhill in the Department of Art and Art History at Colgate University, Stephanie McClintick (Designer), Michael Somple (Picker Art Gallery Registrar), Jesse Henderson (Digital Curator), Don Mistretta and Jeff Golley (Preparators), all of whom helped bring this project to fruition. The students in the seminar were Alayna Anderson, Ayesha Bhagat, Jeremy Burns, Katherine Downey, Sophie Greene, Leigh Hickey, Chelsea Hoffman, Charlotte Howells, Bryan Kretschmer, Jenny Kutik, Erin Lusheski and Yuxi You. And of course, our thanks go out to Barrie Wentzell for his beautiful work and the time he spent working with us.

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The gallery is located in Dana Arts Center, Lally Lane, just off Route 12B on Colgate University's campus.

Hours through December 10: Tuesday–Saturday 10-5; Sunday 1-5  
Hours December 11–17: please call 228-7634 for appointment

Please check our website for special hours and exhibition updates, [www.pickerartgallery.org](http://www.pickerartgallery.org).



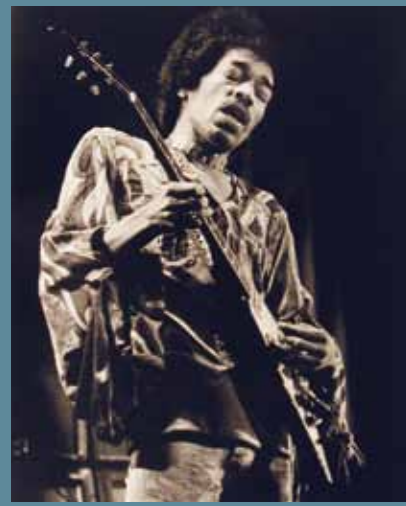
October 29 – December 17, 2010

**Picker Art Gallery**  
**Colgate University**





Alice Cooper, 1972



Jimi Hendrix, 1970



The Rolling Stones in Hyde Park, 1969



Aretha Franklin, 1970



Tina Turner, 1971



Syd Barrett, 1970

**BARRIE WENTZELL'S ROCK 'N' ROLL PHOTOGRAPHS** are remarkable both in extent and content. Still, to appreciate and understand his contribution to the art world it is vital to assess his career within two major contexts that helped shape his work: the environment of the 1960s and 1970s and the community of artists and photo-graphers to which he belonged.

Photojournalist Maurice Newcombe urged Wentzell to pursue photography while he was still in his early twenties and acted as a mentor during Wentzell's early years in the field. As a young photographer for the British music magazine, *The Melody Maker*, Wentzell was working during a time in Britain when music was exploding and transcending boundaries. His photographs fit into the wide span of other rock 'n' roll photographs, exhibiting the intimacy and trust of a candid shot and capturing the pinnacle moment of a performance.

Although Wentzell worked primarily in the United Kingdom, he was exposed to international musicians, and to photographers such as Bob Gruen, Astrid Kirchherr, and Gered Mankowitz. These photographers immersed themselves into the rock 'n' roll culture and befriended the artists. Not all photographers, however, sought to capture the raw energy of the music and the moment of onstage glory. Celebrity portrait photographer Lynn Goldsmith shot the opposite moment of the performance climax: the lull in between songs when musicians stood silent and fans waited for the next act. Other photographic artists during Wentzell's time such as Elliot Landy, who supported the Civil Rights Movement and participated in Vietnam War protests, used their photographs to advocate political or social change.

Although Wentzell was in good company, he chose to leave the world of rock 'n' roll photography in 1975. This decision to discontinue documenting the lives behind the legends makes these photographs all the more interesting to consider as they are a glimpse into a specific moment of rock 'n' roll history.

### BARRIE WENTZELL'S STYLE AND APPROACH

Wentzell captures the passion and triumph of rock 'n' roll artists at the height of their performance. He positions the camera at an angle that captures the individual in a moment of vulnerability and humanity. The low lighting gives the photographs a magical quality. His use of black and white photography, his knack for capturing the artist off-guard and gesturing, both in and out of performance, and his way of giving the viewer a small glimpse into the private life of a rock and roll superstar define his style. While Wentzell could have advanced his own career by divulging the compromising details of the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll lifestyle, he

never focused solely on the pursuit of money or fame. As a result, Wentzell stands apart from his contemporaries. And unlike the majority of today's tabloid-crazed, scandal-seeking photographers, Wentzell's love for the music and musicians who came to define popular culture of the 1960s and 1970s was genuine. His respect and integrity shine through in his photos of legends like Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, and The Beatles, which were included in a retrospective exhibition at the Analogue Gallery in Toronto.

Wentzell captures the feeling of the music for a viewer standing in the crowd below the musicians, looking up at them and venerating them in their element. Photographers often face the problem of creating a truly genuine image of an icon because the subject is aware of the photographer's presence. However, Wentzell conversed extensively with his subjects, establishing friendships that make his photos seem natural rather than staged, as many rock 'n' roll photographers did in this era. Through Wentzell's innovative style and selfless but unique approach, he has crystallized a canon for rock 'n' roll photography that lives on to present day.

### THE GOLDEN AGE OF ROCK

The mid-1960s marked the development, within rock 'n' roll, of a plethora of emerging and developing genres, thus engaging a broad spectrum of western culture.

British acts such as the Beatles achieved international mainstream success by pushing the genre of traditional rock 'n' roll into their own distinctive style and reaching their creative peak with the 1967 release of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Other British musicians such as the Rolling Stones, John Mayall and Eric Clapton took their cues from earlier American blues music.

Soon after, guitar virtuoso Jimi Hendrix developed a playing style that marked a fusion of blues and psychedelic rock, a brand of rock that largely attempted to reproduce or exaggerate the experiences of psychedelic drug use. Syd Barrett, and later Pink Floyd helped to explore the genre of psychedelic rock. Emerging in United States and Britain during the mid-1960s and influenced heavily by folk rock and blues rock, it often used new recording techniques and effects, and drew on non-Western sources such the ragas and drones of Indian music.

Bands such as Pink Floyd ultimately helped psychedelic rock evolve into progressive rock. Progressive rock is a sub-genre of rock music that evolved in the late 1960s and early 1970s and developed from late 1960s psychedelic rock, as part of a wide-ranging tendency in rock music of this era to draw inspiration from ever more diverse influences.

Other genres of rock such as folk rock, soft rock and roots rock all have close connections with each other. Folk rock rose in the United States and the UK in the mid-1960s, utilizing mostly acoustic instruments and putting artists such as Joan Baez and Bob Dylan in the spotlight. From folk rock, soft rock was born. Soft rock was similar to folk rock but placed more emphasis on melodies and harmonies. Key artists in the soft rock tradition include James Taylor, Carole King and Cat Stevens. Roots rock draws its inspiration from blues, country

and folk music. Roots music can sometimes be described as a general category encompassing all these music styles. Creedence Clearwater Revival was a leader in this roots category.

Barrie Wentzell maintained a long career photographing celebrated musicians of all these rock genres.

### A SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

Throughout human history, prominent figures in society have been idolized as a matter of course. This impulse began with a reverence for gods and nature, developed into the adoration of war heroes, and finally has manifested itself today through the worship of celebrity. Historians attribute this change to the shift from a culture of production to one of consumption that began in the late nineteenth-century. The shift resulted in the establishment of consumerism as the basis of one's personality and individualism.

A counter-consumerist current arose in the mid-twentieth century, and along with this a struggle to reclaim the individual image and voice. Rock personalities of the late 1950s up to the late 1970s all had very distinctive styles that were associated with their name. Yet, it was the artistic eye of the photographer that created a marketable style out of an average face. Photographer James Kriegsmann's makeover of Frank Sinatra led to the saying: "You need three things to make it — a good agent, a good manager, and a Kriegsmann session."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, photographer Dezo Hoffmann's advice on image and marketing tactics led to an innovative and self-defining style for the Beatles that helped launch the band internationally. Instances such as this helped to create a dynamic friendship between photographer and musician in which the photographers came to know the musicians more intimately than the celebrity hype could reveal. Rock photographer Henry Diltz described this relationship saying: "[photographers] were co-conspirators with their subjects. They hung out together, drank together, fell down together, slept together, OD'd and got sober together, went to the top together, went down the drain together."<sup>2</sup>

Undeniably, photographers left an enduring imprint on rock 'n' roll musicians. Yet, one cannot escape the musicians' simultaneous impact on their photographers. "We didn't really hang-out together, we hung-in together," said Wentzell, "we [were] all starting off together — the musicians [were] learning how to play their instruments and we [were] learning how to do art, light, and photography." This relationship with their subjects gave these photographers the opportunity to develop their passion for their art through a medium that they were already comfortable with: rock 'n' roll music.

The photographs that resulted from these friendships provided society with more than just a paparazzi image for consumption, and instead captured an authentic portrayal of an individual. ". . . [Y]ou try to allow the person just to be and try to capture that essence of being."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hirshey, Gerri. Being There, Rolling Stone 643: 53 (1992: November).

<sup>2</sup> Wentzell, Barry. May 5, 2010 interview with Colgate class ARTS 483.