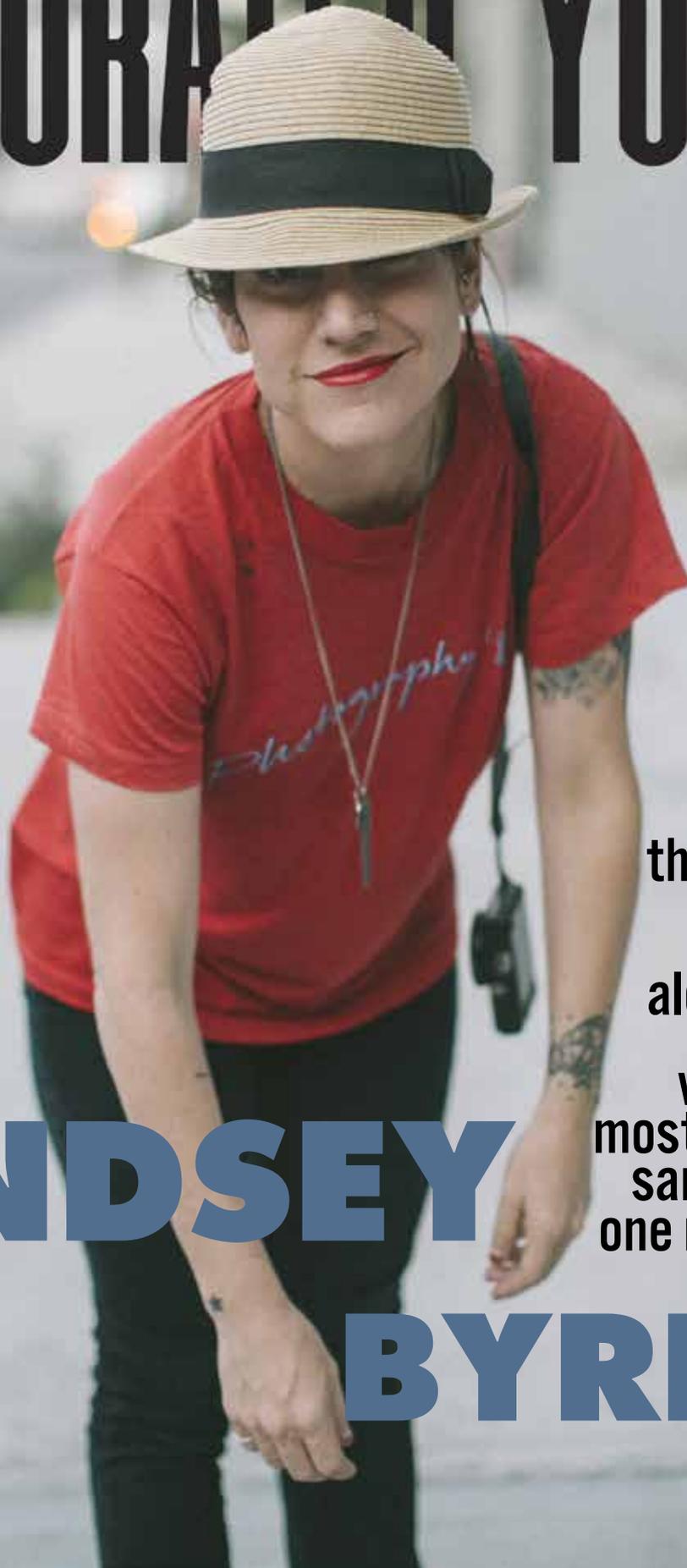


DECORATED YOUTH

ISSUE 3



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the paper kites
dirk mai
katie moore
alex wilhelm
claire vogel
warped tour
most nights tour
sara bareilles /
one republic tour

LINDSEY

BYRNES

LINDSEY BYRNES

FROM YEARS OF WORKING FOR PUBLICATIONS,
TO HAVING HER PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWCASED IN PUBLICATIONS

Since professional photographer Lindsey Byrnes didn't grow up in an artistic family she had no knowledge that being an artist or making a living off of doing art was even an option. She originally went to college to focus on things along the lines of business, communications, and marketing, but dropped out because she was excited to start working and wasn't interested in postponing.

She immediately got a job in sales at a skateboard company which led her to move to San Francisco. While at the skateboard company she somehow got into writing music reviews. "Basically I was the receptionist, super entry level, and I was writing all these kids back fan mail. I was super in to writing kids that would write fan mail, and that somehow got me into writing music reviews. I don't even know how it happened so all of a sudden I was like "I'm a writer!"

During her time at the skateboard company, she met somebody that worked at one of the three magazines that High Speed Productions, Inc. published called Thrasher Magazine, so out of curiosity she went in and interviewed. "I go to Thrasher and I show them my writing. The editor in chief looks at my work and looks at me and he's like "so you're obviously not a writer, but we like you, so call us back". So for months, every time they'd be like "call us back", I would like call on the day. One day they like said "Hey we got this opening come in"."



Lindsey is an accomplished photographer with years of editorial experience, having worked on the staff of publications like Thrasher and Juxtapoz. She's also been behind the band and skate photography in a Vans' book, 'Off the Wall: Stories of the Sole' and Tegan and Sara's three-book series 'On', 'In', 'At'.

sites

<http://www.lindseybyrnes.com/>

@LindseyByrnes

photos

Cover portrait and inside portrait:
Mel Barlow

All other photos: Lindsey Byrnes

words

Heather Hawke



When she went in they didn't reiterate that she wasn't a writer, but they did tell her that she was a sales person. Since she started out at the age of 15 doing phone sales, they offered her the position of Ad Sales Director for their art magazine, Juxatapoz. "It was really small at the time going into its second year, and nobody knew what it was. The offer that they made me seemed great, I was like "Oh my god this is amazing, everybody I know is going to college and I'm like making money!"

Being in charge of Advertising Sales for a small magazine she had to figure out a way for people to start noticing the magazine and since they didn't have an official promoter she took it into her own hands. After a couple years of doing promotion, with events and sending out magazines, she inevitably started doing stuff for their other magazines Thrasher and Slap. She recalls that it was during this time that she went to them with a job proposal to do the marketing for the whole company. They accepted her job proposal but told her "because we're giving your job to someone else, if this doesn't work then you're out."

She then started taking pictures on the job. "I'd be taking meetings in New York and I'd come back with pictures of these events and then they'd put them in a magazine." She recalls that when she saw her photos in a magazine it felt the same as when she used to see her music reviews inside a magazine. "Strength was the first magazine I was published in. It was a skate/ surf/ snow type of deal. I thought oh my god this is so cool, seeing my name in print. I felt so important, I felt like I had a sense of purpose which was, something I was looking for."

Lindsey grew up really fond of magazines, "I didn't read a lot I didn't find my escapes in books. Maybe it was that my attention span was so short or I couldn't find books I liked. When I realized that there is basically a magazine for everything I liked I became obsessed. "I had a subscription to Surfing Magazine and every day check my mailbox, every day, just waiting for the new issue to come. Same with Seventeen, I was so into my Seventeen Magazine."

"I remember the first issue I got, it was Milla Jovovich on the front cover she was like 12 years old. I remember getting those magazines in the mail and it was the first time something cool was coming for me; it was like a present every month. I mean I've always been in love with print, and so working at a magazine was just so cool, I finally made it, I arrived."

Her first live show photographing experience also came when working for High Speed Productions, Inc. A band she liked 'The Vines' were performing and she told her work that she was going to shoot them and they said "ok, you can". "I really wanted everything to look good and be good, and I got the photos back and there was like three frames that turned out and I was in tears. Luke Ogden, who's a really great photographer, he was just like "Do you even realize? This is great, this is a great shot, you're great, don't worry about it! Do you know how many rolls of film I have to go through to get that shot that I want?" He was really encouraging, like "don't stop, just keep doing it, this is great!"

After that first live show she was hooked. She started learning more about light and film and what you have to do to make something show up on film with no flash. "There was no digital then, I'm so grateful for that kind of learning, because I don't know how people learn on digital. I don't know how anybody can really truly have a concept of ISO and aperture and shutter speed and all of that without understanding what's really happening. All those things on a digital camera are just mimicking what film was doing, without that tangible feeling. I would have a hard time conceptualizing, I have to do something and see, to develop the film and see how something works to really understand what's happening."

Since Lindsey is now an experienced photographer in the industry she says it can sometimes make her a little judgey. "I feel like I can really tell good live photography versus bad live photography now, then maybe I couldn't. I also didn't have as much of an opinion, I wasn't as confident in my work so I didn't feel like I could criticize other's people work."

She also says that as her opinions grew she also had to deal with others criticizing her more. "For an example I have this photo that I love of Flea, and I turned it in somewhere and the outlet I was shooting for told me they didn't want to use it because he was making a weird face at the camera. Flea is the bassist for Red Hot Chili Peppers, and if anybody is familiar with Flea or his performances, that's what he does, he makes a weird face. That's his thing you're not going to get a shot an awesome shot of him not kind of making this serious crazy face. They came back to me and they're like we didn't really like that one, and he was looking straight at the camera, and it's awesome and I love this shot and I feel like I'm pretty hard on myself, and they're like "he's making a weird face" and I'm like "do you know who he is?" She proceeds to say, "Photography is subjective to people's opinions and I can defend it and argue it, but I am learning to just keep my mouth shut too."

After ten years of working for High Speed Productions, Inc. Lindsey was starting to feel a little antsy so she moved back down to Southern California and got a job working as a Marketing Director for Goldenvoice the promoter of the acclaimed music festival Coachella. "I've always really loved Coachella, I shot Coachella for a couple of years and, I was like 'this is so great.'" I realized that doing marketing for a promoter was very different than doing marketing for magazines; I didn't have the creative canvas that the magazine provided. I hadn't quite connected the dots yet, though."

“I had two big job interviews and one offer at this agency, and I came to that moment where I was like, go on tour with this super awesome band and take photos of them and do something creative, or go work another office job. I was like 'this is totally scary' as someone that always had a job and always worked for someone else. This is really scary but I'm going to do it.”

After working for Coachella for a year, she applied for a Marketing position for Vans. “I went through like three tiers of interviews and finally they chose someone else and I was devastated because it's you know Vans' and their so cool and I was so upset.” She thought that going back to work in the action sports industry was the answer and what she had been missing while working for Goldenvoice.

About a month later when Vans was in the works of putting together their 'Off the Wall: Stories of the Sole' book, author Doug Palladini reached out to her and proposed an offer. He asked her if she'd like to photo edit the book because of all of her licensing experience. Unsure about the offer she took a month off and went to Europe.

When she returned home they made her another offer that she liked, so she took the job. “In the process of doing that, I started looking at a lot of the old photos that I had, I picked all of the photos that went into this book, and it was a big deal. I started looking at some of the archives I had from Warped Tour and things I shot and I was like “oh wow, this is kind of cool.”

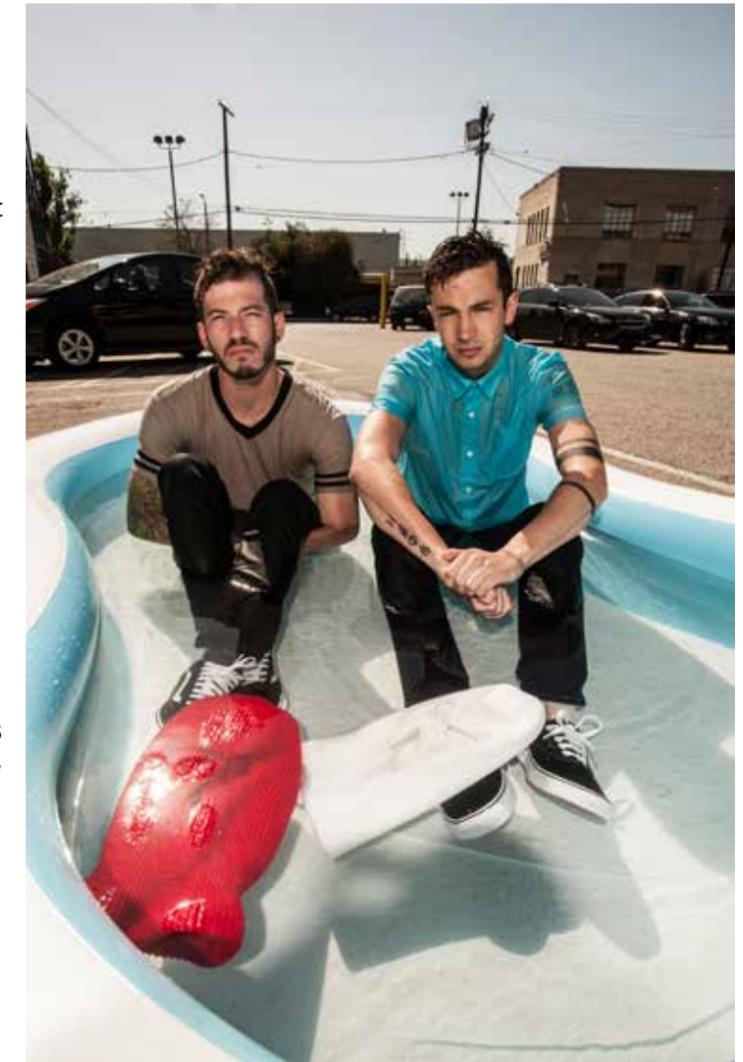
For the Vans book she had put forth some of her photos, since she was the photo editor it seemed completely appropriate. “I had put some of my photos in the pile, I feel was subjective. They were really good. I mean, I had put maybe two photos of mine in the whole book, and Doug and Jeremy, the designer, loved them so it gave me a little bit of confidence. I was like, 'okay, I guess, I guess photography is choosing me, let's see what happens.' – Dots finally connected.

Lindsey says photography chose her because she has never had a specific point in time where she said “photography is my career.” She says that in a way, just like with her other job where they told her “you're a sales person,” photography found her. “Honestly, I didn't know it was going to be a career, I still don't even know if it's a career. You know, I definitely looked at other photographers and was like 'oh my god, your job is so awesome, like you get travel all over the place.’

She was just about to finish the Vans book when Tegan and Sara asked her if she wanted to go on tour with them and shoot. “I had two big job interviews and one offer at this agency, and I came to that moment where I was like, go on tour with this super awesome band and take photos of them and do something creative, or go work another office job. I was like 'this is totally scary' as someone that always had a job and always worked for someone else. This is really scary but I'm going to do it.”

From there, a friend of hers asked her if she would like to go shoot a wedding with her if she paid for everything, including plane tickets, for a week in Mexico and all Lindsey had to do was shoot for two days, Lindsey said “sounds good, I'm in”. “Things just started happening, and it wasn't out of the blue, I was interested in her job and I had volunteered and had helped her put together some stuff and been working for her a little bit, and she was like 'do you want to come shoot with me?,' and I was like 'Mexico I'm in!' She's so cool, and she's so talented, her name is Mel Barlow she's such a super talented woman, and really inspiring.”

Although she was shooting weddings to subsidize money for a couple of years, she stopped shooting weddings more for political reason than anything. “The fact that the gay rights, civil rights movement is kind of like the biggest movement of our time, of my generation anyway, I just couldn't. I stopped shooting weddings, because I couldn't participate in something that wasn't including everyone.” I didn't want to make money off of something that was ultimately making myself and so many other people feel bad. To be honest I stopped attending weddings all together.”





Even though it was a really hard choice for her because wedding photographer was accounting for a substantial part of her income she made a political decision and took a stand in what she really believes in and quit shooting weddings. She says that the only time she even entertains the idea of shooting weddings is in states, or countries, where it's legal for everyone to get married. So now that same sex marriage is legal in California, she says "bring it on!"



Being a freelance photographer, Lindsey has a wide variety of clients she works with. She says that when it comes to getting a job it's a mixture of clients approaching her with direction along with herself approaching them with ideas. "This is something that I really want to address is freelancer fear. Freelance fear is real, it's really hard not knowing where your next job is coming from. I used to envy freelancers so much, I'd be like 'you're a freelancer that's so cool you get to do whatever you want,' but now I realize that as a freelancer you're constantly working. You don't get weekends. You don't get to clock out at five. You're constantly working, and when you're not in town you're turning things down, not knowing where your next job is, it's scary."

As a photographer you're constantly creating, you constantly have to be updating; you constantly have to be working on your craft. It's not about the money; it's about being productive and staying inspired."

Not knowing where or when your next job is leads to scheduling and travel conflicts, which she says are some of her biggest hurdles. "Then would be the team, and putting whatever team together you need. A lot of times it's just me, but I love working with a team, I love doing bigger things. So then with a team not only is it selecting who you want and who the artist wants and who the label wants, or if it's just something I'm doing who I want."

Another thing she tries to prioritize is finding the balance between everything. She says that although there are a lot of photographers that are doing ten times as much as she is who don't ever take time off, she does. Even though she just took a month off and she had to turn down stuff left and right she says that she has to live her life.

She acknowledges that it's a totally privileged life that she leads and she has empathy towards the people who absolutely detest what they do. "I feel fortunate. It sometimes feels unreal that people like what I'm doing! Every day I'm like, "Really? You want me to do that? Oh my god thanks!" You know? I'm so appreciative. I'm so grateful that people choose to hire me. There are so many great accessible artists out there, when I get a job it really feels like a win every time."

Lindsey doesn't like being photographed herself, as someone who doesn't think they're photogenic she understands the trust people have to give photographers to make them look good. "Some people just don't look as good in photos as in real life."

"No matter what you do, no matter what you try, no matter what filters you put over it, they just look better in person. I mean have you seen celebrities that you meet even, who are really, really, über famous, and then you see them in person and you're like, "Oh, my god you're so beautiful." They're so much more beautiful than I ever thought, and then they're like, "Whoa ... how, what?" like I can't believe that people would let me take their picture."

Lindsey says she now feels like she's gotten to the point in her career where she can be more concentrated on the things that she finds inspiring, but before that she wasn't saying no to anything. "When people asked me to do stuff I would just do it. To a certain extent I still do, but I can be a bit more selective now. As a photographer you're constantly creating, you constantly have to be updating; you constantly have to be working on your craft. It's not about the money; it's about being productive and staying inspired."

She mentions that at the moment she feels really lucky because there's a lot of word of mouth which leads a lot of people her way, but she still reaches out a lot. An example being when she was down at SXSW earlier this year a guy who works with the band Twenty One Pilots approached her and told her she really needed to watch them play. After she saw them she absolutely knew she wanted to work with them. "This is the first time I had the confidence to do this, but I reached out to the label 'look here's, what I want to do', and they took it to the band to see if they were interested."

As it turned out they were, and the label gave me a budget. Which, you can pitch ideas, but it doesn't mean that anybody is going to fund them. I'm mean like I could have pitched it, but they could have been like "great, go ahead try and make that happen." Not only did they give me a budget, but they gave me the band."

She says her craft (her bread and butter) is press photography. She mentions that she's really happy that she has the business mind that she does coupled with what she wants to do, or what she is doing, because there's a lot more to press photography than just getting a cool photo. "You're not necessarily just getting the best image. The best image or the image that's picked can be totally different than what I think. You're translating a sound into an image, into a personality. How do you take somebody's personality and their music and translate them into one visual image that's going to be presented over, over and over again? There's a lot of pressure not just for the photographer, but for the artist." She says it's especially a lot of pressure for musicians. "If you're taking photographs of an actor, you're just doing head shots and they're presenting the smiling man, or the serious man, but with press shots for musicians it's not just about them looking good, it's about them looking like how they want you to feel through their music."

When people go to Lindsey stating that they want an iconic image she tells them that they are going to create it together. She says that it's all about collaboration, "not only do you create the image together with the artist, you gotta know how to work with the label too." An artist has their own relationship with their label, or whoever it is that's working with them. It's also different working with an independent artist compared to an artist signed to a major label.

"For a major label artist you're not only dealing with the musician and how they want themselves presented, you're dealing with the label and how the label wants to package everything together. A lot of times, I feel I've been really lucky, we can all meet together, but there's always that fear, that they are not going to like it. I have a tendency to over-shoot and over-send, because I want them to pick the ones that they like."

She draws inspiration for her press photography from her subjects' inspiration and from other photographers and their work and everything around her. Since there are so many different factors that come together there is no single formula for inspiration, it's different with every client. If she was known for having one specific style of how she shot, like all of her photos were black and white and heavily re-touched, then her clients would just come to her for that one thing; but that's just not how she works. "Everything kind of happens together. Even with Twenty One Pilots, I came to them and I was like 'how about this, this and this?' They were like 'yeah, we love those ideas!' Then we do the ideas and then the images that end up getting selected aren't even the weird ideas that we had, that we loved together. Because, maybe after the shoot's done they're like 'yeah, maybe we should go with these one.' Or maybe it's this, so we're shooting like a million different ideas."

"If you're taking photographs of an actor, you're just doing head shots and they're presenting the smiling man, or the serious man, but with press shots for musicians it's not just about them looking good, it's about them looking like how they want you to feel through their music."

For that Twenty One Pilots shoot, the pool idea was a total collaboration. "The idea was to use a real pool, but I couldn't borrow someone's pool and also do studio shots in the same day due to time restrictions so I ended up finding a giant kiddie pool to use. They have their guy Mark, who does all these amazing videos and works with them on all aspects of their visual creative, he and I got down on these ideas together. It was so much fun."



Lindsey photographs a wide variety of bands, but the band's that she's most familiar with include Fun., Tegan and Sara, and Paramore. When asked if it puts more pressure on her to photograph the bands that she regularly photographs, given the close relationship, compared to photographing people that she barely knows she mentions that it's the opposite of what people would think. "People think that when you've been shooting a band for a really long time that it's easier, and easier in that it's less pressure. In a way, and this isn't slighting any of the new bands cause for instance, new bands are my new business. In a way I'm so attached to Paramore and Fun and Tegan & Sara. I'm not only attached because we created together, and they've invited me into their studios, and I've done videos, and I've gone on tours. I think that what happens is I want them to love everything like every time I click the clicker. Then it becomes this combination of things. Are they going to love everything, or do they want new eyes? Do they want a new thing? It's just like this whole combination thing, of where I'm so absolutely invested, and love them and their career so much and I just want everything that I do, to be better, every time. It's not harder or easier, it's different. It's just different when you're closer to a subject."



Along with photographing Lindsey has also been interviewing people for a long time, and she says the same can be applied to that, that it's almost easier to interview people you don't really know. "I've interviewed celebrities that I knew and I don't want to ask the questions that I know that they don't want to be asked, because you love them, and you care about them, and you don't want to go to place with them that they don't want to be. It kind of makes you a worse interviewer. It's easier to interview people you don't really know. Sometimes you're not as conscious of people's personal space when you don't know them, so you can kind of warm into their personal space as a photographer. Then it's like a catch-22 because, a band like The Black Keys I was not approved to shoot them. They have like very select photographers that they'll let shoot them because they don't want people warming into their personal space. They want to have their relationship. Totally not harder, totally not easier, just totally different."



Lindsey had the opportunity to shoot one of those band's she's most familiar with (fun.) for Rolling Stone last year at the MTV Movie Awards. She recalls the experience as being one of the best things ever and states that when she was growing up watching MTV, there was never a part of her that thought she would ever be anywhere near that in reality. "I feel that now with the internet and Twitter and all of these things that there are no boundaries. They're like, "Yeah I totally am going to do that." Not me, I did not. I was telling Jack that day "I used to watch these shows and look at people, and you're those people I would look at. Now it's you and here I am and I'm on the carpet with you and you're my friend and like this is unreal to me."

She says that that experience was a total dream come true for her, and not the kind of dream come true that comes true and then you're looking for the next best thing, or one that comes true and it wasn't as good as you'd hope. "It was awesome, totally awesome, such an honor. The only frame of mind that I was in was, "This is rad. This is so cool!" It will never get old. Never, not in a million years." She states that the reason this kind of stuff doesn't get old to her may be because she's a very excitable person, "when I go to SXSW, the night before I go I can't sleep. I'm an excitable person and none of this stuff gets old to me. Can you believe it? Like Paramore took me to Bali and all these places, like "What?"

For that Paramore 'Pacific Rim' tour in 2011 Lindsey filmed & edited a behind the scenes documentary of them touring in Jakarta, Bali, Hong Kong, Singapore and Honolulu. She states that if she could have she would have put every minute of footage into the video, but since most people's attention spans aren't that long and the ideal video to put up is around three minutes, she somehow managed to get it down to ten minutes.

As we began to wrap up the interview Lindsey mentions that there are so many people in her profession that she's so grateful for, people who have helped her or gave her a chance or people who will give her a chance in the future. Although her list is so long it would take all day to thank everybody she just really wants those people to know how much she appreciates their help and their encouragement. "You don't get to do things that you love unless other people help you along the way. Everybody needs help and I feel pretty fortunate that I've learned to receive help and give help. You don't always want to do stuff, and things don't ever come back to you the way that you think. You do something for somebody and you expect something in return and you're never going to get it. You're never going to get it from them, but you'll get it in another way or maybe you will get it from them, but you can't expect it. You just have to learn that it's like a really growing process. Whenever I get down on myself or I'm always like, "Just remember, you're lucky."

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