

Eddie Boy Escudero (b.1955, Pasay City) grew up both in Metro Manila and San Pablo, Laguna. By the time he was five years old, he said he was simply “enthralled” by his Tita Itas’ (Rosita Serungard) photography magazines. He’d spend countless hours looking at them. He appreciated everything—landscapes, action shots, portraits and especially the “artful” nudes.

He acquired his first camera in July of 1983 while managing the show band “Something Special” during their three-month stint in Singapore. It was a Minolta XG-1. When he took his first pictures he “did not know anything about aperture, shutter speed or ISO.” He would “put the dial on A then ‘Bahala na si Batman.’”

It wasn’t until he joined the Zone V Camera Club in 1991 that he actually learned to shoot. “I liked the idea of joining contests” he shares, and these contests motivated him to learn to work the camera and improve his craft. “As I was going through the learning process, I was becoming more and more addicted to photography.”

Each time a contest came around, he tried hard to stand out among peers he looked up to: “I wanted my pictures to be different from the rest. I wanted to come up with something unique to ‘wow’ them. These were damn good photographers I was with, and it was such a struggle to get to the top 10.”

He naturally started to shoot the local music scene because “that scene was my life.” His first paying gig was the contract signing of Alamid in 1994 under Warner Music. He shot the album covers of up-and-coming bands like Color It Red and Rizal Underground. He shot the wedding of the late, legendary Dominic “Papa Dom” Gamboa of Tropical Depression.

He spent many nights at Club Dredd watching and shooting—even just for fun--friends, artists and acts like Joey Ayala and the Bagong Lumad, Tropical Depression, Eraserheads, Binky Lampano, Karl Roy and Put3Ska. He also shot foreign acts like Anggun and Bela Fleck and the Flecktones when they played here, and the legendary B.B. King when he performed at the North Sea Jazz Festival.

By the time 1995 rolled around, another new era in Manila nightlife was beginning. Eddie Boy followed the infamous ‘bat signal’ to the second Consortium party at the National Library on Kalaw St. and saw this colorful cornucopia of sights, accompanied by electronic music that made you dance. “It was like discovering Shangri-La!” he quips as he found yet another scene to embrace, enjoy and photograph.

Looking back, he tells me, “I was a wild one. Those were the days.” Those who were there believe him. “I started to dance like hell and I would dance with my camera in one hand and the flash in the other.”

Brands like Lucky Strike and Evian, who he describes as “aggressive” sponsors at the time for these parties, brought in the DJs and hired him to shoot and document the vibrant and colorful rumpus.

At around the same time, Larry Leviste, then style director of Metro magazine acquired Eddie Boy’s unique brand of services, because he didn’t want to get ‘established’ photographers. Leviste says, “I wanted to shoot fashion paparazzi style, very quick and spontaneous, even impolite. The other photogs were too slow, with set-up lighting and makeup taking more than three hours before beginning, then there were polaroids, and adjustments, and I found it all too tedious and pretentious.”

Melvin Mojica echoes, “Before Eddie Boy, you only come out in society pages if you’re rich and pedigreed.” Now, all anyone needed to be was your own unique self. Eddie Boy would “stop the loud characters of after-midnight Manila and capture them for a portrait. He absolutely got a huge rush from chronicling such a diverse, fascinating collection of nocturnal wildlife.”

Writer Jerome Gomez describes Eddie Boy’s photos as “shot straight-forward style but spiked with the exuberance and decadence of the time, its atmosphere of joyous exhilaration and living on the edge.” His images “boast not of the arrogance of access but of comradeship with his subjects. He did not play outsider-looking-in ready for an intrusive snap. He was a party boy himself.” Truly, Eddie did not just shoot the scene, he was IN the scene, a genuine part of it.

Eddie Boy Escudero was in the middle of it all and in the words of Leviste, he “had no ego.”

A collection of Escudero’s photographs from that era (1995-2002), was the focus of his 2005 Silverlens exhibit, “When We Danced.” “I would never run out of interesting subjects to shoot,” he says and the photographs affirm that.

That scene slowly folded up, he observed in the later 2000s “People stopped dancing. They decided to just sip their drinks, send text messages, and watch the DJ.”

By this time, he was shifting to the wedding photography business. He joined the 1999 Bridal Fair at the Shangri-la. All he needed to be a “hit” at the show was “a box of pictures and a few 5 x 7 frames.” Though some would clearly add, it’s his people-loving personality that also plays a big part in getting hired to shoot weddings.

These days, his cellphone is his favorite camera and Instagram and Facebook his chosen platforms. He considers himself “Still addicted to photography. I want to document what I see.”

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Interview with Eddie Boy Escudero. Pasig City, January 2019.