



COME



I grew up watching wildlife documentaries and, like most kids, was fascinated by the wild animals I saw. Yet no matter how hard I tried, I could never accurately recall the images of these creatures. All I could remember - besides a few fleeting facts about their diets and breeding habits - were a series of blurred shapes and shadowy movements.

However, these dim and distant memories were delightfully brought back into sharp relief when I flicked through David Yarrow's luxuriously bound book *Encounter*, launched last November. As I pondered what gave this monochromatic book such mesmerizing power, it occurred to me that the magic emanated from the directness and intense focus of the pictures.

Ironically, to get a shot in focus is one of the most basic requirements for any photo, but often the results are unfocused in terms of the subject or the photographer's idea. Many photographers are seduced by the incredible detail that today's cameras can capture, and consequently their work can become overloaded with information, information that the human mind just can't process.

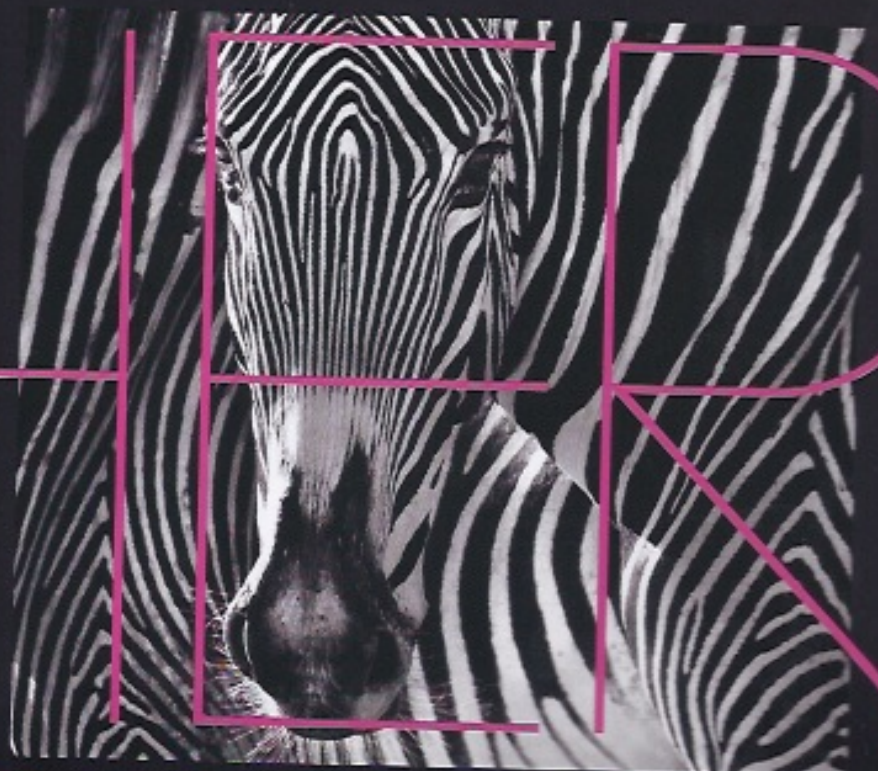
The photos in *Encounter* are more than in focus, they are vividly telling. Many of them offer remarkably intimate glimpses of creatures that would remain unseen and unappreciated were it not for Yarrow's camera. For example, the elephant shots have a strong focus on their coarse skin and sheer scale, the images of white rhinos capture their brutishly square jaws and the zebra photos highlight their asymmetric head stripes.

The monochromatic treatment of the 87 images minimises distractions and avoids the gaudy immediacy of most full-colour wildlife shots. It also gives them a timeless beauty, something that all photographers strive to achieve.

"I want to convey a sense of timelessness," says Yarrow. "The majority of these images could have been taken a century or two ago."

Another aspect of the book's power and charm comes from the raw energy and emotional engagement that radiates from the pages. One of the most heartwarming and unforgettable pictures features two penguin chicks in Antarctica helping each other.

"This picture has soul - and my daughter loves it," says Yarrow. "I was watching them; you won't believe this but penguin chicks go to school - they have a crèche! Every morning adult penguins take the chicks to school; there are around a hundred and one senior penguin looks after them all. The chicks all play around with each other and at lunchtime they go back to their parents." >>





Readers will be fascinated by the background stories as they set out on a tour around the globe through Yarrow's lens. The engaging narrative feels a little like the words of an old friend who is joining you for the adventure. It also includes a wealth of tips and inside information that are as valuable to a professional photographer as to a primary school student.

Through the stunning photographs and the stories about how they were achieved, it's not hard to discern the founding principle of the book – exclusivity. "I always want to go the extra mile to get the stuff that other people can't," says Yarrow. "Because if you don't, you just produce pulp."

"My philosophy for the book is that I will always sacrifice comfort for content," Yarrow speaks about his most logistically challenging and physically exhausting trip for the book, visiting the Suri tribe on the west bank of Omo in Ethiopia.

"There are eight tribes on the east side of the river which are very easy to reach, and one tribe on the west side, which is almost impossible to get to. Knowing that, my decision to take the road less traveled became relatively straightforward."

challenges of the desolate environment and hard two-day drive, he conducted exhaustive research and made logistical plans to increase the chances of a successful trip.

"You do your homework and find out who are the most important people in their villages," says Yarrow. "Then you pay them to look after you, and they tell everyone else in the village to do the same. The villagers don't use money, so I paid them in pens and razors!"

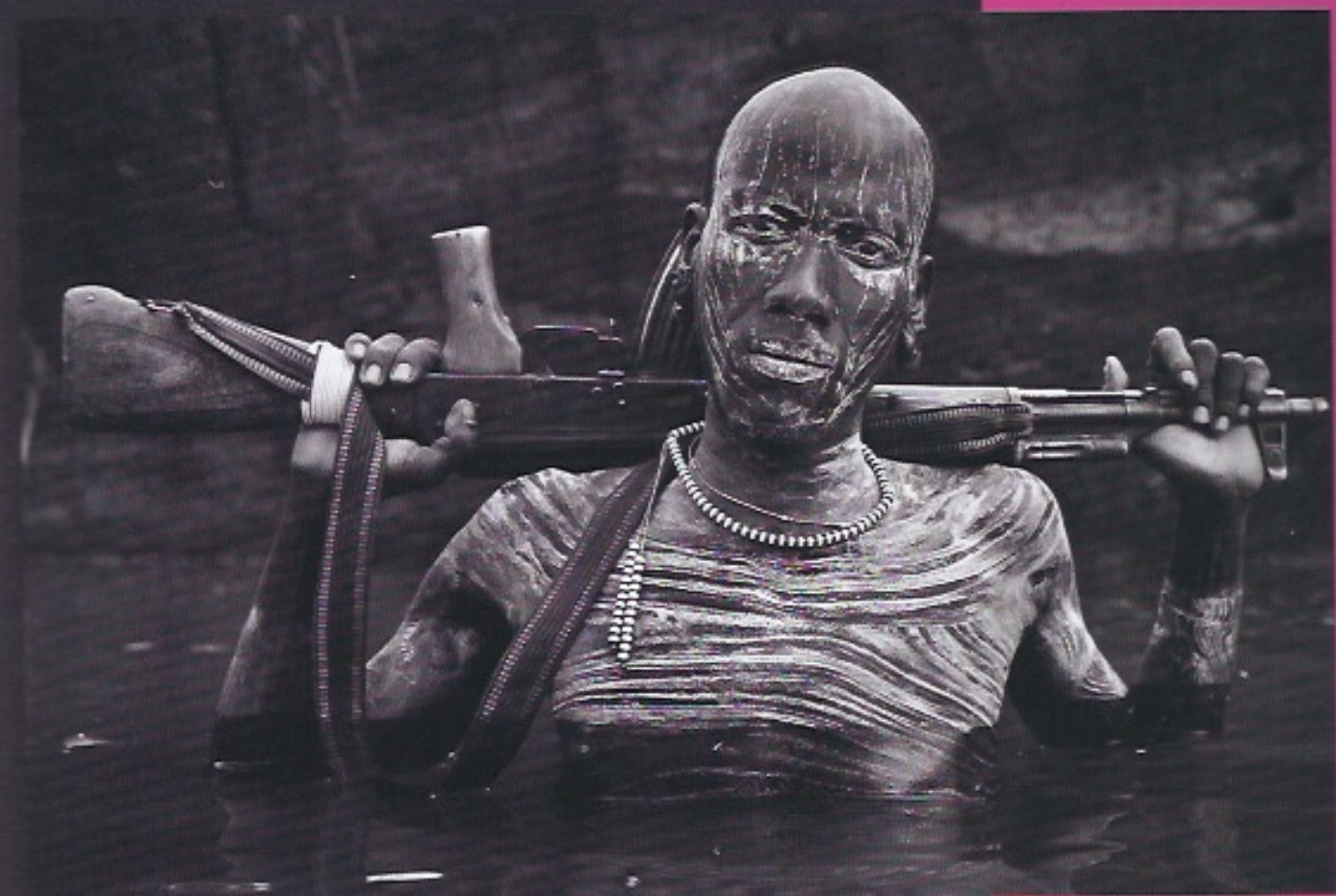
For Yarrow, time, commitment and patience are the foundation stones of taking great photographs. "Sometimes, the hardest pictures you have to take are of animals that are easiest to see," says Yarrow. "They're easy to see – so how can you get unique images? That's the challenge, and it involves numerous techniques as well as understanding wide angle and telephoto lenses."

Striving for exclusivity, Yarrow always aims higher. "All the pictures of polar bears in this book are good – but I don't think I've caught the 'Whoa!' factor with their size and menace. And I still want to capture a great image of elephants fighting hard!"





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THAT PAGE TOP: The Killer, Ranthambore National Park, India
THAT PAGE BELOW: Family, Amboseli, Kenya
THIS PAGE: Omo Wemor, The Omo, Ethiopia