
THE YEAR IN PHOTOGRAPHS



(LEFT)
TERRY MCDONALD OF
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

TRASK BEDORTHA



(CENTER)
R&B MUSICIAN
BJ THE CHICAGO KID

TODD COOPER



(RIGHT)
MURALIST
BEAU STANTON

ATHENA DELENE

They say a picture is worth a thousand words, but we all know the market fluctuates wildly and the exchange rate is a bear for some, a bull for others. For instance, my dear Grandma Phyllis, bless her, was an avid photographer, but her family snapshots routinely decapitated at least one of us and left the blurry ghost of her thumbprint in the right margin of the print.

Give a thousand people the same camera and tell them to shoot the same thing, and maybe five will hit that thousand-word mark. I call this quality “soul,” for lack of a better word — that magical something that only a handful of photographers reveal in their work. You know it when you see it.

EW photographers Trask Bedortha, Todd Cooper and Athena Delene all have this unteachable skill. They belong in that rarified category of photographers who not only capture reality but somehow magnify it, enhance it, elevate it. Each of them, in their own particular way, brings a passion and intelligence to

picture-taking that suffuses the subject with the dignity it deserves. Beyond just having “a good eye” — a mere matter of composition, timing, framing, etc. — they exhibit a sense of curiosity and concern for their subjects that can only be called humanity.

We aren’t the only ones to recognize it. Cooper won a first place for his music photography from the Association of Alternative Newsmedia and the design team took a second place in that same national contest for their *EW* covers that appear in our red boxes each week.

Working with these folks is always a blessing, and a formidable challenge. They consistently push us to make our thousand words matter. And in the end — as you can see from this collection of their past year’s work — you can remove the timely words, and a great photo will stand on its own, timelessly. It speaks volumes in a language we all understand.

— Rick Levin