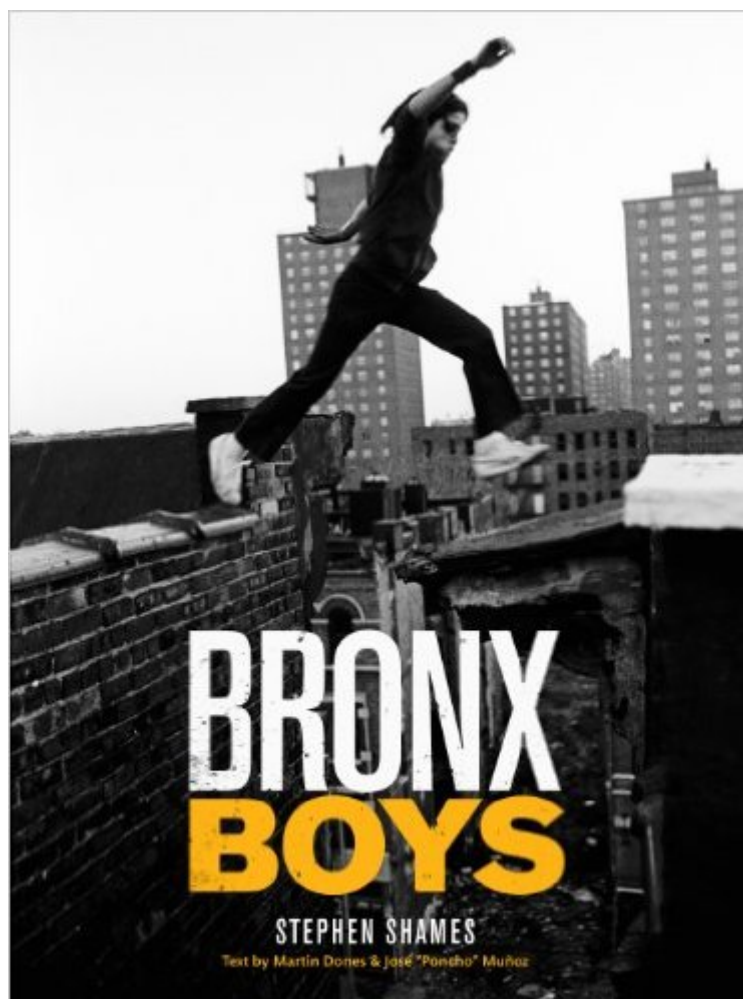


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# Bronx Boys



## Synopsis

"The Bronx has a terrible beauty, stark and harsh, like the desert. At first glance you imagine nothing can survive. Then you notice life going on all around. People adapt, survive, and even prosper in this urban moonscape of quick pleasures and false hopes. . . . Often I am terrified of the Bronx. Other times it feels like home. My images reflect the feral vitality and hope of these young men. The interplay between good and evil, violence and love, chaos and family, is the theme, but this is not documentation. There is no story line. There is only a feeling."—Stephen Shames

A 1977 assignment for *Look* magazine took Stephen Shames to the Bronx, where he began photographing a group of boys coming of age in what was at the time one of the toughest and most dangerous neighborhoods in the United States. The Bronx boys lived on streets ravaged by poverty, drugs, violence, and gangs in an adolescent "family" they created for protection and companionship. Shames's profound empathy for the boys earned their trust, and over the next two-plus decades, as the crack cocaine epidemic devastated the neighborhood, they allowed him extraordinary access into their lives on the street and in their homes and "crews." *Bronx Boys* presents an extended photo essay that chronicles the lives of these kids growing up in the Bronx. Shames captures the brutality of the times—the fights, shootings, arrests, and drug deals—that eventually left many of the young men he photographed dead or in jail. But he also records the joy and humanity of the Bronx boys, who mature, fall in love, and have children of their own. One young man Shames mentored, Martin Dones, provides riveting details of living in the Bronx and getting caught up in violence and drugs before caring adults helped him turn his life around. Challenging our perceptions of a neighborhood that is too easily dismissed as irredeemable, *Bronx Boys* shows us that hope can survive on even the meanest streets.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I'm an avid collector of New York City street photography, always on the look-out for collections that capture the evolving character of the city over the decades. It so happens that this collection by Stephen Shames is set in the part of the Bronx where I've lived for many years now, though as it was about thirty, during the height (or depths) of the crack epidemic of the 1980s, when the south Bronx became the international symbol of American urban decay. The area no longer looks as it did when Shames took these pictures, though the continuity from then to now is unmistakable. I must say that to my eye, Shames' pictures don't have quite the vitality of Arthur Leipzig's New York street photography of the 1940s and 50s, which I take as the hallmark of the genre and the standard by which all others must be measured. Still, Shames does capture something endearing in many of these images -- despite the back-drop of blight in so many of these pictures there is a human warmth and intimacy between the individuals he captures here. This is not the case in every single photo, of course. There are street fights, youths led out in handcuffs by cops, and pictures of crack being bagged up, too. But when I see the young men and women who are the main subjects of this collection among their friends and family members, I am reminded of that we all crave and seek to create love, friendship, community and sociability, even when abandoned and left for dead by the larger society as were the people of this neighborhood "back in the day." I'm glad I've added it to my collection documenting the life of this city.

It was a gift for a friend who's brothers happen to be pictured in the book. He was overjoyed with Bronx Boys, I wish I have gotten an edition for myself! If you want to see what life was & is like for the boys who live in disadvantaged areas, Bronx Boys is a very good book. It's stories are engaging and the photography is excellent.

The only thing I want is the story behind some of the pics. There is a street kid with lousy tats looks like he's 11 and an older kid is holding his arm while he shoots dope in the 11 year old kids arm!!! There are happy moments too of course, kids playing, young lovers kissing, cops shutting down the fire hydrant pissing off the kids This IS those bronx stories you'd hear about. The book leaves you wanting more of everything that you just saw. That is what a good photographer does. Buy this

book, you won't put it down.

Good

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