



# Simon Plant

Simon Plant had a big call to make when just starting out, whether to stay in Somerset or head for London's bright lights, and his choice defined his entire career direction.

I'M WRITING THIS story as I fly over the Aegean Sea, returning from a family holiday/photography trip. You see, when asked to contribute this feature, I thought it would be a quick and easy task. But, on reflection, it turned out to be tougher than I imagined, and much of what I could pass back down would, I suspect, have been profoundly ignored in any case by a young man just starting out.

One of the key things I would tell myself would be not to feel pressurised into leaving my home, on the coast near Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset. It's where I spent hundreds of hours learning my craft, but didn't appear to be the creative hub where a young ambitious commercial/advertising photographer would have the opportunity to break into the business.

Logic told me to head to London, which was such a thriving centre for photography in the late 1980s. There was also something of a stigma attached to working out of a less favoured location. Essentially, if you weren't living and working in London at that time then you weren't going to be taken seriously as a photographer by clients and photographic agents.

I was torn and not sure what to do and, if I could, I would tell my younger self to trust his instincts. I wasn't sure that a move to London would provide me with the creative fuel that I thrived on and, having cut my professional teeth in the south-west, London could have chewed me up and spat me out like so many others before me.

My ultimate solution, after much soul searching, was to find an agent who had faith in my work, and they helped me get in front of buyers. I took trips up to London when required to show my book or for other face-to-face meetings, and it all worked out fine.

As it happened, my big break actually came about when I was commissioned to shoot location



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Simon has enjoyed a highly successful career as a car and commercial photographer, with clients including Clarks Shoes, National Geographic and British Airways, and he's also picked up a string of awards from the likes of the AOP, Epson and Fujifilm Professional.

lifestyle imagery for Clark's shoes, a company based down here in Somerset. This work subsequently opened opportunities for other commissions in London and Birmingham. Looking back, I believe I might not have had this opportunity had I been London-based, especially at so early a point in my career, so it would be good to confirm to my younger self that my perceived risk was worth taking.

Even if it hadn't been, I believe you can't look back and beat yourself up about stuff. We all make what we believe are the right decisions at a particular time in our lives and sometimes they simply don't work out when and how you would like them to. However, my outlook is very much that things happen for you at the right time when you are ready for them.

Another thing I would tell my

younger self is to relax more. I used to push hard to try and achieve things career-wise that others of my age were accomplishing. For example, an AOP Gold award by the age of 29, or an award-winning global campaign by the time I was 33. Over the years I've realised that you can't gauge your career by someone else's path, as there are so many things outside of your control, and we're all our own people and bringing our unique life experiences to the table. It's good to be ambitious, but you need to follow your own path and head towards what excites and inspires you.

Over the last 37 or so years (I've lost count) I've shot cars all over the UK, captured global lifestyle campaigns for big American clients and I've even shot a cover for National Geographic. Not too shabby then from my lil old shack in Somerset! To date I haven't landed the AOP Gold award I once craved, but I've done ok and, more importantly, I've achieved a work/life balance that suits me in a beautiful part of England I call home.



■ [simonplant.co.uk](http://simonplant.co.uk)

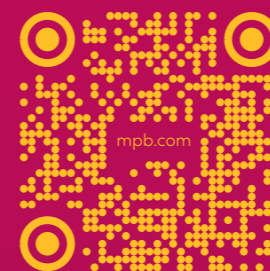


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