

DAYTONA BEACH  
FILM FESTIVAL

PICTURE  
PERFECT



News-Journal file

Former New York City photographer Jack Mitchell is surrounded by photos in his New Smyrna Beach home.

**"Jack Mitchell:  
My Life Is  
Black and White"**

N-J: ★★★★★

75 minutes

**DOCUMENTARY**

**BY:** Craig  
("Superstar in a  
Housedress")  
Highberger.

**NOT RATED:**  
Contains some  
language, adult  
issues.

**SHOWING AT:** 7:30  
p.m. today, opening  
film of the Daytona  
Beach Film Festival  
at News-Journal  
Center, 221 N. Beach  
St., Daytona Beach.

# Documentary captures essence of photographer

By **JEFF FARANCE**  
FILM CRITIC

Some cultures fear being photographed. They believe it steals the soul. The film "Jack Mitchell: My Life Is Black and White" doesn't dispel that notion.

But the New Smyrna Beach photographer and subject of Craig ("Superstar in a Housedress") Highberger's second documentary allays those fears.

His world-famous images penetrate to the soul. But he doesn't steal his subjects' essences. If anything, he enhances them.

Highberger and Mitchell met when the former was compiling "Superstar," his account of the life and times of Andy Warhol associate Jackie Curtis.

Mitchell, now 81 and retired back home after four decades in New York City, was among those interviewed on camera about Curtis. Mitchell's photos also were part of the film's visual backbone.

This time out, it's Mitchell talking about Mitchell. Yet the man has not a bragging bone in his body, despite huge successes in the world of icons and idols.

All due credit to Highberger for making so many static shots sparkle, but "Jack Mitchell" is fascinating because Jack Mitchell is fascinating.

Having photographed and befriended some of the heaviest-hitters from dance, music, literature, the stage and screen, Mitchell and his partner of more than five decades, Bob Pavlik, recount many a hilarious anecdote about the famous who have crossed their paths. Those of us who took up photography in our preteens can appreciate Mitchell's trajectory. But anyone who's fired off an entire roll of film or filled up a digital card without ever distilling the subject's essence, much less capturing a moment of pure beauty, can marvel at Mitchell's mastery.

A picture is worth a thousand words, as they say. Jack Mitchell is worth an entire movie. And his 75 minutes of fame are more than worth watching.