

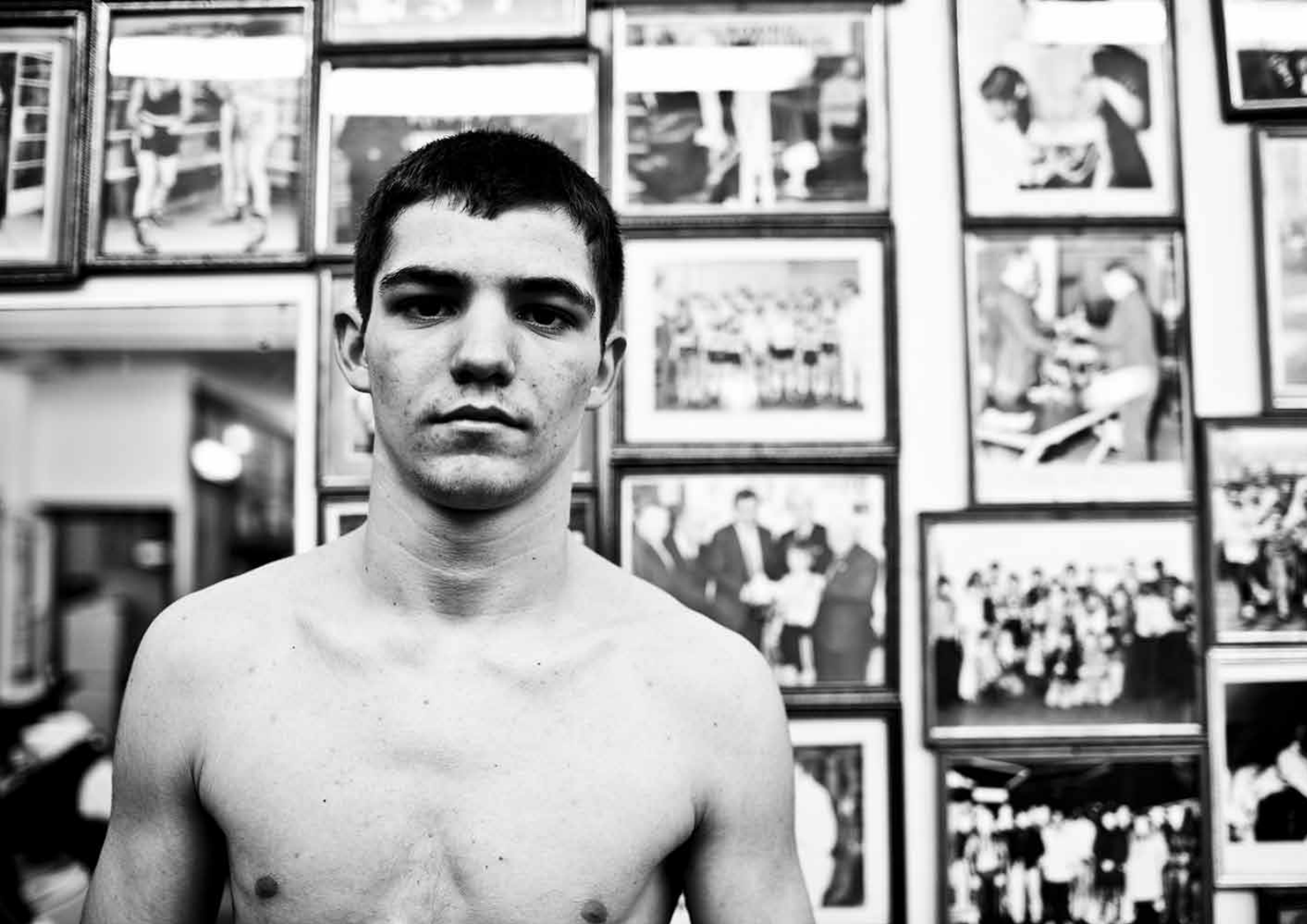


*The West Ham Boys Boxing Club  
by David Brunetti*

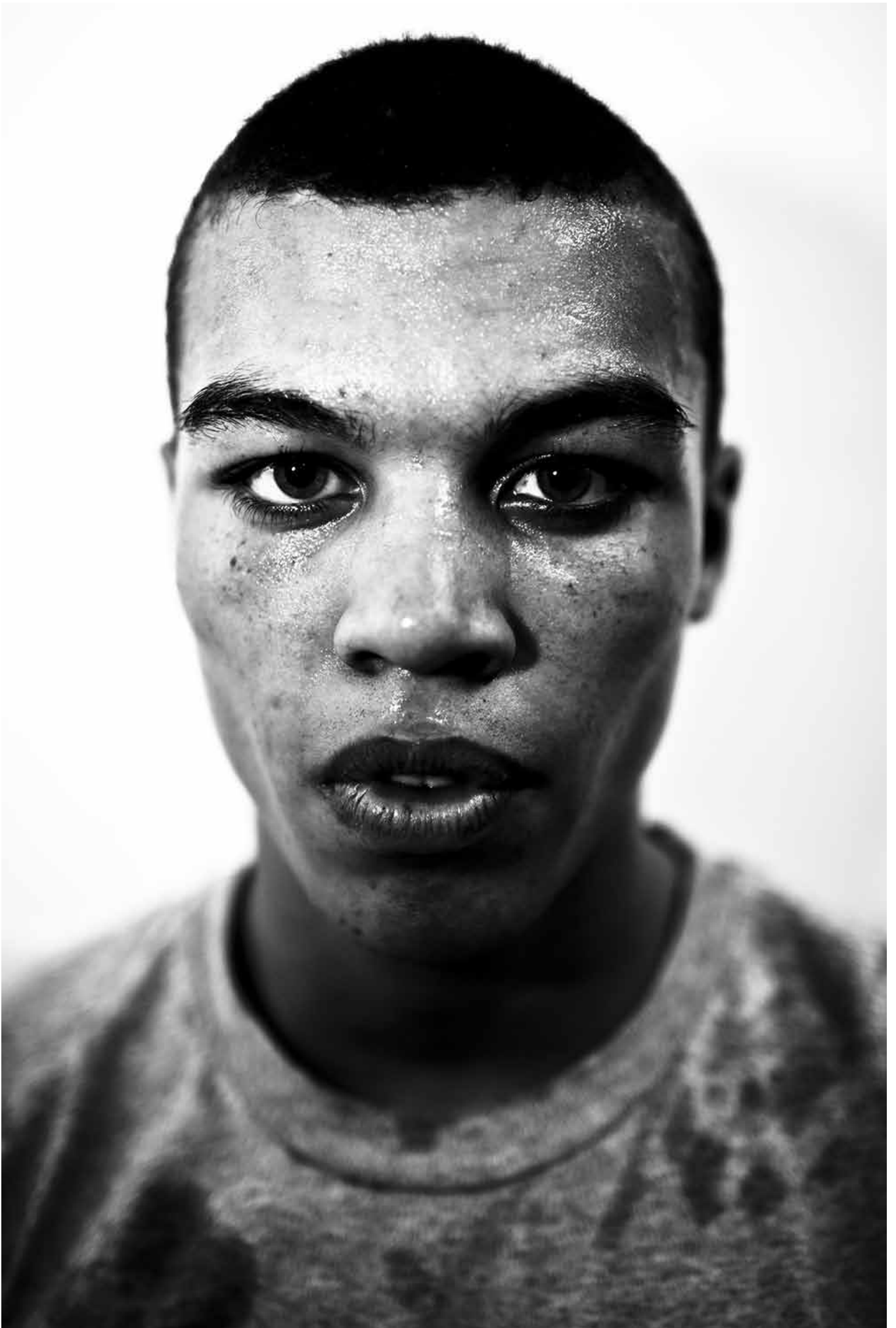


Boxing is seen as a gentleman's sport. In Victorian England social reformers started setting up boxing clubs in East London as a remedy against the social ills of the working class. They wanted to bring public school ideals to poorer neighbourhoods. As a sport of gentlemen the reformers wanted to instil upper class values such as honour, honesty, habits or order and discipline.

But instead of purging the working class from their unpleasant ailments it reaffirmed their identity. They made it their own. And even though it has been stylised as a cultured gentlemen's sport boxing is one of the most visceral of sports.



Boxing is powerful - it's one of the oldest and most exciting of sports. For centuries it has permeated Western societies. Throughout sports history boxers have enacted our anxieties about race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Its bruising and bloody confrontations simplify everything. For the duration of a fight boxing strips life of its frills. It's about the winner and a loser. Good and evil. As the struggle of two bodies boxing is a metaphor for opposition. It represents the struggles between opposing qualities and idealised values. In modern times, boxing dramatised conflicts of nationality, race and religion. And throughout history painters, poets, novelists and photographers have been there to record and to make sense of the bruising and bloody confrontation.















Boxing holds a fascination that cannot be denied, but it provokes a debate and divides opinion. It's at once noble and savage – a choreography played out in the ring in which noses are broken and bloodied and brains shaken loose.



The West Ham Boys Boxing Club is located where London's true heart really lies - the East End. East London today is rough. It's working class. To live here you have to toughen up. You have to fight. Not only for respect or standing within the communities of East London but you also have to fight prejudices imposed on you by outsiders. In today's economy and in today's society many young people find it difficult to find their place in society, especially if they're from disadvantaged backgrounds. Unemployment is high - especially among the young. They are only just starting out and they've already lost. The odds are stacked against them. Their youth is seen as problematic, dangerous, and violent. They're not only fighting for a title, they are fighting for a place in this world. These are young men, who face the immediate challenge of the ring, are searching for a place in this world. They're on the verge of adulthood, and are learning how to hold their ground in a hostile world the hard way. Their fight in the ring is emblematic. Boxing teaches young men discipline, honour and pride. It builds their character and keeps them off the streets. They box, they don't fight. It gives them stamina and identity. It prepares them for a world that doesn't give up anything without a fight.









David Brunetti is the photographer behind these images. He trusts the documental eye of the camera to reveal a universal struggle. His photographs show vulnerability, defeat and exhaustion. The young boys are marked with scars, bruises and cuts. Their jerseys are drenched in sweat. Their faces are tired and glisten. Beads of sweat drip from their brows and hair. We can feel their tension, their exhilaration, their exhaustion, their pain, the victory and loss. We can empathize with them and feel their pain. These images allow us to enter their world - take a peek.





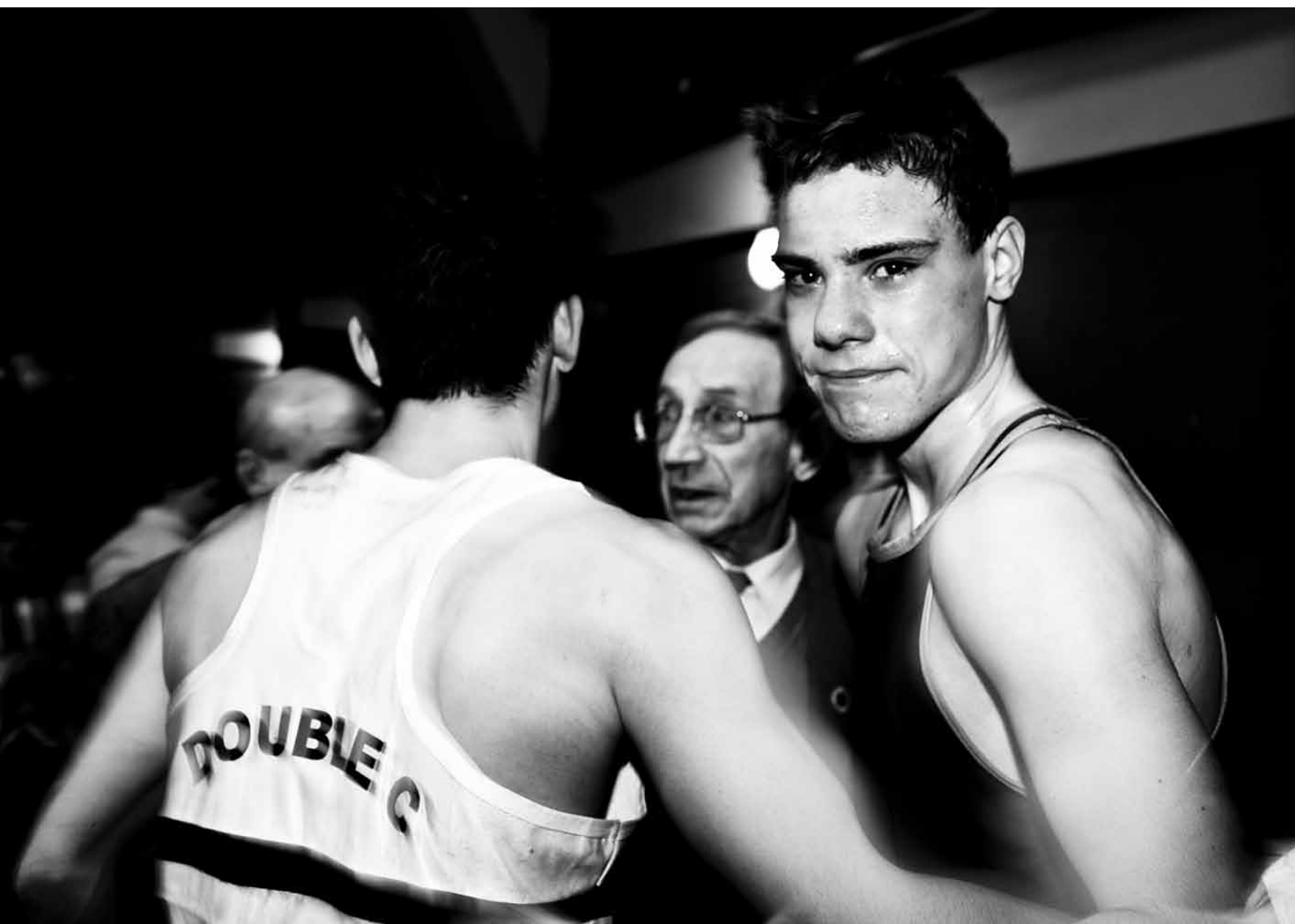


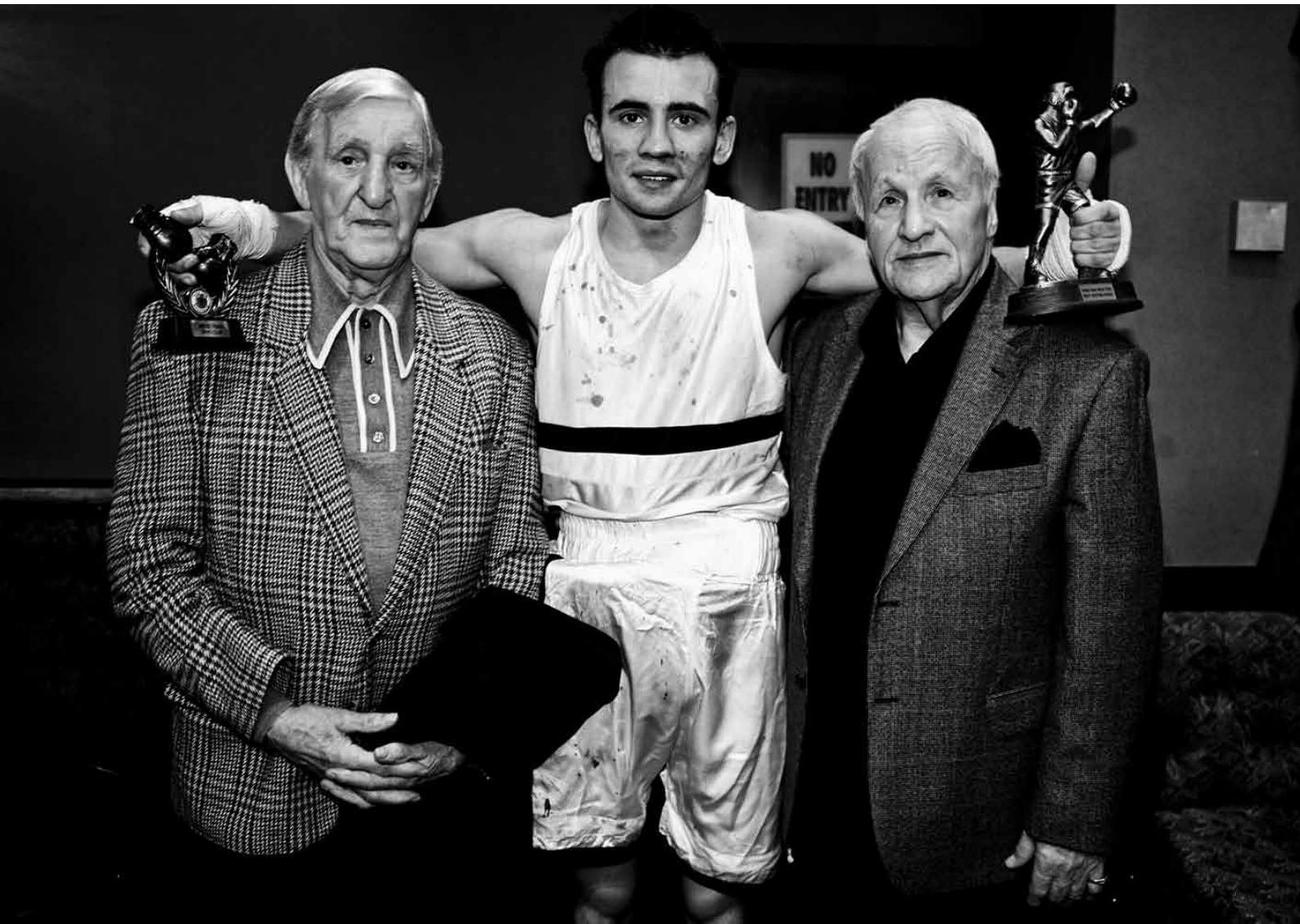














David Brunetti is an independent photographer who specializes in humanitarian issues and social-documentary photography.

David is available for new assignments both in the UK and worldwide.

For more information please visit David's website or contact him directly.

**david@davidbrunetti.com**

**+44 (0) 208 533 8049**

**www.davidbrunetti.com**