The airport photographer

I'm a photographer based at Heathrow Airport in London. Airlines often commission me to take photos of aircraft or their staff. But mostly I concentrate on getting shots of celebrities as they come through the arrivals hall. I sell some photos direct to the daily newspapers and celebrity magazines, and the rest go to a picture agency.

On a typical day I look out for the flights arriving from Los Angeles on the major airlines. **(1)**…… Most of them fly either with British Airways because it's such an established company, or with Virgin Atlantic because the owner, Richard Branson, moves in those celebrity circles.

You've got to cover all the incoming flights though – Victoria Beckham took to flying with Air New Zealand at one time. I know the ground and security staff here very well. **(2)**…… That can really make all the difference to being in the right place at the right time.

I've been working here for many years now, so I've seen thousands of celebrities throughout the decades. In my experience, the old stars are the best. Joan Collins is my favourite – she sends me a Christmas card every year. Mick Jagger also knows me and always says hello. People like Paul McCartney and Rod Stewart are lots of fun, too. **(3)**…… I guess that's because they can see the value of it.

Today's big stars are generally okay and give you a polite smile. I won't mention names, but there are some who wave me away rudely, whilst others even have their managers popping up from nowhere, saying: 'no pictures' to the waiting photographers. **(4)**…… You've probably seen photographers leaping around in this manner on TV footage of celebrities arriving at airports and wondered why they do it – well often that's why.

(5)…… One time, Naomi Campbell refused to come out from behind a pillar. She called up for a buggy and hopped on the back, so there I was chasing it, trying

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to get a shot of her. But the next time I saw her she'd just got engaged and came up to me to show me the ring.

But if today's stars don't make my job as easy as it was, today's technology more than makes up for it. When I started out it was much less sophisticated. I remember when the British queen's granddaughters, Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, were just babies. I heard that their mother, the Duchess of York, was coming through Heathrow with them. She was carrying both babies in her arms. **(6)**..... I realised I had a good chance of getting one of them onto the front page of the newspaper, which is always the photographer's aim.

So I called my editor to warn him, took the shots, then rolled up the film, labelled it, put it in an envelope and organised for a motorbike dispatch rider to pick it up, take it back to the newspaper offices and have it developed. It had taken three hours. Today, using digital cameras and a laptop, the office gets images in three minutes.

A You get the impression that they enjoy the attention.

B I was lucky enough to get some lovely shots of them.

C Often it's one of them who tips me off that a big star has just come through passport control.

D That's where you generally find the celebrities.

E The could be appearing in the arrivals hall at any time, night or day, of course.

F When that happens, they have to do what we call 'duck and dive' to get a shot.

G With some stars, however, you're never quite sure what you're going to get.

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