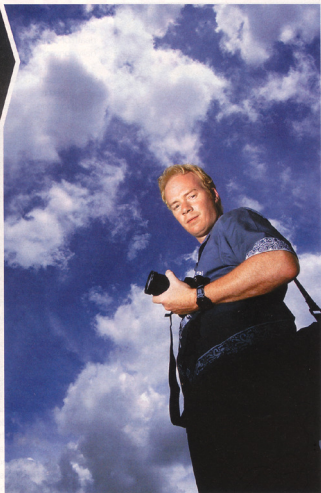


**Marty Pouwelse**  
Storm chaser,  
32, Toombul



## ordinary people

**I'll drive 300km chasing a storm to get photographs of lightning, particularly cloud-to-ground strikes, or CGs. It's not often you see where lightning contacts the ground, it's always behind the horizon or obscured by a building.**

CGs are the most photogenic. You get the big thick bolt with lots of streamers. The best shot I ever got was a cloud-to-ground strike taken from the roof of Toombul shopping centre.

I work as a breakfast show producer at [radio station] B105. It's an early start. But it allows me to get out early and chase the afternoon storms. During storm season, I'll jump on the weather bureau's website, find out where the storms are going and how fast. If it's a big enough storm cell, I'll chase it. I've had my dud chases, driving 300km for no storm. But when the storm's on, you don't think about where you're driving and how much driving you're doing. If there's activity, you're just chasing the storm single-mindedly.

It's always a compromise between getting the great photo and keeping myself safe. There have been times when I've been standing under an umbrella, wanting to get the better shot, and a couple of lightning strikes have gone off incredibly close. You have to make a decision to get out of it

and get back into the car. The sound is incredible. When you're really close, it sounds like a snap, and then it's gone. It's bizarre. Intensely loud.

One in four people struck by lightning dies. It affects your nervous system. I know someone who was standing near her sink when lightning struck and it came up through her plumbing and she got an offshoot. After the strike she'd get tingling in her fingers when she wore jewellery.

I remember as a kid being thrilled by storms. I'd stand on the back patio watching them. I'd be on my own. No-one else was into it. Then I got a car and I was able to chase them.

I was a very shy boy and did not want to ask many questions for fear of looking stupid. That was a big problem. Storm chasing was a product of me being so shy. I wanted to get excited by something and it got me out of my comfort zone. Now I'm always asking questions.

I'll never be satisfied. I'm always after the perfect lightning strike. It's a never-ending quest.