

HORIZONEWS #67

IMAGES, THOUGHTS AND NEWS FROM HORIZON PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

“Antelope Canyon is one of the most famous and most photographed canyons on earth.”

Utah.com

Landscape Paparazzi

Steve Gottlieb

Many year’s ago, I received a very typical assignment to be done in a very atypical venue: my job was to photograph the CEO of a major insurance company for their annual report...at a cocktail party. The CEO loathed having his picture taken, especially in a formal situation, so my job was to shadow him at an unobtrusive distance and get an image that had a CEO/annual report flavor, that is, relaxed, confident, upbeat, friendly, professional.

As I was shooting away at Mr. CEO, all of a sudden a throng of paparazzi poured into the room. Flashes were firing at a rate of several hundred per minute. I couldn’t see what all the fuss was about, so I elbowed my way into this photographers’ scrum. There was Elizabeth Taylor, arm-in-arm with George Hamilton. I took one single shot (right), and then was content to let the aggressive paparazzi push me aside so they could make their living and I could go back to making mine. But those brief moments made a big impact on me. Being surrounded by other photographers, I realized, instantaneously depletes my creative energy. And while I respect many celebrities—Liz Taylor, for one—I don’t feel totally comfortable in their presence. Bottom line: becoming a celebrity paparazzi would never be my cup of photographic tea.

I was reminded of the circumstance of being enveloped by other photographers when I recently took my workshop group to Antelope Canyon, in Page, Arizona. That slot canyon [mentioned in the previous Horizonews in a discussion of fine art photography] is the landscape equivalent of Elizabeth Taylor. Exquisitely beautiful, supremely photogenic and a perennial magnet to photographers. Given the dozens of cameras firing simultaneously, you might label Antelope a “paparazzi landscape.” But my reaction to Antelope was very different than to Elizabeth. The hordes of camera-totting people surrounding me did not ruin the experience, nor did the fact that thousands of photographs are taken there *every single day*. The place was like a shrine that transcends all distractions.

I wasn’t sure how my group would respond. Given the large crowds and the hectic pace with which we (and everyone) were herded along a common pathway, would they enjoy the experience? The vibe on the truck after the visit said YES! And would they get good shots? The pictures on the next three pages say YES! This portfolio would surely be among the very best images taken that day...or week...or month.



This single exposure of Elizabeth Taylor represents my ninety second experience as a paparazzi and my entire oeuvre as a celebrity photojournalist.
Photo: Steve Gottlieb



Here are members of our group exiting Antelope Canyon and returning to daylight. There were more people-moving vehicles than you see here...and this was just one place where tourists embark on their canyon exploration/tour. Shuttling in tourists by the thousands every week is a formidable logistical operation overseen by the Navajo tribe.
Photo: Rhonda Doty

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[Clockwise from top left] **Rhoda Levine** captured the classic undulating shapes of the canyon walls, with the shapes accentuated by the deep black shadow areas. **Ginny Lockman** spotted a tumbleweed that literally “fell through the cracks.” The deep black background transforms a prickly plant into a elegant filigree. In spring, summer and fall, there are a few magic minutes when a high sun streams light through the narrow crack above to spotlight the canyon floor. The Navajo guides know the exact time; they use a plastic shovel to launch dust from the floor high into the cavern, which makes the light, which would otherwise be invisible, visible. **Bill Daniel** nailed the magic moment, with the beam of light accompanied by a particularly lovely set of canyon walls.

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[Clockwise from top left] **Roger Singley** opted for more cave and less light beam. Getting this shot with a large area of canyon without including any people demonstrated good timing or good luck.

Esther Steffens turned one of her color images into B&W for great impact. When color is vibrant, as in the canyon, it can be difficult to “throw it away,” but B&W is an ideal tool for calling attention to great shapes, as in this image.

Eldad Cohen found a spot where the light beam was narrowly focused. The beam hitting the person on the head gives the shot some added drama; unfortunately, we didn’t have a clothing stylist available to help us out.

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There are two basic approaches to Antelope Canyon photography: First, point the camera above everyone's head (as seen in some prior images) or, second, turn the presence of people, which would generally be considered a problem, into a positive compositional element. Here are three very different, and very effective, examples of that:

[Clockwise from top left] **Sherm Levine; Yair Egozy; Esther Steffens.**

There is a ten stop exposure differential between pure daylight—that would include both the sky seen through the canyon crack and also where *direct sun* hits the canyon walls and floor—and the shadow areas in the canyon. That's too much range for a camera to capture...which make a canyon an ideal location to use HDR.

Horizon Western Adventure Past & Future



We had a fabulous western adventure this spring. Here's our group mugging in Zion Park — just one of the many awesome sights we visited. What's on tap for next year? A dramatic change of atmosphere, from the dry, red rocks of southern Utah and northern Arizona to the lush green forests of the Pacific Northwest. We'll be going for a week in May...exact dates to be announced soon.



Photos: Steve Gottlieb