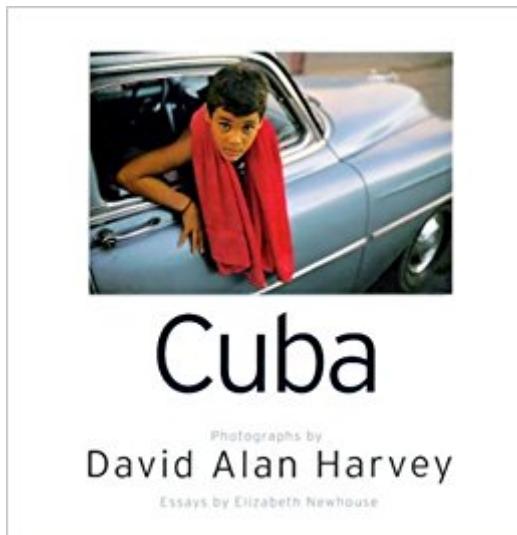


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# Cuba: Island At A Crossroad



## **Synopsis**

This book displays the island of Cuba in both pictures and words. It explores the present-day concerns of the Cuba people, which include surviving under an impoverished government and an uncertain future without Fidel Castro.'

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Cuba is a visual delight and, with more than 100 color photographs, David Alan Harvey shows you why. Combine Harvey's images of life in Cuba with Elizabeth Newhouse's terse yet thorough style and you have a perfect match for this book. I have recently visited Cuba and found that Harvey's photography captures the essence of Cuba's greatest resource - the Cuban people. Strong and proud, though materially impoverished, the people of Cuba are rich in relationships, music, dance and defiance. Harvey, a photographer for National Geographic, has spent the last 20 years photographing Latin America and is skilled at capturing people in their everyday environment. Newhouse's chapter on the turbulent history of Cuba is excellent. Without pulling any punches about the glaring deficiencies of Castro's totalitarian Communist government, she writes with objectivity about life in Cuba and she is able to show, with sensitivity to the culture, the strength found in the people of Cuba. "But above all Cuba is music," Newhouse writes, "expressing Cubans' intense joy in life, sensuality and machismo. Garcia Marquez calls Cuba 'the most dance oriented society on earth. And that Fidel Castro is the only Cuban who can't dance, should have warned the people about him from the start.'" The downside of this book is the publisher/printer's very poor reproduction of Harvey's photos. Almost all of the photos are too dark and thus rob the effect that

David Harvey intended. Considering that National Geographic is distinguished for its stunning photography, I called the publisher and asked about this blunder and was told that the printer, not the photographer, was culpable. This book celebrates the passion, color and sensuality of the Cuban people, and, even with the gray backdrop of Communism framing their existence, and the deficiency in the photo reproduction, the Cubans are still able to shine through the gloom and darkness.

Recommended.

David Allen Harvey is a veteran National Geographic photographer. His style reminds my of one of the most significant photographers of the 20th century, Henri Cartier-Bresson, who photographed exclusively in duotone. But Harvey's photos are in glorious color, and are striking for their lack of artificial style. I have not been to Cuba, but having studied Harvey's deceptively simple photos, I feel I have gotten as close as I can legally, given US restrictions. And the book makes me want to go I do not believe, as other reviewers say, Harvey is exploiting anyone. Like the best Geographic photographers, he simply took pictures of things as they are, not as he wishes they were. I do not believe he glorifies poverty by any means -- quite the contrary. Harvey's pictures do reveal an impoverished culture -- a proud one -- struggling to keep up with the rest of us. I strongly recommend the book.

David Alan Harvey, long one of the most outstanding photographers at an outstanding publication, National Geographic, has produced that captures well the beauty, spirit, and reality of life in Cuba. Harvey's masterful compositions with his trademark use of strong, vibrant color remind one of Alex Webb's photographs of Haiti and the tropics. I suspect that those who complain about "dark pictures" have missed the point; the photographer seems to deliberately have exposed for the highlights, leaving his shadow areas to fall to blackness and lending the subjects in his photos a timeless anonymity. And the harsh reviews that Harvey has "misunderstood" Cuba seem to be misguided on the part of some reviewers. I guess they'd rather deny that the poverty reflected in some of his photographs actually exists, and bash him for merely bringing a non-Cuban perspective to the land they love with rose-tinted vision, rather than address the actual points his work raises.

I have traveled to Cuba and I have followed the photographic work of David Harvey for more than 20 years. While neither makes me an expert I do know that the Cuba Harvey captured is the Cuba I saw and felt when I visited several years ago while on a teaching visa. Harvey caresses his subjects with intensity and love. He blends in - he becomes a part of the scene - while not changing the

scene. He is both a photographer's photographer and a man of the people. We hang with the saxophone player in Trinidad on page 45, we roam the late night streets of Havana on pages 92-93, we are unseen as we observe the barbershop/front bedroom on page 166. I highly recommend this book to those who love photography, those who love people and want to learn something about another place, to those who desire to sit awhile in a culture other than their own, and to those who simply love images and the gift a fine photograph can bring to your life. It is a true gift. This captures the vibrant yet gentle Cuba of today, of now, not of tightly clutched notions that died 50 years ago.

Do not believe the nay sayers reviewing here, photography can never be a medium that wants or even care to project and objective view of a place, God forbid! What it does, and that one of the most accomplished artists of his generation proves here page after page, is to show us how the best photographer is one who doesn't merely catch a moment, nails a perfect shot, but conveys his feeling of a place and its people, and so much that is in between and that words can hardly translate, which is exactly where the subjectivity of and in photography, the inherent genius of the medium, comes in. Harvey's photographic mastery lies in the poetic, not the descriptive. He has what the greatest masters of the Arts do have, an intuitive knowledge of the composition, of the right angle, coupled to a sure sense and experience of color hues and volumes, again not to nail a shot, not to do pretty, snappy glossy travel or documentary images but to give that photo the resonance of a written poem, to translate all these elements as feelings, be they lingering or fleeting ones. Also, anyone just a little familiar with his career knows that he wouldn't even bother to go out and shoot if he was to lose his great empathy for people, a quality that defines who he is, maybe even more than his photographic talent. I doubt any of the Cubans he met, some many times over, found any less than a friend in him. It is their loss that some do not recognize this in his pictures.

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