

WHERE TO STAY

Photographers on the road have definite ideas about where they like to rest and revitalize. Here, several well-traveled shooters recommend some of their favorite American hotels:

ANTONIN KRATOCHVIL leans toward the Breakers in Palm Beach. "I like the stuffiness of it. If you visit the hotel, they expect you to wear a tie, but if you're staying there you can be as scruffy as you want to be."

DOUG KIRKLAND favors the San Diego Princess Resort. "It's beautiful, and has individual bungalows right on the beach."

ERIC MEOLA has fond memories of the Sheraton Royale in Key Biscayne. "It's very low-key, it's right on the ocean, it's pink, and it has lots of green grass and palm trees."

PETER READ MILLER likes the Mansion on Turtle Creek in Dallas. "They really take wonderful care of you—even if you walk in wearing a photo vest."

Above right: Birney Imes "painted" the Purple Rain Lounge with his car's headlights for this twilight study. Below: The Sheraton Royale in Key Biscayne.



COURTESY SHERATON ROYALE

LYNN GOLDSMITH says that "in L.A., the Sunset Marquis is my favorite place to do portraits of celebrities or people in the music industry. I always get extra work just from running into people in the lobby. Also, you can park underneath, so you save money on valet tips."



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Delta Detour

The Mississippi Delta—a flat, sparsely populated region stretching from Memphis to Vicksburg—is only a two-hour drive from home for photographer Birney Imes. But he says it feels like another world. He began taking pictures there in 1983:

I'd go to the Delta for three or four days at a time, just traveling by a kind of intuition. The names of towns on the map often caught my attention—Alligator, Panther Burn, Bobo, Hushpuckena. When I got to a town, I would talk to people and show them pictures I'd taken and ask where the locals liked to gather. They usually pointed me to the juke joints, the social clubs of the Delta.

Tiny, rickety places, juke joints seem to spring up out of the soil. The owners often paint and decorate them with wild and colorful schemes. Many of the joints I photographed changed hands and burned down and went out of business over the six or seven years I was doing this. But I got to know a lot of the people who worked and played in them.

Shooting in juke joints made the photographic process a very social thing.

That may be why it struck such a chord with me. I tend to work in a very leisurely manner, and it's important for me to feel comfortable with the people around me. I might visit a juke joint for three hours and only take a picture or two. I could be riding past the Riverside Lounge in Shaw, Mississippi, and stop just to say hello to Alice, the woman who runs the place, or get a Coca-Cola, and not even take a picture. It would often happen that I'd be sitting there visiting and suddenly see the place in a way I hadn't photographed it before. The picture was a by-product of the visit.

On one of my last trips to the Delta, I passed the Purple Rain Lounge, in a town called Duncan. The facade was decorated with Christmas-tree lights, so I decided to come back at twilight when they were on. When I returned, I asked the owner if I could photograph

the front of the club. He watched me as I set up my 4×5. By the time I was ready, the light was pretty much gone. So I opened the shutter, then started driving my car around the parking lot, painting the building with the light from my headlamps. Needless to say, the owner was amused. I made several exposures that way. (The moon is oblong because of the length of the exposure.)

The point is that I'm not very methodical in my work. I don't decide to travel to Cape Cod to photograph redheads next summer. I kind of stumbled onto the juke joints. And because they were close to home, I could take a more relaxed approach to them. That turned the photography into a process of discovery.

Birney Imes lives in Columbus, Mississippi. His Delta photographs can be seen in Juke Joint, available from the University Press of Mississippi.