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David Graham Sparta, Wisconsin

"I think some photographers take their best pictures in places they're not familiar with, because they see things that are out of the ordinary," says David Graham. "But others need to *understand* the place they're photographing. They have to be part of it to see its nuances." Graham, who takes his best pictures in America, is an unabashed member of the latter group. "I need to be inside the culture that I know," he says.

That inside view drives *Taking Liberties* (Pond Press, \$30), Graham's latest book. Yet his pictures aren't dulled by the enervating irony that often overcomes photographers working in familiar settings. If they aren't out-and-out funny, Graham's pictures are fun.

It makes sense, then, that Graham's favorite place to photograph is Route 66, the mythically funky American highway—specifically the stretch from west Texas to Kingman, Arizona. "I always find new pictures there," he says. "A particular town will look really good, or I'll meet a person who'll turn me on to something I didn't see before." Graham claims he has a hard time finding pictures along his native East Coast. "The density of development makes it hard to get a clear view of things," he says. "But when you're driving in the Southwest, you can see what's happening a mile ahead."

Graham's work depends heavily on description, which is why he has shot mainly in large format, either

with an 8x10 or a 4x5 field camera. But lately his preferred travel kit has included the 4x5, a Fuji GW690 6x9cm rangefinder, and a 2¼-square camera—either the Mamiya 6 rangefinder or, when he's doubling up assignments for publications such as *Fortune* and *The New York Times Magazine*, a Hasselblad 501C SLR. "A lot of times I'll cheat with medium format," he says. "Instead of setting up the view camera so I can use movements to control per-

spective, I'll just climb up on top of the car to straighten out the vertical lines. A friend recently commented that I'm always trying to take an 8x10 photograph."

For Graham, the smaller format has a liberating effect. "When I shot only with the 8x10, I could go for days without taking a picture," says the photographer, who makes prints up to 30x40 from his color negatives using a Durst 8x10 enlarger. (You can see them in his show at New York's Ricco/Maresca Gallery through May 4.) "But when I started doing books, I realized there are images you want in a book that you might not include in a show, because they serve as links between ideas. So I shoot a lot more than I used to." —R.H.

Graham made this photograph in Sparta, Wisconsin, "the center of the fiberglass universe," with an 8x10 Deardorff field camera and Schneider 240mm f/9 G-Claron lens, which is moderately wide-angle for the format. His exposure was 1/4 second at f/64 on Kodak Vericolor III (VPS) film.