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by Kim A./gmb.net

Photo journalist/historian Kim Gottlieb-Walker is currently working on a book chronicling her work on several John Carpenter films. The role of film/tv still photographer is one of great importance: freezing a moment of a scene sometimes cut, sometimes not. Freezing a character in our minds or perhaps making us more interested in the character or world.

Kim's colorful career began in the late 1960s and this discussion covers her beginnings and what it was like to work with John Carpenter. Please visit her sites to see more and watch for her upcoming book.

Photo copyright Kim Gottlieb-Walker www.lenswoman.com



IHYWD: I've recently discovered how important photography is to recording history. Reading your biography, it's as if you always knew this Kim. What is it like to capture a particular moment in time within your lens?

Kim Gottlieb-Walker: "I've always thought of myself as a historian who preserves moments in time, never as an artist creating something from scratch. There is a certain rush involved with capturing the decisive moment, a thrill, a deep sense of satisfaction, especially when lighting and circumstance made it a challenge."

IYWD: You've produced photo journalism and entertainment still photography. Which is more demanding? More satisfying?

Kim: "Most of my photo journalism was either covering events of a certain political or social significance or shooting during interviews, both of which I enjoyed very much...but despite the general slow pace of shooting movies, so much happens in front of your lens that is exciting - the director working with the actors, special effects being rigged, etc. and it's been lit by Directors of Photography to capture the right mood, the actors are co-operating and acting their hearts out...it's a pleasure to be in the right spot at the right time to document it all!"

IHYWD: I appreciate your work ethic in respecting your subject. You described your role to journalist Lynne Eodice as "a recording angel, who's there to document what happens for posterity."

Kim: "It's also like being the family photographer...documenting all of the effort that goes into creating a film or tv show...being there to serve the needs of the entire production, including documenting sets, wardrobe, etc to help continuity, as well as capturing the mood, the action, the essence of the project in single frames. I don't think of it as "taking" pictures, but as a mutual giving...a gift between the subjects allowing me to photograph them and my eye and skill to make it the best it can be."

IHYWD: You were enrolled in UCLA at a very important time in film history. What was

it like to be a student and subsequently a teaching assistant during the 60s/70s?

Kim: Very exciting. My teacher at film school, Bill Kerby, also ran a lightshow at a club that was in a different location each week, where the Doors (also from UCLA) would perform, I helped with the lightshow and began shooting stills to go with some of the interviews he did for the Free Press...so I shot musicians like Jim Morrison and interviews with people like Jimi Hendrix when I was barely 20. I was also on Bill's crew when he made his master's thesis film about the summer of 1967...which took me to the Monterrey Pop Festival, the celebration of the Summer Solstice in Golden Gate Park as guests of the Grateful Dead and to the peace march at Century City which turned into a police riot in which our whole film crew was assaulted - my political awakening. [People can sign up for my free email political newsletter at my website www.Lenswoman.com]"

IHYWD: I understand you met Debra Hill on an independent production in the mid 70s. When she recommended you to John Carpenter were you aware of his work?

Kim: "Debra was the script supervisor on a terrible little indy comedy I shot for which was never even released...but she remembered me and when she produced and co-wrote *Halloween* with John, she called me to shoot the stills for it. I wasn't really very aware of John at that point, but working on *Halloween* was a blast and I became part of his film-making family."

IHYWD: Others mention John Carpenter is very precise, he knows what he wants. I understand he requested scenes be restaged for you to shoot. Did he also allow you carte blanche to record moments in the respectful manner you do?

Kim: "I didn't have blimps (sound proof casings) for my cameras when I shot *Halloween*, so any scene with dialogue in a quiet space needed to be re-acted for me...also, when Nancy Loomis dies in the car, because it was shot through a car window, they restaged that for me as well, pulling the movie camera out and letting me get in there and direct them to get the angles I needed. John knew the value of stills to help sell the film, so he always would let me have the scene for a few minutes...though he would often pace behind me flipping his keychain saying : "Hurry Kim!"...and I would."

I also had complete freedom to shoot whatever was happening on the set...and the actors would often spontaneously pose for me if the light was good. After that, I had blimps and could shoot during every scene. I also had John and DP Dean Cundey trained to point when I aimed the camera at them, because just standing there doesn't make an interesting photo...LOL..."

IHYWD: Of the five Carpenter films you shot still photography for, which was the most fun to shoot and why?

Kim: "They were ALL fun...great co-operative casts and crews..."

I was pregnant when we shot *Christine* (it finished when I was in my eighth month!) so Don Morgan, the DP would have the crew build barricades to protect me from flying cars and debris and the whole crew felt as though my belly was community property. But each movie was tremendous fun to work on."

IHYWD: Which was the hardest?

Kim: Actually, *Halloween 2*, which was produced by John and Debra but directed by Rick Rosenthal was NOT fun. He was very inexperienced, didn't trust John's wonderful crew and didn't understand why I was there nor the adjustment process before each shot where everyone finds the spot they need to work from, and kept throwing me off the set. It was infuriating and frustrating."

IHYWD: For the *Escape from New York* shoot did you take both b&w and color photographs or just b&w?

Kim: "I shot both color and B&W...but I only have the b&w negatives...I don't know what became of all the original color from *Escape*, or the B&W and color from all the other films. I have the prints I made at the time and have digitized them for posterity. Many studios simply throw out the "art" when they think it's no longer needed...a terrible waste and shame."

IHYWD: Were the night shoot conditions of *Escape from New York* more of a challenge to photograph?

Kim: "VERY challenging...sometimes we were shooting at under 5 foot candles (the equivalent of lighting the scene with five candles!) Some shots were done at F1.2 at a 30th of a second...so the focus had to be EXACT and I couldn't even breathe lest the movement blur the photo."

IHYWD: When you photograph a particular character, Kurt Russell's Snake Plissken for example, do you employ a certain technique or use of light to bring out that character?

Kim: "Dean Cundey created the lighting working with his gaffer Mark Walthour...they handed me beautifully lit scenes on a silver platter."

IHYWD: Any antidotes from the ...*New York* set you wish to share?

Kim: "Lots! But you'll have to buy the coffee-table photo book I'm working on to read them all!"

IHYWD: Speaking of your book about your experiences with John Carpenter. Can you tell us more about it?

Kim: "It will have 100s of behind the scenes photos as well as production stills with commentary from John, his co-producer/assistant director Larry Franco (who went on to become a MAJOR producer), Kelli Cole who was the 20 year old publicist on *Escape*, Dick Warlock, Kurt's stunt double and others. Titan Press in the UK is planning to publish it...when I finish it...which could be a few more months yet, at best."

IHYWD: Anything else you'd like to add?

Kim: "Working with John was one of the great joys of my life."

Image of Kim & Kurt Russell used with permission.

Visit [Kim Gottlieb-Walker's Official Site](#).

and if you're into virtual worlds you can find Kim at [secondlife.com](#).

Regarding [secondlife.com](#), Kim says: "For any of your readers who have avatars in Second Life, search for me (*KimLenswomanPhotographer Writer*) and my Gallery "Kim's 1960s and 70s Counter Cultural Photography Gallery"...and go to the second floor to see an exhibit of never before seen photos from *Escape from NY* as well as 100s of photos from the late 60's and 70's of rock, reggae and culture heroes of the period...and photos from recent San Diego Comic-Con movie guest appearances."

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