

Cowboy Chef
Robert McGrath

Prescott's
Whiskey Row

A Quiet Hike
to Paradise

Why Al McCoy
Doesn't Hike

APRIL 2008

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

BEST RESTAURANTS 25 IN ARIZONA OF OUR FAVORITE PLACES TO GRAB A BITE TO EAT



PLUS:

- Tucson's Abandoned Cemeteries
- What's Up With This Cover? [See page 9]

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PHOTOGRAPHY

The Right Touch

Photoshop has become a household word. At this magazine, however, it's something we use sparingly. This month, we used it on the cover. Here's why.

BY NOW YOU'VE PROBABLY NOTICED the striking photograph on the cover of this issue, and you might be wondering why *Arizona Highways* has never featured this place before — a place with a quaint little diner standing like a neon mirage in the middle of nowhere.

The answer is simple. It doesn't exist. Oh, the diner's real. Dot's serves up some of the best home-style cooking you'll find. That's why it's featured on our list of the state's best restaurants. To highlight this iconic eatery, we lifted it from its earthly setting in Bisbee and set it down in front of a mythical backdrop. If the cover of this issue caught your attention, mission accomplished.

What we did is called photo illustration — digitally melding disparate elements into one believable fantasy. This isn't the first manipulated photo *Arizona Highways* has ever published, but it breaks new ground in our use of digital technology to create a cover from multiple photographs.

The idea of doing a photo illustration came about when we decided to feature one of the top restaurants on the magazine's cover. The challenge was finding a restaurant or diner that would be visually appealing. As you know, many of the best restaurants are known for their food and service, not necessarily the beauty of their architecture and surroundings.

Creative minds went to work on the project. The concept progressed rapidly during the thinking-out-loud phase as we



brainstormed ways to treat the cover. Once the base elements for a strong image were decided, execution and refinement got under way.

At that point, photographer and Photoshop wizard Edward McCain was brought into the loop. Edward, who is a long-time contributor to *Arizona Highways*, first photographed Dot's Diner in Bisbee, and then, on his computer, experimented by blending different backgrounds with the classic diner. As the cover evolved, several mockups were e-mailed back and forth between McCain's studio in Tucson and the magazine's office in Phoenix.

"For this photo illustration, I wanted the image to be somewhat believable," McCain says. "Even the sky, which is a Photoshop-generated gradient. When I'm working in Photoshop, I give an image certain visual rules and then work within those rules to create the strongest expression I can. Tools for this include composition, lighting, perspective, color, shape, form, content, and anything else I can bring to the image."

After 16 hours of computer time, McCain's final image was approved and put into production. From our perspective, it was time well spent — it's important that we stay on the cutting edge and explore the digital technology available in modern publishing. For us, however, it's the kind of thing we'll do only with a very specific purpose in mind.

"By removing the diner from its natural environment and placing it on a desert playa at sunset, I believe we created a very striking image that'll make people do a double take," McCain says. "I think that's part of the function of a successful cover image. As long as the image is clearly identified as a photo illustration, I don't have a problem with it. I do have a problem with photographers retouching images to 'improve' them without letting the reader know. One of the great assets of photography is that of believability. In my role as a photojournalist, I never want to lose that credibility."

It's the same for *Arizona Highways*. We don't want to lose your trust in the beautiful photography published in our magazines, calendars and books, so we'll never abuse the technology at our disposal. Our litmus test is very narrow and stringent when making the decision to modify an editorial photograph, and we'll always let you know if we do it.

— Peter Ensenberger, Director of Photography

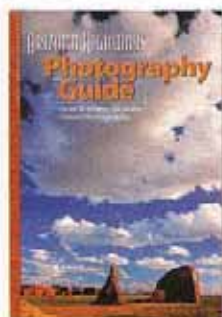


PHOTO TIP

Because of the mechanics of sensor design, digital images always look a little softer than they really are. Almost all digital photographs can be improved with some sharpening. When software sharpens an image, it looks for an edge and then bumps

up the contrast along that edge. So it doesn't have much effect on a clear blue sky, but dramatic effect on something with a lot of texture, like a brick wall. Over-sharpening can wreck a photograph. The resultant halos make edges look artificial and

magnify the noise. Sharpening can always be added to a photograph, but once applied, it can't be undone. So don't go crazy.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Look for *Arizona Highways Photography Guide*, available now at arizonahighways.com.

online For more photography tips and information, visit arizonahighways.com and click on "Photography."

For casual family dining in Willcox, try Plaza Restaurant. It's open 24 hours a day and features Mexican food and American fare, from burgers and fries to a Friday night fish buffet that's popular with the locals. Plaza also offers takeout service, banquet facilities and an ultra-friendly service staff. 1190 W. Rex Allen Drive, Willcox, 520-384-3819.

RED RAVEN RESTAURANT

Williams

Beyond its red front door, Williams' Red Raven Restaurant is a charming, intimate space, loaded with local artwork and plenty of charm. And beyond the kitchen doors, you'll find chef David Haines whipping up some of the finest meals in the area. His focus is on comfort food — the kind of food you'd want to eat snuggled up on a Sunday afternoon — but with a

decidedly fresh twist. Take, for example, Haines' basil-butter salmon served with cranberry-pine nut couscous, or his tenderloin of pork scaloppini. Add fine service to the great menu and the aforementioned ambience, and the Red Raven is one restaurant you'll want to visit again and again. 135 W. Route 66, Williams, 928-635-4980 or redravenrestaurant.com.

THE TURQUOISE ROOM

Winslow

The Turquoise Room at La Posada Hotel and Gardens has its origins in a railroad car. In 1935, Mary Jane Colter designed the private dining car for the *Super Chief*, a train that ran from Chicago to L.A. She dubbed the dining car The Turquoise Room, and the modern version of the restaurant, opened in 2000, replicated many of the original accents — green brocade booths

and leather-and-wood chairs, to name a few. Just as elegant is The Turquoise Room's menu. It features a variety of entrees that incorporate fresh ingredients flown in from as far away as Ninilchik, Alaska, as well as plenty of homegrown items, among them piki bread made by local Hopi women. 303 E. Second Street, Winslow, 928-289-2888 or theturquoiseroom.net.

LUTES CASINO

Yuma

Although Lutes Casino is currently one of Yuma's most beloved restaurants, it wasn't always like that. In fact, the building that houses the restaurant — which serves up popular diner-esque lunches and dinners — was once a pool hall where the patrons were notorious for illegal gambling and other bad behavior. Today, however, crowds line up outside

during the winter months when the weather's cool and sunny, and many of them order the special, a \$4.50 cheeseburger topped with an unusual condiment — a hot dog. 221 S. Main Street, Yuma, 928-782-2192.

BONUS: DOT'S DINER

In case you missed it, Dot's Diner is featured on the cover of this month's issue. Like the other 25 restaurants in the story you've just read, Dot's is one of the state's best. The 10-stool eatery, which is named in honor of Dot Bozeman, the restaurant's first cook and bottle washer, is a blast from the past if ever there was one. The next time you're in Bisbee, check it out. Old Douglas Road, Bisbee, 520-432-3567 or theshadydell.com. ■■■

Kelly Kramer is a Phoenix-based writer and a frequent contributor to Arizona Highways.

