Hometown | Joseph Szabo

FOREWORD

Maybe something like this has happened to you.

It's a night like any other, in a bar like any other. A band, like any other, plays covers: Beatles, Ramones, Creedence, Kinks, Sly and the Family Stone. At some point, the atmosphere and attention in the room shift. The music isn't incidental anymore: locked in an unassailable groove the band members know—you see it in their eyes—that their playing is tighter, more urgent, more commanding than it's ever been.

Bound together inside that sound, everyone in the bar wants the moment to last, and everyone knows it can't.

Joe Szabo's photographs carry that same sense of heightened, fugitive immediacy. *Here is a moment*, each photo declares. *It won't come again. Remember it.* The spontaneity and candor of his pictures help explain their appeal, but Joe's artistry—sustained effort, a clear vision—has ensured that his work remains vital and influential across five decades.

In *Hometown*, transience and permanence align. The photos that Phil Bicker and Joe selected for the book reflect places that, in Joe's words, moved him "in their uniqueness." They also capture suburban scenes from an era—the 1970s and early '80s—that forged a million memories: kids on minibikes at all hours; manicured lawns and sagging porches; muscle cars shaped like teenage dreams; tender light spilling through doorways onto sidewalks at dusk …

There's a clever saying to the effect that nothing conjures the good old days like a bad memory. Joe Szabo's quiet, riveting photos remind us that cleverness is not the same as truth. Sometimes, the good old days are just that: days that won't come again. We should remember them if we can. They made the world as it is for us, and as it will be for others when we're gone—imperfect, fleeting, beloved.

Benedict Cosgrove
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