

BENEATH THE

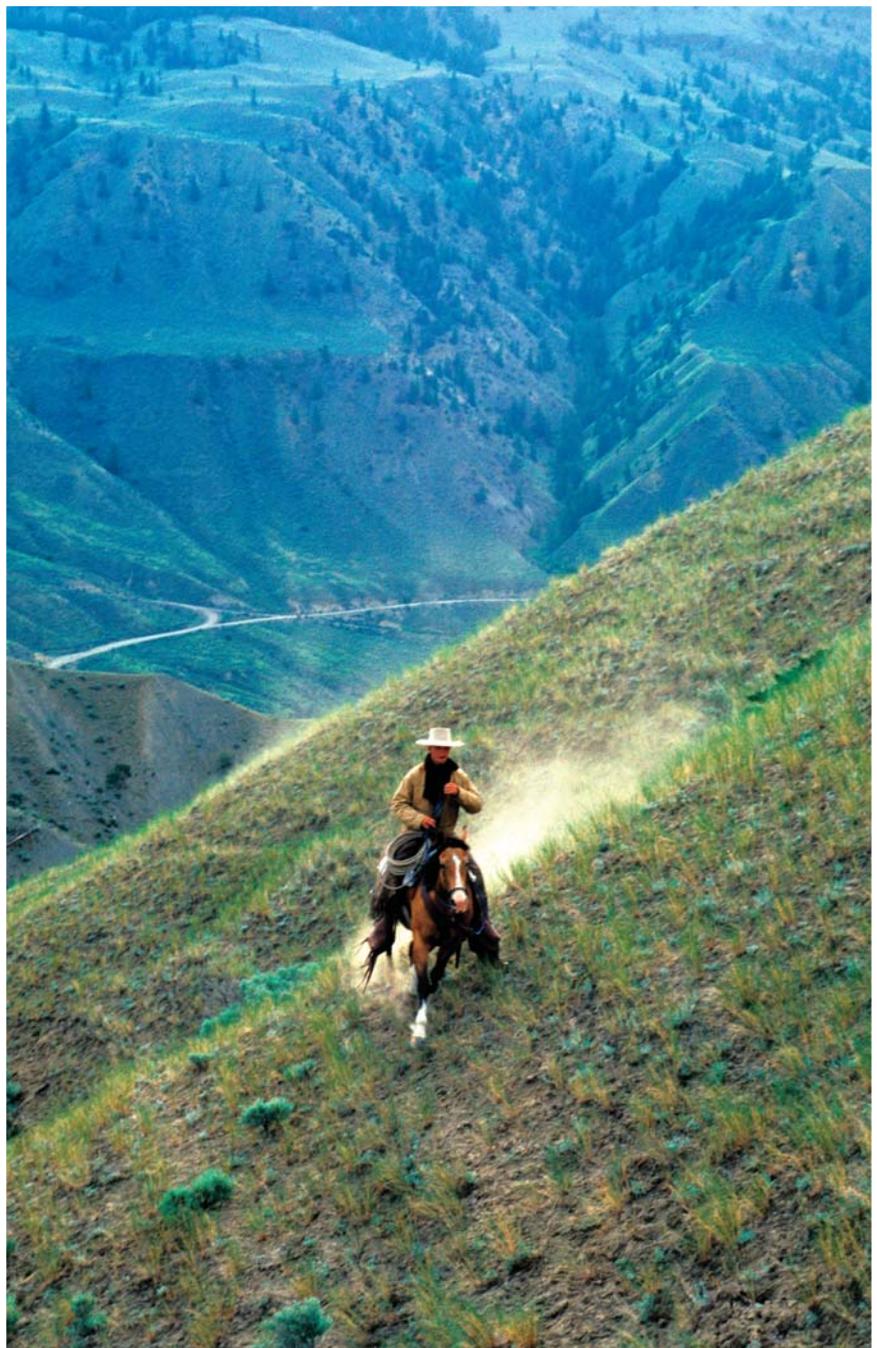
Photographers Who Get It

Alberta's hot with Hollywood this year. "Go west ten minutes down the road," draws rancher Marty Edge who's worked on film sets for the odd decade or two and who right now is tilting thoughtfully backwards dangerously close to the fall line in his old pine kitchen chair. "They're supposedly filming Colorado, go east and it's Mexico, south and it's somewhere else. Directors love this province."

Photographers too. Three are featured here and prying them out from behind the safety of their cameras proved one, in particular, right elusive. Ask those same three to explain what makes the prairie light, the Alberta foothills and rangeland special or what makes the cowboy way of life grab hearts worldwide – and they all go quiet, introspective and thoughtful.

Each photographer is in the super-successful bracket, Todd Korol, Kim Taylor and Pat Price, and are supremely expert at sliding seamlessly into Alberta's landscapes. From pasture, to log cabins, to hand-tooled chaps noticed atop an old corral rail... wherever the different personalities of their subject material reside, these photographers slip into the mind frame unique to each location. It's pure pleasure spending time in their company.

Kim Taylor is a woman morphing into becoming supremely at ease with her talent and capabilities and, I'd guess, who's worked hard at that goal. Tall, slim, fiercely elegant, here is a face that will look beautiful at a hundred with timeless



Mark Elliott checking the draws for bulls on the historic Gang Ranch of British Columbia.
Kim Taylor: "When I arrived at the ranch that morning," she remembers, "I looked at the infinity of huge spaces there and wondered how on earth I could capture that feeling."

PHOTO BY KIM TAYLOR

PRAIRIE SKY

By Pam Asheton



PHOTO BY PAT PRICE

Renowned Alberta horseman Bill Collins silhouetted against the combined cattle drive of the Church and Lamb family ranches. "As far as having a signature or favourite photo I really don't, except for my kids. Longevity and hard work has afforded me the opportunity of getting and having good photos." Pat will soon be publishing a book of his photography.

bone structure-to-die-for. Her annual Daytimers and calendars are knockout bestsellers, jumbling days of the year together with high-gloss ranch life photographs often accompanied by wonderful quotations. Horse whisperer Ray Hunt reminds us that horses can teach us forever, Doris Bircham dispatches home truths with Saskatchewan firmness. This year Kim has absolutely captured a ranch branding on one page by downsizing ten different photographs and overlaying them over one big shot. The different angles of a day captured in different stages simply accentuate the action kaleidoscope.

Every single order mailed out gets a scribbled note included personal connection is important to this lady. Her office may look piled high with slides (she's thinking about digital) and storage CDs in what appears to be chaotic jumbles, but she effortlessly finds a particular disk of a cattle drive from two years back I've asked about in minutes. About eighty percent of her photographs she shoots on horseback, with a specially adapted camera harness. I ask if she's ever used flash when in the saddle and about her horses' reaction, and she giggles.

Her words slide into each other; she works out a thought right in front of you and perhaps the reason she is so instinctive on finding a new or better angle to photograph a perspective. "My images," she writes me in an email later, "not only tell a story....they all have a story. Maybe it was the warmth in the light, or was it the glistening sweat on a hard-working ranch horse... the weathered hands that had worked this land since they were childlike....I shoot from my heart."

Collared in the offices of newspaper, the Cochrane Eagle photographer Pat Price exhibits all the characteristics of the cornered glazed stare of a rabbit-in-your-headlights-just-before-impact when asked for a byline photograph of himself. Sitting uneasily on a wooden bench by the infamous Westlands Bookstore as I set up the shot, we both notice a brunette watching. "He's a famous photographer," I call out (the impulse was irresistible) and almost lose my subject material right there as he threatens to speedily exit.

Price is on contract for Reuters, a worldwide news wire service. His signature photographs also distinctively stamp the outside front page each week on his local newspaper owned by longtime publisher, Jack Tennant. "Reuters picked me up in '85 when they

picked up United Press Canada," Pat explains, "I took their last ever photograph at a hockey game then typed in, 'The last picture to move on the UPC wire, thank you and goodbye.' " He laughs, savouring his closing line.

His bread-and-butter specialty is sports – hockey, football, rodeo - and he might be surprised as just how highly regarded he is by his colleagues who equally covet dinner invitations as he's a fiercely accomplished cook of the first water. I complain that sports editors always seem to use people falling into water jumps when it comes to covering horse events and his mouth straightens, eyes narrowing with cynical-around-the-edges humour. "I look for wrecks." He shrugs. "It's what sells."

Like Kim Taylor, Price has a book of Alberta's ranching foothills life firmly in

crystal clear focus as a future project, from photographs taken over decades. His motives, though, are completely different, with simple admiration for early homesteaders and ranchers and cowboys top of his shooting list. He shakes his head, wondering, amazed at the resilience, the toughness, the discipline needed day after day. "I couldn't do it," he says simply, while adding he wishes more ranches would let him capture, document their way of life.

I know from a story of Jack Tennant's that sometimes Price will drive his ancient gas-guzzler somewhere and sit, waiting, for fifteen minutes, seeing if something might happen. It sounds erratic and is anything but; he's watched wildlife move in precise corridors for years, watched fingers of sunlight walk down shadowed hills at certain times, or



PHOTO BY TODD KOROL

Rodeo riders in the badlands of Writing-On-Stone

Todd Korol is fascinated by portraits of the individual. "The ranching community," he remarks, "has always been generous, always let me in."

thought about leaves falling against a backdrop of a blue hazed Devil's Head. Sometimes he admits an idea can take years to happen.

Or, he smiles, "sometimes you just see it when you get there. And you have to forget the inner image that may be in your mind." He is a complex man with an unerring ability to be in the right place for that split second shot that tells you everything.

Equally charismatic is Todd Korol, loosely Calgary-based, although these days he's travelling the globe on commissions piling up at speed from international newspapers and magazines. Korol shot dynamite photographs years back for the now deceased Equinox magazine (absorbed into Canadian Geographic)... some readers may remember a certain Cowboy Culture feature article co-written by Ian Tyson.

"My parents probably thought I was a weird kid," Todd remarks leaning across a coffee house table. "When I was eight-years-old, my son's age, I loved the country, loved the farm, loved driving a disking tractor across the fields. Then,"

he shakes his head, mouth edges tilting upward, "when I was 14, I discovered Winnipeg, the art galleries and art and paintings, architecture. My life kind of divided after that."

Back, he goes on explaining, when he did that Cowboy Culture piece, and before that really, when he was working and photographing range life, individual faces and cowboys, "that was a pure time in my life."

"I was," he remarks, "probably making a quarter of what I earn now, there was time to play, to be a cowboy, to be with cowboys. It was good to be alive; I'd wake up and think that."

"A camera," he insists, "is a passport into people's lives. The ranching community has always been generous, always let me in. A cowboy would invite me for an hour and I'd end up spending the day, talking, taking photographs, working. I'd try and be interactive, to the point where they wouldn't notice you any more."

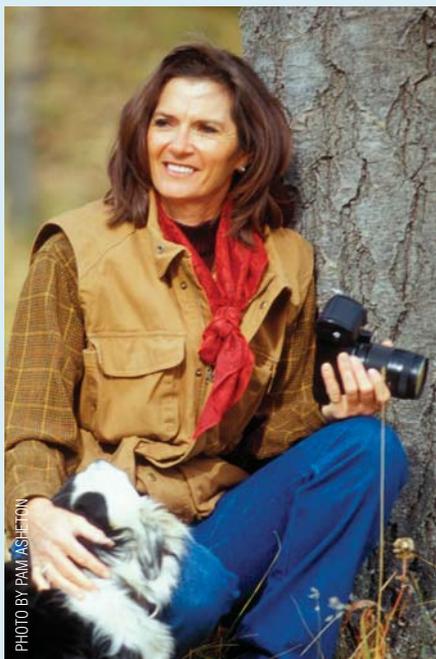
Korol is known for using a prodigious amount of film; say 15-20 rolls of film a day. "That's 720 shots," he exclaims, "and perhaps I'll get one really outstanding

photograph. Sometimes you'd get three minutes of great light. All day you'd be taking what you knew were crap shots with indifferent light and then suddenly you'd get one magical picture."

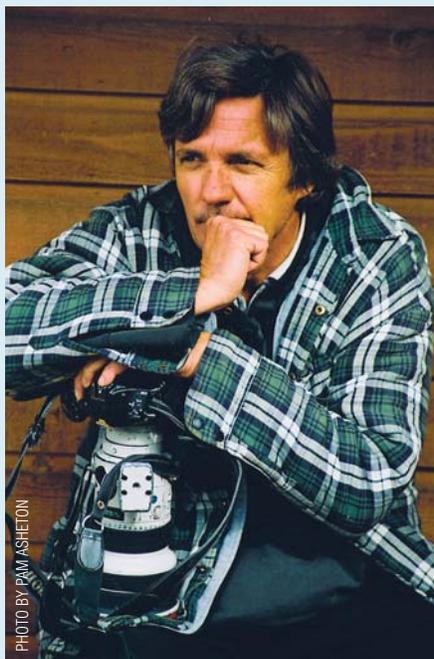
These days he's in love too with Central America, Mexico, Cuba. "The light's magical," he gestures wildly, "there's such political tension there too, the air almost fizzes with that energy."

Rangeland detailing, he reminisces, may be on a backburner right now, "but it's something I think about all the time. I want to explore the landscape this next time, no people in it, because the landscape's changing in our lifetime too." I notice he drives an environmentally friendly vehicle and he admits his family's lifestyle is conscious of the impact of the human footprint. He wants to use colour, large portraits. "Grittier, more real," he feels, "black and white can be too romantic."

"I remember," Korol's smile easily slices through deepening shadows of dusk, "a cowboy looking one day across a view that would take your breath away and remarking it was part of the pay."



Photographer Kim Taylor is in love with documenting ranch life and has two book projects firmly in mind to honour the historical impact.



Pat Price has infinite admiration for the ranching community. "There's no segregation," he maintains, "if there's work you share it."



Todd travels the globe shooting for an international clientele ranging from Sports Illustrated to Rolex. He published the book "Harvest" and contributed to many others, including the Day in the Life series.