Fascinating, paradoxical Cuba has a long and colorful history. Discovered by Columbus in 1492, the island was one of imperial Spain's first footholds in the New World and its last colony there. From the sack of Santiago by English freebooters in 1662 to Teddy Roosevelt's charge up San Juan Hill to Castro's revolution and the 1962 missile crisis, Cuba's turbulent past and difficult present belie its tropical beauty and the joyous, ebullient, resourceful people who spice its multiethnic melting pot. David Alan Harvey's superb, richly evocative photographs celebrate the place itself and its extraordinary inhabitants: their vitality and humor, their ingenuity and courage, and above all their indefatigable spirit. Complementing Harvey's compelling images, Elizabeth Newhouse's insightful text presents an overview of Cuban history and, drawing on conversations with men and women from many walks of life, describes what it is like to live in Cuba now and looks at what might be expected for the future. Shunned by the United States and impoverished since the Soviet Union cut it loose in 1991, Cuba is in the throes of a painful transition as it struggles to uphold a 40-year-old revolution that began with high hopes but seems now on the verge of failure. To survive their economic plight, the Cuban people must call on all the creativity and resourcefulness for which they are famous, especially in their never ending scramble for U.S. dollars. But in spite of their economic woes, they remain as welcoming and as winning as ever. This unforgettable portrait captures the uniquely Cuban spirit and the lovely, lush Caribbean landscape, which have seduced and delighted visitors for centuries.

My Personal Review:
I have traveled to Cuba and I have followed the photographic work of David Harvey for more than 20 years. While neither makes me an expert I do know that the Cuba Harvey captured is the Cuba I saw and felt when I visited several years ago while on a teaching visa. Harvey caresses his subjects with intensity and love. He blends in - he becomes a part of the scene - while not changing the scene. He is both a photographer’s photographer and a man of the people. We hang with the saxophone
player in Trinidad on page 45, we roam the late night streets of Havana on pages 92-93, we are unseen as we observe the barbershop/front bedroom on page 166. I highly recommend this book to those who love photography, those who love people and want to learn something about another place, to those who desire to sit awhile in a culture other than their own, and to those who simply love images and the gift a fine photograph can bring to your life. It is a true gift. This captures the vibrant yet gentle Cuba of today, of now, not of tightly clutched notions that died 50 years ago.

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