

# THE COWBOY WAY

Photographer Scott Baxter's stirring images strive to capture the soul of America's West

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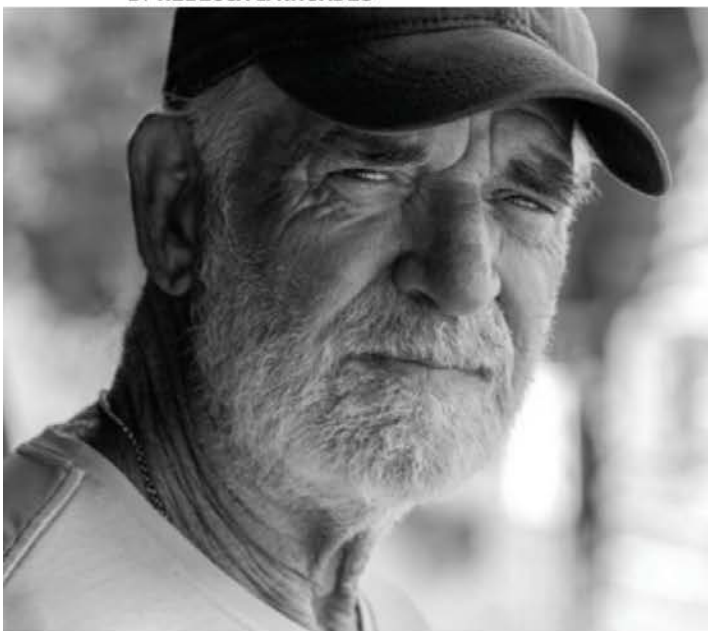


PHOTO BY KEVIN STURMAN



PHOTO BY SCOTT BAXTER

**The cowboy is** an iconic image of the American West. But beyond the stereotype of ropin' and ridin' gunslinging heroes in hats and spurs is a centuries-old industry in Arizona – one supported by hardworking men and women who continue to possess the very traits that typically define their celluloid counterparts: a lifelong connection to the land, a sense of rugged individualism and pride in where they come from and their family's heritage.

It was these traits that first attracted photographer Scott Baxter to the lifestyle. His ability to capture the honesty and simplicity that comes with the culture through hauntingly profound portraits and sweeping landscapes helped propel him and his subjects into the art spotlight.

The self-taught lensman with over 30 years of commercial experience is best known for his award-winning 2012 book, *100 Years, 100 Ranchers*. An official legacy project for Arizona's centennial, the coffee table book profiles in stunning black-and-white photos ranchers whose families have been tending land and cattle for a century or more.

Even if you're not familiar with the book, you may still know Baxter's work. His images regularly grace the pages of *Arizona Highways* and *Alta Journal*. He also has works in the permanent collection of the Phoenix Art Museum, Desert Caballeros Western Museum in Wickenburg and Western Spirit, Scottsdale's Museum of the West. One of his photographs is currently on display in the juried Arizona Biennial exhibition at the Tucson Museum of Art, which runs through February 2025.

Tightly framed portraits are a hallmark of Baxter's work. Sun-kissed freckles and weathered creases serve as canvases for a young boy's twinkle or the weary gaze of an elderly cowpoke, exhausted after a hard day's work. In an age where digital manipulation reigns, Baxter prefers to work with black-and-white film. Baxter also processes all of his own film.

"When you take the color out of a photograph, it becomes more driven by content and composition, especially with portraits," he explains. "I just love the tones and depth that you get in a black-and-white photo. There's a timeless quality to it."

Baxter's work keeps him on the road for weeks and months at a time, traveling and shooting working ranches, dude ranches and editorial subjects across America's Western states. Home, though, is Scottsdale. After living for a number of years on the X Diamond Ranch, a historic working cattle ranch outside of Springerville in Northeastern Arizona, Baxter and his wife, Barb, moved to the Cattle Track Arts Compound in March of 2021.

"It's very private, and I get a lot of stuff done," he says. "I'm mostly doing a lot of art, and I'm still doing the Western art thing. And Cattle Track is a very conducive place to be an artist."

Learn more at [www.scottbaxterphotographer.com](http://www.scottbaxterphotographer.com).