



## *Cage Call* by Louie Palu



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### Commentary

If Louie Palu's project includes what might be characterized as an "iconic image," this would certainly be it. First, it is a marvelous image—a great gesture captured at the perfect moment, in such a wonderfully engulfing light, all presented in photographic symmetry and balance. Just terrific.

But, beyond the virtues of the image is an underlying strategy that is worth mentioning. By the way, I have no idea if any of what follows is factual relative to Palu's thoughts, but it may be. We never discussed it, so I don't want my comments to misconstrued as his.

Palu selected this image— from all those in the project—for repeated use in his publicity. It appeared on postcards, press releases, announcements, websites, and the cover of his book, *Cage Call*. I have no doubt he selected this image for the focal point of his marketing because it is a wonderful image. His strategy may not have reached any further than that. However it came about, it was a strategy that is worth thinking about for a powerful reason: One image, carefully selected and used repeatedly, increases the visibility for the project as a whole. The very term "iconic" means an icon, a symbol, a shortcut. By selecting one image to represent the project, it amplifies the project through its repetition.

Too often I see photographers use multiple images from a project to represent it. They'll use one image for the postcard, another for the press release,

a third for the web page, etc. They mistakenly think that using a collection of images will show breadth of the project and perhaps build interest. In fact, it does just the opposite. Seeing an assortment of images promoting a project dilutes the message. Simply said, casual viewers won't connect the dots and may never know that the half dozen different images they've seen are all part of a single project. Repetition may be boring for us as producers, and the virtues of spreading the publicity across a bunch of images might be more satisfying relative to getting our work seen, but the single iconic image does a much better job of promoting the work and fixing it in the mind's eye of the audience.

So, I'm suggesting a specific strategy: With each project you complete, select one image that will be the icon for that project. Use it everywhere. Build identity for the project with that single image. Pick it carefully and then commit to it. Of course, it will help if the image is a stunning and memorable one— like this one from Louie Palu.