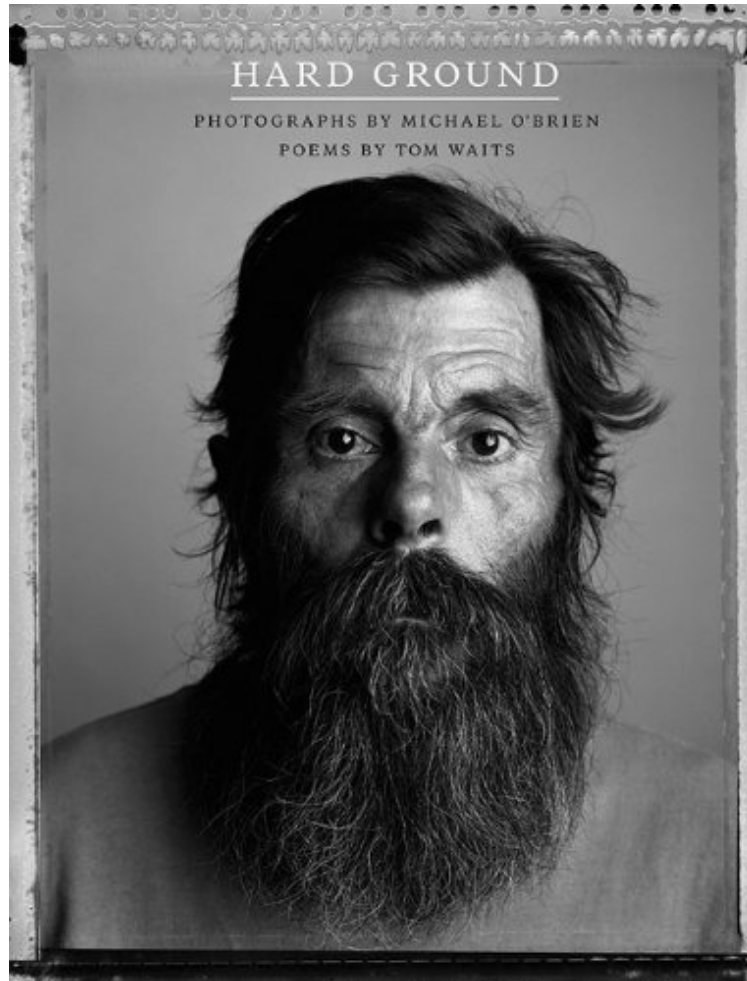


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## Hard Ground

*Tom Waits*

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**Tom Waits : Hard Ground** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hard Ground:

18 of 18 people found the following review helpful. This is a special book...By photomanI buy a lot of photo books and to be honest, I end up selling most of them. But some are just so special they are keepers. Hard Ground is a keeper. The black white photography is wonderful, the poetry by Tom Waits is a great match for the photos and the brief stories about the people are heartbreaking. This book really makes you want to learn more about these people. This is the new face of America. Take a good long look, then ask yourself how far you are from being one of these people. Not as far as you think. Buy this book.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is a Magnificent Book. Belongs in any Library.By pluto1999I'm a photographer and own hundreds of monographs that present all of the great names of photography. This volume -- with an exquisite agreement of subject, technique, and presentation -- takes its place with the finest of them. UPS Guy just handed me this book, and after my initial viewing I felt compelled

to post this review in the hope that others who come across the listing will also get themselves a copy. These are powerful images, executed with mastery of an extremely difficult technical approach, interspersed with wonderful pithy verses by Tom Waits. This is one of the finest and most important books of photography to appear in recent years. 12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Absolutely haunting

By Bethany A. Seales  
There is not too much I could say about this gorgeous book; the eyes of its subjects speak volumes for themselves. The Waits poetry additions really make the book, and on more than one photo I felt myself tearing up. Just lovely, and an important reflection on the people who have been left behind in our country. My dad is a musician and songwriter, and I am purchasing him a copy for Father's Day...I believe it could easily inspire a bout of beautiful and melancholy songwriting out of him.

Michael O'Brien got out of his car one day in 1975 and sought the acquaintance of a man named John Madden who lived under an overpass. Their initial contact grew into a friendship that O'Brien chronicled for the Miami News, where he began his career as a staff photographer. O'Brien's photo essays conveyed empathy for the homeless and the disenfranchised and won two Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards. In 2006, O'Brien reconnected with the issue of homelessness and learned the problem has grown exponentially since the 1970s, with as many as 3.5 million adults and children in America experiencing homelessness at some point in any given year. In *Hard Ground*, O'Brien joins with renowned singer-songwriter Tom Waits, described by the New York Times as "the poet of outcasts," to create a portrait of homelessness that impels us to look into the eyes of people who live "on the hard ground" and recognize our common humanity. For Waits, who has spent decades writing about outsiders, this subject is familiar territory. Combining their formidable talents in photography and poetry, O'Brien and Waits have crafted a work in the spirit of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, in which James Agee's text and Walker Evans's photographs were "coequal, mutually independent, and fully collaborative" elements. Letting words and images communicate on their own terms, rather than merely illustrate each other, *Hard Ground* transcends documentary and presents independent, yet powerfully complementary views of the trials of homelessness and the resilience of people who survive on the streets.

"Other collections of lost souls (Richard Avedon's *In the American West* comes to mind) are different. . . . We meet O'Brien's people one on one. Their otherness is removed. The photographs engender compassion and empathy. If that sounds simple, it is because it is simple. And, as you know, being simple is very, very difficult. *Hard Ground* is a rare and powerful book." (John Loengard, *Life* magazine photographer and picture editor, and one of *American Photo* magazine's 100 most influential people in photography)"If I can think of a book to relate to this one, it would be James Agee and Walker Evans's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. That book was photographed in 1936 during the Great Depression and published in 1941. It had an enormous influence and still does on the way photography and writing can work together as a catalyst for social change. . . . I think *Hard Ground* has this potential." (Mary Ellen Mark, internationally renowned photographer and author of sixteen books, including *Seen Behind the Scene*, *Exposure*, and *Twins*)

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About the Author  
For more than thirty years, MICHAEL O'BRIEN has worked as a freelance photographer for national publications, including *Life*, *National Geographic*, *Esquire*, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, *ESPN Magazine*, and *Texas Monthly*. He has also published the book *The Face of Texas*, and his work is housed in the permanent collections of the National Portrait Gallery and the International Center for Photography in New York.

TOM WAITS is critically recognized as one of America's most influential and significant songwriters. In a career that has spanned four decades, he has delved into the worlds of recording, literature, and live performance, as well as theater and film as both actor and composer. His songs chronicle the lives of both the misbegotten and the entitled while wrestling with life's big themes: love, loss, war, grace, madness, God, corruption and beauty. Waits has won two Grammy Awards and an Oscar nomination.