

The Online Photographer

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SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2006

All the World's a Stage

by **Ctein**

Many years ago, there was an interesting photography *vs.* privacy lawsuit. A man was photographed in costume at one of those "erotic" Halloween balls in San Francisco by a photographer from one of the skin mags. When his photograph appeared in the magazine the man sued for invasion of privacy. Strictly speaking this wasn't a public venue—anyone could attend, but you had to buy an admission ticket. So, the argument went, participants could reasonably expect a minimal amount of privacy regarding their activities there.

Not so, ruled the courts, after considerable litigation. It was well known that the ball attracted photographers, both private and professional; in fact many people went there to be seen and photographed. Hence, the hapless subject could not insist upon any real expectation of privacy. He knew the score; he just didn't expect be one of the players.

Fast forward 20 years. Any reasonably interesting semi-public event produces a plethora of amateur videos that wind up on the Web. It's a great way for you to see things you may have missed, or to see them from a vantage point different (and frequently better) than yours. But there's no longer a bright shining line between the stage and the audience; which side of that invisible wall you appear on will depend upon the circumstances.

When I got back from the recent World Science Fiction Convention in Anaheim, I could go on line and find all sorts of little videos and photographs by friends and of friends. On the whole, this enhanced everyone's enjoyment; it let me be, vicariously, in several places at once.

It also had interesting ramifications. The nadir of the convention was when bad-boy author Harlan Ellison, showing misbehavior that was a low even for him, *groped* the Author Guest of Honor, Connie Willis, in front of the audience at the Hugo ceremonies. You don't need to hear my opinion of that; read [Patrick Nielsen Hayden](#), item #3. He said it better than I ever could.

This behavior was so unexpected and inappropriate than half the audience couldn't really believe they had seen what they had. After Ellison issued an equivocal apology, he backtracked by claiming, "There was *no* grab; *no* grope; *no* fondle; there was the slightest touch."

Ok, so maybe a big misunderstanding? It was up on the stage distant from most viewers and it was all over in seconds. Easy to misinterpret.

Enter Larry Sanderson who was video recording large parts of the convention, and had a 50-yard-line seat for the Hugos. And enter [Google Video](#).

Busted.

So, smile, we're all on (not so) Candid Camera!

Posted by CTEIN

Ctein's Site

Unique contents © 2006 by Ctein and the commenters

6 Comments:

-  **Carl said...**
Well, privacy issues aside, it's nice to know Harlan is still the same, alive and, er, kicking.
[5:07 PM](#)
-  **Anonymous said...**
Just to show that things look different to different people, I would describe it more as a touch than a group.
[5:22 PM](#)
-  **Anonymous said...**
I meant grope
[5:23 PM](#)
-  **MJ said...**
I would have to say that with most women I know, a touch in the wrong place constitutes a grope. Actually, come to think of it, most men would feel that way about a touch in the wrong place, too. (g)

--Mike
[5:33 PM](#)
-  **Dave New said...**
I could be taken as an 'adjustment' to correct a 'costume malfunction'...
[9:23 PM](#)
-  **colake said...**
1: Harlan is an a-hole.

2: Sure this was not funny, but I think getting very upset about it is out of place.

3: ctein's main point holds: public pictures and videos need to be legal and preserved. For instance it is insanity that many places in the UK you can't video your child's school theatre performance on the chance that you're a molestor (or some such logic).
[4:54 PM](#)

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