

THE MAGAZINE FOR TODAY'S PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

HOTSHOE

I N T E R N A T I O N A L



• **David Bailey: On nostalgia, babes and Bambi...**

Mamiya 7II Medium Format on test

Lady Hawarden: Victorian Postmodernist

Light panels and Transparency viewers

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Ask anyone in the street to think of a fashion photographer, they'll give you one name.
On the eve of a major exhibition devoted to an extraordinary career
Jean Wainwright went to talk to

Bailey...

David Bailey looks and behaves exactly like his screen personality. His career has spanned almost four decades, from fashion photography to portraiture, photojournalism to advertising, film directing to painting. Warm and humorous, Bailey's rapport with his models was evident in his recent Channel 4 documentary 'Models Close-Up': it's a trait that characterised his work when he first established himself in the nineteen sixties. However Bailey claims to be the worst person to answer a nostalgic question. He is adamant that he is not that interested in the past, 'it's over, the images remain, but I'm not one of those people who think, wasn't it great in the good old days.' Those 'remaining' images, taken with a 35mm SLR, cropped, sometimes tilted, with strong lighting and stark backgrounds, still look remarkably contemporary.

Declaring that he doesn't really look at things, citing visual overload, his first artistic influences were Disney and the fragility of Bambi. Bailey suggests that composition is common sense, and that his sense of composition came from his mother's mantelpiece. His style, he claims, has remained essentially the same over the years. By the time he produced his "Young Idea Goes West" and "New York Story" in 1962 he was already under contract for Vogue. It's easy to imagine what made then Editor Diana Vreeland shriek 'Stop! They are adorable. The English have arrived' when, bedraggled from the rain, Bailey, with Jean Shrimpton on his arm, turned up at Vogue's New York offices.

Bailey is warm in his praise for those who helped his career initially, humorous about the laddish rhymes they would make up. 'David Bailey makes love daily, Brian Duffy bald and scruffy' and 'several unprintable ones.' He stresses the importance of a sense of humour. He doesn't like anal people or fanatics. Forthright and provocative, the man who married Catherine Deneuve in jeans and a sweater, photographed the icons of the sixties - Marianne Faithful, Jean Shrimpton, Mick Jagger, John Lennon, P.J. Proby in a crucifixion pose and the Kray's, with their pet snakes, is vibrant and engaging. Cigar smoke and laughter permeate the room. David Bailey never runs out of style. JW

Jean Wainwright. David, over the last few decades you have worked with such a variety of people, and styles of photography have changed. What has interested you stylistically?

David Bailey. I'm never interested in style. I try to keep my photographs as styleless as possible. It's really about the emotion in the picture, not technique or style, that's why my pictures are not that easy to copy. It's not about a way of doing things, it's not a technique. I hope it's about emotions rather than clever photography, because clever photography doesn't interest me. I also like to do things quickly. I get bored if things take too long.

J.W. Some of the images you took in the sixties are so contemporary. You were also one of the first people to take the model into the streets in shoots like "New York Story", breaking the studio mould.

D.B. Yes. I wasn't the only person working in that way, there were other people at the same time: Edouard Boubat, Robert Frank, William Klein and Terence Donovan. I can't take all the credit for it. There's often something in the air. I sort of looked out for real people rather than models. The models seemed so stiff in those days, it seemed a natural way to go, that hadn't been explored. I think it also had to do with the camera's technical changes. The 35mm made it more relaxed. There's a sexual rhythm to the motor drive. There's an irony that people are reverting to using plate cameras again. I've always tended to use plate cameras.

J.W. What about your background, your roots? A great deal has been made of that.

D.B. That's a bit of a myth. I never really spoke like that. It depends who you are with, it's definitely less important now. It counted for a lot. People don't realise how much has changed. I was with Penelope (Tree) then and Penelope was very posh. Catherine (Bailey) is very posh, my kids are very posh. If you had a bad accent there was no way in, you were considered white trash. I think it was also a homosexual thing. A lot of my success had to do with two gay men, John French, and John Parsons, the art director of *Vogue*. It was an

outsider thing, cockneys were outsiders. There were a lot of gays in strong positions who were also outsiders. There was a lot of pseudo snobbishness in those days.

J.W. Another outsider was Andy Warhol. What about your relationship with him, the photographs you took, and the documentary you made for A.T.V. in 1973, where he is in bed with you and so relaxed.

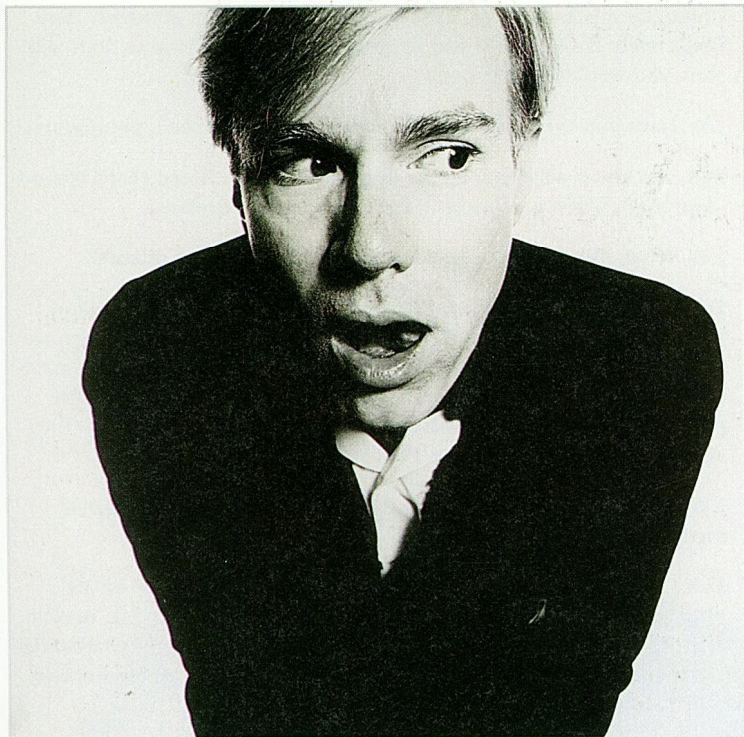
D.B. That was great. I had a lot of trouble though. They took my name off the credits, as I didn't have a documentary ticket in those days. Well again it was trust, I suppose. I probably got him talking more than anyone else. Andy said that he wouldn't do the documentary unless I went to bed with him, so I said 'lets do the documentary in bed'. I was a big fan of Andy's. It was Miki Denhof (editor of *Glamour*) who introduced me to him. She was terrific, she was exceptional. She was one of those art directors who put ten pictures on one spread and you didn't mind. She said that there was a guy that she wanted me to meet, who thinks like you do, and took me to meet Andy. She's been overlooked a bit and should be looked at again. I think in a way Libermann was a bit jealous of her. Libermann used to say to me 'don't do pictures like that for *Glamour*, do them for *Vogue*

J.W. You also documented the Stones tour and went to Baby Jane Holzer's house. (One of Warhol's superstars.)

D.B. I liked the Stones and Mick Jagger was a mate, and the Beatles were a bit silly when they started. They were banal... The Stones came out of music I really liked. I was really influenced by jazz, Duke Ellington, and Stravinsky. It wasn't that I was particularly interested in Rock and Roll because I wasn't. I enjoyed photographing the group and being involved in the whole scene.

J.W. You also made a series of photographs of the Stones with scarves over their heads.

D.B. I had a big argument over that with Mick, because he didn't want



Andy Warhol, *Vogue*, July 1965

Courtesy of David Bailey

to do it. Bianca understood it. I think that he looks like Katherine Hepburn in *The African Queen*. At first Mick thought I said Audrey Hepburn, but when I said Katherine Hepburn he came round a bit.

J.W. You were quite rebellious in those days, getting married in jeans, always in the press...

D.B. That was not done on purpose, that was the way I was. It's like the shoot of the girl with the squirrel, where she is crouching down. Donovan phoned me up and said 'what have you done you've broken a mould.' Terry was the first one to realise this. I didn't realise what a stir it would cause. I told the girl to get on the floor and told someone to fetch me a stuffed squirrel. Now when you look at it it is nothing.

J.W. Have you ever been on a shoot and longed to ask the model to do something but felt you couldn't?

D.B. I wouldn't ask someone to do something that they wouldn't want to do, and if a girl asked me not to use a picture I wouldn't use it.

J.W. Have you ever felt frustrated because of that?

D.B. No because it's usually silly. Things have a way of averaging out. I remember I was fighting once with Libermann in the offices of French *Vogue*, arguing about a layout or something. I was stupid, I was only twenty two. Irving Penn was in the corner. He came over and said 'sometimes Alex will lay out a bad picture and make it look great, and sometimes he will lay out a great picture and make it look bad, but if you're any good you're going to average out.'

J.W. Have you ever had a photo session that went horribly wrong?

D.B. One. I once had an argument with an actor. I was doing a portrait for *Vogue* of Oscar Werner from *Jules et Jim*. He came to the studio. I think it was the Beatles playing, and one of his assistants said that actually he preferred Bach. I said that actually I preferred Bach too, but I didn't think that I'd got any handy. I then asked if he minded sitting on a stool, and he said 'I'm not a male model.' I said 'I don't think that we can continue.' Now I'd laugh around it. I'd be more tricky now. I was less tolerant then. I just thought 'who the fuck is this guy?' We were all being nice. Now I know that it was his insecurity. I'd be more indulgent.

You can do more things with men now that before you could only do with women. Before they wanted men to look like James Bond. It's a shift in a way, with Bruce Weber changing everything. I think that Weber changed things more than any photographer. Men could be narcissistic.

J.W. Have you ever had problems with a female model?

D.B. I had one model who said 'I can't smile because I'm an artist.' She didn't stay in my life for very long... You have to make the best of it. Having the wrong hair is a big problem. I try to keep it simple, then it doesn't date. I hate hairstyles. I like hair either straight up or straight down.

J.W. The models you were working with in the sixties. You were having relationships with them?

D.B. Hopefully...

J.W. Were you able to push them more because of that?

D.B. No, they were young as well, they weren't preconditioned, people hadn't got to them. It was hard working for John French because he was so stiff. It took me eighteen months to throw that off.

His lighting was very good. He used all that reflected light, a bit like movie light that people tend to use a lot now.



Françoise Dorleac and Catherine Deneuve during the making of *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort*, July 1966

Courtesy of David Bailey

J.W. You are quoted as saying that when *Vogue* paid you to photograph beautiful women all day you thought you were on a dreamboat. Beauty, how do you define beauty?

D.B. For me there are all kinds of beauty. There's the obvious beauty like Christy Turlington, or the more extreme beauty like Georgia O'Keeffe. If you look for it there is beauty in most people.

J.W. In your *Box of Pin-Ups* there are very few women, only four.

D.B. Yes there was just Shrimpton and Murray. There just weren't that many women that interested me at that point. There were always more men than women. It's a big dilemma for women, a career, a family, which ever way they go is right... I love women and I hate feminism. I find it really stupid that they have to have a women only exhibition, as if women can't be shown with men. Why do they need something separate? They don't. Women can make it if they want to make it. Georgia O'Keeffe is probably one of the most famous artists in America. I'm not saying she's the best. I think that one of the hardest jobs is bringing up children, and I'm not just saying that to be nice to women. I don't give a shit what women think of me. I don't give a shit what anyone thinks of me.

J.W. Can we talk more about the *Box of Pin-Ups*?

D.B. My first series of works was the *Box of Pin Ups*. I couldn't give it away, although now it sells for a great deal of money. It was ahead of its time, but *Goodbye Baby and Amen* achieved notoriety. It sold over one hundred and twenty thousand copies. That was the biggest photographic book ever. What changed was that people understood it more. There was a great energy in the sixties, that hasn't existed since. Everybody could suddenly have a piece of the cake, there were moulds to be broken. It seems to have gone back to strict rules again. They seem to have crept in by the back door. There's a lot of the state being over protective. Political correctness, I hate it.

J.W. One of your iconographic portraits is of the Kray twins with their pet snakes.

D.B. That was banned because of the court case coming up. We had to wait two years before we could publish it. I was very aware of their power. I wasn't scared of Reggie, but I was scared of Ronnie because he was so unpredictable

J.W. You also photographed Reggie's wedding. You captured Reggie with his new wife and Ronnie touching his mother.

D.B. Ronnie was gay in the old fashioned sense. I think a lot of what I



David Bailey

The Kray Twins, April 1965

Courtesy of David Bailey

photograph is instinctive. Is there such a thing as an accident? You don't really know, and if you knew you wouldn't be able to do it, and then you would become anal.

J.W. Have you ever been surprised when you developed a photograph?

D.B. You know what you are getting when you do it and that's when I stop, that's when you know. I have never been surprised.

J.W. What about in retrospect, as with the Sharon Tate picture?

D.B. I find photography a bit sad, it's usually about death. Roland Barthes had a thing about it - there's always a deadness, like when we look at Victorian portraits of children, it records a moment, and maybe we can find that moment again and maybe we can't. That's where painting is different, painting isn't particularly dead. There is a truth about photography and there's a lie about painting.

J.W. So many artists now are using photography as their preferred medium.

D.B. I never understood that definition. It seems if you are an art photographer you take rather bad pictures, blow them up big, make a one off, and call it art. Lots of things at the Turner Prize are rather bad photography. There's a snobbishness, if its rather big and rather bad, call it art.

J.W. What about the concentration on the abject, on disgust in photography?

D.B. It's not real, it's pseudo-realism. It's as fake as Cecil Beaton. Spew has replaced tinsel. It's enhanced reality because people are desperate to get attention. In advertising in the sixties you could take one picture in Italian *Vogue* and get noticed, now you have to take forty pages. People have to shout above the crowd and there's more of a crowd now. There is only one new talent in commercials and that's Tony Kaye. Yet in a way it was harder in the sixties, because there were less outlets, you couldn't work for *Vogue* unless you had a contract. You had to be on a contract and there were only ever five photographers on a contract. I think I lasted there for sixteen years. Every two years I resigned! It's not elite to work for *Vogue* anymore, they can use someone for six months and then drop them.

J.W. How do you feel about the digital revolution?

D.B. We use computers all the time, but I don't do girls flying on bananas. It's just another tool, just another paintbrush. As long as you use it, rather than it using you.

I think that everything looks a bit the same now, because of computers. Because of computers nothing dates, we have virtual everything, so we've done away with the old fashioned, because there can be no fashion. Writing can still be old fashioned, like Kipling, but the visual thing is just turning around the whole time.

J.W. Do you prefer working in the studio?

D.B. I always prefer the studio because you've got control. I'm doing a movie at the moment and we're building all the sets, so that I can control the lighting. It's really a question of controlling the elements. That's why the studio works better for me.

J.W. You enjoy directing?

D.B. Yes I enjoy everything. I don't think that it is more important than photography. I don't think that Kubrick is more important than Avedon, or Francis Bacon. Everybody is as important as everybody. People tend to think that photography is a stepping stone to some thing else, it's not. Photography is much more artistic than film directing. Film costs a great deal more, it's more about money and is surrounded by more hype.

Facing Page Right

David Bailey

Jean Shrimpton, Town, November 1963

Courtesy of David Bailey