

ANNIE
LEIBOVITZ
AT
WORK

11	PROLOGUE
20	NIXON'S RESIGNATION
30	POLAROIDS
34	THE ROLLING STONES
48	JOHN AND YOKO
52	CONCEPTUAL PICTURES
68	ADVERTISING
78	AL SHARPTON
80	ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
88	DANCE
94	DEMI MOORE
98	PERFORMANCE
102	PEAK PERFORMANCE
106	WAR
116	O. J. SIMPSON
124	IMPROMPTU
126	PATTI SMITH
130	FASHION
140	NUDES
146	GROUPS
156	PRESENCE AND CHARISMA
162	BEING THERE
170	MY MOTHER
172	SARAH
174	SUSAN
176	SHOWGIRLS
180	HOLLYWOOD
188	THE QUEEN
198	THE PROCESS
202	THE ROAD WEST
206	PILGRIMAGE
216	RIHANNA
222	A SENSE OF PLACE
227	AFTERWORD
234	EQUIPMENT
246	TEN MOST-ASKED QUESTIONS
253	PUBLISHING HISTORY
268	CHRONOLOGY
274	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



POLAROIDS

My last car when I lived in California was a '63 Porsche—a 356C Cabriolet. When I had an assignment in L.A., I would throw my equipment in the back and drive south from San Francisco down Route 101. If I wanted to make better time, I would go inland to Highway 5, which is not so scenic, but that section is flat and built for speed. It wasn't a big deal to go 80 or 90 miles an hour, and you could push it to 100. The Porsche wouldn't go that fast, but Janie Wenner's Mercedes would. Then in 1974, because of the oil embargo and ideas about fuel efficiency, President Nixon changed the speed limits on all federal highways to 55. I got tired of spending the whole trip looking into the rearview mirror for policemen and just let them pull me over. I had a new Polaroid SX-70, and I would ask them if they minded if I took their picture. The SX-70 was a beautiful camera—sleek and fast. It was dazzling. I would take two pictures and give the policeman one. They were mesmerized, although they always gave me a ticket anyway.

The picture of John Lennon and Yoko Ono lying on the floor together a few hours before he was murdered was ten years in the making. The first picture I took of John was my first important assignment from *Rolling Stone*, in 1970. Jann Wenner was going to New York to interview him, and I persuaded Jann that I should come too, mostly by explaining that I would be cheaper than anyone else. I flew youth fare and stayed with friends. Yoko said later that she and John were impressed that Jann let someone like me photograph people who were so famous. They were used to the best photographers in the world, and this kid showed up. But John didn't treat me like a kid. He put me at ease. He was honest and straightforward and cooperative. That session set a precedent for my work with well-known people. John, who was a legendary figure, someone I revered, taught me that I could be myself.

I was carrying my three Nikons, with the 105mm lens on the body with a light meter. At one point, while John was talking to Yoko, I was using the 105 to take a reading and John looked up at me. It was a long look. He seemed to be staring at me, and I clicked the shutter. That was the picture Jann chose for the cover when we got back to San Francisco.

Ten years later, John and Yoko's album *Double Fantasy* had just come out, and Jonathan Cott had done an interview with John for *Rolling Stone*. I photographed them at their apartment in the Dakota early in December, and then a few days later I came back with something specific in mind. John and Yoko were exchanging a kiss on the cover of the new album. It was a simple kiss in a jaded time. I thought about how people curl up together in bed, and I asked them to pose nude in an embrace. They had never been embarrassed about taking their clothes off. There was frontal nudity on the cover of *Two Virgins*, the first record they did together. They were artists. John had no problem with my idea, but Yoko said she didn't want to take her pants off for some reason. So I said, "Oh, leave everything on."

I made a Polaroid of them lying together and John looked at it and said, "You've captured our relationship exactly." He had just spent five years being what he referred to as a house husband, taking care of their young son, Sean, and the new album was his return to a musical career. He took me aside and said that he knew that the magazine wanted just a picture of





Puff Daddy and Kate Moss, Paris, 1999

FASHION

Bea Feitler used to tell stories about going to the couture collections in Paris with Richard Avedon in the 1960s. Bea was the art director of *Harper's Bazaar* then, and they would have to see the shows and photograph the dresses in a few days. Magazines battled over who was getting the clothes first. The magazines would have them at night and the buyers had them during the day. Photographers and editors stayed up working around the clock and everyone got drunk and crazy and wild. I listened to Bea's stories with awe. I thought of them when I went to Paris to cover the couture collections for *Vogue* for the first time in 1999. I was thrilled to be in Paris shooting those clothes. They're like pieces of sculpture. I couldn't believe that Anna Wintour had asked me to go. The scene that Bea described was long past, but I would see some great shows in Paris over the next few years—Galliano's show in the Orangerie at Versailles, some amazing Alexander McQueen shows. They were like performance art.

I had done fashion work a few times before. The first time was in 1977 when I went to Plains, Georgia, Jimmy Carter's hometown, to do a shoot with Margaux Hemingway for *New West* magazine. Carter had just become president, and we shot in front of his house, and in a peanut field, and in the back room of his brother Billy's gas station, where the cases of beer



SHOWGIRLS

The photographs of showgirls in Las Vegas were taken for Tina Brown's *New Yorker*. They were a turning point for a project I had been working on with Susan Sontag. She had suggested a book on women and I was reluctant. It seemed too broad a subject—like the ocean. When the showgirls walked into the studio for their portraits, I didn't recognize them. But then they changed into their costumes and that's when I realized what the women's book could be.

THE QUEEN

The pictures of Queen Elizabeth were taken a few weeks before she visited the United States for the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown. I was the first American to be asked by the Palace to make an official portrait of the Queen, which was very flattering. I felt honored. I also felt that because I *was* an American I had an advantage over every other photographer or painter who had made a portrait of her. It was OK for me to be reverent. The British are conflicted about what they think of the monarch. If a British portraitist is reverent he's perceived to be doting. I could do something traditional.

It's ironic that the sitting with the Queen became controversial. I'm rather proud of having been in control of a complicated shoot. The controversy arose about two months after the pictures were published, when the BBC claimed that the Queen had walked out while we were shooting. This was completely untrue, and although they retracted the claim and issued an apology to the Queen and to me almost immediately, the scandal had a life of its own. The story, which came to be referred to as Queengate, wouldn't die. Eventually the head of BBC One resigned because of it.

When I was preparing for the shoot, I thought about using the landscape around Balmoral Castle, in Scotland. I brought this up in the first conference



Elizabeth II, Buckingham Palace, London, 2007

RIHANNA

A shoot can become so charged and intense that you enter a kind of zone. You are taken in. The rest of the world just disappears. Rihanna has a mesmerizing aura. Her confidence in her allure is conveyed in some intangible, mysterious way. I had seen a photograph of her dancing in the street in Barbados—where she grew up—during Mardi Gras, and I had tried for years to set up a trip with her there. Then when we were planning a cover shoot with her for *Vanity Fair*, we began hearing rumors that restrictions on travel to Cuba were going to be lifted. Why not do the Rihanna shoot in Havana? Before the old city was changed forever. It turned out that Rihanna wanted to go to Cuba too. She was interested in Cuban music and the legendary recording studios that were there before the revolution.

Havana was hot and vivid and sexy. There were little bars on side streets and deteriorating 1930s villas and classic American cars. We used a 1956 Lincoln Continental Mark II that had been owned by the wife of Fulgencio Batista, Cuba's last military dictator. Hundreds of people—fans—gathered around wherever we went. Rihanna would get into arguments with her bodyguards, who were trying to control the situation, but that was pretty much impossible. One afternoon I followed her into a particularly large crowd, trying to take her picture, and she took my arm and pulled me in deeper.

