

PHOTOGRAPHER reviewed by JONT MITCHELL

NEWTON'S MONEY SHOTS

A GUN FOR HIRE

Helmut Newton

Taschen, Köln www.taschen.com

The departure of any revered artist for that great studio in the sky puts a finite limit on what of their work, thereafter, can be offered to the world as 'new'. Fortunately for us, Helmut Newton was a prolific artist, and one imagines that his widow June has been left with enough archive material to keep book publishers and admirers of the photographer happy for decades to come.

However, rather than putting together what could have been a random selection of images for this first posthumous offering from Taschen, June has chosen a theme which will be of genuine interest to Newton's legion of fans: the work he shot for fashion catalogues, which, in her own words, "made him financially independent and enabled him to do the work that made him famous". Some of his last fashion editorials are also included. This is work many of us will have never seen; or we'll have seen only a small proportion of it. Putting it all together like this gives it new context.

The title itself is taken from Newton's habit of referring to himself as a gun for hire. "When I was young and poor and starting as a photographer," he said, "I decided to accept any job that came along. I had made up my mind to earn my living taking photos, any photos, and not to treat my craft as a precious art form. I was quite ready to prostitute this precious talent that God had given me to make my living." How many struggling photographers today would take heart hearing those words from a master of the craft? And how many more might learn something from them?

Newton has been an inspiration to fetish photographers pretty much since such animals have existed, and his denial

that personal tastes inspired the fetishistic and SM content of his work has both intrigued and annoyed pervs. Many find it impossible to believe his famously kinky images were created without a genuine pervy sensibility behind them, but, well, he'll never admit it now.

What matters to us here is: what does *A Gun For Hire* offer in that department? In a word: *enough*. Leafing through it is like leafing through one of those thick editions of *Vogue* in the mid-'90s when fashion photography was in love with SM style. You'd turn past pages of fairly sexy fashion, then every so often find yourself in perv heaven. Sometimes a whole outfit, sometimes just a detail would do it. Dominatrix make-up. Beachwear teamed with black wigs, hose and heels. Killer fringes with corsets and stockings. Girls handcuffed to each other. A statuesque blonde mimicking an Allen Jones mannequin. A slinky swimsuit shot from grovel level. It's all here.

A Gun For Hire may not be solid kink from cover to cover, but for Newton's many perv fans, it's definitely a treat not to miss. ●●●●●

