

culture

Asked recently who her style icon is, Eva Longoria replied: 'Marilyn Monroe had that certain something. She never changed her look. But it's also what she exuded – **she was electrifying**. She just had this essence about her that was beautiful'

Unseen Marilyn

Chris Anderson talks to the American photographer Lawrence Schiller about his new book, titled *Marilyn & Me*, which reveals never-before-seen photos of Marilyn Monroe as well as others taken in the final years of her life – and the story behind each of them

The photographer Lawrence Schiller was just 23 when he first met Marilyn Monroe, in 1960 on the set of *Let's Make Love*. At this time, and in 1962 when he met her again just months before her death, he took some very memorable photographs, which appear along with previously unseen images in his new book, *Marilyn & Me* (Taschen). Here he talks about his memories of the star from their brief time together.

What was it like meeting Marilyn Monroe at such a young age?

I'd had a lot of good assignments, but this was the first with a really big star, and I was scared. She had been photographed by some of the world's greatest photographers, and here I am, 23 years old, thinking: "How am I going to get a photo of Marilyn Monroe even equal to one of these guys?" So I went along, and the press agent took me out to the stage where she was working, and I remember she walked past me as if I didn't even exist, so he called out: "Marilyn, this is Larry from *Look* magazine, he's here for a few days." Well, she turned around all of a sudden with a big smile on her face, not because of Larry, but because of *Look* magazine – this is now another big story about her, which is publicity, which helps her prove to the studio that she has value.

She knew how to play the game ...

Right. And she says: "How are you? I'm Marilyn." And I, not knowing what to say, said: "I'm the big bad wolf." I didn't know what else to say! And she looked at me and said: "Well, you look a little young to be that bad." So that started the relationship.

And when you next met her it was 1962 – the year of her death?

Yes, for *Paris Match* this time, it was the movie *Something's Got to Give*. I'd won awards now, I'd been all over the world, I was cocky in some ways. And she has a problem in that she is getting US\$100,000 (Dh367,000) a movie, and Liz Taylor is getting \$1 million from the same studio for *Cleopatra*. She needs to do something to raise her profile. So she has a meeting with me, at her home, and she says: "What

* Lawrence Schiller on ...



United Artists / The Kobal Collection

...watching her on set

"Marilyn was all business when the cameras started rolling. It took her hours and hours to get herself psyched up to do each scene, but when she was ready to be the character the role demanded, there was no denying her power ... Everyone was focused on Marilyn."

...photographing her

"Marilyn didn't have a preconceived idea of how she wanted to be seen by the public. All she wanted was to make sure that her face and body

would happen if I jumped in the swimming pool with a bathing suit on like it says in this scene, but I came out with nothing on?" Her press agent, who was there, couldn't believe it, but she said to me: "If I do that and you sell the pictures, you have to make sure there are no pictures of Elizabeth Taylor in that magazine when I'm in it." She is giving me a condition of sale! I said: "Marilyn, you're already famous – now you're going to make me famous." And she replied: "Stop being cocky, Larry. Photographers like you can be replaced." And we did the shoot – an extraordinary set of photos, which in essence says everything but shows nothing.

So she did the pool shoot on May 23 – June 1 was her 36th birthday, which you were also there for –

were not deformed in any way. She didn't want to see her head or neck turned in a way in which lines or wrinkles might appear. If she was wearing, say, a tight dance outfit and was swinging around a pole, she wanted to be sure that her legs looked right."

...visiting her home

"The house wrapped around a nice-size pool in the back, and there was a guesthouse. There was no art on the walls, just a few pieces of furniture, and loose tiles were scattered all over the living room and kitchen floors. Later I would learn that her bedroom contained only a mattress and two small tables. There was nothing on the walls in there either."

...her death

"I just didn't understand it. Marilyn Monroe was dead at 36. I don't remember what I thought or discussed with Judi [his wife] on the drive back to Los Angeles, but I remember keeping the radio on all the way home. The early reports were of suicide, but she hadn't seemed suicidal when I saw her the previous morning."

* Compiled by Chris Anderson

then on August 5 she was dead.

How did you react when you heard the news?

I didn't believe it. I hung up.

Did you ever see any evidence of her inner demons?

There was only one time. I was talking about my children, and all of a sudden she said: "I want to have a baby ..." But she said: "My mother was in a mental hospital, my father probably committed suicide," and she tried to explain that she was worried the insanity would trickle down into her child's life. So she feared having a child as much as the desire to have a child.

• Find more info on Lawrence Schiller's limited edition book, *Marilyn & Me*, at www.taschen.com

Marilyn Monroe continues to be celebrated in popular culture. We take a look at various global events celebrating the legend 50 years on.

• In film
My Week with Marilyn
Michelle Williams picked up a best actress Golden Globe award as well as an Oscar nomination this year for her portrayal of Monroe. The film follows a young film student who is invited into Monroe's inner circle, only to discover a troubled life far removed from the glitz and fame.

• In television
Smash
The American musical drama series recently returned for its second season on NBC. It centres on the creation of a new Broadway musical based on Monroe's life, starring Debra Messing, Jack Davenport and Anjelica Huston.

• In festivals
Marilyn Monroe Film Festival
Hollywood's famous Chinese Theatre ran a week-long festival from June 1 to 7. Before each nightly screening, a Marilyn Monroe lookalike competition was held, with the first 200 "Marilyns" receiving a free ticket.

★ Saeed Saeed