

Marilyn Monroe from another angle

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One-page article

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 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 - 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.