

DAYS + WEEKS

MARILYN MONROE – IMAGES OF A HOLLYWOOD ICON



PHOTO: LAWRENCE SCHILLER

Lawrence Schiller was a young and ambitious beginner when he photographed Marilyn Monroe for the first time in 1960. Two years later, he was amongst the last to capture the glamour of the icon mere weeks before her tragic death. In between, much had changed in the lives of both, Monroe and Schiller. More than five decades later, the photographer has collected his memories of the star and a wealth of previously unpublished pictures to produce a unique new book.

HANSPETER KÜNZLER

One of the most memorable moments of accomplished photographer, New York Times bestselling author and director Lawrence Schiller's life was spent parked outside of Schwab's Pharmacy on Sunset Boulevard, where he sat with the legendary Marilyn Monroe, inside her car, drinking Dom Perignon, after having photographed her nude, very early in his career.

More than five decades later, on the 50th anniversary of her death, Schiller shares his memories of Monroe in a new book, titled, simply: "Marilyn & Me." Schiller's book provides an intimate look into Monroe's downfall, including an uncomfortable exchange of words Schiller had with her the night before she died. The book also includes many images that have never been published, some of which are shared in the previous pages.

When he met Marilyn, Schiller the rookie was 23, and was so nervous, he could barely hold the camera. Commissioned by American magazine "Look," he was to accompany Marilyn Monroe for a few days on the set of the movie "Let's Make Love." His introduction to her was awkward. "Hi, Larry from Look, I'm Marilyn," the icon said, flashing her megawatt smile. To this came young Larry's retort: "And I'm the big, bad wolf!" Fifty-two years later, Schiller still has no idea where those words came from. Marilyn gave a hearty chortle, shook his hand and said: "You look a bit young to be so bad!"

Schiller spent three days on set in this first encounter. Monroe, who was ten years older, chatted freely with him, showing an interest in his personal circumstances. At times, she even spoke about herself. "Larry Wolf," she said, during one such conversation, "let me ask you – do you know how many Academy Award nominations I have?" The photographer had to admit that he had no idea. "I do," she replied: "None!"

Two years later, Schiller once again photographed Monroe. This time, the situation was very different. Schiller was no longer a rookie, having won awards and gained experience. Monroe felt he owed his fortune to her and relayed to him when they reunited that she felt exploited. By this time, Monroe had also heavily turned to alcohol and prescription drugs. "This time it was different," says Schiller of the re-encounter. "It was no longer a relationship of innocence. We both knew what we had to do."

Schiller's task was to photograph the actress during the filming of her movie "Something's Got to Give" in a swimming pool, during which she was to wear a flesh-colored swimming costume. At the last minute, Monroe decided to let the costume slip off once she was in the water. Schiller snapped away, with results that were nothing short of iconic. He was given the rights to sell the pictures around the world – on condition that any magazine carrying them would not feature Elizabeth Taylor in the same issue.

Despite the disruptive background, Marilyn Monroe radiates an aura of playfulness and self-confidence on these last photos of her illustrious career. "In the middle of all her turmoil, of her fight against her demons, like a light switch, she was able to turn it on and become the image in these pictures," says Schiller. "She was a brilliant, brilliant actress. And this is what many people failed to appreciate."



At the 50th anniversary of Marilyn Monroe's death, photographer Lawrence Schiller recalls her mix of vulnerability and cold calculation as she guided his camera toward the ultimate revelation – breathtaking nude shots, some unseen till now.



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"Marilyn & Me" by Lawrence Schiller is published by Taschen in three different XL format editions limited to 1962 copies in total, containing many unpublished pictures. A small version of the book was released by Nan A. Talese/Doubleday which contains the text and a number of black and white photos.