

# **BOBBY FISCHER: Icon Among Icons,** *Photographs by Harry Benson CBE*

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**World Chess Hall of Fame**

All text courtesy of Harry Benson CBE.

## **Photographs on Icon Wall**

### ***Tina Turner and Janis Joplin, Rolling Stones Concert, Madison Square Garden, New York City, 1968***

Turner was in the middle of her act at a Rolling Stones concert in Madison Square Garden when Joplin jumped up on the stage and started singing with her. At first I thought it was Mick Jagger in drag. Born in Tennessee, Tina has been singing for fifty years and is still recording and performing in concerts. She lives in Switzerland when not on tour. Joplin, born in Texas in 1943, attended the University of Texas and belted out raspy blues songs in cabarets in Austin before joining Big Brother and the Holding Company in 1966. Swigging Southern Comfort onstage while singing “Piece of My Heart,” she was adored by fans. Addicted to speed and heroine, she overdosed and died in a Los Angeles motel at the age of twenty-seven. Two of her most popular songs, “Me and Bobby McGee” and “Mercedes Benz,” were released after her death.

### ***Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy, Laurentian Mountains, Canada, 1968***

Crowds of skiers were waiting to catch a glimpse of the elegant former First Lady, who was on a ski holiday near Montreal with her children, Caroline and John, Jr. She appeared right in front of me. You could tell it was her from a mile away, even with her face covered and with her trademark sunglasses propped on her head; you could still see her eyes. After graduating from George Washington University, she became a roving photographer for a Washington newspaper. She met and married then-Senator John F. Kennedy. Widowed in 1963 when President Kennedy was assassinated, she married Aristotle Onassis in 1975. From 1978 until her death in 1994, she worked as an editor for Doubleday.

### ***Boris Spassky, Reykjavík, Iceland, 1972***

Boris Spassky arrived in Reykjavík with his team of grandmasters well before Bobby who kept postponing his arrival. Even to the casual observer, Spassky was calm with a pleasant demeanor; it turned out none of his grandmasters liked him, if you can believe what they said behind his back.

### ***Bob Dylan, Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, USA for Africa, Los Angeles, California, January 28, 1985, 1985***

“Leave your egos at the door,” said the sign posted by musical director Quincy Jones as we entered the soundstage, and everyone did. The assemblage of stars expected was high voltage to say the least. It took all night to record “We Are the World” written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie. The song became number one in the U.S. and the U.K. and won a Grammy for Song of the Year, and Record of the Year, raising nearly \$100 million to feed the hungry children in war-torn Africa. I was the only photographer allowed in that evening, and it was about 6:30 a.m. when things wound down—with only Michael Jackson and a few others still there. As the artists left, they hugged and said their goodbyes. I could tell they felt it had been a job well done for a cause they believed in.

### ***Martin Luther King's Funeral, Atlanta, 1968***

After his assassination, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s body was laid in state in Atlanta. Inside the Ebenezer Baptist Church, the heat was stifling as people cried and mourners passed by the open casket.

### ***Jack Nicholson, Billings, Montana, 1975***

Jack was starring in the film *The Missouri Breaks* opposite Marlon Brando and they could not have been more opposite. Jack was happy and easy going, but Brando would not come out of his trailer and was holding up production. The director Arthur Penn gave up and decided to let Brando do whatever he wanted. With all the delays in filming, Jack and the rest of the cast had time on their hands, and we had fun while I was there.

### ***Greta Garbo, Antigua, 1976***

My family and I were on holiday in Antigua and were out on a catamaran when the legendary Greta Garbo emerged from the water, took off her bathing suit on the beach, put on her robe, and walked to her cabin. She didn't know I was there, but I didn't interrupt her holiday by chasing her up the sand or anything like that. As Garbo left the beach, it was clear she had lost none of that style that had made her a legend. As a child I had heard about the beautiful Garbo from my parents and there she was in front of me. How could I not take a photograph? In other words, I was being what some would call a paparazzo.

### ***Mia Farrow and Frank Sinatra, Truman Capote's Black and White Ball, Plaza Hotel, New York City, 1966***

Truman Capote's Black and White Ball at the Plaza Hotel was ostensibly in honor of the detectives who broke the case of the terrible random murders in Kansas that Capote documented in his nonfiction novel *In Cold Blood*. A rather odd way to celebrate, yet everyone who was anyone attended. It was the hardest ticket in the history of parties. You were not allowed in without a mask. Sinatra, with his tough-guy image must have felt rather silly coming up the stairs as a cat with actress/wife Mia Farrow as a butterfly.

### ***The Beatles, Paris, France, 1964***

#### ***John Lennon, Paris, France, 1964***

#### ***Paul McCartney, New York City, 1964***

In early January 1964, I'd been given an assignment to go to Africa, and I'd had all the necessary inoculations and was all packed, ready to go. The night before I was to leave, the phone rang late in the evening and the night editor said I was to go to Paris the next day to photograph a new group called the Beatles. I told him I was leaving for Africa on a major news story and didn't want to photograph a relatively unknown pop group. I hung up and thought that was that. A few minutes later the phone went again, and the night editor said, "The editor says you are going to Paris." Unbeknownst to me at the time, that was my lucky day.

Arriving in Paris the next afternoon, I immediately drove to an auditorium outside Paris where the Beatles were to perform the night before their opening at the Olympia. I walked in as they started to sing "All My Loving." When I heard their music, I knew the editor had made the right decision.

The Pillow Fight: It was 3:00 a.m. after a concert at the Olympia in Paris in January 1964. They had so much pent up energy after a performance, and they really couldn't go out because they would be mobbed. So we were sitting around talking and drinking. Their manager, Brian Epstein, burst into their suite at the Hotel George V to tell them "I Want to Hold Your Hand" was number one on the American charts which meant they were going to go to America to be on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. That also meant I was going to America with them, and I was pleased.

America had always fascinated me. Ever since I was a boy in Glasgow watching James Cagney gangster movies, I knew that was where I wanted to be. They were excited about having a number one hit in America. I had heard the Beatles talking about a pillow fight they had a few nights before so I suggested it. I thought it would make a good photo to celebrate. At first they said okay, but then John said, no, it would make them look silly. Then John slipped up behind Paul and hit him over the head with a pillow, spilling his drink, and that started it.

***James Brown, Augusta, Georgia, 1979***

In Augusta to photograph James Brown, these pictures were taken when he suggested we go for a ride. He told me he would show me "his town." So we jumped into an old car and drove around. He would stop the car when he saw someone sitting in their yard, run up, do the split, yell out, "I feel good," and jump back in the car and drive off. It was all so spontaneous and hilarious, and it took the onlookers by such surprise. Brown was a fun-loving character and a good sport.

***Pete Townshend and Roger Daltrey, The Who Concert, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1980***

People had warned me that Pete Townshend might be difficult, and had a history of being impossible with the press. On the contrary, I found him to be very cooperative to the point of giving orders to everyone around him that I was to have complete access and could even go on stage during a performance.

***Elizabeth Taylor, Bel Air, California, 1992***

When my sixtieth birthday photo of Elizabeth Taylor appeared on the cover of *LIFE* magazine, the telephone started ringing. Friends were curious to know if I had retouched the photograph. The answer is no. That's how she actually looked. I first photographed her in 1961 on the set of *Cleopatra* at Pinewood studios, London. I slipped onto the set at 4 a.m. and hid in a palm tree for hours, waiting for her to appear. How could they have thought of making a Roman epic in London in February? She caught pneumonia and they finally moved the production to Rome.

***Valentino, New York City, 1984***

Valentino was leaving the Pierre Hotel after rehearsals for his fashion show. I was pleased when Valentino chose this photograph to be the invitation for his gala retirement extravaganza.

***Princess Diana, Glasgow, Scotland, 1992***

Not only did the world love Princess Diana, British Fleet Street photographers loved her even more. She would often call her favorites and tell them where she would be that day. One cold night she stood in Covent Garden until a photographer, who had been camped out all night waiting for her to arrive, fixed a jammed camera and got his picture.

When she was in Scotland, a photographer told me not to bother taking a picture until she approached the little girl standing in front of the barrier. He told me, "I know what she will do. She will bend down and say hello to the little girl and that will be your picture." And he was right.

***President John F. Kennedy, Paris, France, 1961***

The President and First Lady took Paris by storm on an official visit to French President Charles de Gaulle. All day I ran around trying to get a photograph in which I could see President Kennedy's face. The chance came on the Champs Elysées during a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe. As it began to rain, Kennedy pushed an umbrella away as I tried to climb up a slanted ledge. I kept sliding off and Kennedy kept looking at me until I got the photograph. Born in Massachusetts in 1917, the second of nine children of Ambassador Joseph P. and Rose

Kennedy promised a “new frontier” in politics before being assassinated in 1963 by Lee Harvey Oswald.

***Nixon and Sammy Davis, Jr., Republican Convention, Miami, Florida, 1972***

The 37<sup>th</sup> President (1969-1974), Richard M. Nixon, was the president with whom I spent the most time. I accompanied him on the campaign trail, starting at a fund-raiser at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York in 1967, until his resignation in 1974, and after, and from the White House to his trips to the Middle East and Russia. Surprisingly, I found him to be the most “presidential” of all presidents I have been fortunate enough to photograph.

***Jerry Garcia, San Francisco, 1992***

Backstage waiting to go on for a concert, Garcia told me the Grateful Dead had the greatest fans in the world, which was probably true.

***Judy Garland, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1965***

I flew to Copenhagen from London to photograph the legendary singer who had just married her tour promoter, Mark Herron. Herron is lighting her cigarette in the photo. I asked what her favorite song was and of course she answered, “Over the Rainbow,” and she unexpectedly proceeded to sing about ten songs for me. She was to paraphrase what Frank Sinatra once said, “the greatest entertainer in the world.”

***Dolly Parton, Nashville, Tennessee, 1976***

Dolly Parton makes everyone feel right at home with a down-home welcome when she meets you. She was getting ready for me to photograph her. I walked over to ask when she would be ready and saw her standing near a window, putting on the finishing touches of her make-up. I said, “Dolly, don’t move, just keep doing what you are doing,” and she obliged. It was a completely natural picture, no lights were set up, yet it was the one I liked best from that day.

***Andy Warhol, The Factory, New York City, 1977***

Lunch at “The Factory,” pop artist Andy Warhol’s studio, was as infamous as the artist himself. Friends, including fellow artists Jamie Wyeth and Larry Rivers, and various celebrities such as Mick Jagger’s former wife, Bianca, would be there every day. Born in 1928, Warhol attracted many to his entourage as he became more famous than his *32 Campbell’s Soup Cans* (1961-62), his silk screens of celebrities, and his underground films. Never without his Polaroid camera, Warhol chronicled his life and times for his magazine *Interview* and survived an assassination attempt in 1968. Since his death in 1987, the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh is home to many of his works of art.

***President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan, the White House, 1985***

The photographs of the Reagans dancing, which was used for the cover of *Vanity Fair* in June 1985, was taken in the map room of the White House. When the White House press people put me in the room and left, I turned it into a studio. I rolled out white seamless paper, put on a tape of Frank Sinatra singing “Nancy with the Laughing Face,” and waited. When the President and Mrs. Reagan stopped by, on their way to a state dinner, I could see the faces of the press officers fall. I hadn’t told them what I was going to do. What are they going to say at this point? They can’t run up to the President and say they didn’t know this was happening. They would look stupid. Anyway, Nancy loved and started dancing with the President. As they were leaving, I asked for a Hollywood ending—a close-up of the couple kissing. I got the pictures and they were off to their dinner. All in five minutes.

***Barbra Streisand, Central Park Concert, New York City, 1967***

Fans flocked to “A Happening in Central Park,” one of the first free pop concerts in New York’s Sheep Meadow. They were mesmerized. Barbra Streisand lived up to her legendary reputation as being difficult; she looked at the photographers and shouted at us to “get away” as she headed for her trailer after the concert, which was filmed for television. The Academy Award-winning actress and singer, born in Brooklyn in 1942 and now married to actor James Brolin, continues to produce, direct, appear in films, and make occasional concert appearances.

***The Clintons Kiss, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1992***

Governor Clinton had announced his candidacy for the presidency and this was a quiet moment before the hectic campaign began. When he heard me first speak, he asked if I was from Scotland and I replied, “Glasgow.” He said, “I have been to Kirkudbright” actually pronouncing it correctly—*Kir-Koo-Bree*. When I complimented his pronunciation, he told me he had been there when he was a student at Oxford and hoped to return someday. I took the first cover photograph of him during the race—for *New York* magazine. He reminds me of that whenever we meet.

***Ali Training, Lewiston, Maine, 1965***

Muhammad Ali was in top form before the second fight with Sonny Liston. I like this photograph because it captures Ali’s famous statement that he could “float like a butterfly and sting like a bee”—which he did.

***Halston, New York City, 1978***

Halston was relaxed in his own environment—his design studio and showroom in the Olympic Towers on Fifth Avenue. Laughing with Liza Minnelli, Halston knew his image was of a glamorous fashion designer and he loved it. He had become the American designer who rivaled the European couturiers in elegance, style, and design. Halston first made his name with the pillbox hat Jacqueline Kennedy wore to her husband’s inauguration.

**Photographs in Hallway**

***Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda, New York City, 1969***

The pair had written, produced, directed, and starred in the film *Easy Rider*, which was to become the definitive motion picture of the hippie, antiwar generation. I photographed them for *Vogue*, and I got the idea they had not expected all the hullabaloo that erupted after the film was released. They turned up in full regalia; they were covered with bells, trinkets, and suede pouches, and very laid back.

***Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones, Madison Square Garden, New York City, 1968***

The Rolling Stones concert at Madison Square Garden was so different from what concerts are like today. It was just the band on stage, no pyrotechnics, no huge projection screens, but the crowd was as wildly enthusiastic as ever.

***Michael Jackson, Neverland near Santa Barbara, California, 1993***

Although I had photographed Michael Jackson before, this was the first time I had visited Neverland. I spent the day photographing Michael inside his home, in his very own amusement park, with his beloved animals, and with the children of his employees. I, along with the rest of the world, was shocked and saddened to learn of his sudden death.

***Paul McCartney and Stella McCartney, Los Angeles, California, 1975***

Three-year-old Stella, now a successful clothing designer married to Alasdair Willis, sat spellbound by her father's playing and singing. It was one of the quieter moments for the former Beatle who had just completed an album for Wings.

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