



PETER SELLERS:

Behind The Camera

An intriguing glimpse into another side of one of the world's greatest comedy actors.

Peter Sellers might be best remembered for his much-loved role as Inspector Clouseau in the Pink Panther films, but some of his lesser known talents were his skills as a photographer. Now, to commemorate what would have been Sellers' 90th birthday, his daughter, Sarah, and granddaughter, Emily, have created an exciting opportunity to view some of his photographs

in an exhibition. Peter Sellers: Behind the Camera is to take place in a pop up space at 19 Beauchamp Place, Knightsbridge from Monday 26th October until Sunday 1st November 2015 and then at The Towner Gallery, Eastbourne from 11th February to 6th March 2016.

The exhibition features 50 rare images either taken by Peter Sellers himself or relating to his photography throughout the '60s and '70s. Some photographs will also be up for sale and all proceeds from this and the exhibition will be donated to the British Heart Foundation.

Sellers' love of photography was mainly a hobby but, eventually, led to him being commissioned by The Times and The Telegraph and, most famously, Vogue. Sarah suspects to begin with, that it was due to his famous name but, as time went on, they used around 40 of his images, and it became clear that he had an impressive talent. His subjects ranged from family, friends and a penchant for photographing famous actresses!

Some of the images make for a veritable who's who of some of the era's most famous faces including Ringo Starr, Charles Aznavour, Tessa Dahl, Sophia Loren, and the famous photo of Liza Minelli, which graced the cover of Vogue in 1973. Other captivating photographs were discovered by Sarah and Emily, in the Camera Press agency archive. These include a series of photos of the Pink Panther director, Blake Edwards, and his wife Julie Andrews, together with their adopted children. Sellers was also friends with various members of the Royal Family, including Prince Charles and Princess Margaret. He was privileged to be invited to take a photograph of Prince Charles and the Queen Mother, to celebrate her 75th birthday, which then featured prominently on the front page of the Daily Mirror, chosen over numerous other commissions

to commemorate the occasion.

Photography was something that Sarah and her father had in common, she explains, and this interest began with an Olympus OM-1 camera gifted to her by Sellers in 1973 after he appeared in a pivotal Olympus advertising campaign. This is one of the key images featured in the exhibition, taken by Adrian Flowers and using the line 'No prizes for guessing the name'.

It is clear a love of photography runs in the family as, years later, Peter's granddaughter, Emily, used the camera for her photography degree. Now a producer, she says, having never met her grandfather: "Gathering together his work has been quite moving at times. Looking at his negatives and putting myself in his place has been a bit like retracing his steps."

Family photographs are cherished by the Sellers family, among which a young Sarah is photographed with her mother, Australian actress Anne Howe. His second wife, Britt Ekland, features on their horse at their family home in 1966 and in Hyde Park with her daughter Victoria, and Sarah's late brother Michael. Sarah has fond memories of her father's interest in photography: "He was mad about photography and it was an ambition to have them exhibited. He often talked about producing a book of his photographic work. It has been so interesting to put the exhibition together and discover things we haven't seen before!"



Above: Michael & Sarah Sellers - Paris c.1964
©Sellers family Collection

Photography was part of Peter's lifeblood and, ultimately, was part of his death. Peter Sellers died in 1980 from heart failure but, before his death, he was asked to photograph his good friend and pioneering heart transplant surgeon, Christiaan Barnard, in Cape Town. Being beset with health problems following a number of near fatal heart attacks, Sellers himself was booked to have the life-saving surgery. However, he became so traumatised by the photos that he point blank refused to undergo the operation. Tragically, 26 years later, Peter's son, Michael, died of the same cause. Therefore, the British Heart Foundation is a cause dear to the Sellers' family hearts and they hope through the exhibition to raise awareness along with vital donations. Many of the framed images will be offered for sale and a limited edition, fully illustrated catalogue, also featuring photographs not in the exhibition, will be available.

It is clear that the exhibition will be an excellent and fascinating opportunity to learn about the actor's skills behind the lens. Sarah says: "I wanted to find a way to celebrate my father's life, his family and his love of photography. Peter Sellers: Behind the Camera, organised in support of the British Heart Foundation, is the result. We really hope the public enjoy it. We think it is something he would have been incredibly proud of."

Along with Arqadia, the exhibition is being sponsored by Olympus, 19 Beauchamp Place and Lewes-based foundation The Chalk Cliff Trust. Arqadia will be carefully selecting appropriate frames to ensure all the exhibits are shown to their full potential.

For further information about the exhibition contact <https://www.bhf.org.uk/news-from-the-bhf/news-archive/2015/september/peter-sellers-exhibition>



Top left: Unpublished Vogue shoot. Date unknown. ©Sellers family Top right: Britt Ekland and Sellers family in Hyde Park c.1967 ©Sellers family Bottom image: Denis Selinger. Peter Sellers agent for many years ©Sellers family