



МАЙСТОРИ НА ФОТОГРАФИЯТА

ХАРИ БЕНСЪН

60 ГОДИНИ В СНИМКИ

MASTERS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

HARRY BENSON

60 YEARS IN PHOTOGRAPHS

5.12.2013 - 15.01.2014

5.12.2013, 19:00 - ОТКРИВАНЕ

5.12.2013 7 P.M. - OPENING

6.12.2013, 18:00 -19:00 - ЛЕКЦИЯ НА ХАРИ БЕНСЪН

6.12.2013 6 - 7 P.M. - LECTURE BY HARRY BENSON

VIVACOM ART HALL, УЛ. "ГУРКО" 4, СОФИЯ ВХОД: СВОБОДЕН VIVACOM ART HALL, 4 GURKO ST, SOFIA FREE ADMISSION

Иво Хаджимишев говори с Хари Бенсън като фотограф с фотограф

Запознайте се с Хари Бенсън - роден в Шотландия, базиран в Ню Йорк, легенда във фотографията. Вече повече от половин век той запечатва историята в снимки за издания като LIFE Magazine, People Magazine, Vanity Fair, Time, Newsweek, Vice. Бенсън е само на метри от Боби Кенеди в нощта на неговото убийство, в стаята с Никсън, когато подава оставка; с ИРА по време на акции, в Босна, Сомалия и Берлин - когато Стената се издига и пада. Неговият обектив улавя Бийтълс в бой с възглавници, докато целият свят е в краката им. Той фотографира всички американски президенти от Ајзенхауър до Барак Обама, както и някои от най-интересните личности в света - от кралица Елизабет, Сър Уинстън Чърчил и Александър Солженицин до Майкъл Джексън, Елизабет Тейлър и Брайан Пит. С безброй изложби, награди и няколко книги зад гърба си, Хари Бенсън е на път да празнува 84-ия си рожден ден в самолет на път за България.

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Ivo Hadjimishev talked to Harry Benson photographer to photographer

Meet Scottish-born and New York based photography legend Harry Benson. For more than half a century now, he has been making images out of history and for publications such as LIFE Magazine, People Magazine, Vanity Fair, Time, Newsweek, Vice. He was just feet away from Bobby Kennedy the night he was assassinated; in the room with Richard Nixon when he resigned; on maneuvers with the IRA; in Bosnia, Somalia and Berlin - when The Wall came up and down. His camera captured The Beatles pillow fighting while the whole world was at their feet. He photographed every American president from Eisenhower to Barack Obama as well as the world's most extraordinary people - from Queen Elizabeth, Sir Winston Churchill and Solzhenitsin to Michael Jackson, Elizabeth Taylor and Brad Pitt. With countless exhibitions, many awards and several books behind his back, Harry Benson is about to celebrate his 84th birthday on a plane to Bulgaria.

Ivo Hadjimishev: I won't ask you silly questions about when and where you took your first pictures etc. But tell us briefly, how did your career in photography start? You were born in Scotland, right?

Harry Benson: Yes, I was born in Glasgow.

IH: Is this where you made your first steps in photography? Which papers or agencies did you first work for?

HB: Well, I had to do my national service in the army. And when I came out I really didn't know what to do. I had always been interested in photography. But I discovered it was the only way I could go. I started out doing weddings and going back to where I lived, developing and printing the pictures in a garage and taking the prints back to the wedding. I also worked for a holiday camp taking happy snapshots of campers. Mind you, at this time my ambition really was to play professional soccer. But when you realize you're not really going to go much further with it and you've got to start thinking, what can I do. And the only thing I really could do was photography. I was interested in news photography because I grew up during the war with Winston Churchill making great speeches and getting bombarded by the Germans.

IH: Was Glasgow bombed by the Germans?

HB: Oh, yes.

IH: And you remember the bombings?

HB: Oh yes. So I wanted to be a news photographer and I got a job miles away from my home in an agency that did a little bit of news but mostly weddings.

IH: But in Great Britain, wedding photogra-

phy is a big part of professional photography; it's highly respected and very well paid.

HB: Sure, but let me tell you, mine was a little amateur because I had to go to churches at 3, 4 or 5 in the morning for Mass; weddings where people didn't want a photographer and I asked them, 'do you want to be photographed?' So that means that I had to hustle it.

IH: These were very hard times for you.

HB: Sure, but anyway. I tried to get a job in a newspaper in Glasgow and I couldn't get one, they told me my work wasn't good enough.

IH: According to their standards and the idea of good press photography at the time?

HB: That's right. But I knew I was better than what they would say. You've got to believe in yourself.

IH: So when did you first get lucky and have your picture published in a newspaper?

HB: The first picture I got published was a picture of a deer. My father ran a zoo in Glasgow and there was a deer and I sent it to one of the Glasgow newspapers. Once I was coming home on the train, I had forgotten all about it, and the man next to me opens the paper and there was this picture of a deer.

IH: How old were you?

HB: About 20. Then I got a job at a local newspaper, and that was my first job in a journal. That went on for a few years. I was trying to get a job at my hometown and I couldn't. But occasionally I would go down to London, which was on an overnight ride in the train, and I would go around newspaper

offices and this must have gone on for about 12 times. And then once I got a call. They asked me if I would do a job for them. And that was really the beginning. They gave me the job of covering all of Scotland. Then eventually I got a prize; I came second in Press Photographer of the year. And that was a big honor. I went down to London and that was a whole different thing because I was covering hard news all the time. I was 27 or 28. My idea has always been that I can be the first in and last out on a story. I've always believed that if you work hard, you're inclined to get lucky. And there is always a picture no matter how crappy the story is.

IH: Rule number 1 for a professional. It doesn't matter what the light conditions are, nobody cares about that. You have to take the picture.

HB: Yes. And basically you want to stay on the payroll in the end of the week, you want to have a job and it's very competitive.

IH: Were you still freelancing?

HB: No, I was on the staff in London.

IH: So you went to the States for the first time in your life covering The Beatles?

HB: First I went with The Beatles to Paris and that's when I think they broke out, because that's when we were told they were number 1 in America. And you could see this Beatlemania gathering momentum. The music was very good. I stayed in Paris for 10 days with them and then we went to New York and I basically didn't come back. I stayed in New York.

IH: But were you on an assignment from an American agency or you were still a

correspondent for the paper for which you worked?

HB: I was still a correspondent for the paper, which was good because it gave me time to make that transition into the American job market.

IH: Was the British paper for which you worked?

HB: London Daily Express.

IH: And when did you switch from the British press to the American agencies and press?

HB: Well I didn't want to work for an agency, I wanted to work for Life magazine and I did.

IH: You knew The Beatles personally because they had to trust you. Did you have a good relationship with them? You can see from the pictures they're posing for you, they work for your camera.

HB: Normally, I try to get as close to somebody as I can. That's my thing. But when I am finished I don't want to know them. There are a lot of reasons for that, like I don't want them to say, 'Harry, that picture of me in a bubble bath, please don't use it.' The Beatles in Paris were just a rock 'n'roll story. But all of a sudden it changed into a major news story. They really were a phenomenon. And I was a news photographer.

IH: But in Paris you took another great picture - John Kennedy and de Gaulle.

HB: Yes, I like that one too. I like pictures that have movement in them.

IH: This is a Rolleiflex picture or 35 mm?

HB: That's a 35 mm. The Beatles pillow fighting, that was Rolleiflex.

IH: Yes, I can recognize your Rolleiflex period. But Jack Nicholson is great too. Because he is a character and you had luck with all nine frames, it's a very good idea to show them together. Andy Warhol and Bianca, this is something that I like very much as well.

HB: I had never done that in my life where I joined two pictures together. But these two are identical, only in one of them Andy is in focus and on the other one Bianca is in focus, and she looks very beautiful. They were next to each other. I just put them together. Actually it was my wife who picked it up. Originally we just had the one of Andy Warhol taking a photograph, you know.

IH: Yes, artist and character. I'd like to go now to another type of photography which you took. There are three in the selection for

Bulgaria. President Reagan dancing, that one's in a studio set.

HB: Not a studio. That one's in the White House.

IH: But then you cleaned up the background?

HB: That's right, I just brought in no-seam paper and put it in the room, it was called the Map room. They were heading to a state dinner and on the way they came off the White House elevator, they walked straight into that room and I had it all fixed up like a studio. That's a studio type of picture, but I don't like studio pictures.

IH: But this is 4x5 camera or Rolleiflex?

HB: No, it was a Hasselblad.

IH: George Bush is posing and also Boris Yeltsin. Maybe you can say a few words about your Russian experience with him. How many vodkas did you have together before taking this picture?

HB: Oh no, that was like three shots. I was in the Parliament and I had a room behind where Yeltsin was speaking. And one of Yeltsin's secretaries said to me, 'what are you doing here?' And I said, 'well President Yeltsin is going to come in here after he is finished talking.' The guy said to me, 'no way he'll come in there. If you want to get a picture, you better stand in that corridor.' It was only a narrow corridor. And I had the lights fixed up. I caught him passing and I just literally stopped him from going any further.

IH: This is an interesting way of dealing with presidents and dignitaries and you seem very good at it. The Eisenhower picture is great too. And the greatest pictures are of course the Kennedy pictures; they are very moving pictures for me. Tell me a little bit about that.

HB: Well, that was my job. I was covering his campaign. It was a pleasure to cover.

IH: Was he ever friendly with the press and the people traveling with him?

HB: Very much so. I liked him. He was very good and all of a sudden he is dying in front of me. And it's something that I've got to do.

IH: Maybe this was the most difficult moment in your press photographer's career?

HB: Yes, but you can't just feel numb. This is it. This is what you came in the business for and you've got to do it.

IH: I also had the opportunity to get close to IRA but in Belfast. How did this happen? They are very difficult to photograph. What

was your assignment?

HB: I was doing a story on maneuvers with the IRA. I didn't worry so much about being with the IRA, what I worried about was being caught by the British soldiers because they didn't take prisoners; they shot them at the back of the head. That was my problem.

IH: But the IRA look very relaxed in this picture.

HB: You know, they were tough guys. I like the picture because it takes a look at violence.

IH: Do you normally work alone?

HB: Most of my good pictures were taken alone. I was alone around Kennedy. I prefer that, because you don't have to worry about your colleague, you're not slowed down by note-taking and writing things down, you want to go your own way and if it's dangerous get out of the way.

IH: You were very lucky in your career because you photographed a lot of great people. These images are the icons of an era today.

HB: Thank you, that's very nice but let me tell you something. I didn't go out looking for the big jobs. I did any piece of crap that came up. I never said, 'Oh I want to do this because I'll do the big one here.' I didn't think like that. And these pictures are sixty years old, that's a long time.

IH: Can you imagine being 20 again with the expertise that you have now?

HB: Yes, but digital would have been of help (laughs). But a lot of my pictures were taken in black and white. To me black and white was the photographer's medium, it belongs to the photographer. Color belongs to the objects, to painters, but black and white will always be the special thing for photographers.

IH: Do you still have a dark room somewhere in your home?

HB: No. I got a closet full of maybe three Hasselblads, two Rolleiflex, etc.

IH: One of my favorites is the twin-lens reflex Rolleiflex.

HB: It's a great camera. One of the things I regret is I didn't use it often enough. I started to use the Hasselblad, and actually it's a much better camera than the Hasselblad.

IH: For the low speed the Rollei is more stable.

HB: Yes, and it has focus.

IH: Well, thank you for this conversation.

HB: It's nice to talk to someone who knows about photography.



Bobby Fischer, Kissed by a Horse, Iceland 1972

Robert James 'Bobby' Fisher and his sister Joan learned to play chess from the instructions in a box purchased at the neighborhood store in Brooklyn. When Joan quickly loses interest, Fisher continued to play with himself and joined the best chess club in the country. Later he frequented the same high school as Barbara Streisand and Neil Young, but dropped out the earliest legally possible, because he found it a 'waste of time'. He is considered by many to be the greatest chess player of all times, challenging the world title at 15, becoming the youngest candidate in history and winning a series of titles in the following years. By 1970 Fisher was one of the most influential players. In 1972 in Reykjavik he won the World Title against Boris Spassky in a match widely publicized as a Cold War confrontation. The rematch was played 20 years later in Yugolsavia, under international embargo at the time.



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Ku Klux Klan Mother and Child, Beaufort, South Carolina 1966

Aleksander Solzhenitsyn in Vermont, 1981

Aleksander Isayevich Solzhenitsyn was an eminent Russian novelist, historian, and tireless critic of Communist totalitarianism. He helped to raise global awareness of the gulag and the Soviet Union's forced labor camp system. While his writings were often suppressed, he wrote many books, most notably *The Gulag Archipelago* and *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, two of his best-known works. "For the ethical force with which he has pursued the indispensable traditions of Russian literature" Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1970. He was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974 but returned to Russia in 1994 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

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6 , 1966
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16 , 1966
1966

Civil Rights James Meredith March, near Canton, Mississippi 1966

On June 6, 1966, James Meredith started a solitary March Against Fear for 220 miles from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, to protest against racism. Soon after starting his march he was shot and injured. When they heard the news, other civil rights campaigners, including Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael, as well as the Human Rights Medical Committee decided to continue the march in Meredith's name. Ordinary people both black and white came from the South and all parts of the country to participate. The marchers slept on the ground outside or in large tents, and were fed mainly by local communities. Meredith recovered and joined the marchers before they reached Jackson.



1966

15 000

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Canton, Mississippi 1966

On the early evening of Thursday, June 16, 1966 the marchers arrived in Greenwood, Mississippi and tried to set up camp at an elementary school for black people. Carmichael was arrested for trespassing on public property and held for several hours, but then rejoined the marchers for the night-time rally. It is claimed that then and there an angry Carmichael took the speaker's platform and delivered his famous "Black Power" speech. King returned to Mississippi after a three-day absence only to find that the civil rights movements' internal divisions had gone public. SNCC's "Black Power" slogan was now competing with SCLC's "Freedom Now" slogan.

Civil Rights Teargassing Canton, Mississippi 1966

In Canton, Mississippi the march was attacked and tear-gassed by the local police, who were joined by other police agencies. Several marchers were wounded, one severely. Human Rights Medical Committee members conducted a house-to-house search for wounded marchers while the nuns of the Catholic school extended their help and hospitality to the marchers. When the march stopped before entering Jackson, it was entertained by James Brown and other musicians. By the end of June, when the march entered Jackson, it was estimated to be 15,000 strong. Its passage was warmly welcomed in the black neighborhoods and by some whites. However, many whites jeered and threatened the marchers: others simply stayed indoors.



6 , 1966
1966
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16 , 1966
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Senator Robert F. Kennedy, Ambassador Hotel, Los Angeles, 1968

Robert 'Bobby' Kennedy, US Senator and brother of the assassinated John F. Kennedy, was killed after midnight on June 5, 1968 in the Ambassador Hotel during the Presidential campaign. After winning the primary elections for the Democratic nomination for President of the United States, Kennedy was shot and died 26 hours later. A young Palestinian/Jordanian immigrant was convicted of Kennedy's murder and is serving a life sentence for the crime. His lawyers have released statements claiming evidence that he was framed. As with his brother John's death, Kennedy's assassination spawned a variety of conspiracy theories. Hubert Humphrey went on to win the Democratic nomination for the presidency, but ultimately lost the election to Richard Nixon.



Jacqueline Kennedy, London, England 1962

, 1962

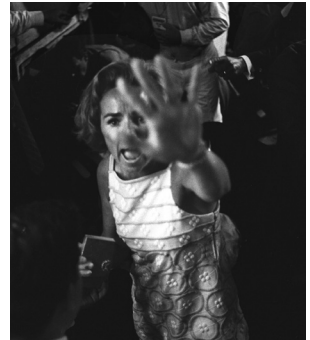
President Lyndon B. Johnson at the Statue of Liberty, New York 1965

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Kennedy for President Hat on the Floor, Ambassador Hotel, LA 1968



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Ethel Kennedy, Ambassador Hotel, LA 1968



, 1968

Senator Robert F. Kennedy, St. Patrick's Day Parade, New York City 1968



, 1965

President Lyndon B. Johnson at the Statue of Liberty, New York 1965



Ali and the Beatles, 5th Street Gym, Miami 1964

In February 1964 The Beatles landed in Miami, sparking the Beatlemania on their way to the Ed Sullivan Show. Meanwhile in a low-rent Miami gym, the underdog Cassius Clay trains to fight reigning champion Sonny Liston for the world title. The pundits say Clay hasn't a hope. Harry Benson arranges for The Beatles to visit Clay at the gym. The Beatles triumph on TV. Clay amazes all the boxing writers by defeating Liston. They suddenly both find themselves on the cusp of a new kind of stardom - they're young, outspoken and able to capture the global imagination. John Wilson reports on the background to this unique encounter, with the memories of three people who were there at the time: photographer Harry Benson, who was travelling with the Beatles, writer Robert Lipsyte, who was covering the fight for the NYTimes as a rookie reporter, and fight doctor Ferdie Pacheco. All witnessed the moment when Cassius met The Beatles.

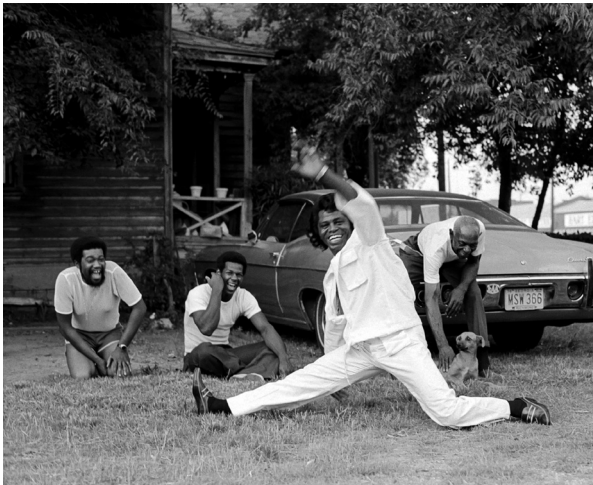
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James Brown, Augusta GA. 1979



V, , 1964

The Beatles Pillow Fight Times Nine, George V Hotel, Paris 1964



Andy Warhol & Bianca Jagger, The Factory, NY 1977

Nicaragua-born Bianca Jagger is at the same time a former actress, Warhol's favorite beauty and the founder and chair of a human rights foundation. At present she serves as a Good Will Ambassador at the Council of Europe along with participating in other NGOs and for the past 30 years she has actively spoken on topics such as genocide, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, crimes against humanity and the future generation, climate change, sustainable energy and other. She was also married to Rolling Stones' lead singer, Mick Jagger. Bianca and Mick met after the band's show in Paris in 1970. Their only daughter, Jade, was born in 1971 and in 1978 Bianca filed for divorce because of Mick's affair with model Jerry Hall. "My marriage ended on my wedding day," she said. In the '70 and '80 Bianca Jagger is also known as a jet-setter and a party-goer as well as a close friend to Warhol.

Andy Warhol & Bianca Jagger, The Factory, NY 1977

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Jack Nicholson Nine Portraits, Montana 1976



Frank & Mia, Truman Capote Black & White Ball, NY 1966





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President Richard M. Nixon at The Knesset, Israel 1974

Nixon was the first American President to officially visit Israel. Some say this was a Swan Song after his administration's diplomatic involvement in the Yom Kippur War in 1973. In Israel Nixon and the First Lady were greeted by President Katzir and Prime Minister Rabin. He then visited Golda Meir, Israel's, former prime minister. After a ceremony at the Yad Vashem memorial, Nixon went to the Knesset and met the Israeli cabinet.

Arriving in Tel Aviv Nixon declared: " During the period that I have served as President of the United States, we have been through some difficult times together, and I can only say that the friendship that we have for this nation, the respect and the admiration we have for the people of this nation, their courage, their tenacity, their firmness in the face of very great odds, is one that makes us proud to stand with Israel, as we have in the past in times of trouble, and now to work with Israel in a better time, a time that we trust will be a time of peace."



, 1961

President John F Kennedy & President Charles DeGaulle, Paris 1961

John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy began their European visit in Paris. Europe was intrigued by the new President and, then as now, was charmed by the first Lady. The only difference was, Kennedy was about to face two of the biggest challenges of his Presidency: Cuba and Berlin, all direct results of the Cold War. Today the world is different. But the challenges are just as severe. President Kennedy landed in Paris saying: "I come not merely because of the past, but because of future associations in defense of the West." He ended his day by telling an Elysee Palace dinner "American forces will remain in Europe as long as they are required. Ready to meet any threat with whatever response is needed". "All this was aimed at the question uppermost in President DeGaulle's mind - resisting Soviet pressures on Berlin with the utmost Western strength. Privately, President Kennedy has given this assurance to DeGaulle. For this reason, he's very welcome here." comment NBC News.



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