



**PIRELLI CALENDAR,  
CHINESE ZODIAC:  
YEAR OF THE RAT  
Spain, 1992**

'This shoot had its problems. We did it in the Almeria desert in southern Spain and it was over 100° F. I had a set built with scaffolding and tarpaulin, and one day a sand storm lifted it up and carried it down a ravine. We had to get down and drag it back up. Also, the make-up artist spent hours putting water-based make-up on a model but it was so hot it just ran off her. So we phoned another make-up artist, Charlie Duffy, flew her out to Spain and she did a marvellous job.'

# FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Once the 'wild man' of fashion photography, Clive Arrowsmith rejected his hedonistic lifestyle and embraced Buddhism. But he's still hungry for images, hears David Clark



**CHARLOTTE  
RAMPLING**

**London, 1970**

'This was taken at *Vogue* studios and is one of my favourite photographs. I just used one Balcar light and an umbrella, which was pointing slightly towards me. That gave the lovely shadow around the side of her face, while the back of the picture fell into shadow. She had no top on and was very confident and in control. Just before I took this shot she was looking away, then turned towards the camera with that "Mona Lisa" smile. It's just an extraordinary picture.'



**W**ithin a few minutes of arriving at Clive Arrowsmith's house in Chiswick, west London, it feels like I've known him for years. I'm carried along on the tide of his quick-witted, irreverent and sometimes outspoken conversation, peppered with anecdotes, whimsical diversions, vocal impersonations and philosophical asides. It can switch from photography to Buddhism at any moment.

Arrowsmith's 'gift of the gab' has served him well during an almost 50-year career in which he's photographed everyone from top models and pop stars to the Dalai Lama. He's shot fashion and portraits for *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Sunday Times* and others, and advertising for De Beers, Revlon and Hasselblad. To that list he adds that he's the only photographer to have shot two consecutive Pirelli calendars.

Yet being a photographer wasn't originally part of his game plan. As a young man he dreamed of being an actor or artist. His parents insisted that he train as a chartered accountant for the local authority in his native Wales, but he abandoned the job after eight months and headed for Queensferry Art School (then Kingston College of Art), where he studied painting, illustration and graphic design for a total of six years.

'I was trying not to leave art school because I didn't think I'd get a job,' he says. 'So I was constantly inventing and winning new bursaries so I could stay another year.' He finally left and joined

**ANN SCHAUFUSS  
FOR VOGUE  
London, 1972**

'This is Annie, my muse, in a picture for the *Vogue Beauty Book*. It was a double exposure on the same negative, taken using two Hasselblad bodies, long before Photoshop came along. For the profile shot I used a spotlight through a cardboard tube to frame the face with a sharp, crisp light. I put a glass 2¼" square holder on the back of the camera and drew around the profile with a wax pencil. Then I set up the lily, lit the background and adjusted the position of the flower until I thought, yes, that's definitely in line.'

**MONTY PYTHON  
TEAM  
Surrey, 1976**

**BELOW**

'*The Sunday Times* magazine asked me to photograph the Monty Python team while they were rehearsing on stage at a studio in Shepperton, Surrey. I needed to light them but couldn't get lights on the stage. So I had to put an umbrella on a stand, pointing up, to make it look a little like a Footlights Review. Necessity was the mother of invention on this shoot. Getting them to do anything was difficult. At one point John Cleese wrapped the curtains around his head and most of the others followed.'



**PHIL SPECTOR  
London, 1972**

'I photographed Phil dressed as Father Christmas for the cover of *Phil Spector's Christmas Album*. George Harrison was in the studio in Soho, sitting in the corner chanting 'Hare Krishna'. Phil had obviously been taking something. At one point I was photographing him in front of a Christmas tree. I fired the flash, then left the shutter open to get the fairy lights. Suddenly, there was a crash. We turned the lights on to find Phil had fallen over in the gloom. Afterwards we had to prop him up with a brush behind his back.'

**PAUL MCCARTNEY  
London, 1976**

'Paul asked me to shoot the back cover of the *Wings at the Speed of Sound* album. When we were at the studio, he said: "We just want something that looks like the speed of sound, d'yer know what I mean?" So, thinking on my feet, I put some white camera tape on the floor, blacked out all the studio lights and asked Paul to stand in the middle. Then I fired the flash, keeping the shutter open, and told him to step to the side and do a different face. We repeated this lots of times to get the overlap.'

**PIRELLI CALENDAR:  
SPANISH HEROINE  
France, 1991**

'The calendar's theme that year was 'Heroines' so I photographed models representing heroines of different nationalities. Art director Martin Walsh and I drove for a week around the Massif Central to find locations. This model was the Spanish heroine. We took a cannon (pictured) and at one point on the journey it rolled out of the van and banged into a post office, which got us in trouble with the local police. They also came along when we were setting off smoke bombs during the shoot, but didn't mind too much when they saw the models.'

Rediffusion Television where he worked as an art director on the groundbreaking rock and pop show *Ready Steady Go!*

Needing pictures for the title sequences, Arrowsmith began photographing the show's stars. Soon photography became an all-consuming obsession. Freelance jobs for *Nova* (photographing artist LS Lowry) and *Harpers & Queen* led to a visit from *Vogue's* fashion editor Grace Coddington and art director Barney Wan. Arrowsmith was offered a job the next day.

All this happened without him having any photographic training. 'I didn't study photography at art college and I was too egotistical to assist,' he says. 'I learned all I needed from painting, although, because I hadn't been trained, I broke all

**BAND ON THE RUN  
ALBUM COVER  
London, 1973**

**RIGHT**  
'Paul McCartney asked me to shoot this with a 'band' of celebrities, as if escaping from prison. I used a theatre spotlight on top of a van but it wasn't powerful enough and the exposure was about 1½ seconds. They were all very merry on champagne and keeping them still was frustrating. I only got three frames that were reasonably sharp.'





the rules. I learned photography by trial and error, but it was like walking across Niagara Falls on a high wire and I had to get it right. A couple of times of course it went wrong, but I managed to get away with it.'

Arrowsmith quickly gained a reputation for his imagination and technical inventiveness. He also became known for being a 'wild man' of fashion photography, a party animal who took things to extremes at work and play. At one point he was drinking almost a bottle of vodka a day. Alcohol, he says, fuelled one notorious incident during a complicated *Vogue* shoot.

'After I'd been fiddling with this picture most of the afternoon I showed the editor the Polaroid very proudly,' he recalls. 'She said, "Yes, it's very good, Clive, but you'll have to do it all again if it doesn't work." You had to be like a slave to *Vogue*, which I wouldn't.

'Afterwards I dressed up as Jesus

### 'DRESSED AS JESUS, I WENT IN TO THE EDITOR'S OFFICE CARRYING THIS HUGE WOODEN CRUCIFIX ...'

Christ in a white robe and went into the editor's office repeating, 'Why persecute thou me?' I was carrying a huge wooden crucifix and had my foot in a bucket of strawberry yogurt, which spilled on to the carpet. They loved the pictures, but I didn't work for *Vogue* again for six months.'

His alcohol and drugs-fuelled lifestyle continued in parallel with a successful career until the early 1990s, when one night he took a long look at his two-year-old son, Paris, asleep in his cot. 'At that moment, I thought: I'm not doing this any more,' he says. 'I stopped on a Good Friday and I've never had a drink, a drug or a cigarette in the 25 years since.'

Married four times and the father of seven children, these days Arrowsmith finds inner peace through Buddhism and daily meditation, which he says helped him regain his equilibrium. As part of the process of looking back over an active and colourful life, he produced a retrospective book. Beautifully designed and printed, *Arrowsmith: Fashion, Beauty and Portraits* shows 300 of his best images. A second book is due next year.

Arrowsmith remains a very active photographer and the whole process of creating images excites him as much as ever. 'I love working, I love taking pictures,' he says. 'It's about having an incredible devotion to it, you know? For me, taking pictures is an obsession. I'm hungry for images all the time.'

*Arrowsmith: Fashion, Beauty and Portraits* is published by ACC Editions, price £50

### DONNA MITCHELL Paris, 1970

LEFT  
'I shot this image for the Paris Collections in 1970. It was styled by Grace Coddington, *Vogue's* fashion editor. Donna Mitchell is wearing a Perspex windscreen and lattice vinyl body by Pierre Cardin. The clothes were going to be shown the following day on the catwalk, so we had to shoot the collections overnight, starting at 7pm. At one stage they weren't going to show this picture in the magazine as it was far too sci-fi, but I said it was the best thing in the collection. The picture has become iconic.'



### DANCER IN DAVID BOWIE COSTUME Japan, 2013

LEFT  
'This dancer was in between rehearsals for a spectacular show by the Japanese fashion designer Kansai Yamamoto, who is a friend of mine. I had half an hour with the cast with a white curtain behind them, and I shot one costume after another. It was the first show Kansai had done for 20 years and the dancer was wearing a costume he had designed for David Bowie to wear on his Aladdin Sane tour in 1973. The assistants were quickly attaching it to the dancer using Velcro.'

### GHOST CAMPAIGN London, 2016

ABOVE  
'Touker Suleyman, who owns the fashion label Ghost, asked me to do a shoot featuring the company's clothes, together with Ghost Home soft furnishings, designed by Sera of London. The model for this shoot was actually a sergeant in the Israeli army and I photographed her at Sera Hershman-Loftus's apartment. The background was shot using tungsten light, to give it a warm tone. I separately photographed the foreground with the girl, cushions and bed cover. Then, using Photoshop, I cut around this area and blended the two images.'