



EYES OF A MUSE

EXHIBITIONS

Most classic-rock fans know at least a couple of things about Pattie Boyd: She's "Layla" and she's "Something."

Those are but two of the hit songs that Boyd inspired, written by her former husbands, Eric Clapton and George Harrison, respectively. Boyd acquired instant fame when she started dating Harrison at the height of Beatlemania: They met when she had a bit part in the 1964 film *A Hard Day's Night* and married in 1966. Then the 1970s love triangle between Boyd, Harrison, and George's fellow guitarist and best friend Clapton became the stuff of rock-and-roll legend. Boyd and Clapton wed in 1979 and divorced ten years later.

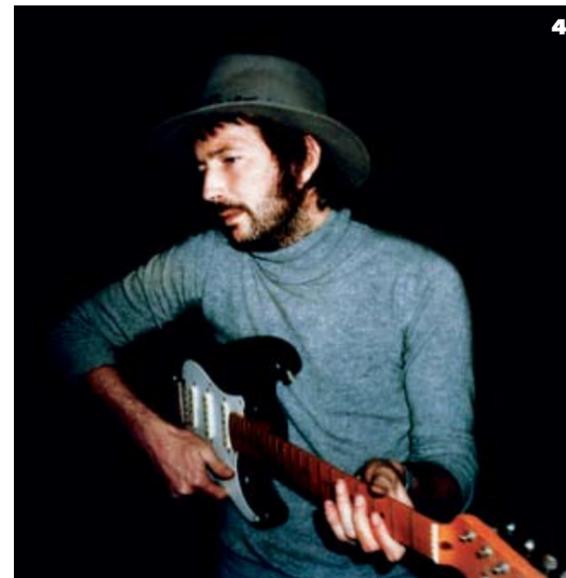
This member of British rock royalty spent many years in front of the camera, both as a celebrity and as a fashion model, and also behind it as a serious photographer.



PATTIE BOYD TALKS ABOUT HER LIFE AS A 1960s ICON, HER FABLED ROCK-AND-ROLL MARRIAGES, AND HER VIEW FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE CAMERA. BY JACK CRAGER

"I've had the experience of photographs being snatched from me by the paparazzi, and I've also deliberately stood and had my picture taken," Boyd says. "I'd much rather be taking pictures. I'm actually quite shy."

American Photo caught up with Boyd during her visit to New York City's Morrison Hotel Gallery, where an exhibition of her images recently went up. The work has also been shown at Morrison Hotel Galleries in Los Angeles and La Jolla, California (visit morrisonhotelgallery.com or pattieboyd.co.uk). Now 64, still vivacious and beautiful, Boyd candidly recalls her colorful past—much of which came to light in her revelatory 2007 book, *Wonderful Tonight* (Harmony Books, \$26), named after another hit song written about Boyd by Clapton. "I liked the book title fine," she says, "but the publisher chose it. I wanted it to be called *I Went to the Cinema with Elvis*."



1. A self-portrait by Boyd with George Harrison in the 1960s in their rose garden.
2. A fashion image of Boyd that ran on a 1969 cover of British *Vogue*.
3. Pattie Boyd (left) on a mid-1960s modeling shoot with her sister Jenny, who later married drummer Mick Fleetwood.
4. A Polaroid of Boyd's second husband, guitarist and singer Eric Clapton.
5. Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, and John Lennon (from left) take a break from their studies with the Maharishi in India, 1968.
6. Pattie Boyd in 2005.

She's alluding to an anecdote from the book, and also to the happenstance manner in which she met Harrison on the set of *A Hard Day's Night*. Boyd had been given her film part (she played a schoolgirl) by director Richard Lester, whom she'd met while shooting television commercials. "I never had a desire to be an actress, so that was my first and last film part," she says with a laugh. "I mean, how do you top that?"

Boyd was surprised when Harrison asked her out; she told him about her boyfriend, a photographer who had been helping her start a modeling career. But soon after, she dumped the photographer and started dating the Beatle—giving her a ticket to ride in the hippest circles of swinging London in the mid-1960s.

"I absolutely loved it," she recalls of the scene. "It was so buzzy, with interesting people—mad and fun and eccentric. All the creative people seemed to congregate: designers, painters, filmmakers, and of course musicians." Boyd's modeling career also took off, with appearances on *Vogue* covers. She says she didn't regard being a celebrity as a burden, though she notes that Harrison did. "George was never very comfortable with that level of fame," she says. "The Beatles had experiences where they realized, on tour, that they were trapped in their hotel room. They couldn't go anywhere. That's when George realized what fame had done to them, and he didn't like it. He didn't understand why *he* was famous. Why him and not somebody else?"

For her part, Boyd recalls fans interrupting her and George as they dined out, intrusive autograph-seekers, and the ever-present paparazzi. "They were invasive and irritating," she says of the latter. "Our lives would be spent trying to hide from them. How ludicrous is that?"

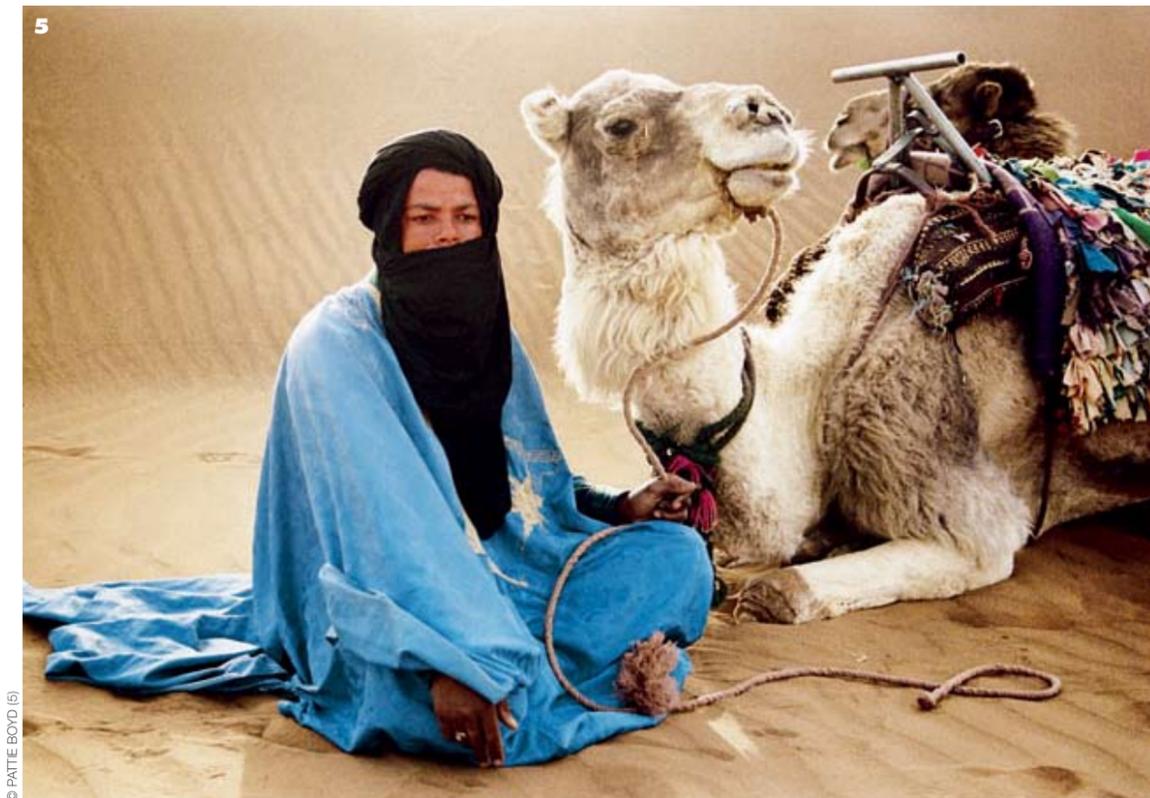
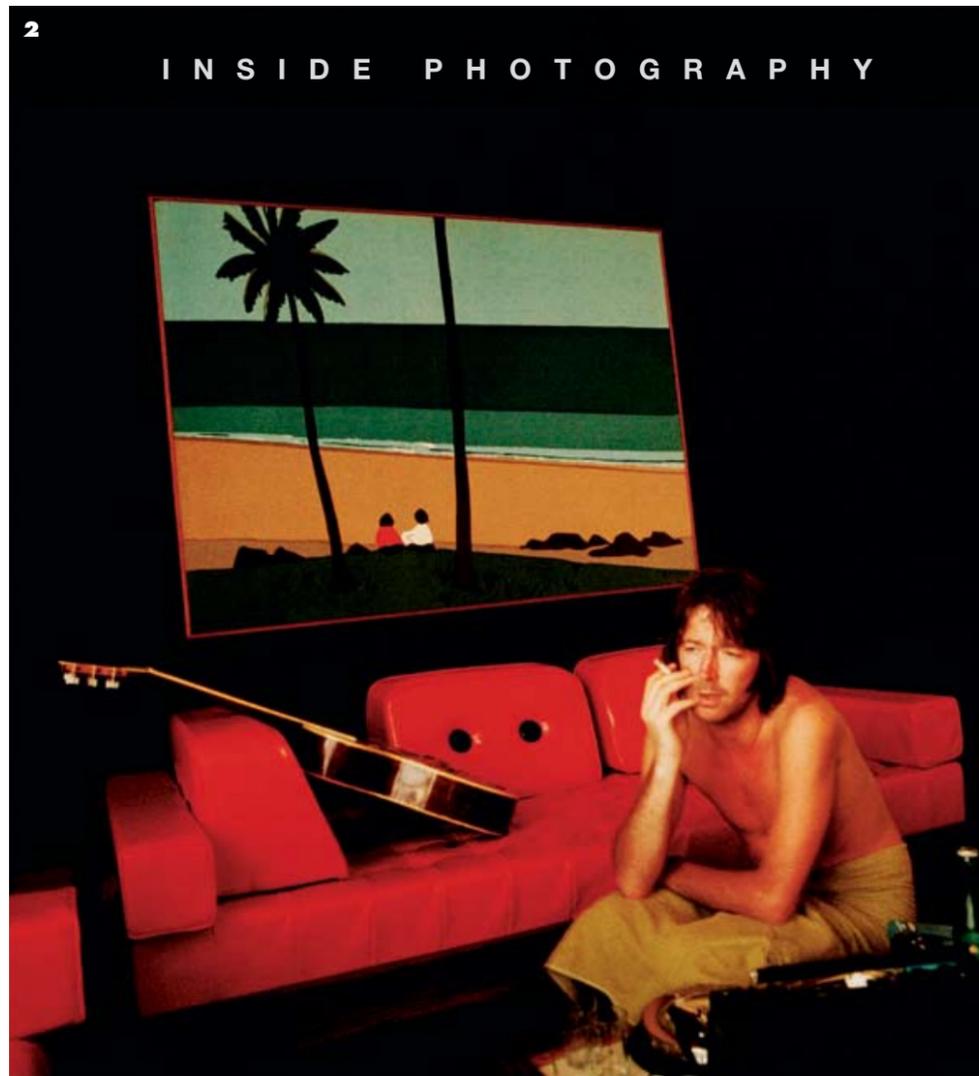
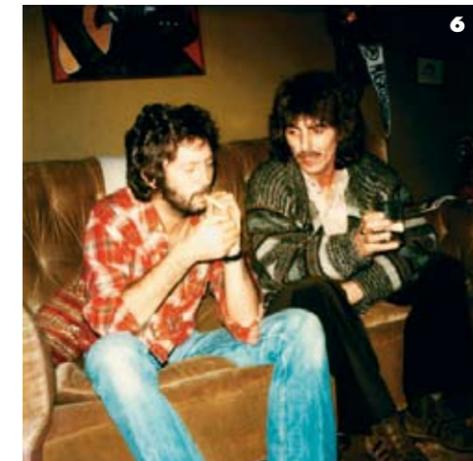
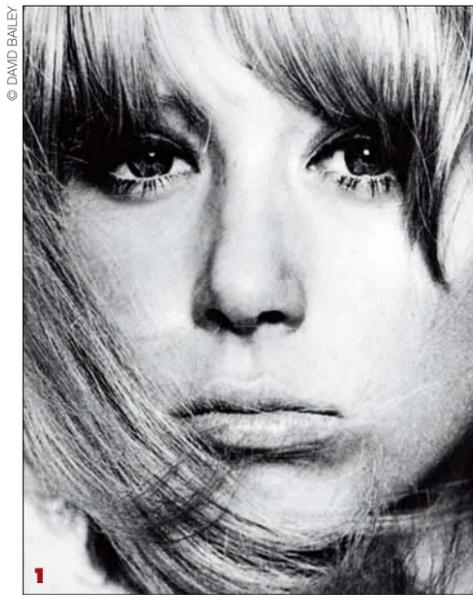
Boyd remembers one nightmarish crowd scene when she and Harrison visited San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury area in 1967, during the Summer of Love. "That put us off forever, really," she says. "When all these drugged-out people in the Haight saw George, I think they thought he'd appeared like a messiah, and they wanted to make him responsible for whatever state they were in. There were a lot of dropouts and bums and scraggly people. The crowd got out of control, and it was an eye-opener."

Seeking a lifestyle change, Boyd became curious about transcendental meditation courses taught by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; she was joined in this pursuit by Harrison and the other Beatles. The band and wives and friends famously studied with the Maharishi in India in 1968, which Boyd calls "the most enlightening time of my life."

Around this period, Harrison gave Boyd her first serious camera, a Nikon F, and she began shooting portraits. "I took several photos of the group in India and then I discovered the images again many years later," she says. "But I didn't bring the camera out all that often with the Beatles, because I didn't want to be invasive. I sensed not to take advantage of the situation I was in."

She did make an evocative picture of George reclining in India that she calls "the last time I saw him looking so calm and relaxed." Within a year, the Beatles would be facing business problems, internal bickering, and the interpersonal stress that eventually broke up the band.

The Harrisons' marriage, too, soon hit the rocks, due in part, Boyd says, to Harrison's infidelities and in part to the presence of a mutual friend: blues-guitar virtuoso Eric Clapton. "Eric and George had become close friends; they played, wrote music, and recorded together," Boyd recalls. "But I was aware that [Eric] found me



1. Pattie Boyd as a model in the mid-1960s, photographed by David Bailey.

2. A late-1970s Polaroid of Eric Clapton at his estate in Surrey, England.

3. The Quiet Beatle relaxes on holiday in India in 1968, shortly before returning to London to join his bandmates in founding Apple Corps Ltd. and recording the group's White Album.

4. George Harrison with Boyd while the newlyweds enjoyed their honeymoon in Barbados in 1966.

5. One of Boyd's travel photographs of a bedouin with his camel in the Sahara Desert, Morocco.

6. Harrison (right) pays an unexpected visit to see his friend Eric Clapton in the late 1970s, not long after Pattie Boyd broke up with Harrison and moved in with Clapton.

INSIDE PHOTOGRAPHY

2

3

"I THINK MUSICIANS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS ARE FAIRLY SIMILAR—THEY LIKE TO GET CRAZY."

attractive, and I enjoyed the attention he paid me."

This attention—in the form of highly romantic letters, overtures, and most of the classic album *Layla and Other Assorted Love Songs*—eventually lured Boyd away from Harrison and into Clapton's arms. Even after Boyd married Clapton, the friendship between the two guitarists endured; they called each other "husband-in-law."

Boyd's relationship with Clapton, too, later soured. In her book, she partially blames his habitual infidelity and his alcoholism; in his own book—*Clapton: The Autobiography*—he essentially agrees. As their marriage faltered, Boyd dated another photographer, Will Christie.

"I think musicians and photographers are fairly similar—they like to get crazy," Boyd says with a laugh. "They hang onto the child within themselves longer probably than, say, men who are accountants or bankers. They have to remain young at heart in order to be creative."

After her divorce from Clapton, Boyd turned to her longtime hobby of photography as both a source of income and therapy. "The breakup of my marriage threw me," Boyd says. "Suddenly if I wasn't the famous Mrs. Eric, then who was I? I thought, 'I've got to get a job of some sort.' And then one day I thought, 'There's my camera smiling at me!'" She laughs. "That's what I'll do." So I started shooting in earnest. It was therapeutic."

Boyd took a private darkroom course, joined the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain, and began shooting photo assignments for magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar*. To her chagrin, some publications she contacted wanted to make *her* into the story. "Once I thought I was seriously doing photos for a newspaper," she recalls. "And the bloody paper sends a photographer to shoot me at work! What's going on? I'm working—I don't need to be photographed as well, bent over a Hasselblad, not an attractive look, you know, bum in the air!" She laughs. "But I enjoyed shooting; portraits, travel, whatever. Photography became my passion."

She still enjoys working in the darkroom and making prints, but she's also recently gone digital, documenting her travels with an eye toward future photo books.

Yet it's Boyd's pictures from her rock-and-roll past that have generated the most interest in the gallery world. Her exhibition *Through the Eyes of a Muse* debuted in San Francisco in 2005 and traveled to London, California, and New York. She hopes to arrange a show in Japan to coincide with a Japanese printing of her autobiography.

"I'd like to dig out more photographs and seriously go through what I have," she says. "Back in the day I took a lot of Polaroids, which are now in boxes, so they haven't seen daylight, and they're still in quite good shape."

She acknowledges the bittersweet memories. "Photography is so emotive," she says. "When you see a photo of somebody whose music you love or of when things were happening in your life, it just brings back the memory of a younger you—of when you were really happy and doing well, when you were young. I do that too. Photography is emotive, in the same way that music is." ■



4