Cultural Daily

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Remembering Dudley Moore

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, July 8th, 2020



Dudley Moore (c) Elisa Leonelli

I was still living in my hometown of Modena when I first saw *Bedazzled* (1967), the irreverent British comedy directed by Stanley Donen, so it was dubbed in Italian and titled *Il mio amico diavolo*, but I found it wickedly delicious. Peter Cook played the devil who, helped by the seven deadly sins, offers seven wishes to a young cook, Dudley Moore, in exchange for his soul.

Dudley Moore (c) Elisa Leonelli

It was a dream come true when, many years later, in November 1980, after I had moved to Los Angeles and was working as a photo-journalist, I was entrusted with the assignment to photograph Dudley Moore in his Marina Del Rey home for the magazine *Intro*. By then the success of the film *Ten* (1979) directed by Blake Edwards with Bo Derek and Julie Andrews had made him a movie

star in America. Dudley was game and posed for my Nikon cameras in every room of the house against various backdrops, that I had lit with my portable Norman 200B strobe diffused with an umbrella and captured on vibrant Kodachrome. He changed his clothes from a yellow sweater to a green one, he made funny faces and gestures, he was delightful and sweet. The published article's headline was his nickname "Cuddly Dudley."

I interviewed Dudley for *Arthur* (1981) with Liza Minnelli, for *Six Weeks* (1982) a drama directed by Tony Bill, for *Micki and Maude* (1984) by Blake Edwards. I photographed him at the Golden Globes in 1982, when he won Best Actor for *Arthur*, accompanied by his girlfriend Susan Anton, and at the Oscars in 1988.

I was familiar with his work as an actor and had a real fondness for Dudley, but only recently I read the 2004 biography by Rena Fruchter, *Dudley Moore: An Intimate Portrait*, and learnt more about his seven year battle with the rare neurological disease PSP (Progressive Supranuclear Palsy) that took his life on March 27, 2002 at age 66. He was married four times, to Suzy Kendall (1968-1972), to Tuesday Weld (1975-1980) with whom he had a son, Patrick, to Brogan Lane (1988-1991), and to Nicole Rothschild (1994-1998) with whom he had another son, Nicholas. He was a classical concert pianist and performed at Carnegie Hall, he composed music, including the soundtracks for *Bedazzled* and *Six Weeks*.

Elisa Leonelli, Dudley Moore (c) HFPA 1982

When asked about the comedians that make him laugh, he mentions Peter Sellers, Marcel Marceau, Jacques Tati, Fernandel, Terry Thomas, John Cleese, Alistair Sim, Bob Hope, Jerry Lewis, Steve Martin, Bill Murray.

On religion: "My father's great interest in life was the Church. I spent time as a choirboy from the age of 6, and I was struggling with the idea of God and religion for a long time when I was young. But I've now abandoned it, which is a great relief. The essence of people as they are is enough for me."

On marriage: "l'm not against it. It's a nice and cozy gesture to make with somebody. lt's saying that you really like to be with that person. If you expect it to be any more than that, you might get into trouble. Promises of lifelong trust are very dangerous things."

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