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When Dixie Met Kathy: A Tale of Icons, Nikons and Legendary Image-Making

Featuring **NIKON AMBASSADOR DIXIE DIXON**



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Dixie Dixon photographed Kathy Ireland as Marilyn Monroe, with a Nikon Df representing the original F camera Monroe held in the 1962 Bert Stern sessions. D5, AF-S NIKKOR 105mm f/1.4E ED, 1/250 second, f/4, ISO 800, manual exposure, Matrix metering.

It happens all the time.

You carry an idea for a photo shoot around for a while, figuring that when the time is right it'll link up through circumstance with the right people, and then something really cool will take place.

Which is how it went not too long ago for Dixie Dixon, commercial, fashion and advertising photographer, when her business consultant, who's a good friend of celebrated former model and current business entrepreneur Kathy Ireland, invited Dixie to dinner with Kathy.

"We hit it off," Dixie says of their meeting, "and though she hadn't modeled in about 20 years, I pitched her an idea."

The idea came from the documentary film Bert Stern: Original Madman—specifically the legendary photographer's sessions with Marilyn Monroe and the images he shot for Vogue magazine over three days in June, 1962, just six weeks prior to Monroe's death. The Last Sitting, Stern's book of selected photographs from that shoot, was published in 1982.

"In some of the photos Marilyn was holding an original Nikon F camera," Dixie says, "and I thought it would be fun to recreate some of those iconic images with Kathy, a modern-day businesswoman who's gone from being in the limelight as a supermodel to being behind the scenes of so many successful businesses."

When Ireland and her people agreed, there was one more pitch to make: to Nikon to see if they'd be interested in using some of the resulting photos and the video Dixie planned for the shoot. "They liked the idea," Dixie says, "and so the whole thing became a big collaboration."

Dixie shot with Ireland in a Los Angeles studio, at the beach and in an office setting. The beach shots perhaps call to mind Sport's Illustrated's designation of Ireland's 1989 issue cover as "the greatest Sports Illustrated swimsuit cover of all time," while the office location represented Ireland as a businesswoman—she is, in fact, one of the most successful in the world.



© Dixie Dixon

Dixie did a half-day shoot with Ireland at the beach that might be a nod to the former model's appearance in 13 consecutive *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issues. D5, AF-S NIKKOR 105mm f/1.4E ED, 1/640 second, f/4, ISO 200, manual exposure, Matrix metering.

Getting it Right

To capture the spirit and look of the Stern images, Ireland's team suggested the Los Angeles hair and makeup artists she had worked with for a Forbes magazine cover. "They knew she was comfortable with them," Dixie says, "so we brought them into the studio."

For the shoot, Dixie chose Nikon's cutting edge D5, but to stand in for the F camera of the Stern shoot, Nikon suggested that Ireland hold a Df. "It has the vintage, retro look of that original F from the black-and-white film days," Dixie says.

Dixie's first photos of Ireland as Monroe were made in the studio, but the lighting gave the pictures a pronounced modern look. "Stern's images of Marilyn were backlit by natural light," Dixie says, "and that's what I really wanted. We got that look at the office location where we were able to get a setup that was completely backlit, just like the original pictures."

Finally, there's the dress that Monroe wore. "The stylist pulled some gowns, but she wasn't able to find the right look," Dixie says. But Dixie has a friend, the photographer Benny Migliorino (known in the industry as Benny Migs), who just happens to have a dress that's similar in style to the one Monroe wore. "He found it in a vintage store in New York," Dixie says, "and I knew he had it because at one time he'd photographed me in it. So I called him and he FedEx'd it out to us from New York."

Dixie's photos will be used by Ireland and Nikon, and there'll be a gallery show

this fall in Ft. Worth—Dixie is based in Texas—and possibly one in Los Angeles as well. And Ireland will be writing the foreword to Dixie's book, *Fashion & Lifestyle Photography*, due out this fall.

"It was just great how everything came together and how well it all worked out," Dixie says.

Happens all the time.

One of the Nikon Ambassadors, Dixie is known for her portrait, fashion and large-production commercial images. Her website, dixiedixon.com, features a collection of photographs and videos. To see some of Bert Stern's images of Marilyn Monroe...well, you know what to Google.



Featuring

DIXIE DIXON



NIKON AMBASSADOR
UNITED STATES

Dixie Dixon is a Texas born and bred commercial fashion photographer. Her passion has led her to shoot internationally in places such as Cannes, Toronto, Vancouver, New York, Miami, Los Angeles, Ibiza and Barcelona for various brands, TV shows, commercial campaigns and editorial projects. Go to her website www.dixiedixon.com and her [ambassador page](#).

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