

**Hollywood's  
hottest man (still!)**  
talks about his  
worries, his women  
and why he'll **never**  
be too old for  
steamy love scenes.

BY SHERYL KAHN  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
KEN REGAN

# An intimate chat with Robert Redford

He dashes into his New York City office apologizing profusely. "This traffic!" Robert Redford complains, breathlessly peeling off a scarf, jacket, beret and sunglasses to reveal a plaid work shirt, jeans and a red, windburned face.

"I must have been sitting on Fifth Avenue for a half hour without moving an inch. I finally got out and walked it. Sorry I'm so late."

I'd been warned that Redford is notoriously tardy—it's more than an hour past our scheduled appointment. "I know, I know. I have this reputation for always being late," he

## what's sexy? Robert's rules

I admire **strength, resourcefulness, courage**—these are things I see, in retrospect, that my mother, my grandmother and my ex-wife all had. I think there should be more women today with a voice, more women in Congress, more women not afraid to speak the truth. I like a woman who can hold her own.

says, tracking slush down the hallway and settling behind his desk. His assistant is at his heels with a hot cup of coffee. "It's a big problem with me," he says, flashing the famous smile. "But I guess there are worse reputations to have."

It is, by any definition, an entrance—almost as dramatic and revealing as Gloria Swanson's slinking down the stairs in *Sunset Boulevard*. You get an immediate impression of the man whose name has been synonymous with *movie star* for more than 30 years: He is harried, he is humble and he is certainly handsome—but not in a way

that turns your knees to Jell-O. He's also charmingly rumped and resolutely down-to-earth.

The sign on his desk says, simply, "Bob," which is what everyone from his pal Paul Newman to his assistant calls him. There are no awards, not even his Best Director Oscar for *Ordinary People*, adorning his private space; just dozens of pictures of his three children—Shauna, 35, Jamie, 33, and Amy, 25—and four grandchildren, which cover every available inch of wall and tabletop. As I look around, he follows my gaze for a few moments, his eyes appraising, non-committal. Then suddenly, the game begins.

"I bet no writer could ever make it through an article without mentioning the blue eyes," he taunts. I ask him what else he wishes journalists would stop writing about him.

"The physical descriptions," he replies, and we run through the oft-reported inventory: chiseled cheekbones, strong chin, strawberry-blond hair. "It touches a nerve, since I am being evaluated on the strength of that rather than the strength of my talent, my performance, my art. It bothers me—actually it bothers me a lot—because it gets in the way, and it's simply not who I am."

At 58, Redford is still used to women fawning over him—one interviewer actually brought him brownies. He's eager to gauge my AQ—adoration quotient.

"You didn't bring me brownies, huh?" he asks, raising an eyebrow. "Okay." He's brought his own breakfast this morning—▶

## Bob's jobs

From actor to Oscar-winning director



The Great Gatsby



The Way We Were



With Paul Newman, as Sundance and Butch, left, and today, right.



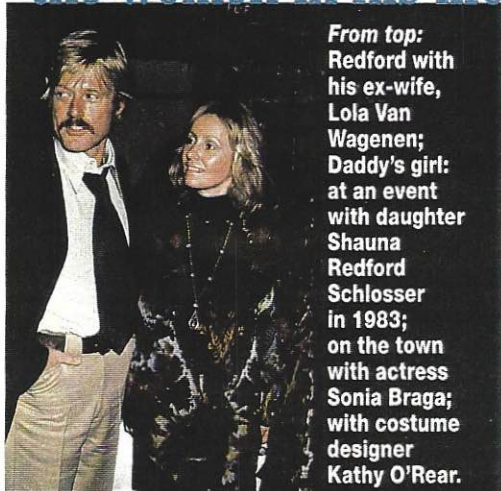
Winning an Oscar for Ordinary People.



Directing Quiz Show.

■ CELEBRITY CLOSE-UP

the women in his life



From top: Redford with his ex-wife, Lola Van Wagenen; Daddy's girl: at an event with daughter Shauna Redford Schlosser in 1983; on the town with actress Sonia Braga; with costume designer Kathy O'Rear.



(continued from p. 51)

a sticky honey-nut danish that he offers to share—and between hearty bites, he licks his fingers.

What I did bring him was a true story. He leans forward in his chair, curiosity piqued. "I love stories," he says. I tell him about a teenage boy with whom I work as a volunteer. The boy, who has HIV, is always running around with a camcorder. When I asked him, just before Christmas, about his goals for the future, he replied without a moment's thought: "I want one day to be the talk of Sundance." He was referring, of course, to the once

fledgling, now respected film festival Redford helped start 15 years ago, never dreaming it would come so far, so fast.

Redford pushes a stack of papers and a half-empty jar of peanuts aside so he can look me straight in the eye. "Thank you," he says, and this is not the actor in him speaking—he looks genuinely moved. "God, that's wonderful. That's the reward for putting something into motion against the odds, against advice, out of some vague conviction that there was something good in it."

Before the Sundance Film Festival, Park City, Utah, was simply a ski resort. Now, it's a mecca for independent filmmakers, with a teaching institute and an annual festival at which thousands of movie movers and shakers focus on innovative cinema (while getting in some prime time on the slopes). Redford acts as the festival's patron and pitchman, as well as its proud papa. And Sundance continues to grow—with a catalog that hawks handmade crafts, and a two-year-old film-internship program for kids. Last month, Redford launched the Sundance Cable Channel, which will bring independent films into subscribers' living rooms.

"I'm passionate about Sundance," he says. "Passionate about art in all shapes and forms. There are not many things in my life I feel I can say that about."

Chief among the topics that *don't* elicit Redford's ardor is Hollywood. Although he's very much a part of it, Redford makes no bones about his dislike of the business side of the film industry. He doesn't even live in Los Angeles—his homes are in Utah and New York City—and he shuns the star scene. "You'll never see me on a talk show, and I don't run the party circuit," he says. "I find Hollywood to be as cold and harsh a business as Wall Street. The dollar drives it, not art."

So how can he not feel hypocritical acting in such a commercial film as the new *Up Close and Personal* with Michelle Pfeiffer—a movie that is rumored to have netted him a \$20 million salary? "I was drawn to the story," he says. "It's about the media, which interests me." The film shows both sides

of TV-news reporting—the grit and the glamour. Redford's character, a hard-boiled has-been reporter, helps turn Pfeiffer's ingenue into a glossy anchorwoman.

As can be expected from someone with such a long history of activism (he has been outspoken on the environment and Congress), Redford has a few suggestions for the real-life media. "I think news has become showbiz, and that should change," he says. "It's all about drama nowadays—they couldn't care less about whatever margin of respect or dignity might be accorded someone. They take that camera right into the nostrils of somebody who's just received news of a death, and gossip makes the front page. 'News' today has become whatever will get attention, whatever will sell."

**Big money, big compromises**

Abruptly, Redford stops, realizing he's been on his soapbox for several minutes, and turns his thoughts back to his new movie. "It's a great romance. I'm the mentor and Michelle is the pupil, and out of that beginning comes a tempestuous love story. My character is a man who respects the truth, but he has also flown too close to the sun. He's made too many enemies by being uncompromising."

This description is a far cry from Redford himself, who, no matter how frivolous he may find Hollywood, shrewdly refuses to bite the hand that feeds him.

"I see them as a trade-off," he says of the commercial films he has made in recent years, including *Sneakers*, *Havana* and *Indecent Proposal*. "I've always been able to play both sides, and I don't see anything wrong with that." The big money he gets from the studios ▶



Relaxing at home in Utah: "I find peace here."

FOR ADDITIONAL PHOTO CREDITS, SEE P. 146

## CELEBRITY CLOSE-UP

(continued from p. 52)

affords him the ability to do what he likes best—direct, produce and develop. He's proudest of his directorial efforts—among them *The Milagro Beanfield War*, *A River Runs Through It* and *Quiz Show*. He recently paid \$3 million for the rights to *The Horse Whisperer*, a best-seller by Nicholas Evans about a man who heals animals and people both physically and spiritually. Besides producing and directing, Redford will play the title character. "I look for projects that matter," he says. "I don't fault Hollywood—it entertains. But it should learn the worth of diversity instead of making passes at pretending."

Redford, though, is no pretender. He carries no air that gives any indication of his clout. "I have always

been baffled by my success in Hollywood," he says, leaning back in his chair and resting his hands behind his head. "Not to sound falsely humble, but I honestly don't understand it. It came as a surprise to me."

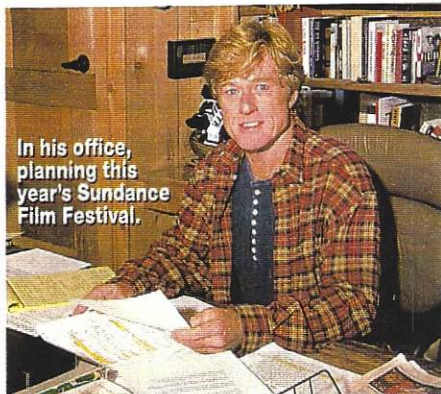
In fact, he adds bluntly, "I grew up thinking I was nothing particularly special." His father was a milkman-turned-accountant who settled his family in Southern California, and his mother was a homemaker. He went to Van Nuys High, where he was a "so-so" student and a member of the tennis team, and then briefly attended the University of Colorado, dropping out in his sophomore year. He spent a year in Europe trying to become a painter before the acting bug bit. Redford headed for New York City and the stage, where he landed his first leading role at 23 in the 1961 Broadway play *Sunday in New York*, followed by *Barefoot in the Park* in 1963, which he later reprised on-screen. In the '70s he became the quintessential Hollywood heartthrob, starring in such films as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *The Way We Were*.

But while his career has continually soared, his offscreen relationships have steadily fizzled. His 27-year marriage to Lola Van Wagenen, the mother of his children (they met when he was 20 and she was 18), ended in a painful divorce in 1985. There have been numerous reported romances ever since, most notably with actress Sonia Braga and with costume designer Kathy O'Rear. But he won't talk about any of the women in his life. "That's personal," he says, shrugging.

And Redford hates getting personal. It makes him squirm uncomfortably in his chair, ruffle his hair and furrow his brow. "I don't talk about my personal life," he says. Never? "Never."

He's apologetic—he hates for people to think he's difficult or unyielding. "But you have to understand," he explains. "I'm the one who chose the spotlight, not the people I love. I put this shadow on their lives. It's not that I have anything to hide—it's just that I feel I owe it to them to give them a life that's on their own terms."

He worries most about his children. "You think it's easy being Robert Redford's son or daughter?"



In his office, planning this year's Sundance Film Festival.

he asks. "Of course it has privileges, but it also has just as many negatives." He shows me a picture of his new grandson, Dylan, the second child of his son, Jamie. "He's two months old—I wonder if he knows what he just got himself into," he says with a trace of remorse. "All I can tell you about my kids is that I love them all very much. Considering the nature of my business, I did the best I could. They turned out okay, and they're all healthy kids, so I must have done something right."

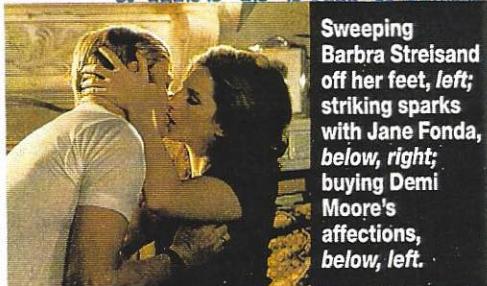
### Leading ladies and love scenes

He's equally elusive about his colleagues and friends. "I'm not a name-dropper," he says, grinning. "Out of fairness to the people I've worked with, I don't like to pick favorites." But after a bit of pumping, he admits whom he'd like to work with (Emma Thompson) and whom he admires (retiring Colorado Representative Pat Schroeder), and he comes clean about Michelle Pfeiffer. "I have a great deal of respect for her," he says. "Michelle's got a good, tough mind, but she doesn't compromise her soul or her femininity to play a man's game. She's my idea of a modern woman."

As for his competition—all the Brad Pitts, Antonio Banderases and Tom Cruises—Redford refuses to speculate as to who tomorrow's screen legends will be. "I'll just cast my vote for the person who is true to his craft," he says. "Looks only last for a while."

That brings up a thorny topic—one that Redford doesn't hesitate to raise himself: "Do you think I look too old to be doing love scenes?" he asks. "Maybe you'll see the new movie and call me up and say, 'Hey, Bob! Forget it! If I were you, I'd think about doing *Father of the Bride, Part III* or something!' But getting old is not something I think about—it just happens. At this point in my life, obviously a part that calls for a 35-year-old is out of my league. But a good love story? Hey, those can happen at any age—and I guess I'm a sucker for one." ■

## a kiss is still a kiss



Sweeping Barbra Streisand off her feet, left; striking sparks with Jane Fonda, below, right; buying Demi Moore's affections, below, left.

The Way We Were



Indecent Proposal

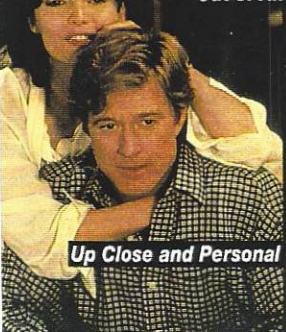


The Electric Horseman



Out of Africa

Making his move on Meryl Streep (amid mosquito netting), above, and as a veteran reporter, left, romancing Michelle Pfeiffer.



Up Close and Personal