

A sequel to success

→WHAT'S A MAN TO DO WHEN HE'S WRITTEN A SUCCESSFUL AUTOBIOGRAPHY but then accidentally goes on to enjoy another few decades of his career, win an Academy Award, appear in Christopher Nolan's Batman films, and have a few epiphanies about work, the world and society at large? If that man is **Michael Caine**, he gets right back to writing, and creates *Blowing the Bloody Doors Off*

GQ: Many of the memories you share in *Blowing the Bloody Doors Off* are warm, fond ones. Would you call this a nostalgic book?

MC: Oh, yes. I was in a bit of a quandary: when I was about 60, I got a script and I sent it back saying the part was too small. He sent it back, saying, 'I didn't want you to read the lover, I wanted you to read the father.' And so suddenly I realised I was at that age and it was all over, and I retired to Miami and bought a restaurant, and decided to write my autobiography, *The Elephant to Hollywood*, and that was that.

But while I was there, Jack Nicholson was there, and we became friends. Then one day he came to me and said 'I'm going to do a movie, and I've got the script, with a part for you in it.' And I said, well, I'm not the star of the movie, I'm an actor now, a leading character actor, and no longer the romantic star who got the girl and all that stuff. So I did it, and I went on to win an Oscar for *The Cider House Rules*, make six wonderful pictures with Chris Nolan, and I'm still working – I'm 85.

And I thought, I wonder how many people make that mistake, of retiring, you know? And I had this whole other fabulous life of 20 years of movies after I retired, you know. And I thought, well, I've done an autobiography, everyone knows who I am, where I came from, all that. I decided to write a book that was more philosophical than anything. I've got to record the pictures that I did, you know, it's part of my life – but I didn't do where I was born or how tall I was or anything like that, because you already know that.

GQ: Were the encouraging tone and positive mood of your book intentional, or is that simply who you are?

MC: I didn't want anything negative to be in there. One of the reasons I wrote this book is that I've been watching a TV programme and they were asking young people what they wanted to do with their lives. A lot of them, obviously, said what they wanted to do, but several of them just said that they wanted to be rich and famous. And that's entirely the wrong way to set out.

If I was any example of anything – because I obviously did become rich and famous – but I didn't set out to become rich and famous. It was exactly the opposite for me: I had a thick cockney accent, I'd just been in Korea in the war in the British Army, and I had malaria which had an incubation period so I didn't know I had it until I got back to England. I had a big yellow face, and a cockney accent. I felt that I never could be rich and famous – I could never be a movie star, because they were all Clark Gable, Cary Grant – I never could be that. So I just set out to be the best that I could possibly be and I did what I wanted to do. That's all.

PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF SPICER

“A man said to me ‘Have you seen *Jaws: The Revenge*?’ and I said, ‘No, but I’ve seen the house it bought my mother, and it’s fabulous

GQ: You write about a moment when you felt that you'd 'made it', but then learnt that you need to keep on 'making it' day after day. Have you ever felt invincible, or untouchable?

MC: When you get to my age, and have lived the life and career that I have, if I make a movie and I get a bad review it's not going to destroy my career or life at this point. And also, I don't play leading parts anymore: I'm too old to get up at six thirty for three months. But if I do think that I'm going to enjoy it, I'm going to do it.

GQ: For a good few years, you've been unapologetic about taking parts for the money, or for enjoyment. In this book, you talk about the luxury of being able to choose.

MC: I was very broke until I was 32, and I got my first movie, and I thought that that wasn't going to be very good, and you have to remember that you're offered another movie before the one you've made comes out. So you do that, and think, well, I've got to pay the rent! I made a movie once called *Jaws: The Revenge* and I was on it for two weeks. I wasn't the star of it, but they paid me a great deal of money for it. A man said

to me 'Have you seen *Jaws: The Revenge*?' and I said, 'No, but I've seen the house it bought my mother, and it's fabulous.'

I did things like that because I had no confidence that I would remain a star. But what happened with me was that I would make a couple of flop pictures, and I was always saved by the next one, which was great, you know? The thing about it was surviving, and also learning the movie business. I had a couple of friends who would only wait for really great scripts with wonderful directors, and by the time they got one of these, they hadn't worked for a year, so they'd be absolutely useless when they got on the set. Me, I mean, if you wanted me in a movie, I'd just finished one, so I was ready to go.

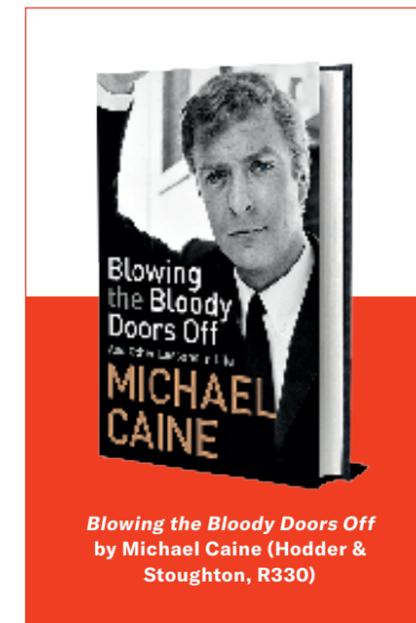
I had my first daughter, Dominique, and I didn't want her to live my life. And so, I did what I could. By the time her mother died, I was in a good space, and Dominique and I have been together ever since, and I've taken care of her. I think it's terribly important, if you come from a poor background and you do make some money, that you should take care of everyone else, and I have done that.

GQ: There's a lot of hand-wringing at the moment about people being self-obsessed and obsessed with their own image – how does that meet with the advice you share in the book about the importance of self-presentation?

MC: Well, if you're self-obsessed with your image, you're going nowhere. Because we're supposed to be obsessed with your image – not you.

GQ: You write about the '60s and the cultural revolution that changed class relations. Have you ever felt a mood like that since?

MC: Well, the cultural revolution kept going, and of course now we've had a scientific revolution. With computers, iPads and phones, we're all much more connected to each other. The only fault I can see with that is that when we didn't have all these methods of connection, we made the effort to connect personally. I think that we have, now, fabulously knowledgeable young people. Much more so than my generation, and they're living, for instance in England, in a less class-ridden society. I love this generation, but we've got to wait and see what they do. ❌
- CAYLEIGH BRIGHT



Blowing the Bloody Doors Off
by Michael Caine (Hodder & Stoughton, R330)