

Going back to the birth of

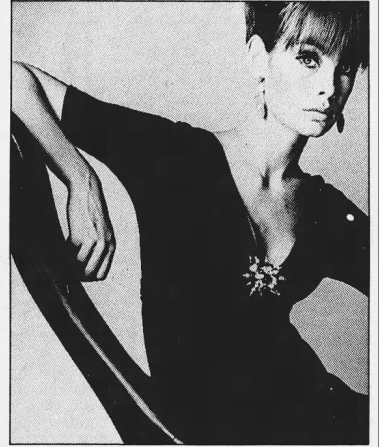
ADAM EDWARDS sees a snapshot of the Swinging Sixties that won't fade away

NOBODY calls it Cool Britannia any more. Nobody — except for a New Labour backbencher and one's mother — would be so startlingly crass.

Cool Britannia had but a moment of ecstasy, briefly in the summer of 1997, when the whole country was singing from the Oasis song sheet. Since then "cool" has been a cliché.

That sunny moment was, in fact, a throwback to the mid-Sixties Swinging London. It was that generation which laid down the template for the new chic, rock 'n' roll Britain. And much of what was created then is still with us today.

Later this month the Barbican is showing an exhibition of David Bailey's pictures titled *Birth of the Cool*. The exhibition, featuring more than 200 black-and-white prints, includes a mixture of classic images such as Jean Shrimpton, Mick Jagger and



David Bailey created the images of the Sixties English cool: (from left) Marianne Faithfull, Cecil Beaton with Rudolf Nureyev, Jean Shrimpton,

the Kray Twins. It also includes previously unpublished photographs discovered in his archives.

The title of the show is perfectly justified. It was David Bailey who, more than anyone else in London, personified the new English cool: classless, relaxed, fashionable and strikingly handsome.

Before Bailey, the image of a London photographer was that of a lowly beast clad in an old mackintosh and trilby

flashing his square Rolleiflex, or in a cheap suit behind a tripod at weddings. It was Bailey who turned this grubby creature into a glamorous figure by photographing the famous, dating the models he pictured and mixing with, and living like, the subjects he photographed. His cover pictures for the Rolling Stones' first two albums helped make him a star. The hero of the film *Blow-Up*, starring David Hemmings, about a fashion pho-

tographer who discovers a murder, was modelled on Bailey. It turned him into a household name.

His rise, in turn, made other trades cool. Hairdressers were no longer found in basements selling something for the weekend but in smart salons along the King's Road with rock music thundering through the room. Sweeney's and Scissors cut male and female hair and, in particular, Leonard, who was more feted

than Nicky Clarke will ever be.

The same was true for models. It was the first time that the model was as important as the clothes. Twiggy and Jean Shrimpton took centre stage with the mini skirt. And clothes shops like *Granny Takes A Trip*, *Chelsea Antique Market* and *Biba* were cool places to be seen.

London's new young Brat pack gave the city and the

country its international cool image, particularly in the US. Sean Connery in the early Bond films, Michael Caine in *Alfie*, Peter O'Toole in *Lawrence of Arabia* and *What's New Pussycat?* And there were many more: Albert Finney, Terence Stamp, Oliver Reed, Alan Bates, Julie Christie and Vanessa Redgrave. And, of course, the late, lamented Lionel Bart, the enduring figure of Brit musical theatre.

Bailey Edwards Standard 1 of 2

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