

Bob Willoughby

Willoughby was born in Los Angeles on June 30, 1927. He pursued photography after receiving a camera as a gift on his 12th birthday. Willoughby studied photography at the film school at the University of Southern California and worked under graphic designer Saul Bass.

Between 1948 and 1954, his exhibitions of photographs of jazz musicians and dancers led to a contract with Globe Photos. Later, he worked for Harper's Bazaar magazine where his photographs illustrated arts and culture articles.

His big break came when he was assigned by six magazines to photograph Judy Garland during the filming of A Star is Born (1954). Subsequently he was hired by Warner Brothers to film the extensive "Born in a Trunk" sequence. This was the first time a motion picture studio hired a special or unit photographer to specifically take photographs for sale to magazines. The result was a Life magazine cover featuring a close-up portrait of the pixie-faced singer in costume. It was her second Life cover and his first.

In 1963, Willoughby built the first remote radio-controlled camera for on-set still photography. This led to other innovations that enabled him to take still photographs identical to the film footage.

Willoughby continued to photograph for the rest of his life. He lived in Ireland for 17 years where he used his photographic skills to illustrate ancient Irish poetry text with photographs of the countryside. In addition, he authored books on photography and other subjects. He lived his last years in Vence, France, where he continued a very active professional life. He died of cancer on 18 December 2009.

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