

PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: ROBERT REDFORD

A candid conversation with the iconic actor-director about why he likes fast cars, hybrids and Paul Newman and doesn't like George Bush or the press

What's remarkable about Robert Redford after all this time—and he has been famous for nearly five decades—is that he's still something of a mystery. He rarely gives interviews, and he manages to stay above gossip at a time when every 14-year-old with a cell phone is a paparazzo.

What we do know is that Redford defies easy categorization. Celebrated for his golden good looks, he always rejected the role of pretty boy. An intensely private man, he has dedicated his life to public causes. And though he's a wealthy Hollywood insider known for blockbusters like *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Sting* and *All the President's Men*, Redford's lasting legacy may well be his commitment to scrappy independent film.

At 71, with a face cragged from a lifetime on ski slopes and sunny back lots, Redford isn't showing signs of losing his complexity. This winter he's taking on an unpopular administration by releasing a drama full of popular names (Streep, Cruise and, yes, Redford, who's also starring). *Lions for Lambs*, set in Washington and Afghanistan, is Redford's 38th film as an actor and his seventh at the helm since winning his only Oscar, for directing *Ordinary People*.

But moviemaking is now practically a sideline for Redford, whose acting and directing efforts have mostly sputtered since long-ago hits like *The Natural*, *Out of Africa* and *A River Runs Through It*. (He has

fared better in recent years as a producer of such films as *The Motorcycle Diaries*.)

From his mountain home on 6,000 acres outside Park City, Utah, the still sandy-haired icon plays don to a worldwide mob of indie auteurs whose reason for being is the annual Sundance Film Festival. Founded in 1981 Redford's Sundance Institute and the festival have become the recognized ways to buck the Hollywood establishment. Steven Soderbergh, Quentin Tarantino, Robert Rodriguez and Jim Jarmusch all screened their breakthrough films to the Ugg-booted hipsters there. And Redford has since spun the brand, named for his own career-making role opposite pal Paul Newman, into a small empire. There's the 24-hour Sundance Channel, a Sundance housewares catalog and an expanding chain of Sundance Cinemas. This year's festival drew 48,000 attendees, some of whom actually came to see the movies. To counter the increasingly zoo-like atmosphere, Redford's institute distributed pins reading FOCUS ON FILM.

Redford, who's divorced and has three grown children and four grandchildren, is just as focused on politics and the future of the planet. Decades before every Hollywood star drove a hybrid, Redford became a trustee of the Natural Resources Defense Council, a base he has used to push for cleaner air and water and alternative-energy production. He has

frequently narrated eco-themed films and commercials, and last year the Sundance Channel premiered *The Green*, a series of programs and documentaries devoted to environmental issues. He has also spent much of the past six years railing against the policies—environmental and otherwise—of the Bush administration.

Born in Santa Monica, California in 1936, Charles Robert Redford Jr. was a restless kid. His father was a milkman and later an oil-company accountant; his mother died young from cancer. In high school Redford stole hubcaps and hiked more than he studied. Later he lost his baseball scholarship at the University of Colorado for drinking (and skiing and painting) too much. After a starving-artist stint in Europe, he found his way to New York, where his curiosity for set design led him to the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. Too good-looking for stage crew, Redford was soon landing parts on Broadway, where his charisma in Neil Simon's *Barefoot in the Park* (1963) got the attention of Hollywood, and he has been an international star ever since.

Writer DAVID HOCHMAN met Redford at the actor's vacation home in Napa Valley. (His primary address has been Utah since 1970.) Says Hochman, "Redford is notorious for being late, even though he keeps his watch set a half hour ahead. True to form, he pushed the interview time to the 11th hour, but once we sat down he couldn't stop talking. Redford



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"I drive hybrid cars. I've had passive solar heating and wind generation in my Utah home since 1975. But I must say, I do like racing fast cars. It's a hypocritical, weak move on my part. But I've always loved speed."



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PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK EDWARD HARRIS

looks older and softer around the middle than he did in the days of *The Sting* and *The Great Gatsby*, but at one point he donned a pair of gold aviator sunglasses and lit up that legendary smile. All you can think is, *Good God! It's Robert Redford!*"

PLAYBOY: You've been enormously successful for almost 50 years without a major scandal or a real drop in your esteem. In fact, as you've gotten older, you've become more revered. How on earth is that possible?

REDFORD: Probably because I never trusted success. I come from a long line of people who thought if something good happens to you, there must be something wrong. Early on, when movies like *Butch Cassidy* put a huge spotlight on me, I ran from it. I never fell into the traps of having an entourage or being surrounded by yes-people. It never interested me to do Leno or go to parties, and I think that served me.

PLAYBOY: Can you imagine starting out in today's celebrity-crazed environment?

REDFORD: I'm glad I don't have to. Today more than ever I see young actors going into the business of themselves. They find some commercial hook, and they play it out. You see them doing every magazine cover, every TV show. I think that's a mistake. One of the benefits of growing up in L.A. was that Hollywood wasn't the end of my rainbow. As a kid, I would see famous actors and say, "Oh, shit, that person is bald" or whatever. Furthermore, I always benefited from having interests outside L.A. I felt it was important to be in Utah, to raise my kids there. It was grounding for them and for me. I came to see Hollywood as a place where I could make social statements under the guise of entertainment—and then get out.

PLAYBOY: *Lions for Lambs* is the latest in a long series of political movies for you that started with *The Candidate* in 1971. Is your intention to somehow influence public opinion or policy?

REDFORD: I gave up a long time ago the idea that a film can change people's lives, let alone their politics. I once had great hopes that people would see movies like *The Candidate* or *All the President's Men* and say, "Hey, if we're not careful, we might get snookered." I discovered we Americans enjoy the distraction of entertainment but aren't really interested in the deeper message. We don't like to look inward; we don't like darkness. For me *The Candidate* was a movie about hypocrisy in politics, about how it's all dominated by cosmetics and dressing well. But I'll never forget, years later,

Dan Quayle saying that was the movie that got him into politics. I thought, Boy, did he miss the point!

The one exception in terms of influencing people was always fashion. When we were doing *Butch Cassidy*, I wanted to wear a mustache, but they were out of style. My agent was against it. I was told stories about actors whose entire careers were ruined by mustaches. And I said, "That's crap." After the movie hit, mustaches were *everywhere*.

PLAYBOY: A mustache might have been a good idea for Tom Cruise in *Lions for Lambs*, given the public's reaction to him lately. As his co-star and director, are you worried about all that negative attention?

REDFORD: Tom's a talented actor, and I



Environmental activism isn't about being trendy. There's something shallow about that.

think people still respond positively to him. This is an especially interesting role for him, because he plays a young Republican who's sort of a better version of Bush. He's smarter. He went to Harvard and West Point, not to Yale on a pass. The concern for me was whether Tom was up for playing a character like that, and he definitely was. I didn't concern myself with the gossip—I never do—and I knew enough from what I've been through to judge the man based on what I experienced firsthand. And I didn't see any behavior on the film that troubled me. Really.

PLAYBOY: A producer like Jerry Bruckheimer has no trouble getting access to military vehicles and government

locations for his movies. Is that process harder on a Robert Redford film because of your liberal reputation?

REDFORD: I can only speculate, but I suspect it is. For the new film, I wanted a shot of Meryl Streep, who plays a veteran political journalist, coming down the steps of the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington and was initially told it wasn't a problem. Word finally got back that the head of security wanted to speak to me directly. Directly? I thought that was odd. He ended up telling me no, which seemed to give him a certain amount of pleasure. Then when our production designer inquired about taking measurements inside the building so we could re-create our sets—not an uncommon request—we started hearing questions like "Is this that Redford movie?" The tone of the question suggested it would be some sort of lefty picture, like I was going to shoot down the whole building. In the end we put in a call to Barack Obama, and he made it possible to get what we needed.

PLAYBOY: You kicked off this year's Sundance Festival by demanding an apology from President Bush for the war in Iraq. It's nearly a year later. Have you heard from him yet?

REDFORD: The situation is worse now. It's worse than Nixon, worse than Vietnam, worse than McCarthy. But it's the same pattern, the same sensibility that caused it. You have a leader who's mean, myopic, tyrannical, obsessed with power and willing to make criminal mistakes. You can take almost every area of our society—health, the environment, the military, jobs—and this administration has savaged it for one percent of the American population. I feel anger and hurt for the loss of the country I once knew. What's amazing is the Republicans—with control of both houses, the Supreme Court and the bully pulpit—

have had every opportunity to move the country ahead, and look what they've done in just six years. You begin to wonder, Are we just another empire, like the Ottoman or the Roman, that crashes and burns because of hubris? It's not going to be easy to undo what these guys have done to us. But there's always hope, and my hope has always been in art.

PLAYBOY: When you received the Kennedy Center Honor in 2005, President Bush called you "extraordinarily handsome, effortlessly fascinating and enormously talented." Was it difficult to shake his hand?

REDFORD: It was tough, but you have to shake his hand. You go through the motions because everybody's taking the

high road. I was assured beforehand that this was an honor above politics, and I said, "If that's the case, okay, I'll have to bite it." It really was about my family and giving my kids and especially my grandkids a chance to see firsthand how a place like the White House operates, and boy, they saw it all right.

PLAYBOY: What happened?

REDFORD: What we observed that night was mind-bending. Here were sworn enemies, the leaders who beat the shit out of each other all day in public, but the minute those doors closed for the state dinner, the daggers went away and it was one big happy family. Condoleeza Rice got up and couldn't have been sweeter or more gracious; she was smiling at everyone. I thought, This is so bizarre. Then I saw former Republican senator Bill Frist weaving through the tables, and he came over to Ted Kennedy and started massaging his shoulders and laughing like they were the oldest buddies in the world. Everybody was crossing the aisles and chuckling, and I said, "Oh, I get it! It really is just a game." They have to go out and say, "I represent so-and-so and such-and-such a platform," but it's absolute total bullshit.

PLAYBOY: Are you ever ashamed to be an American?

REDFORD: I'm not ashamed. I'm sad. I'm angry. I'm sad to be an American caught in a minority sensibility in this country. But I think it will swing back. It always does. The real question, particularly when it comes to the environment, is when we have a Nero—and that's what Bush is—how many resources do we have to play with before they all run out? How much damage can he do?

PLAYBOY: Looking at Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, do you ever think, I should be doing that?

REDFORD: Every film about politics I've made makes the point that politics compromises you. Your hands are tied, and I would never want to be in that position, so no. I lost all interest in going into politics around the time the Watergate break-in occurred. I was promoting *The Candidate*, and I did a whistle-stop train tour with George McGovern and some other candidates. I wanted to make the point that I could draw more people just by standing on the back of the train. And that's what happened. They would draw 300 or 400 people, and then I would go out and get 3,000 or 4,000 people. I would tell the crowds, "Thank you all for coming. My fellow Americans, I just want you all to know I have absolutely nothing important to say." And they would cheer.

PLAYBOY: Which presidential candidate excites you most now?

REDFORD: There isn't one. In terms of support, I try not to involve myself in national politics. I realize you have much more influence on the local stage. There's so much constipation on the national front, but locally is where things can shift. I don't agree with everything Mayor

Richard Daley has done, but he's done amazing things with the environment in Chicago, and I can support that.

PLAYBOY: Is it a sign of progress that many Hollywood stars now arrive at movie premieres in Priuses instead of limos?

REDFORD: Honestly, it scares me. Environmental activism isn't about being trendy or making a fashion statement. There's something shallow about that. With the Johnny-come-latelies, you hope it's not just a publicity move, because people will grow tired of it and move on. That's not to say there hasn't been progress. What's changed is the money. The public is waking up to this and buying the green movement. Corporate America is finally saying you can be both profitable and environmentally conscious. That's something we've been waiting for since the 1960s. What Al Gore's been doing couldn't have happened without corporate funding. Unfortunately it took the escalation of global threats to make that happen, and now we need more than stars showing up in hybrids and organic cotton. If public enthusiasm wanes, the blue-chip backing will disappear, and then where will we be? We need more funding. We need new green technologies, like the ones coming out of Silicon Valley. We need real action.

PLAYBOY: Granted, but we notice you don't have those squiggly bulbs in all your light fixtures. How green are you exactly?

REDFORD: I'm not Ed Begley Jr., though I think he's amazing. I'm not that extreme. But I drive hybrid cars. I've had passive solar heating and wind generation in my Utah home since 1975. I bike and hike and ride horses as much as I can. But I must say, I do like racing fast cars.

PLAYBOY: How do you rationalize that?

REDFORD: Guilty as charged, I'm afraid. It's a hypocritical, weak move on my part. We do what we can. But I've always loved speed. I love finding a good stretch of open road and cutting loose in my Porsche. That's all I want to say about that.

PLAYBOY: Do you ever get caught?

REDFORD: [Laughs slyly] That's often the interesting part. I was blasting through an Indian reservation one time in northern New Mexico, and the reservation cop was taking a long time giving me a ticket. I looked in the mirror, and the place was alive with cop cars. I think the entire Apache nation turned up, and they all wanted a picture with me, down to the last secretary.

PLAYBOY: When did that sort of thing start happening to you?

REDFORD: Things started getting hairy around the time I did *Barefoot in the Park* on Broadway in 1963. I lived a pretty anonymous life before that, but suddenly everything was supercharged. One day in New York I had some business in a building on the west side, and some nursing school students got wind I was there. Somebody came up and said, "The nursing gals are freaking out. You have to exit through the basement." And I (continued on page 000)

Action! Heroes

It's not easy to work both sides of the camera. Here are the best actor-directors on-screen today

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Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* is memorable, but the gentle power of his recent films such as *Letters From Iwo Jima* has moved critics. He is one of only four living directors to have made two films that won Academy Awards for best picture (*Unforgiven* and *Million Dollar Baby*). Not bad for a man with no name.

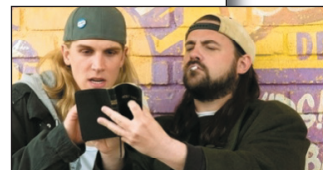


Oh, **Mel Gibson**, *Apocalypto* and *Braveheart* are amazing, but *The Passion of Christ* is a little freaky.

Very passionate about his subjects, the devout Catholic has said that his Episcopalian wife may not get into heaven: "She's a saint, but that is a pronouncement from the chair. I go with it." Yikes.



It's tough for **Kevin Smith** to be vain about his success as a studio director-actor when the press continues to label him an indie filmmaker. (He made *Jersey Girl* for a reported \$35 million.) Vanity, though, is not one of Smith's traits—he recast himself in *Clerks II* as Silent Bob, a central character with the fewest lines.



Zack Braff is no scrub; critics loved his directorial debut, *Garden State*.

His acting and directing were both impressive, and he also compiled the Grammy-winning soundtrack, which included the Shins, Iron and Wine, Frou Frou and, unfortunately, Coldplay.



Kevin Costner won an Oscar for his debut behind the camera with *Dances With Wolves* but stumbled in his next attempt, with *The Postman*. His fourth film, *Open Range*, put him back in critics' good graces—it was also the first film he directed for which he didn't give himself top billing. Coincidence?
—Rocky Rakovic



remember being down there, hearing this thunder of footsteps overhead. I got out to the street, and there was a wall of nurses. They wanted every piece of me. They started clawing at my hair and my clothes. If it wasn't for a helpful taxi driver, I would have been torn apart by nurses.

PLAYBOY: That doesn't sound totally unpleasant.

REDFORD: The excess attention always made me uncomfortable. I never liked feeling it was all about my looks. You want to be seen for what you can do, not for your hair or your blue eyes or your teeth. The golden-boy thing became a screen in front of everything else. And that really worried me. It felt threatening. Suddenly your looks bring up resentment. You start to represent something to people that has nothing to do with who you are. That's not to say I wasn't enjoying success. I was enjoying parts of it immensely.

PLAYBOY: Can you give us a sense of what it was like to be Robert Redford in those days? Were you hanging out with Elvis and people like that?

REDFORD: I was Elvis in a way. It was absolute insanity. Once the money started coming in, I could do anything I wanted. I could have a house in Connecticut in addition to an apartment in New York. At a moment's notice we could fly to the Caribbean. We could go out to Trader Vic's for dinner every night if we wanted.

PLAYBOY: Were drugs or alcohol ever a problem?

REDFORD: No. I tried everything, but I never struggled. For me, it was a very exciting time, though I wasn't thinking that specifically. I was doing what I wanted to do. People talk about the 1970s now. I was just living my life. I was able to make films that were slightly off the street: *Downhill Racer*, *Jeremiah Johnson*, *Three Days of the Condor*. And those movies were being funded by popular films like *The Great Gatsby*. But as good as success was, there were dark sides to it I couldn't have imagined.

PLAYBOY: Like stalkers?

REDFORD: Stalkers, people hounding you, sneaking through bushes. On my birthday one year, we were on the property in Utah, and some woman came down out of the trees. She was stark naked and carrying a cake, walking toward the house. They led her away, but there was always another girl. Sometimes I don't know how I survived, but I really don't know how the younger generation of actors—Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise and everybody on down—survive, since it's a thousand times more intense.

PLAYBOY: Not to alarm you, but do you realize you're as old now as Will Geer was when he played the ornery old coot in *Jeremiah Johnson*?

REDFORD: Jesus, really? Man, he was old! [*laughs*] He wasn't in his 80s? Gee,

thanks for the reminder.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel Will Geer *old*?

REDFORD: I hope this doesn't sound false, but I don't think about age. It's interesting other people do. At a certain point I noticed I was being identified by my age. "Blond-haired, 52-year-old actor Redford...." And you wonder, What difference does that make? Well, obviously a big difference.

PLAYBOY: Some people—Joan Rivers chief among them—insist you've had plastic surgery. Have you?

REDFORD: No. Look at me. *[laughs]* I don't like the look of stretchiness plastic surgery gives you. It's one reason I've always liked European films. You see real faces. It's sad we feel such pressure in this culture to maintain a certain look forever. I was blessed to look well and retain a youthful look, but that was just genes. I was disappointed when critics started pointing out my wrinkles. I thought, You mean this is what it's gonna be about now? I'm not going to be permitted to be human now? I can't go through the natural changes that have faced every man since the dawn of time?

PLAYBOY: Do you still get sexual attention from strangers?

REDFORD: The sexual energy was always there, and it still is. I'm 71 years old, and I still get it. In a way it's bigger now because it's across the spectrum. I get it from people much, much younger and from older people—teenagers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers. Now it's flattering more than irritating, and it's not as acute; it's more polite. The worst period was probably after I made *Indecent Proposal*. Holy God, that one! I couldn't take a step outside without hearing "A million dollars for one night with your wife." If I had to hear "a million dollars" one more time.

PLAYBOY: Did anybody make you a firm offer?

REDFORD: Yes, tons of firm offers. Things came through the mail. Certified. I could have made money. *[laughs]*

PLAYBOY: Was it that sort of attention that contributed to the breakup of your marriage to Lola van Wagenen, the mother of your children, after 27 years together?

REDFORD: Yeah, it was hard. How could it not be? You're a human being, and you're competing with a ghost. You're with this person, but the person has this other side, this fame thing, that's not real, and yet it's everything. It's huge; it's bigger than anything you've ever known. But I don't think it's dignified to get into my marriage. There's nothing dark, nothing to hide. I got married young, at the age of 21, and it was good while it lasted. But you go your different ways and grow out of where you were. I want to protect the family.

PLAYBOY: Actors like Warren Beatty are well-known for their involvement with numerous women, but you never had a reputation as a philanderer. No doubt

you could have had your pick of any woman, including co-stars like Natalie Wood and Jane Fonda.

REDFORD: I won't comment on other actors. The job is hard enough without someone like me telling stories. But being single never appealed to me, and I didn't think about it much. I was aware there were people who lived a certain kind of playboy life and were immersed in it; I just didn't. There were always beautiful women around, of course, and I had beautiful co-stars, but making movies for me in those days was like dropping bombs behind enemy lines: I would do my work and get out of town.

PLAYBOY: You're officially single now, though you appear to have a good thing going with your lovely companion of 10 years, Sybille Szaggars. Will you get married again?

REDFORD: [Silence]

PLAYBOY: Okay. Do you believe in marriage?

REDFORD: It depends on the individual, but as a general category, no.

PLAYBOY: Perhaps we should change the subject. Rumor has it you and Fidel Castro are good buddies.

REDFORD: Ah, Fidel. [laughs] I met Castro for the first time in 1990. Gabriel García Márquez had come to Sundance at my request to start a Spanish-speaking lab with Cuban filmmakers. They smuggled their films out of Cuba, and it was the first time we got any traction from outside media for the Sundance Institute. Afterward Gabo asked me to return the favor and come to Cuba with him. I took a tiny plane from Orlando to Havana, and we were set up in these magnificent state houses. One night at midnight Castro's men arrived unannounced, followed by Castro. He's a great teaser, that Fidel. He kept hitting my leg. "Oh, you like baseball," he said. "I like baseball too." He told me he loved *The Natural*, though I have no idea how he got a copy. After a while, he decided we were friends and said, "Redford, you're a good guy. I want you to be my guest at the Cinco de Mayo parade." I thought, Hmmm, could be interesting. He started hitting my leg again. "You sit with me on the parade stand," he said, and I said, "Whoa! Wait a minute! I don't think so." I could imagine that picture getting around.

PLAYBOY: Were you afraid it might tarnish your reputation among the right wing as a pinko, granola-crunching tree hugger?

REDFORD: Hardly. I had already been burned in effigy several times. You have to remember, when I started speaking out politically in the late 1960s, actors weren't supposed to talk about their beliefs. The studios certainly would have been happy if I'd just played romantic leads like in *The Way We Were* and kept quiet. But I couldn't keep quiet. As I got more successful, I realized I had a platform to get messages across. In the early

1970s, I went out against a power plant in southern Utah and got hammered for it. The locals thought it was going to benefit them economically, but I saw it would totally destroy a big section of contiguous national park. I called *60 Minutes*. They did a show on it, and the plant pulled out. The locals threatened my life and my family. That's when I realized my activism was throwing a net over innocent people, like my kids, and that made me want to retreat further.

PLAYBOY: As if it wasn't complicated enough for them having a dad like Robert Redford.

REDFORD: I worked hard on giving my kids a solid foundation. That started with communication, encouraging them to speak up about things that bothered them, both in the family and in the larger world. I also spent as much time with them as I could. That was important. It helped that they grew up in both Utah and New York. Utah taught them the power of nature, which is steady, unlike fashion or show business. Going to school in New York, they learned the value of recognizing bullshit. As you get successful and famous, you start to get taken, even if you have radar. You have so much thrown at you, and it's important to figure out what's real and what's not. I'm proud to say my kids turned out okay. My son's a writer and producer. One daughter's an actress who recently directed a film. My oldest daughter is a painter married to Eric Schlosser, who wrote *Fast Food Nation*, so there's been a real uptick in their lives.

PLAYBOY: Is it tricky having a son-in-law like that around when you're craving a Big Mac?

REDFORD: I eat pretty healthily, but I'll tell you, when I drive from Sundance to Santa Fe, where we have some property, I *love* a cheeseburger. It's one of those sections of the country that don't have a lot of healthy food options, so what are you going to do? I'm forced to have a Big Mac or a Whopper or a chocolate malt. I like those old-fashioned American pleasures.

PLAYBOY: How are you with more modern pleasures? Are you a web surfer or a video game guy?

REDFORD: No. I love technology. It makes life easier. But I see people checking their handheld devices, and they make me want to scream. Technology has taken the poetry out of communication. I love letter writing. I love getting letters. You can feel the person at the other end. These digital messages we get are over and out. The shorthand leaves me kind of cold. It's why I don't have e-mail.

PLAYBOY: You run the Sundance Film Festival, and you don't have an e-mail address?

REDFORD: I'm an addictive enough personality to know if I started e-mailing people, I would constantly be checking in, constantly e-mailing people about

financing or whatever. Fortunately at Sundance, we have a bigger team in place now than we did the first year, when I was literally out on Main Street in Park City, saying, “Hey, we’re showing a film in here. Want to come see it?”

PLAYBOY: With 50,000 attendees expected next year, you don’t need to do that anymore. In fact, many people say Sundance has become a media circus and a corporate sellout.

REDFORD: It certainly has grown. The success of *sex, lies and videotape* in 1989 brought the Hollywood merchants. Once the merchants came, the distribution and marketing people came. The agents came, the Weinsteins came, the film press came, the celebrities came, and the paparazzi came. Once the paparazzi came, fashion came. Then another type of paparazzi came, and the parties got bigger. And the crowds got bigger. That’s when the difficulties began—to manage it, to keep the reins on it. It had been this safe haven, and now Paris Hilton and Britney Spears were coming, people who had nothing to do with film. I thought, Oh, shit!

PLAYBOY: Of course, the upside has been huge. Sundance has produced some amazingly provocative films: *Little Miss Sunshine*, *Boys Don’t Cry*, *The Blair Witch Project*, *El Mariachi*, *Saw* and on and on. What have those successes meant for you personally?

REDFORD: They’ve meant the world to me. At a certain point in my life I said, I’ve achieved something. Life has been good to me. What can I put back? The idea of creating opportunities for others felt really good. There’s no equivalent in the movie world of summer stock in the theater, of a training ground where you can learn by making mistakes and are free to risk. That was the whole point of the Sundance Lab, and the films that came through there needed a place to screen, so we created the festival. Hollywood has never been a safe place. It’s competitive; it’s cutthroat. People will slice you apart for money, and nobody cares much about artistic content. We’ve worked hard with Sundance to nurture talent, to make movies that aren’t just about the bottom line.

PLAYBOY: Looking back on Sundance, is there one glory moment that stands out for you?

REDFORD: Quentin Tarantino came through our lab. Paul Thomas Anderson. Wes Anderson. Kevin Smith. I felt like these were all glory moments, but the biggest moment I remember was when I was in New York for a photo op, which I never like, for *Quiz Show*, and I was getting itchy and scratchy and wanted out. All of a sudden, this guy came up, and he looked like a panhandler. He had an Army fatigues jacket on, long straight hair, and he started in, “Mr. Redford, Mr. Redford.” I said, “Sorry, son, I gotta go,” but he had something for me. People

always have something to give me—a picture to sign, a script to read—but it was a tape of a movie. I said, “I can’t,” but he started begging me. Partly to get rid of the guy, I took it. But I also knew that’s what Sundance was about. Anyway, it turned out the guy was Ed Burns, and the movie was *The Brothers McMullen*, which he’d made for less than \$35,000. I called Eddie and told him to cut 35 minutes. He showed it at Sundance. It won the big award and went on to push *Waterworld*, a movie made for \$150 million, out of theaters. There’s nothing more gratifying than seeing a kid who put everything on his credit card or borrowed from everybody in his family to make something great. That’s the glory of independent film.

PLAYBOY: Do you worry that Sundance will become irrelevant in an age when everybody on YouTube is an independent filmmaker?

REDFORD: No, because Sundance delivers something you can’t get sitting in front of your computer. We’ve given something to the moviegoer: an experience. The big movie theaters came in and created these very hostile environments. You have thin walls, 20 theaters and concession prices that are through the roof. People are noisy, and they usher you in and out as quickly as possible with one movie and six bombastic trailers. Our latest venture takes Sundance into towns across America with our chain of Sundance Cinemas. It’s not the kind of chain that plants a Godzilla footprint in a neighborhood and takes the money and runs but a group of theaters that are at heart a gathering place for people who love film. These venues partner with local arts organizations and universities and bring the feeling of the labs. The advice I got was, “Don’t do it. Theaters are dying.” But we have six so far, and they’re working.

PLAYBOY: Is it fair to say all the attention on Sundance and other people’s work took its toll on your acting career?

REDFORD: Absolutely. What I underestimated was the amount of time and energy Sundance would take. I underestimated what would happen if my ego got involved. I started taking it personally and felt the need to put money into it, raise money for it. So I didn’t make as many films. My attentions were elsewhere, and I have mixed feelings about what that has meant. The cost of Sundance has been great personally in that it wore me out. I’m ready to let go now. I’ll always be involved with it, but I don’t have to tend it. And I miss my own work so much that I need to get back to it. I still want to do more.

PLAYBOY: You haven’t done too badly for the son of a milkman. If you had to choose one moment from childhood to relive, what would it be?

REDFORD: The eighth grade. It was a particular time in my life when women

kicked into gear. I excelled at sports. I became more social. Life was good. The war was over. America was at its highest point in the 1950s. It was a high point for a number of reasons, and it came together in the eighth grade.

PLAYBOY: Is it true your family never considered you a success?

REDFORD: My father and my grandfather both gave me a hard time. When I went into acting, they were scared to death. My father came from a very poor background in New England; he was very cautious and tried to put that shadow on me. When he gave me my allowance, he would hold onto the dollar bill for a few extra seconds so I would know where it came from. He wanted me to go to Stanford and get a conventional job, get into business, but I wasn't going that way.

PLAYBOY: Wasn't he impressed once you got your early TV and stage gigs?

REDFORD: Even when I started becoming well-known, he was still concerned that the bottom would drop out. I would get one bad review for *Barefoot in the Park*, and that's the one he would mention. Eventually he came around and was proud of me, and I think he was surprised he was proud. But his father was the real troublemaker. When dad told him I wanted to be an artist, my grandfather said, "Did you tell him he can't eat art?" Later, when my grandfather was dying, I went to see him at a nursing home in Connecticut. I wanted to please him, so I got dressed up and pulled up in a fancy car and told him, "Things are going great. I got this part and that part." The nurses had fallen in love with my grandfather. He was a real charmer. And they said, "Charles, isn't it lovely your grandson is doing so well," and he said, "Yeah, but you might want to count the silverware when he leaves."

PLAYBOY: Besides keeping you humble, what did your family teach you?

REDFORD: When I was in the third grade, I had a friend named Lois Levenson, and she was my pal. One day I began to notice this buzz around school: Somebody was a Jew. I didn't understand what was going on. Then I heard words like *kike* and *Yid*, things like that. Suddenly something bad was going on, and it had something to do with being a Jew. One day out of the blue, in class, this girl stood up and said, "My name is Lois Levinson, and I'm a Jew." And I thought, Lois is one of those! Lois? Oh my God! Why is she doing this? "And I'm proud of it," she said. Very bold, very brave, but very confusing to me. So I ran home, and at the dinner table I said, "Hey, what am I?" My dad said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Today Lois Levinson got up and said she was a Jew. What am I?" My dad said, "You're a Jew." I said, "What?" I thought my life was over. My mom said, "Charlie, Charlie!" And he said, "No, he should know about this." And I was devastated. My dad had a wicked sense of humor. I ran to my room

and was in there awhile before he came in and said, "Look, I told you that to make a point." It made a huge impact on me. From then on I was going to defend anybody in that situation.

PLAYBOY: Who gave you the idea you could achieve greatness?

REDFORD: Aside from Ted Williams, nobody really. If I had to name a person, it was my father's brother, David. He was an amazing guy, six feet six inches with black hair, an incredible athlete. He went to Brown University on a scholarship, became Phi Beta Kappa and a Rhodes Scholar and spoke four languages fluently. When World War II broke out, he was offered a job playing ball with the St. Louis Browns, but he went into the Army instead and became General Patton's translator. He was killed by a sniper in the Battle of the Bulge. I was around seven, and it was the first sense I had that things could go really wrong. But Uncle David also showed me life could be an adventure. As far as professionally, I've always been grateful to Paul Newman for giving me the chance to be in *Butch Cassidy*. After that my life changed forever.

PLAYBOY: There's been talk recently of you and Newman getting back together to make another movie. What's the status of that?

REDFORD: It's not happening, sadly. Paul and I were planning on doing a film version of Bill Bryson's wonderful book *A Walk in the Woods*. I got the rights to it four years ago, and we couldn't decide if we were too old to do it. Then we decided, Let's go for it. But time passed, and Paul's been getting older fast. I think things deteriorated for him. Finally, two months ago, he called and said, "I gotta retire." The picture was written and everything. It breaks my heart.

PLAYBOY: Does that make you think about your own retirement or, dare we say, your mortality?

REDFORD: Retirement is not an issue for me. I'm going to keep working, and I would like to put together more than one picture every three years. I'm interested in telling the story behind the story everyone knows about Jackie Robinson. We've all seen so many photographs of him as this emblematic figure in the Brooklyn Dodgers uniform, who broke the color barrier and paved the way for black players to compete in the major leagues. But nobody knows the story of how he got to that point. Very few people know the story of his relationship with Branch Rickey, the white baseball executive who signed him. Even fewer know how virulent the racial prejudice Robinson faced was, what a threat his signing was to the Negro Leagues and the tremendous amount of risk involved in his going to the majors. I would like that to be my next picture.

PLAYBOY: And when you're not making a movie, what will you do?

REDFORD: I would like to spend as much

time as possible being physical. I've been physical all my life, and it gives me such pleasure to ski, bike and play tennis. I'm also interested in talking to people, to tell the public who I am a little more. I pretty much stay private, but about two years ago I realized people had lost touch with who I was because I wasn't out there on TV and had always said no to publicity. People had fallen for this image. I sensed something. Someone suggested I should go out and start speaking, to tell people who I am a little more. So I signed up with a speakers bureau, and I started talking at college campuses, to groups, to Vegas. You wouldn't believe how much they'll pay me to stand onstage for seven minutes with the head of Intel. But it was also a real education for me.

PLAYBOY: Did you feel like a rock star?

REDFORD: What I felt was respect. People have actually been moved by whatever it is I've done, and there was this enormous gratitude. "Thank you, Mr. Redford, for *The Great Waldo Pepper*." Or "I took my grandfather to see *A River Runs Through It*, and he asked me to take him to the river one last time." And also, "Thank you for speaking out on the environment and for various issues all these years." It gives me hope that the work I've done means something.

PLAYBOY: Do you believe in an afterlife?

REDFORD: I'm not sure I do. I've explored every religion, some very deeply, enough to know there's not one philosophy that can satisfy me. Problems can't be solved with one way of thinking. If anything is my guide, nature is. That's where my spirituality is. I don't believe in organized religion because I don't believe people should be organized in how they think, in what they believe. That has never been driven home as hard as with this administration. When somebody thinks God speaks to them, you've got trouble. If God is speaking to the president, he's speaking with a forked tongue, because the behavior of this administration doesn't seem very God-like or spiritual.

I often think of the arc of my life having moved from a very narrow space to a much larger one. Growing up in a working-class world in Los Angeles, I had no luxuries or entertainment. I was ashamed to have people come to our house. You're defined by that, and you try to take every opportunity that comes to you with whatever skills you've got. In my case, I acted awhile and then tried to advance those skills. Theater led to TV, TV led to film, and acting led to directing and producing, which led me to think about Sundance. Each time, I got itchy. I wanted more authorship, more ownership of the subject. It's all part of the adventure I've sought since I was a kid. Is there an afterlife? As far as I know, this is it. It's all we've got. You take your opportunities, and you go for it.

