Brigitte Bardot

This article is about the French actress and animal rights activist. For the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society vessel named after her, see MV Brigitte Bardot.

Brigitte Anne-Marie Bardot (French: [bʁiʒit bɑ̃ do]; born 28 September 1934) is a French former actress, singer and fashion model, who later became an animal rights activist. She was one of the best known sex symbols of the 1950s and 1960s and was widely referred to by her initials.[3] Starting in 1969, Bardot became the official face of Marianne (who had previously been anonymous) to represent the liberty of France.[4]

Bardot was an aspiring ballerina in early life. She started her acting career in 1952 and after appearing in 16 routine comedy films, with limited international release, became world-famous in 1957, with the controversial film And God Created Woman. She later starred in Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film Le Mépris. For her role in Louis Malle's 1965 film Viva Maria! Bardot was nominated for a BAFTA Award for Best Foreign Actress. Bardot caught the attention of French intellectuals. She was the subject of Simone de Beauvoir's 1959 essay, The Lolita Syndrome, which described Bardot as a "locomotive of women's history" and built upon existentialist themes to declare her the first and most liberated woman of post-war France.[5]

Bardot retired from the entertainment industry in 1973. During her career in show business, she starred in 47 films, performed in several musical shows and recorded over 60 songs. She was awarded the Legion of Honour in 1985 but refused to receive it.[6] After her retirement, she established herself as an animal rights activist. During the 1990s, she generated controversy by criticizing immigration and Islam in France and has been fined five times for inciting racial hatred.[7][8]

Bardot concentrated on ballet. In 1947, Bardot was accepted to the Conservatoire de Paris, the daughter of Louis Bardot (1896–1975) and Anne-Marie "Toty" Bardot (née Mucel; 1912–1978). Louis had an engineering degree and worked with his father, Charles Bardot, in the family business. Louis and Anne-Marie married in 1933. Bardot grew up in an upper middle-class Roman Catholic observant home.[9] When she was seven she was admitted to the Cours Hattemer, a private school. She went to school three days a week, and otherwise studied at home. This gave time for lessons at Madame Bourget's dance studio three days a week.[10] Brigitte's mother also enrolled Brigitte's younger sister, Marie-Jeanne (born 5 May 1938), in dance. Marie-Jeanne eventually gave up dancing lessons and did not tell her mother, whereas Brigitte concentrated on ballet. In 1947, Bardot was accepted to the Conservatoire de Paris. For three years she attended ballet classes by Russian choreographer Boris Knyazev. One of her classmates was Leslie Caron. The other ballerinas nicknamed Bardot "Bichette" ("Little Doe").[11]

At the invitation of an acquaintance of her mother, she modelled in a fashion show in 1949. In the same year, she modelled for a fashion magazine "Jardin des Modes" managed by journalist Hélène Lazareff. Aged 15, she appeared on an 8 March 1950 cover of Elle[12] and was noticed by a young film director, Roger Vadim, while babysitting. He showed an issue of the magazine to director and screenwriter Marc Allégret, who offered Bardot the opportunity to audition for Les lauriers sont coupés. Although Bardot got the role, the film was cancelled but made her consider becoming an actress. Her acquaintance with Vadim, who attended the audition, influenced her further life and career.[13][14]

2 Career

Although the European film industry was then in its ascendance, Bardot was one of the few European actresses to have the mass media's attention in the United States, an interest which she did not reciprocate. She debuted in a 1952 comedy film, Le Trou Normand (English title: Crazy for Love). From 1952 to 1956, she appeared in seventeen films; in 1953 she played a role in Jean Anouilh's stageplay L'Invitation au Château (Invitation to the Castle). She received media attention when she attended the Cannes Film Festival in April 1953.[14]

Her films of the early and mid 1950s were generally lightweight romantic dramas, some historical, in which she was cast as ingénue or siren, often appearing nude or nearly so. She played bit parts in three English-language films, the British comedy Doctor at Sea (1955) with Dirk Bogarde, Helen of Troy (1954), in which she was understudy for the title role but appears only as Helen's handmaid and Act of Love (1954) with Kirk Douglas. Her French-language films were dubbed for international release. Roger Vadim (her husband) was not content with this light fare. The New Wave of French and Italian art di-
rectors and their stars were riding high internationally and he felt Bardot was being undersold. Looking for something more like an art film to push her as a serious actress, he showcased her in *And God Created Woman* (1956) opposite Jean-Louis Trintignant. The film, about an immoral teenager in a respectable small-town setting, was a huge success and turned Bardot into an international star. [14]

During her early career, professional photographer Sam Lévin’s photos contributed to her image of Bardot’s sensuality. One showed Bardot from behind, dressed in a white corset. British photographer Cornel Lucas made images of Bardot in the 1950s and 1960s, that have become representative of her public persona.

She divorced Vadim in 1957. In 1959, she married actor Jacques Charrier, with whom she starred in *Babette Goes to War*. The press took great interest in her marriage, while she and her husband clashed over the direction of her career. Bardot’s only child, Nicolas-Jacques Charrier, was a product of her marriage to Jacques Charrier.

Bardot was awarded a David di Donatello Award for Best Foreign actress for her role in *A Very Private Affair* (*Vie privée*, 1962), directed by Louis Malle.[15]

In May 1958, Bardot withdrew to the seclusion of Southern France, where she had bought the house *La Madrague* in Saint-Tropez. In 1963, she starred in Jean-Luc Godard’s film *Le Mépris*. Bardot was featured in many other films along with notable actors such as Alain Delon (*Famous Love Affairs; Spirits of the Dead*); Jean Gabin (*In Case of Adversity*); Sean Connery (*Shalako*); Jean Marais (*Royal Affairs in Versailles; School for Love*); Lino Ventura (*Rum Runners*); Annie Girardot (*The Novices*); Claudia Cardinale (*The Legend of Frenchie King*); Jeanne Moreau (*Viva Maria!*); Jane Birkin (*Don Juan, or If Don Juan Were a Woman*). Her career had traversed epochs where it was possible to say, “In the Sixties and early Seventies, there was no better known - or more scandalous - movie star on earth. — Not since the death of Valentino had a star aroused such insane devotion in their fans.” [16] In 1973, Bardot announced she was retiring from acting as “a way to get out elegantly”. [17] A decade later she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which she survived.[18][19]

She participated in several musical shows and recorded many popular songs in the 1960s and 1970s, mostly in collaboration with Serge Gainsbourg, Bob Zagury and Sacha Distel, including “Harley Davidson”; “Je Me Donne À Qui Me Plaît”; “Bubble gum”; “Contact”; “Je Reviendrai Toujours Vers Toi”; “L’Appareil À Sous”; “La Madrague”; “On Déménage”; “Sidonie”; “Tu Veux, Ou Tu Veux Pas?”; “Le Soleil De Ma Vie” (the cover of Stevie Wonder’s “You Are the Sunshine of My Life”); and the notorious “Je t’aime... moi non-plus”. Bardot pleaded with Gainsbourg not to release this duet and he complied with her wishes; the following year, he rerecorded a version with British-born model and actress Jane Birkin that became a massive hit all over Europe. The version with Bardot was issued in 1986 and became a popular download hit in 2006 when Universal Records made its back catalogue available to purchase online, with
3.1 Animal welfare activism

this version of the song ranking as the third most popular
download.[20]

3 Personal life

On 21 December 1952, aged 18, Bardot married director Roger Vadim, seven years her senior. To receive permission from Bardot’s parents to marry her, Vadim, originally a Russian Orthodox Christian, was urged to convert to Catholicism, although it is not clear if he ever did so. They divorced five years later, but remained friends and collaborated in later work.

Bardot and Sami Frey in St. Tropez, 1963

Bardot had an affair with her And God Created Woman co-star Jean-Louis Trintignant (married at the time to actress Stéphane Audran) before her divorce from Vadim.[13][14] The two lived together for about two years. Their relationship was complicated by Trintignant’s frequent absence due to military service and Bardot’s affair with musician Gilbert Bécaud, and they eventually separated.[13]

In early 1958, Bardot recovered from a reported nervous breakdown in Italy, according to newspaper reports. A suicide attempt with sleeping pills two days earlier was also noted, but was denied by her public relations manager.[21]

On 18 June 1959, she married actor Jacques Charrier, by whom she had her only child, a son, Nicolas-Jacques Charrier (born 11 January 1960). After she and Charrier divorced in 1962, Nicolas was raised in the Charrier family and did not maintain close contact with Bardot until his adulthood.[13]

Bardot’s third marriage was to German millionaire playboy Gunter Sachs from 14 July 1966 to 1 October 1969. In the 1970s, Bardot lived with sculptor Miroslav Brozek and posed for some of his sculptures. In 1974, Bardot appeared in a nude photo shoot in Playboy magazine, which celebrated her 40th birthday.

Brigitte Bardot in a scene of A very Private Affair, 1961.

Bardot’s fourth and current husband is Bernard d’Ormale, former adviser of Jean-Marie Le Pen, former leader of the far right party Front National; they have been married since 16 August 1992.[22]

3.1 Animal welfare activism

In 1973, before her 39th birthday, Bardot announced her retirement. After appearing in more than forty motion pictures and recording several music albums, most notably with Serge Gainsbourg, she chose to use her fame to promote animal rights.

In 1986, she established the Brigitte Bardot Foundation for the Welfare and Protection of Animals.[23] She became a vegetarian[24] and raised three million francs to fund the foundation by auctioning off jewellery and personal belongings.[23]

She is a strong animal rights activist and a major opponent of the consumption of horse meat. In support of animal protection, she condemned seal hunting in Canada during a visit to that country with Paul Watson of the Sea Shep-
herd Conservation Society. On 25 May 2011 the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society renamed its fast interceptor vessel, MV Gojira, as MV Brigitte Bardot in appreciation of her support.

She once had a neighbour’s donkey castrated while looking after it, on the grounds of its “sexual harassment” of her own donkey and mare, for which she was taken to court by the donkey’s owner in 1989. Bardot wrote a 1999 letter to Chinese President Jiang Zemin, published in French magazine VSD, in which she accused the Chinese of “torturing bears and killing the world’s last tigers and rhinos to make aphrodisiacs”.

She has donated more than $140,000 over two years for a mass sterilization and adoption program for Bucharest’s stray dogs, estimated to number 300,000.

In August 2010, Bardot addressed a letter to the Queen of Denmark, Margrethe II of Denmark, appealing for the sovereign to halt the killing of dolphins in the Faroe Islands. In the letter, Bardot describes the activity as a “macabre spectacle” that “is a shame for Denmark and the Faroe Islands … This is not a hunt but a mass slaughter … an outmoded tradition that has no acceptable justification in today’s world”.

On 22 April 2011, French culture minister Frédéric Mitterrand officially included bullfighting in the country’s cultural heritage. Bardot wrote him a highly critical letter of protest.

From 2013 onwards the Brigitte Bardot Foundation in collaboration with Kagyuopa International Monlam Trust of India has operated annual Veterinary Care Camp. She has committed to the cause of animal welfare in Bodhgaya year after year.

4 Politics and legal issues

Bardot expressed support for President Charles de Gaulle in the 1960s. Her husband Bernard d’Ormale is a former adviser of the Front National, the main far right party in France, known for its nationalist and conservative beliefs.

In her 1999 book Le Carré de Pluton (“Pluto’s Square”), Bardot criticizes the procedure used in the ritual slaughter of sheep during the Muslim festival of Eid al-Adha. Additionally, in a section in the book entitled, “Open Letter to My Lost France”, Bardot writes that “my country, France, my land is again invaded by an overpopulation of foreigners, especially Muslims”. For this comment, a French court fined her 30,000 francs in June 2000. She had been fined in 1997 for the original publication of this open letter in Le Figaro and again in 1998 for making similar remarks.

In her 2003 book, Un cri dans le silence (“A Scream in the Silence”), she warned of an “Islamicization of France”, and said of Muslim immigration:

Over the last twenty years, we have given in to a subterranean, dangerous, and uncontrolled infiltration, which not only resists adjusting to our laws and customs but which will, as the years pass, attempt to impose its own.

In the book, she contrasted her close gay friends with today’s homosexuals, who “jiggle their bottoms, put their little fingers in the air and with their little castrato voices moan about what those ghastly heteros put them through” and that some contemporary homosexuals behave like “fairground freaks”.

In her own defence, Bardot wrote in a letter to a French gay magazine: “Apart from my husband — who maybe will cross over one day as well — I am entirely surrounded by homos. For years, they have been my support, my friends, my adopted children, my confidants.”

In her book she wrote about issues such as racial mixing, immigration, the role of women in politics and Islam. The book also contained a section attacking what she called the mixing of genes and praised previous generations who, she said, had given their lives to push out invaders.

On 10 June 2004, Bardot was convicted for a fourth time by a French court for “inciting racial hatred” and fined €5,000. Bardot denied the racial hatred charge and apologized in court, saying: “I never knowingly wanted to hurt anybody. It is not in my character.”

In 2008, Bardot was convicted of inciting racial/religious hatred in relation to a letter she wrote, a copy of which she sent to Nicolas Sarkozy when he was Interior Minister of France. The letter stated her objections to Muslims in France ritually slaughtering sheep by slitting their throats without anesthetizing them first. She also said, in reference to Muslims, that she was “fed up with being under the thumb of this population which is destroying us, destroying our country and imposing its habits”. The trial concluded on 3 June 2008, with a conviction and fine of €15,000, the largest of her fines to date. The prosecutor stated that she was tired of charging Bardot with offences related to racial hatred.

During the 2008 United States presidential election, she
branded the Republican Party vice-presidential candidate Sarah Palin as “stupid” and a “disgrace to women”. She criticized the former governor of Alaska for her stance on global warming and gun control. She was also offended by Palin’s support for Arctic oil exploration and for her lack of consideration in protecting polar bears.[44]

On 13 August 2010, Bardot lashed out at director Kyle Newman regarding his plan to make a biographical film on her life. She told him, “Wait until I’m dead before you make a movie about my life!” otherwise “sparks will fly.”[45]

5 Influence in pop culture

![Statue of Brigitte Bardot in Buzios, Brazil](image)

In fashion, the Bardot neckline (a wide open neck that exposes both shoulders) is named after her. Bardot popularized this style which is especially used for knitted sweaters or jumpers although it is also used for other tops and dresses. Bardot popularized the bikini in her early films such as Manina (1952) (released in France as Manina, la fille sans voiles). The following year she was also photographed in a bikini on every beach in the south of France during the Cannes Film Festival.[46] She gained additional attention when she filmed ...And God Created Woman (1956) with Jean-Louis Trintignant (released in France as Et Dieu Créa La Femme). Bardot portrayed an immoral teenager cavorting in a bikini who seduces men in a respectable small-town setting. The film was an international success.[14] The bikini was in the 1950s relatively well accepted in France but was still considered risqué in the United States. As late as 1959, Anne Cole, one of the United State’s largest swimsuit designers, said, “It’s nothing more than a G-string. It’s at the razor’s edge of decency.”[47]

She also brought into fashion the chouchoute (“Sauerkraut”) hairstyle (a sort of beehive hair style) and gingham clothes after wearing a checkered pink dress, designed by Jacques Esterel, at her wedding to Charrier.[48] She was the subject for an Andy Warhol painting.

In addition to popularizing the bikini swimming suit, Bardot has been credited with popularizing the city of St. Tropez and the town of Armação dos Búzios in Brazil, which she visited in 1964 with her boyfriend at the time, Brazilian musician Bob Zagury. The place where she stayed in Búzios is today a small hotel, Pousada do Sol, and also a French restaurant, Cigalon.[49] A statue by Christina Motta[50] honours Brigitte Bardot in Armação dos Búzios.

Bardot was idolized by the young John Lennon and Paul McCartney.[51][52] They made plans to shoot a film featuring The Beatles and Bardot, similar to A Hard Day’s Night, but the plans were never fulfilled.[14] Lennon’s first wife Cynthia Powell lightened her hair color to more closely resemble Bardot, while George Harrison made comparisons between Bardot and his first wife Pattie
Boyd, as Cynthia wrote later in *A Twist of Lennon*. Lennon and Bardot met in person once, in 1968 at the Mayfair Hotel, introduced by Beatles press agent Derek Taylor; a nervous Lennon took LSD before arriving, and neither star impressed the other. (Lennon recalled in a memoir, “I was on acid, and she was on her way out.”)[53]

According to the liner notes of his first (self-titled) album, musician Bob Dylan dedicated the first song he ever wrote to Bardot. He also mentioned her by name in “I Shall Be Free”, which appeared on his second album, *The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan*. The first-ever official exhibition spotlighting Bardot’s influence and legacy opened in Paris on 29 September 2009 – a day after her 75th birthday.[54]

A type of Czechoslovak diesel-electric locomotives (Classes 751 and 749) manufactured in the 1960s/70s was nicknamed “Bardotka”, reportedly because of the fact that the locomotive has a distinctively shaped front, resembling a woman’s bosom.

### 6 Filmography

### 7 Discography

Bardot released several albums and singles during the 1960s and 1970s[55]

- “Sidonie” (1961, Barclay), lyrics by Charles Cros, music by Jean-Max Rivière and Yanis Spanos, guitar by Brigitte – first song, from the film *Vie privée*
- *Brigitte Bardot Sings* (1963, Philips) – collaborations by Serge Gainsbourg (“L’Appareil à sous”, “Je me donne à qui me plaît”), Jean-Max Rivière as writer (“La Madrague”) and singer (“Tiens ! C’est toi!”), Claude Bolling and Gérard Bourgeois
- *B.B.* (1964, Philips) with Claude Bolling, Alain Goraguer, Gérard Bourgeois
- “Ah ! Les p’tites femmes de Paris”, duet with Jeanne Moreau in *Viva Maria* (1965, Philips), directed by Georges Delerue
- *Brigitte Bardot Show 67* (1967, Mercury) with Serge Gainsbourg (writes “Harley Davidson”, “Comic Strip”, “Contact” and “Bonnie and Clyde”), Sacha Distel, Manitas de Plata, Claude Brasseur and David Bailey
- “Je t’aime... moi non plus”, duet with Serge Gainsbourg (1967, published by Philips in 1986)
- *Brigitte Bardot Show* (1968, Mercury), themes by Francis Lai
- *[Burlington Cameo Brings You] Special Bardot* (1968, RCA) with “The Good Life” by Sacha Distel and “Comic Strip (with Gainsbourg) in English
- *Single Duet with Serge Gainsbourg “Bonnie and Clyde”* (Fontana)
- “La Fille de paille”/“Je voudrais perdre la mémoire” (1969, Philips), collaboration with Gérard Lenorman
- *Tu veux ou tu veux pas* (1970, Barclay) with the hit “Tu veux ou tu veux pas” (the French version of the Brazilian “Nem Vem Que Não Tem”), directed by François Bernheim; “John and Michael”, hymn to the collective love; “Mon léopard et moi”, a collaboration with Darry Cowl, and “Depuis que tu m’as quitté”
- “Nue au soleil”/”C’est une bossa nova” (1970, Barclay)
- “Boulevard du rhum” and “Plaisir d’amour”, duet with Guy Marchand, in *Boulevard du rhum* (1971, Barclay)
- “Vous ma lady”, duet with Laurent Vergez, and “Tu es venu mon amour” (1973, Barclay)
- “Le Soleil de ma vie”, duet with Sacha Distel
- “Toutes les bêtés sont à aimer” (1982, Polydor)

### 8 Books

Bardot has also written five books:

- *Noonoah: Le petit phoque blanc* (Grasset, 1978)
- *Le Carré de Pluton* (Grasset & Fasquelle, 1999)
- *Pourquoi ?* (Editions Du Rocher, 2006)

### 9 References


[3] Institut Français Royaume-Uni, And Bardot Became BB

[4] Anne-Marie Sohn (teacher at the ENS-Lyon), Marianne ou l’histoire de l’idée républicaine aux XIXe et XXe siècles à la lumière de ses représentations (résumé of Maurice Agulhon’s three books, *Marianne au combat, Marianne au pouvoir* and *Les métamorphoses de Marianne*) (French)


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[19] Famous proof that breast cancer is survivable, beliefnet.com; accessed 4 August 2015.


[32] Bardot commits to animal welfare in Bodhgaya, phayul.com; accessed 4 August 2015.


[37] “Brigitte Bardot's sick elephants add to circus over French wealth tax protests”, telegraph.co.uk; accessed 4 August 2015.


10 Literature


11 External links

- Brigitte Bardot Foundation for the welfare and protection of animals
- Brigitte Bardot at the Internet Movie Database
- Brigitte Bardot at the TCM Movie Database
- Brigitte Bardot at AllMovie
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