

AMERICAN

PHOTOGRAPHER

June 1989 • \$2.50
Canada \$2.95 • £1.95

The LOOK *of* FAME

*Portraits with
star quality*



Photograph of Kim Basinger by Greg Gorman



ON CELEBRITY

In Greg Gorman's universe, stars burn cool.

Greg Gorman's portraits of celebrities perform an impressive balancing act. They satisfy our expectation that character be revealed, even as their hard light chisels our stereotypes of the famous into stone. His sitters are cool and untouchable, yet fiercely present. His pictures shun eye contact, observing the royal taboo.

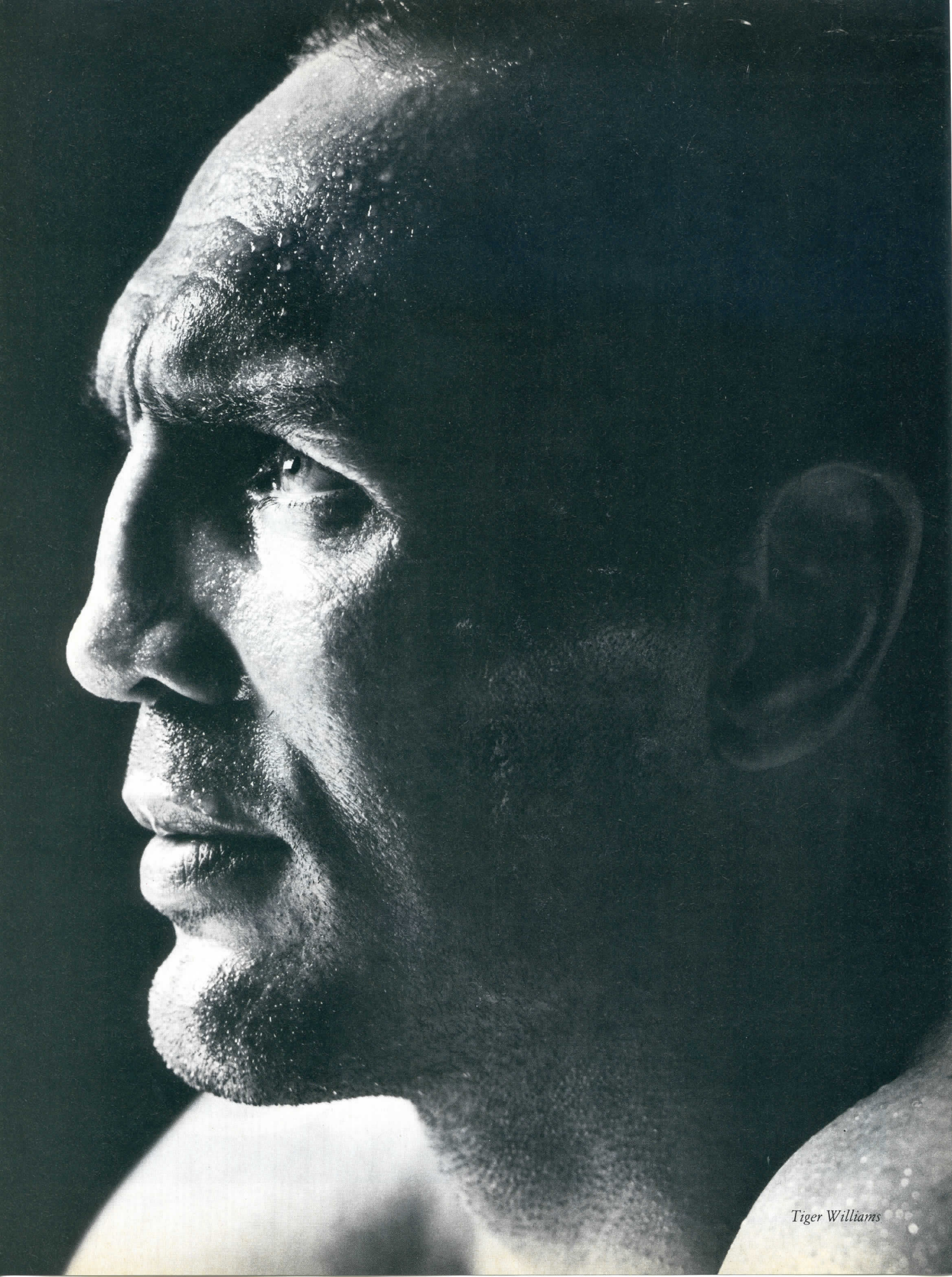
If movie stars are the closest thing we have to royalty, then Gorman's Hollywood studio is a palace with a revolving door. It's hosted the likes—and created the favored likenesses—of Barbra Streisand, Bette Midler, David Bowie, and Bette Davis. Even that short list, with its rhinal bias and Bette Davis eyes, suggests Gorman's attention to the physically distinctive in his subjects—whether it's the statuesque tonus of Brigitte Nielsen or the Piltdown brow of hockey player Tiger Williams. "I like people who have strong features and strong faces," he says, "and I like to accentuate those qualities in the picture—keeping people looking good but looking like themselves."

That's a recipe for star-making straight out of Hollywood, perhaps learned during Gorman's stint behind a movie camera as a student at USC film school. He later switched to still photography (he's shot for magazines such as *Interview* and German *Vogue*) but went about it with a cinematic bent: His clients were actors, and his lights the tungsten leviathans of the trade.

Gorman has long since exchanged the latter for strobes and softboxes, but he rejects the flat, glamorizing light of 8×10 glossies. "Some people consider my lighting too harsh for portraiture—strong highlights, deep shadows," he says, without the slightest apology. "I like light that leaves something to the imagination." And a lot is left: Gorman's pictures tell us that majesty is, indeed, aloof.

—RUSSELL HART

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GREG GORMAN



Tiger Williams



Arnold Schwarzenegger



Kim Basinger



