

The photographer Terry Richardson’s sleazy studio antics were hardly hidden away in the fashion set’s closet. As he brazenly remarked about his provocative work in 2007: “It’s not who you know, it’s who you blow. I don’t have a hole in my jeans for nothing.”

A quick flick through his coffee-table book, Terryworld, gives anyone who is uninitiated with this charmer an idea about the man behind the camera. In one picture Richardson is apparently being given oral sex by a model. She is crammed into a bin with the word “slut” on her forehead. In a similar image she is squeezed into a suitcase. There is nothing subtle about these photographs.

The book’s foreword reads: “Richardson took 1970s porn aesthetic and made it fashion chic”. Plenty of people seemingly bought into this “fashion chic” line. The 52-year-old American has worked with everyone from Marc Jacobs to Tom Ford and Kate Moss to Cara Delevingne. He is also the culprit behind Miley Cyrus’s Wrecking Ball pop video. Even Barack Obama has posed for him.

Indeed, the former heroin addict, a married father of two, is one of the highest paid photographers in the world. However, “Uncle Terry”, as he is creepily known by some fashionistas, came relatively late to my attention.

Over the past 15 years young models have accused Richardson of pressuring them to perform sex acts, strip naked and photograph him in the nude. As I read these accounts of alleged coercion and abuse, I saw red. I knew I needed to speak up. I didn’t have a plan but, as a fashion writer and former presenter of the BBC’s The Clothes Show, I had a platform.

Four years ago I alerted people to the various allegations against Richardson in pieces in the press and on Channel 4 News. It’s interesting when you put your head above the parapet to try and expose a powerful man for what he truly is. I feel I can now appreciate a little of what the victims of sexual assault must suffer when they take on their attackers.

Initially there were warnings such as: “This is a very serious accusation, are you sure?” There was ridicule, too, with people labelling me naive. Then there was the fear over my legal position: could I be sued for libel? At one point my husband and I went into a tailspin as we worried about the danger of losing our home as a result of a lawsuit gone wrong.

Almost worse than all that were those people who accused me of overreaction: “Don’t you think you are taking this all a bit personally? I’ve met him, he’s really nice and has children now” and so on. No wonder so many people choose to suffer in silence instead of speaking out.

When sex scandals emerge there is the inevitable cry of: “Why didn’t the women say something?” Many of us did. The Canadian model Liskula Cohen walked out of a Vogue shoot in 2001, accusing Richardson of stripping naked and asking her to strip and perform a sex act on another man. In 2005 Gabriela Johanson, a Romanian model, alleged she was pressured to pose naked under false pretences. Five years later Jamie Peck, another model, wrote that Richardson had demanded she take part in a sex act.

Finally, spurred on by the wretched Harry Weinstein revelations, the fashion world has been shamed into taking action. Last week Condé Nast forced its glossies, including Vogue, Vanity Fair and GQ, to stop working with Richardson. A leaked email from James Woolhouse, executive vice-president of Condé Nast



Terry Richardson with Rihanna. Fashion shoots, including Yves Saint Laurent, right — which attracted anti-sexism protests — and Balmain featuring Cindy Crawford, below right, have become increasingly sexual



RIDICULED FOR BEING NAIVE, BECAUSE I DARED SPEAK OUT

Condé Nast has banned Terry Richardson’s work after a Sunday Times exposé last week. But when *Caryn Franklin* spoke up about the sleazy photographer four years ago, she was accused of overreacting



International, ruled that “any shoots that have been commissioned or any shoots that have been completed but not yet published should be killed and substituted with other material”.

Even though many professionals such as Justine Picardie, editor-in-chief of Harper’s Bazaar, have now flagged up how they refused to work with Richardson, he appeared unstoppable.

Modern digital production techniques may have added a polished veneer to his sexually overt shoots, but Richardson’s aesthetic relied upon the same shabby old narrative of female objectification. To my mind, brands and fashion creatives crossed a line when they deemed his dangerously regressive work fit for use. Take his work with Sisley, an inexpensive high street brand, which featured a model faking arousal as she squirted milk from a cow’s udder into her mouth.

“I now know a little of what a victim of sexual assault must suffer when she takes on her attacker

As more women and some men find the courage to speak up, accounts of other predators in the fashion world are surfacing. Certainly the problem is much bigger than Richardson alone. We need to talk about the horrifying pornification of fashion imagery generally. Remember, these ubiquitous and beguiling photographs inform not just our ideas about beauty but also our beliefs about identity and self-worth. How fashion frames femininity influences both how men see us and how we see ourselves.

Earlier this year Yves Saint Laurent released a publicity campaign in France featuring models in degrading poses – bent over a stool, for example, or with their legs spread wide open. The photographs led appalled women to condemn the images as incitement to rape.

In 2016 a Balmain campaign by the American photographer Steven Klein

featured Cindy Crawford, Naomi Campbell and Claudia Schiffer writhing like brainless nymphets. As Crawford leans towards me pouting furiously with her breast in her hand, I’m irritated. Why is she suggesting we have sex?

Moreover, the stupidity of this portrayal of a male wet dream is that studies show sexual appeal in advertising can alienate female viewers. Surely more female perspectives at boardroom level might result in womenswear advertising moving away from constant sexual referencing and eroticised posturing.

Is it too much to hope that Richardson and his ilk’s days are numbered and a more female-friendly gaze will rise up from this whole sorry story?

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Richardson directed Miley Cyrus’s Wrecking Ball video. She said later she regretted having done it

SHE’S LIFTED THE CURSE OF BEVERLY, THE HOSTESS FROM HELL

Forty years after Abigail’s Party, Alison Steadman is back with John Cleese in a BBC sitcom, writes *Laura Pullman*



Approaching the north London cafe chosen for our interview, I spy Alison Steadman through the window nursing a large glass of white wine. Things evidently kick off early in leafy Highgate – it’s 10am on a Tuesday.

I brace myself, walk in and find that it’s not Steadman at all but a craggier-faced woman with similar hair. Phew! The real Steadman soon enters and is immediately accosted by the boozer, who is a fan of Abigail’s Party.

Once we are sitting safely on the other side of the room, I confess my momentary mix-up. “I’ll probably start on the wine closer to 8pm,” Steadman laughs.

It has been 40 years since Steadman wowed as the hostess-from-hell Beverly in Abigail’s Party, directed by her then husband, Mike Leigh, but it’s still the role that garners the most stopping-in-the-street attention.

Once upon a time Stead-

man worried that people would remember her only for Bev, but today she is much more positive. “Occasionally someone says that was the reason they wanted to be an actress. That’s a huge compliment, so I’ve come full circle and love it now.”

She also still receives lots of love for Gavin & Stacey, in which she played Essex mum Pamela (pronounced Pam-eelah), for her hyperventilating Mrs Bennet in 1995’s Pride and Prejudice and, “for the hardcore fans”, Nuts in May (another of Leigh’s comedies).

In an unassuming style she has cemented herself as one of Britain’s best-loved comic actresses, working almost solidly since leaving drama school. I point out that was nearly 50 years ago and she puts on a deaf old biddy act: “What’s that dear? What did you say? I couldn’t hear.”

In truth Steadman, with her peachy complexion and fuchsia lipstick, looks younger than her 71 years.

She will soon be back on our screens in Hold the Sunset, a romantic comedy in which Steadman’s character falls for a neighbour played by John Cleese. The sitcom marks Cleese’s return to the BBC after he had branded its comedy “an awful amount of crap” overseen by ignorant executives and vowed not to work with the Beeb again.

What was it like working

“Weinstein didn’t attack me but he was horrible, rude and ungracious

with the hard-to-please Cleese? “He’s off the wall, but that’s John Cleese. We just have a good laugh. He’s a real animal-lover, too, and so our thing was that we’d talk to each other as cats. We meow at each other.” A memory resurfaces of George Galloway creepily pretending to be a cat with Rula Lenska on Celebrity Big Brother aeons ago.

Yet for Steadman this behaviour is perfectly normal: “I love all that, that’s not alien to me. My partner [actor Michael Elwyn] sometimes tells me to shut up because I bark in the street at dogs.”

Don’t people think she’s gone, well, barking? “Oh no, I don’t do it in front of people. It’s if you passed a gate with a dog behind,” she explains.

Line learning gets trickier with age and Steadman had requested that the scripts be sent early for Hold the Sunset. Does she agree with Bill Nighy’s recent charge that young actors don’t bother learning their lines properly?



“No, not really. Though you get the odd American who hasn’t bothered.”

Steadman has never found fame across the Atlantic – as is often pointed out, no doubt to her chagrin. What does she make of so many British actors’ obsession with “breaking America”?

“I don’t understand it. I’ve never particularly wanted to work in Hollywood. I’ve never been asked to,” she says. “I love being here playing British women. I know British women. I don’t want to go to America and start having to

talk like this...” Here she adopts a ludicrous Californian drawl.

Despite dodging Hollywood, Steadman still had the misfortune to run into Harvey Weinstein. It was back in the early 1990s when she was appearing in The Rise and Fall of Little Voice in the West End. “He didn’t attack me but he was horrible, rude and ungracious,” she fumes.

Weinstein, keen to turn the show into a movie, took the cast out for drinks. “He chatted away with the other actors, but looked me up and

down like I was dirt on his shoe. He never greeted me. I was really puzzled as to why this man was so horrid to me.”

Although Steadman won an Olivier award for her role in the stage show, Brenda Blethyn bagged the part in the Little Voice film.

Post Weinstein, Steadman is relieved actresses are speaking up for themselves. She recalls her early working days when “men thought groping was OK. They thought you’d like it or whatever, so that women didn’t have a choice.”

Strictly speaking, we’re not

meant to be talking work or Weinstein but about Steadman’s awareness-raising efforts with Pancreatic Cancer UK. Steadman’s mother, Marjorie, died from the disease 21 years ago. Shockingly, the chance of sufferers surviving beyond five years has hardly changed since then.

“It’s the most horrendous cancer and it gets the least publicity and support in a funny sort of way. It’s terrible to say, but it’s almost as if cancers have a popularity ranking...” She trails off, but I know what she means. Who,