



## Famous French People

**Brigitte Bardot** ©

by Robert Shepherd

Hello, you're listening to Robert Shepherd on EnglishWaves and it's time for another instalment of Famous French.

We turn our attention to a former dancer, model and actress who became an international icon in the '50s and '60s with films like *And God Created Women* and *Contempt*. Since giving up acting in 1973, she has dedicated her life to animal activism. She is Brigitte Bardot.

Born on 28<sup>th</sup> September 1934 in Paris, Bardot studied ballet as a teenager and by the time she was 15, she appeared on the cover of France's *Elle* magazine.

Bardot's talents were discovered by then-screenwriter and future filmmaker Roger Vadim – she married him in 1952. That same year, Bardot made her big-screen debut in *Le Trou Normand*.

Bardot was later cast in Vadim's 1956 directorial debut, *And God Created Woman*, in which she played a sexually liberated young woman in St. Tropez. The film stood out because of its daring nudity and it proved popular with moviegoers.

On and off-screen, Bardot became renowned for displaying a naturalistic, free-flowing sensuality that helped her become Europe's top female lead.

Although Bardot and Vadim divorced in 1957, they maintained a professional relationship. He directed her 1958 film *The Night Heaven Fell*.

Bardot later re-married, this time it was actor Jacques Charrier, by whom she had a son, Nicolas-Jacques Charrier. However, Bardot found it difficult to deal with everything that came with stardom and during the making of the 1960 film *La Verité*, she attempted suicide on her 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. Bardot and Charrier divorced in 1962.

Decades later, Bardot opened up about how hideous the world of celebrity had become and the pressures inherent in constantly aiming to display a certain image.

In 1963, she played a character called Camille Javal in *Le Mépris*. In order to garner publicity for the film, director Jean-Luc Godard created a myth that Camille Javal was Bardot's real name.

Bardot married again in 1966, this time to German millionaire playboy Gunter Sachs—only to divorce him three years later.

The '60s also saw Bardot embark on a successful music career, releasing albums like *Brigitte Bardot Sings* and *Special Bardot*. She recorded hits with Serge Gainsbourg.

On-screen she also continued to produce hits, including a film called *Dear Brigitte*, in which she played herself opposite James Stewart. Nevertheless, fame began to take its toll on Bardot and so she decided to retire in 1973 and went to live in St. Tropez.

She began to devote her time to animal welfare and established different foundations. Bardot's work has led to the Council of Europe banning the importation of seal fur and the French government banning ivory imports. Bardot has also had to appear before the French courts over the years, being fined more than once for making anti-Muslim comments. In 1992, she married extreme right-wing political aide Bernard d'Ormale.

Today, at the age of 81, Bardot's status as a global icon of beauty has continued to be celebrated by a number of art and fashion institutions.

Stay tuned to EnglishWaves.