

= Peter Sellers =

Peter Sellers , CBE (born Richard Henry Sellers ; 8 September 1925 ? 24 July 1980) was an English film actor , comedian and singer . He performed in the BBC Radio comedy series The Goon Show , featured on a number of hit comic songs and became known to a worldwide audience through his many film characterisations , among them Chief Inspector Clouseau in The Pink Panther series of films .

Born in Portsmouth , Sellers made his stage debut at the Kings Theatre , Southsea , when he was two weeks old . He began accompanying his parents in a variety act that toured the provincial theatres . He first worked as a drummer and toured around England as a member of the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) . He developed his mimicry and improvisational skills during a spell in Ralph Reader 's wartime Gang Show entertainment troupe , which toured Britain and the Far East . After the war , Sellers made his radio debut in ShowTime , and eventually became a regular performer on various BBC radio shows . During the early 1950s , Sellers , along with Spike Milligan , Harry Secombe and Michael Bentine , took part in the successful radio series The Goon Show , which ended in 1960 .

Sellers began his film career during the 1950s . Although the bulk of his work was comedic @-@ based , often parodying characters of authority such as military officers or policemen , he also performed in other film genres and roles . Films demonstrating his artistic range include I 'm All Right Jack (1959) , Stanley Kubrick 's Lolita (1962) and Dr. Strangelove (1964) , What 's New , Pussycat ? (1965) , Casino Royale (1967) , The Party (1968) , Being There (1979) and the five films of the Pink Panther series (1963 ? 78) . Sellers 's versatility enabled him to portray a wide range of comic characters using different accents and guises , and he would often assume multiple roles within the same film , frequently with contrasting temperaments and styles . Satire and black humour were major features of many of his films , and his performances had a strong influence on a number of later comedians . Sellers was nominated three times for an Academy Award , twice for the Academy Award for Best Actor for his performances in Dr. Strangelove and Being There , and once for the Academy Award for Best Live Action Short Film for The Running Jumping & Standing Still Film (1960) . He won the BAFTA Award for Best Actor in a Leading Role twice , for I 'm All Right Jack and for the original Pink Panther film , The Pink Panther (1963) and was nominated as Best Actor three times . In 1980 he won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor ? Motion Picture Musical or Comedy for his role in Being There , and also earned three other Golden Globe nominations in the same category . Turner Classic Movies calls Sellers " one of the most accomplished comic actors of the late 20th century . "

In his personal life , Sellers struggled with depression and insecurities . An enigmatic figure , he often claimed to have no identity outside the roles that he played . His behaviour was often erratic and compulsive , and he frequently clashed with his directors and co @-@ stars , especially in the mid @-@ 1970s when his physical and mental health , together with his alcohol and drug problems , were at their worst . Sellers was married four times , and had three children from his first two marriages . He died as a result of a heart attack in 1980 , aged 54 . English filmmakers the Boulting brothers described Sellers as " the greatest comic genius this country has produced since Charles Chaplin . "

= = Biography = =

= = = Early life (1925 ? 35) = = =

Sellers was born on 8 September 1925 , in Southsea , a suburb of Portsmouth . His parents were Yorkshire @-@ born William " Bill " Sellers (1900 ? 62) and Agnes Doreen " Peg " (née Marks , 1892 ? 1967) . Both were variety entertainers ; Peg was in the Ray Sisters troupe . Although christened Richard Henry , his parents called him Peter , after his elder stillborn brother . Sellers remained an only child . Peg Sellers was related to the pugilist Daniel Mendoza (1764 ? 1836) ,

whom Sellers greatly revered , and whose engraving later hung in his office . At one time Sellers planned to use Mendoza 's image for his production company 's logo .

Sellers was two weeks old when he was carried on stage by Dick Henderson , the headline act at the Kings Theatre in Southsea : the crowd sang " For He 's a Jolly Good Fellow " , which caused the infant to cry . The family constantly toured , causing much upheaval and unhappiness in the young Sellers 's life .

Sellers maintained a very close relationship with his mother , which his friend Spike Milligan later considered unhealthy for a grown man . Sellers 's agent , Dennis Selinger , recalled his first meeting with Peg and Peter Sellers , noting that " Sellers was an immensely shy young man , inclined to be dominated by his mother , but without resentment or objection " . As an only child though , he spent much time alone .

In 1935 the Sellers family moved to North London and settled in Muswell Hill . Although Bill Sellers was Protestant and Peg was Jewish , Sellers attended the North London Roman Catholic school St. Aloysius College , run by the Brothers of Our Lady of Mercy . The family was not rich , but Peg insisted on an expensive private schooling for her son . According to biographer Peter Evans , Sellers was fascinated , puzzled , and worried by religion from a young age , particularly Catholicism , but soon after entering Catholic school , he " discovered he was a Jew ? he was someone on the outside of the mysteries of faith . " Later in his life , Sellers observed that while his father 's faith was according to the Church of England , his mother was Jewish , " and Jews take the faith of their mother . " According to Milligan , Sellers held a guilt complex about being Jewish and recalls that Sellers was once moved to tears when he presented him with a candlestick from a synagogue for Christmas , believing the gesture to be an anti @-@ Jewish slur .

Sellers became a top student at the school , excelling in drawing in particular . However , he was prone to laziness , but his natural talents shielded him from criticism by his teachers . Sellers recalled that a teacher scolded the other boys for not studying , saying : " The Jewish boy knows his catechism better than the rest of you ! "

= = = Early performances (1935 ? 39) = = =

Accompanying his family on the variety show circuit , Sellers learned stagecraft , but received conflicting encouragement from his parents and developed mixed feelings about show business . His father doubted Sellers 's abilities in the entertainment field , even suggesting that his son 's talents were only enough to become a road sweeper , while Sellers 's mother encouraged him continuously .

While at St Aloysius College , Sellers began to develop his improvisational skills . He and his closest friend at the time , Bryan Cannon , both enjoyed listening to early radio comedy shows . Cannon remembers that " Peter got endless pleasure imitating the people in Monday Night at Eight . He had a gift for improvising dialogue . Sketches , too . I 'd be the ' straight man ' , the ' feed ' , ... I 'd cue Peter and he 'd do all the radio personalities and chuck in a few voices of his own invention as well . "

With the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 , St Aloysius College was evacuated to Cambridgeshire . Because his mother did not allow Sellers to go , his formal education ended at fourteen . Early in 1940 , the family moved to the north Devon town of Ilfracombe , where Sellers 's maternal uncle managed the Victoria Palace Theatre ; Sellers got his first job at the theatre , aged fifteen , starting as a caretaker . He was steadily promoted , becoming a box office clerk , usher , assistant stage manager and lighting operator . He was also offered some small acting parts . Working backstage gave him a chance to study actors such as Paul Scofield . He became close friends with Derek Altman , and together they launched Sellers 's first stage act under the name " Altman and Sellers " , consisting of playing ukuleles , singing , and telling jokes .

During his backstage theatre job , Sellers began practising on a set of drums that belonged to the band Joe Daniels and his Hot Shots . Daniels noticed his efforts and gave him practical instructions . The instrument greatly suited Sellers 's temperament and artistic skills . Spike Milligan later noted that Sellers was very proficient on the drums and might have remained a jazz drummer , had he

lacked his skills in mimicry and improvisation .

== Second World War (1939 ? 45) ==

As the Second World War progressed , Sellers continued to develop his drumming skills , and played with a series of touring bands , including those of Oscar Rabin , Henry Hall and Waldini , as well as his father 's quartet , before he left and joined a band from Blackpool . Sellers became a member of the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) , which provided entertainment for British forces and factory workers during the war . Sellers also performed comedy routines at these concerts , including impersonations of George Formby , with Sellers accompanying his own singing on ukulele .

In September 1943 , he joined the Royal Air Force , although it is unclear whether he volunteered or was conscripted ; his mother unsuccessfully tried to have him deferred on medical grounds . Sellers wanted to become a pilot , but his poor eyesight restricted him to ground staff duties . He found these duties dull , so auditioned for Squadron Leader Ralph Reader 's RAF Gang Show entertainment troupe : Reader accepted him and Sellers toured the UK before the troupe was transferred to India . His tour also included Ceylon and Burma , although the duration of his stay in Asia is unknown , and Sellers may have exaggerated its length . He also served in Germany and France after the war . According to David Lodge who became friends with Sellers , he was " one of the best performers ever " on the drums and developed a fine ability to impersonate military officers during this period .

== Early post @-@ war career and The Goon Show (1946 ? 55) ==

In 1946 , Sellers made his final show with ENSA starring in the pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk at the Théâtre Marigny in Paris . He was posted back to England shortly afterwards to work at the Air Ministry , and demobilised later that year . On resuming his theatrical career , Sellers could get only sporadic work . He was fired after one performance of a comedy routine in Peterborough ; the headline act , Welsh vocalist Dorothy Squires , however , persuaded the management to reinstate him . Sellers also continued his drumming and was billed on his appearance at The Hippodrome in Aldershot as " Britain 's answer to Gene Krupa " . In March 1948 Sellers gained a six @-@ week run at the Windmill Theatre in London , which predominantly staged revue acts : he provided the comedy turns in between the nude shows on offer .

Sellers wrote to the BBC in 1948 , and was subsequently auditioned . As a result , he made his television debut on 18 March 1948 in New To You . His act was largely based on impressions , was well received , and he returned the following week . Frustrated with the slow pace of his career , Sellers telephoned BBC radio producer Roy Speer , pretending to be Kenneth Horne , star of the radio show Much @-@ Binding @-@ in @-@ the @-@ Marsh . Speer called Sellers a " cheeky young sod " for his efforts , but gave him an audition . This led to his brief appearance on 1 July 1948 on ShowTime and subsequently to work on Ray 's a Laugh with comedian Ted Ray . In October 1948 , Sellers was a regular radio performer , appearing in Starlight Hour , The Gang Show , Henry Hall 's Guest Night and It 's Fine To Be Young .

By the end of 1948 , the BBC Third Programme began to broadcast the comedy series Third Division , which starred , among others , Harry Secombe , Michael Bentine and Sellers . One evening , Sellers and Bentine visited the Hackney Empire , where Secombe was performing , and Bentine introduced Sellers to Spike Milligan . The four would meet up at Grafton 's public house near Victoria , owned by Jimmy Grafton , who was also a BBC script writer . The four comedians dubbed him KOGVOS (Keeper of Goons and Voice of Sanity) Grafton later edited some of the first Goon Shows .

In 1949 , Sellers started to date Anne Howe , an Australian actress who lived in London . Sellers proposed to her in April 1950 and the couple were married in London on 15 September 1951 ; their son , Michael , was born on 2 April 1954 , and their daughter , Sarah , followed in 1958 .

Sellers 's introduction to film work came in 1950 , where he dubbed the voice of Alfonso Bedoya in

The Black Rose . He continued to work with Bentine , Milligan , and Secombe . On 3 February 1951 , he made a trial tape entitled The Goons , and sent it to the BBC producer Pat Dixon , who eventually accepted it . The first Goon Show was broadcast on 28 May 1951 . Against their wishes , they appeared under the name Crazy People . Sellers appeared in The Goons until the last programme of the ten @-@ series run , broadcast on 28 January 1960 . Sellers played four main characters ? Major Bloodnok , Hercules Grytpype @-@ Thynne , Bluebottle and Henry Crun ? and seventeen minor ones .

Starting with 370 @,@ 000 listeners , the show eventually reached up to seven million people in Britain , and was described by one newspaper as " probably the most influential comedy show of all time " . For Sellers , the BBC considers it had the effect of launching his career " on the road to stardom " .

In 1951 the Goons made their feature film debut in Penny Points to Paradise . Sellers and Milligan then penned the script to Let 's Go Crazy , the earliest film to showcase Sellers 's ability to portray a series of different characters within the same film , and he made another appearance opposite his Goons co @-@ stars in the 1952 flop , Down Among the Z Men . In 1954 , Sellers was cast opposite Sid James , Tony Hancock , Raymond Huntley , Donald Pleasence and Eric Sykes in the British Lion Film Corporation comedy production , Orders Are Orders . John Grierson believes that this was Sellers 's breakthrough role on screen and credits this film with launching the film careers of both Sellers and Hancock .

= = = I 'm All Right Jack and early years in film (1956 ? 59) = = =

Sellers pursued a film career and took a number of small roles such as a police inspector in John and Julie (1955) . He accepted a larger part in the 1955 Alexander Mackendrick @-@ directed Ealing comedy The Ladykillers in which he starred opposite Alec Guinness , Herbert Lom and Cecil Parker as Harry Robinson , the Teddy Boy ; biographer Peter Evans considers this Sellers 's first good role . The Ladykillers was a success in both Britain and the US , and the film was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay .

The following year Sellers appeared in a further three television series based on The Goons , which aired on Britain 's new ITV network . The series were The Idiot Weekly , Price 2d , A Show Called Fred and Son of Fred . In 1957 film producer Michael Relph became impressed with Sellers 's portrayal of an elderly character in Idiot Weekly , and cast the 32 @-@ year @-@ old actor as a 68 @-@ year @-@ old projectionist in Basil Dearden 's The Smallest Show on Earth , supporting Bill Travers , Virginia McKenna and Margaret Rutherford . The film was a commercial success and is now thought of as a minor classic of British screen comedy in the post @-@ war era . Following this , Sellers provided the growling voice of Winston Churchill to the BAFTA award winning film The Man Who Never Was . Later in 1957 Sellers portrayed a television star with a talent for disguises in Mario Zampi 's offbeat black comedy The Naked Truth , opposite Terry @-@ Thomas , Peggy Mount , Shirley Eaton and Dennis Price .

Sellers 's difficulties in getting his film career to take off , and increasing problems in his personal life , prompted him to seek periodic consultations with astrologer Maurice Woodruff , who held considerable sway over his later career . After a chance meeting with a North American Indian spirit guide in the 1950s , Sellers became convinced that the music hall comedian Dan Leno , who died in 1904 , haunted him and guided his career and life @-@ decisions .

In 1958 Sellers starred with David Tomlinson , Wilfrid Hyde @-@ White , David Lodge and Lionel Jeffries as a chief petty officer in Val Guest 's Up the Creek . Guest later claimed that he had written and directed the film as a vehicle for Sellers , and thus had started Sellers 's film career . To practice his voice , Sellers purchased a reel @-@ to @-@ reel tape recorder . The film received critical acclaim in the United States and Roger Lewis viewed it as an important practice ground for Sellers . Next , Sellers featured with Terry @-@ Thomas as one of a pair of comic villains in George Pal 's tom thumb (1958) , a musical fantasy film , opposite Russ Tamblyn , Jessie Matthews and Peter Butterworth . Terry @-@ Thomas later said that " my part was perfect , but Peter 's was bloody awful . He wasn 't difficult about it , but he knew it " . The performance was a major landmark in

Sellers 's career and became his first contact with the Hollywood film industry .

Sellers released his first studio album in 1958 called *The Best of Sellers* ; a collection of sketches and comic songs , which were undertaken in a variety of comic characters . Produced by George Martin and released on Parlophone , the album reached number three in the UK Albums Chart ; The same year , Sellers made his first film with John and Roy Boulting in *Carlton @-@ Browne of the F.O.* , a comedy in which he played a supporting role for the film 's lead , Terry @-@ Thomas . Before the release of that film , the Boultings , along with Sellers and Thomas in the cast , started filming *I 'm All Right Jack* , which became the highest grossing film at the British box office in 1960 . In preparation for his role as Fred Kite , Sellers watched footage of union officials . The role earned him a BAFTA , and the critic for *The Manchester Guardian* believed it was Sellers 's best screen performance to date .

In between *Carlton @-@ Browne of the F.O.* and *I 'm All Right Jack* , Sellers starred in *The Mouse That Roared* , a film in which Jean Seberg also appeared , and was directed by Jack Arnold . He played three leading and distinct roles : the elderly Grand Duchess , the ambitious Prime Minister and the innocent and clumsy farm boy selected to lead an invasion of the United States . The film received universal and high praise by critics .

After completing *I 'm All Right Jack* , Sellers returned to record a new series of *The Goon Show* . Over the course of two weekends , he took his 16mm cine @-@ camera to Totteridge Lane in London and filmed himself , Spike Milligan , Mario Fabrizi , Leo McKern and Richard Lester . Originally intended as a private film , the eleven @-@ minute short film *The Running Jumping & Standing Still Film* was screened at the 1959 Edinburgh and San Francisco film festivals . It won the award for best fiction short in the latter festival , and received an Academy Award nomination for Best Short Subject (Live Action) . In 1959 Sellers released his second album , *Songs For Swinging Sellers* , which ? like his first record ? reached number three in the UK Albums Chart . Sellers 's last film of the fifties was *The Battle of the Sexes* ; a comedy directed by Charles Crichton .

= = = *The Millionairess* , *Lolita* , *The Pink Panther* and divorce (1960 ? 63) = = =

In 1960 Sellers portrayed an Indian doctor , Dr Ahmed el Kabir in Anthony Asquith 's romantic comedy *The Millionairess* , a film based on a George Bernard Shaw play of the same name . Sellers was not interested in accepting the role until he learned that Sophia Loren was to be his co @-@ star . When asked about Loren , he explained to reporters " I don 't normally act with romantic , glamorous women ... she 's a lot different from Harry Secombe . " Sellers and Loren developed a close relationship during filming , culminating in Sellers declaring his love for her in front of his wife . Sellers also woke his son at night to ask : " Do you think I should divorce your mummy ? " Roger Lewis observed that Sellers immersed himself completely in the characters he enacted during productions , that " he 'd play a role as an Indian doctor , and for the next six months , he 'd be an Indian in his real [daily] life . " The film inspired the George Martin @-@ produced novelty hit single " Goodness Gracious Me " , with Sellers and Loren , which reached number four in the UK Singles Chart in November 1960 . A follow @-@ up single by the duo , *Bangers and Mash* , reached number 22 in the UK chart . The songs were included on an album released by the couple , *Peter & Sophia* , which reached number five in the UK Albums Chart .

In 1961 Sellers made his directorial debut with *Mr. Topaze* , in which he also starred . The film was based on the Marcel Pagnol play *Topaze* . Sellers portrayed an ex @-@ schoolmaster in a small French town who turns to a life of crime to obtain wealth . The film and Sellers 's directorial abilities received an unenthusiastic response from the public and critics alike , and Sellers rarely referred to it again . The same year he starred in the Sidney Gilliat @-@ directed *Only Two Can Play* , a film based on the novel *That Uncertain Feeling* by Kingsley Amis . He was nominated for the Best British Actor award at the 16th British Academy Film Awards for his role as John Lewis , a frustrated Welsh librarian whose affections swing between the glamorous Liz (Mai Zetterling) , and his long @-@ suffering wife Jean (Virginia Maskell) .

In 1962 Sellers played a retired British army general in John Guillermin 's *Waltz of the Toreadors* , based on the play of the same name . The film was widely criticised for its slapstick cinematic

adaption , and director Guillermin himself considered the film an " amateurish " effort . However , Sellers won the San Sebastián International Film Festival Award for Best Actor and a BAFTA award nomination for his performance , and it was well received by the critics . Stanley Kubrick asked Sellers to play the role of Clare Quilty in the 1962 film Lolita , opposite James Mason and Shelley Winters . Kubrick had seen Sellers in The Battle of the Sexes and listened to the album The Best of Sellers , and was impressed by the range of characters he could portray . Sellers was apprehensive about accepting the role , doubting his ability to successfully portray the part of a flamboyant American television playwright who was according to Sellers " a fantastic nightmare , part homosexual , part drug addict , part sadist " . Kubrick encouraged Sellers to improvise and stated that he would often reach a " state of comic ecstasy . " Kubrick had American jazz producer Norman Granz record portions of the script for Sellers to listen to , so he could study the voice and develop confidence , granting Sellers a free artistic licence . Sellers later claimed that his relationship with Kubrick became one of the most rewarding of his career . Writing in The Sunday Times , Dilys Powell noted that Sellers gave , " ... a firework performance , funny , malicious , only once for a few seconds overreaching itself , and in the murder scene which is both prologue and epilogue achieving the macabre in comedy . " Towards the end of 1962 , Sellers appeared in The Dock Brief , a legal satire directed by James Hill and co @-@ starring Richard Attenborough .

Sellers 's behaviour towards his family worsened in 1962 ; according to his son Michael , Sellers asked him and his sister Sarah " who we love more , our mother or him . Sarah , to keep the peace , said , ' I love you both equally ' . I said , ' No , I love my mum . ' " This prompted Sellers to throw both children out , saying that he never wanted to see them again . At the end of 1962 , his marriage to Anne broke down . In 1963 , Sellers starred as gang leader " Pearly Gates " in Cliff Owen 's The Wrong Arm of the Law , followed by his portrayal of a vicar in Heavens Above ! .

After his father 's death in October 1962 , Sellers decided to leave England and was approached by director Blake Edwards who offered him the role of Inspector Clouseau in The Pink Panther , after Peter Ustinov had backed out of the film . Edwards later recalled his feelings as " desperately unhappy and ready to kill , but as fate would have it , I got Mr. Sellers instead of Mr. Ustinov ? thank God ! " Sellers accepted a fee of £ 90 @,@ 000 (£ 695 @,@ 641 in 2016 pounds) for five weeks ' work on location in Rome and Cortina . The film starred David Niven in the principal role , with two other actors ? Capucine and Claudia Cardinale ? having more prominent roles than Sellers . However , Sellers 's performance is regarded as being on par with that of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton , according to biographer Peter Evans . Although the Clouseau character was in the script , Sellers created the personality , devising the costume , accent , make @-@ up , moustache and trench coat .

The Pink Panther was released in the UK in January 1964 and received a mixed reception from the critics , although Penelope Gilliatt , writing in The Observer , remarked that Sellers had a " flawless sense of mistiming " in a performance that was " ... one of the most delicate studies in accident @-@ proneness since the silents . " Despite the views of the critics , the film was one of the top ten grossing films of the year . The role earned Sellers a nomination for the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor ? Motion Picture Musical or Comedy at the 22nd Golden Globe Awards , and for a Best British Actor award at the 18th British Academy Film Awards .

= = = Dr. Strangelove , health problems , a second marriage and Casino Royale (1964 ? 69) = = =

In 1963 , Stanley Kubrick cast Sellers to appear in Dr. Strangelove or : How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb alongside George C. Scott , Sterling Hayden , Keenan Wynn and Slim Pickens . Sellers and Kubrick got on famously during the film 's production and had the greatest of respect for each other , also sharing a love of photography . The director asked Sellers to play four roles : US President Merkin Muffley , Dr. Strangelove , Group Captain Lionel Mandrake of the RAF and Major T. J. " King " Kong . Sellers was initially hesitant about taking on these divergent characters , but Kubrick prevailed . According to some accounts , Sellers was also invited to play the part of General Buck Turgidson , but turned it down because it was too physically demanding .

Kubrick later commented that the idea of having Sellers in so many of the film's key roles was that " everywhere you turn there is some version of Peter Sellers holding the fate of the world in his hands ". Sellers was especially anxious about successfully enacting the role of Kong and accurately affecting a Texan accent . Kubrick requested screenwriter Terry Southern to record in his natural accent a tape of Kong 's lines . After practising with Southern 's recording , Sellers got sufficient control of the accent , and started shooting the scenes in the aeroplane . After the first day 's shooting , Sellers sprained his ankle while leaving a restaurant and could no longer work in the cramped cockpit set . Kubrick then re-cast Slim Pickens as Kong . The three roles Sellers undertook were distinct , " variegated , complex and refined " , and critic Alexander Walker considered that these roles " showed his genius at full stretch " . Sellers played Muffley as a bland , placid intellectual in the mould of Adlai Stevenson ; he played Mandrake as an unflappable Englishman ; and Dr. Strangelove , a character influenced by pre-war German cinema , as a wheelchair-bound fanatic . The critic for The Times wrote that the film includes , " three remarkable performances from Mr. Peter Sellers , masterly as the President , diverting as a revue sketch ex-Nazi US Scientist ... and acceptable as an RAF officer , although the critic from The Guardian thought his portrayal of the RAF officer alone was , " worth the price of an admission ticket " . For his performance in all three roles , Sellers was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Actor at the 37th Academy Awards , and the Best British Actor award at the 18th British Academy Film Awards .

Between November 1963 and February 1964 , Sellers began filming *A Shot in the Dark* , an adaptation of a French play , *L'Idiot* by Marcel Achard . Sellers found the part and the director , Anatole Litvak , uninspiring ; the producers brought in Blake Edwards to replace Litvak . Together with writer William Peter Blatty , they turned the script into a Clouseau comedy , also adding Herbert Lom as Commissioner Dreyfus and Burt Kwouk as Cato . During filming , Sellers 's relationship with Edwards became strained ; the two would often stop speaking to each other during filming , communicating only by the passing of notes . Sellers 's personality was described by others as difficult and demanding , and he often clashed with fellow actors and directors . Upon its release in late June 1964 , Bosley Crowther noted the " joyously free and facile way " in which Sellers had developed his comedy technique .

Towards the end of filming , in early February 1964 , Sellers met Britt Ekland , a Swedish actress who had arrived in London to film *Guns at Batasi* . On 19 February 1964 , just ten days after their first meeting , the couple married . Sellers soon showed signs of insecurity and paranoia ; he would become highly anxious and jealous , for example , when Ekland starred opposite attractive men . Shortly after the wedding , Sellers started filming on location in Twentynine Palms , California for Billy Wilder 's *Kiss Me , Stupid* , opposite Dean Martin and Kim Novak . The relationship between Wilder and Sellers became strained ; both had different approaches to work and often clashed as a result . On the night of 5 April 1964 , prior to having sex with Ekland , Sellers took amyl nitrites (poppers) as a sexual stimulant in his search for " the ultimate orgasm " , and suffered a series of eight heart attacks over the course of three hours as a result . His illness forced him to withdraw from the filming of *Kiss Me , Stupid* and he was replaced by Ray Walston . Wilder was unsympathetic about the heart attacks , saying that " you have to have a heart before you can have an attack " .

After some time recovering , Sellers returned to filming in October 1964 , playing King of the Individualists alongside Ekland in *Carol for Another Christmas* , a United Nations special , broadcast on the ABC channel on 28 December 1964 . Sellers had been concerned that his heart attacks may have caused brain damage and that he would be unable to remember his lines , but he was reassured that his memory and abilities were unimpaired after the experience of filming . Sellers followed this with the role of the perverted Austrian psychoanalyst Doctor Fritz Fassbender in Clive Donner 's *What 's New Pussycat ?* , appearing alongside Peter O 'Toole , Romy Schneider , Capucine , Paula Prentiss and Ursula Andress . The film was the first screenwriting and acting credit for Woody Allen , and featured Sellers in a love triangle . Because of Sellers 's poor health , producer Charles K. Feldman insured him at a cost of \$ 360 ,000 (\$ 2 ,746 ,738 in 2016 dollars) .

Sellers became a close friend of Antony Armstrong Jones , 1st Earl of Snowdon , a photographer who was then married to Princess Margaret . Snowdon shared a love of women , photography , fine wine and fast cars with Sellers ; both were also prone to bouts of depression . They spent many weekends together with their wives and went on several holidays on board Sellers 's yacht Bobo in Sardinia . On 20 January 1965 , Sellers and Ekland announced the birth of a daughter , Victoria . They moved to Rome in May to film *After the Fox* , an Anglo - Italian production in which they were both to appear . The film was directed by Vittorio De Sica , whose English Sellers struggled to understand . Sellers attempted to have De Sica fired , causing tensions on the set . Sellers also became unhappy with his wife 's performance , straining their relationship and triggering open arguments during one of which Sellers threw a chair at Ekland . Despite these conflicts , the script was praised for its wit .

Following the commercial success of *What 's New Pussycat ?* , Charles Feldman again brought together Sellers and Woody Allen for his next project , *Casino Royale* , which also starred Orson Welles ; Sellers signed a \$ 1 million contract for the film (\$ 7 @, @ 096 @, @ 806 in 2016 dollars) . Seven screenwriters worked on the project , and filming was chaotic . To make matters worse , according to Ekland , Sellers was " so insecure , he won 't trust anyone " . A poor working relationship quickly developed between Sellers and Welles : Sellers eventually demanded that the two should not share the same set . Sellers left the film before his part was complete . A further agent 's part was then written for Terence Cooper , to cover Sellers 's departure .

Shortly after leaving *Casino Royale* , Sellers was appointed a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) in honour of his career achievements . The day before the investiture at Buckingham Palace , Sellers and Ekland argued , with Ekland scratching his face in the process ; Sellers had a make - up artist cover the marks . Ekland later reported that although the couple argued , Sellers never hit her . During his next film , *The Bobo* , which again co - starred Ekland , the couple 's marital problems worsened . Three weeks into production in Italy , Sellers told director Robert Parrish to fire his wife , saying " I 'm not coming back after lunch if that bitch is on the set " . Ekland later stated that the marriage was " an atrocious sham " at this stage . In the midst of filming *The Bobo* , Sellers 's mother had a heart attack ; Parrish asked Sellers if he wanted to visit her in hospital , but Sellers remained on set . She died within days , without Sellers having seen her . He was deeply affected by her death and remorseful at not having returned to London to see her . Ekland served him with divorce papers shortly afterwards . The divorce was finalised on 18 December 1968 , and Sellers 's friend Spike Milligan sent Ekland a congratulatory telegram . Upon its release in September 1967 , *The Bobo* was poorly received .

Sellers 's first film appearance of 1968 was a reunion with Blake Edwards for the fish out of water comedy *The Party* , in which he starred alongside Claudine Longet and Denny Miller . He appears as Hrundi V. Bakshi , a bungling Indian actor who accidentally receives an invitation to a lavish Hollywood dinner party . His character , according to Sellers 's biographer Peter Evans , was " clearly an amalgam of Clouseau and the doctor in *The Millionairess* " . Roger Lewis notes that like a number of Sellers 's characters , he is played in a sympathetic and dignified manner . He followed it later that year with Hy Averback 's *I Love You* , Alice B. Toklas , playing an attorney who abandons his lifestyle to become a hippie . Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun - Times* gave the film three stars , remarking that Sellers was " back doing what he does best " , although he also said that in Sellers 's previous films he had " been at his worst recently " .

In 1969 Sellers starred opposite Ringo Starr in the Joseph McGrath - directed film *The Magic Christian* . Sellers portrayed Sir Guy Grand , an eccentric billionaire who plays elaborate practical jokes on people . The critic Irv Slifkin remarked that the film was a reflection of the cynicism of Peter Sellers , describing the film as a " proto - Pythonesque adaption of Terry Southern 's semi - free form short novel " , and " one of the strangest films to be shown at a gala premiere for Britain 's royal family . " The film , a satire on human nature , was in general viewed negatively by critics . Roger Greenspun of *The New York Times* believed that the film was of variable quality and summarised it as a " brutal satire " .

== = " Period of indifference " : two marriages , three Pink Panther films (1970 ? 78) == =

After a cameo appearance in *A Day at the Beach* (1970) , and a serious role later in 1970 as an ageing businessman who seduces Sinéad Cusack in Hoffman , Sellers starred in Roy Boulting 's *There 's a Girl in My Soup* opposite Goldie Hawn . According to *The Times* , the film was a major commercial success and became the seventh most popular film at the British box office in 1970 . Andrew Spicer , writing for the British Film Institute 's *Screenonline* , considers that although Sellers favoured playing romantic roles , he " was always more successful in parts that sent up his own vanities and pretensions , as with the TV presenter and narcissistic lothario [sic] he played in *There 's a Girl in My Soup* " . The film was seen as a small revival of his career . However , Sellers 's next films , including Rodney Amateau 's *Where Does It Hurt ?* (1972) and Peter Medak 's *Ghost in the Noonday Sun* (1973) , were again poorly received , and his acting was viewed as frenetic rather than funny . Despite these setbacks , Sellers won the Best Actor award at the 1973 Tehran Film Festival for his tragicomic role as a street performer in Anthony Simmons 's *The Optimists of Nine Elms* . Fellow comedian and friend Spike Milligan believed that the early 1970s were for Sellers " a period of indifference , and it would appear at one time that his career might have come to a conclusion " . This was echoed by Sellers 's biographer , Peter Evans , who notes that out of nine films in the period , three were never released and five had flopped , while only *There 's a Girl in My Soup* had been a success . In his private life , he had been seeing the twenty three year old model Miranda Quarry . The couple married on 24 August 1970 , despite Sellers 's private doubts expressed to his agent , Dennis Selinger , about his decision to remarry .

On 20 April 1972 , Sellers reunited with Milligan and Harry Secombe to record *The Last Goon Show of All* , which was broadcast on 5 October . In May 1973 , with his third marriage failing , Sellers went to the theatre to watch Liza Minnelli perform . He became entranced with Minnelli and the couple became engaged three days later , despite Minnelli 's current betrothal to Desi Arnaz , Jr . , and Sellers still being married . Their relationship lasted a month before breaking up . By 1974 , Sellers 's friends were concerned that he was having a nervous breakdown . Directors John and Roy Boulting considered that Sellers was " a deeply troubled man , distrustful , self absorbed , ultimately self destructive . He was the complete contradiction . " Sellers was shy and insecure when out of character . When he was invited to appear on Michael Parkinson 's eponymous chat show in 1974 , he withdrew the day before , explaining to Parkinson that " I just can 't walk on as myself " . When he was told he could come on as someone else , he appeared dressed as a member of the Gestapo . After a few lines in keeping with his assumed character , he stepped out of the role and settled down and , according to Parkinson himself , " was brilliant , giving the audience an astonishing display of his virtuosity " . In 1974 , Sellers again claimed to have communicated with the long dead music hall comic Dan Leno , who advised him to return to the role of Clouseau .

In 1974 , Sellers portrayed a " sexually voracious " Queen Victoria in Joseph McGrath 's comedic biographical film of the Scottish poet William McGonagall , *The Great McGonagall* , starring opposite Milligan and Julia Foster . However , the film was a critical failure , and Sellers 's career and life reached an all time low . As a result , by 1974 he agreed to accept salaries of £ 100 ,000 and 10 per cent of the gross to appear in TV productions and advertisements , well below the £ 1 million he had once commanded per film . In 1973 , he appeared in a Benson & Hedges cinema commercial ; in 1975 , he appeared in a series of advertisements for Trans World Airlines , in which he played several eccentric characters , including Thrifty McTravel , Jeremy ' Piggy ' Peak Thyme and an Italian singer , Vito . Biographer Michael Starr asserts that Sellers showed enthusiasm towards these roles , although the airline campaign failed commercially .

A turning point in Sellers 's flailing career came in 1974 , when he teamed up with Blake Edwards to make *The Return of the Pink Panther* , starring alongside Christopher Plummer , Herbert Lom and Catherine Schell . The film was shot on a budget of £ 3 million and earned \$ 33 million at the box office upon release in May 1975 , reinvigorating Sellers 's career as an A list film star and restoring his millionaire status . The film earned Sellers a nomination for the Best Actor ? Musical or Comedy award at the 33rd Golden Globe Awards . In 1976 , he followed it with *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* . During the filming from February to June 1976 , the already fraught relationship

between Sellers and Blake Edwards had seriously deteriorated . Edwards says of the actor 's mental state at the time of *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* , " If you went to an asylum and you described the first inmate you saw , that 's what Peter had become . He was certifiable . " With declining physical health , Sellers could at times be unbearable on set . His behaviour was regarded as unprofessional and childish , and he frequently threw tantrums , often threatening to abandon projects . Peter Evans mentioned that Sellers was a " volatile and perplexing character [who] left a trail of misery in his private life " . He also noted that Sellers had a " compulsive personality and [was] an eccentric hypochondriac " who became addicted to various medicines aside from his recreational drug habits during this period . His difficult behaviour during productions was widely reported and made it more difficult for Sellers to get employment in the industry at a time when he most needed the work . Despite Sellers 's deep personal problems , *The Pink Panther Strikes Again* was well received critically . Vincent Canby of *The New York Times* said of Sellers in the film , " There is , too , something most winningly seedy about Mr. Sellers ' Clouseau , a fellow who , when he attempts to tear off his clothes in the heat of passion , gets tangled up in his necktie , and who , when he masquerades ? for reasons never gone into ? as Quasimodo , overinflates his hump with helium . " Sellers 's performance earned him a further nomination at the 34th Golden Globe Awards .

In March 1976 Sellers began dating actress Lynne Frederick , whom he married on 18 February 1977 . Biographer Roger Lewis documents that of all of Sellers 's wives , Frederick was the most poorly treated ; Julian Upton likened it to a boxing match between a heavyweight and a featherweight , a relationship that " oscillated from ardour to hatred , reconciliation and remorse . " Peter Evans claims that Milligan detested his friend 's choice of partner and believed she was to blame for his increasing alcohol and cocaine dependency . On 20 March 1977 , Sellers suffered a second major heart attack during a flight from Paris to London ; he was subsequently fitted with a pacemaker . Sellers returned from his illness to undertake *Revenge of the Pink Panther* ; although it was a commercial success , the critics were tiring of Inspector Clouseau . Julian Upton expressed the view that the strain behind the scenes began to manifest itself in the sluggish pace of the film , describing it as a " laboured , stunt @-@ heavy hotchpotch of half @-@ baked ideas and rehashed gags . " Sellers too had become tired of the role , saying after production , " I 've honestly had enough of Clouseau ? I 've got nothing more to give " . Steven Bach , the senior vice @-@ president and head of worldwide productions for United Artists , who worked with Sellers on *Revenge of the Pink Panther* , considered that Sellers was " deeply unbalanced , if not committable : that was the source of his genius and his truly quite terrifying aspects as manipulator and hysteric " . He refused to seek professional help for his mental issues . Sellers would claim that he had no personality and was almost unnoticeable , which meant that he " needed a strongly defined character to play " . He would make similar references throughout his life : when he appeared on *The Muppet Show* in 1978 , a guest appearance that earned him an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Continuing or Single Performance by a Supporting Actor in Variety or Music , he chose not to appear as himself , instead appearing in a variety of costumes and accents . When Kermit the Frog told Sellers he could relax and be himself , Sellers replied :

But that , you see , my dear Kermit , would be altogether impossible . I could never be myself ... You see , there is no me . I do not exist ... There used to be a me , but I had it surgically removed .

= = = Being There , Fu Manchu and marital problems (1979 ? 80) = = =

In 1979 , Sellers starred alongside Lynne Frederick , Lionel Jeffries and Elke Sommer in Richard Quine 's *The Prisoner of Zenda* . He portrayed three roles , including King Rudolf IV and King Rudolf V ? rulers of the fictional small nation of Ruritania ? and Syd Frewin , Rudolf V 's half @-@ brother . Upon its release in May 1979 , the film was well received ; Janet Maslin of *The New York Times* observed how Sellers divided " his energies between a serious character and a funny one , but that it was his serious performance which was more impressive . " However , Philip French , for *The Observer* , was unimpressed by the film , describing it as " a mess of porridge " and stating that " Sellers reveals that he cannot draw the line between the sincere and the sentimental " .

Later in 1979 , Sellers starred opposite Shirley MacLaine , Melvyn Douglas and Jack Warden in the black comedy *Being There* as Chance , a mindless , emotionless gardener addicted to watching TV . In a BBC interview in 1971 , Sellers had said that more than anything else , he wanted to play the role , and successfully persuaded the author of the book Jerzy Kosinski to allow him and director Hal Ashby to make the film , provided he could write the script . During filming , to remain in character , Sellers refused most interview requests and kept his distance from the other actors . Sellers considered Chance 's walking and voice the character 's most important attributes , and in preparing for the role , he worked alone with a tape recorder , or with his wife , and then with Ashby , to perfect the clear enunciation and flat delivery needed to reveal " the childlike mind behind the words " . Sellers described his experience of working on the film as " so humbling , so powerful " , and co -@ star Shirley MacLaine found Sellers " a dream " to work with . Sellers 's performance was universally lauded by critics and is considered by critic Danny Smith to be the " crowning triumph of Peter Sellers 's remarkable career " . Critic Frank Rich wrote that the acting skill required for this sort of role , with a " schismatic personality that Peter had to convey with strenuous vocal and gestural technique ... A lesser actor would have made the character 's mental dysfunction flamboyant and drastic ... [His] intelligence was always deeper , his onscreen confidence greater , his technique much more finely honed " : in achieving this , Sellers " makes the film 's fantastic premise credible " . The film earned Sellers a Best Actor award at the 51st National Board of Review Awards ; the London Critics Circle Film Awards Special Achievement Award , the Best Actor award at the 45th New York Film Critics Circle Awards ; and the Best Actor ? Musical or Comedy award at the 37th Golden Globe Awards . Additionally , Sellers was nominated for the Best Actor award at the 52nd Academy Awards and the Best Actor in a Leading Role award at the 34th British Academy Film Awards .

In March 1980 Sellers asked his fifteen @-@ year @-@ old daughter Victoria what she thought about *Being There* : she reported later that , " I said yes , I thought it was great . But then I said , ' You looked like a little fat old man ' he went mad . He threw his drink over me and told me to get the next plane home . " His other daughter Sarah told Sellers her thoughts about the incident and he sent her a telegram that read " After what happened this morning with Victoria , I shall be happy if I never hear from you again . I won 't tell you what I think of you . It must be obvious . Goodbye , Your Father . "

Sellers 's last film was *The Fiendish Plot of Dr. Fu Manchu* , a comedic re @-@ imagining of the eponymous adventure novels by Sax Rohmer ; Sellers played both police inspector Nayland Smith and Fu Manchu , alongside Helen Mirren and David Tomlinson . The production of the film was troublesome before filming started , with two directors ? Richard Quine and John Avildsen ? fired before the script had been completed . Sellers also expressed dissatisfaction with his own portrayal of Manchu with his ill @-@ health often causing delays . Arguments between Sellers and director Piers Haggard led to Haggard 's firing at Sellers 's instigation and Sellers took over direction , using his long @-@ time friend David Lodge to direct some sequences . Tom Shales of *The Washington Post* described the film as " an indefensibly inept comedy " , adding that " it is hard to name another good actor who ever made so many bad movies as Sellers , a comedian of great gifts but ferociously faulty judgment . " *Manchu* " will take its rightful place alongside such colossally ill @-@ advised washouts as *Tell Me Where It Hurts* , *The Bobo* and *The Prisoner of Zenda* " .

Sellers 's final performances were a series of advertisements for Barclays Bank . Filmed in April 1980 in Ireland , he played Monty Casino , a Jewish con @-@ man . Four adverts were scheduled , but only three were filmed as Sellers collapsed in Dublin , again with heart problems . After two days in care ? and against the advice of his doctors ? he travelled to the Cannes Film Festival , where *Being There* was in competition . Sellers was again ill in Cannes , returning to his residence in Gstaad to work on the script for his next project , *Romance of the Pink Panther* . He agreed to undergo an angiogram at the Cedars @-@ Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles , to see if he was able to undergo open @-@ heart surgery . Spike Milligan later considered that Sellers 's heart condition had lasted fifteen years and had " made life difficult for him and had a debilitating effect on his personality " . Sellers 's fourth marriage to Frederick collapsed soon after .

Sellers had recently started to rebuild his relationship with his son Michael after the failure of the

latter 's marriage . Michael later said that " it marked the beginning of an all @-@ too @-@ brief closeness between us " . Sellers admitted to his son that " he hated so many things he had done " , including leaving his first wife , Anne , and his infatuation with Sophia Loren .

= = = Death and subsequent family issues = = =

On 21 July 1980 Sellers arrived in London from Geneva . He checked into the Dorchester hotel , before visiting Golders Green Crematorium for the first time to see the location of his parents ' ashes . He had plans to attend a reunion dinner with his Goon Show partners Spike Milligan and Harry Secombe , scheduled for the evening of 22 July . On the day of the dinner , Sellers took lunch in his hotel suite and shortly afterwards collapsed from a heart attack . He was taken to the Middlesex Hospital , London , and died just after midnight on 24 July 1980 , aged 54 .

Following Sellers 's death , fellow actor Richard Attenborough said that Sellers " had the genius comparable to Chaplin " , while the Boulting brothers considered Sellers as " a man of enormous gifts ; and these gifts he gave to the world . For them , he is assured of a place in the history of art as entertainment . " Burt Kwouk , who appeared as Cato in the Pink Panther films stated that " Peter was a well @-@ loved actor in Britain ... the day he died , it seemed that the whole country came to a stop . Everywhere you went , the fact that Peter had died seemed like an umbrella over everything " . Director Blake Edwards thought that " Peter was brilliant . He had an enormous facility for finding really unusual , unique facets of the character he was playing " . Sellers 's friend and Goon Show colleague Spike Milligan was too upset to speak to the press at the time of Sellers 's death , while fellow Goon Harry Secombe said " I 'm shattered . Peter was such a tremendous artist . He had so much talent , it just oozed out of him " ; in dark humour , referring to the missed dinner the Goons had planned , he added , " Anything to avoid paying for dinner " . Secombe later declared to journalists " Bluebottle is deaded now " . Milligan later said that " it 's hard to say this , but he died at the right time . " The Daily Mail described Sellers as " the greatest comic talent of his generation as well as a womanising drug @-@ taker who married four times in a fruitless search for happiness " , a " flawed genius " who , once he latched on to a comic idea , " loved nothing more than to carry it to extremes . "

A private funeral service was held at Golders Green Crematorium on 26 July , conducted by Sellers 's old friend , Canon John Hester . Sellers 's final joke was the playing of " In the Mood " by Glenn Miller , a tune he hated . His body was cremated and his ashes were interred at Golders Green Crematorium in London . After her death in 1994 , the ashes of his widow Frederick were co @-@ interred with his . A memorial service was held at St Martin @-@ in @-@ the @-@ Fields on 8 September 1980 ? what would have been Sellers 's 55th birthday . Close friend Lord Snowdon read the twenty @-@ third Psalm , Harry Secombe sang " Bread of Heaven " and the eulogy was read by David Niven .

Although Sellers was reportedly in the process of excluding Frederick from his will a week before he died , she inherited almost his entire estate worth an estimated £ 4 @. @ 5 million (£ 17 @. @ 4 million in 2016 pounds) while his children received £ 800 each (£ 3 @, @ 094 in 2016 pounds) . Spike Milligan appealed to her on behalf of Sellers 's three children , but she refused to increase the amount . Sellers 's only son , Michael , died of a heart attack at 52 during surgery on 24 July 2006 , twenty @-@ six years to the day after his father 's death .

In 1982 Blake Edwards tried to continue with Romance of the Pink Panther and offered the role of Clouseau to Dudley Moore , who turned it down . Edwards subsequently released Trail of the Pink Panther , which was composed entirely of deleted scenes from his past three Panther films . Frederick sued , claiming the use of the clips was a breach of contract ; the court awarded her \$ 1 million (\$ 2 @. @ 5 million today) , plus 3 @. @ 15 per cent of the film 's profits and 1 @. @ 36 per cent of its gross revenue .

= = Technique = =

Vincent Canby of The New York Times said of the Pink Panther films , " I 'm not sure why Mr.

Sellers and Mr. Lom are such a hilarious team , though it may be because each is a fine comic actor with a special talent for portraying the sort of all @-@ consuming , epic self @-@ absorption that makes slapstick farce initially acceptable ? instead of alarming ? and finally so funny . " Film critic Elvis Mitchell has said that Sellers was one of the few comic geniuses who was able to truly hide behind his characters , giving the audience no sense of what he was really like in real life . A feature of the characterisations undertaken by Sellers is that , regardless of how clumsy or idiotic they are , he ensured that they always retain their dignity . On his playing of Clouseau , Sellers said : " I set out to play Clouseau with great dignity because I feel that he thinks he is probably one of the greatest detectives in the world . The original script makes him out to be a complete idiot . I thought a forgivable vanity would humanise him and make him kind of touching . " His biographer , Ed Sikov , notes that because of this retained dignity , Sellers is " the master of playing men who have no idea how ridiculous they are . " Social historian Sam Wasson notes the complexity in Sellers 's performances in the Pink Panther films , which has the effect of alienating Clouseau from his environment . Wasson considers that " As ' low ' and ' high ' comedy rolled into one , it 's the performative counterpoint to Edwardian sophisticated naturalism " . This combination of " high " and " low " , exemplified by Clouseau 's attempting to retain dignity after a fall , means that within the film Clouseau was " the sole representative of humanity " . Film critic Dilys Powell also saw the inherent dignity in the parts and wrote that Sellers had a " balance between character and absurdity " . Richard Attenborough also thought that because of his sympathy , Sellers could " inject into his characterisations the frailty and substance of a human being " .

Author Aaron Sultanik observed that in Sellers 's early films , such as I 'm Alright Jack , he displays " deft , technical interpretations [that] pinpoint the mechanical nature of his comic characterization " , which " ... reduces each of his characters to a series of gross , awkward tics . " Academic Cynthia Baron observed that Sellers 's external characterisations led to doubt with reviewers as to whether Sellers 's work was " true " acting . Critic Tom Milne saw a change over Sellers 's career and thought that his " comic genius as a character actor was ... stifled by his elevation to leading man " and his later films suffered as a result . Sultanik agreed , commenting that Sellers 's " exceptional vocal and physical technique " was under @-@ used during his career in the US .

Academics Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis remarked that Sellers fits the mould of a technical actor because he displays a mastery of physical characterisation , such as accent or physical trait . Writer and playwright John Mortimer saw the process for himself when Sellers was about to undertake filming on Mortimer 's The Dock Brief and could not decide how to play the character of the barrister . By chance he ordered cockles for lunch and the smell brought back a memory of the seaside town of Morecambe : this gave him " the idea of a faded North Country accent and the suggestion of a scrappy moustache " . So important was the voice as the starting point for character development , that Sellers would walk around London with a reel @-@ to @-@ reel tape recorder , recording voices to study at home .

= = Legacy = =

New York Magazine stated that all of the films starring Sellers as Clouseau showcased his " comedic brilliance . " Sellers 's friend and Goon Show colleague Spike Milligan said that Sellers " had one of the most glittering comic talents of his age " , while John and Roy Boulting noted that he was " the greatest comic genius this country has produced since Charles Chaplin " . Irv Slifkin said that the most prominent albeit ever @-@ changing face in comedies of the sixties was Sellers who " changed like a chameleon throughout the era , dazzling audiences " . In a 2005 poll to find " The Comedian 's Comedian " , Sellers was voted 14 in the list of the top 20 greatest comedians by fellow comics and comedy insiders . Sellers and The Goon Show were a strong influence on the Monty Python performers , as well as on Peter Cook , who described Sellers as " the best comic actor in the world " . The British actor Stephen Mangan stated that Sellers was a large influence , as did the comedians Alan Carr and Rob Brydon . The comic performer Sacha Baron Cohen referred to Sellers as " the most seminal force in shaping [his] early ideas on comedy " . Cohen was considered for the role of Sellers in the biographical film The Life and Death of Peter Sellers . The three members

of Spinal Tap ? Michael McKean , Christopher Guest and Harry Shearer ? have also cited Sellers as being an influence on them , as has the American talk @-@ show host Conan O'Brien . David Schwimmer is another whose approach was influenced by Sellers : " he could do anything , from Dr Strangelove to Inspector Clouseau . He was just amazing . " Eddie Izzard notes that the Goons " influenced a new generation of comedians who came to be known as ' alternative ' " ? including himself , while the media historian Graham McCann states " the anarchic spirit of the Goon Show ... would inspire , directly or indirectly and to varying extents , ... The Hitchhiker 's Guide to the Galaxy , The Young Ones , Vic Reeves Big Night Out , The League of Gentlemen [and] Brass Eye . "

The stage play Being Sellers premiered in Australia in 1998 , three years after the release of the biography by Roger Lewis , The Life and Death of Peter Sellers . In 2004 , the book was turned into an HBO film with the same title , starring Geoffrey Rush . The play later transferred to New York in December 2010 . The Belfast Telegraph notes how the film captured Sellers 's " life of drugs , drink , fast cars and lots and lots of beautiful women " . Although the film was widely praised by critics , both Lord Snowdon and Britt Ekland were highly critical of the film and the enactment of Sellers ; Ekland believed that the film left the audiences with the wrong idea of her former husband , saying " the film leaves you with the impression that Peter Sellers was essentially a likeable man when in reality he was a monster . He may have been a brilliant actor , but as a human being he had no saving graces at all " . Snowdon disagreed with Ekland 's verdict , and with the film , and stated that Sellers " had a light touch , a sense of humour , I can 't bear to see him portrayed as somebody who was apparently without either ... The man on the screen is charmless , humourless and boring ? the one thing you could never say about Peter . "

= = Filmography and other works = =

Selected works , based on award nominations

= " Weird Al " Yankovic (album) =

" Weird Al " Yankovic is the eponymous debut album by American parodist Alfred " Weird Al " Yankovic . The album was the first of many produced by former The McCoys guitarist Rick Derringer . Mostly recorded in March 1982 , the album was released by Rock ' n Roll Records as an LP and on Compact Cassette in 1983 .

Consisting of five direct parodies and seven original songs , " Weird Al " Yankovic parodies pop and rock music of the late 1970s and early 1980s , and satirizes American culture and experiences of the same time period . Half of the album is made up of parodies , featuring jabs at Toni Basil , Joan Jett , Stevie Nicks , The Knack , and Queen . Yankovic 's trademark instrument , the accordion , is used on all songs featured on the album .

Fueled by the underground success of the singles " My Bologna " and " Another One Rides the Bus " , the album charted at 139 on the Billboard 200 . Critically , however , the album received a lukewarm reception , with many reviewers feeling that Yankovic was a throw @-@ away act , and someone who could not overcome the stigma of a novelty record .

= = Production = =

After hearing Yankovic 's parody of his song " I Love Rock ' n ' Roll " , " I Love Rocky Road " , songwriter Jake Hooker suggested to guitarist Rick Derringer that he would be the perfect producer for the burgeoning parodist . Agreeing , Derringer used his music industry prestige and convinced Cherokee Studios to record an album 's worth of Yankovic 's songs gratis , to be paid from sales revenue . Then , in March 1982 , " Weird Al " Yankovic stepped into a professional recording studio for the first time and recorded nine of the songs for " Weird Al " Yankovic .

The huge irony of my life ; [...] it was difficult for me to get signed to a record deal back in early 80s because all the executives were saying " Oh , you do that ... novelty music . You 're gonna have

maybe one hit if you 're lucky and then [...] you 'll go right to oblivion . You know , nobody 'll ever hear from you again . "

After encountering difficulty picking up a record label for the first @-@ time album , Jay Levey (a Los Angeles artists ' manager) provided KIQQ @-@ FM with a copy of " I Love Rocky Road " . Impressing the program director of the Top 40 station , he played it immediately ; " I Love Rocky Road " was one of the most @-@ requested songs by the next day . At the same time , Tad Dowd ? head of the new record label , Rock ' n Roll Records ? had been trying to convince parent company Scotti Brothers Records to sign the 22 @-@ year @-@ old Yankovic . The positive furor over the KIQQ playtest provided Dowd with the leverage needed to convince Scotti Bros. to offer a contract for Yankovic 's first album .

Scotti Brothers Records ' contract planned an April 1983 release date for a twelve @-@ track album : " I Love Rocky Road " and eight other tracks were already recorded , " Another One Rides the Bus " would be the original 1980 live recording from The Dr. Demento Show , and the last two songs (" Ricky " and " Buckingham Blues ") would be recorded at Scotti Brothers ' own studios in Santa Monica , California .

To promote the album , Levey coordinated a three @-@ week tour in late Summer 1983 across the United States ' East Coast and Midwest for both Yankovic and Dr. Demento . Promoted as " An Evening of Dementia with Dr. Demento in Person Plus ' Weird Al ' Yankovic " , Demento opened with recorded hits and short comedy films from his show before introducing Yankovic and the band . During their three weeks , the tour played in several famous clubs , including The Bottom Line in New York City .

The album cover for " Weird Al " Yankovic was designed by Brazilian artist Rogerio . The band chose Rogerio because of his " MAD Magazine @-@ like drawing style . " The cover art specifically features individual elements that correspond with each of the album 's twelve songs .

= = Critical reception = =

Eugene Chadbourne , reviewer for Allmusic , felt that while " Weird Al " Yankovic was a detailed harbinger of parody to come , the album does not hold up well on its own . Chadbourne extolled most of the parodies (" Another One Rides the Bus " , " My Bologna " , " I Love Rocky Road ") for their comedic value in contrast with their originals ? songs he supposed to be " pretentious [&] overblown " . However , also according to Chadbourne , " Ricky " lacks the comedic connection Yankovic cultivates in later albums , and the original songs " may not seem like they were written in ten minutes , but the ideas behind them don 't seem to involve that much contemplation . [They 're] like little bits of puff [whose ...] impact on the flow of an album side is more like ballast . "

Introducing Yankovic as the guest DJ for All Songs Considered on National Public Radio in 2006 , host Bob Boilen opined that upon his debut , Yankovic " seemed the epitome of throw @-@ away novelty act " . Reviewing Yankovic in 2008 , Brian Raftery of Wired magazine wrote that " Ricky " introduced the world to " an accordion @-@ playing spaz with a coif like Rick James and a voice like an urgent goose . " In 1983 , Yankovic was considered a fad of the time ? comparing him to parachute pants and Contras ? and " thoroughly disposable . " Musical databasing and review websites Allmusic and Artistdirect rated " Weird Al " Yankovic three and a half out of five stars .

= = Composition = =

" Weird Al " Yankovic is the only album in Yankovic 's discography in which the accordion is prevalent in every song ; in subsequent albums it 's only used where deemed appropriate or wholly inappropriate for comedic effect . " Ricky " is a parody of " Mickey " by Toni Basil ; an ode to I Love Lucy with Yankovic performing as Ricky and Tress MacNeille as Lucy . " Gotta Boogie " is a play on words discussing a man with a " boogie " on his finger and his quandary therein . " I Love Rocky Road " is a parody of Arrows ' " I Love Rock ' n ' Roll " made famous by Joan Jett ; in the song the narrator expresses feelings about the titular ice cream flavor . " Buckingham Blues " is a blues song satirizing the socialite lifestyle of the Prince and Princess of Wales (Prince Charles and Diana) .

Originally , the song was going to be a parody of " Jack & Diane " by John Mellencamp ; worried about spoiling a Jack and Diane movie deal , Mellencamp shot down the parody . Yankovic considered tweaking the " Jack & Diane " melody to avoid the song being a true parody , but decided against it and later rewrote it as an original song . Answering a fan in 1998 , Yankovic replied that he would not rewrite and rerecord the song in light of the death of Diana .

" Happy Birthday " is a style parody of Tonio K , one of Yankovic 's favorite artists . The song is a morbidly depressing birthday song detailing ails of the world , including poverty , nuclear holocaust , and eventual solar cataclysm . Only seeing two popular birthday songs at the time ? " Happy Birthday to You " by Patty and Mildred J. Hill , and " Birthday " by The Beatles ? Yankovic decided to write his own " severely twisted version of one . " " Stop Draggin ' My Car Around " is a parody of " Stop Draggin ' My Heart Around " by Stevie Nicks ; the lament of an otherwise " cool guy " forced to repeatedly save his 1964 Plymouth car from impoundment due to illegal parking , shame , and non @-@ payment . " My Bologna " is a parody of " My Sharona " by The Knack ; the narrator talks about his obsession with bologna sausage . This is a re @-@ recording of the song ; the original Capitol Records single version would not appear on a " Weird Al " album until the 1994 box set Permanent Record : Al in the Box . " The Check 's in the Mail " parodies business @-@ related prevarications , exemplifying avoidance , litigation , and the titular payment delay . " Another One Rides the Bus " is a parody of " Another One Bites the Dust " by Queen ; the narrator laments about a crowded public bus . This is the original 1980 recording from The Dr. Demento Show . " I 'll Be Mellow When I 'm Dead " is a rejection of the stereotypical attitudes and accoutrements of the hippie / yuppie lifestyles .

" Such a Groovy Guy " parodies narcissism specifically noting fashion , demeanor , dominance and submission , and relationship breakup . Yankovic wrote the song for a woman he was dating in homage of her previous boyfriend who , upon the breakup asked her , " I ? m such a groovy guy ! Why would you break up with me ? " Out of concern the individual may not be aware of his status , Yankovic does not identify him . " Mr. Frump in the Iron Lung " is an audience favorite from Yankovic 's days playing in coffeehouses at Cal Poly ; the song describes the rather lopsided relationship between the narrator and the eponymous " Mr. Frump " in his iron lung , until the latter 's death . The sound of the iron lung is an accordion 's air release valve . " It 's Still Billy Joel to Me " , Yankovic 's 1980 parody of Billy Joel 's " It 's Still Rock and Roll to Me " , was originally planned for this album . Wary of the song being considered " dated " three years later , and doubtful that Joel would give his blessing , the band never bothered to ask . Yankovic 's parody of The Kinks ' song " Lola " ? " Yoda " ? was written in 1980 (during the initial theatre run of The Empire Strikes Back) , and a " huge hit " on The Dr. Demento Show . However , the complexities of receiving permission from filmmaker George Lucas and the Kinks ' publishers delayed its release until 1985 .

= = Track listing = =

= = Charts and certifications = =

= = = Singles = = =

= = Personnel = =