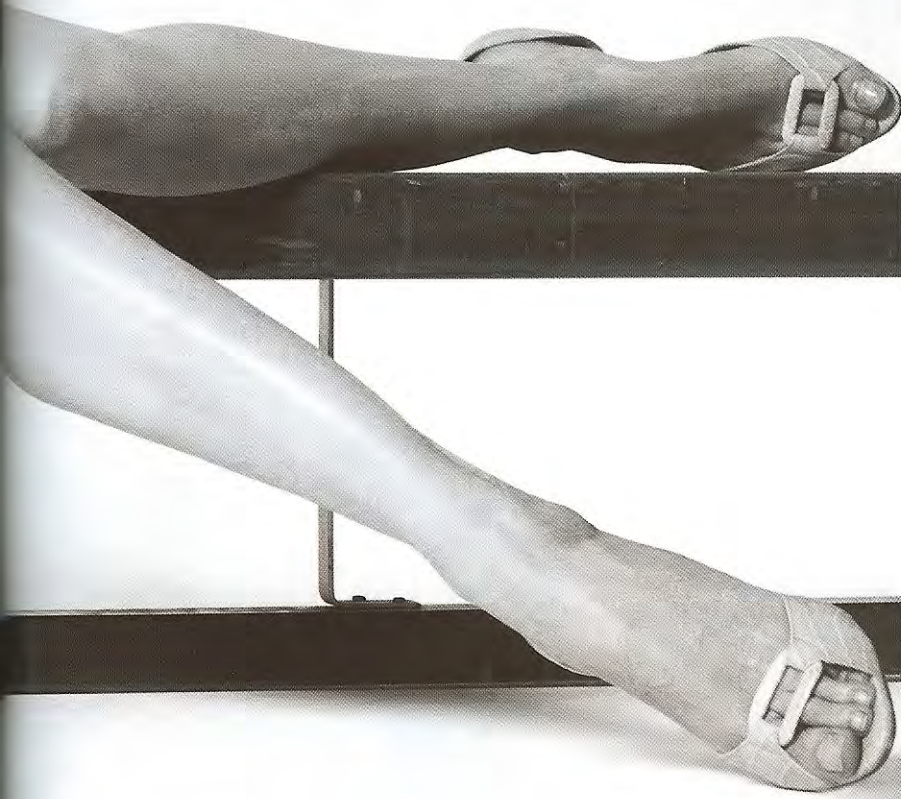




L'Wren wears black silk fitted  
Headmistress dress and peep-toe  
crocodile shoes from her new collection.  
Hair: Peter Grey for Aveda Salon. Make-up:  
Emmanuel Sammartino. Nails: Marian  
Newman. Digital artwork: D-Touch Paris.  
Fashion editor: Kate Phelan

# THE SECRET LIFE OF L'WREN SCOTT

For a celebrity stylist, former model and girlfriend of one of the world's biggest rock stars, L'Wren Scott has remained remarkably publicity shy – until now. Here she tells Sarah Mower about her debut as a designer, a secret she has kept from even her closest friends. Photographed by Bryan Adams



If you've picked up this issue early, you may be roughly the third person, after Bryan Adams and I, to know that L'Wren Scott has officially become a designer. Obviously, Mick Jagger knows, and the handful of people who have worked on these pages know, but they were entreated to be sure not a word escaped Vogue House until the ink was on the paper. Because what L'Wren Scott is announcing here runs so counter to her publicity-shunning instincts, it's practically cutting her in two. "Throughout my career, I have made it a rule never to talk about my clients or promote myself on the back of anyone else," she insists, folding her 6ft 3in frame into a chintz couch in the penthouse suite she occupies at Claridges with Mick. Her desire to avoid self-promotion runs so deep that she hasn't quite mentioned to her friends that, while travelling on the Stones' *A Bigger Bang* tour, she was also finishing off her first collection.

Now it's out. Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore, Sarah Jessica Parker, Ellen Barkin (and nameless others she will not mention) can get their first sighting here of what their stylist has been up to on the quiet. In Adams' photos (he's a trusted friend), Scott is wearing some of her perfectly honed clothes – sleek pieces with a smattering of goth Victoriana – soon to be available at [Couturelab.com](http://Couturelab.com) and [Net-a-Porter.com](http://Net-a-Porter.com). >



L'Wren wears black cotton vest and silk-gloss jeans, *left*, silk-and-lace coat, over black silk tuxedo shirt, and matt jeans, *centre*, silk and velvet cape with tassel fringing, cotton vest and matt jeans, *right*, plus ruby-and-diamond earrings and leather shoes, all from her new collection



"I'm calling the collection Little Black Dress," she says, "although it's not just dresses: 20 pieces, three pairs of shoes that Christian Louboutin made for me, jewellery and a handbag. I started designing because, even though I am endlessly looking at clothes, there are still items I can't find. I've been making things for years to fill gaps in people's wardrobes, so I decided to design a few pieces and see how it went."

Scott is very firm, however, about how far this introduction to her world can go. I might be in her flat, but essentially only a chink of the door is open. There are no personal objects whatsoever lying around. As she stands up, towering above my suddenly super-dumpy 5ft 6ins in her brilliantly tailored own-label black skinny jeans, she issues her warning: "I will only do this on the basis that it's about what I do, not who I know." As we move towards the wardrobe, she fires a meaningful glance over her shoulder. "I am doing this with my own money. My life's always been like that; it's how I was raised. Although," she quivers slightly, as if she might have given the wrong impression, "my boyfriend has been very generous and supportive about it – as he always is to me, his children, and any of his friends. He'll stop everything in his busy schedule and pay attention if you need to talk about something."

It's funny, but L'Wren Scott's guarded yet direct manner is charming and frank – if you're not the sort to be freaked out by a strong woman encased in an almost superhuman physique. (Some are, of course: press reports, officially refuted by Jagger, have tried to give her the standard Yoko Ono treatment, vilifying her as an interfering dragon whose arrival upset the Stones' group dynamic. "It's completely untrue to say L'Wren has caused a rift between myself and the rest of the band," Jagger said in a statement. "The band, their wives and girlfriends are all getting along extremely well.") She does take some adjusting to at first, though. For the initial 20 minutes of our meeting, the sheer length and pallor and exaggeration of her physical presence make it impossible to take in a thing she says. You find yourself

staring at the way every bone in her body – forearms, fingers and 41-inch legs – has inches on anyone else's, as does her hair, which falls in a sheer curtain of raven's-wing black. What takes away from that, though, is her Utah accent: she has the gift of one of those easy Western demeanours that can't help but seem friendly. It makes it instantly understandable that her super-elite clutch of women clients like to have her around. And you can't help thinking "good choice, Jagger" because a man who is not afraid to look up to an amazing woman wins many brownie points for taste and maturity. As a woman who is defined by her own achievements, in her own world, Scott is not the stereotypical rock-star wife/groupie/female hanger-on. "The thing is," says a mutual friend, "L'Wren is funny, open and forthright. She doesn't seem like she needs anything from anybody, which, I suppose, would make her attractive to someone like Mick Jagger."

Now we are in L'Wren's closet and what she does is becoming much clearer than the vague term "stylist" suggests. It is highly specific, in fact. She's showing me what is ostensibly the simplest piece in the world – a knee-length black dress suspended on rouleau straps – but up close you can see it is built by someone who understands both the technicalities of couture and how a dress must perform. The interior bust line is curved and panelled in satin, so you wouldn't have to wear a bra, while two little weights sewn into the hemline cancel the risk that it might ride up at the back. "I tested all the prototypes myself – walking and sitting, standing, walking, sitting – to see how they behaved," she explains. "Unbelievably, I was unable to find a little black dress I liked. I don't want a paper-thin piece of jersey, and I don't want to feel my ass moving when I walk across a restaurant!" All L'Wren's designs have hidden secrets, including velcro tabs in the shoulder to tether bra straps, the option of integral sleeves (in her very sexy Headmistress dress) and a leaf-embroidered cashmere bolero to deal with "you know, arms. So many of my girlfriends hate theirs." Then there are the jeans, which come in several chic and >

rockin' textures, but the main trick is the centre seam. "So, your legs get to look even longer!" she grins slowly.

It's apparent by now that Scott operates in a different dimension to designers and fashion editors. Though she is loath to talk about anyone else, it turns out that her fashion friends, designers and clients will, conversely, go out of their way to describe her talent and character traits. Alber Elbaz says: "Her eye is almost like a camera. When I'm designing in the studio, the mirror can show me things I can't see with my eye. She is like that, but also knows what looks good for the camera. And what you see in the end is the person, not the dress – that is the forte of L'Wren."

Nicolas Ghesquière, who worked with Scott when she was styling Nicole Kidman and on pieces for Jagger's tours, adds: "She is totally and solely dedicated to her clients, what will make them look their best, make them feel happy and complement their style. She's also incredibly respectful of the designer and you get the clear impression that she has come to you for what you do – and not because she wants you to make the dress she has in her mind. That's truly amazing and very rare."

Cathy Horyn, fashion critic of the *New York Times* and Scott's friend, says, "Her observations are laser-focused. In a messy collection that I would write off, she can go back and find the one thing that looks brilliant. I think her instincts are very feminine – about arms and shoulders and décolleté. And," she laughs, "I love her tips."

Ah, L'Wren's tips are worth knowing. A lot of them involve her optical lengthening devices, one of which is revealed when she pulls out the Louboutin shoes. I'm puzzled: they're not black. "Oh no," she remonstrates, "It's a thing of mine. With a black dress, it has to be flesh-coloured shoes – they make the leg look longer!" Ellen Barkin breaks from filming *Ocean's Thirteen* to contribute a client's view. Scott designed her entire wardrobe for the movie, and has been styling her for 15 years. "Yeah, I wear the nude shoes. She's right! We're not all 6ft 3in. She has an extraordinary way of making everyone look tall. Julianne Moore looks tall. I looked tall, even when she dressed me to play a cop in a jumpsuit and flat Oxfords. She will concentrate on the details, like the break of a trouser and the placement of a button on a jacket. And," she laughs, "there's a lot of focus on the butt in the world of L'Wren Scott. I don't have one – she does – but she gives me one!"

Eventually, Scott and I sit down and begin to circle conversationally towards her no-go areas. I need to at least get some clue about

how this enigma has ended up as one of Hollywood's most prized stylists, and the girlfriend of arguably the world's most famous rock star. She was an adopted child, brought up as a Mormon in Roy, a small town an hour's drive from Salt Lake City. Clearly, she was not named "L'Wren Scott" – that came later, when she ran away to Paris at 17 to become a model – but, to protect the identity of her elderly adoptive mother, she will not budge on giving her original name. You have to respect that. "I was raised with strict family values and went to church every Sunday. I'm not religious now, but I appreciate moral values," she explains.

But where could a girl have got ideas about fashion in such a far-flung, buttoned-down state? "Going to the dollar movies! I watched old films, when women really looked like women. We didn't get a lot of new movies in Roy." By the time she was 13, Scott was already 6ft tall, and she is eternally grateful to her mother for giving her the confidence to love her height. "My mom encouraged me to make the most of my height. I remember her

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wins brownie points

taking me to the shoe shop when I was 14 and saying, 'Of course you must try high heels.'" The teenage proto-L'Wren also transformed the problem of finding things to wear into a creative outlet. "I would go to the store, buy Butterick patterns and make my own clothes, sometimes from fabrics I'd cut up from clothes from vintage stores. Often, I would buy men's clothes and adapt them and hope nobody saw the closures fastened the wrong way."

Fate intervened when Bruce Weber arrived in Utah to cast one of his epic Western shoots and spotted the extraordinary girl from Roy. Before long, she bought a one-way ticket to Paris and landed a booking for the Chanel couture show. Later, she was taken up by Thierry Mugler, who always adored an otherworldly glamazon. "But," she says, "I was never good at being objectified. What I loved much more were the fittings, watching and learning about how things were made. So I moved to LA to do something different, and I met Herb Ritts." Working as a stylist for Ritts, one of the most sought-after personality

photographers of the late Eighties and early Nineties, Scott made her crossover into the about-to-explode universe of the Hollywood celebrity. In Ritts' photography, actors and actresses looked superhuman, glistening god-like in the California sunshine.

Before long, the girl who worked the Ritts magic behind the scenes on his shoots was in demand in her own right. Soon she was taking front-row seats at Paris shows. Scott also worked on costume design for films and music videos, and then, as the culture of red-carpet dressing grew, became a specialist in that. "I'm sure everyone works differently," she says with an emphasis that just might refer to other names in the field who have recently become household names, like Rachel Zoe. "I want to develop a client's individual style. I already have mine. I work with designers, and I make things for people, too. But," she throws up those long, pale arms, "now we are back to another one of my rules – less is more. Sorry, but I really take the old-fashioned approach. I always think of Edith Head. She was dressing all those women every minute of the day, in film and in life. She worked with Givenchy and other designers on film costumes. But did she ever give interviews about them? Never. I take that approach. My place is 10 steps behind."

And, dare we ask (actually, I didn't) – is that also her position with her boyfriend? All she will confirm – with a slightly deranged weaving of the head – is that they've been dating since 2002. She tries to avoid telling me, too, where they live, citing Paris and LA, though obviously – it was in the papers the next day – she's going to be moving into the house he's just bought in Chelsea sometime soon. And anyway, they are often out together in public, most recently in full view of fashion spectators as they sat chatting and laughing together at the Dior Homme show in July.

Mostly, though, you get the feeling that Scott genuinely isn't that impressed with the fame side of celebrity life. "She moves in and out of a high-profile world with incredible discretion," says Ellen Barkin. "She doesn't need minute-by-minute affirmation of who she is." "I guess," speculates another observer, "they manage to have a life together that is not superstar-ish." Perhaps it's that extraordinary normality – the reality of a grown-up relationship – that these two want to protect most. As Cathy Horyn puts it, "I've never heard L'Wren talk about her clients or Mick. She keeps it private. But, you know, I think it has very little to do with trying to create a mystique about herself; it's about staying clear within herself." ■



L'Wren wears silk-velvet jacket with bustle and jeans from her new collection. All clothes and jewellery, L'Wren Scott, from a selection at [Couturelab.com](http://Couturelab.com) and [Not-a-Peter.com](http://Not-a-Peter.com). Shoes, Christian Louboutin for L'Wren Scott at [Couturelab.com](http://Couturelab.com)