



Clockwise from top left: Statuesque L'Wren Scott in her Carlyle Hotel suite; looks from her first two collections, including shoes Christian Louboutin designed for her; pal Tom Ford at Scott's intimate dinner at New York's Bette.

L'Wren Takes Flight

L'Wren Scott morphs from stylist to designer.

Photographs by JENNIFER LIVINGSTON

L'Wren Scott stands before the windows in her luxe suite at New York's Carlyle Hotel, her willowy black-clad figure a stark contrast to the plush, gilt French furniture around her. "Look at that," she says, pulling back the curtains in order to take in the arresting unobstructed view her perch on the 21st floor affords: a vivid pink and purple sunset over Manhattan's skyline and Central Park. It's the sort of sight ordinary folk don't often get to see. But between her regular gig as stylist to the most luminous of stars—her boyfriend Mick Jagger and his Rolling Stones crew, Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore—and her most recent venture as designer of a pricey signature label, Scott is no ordinary woman.

Indeed, even physically, Scott stands out in a crowd. At six feet three, she towers over most women and men, her extra-long dimensions accented by a dense wave of long jet black hair and pale skin. Heightening the goth-romantic aura is her

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wardrobe of all things black, lacy and incredibly skintight. It's this look that Scott has channeled into her sultry collection, unveiled first at an intimate "friends" lunch in Paris during the October collections and shown again a few weeks later at a private dinner at New York hot spot Bette.

But right now, the day after the dinner party, you'd never know that the previous evening Scott had chatted and giggled over candlelight, cocktails and perfect crab soup with Bill Clinton, Bette Midler, Christy Turlington, Ellen Barkin, Tom Ford, Lynn Wyatt, Jagger and a host of other high-wattage celebrity friends. For one thing, Scott is aggressively private when it comes to her clients, friends and boyfriend. "My private life is my private life. My women's clothing line is my women's clothing line," she says in a warning tone far different from her otherwise friendly banter. "I don't really see how the two paths cross."

Perhaps at an elegant, smallish dinner party, but no matter. It's understandable that like any new designer, Scott wants to focus on her work. "I'm not interested in making clothes for 12-year-olds. These are for women," she proclaims of the project's raison d'être. And she's not kidding. Though her sexy cuts are all curves, non-nonsense and seem to leave no room for dietary misbehavior, she insists their painstaking constructions make them more forgiving than they look. To wit, she didn't want to show on a lineup of skinny models, but "finding a girl with an ass in this town isn't easy," Scott says. Some of her mannequins had never even walked before. "They were just real, sexy girls."

Her first collection, called Little Black Dress and filled with reed-thin dresses, coats and brocade pants, all with a hint of goth Victoriana, was launched online at couturelab.com in the fall. Retailers Barneys New York, Maria Luisa, London's Dover Street Market, Los Angeles's Max-

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field and Hong Kong's Joyce, as well as couture lab.com and net-a-porter.com, have picked up Scott's follow-up effort, *Under My Skin*, for spring, which is done all in subdued blush tones. In addition, Scott added a totally wearable range of cashmere knits in several weights and styles. Each collection will have a name and will revolve around a single color palette. "The concept behind them is that each season you can identify by its color," she says.

Having long made a single dress here and there for her styling clients or for photo shoots, Scott didn't start thinking about her own line in concrete terms until about a year ago, when she needed a little black dress herself and couldn't find one. "I was kind of in shock," she says. "And it's not like I wouldn't have access." What started with one look led to a second and ultimately snowballed into a few pieces she decided to make only for couturelab.com. But, she recalls, "I found it very hard to just stop at that point. It's almost like cooking for two, which I'm terrible at, versus cooking for a huge group. I'm really good at cooking for a lot."

The project started organically, and Scott didn't want to unveil it to anyone until she knew she had all the elements in place. When she asked her designer, buyer and editor pals for advice about running a fashion business, she never posed the question as information for herself. "A large part of me wanted to keep it to myself because it was a very personal project I was working on by myself," she explains. "I wanted to finish it and say, 'Okay, what do you think?'"

In fact, even those in her everyday circle were unaware for much of the process. "They didn't see it that much. They heard rumblings—they'd see swatches, heard me on the phone talking about how the color wasn't right and they'd be like, 'Is that for the couch?'" One is left to assume that "they" is code for Jagger. She avoids mentioning him in conversation.



Clockwise from above left: Bette Midler at Scott's party; Scott oversees a model's strut; Little Black Dress frocks; Ron Wood and Mick Jagger; revelers at Bette.





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“Her clothes are easy, simple, one zipper. L'Wren does all the work and you don't,” says friend Ellen Barkin.

During this interview, when he walks into the room with his daughter Georgia, who wants to put in a clothing order, Scott quickly adjourns to a different room. Now Jagger seems happy to let Scott take center stage, as he was at the dinner the night before, when he was all low-key charm, vacillating between speaking and writing his conversations (the latter due to a well-publicized sore throat).

Nor will Scott drop the names of high-profile types who have already worn her signature wares. But then, that's her MO. As a stylist, she has never been one to dress and tell. “I'm not going to take credit for someone else's beauty and style,” she says. “I'm certainly happy to help them if they're willing to trust me. I have always felt it very odd to talk about someone else because, why? I don't think it's very chic.” She barely divulges that she is responsible for Jagger's look on the most recent Rolling Stones tour. “I did design that part of the road,” she admits, with a cursory nod to a rack of clothes pushed against the wall and covered in plastic bags.

Nevertheless, word gets out. At a recent film festival, Nicole Kidman dazzled, literally, in Scott's pale spangled dress. At the New York dinner, Christy Turlington and Ellen Barkin looked positively drop-dead in black and fuchsia frocks, respectively. Barkin, who has known Scott for more than a decade, gave an impromptu dinner speech, proclaiming, “The best-kept secret in fashion is the design talent of L'Wren Scott. I'm very proud and delighted that she's decided to pass it along to the world.” The actress recently donned Scott's costumes for her role in *Ocean's Thirteen* and loves the way “her clothes are easy, simple, one zipper. L'Wren does all the work and you don't.”

Turlington sings similar praises. “Every piece in that collection is something that I would have in my closet and wear forever—as long as I could fit into it,” she says. “The construction of the fitted garments really holds you in. And you're in for the night.”

“They are the kind of clothes that make women feel beautiful and alluring,” chimes in Julie Gilhart, fashion director of Barneys New York.

Scott herself has a history of searching hard for such clothes at retail, due to her outsize proportions. “I couldn't find them from the start. At 12, I was nearly six feet,” she recalls. By 13, she had hit the six-foot mark and was reworking clothes she found in local thrift and vintage stores in her small town of Roy, Utah. “You just have to learn to compensate.” That early necessity, coupled with working as a model and then having the kind of access a stylist to the stars receives, has given Scott the technical chops she needs. She's been a front-row fixture at the industry's best shows, but as far as she's concerned, that's not necessarily the best view: “I get more excited about going to the showroom to worship these great designs to see how they're constructed.”

And when it came to her own collection, no one but herself could be the test-driving fit model. “I learned a lot when I would wear things myself and change things that didn't work,” she says. For instance, she figured out which looks needed a little extra support along the bust—“the little obsessive things that are very feminine and very important to me. If you're not comfortable, you're not going to look good. Ever.”

—NANDINI D'SOUZA



Clockwise from top left: Scott prepping a model; Charlie Watts and Rolling Stones manager Tony King; Ellen Barkin congratulates the designer; Jagger records the party for posterity; Christy Turlington in a Little Black Dress number.