

Fashion Born of Frustration

by *Jacob Bernstein*



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After a career as a fashion model and then celebrity stylist, Mick Jagger's girlfriend, L'Wren Scott, has launched a new line of makeup. Jacob Bernstein talks to the ultimate Hollywood fashion insider.

She's styled celebrities such as Nicole Kidman and Ellen Barkin; designed dresses that have flown off the shelves at Barneys even in the midst of the Great Recession; and spent most of the last decade on the arm of Mick Jagger.

Now, L'Wren Scott is heading further into empire-building with a new collection of makeup products she has designed for Lancôme. The dark, slightly moody color palette is exactly what you'd expect from a girl whose style is sexy and tough, but never over-the-top Goth or dominatrix.

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"I wanted the nail color to have this real deep dark intense lacquer," she says by phone, from Paris, where she's been working during the past few weeks. "I didn't want it to have a frost. I don't really like those frosty looks or glittery looks." For lipstick, she says, "I like things that go from day to night. I explained that it should be just as beautiful with one coat as with two."

The effect she aims for is natural. "I don't like things that look too artificial," she says. Scott, who is six foot four, and has a mane of jet black hair, talks a lot about bringing practicality back to fashion—whether it's how to make a lipstick for any time in the day, or the virtues of the perfect black dress.

"I like practicality but at the same time, I don't want it to be boring," she says, describing her style philosophy, which owes something to her roots. Scott grew up in Roy, Utah, the adopted daughter of Mormon parents.

"In Roy," she says, "everyone pretty much looked the same. Except for me...I had black hair and dark skin. I was very tall. Most people in my little town were blond and light-skinned. It was not very ethnically diverse. I didn't fit in on that level."

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Her mother, who worked at a bank, was an early influence on Scott, who even as a young girl was designing dresses—learning to sew in school, and making fashionable outfits for her Barbie. "My mother had fantastic style," Scott says. "She always had the perfect little suit and dress and a crocodile handbag and matching shoes. Women in my neighborhood didn't really work but my mother did. She always had a career so it never crossed my mind that I wouldn't."

While still in grade school, Scott was cast in a Bruce Weber campaign for Calvin Klein. And at 17, she bought a one-way ticket to Paris. "My parents thought I was going to New York to see a friend," says Scott. "They found out, like I think 10 days later... I said 'I'm in Paris.' They said 'Texas?' I said, 'No, France.' They were so freaked out."

Soon, she was modeling for French Vogue, working with photographers such as Guy Bourdin and walking the runway for Thierry Mugler. "I remember thinking 'Wow, these people are strange,'" she recalls.

Eventually, Scott began styling others, moving to Los Angeles where she often collaborated with Herb Ritts, the photographer who, more than almost any other, helped to bridge the gap between Hollywood and fashion, shooting iconic photos of celebrities for Vogue and Vanity Fair, and doing album covers for Madonna.

By 2003, In Style and Us Weekly had both taken off, and turned fashion into an arm of the entertainment business. In Us, you could see everything celebrities were wearing when they went to Starbucks and the supermarket. In InStyle, it was what they were wearing on the red carpet, which thanks to an ever-expanding Oscar season, became an endless fashion parade. "It's a pandemic," Scott says, of what the carpet has become. "Now, you turn the corner in your car and there's a red carpet outside your drugstore."

For the Us Weekly set, no stylist was more important than Rachel Zoe, who dressed stars in oversized sunglasses and '70s inspired getups.

Scott didn't really have a signature look, but she became one of the more influential stylists because she provided classier actresses with clothes that were edgy enough to make the fashion pages but safe enough to keep them off snarky worst-dressed lists. "I wanted to help people enhance their personal style. People know what they want and what they feel comfortable in, and I had time to go out and do this job," says Scott, with characteristic understatement.

By 2005, she began designing her own clothes and the celebrities she dressed—Nicole Kidman, Ellen Barkin and Sarah Jessica Parker—served as malleable muses. "When I started doing my own collection, I could not find a simple black dress for myself, and I was being asked by lots of clients to, sort of, supplement their wardrobes...It was a moment in fashion where everything was pouffy and frouffy and ruffy and big, and it didn't suit me personally. That's how I started to do my own collection—out of pure frustration," she says.

And, as the tabloids soon picked up, Scott became involved with Mick Jagger. Needless to say, she's had some impact on her boyfriend, who's been seen out in recent years wearing snazzy suits from younger designers like Hedi Slimane. "I introduced them," she says of the Rolling Stones frontman and the much lauded former menswear designer of Dior. "Hedi was my friend."

Having conquered Hollywood, Scott wants nothing less than total world domination.

"I want to continue to grow my brand so that it lasts for a hundred years—not just five minutes. I'm not in it for the quick cash. I'm in it for the long haul. I want to create the ultimate luxury for my customer."

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