

L'WREN SCOTT ROCKS

With a cult following for her body-con dresses, the WILLOWY DESIGNER proves she's much more than just Mick Jagger's girlfriend

By PHOEBE EATON

Photographs by VICTOR DEMARCHELIER

There are a few bankable certainties at a L'Wren Scott fashion-show luncheon. One: The editors in attendance will liberally partake of the white wine on offer but barely touch the chicken potpie in the interest of maintaining fighting weight. Two: Mick Jagger, L'Wren Scott's boyfriend of almost a decade, will show, schedule permitting. Three: After nine seasons, the audience has learned to coolly ignore L'Wren Scott's boyfriend as he dashes about in a violet blazer and sneakers, documenting on a minicam the very spectacle his rock-star presence threatens to upstage.

The music rises and Ellen Barkin reaches for her vaguely Buddy Holly glasses, the better to observe the rituals of the runway. Schoolgirl caplets and pencil skirts garnished with flop-eared bows are trailed by fur shrugs brooched in the rear and waistlines in the flattering grip of embroidered acanthus leaves. Now comes a variation of the best-selling "headmistress dress" worn by such pendulum-swing personalities as Michelle Obama and Madonna. Big day bags in jewel tones and calf-coresetting gladiator pumps are new to the lineup. The cymbal clash of "super strong colors" was inspired by "this beautiful Gauguin show in London that was just kind of overwhelming," Scott explains afterward, as the unmolested potpies are being cleared away.

Barkin met Scott back when she was a stylist to the stars. Now Barkin pretty much restricts herself to clothes authored by Scott; in 10 days' time, she will be at the Oscars in a L'Wren Scott jumpsuit of four seasons ago—which on the red-carpet racetrack practically qualifies it as vintage. Barkin's black dress is superglued to her curves and trumpets just below the knee. "It's called a 'follow-me skirt,'" Barkin says, signing off on that thought with her trademark tilted grin. "It sends a message." >

Frocks and roll. Corset, \$1,675. L'Wren Scott. Blake, Chicago: 312-202-0047. Earring, L'Wren Scott. Barneys New York. 888-8-BARNEYS. Gloves, \$350. Carolina Amato. carolinaamato.com. Fashion editor: Mary Alice Stephenson



A week earlier, a scarlet "privacy" sign on the doorknob of a suite in Manhattan's Carlyle hotel sends a message that all ye who enter should adjust expectations. Scott is here on a layover en route to Jagger's first-ever Grammy Awards performance in Los Angeles. She is on the couch, but not *on the couch* in the Freudian sense. Certain subjects are off-limits. Just visible under a much-unbuttoned cornflower-blue blouse is a lace brassiere that, in context, reads more like medieval armature than an erotic statement. Like many a creature of reinvention—one who then made her name reinventing the look of starlets too numerous to mention—the designer who everyone knows as Luann back where she grew up in small-town Utah is only selectively revealing.

From the start, she was unlike any of the other little girls. Adopted (as were her siblings) by deeply religious Mormon parents—her father, an insurance man who was for a time the ward bishop—she realized early on that she didn't look like anybody in her neighborhood "or even in the surrounding neighborhoods." Most everyone in Roy was a mayonnaise blonde conforming to the bland average, but here she was, 5 foot 11 inches at age 12, which meant she and her mother spent a good deal of their time parked in front of a sewing machine. "My mom used to say, 'I'm not very good at this,' and I would say, 'Well, you're better than me.'"

Her mother worked at the local First Security bank. "That was her gig," says Scott, who speaks fluent rock 'n' roll. "She'd race around in her little suits and matching shoes and bag. You'd always know when she was coming in or out because I would hear her keys and the bag."

Nadia Comaneci was notching perfect 10's on television, but Scott was encouraged to take up basketball. "How dare you tell me I'm too tall to be a gymnast?" she remembers thinking. (Yeah: *Just watch me*.) She embraced her altitude. At ballet, "I was like, my leg doesn't look long enough." This is where she first understood you could pair a nude shoe with a black dress to make that leg look even longer.

At the Carlyle, Scott, now into her 40s, is wearing her skinny jeans with the seams up the front that make everyone who wears them look taller. On the feet are manly Martin Margiela slip-on brogues, "which I'm kind of obsessed with," she admits. The laces had annoyed her, so she removed them. "They were sloppy, and I need a clean line," she explains.

All her life, Scott has been a student of the "silhouette." Of course, she herself is all silhouette. Men and women alike are intimidated by her silhouette. She knows this. When she and



Scott with boyfriend Mick Jagger

Jagger pull up in front of the paparazzi, she adjusts the silhouette, bending at the knee to even things out. It is the only time she'll compromise her innate grace, like a dancer who in a reversal of the sex roles desires only to make her partner look his best. What a woman will do for her man.

Especially a legendary lothario who recently told *The New York Times* that Scott, who cohabits with him in London and France, is someone he is "kind of dating." It begs the question, what does the public misunderstand about her? She darkly alludes to the British tabloids and free-associates from there. "You can't believe everything you read," she says, quickly adding, "I am only six foot three, by the way."

It is true she looks even taller. (If only the hotel minibar stocked a tape measure.) Bruce Weber couldn't miss her on a trip to Utah more than 20 years ago, when he cast this gangly teenager and her boyfriend in a Calvin Klein shoot, then wrote a check for something on the order of \$1,500. ("That was *big*," she remembers.) Not long after, without telling her folks, Scott flew to Paris, where her agents persisted in advertising "L'Wren" as six foot one. A French-fried fiction. Scott was too tall for steady runway work and was shut out of being a fit model in the ateliers of Paris. Once, her agency even tried to lie about the size of her foot—until she put her proverbial foot down. "Absolutely not," she said, anticipating shock waves of pain on her shoots, emanating from the root system of her sequoia frame.

Still, she worked with some great photographers. Lots of leg jobs, she says, kicking up a heel like a cancan girl. Her legs were the hands of the clock in a memorable David Bailey commercial for Pretty Polly panty hose. Relocated to Los Angeles in the early '90s, she was introduced, after a long day of vintage shopping, by Helena Christensen to the late Herb Ritts, then shooting covers for *Rolling Stone* and *Vanity Fair*. "The nicest guy in the world. A real artist," she calls him. "As obsessed with the silhouette as I am." Scott admits the body part she obsesses over the most is her waistline. (While she's never excelled at dieting or starving herself, she did 20 minutes on the elliptical this morning; much more and she worries she'd look like she was built out of toothpicks.) When solicited for their opinion, guys always go for the dress or the jacket with a clearly defined waistline, she's noticed: "Guys understand a waistline. They understand a silhouette." That floaty shift? Save it for lunch with your girlfriends. "I dress for men," she announces, those brown button eyes suddenly boring holes. "I have to feel good, you know what I mean?"

Here's what she's learned from working with such actresses as Sarah Jessica Parker. (CONTINUED ON PAGE 231)

PHOTO: MAZUR/WIREIMAGE.COM



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She whips her hair back and forth. Gown, \$12,795. L'Wren Scott. Barneys New York; 888-8-BARNEYS. See Where to Buy for shopping details. Hair: Serge Normant for sergeornant.com; makeup: Fulvia Farolfi for Chanel; manicure: Michina Koide for Nars Cosmetics.



L'WREN SCOTT

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Penélope Cruz, and Nicole Kidman, who industry yardbirds like to say *made* her: "You'll see the most perfect person and you are like, God, she's, like, perfect. And then she'll tell you everything that's not perfect. Everyone has their own special set of problems—in their own minds." The gig, she insists, "is 98 percent psychology."

Scott has been responsible for the dinner jackets and tux shirts Jagger wears in concert. How much aesthetic is assimilated from the Jagger teenagers? "They all have their own special amazing style," she allows, "but I go to my own drumbeat." She's more of a Victorian herself, with her period cuffs and gold chains and locket, high-ruff blouses, and velvet frock coats trailing buttons. "I like the feeling of being corseted in your jeans," she says at one point. She affirms she is not the person in the room who'll be hacking off her Pre-Raphaelite hair once she hits 50.

Artist Rachel Feinstein, who met Scott in Mustique, says she and her artist husband, John Currin, were drawn to the couple out of their mutual love of beauty, paintings, old houses, and bygone eras: "We all have a love affair with the grandiose and the baroque," says Feinstein. On Saturdays, Scott and Jagger will get in the car and go explore castles and churches. She's driven down driveways, hoping to find no one at home so she can poke around. There are rules: "If the shutters are open, you generally know somebody's there."

A knock on the door. Time to get going. The shutters on this marvelous life swing closed. ■

To see L'Wren Scott looks on the red carpet, go to bazaar.com/lwrenscott