



BLACK MAGIC
The 'Ford' dress by Chanel



UNFORGETTABLE
Audrey Hepburn in a trench in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*

Chanel LBD

Exactly 84 years ago, in October 1926, *Vogue* labelled the Little Black Dress 'Chanel's Ford', and predicted it would become a uniform for the modern woman. It did. In the 20th century, memorable images of the LBD emerged: Audrey Hepburn, Princess Diana, Michelle Obama. Chanel was the first to shift the LBD away from Victorian mourning dress.

"One is never over- or under-dressed with a little black dress," says Chanel's head designer and creative director, Karl Lagerfeld.

HOW TO WEAR NOW: Pair your LBD with a tough leather jacket for a hard-on-soft twist.

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GURU

THE REWIND

With fashion houses returning to their roots and reinterpreting signature styles, SAHAR KHAN looks back at the original icons

THE *icon* ISSUE

Burberry trench

In 1888, Thomas Burberry patented gabardine—a water- and tear-proof fabric that is still used to make the label's trench coats. It was the outerwear of choice for British soldiers during WWI. Though its origin is disputed—both Burberry and Aquascutum claim to have invented the coat—its best-known attachment is to Burberry.

The trench soon moved into contemporary culture, as film stars, intrepid foreign correspondents and novels about espionage and intrigue helped glamourise its stylish silhouette.

Today, from advertisements of Agyness Deyn ensconced in a gold leather trench to a subtle blueberry version with lace detail, creative director Christopher Bailey has added a sense of luxury. "It's not about revolutionising the trench—it is a timeless piece," says Bailey.

HOW TO WEAR NOW: Pair a tailored trench coat with an unstructured silhouette, like a billowy shirt-dress.

Rachel Bilson

Rihanna



Giorgio Armani suit

The deconstructed suits that Giorgio Armani designed for *American Gigolo* became as big a hit as the 1980 film. After the 1970s flowing hippie fashions, Armani's draped linen blazers and relaxed trousers ushered in an era of precise tailoring and the power suit.

The look was translated into womenswear soon after. Softly moulded suits modelled by Jerry Hall were shown in the 1980 and '81 collections. Movie stars like Jodie Foster, Glenn Close and Michelle Pfeiffer started turning up to red-carpet events in Armani's suits.

The classic suit is present in each Armani collection, including this autumn's, which features Nehru-esque jackets with high collars, as well as cushioned shoulders and a flap that buttons on the left.

HOW TO WEAR NOW: Pair a soft, deconstructed jacket with a soft V-neck T-shirt.

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SUITED UP
Glenn Close

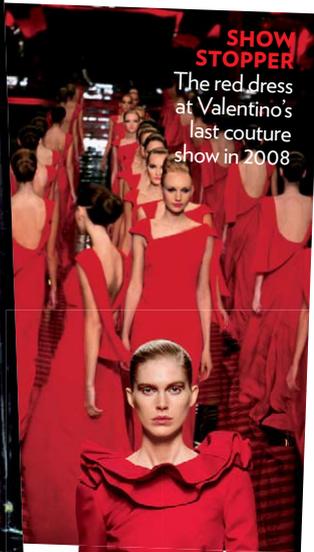
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AQUARIUS COLLECTION





OLD SCHOOL
Princess Diana in Valentino in 1991



SHOW STOPPER
The red dress at Valentino's last couture show in 2008



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Kate Bosworth

Valentino red

The shade of red famously used by Valentino Garavani is known as Rosso Valentino, after its most prolific user. The hue, a precise combination of 100 per cent magenta, 100 per cent yellow and 10 per cent black, is evocative of the seduction of dance. And when worn, it becomes, to borrow a phrase from George Bernard Shaw, the vertical expression of a horizontal desire.

The titillating tinge has given life to some of Valentino's most astounding creations, including a corseted tulle and lace gown for Sharon Stone, and a cap-sleeved dress with a plain bodice and feathered bottom worn by Sienna Miller. Though Valentino's successors—creative directors Maria Grazia Chiuri and Pier Paolo Piccioli—have not yet used much of the iconic red in their collections, they understand its importance to the house. In their first show, they presented a powerfully unadorned crinkled silk qipao.

HOW TO WEAR NOW: Choose red accessories—shoes, a scarf or a bag—to add oomph to an outfit.

Louis Vuitton premier luggage

Louis Vuitton became France's—as well as the world's—premiere luggage maker after he served as layetier for Napoleon III's wife, Empress Eugénie de Montijo. Vuitton designed bespoke trunks for the monarch and her ladies-in-waiting.

In 1854, he opened a shop in Paris and created the first flat-topped trunk, making it convenient for luggage to be stacked during journeys. (Although it was Vuitton's son, George, who created the famous LV monogram canvas in 1896.) Products included picnic hampers for weekend jaunts, suitcases for short flights and built-in drawers and hangers in watertight trunks that were stowed under passengers' berths during sea voyages.

In an era when wealthy passengers took up to 50 pieces of baggage, the practicality of Vuitton's luggage won him clients like Coco Chanel, Charles Lindbergh and Maharaja Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala.

"When you think of Louis Vuitton luggage, you think of luxury, you think of elegance, you think of durability and you think of classic design," says Ellen Goldstein, chairperson of the accessories design department at FIT in New York. "That's what makes it iconic."

HOW TO CARRY NOW:

Have your initials monogrammed on a classic LV suitcase. >



CHIC CARRY-ALL
Sophia Loren with her monogram luggage in 1981



Cameron Diaz



LOUIS VUITTON



The cover of the 1901 catalogue



vogue VIEW



REVIVAL
Tailleur
Bar. Haute
couture,
S/S 1947

**PAST
PERFECT**
Eugenie,
Haute couture,
A/W 1948

Dior's New Look

Nipped waists, moulded shoulders, rounded busts and mid-calf skirts defined Christian Dior's New Look, the 1950s aesthetic that soon became the 20th century's epitome of womanhood.

"It was the return of femininity, and was in total opposition to the WWII austerity of practical suits and fabric rations," says Patrick Michael Hughes, an associate professor of fashion history and design strategies at Parsons New School for Design.

Dior celebrated the end of fabric rationing by using up to 20 yards of sumptuous material for his designs. Paris, whose sartorial reputation had dwindled during the war, regained its position as a leading fashion capital, due immeasurably to the interest in Dior's New Look. The seductive new silhouette returned the joie de vivre to women (and the men who admired them).

"Zest is the secret of all beauty," Dior once said. "There is no beauty that is attractive without zest."

Creative director John Galliano has embraced his forerunner's fashionable spirit by revisiting Dior's '50s facades in his own collections. His latest haute couture collection also referenced the New Look with taut bodices and swinging, voluminous skirts. One lively ensemble comprised a black-feathered top paired with a red wool, rounded bottom, reminiscent of the voluptuous shape that, according to Hughes, "defined a generation."

HOW TO WEAR NOW: Play with belted waists and softly moulded shoulders to subtly frame an hourglass shape.



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Gucci's equestrian aristocracy

In the 1950s, Guccio Gucci introduced a plethora of equestrian-inspired ideas to lend his leather goods company an aristocratic air. Introduced in 1953, the horsebit—a strap used to control steeds—was used as hardware on canvas bags, printed on clothes and made into fine jewellery.

Gucci's idea worked. "[The horsebit] is the epitome of the aristocracy," says Goldstein. The equestrian theme continues today under creative director Frida Giannini. But it was during Tom Ford's tenure that Gucci epitomised the modern woman—aristocratic in look, free-spirited in nature—as a seductive centaur. Ford's glistening models stomped down runways with a thoroughbred's gait. The horsebit, incorporated into each collection, was ever-present and seemed to broadcast on behalf of its hoof-heeled owner a mocking challenge to the world: "Try to rein me in, if you dare."

HOW TO WEAR NOW: Choose one equestrian-style jewellery piece, to add a classic polish to your look.



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OLD SCHOOL
Jodie Foster wearing Gucci loafers in 1977.



Shoulder bag with metal horsebit, mid-'50s

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Tod's 'D' bag

The youngest icon on our list, the Tod's 'D' bag debuted in 1997 and became an instant classic, toted on the arms of celebrities like Nicole Kidman and Diane Kruger.

No matter what ornamentation it's given—the 'D' bag has featured fur, fringe, ribbing and zippers—the soft, boxy shape, pert handles, slim ridges and stitches, and creamy leather have become as well-recognised as Hermès' much-loved Birkin. Creative director Derek Lam has brought the Italian love of colour to the D bag.

His fall collection was reminiscent of the hues of Tuscan vineyards.

HOW TO WEAR NOW: This season's versions in metallic leather add shine. ■



Jennifer Garner

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