

BEAUTY

Mane Man

A favourite with photographers, designers and celebrities, if there is one man who has turned styling hair into an art form it is Sam McKnight. In celebration of his new book and exhibition, we asked him to look back on his favourite A-list moments

Sam McKnight is as charming and irreverent as he is talented – and that is saying something. The world's most in-demand hairstylist, over his 40-year career Sam has racked up more Vogue covers than any of his cohorts, and his influence is huge. He turns Karl Lagerfeld's hair styling sketches into reality for the Chanel catwalk, gave Tilda Swinton her trademark crop and was credited with transforming the late Diana, Princess of Wales from a lady into a fashion icon.

More used to working his magic behind the scenes, in the coming months Sam will be centre stage thanks to a new book and an exhibition of his work at London's Somerset House. More than just a retrospective, they feature photos and objects that give a personal insight into the work involved in creating some of fashion and celebrity's most memorable looks. And when you have worked with everyone from Hollywood superstars to royalty, helping to craft more than 40,000 iconic images, choosing your favourites is,

understandably, no easy task.

"My book is not just a collection of my printed work," says Sam. "It has lots of moments captured backstage and behind the scenes, as well as my personal Polaroids. Just as the exhibition contains wigs that I have created, tools that I've worked with, clothes and outfits, as well as the images from the book. So you get to experience the process of creating images and shows."

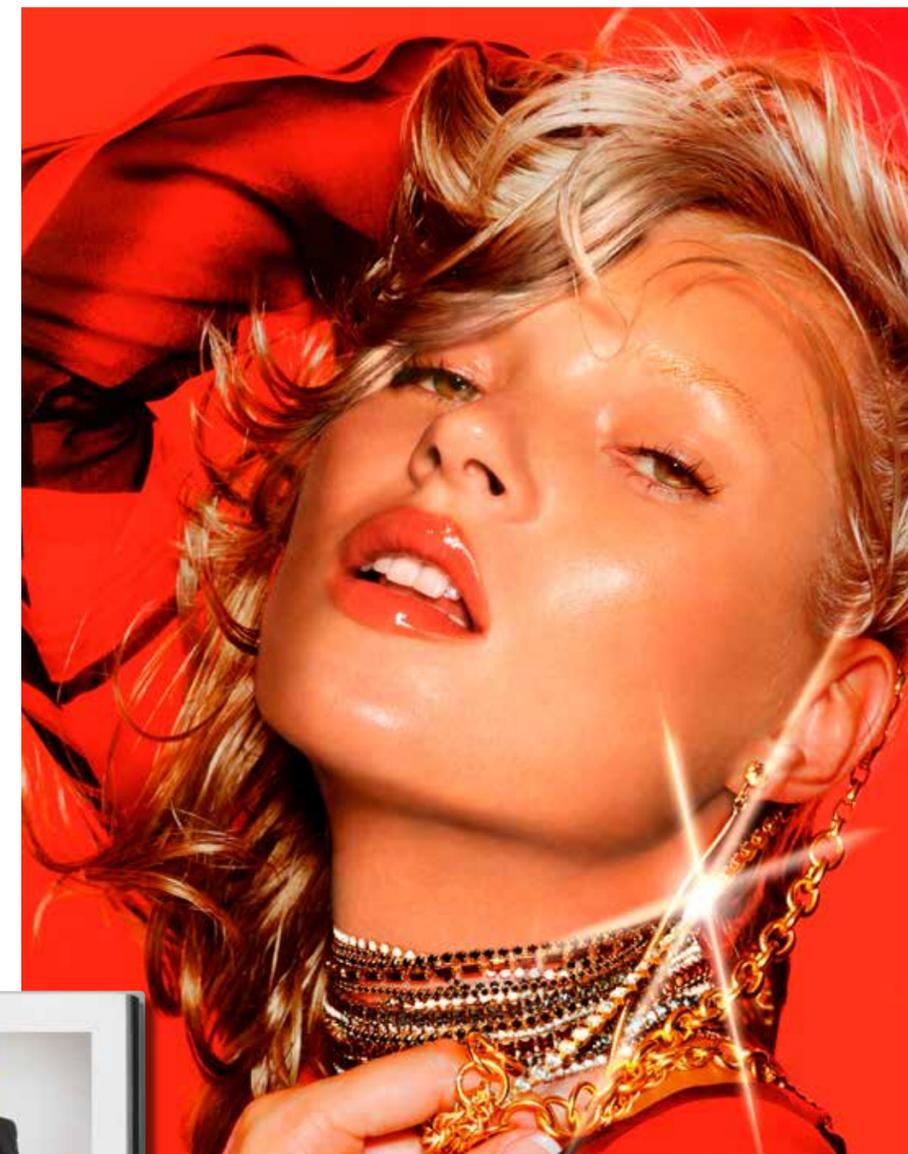
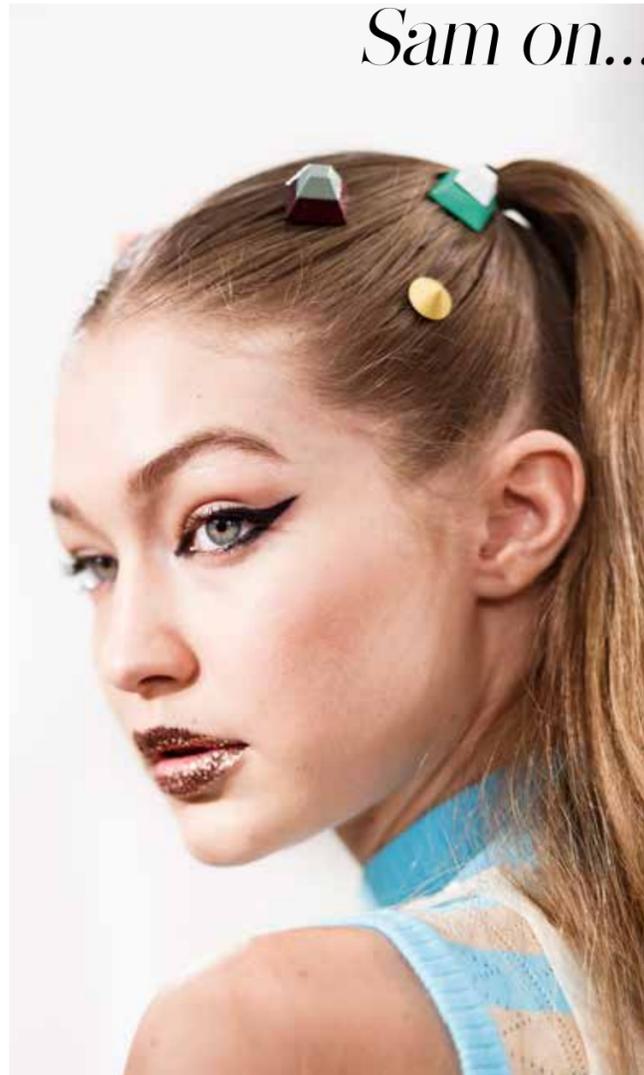
We asked Sam to share special celebrity style moments from the past five decades.

Sam on... his ultimate supermodel

"Oh, don't make me choose. But take a look at pictures of Linda Evangelista and everything is simply perfect. She has this ability to control every inch of her body. I tell a story in the book where she is walking a pack of doberman dogs, all pulling furiously on their leashes. And yet she stops and asks the photographer: 'Do you want me to highlight the earrings or bracelet?' That's a professional."

Sam on... the new generation Insta-famous models

"I work in a different era now and everything is in a state of flux; things change daily. Of the new generation of models, Gigi Hadid is kind of amazing. She is such a lovely girl and understands the business and wants to create a great image. And Rosie [Huntington-Whiteley] is just so nice and professional – and, of course, incredible looking. There is a lot to be said for manners, grace, humility and kindness, and those two women embody that."



Sam on... styling his friend and muse Kate Moss

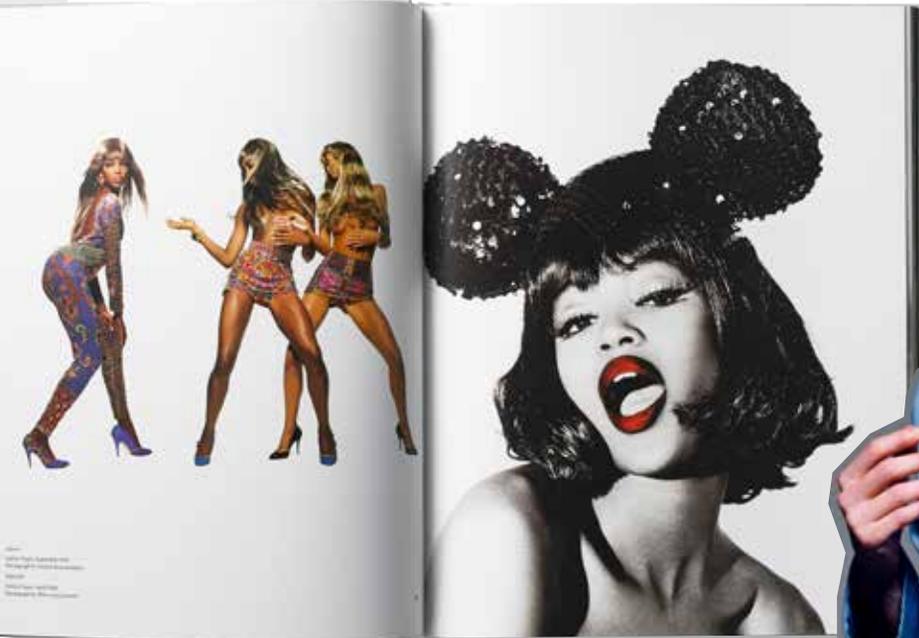
"We have done over 30 Vogue covers and she is on the cover of my book; it's classically and unmistakably Kate. Her appetite for creating images and being photographed is incredible. Sometimes I hear people ask, 'Why is she still going?' And then you see her turn it on for the camera and work hard to create the perfect image. There are not many people like that – who strive for perfection. That's what sets those girls apart: Kate, Lady Gaga, Tilda, Linda Evangelista... It's about striving to be the very best you can be. That's what Kate does, and she does it really well."



Sam on... *meeting Princess Diana*

"I remember the day that I met Diana so clearly. I was with Patrick Demarchelier and Mary Greenwell and we were shooting the new generation of royals. No one told us she was coming. We had Victoria Lockwood and Lady Helen Windsor [Taylor], Sarah Armstrong Jones [Lady Sarah Chatto]... and suddenly this blonde woman comes up the stairs looking just like a model. I mean tall, elegant, long-legged, smiling, striking; so funny and great to be around. Patrick had her on the floor in a white dress, smiling. People complained that we put her in a sheet, when in fact it was a Victor Edelstein ballgown.

"We became friends. I went to Afghanistan with her for her landmine charity work and on that visit to India where she was photographed outside the Taj Mahal. She had this ability to touch people's lives. It took a while for her to trust me to make her look more casual; she would say to me: 'Sam, people don't want me to look like I've just stepped out of the gym; they expect to see a Princess.' It was an amazing thing to be invited to travel with her; we laughed so much. I would cut her hair as she watched [TV series] Brookside with her boys."



Sam on... *working with a teenage Naomi Campbell*

"I first met Naomi when she was 15 and we were shooting in Hyde Park by the Albert Memorial. This little girl in a school uniform turned up and said, 'I need to be on the bus home by 4 o'clock, my Mum don't know I'm bunking off school modelling.' And she was amazing. You could tell straight away that she was going to be huge. "She has this extraordinary feline quality. She is also very funny, I cannot tell you the trouble we've got in to over the years."

Sam on... *his favourite chameleon*

"Tilda Swinton is such a dream to work with. She has this ability to act on camera for a fashion shoot, to inhabit a character that I help to create with hair (and clothes and make-up). Watching her transform is mesmerising. She is a genuinely unique talent. I remember a press junket we went on and I was cutting her hair. Her publicist came in and asked me not to cut it too short, but Tilda just told me to take it super-short, so we buzz cut it off. How fabulous that she can do her own thing. I like women who are not afraid to change."



Sam on... *his favourite actress*

“Cate Blanchett could easily have been a model. She is simply extraordinary and just the nicest woman. She turns up and wants to create the perfect image or photograph. It’s not about vanity but sheer professionalism – and a gorgeous face, of course. I bumped into her on the street recently just as I was going to pick up my first copy of the book, and we strolled through Soho together. She has the ability to go unrecognised. That is how to do it – elegance personified.”



Sam on... *working with Karl Lagerfeld*

“I have an amazing job and work with some incredible people, and Karl is totally inspirational. I’ve been working with him for nine years, and watching him work, create and photograph – until the wee hours of the morning sometimes – with so much energy and enthusiasm, is an inspiration in itself.”

Sam on... *the creative force that is Vivienne Westwood*

“What an amazing woman. She never ceases to amaze me with her approach and energy and enthusiasm. In a cynical world she is a beacon of light, and working with her is a delight. We can talk for hours as most of her references come from art history.”



Hair by Sam McKnight
The Exhibition runs from
2 November to
12 March 2017 at
Somerset House,
London; visit
somerset.house.org.uk

Hair by Sam McKnight
(Rizzoli, £35) is out
now.

