

CATCHING UP WITH CHLOË

SHE IS LIVING PROOF THAT THE BEST-DRESSED WOMEN KNOW THEIR OWN STYLE. CHLOË SEVIGNY HAS MANAGED HER TRANSFORMATION FROM SKATEBOARD CHICK TO INDIE INGENUE WITHOUT COMPROMISING HER DEVOTION TO VINTAGE CHIC—AND WITHOUT EVER FALLING VICTIM TO FASHION TRENDS (LIKE SOME ACTRESSES SHE COULD MENTION). BY NANCY JO SALES
PHOTOGRAPHED BY PATRICK DEMARCHELIER

It's a runway show for *Imitation of Christ*, the fashion industry's answer to independent film. There are young women here who look as if they might be named Astrid, and young men resembling Japanese homeboys by way of Kurt Cobain. Unconventionally, it's all taking place at the entrance to a New York movie theater; the setup's a Hollywood premiere. A red carpet's rolled up to the door; a star is about to appear.

"Chloh-way!" French photographers scream.

A driver hops out and opens a limousine door, and there she is: Chloë Sevigny, fashion's most unwilling icon, staring down the paparazzi like a snake charmer.

Tonight, Sevigny is wearing a cream-colored wedding dress, heavy and fussy, over a long-sleeved black leotard and jeans. The dress is short-sleeved, circa 1920; the leotard simply Danskin.

Sevigny glides down the runway, seeming to move without moving. "What, don't you get it?" says her steady gaze.

"Oh ... my ... God," says a young man, simulating hyperventilation, "she is *perfect!*"

"She's so *cool*," someone else says.

A prominent fashion editor nearby offers, murmuring, "She's been seen in some animal-print coat all over town...."

"Yes! What is that?" someone else asks.

People watch what Sevigny wears. It all started when she was 17 and a producer from a TV talk show came up to her on the street and asked her to be in the show's opening credits, apparently to lend some cool. From there, she turned up in a Sonic Youth video, a Lemonheads video, and the second Miu Miu campaign. She wouldn't be Chloë Sevigny if she hadn't (infamously) blown off a casting session for Italian *Vogue* when she was 18. Then there was *Kids*, and to her reported horror, she was suddenly being called "the

coolest girl in the world." She said she just wanted to be left alone—to shop in thrift stores, among other things; but everybody always wanted to know what she was buying there.

"The fashion world is fascinated by her," says designer Marc Jacobs, "because she is not only talented, young, and attractive—she stands out in a sea of often clichéd-looking actresses."

"Whether she wears designer clothes or vintage clothes, they always look like Chloë Sevigny's clothes," says Balenciaga designer Nicolas Ghesquière.

"I like to watch Chloë model," her former boyfriend, filmmaker (and *Kids* writer) Harmony Korine, once said. "Usually, she stumbles."

But Sevigny doesn't stumble now. In a moment, Carmen Kass, Frankie Rayder, and a string of other taller and more gorgeous models will appear. But it's Sevigny you'll remember; her eyes. Her bearing. She has style.

She seems to know it.

At 26, after nine films, Sevigny finds herself at a most visible point in her career. With her Best Supporting Actress Oscar nomination last year for *Boys Don't Cry*, she is being recognized as the serious actress she wants to be (she once claimed she wanted to be a fashion designer, maybe). Concurrently, she's become an international symbol for emerging style. And, she says, this worries her.

"You know," Sevigny says, "I love acting and I love cinema more than anything. For some reason the public has embraced me as a fashion icon, and I feel like it has diminished me as an actress. Or I don't get as much recognition as an actress—and that upsets me."

She's sitting, bathed in candlelight, in the bar of the Gramercy Park Hotel—a dark, homey dive (her selection) with a live ▶211

SCREEN GEM Like Chloë Sevigny, Jean Paul Gaultier's ruffled, diamanté-studded dress combines hard edges with a soft, feminine silhouette. Organza dress with studded straps, Gaultier Paris. By special order from Gaultier Paris, Paris. Veil, Chanel Haute Couture. Pink lady: Drama Lash Mascara in Onyx and Hydrasoleil Lipstick in Soleil Rusé. Both, Chanel. Hair, Garren of Garren New York; makeup, Kevyn Aucoin; manicure, Deborah Lippmann for Lippmanncollection.com/Artists by Timothy Priano. See Buyline for details. Fashion editor: **Michel Botbol**

about \$130, A.P.C., NYC. Giorgio Armani tie, about \$110, Giorgio Armani stores nationwide. Page 175: Chanel dress, about \$5700, and slingbacks, about \$370. Dress at Chanel, NYC; call 800-550-0005. Slingbacks not available. Fred Leighton earrings, about \$45,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Calvin Klein Hosiery stockings, about \$10, Bloomingdale's stores nationwide. Pages 176-177: Bill Blass dress, about \$6200, Saks Fifth Avenue, NYC. Fred Leighton bracelet, about \$55,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Calvin Klein Hosiery stockings, about \$10, Bloomingdale's stores nationwide. Cerruti dress, Cerruti, NYC. Fred Leighton bracelet, about \$35,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Emanuel Ungaro dress, Emanuel Ungaro, NYC, Palm Beach, and Bal Harbour, FL. Chanel necklace, about \$1585, select Chanel boutiques; call 800-550-0005. Carolee necklace, about \$40; call 800-CAROLEE; carolee.com. Calvin Klein Hosiery stockings, about \$10, Bloomingdale's stores nationwide. On men: Ray-Ban and Persol sunglasses, Sunglass Hut stores nationwide; LensCrafters stores nationwide. Helmut Lang jackets, about \$780 each, pants, about \$340 each, and shirts, about \$300 each; helmutlang.com. Giorgio Armani ties, about \$110 each, Giorgio Armani stores nationwide. Page 178: Linda Allard for Ellen Tracy dress, select Saks Fifth Avenue stores; select Bloomingdale's stores; call 800-925-7979; ellentracy.com. Fred Leighton earrings, Fred Leighton, NYC. Page 179: Ralph Lauren Collection dress, select Polo Ralph Lauren stores; Bergdorf Goodman, NYC; select Saks Fifth Avenue stores. Chanel pumps, about \$390, Chanel, NYC and Beverly Hills; call 800-550-0005. Calvin Klein Hosiery stockings, about \$10, Bloomingdale's stores nationwide. Pages 180-181: Valentino dress, by special order at Valentino, NYC, Palm Beach, and Beverly Hills. Fred Leighton earrings, about \$25,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Louis Vuitton shoes, about \$425, Louis Vuitton, NYC, Beverly Hills, San Francisco, and Costa Mesa, CA; call 800-285-2255. Calvin Klein Hosiery stockings, about \$10, Bloomingdale's stores nationwide. On men, clockwise from top left: Costume National Homme jacket, about \$925, Costume National, NYC and Los Angeles. Helmut Lang shirt, about \$490; helmutlang.com. Calvin Klein tie, about \$80, Calvin Klein, NYC and Dallas. Agnès B. Homme shirt, about \$130; agnesb.fr; call 888-AGNES-B-2. A.P.C. sweater, about \$130, A.P.C., NYC. Giorgio Armani tie, about \$110, Giorgio Armani stores nationwide. Versace tuxedo, about \$1760, and shirt, about \$510, Versace boutiques worldwide; call 888-3-VERSACE. Calvin Klein tie, about \$80, Calvin Klein, NYC and Dallas. Ballantyne cashmere sweater, about \$495, Ballantyne Cashmere, Chicago. Agnès B. Homme shirt, about \$130; agnesb.fr; call 888-AGNES-B-2. Calvin Klein tie, about \$80, Calvin Klein, NYC and Dallas. Helmut Lang jacket, about \$780, and shirt, about \$490; helmutlang.com. Prada silk tie, about \$115, Prada boutiques nationwide; call 888-977-1900. Page 182: Carolina Herrera halter dress, by special order at Carolina Herrera, NYC. Fred Leighton bracelet, about \$75,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Page 183: Valentino dress, Valentino, NYC, Palm Beach, and Beverly Hills. Fred Leighton earrings, about \$45,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Pages 184-185: Fred Leighton earrings, about \$45,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Page 186: Calvin Klein dress, about \$4110, Calvin Klein stores nationwide; Bergdorf Goodman, NYC; Nordstrom stores nationwide. Versace dress, price available upon request, Versace boutiques worldwide. Chanel shoes, about \$395, Chanel boutiques nationwide; call 800-550-0005. Fred Leighton bracelet, about \$75,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. Calvin Klein Hosiery stockings, about \$10, Bloomingdale's stores nationwide. On him: Versace tuxedo, about \$1760, and shirt, about \$510, Versace boutiques worldwide; call 888-3-VERSACE. Calvin Klein tie, about \$80, Calvin Klein, NYC and Dallas. Page 187: Tuleh dress, select Neiman Marcus stores; Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Fred Leighton diamond pendant earrings, about \$40,000, Fred Leighton, NYC. **Tank Girl** Page 198: Blumarine bathing suit, Henri Bendel, NYC; Bagutta, NYC; Fred Segal Couture, Santa Monica. Alice Roi shoes not available. Page 199: Anne Klein Swimwear one-piece; call 800-BUY-SWIM. M+J Savitt belt, about \$1350; call 800-3-SAVITT. Erickson Beamon at Showroom Seven pendant, about \$390, Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Manolo Blahnik shoes, Manolo Blahnik, NYC. Page 200: Celine by Michael Kors maillot, Celine, NYC and Bal Harbour, FL. Celine belt, about \$575, Celine, NYC and Bal Harbour, FL. M+J Savitt cuff, about \$165, Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Roberto Cavalli sandals, about \$600, Roberto Cavalli, NYC; robertocavalli.it. Chanel gold chain belt not available. Page 201: Christian Dior bathing suit, necklace, about \$160, and bracelet, about \$100, Christian Dior boutiques nationwide. Charles Jourdan pumps, about \$235, Charles Jourdan, NYC, Beverly Hills, Palm Beach, and Bal Harbour, FL. Page 202: XOXO Swim bathing suit, Londo Mondo, Chicago; Sunstation, Belmar, NJ; everythingbutwater.com. Gucci choker, about \$1250, and shoes, about \$575, select Gucci stores; call 800-234-8224. M+J Savitt body chain; call 800-3-SAVITT. Miu Miu belt, about \$170, Miu Miu, NYC and Los Angeles; call 888-977-1900. Page 203: Victoria's Secret tank suit, Victoria's Secret catalog, call 800-888-8200; victoriasecret.com. M+J Savitt necklace with lariat drop, about \$315, Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Fendi sandals, about \$350, Fendi, NYC; call 800-FENDI-NY. **Summer of Love** Pages 204-205: Michael Kors cardigan, Michael Kors, NYC. Romeo Gigli skirt, Bergdorf Goodman, NYC; Maxfield, Los Angeles. Sally Penn belt; call 718-602-4831; sallypenn.net. Prada sandals, Prada, NYC; call 888-977-1900. Calvin Klein Accessories bag, Calvin Klein stores nationwide; Bloomingdale's stores nationwide; Stanley Korshak, Dallas. Page 206: Celine by Michael Kors shirt, Celine, NYC, Beverly Hills, and Bal Harbour, FL; select Nordstrom stores. Michael Kors skirt, Michael Kors, NYC. Sally Penn belt; call 718-602-4831; sallypenn.net. Julie Baker earrings, Bergdorf Goodman, NYC. Hermès sandals, Hermès stores nationwide; call 800-441-4488. Fendi tote, about \$5335, Fendi, NYC; call 800-FENDI-NY. Page 207: Miu Miu top and skirt, Miu Miu, NYC and Los Angeles; call 888-977-1900. Panerai Luminor; call 800-628-4434. Michael Kors belt, Michael Kors, NYC. Pierre Hardy sandals, by special order at Kirna Zabête, NYC; Jill Kohl Shoes, Woodland Hills, CA. Valentino Garavani bag, Valentino, NYC, Palm Beach, and Beverly Hills; Jeffrey, NYC. Pages 208-209: Chanel top, Chanel boutiques nationwide; select Saks Fifth Avenues stores; Bergdorf Goodman, NYC; call 800-550-0005. Michael Kors skirt and bag, Michael Kors, NYC. Skirt at select Saks Fifth Avenue stores; Barneys New York, NYC. Anna Sui peccotaco, Anna Sui, NYC. Cacharel belt, Scoop, NYC; select Barneys New York stores; select Bloomingdale's stores. Tod's thongs, Tod's boutiques nationwide; select Neiman Marcus stores; select Saks Fifth Avenue stores. **Retail prices are approximate and may vary in different regions of the country. ■

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pianist playing "Angie." Her head is covered with a long black scarf. She looks a bit like Mata Hari.

"I used to be really addicted to the fashion magazines," Sevigny says with a weary tone, "and I think I'm pretty schooled as far as the designers go, but I don't study fashion. I don't think it's worth studying...."

"Fashion is just *there*." She's sipping dry white wine and smoking Parliaments, both in steady succession.

"Carolyn Bessette always looked so elegant—and like Gwyneth Paltrow *wishes*," Sevigny continues. "Carolyn Bessette always looked so clean and, like, not forced. I mean, it wasn't as if she was wearing Calvin Klein—she was wearing Yohji Yamamoto and offbeat things, but she looked amazing in them."

"She was so consistent, whereas Gwyneth will one day look this way and the next day look completely different." She laughs—which comes as kind of a shock. It sounds like a blender on a high speed. "Actually, I really feel for Gwyneth," she says, "because how much pressure does she have to look good every time she goes out?"

Perhaps since she got her own Oscar nomination, Sevigny has been feeling some of the same pressure.

"They're gonna rip her apart if she looks bad, and they're gonna rip her apart if she looks good," she says.

Aside from her babushka, she's got on another leotard, and a denim skirt to the floor with a cross patch, "which I've had since high school. I found it in the attic"—at her mother's home in Darien, CT, where she's from, as she often mentions. ("I'm just this girl from Connecticut, very plain-looking....")

She looks arresting.

"I'm just very into covering myself up," she says. "I think it's really elegant and pretty. People are too showy now—maybe they're looking for a man; they're showing off what they've got."

"My mother always wants me to dress more revealing, more sexy," Sevigny says. "If you've got it, flaunt it; that's her thing. But I don't feel like I've 'got it.' I've always had a paunch"—she pats her stomach—"my whole life."

Her long arms and neck are pale in the ►

flickering light. There's something about her that's like an early film star. Bette Davis if she were a skate betty.

"These days I'm into the refugee look," she says.

I'm confused. "Like the band the Refugee Camp?"

"No, like a person who is a refugee. Like, Edwardian," she says, meaning to explain. "I'm inspired by the Amish lately—they look so pure and puritanical that I'm really attracted to it.... Hasidic boys on the train I'm always so attracted to."

I ask her what she thinks of Jennifer Lopez. She laughs; it sounds like she's inhaling helium. "I love her in that *ghetto* sense," she says. "I sat across from her at the VH1 fashion awards last year. I could not take my eyes off her. I love her body.

"Clothes do seem to fall nicer on women who are thin," she adds, "but my eye is for a woman who looks like a woman. Supermodels are far too skinny, with breasts far too small for my taste."

I ask her what she thinks of Oprah.

She blinks. "I don't think of Oprah.

"People are saying Kate Hudson is fashionable now—boring to me," she says. "And Charlize Theron—tacky to me. I mean, I don't know...." She rolls her eyes, which she does a fair bit.

"I like Monica," she offers, meaning Lewinsky. "I mean, I don't really have much respect for her clothes—or her handbags—but I just love what she did for Bill with the cigar!

"I love Bill," she goes on. "I met him once on Martha's Vineyard at a fund-raiser for Hillary, and he was so sexy. He was grabbing this girl! I wish I could be more scandalous.

"The biggest scandal now is Tom and Nicole. Now, *she* always looks beautiful. But she was on a contract with Christian Dior—the rumor was, they paid her like a million dollars to wear those dresses!" Her face registers mild outrage.

I ask if she would ever make such a deal.

"Oh, I don't know," she says with a sigh. "Maybe if it was a lot of money and a designer I really liked."

Maybe Imitation of Christ? I ask.

Sevigny laughs again; it's like a mini asthma attack. "They don't have any money!" she says.

She's their creative director, their hipster figurehead; but even toward this, Sevigny has a reluctant mien. "I just showed up at the space where they were doing all the fittings the other night," she says. "Tara Subkoff and Matt Damhave"—IOC's designers—"are my friends. I showed up in my jeans and they said, 'You have to wear a dress,' and I said, 'Oh, okay, I'll wear it over this.' It wasn't meant to be like, Chloë's gonna start off the show. I hate fashion shows."

Sevigny says she shops exclusively in thrift stores, as she has since the seventh grade: "My mother would bring me into New York and we would go to thrift stores. We didn't have a lot of money." (Her father, who died six years ago, was an insurance man who quixotically switched to trompe l'oeil painting after his company was sold.) "I think it had to do with the town I grew up in and being surrounded by very preppy girls. I wanted to prove I was different.

"Then, the summer between my junior and senior year, I started going clubbing in New York. I was listening to hip-hop then, and this was when the whole Polo-kids thing was happening. I worked at Polo in Stamford actually, and I used to put out the cashmere teddy-bear sweaters so the homeboys could steal them easier."

She laughs. "Very illegal activity," she says.

"It's sort of unfortunate in a way that I can't be as punk as I wish I could, but unfortunately, I've only stolen from, like, the Salvation

Army," she says. "I have friends who've stolen from Chanel. But the way I was raised was not to hurt other people's belongings.

"Tag switching"—she giggles—"is very easy. I do a lot of that still. At the Salvation Army you can just take off the staple and restaple another tag. It's basically stealing. But I give so much back to Salvation Army," she adds conscientiously.

It wasn't Salvation Army duds that Sevigny wore to the Oscars last year, however. "I had made a very conscious decision that I was going to look like a star," she says. She was in YSL, a black V-neck silk dress, with her hair done up like Marilyn Monroe's.

"I knew that I had to choose my clothes carefully," she says, "and work the image out myself, because at the Oscars and all the other events"—she was also nominated for a SAG Award and a Golden Globe—"is where all the pictures would be taken. So I decided to dress very movie-star. Which is how I never look in my personal life."

It's time for her to go. She's whispering in a baby voice to someone on her cell phone, "Just come over for a minute...."

We leave the bar. She walks off alone, pulling her scarf around her head and looking very much like an Amish refugee from the Edwardian era. ■

WHO'S THAT GIRL? (continued from page 190)

almost wore that dress tonight!" she exclaims. There's no time to tell her how glad I am that she didn't before a tall blonde interrupts. "That's one of Marc's, isn't it?" she whispers. Yes, yes it is! Never in her short social career has Rose felt more accepted, more part of things. She is in fashion heaven as she hits the dance floor, where everyone's losing it to Joan Jett's "I Love Rock 'n' Roll."

DAY SIX: The Private Party

Buoyed by her triumphs, Rose makes her first foray into the world of film. This party, given by Martin Scorsese to celebrate the Oscar nominations of scriptwriter Kenneth Lonergan and actress Laura Linney, is being held at the Central Park West apartment of international public-relations guru Peter Brown. It becomes clear that if Rose's initial successes had seemed too easy, it's because they were. This time, I realize, as I walk into the room—dressed leading-lady low-key in a floaty silk Club Monaco skirt, black Tuleh blouse, and high, pink-and-black Marc Jacobs pumps—fashion won't be enough. Everyone else is wearing a suit. And I stand six inches taller than the rest of the crowd—contravening strict Hollywood height regulations. But what truly makes it impossible to talk shop with Dominick Dunne and the other Hollywood heavyweights is my lack of insider knowledge. "I don't think I've seen you since *Titanic*," says one tanned man to another. "Miramax is looking at my treatment," says someone else.

I corner the mother of the boyfriend of the producer and try to impress her with Rose's gilded, imaginary life. "My husband and I have an apartment just like this one on London's Park Lane," lies Rose (fake name, fake life, why not fake marriage?). She is interrupted by a young producer. "Hi!" he says to her warmly. "How are *you*?"

"Hello, I'm Rose Churchill."

"Rose! It's so good to see you again!" he says.

I am startled by the Californian practice of greeting a stranger as if she were a long-lost friend, and an excruciating silence follows. It is the final straw: Rose makes her excuses and leaves—