

JAY LEVINE
IN 1990 WITH A
KARL LAGERFELD
HIGHLIGHT

JEANNE BEKER
CHATS UP ANDRÉ
LEON TALLEY,
AND (BELOW)
CINDY CRAWFORD
AND CLAUDIA
SCHIFFER



FASHION TELEVISION *turns* 25



It's hard to believe *Fashion Television* started as a celluloid experiment. Created by Canadian Jay Levine and hosted by mime-turned-music-reporter Jeanne Beker, the show first aired on April 21, 1985 as a one-hour TV special. Some called it vacant, some hailed it as brilliant, yet enough viewers became so addicted with its fashion-as-entertainment concept that the series went weekly a year later. From *FT*'s first designer interview with Bob Mackie to its demystifying mandate, "We examined everything," says Levine. "How did [labels] decide who sat in the front row during collections? How do you choose the models? All the little aspects of the business became interesting because there was a huge curiosity about this industry that was sexy and glamorous—it kind of had it all."

The program did what few broadcasts could—share fashion's opulent cast of characters with the world. "I became a tour guide to so many scenes and personalities," says Beker. "Designers developed their TV personas with us. Oscar de la Renta was very smooth, Michael Kors was chatty, Marc Jacobs had a natural unpretentious air—even from the early days of his career when he was a kid with his hair down to his elbows. Karl Lagerfeld has been great, depending on who's asking the

questions. He can be the most generous soul in the world, but doesn't suffer fools gladly."

Still representing reality television at its chicest—a classic time of docu-TV before the Hiltons and Snookies of the world dressed-down the networks—*FT* remains an anomaly. And an obsession (the program's theme song) for the 2.1-million viewers who are fascinated with the cool models, dramatic designers and stressed-out hair-stylists profiled week after week. Twenty-five years off, on and behind the runway, *FT*'s greatest strength—aside from Beker's tenacity—is that the show was founded and created by a cast and crew of Canadians who lived the phrase "support your own." Because of this, Canada's own fashion industry has broken into the global marketplace. Think about it: Where would Dsquared², Linda Evangelista and *FLARE* be today without *FT*? —*Elio Iannacci*

PHOTOGRAPHY: COURTESY OF FASHION TELEVISION; IAN ENGLER (MICROPHONE)