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LISTENING TO A SONG BY COURTNEY LOVE IS LIKE surrendering to abduction. Raucous guitar chords confront eardrums head-on. Lyrics lined with rage and sorrow expose a thundering emotional state. Yet Love's voice—which shrieks, croons and growls at whim—sparks curiosity. Offstage, the 49-year-old has a similar way of seizing attention. The San Francisco-born rocker/actress is just as hypnotic in conversation as she is singing hits like "Miss World," "Doll Parts" and "Celebrity Skin" (recorded with her former band, Hole). Anyone who meets Love can testify that her ability to captivate is instant and does not fade when the footlights are turned off. As soon as she arrives at Canoe Studios in Manhattan, the New York locale chosen for *FASHION*'s Winter cover shoot, a bounty of 24-karat-gold observations starts flying out of her mouth. By the time she chooses a lip colour, she has an intrigued crew buzzing around her like bees at a hive. Openly sharing her thoughts on actress Lindsay Lohan's last film, *The Canyons* ("That poor girl—I couldn't even watch it. I'm glad I didn't fuck up as badly"), and her past obsession with Etsy.com ("I had to stop—my daughter complained that the house was getting crowded with Edwardian puppets and taxidermy!"), Love touches on political headlines, gossip and her soon-to-be-released autobiography and album. She also hints at scheduled meetings with HBO to discuss a prospective acting job on an undisclosed series. The hope is that a TV role may reignite the kind of critical acclaim she received for her Golden Globe-nominated performance in *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. Things briefly get quiet on set when Love spots a grey Givenchy dress.

She is so smitten by the cut of the garment that she proceeds to give an in-depth review of the label's Fall 2013 show (the analysis matches her fashion musings as a regular contributor to Style.com). After her face is made up, Love excitedly slips into the outfit and insists on getting a photo snapped so she can text it to her friend Ricky (that would be Riccardo Tisci, Givenchy's creative director).

Fashion has been a constant throughout Love's life. Well before she launched her own line, Never The Bride, she learned the ins and outs of fabrics at an early age, when she got a job in Hollywood at Paramount's wardrobe department in 1984. It was there that she started collecting vintage clothing and understanding the difference between genuine aesthetes and trend worshippers. "If I get a weak stylist," she says, "I will run them over with a train." Her own influential looks—many of which are throwbacks to punk, Seattle garage bands and Victoriana vintage—have made her a muse for many labels, including inaugural grunge collections from Anna Sui and Marc Jacobs (for Perry Ellis) in 1992. That was the same year Love married her late husband, Nirvana frontman Kurt Cobain, in a lace dress once worn by Frances Farmer. Countless Courtney-esque references have since infiltrated the catwalk, but nothing as dramatic as Saint Laurent's current fall collection, which was so motivated by Love that she was cast as a campaign model.

"I understand the rules and principles of costume," she says while trying on a Gucci dress, noting that seeing waif-thin models at fashion shows has not changed her own self-image. »

LOVE

ROCK MONARCH COURTNEY LOVE OPENS UP ON SCANDAL, SURVIVAL AND SECOND CHANCES. *By* ELIO IANNACCI
Photographed by CHRIS NICHOLLS *Styled by* ZEINA ESMAIL

"I don't have body dysmorphia. I don't ever look at my body and think I'm gross. In fact, when I gained weight and was up to 192 pounds, I thought I was hot."

As the day progresses, Love remains as quick-witted as she appears on talk shows, serving up heaps of one-liners to break the monotony of each photo set-up. "Nobody ask me about aging gracefully, *pleeease*," she implores while lighting a cigarette and getting her hair brushed. "C'mon, I took advice from Goldie Hawn when she said I should get a facelift at 35!" When she changes into a tomato-coloured blouse and pant combo by Mulberry, she nods in approval. "I read this fascinating essay on colours in this amazing media literacy book," she says. "Apparently this type of red is so strong, advertisers use it all the time because of its subliminal power. People won't be able to take their eyes off the page. I love it."

Away from an audience, Love is just as generous with anecdotes. In fact, it is hard to think of her as the messy persona characterized—and often crucified—in the media during her days of heavy drug use in the '90s and early 2000s (Love has

Love had to deal with Hole's bassist, Kristen Pfaff, dying of a drug overdose, and Cobain—Love's husband and the father of her now 21-year-old daughter, Frances Bean—committing suicide. It was a hectic, tragic period, and Love says she did not have the chance to mourn properly. Instead of allowing her a proper bereavement period, the record company rented a bus and sent her on tour. "Rock 'n' roll is brutal," she says. "When you have a record [Hole released their *Live Through This* disc a few days after Cobain's death], you have no choice.

"There's a reason people seek renown, and it generally comes down to mothering. Not everybody has the kind of wound that I have," she says, hinting that her own mother—who wrote a tell-all book about her daughter in 2006—and father, who once implied Love may have been involved in Cobain's death, were not the most doting parents.

"I do think fame is like a mother to me," she considers. "Whether people want to accept it or not, having that wound makes for good art and good fashion."

At recent gigs, a royal trumpet fanfare opened her show. It

« Fame is like a mother to me. Having a wound makes for good art. »

reportedly been sober since 2004). "Listen, if [*Orange Is the New Black* star] Natasha Lyonne can burn down a house and Robert [Downey Jr.] can go to prison for two years, I deserve a second chance. I know there is hope for me." Perhaps it was this level of candour that prompted Harper Collins to sign Love to pen her "definitive memoir."

"There's hardly any kissy-telly," she reveals after the shoot, stretching out on a couch in her rented brownstone in Greenwich Village. "I am so not giving out my list of men like her," she says, grabbing a copy of Gloria Vanderbilt's *It Seemed Important at the Time*—one of hundreds of books piled around the house. Hollywood executives are already trying to ply Love's "people" into booking meetings to bid on the book's movie rights. Love, however, says she's dodging calls.

"No, no, no," she says. "There will be no biopic on me. I will never sell my publishing. I won't let that happen. I still get hit on by guys because they want to be cast in that Kurt Cobain biopic that's been in production for years. I could give you some [actors'] names that would blow your mind, but I am so not sleeping with someone under 38."

It is understandable why the Harvey Weinsteins of the world are eager to see Love's life on the silver screen. Her North American tour last summer—which featured a slew of sold-out dates—explains some of the attraction. During her Toronto stop, Love introduced a punked-out cover of Buffy Sainte-Marie's "Cod'ine" by saying, "I've earned the right to sing the blues," and it's impossible to disagree with her. She married the love of her life at 27 and, around the same time, signed a multi-album record deal for Hole. Within two years,

was like a tongue-in-cheek take on the Queen's jubilee, but Love is one of few living (and working) rock monarchs around. When asked why other women have not succeeded in achieving her level of rock sovereignty, Love gets rattled.

"I tell female artists all the time, 'You want this crown? Stand up and get it!'" she says. "It brings in a lot of glory and it's controversial, but it's not as rewarding as Madonna's job—dance music—which has lots more sales. Look, everybody wants to have a rock moment, but living a rock moment all the time is hard for anybody, including me."

After stating this, Love plays "Wedding Day" on her stereo; it's a track slated to be released on her new album. She explains that the cut, which features her signature smoky gasps and howls, was fuelled by a romantic relationship that went off the rails. "I was really mad when I wrote that," she says. "I got dumped, and [the lyric] 'Break my neck on my wedding day' just came out of me. I wondered about getting married. I've been asked twice before and said no. I just haven't made that Jackie O move yet."

Love also says she isn't going to be giving marital guidance to her daughter, with whom she's been reunited after four years of estrangement. "She's engaged, and I'm very glad. I was only married for three years, [so] I'm not in any position to give her advice—she's got her shit together on that front. Where she doesn't have her shit together is her dad. That's her issue. I can certainly give you advice on how to make a guy chase you around the block, but I'm not part of some harem with four über-wealthy successful marriages and six kids. That's just not my deal. But I can give her fashion advice!" □



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