

“NEVER-EVER BORING”

IT WAS LIKE TRYING TO CORRAL CATS, GETTING *VICTORIA BECKHAM* AND *MARC JACOBS* INTO THE SAME ROOM. BECKHAM STARRED IN ONE OF MARC'S BEST AD CAMPAIGNS, MOST MEMORABLY AS A PERFECT PAIR OF LEGS STICKING OUT OF A SHOPPING BAG AND A GIFT BOX. SHE IS THE CREATIVE DIRECTOR OF THE DVB BRAND WHICH SELLS, JUST AS MARC DOES, SUNGLASSES, DENIM AND FRAGRANCES. AND THIS SPRING, BECKHAM DEBUTS HER NEW DRESS LINE—AT THE STORE THEY SHARE, BERGDORF GOODMAN. SO IT DIDN'T REALLY MATTER MUCH THAT WE WERE ON 58TH STREET, JACOBS IN HIS PARIS DESIGN STUDIO, AND BECKHAM AT HOME IN HER ESTATE IN HERTFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND.



VICTORIA BECKHAM



MARC JACOBS

Marc's show. And I was just blown away, I was so impressed. I have so much respect for what he does. And for me, to get to know him as a friend has been really, really great. Then we met again in Paris, didn't we, Marc?

MJ: Yes, we did, when I asked you to be the star of our campaign. [laughs]

BG: How did that happen? Those were great pictures.

MJ: Well, Victoria was at that show, as just described, and I had this idea, like literally the next morning, and I called Juergen [Teller, who shoots Jacobs' Marc Jacobs-line campaigns], and I said, "I don't know if she'd do it, but I'd really love it if Victoria Beckham would be in our campaign." Then I got the word to Victoria, and then I met her at her suite at the Ritz and we discussed it and we were both up for it for our different reasons. We had a long talk about it. She said, "This isn't what's expected of me, so I'd love to do it." For both of us, it was so unlikely, but it should be likely, because neither one of us is really tied to what people's perception is; we're both open to doing things and have a natural curiosity. The passion and the curiosity and the perseverance is what I admire so much about Victoria.

BG: Did you already have the idea of a woman's legs sticking out of a bag or a box?

MJ: Victoria and I spoke a little bit about ideas, and then I spoke also to Juergen. I said, "This woman has invented herself and I think it's very important to have humor in this, and we want her as Victoria Beckham—but in Marc Jacobs through the lens of Juergen Teller." So everybody's elements were really all there. It was really a collaboration.

BG: Victoria, wasn't it a game-changer for

BG: How did you two get to know each other?

VB: Well, I don't know him that well, but I have seen him naked. We were both in *Harper's* [*Bazaar's* January 2009 issue] together, actually.

MJ: No! They've done this horrible thing, Victoria. They've airbrushed me, so I look like a Ken Doll. It's very strange. The first thing Lorenzo [Martone, Jacobs' boyfriend] said was, "Baby, you look a little bit scary."

VB: Well, I didn't notice that!

MJ: I'm glad you didn't look that close.

VB: But they're great pictures. I first got to know Marc about three years ago. I went to

you? You have a—forgive us—kind of chilly image, and there you were, going along with the joke, laughing *with* it.

VB: Yeah. I mean, I have loved fashion ever since I was a kid. But I am very aware that people have preconceptions because of my past, coming from the Spice Girls. I have worked hard over the last ten years to try to beat those doors down, as hard as I can, and still having respect obviously, for where I come from. When someone like Marc Jacobs, who is so influential, gives you the stamp of approval—that was a big deal for me. I love the fact that I don't take myself too seriously. I am never afraid to push a different kind of look. I don't think things always have to be airbrushed to look beautiful. I am prepared to take a bit of risk. That's what fashion is about. I have lots of different images that I play around with. So it was such a compliment for me to be asked to be in the campaign. I was so excited. It really was probably one of the highlights of my career. And you're right. A lot of people did pick up and pay attention to me after that.

BG: And oddly enough, in several of the pictures, all we can see is your legs.

MJ: We were looking at the pictures, and wondering how to introduce the campaign. It was so anticipated, there were so many blogs and gossips and blurbs everywhere about, "Victoria Beckham, the new Marc Jacobs..." So we thought, "Right, let's just keep them waiting a little longer. Let's have the first picture be just the legs, and then more will be revealed."

But I think what Victoria said is most valid. Fashion is about risks, and I think that both of us work very, very hard, not as rebels, but as people who challenge and who take chances and are willing to push the envelope and who refuse to be categorized by what other people think. That's one of the main attractions of Victoria. I saw that before we knew each other.

BG: So obviously, she didn't disappoint you, Marc.

MJ: Not at all. As far as from disappointed as you could get. I was so delighted, and the reaction was so good. Then, we became friends. I value my friendships, and I am a very loyal friend. I'm so proud of Victoria. She puts her

mind to something, and whatever she does, whether you like it or you don't, she does it well. So many people talk and don't do it. So many celebrities say they're doing a collection, and they've never even been there. They have no idea about fabrics, they have no idea about cuts, they have no idea about construction. What's really evident in the work that Victoria has produced is that she really wants to do this, not have somebody else do it and put her name on it.

BG: Victoria, you've said a number of times, "I get very excited by rivets and buttons." How did you actually come to care about the details?

VB: I've always cared. I've always paid attention to those kind of details.

BG: Victoria, you considered yourself a loner and a loser when you were a little girl, didn't you?

VB: Mmm-hmm.

BG: ...And you grew up to be a world-class beauty.

VB: Yeah. I've always had to work very hard at everything.

BG: Are you an overachiever?

VB: I wouldn't say I'm an overachiever. I'm a perfectionist. People say to me, why do I do what I do? I don't need to do it. It's because I love it. Everything I do, I do one hundred ten percent or I don't bother doing it at all.

BG: What drove you to fashion?

VB: I really appreciate good clothes. I'm a very, very girly girl, so I've always loved clothes. I used to customize the school uniform when I was about five years old. I've worn lots of clothes by lots of different designers over the years, I just always had a passion for clothes and I've learned so much I can now use when I'm working on my collections. Things that, as a woman, are important. Attention to detail. Corsetry. Structure. Fabrics. The art of clothes.

BG: So, are the designers who are lucky enough to have you wear their clothes also teaching you about how they're made?

VB: I wouldn't say they're teaching me, but I'm learning! I've got big dreams and I want to do more and more. I want to keep creative control, so I don't want to grow the line so hugely that I can't do that. The other day, I was talking about it with Marc, saying, "I'm quite nervous about next season, because I did very well this season and people really liked it."

BG: Welcome to fashion, Victoria!

VB: But the truth is that you might not be to people's personal taste again, and that makes me quite nervous, and I want to make sure that I can please next season as well.

Marc said, "So long as it is the absolute best quality, so long as you love it, then that is all you can do." But I am very, very nervous about that, and I suppose I'll continue to be like that every season.

MJ: Well, that comes with the territory. Anybody who says they don't have that anxiety about the next season is lying.

BG: Marc, you've had your best collections drubbed by critics.

MJ: That's what I was saying to Victoria: I think opinion, or personal taste, is just that, personal. We're not responsible for other peoples' opinions. But what you are responsible for is contributing to the quality and beauty and integrity that's out there. Good quality is not a matter of opinion. Aesthetics are a matter of opinion. I can't control that. And you know what? I hope people always love or hate. I never want them to be indifferent.

BG: Victoria, do you think what you're doing—this new career—is risky for you?

VB: It's a risk, but it's also a passion. I never feel like I'm going to work. This is what I love to do. Like Marc said, you can love things or you can hate things, it's really boring when it's middle of the road. If one more person tells me that I'm polarizing [*laughs*], I'm going to shoot them. But it's true. I am. That's what I love. Never, ever boring.

BG: Do you ever feel competitive with each other?

VB: What Marc and I do is very, very different. There's room for lots of different people in their own area.

MJ: I'm really only competing with myself. My competition is my last collection. Knowing Victoria was, from the start, a collaboration, not a competition.

VB: It feels weird to me that I'm even having this discussion with Marc Jacobs! I have such a long way to go. I'm not a threat to anybody.

MJ: And as we know, women who love clothes

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MJ: FASHION IS ABOUT RISKS, AND I THINK THAT BOTH OF US WORK VERY, VERY HARD, NOT AS REBELS, BUT AS PEOPLE WHO CHALLENGE AND WHO TAKE CHANCES AND ARE WILLING TO PUSH THE ENVELOPE AND WHO REFUSE TO BE CATEGORIZED BY WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK.

will always, *always* love clothes. I don't know one single woman who *only* wears one thing or one designer. I would imagine (and Victoria, correct me if I'm wrong), part of the wonderful thing about being a woman and getting dressed is that you've got so many great choices from so many different people. That's the joy of fashion; you can reinvent yourself constantly through the imagination and the voices and the dresses of other people.

VB: I think it's good to keep other people—and keep yourself—on your toes, and play around with different images. I don't know anybody who wears just one designer.

BG: Victoria, you mentioned Marc's naked *Harper's Bazaar* pictures. You were both featured in that issue, and the story about you spoke of the "whiff of scandal" around you. You've been the queen of the tabloids and the paparazzi and the gossip columnists for years. Marc, at least in the last few years, you've been there, too. Any thought on what it's like to be there?

VB: It comes with the territory. I wouldn't say that it's particularly enjoyable being in that position, but I take it for what it is. For me, starting out in that way has enabled me to do what I love, which is why I will always be respectful of all of that attention. I think you have to embrace it and you have to turn it into a positive. You make it work for you.

MJ: Wanting attention is very human, and I think that anybody who says they don't want it or love it is lying. You can't control what people say about you, but the fact that people *are* talking about you is a good thing. You can take it apart and say how hurtful and how painful [it is], and how misinformation creates chaos and drama and insecurities. But the

reality is, you've got to be doing something right for people to be paying attention.

BG: That sort of attention came to you later in the game, though. You'd already been the new kid on the block before you hit the tabloids.

MJ: Well, it came to me when I became more of an extrovert, because I wasn't so insecure about my appearance. It really came from my physical transition, when I became a little bit more confident about how I looked, and I started going out more.

VB: The problem is, when you are well-known in the tabloids, and you're trying to break into a new industry, it makes it very difficult, because people get preconceptions—and so everybody thinks that I'm a miserable bitch who goes shopping every day. It's hard to change people's thinking, which is what I've set out to do.

MJ: But the product will always speak for itself. We didn't really ever talk about this, but I've learned over years of getting bad reviews that they hurt, because I've put so much work into it. But what matters is the customer, and the people who live for reviews and gossip and are on those blogs all the time, that's probably not your customer. The customer is the woman who wants a great dress. She's not concerned with what a critic thinks, or what a gossip column says about my boyfriend. I don't think my personal life has ever stopped a woman who wanted a coat of mine from buying it.

VB: I need the journalists and the retailers I'm meeting to not be influenced by what they have read. That's the tricky thing about being in my position. But the industry has been very kind to me, they have given me a chance.

BG: You've also been smart. You only showed eighteen dresses in your first season, you didn't overdo it the first time out. You showed them in a hotel suite, not in a runway show. That showed care and modesty.

VB: A lot of people were asking, had I done this myself? So I figured the best way to show them was for me to actually sit with people and explain the collection. And I wanted to do this in a humble way. I am just starting out. During Fashion Week, you've got the most influential designers in the world showing. I can't compete with those designers right now.

BG: Have you seen anyone other than a model in one of your dresses yet?

VB: I have actually. It's really exciting. I had an event at Bergdorf the other day, and when I saw them hanging there, it was just fantastic.

It's a dream come true. I didn't know where they were going to place me in the store, so to turn up and see my clothes next to YSL, and only three left on the rail, I mean, it was a *really* big thing.

MJ: It's the highest compliment you can get, when a woman goes to a store like Bergdorf Goodman and she chooses a dress that you've made. What more could you ask for? How can it get better than that?

BG: So you still get that thrill when you see somebody wearing your clothes on the street?

MJ: Yes. I love when I see pictures in magazines and I love the praise after the show. But the thing that means the most is when I'm sitting in a restaurant next to a woman I don't know, and she's wearing something I designed.

BG: Victoria, that's something to look forward to, isn't it?

VB: It really is. I'm so excited about the future. I've got so much to learn. I'm like a little sponge at the moment. I feel really charged and ready to go. I've waited a lifetime to do this.

The BG Conversations are conducted and edited by Michael Gross