



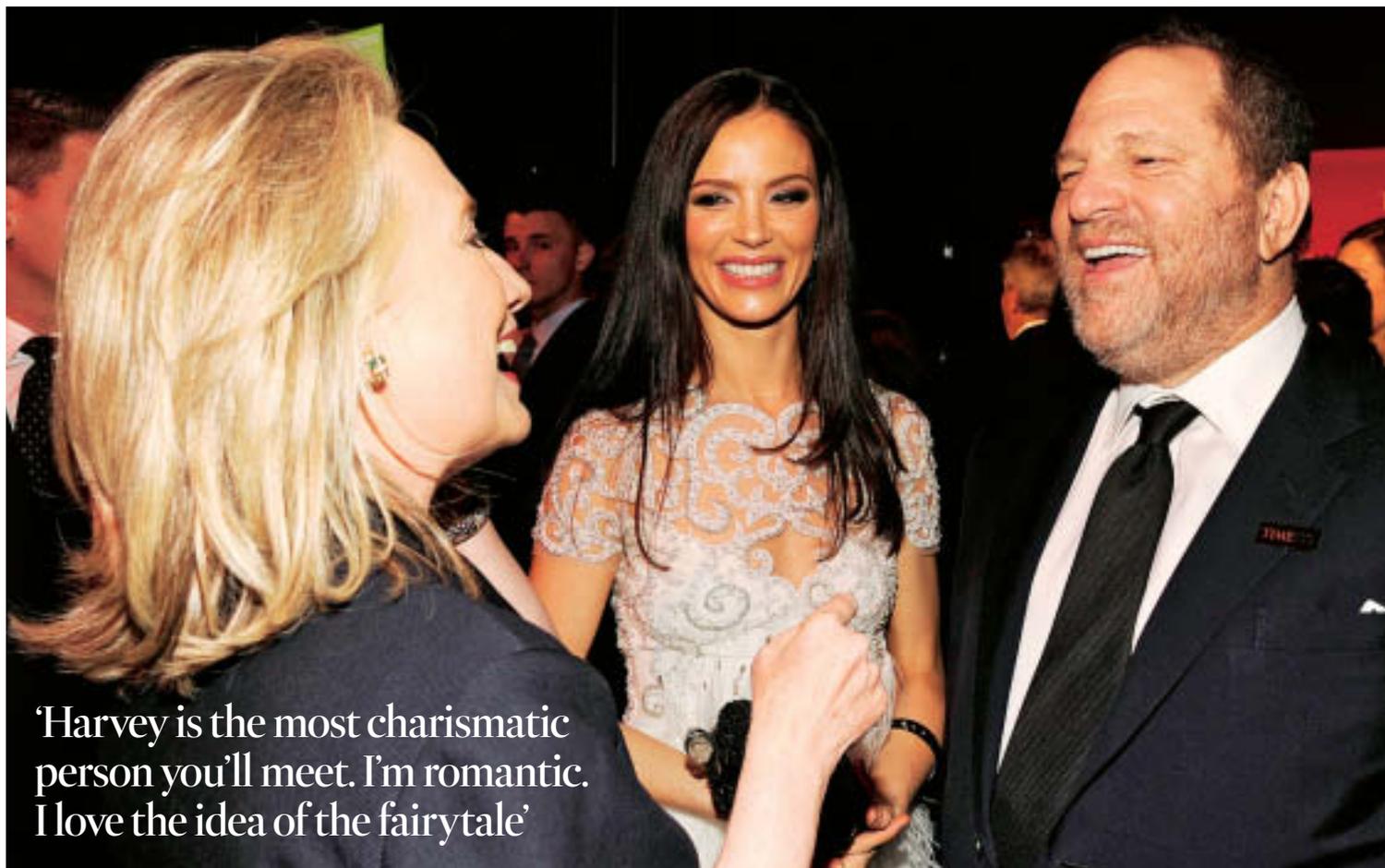
‘HAVE YOU SEEN THE
WAY HARVEY DRESSES?
I WOULD NOT LET HIM
NEAR MY BRAND’

She creates \$80,000 dresses for the A-list and she’s
married to Harvey Weinstein, Hollywood’s most
powerful man. Tim Teeman meets Georgina Chapman

PORTRAIT Pamela Hanson **STYLIST** Lauren Blane

Georgina Chapman
wears Marchesa gown
(marchesa.co.uk); ring,
Chanel Fine Jewellery
(020-7499 0005)

PREVIOUS SPREAD: HAIR: ANDREW FITZSIMONS AT ARTISTS BY TIMOTHY PIANO USING ORIBE. MAKE-UP: VICKY STECKEL AT BRYAN BANTRY AGENCY. MANICURE: JULIE KANDALEC AT BRYAN BANTRY AGENCY. WITH THANKS TO THE STANDARD, HIGHLINE, NYC



'Harvey is the most charismatic person you'll meet. I'm romantic. I love the idea of the fairytale'

She insists that her pregnancy jeans “are really quite comfortable”, but when we meet, ten weeks before her second baby is due, Georgina Chapman doesn't look even moderately close to embracing maternitywear. The co-founder of Marchesa – the couture label favoured by red carpet A-listers such as Anne Hathaway, Jennifer Lopez, Cameron Diaz and Renée Zellweger – is wearing dramatic Alaïa heels, a black leather Balenciaga skirt (“not too bad, it's got elastic in the back”) and a fitted white Givenchy shirt. Her make-up is flawless, her hair so glossy it came with its own light show.

“There are moments when you stare into the wardrobe and think, ‘Oh God, something that looked lovely four weeks ago won't work now.’ But I'm trying to make my old clothes work,” Chapman says, in her sing-songy posh accent, with the first of many fluting laughs.

We are in Chapman's showroom and headquarters in West Chelsea, Manhattan. Pinned to a mannequin in front of a “mood board” littered with pictures of old movie stars is the dress actress Amy Adams wore at this



From top: with Weinstein and Hillary Clinton; Anne Hathaway in Marchesa at the Oscars, 2008

year's Golden Globes: a blush-coloured, Chantilly lace and boned-tulle corset, with netted skirt. In the atelier beyond, Marchesa's 60 staff are in a busy blur of stitching and pressing (Chapman's own nails “are too beaten” to qualify for manicures). They are about to be busier: at the time of our interview, the Oscar dress commissions were unconfirmed, but safe to say there will be a few. Does she mind when the critics dig in their talons? “Let them say what they say. The important thing is the client and if she's happy.” You don't mind if your creations are trashed? “It's a hard thing... taste. You just move on and make another dress.” And when said dresses can sell for a cool \$80,000, who cares what a critic thinks?

Whereas there will be those (admittedly, non-fashion types) who will not have heard of Chapman, 36, there won't be many who haven't heard of her husband – movie mogul Harvey Weinstein, 60. They married six years ago, and have a two-year-old daughter together, India, as well as three grown stepdaughters from Weinstein's first marriage.

She and Weinstein couldn't seem more different: he bearish, brutal, thick-skinned; she young, petite, gentle. They met in 2004 and married in 2007. What first attracted her to

him? “He is probably the most charismatic person you’ll ever meet. He’s an extraordinary man and an extraordinary talent. He is my husband and I love him. I love being married. Everyone said, ‘You won’t feel any different,’ but I think you do. I’m romantic. Look at my clothes! I love the idea of the fairytale.”

But he has such a ruthless reputation? “You should see him with our daughters. He’s just putty in their hands.” Does he get couture? “He goes to Dior shows. He gets costume because he has beautiful costumes in his films. He’s incredibly interested in everything, but does he have anything to do with this brand? Absolutely not.” Chapman guffaws. “Have you seen the way he dresses? I would not let him near this brand, no. When it comes to fashion, it’s a separate world: think Church and State.”

Has he got smarter since she met him?

“I like to think so. I order him suits from Richard James and great jackets from Belstaff and Zegna. My whole world is about fashion and aesthetics and it’s actually quite nice to be with somebody who isn’t about that at all and doesn’t particularly get what I do, but appreciates and loves it because I love it.”

They have homes in the West Village, a weekend residence in Connecticut, and Chapman kept her first flat in Brook Green, London, “for sentimental reasons.”

In Connecticut, they cook and walk their dogs. Is it an extravagant lifestyle? “I don’t dislike luxury,” Chapman laughs. “I like beautiful craftsmanship.” She “loves” Frette sheets, candles, baths and, when not pregnant, “a good Tuscan red on a Friday night.”

Although Chapman insists that her children and family come first (indeed, she threatens to pull out of this interview unless we can fit around them), she is equally devoted to her work. “India was born seven days before a show. I had her on the Monday and was back at work on Thursday. I was delirious; it was very intense, but you just get on with it.” India was ferried about “under a blanket so I could nurse her” to fittings, and now “comes into the office almost every day. I’m incredibly lucky; I have support [including her mother, who moved to the US to help], but for women who work for someone else it must be difficult.”

Chapman was bought up in upper-middle class comfort in Richmond, Surrey, the daughter of a millionaire businessman father and journalist mother. She made clothes from a young age and in moments of teenage angst she took herself off to Richmond Park to paint. She applied to art college to study painting and sculpture, but “knew I’d end up doing fashion” and switched courses. “It was the time of Galliano, McQueen. As a kid I went to Kings Road, seeing punk rockers, and I loved the visual aspect of it. Then I became obsessed by Lacroix and Byzantine jewellery. I started stitching feathers on white shirts. Awful.”

GETTY IMAGES; PRESS ASSOCIATION



From left: Jennifer Lopez in Marchesa at the Golden Globes, 2007; Eva Longoria at Cannes, 2012



And like many a middle-class kid, she went to India on her gap year, only its effect was more long-lasting. “My great-grandmother and grandmother were born there. Their photo albums began my obsession with fashion: they’re in corsets, long skirts. My own visits left a mark on me.” Not only did she and Weinstein name their first daughter after the country, they also fund the Rose Home Shelter for Girls in New Delhi. “It houses 50 homeless girls, from babies to 18-year-olds. We get them into education.” Now they want to help the young women find work. “I’ve been very lucky in my life. I had an amazing, wealthy upbringing and now this incredible brand. A lot of people don’t. I think if you can afford it you have a responsibility to do something for others.”

Chapman and Karen Craig, whom she met at art college, co-founded Marchesa in 2004, encouraged first by Isabella Blow. “We were at a party. I had bought a sari from Southall and created a backless corset. She loved the dress, asked to wear it and said, ‘You

should be doing couture.’ Without her encouragement, I’m not sure we would have had the courage to do it.” The label is named after another inspiration, the Marchesa Luisa Casati, an eccentric 20th-century Italian heiress, for “her fearless approach to fashion, being a living work of art. Like Isabella, she was a rare bird. I love women who embrace fashion, their bodies, unafraid.”

Chapman would like to keep Marchesa an independently owned company, but doesn’t have “a problem” with the idea of a conglomerate swooping. “At the moment I have the best job,” she says. “I get to dream all day and design gorgeous dresses.”

Next month, three weeks before she is due to give birth in early April, she is directing her first film, a 12-minute “fairytale”. “How am I going to get in and out of the director’s chair?” It’s set in New York and written by Neil Gaiman, author of the graphic novel series *Sandman*. “I’m definitely going to seek out Harvey’s advice. It would be foolish not to.” Another fluting laugh. “I’m hoping if he ever designed a dress he might ask for my advice.” ■

In the autumn, Marchesa launches a ready-to-wear line of separates, from \$200 to \$3,000