

A full-page photograph of Lily Aldridge. She is lying on a dark brown, tufted velvet sofa. She is wearing a dark green denim jacket over a white lace bra and matching shorts. Her legs are crossed, and she is wearing red, pointed-toe boots with intricate gold embroidery. She has long, wavy brown hair and is looking directly at the camera. Her right arm is raised, resting on her head, and she is wearing a silver watch. The background is a wall of dark brown tiles with a repeating pattern of yellow and green floral designs. To the left, a portion of a wooden cabinet and a window with orange curtains is visible.

'If I didn't feel  
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to make a living'

Model, mother, rock-star wife  
— Lily Aldridge talks to Tim Teeman

PHOTOGRAPHS Danielle Levitt STYLING Jane Taylor-Hayhurst



Opening spread: **jacket, £148**, Velvet (020-7580 8644); **bra top, £1,343**, and **pants, £459**, both Rochas (matchesfashion.com); **boots, £645**, Rupert Sanderson (rupertsanderson.com); **bracelet, £330**, Chanel (020-7493 5040)

Opposite: **tank top, £58**, Velvet; **body (worn underneath)**, Antonio Berardi at Harrods (020-7729 1234); **skirt, £625**, Victoria Beckham (selfridges.com); **hair slide, £75**, Hillier (giftlab.com)

This page: **dress, £148**, Velvet; **pearl belt, £1,040**, Chanel

The Lily Aldridge for Velvet collection will be available to buy from mid-March. For stockist details, call 020-7580 8644 or go to velvet-tees.com

**Hair** Adrian Clark  
**Make-up** Cyndle Komarovski  
**Model** Lily Aldridge at IMG

**W**hen model Lily Aldridge was a teenager, she found a copy of *Playboy* in her artist father Alan's studio. "I thought, 'Oh my God, my dad's reading *Playboy*, it's like he's having a crazy affair,'" she says in the hushed bar of a New York hotel. "I ran upstairs to tell my mother and she was like, 'Well, there's something you should know...'" Aldridge's mother, Laura Lyons, revealed she was a former *Playboy* Bunny and Playmate. "I was pretty shocked and amazed, but I thought it was cool. She was a 'jet bunny', too [a flight attendant on Hugh Hefner's private plane]. I have the little outfit she wore: a leather Sixties Mod-style long-sleeve dress with a silver bunny sewn onto it."

Like mother, like daughter. Just as in the Sixties and Seventies, when her mother was the stuff of male fantasy, so today Aldridge, 27, is a Victoria's Secret Angel, striding the catwalk in her bra and knickers.

Her English father designed book covers for Penguin and album artwork for the Beatles and Elton John, and the Aldridges were "really good friends" with musicians such as Roger Daltrey. "I was raised on the Beatles and went to a Who concert when I was 5."

Modelling and fashion is the family business. Aldridge's half-brother Miles is a fashion photographer, married to model Kristen McMenamy; half-sister Saffron is a model; and her sister Ruby modelled for Marc Jacobs. Lily grew up mostly in Santa Monica and "a little bit" in England, where she formed an attachment to PG Tips.

Along with Miranda Kerr, Aldridge is one of the most papped of the Victoria's Secret Angels, the top models who parade down catwalks in Victoria's Secret lingerie and outrageous angel wings. The annual *Victoria's Secret Fashion Show* TV spectacular pulls in an audience of more than ten million viewers: a fleshy, feminism-never-happened procession of young women in their undies.

Victoria's Secret's 2012 sales were \$6.12 billion (£3.9 billion); it has more than 1,000 stores in the US and opened its first British ones last year.

"I love Victoria's Secret," Aldridge says, insisting she is not playing the corporate parrot. "I used to go to the mall as a teenager and buy it. I'm wearing it right now." She smiles vaguely naughtily. I – a fixed, full-time homosexual – smile back and say, "Jolly good."

"Underwear modelling has changed,"



**Left: with husband Caleb Followill, May 2011. Below: in last year's Victoria's Secret Fashion Show**

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she claims. "All the Angels have to have some other quality apart from their looks – personality, generosity – that sets them apart." What does she think of men ogling her? "I don't know. I try not to think about it. When I'm posing I'm doing it for other women, thinking how much I loved looking at [similar] pictures as a little girl. Men are looking at me, too, I know that, and if I didn't have men fans I wouldn't have women fans." How does she feel about being seen by some as a sex object? She looks askance. "It's tricky. I don't see myself as that and it's weird to think of it that way."

Aldridge is keen to build her own brand. She has just designed a collection for Velvet, one of the first labels she modelled for. "It felt a no-brainer; it's my style."

Last year she gave birth to her daughter, Dixie. Her husband is Caleb Followill, lead singer of Kings of Leon. She met him at Coachella in 2007 and asked him for a shot of tequila: "I knew he had a crush on me." Their first date was at Nobu in London. "From then on, we were inseparable."



Despite their professions, she claims: "We're super-low-key and very family-orientated." There's no rock-star wildness, beyond "liking a glass of wine".

Aldridge started modelling at 17. "I was pretty waify as a kid and was told by my agents to gain weight. I ate five pizzas a day."

When Aldridge started out, the model Carolyn Murphy warned her about girls who partied too much.

"She said, 'Treat this job like a business. Girls get caught up in it, but it's just a job.' It was very good advice. I never did drugs: that was not my thing, thank God."

She appeared on the cover of Spanish *Vogue* at 17, but "being a Victoria's Secrets Angel is like a dream. It's an amazing piece of American popular culture that all girls grow up with. You saw these models doing their fashion show on TV and you didn't have to say their last names. Giselle, Tyra, Heidi: everybody knew who they were."

She got her figure back after the birth of her daughter within months. "It was really hard, but my body looked amazing." She trained with Mary Helen Bowers, who coached Natalie Portman for her lead in ballet drama *Black Swan*.

"I'm not self-conscious," she says. "If I didn't feel confident, I wouldn't be dressing in underwear to make a living," she says.

She is, she insists, "really low-maintenance. I love getting all sexy and dolled up, hot and awesome, but life isn't how it seems on a billboard. It's great that guys think I'm hot."

"But I'm a woman's woman. I loved how on *Downton Abbey*, the youngest daughter [dear departed Lady Sybil] fought for women's rights. I teared up watching that. I have rights now because of these women. I have the right to vote because of these feminists. I have the freedom now to be a Victoria's Secret Angel because of them."

I'm not sure the suffragettes were marching for that kind of freedom.

She finds elements of fame unsettling, such as in an airport recently, when someone took her picture on their phone. "Twenty minutes later, a picture appears on Twitter of me eating a sandwich. I love being recognised, and I wanted to say to the person, you should have just come over and said hello."

And Aldridge really doesn't mind if lusty men are among them? She gives me a "like duh" look. "Obviously, they're going to look at pictures of girls in their underwear and think they're hot." Then she grins. "And they *are* hot." ■