

It's 7am on a clear autumn day and a large group of designers is gathering at Sydney Opera House, patiently waiting to have their portrait taken by photographer Justin Smith. To onlookers, the outfits on show might seem somewhat peculiar for such an early hour, but today's dress code is black tie, in keeping with our eveningwear shoot on page 138.

The scene unfolding is stirring: an assorted blend of design veterans and up-and-comers, all here together to celebrate Australian style. Everyone has dressed up, and all have their own, distinctive aesthetic.

Kit Willow-Podgornik is running late, but comes flying in at the last minute wearing a twisted silk-tulle dress in a sunny shade of hay. Fashion-forward cobbler Terry Biviano is around the corner being fitted into her body-con J'Aton Couture dress by the Perth-based designers Jacob Luppino and Anthony Pittorino themselves. *Zzzzzzip!* The dress is on and fits her like a glove. The virtuoso Dion Lee is sitting calmly on the steps, looking dapper in a Givenchy shirt and Comme des Garçons pants.

Among the crowd, there are some instantly recognisable faces. Alex Perry is an imposing picture in black, finished, of course, with his signature sunglasses perched atop his head. Carla Zampatti embodies refined elegance in a black floor-length evening dress. Her daughter, Bianca Spender, who has successfully built a brand of her own that appeals to a younger generation, is dressed in an ethereal nude organza dress, finished with a bold splash of coral lipstick.

There are the quintessential Aussie labels. Zimmermann, a brand which has become synonymous with beach chic (what Aussie girl doesn't own at least one Zimmermann bikini?); Anna & Boy — the tale of two talented fashion editors turned swimwear designers; Easton Pearson, the crafty design duo whose artisanal approach has made a mark both here and overseas. The international success stories — Collette Dinnigan (who shows in Paris), sass & bide and Josh Goot (London), Willow (New York), and finally, the newcomers.

Interestingly, the new guard sticks together. Lee catches up with fellow NSW TAFE graduate Christopher Esber who, after taking a season off, is back in the game (and somehow, has made combat boots look like appropriate evening attire). It was only a year ago that Lee presented his spectacular S/S 10-11 collection in this very space; a defining moment in the young designer's career.

BAZAAR contributing fashion editor Mark Vassallo is busy directing the shoot. "It was overwhelming having so many designers in one space," he says after it has wrapped, "but I'm so glad we did it. It was a moment in Australian fashion history." A day to remember, that's for sure.

— Georgie McCourt



Who's who: for the list of designers pictured, turn to page 217. Photographed at Sydney Opera House, (02) 9250 7111; www.sydneypoperahouse.com.



YASMIN & GAIL

Two supermodels reflect on their enduring friendship as they prepare to reunite on a Sydney runway

YASMIN LE BON

"When I hear the words 'iconic supermodel' I cringe. It makes me feel so old. I've been in the industry now for such a long time and have made some great friendships. I'm trying to remember when I first met Gail. Oh god, do you know, it was so long ago — I'm pretty sure we met at the shows in Milan; Gail was the pro and the other girls said you didn't want to cross her, but I was new then and she kindly took me under her wing. She can be quite bossy, though. We always had such terrific fun at the shows — especially at Alaïa.

"Gail is such a great, loyal friend. I'm not good at keeping up with email — but I really am trying. Whenever we catch up, we just pick up where we left off. It feels very natural — like nothing's changed, even though a whole lot obviously has. I think that's the mark of a true friendship. And whenever Gail comes to London she's always taking me out to the coolest places, restaurants and stuff ...

"I met Gail long before I did my husband [Duran Duran's Simon Le Bon] and I've been married now for more than 25 years. Simon was the last person I thought I would marry. It's a funny old story — he saw my photo in a magazine and asked a photographer I had worked with for my details. The photographer naturally resisted handing out my number out so Simon went directly to my agency and asked my booker for it and my booker complied. I almost broke up with my booker right then and there — I mean, how unprofessional! I was really affronted. Simon's saving grace was running into [BAZAAR Italy cover girl] Joanne Russell that day at the agency. When my booker tried a different tack — 'Would it be alright if Joanne called you to vouch for Simon?' — I was taken aback: 'Oh, OK. Yes.' I was a bit star-struck by Joanne Russell; she was a big, successful model in those days. So Joanne rang me and convinced me to go to the movies with Simon, saying he was a really nice guy and all I had to do was spend 10 minutes with him ... and the rest is, well, history. I got married early and had children ... I really didn't have much ▶

Harper's BAZAAR

250

AUSTRALIA

Yasmin Le Bon with daughter Amber and Gail Elliott storming the runway for Chanel in 1991.





of a life. I was juggling kids and my job. Some of those girls now are just starting to have kids and they're saying, 'It's so hard' ... and I'm like, 'Now you see ...'

"Gail and I have been modelling for a long time but I think the fashion industry has evolved dramatically over the years. It is ever-changing and there's now a demand for strong, interesting women. [As part of the supermodel crew] we weren't really aware of our influence on pop culture ... Although we knew how to enjoy ourselves back then; Gail and I always got up to high jinks. We worked hard, of course, but there used to be more frivolity. There are some gorgeous young girls around at the moment ... but the modern woman also wants 'relatability' — I never thought I would be modelling for this long, and every time I get on the catwalk I question myself: 'Should I be doing this again?' But I do love it. The longevity of my career could be attributed to the fact that people are short-sighted!

"Gail started her fashion line independent of her modelling but I've been quite fortunate and managed to do other projects on the back of my modelling career ... Phil Green from [British fashion conglomerate] Arcadia approached me to do a range for [high-street brand] Wallis, and I really loved it. I worked on two collections for them. I went in there nearly every day — I was so busy and I got so much out of it. In fact, when my contract was up, my children were almost more disappointed than I was. They saw how much I enjoyed the whole creative process and how I really thrived.

As for the next project, well, I don't know ... I'm not superstitious but I don't like to jinx things. Do you know, I've travelled everywhere, all over, and yet this will be my first trip to Australia. I'll be walking for Gail at her Little Joe [Woman] show [at Rosemount Australian Fashion Week]. I'm so excited about seeing Gail in her element. I think it will be quite an emotional experience for me — seeing Gail all grown up, presenting her collection on her home turf. I'm coming out on my own and staying with Gail and Joe. And I'm looking forward to getting out and having some fun."

GAIL ELLIOTT

"Yasi and I were staying in the same hotel in Milan and she left a present for me at reception — it was a very expensive gift — a Jean Paul Gaultier scarf. I later went to thank her and we ended up chatting in her room for ages; that's how we met. She was always on time while I was forever running late to things and I would turn up and Yasi would be there waiting, her nose buried in some car magazine. She could recite all the facts about cars: the different brands; size of the engine; and how fast they went ...

"Work was a lot of fun in those days. The girls used to have so much personality, and there were about 25 of us: Yasi, Claudia [Schiffer], Carla Bruni, Naomi [Campbell], Cindy [Crawford], Helena

"I never thought I would be modelling for this long, and every time I get on the catwalk I question myself: 'Should I be doing this again?'" — Yasmin Le Bon

[Christensen], Christy [Turlington]... We had more input into how we looked during the shows, more than girls do now ... Often they would get Yasi and I to walk the runway together when they wanted a pair and we would always argue about our hair — mine is naturally curly and I always wanted it to look straight for the show — while Yasi, who had poker-straight tresses, would want to curl hers. I usually won the battle. Look at her hair, it's so beautiful — can you believe she just washes it and it looks like that?

"We all used to stay at the Ritz during the shows. And there was the Concord. Clients used to pay for us to fly the Concord ... the Concord! And we all used to buy each other luxurious gifts at Christmas time, from stores like Prada. I think, as models, we probably worked at the best possible time. There was so much money floating around back then; I mean, nowadays, models have to take the bus or train. Times have changed.

"Yasi is such a gorgeous friend and I'm still close to Cindy; we email at least twice a week and I stay with her whenever I'm in LA. Yasi isn't so good on the email or mobile phone. She struggles a little with technology. But when we catch up, it's just like old times. I'm not such a girlie girl — I don't do girlie lunches. My husband, Joe, and I have our friends and we do social things together ... that said, I really do love a long lunch with Yasi.

"I sort of fell into designing while modelling in New York. Joe and I were living near the Twin Towers and after 9/11 we moved to the Hamptons. I was wearing a lot of silk slips at the time and thought, 'There must be a better way to do this.' Vintage pieces often don't fit well or carry a funny odour, so I started designing my own range. And I was very lucky; I had a good network of people to draw on. [Buyer] Joan Burstein bought the collection for Browns and cult London boutique The Cross followed. We've also had the likes of Net-a-porter buy our range. I still feel like we have a lot to achieve; the brand is growing and we are aiming to get an even bigger presence overseas.

"My clothes aren't like Marc Jacobs's — we're not about being cutting-edge. Little Joe is timeless, stylish and there's an easy elegance to the label. I'm diversifying and launching a bridesmaid capsule collection soon; I suppose I was inspired by my own wedding. My beautiful bridesmaids, including Yasi, had different requirements: one was pregnant, another needed to wear a bra ... So I think I'll start off with six styles in a range of chic colours for brides to choose from.

"I'm really looking forward to fashion week; Yasi has been so good to come out all this way. It was quite opportune; Simon is on tour at the moment and her kids are doing their own thing. I'm thrilled to show her around Sydney and to be able to spend some time together on Hamilton Island. And yes, we're definitely going to have a fun time." ■

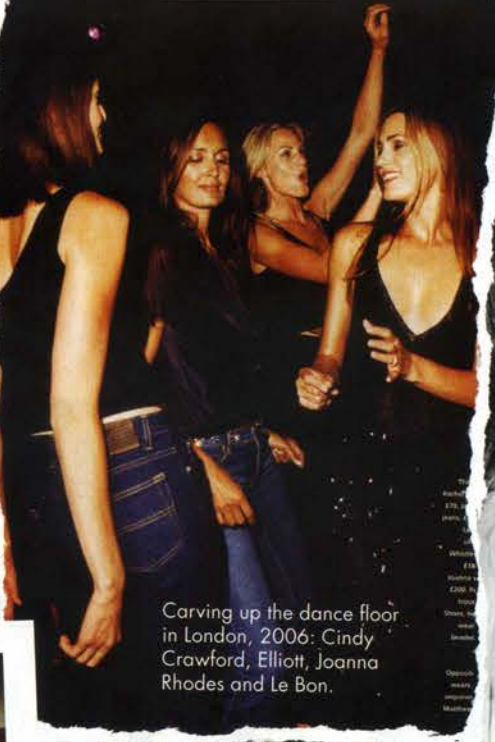
Gail Elliott's Little Joe Woman will show at Rosemount Australian Fashion Week, May 2-6, 2011, www.rafw.com.au.

Harper's BAZAAR

250 AUSTRALIA



A grown-up Amber Le Bon with mother Yasmin and Elliott at the Little Joe Woman launch at Covent Garden Hotel, London, 2006.



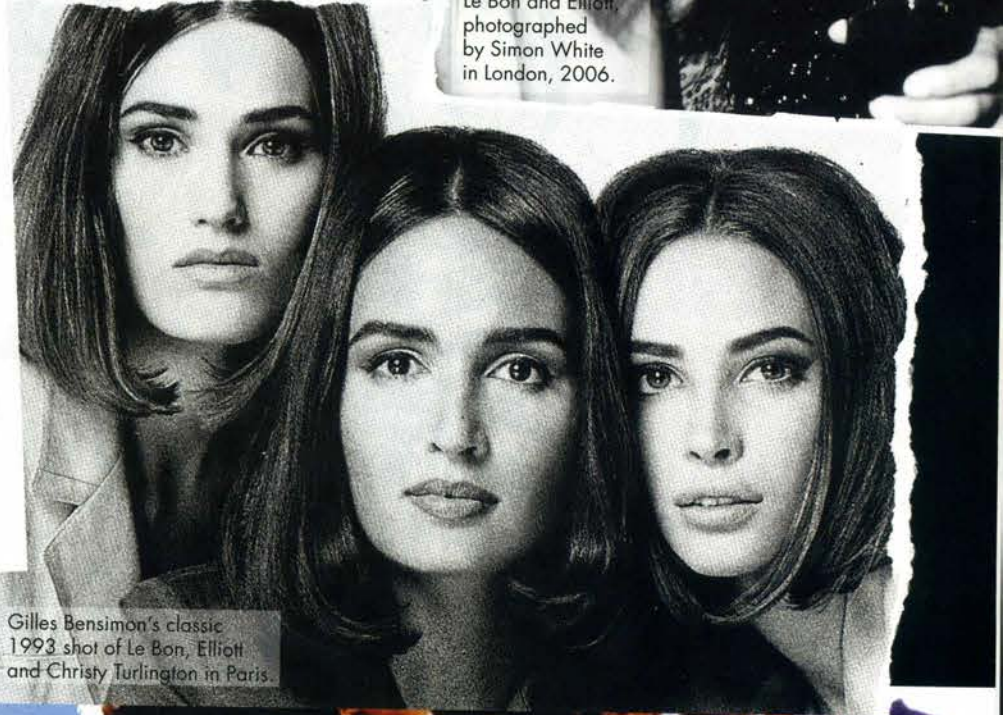
Carving up the dance floor in London, 2006: Cindy Crawford, Elliott, Joanna Rhodes and Le Bon.



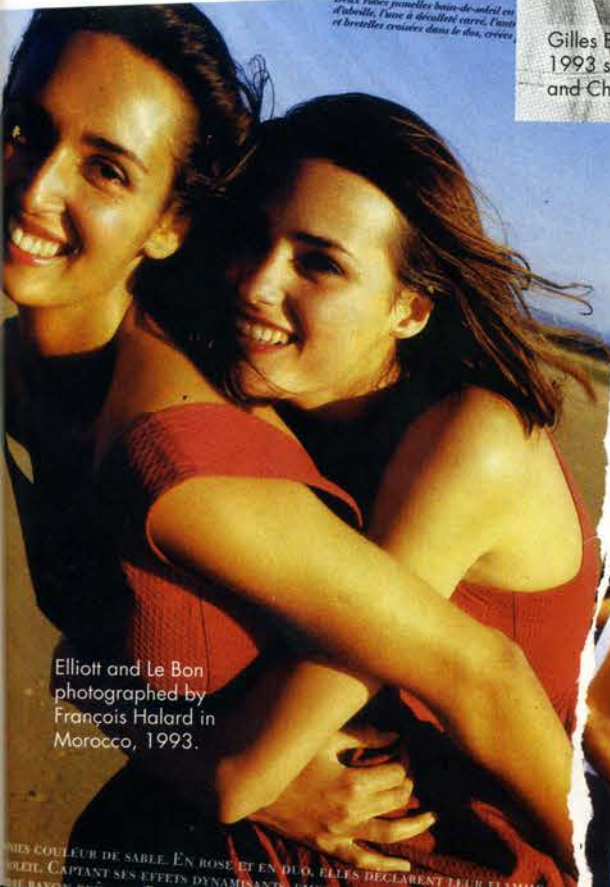
Best friends forever: Le Bon and Elliott, photographed by Simon White in London, 2006.



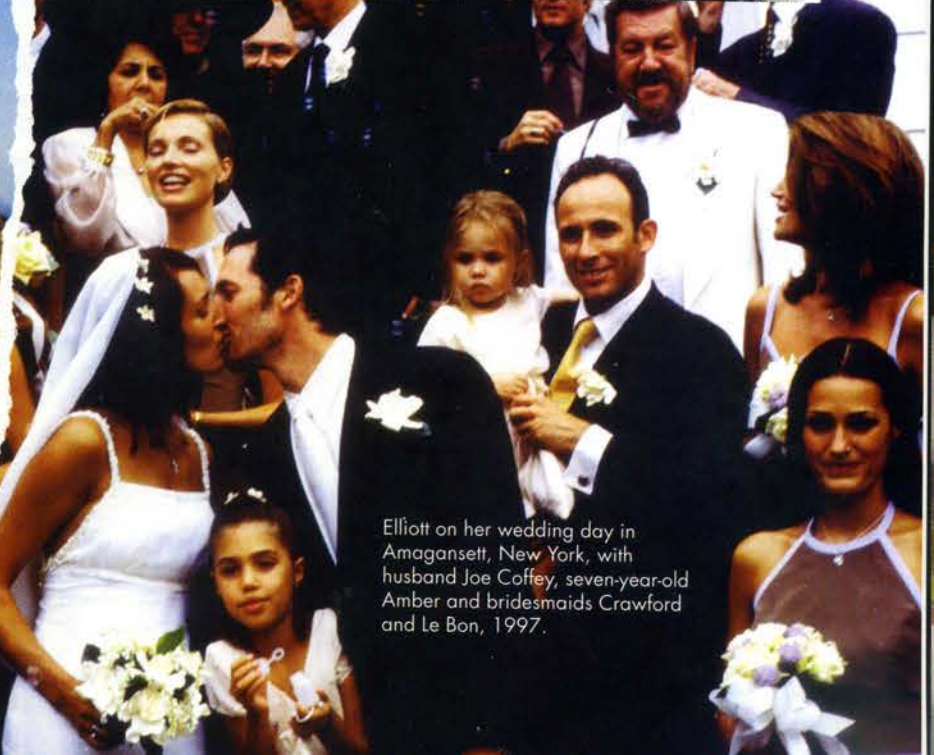
Designer Helmut Lang, Elliott, Crawford, Le Bon and hairstylist Guido Palau, 1992.



Gilles Bensimon's classic 1993 shot of Le Bon, Elliott and Christy Turlington in Paris.



Elliott and Le Bon photographed by François Halard in Morocco, 1993.



Elliott on her wedding day in Amagansett, New York, with husband Joe Coffey, seven-year-old Amber and bridesmaids Crawford and Le Bon, 1997.

...MES COULEUR DE SABLE. EN ROSE ET EN BLEU, ELLES DECLARENT LEUR FLAMME
...SUIVI, CAPTANT SES EFFETS DYNAMISANTS DE
...RE BANGOR