



La belle epoch

*Style icon Jane Birkin proves
easy elegance is timeless in
her staple 'man style' suits
and monochrome classics*

**PHOTOGRAPHY EZRA PATCHETT
STYLING CARLIE OATES**



THIS PAGE Superfine blazer, \$799; Chanel sweater, \$1460; Salasai pants, \$220; Voodoo stockings, \$17.95 (worn throughout); Thurley shoes, \$159.99.
OPPOSITE Gant blazer, \$1199; Rodeo Show top, \$179; Secret Squirrel pants, \$249; Moschino Cheap & Chic heels, \$305, from My Wardrobe.



THIS PAGE Hermès sweater, \$1150; Willow pants, \$395.
OPPOSITE Jac + Jack sweater, \$399; Emporio Armani pants, \$590; heels, as before.

HAIR & MAKE-UP

Valérie Beaudenuit

The *sunday magazine* crew flew to Paris with Emirates (www.emirates.com/au) and stayed at the Four Seasons Hotel George V, Paris (www.fourseasons.com).

STOCKISTS

Chanel 1300 242 635, Emporio Armani (03) 9654 1991 or (02) 8233 5858, Gant (03) 9340 5200 or www.gant.com, Hermès 1300 728 807, Jac + Jack (02) 9380 6630 or www.jacandjack.com, My Wardrobe www.my-wardrobe.com, Rodeo Show (02) 9690 1833 or www.rodeoshow.com.au, Salasai (02) 9281 1110 or www.salasai.com, Sara Phillips (02) 9281 8943 or www.saraphillips.com.au, Secret Squirrel (02) 9331 6252 or www.secretssquirrellabel.com, Superfine (02) 9360 3609 or www.superfinelondon.com, Thurley (02) 9368 7711 or www.thurley.com.au, Voodoo 1800 810 449, Willow (02) 9281 7355 or www.willowltd.com.





Walk down the streets of Paris and you'd be hard pushed to spot a woman who doesn't ooze style. But the most elegant of all – the queen of ageless style – is Jane Birkin.

Today the 65-year-old is sitting on a plush sofa at the Four Seasons Hotel, sipping green tea after her exclusive photoshoot for *sunday magazine*. Her short hair is dishevelled and she's wearing a grey Alexander Wang T-shirt belonging to daughter Charlotte Gainsbourg, beige corduroys her agent took off to give to her after she mentioned liking them, and a cherished navy jumper by Vanessa Bruno.

The British actor and singer first arrived in Paris in 1968 with her baby daughter Kate, following the breakdown of her marriage to composer John Barry. It was a move that would make her a household name across the world. After she auditioned for a role in the film *Slogan* opposite France's *enfant terrible* Serge Gainsbourg, the pair fell in love and went on to record the provocative duet 'Je T'aime... Moi Non Plus', which was famously banned by the Vatican.

The couple had Charlotte before splitting in 1980 (Birkin later had a third daughter, Lou, with French director Jacques Doillon).

Jane wears: Country Road blouse; Saba pants; Yves Saint Laurent shoes, from Net-A-Porter; (inset) Birkin with former partner Serge Gainsbourg.

The French were captivated by Birkin. "I don't think it was me they loved; I was just part of the British renaissance sweeping the world," she reflects. "I had an English accent and France fell in love with that."

Her music and acting propelled her to stardom, but it's Birkin's style that put her on a pedestal. In 1981 a chance meeting with Hermès chairman Jean-Louis Dumas on a flight to London led to a conversation about the ideal bag. "I told him I wanted a bag bigger than the Kelly [bag] and not quite as big as Serge's suitcase." And so, one of the most famous handbags in the world was conceived.

Birkin finds the label of 'style icon' baffling, saying she simply wears what's comfortable. "When Serge and I first performed together, he asked me if I was going to lick my lips and wear a skirt. I told him I was going to do the opposite. I wanted the applause to be for his music."

A favourite Birkin 'look' is men's pants held up with a tie, and an oversize jumper "to show collarbones and a long neck. I love dressing up for photoshoots, but I wear what I feel at ease in and most of the time that's men's clothing."

Growing older has impacted her style. "I need to find a cocktail dress with sleeves because I have to put on a cardigan these days," she laments. "My skin is two sizes too big for my body. I'm a size 10 but my skin is a 14!"

As with her clothing, Birkin's beauty routine is simple. "Older women need only mascara, a smudge of red on the lips and cheeks and not a lot of powder – it goes into the creases and looks dreadful." And she doesn't rule out surgery one day, either. "I'm open to anything!" she whispers. ■

STORY: ALICE STOLZ
Jane Birkin Sings Serge Gainsbourg is touring March 16–19. Visit www.ticketmaster.com.au.

OTHER PHOTOGRAPHY: AUSTRAL STOCKISTS; COUNTRY ROAD 1800 801 911, NET-A-PORTER WWW.NET-A-PORTER.COM; SABA 1800 441 739

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