

VOGUE



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Rainbow
lips and
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hair

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The new
status accessory

The woman with
the £100 million
shopping budget

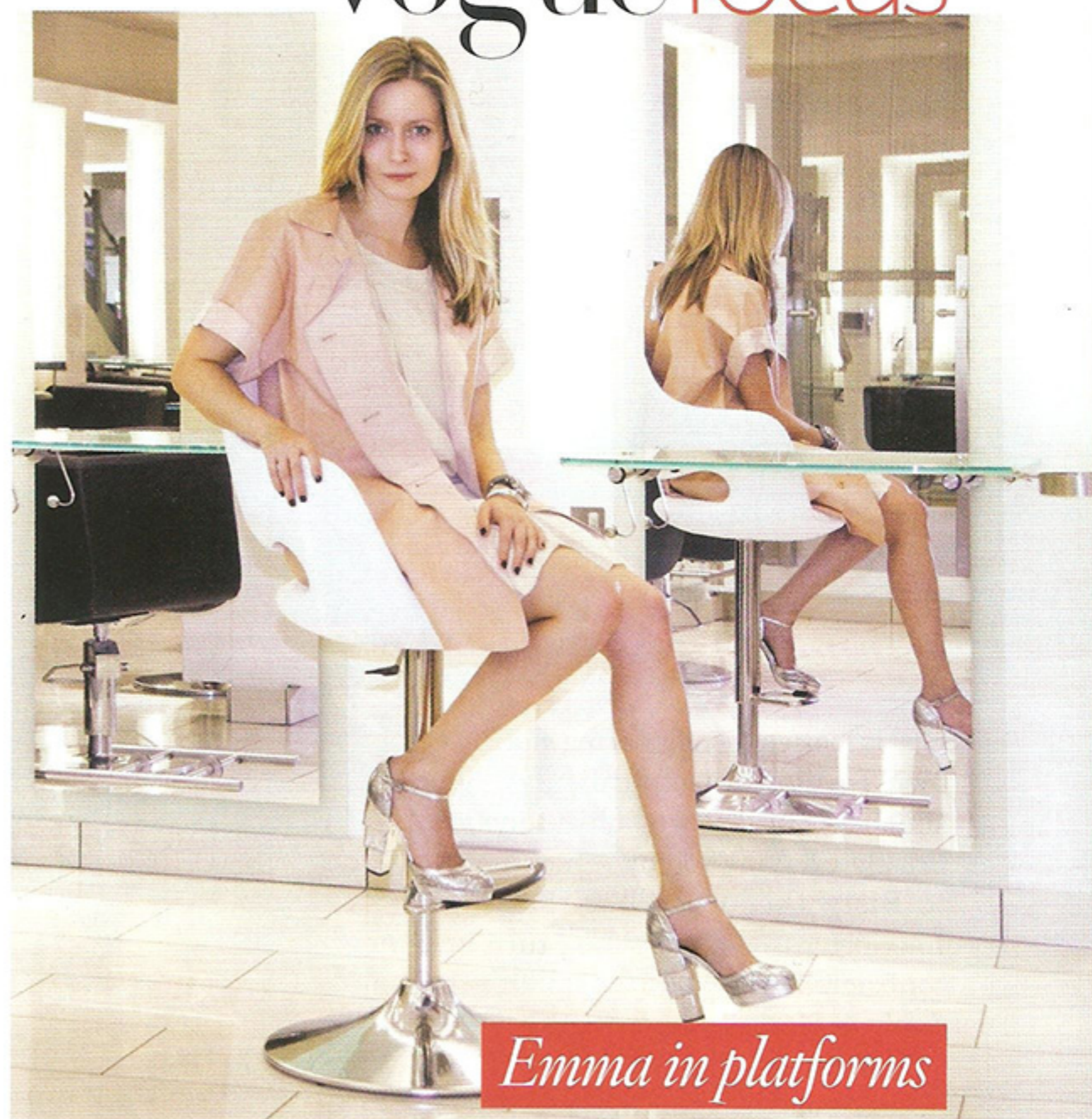
STAR TURN

THE INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIONS SPECIAL





Bronwyn in stilettos



Emma in platforms

Spindly vs Clumpy

Elegant and versatile, slim heels suit any outfit or situation, says Bronwyn Cosgrave

I have great legs. And though my admission may seem immodest, their shapely look is not just down to regular cardiovascular exercise – my choice of footwear has a lot to do with it. I have lived in spindly heels since 1980 when, as a pre-teen, I first towered in a sleek pair of Guccis belonging to my best friend's mum. Platforms never stood a chance because, when Gucci-shod, I realised that an artfully constructed, slimline heel is the most leg-lengthening footwear breed.

Today my shoe shelves heave with a huge variety. My trophies include striking copper leather Rupert Sanderson peep-toes, gold Louboutin gladiator sandals and two pairs of Helmut Lang court shoes – one in black, the other dove grey – which I purchased simultaneously before the master minimalist decamped from his eponymous label. I also own an array of interesting loafers elevated by slender heels of varying heights – lavender suede Manolos, chocolate-brown Chansels and two-tone Sigerson Morrison's. My must-haves for spring? YSL's star-motif stilettos and Louis Vuitton's bow-brandishing pointy pumps, which hark back to the early Fifties, when Ferragamo and Roger Vivier first introduced streamlined lean high heels to fashion. My current favourites – bejewelled Chanel slingbacks – feature inverted pyramid heels cut so sharp that an architect friend sitting next to me at dinner recently drew back when I whipped one off and dangled it before his widening eyes to display its exquisiteness. He agreed that the sleek, vertiginous Chanel >

Let's stomp, urges Emma Elwick – clumpy shoes are the choice of the powerful woman

I Freud said that dreams are often most profound when they seem most crazy. Let's extend this to shoes. There is no space for shrinking violets in my shoe closet: vying for attention are Prada Forties-style peep-toes, Chanel "Princess Anne" patent slingbacks, Balenciaga's towering T-straps, super-size Mary-Janes and YSL's duck-nosed, wooden-heel courts. They all stand tall (at least 4-7in) on a self-assured sturdy heel. I doubt that any of them would have been cast in a Helmut Newton shoot, but I like a clumpy shoe that's made for stomping.

Not that I haven't succumbed to the skinny spindle in my time. The real Cinderellas of my wardrobe are the box-fresh Louboutin satin-bow sandals (complete with Virginia Slim heel). No fairy godmother will save them, as I'd have already been whisked off in my sturdy studded ankle boots. Who cares to walk around on tiptoes with little more than a toothpick for support?

The clickety-click of stilettos might have more auditory allure than the clomp-clomp-clomp of my orthopaedic Chloé wedges, but the notion of an overt "killer heel" seems as dated as Hall & Oates's contribution to feminism – "Oh-oh, here she comes/ Watch out boy, she'll chew you up!" Now's not a time for sirens; Chloé's sheer layers and Giles's tulle ruffles beg for a strong shoe to modernise the romance. To wear a clumpy-clunky is to think outside of the (shoe) box. It's the antidote to the fetishistic >

From left:
John Galliano:
Vivienne
Westwood:
Alexander
McQueen



spindly heels

YVES SAINT LAURENT



heel is footwear engineering worthy of its own Design Museum display. Those slingbacks also proved ultra-functional, briskly carrying me off when, heading to Bistrottheque earlier that night, I accidentally took a wrong turn and was confronted by a plump fox stalking the same dimly lit Hackney backstreet.

Therein lies the magnificence of spindly heels. At once sexy and chic, the superlatively made are an absolute breeze to wear all day as well as by night, and practical enough to enable the occasional sprint, if need be. This season's thicker, fuller luxury shoes – such as Bottega Veneta's *Dolce Vita*-style wedges or Hermès's towering platform sandals – strike me at best to be decorative, sculptural objects designed to stand out on a catwalk. Maybe they will please somebody's foot, but it's not going to be mine. The latest incorporate ostentatious accoutrements (flashy metallic thick soles; ornate, sculpted heels; strappy uppers) seemingly unearthed from an archaeological dig. Who needs all those bells and whistles? Put on the spot in a typically urban situation – say, dashing for a taxi – a cumbersome platform could never perform with the ease and grace as my highest heels, gold-studded, espresso-coloured Sergio Rossis. Elevated from the ground by what resemble leather-encased needles, these lace-ups are as comfy as my Nikes and, expertly made from butter-soft leather, nearly as light as air. Next to these beauties, hulking platforms resemble beasts.

Weighty, showy, fat, frumpy and inefficient – that's my take on the two pairs of platforms I've ever owned. Stepping out in them was always an ordeal and my usually steady gait was inhibited because I always felt my platforms were just way too "on" – impossible to miss, vying for the limelight no matter what they were paired with. By contrast, my slim heels consistently work magic by subtly enhancing an ensemble, lending to it a flattering hint of stature. Longevity is their other integral bonus. Fluted heels or spikes are eternally fashionable, all-time classics and this spring mine will make more striking their sartorial equivalents – a demure Chanel suit, Moschino's flirty shift dresses or my new tailored Erdem trousers paired with one of his pretty, botanical-print blouses. The only drawback of a slim heel is that the steel core supporting some can occasionally snap. It happened to me once, while striding across the polished parquet front hall at Claridge's, and experiencing the sensation was nearly as torturous as suffering the heartbreak. ■

CHLOÉ



clumpy heels

“The clumpy pack can make it through the day without vertigo and bleeding feet”

turn of sinister spikes – a bit more bluestocking. Flattering, reliable and comfortable, they are stalwart companions. With heads held high and a steady gait, the clumpy pack can make it through the day without vertigo and bleeding feet.

These shoes suggest a woman in control. It's no coincidence that the rise of the clumpies has coincided with periods of women's power and sexual liberation: thick-soled shoes were needed

for decadent dancing in Thirties Berlin, and also in the wartime Forties, when women were taking on men's jobs. The hippy period was a prime time for the women's movement, sexual hedonism and, more importantly, platform soles. Treetop-grazing shoes are perfect for the Seventies ride we're about to take this spring – those floor-sweeping flares at Balmain and Prada necessitate the solid charm of a clumpy heel.

Since Chloé's gargantuan dolly-shoes, the clumpy has made a triumphant return over the last few seasons, with Balenciaga currently leading the pack. Just think of the cyber-sex pony-club ankle boots (the ones that elevated the wee Olsens to at least 5ft 5ins), the techno-Lego sandals and now the *cloisonné* bejewelled gladiator boots. I sometimes gawp at the construction of my Nicholas Kirkwood candy-stripe painted shoes, or my YSL "snowstorm" heels – both architectural marvels. This season offers up some of the most breathtaking *objets d'art* to tempt me: Prada's dippy surrealist shoes complete with ground-hugging floral heels, Chloé's glossy bone shoe-boots held up by a fluoro "shark's tooth", and Nina Ricci's heels that curve inwards like grizzly-bear claws. With clumpy creativity reaching new heights, my taste for extremes has been given extra pep. I ask you: what else but a divine chunky shoe could anchor Giambattista Valli's couture-like folds, Lanvin's exuberant ruffles or Zac Posen's cloudy confections?

But there is another reason for this sudden appreciation of practical chunky footwear: it makes your legs look thinner. Wear it with a minidress and calves take on a gangly, Bambi-like quality – it's my favourite fashion illusion. And although these shoes might take up more room in the suitcase, I'm safe in the knowledge that I shan't be accused of grievous bodily harm when accidentally stepping on someone's toe during Fashion Week. ■

Clockwise from bottom right:
Balmain; Sinha; Stanic; Stella McCartney; John Galliano

