



# Queen Mary

From sewing her own clothes as a child to dressing Oscar winners, stylist Mary Fellowes makes her own rules

By GRACE CAIN / Photographer AMY GWATKIN / Fashion Editor CHRISTOPHE RUIZ

**F**ashion influencers are nothing new. Even before vloggers and Instagram became the fuel that powers the fashion industry, the beautiful and wealthy were still the perpetuators of trends. In the 1930s, a young woman seeking sartorial inspiration might well have looked to one such person in particular: the glamorous Daisy Fellowes, a socialite, writer and fashion editor who played muse to Elsa Schiaparelli.

Almost six decades after her death, Daisy's influence is noted by a distant relative who also happens to have made a name for herself in fashion: celebrity stylist Mary Fellowes. "Everyone used to copy what Daisy wore," she says. "For one white-tie ball, she knew everyone would be wearing diamond necklaces, because she had worn one the previous season – so she wore a string of corks instead, just to poke fun at people." Fellowes' face opens into a mischievous smile. "Issie would do things like that, too. She'd be provocative with fashion, in a way I'd always find funny."

'Issie' is Isabella Blow, the renowned editor and icon of English eccentricity, who is credited with unearthing such talent as Sophie

Dahl, Philip Treacy and Alexander McQueen. It was Blow who gave Fellowes her first glimpse at where a career in fashion could lead, hiring the eager young Central Saint Martins graduate as her assistant at *The Sunday Times Style* magazine in 2000.

"Issie showed me that there was a job that would allow me to do the three things I loved most: shooting photos, making clothes and telling stories," Fellowes explains. Those passions are the glue that holds together the many fragments of what has been a remarkably varied career. As well as being a frequent contributor to 11 international editions of *Vogue* (and launching the Turkish output), Fellowes was also the first (and only) fashion editor at *The Economist*. Recent years have seen her turn her hand to digital content and celebrity styling – a highlight of which was dressing Olivia Colman for this year's Oscars. Afterwards, newspapers and social feeds across the world were filled with photographs of the Best Actress winner in that bottle-green Prada gown. Colman and Fellowes had sketched ideas in a car on the way to a film festival – an inky palette, a big bow, drapery; all to create a feeling of 'classic elegance' – and Prada set to work on making >



Mary wears, this page STELLA McCARTNEY gown £2499; CARTIER ring £156,000; opposite page ROLAND MOURRET top £850 and trousers £470; MESSIKA ring £22,900; STELLA McCARTNEY shoes from a selection >

## HOW SHE WEARS



*“I’m interested in the intersection of fashion and identity. Every outfit is a costume choice”*

their vision a reality. Quite the coup, considering the star of *The Favourite* had repeatedly been snubbed by other high-profile designers in the months preceding.

Fellowes finds inspiration everywhere, she says – an old record sleeve, a performer onstage, an elderly lady on the bus. “For me, fashion is at its most interesting when it exists in a dialogue with art, music, film and literature,” she explains. “When it’s just about brands, trends and labels, it leaves me cold.”

Her family was not a creative one, she says, but her mother did teach her how to sew her own clothes. “I was always very, very specific about what I wanted to wear,” she explains. “But I used to experiment. I once wore boys’ clothes to go sledging, because I knew then I would be allowed to go down the steeper runs. I found it interesting to watch how people would treat me differently when I dressed as a boy.”

Throughout her life and career, Fellowes has continued to use clothing not only to express herself, but also to control how others perceive her. As a result, she says, she never developed a fixed personal style. “I’ve always yearned to be one of those people who have a uniform – I admire the discipline of a woman

Mary wears FAITH CONNEXION jacket £1,550; ALEXANDER WANG trousers £650; MESSIKA bracelet £30,100; ALEVI MILANO boots £660

Fine Jewellery, Ground Floor; Luxury Jewellery and Womenswear, First Floor; Harrods Shoe Heaven, Fifth Floor; and harrods.com

Hair BEN JONES  
Make-up NICKY WEIR  
Photographer’s Assistants JODIE HERBAGE and STEFANO SARGENTINI  
Stylist’s Assistant ZOEY HAYNES

### MARY’S STYLE TIPS

#### Be penny-wise

*“Invest in strong tailoring, overcoats and a really good day bag (I love Fendi and JW Anderson).”*

#### Don’t suffer for fashion

*“Never buy shoes you can’t dance in!”*

#### Be picture-perfect

*“Avoid fabric that creases easily – it never looks good in photos.”*

#### Play the long game

*“Don’t buy into gimmicky trends – you’ll just get bored of them.”*

#### Be fearless

*“Think about the style risks you’ve taken when getting dressed up after a few glasses of something with your friends. That’s when you’re at your most authentic.”*

who will only wear black pieces by Comme des Garçons. But I’m a chameleon, and my love of fashion plays out in the way I experiment with my identity.”

Whether she’s dressing for work or styling a star for the red carpet, Fellowes is always trying to convey a character. “Every outfit is a costume choice,” she says. “The intersection of fashion and identity – that’s what interests me more than anything else.” This is why, when she worked for Anna Wintour at *Vogue* early on in her career, she preferred to work on portrait shoots rather than on fashion spreads. “I would say: I can’t call myself a fashion expert if I only know how to dress models,” she explains. “And I loved the women Anna asked me to dress – from news anchors and activists to painters and poets. They were always fascinating.”

Whoever she is dressing, Fellowes aims to empower them. “I tell my clients: forget the trends. Think about how you want to feel, and we’ll work the outfit around that. My job is to make you feel invincible; that’s what will enable you to enjoy yourself.”

Fellowes is also aware that fashion can convey a message – and encourages clients to take advantage of their platforms. At the 2018 Golden Globes, for example, she dressed Phoebe Waller-Bridge in black, in solidarity with the Time’s Up movement. “I was extremely proud – in my own tiny, tiny way – to be involved in that conversation,” says the stylist.

“I think the red carpet is now a platform not only for humanitarian change,” she continues, “but also for environmental change.” She’s particularly excited by the recent swing towards sustainability that has seen the likes of Anne Hathaway and Emma Watson opt for vintage pieces, flea-market finds or even (gasp!) reworked versions of previously worn looks.

Although Fellowes’ approach to clothes is undoubtedly thoughtful and intelligent, there are also frequent glimmers of the same irreverent spirit that gave Daisy Fellowes her charm almost a century ago. “The best advice I’ve ever been given?” Fellowes thinks for a moment, before her face cracks open with that mischievous grin and she lets out a laugh, her eyes twinkling. “Issie always used to say these words to me: ‘Do whatever the hell you want.’” □