



### LOW-KEY SMOLDER

Sudden fame means intense public scrutiny: The day after the Academy Awards, Viola Davis's gold Reem Acra gown was the talk of the Internet. "It's good this happened later in life, because I'm more comfortable with how I look now," says Davis, 43. "I'm not comparing my body with Halle Berry's anymore!" She especially appreciates the way these dresses hark back to a feminine ideal that's curvy rather than skinny. Here, a slinky black knit with silver beading on the kimono sleeves (St. John, \$1,195) is the perfect balance of at-home ease and star-quality extravagance. Can't you imagine Frank Sinatra playing on the hi-fi (or maybe even dropping in for a drink)? Pumps, Jimmy Choo.

# SOME LIKE IT HOT

*Now playing: body-conscious clothes that are sensual but never over-the-top.*

*Actress **VIOLA DAVIS**, Oscar-nominated for her role in *Doubt*, channels the timeless glamour of movie stars like *Marilyn Monroe*, *Lena Horne*, and *Eartha Kitt*.*

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DEWEY NICKS



### LIGHTS! CAMERA!

Defying the notion that sexy has to be short, a strapless purple sheath with below-the-knee flare (L'Wren Scott) is the sort of thing Marilyn might have worn for lunch in the studio commissary, maybe with tortoiseshell sunglasses (Proenza Schouler), black croc heels (Jimmy Choo), and a casual animal-print cardigan (Rebecca Taylor, \$295). Bracelet, House of Lavande. Bag, Roberta di Camerino. ▶



#### EVERYDAY CHIC

Davis is no overnight sensation: A Juilliard graduate, she won a 2001 Tony Award for her performance in August Wilson's play *King Hedley II* and has been a luminous presence in films like *Antwone Fisher*. But since her scene-stealing turn as Mrs. Miller in *Doubt*, "I've been catapulted out of my former life," she says. What sustains her is a sense of "what is reliable and constant and true." Next up for Davis: playing the mayor of Philadelphia in *Law Abiding Citizen*, an action thriller with Jamie Foxx. Full skirt, Michael Kors, \$1,095. Tulle skirt (worn underneath), H&M, \$50. Shirt, Thomas Pink, \$150. Earrings, David Yurman. Pearls, Kenneth Lane. Sunglasses, Karl Lagerfeld Eyewear. Ring, Noir Jewelry. Shoes, Christian Louboutin.

*"I love the classics," says Davis, and she's not just talking Shakespeare and Chekhov. "I feel strong and powerful in this suit—like a modern girl."*

#### COMING UP ROSES

"In my day, people dressed," sultry show-business legend Eartha Kitt once said. "You left your tracksuits at home." Kitt, who died last year after a six-decade career, always looked unbelievably soigné. Davis evokes her signature sophistication in a well-priced, beautifully tailored suit (Talbots jacket, \$189, and skirt, \$109), smartly accessorized with a

chiffon scarf (Vera), faux-diamond brooch (R.J. Graziano), and long leather gloves (LaCrasia Gloves). The bamboo-handled embossed croc bag (Elaine Turner) signals the return of structured pocketbooks. And in a switch from typically '60s shades, these modified cat's-eye sunglasses (Proenza Schouler) have upturned corners that give the face a nice lift. ▶





**BODY LANGUAGE**  
The pale sequined gown (Naeem Khan), far left, has a second-skin feeling (like the glittery confection Marilyn Monroe wore when she sang "Happy Birthday, Mr. President" to JFK). There's also a racy private-goes-public aura to the corset dress (Dolce & Gabbana), above. "It makes me feel mysterious, unattainable—everything that attracted me to being a movie star," Davis says. Coat, Vera Wang. Gloves, Carolina Amato. Bag, Roberta di Camerino. Shoes, Jimmy Choo.



**BATHING BEAUTY**  
Who needs a bikini? This halter-neck swimsuit (OMO Norma Kamali, \$350) is cut just right, proving that a one-piece can be as seductive as acres of bare skin. It's definitely a descendant of the shirred maillots Marilyn wore in the '50s, often with a velour robe (Alberta Ferretti, \$560)—as luxurious as a cover-up gets. Vintage-looking scarlet sunglasses (Karl Lagerfeld Eyewear) complete the picture. Mules, Sergio Rossi.



*"It's in casual moments at home that I feel most attractive," says Davis. "I'm freer to let my fun, quirky side come out."*

**LEISURE CLASS**  
Celebrities used to be perfectly turned out even on weekends (no paparazzi shots of grungy clothes in those days): flawless hair, full makeup, and fresh-looking separates like this no-iron shirt (Brooks Brothers, \$90), striped cardigan (Gap, \$45), and sleek capris (Liz Claiborne New York, \$65). Mules (Sergio Rossi) and a pink "diamond" bracelet (R.J. Graziano) add a glamorous touch. Davis admits that she prefers jeans, loose shirts, and Uggs ("Normally I'm a slug!"), a uniform that's partly about comfort but also involves camouflage—growing up, she says, she lacked the support of attractive role models. "I never saw any images of beauty that resembled me." ▶



*An agelessly feminine silhouette (fitted on top, softly pleated on the bottom) teams up with cotton and linen—the definitive warm-weather fabrics.*

#### **A DAY IN THE LIFE**

As if to offset their on-camera sexiness, actresses were often photographed looking blissfully domestic (Lena Horne tied on an apron and posed next to an oven for one publicity shot). This cool, demure dress (Talbots, \$149) is a perfect showcase for Davis's well-toned arms, and the dragonfly pattern makes it delightfully summery. Earrings, Moon and Lola. Belt, Hobo International. Bracelet, Carolee. Shoes, Christian Louboutin.



#### **HOLLYWOOD CONFIDENTIAL**

Davis gives her feet a break, trading heels for sneakers (Keds)—“I feel like a little kid playing dress-up!”—as she hitches a ride between sets on the studio golf cart. Her pale peach gown, bursting with tulle ruffles (Monique Lhuillier), has both charm and substance: Its exquisitely shaped bodice—think couturier-quality construction—molds the torso and defines the waist. Pearls, House of Lavande. Back-lot photos shot on location at Paramount Studios. For details see Shop Guide.

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