

# The dress that gets results

It's Oscar season and, as every nominee knows, it's all about the frock. Plunging or pure, couture or unknown designer, the power of the dress to win press inches is huge. So what's the winning formula? And how do you work it off the red carpet? SARAH CRISTOBAL asks the style merchants for their tips.

**P**ulling together the perfect look is no easy feat. Aside from deciding which dress to don, there are the details to worry about: a mussed chignon or come-hither locks? Strappy sandals or sky-high stilettos? To bejewel or not to bejewel? The possibilities are as endless as Madonna's self-reinventions.

Fashion is constantly in motion, and at times it's hard to keep up. With that in mind, there is nothing like nailing your outfit for the evening. It's that glorious moment when the universe is in harmony and makes way for a stylistic synergy that comes along about as often as a shooting star (preferably in the form of a Chanel Fine Jewellery brooch, thank you very much).

Jacqueline Kennedy was so style conscious that she used to study the culture and history of her guests and destinations before having one of her couturiers, usually Oleg Cassini, create her unique ensembles. As many museums and countless books have attested, her dresses certainly got

results. Her inaugural gown – an off-white sleeveless chiffon confection that Kennedy conceived and had made by Ethel Frankau at Bergdorf Goodman – won over the country. Meanwhile, at a dinner in his honour in 1962, André Malraux, the French minister of culture, was so enchanted by the first lady in her pink strapless shantung silk Christian Dior gown that he promised to lend the country's national treasure, "The Mona Lisa", to the National Gallery in Washington.

On the flipside, swinging 1960s provocateur Jane Birkin garnered plenty of attention for her barely-there get-ups. Years later, Versace vixens Jennifer Lopez and Elizabeth Hurley would follow suit in their own depth-defying dresses, the former in a green chiffon navel-baring wisp of a gown at the Grammys in 2000. The latter was a relative unknown when she attended a 1994 premiere with her then-boyfriend, Hugh Grant. Hurley reportedly could not afford to buy a dress and was lent the only thing left in the press office – a slinky black number