Reality Star

Alexa Chung proves personality, not price, makes for winning style. Photographed by Norman Jean Roy.

Alexa Chung doesn't indulge in frequent shopping splurges, nor is she one for head-to-toe labels. "It can look a little princessy," says the style maven–slash–DJ–slash–TV presenter, who prefers thrown-together schoolmarm–meets–gamine chic looks from Zara and Uniqlo, or vintage pieces from Amarcord in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Chung's loftiest purchases are one-offs—a quilted Balenciaga by Nicolas Ghesquière biker jacket, a structured Mary Katrantzou dress—as she has "other things to buy now . . . like houses," she deadpans. That most recent investment, a prewar apartment in the East Village, had the native Brit settled in time to tape her latest endeavor as host of Lifetime's *24 Hour Catwalk* (which debuted in January). Each episode of the ten-part series sees four aspiring designers compete for a $10,000 prize. "It's not a freak show; they're talented, and it's funny," says Chung, 28, whose tailoring experience is limited to sewing skirts as a teenager on her sister's machine, until she broke it. "People often lose their sense of humor when it comes to fashion."

Bringing wit to the proceedings is Chung's modus operandi. Take those whimsical doodles she whips up in her downtime that have landed on T-shirts for her two Madewell collaborations, her kooky eyeball manicure, or the man-size blazer she's tossed over this girlish Jason Wu for Target dress. "It's modern-day power dressing," she says of the ironic match. "Sexy, but in a less obvious way." And Wu himself is all for girls' adding individual spin to his collection. After all, says the designer, "nothing's replicated from the main line—it has its own voice."—**ESTHER ADAMS**



NATURAL TALENT
"I love the way Jason Wu cuts clothes," says Chung. "It's classic and ladylike." Jason Wu for Target shirtdress, $40; target.com. Étoile Isabel Marant jacket, Chung's own. Hair, Teddy Charles for Orlo Salon; makeup, Alice Lane. Photographed at Vinegar Hill House, Brooklyn. Details, see In This Issue. Fashion Editor: Tabitha Simmons.

STEAL OF THE MONTH

