

# VOGUE

MAR

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SPRING  
ISSUE EVER!**

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GLITZ  
GOLD**

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CHOICES**

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ODDS**

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Russell Crowe  
The Men  
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**EXCLUSIVE  
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**Marie Brenner's  
*Great Dames***



U.S.A. \$3.50  
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money," he says. When his distributor dropped out at the last minute, Pecoraro found himself having to sell the collection, too. It was produced and shown in his tiny apartment, where a fairy godmother arrived "out of the blue" in the shape of Roberta Valentini, a highly regarded boutique owner from Brescia. Valentini placed a small order, but far more significant, she promised the designer, "I think these things are really different, and I'm going to tell my colleagues about it. Just you see: In two days, everyone will come here."

**S**ure enough, that season he had 70 clients, enabling him to continue from strength to strength. This season, he has 120 pieces in the line, all of them subtly colored with natural dyes that are made in India, where much of his highly detailed work has been produced since his first collection. For that,

Pecoraro went to Delhi in August to research embroidery houses: "It was very hard with no air-conditioning in those factories," he remembers. "But it was fascinating. I adored the spirit of the country and of the people." Now Pecoraro travels to India almost every season to work on his collections. "I wanted to stay faithful," he says, "because they really helped me." From the beginning, Pecoraro has wanted his collections to focus on artisanal hand-craftsmanship, reflecting his Sicilian roots. Some of his work is even produced in Sicily. "The women in the country make wonderful crochet and so on, and I think it's

Pecoraro has produced sequins made from twelve different materials, including horn, bone, ebony, snake, suede, and ponyskin

important not to let those traditions die, although it's often so expensive that we have to go to India instead. Of course, those things are very time-consuming and difficult to do." A case in point: Pecoraro

went to Nepal to work on looms to produce a new kind of pashmina. "We developed one using threads made from seaweed!" he says. "They had to be dried out—it was terribly difficult—but we sold 1,500 pieces."

For his fall/winter 1999 collection, Pecoraro developed leather sequins, which inspired him to indulge in what he playfully dubs "paillette mania" for his spring/summer 2000 line. Pecoraro has produced sequins made from twelve different materials, including horn, bone, ebony, snake, suede, and ponyskin. They embellish many of his dresses and skirts, as well as dashing boots and whimsical purses. Pecoraro works out of an amazing loft-like space that he found serendipitously in the courtyard of a turn-of-the-century apartment building 50 meters from his own apartment. He also shows his collection there, eschewing runway madness to explain his pieces personally to buyers and press. "It's not pretentious," says Sozzani, "and with those pieces, you have to touch, so it's a nice way to do it."

"I always wanted things done with a great deal of passion," the earnest Pecoraro maintains. And Sozzani agrees: "You can feel it when clothes have love in them." □



POELL STAR: A PIGSKIN JACKET AND LINEN TROUSERS (NEAR RIGHT) AND SILICON-IMPLANT TEE WITH TRANSPARENT LEATHER COAT, WORN BY YOUNG ACTRESS ARLY JOVER.

## the purist

Life is not easy for committed counterculturalist Carol Christian Poell. His innovative designs are as esoteric as they come—but celebrities love them anyway, and mainstream success looks impossible to avoid.

**h**e can't name a single model. He doesn't read fashion magazines or buy designer clothes. "I'm against this system," he says. "It has no part in my work."

Carol Christian Poell may talk like a Soviet commissar, but as an Austrian-born, Milan-based designer of brainy, avant-garde clothes, he owes his bread and butter to the free world. For several years, Poell's ingeniously cut, expertly tailored jackets and trousers have been cult hits in some of consumer capitalism's snazziest redoubts—Maxfield and Ron Herman at Fred Segal in Los Angeles, Yasmin Cho in London—where celebrity clotheshorses from Ellen Barkin to Madonna buy them in bulk.

And that was before he'd started making women's clothes. Alonzo Ester, a menswear buyer for Ron Herman at Fred Segal, remembers the day in 1995 when Poell's men's line arrived in Los Angeles. "We were the first store in America to carry him," Ester says. "He was the first to do that long, low, and lean silhouette in pants. The fit was amazing. We would grab women as they came in and show them his pants. I remember Linda Evangelista coming in. I said, 'You have to try these.' She fell in love with them. We sold out our first shipment in a day, and probably 40 percent of the customers were women."

Perhaps Poell saw a lucrative opportunity. Or, as he might prefer us to think, a creative challenge. In any case, his first official women's collection appeared last fall, sparking another frenzy of acquisitiveness, this time in London. "I've got eighteen designers," says Yasmin Sewell of Yasmin Cho. "And he's the one who sells out. I carry a huge selection of his trousers, and anyone from a size 6 to 14 looks incredible in them. They flatter the hip, the bum, and the stomach. They really drape on the leg and give you so much length. I've sold 20 pairs in six weeks."—EMILY EAKIN

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