



By C. Robert Jennings

BODY BY MACLAINE— IN ORIGINALS BY EDITH HEAD

Urged to shoot the works on perky Shirley MacLaine for the \$6,000,000 comedy, "What a Way to Go!," Hollywood costumer Edith Head turned out a dazzling grab bag of glad rags.



"A designer," says Edith Head, seven-time Oscar winner for her movie costumes, "is only as good as the star who wears her clothes." The reverse is also true. As boss designer of Paramount Pictures since 1938, Miss Head has reinforced the allure of some of the cinema's most spectacular stars.

Recently 20th Century-Fox borrowed Miss Head for its six-million-dollar comedy-fantasy, *What a Way To Go!* and urged her to shoot the works on leading lady Shirley MacLaine. Miss Head did—with the aid of hair stylists, makeup magicians, her own retinue of 30 stitchers, three million dollars' worth of jewels from Harry Winston and roughly half a million dollars' worth of gowns. "But I don't think this is really Shirley MacLaine," says tiny (5'1") Edith Head, who in the past has dressed Shirley as everything from a geisha to a lady bat. "She used to hate fittings. She was always slightly defiant, a little on the defensive, and she'd break out in a rash. But for this picture she has stood still for difficult, intricate fittings of seventy-three costumes, not only politely but with great excitement."

In the film Shirley plays a simple, guileless girl who marries five men, four of whom contract the modern disease of money and die of it. Each new marriage gives Shirley the chance to dramatize her shifting financial status through the vagaries of fashion. "If you ran this picture without sound," says Edith, "Shirley's clothes would tell you the story. She's a fine clothes chameleon, who can look like a little girl, a beatnik, a hooper or a high-fashion model."

Although she has tangled with an awesome variety of types over her 30 years as a costumer, the stars all look the same to Edith. "There was never an actress with whom it was easy to work," she says. "I have yet to see one completely unspoiled star, except for the animals—like Lassie. Each thinks she knows more

Designer Edith Head calls this classic suit "the red, red look."

"The sophisticated look" is Miss Head's label for this gown made of spun gold Persian tapestry and sable. It has a hoop tunic, offshoot of old-time hoop dresses.





LIZ TAYLOR WANTED HER WAISTLINE MADE "SMALLER, SMALLER."

than I do about her bust and hips." As a result, she sees designing in Hollywood as a mixed drink: roughly one part style-savvy to three parts diplomacy, shaken with unrelenting psychoanalysis. "Good clothes are not good luck. They are a result of a pretty thorough-going knowledge of the people you are dressing—and undressing."

Through Edith Head's "clinic"—which is what she calls her elegant, silver-gray salon at Paramount—have paraded the most glamorous patients in the world. Clara Bow, she remembers, insisted on high heels for a celluloid game of tennis. And *She Done Him Wrong* brought Edith eyelet to eyelet with Mae (38-24-38) West. "I love fabric I can feel, honey," husked Mae. "So do men." When Edith showed her pictures of period jewelry, Mae said, "Fine, honey, just make the rocks bigger. Without diamonds, honey, I'd feel undressed." And to Edith's staff she purred, "I like 'em tight, girls." So they jammed Mae into costumes, says Edith, in which she could not "lie, bend or sit."

Miss Head remembers Hedy Lamarr spent "a good part of each fitting on the horizontal"; that Paulette Goddard toted her jewels around in a cigar box; and Betty Hutton made each fitting into a little show and brought along her own audience. Like Scarlet O'Hara, Liz Taylor had a 19-inch waist but always wanted her gowns "smaller, smaller." Juliet Prowse made things easy—"You just put the minimum of beads on the maximum of chassis," says Edith. Anna "I-am-Magnani" was so horrified of glamour she insisted on "old" materials. And Nancy Carroll had the quickest solution for a dress she didn't like: "She calmly ripped it off." On the other hand, says Edith, "if MacLaine hates a dress, she is like a horse about to be cinched. She swells up and you know it's a dead dress."

Most meticulous clothes horse in Hollywood, according to Edith, is not a woman at all, but Cary Grant. He plans an entire color scheme for his wardrobe, usually built around his leading lady's. And he wasn't very happy the day Sophia Loren's 14-karat gold dress rubbed off on his tux in a *Houseboat* clinch. Recalls Edith, "We had to spray her with lacquer so she would stay gold." As for Loren, says Edith, "Sophia has no vanity at all. She analyzes herself as if she were another person. She has the same lack of self-consciousness about her body an animal does."

Miss Head's own influence on fads and fashion has extended beyond Hollywood. She launched a Latin-American trend with Barbara Stanwyck in *The Lady Eve*, and magazines reproduced Edith Head adaptations of the rebozo



For "the provocative look," Shirley sports an ostrich-banded dinner gown with ostrich hat.

endent in white mink, white gown, white hair
white diamonds, Shirley MacLaine embodies
costumer Head has named "the snow-white look."



Beaded dress shows influence of Spanish painter Goya.

(long scarf), the poncho and the sarape styles. Her sarong for Dorothy Lamour became a kind of institution—though Dottie was so unchesty it had to be taped on. Edith created Veronica Lake's half-nymph, half-witch look, and Audrey Hepburn's "Sabrina neckline," which had ties on each shoulder.

Today, says Miss Head, "we are about to see a renaissance of glamour *cum* humor—for fashion taken straight can be dreary and dull. The industry seems amazed that people love wit, beauty and glamour.

"I'd not like to bring back the corset of the Victorian era, but I'd sure like to bring back some of its other ele-

gance, like stockings and gloves. The new *sportive* look is all very well for models, but very many women don't look *sportive*. When the well-dressed woman is typified by beatnik space helmets and alligator boots, we have come to the end of the pendulum's swing. Marlene Dietrich and Roy Rogers are the only two living humans who should be allowed to wear black leather pants.

"Nowadays," summed up Edith, "you walk down the street, and from the rear you see sandals, sweat shirt, close-cropped hair and a small caboose of tight-tight pastel pants. The puzzling question is, do you address it as sir or madam or what?"

THE END

Empire evening gown serves as frontdrop for emerald necklace that once belonged to a maharaja's favorite.



Dressed in what Miss Head calls "companion clothes," Shirley and daughter Stephanie apply themselves to an all-day sucker for "the young, young look."



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