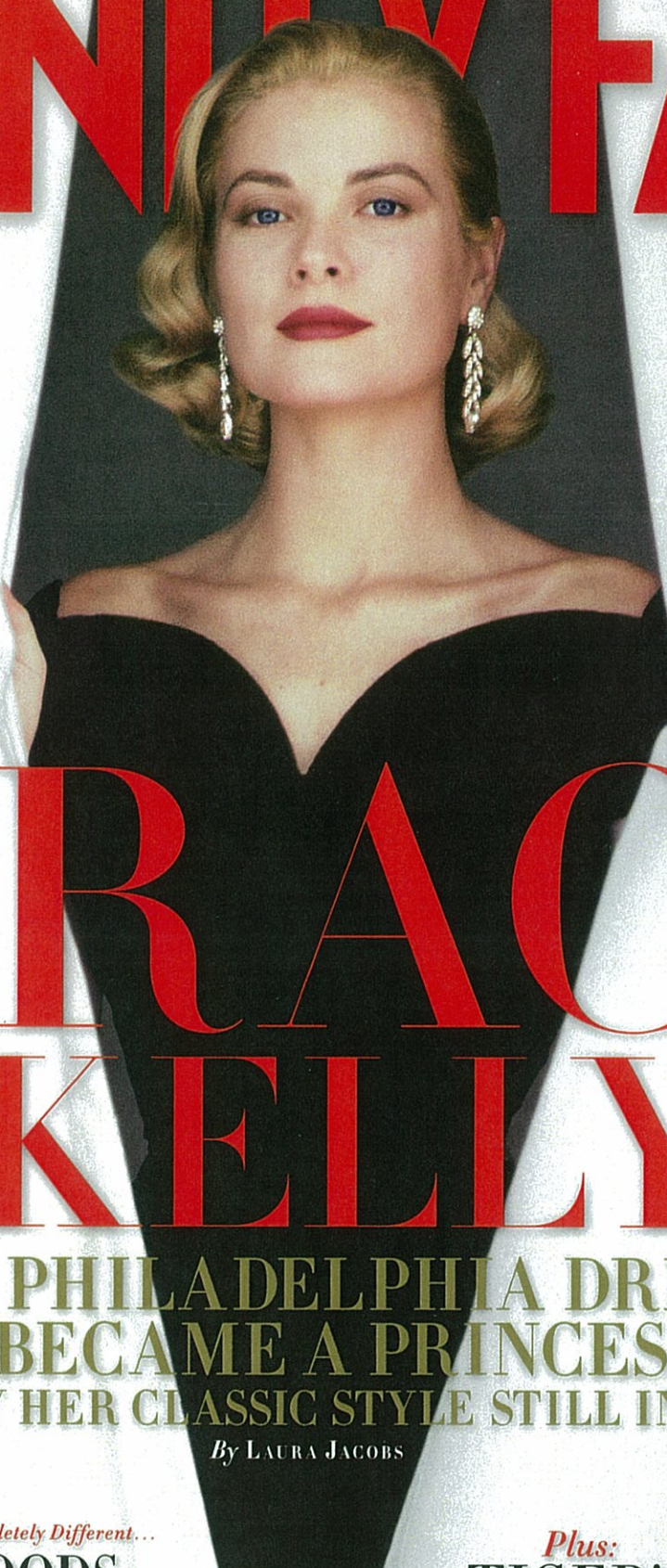


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VANITY FAIR

"The innocent and the beautiful / Have no enemy but time."
—W. B. YEATS



GRACE KELLY

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Photos by MARK SELIGER

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THE GODFATHER OF SOLE

For Christian Louboutin's passionate customers—Angelina Jolie, Lady Gaga, the Olsen twins, and Oprah, among others—his red-soled confections are far more than footwear, and their creator far more than a designer. For the shoe god himself, who recently completed a line of Barbies, the line between fashion and fetish is nearly invisible.

BY VANESSA GRIGORIADIS

Deep in the heart of conspicuous consumption, in a 2.6-million-square-foot luxury mall in Orange County, there is, on a warm evening last spring, a small private party for Christian Louboutin. This is a time in which every woman must whisper about her purchases and feel like Cinderella's wicked step-sister for contemplating so gauche a desire as a thousand-dollar pair of leopard-print booties. Every woman, that is, except the several dozen extremely real housewives of the O.C. who are gathering, in airy polka-

dot dresses and chunky David Yurman bangles, at South Coast Plaza to fête Louboutin, the warm, quizzical 46-year-old king of the heel—the “new Manolo Blahnik,” according to *Visionaire* co-founder Cecilia Dean—or, as one Mercedes-coupe-driving, abundantly spray-tanned Louboutin devotee puts it, cutting through the air with her French-manicured nails, “our shoe god!”

There's something so 1999, so *Sex and the City* about this scene, with the copious champagne, the servers passing mini cupcakes on lollipop sticks, the *clickety-clack* of astonishingly high heels on spotless marble

floors, and the ambient trill of women complimenting other women on their shoes. A boutique party? Didn't we replace these long ago with Art Basel and the Venice Biennale—places where similar fabulously shod people stand around and look at art they don't completely understand? Maybe this is full circle, because on this night—just one of a staggering number of nights that parties like this are thrown around the globe in Louboutin's honor—we are celebrating a new shoe, which looks like a cupcake with little bits of frosting. But

PASCAL CHEVALIER

**HERE'S
LOOKING AT
SHOE, KID**
Christian
Louboutin knows
the secrets of a
woman's sole.

