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Dressing for Fame: A Queen Latifah Video, a Never-Ending Cher Shoot, and More Styling Experiences From Maryam and Marjan Malakpour



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*If celebrity status is conferred in red-carpet appearances, then no actress today can compete without the help of just the right stylist. As Kerry Washington once told *Glamour* after she noticeably upped the sartorial ante, “There were a couple of actresses whom I felt were having the upper hand careerwise—because they knew how to work that red carpet.” A carefully crafted collaboration between stylist and client, the perfect look can create an indelible impact on agents, casting directors, and those of us watching from the sidelines. Straight from the epicenter of all things celebrity, we’ve asked some of the industry’s top stylists to share their experiences and impressions from their perch above Tinseltown. With our *Dressing for Fame* series, we bring you an exclusive, insider look at everything it takes to create those iconic moments captured by a million photo flashes.*

Maryam and Marjan Malakpour

With a client roster that reads like a who’s who of music’s living legends (think Cher, David Bowie, and Keith Richards), Maryam and Marjan Malakpour have mastered the rock god(dess) aesthetic. When they’re not busy with NewbarK, their line of impeccable flats, the two spend their time on the set of music videos and photo shoots, keeping the likes of Heidi Klum and Julian Casablancas ahead of the trends—Maryam even lends her magic Malakpour touch to Angelina Jolie on special projects. Here, the sisters talk to Style.com about how Queen Latifah played a role in their journey, why styling on set is better than the red carpet, and a Cher shoot that took a cool 22 hours to complete.

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How did you get your starts styling?

Marjan Malakpour: For me, it was kind of by surprise. At the time I was living in San Francisco and came here to L.A. to help Maryam, who had been styling a Queen Latifah video shoot. I never left.

Maryam Malakpour: Styling for me was not a planned thing. I didn't even know that stylists existed until I met a Japanese stylist and she asked me if I would assist her on a few projects. I never interned at a magazine or with a huge stylist to really know how they do it. I would say if I could take time back, I would have done that, interned at *Vogue* or for Carine Roitfeld—she is my hero!

As designers of the brand NewbarK, how do you maintain a balance between life as stylists and designers?

Marjan: Sometimes it's very challenging because they are both very full-on projects. But I feel like by now Maryam and I have figured out how to give each area its time. Somehow it works out between the two of us.

Maryam: I do most of the designing for NewbarK, and then present them to my sister. Then together we make edits and comments and changes. I have to get up very early to give time to styling and e-mails and sometimes research for the next inspiration. Most of the time it's all happening simultaneously when I'm alone in my studio office at home and everyone is sleeping.

Do you think being a designer informs your work as a stylist or vice versa?

Marjan: Definitely. Maryam does the design for NewbarK. Because of styling, every season we know what is missing out there or how to make the design better. Basically, this is how NewbarK started. At the time there really weren't any cool flats besides ballerinas and we wanted something that was more rock 'n' roll.

Maryam: For the kind of brand that we have, it's all about what people need and want and can't find. So being a stylist really helps us know that. I am shopping all the time and see great things and not-so-great things and pretty much know what works and what doesn't work for a certain type of person. Also, most brands hire stylists to consult and gather information and ideas for them. In our case, we are all in-house, designing, styling, researching ideas and inspiration—we're doing it all.

What was your “made it” moment?

Marjan: I think when I met David Bowie for “The Next Day” music video I shot with him—that was pretty amazing.

Maryam: When I got my first gig with the Rolling Stones.

What do you find more challenging, photo shoots or red carpets?

Marjan: It really depends on whom you are working with. I can tell you the last photo shoot I did with Cher, who is a great client of mine, went over 22 hours. My alarm clock went off for the next day in my pocket.

Maryam: I prefer photo shoots. It's more that I love to create a moment that's about storytelling rather than just a look on a red carpet.

How do you challenge yourselves to keep things fresh, even after working with some of the same clients for years?

Marjan: Always looking for and keeping up with cool and upcoming designers.

Maryam: It never gets old, as long as you keep dreaming and being inspired and love what you do.

Photo: Roger Davies

Trends / Industry: Stylists Maryam and Marjan Malakpour on Cher, David Bowie, and More

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