

VOGUE

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**INTERNATIONAL
COLLECTIONS
SPECIAL**

**Who's
new on the
fashion radar?**

REALITY CHIC

Checklist: khakis, denim and the great white shirt

Alexa chung

*Fashion's
favourite girl*

**POWER AND
GLAMOUR**

*Can women
have both?*

**THE LAST
TABOO**

We need to talk



the codpiece] to a poetry reading with a bunch of poets... suffering poets.”

As important as image is to rock’n’roll, by the early Seventies, the young poet felt new barriers were being erected. The era of celebrity that Warhol anticipated was coming into view; no longer would she be hanging out in the back room of El Quixote with Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. “They weren’t so different to the rest of us. They had a little more money.” Smith made it her mission to follow the Jimi Hendrix dream, she says, “of evolving rock’n’roll into a universal language that would draw new generations together and begin a positive revolution”. A lofty aim, she concedes, but why not?

“I saw the evolution of rock’n’roll, and I could see it was heading into a whole glamorous arena of drugs and celebrity. I wanted people to remember some of that early grass-roots revolutionary spirit and to create space for a new guard that was not about glamour. That’s why we did *Horses*. I didn’t anticipate going beyond it, and hoped it would be a clarion call for a new generation to take up the torch.”

And, in a sense, it was. The 1975 album, with Mapplethorpe’s black-and-white

portrait on its cover, helped establish a new rock lexicon. The British punks who arrived soon after adopted some of her stances but dropped the overt references to Baudelaire and Rimbaud. In 1979, at the height of her success, she married Fred “Sonic” Smith, guitarist with the politically conscious MC5, and moved to Detroit, leaving her band behind for more than a decade until her husband’s untimely death forced her to resume her career.

“In Europe at the end of Seventies, I was a rock’n’roll star. I tasted what it was like. I had girls running down the street after me, cutting my hair,” Smith recalls. Her decision to abruptly abandon her career was not, as was widely believed at the time, anything to do with selling out. “I didn’t turn away from commercial success. I turned away from the public eye. I devoted myself to my husband and my children.”

So it is with Smith’s relationship with success. “Robert always wanted to see me achieve fame through rock’n’roll. He wanted it very badly. I didn’t care – especially when I was younger. If I had it, great; if I didn’t, great. But if I had done it for no other reason but to make him happy, that would be its own

reward.” For a moment, Smith is moved to tears. “Robert wanted people to see me as he saw me. He wanted everyone to see me in a glowing way ... and for a brief moment, there was that moment. But I don’t know...”

For Smith, who still tours extensively, her reward is in connection to her audience – to “the people”. It is, she says, still exciting to sing “Because the Night”: “I know the people are going to erupt. It’s a great feeling. We have fun. It’s a happy moment. I love the energy, the exchange.” But there’s still an underlying feeling that probably plagues most artists – that they haven’t done enough. Being a rock star has its reward and excitement – for some, financial reward – but a lot of it is sheer labour, she confides. “Writing songs is one area I feel I’ve failed. I’ve written very few songs that hit the nerve of the people, like Smokey Robinson, the Rolling Stones or Bob Dylan.”

Still, she’s never short of young admirers. Nate Lowman, one of the Bowery school of artists that emerged in the past decade, recalls seeing her perform when he first visited the city, aged 15. “Her long, greying hair was stronger than the vines that grow the vertical length of entire buildings. She performed about three songs, and that’s when I knew I would move here as soon as I could.”

Smith’s message, even in writing *Just Kids*, is quietly against the kind of retro-mythologising that dogs rock’n’roll. Even in New York in the Seventies, she recalls, she quickly became obsolete in scenes-within-scenes and sought to escape their clutches. “The scene was not important to me,” she says. “What was important was to go out to the world, tell the new guard, ‘Look, you can create your own scene if you are free.’”

“I tell people, don’t romanticise [the rock club] CBGB’s. Make your own. It was just a place. All punk rock meant to me was freedom. It didn’t mean you had to look a certain way, be ultra-cool, poor or whatever. It just meant freedom. People ask what I think about their kid with a safety pin in their ear? I think, well, fine. So long as it makes you feel free. It’s a transition. It doesn’t matter. Punk rock is not sacred. It belongs to anyone who wants to embrace it, just as I embraced French symbolism. In my mind, I was a French symbolist – it didn’t matter that it was 1965.”

“Just Kids” by Patti Smith is published by Bloomsbury at £19



STYLE HOTELS

Half the joy of staying in hotels is trying on their interior styles for size. Most of us wouldn’t want to live in a house filled with black glass and sofas as large as cars, but it’s fun for a weekend. Style comes in various statements at three new – or newly revamped – hotels this month. The Viceroy Anguilla hotel (Viceroyanguilla.com) in the British West Indies is a sprawling affair with 166 rooms – from vast beachfront villas to more humble suites – set over 35 acres of land and seashore. Driftwood mirrors and petrified-wood tables are set against cool marble in the rooms – interior-designed by Californian Kelly Wearstler – giving them a luxe beachcomber effect. It’s perfect for those who want an element of the beach hut in their rooms, without actually having to get among all that awkward sand.

The seventeenth-century Pavillon de la Reine (Pavillon-de-la-reine.com) is situated amid the discreet grandeur of the Place des Vosges in the Marais, Paris. Racine and Molière used to meet here, and would surely have approved of its revived interiors by Jacques Garcia protégé Didier Benderli. Dark walls, stone fireplaces and grey carpets create an atmosphere of cosy contemplation in the salon spaces, while flock wallpaper, silk curtains and striped carpets lend an urbane romance to the hotel’s 54 rooms. (And anywhere Johnny Depp frequents has our vote.)

The French connection continues at Upper East Side grande dame The Surrey (TheSurrey.com). The New York hotel has undergone a \$60 million facelift, adding a roof garden, a style-conscious hotel bar and lounge inspired by Coco Chanel (featuring a black laquered bar and white quilted walls), and refurbishing 190 guest salons with Art Deco flourishes. It’s all given an injection of modernity with graffitied furniture by London company Jimmie Martin, and with art by Chuck Close and Jenny Holzer in the lobby, proving that hotel interiors are like hotel guests – it’s all in the mix. CS

