

the WOMEN, the MYTHS, the LEGENDS

They are coquettish ingénues and cutting-edge sophisticates, sultry screen sirens and trendy tomboys—and always, undeniably chic. Imitate the best elements of French style as worn by some of the nation's most captivating icons and you, too, will have people asking what gives you that 'je ne sais quoi.'

French women possess a stylish allure with her come-hither cat eyes, among to a prescribed formula than giving off their nonchalant approach to all things a certain enigmatic aura-an air of ef- la mode, there are certainly tricks one fortlessness, innocence, or hyper- can learn from these apparel idols. unquestionably chic filter. like Carine Roitfeld or bohemian char-

sive Coco Chanel to Brigitte Bardot about imitation, after all.

long admired and imitated to no end, others. Such women represent the but never fully unraveled. To be French many shades of French style; and while and fashionable is less about adhering it may be impossible to fully "crack" charged sexuality, all fed through an Whether you count an avant-garde Whatever the cultural-or my- mer like Vanessa Paradis as your gothological-cause, the country has to style goddess, we'll help you stugenerated a parade of fashion icons dy-and steal-elements of their way over the years, from sartorial subver- of dress. You know what they say



PROVOCATEURS

Far from going rosy-cheeked at the mere mention of sex, the French revel in life's libidinous pleasures and demonstrate their love of eroticism via clothing. Such is true of seductresses like Eva Green, who sports perpetually smoky bedroom eyes, slinky bodycon black gowns, and lingerie-inspired separates when she hits the red carpet. Lou Doillon, rebellious kid sister to fellow style paragon Charlotte Gainsbourg, sometimes dons tomboy-chic attire, but is better known for her love of lace, leather, and dresses with eyebrow-raising hemlines. But it's Brigitte Bardot who has virtually come to define the French sexpot; pouring herself into curve emphasizing knits, bustiers, and revealing beachwear, Bardot's more-is-more philosophy has taught women that racy need not be a fourletter word.





SOPHISTICATES

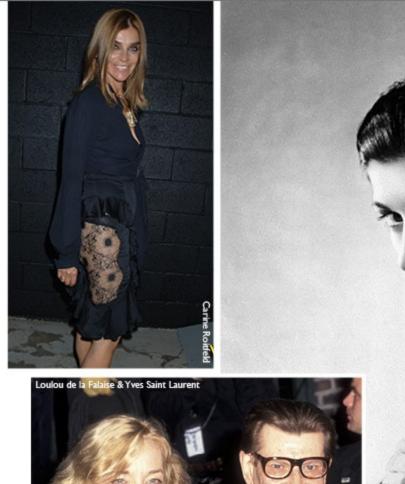
In contrast to their risqué counterparts, French sophisticates adopt a less showy, yet no less memorable, signature look. Magnetic crossover star Marion Cotillard opts for feminine blouse and skirt combinations by day and glamorous floor-length numbers by night, Audrey Tautou pairs iconic garments—such as crisp button downs and femme tuxedos reminiscent of Le Smoking—with on-trend separates for an au courant spin on classics; and Catherine Deneuve, ever the refined bombshell, proves that perfectly tailored shift dresses and trenches are perennially en vogue. Smart accessories with a bit of punch, like an animal skin satchel or dazzling chain necklace, add a nicely flashy touch to such streamlined ensembles.



AVANT GARDES

France is known for producing many a prescient tastemaker over the years. These intrepid individuals have led influential fashion movements and birthed lasting, culture-shifting trends. Gutsily challenging the quotidian, their ingenuity has helped propel style forward, inspiring subsequent generations of creatives to do the same.

History counts Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel among this circle of savants, her revolutionary sportswear liberating women from the confines of corsets. Left Bank bohemian Loulou de la Falaise (of British and French heritage) followed suit, bringing worldly influences to haute couture runways during the '70s and brashly adorning herself in self-designed accessories. And, of course, there's Carine Roitfeld, whose irreverent, sexually-charged approach to fashion illustrates that visionary styling can turn the ordinary into something cutting edge. However diverse, what unites such industry idols is their commitment to innovation and originality above all else.









MINIMALISTS

French style is synonymous with simplicity: it is unfussy and seemingly innate to members of this fashionable gene pool. The combination of a tissue-thin white vneck, worn-in denim, and biker boots, for instance, looks immeasurably chic on women like Charlotte Gainsbourg, who wears the uniform with classy panache. Gainsbourg predecessor and fellow chanteuse Françoise Hardy was fond of an equally pared down look, demonstrating that the right measure of androgyny could ooze sultriness, too. Think Breton-striped tops, polo necks with mod minis, and the occasional hit of fur to top it all off. Dressing with a similar sense of ease is the oft-photographed former model Vanessa Paradis. The designer favorite reaches for ethereal gowns and tough footwear and throws sharp blazers over feather-light frocks-a skillful blend of contrasts. keep the public rapt in awe of their voguish ways.

