

# SundayStyles

Section 9

## A Little Begging, A Little Borrowing

During Oscar week, stars troop through hotel suites set up like designer showrooms.



Photographs by Marissa Roth for The New York Times

To enhance her wardrobe for Oscar week festivities, Bridget Fonda, above, makes a stop in the Jimmy Choo suite at L'Ermitage to find a pair of shoes to go with her dress. Below, mannequins in evening wear in the Versace suite at the Beverly Hills Hotel await famous clients.

By **GINIA BELLAFANTE**

LOS ANGELES

**K**ELLY CUTRONE, a liberally tattooed fashion publicist, was waiting for a call on Wednesday afternoon from a stylist who shares her name with an Edgar Allan Poe poem. Raven Kauffman, the stylist, had spent many hours — about 172, in fact — putting together an outfit for Courtney Love to wear to the Oscars today. Now, Ms. Kauffman was supposed to be calling to say whether Ms. Love, a guest again this year, would appear at the Shrine Auditorium, her clavicles supporting a billboard for Bulgari. Ms. Love was thinking about wearing a necklace from Bulgari, one of Ms. Cutrone's clients.

But Ms. Love hadn't made up her mind, it turned out, because she still didn't know which dress she would wear. Her stylist was pursuing a certain Valentino gown, but the house hadn't agreed to let her have it yet.

"They're going to hold it up to the last minute, to see if they can get someone bigger to wear it," Ms. Cutrone speculated on the phone. Valentino is not her client, but she knows how the game is played.

"You'll get it by Friday at 4," she predicted. In the meantime, Ms. Cutrone suggested that Ms. Love consider a Batgirl number from one of her clients, Carlo Ponti. The dress was quite revealing, however, prompting Ms. Cutrone to ask,



"How are Courtney's upper thighs right now?"

The days leading up to the Oscars constitute a high-stress shopping frenzy, much of it centered in the consumption mecca of Beverly Hills, and most of it the kind in which no cash or credit cards change hands. On Thursday afternoon in the V.I.P. room of the Chanel store on Rodeo Drive, there was outward calm but an underlying current of drama. Five celebrities, one an Oscar nominee, had requested the

same black and white lace sequined gown from the spring 2001 haute couture collection. Anne Fahey, Chanel's publicity director, said priority would be given to the woman who called first, though she declined to name her.

Those highest on the Academy Awards-night food chain, the nominees and presenters, typically order multiple dresses, often weeks in advance. The last days before the ceremony are spent skulking in and out of bungalows and suites at the Beverly Hills Hotel rented by houses like Gucci and Versace, for fittings and final decisions. Design houses famously try to keep secret the news of whom they are dressing, out of fear that fickle stars will change their minds and designers will look like network anchors on election night, calling Gore-takes-Florida victories.

(Despite the secrecy, everyone and her manicurist seemed to know by week's end that Hillary Swank is planning to wear

**A shopping spree without money or credit cards? Sure, if you're welcome at the Gucci bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel.**

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