

Lady IN Red

Red is the colour of passion and the allure of a scarlet pout is hard to resist. Diana d'Arenberg on the powerful effects of the red lip

What is it about a woman wearing red lipstick that makes us turn around to stop and stare? Is it the confidence she evokes? After all, the woman wearing red lipstick is no wallflower and is armed with moxie. Is it the promise of sex hinted at by the colour red? For centuries, red lipstick has been associated with sexual availability and easy virtue. Perhaps it is the glamour evoked of a bygone era when the silver screen presented us with Hollywood goddesses like Marilyn Monroe, Lana Turner or Ava Gardner. It seems that the woman wearing red lipstick is instantly sexier and more desirable—a fact noted by civilisations throughout our history.

Red lipstick has been a mainstay of a woman's toilette for millennia. The ancient Egyptians, the Romans and the Greeks used a form of red lipstick to enhance their sexual attractiveness. The association of red lipstick and sex was also not Christian Medieval England where it was banned by the Church and seen as the devil's work. The power of lipstick's transformation resulted in condemnation as witchcraft in 18th century, and its perception as bastion of the wanton woman in Victorian times. In the roaring '20s, suffragettes fighting for a voice applied red to their lips as a symbol of empowerment and defiance. When times are hard, red lipstick sales soar. A slash of red lipstick is the cheapest way to add a dose of glamour and boost morale. This was evident during depression and during World War 2 when red lipstick became a symbol of femininity in a world of rations and bombings. By mid-20th century, with the emergence of the cosmetics industry as we now know it, red lipstick became a symbol of glamour and ladylike grooming, and sexual difference. Unsurprisingly, just like she did with the little black dress, aldehydic perfumes and costume jewellery, it was Coco Chanel who popularised red lipstick and made it chic and glamorous. Creating her first lip colour as far back as 1921, she viewed red lips as a necessity to seduction. And it seems there may be a scientific explanation to the allure of red lipstick.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALEX SARGINSON/FIGARO PHOTO/SNAPPER MEDIA



Rouge Dior in 729 Sonatine, \$44, Dior

Snow Crystal Intense Lipstick in LR09 Pink Fever, \$32, Laneige

Shimmering Rouge in OR 405, \$43, Shiseido.

Amplified Lipstick in Neon Orange, \$28, M.A.C

Ceramide Plump Perfect Lipstick in Perfect Scarlet 23, \$40, Elizabeth Arden

ColorBurst Lipstick in Plum, \$21.90, Revlon

ROUGE FATALE

Nothing screams "temptress" louder than a sexy red pout

According to a recent study carried out at Manchester University, it's the lips that are most likely to catch a man's attention. Especially red lipstick, keeping him fixated for an average of 7.3 seconds, compared to 2.2 seconds without lipstick, whilst the eyes, those windows of our soul, are likely to take up no more than 3 seconds. Dr Geoff Beattie, who led the research, reported to the *Daily Mail* that "this study proves that lips represent one of the most sensual aspects of a woman's body and play a critical role in human sexual attraction. Full and red lips combined deliver the perfect

pout to achieve male fixation." Red full lips denote health, fertility and youth and as such are a powerful biological attractor.

If you think red lipstick isn't for you'd be wrong. There's a red for every shade to suit every colour. For a fail-safe classic, try a bestselling classic like Chanel Rouge Allure, a vivid creamy red. Or a softer red, which can be used to build up intensity of colour. Or go on smooth, are long-lasting and don't dry out your lips. Or try Yves Laurent's Rouge Volupté 17 Red for a deep fuchsia red. Then there's the new Serum de Rouge in crimson, a red lip treatment that hydrates while giving it an intense boost of moisture. These classics have been leading the way in red lipstick sales by 35 per cent last year at Selfridges alone. Tens of millions of women surely can't be wrong.

Whatever it is about it that inspires such a mix of love and divisive feelings, red lipstick not only has the power to change the way you feel and the way others feel about you. A streak of red on the lips is like an unspoken statement, whether it is one of seduction, power or glamour. Pink lipstick inspires no such feeling. And brown? Beige? Forget it. That's about as sexy as old sweat pants and sneakers in a supermarket queue. It's only red lips that demand attention, holding a man's gaze, inspiring a woman's admiration and immediately making one feel dressed up. All it takes is a bit of chutzpah and confidence to pull off a red-stained pout. And what could be sexier than a woman with a strong sense of self, coupled with a bit of red lippy? ■