

Sienna Miller New Brave Sienna

When Sienna Miller shot to fame 13 years ago while dating Jude Law, she became an instant global style icon – and the victim of a muck-raking British press. Tabloid gossip aside, the Golden Globe-nominated actress has now quietly worked her way into the Hollywood big league and still commands fashion envy the world over. As she talks politics, feminism and Freudian analysis, *Vassi Chamberlain* is charmed by this razor-sharp and surprisingly candid, independent single mother

Photography by Cass Bird Fashion editor Alex White





Previous page:
pants by Céline,
\$1,868; shoes by
Chanel, \$1,110
Opposite:
waistcoat, \$744,
and pants, \$914,
both by Dolce &
Gabbana at Net-A-
Porter.com; shoes
by Chanel, \$1,110

“I would like to think that
all women are *feminists*.
That we aren’t recognized
as *equal* makes me irate”

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the name Sienna Miller? Blond actress, great style, Jude Law, curious platonic friendship with Bradley Cooper? All correct. But wisdom and intellect? Not immediately. That's not to say Miller isn't sparky and fun in that assured English-girl way. But by the end of our near two-hour conversation, more than her fine-featured beauty, choppy bob, cool girl clothes, surprising honesty about men, recent experiences with therapy and even the size of her bush, it's her unaffected intelligence that stands out.

Miller's ascent to where she is now, a serious player in Hollywood, who first came to international prominence in the 2006 Edie Sedgwick biopic *Factory Girl* and now stars opposite Oscar-worthy leading men such as Ben Affleck and Bradley Cooper, has been a slow burn, punctuated by the distraction of a photogenic love life and the intense obsession with the way she dresses. She became widely known in the early 2000s as an old-fashioned model/It-girl. She might well have tried to establish herself as an actress, and she did in films such as Matthew Vaughn's 2004 *Layer Cake*, but her style and love affairs proved too distracting for the gossip press of the time, seduced, as we all were, by the alluring combination of great beauty and perceived privilege.

It wouldn't be stretching the truth to say she had a rough time, both trying to prove herself professionally, and protect herself emotionally. And it is undoubtedly why, when I arrive a little ahead of her at Essenza, the low-key neighborhood Italian she has chosen for lunch near her house in London's Notting Hill, I um and ah over where she should sit so she is most protected from other diners.

"Pah, it doesn't matter," she says, sitting down and adjusting the side of her grown-out bob, so it falls just right, a tick she will repeat many times during our conversation. "I've been wandering around Portobello all morning," she says. Like many London girls who regularly make the pilgrimage to the famous market every Friday and Saturday, she was searching for that great fashion find. "Looking for that dress, always looking for that dress," she says, laughing.

From the way she speaks, with a natural unedited honesty, it becomes clear that she's the sort of person who lives by her own sound instinct, rather than PR strategy. Indeed, the way she described her ordeal at the hands of the British press (constantly chased by 10 to 15 photographers and reporters for the three years she dated Jude Law) during the government's 2012 inquiry into the phone hacking scandal, of which she was a victim, was both powerful and eloquent. Does she still get bothered? "No, no never," she says. "We are in different times now. But I have a theory. I'm not being stupidly bashful, and of course there are occasionally people who give you funny looks but I do think that as an individual you can attract or repel that

energetically. I know people who are mega-stars, like Bradley Cooper, he takes the subway and he walks through New York City totally anonymously. He's not asking for it. People will see and notice him but there's something you can force-field. There are people who somehow attract it and want it and need it, but I do think it's something you can harness." But surely she must get stopped for selfies, the scourge of today's famous. "I have boundaries now," she says, as if they were a newly acquired talent. "I'll just go, 'I'm really sorry but I'm with my daughter,' or, 'It's nice to meet you but I'm not doing anything professional, I'm just stuffing my face.'"

She has an injunction against the paparazzi in the UK, stopping them from photographing her unless she is working, but she is worried that when she moves to New York in September she won't be accorded the same degree of distance. Now that time has elapsed since she gave evidence, how well does she think the investigation was handled? "I think it's a huge disappointment. It was just an appeasement by the government. But culturally, media has changed; Twitter and Instagram have made people much more in charge of their own image, much more in control of what happens, much more powerful than any news outlet will be because they can just retaliate through social media."

"Thank God I actually survived it," she continues. "I watched that Amy Winehouse documentary and, not to compare myself, but there was footage that... it was a similar time, and you just lose your mind. It basically perpetuates all the behavior that it wants. It creates what it can feed off. It's a really toxic animal. So you start to implode and then there's more footage and you can't help but... I couldn't cope but it's resilience that kicked in. And no heroin addiction, thank God."

"You sound like someone who..." , and I'm about to say, who has been in therapy, except she stops me. There is a curious look in her eye, like an impatient child bursting to say something. "Like someone who's done the Hoffman," she says, triumphantly, referring to the controversial intensive one-week residential therapy course. "That's literally why I'm like blahblahblah." For someone so burnt by press intrusion, the admission feels shockingly honest. But perhaps it's her way, a clever one, of controlling personal information. What was it like? "Fucking amazing. It's terrifying but extraordinary. It's 10 years of therapy in a week. I got back a week ago. It takes a while to settle. It's focused on Freudian analysis, which is basically how behavior patterns are all learned, so what the Hoffman does is analyze who you can trace them all back to, either parents or surrogates, then you kind of let go and examine who you would have been if you hadn't taken on all these negative traits. There's an immense amount of space in my head and there is no fucking noise in it for the first time. All that noise has just gone."

The Hoffman Process is well-known to be emotionally brutal, not something undertaken lightly. Advocates swear it >



Dress by Prada, \$3,975; bikini top by Araks, \$210

Bikini by Lisa
Marie Fernandez,
\$605, at Net-A-
Porter.com;
sunglasses by
Céline, \$295



“(My sister and I) we share a *heart*,
she is my rock, my *foundation* for everything.
Without her, I don’t know, *she’s everything* really”

changes their life, others that the method is too harsh. Why did she do it? “I just got to a point where I just felt... I didn’t understand why I was, I couldn’t dig myself out, I couldn’t make decisions, I felt pretty assaulted by life and not in control.”

She describes herself as a single mother, and confirms that she has separated from the actor Tom Sturridge, father of her young daughter Marlowe, who turns four this summer. But whatever drove her there, it seems almost too simplistic to pin down to her love life alone. “Without being really indulgent, I think as you get older you have to really cultivate your mind and have a deep understanding of self, otherwise you just become lonely and isolated and unsatisfied and unfulfilled, and however your perfect little life looks on paper, there will be a sense of unfulfillment if you haven’t explored the nature, the very depths of who you are.”

As a famous person it must have been difficult opening up with people she didn’t know, particularly being someone who legally sought to protect her privacy. But she says she didn’t find it a problem because she doesn’t see herself as that kind of person – someone who is famous. “I think I was much more aware of myself in that way when I was being constantly followed,” she says.

We have been so busy speaking that I don’t notice a waiter hovering behind my chair. “Do you mind if I order,” she asks. “I’m starving.” And to the waiter: “Please can I have the spaghetti bolognese and some steamed spinach.” “Wine?” he asks. She looks at me for a split second. “No, no, better not.” When the pasta arrives, she douses it in Parmesan, and eats with a sort of sexy appetite.

It’s a wonder looking the way she does, so youthfully beautiful in an oversize Céline (“I love Céline obsessively, I love Gucci too, I’m less into the sexy, I want to wonder what’s underneath”) beige coat, cream cable-knit Isabel Marant fitted sweater and torn light-blue boyfriend jeans, that she has a reputation for living life well, for having fun. I can’t see her shoes, I say. She lifts her slim leg above the table to show a plain white Converse-like trainer with lilac socks, probably stolen from her daughter.

Her hair, the modern jawbone-grazing bob she recently made famous, is now longer and half up in a messy, little ponytail. She takes it down to show me, runs her fingers through the fine pale strands, and shakes it out. “I just got it done,” she says, putting it back up, her mouth pouting naturally as she speaks. “It’s a little too blonde. I need to get it fixed.” There are multiple piercings in her ears, from top to bottom. How many does she have? She cocks an ear in my

direction. “You count.” There are five in one and four in the other. “I’ve got one in my tummy, but I don’t wear anything in it.” Her skin (she isn’t wearing a scrap of makeup, not even mascara) has a mesmerizing airbrushed velvety quality to it, the result of a recent bleaching treatment. “I had so many sun spots and marks. It’s called the Obagi method, it really works.” She has tattoos too; a little bird on the inside of one wrist, and her daughter’s name on the other. Plus there’s a nasty looking burn. “It’s a housewife’s burn,” she says, referring to her love of cooking.

There is something authentic to Miller, something vanity, or even acting classes, can’t buy. She presents herself to others as she sees herself. What does being a feminist mean for her today? “That we aren’t recognized as equal makes me irate,” she starts.

Then she stops and exclaims, “Pull down my pants and I’ll show you what a feminist looks like. Somebody said I looked like a 1940s virgin. That’s an insight into my level of feminism.” Gwyneth Paltrow recently described herself as having a ‘1970s vibe going’. Is that what she means? “Yes, full 1970s vibe. It really depresses me to read that young boys, because of YouPorn, don’t think women have hair. I actually feel much sexier with it. It’s really unbalanced to have nothing.”

Most striking is the honesty with which she discusses intensely personal matters. Actors sometimes do that by accident, lulled into the confessional sense of intimacy that sometimes happens in interviews. But the call always comes a few days later. “Please don’t mention that,” the publicist will say, the implication of mildly threatening consequences hanging in the

air. But Miller is cunning. When I bump into her at a party a week after our interview, she exclaims with a huge smile on her face: “Oh, I was so indiscreet with you. You know that bit about the Hoffman, and my big bush, I didn’t say too much did I? You know how to handle that, don’t you?” The charm again.

This is no false posturing. I remember seeing her once in a crowded RV at Glastonbury (she was in black fur), and then again at a friend’s wedding last summer. Both times she was one of many fashionable friends, not *the* fashionable friend. I was struck by how little, unlike other actors, she seems to value or make use of her star status. She says hello, she smiles, she has little or no affectation. She talks loudly and expresses opinions. But cleverly, she eschews social media. “Twitter just breeds narcissism, it infantilizes adults,” she says. “Social media in general is hugely addictive; imagine every cab ride you’re on, you’re on your fucking phone and you’re missing life.”



Sienna embraces her daughter Marlowe. Bikini by Lisa Marie Fernandez, \$385

The overriding impression is of someone who feels good in her own skin; the way she looks up and smiles whenever the waiter approaches our table, demonstrates a natural social ease. It seems innate, a confidence born out of a sound upbringing rather than entitlement, something one suspects she taught herself from a young age – how to appeal to adults who weren’t her parents, to get what she wanted. She was sent to a private boarding school at the age of eight; and went on to Heathfield, the all-girls school, whose chief qualification is its spitting distance from Eton, the all-male boarding school, founded by Henry VIII, most recently attended by Princes William and Harry. She thought of herself as a rebellious teen who was intelligent but not academic and she went to illegal raves in Dalston, one of London’s then edgier suburbs. But she says she never lied to her parents.

When I ask who her best friends are she becomes serious: “The ones I was at Heathfield with. We raised each other.” Her best friend is her publicist Tori Cook. The pair met at school when they were both 10, and their mothers, Jo and Adi, a wonderfully eccentric double-act, are best friends. But the person she is closest to is her sister Savannah; the siblings, who used to be co-creative directors of the fashion line Twenty8Twelve, speak four times a day. “We share a heart, she is my rock, my foundation for everything. Without her, I don’t know, she’s everything really.”

Leaving home so young clearly both marked and united the sisters (“I’ve been independent since the age of eight”). She mentions it more than once, noting in particular how resilient she had to become as a result. But she stops short of criticizing her parents, who divorced when she was five and whom she is still very close to. “I don’t want to shit on my parents,” she says. Her father,

once a banker, was with her at last year’s Oscars, when she presented an award. I saw them on the night. They made an attractive duo, both with the same amused glint in the eye. Edwin Miller looked like he was having the night of his life. He also looked like a movie star himself. The pair walked around arm in arm at the *Vanity Fair* party, chatting with Eddie Redmayne and Robert Pattinson, laughing with Bradley Cooper, as if they were at a local hunt ball in Gloucestershire.

She says she knew she wanted to act from the age of three, when she played the Angel Gabriel in a Christmas play. Her mother, Jo, who ran London’s Lee Strasberg acting school, constantly took her young daughters to see plays. “I grew up loving the theater,” she says “I didn’t have a strategy. I just knew that acting was what I wanted to do. I was completely confident I would do it. It turns out I did the right thing. I love the exploration of personalities. I like being nomadic and meeting creative people; there’s this sort of motley crew coming together and

creating something. I love that. It constantly surprises me that I get immense fulfillment from it, and actually, increasingly so.”

“It’s a very strange profession,” she continues. “It’s fascinating in terms of the loss of self; the most satisfying part is when you completely disappear and fully immerse in something else, which on a very pretentious level is kind of a spiritual experience, at the same time the reward of that is that it just breeds incessant narcissism. So it’s so strange, for want of sounding like a complete prick, that there’s this kind of selfless but mildly spiritual experience which is then rewarded by fueling the one thing that you’re trying to shed, which is your ego.”

Her first break came with the Matthew Vaughn film, *Layer Cake*, where she played opposite Daniel Craig. The pair famously had an affair, a postscript to which formed part of her testimony during the phone-hacking inquiry. The message she left on his voice mail one day was read out in court: “I love you,” she said, explaining that those were words she often spoke to good friends. Whether by decision or accident, she disappeared

for a few years during and after the inquiry, at least from the tabloids, demonstrating that she wasn’t the sort who needed the limelight to survive. She fell in love and had a child. But it was her appearance in the 2012 film *The Girl* as Tippi Hedren that earned her a Golden Globe nomination, that marked the moment when the tide of opinion turned. In 2014, she was cast in the critically acclaimed movie *Foxcatcher* (the Seoul Olympics wrestling thriller also starring Channing Tatum, Steve Carell and Mark Ruffalo), followed by the box-office success *American Sniper*, opposite Bradley Cooper. Both performances were roundly praised.

In the past, Cooper, whom Miller now counts as her best male friend, has commented that

she is like a little Napoleon. Why did he give her that name? “It’s that resilience we keep coming back to,” she says. “I stand up for myself, that’s what he’s referring to. Also he would have seen the stability of my life. I’ve got a cottage in the country and I have friends who come all the time and I cook and it’s open and in many ways it’s really idyllic. It’s a 16th-century thatched cottage with five bedrooms, it’s like a Hobbit house and it’s really scruffy. So he probably saw that. You know us actors are nomads, we’re like gypsies, so he would come and hang out. Let’s FaceTime him,” she suddenly says. She pulls her phone out of her bag. But it’s the middle of the night in LA, I say. “He gets up early to go to the gym; if he’s asleep he won’t answer.” She holds up her cell, we huddle in next to each other, our faces reflected back at us. I badly don’t want him to answer. I imagine her saying: “Dude [she calls him Dude], this is my friend Vassi, actually she’s a journalist,” followed by his hesitant reply, an embarrassing [CONTINUED ON PAGE 204]



With her mother Jo. Bikini as before



This page: sweater
by Victoria
Beckham, \$880;
bikini briefs by
Eres, \$205, both at
Net-A-Porter.com
Opposite: dress
by Tom Ford,
\$4,950, at Net-A-
Porter.com





This page: shirt by Versace, \$668; jodhpurs by Cavalleria Toscana, \$305, at Net-A-Porter.com; boots by Cavalleria Toscana, \$565
Opposite: dress by Altuzarra, \$6,695; earrings by Oscar de la Renta, \$590, at Net-A-Porter.com





“However your *perfect* little life looks on paper, there will be a sense of *unfulfillment* if you haven’t explored the nature, the very *depths* of who you are”

Dress by
Ralph Lauren
Collection,
\$2,790; sandals
by Saint Laurent
by Hedi
Slimane, \$830

TRAVEL NOTE

The Magic Of Mustique

Mustique is an island of hidden characters, one that has evolved over the years to become many things to different people. It was first made popular by Princess Margaret's great friend, the late Colin Tennant, or Lord Glenconner, who bought it in the late 1950s and developed it from scratch, building 18 houses with his friend the great stage designer, Oliver Messel. Together they created an imprint which has endured to this day; one where Messel's haute Caribbean style gives a stamp of history to this tiny island, once almost exclusively inhabited by Brits, but now a playground for those global nomads (rock stars, models, bon viveurs) who like an aura of seclusion but with the constant availability of fun. Today there are Indian palaces, Balinese villas, Hawaiian beach huts, Scottish follies and French chateaux, but the houses that truly feel indigenous are the ones Messel designed, open to the breeze and multi-leveled, such as Callaloo and Zinnia, where his spirit lives on. The first sits on a promontory overlooking the island, like a perfectly positioned observation point, its vast main room offering 360-degree views of the tropical surroundings, whereas the second, more of a traditional plantation house, has a grand Gatsby-like double staircase down to the pool – both the perfect set for a party. mustique-island.com/villa/zinnia; mustique-island.com/villa/callaloo

Jumpsuit by Miu Miu, \$2,995





Dress by Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane, \$4,990, at [Net-A-Porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com); sandals by Saint Laurent by Hedi Slimane, \$830; earrings by Oscar de la Renta, \$490, at [Net-A-Porter.com](https://www.net-a-porter.com)



SCAN & SHOP THESE
LOOKS WITH THE
NET-A-PORTER APP
Hair Earl Simms at Caren.
Makeup Wendy Rowe at Caren.
Set design Daniel Graff at Mary
Howard Studio. Production
PRODi at Art+Commerce.
Post production Gloss Studio
New York. Shot on location in
Mustique ([mustique-island.com](https://www.mustique-island.com)) on April 10 & 11, 2016