

## *Clothes now celebrate pregnancy*



*By Daphne Gordon*

### **"Pregnancy is the new black."**

So announced the fabulous Canadian born style commentator Steven Cojocar, when he did the red carpet thing for Entertainment Tonight at the Screen Actor's Guild awards earlier this year.

Cojo was responding to the sight of Will & Grace star Debra Messing, who wore a flowing green and gold goddess dress. But the most beautiful thing about her outfit was not her expensive jewelry, it was the glow she radiated thanks to the fact that she was seven months pregnant.

Messing is one of several high-profile Hollywood Celebrities who have turned pregnancy into a style trend. While it was cute to carry a miniature maltese in one's purse two years ago, these days, the biggest style statement is to be photographed by the paparazzi looking serene in a designer evening gown while in the later stages of pregnancy.

Actress and former waif Gwyneth Paltrow, set to give birth to rock star Chris Martin's child this summer, has been seen wearing feminine dresses that draw attention to her now womanly figure.

Courtney Cox, pregnant with husband David Arquette's baby, appears (on the cover!) of last week's In Touch magazine wearing a denim skirt and red cardigan, bursting at the buttons to make room for her growing bump. Inside the magazine, a snapshot of actress Helen Hunt on the beach in Maui reveals how the 40-year-old looks in a bikini several months into her first pregnancy.

As well, a current list of celebs who are pregnant is available at a popular Web site for moms-to-be, [www.sheknows.com](http://www.sheknows.com), as well as a list of 30 famous moms who have breast-fed in public and pictures of stylish celebrity nurseries, and a list of weird baby names chosen by celebrities. (Toni Braxton called her son Denim!)

Perhaps this celebrity baby obsession is a sign that we're over Britney Spears' childish scandals and Christina Aguilera's hilariously raunchy getups. Maybe we want to see something a little more respectable and real.

Though the lives of pregnant celebrities are undoubtedly made more stylish by loads of cash and a full staff, the spotlight on celebrity moms

has been good for real-life moms-to-be. It's led to a realization that pregnant women can be sexy and stylish while they're expecting.

So maternity clothing is more beautiful than ever and real-life pregnant women have found bold new courage to show off their inner glow and blossoming figures.

"Women's lives have changed," says Eva Salem, owner of a chic new maternity clothing store called Belly Maternity. "The mentality now is that women care what they look like, whether they're pregnant or not. Letting it go isn't acceptable anymore when you're pregnant," she says.

"Women have jobs, social lives, they've got a lot going on and they have to look good."

Salem, who had been working in New York for L'Oreal, opened her small but beautiful boutique last November because she had many stylish pregnant friends who couldn't find maternity clothes they liked.

Featuring fluttery blouses by Diane von Furstenburg, stretchy cotton thong underwear by the appropriately named Brazilian brand Bellabumbum, and Earl jeans with nearly invisible elastic panels, Belly is where the yummy mummies will shop this summer for sweet sundresses and diaper bags that aren't completely humiliating.

Salem, who is barely pregnant with her first child and jokes that she'll be better dressed when her belly begins to show than she is now, notes that Hollywood has shown it's possible to look fashionable during pregnancy, and that the trends in regular fashion do translate on a more rounded figure.

Designers of mainstream lines have begun creating modified styles for pregnant women, based on their best-selling styles. That means the girl who loves wearing the hippest jeans of the moment, Citizens of Humanity, can continue doing so while she's preggers, thanks to another new boutique in Toronto, Kick Maternity, which opened in January and carries maternity versions of the hottest denim and sportswear lines going.

Over at Over the Rainbow, demand for casual separates among customers who are about to start family has led owner Joel Carman to begin offering expert alterations to install nearly invisible denim-coloured stretch maternity panels into a new or old pair of jeans. It costs about \$40 per pant or skirt.

In recent years, stylish pregnant women have taken to wearing low-rise pants and cropped tops, showing off a bit of bare belly on the hottest days of summer.

At first, it seemed a bit shocking. But it was also a sign that we're increasingly seeing women's bodies as beautiful, regardless of shape or size, and that's a good thing.

But as quickly as it came, the bare belly trend has passed, just as it has in regular fashion.

"This year, you're seeing less and less cropped tops and low pants, and now women are showing off their figures but it's more tailored," notes Salem, pointing out an elegant tube dress that would definitely draw attention to a growing belly.

And pregnant women are willing to pay for clothes they might wear for only a few months, says Salem.

"Pregnancy isn't a long period of time, but you're wearing the same pieces over and over, so people are investing, and then mixing and matching."

The trend toward stretchy fabrics in regular fashion has also made it easier for moms-to-be to find clothing they can wear into the ninth month.

"I found Lululemon and lived in their stuff," says Melanie Casselman, a 33-year-old account manager who is in her ninth month and expecting her first child this weekend.

After explaining that her blouse top was not actually meant as a maternity piece, Casselman said she found it hard to find clothes she liked while she was pregnant.

"I don't find that a lot of what's available is very attractive. I know there's a lot of stuff online, but when you convert the exchange rate from the U.S., it's really expensive."

But she invested in a couple of nice suits, and bought a couple of cocktail dresses from the funky Toronto-based line Yummy Mummy.

She liked the clothes at the Yorkville boutique Formes, which carries a stylish line of maternity wear from France.

Of course, Casselman did notice the paparazzi pictures of pregnant women everywhere she looked. And while it was nice to see stars such as Liz Hurley and Catherine Zeta-Jones looking glam and on the go while expecting, she also enjoyed pictures of stars living their real lives.

"I was glad to see pictures of people like Kate Hudson. She looked like a normal pregnant person, when you compare it to someone like Sarah Jessica Parker, who always looked like a glamour girl."

But Casselman did manage to feel sexy during her pregnancy, a fact that surprised both her and her and her husband.

'It's possible to feel sexy, but it really depends on your partner, I think. My husband is still really attracted to...I've gained 45 pounds, which is a lot, but it does make you feel very womanly. I thought I'd want to hide it but I don't. I wear body clinging stuff. I went out quite a bit, I went out for quiet dinners with friends, and although you can't have the cocktails, you can still wear the cocktail dress. I felt attractive and confident."

So Happy Mother's Day to Casselman, and to the many women who will be pregnant in the hot and humid city this summer. May you blossom beautifully and enjoy your newfound cleavage to the fullest.

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