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APRIL 2011

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THINKING FASHION

Bazaar

Harper's

COLLECTORS' EDITION
3-FOLD-OUT COVERS

AUSTRALIA

538 NEW A-LIST LOOKS

Abbie
CORNISH
SKY'S THE LIMIT

- + RACHAEL TAYLOR
- ALICE ENGLERT
- TERESA PALMER
- COLIN FIRTH
- SOPHIE LOWE
- GEMMA WARD
- JEFFERSON HACK
- JAVIER BARDEM
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GIRLS ON film

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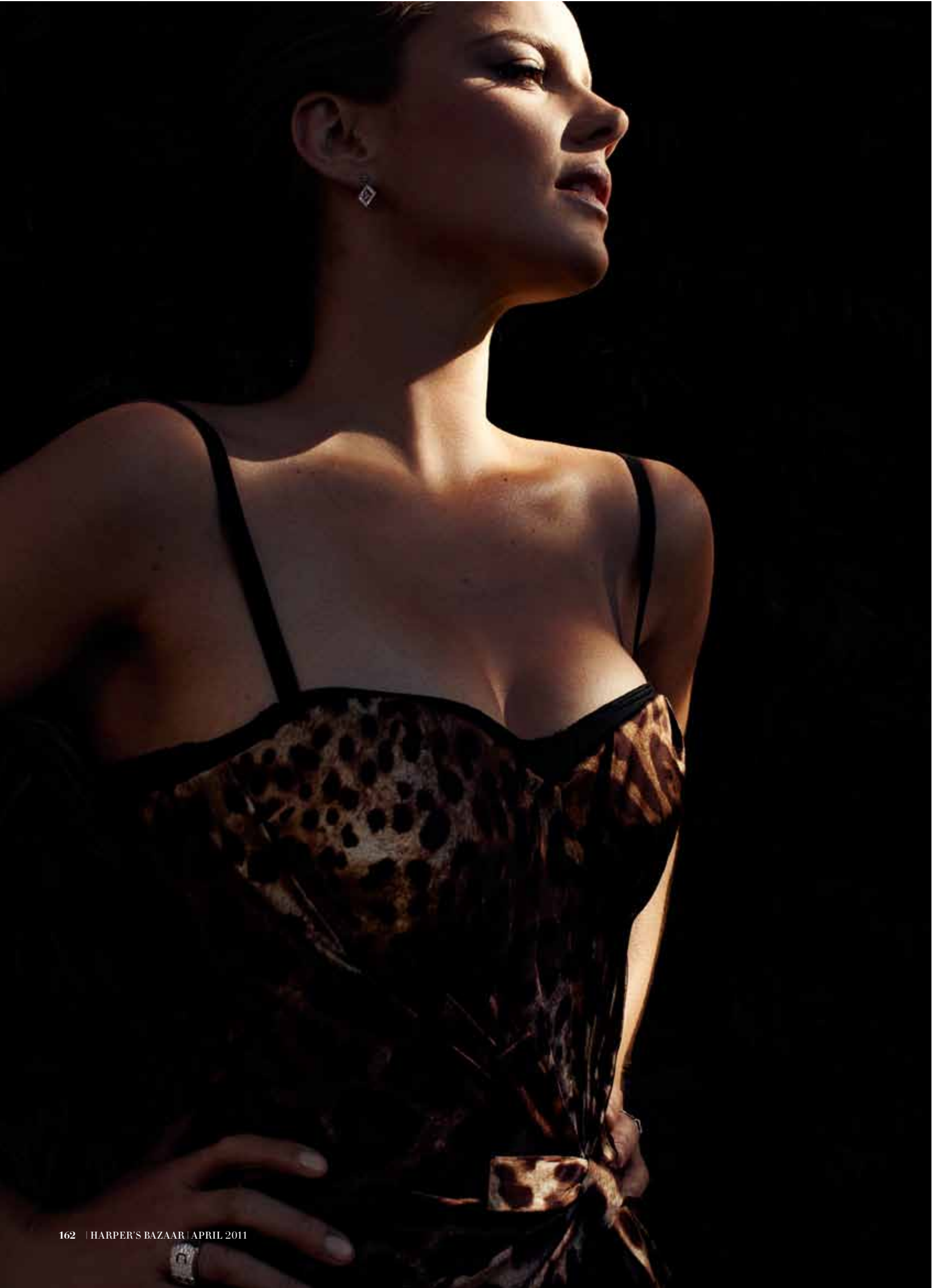
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APRIL 2011 \$9.50
(INC GST) NZ \$9.20 (INC GST)



Abbie Cornish wears
Dion Lee dress, \$2200;
Cerrone earrings, \$4445;
on Cornish's left hand, from
left: **Cartier** ring, \$7050;
antique ring, \$6500, from
Anne Schofield Antiques; on
Cornish's right hand: **Bulgari**
ring, \$6850. Styled by
Christine Centenera.





Opposite page: Cornish wears **Dolce & Gabbana** dress, \$2125, and corset (worn underneath), \$995, from a selection at Xile; **Tiffany & Co.** earrings, \$5600; on Cornish's right hand: **Bulgari** ring, \$9550.

This page: **Burberry Prorsum** dress, price on application; **Tiffany & Co.** earrings, \$5600; **Cartier** ring, \$7050; antique ring, \$6500, from **Anne Schofield**. Beauty note: **Dior** Hydra Life Pro-Youth Comfort Crème.

The Starlet

The independent-film darling turned
A-lister talks Australian “angels”,
working with Madonna and the
rural roots that keep her grounded.
By *JENNY COONEY CARRILLO*.
Photographed by *BENNY HORNE*

It seemed serendipitous to Abbie Cornish that she was accepting an award for Excellence in Film at the G'Day USA Gala in Los Angeles on January 22, on the three-year anniversary of the death of her *Candy* co-star, Heath Ledger.

"It was so interesting that the event fell on the exact day and I felt compelled to talk about him and dedicate the award to him, because I was thinking about him a lot," says the 28-year-old actor, struggling to keep her emotions in check as we sit in a Beverly Hills hotel suite. Cornish retells the story that she told that night in her speech, that she often felt Ledger's presence, but got a definite sign when she was filming *Bright Star* a year after he passed away. Arriving on set one day she found a new dressing room trailer had been delivered for her and suddenly her dialect coach, Gerry Grenell, who also worked with Ledger, rushed inside ahead of her, shouting, 'I don't believe it!'

"He said he just knew as soon as he saw the trailer that it was the same one Heath had for his last film (*The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*) and he rushed in and started opening drawers until he found Heath's hotel key card in the bottom drawer and just held it up and said, 'He's here!'," she continues. "It was kind of magical, like Heath was somehow watching out for us."

The wonderfully grounded and talented actor has been watched over by many of Australia's finest thespians during her somewhat meteoric rise from ingenue to movie star thanks to films such as: *Somersault* (2004), *Candy* (2006), *A Good Year* (2006), *Elizabeth: The Golden Age* (2007), *Stop-Loss* (2008) and *Bright Star* (2009).

"I was really blessed in that transition period from working on just Australian films in Australia to international films," she reflects, "because the first international film I made was *A Good Year* with Russell Crowe, so on the first day on set there was this guy with a thick Aussie accent who treated me like a little sister and said, 'If there's anything you need, I'm here for you'. I worked with Geoffrey Rush in the beginning of my career in *Candy*," she adds, "and then we worked together on *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, which Cate Blanchett was also in, and then working on *Bright Star* with Jane Campion — who is pretty Aussie even though she's from New Zealand — made me feel like there was always something close to home about those experiences and it wasn't too much of a leap."

Cornish is an actor in demand, with three major films scheduled for release this year; the Zack Snyder action flick *Sucker Punch* (co-starring fellow Aussie Emily Browning), in which she got to "do crazy stuff with fighting and guns and swords"; the thriller *Limitless*, with Robert De Niro and Bradley Cooper, and *W.E.*, about the controversial relationship between Prince Edward and Wallis Simpson and written and directed by Madonna. "We had a really good time working together but it was an interesting dynamic because Madonna is just beginning

as a film director yet she has so much knowledge behind her in regards to other things she's done in her life, and it was beautiful watching her evolve through this process," Cornish says of her iconic boss on that film. "I play Wally, who is in her twenties, in an unhappy marriage and obsessed with King Edward and Wallis Simpson. Her story parallels with theirs and I play both a fictional character and a non-fictional character."

Cornish grew up on a 70-hectare farm at Lochinvar, in New South Wales's Hunter Valley, with three brothers and a younger sister, and she talks about her childhood with an almost poetic rapture. "Growing up in the country, I feel like I had to project, to absorb, to take in nature and animals and what it is to live and breathe and come to those bigger questions when I was really little," she describes. "I used to love lying on a trampoline at sunset out in the paddock, and you could see the entire sky and hear the crickets and the stars would come out and it made me feel so connected to something bigger."

"On set, [Russell Crowe] treated me like a little sister and said, 'If there's anything you need, I'm here for you.'"

The critically acclaimed actor acknowledges her diverse list of film credits is also very much a reflection of her eclectic tastes from a young age. "If I did watch TV, it was SBS or ABC," she explains, "and when I was 11 or 12, I'd stay up late and watch European films on SBS and learn about foreign languages and cultures and that was my exposure to the world."

In 2006, Cornish moved to LA to follow her heart, not her career, after she fell in love with her *Stop-*

Loss co-star Ryan Phillippe (the couple ended their four-year relationship in February, 2010). "It took so much pressure off what maybe an actor would usually move here for, so it was all about setting up a home and having a life and exploring the city and having solid ground here," she says.

Cornish is wearing clothes from her own wardrobe today, and looks relaxed and casual in a simple black shirt and skirt, tights under black boots, and a silk scarf decorated with gold stars draped over her jacket. But she's the first to admit an unabashed love for fashion. "It's part of growing up and becoming a woman when you get to wear a beautiful dress," she beams. "I still remember the dress that Toni Matceviski made for me to wear at the Cannes film festival. It arrived 20 minutes before I was leaving for the airport and I pulled it out of the box and this beautiful lilac creation melted my heart — it was so special."

While Matceviski is a favourite (as well as close friend), Cornish says she likes to mix it up with the classics — Prada and Christian Dior — and more contemporary designers such as Elie Saab and Balenciaga. "But I don't wear any leather, fur or suede," the avowed vegetarian says, bragging that the black boots she's wearing today are vegan and that she found them online. "It's always an adventure, shopping," Cornish muses, "but it's something I'm passionate about so what are you going to do?" ■



MaxMara navy dress, \$1585;
Halston gold and black belt,
price on application; **Cerrone**
diamond earrings, \$4445. In
this portfolio: hair by Renya
Xydis for ghd; makeup by
Matthew Vanleeuwen at
Tracey Mattingly. Production:
Peter McClafferty. All prices
approximate. See Buylines for
details and stockists.