

Harper's BAZAAR

FASHION

Silk beaded dress, Christian Dior; Metal headpieces; gold stackable rings; textured bangle, House of Harlow; Gold necklace; gold shoulder jewelry; gold earpiece, Litter; Gold bangles with semi precious stones, Ippolita; Gold textured bangles, Elizabeth Cole; Gold twisted bangle, Rosena Sammi; Gold stacked bangle, Circa 78

Asia Rising

Hollywood star Lucy Liu graces our cover this month. Playing the part a hip, young, cool aesthetic you're after, take your cues from MTV's lass has a sass loved by the style cognocenti. Yellow fever never looked

of an Eastern princess in Dior, Liu is the epitome of Chinois chic. If it's newest It girl, Alexa Chung. Already a style icon, the Chinese-English so good. Photographed by Georges Antoni. Styled by Kenneth Goh

I Love LUCY

Rising to Hollywood's highest ranks with scene-stealing turns in *Kill Bill* and *Charlie's Angels*, Lucy Liu continues to strike an effortless balance between style and substance. By Terena Thyne Eisner. Photographed by Georges Antoni. Styled and directed by Kenneth Goh

Lucy Liu definitely knows how to make a powerful first impression. My first encounter with the vivacious star happened on a ski slope in Snowmass, Colorado where we were both taking snowboarding lessons. Despite having her face buried in the snow on several occasions, Liu persevered and was making perfect turns by the end of the day.

"I must have fallen 150 times that day," she says with a laugh. "But to me, you have to try something to see if you really like it. The freedom of that moment when you get it is just amazing."

Walking on set today at the photo shoot for *Harper's BAZAAR*, Liu looked exactly as she did two and a half years ago on New Year's Eve – albeit with a lot less slush on her face. Casually clad in neutral tones of Rick Owens, the loose languid style transferred to her gorgeous chocolate Labrador, Jake. The hulking dog is Liu's best pal, and follows her everywhere from New York where she now lives, onto a plane to Paris where she stayed for a few years and now back to her second home, Los Angeles. Jack promptly hopped onto the large, white master bed and settled down for the day, drool emitting total satisfaction.

While Liu puts everyone at ease immediately, there is that familiar Asian grit, that verve and determination that demanded no glossy hair or make-up for what was originally envisioned for the shoot. That she was adamant about. She loved the Oriental flavour

of Dior's fall/winter collection; she adored the steel headpieces and ethnic accessories, but this was a girl who was not getting her body wet, as was initially hoped for by the team.

It is this same tenacious and fearless attitude that has helped Liu navigate the fickle world of Hollywood to become one of the most successful Asian-American film stars in the world. Considering that Asian actresses are normally relegated to "ethnic" roles on television and film, Liu's success as a box-office leading lady is impressive. Not only did she break the racial barrier by becoming one of the iconic trio *Charlie's Angels*, she continues to blaze her own trail in Hollywood by picking films with strong, confident roles.

"I made a conscious effort to play characters that I believe in," declares the striking actress.

Liu, 41, first caught audiences' attention as the overbearing lawyer, Ling, on the TV series *Ally McBeal*. During the audition, she made such a strong impression on the show's creator, David E. Kelley, that he developed the character Ling Woo just for Liu.

After earning an Emmy nomination for her role as the politically incorrect lawyer with a razor-sharp tongue and sardonic wit, Liu moved onto the big screen playing a leather-clad dominatrix in Mel Gibson's *Payback*. The following year, Liu landed a larger role as the kidnapped



Silk chiffon halterneck dress, Dior by John Galliano. Printed silk chiffon cape, vintage Hanae Mori at The Way We Wore. Gold multi-coin headpiece, House of Harlow. Gold necklace, Rosena Sammi. Gold shoulder jewellery, Litter. Gold bangles with semi-precious stones, Ippolita



princess in the Jackie Chan western *Shanghai Noon* before becoming one of the crime-fighting trio in *Charlie's Angels*.

Although she has become a box-office draw in films where she often shows off her butt-kicking martial arts skills, like the fierce Queen of the Tokyo underworld in *Kill Bill*, the soft-spoken actress has consistently switched from big studio films to independents.

"I've done other roles in between to balance out and have more of a diverse line-up. Even if there is weakness, there is strength in the characters I play. The elasticity of playing both is so important," she explains. One such role was Liu's powerful performance in *3 Needles* where she speaks fluent Mandarin as a Chinese villager posing as a government-sanctioned blood drawer.

Liu embraces her Chinese heritage (she happily chatted with *BAZAAR*'s fashion director in Mandarin), but there was a time when she rebelled against having to learn Mandarin at home. Her parents were Chinese immigrants who had settled into Queens, New York, a racially diverse neighbourhood.

"I didn't speak English for the first part of my life. I grew up speaking Mandarin. It was challenging since I didn't know my place in the world. At home, I lived this Chinese culture and outside was a very different world. I had to find my balance of who I was," explains Liu.

It is hard to imagine a time when the beautiful star felt like an outcast, but Liu didn't feel confident in her own skin until she was in college.

"You really reflect what you see on television and there wasn't anything for me to reflect on while I was growing up," she says.

Yet, today, Liu is a role model for young girls with her striking good looks and effortless style.

"To have an Asian-American cast in *Charlie's Angels* really changed the course of history for me to see that it was possible," she says.

The lithe actress is a fixture in the best-dressed round-ups, and also has an innate sense for fashion. "I love mixing vintage with high fashion," Liu admits, as she exudes the confidence to carry off style with flair.

Liu knew early on that she wanted to act, but felt unable to voice her desires for fear of ridicule. "I thought it was a pipe dream. I was afraid

that people would laugh at me," she says.

She transferred from NYU to Michigan after her first year of college. She was looking to break out of her life in New York. It was in college while studying Asian languages that Liu took her first trip to China.

"When I was younger, I didn't understand the connection," she says. "Now I am so grateful for being given the gift of

speaking the language and feeling like I am a part of the culture."

When she finally disclosed her career choice to her family, they were hesitant at first. "My parents were very pragmatic. They didn't understand my need to be an actress," she says. The youngest of three siblings, the actress credits her parents' strong work ethic for driving her to succeed. "It was difficult at first but it helped me push myself," she says.

Although Liu still calls New York home, she lived in Los Angeles after college where she eventually landed episodic work. Liu worked on a comedy series for a year and landed roles in several independent films.

"Just being able to do what I loved and pay my bills felt like a success," she says. "The next stage of success was recognition. That's when *Ally McBeal* and *Payback* started falling into place."

Liu has channelled that recognition into ways of giving back. She was recently honoured as a UNICEF ambassador and has worked with the organisation since 2004.

"When you have things in your life that you've been lucky enough to be given, it is important to help others' dreams come true," she says.

Art is another passion for Liu and she works with different mediums like sculpture, painting, photography. The multi-talented star is putting together a compilation of her work and has had shows in Munich, Los Angeles and New York featuring her paintings and photographs.

Besides her art projects, Liu is also busy working on a film projects. "Some are independent films that are in different languages, so it is a new challenge and it's very exciting" she says.

Challenges are something that Liu does not shy away from, and we can expect to see even more surprises from her both onscreen and off.

"In acting and in life, you will get hurt big time," she muses bluntly.

"If you don't get back on and try again, you can rob yourself of an experience you might have missed. That's how it is in art and acting.



"To have an Asian-American cast in *Charlie's Angels* really changed the course of history for me to see that it was possible."

Silk halterneck dress, Dior by John Galiano. Gold headpiece; gold shoulder jewellery; elbow jewellery, Litter. Gold hand jewellery with semi-precious stones, Tres Jolie
 OPPOSITE PAGE: Silk harem suit; sheer silk embroidered jacket; engraved silver antique multi-disc necklace, Dior by John Galiano. Silver antique chain headpiece; silver multi-chain body harness; silver body jewellery; silver hand jewellery; silver ear piece, Litter. Silver bangles, Elizabeth Cole



"It was challenging since I didn't know my place in the world. I had to find that balance of who I was."

Lace dress, Dior by John Galiano. Multi-tier headpiece; silver multi-chain body brace; silver multi-chain anklet, Litter. Silver multi-disco necklace, Circa 70. Silver chain gloves with semi-precious stones, Gaspar Gloves. Silver antique bracelet, Elizabeth Cole. Silver cuff, Samantha Wills

“When you have things in your life that you’ve been lucky enough to be given, it is important to help others’ dreams come true.”

Silk harem suit; engraved silver antique multi-disc necklace, Dior by John Galiano. Silver antique chain headpiece; silver multi-chain body harness; silver body jewellery; silver hand jewellery, Litter. Silver bangles, Elizabeth Cole. Silver fringe anklets, Samantha Willis. Silver anklets with bells, Tres Jolie

See Buylines for details

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