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*I'd love to see Cheryl in one of my dresses'*

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They've got designs on you: Dannii (in Cracker dress) with her Project D fashion partner Tabitha (in Twinkle dress)



With just two weeks to go until *The X Factor* final, it's fair to say that Dannii Minogue is this year's undisputed Queen of Style. But what's been her secret? **LOUISE GANNON** meets the TV judge and her fashion business partner Tabitha Somerset Webb

Photographs: Alex Sarginson

**IN THAT OTHER MASSIVE X FACTOR BATTLE THAT IS THE STYLE WARS**, there has only really been one winner this season. The super-improved, uber-glamorous Dannii Minogue. Every week, a softer-looking Dannii shines in grown-up, immaculately cut classics, while Cheryl Cole seems to be struggling to find her fashion mojo.

It's a twist no one was expecting – least of all Dannii, who returned to the show eight weeks after giving birth to son Ethan in Australia. She laughs, 'Believe it or not, underneath all those glamorous gowns I'm still wearing maternity bras as I'm still breast-feeding my son.'

'I may look very pulled together when I go out on stage, but I'm literally giving myself minutes. I do make-up in the car. I cover everything I wear with muslin cloths because the worst thing that could happen would be some unexpected spill.'

We meet in designer to Sam Cameron, Emilia Wickstead's Chelsea atelier where a powder-blue leopard-print dress is being altered – a size eight is now too big. That's a pretty big result four months post birth. Dannii says, 'When I came back to *X Factor* I was a generous size 10. I couldn't plan anything because I didn't know what would fit, what would work. I had one dress, a white lace J'Aton Couture, and that was it. That was my dress plan for the show. I then got a red Marchesa dress which I ▶



# 10 HOT STORIES



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had to get taken out, but you just have to think, “OK, that's what alterations are for.”

‘But I think with the stress and the drama and the non-stop schedule, my body has just pinged back. I've done one day with a trainer but I've dropped two dress sizes. If I had time to sit back and think about it, I'd be delighted but I'm literally on my feet 12 hours a day running from one project to the next.’

As Dannii talks, her very tall, very blonde Project D (Dannii's clothes line) business partner and feted bag designer Tabitha Somerset Webb arrives. Immediately the atmosphere changes as ‘Tab’ swings into action and the real Dannii emerges, the one who drinks cocktails, swears like a trooper and swoons over anything Jennifer Aniston.

‘Jennifer Aniston is the girl we'd absolutely love to wear our clothes,’ says Tabitha. ‘I'd die happy if I could wear a pair of jeans and a white T-shirt like she does. That whole ethos of clean, simple, effortless glamour is what we are all about.’

The label was set up less than a year ago after Dannii and Tabitha formed a close friendship over champagne, handbags and a mutual love of fashion. ‘I just knew we would be able to work together,’ says Dannii, as we set off in her ‘mobile office’ (a people carrier) to the *X Factor* rehearsals at Wembley.

‘The past year has been completely crazy. There was Project D and then there was me and Kris [her boyfriend, model Kris Smith] finding out I was pregnant. It was like having two babies and thank God I had Kris and thank God I had Tab because I could never have coped at all without them.’

Project D was launched when Dannii was six months pregnant and has already made an impact in the fashion world. ‘We both felt there was a gap for

reasonably priced, well-made grown-up glamour,’ says Tabitha. ‘I love Victoria Beckham's clothes and I admire her hugely as a designer but wanted to be able to have a much more affordable price point,’ says Dannii. ‘Our clothes are beautifully made, they are dresses you'll want to wear again and again and I think they are just beautiful.’

Dannii didn't want to swamp *The X Factor* with Project D, so has also worn Victoria Beckham, Antonio Berardi and Dolce & Gabbana. And while the contestants sweat about their performances, Dannii admits the pressure for her and Cheryl to wow with their outfits gets out of hand. ‘I can't believe people actually press live pause to study what we are wearing,’ she shrieks. ‘But I'm very happy that everyone seems to like my clothes this year.’

‘Cheryl and I never discuss what we're going to wear. We each do our own thing. I'd definitely like to see her in a Project D dress – I have a hummingbird one I think would look gorgeous on her and I'd love to see Rebecca in one of our looks, she's so stylish but we have no say in what they wear.’

Dannii admits that a few years ago her style was all over the place. She laughs, ‘I was a very different person then. I'd been through tough times, I hadn't met Kris and I certainly never thought I was ever going to be a mother. Two years ago I had all the time in the world to play around with looks and experiment. I had too much time really. Having a baby, running a business and doing *X Factor*, I needed to simplify my life – and my style. I cut my hair because I don't have time for all those extensions.’

‘I cut my make-up bag by about 90 per cent. I carry a bag with six things in it, concealer – which is essential for covering up those sleepless nights – and foundation with some illuminating light in it, lipply, an eyebrow brush, mascara and powder. That's it.’

‘On stage it's great because I get to look grown-up and glamorous. I do feel very grown-up, which I should because I am 39. Off stage it's a very different story. I spend exactly half my life in trackies and T-shirts, covered in baby goo, but I am careful not to get photographed in my “Mummy Dannii” look as it's so not glamorous. I've also knocked little mini skirts on the head for the same reason.’

At this point Tabitha interjects. ‘But I haven't. My contribution to Dannii's look is pushing her that bit further. She can be way too safe. I'll make her wear a pink pebble print that she'll howl at but then fall in love with. I think Kris and I have really loosened Dannii up a lot, basically we take the piss out of her all the time – and she loves it.’

Dannii admits her life could not be any better at the moment. ‘*X Factor* is incredibly stressful and trying to make Project D the best it can possibly be is a full-on job, and then my little baby is 24/7. But I'm loving it. I love being in the house in no make-up and a skanky T-shirt just as much as getting dressed up for the show. Motherhood has been such an unexpected blessing – and it's definitely simplified and focused my look. I'm just very glad everyone seems to like the new me. I certainly do.’

Above: Cheryl goes full-on in Emilio Pucci and Roberto Cavalli, while Dannii is sophisticated in Victoria Beckham and Antonio Berardi on *The X Factor*

Hair and make-up for Dannii: Christian Vermaak. Hair and make-up for Tabitha: Siobhan Lucky at Era using Sleazy. Styling: Mary-Ana Kearney, Dannii wears: Cracker dress, £286. Project D: shoes, £345. Giuseppe Zanotti; Olga earrings, £124. Atelier Svarovsky by Mark Fast. Turquoise and gold ring, £288. www.nataliedissel.com. Tabitha wears: Twinkle dress, £250. Project D: Fantasy shoes, £760. Gina Couture; Phantom ring, £3,905; Hoorsenbuhs at Browns. Additional photos: Rex Features. Stockists: Harrods: 020 7730 1234; Selfridges: 0800 123 400; www.asos.com; www.my-wardrobe.com; www.projectdonline.co.uk