

Every girl deserves to feel like a Princess

An interview with *Malina* owner
Malin Andréén



With the upcoming wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton, we asked Malin Andrén, a designer sometimes favored by last summer's royal bride Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, about what it takes to dress the blue blooded, and how her newly established label Malina plans to make every girl feel like a princess.

The Swedish Crown Princess' wedding to commoner Daniel Westling in June 2010 was the biggest European royal wedding since the marriage of Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer. After the pageantry and splendor of the historic day in Stockholm, the Swedish princess relies on a few talented designers like Malin Andrén for statement dresses that will transform a young royal into a style icon.

NORDIC REACH / It's been a little over a year since Malina first launched. What inspired you to start the company and what's the secret to your success?

MALIN ANDRÉN / I have always seen myself as an entrepreneur, so after my 4 years [working in fashion] in Asia I felt it was time for me to fly on my own. After years of being a hard-working employee I had a lot of will to present something of my own. The fact that there was a big gap [in the market] for tailor-made evening dresses, especially in Scandinavia, helped me believe in my business.

NR / As a young Swedish designer, how has studying in New York and working in Hong Kong influenced your designs?

MN / Most of my inspiration comes from my trips all around the world. Asia gives me the perfect influences in colors and patterns; Europe has the style and the USA the fun experimental fashion.

NR / How would you describe the Malina woman?

MN / It's not really about the woman. It's about how the woman feels in the dress. I meet cool girls who have no problem wearing an electric patterned, multicol-

ored maxi dress. Then there's the shy girl who feels like a beautiful princess when wearing a Malina dress, without ever having tried something like it before. My customers are of all ages and all styles! I want the dresses to be used all of the time, instead of hanging like a trophy in the wardrobe.

NR / Your clients include the Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden. How did the princess become aware of such a newly established label?

MN / I was really excited about seeing the Crown Princess Victoria in a Malina dress. I couldn't believe it! Her stylist is always looking for new interesting designers for her to wear, to represent Sweden. My PR agency helps me a lot with contacts and keeps an eye on who's a good ambassador for my brand.

NR / What special considerations are involved in designing for a princess?

MN / Nothing special, except she has restrictions on what to wear and how deep or short a dress can be. She has the perfect body, so it's a very easy job.

NR / Are Malina dresses designed to make every woman feel like a princess or does a princess become a Malina woman?

MN / In Malina everyone will feel like a princess.

NR / If you were to design an evening dress for Kate Middleton, the future Queen of England, what type of dress would it be?

MN / Wow, that would be amazing! Well, she has a beautiful body and would suit most styles. I would focus on her tiny waist, make a wide lace or beaded belt with a heart shaped top, along with a long many layers chiffon skirt.

NR / The average Malina dress retails at about \$500. Are the dresses designed for Swedish royals and celebrities more expensive?

MN / No, we offer the same prices for all clients. The prices for our dresses range from \$360 to \$570 (€250 to €400).

NR / Do they actually pay for the dresses or are they free gifts to promote the label?

MN / Depends on who they are. I don't really believe in building your brand by



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giving away your collection. I think you should value each piece and see what it's worth.

NR / Your chiffons are of the finest quality, yet reasonably priced. How do you keep production costs to a minimum and where are the dresses made?

MN / That's my biggest hurdle at the moment, my small production line, buying my own patterns and working each season to produce a small quantity. The silk is from Korea and the production in Hong Kong. Our production in Hong Kong is very exclusive; the craftspeople are talented and expensive. As soon as you cross the border into china you can find production at a better cost, but I don't want to sacrifice quality. I'd rather raise my prices.

NR / Describe the colors or prints that dominate your Spring/Summer 2011 collection?

MN / The collection is called *Garden Collection*. As the name implies it's flowers, lizards and feather prints in strong colors. Prints are my specialty, but a big part of our sales is in solid color chiffon dresses.

NR / Your dresses bear exotic names like *African Rose*, *Bora Bora*, *Indiana* and *Santorini*. What's your connection to these places and how do they influence your design?

MN / They come from my many travels. I was in Africa when I did my A/W10 collection and therefore got the inspiration from there. My philosophy for that collection was to be able to wear the dress on the savannas, in the city or at a party. My first collection was called *Como Collection* – the patterns were influenced by islands around the world: Bora Bora, Santorini, etc.

NR / If your dresses were accompanied by music what type of music would it be?

MN / Strange question, hmmm, any kind of party music, I guess.

NR / What's a typical day like for a young Swedish designer?

MN / I wake up early, have coffee and browse my emails. Usually my inbox already has loads of emails before 9 am, since I'm working with Asia, and they are 7 hours ahead! Then I take the car to the office. Even though it's only five blocks away, I will need it during the day. Then a

few meetings, packing things, following up my billion to-do lists, and working on my next collection. At the moment I'm planning the opening of my new web shop: how much stock, release party, photo shoot and order packing. Sometimes I have a problem delegating work. I want to take care of it all myself. Then home by 8 pm.

NR / What's next for your brand in the coming year?

MN / Besides the web shop, doing more fairs, maybe in the Middle East or Russia. And my own catwalk show at Stockholm Fashion Week.

NR / Is the name Malina related to the solar deity Malina in Inuit mythology?

MN / No, Malina is my first name, Malin, plus the first letter of my last name Andrén, easy... I've heard it means raspberry in Russian.

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For more info, see: www.bymalina.com,
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