

# NOTES OF STYLE

Local musicians share their fashion secrets with NOELLE LOH

Satin dress with bow detail, \$369, from Coast, 03-13 Paragon



Leopard-print cotton cardigan, \$76, from Topshop, 02-39A Raffles City; satin pencil skirt with matching belt, \$99, chunky plastic bangle, \$43, and metal bangles, \$43 for three, all from River Island, 01-41 VivoCity; feathered hairband, leggings, socks and shoes, all musician's own

## BLUE JEANS GIRL

Here is a little-known fashion nugget about jazz chanteuse Claressa Monteiro: her older sister Sheila, now 46, was a house model for Dior in Malaysia for 10 years in the 1980s.

Far from feeling second-rate in the style stakes though, the 39-year-old singer – the youngest of three siblings – thanks her sister.

"When you get great hand-me-downs and compare them to the clothes you bought from the neighbourhood emporium, you start to appreciate things like cut and quality," she says.

Given the chance, however, the ambassador for brands such as Swiss watch company Ebel and French haircare label Kerastase would gladly swap the elegant gowns she often performs in for jeans and tees.

She says: "One of the things I've always tried to remember about jazz is that it was the pop music until the 1960s.

"It was fun. People danced to it. When I'm in jeans, I can get more into that side of the music and get things more upbeat."

**How big of a fashion fan are you?**  
I love clothes and how an outfit can turn a blah day around and make one feel good. However, I don't believe that fashion has to be expensive. Some of the nicest things I own come from flea markets.

**What's your favourite brand of jeans?**  
American label Allen B. Schwartz, which I discovered at Nordstrom

department store in the United States four years ago. I'm a Eurasian girl with an ample bottom and need jeans that can lengthen my silhouette. I own eight pairs.

**Are you a shoes or bag person?**  
I am both. I have a cupboard specially for them, with more shoes than bags. I have about 95 pairs of shoes. My favourite is a pair of leather heels from Italian label Casadei that has an intricately carved wooden heel. It cost \$965 and I've worn only it once – in the shop when I tried it on.

I have many bags because I am constantly on the search for the perfect bag that is both functional and cool, but have yet to find one. The one I use most is my black Kate Spade tote that I can put my laptop in. It's great for work. I also have a Christian Dior satchel bag as well as saddle bag.

**What's the worst fashion faux pas in your music career?**  
I wore a white gown to perform at a wedding about 12 years ago. It was a big event with just about all Cabinet ministers present. The gown was made of lace against gold so I looked partially nude. I still keep the dress to remind myself of how stupid I was.

**How important is image to a musician?**  
What you do as a musician is a visual medium and how you look conveys a message. To those artists who say it's all about the music, I say take a look at how hard you are trying to look anti-establishment and tell me that that's not making a fashion statement.

## ECLECTIC ELECTRONIC CHICK

When electronic musician Mei Wong, 35, aka The Analog Girl was told that stylist Jerome Awasthi would pick some outfits for her, she responded: "Anything kitsch and over-the-top is great."

She did not disappoint when she arrived for the photo shoot in a baggy graphic print top worn over metallic gold leggings, striped knee-high turquoise socks and canvas Mary Jane-style school shoes.

Like her otherworldly-sounding tunes made up of beats and beeps produced on her MacBook Pro laptop, her look is all about making clashing components work as a whole.

Named by Time magazine as one of five Asian acts to watch in 2008, the Topshop fan says of dressing up: "I don't start out with a goal in mind. I just let whatever pieces I come across morph and become the final look. "Fashion is like music – it's a beat that you wear on your body."

**Describe your sense of style.**  
It's party, eclectic and boho-electro. There is always something funky or in an acid tone mixed with a romantic element like florals or traditional Japanese prints.

**What's the craziest outfit you have ever worn?**  
In Japan six years ago, I had a stylist who put me in a leopard-print top, mini skirt and leggings – much like what I have on for this shoot. She also gave me crazy make-up a la David Bowie and stuck graphic

stickers on my face.

**What's the worst fashion faux pas in your career?**  
I chose a floral chiffon blouse with frills for a performance about four years ago because I hadn't worn it before and I thought I would give it a try. I regretted it when I saw the pictures. It was just too girly for me.

**What do you wear when you're off-stage?**  
I usually go for a pared-down mix of something pop and something bohemian. Most often, it's a casual, loose-fitting dress or a loose top paired with tights and Havaianas.

**What's one item that you cannot live without?**  
My Havaianas flip-flops. They are so comfortable yet fashionable. I wear them almost everywhere except when I'm on stage because I can't wear socks with them. I've even worn them to weddings.

**How important is image to a musician?**  
It's the first impression you present to the public so it's pretty important. Sometimes, your image is all that people know about you because you can't hear music on print. At least one element of your outfit, such as your make-up or an accessory, should say something about your music. That is why I always wear leggings or very colourful socks. They add a fun, quirky element which is reflective of my music.



For Claressa Monteiro  
**Photographer:** ALAN LIM; **Stylist:** JEROME AWASTHI; **Make-up:** HUANG HUI MEI for M.A.C; **Hair:** ANNIE TAY for Essentials Evolution Toni & Guy using Redken

For Mei Wong  
**Photographer:** ASHLEIGH SIM; **Stylist:** JEROME AWASTHI; **Make-up:** BENO LIM for M.A.C using the Brunette, Blonde, Redhead Collection; **Hair:** ALICIA TEY (9787-7209), using Sebastian Professional

For Electrico  
**Photographer:** ASHLEIGH SIM; **Make-up:** BENO LIM for M.A.C using Brunette, Blonde, Redhead Collection; **Hair:** ALICIA TEY (9787-7209), using Sebastian Professional

From left: Desmond Goh wears his own cotton T-shirt and tie from Topman, jacket from Furrmuse, jeans from Hells-Bells and sneakers from Converse; William Lim Jr wears his own cotton tee from Quiksilver, jeans from G-Star, jacket from adidas, and sneakers from Converse; Amanda Ling wears leather jacket, cotton tank top and silk culottes, prices unavailable, from Gucci (in stores next month); David Tan wears his own jacket from Esprit, cotton T-shirt and jeans from Levi's and sneakers from Converse

## NOT GOTH GROUP

The coordinated yet cool look the band Electrico sports in this picture has not always been so.

Bassist Desmond Goh, 31, recalls of the 2004 launch party of their first album So Much More Inside.

"The theme was black. David came in cargo berms and a polo tee. William and I came in jeans. (Ex-band member) Daniel (Sassoon) came in a suit and Amanda came in a gown. It was very bad," he says of the motley mix, laughing.

These days, the indie rock quartet – also comprising singer David Tan, 33, drummer William Lim Jr, 31, and keyboardist Amanda Ling, 24 – have become something of a fashion label's dream. They are sponsored by local labels such as Furrmuse, Revoltage and White Room, and international brands like Converse, Pull & Bear and G-Star.

White Room is working on a collection inspired by the band, slated to be launched next month.

Says Tan: "The music always comes first for us but we have come to realise that image plays a role too.

"Justin Timberlake wouldn't look as cool in cargo pants and a polo tee."

**Do you ever plan your outfits?**  
**Lim:** After being together for so long, we have developed some sort of sixth sense where we somehow can turn up in coordinated outfits without having to discuss beforehand.  
**Tan:** This happened after we toured Australia in 2004. We noticed that the bands there looked really good and that was when we realised that image

plays a part.  
**Who is the most vain in the group?**  
**Lim:** Definitely Desmond. He spends the most time in front of the mirror.  
**Tan:** And he is probably the biggest fashion fan among us.

**Goh:** I do love to browse fashion magazines such as i-D and Nylon, even though the latter is a girl's magazine. I also wear women's jeans because they fit me better.

**Do you guys ever get jealous of all the attention that Amanda, the only girl in the group, gets at photo shoots?**  
**Tan:** I actually feel sorry for Amanda that she has to come earlier than us to get her hair and make-up done. I certainly wouldn't want to be in her shoes.

**What are the fashion items you cannot live without?**  
**Tan:** Skinny jeans. They make me look slimmer.  
**Goh:** Skinny jeans and sneakers. The combination makes me feel like a rock star. I also need a sports wristband to relieve the pressure of resting my hand on the guitar.  
**Ling:** I need my eyeliner and lipgloss.  
**Lim:** I'm always in my Converse sneakers and tight jeans.

**What's the worst fashion faux pas in your music career?**  
**Tan:** I think the gig for our first album launch is hands down one of the worst. It was so Frankenstein in look.



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