

Title: Tamara Beckwith
Sub-title: Leaving the Fast Lane
By Amy Mowafi

While her cohorts played by the rules of British aristocracy, she was busy courting the media and defining an era. She was young, popular, and having a little too much fun. She was the original “It” girl. In London, Managing Editor Amy Mowafi speaks to cover girl Tamara Beckwith...

The social pages of every magazine from London to New York brim with talk of fashionistas and glitterati, socialites and “It” girls, professional partiers and publicity professionals. In the now blurry hedonistic annals of the early 90’s there are a small group of girls who, quite literally, invented that world. It’s not that parties didn’t exist before these girls came along. But as with all pop-cultural phenomena, they served to define an era. They gave us a face, or rather a number of fabulously made up faces and extravagantly dressed bodies, to put to the opening days of a publicity fuelled world. They invented the fame game - celebrity for celebrity’s sake, and they played it hard. Good little English girls from very good (and very wealthy) families no longer simply married good little English boys from very good (and hopefully wealthier) families. These girls took the money, and ran...to every fabulous party they could get to, anywhere in the world. They were the original IT girls. And integral to the dynamic was one Tamara Beckwith.

At the tender age of 17 she had a baby, quit school, filled her wardrobe with extravagant couture, and then, along with her high society friends, hit the red carpet with a vengeance. Of course the story was inevitably a little more complicated than that, but speak to Tamara and you get the feeling she’s not one to dwell on the harsh complexities.

So they posed, they laughed, they got drunk and they partied; they made a couple of films (well as long as they were famous), fell in and out of love with the media, and while the rest of their “class” were settling down, they stuck two manicured fingers up at the establishment and had fun. The “It” girl was born.

So when I ask Tamara Beckwith what she thinks of Paris Hilton, her nonchalance is expected. After all Tamara Beckwith gave the likes of Paris et al. the guide book by which to live their lives. “I know Paris actually and at the end of the day it’s just a bunch of girls who are very lucky to be that privileged.”

However all that was a long time ago. Tamara now rarely gets called an “It” girl, the mantel has of course been passed on. She’s still a regular on the pages of Hello and OK, of Harpers & Queen and Tatler, but she now gets photographed at “intimate events”; she dresses “chic” rather than outrageous. She “travels a lot” to places where “she’s very

spoilt” with her Italian boyfriend, the dashing construction heir Giorgio Veroni. She no longer craves the publicity. If something interesting comes along, she’ll take it. If not, she’s content anyway. “I’m not prepared to sacrifice anything for the sake of chasing after a film role for example.” She’s just completed a TV show about LA, for one of the UK’s most popular daytime programmes, and there’s another high profile (“lots of fun”) project in the pipeline. “It’s not been officially announced yet so we’d better not mention in.” And she’s also in demand as a model, featuring in sumptuous shoots for gorgeous glossies, pages on which the Beckwith personality is particularly comfortable. And for, perhaps the first time in her life, she’s indefinable. If she’s no longer an IT girl, what is she?

And here’s the interesting thing. One assumes that the likes of Tamara Beckwith need a by-line: Tamara Beckwith, model; or Tamara Beckwith, actress; Tamara Beckwith something, anything. After all most everyone does. A means my which to confirm your existence, and prove that you’ve not wasted your waking hours. Well, Beckwith herself couldn’t care less. “I don’t like to have a title. I think it alienates possibilities. I’m working on my own jewellery line right now which I love, and if I insisted on some sort of title, I might have missed an opportunity like that. Actually some of my designs are in your shoot. I did a jeans campaign for about three years. So you never know what might come along.” And if the nonchalance comes from a tremendous “been there, done that and got the designer T-shirt” brand of self-confidence, one can only assume it has been a lesson learnt the hard way. The trouble with courting the media is that it’s always the first one to say goodbye. And as Beckwith herself says, “I’m not 20 years old with starry eyes. I have my own life and I’m not going to pursue anything that interferes with that. You know it’s been 12 years since the whole ‘it’ girl thing, it’s a bit boring now.” So when asked what the title of her biography would be, the answer is telling: “Trying to leave the fast lane.”

So first thing’s first, how did the Enigma shoot go?

Your photographer Will was great. And of course I know your art director Mohieb very well. He’s so passionate and he loves what he does. He spends hours before the shoot preparing, and if it’s not exactly as he envisioned he gets so demoralised. So that ensures the end result is perfect. And I was so very happy with it, and you’ve got such a great team.

This was your first shoot for the Arab world, have you ever been to the Middle East?

I’ve been to Dubai but I’m afraid that’s as far as I’ve got there. One of my close friends is actually half Egyptian, so I feel really bad because all my friends have been to see the Pyramids, and I’m yet to get anywhere near there, pathetic really!

So what’s your perception of the Arab woman then?

I think it’s difficult for a girl like me to understand that world. The impression you get of course is that it’s a very controlled male environment, at least in the extreme. But I think there’s also the side where they’ve held on much more to their femininity. I’m quite happy to go out looking like a wreck, and most Western girls are. But Arab women I’ve noticed always need to look perfect. They’re definitely much more high maintenance;

they'll go to much greater lengths on a daily basis, doing their hair everyday for example. My beautician does a lot of Saudi clients, and she's half Saudi and the stories she tells me! Arab women having permanent make-up and that sort of thing. I'm not sure I could be that committed!

Well have you never considered plastic surgery?

No. No. It's not something that I think about. I just think unless it's absolutely necessary its best to avoid it. You know once you've buggered it up that's it. I've seen so many LA women who look scary!

Of course you were just in LA...

Yeah I was doing a show out there for British TV, all about mad Los Angeles freakos and we found plenty of them! It's a three week show. Actually I think I saw Yasmine your editor in Spargo when I was out there. I was having a dinner there with Wolfgang Puck and his wife at the time. He was giving us a special dinner, we were much spoiled, and we had all sorts of wonderful food.

Well speaking of LA, you've done some acting in the past with films like An Ideal Husband and Tunnel of Love, is it not something you'd consider going back to?

It was something really fun, but it's not something that you can just sort of go "oh I want to do that". If it happens that's lovely and I'm thrilled to bits, but it's not going to be the be all and end all, I'm not going to make my every waking moment about that.

You had a baby at 17, how has motherhood been?

You know I just don't think motherhood is very natural [Laughing]; it really is not a thing I should be doing on a full time basis at all. My mother is really not keen about the idea of me having any more.

You've often been dubbed the ultimate party girl, who be on your ultimate party list?

Joan Collis, I've loved her since I was a little girl. Maggie Smith for a bit of help with the Charades team, my boyfriend's friend Flavio Briatore because he always make the party fun and always comes along with about 4 good looking girls and finally the Queen, I'm a bit of a royalist and I think I'd like to have a chat with her.

And what would you wear, who are your favourite designers?

Well I have to think about what's in my cupboard at the moment! Valentino, Marc Jacobs, Alexander McQueen, all the naughty English boys with a touch of the theatrics.

And truthfully Tamara, how long does it take an "It Girl" to get ready?

I can do it in 20minutes, but that's only if my boyfriend's not looking and I don't even think about doing the long version! Although he'd probably laugh if he heard these answers!

Well how about this "It" girl title, it must have started to get a bit irritating?

To be quite honest it has dropped off a lot, it's not like it was. I mean at first it was great and we all loved it and it was lots of fun. But then it got to the point were it was like "ok

this is a bit boring now". But on the whole you can't complain. It served a purpose, it came along. I mean there have been loads of titles for groups of girls in the media, and ours happened to be the It girls, and the media caught onto that and exploited it.