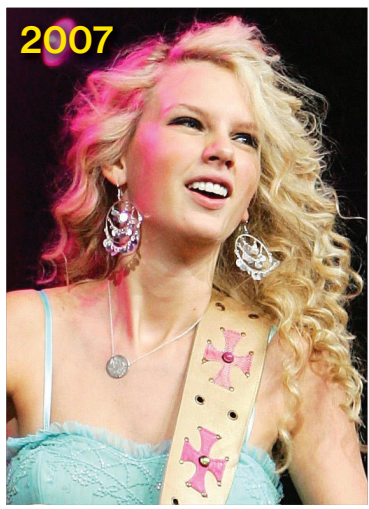


2007



NOW

2016



100+
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TAYLOR
SWIFT

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SWIFT

SENSATION

TAYLOR SWIFT BECAME A STAR THROUGH SONGWRITING, ARTISTRY AND MUSICIANSHIP. BUT WHEN FAME, FROCKS AND FORTUNE WERE ADDED TO THE MIX, SHE TRANSFORMED INTO A POP-CULTURE ICON

BY MARIA SPEIDEL

MARCH 2023

Kicking off her mammoth The Eras Tour in Glendale, Arizona, on March 17, 2023, Swift (in a Versace bodysuit and knee-high Christian Louboutin boots) dazzled in a show that featured 44 songs and lasted for more than three hours.



SEPTEMBER 2009

Two days after Kanye West famously interrupted a 19-year-old Swift during her acceptance speech for Best Female Video at the MTV Video Music Awards, she wore this Rebecca Taylor dress to go on the Sept. 15, 2009, episode of *The View* to discuss that incident. Later in the day, West called Swift to apologize.

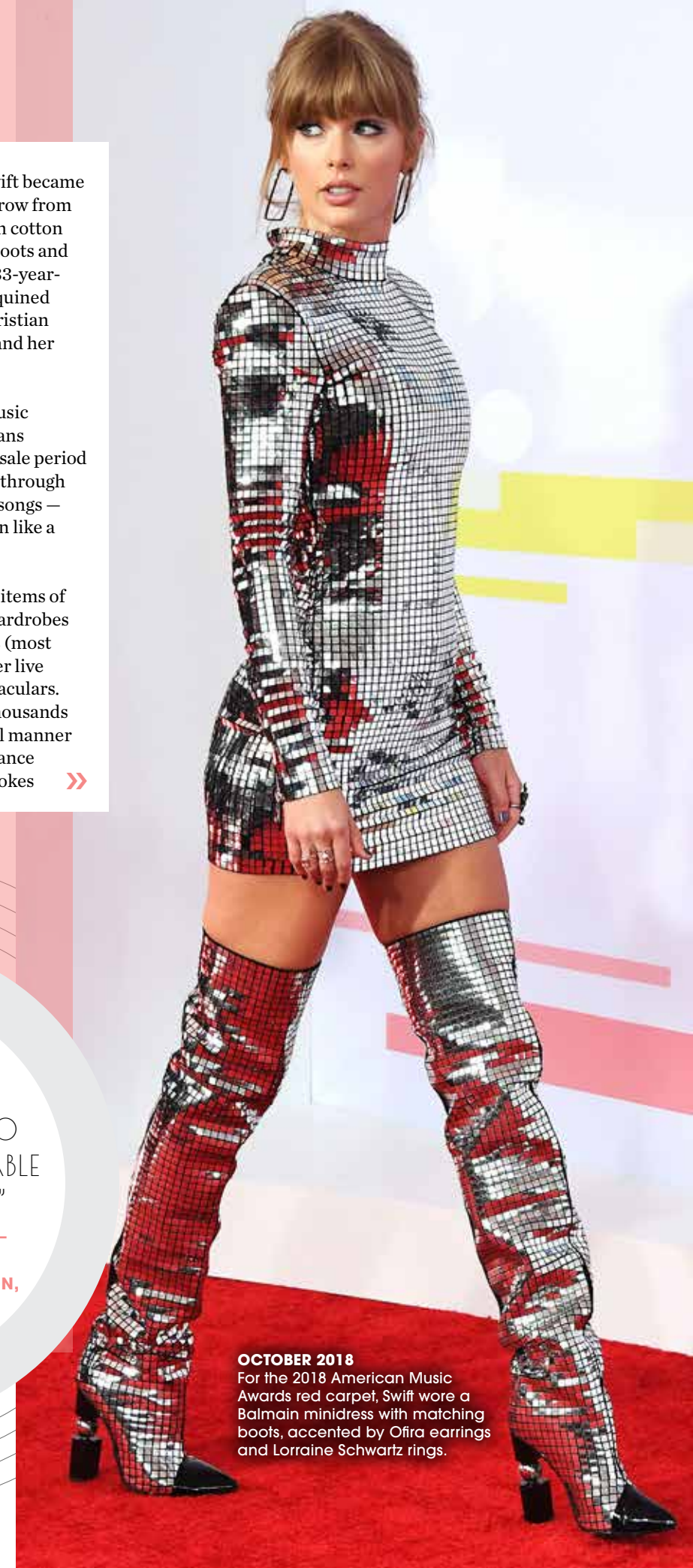
In the nearly 17 years since Taylor Swift became famous, her fans have watched her grow from a winsome 16-year-old opening act in cotton sundresses, clunky leather cowboy boots and peachy lip gloss to an incandescent 33-year-old arena-filling mega pop star in sequined catsuits, custom crystal-studded Christian Louboutin boots with stiletto heels and her trademark red lipstick.

Swift has won 12 Grammys, 10 Country Music Awards and all kinds of other statuettes. Fans crashed Ticketmaster's site during the presale period for her sold-out 2023 The Eras Tour. And, through every era of her career — and in countless songs — the singer-songwriter has deployed fashion like a secret language.

It starts with her lyrics, which namecheck items of clothing; flows through the thought-out wardrobes of the characters she plays in music videos (most of which are herself); and culminates in her live shows, which are costume-changing spectacles. As Swift looks out at the crowd, she sees thousands of iterations of herself — fans dressed in all manner of outfits from dope copies of her performance wear to Instagrammed sweaters to sly in-jokes >>

“WHEN YOU’RE AN ARTIST LIKE HER, I THINK YOU WANT TO FEEL REALLY COMFORTABLE IN YOUR OWN SKIN.”

MARIA BUCCELLATI,
PRESIDENT OF FAITH CONNEXION,
A LABEL WORN BY SWIFT



OCTOBER 2018

For the 2018 American Music Awards red carpet, Swift wore a Balmain minidress with matching boots, accented by Ofira earrings and Lorraine Schwartz rings.



SEPTEMBER 2009
She may have looked elegant in a Kaufmanfranco gown, but Swift had to keep her composure when Kanye West hijacked her 2009 MTV VMAs moment. As she recalled in the 2020 documentary *Miss Americana*, "It was so echo-y in there. At the time, I didn't know they were booing him doing that. I thought they were booing me."

(one concertgoer recently dressed as a crumpled piece of paper from "All Too Well," her short film). Then there are the red-carpet and award-show looks, talk-show appearance outfits and her streetwear, relentlessly captured by the paparazzi. Once identified online, these jeans and tops from mainstream retailers such as Free People sell out faster than her concert tickets.

From "Tim McGraw," her very first hit off her self-titled 2006 debut album, Swift has fully acknowledged the universal truth that clothing is a powerful emotional signifier. In the story of a boy leaving a girl to go away to college, she sings, "When you think happiness, I hope you think that little black dress... and my old faded blue jeans." Nine years later, an older, more sexually knowing Swift sang in "Wildest Dreams," "His hands are in my hair, his clothes are

in my room." Then there is "All Too Well," a song apparently inspired by ex-boyfriend Jake Gyllenhaal and a scarf; "Cardigan" from *Folklore*; and too many more dress references to count. In 2017, Swift even titled a song "Dress," causing *Rolling Stone* to pronounce, "Taylor has always loved singing odes to her dresses — it's like Bruce Springsteen calling a song 'Car.'"

Moving from the vivid experiences described in her songs to dressing herself in the real world, Swift always manages to emit inner goodness. She started off squeaky clean and somehow, even when wearing a sequined one-armed catsuit festooned with snakes (as she does in her ongoing The Eras Tour), there is always something unbreakably wholesome about her. She's a tigress, but a righteous one who, if she

"TAYLOR HAS ALWAYS LOVED TO SING ODES TO HER DRESSES — IT'S LIKE BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN CALLING A SONG 'CAR.'"

**ROB SHEFFIELD,
ROLLING STONE**



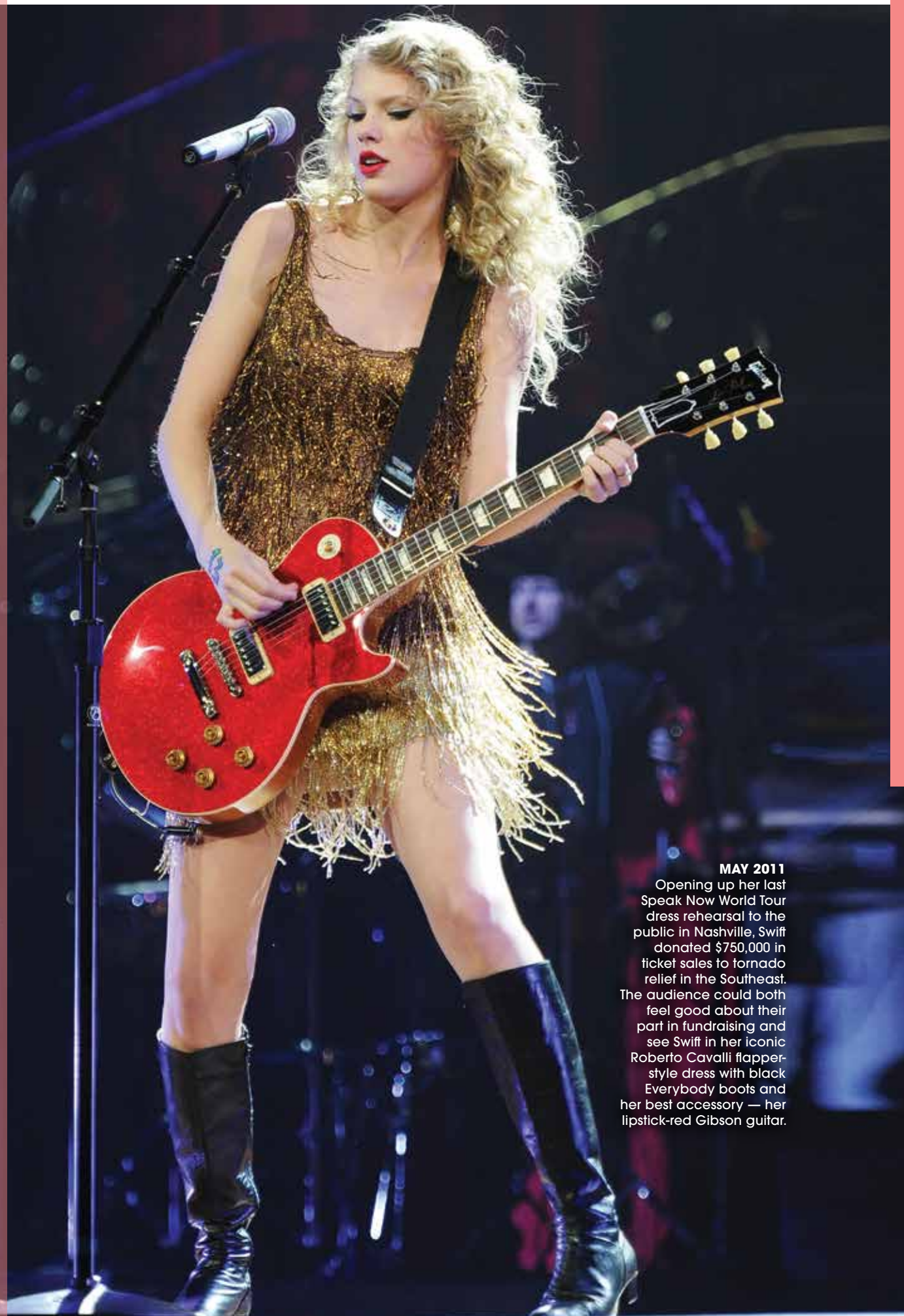
FEBRUARY 2008
Looking confident in a custom-made Sandi Spika gown, Swift was a Best New Artist nominee at the 50th annual Grammy Awards in L.A.



AUGUST 2022
Swift — whose latest album would be called *Midnights* — rocked up to the Republic Records MTV VMAs 2022 after-party at the Fleur Room in Chelsea, New York City, wearing a Moschino romper in midnight blue.

did not have to battle for her reputation, would be off roaming an enchanted forest like the girl with buns over her ears from 2020's "Cardigan" video.

Swift also possesses a modern sense of justice, to which many young women relate, of hitting back when people don't take them seriously because of the way they dress. "I want to love glitter and also stand up for the double standards that exist in our society," she said in her 2020 Netflix documentary, *Miss Americana*, which covers the singer taking her first political stance: campaigning for a Democratic U.S. Senate candidate from Tennessee. "I want to wear pink and tell you how I feel about politics. I don't think that those things have to cancel each other out." »



MAY 2011
Opening up her last Speak Now World Tour dress rehearsal to the public in Nashville, Swift donated \$750,000 in ticket sales to tornado relief in the Southeast. The audience could both feel good about their part in fundraising and see Swift in her iconic Roberto Cavalli flapper-style dress with black Everybody boots and her best accessory — her lipstick-red Gibson guitar.



MARCH 2023
Posing for a selfie with rapper Flavor Flav at the iHeartRadio Music Awards in L.A., Swift sparkled in a crystal Alexandre Vauthier Haute Couture outfit. She would be honored that night with the Innovator Award.

Her fans would not have it any other way. Lucky thousands are flocking to arenas around the U.S. to see her on The Eras Tour, which celebrates each of her 10 studio albums and their stylistic expressions. Swift's costumes bring us from the glam country girl of *Fearless* through the streamlined Hollywood starlet look in *Red*, her dark Gothic turn in *reputation*, the pure pop of *Lover* and into the cottage core — and almost a return to the country feel — of her COVID-19 pandemic releases, *Folklore* and *Evermore*. Her latest, 2022's *Midnights*, has a very '70s vibe.

Those unable to nab Eras tickets could still get their Swift fix at "Taylor Swift: Storyteller," a recent exhibit at New York's Museum of Arts and Design that layered blow-ups of Swift's song lyrics behind iconic costumes such as her red wedding dress from the Red Tour and the white swan tutu from the "Shake It Off" video. In a video interview posted on

Twitter by the Associated Press in May 2023, fan Greta Myers explained how seeing the lyrics and the clothes together helped her face her problems: "It's a way for me to know that I'll be OK if I know Taylor Swift went through it."

It takes a small team to put Swift's looks together, including stylist Joseph Cassell Falconer, who has worked with her since 2008. Even so, being gorgeous is not always fun. In the 2020 documentary *Miss Americana*, we see him zip Swift into a long-sleeved, skin-tight, micro minidress covered in shiny, square-shaped plackets for the 2018 American Music Awards. While her inner circle "oohs" and "aahs" over the Balmain confection with matching boots, Swift appears miserable. "It looks like a melted-down disco ball," she says. "I am a pop-tart wrapper." She asks the stylist to put in her earrings because, "This is gonna sound ridiculous, but I can't move past here," she says, gingerly raising her >>

"I DON'T DRESS FOR WOMEN / I DON'T DRESS FOR MEN / LATELY I'VE BEEN DRESSING FOR REVENGE."

TAYLOR SWIFT,
"VIGILANTE SH-T" (2022)

hands around elbow height. No wonder that Swift often favors comfortable civilian clothes from stores such as Urban Outfitters and Free People when she is offstage. These are the outfits she has on when paparazzi catch her out with her rotating cast of friends, aka The Squad — including Selena Gomez, the Haim sisters and Emma Stone — or high-profile boyfriends.

And, like 99.9% of the population, she does not always enjoy looking at pictures of herself. In another scene in *Miss Americana*, Swift must walk through a corridor of fans and paparazzi snapping photos before ducking into a waiting car outside her New York apartment. "I learned over the years that it's not good for me to see pictures of myself every day," she says. "There is always some standard of beauty that you are not meeting... it's all just f---ing impossible."

Real life can be bruising, even for mega-watt pop stars. Maybe that is why Swift and her fans seem much more comfortable inside a Taylor-made world of dress-up and songs. It's a place where "cardigan" is shorthand for radical acceptance and everyone understands what a T-shirt reading "Not A Lot Going On At The Moment" means. (It was a break in her love life, FYI.) During a recent Eras show, Swift paused at her piano and looked lovingly out at her fans, so many decked out in imitations of endless iterations of her — looks she had dreamed up, written down in her journal and curated. Complimenting their efforts, the songwriter said, "It's a chaos of my own creation and you know me, and you know I love that. So, thank you." ■



MAY 2015
Walking through New York City, Swift paired a black-and-white Elizabeth and James ensemble with a bright yellow Serapian handbag.



JULY 2018
Well, someone loves New York (and designer labels): Swift left her TriBeCa apartment in a Balenciaga hoodie, Alexander Wang cut-offs and Giuseppe Zanotti booties while toting a Christian Louboutin backpack. All together, the look cost more than \$3,000.