a la mode

Diane Von Furstenberg suggests the simple, no-nonsense dress for work or play. (Staff photos by Tracy Baker).

"I do things that appeal to the masses."

"If you fail, it's not that serious . . . for a woman."

"I make clothes for other women with taste."

'Nothing' dresses make a million

By CHRISTINE WALDEN

They looked once and then again, skeptically turning over price tags while pulling three or four different, inexpensive versions of the dress that brought the dress back into vogue.

Others didn't even turn a tag. They simply gathered up an armload and headed for the dressing room. They were Diane Von Furstenberg regulars, women who know what they want and knew the designer would have it.

"You can just wear them and wear them and wear them," said one woman after buying her third Von Furstenberg design.

Said another, "I got my first one six months ago, and I have three of them now. Like she said, I hadn't worn a dress in three years, but they move freely and I can go anyplace in one."

The collection and its creator, recently at Borwit Teller in Troy, attracted a continual flow of customers who racked up sales of more than 100 pieces—a successful day in anyone's book.

OF COURSE, success is not exactly a new-found item for the princess.

Now the queen of the fashion industry, she no longer makes headlines as the social butterfly wife of Prince Egon but as a shrewd businesswoman who has established what is expected to be a $20 million business in 1976.

"It happened very gradually," she said of her success. "But you get used to it very quickly."

Lately, the pace has quickened and Von Furstenberg's impact on a rough industry has given her a confidence and self-assurance she didn't seem to have when she visited Detroit several years ago.

It has also made her something of an idol to other women, a symbol that tough nuts can be cracked.

"You don't have to be hard and you don't have to lose your femininity," she said. "After that Newsweek article (March 22), people found it was possible for a woman to make it."

SHE STARTED making it in 1960 when she came to the United States with a few dresses in great prints. Ever since, she has been the purveyor of a look that doesn't seem to die and though it has been copied and recopied, Von Furstenberg's triumph is her own.

"I'm very flattered by them (copies)," she said. "But they really haven't done it well yet. The quality of my clothes is very good."

The dresses upon which she built her castle are simple and unassuming. They are classics without construction, with colorful prints and flattering lines.

"They are a nice way to be in between," she said, adding, "They are very comfortable and pretty. They make the best out of a woman, and men like them."

Conceivably, she could rest on her laurels. Rather, she plans to fully develop her cosmetics line.

Though what she knows about cosmetics "is only what I know as a consumer," she has surrounded herself with chemists and an expert. The cosmetics business, she said, is her future, and bring another Helena Rubinstein or Revlon isn't necessarily a far-fetched goal.

In the meantime, her name and face are tagged onto sunglasses, accessories and perfume, again bringing in phenomenal sales.

ODDLY, THOUGH, the eyes that stare out from her dress tags and advertisements have look deceivingly distant and don't reflect her princess and the pea sensitivity. Not only is she aware of her customer, but she comes off as a pulled together woman, capable of getting what she wants and maintaining what she has.

Included in that maintainance is a priority system that does not change.

"I have three priorities," she said. "My children, my work and my private life. All three are important to me, and I'm not going to give up any of them."

Consequently, the days of flitting about are intentionally over.

"I still go out and meet very interesting people," she said. "But society per se is very boring. There's a lot of full ——— people."

NO DOUBT VonFurstenberg will stay on top. Her track record is good, and for fall she will introduce a line of solids and for her, a new silhouette, which includes a long cardigan jacket over a straighter skirt.

Too, in spite of, or because of, her money-making abilities, her schedule will remain hectic.

"I figure, if you have to work, you may as well work hard."

Everyone wanted to find out what Diane Von Furstenberg dresses were all about.

Fashion·calendar

May 26-27—Personal appearance by Scali and her collection of fall silks at Claire Pearone, Somerset Mall.

May 27-28—Personal appearance by Carlos Falchi and his collection of handbags and accessories at Claire Pearone, Somerset Mall.

Luncheon Shows

Tuesdays—Informal modeling by Alvin's at Cooper's Arms Restaurant, Rochester.

Thursdays—Informal modeling by Boulevard Fashion Salon at the Atrium Telegraph north of Twelve Mile.

Wednesdays—Informal modeling by Alvin's at the Troy Hilton Hitchingpost, Troy.

Fridays—Informal modeling by Alvin's at Bedell's, Bloomfield Hills.

The fashion calendar is published every Monday in the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. For consideration of listings write Fashion Calendar, 1225 Bowers, Birmingham, 48012.

A Very Special SALE!

Sizes 16-20
16 1/2 - 22 1/2

Coats
Dresses
Gowns
Slacks
Slack Liners
Sweaters
Blouses
Shells

Tadmore's
of Birmingham
777 Woodward

647-6585

Michigan's Largest Ethan Allen Dealer!

hurry!
hurry!
final week!

Ethan Allen
CLEARANCE
SALE

ends Saturday, May 29th

You still have time to enjoy substantial savings on an impressive selection of floor sample sofas, chairs, living room, bedroom and dining room pieces, lamps, clocks, pictures, accessories and area rugs. But do hurry. Sale ends soon!

ALL SALES FINAL • SORRY, NO HOLDS OR LAYAWAYS

BANKAMERICARD • MASTER CHARGE • CONVENIENT TERMS

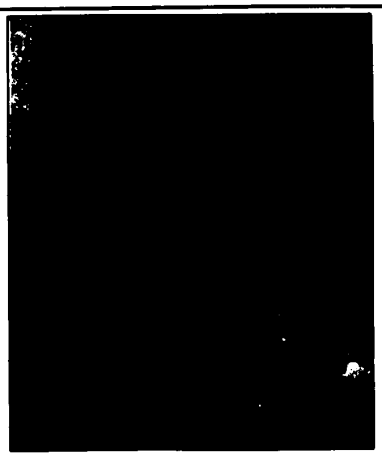
the Hearthside
An Ethan Allen Gallery

LIVONIA
15701 MIDDLEBELT ROAD
Just North of Laurel Park Place
PHONE 422-8770

UTICA
10170 VAN DYKE
Between 22 and 23 Mile Roads
PHONE 779-6100

SOUTHFIELD
15200 W. 12 MILE ROAD
Just West of Greenfield
PHONE 557-1800

OPEN MON., THUR. & FRI. TIL 9 P.M. • TUES., WED. & SAT. TIL 5:30 P.M.



"Jeanine" . . . an enchanting pattern from the Thibaut Designs of Today Vol. XIII collection. "Jeanine" is as fresh as a spring day, a delightful floral with a ribbon stripe which brings a garden look indoors. "Jeanine" is available in four exciting colorways and there is correlated fabric. All of the wallcoverings in the Thibaut Designs of Today collection are printed on durable vinyl acrylic, that is prepasted, pretrimmed, washable and strippable. "Jeanine" as well as hundreds of other designs are presented in full sample rolls at our Birmingham Showroom. Stop in and visit us soon.

• ALSO AVAILABLE AT OTHER FINE WALLCOVERING STUDIOS.

Thybony wallcoverings

MAPLE AT CRANBROOK RD.
BIRMINGHAM, MICHIGAN

PHONE: 642-8990

HOURS: DAILY 9-5 THURS EVENINGS 'TIL 8 P.M.

We've got it all...

BATHROOM MEDICINE CABINETS

Sale

GOLD, SILVER GOLD & WHITE #301R
Reg. $24.95 SALE $15.95

Also
STAINLESS STEEL TRIM
#9708 or #311
Reg. $14.95 SALE $10.95

SPECIALIZING IN BATHROOM DESIGN AND INSTALLATION

One Of The Most Complete Selections Of:

Vanities, marble tops, mirrors, decorator faucets & hardware Corian and unusual accent pieces

IN MICHIGAN

Custom Gallery & Lighting Studios

24200 TELEGRAPH (Between 9 & 10 Miles)
SOUTHFIELD

355-4550 FINISHING TOUCH HOME CENTER