



Wayne Scot Lukas and his beloved Patricio: "Horses have changed my life," he shares.

Riding In Style

By Michael Giltz • Photographs by David Paler for *Show Circuit*

Stylist to the stars
Wayne Scot Lukas
falls in love with the
equestrian lifestyle.

MOVIES AND BOOKS are filled with stories about dewy-eyed youngsters bonding with a pony and developing a life-long passion for riding. (They usually win the big race at the end of the film to boot.)

Another story is heard far less often: The story of adults who perhaps thought the horsey life had passed them by. They stumble onto a barn or get a free riding lesson, though, and suddenly—long after most people have given up on learning anything new—they find riding. In fashion maven Wayne Scot Lukas' case, perhaps riding found him.

"Maybe everybody wouldn't feel like this," avers Lukas, "but it's changed my life. Horses have changed my life."

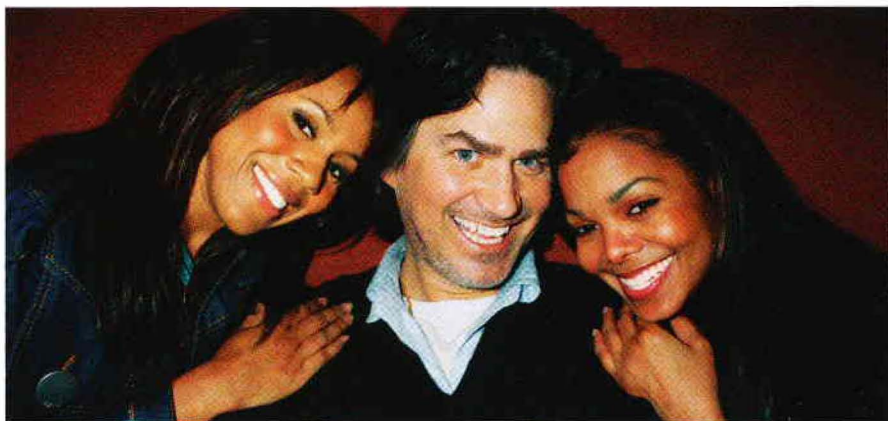
A stylist and fashion guru, the six-foot-four Lukas is at the top of his field in the entertainment world, crafting looks for artists like Justin Timberlake, Tina Turner, Cindy Crawford, Lauren Hutton, Meryl Streep, Halle Berry, and especially Janet Jackson, with whom Lukas has worked for more than a decade. He also launched and co-hosted the TLC hit cable show *What Not to Wear* and has numerous other projects in the works.

A busy man, perhaps the last thing Lukas wanted was a new endeavor that would push him to get up early or stay out late almost every day. That's exactly what he got, though, after his father died and an old friend called Lukas to invite him on a day trip to visit her horse.

"I said, 'You have a horse?'" remembers Lukas. She said, 'Yeah, his name is Willie.' So we drove up to the barn and I walked into the barn, and Willie walked over to me and wrapped his head around my neck and pulled me into his chin and



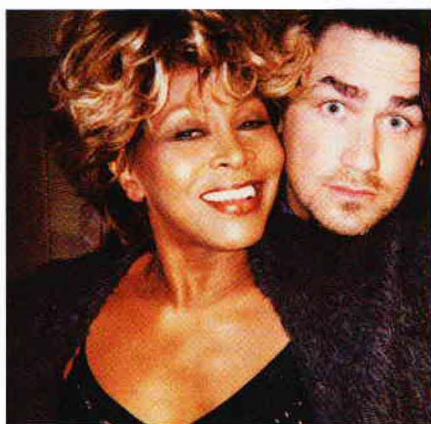
RIDING IN STYLE



Deborah Cox, Lukas, and Janet Jackson at Wayne's 40th surprise birthday party



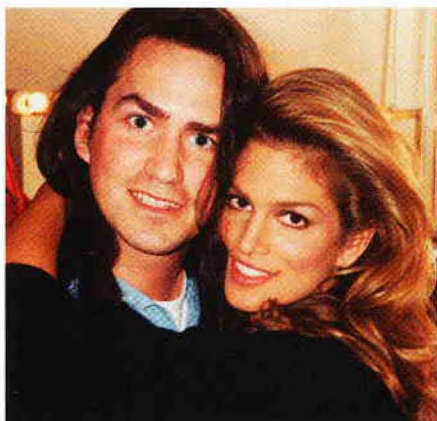
Lukas and Claudia Schiffer...



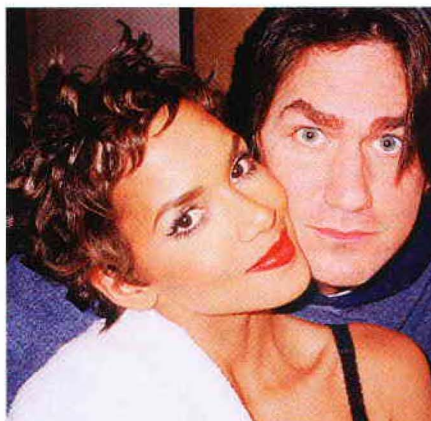
...with Tina Turner...



Magazine covers display Lukas' styling genius.



...Cindy Crawford...



...and Halle Berry

he started to purr and whinny. I thought, 'What the heck is this?' And then I walked away and she said, 'You need to ride.'

"So then I went back and started brushing Willie's tail, and Willie turned around and started to lick my arm and watch me brush him. And she said, 'You need to ride.' And then I was walking out to the field, and Willie hooked his head over my shoulder and walked along with me. And she said, 'Wayne, you need to ride.'"

Lukas' friend followed up this exhortation with a gift of Der•Dau boots and other riding equipment for Christmas. Another acquaintance sent Lukas out to the riding stable of Jonathan Soresi, a trainer who works with professionals and regular people but is also known for his celebrity clients. Lukas praises Soresi's gentle way of encouraging people's strengths rather than critiquing their faults. "He always teaches with compassion and compliments," Lukas describes. Soresi insists it is simply a pleasure to teach someone who takes to horsing so quickly.

"Wayne has a great passion," enthuses Soresi, the owner and head trainer of Soresi Show Stables (www.soresishowstables.com) in Morris County at the North Jersey Equestrian Center. "He's got a tremendous sense of curiosity, and he'll ask a lot of questions and is really interested in many aspects of it. Horses, horse care, the horse business—it's a whole new world for him. As a rider, he's rocketed right along. There's an example of somebody for whom it was meant to be."

Like many converts, Lukas fell hard. He started riding six days a week, especially loving the early morning and late night sessions when everyone else was gone, and the barn was like a cathedral.

"I didn't realize that being a rider meant being an athlete," admits Lukas, who keeps an apartment in the Chelsea neighborhood of New York, but spends most of his time at Spring Lake on the Jersey Shore. "I lost 40 pounds in three months. The weight just poured off me."

His client and friend Janet Jackson raved about how skinny Lukas was, not to mention his riding chaps. That led Lukas

to buy her half-chaps that he customized into boots with four inch heels. He created an equestrian look that swept into fashion magazines just as the love of horses became “hip” thanks to Jackson, Madonna, Angelina Jolie, and others. He hopes to inspire some changes in style at competitions as well.

“I just designed these amazing men’s riding coats,” explains Lukas, who uses a revolutionary fabric with inserted silver thread called Microsilver to craft them and gave one to Soresi as a gift. “They’re just beyond. They breathe, they thermal-regulate, and because they are antibacterial, they don’t hold odor, and I put in these amazing shoulder pads inspired by Kelly Klein’s riding coats. I’m talking to someone about making waterproof riding coats for kids. Kids spend time on the horses, and they get soaking wet in a thunderstorm the first class and have to ride three more events. So we’re talking about making waterproof, seasonless wool Microsilver coats.

“It could be fun. The only way to change the horse business clothing-wise is to go a little to the left. You can’t disrespect the tradition. I’m just trying to change the fabrication so people can see there’s a better way. Your wool riding jacket can breathe! Your wool riding jacket can stretch! Kids don’t have to look like they’re 50 year old women in ill-fitting riding clothes anymore. Come on. My job is not to bulldoze; my job is to respect the tradition of the horse business, but you move [it] forward.”

If he succeeds, it will be just the latest coup for Lukas, who went from a paper route as a little boy to cutting hair on his mom’s porch and then rocketed to international success. Along with a film and TV production company, Lukas has his own website (www.waynescotlukas.com), a Web page on Amazon.com (called a “Wayne’s Favorite Things Boutique”) devoted to what he loves best, a fashion book in the works, a lucrative arrangement with Spiegel catalog (whom Lukas states simply he helped rescue from bankruptcy), and QVC plans to begin selling his lines of equestrian-themed clothing, Ez-Pieces and S’wrap,



Patricio is an 18-hand dark bay 13-year-old Holsteiner.



Trainer Jonathan Soresi with 17.2-hand black stallion Thorn, who was twice honored with the designation of American Trakehner Association Horse of the Year. Soresi is wearing Lukas' newly designed men's riding coat, which uses a new fabric with inserted silver thread called Microsilver. "They breathe, they thermal-regulate, and, because they are antibacterial, they don't hold odor," notes Lukas.

which was co-designed with Marcella Leone, wife of Olympic silver medalist rider-trainer Peter Leone, on its channel in November.

Lukas has also become very involved in the riding world, attending competitions, encouraging his friend Deborah Cox (the star of Broadway's *Aida*) to perform at charity events held in the equestrian world, and even purchasing jumps created by the famous German

designer Olaf Peterson. (Lukas and Soresi plan to donate this jump to a charity benefit in Wellington in the fall with the proceeds going to the Equestrian AIDS Foundation.)

"I'm getting ready to explode to another level of being Wayne Scot Lukas," he asserts, saying that eight years of therapy have helped him keep the attention and intensity in perspective. "I've learned what you do with fame. You go on TV to get more endorsements to sell more things and get better products. You don't go on TV to get famous. TV is a tool."

However frantic and successful his life continues to be, Lukas knows his passion for horses will remain integral.

"I got so hooked I was mucking stalls and cleaning up manure and trying to learn how to clean horses. I was 14 again," he relates.

Though Lukas had planned to lease a horse, he fell in love with a 13-year-old Holsteiner dark bay mount named Patriocio, found in Florida by horse broker and friend Michael D'Ambrosio. Lukas and Soresi flew down immediately to try the horse. Despite passing numerous medical exams with exceptionally good results, the day Lukas was writing the final check, Patriocio fell deathly ill and worsened day by day. No one could determine the problem and—while speaking to the best veterinarians available—Lukas reached out to a psychic and even a horse healer in Arizona named Kedzi Morgan (who does readings by phone) to help solve this mystery.

Cynics advised Lukas that a horse was



Lukas, Soresi, and famed course designer Anthony D'Ambrosio (l.) with their Olaf Peterson Grand Prix Olympic jump

not a pet and that he should not bother spending so much money on a horse he had barely ridden. "But I can't think of an animal or a person as disposable," reveals Lukas, who stuck by the horse that made him feel so safe as a rider that "it was like jumping a fence on your favorite sofa." Today, Patricio is healthy, and Lukas feels they were destined for each other. "We are the 2005 version of Sea Biscuit. I was thrown 10 weeks ago and couldn't ride, and Patricio was down with an illness. But I'm back on," reports Lukas. "Together Patricio and I are training and paralleling each other on our way back up to being fit. It is an amazing journey."

Lukas took the horse healer's advice and groomed and grazed the horse at his vet, Brendan Furlong and Associates, every day for 28 days, hoping he would get better. The vets told Lukas that a lot of horse owners never come in when a horse is down, he recounts. "They said 'It is such a pleasure to have you here grazing and grooming him into wellness.'"

"If I let my heart make the decision instead of my head, I have the horse that God and the world knew I had to have at this point in my life right now," affirms Lukas. "This horse came to teach. He taught us a lot of lessons about love and about hope and about faith. He's an extremely beautiful horse, and you'd never think anything had happened to him. Every day he thrives."

With business pulling Lukas in a million different directions, nothing focuses his mind like being on a 1,500 pound steed.

"If you don't want to get thrown off a horse, you've got to be present. And isn't that a metaphor for the rest of our lives? You don't want to get thrown out of a job? You've got to be present. You don't want to be thrown out of a relationship—you've got to be present. The thrill is to completely let go and trust," Lukas declares. "The thrill is to trust yourself and your connection to the horse."

"People spend their whole life searching for ultimate joy and fulfillment," affirms Janet Jackson, his client of more than 10 years. "My dear friend Lukas has found it, in horses and riding." ♦



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