



# HATS OFF

*Kasha Van Sant* watches two British institutions come together to mark the most definitive social event in the British calendar

In a bid to create a strong, contemporary image, Ascot Racecourse has invited Vivienne Westwood to present her vision of Royal Ascot, Britain's most historic and famous race meeting. As one of the most inspirational and recognisable designers of the past 20 years, who brought modern punk to the fashion forefront, she talks of strict dress codes and ironic ladies' hats.

**Can you tell us a bit about styling this shoot, the concept and the message you wanted to get across?**

It's great to have the opportunity to work with Finlay-Mackay, the photographer. He's able to access the feeling of the stables and horses and add to that great clothes, a beautiful girl and Stephen Jones's hats.

**Last year the Gold Label was shown on the catwalk at Royal Ascot and this year you are involved in the publicity campaign; why have you become involved in promoting this great racing event?**

Royal Ascot is a British institution for showing off clothes and I like to take advantage of any opportunity to do that. Of course the hats are most important and the best hats should be ironic.

**Are the men in their morning suits and the ladies in their hats one of those historic British institutions that inspire you?**

Morning suits are great especially if they are made to fit. Menswear has got a wonderful tradition and has been codified for a couple

of hundred of years and it hasn't changed much. They usually look better than their wives because there is less to choose from so you can't make too many mistakes.

**Ascot has a strict dress code, is it something you would like to shake up a little?**

I think strict dress code is great but it is a triumph of personality to be able to emerge as a star in such a situation. That's what it's all about. You can look great in the confinements of a dress code. It's about how you are, how you relate to your clothes and how you put them together.

**The Duchess of Cornwall looked fantastic in the taffeta gown at the Royal Variety Performance recently,**

**is she someone you would like to dress for Ascot? It would be quite a publicity coup.**

I really enjoyed meeting her and am very proud of how astonishing she looked in the dress. I'd like to repeat it for another occasion. For me, to make somebody look important is the most important thing about clothes, then they look sexy anyway.

**Do you follow the racing or have you been racing yourself?**

I like the idea of a group of people gathered together and it is amazing to look at horses and jockeys. Painters such as Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec are really into painting horses. One of them said that we really miss something when we don't see horses and it had something to do with the beauty of their noble physique. I haven't been to the races recently but now and again, it is great to go to the races.

Both Vivienne Westwood and Stephen Jones will showcase their latest designs in the stylish surroundings of the Bessborough Restaurant. Tickets for Royal Ascot 2009, (Tuesday, 16th June to Saturday, 20th June) are now on sale. To find out more information or to make a booking visit [www.ascot.co.uk](http://www.ascot.co.uk), or call the Hospitality Team on 0870 727 4321 or email: [hospitality@ascot.co.uk](mailto:hospitality@ascot.co.uk).