

## FASHION



MICHAEL ANGELO

Poppy King, a.k.a. the Lipstick Queen, says if you want to wear bold lipstick, scale back on everything else: lose the blush and wear scant eye makeup.

# She went 'Pow!' — right in the kiss

Poppy King packs a punch as the Lipstick Queen

BY SYDNEY STOYAN

Lipstick is theatre. So says Poppy King, and she should know: At the tender age of 18, she launched an eponymous brand of lipstick in her native Australia. Then, in 2006, she reformulated a new line of lip products called Lipstick Queen, and she has just overseen the release of her first book, *Lessons of a Lipstick Queen*, which encourages the reader to find and develop the Great Idea that can change one's life.

Lipstick seems to be a perfect metaphor for King's exposition: It is wholly transformative. The other night, I walked into the kitchen where my five year old was watching a movie. I was dressed in my old bathrobe, straight from the shower, but my lips were daubed a dark red. My son took one look at me and said sternly, "No one said anything about going out tonight."

I explained that, yes, I was having dinner with a friend, whereupon my son burst into floods of tears. I do not think the scene that ensued was quite the sort of theatre King had in mind, but it underscores a point: Lipstick has a powerful presence.

I have always been a lipstick girl. In the minimalist '90s I flirted briefly with gloss, but it was not true love. To this day, even with the

plethora of high-tech products on the market, I find gloss quite goopy, able to besmear an apple and glue strands of hair to one's lips in an unbecoming manner. With this view, I am in the minority, apparently: Gloss continues to maintain its authority in the cosmetics market, while lipstick sales are down. So far, it seems, Leonard Lauder's so-called Lipstick Index, an economic indicator that shows an increased purchasing of small luxuries in recessionary times, is a misnomer.

of a product."

She is preaching to the converted. As a broke young receptionist after university, I blew my meager earnings on Paloma Picasso's one offering of lip colour, a bright but intense classic red. I wore Christian Dior's Indian Red to my wedding in 1991. I learned that Madonna favoured a matte red lip colour from a burgeoning company called M.A.C and for a while its Viva Glam was my signature shade. Then in the mid-'90s I read

*All of a sudden, she looked like something off the silver screen*

This relationship with lipstick is one reason King has stepped back into the ring, offering up a tightly edited group for Lipstick Queen — 10 classic shades in two formulas; one sheer, the other deeply matte, dubbed, fetchingly, Saints and Sinners, available exclusively at Holt Renfrew. In Toronto recently, King said her mission is to re-educate women who associate lipstick with their grandmothers, to remind them that "lipstick is not a dinosaur

that a young woman named Poppy King had created a series of intensely pigmented lipsticks named after the seven deadly sins and I begged myself on my first trip to New York City buying dark purples and reds called Envy and Lust.

I wish I still had those lipsticks. Like so many women, I have strong memories of watching my mother prepare for an evening out. Although her routine was decidedly low maintenance — a spritz of Chanel No. 5 and some coral

lipstick — I remember the precise moment of change, when my mother lost her aura of discipline and dinnertime and became something beautiful and otherworldly, swanning off to adult pleasures denied to me. Likewise, King recalls her mother in the 1970s applying Biba lipsticks brought back from London "and all of a sudden, she looked like something off the silver screen."

Gloss just doesn't possess the same iconic power. It's about looseness, easiness, speed. Lipstick requires commitment and precision, and bestows for one's pains a bold elegance. The worry for many women, as King discovered in her research, is the risk of being overdone, with a noticeably painted face.

But her remedy is simple: Scale back on everything else. Wear scant eye makeup, lose the blush, let the lipstick do the rest. In fact, when I wear strong lipstick — I have been faithful to Lipstick Queen's Berry Sinner for nearly a year — I wear nothing but a little face powder. Nothing else. And it looks modern and fresh. (For those still skeptical, King has produced Shine, a super-size pot of gleaming lip gloss, and Oxymoron, a matte gloss, which goes on shiny but dries into a subtle blush.)

Weekend Post