

Virgin or Vixen?

Designing diva challenges stereotypes of female sexuality.

By Courtney Sanders

Esther Nash is a walking contradiction. From her sexy clothing designs to her straight-laced morals, this 22-year-old fashion designer turns heads, but turns down most of her second dates. Like other young women today, Esther chooses to abstain from sex until she meets the right man, but feels no need to dress conservatively and remain indoors while the rest of the world parties onward.

"Some people hide behind their clothes and appear conservative, but they may take drugs, smoke, drink and sleep around," she said. "It's funny, my values are conservative, but I don't dress conservatively at all."

Stopping Traffic

The bright-eyed designer proudly sports a sequined beret, a fire-red top and an original pair of splatter-painted jeans cut into long fringes with the buttons and zipper removed.

"A lady driving a Corvette offered me \$300 if I took off these pants and gave them to her on the street the other day," she said.

This kind of request is not unusual for Esther. People have literally chased

her down the streets of New York City to find out where she bought her clothes. And not surprisingly, guys' jaws drop when they see her sexy designs.

"One time a guy was driving in the car with his dad and he crashed into a pole because he was staring at me," Esther said. And did he grab her attention? "After all that, I didn't even give him my number!" she said.

So how did a virgin make some guy so hot he crashed his old man's car? Confidence. While Esther respects her body, she is not afraid to show it off and flaunt it. In fact, her designs focus on one area of the body to accentuate. Whether it be a woman's back, a man's neck or a shirt-exposing the belly button through a circular cutout, Esther loves the human body and is not afraid to draw attention to it.

"I want to make the impression that there is no way you could miss me. My designs are so in-your-face because I design for people who are proud and sure of themselves," she said. "After all, getting noticed is really the only reason you get dressed."

This coming from a girl who designed her own prom dress

consisting of a white halter top and a sheer skirt. Gee, do you think her date noticed her?

Walking the Walk

But dressing sexy does not mean you have to follow through with the act of sex itself. Esther believes that being a virgin does not equate to being unattractive.

"Now you dress has nothing to do with who you are as a person. It's just clothing," she said. "You don't have to look bad if you are a virgin."

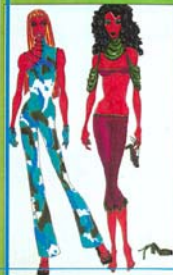
While Esther's forward thinking sounds ideal, men sometimes get the wrong impression of her. One time when she was at a club, a guy asked if she was a pedestal dancer. She does not get too offended by these implications, instead she burly lets guys know what she's all about. Esther simply gave him her business card and told him she was a designer with three boutiques.

"I even offered to give him a discount when he came in," she said. "After that, he apologized."

Her good humor and innocence allow her to get respect in an industry that often relies on the phrase "sex sells."

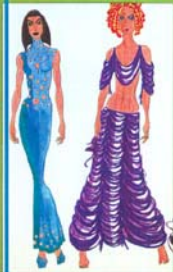


Esther poses at home in her dining room in her trendy New York City apartment.



Esther brings her designs to life as the runway starts in her original design studio.

Esther's designs vary from leopard prints to sequins.



But what's a guy to think when he digs up Esther's store and punches in the digits B77-OhBaby? With a number that sounds more like a sex line than a clothing store, you can see where the male mind becomes stimulated and confused. Just because she's innocent doesn't mean she doesn't know how to play the game.

"I see it as flirtatious, fun and young," Esther said. "The number is 'lucky and sweet' and it catches your attention. You are not going to forget that number."

She insists that personality is what makes a girl unforgettable, rather than wearing sheer prom dresses and slandering shirts. "You have to have an attitude, presence, posture, poise and the right walk," she said. "You want people to think you look great and that they are lucky to be in your company."

To accompany your confidence, Esther recommends wearing soft fabrics, sheer material, crushed velvet and ostrich leathers. And, of course, don't forget the sequins.

"The body is a celebration of beauty and it should be adorned with jewels," she said.

From a guy's perspective, Esther said men tend to find animal prints sexy or clothing that shows off some skin. "The animal instinct is very easy to men," she said. "Maybe it comes from watching the nature channel and they're hoping their woman is a tiger."

Esther does feel that a girl can cross



the line from celebrating her beautiful body to sending out the wrong messages.

"A lot of the clothing ads out there today send the message that sex sells," Esther said. "I'm not selling sex. I'm selling fun."

Birds, Bees and Stars

Esther does not plan to sell herself short of her goals anytime soon. Whether it be her career, her studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) or her search for Prince Charming (who must be a superstar in her eyes, cooler than James Bond and willing to wear coordinating outfits, of course), she is determined.

After leaving FIT as a full-time student and deciding to give the real world a chance, Esther has already opened and operated three boutiques in New York City: Baby Doll, Sugar Daddy, and Baby Doll Sugar Daddy. Her stores offer an array of vintage clothing mixed in with some original designs. Gold and black tube tops line one wall complementing a rack of her sequined bikinis and custom-made glass earrings. Esther saves money from sales of the vintage clothes so she can eventually bring her own designs to life.

Part of the store's collection comes from her mother, Dorothy Dee Nash, who also has a flair for style. As Esther grew up, Dorothy gave her space and support, allowing her to dress up in kimonos, ostrich leathers and any outfit that offered Esther a chance to express herself artistically.

"That's probably the reason I am the way I am today," she said.

Esther draws off the strength of her

mother, who has been as successful in business as she has in parenthood.

"She taught me that I could do anything," she said. "Through school and hard work and being focused, I can follow my dreams." Esther, whose name means star, ironically, said, "Shoot for the stars and remember that things don't always come easily to people."

Along with Dorothy's efforts to encourage Esther, older sister Rachel Nash also made a concentrated effort to portray virginity as a possible choice for her sister.

"I wanted her to feel confident in her choices," Rachel said. "I never want her to feel someone wouldn't love or respect her if she was a virgin because her choice is something to be celebrated."

Esther never had one sit-down "birds and the bees" sex talk with her mother. Instead, remaining a virgin was part of a lifestyle that Dorothy encouraged her to lead.

"Choosing not to have sex does not come from a one-day talk," said Dorothy. "It comes from living every day as you look toward the next day with excitement and promise. Life is very precious, and Esther understands that."

To remain on her path, Esther veers far from anything that will harm her body and surrounds herself with people who have positive energy. This means sticking to a strict vegetarian diet, remaining active through kickboxing and weights, refraining from alcohol, cigarettes and, despite a previous addiction to *The Jerry Springer Show*, even TV.

Oliva Dating

Between her part-time FT studies and running three stores, it's hard to fit in a *Springer* episode, let alone a date. However, Esther has frequent first dates but usually turns down the second offer because she finds out the guy is trying to be something that he's not.

"They're very nice guys but they're usually not for me," she said. "I want someone who is a complete fit to me — someone who will be a good team player and support me."

Esther admits she is a bit of a perfectionist and may have trouble finding the adventurous, ambitious, health-ferocious Romeo who will fit her needs.

"I'm very busy and I don't want to settle for just anyone," she said. "He has to be a superstar in my eyes."

Could such a man possibly exist? "He's out there," she said. "I just haven't met him yet."

While Esther chooses a certain lifestyle, she believes sex is a personal decision that



Even as a teenager, Esther had outgoing aspirations. Here, she poses in her prom dress, which she designed herself.



differs for everyone. Both her mother and sister waited until someone special came along and Esther plans to do the same.

"If you decide to have sex, you should take every precaution," Esther said. "Speak to your parents, your health teachers, read up on it and go to your doctor."

She also suggests speaking openly to your partner and taking sex seriously.

"Find out what type of person he is and what he wants out of life," she said. "Once you have sex, the act is done and over with, and it's not something you can take lightly because you may even accidentally bring someone else into this world."

Esther admits that being "good" is not always easy.

"Sometimes there's so much pressure from different outside sources that it's difficult and you have to choose what's important to you," she said. "I just continue to choose what's important, make sacrifices and hope for the best."

In her sweet but sassy style, Esther added, "You need to make the impression of a lifetime, but make the right one — just sparkle and shine like the superstar that you are." ✨