

Jane Hitchcock

A model for retaining style, beauty and grace at any age

Story by Max Andrews * Photos courtesy of Natasha Ella Pisani, Faz Kashani and Chris Littlechild

Say the terms “fashion model” or “photo model” and immediately one’s mind conjures up the image of a chiseled-featured, gorgeously maned, barely twentysomething whose legs – which go on forever – carry a body that has never weighed in at more than the high double-digits.

That was, in fact, a perfect description of Jane Hitchcock – over 40 years ago. And yet, today, now in her early 60s, Hitchcock still retains the attributes and style that sold bazillions of fashion magazines and cosmetic products from the late 1960s through the early 1980s.

Born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama, Hitchcock’s modeling career began when she was just 14. One of only two young American women to be offered a dance scholarship to train at the school of Balanchine for the world’s premier ballet company, The New York City Ballet, she and her mother moved to New York where, from her first day, photographers began stopping her on the street and asking to photograph her.

While dance was young Hitchcock’s focus, that soon changed when Wilhelmina, the famous *Vogue* model of the 1960s, who had just established her own modeling agency, signed her as her fifth model.

Embraced as Wilhelmina’s protégé, Hitchcock quickly learned that her dance training made her a natural as a model as she exuded poise, posture

and grace. Within months of her signing with Wilhelmina, Hitchcock began appearing on the covers of the world’s premier fashion magazines, including *Vogue*, *Harper’s Bazaar*, *Elle* and *Glamour*. Along with her modeling work, Hitchcock was tapped to appear in commercials and cosmetic ads for Estée Lauder, Clinique, Maybelline, Yardley, Almay, Avon, Noxzema, Cover Girl and Vichey, among others.

While most models see their careers come to an end before they are out of their 20s, Hitchcock continued to get work into her 30s and began a major resurgence in her 40s, thanks to the legendary fashion photographer Steven Meisel. Crusading to convince the fashion and advertising industry that women over 40 would relate to older models and had a spending power that would only continue to grow, Meisel approached *Vogue* and inspired a new recognition of beauty by photographing famous models of the past who were then in their 40s and 50s. Among his subjects were Lauren Hutton, Lisa Taylor, Susan Forestall, Patty Hanson, Rosie Vella and Hitchcock, who graced the cover of *Vogue*, ads for Calvin Klein, and campaigns for Esprit and Ferretti Jeans.

Long after most models had been retired for over two decades, Hitchcock became an important face for cosmetic companies, which began to create advertisements featuring “ageless beauties.” Calvin Klein even used Hitchcock and other older models

in a runway show. “There is a changing perception,” Klein told CNN at the time. “These women are beautiful [and] I’m using Jane Hitchcock because she is perfect for what I’m trying to say: [that] women get better as they age.”

Asked to weigh in on what women can do to help them age better, Hitchcock offered *Life After 50* readers the following advice:

ON WOMEN WHOSE GRAND-DAUGHTERS WANT TO BE MODELS

Encourage them to take ballet classes. This will teach them understanding about alignment of their bodies for posing and awareness of their body’s posture

and how to be graceful in movement. I always felt I stood out because of the way I walked and moved. That came naturally to me, because of my ballet training. I would also say that to become a successful model, you need to have an outgoing personality and always be professional. Make sure you arrive on time, always bring what they ask, do what your agency advises you, and love every bit of the adventure.

ON THE PROPER USE OF MAKEUP FOR MATURE WOMEN

The innovations in makeup for older people have been very good. Today, you can achieve a natural appearance instead of that powdered look. As you get older, you want to look fresh and natural with some color. To achieve that, you may only need a bit of blush and something on the lips. I like a lip-stain gloss. It adds color that lasts even when it wears off, and lips, as we get older, definitely need a little color and freshness. Overall, when it comes to makeup, remember: less is more.

ON THE BEST TRICK FOR GETTING A FRESH LOOK

I think the eyebrows are the most important feature on the face and are all too often overlooked. Their shape and color can affect your entire appearance, because they help balance your features. A properly formed and colored eyebrow brings attention to your face and gives you a lifted look. They are frames for the eyes and can make them look bigger. Eyebrows give personality and expression to the face and they are the one thing we can modify without surgery to get a perky look. Color is also very important when it comes to eyebrows. I think a medium brown is as light as anyone over 50 should ever go. That will give the brows some intensity and will take away a washed-out look. I recommend dyeing them gradually, so you get used to the color. I also think it’s very good to dye your eyelashes. You should then curl them. I believe every woman should do that, because it makes you look bright-eyed and brings out the shape of your eyes. An added bonus is, you don’t have to put on mascara.

ON HAIR STYLES AND COLOR

I know it’s a current trend to go gray or white and brava to women who are making that statement, but, to me, women have been enhancing their appearance with hair color for centuries for a reason – because gray hair is aging. But I think color and style – whether long or short – is a personal choice. I think consulting with a stylist and a colorist is very helpful, but each woman should go with what she thinks works for her and she is comfortable with.



ON PLASTIC SURGERY AND FILLERS

I have never had any cosmetic surgery and don’t use fillers, plumpers or Botox. I’m concerned that things can go wrong with surgery and we really don’t know what the long-term health effects of injecting chemicals may be. So I have chosen another route – facial exercising. I have tried various facial exercises and found that they work well for me. I think facial exercising is extremely important. Our face is made up of muscles and they have to be used to keep toned. I do the “lion roar” every day. That consists of opening your eyes and mouth as wide as you can, to stimulate many of the facial muscles.

ON THE BIGGEST FASHION MISTAKE WOMEN OVER 50 MAKE

You don’t have to be beautiful to be stylish and fashionable, but you do have to be confident and comfortable with yourself, and you should also be aware of what you should be doing to present yourself in an elegant and graceful way. You do need a sense of the aesthetic in understanding how you look and how you should put yourself together. As for the biggest mistake, I would say wearing ¾-length pants that end at mid-calf is a huge mistake for most women. Unless you are really tall and thin, they cut the line of the leg and make you look shorter and wider in the hips. It is a very bad look for most women.

ON DIET AND EXERCISE

I don’t really adhere to any specific diet and, while I try to eat healthy, I also allow myself to splurge occasionally. For the most part, I eat the way we all know to be right: moderate portions and moderation in rich foods. I try to eat very little fried food, sweets, pasta, rice or bread, but I don’t

completely deprive myself. As for exercise, it is always a struggle for me, so what I try to do is use my everyday life as my exercise regimen. I always walk up stairs as much as I can and I try to stretch every day. I think stretching is very important as we get older. Achieving alignment and trying to keep flexible is what I strive for. I do leg kicks and stretches as I’m standing in the kitchen waiting for the coffee to be made. I also walk a lot and do use some small weights, but I really try to make exercising a part of my everyday life. Just the act of lifting groceries can be a form of exercise.

ON AGING GRACEFULLY

I truly believe it’s an attitude thing. There’s a quote I love: “We don’t grow old, we become old by not growing.” I believe we have to always stay creative. Having a creative outlet is important and, like exercising, I think we can and should just make being creative a part of our everyday life. Anything can be creative: conducting business, preparing food, working at a relationship. I think you have to always stay curious, seek new challenges and bring in creativity to whatever you do that keeps you connected to life. A walk down the street, if you are really present, can be a creative endeavor. You can find creativity and joy in so many simple things and moments. There is so much pleasure to be found in everyday things like a simple walk. I think having a reason to get up is also important. I love that I am still working and that there are opportunities for older models. I recently did a shoot for Italian *Vogue* with other women who were in their 70s and 80s. Nowadays there are models having careers even into their 90s, so that means I have 30 or 40 more years of fun to look forward to. I just appreciate every day, because I don’t know what tomorrow may bring. I see every day as a gift to be grateful for.

