FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Ralph Lauren

Ralph Lauren
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“I didn’t like the girl with all the makeup and high heels. I liked the girl in jeans and a white shirt with rolled-up sleeves, wearing her boyfriend’s jacket. That’s the girl I’m attracted to,” Ralph Lauren writes. Since 1967 he has designed clothes for the casual, yet fashion-forward.

This enormous collection of photographs accompanied by Lauren’s own commentary spans the forty years of the designer’s life and work. Since he began making wide neckties, hand sewing the Polo label on each of these first garments, his fashion empire has expanded to include clothes for men, women, and children, as well as fragrances, shoes, glassware, and linens.

The tome itself is representational of Lauren’s design style: rich, eye-catching, and unmistakable. As Audrey Hepburn said in a 1992 speech that serves as the foreword to the book, “if you say something is ‘very Ralph Lauren,’ you’re immediately understood.” Hundreds of photos depict pieces from his collections over the years worn by his classic all-American models, along with the designer himself from his younger days, with his children, and often with his wife Ricky by his side.

Whether working with colors of the Southwest, the chinos and vests of an ivy leaguer, or the tweed and tartan of Britain, Lauren makes collections with distinct voices. He calls them his movies. “I want to tell a story, so I guess you could say I write through my clothes,” he writes. The photographs in his advertising campaigns act the same way. Many images from past advertisements are included here: A family lies on the deck of their sailboat in Polo gear, a man in white sits with his sleeping toddler in his lap, a woman in a long skirt weaves a basket.

Near the end of the book, an illustrated timeline highlights significant years in Lauren’s career, including 1972, when he launched his first full womenswear line; 1974, when he designed the costumes for *The Great Gatsby*; 1986, when he launched his flagship store in New York City; and 1999, when Gwyneth Paltrow wore a pink gown designed by him to accept her Academy Award.

An eponymous volume this large by anyone else may ring of conceit, but for a fashion

icon of Lauren’s stature, one should expect no less. (A deluxe edition with leather slipcover is available for $400, 978-0-8478-3106-7.)