

THE NEW *Couture Ball Game*

Show-stopping haute-couture gowns, dazzling diamonds and Hollywood A-listers – Bazaar gets an insider view of the exclusive Crillon Ball in Paris with Demi Moore's daughter, **Scout LaRue Willis**

Words by Helen Russell

A voluptuous brunette sprawls on a chaise longue as a photographer snaps away – she's dressed in a ruched Christian Lacroix gown that she keeps fiddling with, much to the photographer's frustration. He tells her to hold still. "I can't help it, I love it," she apologises. There's something very familiar about the dark glossy hair, full lips and distinctive jawline as she catches the eye of one of the onlookers and breaks into a huge smile. "My mother describes it as 'sea foam green'." Eyes follow her gaze and meet with a well-known face, who smiles back.

Her mother is actress Demi Moore, dressed simply in jeans and a T-shirt, looking like any other anxious parent watching out for their teenage daughter. The family resemblance between Moore and her daughter Scout LaRue Willis, her middle child with Bruce Willis, is striking.

A few more shots and the photographer is done, and Scout gets up, stretches and ambles over for a chat. The 17-year-old is in Paris to attend the city's super-exclusive annual Bal de Débutantes, or Crillon Ball, at The Hôtel de Crillon, where 23



Scout models her stunning Lacroix couture gown

debutantes dressed in haute couture “come out” in front of an invited high-society audience. So what makes a girl from a modern A-list background want to take part? “Being a debutante appealed because it is so traditional,” she says. “I’m not really into jeans and T-shirts. My look is quite girly, so I love getting to dress up.”

She talks me through her dress. “I wanted Lacroix, my favourite, so I went to see his collection in this hotel room in LA. I just walked in and this was the first one they showed me – it was love at first sight.”

Now based in Los Angeles, Scout spends much of her time evading the media glare. It turns out that having Hollywood stars for parents and pin-up actor Ashton Kutcher as your stepfather can be tough at times. “In LA I shy away from this kind of thing because we get so much attention anyway,” she tells me. “But here [in Paris] it’s nice – it’s a bit more private.”

The Crillon Ball’s founder, Ophélie Renouard, makes sure of that. She launched her version of the traditional deb ball in Paris 18 years ago, mixing rock ‘n’ roll, royalty and catwalk couture. Every year, the immaculately groomed Parisian

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PR scours society pages for girls in their late teens that are bright, attractive, and – crucially – will fit into sample-size couture gowns. It’s an invitation that money can’t buy, with alumni including American presidential niece Lauren Bush (whose 2000 debut led to a modelling contract with Tommy Hilfiger), Amanda Hearst and Lily Collins (daughter of Genesis rocker Phil Collins).

Renouard’s “new debs” are aged between 16 and 22 and come from 12 different countries. For the first time in the ball’s history, this year the guest list includes girls from the Philippines, Egypt and Korea (“I’d love to invite a girl from the Middle East next year,” says Renouard). Debutantes select their preferred couture house and Renouard opens her bulging contacts book and sets them up with a designer. The girls have a dress fitting, then the day before the ball, the 23 “chosen ones” meet at The Hôtel de Crillon for a photo shoot in their gowns and Adler diamond jewellery.

This year’s lucky ladies include British twin sisters Anna and Violet Hesketh, 17,

both wearing Vivienne Westwood – their mother, Catherine Guinness, was Andy Warhol’s assistant at The Factory. Then there’s Sokhna N’Dour (wearing Frank Sorbier HC), the 17-year-old daughter of Senegalese singer Youssou N’Dour; Princess Anne-Hélène d’Arenberg of Belgium (wearing an aqua Christian Dior dress); and, of course, the inimitable Miss Willis.

The night before the ball, there’s a cocktail party for the families to get to know each other and for new debs to meet their escorts for the ball. These young men in chinos and striped shirts with expensive cashmere slung around their shoulders have been selected by Renouard for their breeding and suitability, and every girl who has not brought a boyfriend as an escort is matched with one of the organiser’s choosing.

At the ball, the girls will waltz in full formal regalia, so a waltz teacher is brought in to teach the teens the rudiments of the dance. The debutantes find their allocated escort, the string quartet starts up and

the waltzing begins. The girls resemble newborn foals, while flat-footed cavaliers try not to trip over each other, and there is an awful lot of step-counting. But

there is a problem; one debutante is missing her cavalier. It is Scout.

“My date is late!” she exclaims. I ask her who he is and she replies: “I never met him.” A male voice pipes up: “You want me?” It is Ashton Kutcher volunteering to be Scout’s dance partner, looking obscenely handsome in a charcoal grey suit. Scout shrugs. “OK.”

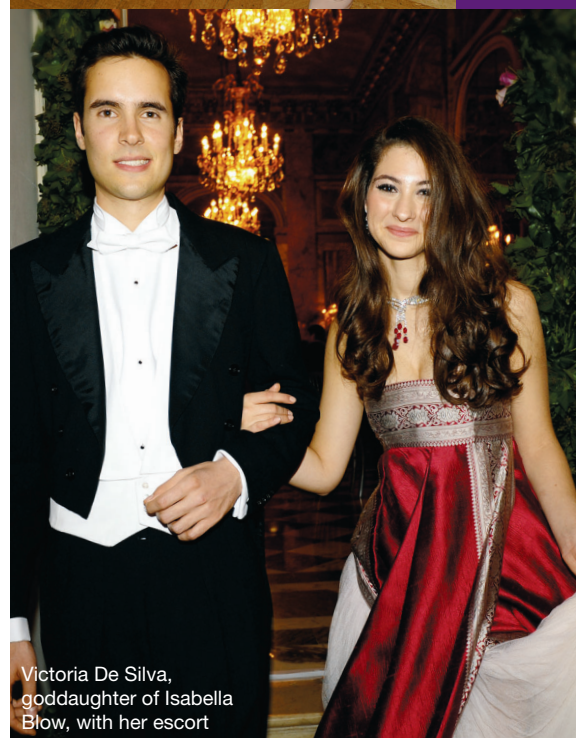
“Oh, I have to get this,” says Demi Moore, in a peach bandeau dress, wriggling her way through a crowd of parents before starting to snap with an enormous camera. “Can he waltz?” I ask. “Noooo, but he’ll fake it,” Moore replies.

Scout’s younger sister also appears, looking chic in a black dress and turban. “Tallulah, you are rocking that turban look,” Kutcher, 30, shouts across the dancefloor, and she grins. Scout is too busy counting to hear – she’s taking the dancing very seriously.

Then a hush falls over the room as a familiar face appears, with a megawatt smile and defined profile. It’s Bruce Willis, standing a foot away, with his model ▶



Ashton Kutcher, Demi Moore and Scout



Victoria De Silva, goddaughter of Isabella Blow, with her escort



Philippa Cadogan takes to the floor with her dance partner

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: TIM GRIFFITHS (2). COURTESY ADLER, EXCLUSIVE JEWELLER OF THE CRILLON BALL (2)

girlfriend Emma Hemming. There are hugs and kisses all around – it seems the Moore/Willis clan and their new spouses really are as amicable as billed – and Willis, 53, cuts in to dance with his daughter, Scout. An elderly lady in a black dress (who must be the only person in Paris not to recognise the A-listers) leans in to Moore and gestures towards the dancers: “Is one of them yours?” Moore smiles warmly, points at Scout, and says in her trademark gravelly voice: “That’s my baby.” The group slowly improves with patient coaching from the two professionals, but all look relieved when it’s over. Then it’s champagne and sushi all round before a well-deserved rest before the big day.

On Saturday, the hotel is transformed, with the furniture cleared away and huge floral displays everywhere. “It’s like a fairy tale,” the Egyptian deb, Enayat Younes, exclaims as she pads down the stairs in her fluffy hotel robe and slippers. She’s right – even for these girls from hugely privileged backgrounds, there is something a little unreal about the weekend. The girls wander about admiring the view before joining a production line of pampering. Each girl

spends an hour with a MAC make-up artist before being ushered on to hairdressing by a team of very chic French madames. The day vanishes in a cloud of hairspray fumes and by 5pm it’s a race against time to get all 23 girls ready in time. Scout goes missing and there is mild panic

She is finally located in her dressing gown, barefoot, with wet hair, waltzing on her own in the ballroom. There’s a little furrow in her brow and she concentrates to get the steps right as electricians wire up speakers and women on ladders wrestle with floral displays all around her. “Oh, sorry. I just wanted to get the waltz right...” she explains, before being summoned into hair and make-up.

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SAYS CRILLON BALL FOUNDER
OPHÉLIE RENOUARD

By 7.30pm, the girls are ready to go. Scout’s cavalier, the dashing 19-year-old Edouard de Bernis, has found his way from the Eurostar terminal after his delay. He’s given a last-minute waltz lesson by Scout and soon they’re ready to go.

Guests arrive and debutantes are ushered upstairs, away from people straining to catch a glimpse. Champagne corks pop and Tattinger flows as 150 guests parade through, all clutching exclusively designed Elie Saab invitations. Demi Moore, 47, is striking in a tiered black fishtail gown and Tallulah accompanies her in a backless green dress. The crowd surges forward



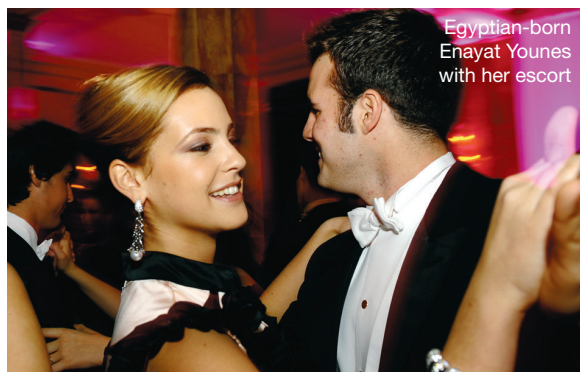
Sokhna N'Dour and Sayaka Ito dance with a guest

and Moore puts a protective arm around Tallulah. Willis, Hemming and Kutcher appear and a burly assistant has to help hold back the photographers, all anxious to get their shot.

They are saved when the master of ceremonies requests that everyone take their seats for dinner. I grab a moment with Tallulah and ask whether her family is always in such demand. She rolls her eyes: “Yeah, it gets pretty crazy,” she explains. The youngest of the three girls, she’s inherited more of her mother’s looks and, at 14, is already stunning. Her eldest sister, 20-year-old Rumer, stayed behind in the US for Thanksgiving and is currently developing her own movie career. Scout and Tallulah have already had bit parts in their parents’ films (*Breakfast of Champions*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *Bandits*) but neither is thinking beyond school and college at this point, and Moore is insistent that they get time to enjoy themselves.

The debutantes are announced and, couple by couple, they parade through the rooms. Some look scared, while some look as though they are having the time of their life – Sokhna N’Dour is beaming and Scout is trying not to giggle. Once all 23 couples have been introduced, to much applause, dinner is served. A starter of endive leaves filled with gold leaf (odd, but enjoyably decadent) is followed by foie gras and chicken compress and shellfish in caramel.

Then it’s time for the waltz. As the ball’s most famous father, Willis and his daughter are invited to lead the dance, and I find myself feeling almost nervous on Scout’s behalf, knowing how much effort she has put in. She sets off, I hold my breath and she is step-perfect as the pair sashay about in neat circles, to applause. Then the rest of the girls and their partners join in. It is astounding how far they have come since last night’s rehearsal and by the end



Egyptian-born Enayat Younes with her escort



The 23 girls were hand-picked for their intelligence, beauty and ability to fit into sample-size gowns



Scout and father Bruce Willis (far right) with Anouchka Delon and her father Alain



Korean deb Jeehae Kim with her cavalier



Franklin Adler, Christian Louboutin and Carlo Adler

of the first dance, most of them have cracked it. Some of the mothers become rather emotional – there are a lot of “you must be very proud” whispers. Then someone nudges me, almost spilling my champagne, and I am shaken out of my reverie: it is Mr Willis. “Hey kid,” he puts his arm around Tallulah, who I failed to notice next to me. He is still humming the Viennese Waltz. Tallulah laughs and pats him on his bald head – it’s a pretty surreal scene.

After the ballroom dancing, the disco gets going and the waltz

teachers start throwing some shapes, encouraging the debutantes and their escorts to join in. Footwear king Christian Louboutin is hovering on the edge of the dancefloor and almost gets garrotted by the flailing limbs of one of the more exuberant cavaliers. Louboutin cannot be convinced to join in and shuffles off (in very nice shoes) while the rest of society’s elite start bopping to The Weathergirls’ *It’s Raining Men*.

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When the “grown-ups” have gone to bed, the debutantes and their escorts get ready to make their escape to the after-party. There is a great sense of camaraderie as the girls walk arm in arm, all agreeing, in slightly manic and overexcited tones, that the night has been “amazing”. They vow to keep in touch, and each girl is given an Adler bracelet: a small circle of diamonds in

a special design, so that they can all remember each other and their day.

As they approach the marble doorway of The Hôtel de Crillon, there is a gasp: it is snowing, and a dusting of white has covered the city while they have been inside. The Champs-Élysées and the Concorde are sprinkled with snowflakes. Debutantes, descended from royalty, rock ‘n’ roll or just plain riches, scramble into taxis. Scout is bundled up in a thick black coat and grabbed by the hand by Tallulah, who drags her out into the snow to join the other girls. The taxi doors close and they disappear into the Paris night. ■

5 It-Girls To Watch

A closer look at the top names from this year’s guest list



PALOMA URQUIJO ZOBEL DE AYALA

The Philippine debutante, 17, hails from the billionaire Zobel des Ayala business dynasty and spends her time between college in Boston and homes in Europe and Asia. She’s a keen fashionista, choosing couture by Carolina Herrera, a friend of her grandmother’s, to wear for the ball.

ENAYAT YOUNES

Enayat, 17, is the daughter of Farouk Younes, an Egyptian entrepreneur whose lineage traces back to the distribution of the Nile Valley water. She also happens to be best friends with Paloma [above], has been asked to be the new face of luxury jeweller Adler, and has invited all the new debts to her 18th birthday party in July – the social event of the summer for the new elite.

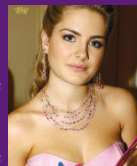


COUNTESS TATIANA DE PAHLEN

The Italian minx is the third daughter of Count Serge Pahlen and Marguerita Agnelli to participate in the Crillon Ball, and her older sister Anna is now presenting for French TV station M6. Tatiana has all the looks and style of her sibling, plus a wicked sense of humour – could we also be seeing her on the small screen before long?

PHILIPPA CADOGAN

The English rose, granddaughter of Earl Cadogan and known as the beauty of Heathfield, has the world at her feet after appearing in *Bratler* (the teen edition of society magazine *Tatler*) and convincing Luella to design her ballgown. What next for the style queen of teen London?



JEEHAE KIM

Korea’s new deb, 19, is the daughter of Sung-Joo Kim, owner of luxury accessories brand MCM. Her gown, designed by French couturier Dominique Sirop, is a gothic-esque creation with PVC fingerless gloves and a bondage-style basque cinching in the waist. Renowned as a bit of a wild child, Kim could take fashion in a whole new direction if she takes over her mother’s business in the future.