

AND GOD CREATED LARA

FROM HEARTBREAK TO TINDER TO HER NEW
SWIMWEAR RANGE, AUSSIE MODEL-NEXT-DOOR
LARA BINGLE REVEALS ALL TO ALICE WASLEY

Photography *Kane Skennar* Styling *Kelly Hume*

Lara Bingle is Australia's answer to Paris Hilton. Much like the platinum blonde heiress, her name mentioned in conversation is likely to elicit at least one eye-roll, a bit of grumbling along the lines of, "But what does she actually DO?" and a debate about if she is, in fact, that hot. To add insult to injury, the name Bingle has also become synonymous with 'dumb'. Last year's vacuous reality show *Being Lara Bingle* didn't help much in that department.

One important distinction, though, is that Bingle's rise to celeb status was the result of gentle, not to mention scripted, swearing in the 2006 'Where the bloody hell are you?' Tourism Australia ad campaign, rather than via a Hilton-esque sex tape.

Bingle seems cheerfully unperturbed by the derision she regularly cops (though she does have trouble bringing herself to say the infamous slogan now), whether it's 'fat' bikini photos published in the gossip mags or simply the comment feed of her Instagram account. Remarks on some of the sizzling selfies she's posted while modelling the swimwear line she's designed, Lara Bingle for Cotton On Body, range from the snarky, "It's amazing how far a set can get you" to the gushing, "Oh my god I love this body!!!! So nice to portray fitness and health rather than ribs and hip bones!!! #hot".

"I like that, though," says the 26-year-old Bingle, explaining the reasoning behind her thick skin. "I think if there's one person hating on whatever, then two people are loving it. It creates emotion to the brand ['the Lara Bingle brand' is how she later refers to it]. That was always what my dad said: 'If no one's talking about you, Lara, then you have a problem.'"

The day after *Sunday Style*'s shoot in Avalon, on NSW's northern beaches, I meet Bingle and her manager, George Moskos, for lunch in Double Bay. We choose a cafe where the silver-haired, well-heeled clientele are unlikely to notice or care about Bingle in their midst. For the record, no one bats an eyelid.

When I arrived at the shoot the day before, she was wearing a red *Baywatch*-style swimsuit from her range; red, white and blue striped

knee socks; and was wrapped in a brown fur rug, quietly shivering between shots. Today (post the influence of stylist and *Vogue* senior fashion editor Christine Centenera), it's a typical black-on-black designer ensemble. I ask her to talk me through the outfit.

"I'm wearing all international stuff," she says, apologetically. "Balmain blazer, The Row cashmere jumper, Balenciaga [leather] skirt, Jimmy Choo shoes, no bag. I don't really take bags with me. I bought a little Chanel Boy Bag I fell in love with in Paris. I was like, 'Oh, I don't have a boyfriend, I'll buy a Boy' [Bingle split with New York-based DJ Nick Cohen when they were in Paris in July this year]. Anyway, that's at home, though. I didn't bring it. And a Céline [chunky gold] necklace."

When she took on Centenera as a stylist during the three-plus years she was with cricketer Michael Clarke (now Australian team captain), her sartorial transformation was dramatic – very expensive, very designer and very black.

"Christine and her boyfriend, [fashion designer] Josh Goot, have always been massive supporters of me. She would be the go-to person throughout my whole relationship with Michael," says Bingle. "I still see her now, we're still friends. But she's expensive and I don't need a stylist every day. And now, yes, I look like a blonder version [of her], maybe a little bit more voluptuous."

"I credit her with creating my look and aligning me to great brands like Louis Vuitton and Chanel. A lot of people can't get access to those brands. Even Dion Lee and Josh Goot don't loan. So she kind of set me apart from all of that, which I am forever thankful for."

How would she say her style differs from Centenera's?

"Not much," she laughs. "Probably day to day I'm a little more beach girl, when I'm at the beach and things like that. I don't know... it's kind of the same. I'm a very uniform dresser. She doesn't wear suits and things like that; I like power suits."

Moskos jumps in with: "Maybe she's taking [style inspiration] from you now?" ▶