

"I'M A REAL BELIEVER
THAT JUST DOING A LITTLE
SOMETHING IS REALLY A LOT
BETTER THAN DOING
A LOT OF NOTHING."



STELLA MCCARTNEY

THE STAR OF EARTH-FRIENDLY FASHION

Beneath the chandeliers and ornate gold ceilings of the Palais Garnier opera house in Paris, a model strode down the catwalk in a billowing yellow dress and grey boots. Fashion fans and reporters filled rows of seats, eager to catch a first glimpse. As she turned, another stepped out in an emerald green jumpsuit and big black boots. Soon a third came onstage in a long blue coat, clutching a matching handbag. Cameras flashed and journalists scribbled notes. Stella watched from the wings, eager to see how her designs would be received. How many of the reporters knew that the boots and bags were made of vegan leather lined with polyester

from recycled water bottles, or that some of the dresses were made from man-made spider's silk?

It was spring 2019, and Stella McCartney was showing off her latest collection at the Paris Fashion Show. The famous designer has made gowns for popstars and princesses, and kitted out Team GB for two Olympic Games, but she is probably best known for her cruelty-free and sustainable fashion – that is, fashion that won't damage the planet for future generations. Stella has never been afraid to stand up for her principles.

Stella grew up surrounded by animals on organic farms in Scotland and Sussex. She has two sisters and a brother and is the daughter of Sir Paul McCartney, a member of the Beatles, a world-famous band from the 1960s. Her mother, Linda, was an American photographer who met her father when she photographed the band. Her parents loved animals, but it was only after seeing lambs playing outside the window one evening as they were eating lamb chops that they decided that they didn't want to eat meat any more. Stella and her siblings grew up as vegetarians, although this was more difficult and unusual in the 1970s and 80s than it is today.

Stella sometimes hung out with her parents' famous

friends, but she much preferred spending time with her family at home in the country to hopping on to a private jet to watch her father play a huge concert for thousands of people. Even though she was from a wealthy family, Stella went to an ordinary state school because her parents wanted her to have a normal childhood and to learn the importance of hard work. She often used the name Stella Martin because she didn't want people to always ask, "Are you Paul McCartney's daughter?"

When her parents started a new band called Wings, the whole family sometimes went with them on tour. Stella was fascinated by the outfits the band wore onstage and loved trying on her mum's clothes and shoes. By the age of eight, she knew that she wanted to be a fashion designer when she grew up. Aged 12, she made her first item of clothing – a jacket made of pink fake suede. From then on, she dreamed of having her own fashion label, with stores across the world.

In her teens, Stella did work experience with various designers before going to college in London to study fashion design. She sometimes had disagreements with her tutors as she refused to work with leather, fur or feathers, because she believed passionately that it was wrong to kill animals for their skin. As well as being cruel, using animals in this way also has a huge

environmental impact because of the resources – like land, water and food – needed to raise them. And Stella argued that using animal products for fashion was old-fashioned and that it was more exciting to use modern materials in their place.

After graduating, Stella opened a small shop selling her own dresses. But not long afterwards, the owners of a struggling fashion brand, Chloé, asked her to come and work for them in Paris as the brand's Creative Director. She was only 25. Although luxury fashion houses usually make most of their money from shoes and handbags, which are often made of leather, Stella told them she would not use animal products. Some people said that she only got the position at Chloé because of her famous father, but Stella ignored them and worked hard to prove them wrong. Her fresh new designs proved to be a huge success.

Sadly, when Stella was 26, and less than six months after her first fashion show for Chloé, her mother, Linda, died of breast cancer. As well as being a photographer and musician, Linda had become an activist for animal rights – campaigning against the use of animals for food, clothing, experiments or entertainment – and had also started a business selling vegetarian food. Stella had always been inspired by

her amazing mother, whose death affected her deeply. It made her more determined than ever to always stand up for her beliefs, and since then she has dedicated many of her collections to her mother.

In 2001, Stella left Chloé and set up her own fashion brand, Stella McCartney. Now she had the chance to really put the environment and animal welfare at the heart of her business. Stella had always wanted her clothes to be beautifully made and long lasting, so they could be handed down from mother to daughter to granddaughter. But what if the fabrics they were made from could be more environmentally friendly?

Stella had been aware for some time that fashion can be very damaging to the environment. It is believed to be the second most polluting industry in the world after energy production. The factories and vehicles involved in making and transporting textiles produce more greenhouse gases than all international flights and shipping combined, while chemicals and dyes from the production of textiles and leather have polluted many rivers worldwide, and every year 150 million trees are chopped down to make fabrics such as viscose.

Many clothes are made from fabrics, like polyester and nylon, that are manufactured using chemicals from oil, and these shed millions of tonnes of plastic

microfibres into our environment each year. Growing cotton uses more pesticides than any other crop, and although organic cotton is less damaging, it takes 20,000 litres of water to make just one T-shirt or pair of jeans, and cotton is often grown in countries where water is scarce. Meanwhile, the increase in fast, cheap fashion has resulted in one rubbish truck of clothes being burned or buried in landfill each second, while only one per cent of textiles are recycled.

Determined to put the planet first, Stella finds it exciting to work with innovative companies to find materials that won't harm the environment and are cruelty-free. Stella uses a vegan leather that looks identical to the real thing, and is experimenting with Mylo, a new leather-like material made from 'mycelium' – the roots of mushrooms. Instead of using silk from silkworms, she is using micro silk made from yeast protein. Scientists learned how to make this by studying how spiders spin their webs. All her company's polyester is made from recycled water bottles, while instead of nylon Stella uses Econyl made from fishing nets salvaged from the ocean. Her company's viscose is produced from wood fibre from non-endangered forests, which means that customers can buy a copy of Meghan Markle's famous wedding reception gown

made from cloth that started life in a Swedish forest.

Her business has been hugely successful and Stella now has more than 50 stores worldwide, just as she dreamed as a child. These are environmentally friendly too, powered by renewable energy, with wood floors from sustainably managed forests. The mannequins are largely made from biodegradable sugar cane – a substance that breaks down naturally without damaging the environment – and the walls of her flagship London shop are decorated with paper pulp recycled from the shredder in the company's head office. She believes that doing lots of small things can make a difference when it comes to looking after the planet.

After nearly two decades of doing things her way, Stella is working hard to change the whole fashion industry, and slowly but surely those changes are happening. Recently, several famous brands – Gucci, Burberry, Versace, Calvin Klein and Armani – have announced that they will stop using fur, as has London Fashion Week, while Helsinki Fashion Week is now leather-free. Most recently, Stella used her spring 2019 Paris Fashion Week show to campaign for protection of the Leuser rainforest in Indonesia, which is home to critically endangered animals such as rhinos, tigers, elephants and the orangutan.

Stella has teamed up with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to try to encourage people to reuse clothes by selling them on or by choosing to rent rather than buy outfits for special occasions. They are also working to increase the recycling of unwanted textiles. Alongside her breast cancer charity, Stella McCartney Cares Pink, she has set up an environmental charity called Stella McCartney Cares Green, which shares her experience in sustainable fashion with other brands. In December 2018, she helped to launch the United Nations' 'Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action' to ask the industry to agree to stop damaging the environment. We don't have long to make these changes, but Stella is hopeful her work will make a difference.

Today, Stella is married and has four children. She loves being a fashion designer and sees her business and employees as her second family. Her rock star dad is incredibly proud of his daughter and is regularly seen in the front row at her shows. Stella has stepped boldly out of his shadow and is leading the way towards an Earth-friendly fashion industry, where care for the planet is at the heart of every new collection.