

VANITY FARE

Melody MAKER

**WEARABLE ART AND CARE
BEARS DRIVE THIS FORMER
FOREST HILL PRINCESS OVER
THE TOP**

Her business card is a postcard; a full color photo of the dark-haired, gamine designer known as Melleny Melody. There she is, her tiara-capped tresses flowing, wearing her pink tights, spray-painted cowboy boots, and satin, crinolined prom dress covered in little blue ballet slippers, bows, and tiny pink phones. Prominently displayed on the bodice of the dress is a hand-painted rotary dial. "Call Me!" is scrawled in pink lipstick across the card, with the sign-off, "Love & Kisses—Princess Phone! XXX."

Not your typical business card and not your typical designer. Melody's company, Mel-Made Madness, specializes in "original, customized, renovated clothing, cakes, frames, and voices." Clothing, cakes, and frames could be considered part of the art spectrum, but voices? "I do the voices of Cheer Bear and Baby Tugs on the Care Bear series," chirps the 36-year-old Melody, imitating the voice of the characters. Her five-year-old son Zack thinks it's great, and so does her husband Clive Smith, co-owner of Nelvana Films which produces the series.

Melody applies a very zany and madcap attitude to the creation of her clothes. When actress Shelley Duvall was in Toronto filming *Faerie Tale Theatre*, a friend turned her on to the designer's sweatshirts. "They were filming 'The Pied Piper' segment and Shelley wanted one for Eric (Monty Python) Idle. So I made this sweatshirt covered in little plastic mice. He loved it and asked me to make one for his wife, who loves the ocean. For her I did one with little whales and sea creatures," recalls Melody. "Shelley was really into dolphins so I put those on her shirt, and for her boyfriend, who was a music producer, I made one with little teddy

bears and music notes."

Her designs have expanded from sweatshirts to evening wear to dramatic show stoppers. A new movie by Patricia Rozema (*I Heard The Mermaids Singing*) called *White Room*, due out next year, features Melody's designs. A wedding cake that she decorated with bubblegum, birds and more will be seen on CBC-TV's upcoming show *Crazy People*. This October her hats will be on display at Toronto's Craft Gallery.



by ROSIE LEVINE

In addition, her work has been featured at the Art Gallery of Ontario ("Spring Thing" 1985) and at the Edmonton Art Show's "Wearable Works" gala ('87).

Besides the obvious attention-grabbers used in shows, Melody has designed a sexy crinoline and bustier for Canadian actress Helen Shaver, a jacket of buttons, scissors and pins for FTV's (Fashion Television's) Jeanne Beker, jewel-encrusted pregnancy overalls for the New Music's Laurie Brown, and stage clothes for The Razorsbacks, The Look People band, Molly Johnson, Phoebe Legere (*Mondo New York*) and singer Billy Newton-Davis. Then there's the

collection of picture frames that Melody has been producing. They might be paper maché, spray-painted and glued with dice, sequins, plastic babies or little evergreen trees. It all depends on the customer and whatever the dynamo artist might pull out of the carefully organized drawers in her workshop. Her creative space, overlooking a busy street in downtown Toronto, is on the third floor of their beautifully renovated and expectedly kitschy Victorian house (decorating touches include plastic fruit and rubber dolls).

Before marrying Clive Smith 10 years ago, Melleny Melody was Melleny Brown. "Brown and Smith are two of the most boring names in the whole wide world, so I decided Melody had a nice ring to it," she howls. She was kicked out of a Forest Hill junior high school for hanging out with a motorcycle gang, and after sporadically attending high school, headed for New York to pursue a singing and acting career. That accounts for the album cover, *Melleny Sings Lighthearted Rubbish*, displayed on the living room wall. "Yeah, I wrote some great hit tunes then, like 'Hot Dogs And Sushi,' which I sang in the film *Rock 'n' Roll Rule*," she says. Then there's a brief allusion to an outlaw character she hung out with in New Mexico in '77, living the life of a bandito (forget the dingo balls, Melody rode around in a Mercedes).

Although currently producing her own music video with producer Jody Colero (he did Mary Margaret O'Hara's new album) and husband Smith, Melody's brown eyes widen at the prospect of what's to come. "I think the end result of all this madness should be my own show," she laughs. "It'll be a kids' show and I'll bake cakes and play all the parts and I'll be a fairy princess with great costumes and tiaras. I think Clive should produce and direct it. Wouldn't that be perfect?"

Phone Melleny Melody at (416) 864-9296 for commissioned pieces.

Rosie Levine is a roving reporter and writes a regular social column in Toronto's Metropolis.