

USA's models step out in style

For two weeks starting Monday, some of the USA's top models will rush from fashion show to fashion show, parading the new fall clothes for women at the New York collections.

Most of the big names — like Paulina Porizkova, Elle Macpherson and Lisa Rutledge — “do the shows” at some point in their careers. In fact, Rutledge probably will be on the runway for the upcoming collections; the others only “maybe.”

The pay's not bad. A top model who works non-stop during the shows can earn \$12,000-\$15,000 a week, says Eileen Ford of Ford Models Inc.

What does it take to be a model?

For women: minimum height is 5-foot-8, bordering-on-thin figure, clear skin, wide-set eyes and lustrous hair. For men: height about 6 feet, size 40 regular jacket and a 15½-inch neck.

Here, four models give a glimpse of what it's like when your livelihood depends on your looks.

Paulina: The No. 1 face would rather be writing

Glamour apparently isn't what it's cracked up to be. The model most in demand in the USA admits she hates her job.

“Yeah, I hate modeling,” sighs Paulina Porizkova. “More than ever.”

“I'm too honest with people. That's a big mistake in this business.”

Speaking her mind, however, hasn't gotten in the way of success for this 5-foot-9, Czech-born beauty known simply as Paulina. At the not-yet-ripe age of 21, she's done 300 fashion magazine covers, two *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit issue covers, umpteenth catalog and magazine spreads, and reams of advertisements.

Paulina frankly admits she's in it for the money: more than \$300,000 a year. In a few years, she hopes to chuck life in the limelight and write and illustrate children's books.

If this sounds unusual, well, Paulina is no ordinary person. Her parents fled Czechoslovakia for Sweden in 1968, leaving their 3-year-old daughter with her grandparents.

Paulina arrived in Sweden when she was 10 and left at 15 to live on her own in Paris as a model.

She's been with the Elite agency the past six years and now makes her home in New York.

“I don't do very many fashion shows because you have to do a fitting for shows, and I'm too busy,” says the world-weary Paulina, explaining that she only works for designers who let her forgo fittings — namely Donna Karan and Bill Blass.

Given those conditions, she admits runway shows “are one of the easiest things to do because they're quick. You run through it and an hour later you're through.”

These days, she treks around town incognito. “When I walk down the street, I do not want to be recognized,” she says.

Reaching into her bag, she pulls out ugly plastic glasses and twists her hair into a frumpy bun. “This is usually how I look when I'm not working and nobody ever recognizes me.”

— Elizabeth Sporkin



BODY OF THE '80s: “Before *Sports Illustrated*, nobody let me (model) a bathing suit because they thought I had a terrible body,” says Paulina, who has been on two *SI* swimsuit covers. Now more than half her work is bathing suits.

By Joyce Ravid