



Traci Dalton's slinky jumpsuits have attracted celebrity attention – one even appeared in a Mary J Blige music video!



RUNWAY READY

Designer Traci Dalton of Traci Couture talks about crocheting high-fashion clothing and what happens to your career when a music megastar falls in love with your hooky designs

Life as a crochet fashion designer is wild. One minute you might be mourning the loss of the Instagram account you've spent years building, and the next celebrity stylists are requesting bespoke garments. Traci Dalton, a crocheter and tutor based in California, USA, takes this all in her stride. She's been creating crochet clothing since 2004 and knows a thing or two about following a spark of creativity.

"The ideas wake me up at night! I don't think I can say no to it," she says. Traci now runs Traci Couture, creating custom crochet pieces and ready-to-wear garments, but her crochet journey began when she was expecting her first child. "With all of the downtime, I needed something to do," she explains. "My mother showed me how to

It wasn't the first time her mother had tried to teach her, but this time it stuck. "From there I just fell in love – I taught myself how to read crochet patterns, to learn how to make different shapes. I started creating my own patterns and I would splice patterns together. I was hooked!" she says.

STAYING CURIOUS

What followed was an explosion of creativity. Traci honed her skills making things for friends and family and crocheting with anything she could get her hands on. "I was just hungry and curious about it, and experimenting with different kinds of materials," she says. "So, I've crocheted with lanyard string, I've crocheted metal wire.

I started crocheting a little bit of everything immediately and exploring different things to make. I think I made a pair of boots!"

Before long, Traci was wearing her own pieces and getting stopped in the street by admirers. Older women in particular would compliment her seams and finishing at markets and shows. She set up Traci Couture as a response to this positive reception, and it's a reflection of Traci's personal style. "I think it was an overflow from who I already was," she muses. "I love bright colours. My initial mentality going into it was that I recognised that my work was really neat, and I wanted to make crochet and bring it into a new light. I wanted to make it fashionable."

FOR FASHIONISTAS

"It's funny now, almost 20 years after me starting," Traci says, "[we're] really starting to see this resurgence of crochet into the fashion world. I think the last time it was

Photos: Traci Dalton

Mary J Blige wore the Rockstar jumpsuit in her "Come See About Me" music video, and it made waves. "I got inquiries from major stylists for other celebrities – that was the first impact. [Then came] the growth of my following... Maybe a week after, I find all these articles about what Mary wore and I felt like there was more to see from crochet than just 'granny crochet'. People automatically think that way when they think of crochet and, in my mind, you can do so much more. It can be mainstream."

Bold, beautiful and unapologetically sexy – that's Traci Couture's signature style. Think crochet garments in bright colours with bodycon silhouettes, mesh and peekaboo details. Traci's designs have a sense of glamour that really stands out, and it's caught the eye of some very exclusive clients. Her most starchy date? The Queen of R&B herself, Mary J Blige.

"When her stylist, Jason Rembert, reached out to me, initially on Instagram, I was blown away. The remarkable message came on the heels of Traci losing access to her previous Instagram account. [At that time] I'm heartbroken and I'm thinking nobody's going to see my stuff and this is the end," she recalls, "so I was dealing with that, and then Jason reaches out. Traci sent her signature Rockstar jumpsuit and about a week after she received a mind-blowing call from Mauricia Henry, another stylist on the team. "It's Saturday morning, I'm sleeping in and I hear the phone ring. I answer and it's Mauricia and she's like, 'Mary loves the jumpsuit, she's wearing it as we speak, and she wants it in every colour!'"



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"I FELT LIKE THERE WAS MORE TO SEE FROM CROCHET THAN JUST 'GRANNY CROCHET'"

[they] mentioned Traci Couture. One of them [was in] *Women's Wear Daily*. That's huge! It gave my business notoriety."

DREAMING BIG

Things reached a new level after the video, and Traci's newfound fame helped her get pieces stocked in choice stores. Now, she's set her sights on more dream clients. "[Singer-songwriter] Tems is one of my top,"



A few of her favourite things

When Traci puts her hook down, she's still getting creative... "I'm a mom, so I'm taking care of a household, and I teach crochet workshops. I love DIY and those sorts of things, so I enjoy doing things around the home, and I do embroidery and macrame and all sorts of handicrafts!" Find Traci at www.tracicuture.com and follow @theycallmetracicuture on Instagram

Alongside mermaid dreams, Traci's current obsessions include menswear pieces and a mesh with four-way stretch. "In conjunction with bamboo, which is comparable to silk, it really hugs. [It takes] crochet out of the 'crochet' category and puts it into [the] mainstream." Likewise, Traci is currently excited about a project she's working on that mixes mesh and crochet. "I always see a great response from my audience to mesh pieces," she explains. "So what's next?" "Something that I've always envisioned myself doing is an underwear line – crochet lace," reveals Traci. "It's still crochet, but we can look at it differently as lace." We can't wait to see it!

Written by Becca Parker

