

her fave raves

Photographer **Laura London** records the mock rock adventures of a suburban teen by Phoebe Hoban

● ● ● Poised precariously between Nabokov's nymphets and MTV's sultry sirens, Laura London's *Rock Star Moments* poses 13-year-old Clancy—the self-possessed, high-cheekboned daughter of an artist friend—in a series of mockumentary tableaux. Here, London cannibalizes the images of a bevy of female rock icons, including Shirley Manson and Courtney Love, simultaneously commenting on the pervasive influence of celebrities and bringing her own nubile life to the party.

London, who teaches photography to teenagers in Los Angeles, is clearly able to get on the same wavelength as her adolescent model. "I like to work with issues of identity. A lot of my work is autobiographical and comes from my own memories," London says. "I was around teenagers so much I started noticing how they were similar and dissimilar to me during different periods of their lives. I like to use a person to tell a story, sort of like a filmmaker. But my images are not documentary; they represent a search to identify the youth culture of this particular era."

London's photographs look a bit like Cindy Sherman's—that is if Sherman scoured the local mall for her surreal images and fixated on

somebody other than herself as the ever-riveting subject. "I had seen a lot of Clancy and she appealed to me as a model because she was very strong and had a very positive personality," London explains. "Together, we picked the rock stars she was going to imitate."

Despite the celebrity-conscious title, *Rock Star Moments* was not shot at a trendy club, but taken in Clancy's natural habitat (and teen haven)—her suburban Los Angeles bedroom and bathroom. They capture her both in full rock star regalia—over-the-top variations on the sex and sensibility theme—and in her more vulnerable moments, as she prepares herself for the various roles she's about to inhabit. Call it Kabuki Candid Camera. There's something equally subversive and innocent in these trumped-up images. Whether she's got a face-full of smeared ruby lipstick, or is clean-scrubbed but for the blood-red streaks she's just put in her hair, this Lolita with the obviously stuffed bra isn't taking any prisoners. At least not yet ●

Laura London is represented by Caren Golden Fine Art, New York, and Works on Paper, Los Angeles. Her work was recently shown at Art Chicago 2001.

New York-based writer Phoebe Hoban writes about the arts and popular culture. She doesn't listen to the music of either Manson, and preferred Courtney Love before she went full-Hollywood.



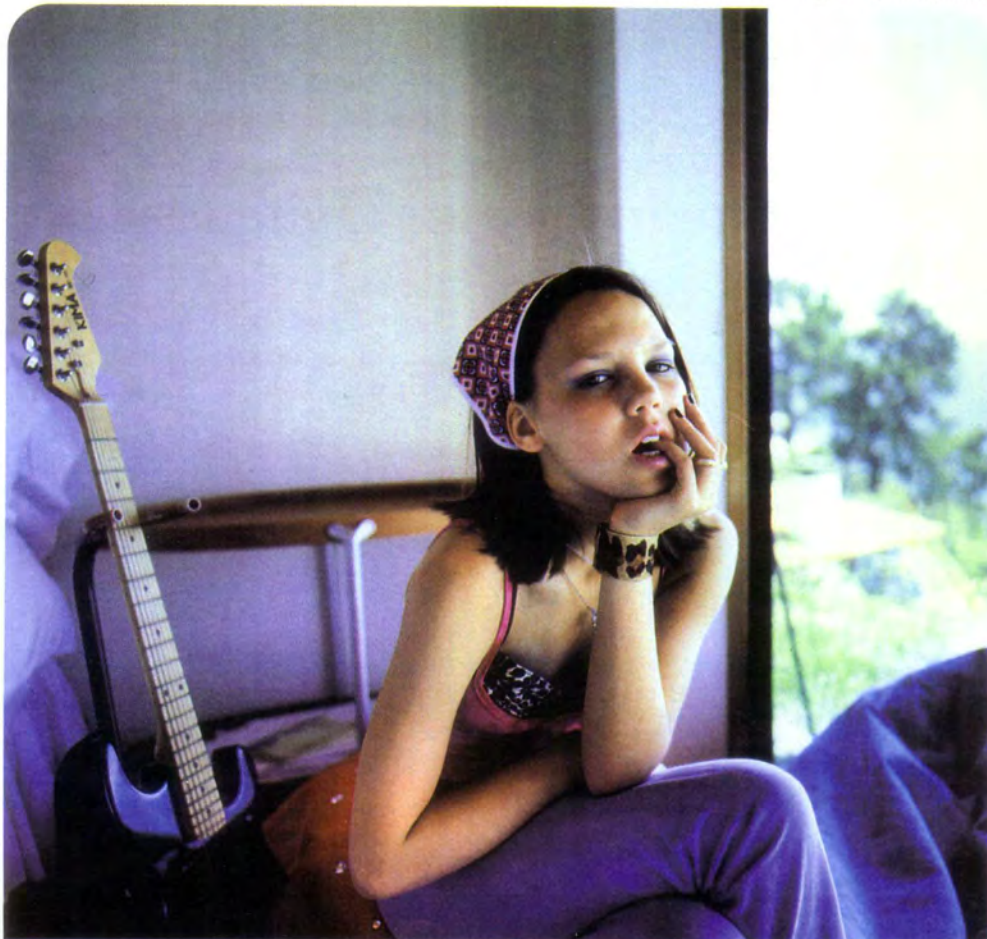
● ● ● **Shades of Love** "It's hard to say whether Courtney Love would embrace or hate this teen's send-up of her. "She's somewhere between her grunge and glamour phases," says London. "We edited out some other shots, where she's showing her underwear and doing poses she saw Courtney do. They were too provocative." The guitar belongs to Clancy. Laura London *Sketchbook Rock Star Moment 2*, 2000, color photograph, edition 1/3, 20" x 30"



Between Roles Clancy deconstructs her image, seated with a dancery grace that is more seductive than the in-your-face put-ons of her icon-interpretations. "This is a process shot," says London. "She still has some makeup on and those are all the clothes spread everywhere. It's very unkempt, and I like the energy of what is going on."
Laura London *Rock Star Moment 6*, 2000, color photograph, edition 1/3, 30" x 30"



Not a still from *The Ice Storm* Suburban teen, Christina Aguilera wannabe? Or both? "This was mocking a video. We talked about imitating it. One of my students saw this series and asked me, "What's up with the Lolita?" That's not my intention. By showing the process of her dressing up I'm trying to tell a story. Everywhere you look you see media images. It's my responsibility to talk about what I see," says London, who considers her work a dialogue. Laura London: *Rock Star Moment 3*, 2000, color photograph, edition 1/3, 30" x 30"





Trick or Treat Marilyn Manson should look so good. "We started the shoot around Halloween, so she was into dressing up anyway. She's just finished dyeing her hair, and I like the imperfection of her hands getting all messy. When young girls dye their hair it is very experimental and I wanted to show that aspect. Clancy's unusually intelligent and she's not just buying into these images. She's critiquing and criticizing them, having a good time and laughing." Laura London *Rock Star Moment 5*, 2000, color photograph, edition 1/3, 30" x 30"



Out of the Closet "She wants to be a fashion designer," says London. "She's very intrigued with the whole process and energy of what creates a rock star, model, icon." Here she has donned a red wig, à la Shirley Manson [of Garbage], and padded her tube top." London mixed natural and artificial light and deliberately depicted her inside of her closet. "I pick locations for private moments you don't usually get to see." Laura London *Rock Star Moment 1*, 2000, color photograph, edition 1/3, 30" x 30"

