Sophie Hunter's stylist Nicholas Drake reveals the secrets to her red carpet success



Sophie Hunter in Valentino at the London premiere of 'Doctor Strange' CREDIT: REX

By **Alice Newbold,** JUNIOR STYLE EDITOR

26 OCTOBER 2016 • 1:15PM

Avant-garde theatre director Sophie Hunter has been on our style radar for some time. The polished other-half of Benedict Cumberbatch, Hunter is always immaculate, refined and modern in what she wears - and has helped make the duo Britain's most stylish red carpet power couple.

This week's *Doctor Strange* launch event at Westminster Abbey was no exception. Hunter, who is pregnant with her second child, posed next to her husband in a hot-pink, caped Valentino dress. The clean silhouette is one that Hunter has mastered with the help of her stylist, Nicholas Drake, who dubs each camera-ready ensemble a "rigorous co-production" between the pair.

Hunter's theatre background comes into play

"Each red carpet appearance is like a mini theatre production which we co-direct with meticulous attention to detail," Drake tells *The Telegraph*. "Sophie is very discerning and decisive about what she likes and does not like." Bold colour and print have become her signatures, but anything too "frilly, frou frou, or with too much surface decoration" won't work with her aesthetic. It's all about keeping it simple, but adding an "edge", says Drake.

Removing an accessory often works better than adding one

The style mantra 'less is more' is at the heart of Sophie's red carpet looks. "We frequently remove pieces of jewellery or a handbag at the last minute that may appear fussy and distract from the outfit's impact," says Drake. Look closely, and Hunter rarely carries a handbag. Instead, she favours dresses with pockets, a simple styling solution to avoid awkward-looking hands in photographs.

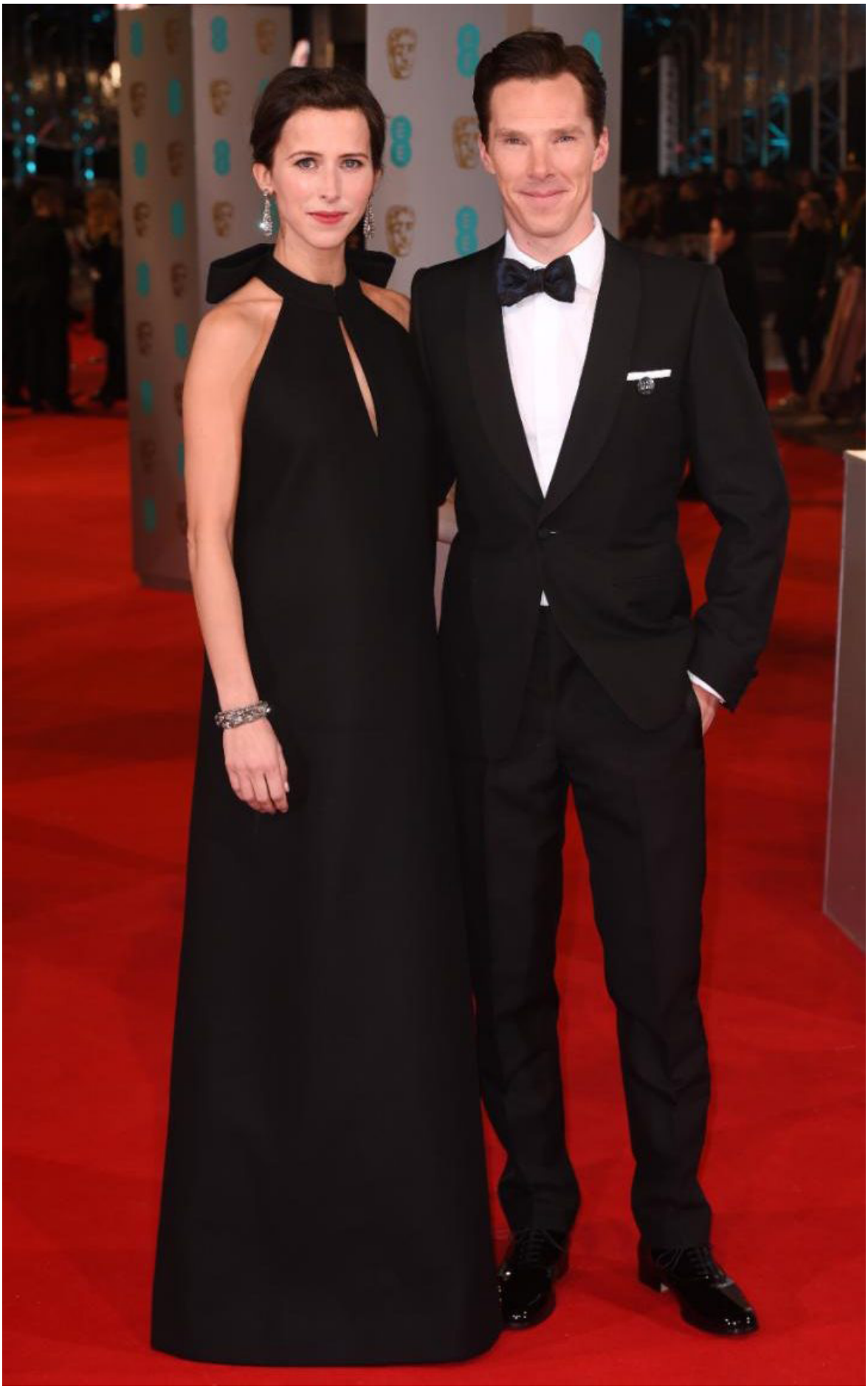


Sophie Hunter in Dior at the 2015 BFI London Film Festival CREDIT: REX

Designer relationships are the foundation of each of her most memorable looks

Sophie has worn bespoke designs by Erdem, John Galliano and Alber Elbaz. The most memorable gown, however, was her Valentino Haute Couture wedding dress. “We were in the very fortunate position of being able to choose any designer in the world to design Sophie’s wedding dress,” recalls Drake.

Each made-to-measure piece starts with Drake and Hunter “discussing the event and exchanging designer ideas, before deciding which direction to go and embarking on fittings.” London Fashion Week labels Emilia Wickstead and Osman are two labels the duo enjoy collaborating on red carpet 'productions' with.



Sophie Hunter in Maison Martin Margiela at the 2015 Baftas CREDIT: REX

Dressing for the red carpet when pregnant comes with it's own challenges

"Our approach when Sophie is pregnant is subtle; there is a discernible baby bump, but she has limbs like a champion whippet so we choose to emphasise those," Drake reveals. "The A-line black dress that Margiela's John Galliano designed for her to wear to the BAFTAs, and the scarlet column that Lanvin's Alber Elbaz made her for the Academy Awards, were both deliberately sleeveless to draw attention to her elegant arms."



Sophie Hunter in Lanvin at the 2015 Oscars CREDIT: REX

And do the couple deliberately coordinate their looks?

"We always consider what Sophie's husband will be wearing on the red carpet and how they will co-ordinate as a couple," Drake tells us.



Sophie Hunter wearing Giorgio Armani at the 2016 LA premiere of 'Doctor Strange' CREDIT: REX