

Night Vision

In need of a killer dress to get you through the festive haze that is the party season? VICTORIA PALMER assesses the options

I'm of the opinion that the feel-good properties of stepping out in a new party frock by far outweigh those fleeting five minutes of guilt post handing over the plastic. And with just over a month to go, till the big day, I feel we're allowed to start getting into the festive spirit.

If you love the look of retro or vintage styling, opt for a knee-length dress in silk or jewel-hued velvet. Carefully draped and folded fabric, or dresses with a bit of hidden structure will enhance your curves, while achieving that requisite lady-like aesthetic.

Demure at first glance, this is a look that requires serious attention to detail on the accessories front, in order to ensure the lady turns into a vamp. Think back-seamed stockings, a slick of scarlet lipstick, effortlessly tousled hair, a satin clutch, concealed platform shoes, finished off with a whip thin belt, a pair of evening gloves and a faux fur jacket. There's no doubting the head-turning capabilities when you step out looking like Lauren Bacall, but low-maintenance styling this is not.

Back to black

I think we underestimate the potential of the LBD. The absolute antithesis of the one-season-wonder, the LBD has staying power beyond any other item in our wardrobes. The LBD comes in many different guises

whether you're going for a slinky shift, a long-sleeved tunic or a 50s-style prom dress, but it's your choice of fabric and finish – brocade, a hint of sparkle, a flash of lace or some plume-tastic feathers – that will help give your outfit a new-season twist.

For those on a budget the LBD is also the easiest party frock to transform into something new by means of accessories. The classic option is to bring on the bling and add some statement jewellery in the form of chandelier earrings, cocktail rings and sparkling necklaces for truly dazzling effect.

In contrast, you can ramp up the style stakes and go all-out for sequins – the trend that was made for partying. The festive season

is all about sparkle, whether or not you're brave – or young – enough to step out in a head-turning, sequined mini dress. There are, however, plenty more subtle routes to go down and we can all pull off a bit of sparkle. Opt for a frock with a subtle shimmer, or a smattering of embellishment and beading in luxurious textures from velvets and satins, and be bold with your colour choice – metallics will always be a fabulously festive option but don't be afraid to up the fashion ante with emerald or scarlet.

Above all the party season is an opportunity to ditch the jeans and glam up. So whatever style of dress you choose, make sure you look and feel fabulous in it – and your show-stopping entrance will be guaranteed. **SL**



We can all pull off a bit of sparkle: Uttam Boutique Jamie Dress available at Maddy Lane



This image: Don't underestimate the potential of the LBD: dress by Outsider from a selection at Regent Tailoring

Main image left: Cut out floral satin dress and outfit available at Kew

Suggested local retailers

Debenhams
41-44 Blue Boar Row,
Salisbury
tel: 08445 616 161

Fairholme & Imago
34 Winchester Street,
Salisbury
tel: 01722 415264

Hollyhock Designer Clothes
25-27 New Street,
Salisbury
tel: 01722 411051

Kew
47 New Canal,
Salisbury
tel: 01722 413 256

Maddy Lane
62 Winchester Street
Salisbury
tel: 01722 238114

Regent Tailoring
51 Winchester Street,
Salisbury
tel: 01722 335151