

Style

Outfits to fall for on Valentine's Day



Anna Berkeley

Ask a stylist

'd love to get a dress or outfit for Valentine's Day that's comfortable but interesting. What do you suggest?

Ah, Valentine's Day. Love it or hate it, there is no getting away from it. If you're heading out to an intimate dinner, just going for a drink or having a "galentines" celebration with your girlfriends, let's look at some outfits that will serve you well, no matter what.

First, can I urge you to check that you haven't forgotten some killer dress, suit, top or pair of shoes that's been languishing in your wardrobe? If you can't see it, you won't wear it, so roll up your sleeves and have a rummage.

If you want to unearth anything special, then here are a few suggestions.

For many of us it's got to be a dress for a special night out. At a December drinks soirée, I saw this amazing silver dress (pictured) on a very chic fashion journalist. The Erika dress from London-based occasionwear label Ilta (to rent from £72, hurrcollective.com) is not just for Christmas, and I was thrilled to see that UK rental platform Hurr has it in lots of sizes. A scene-stealer if ever I saw one, it makes a pleasant little jingle as you move.

If you want to make it more casual, you could layer a super-fine wool top underneath. I love a Cos turtleneck (£45, cos.com), which would look delicious in cream against the silver. If you have a short neck, go for the round-neck version of this top instead. A word of warning, though: Cos's online delivery has been shockingly slow for me for a while, so order

immediately or go into a store. Arket does an almost identical one (pictured) as a back-up (£59, arket.com).

As the dress is so impactful, go with a simple silver, grey or black shoe or just wear black tights with boots. For larger frames, Chie Mihara slingbacks are the right side of chunky (£297, farfetch.com). For smaller frames, choose a softer heel in grey suede from Rupert Sanderson (£495, rupertsanderson.com).

If you want something a little quieter (in both senses of the word), then how about a second-hand leopard-print Samantha Sung dress (£257, vestiairecollective.com)? Fabulous with gold accessories. Why not be a devil and try an orange or green shoe, or coat, for that matter? Look to Gianvito Rossi, Roberto Festa or By Far for good coloured shoes.

If you're after black, try a slim-fitting LBD from The Fold (£295, thefoldlondon.com). The neckline flatters a shorter neck and suits average or small shoulders. Plus, it's comfortable. These sorts of open necks scream out for some jewellery. Add a bit of drama with either a long earring, such as Anissa Kermiche's Grand Fil d'Argent (£160, libertylondon.com) or a "look at me" necklace – I like a punchy Raindrop pearl choker from Alighieri (£350, matchefashion.com). Depending on how smart you want to be, add flats, boots or a sleek heel.

If you have the money and want to make a very worthwhile contribution to a charity that does wonderful work for unemployed women, buy Russell & Bromley's Spotlight boots (£1,495, russellandbromley.com). All the proceeds (less VAT) go direct to Smart Works, and you get to turn a simple outfit into a knockout one and feel good about yourself to boot (sorry, couldn't resist that).

If you're looking for the streamlining effect of a suit but don't want any digging in at the waist, then choose a matching trouser and shirt ensemble from Vince (shirt, £405; trousers, £445, selfridges.com). I recently bought it for a petite client who has a very full bust and tummy and she looked so tall and slender in it. The fabric is sumptuous and



Clockwise from top left: Ilta dress, rent from £72, hurrcollective.com; Tove trousers, £595, tove-studio.com; Arket roll-neck, £59, arket.com; Russell & Bromley boots, £1,495, russellandbromley.com

heavy, but delightfully soft, so it simply snakes around your curves.

If you aren't a fan of matchy-matchy, then you could switch the velvet trouser for the Gabrielle style (pictured) from Tove (£595, tove-studio.com). The combination of black and ivory is timeless. Add a flat shoe or strappy sandal for a louche look.

Doing galentines instead? Go with something comfortable but cool – Norma Kamali's jersey pieces are spot on for glamour, without that restrictive feeling that can really dampen the mood. I have an Obie style (£185, net-a-porter.com), also available as a midi) and the true beauty of it is that you can trim the hem yourself. It's laser-cut so you need a super-sharp pair of scissors – the brand recommends Ontaki scissors but I just used my kitchen ones. Add a modern heart necklace from Mirit Weinstock (\$215, miritweinstock.com) and layer a jacket or a big teddy coat on top.

Lastly, if you don't want to go out and will be having a relaxed dinner on the sofa, can I recommend cuddling up in a tracksuit from Alabaste (£595, alabaste.com) in the finest Mongolian cashmere. Size up for a loose-fitting sweat-style shape that will keep you toasty while looking undeniably fabulous. Happy Valentine's!

Anna Berkeley is a London-based personal stylist who has worked in the fashion industry for more than 25 years. Every month, she answers readers' questions about fashion and what to wear. Email her at anna.berkeley@ft.com

A rip in time



Essay | The messy 'going-out' look of the noughties is finding a new generations of fans on TikTok.

Alexa Chung asks whether this revival has legs

It became apparent that fashion's cyclical nature had reached vortex speed last year when a spate of articles emerged announcing the return of an "Indie Sleaze" aesthetic. No sooner had we wrapped our minds around the resurgence of an early-noughties trend for overly plucked eyebrows, it appeared Gen Z was busy excavating party pics from the mid to late 2000s and plastering them on TikTok.

I'd never heard the term Indie Sleaze until I was tagged in several slightly cringe pictures of myself by an Instagram account of the same name. Upon seeing a baby-faced me pretending to smoke in a brown velvet dress I had hemmed up with gaffer tape, I understood that Indie Sleaze was a recently invented term being retroactively applied to a cluster of messy club nights swaddled in the dawn of MySpace. In 2007, we just called it going out.

There I am with friends in Teddy's Nightclub at The Roosevelt in Hollywood, Camden's hallowed Hawley Arms pub, and The Old Blue Last (a Vice-owned Shoreditch watering hole with an upstairs room that hosted gigs so rowdy

the floor once caved in). These images capture a scene of people united by an enthusiasm for alternative music in, arguably, our last gasp of unfettered freedom before the ability to go on the lash undocumented was swept away by wilful oversharing and sponsored posts.

Olivia V, a video editor living in Toronto, started the @indiesleaze Instagram account because she felt it was a decade "not yet neatly defined or revisited". Olivia's account has 130,000 followers and counting. Hiding in the grid is a riot of flash photography taken from sites such as Flickr, Tumblr and Photobucket, and borrowed from The Cobra-snake, a seminal photoblog run by photographer Mark Hunter that I used to check obsessively. It features the likes of Dev Hynes, Cory Kennedy, Karen O and Sky Ferreira plastered in sweat and glitter, not posing dutifully for the camera but partying with unselfconscious abandon.

But was this niche scene truly enjoying a comeback or were my fellow millennials, some now the gatekeepers of media empires, simply feeling nostalgic? Surely for something to be revived, it needs to be worth revisiting. "I struggle to imagine that it will earn its place in the history books," notes Bunny Kinney, creative director of online video channel Nowness. "In my experience, it wasn't a particularly diverse scene: largely white, heterosexual, cisgender and, though inherently liberal in values, it felt more or less apolitical."

While it may have stood for nothing, the fashion might be worth revisiting for its haphazard charm. What emerges from the sequins and skinny scarves of a very recently bygone era – particularly when juxtaposed with the current appetite for clean girl trends and



'It wasn't a particularly diverse scene and, though inherently liberal in values, felt more or less apolitical'

Clockwise from main image: Alexa Chung after a Klaxons show in 2006; after the same event in 2011; with friends in 2011; with Andrew VanWyngarden of MGMT in 2011; with Tennessee Thomas at the Coachella festival in 2007 – Mark Hunter/The Cobrasnake

the sort of homogenised fashion only an algorithm could impose – is how vastly different everyone looked from each other. Like a fancy-dress party where the theme was drugs.

I can remember wanting to look like Julie Christie in *Darling* and the cover of a Shangri-Las record. My most prized possession was a navy school coat I bought for £5 on Brick Lane. I wore it so often that, to this day, regardless of what I have on, people think I'm wearing a Peter Pan collar. I bought Russell & Bromley loafers because they reminded me of Hampshire mums; knee socks from the John Lewis school uniform department to look like a girl in a Sam Haskins photograph, and vintage 1960s dresses so that I could get into The Cave Club for free.

Achieving your dream look was an inexpensive pursuit and treasure hunt-

ing in east London's maze of vintage shops was all part of the fun. American Apparel emerged supreme as the Stanley knife of the scene. Every single person I knew had something from there and yet we never looked the same. "Luxury brands meant nothing to the people I knew," says Kinney. "Because influencer culture had only really just begun, the pursuit of real-world individuality felt more important than a tag on your outfit." This makes me feel mildly better about DJing (the job *du jour*) for Karl Lagerfeld at his Fendi party wearing a not-so-expertly doctored Zara dress.

"The look was unpolished, hedonistic," notes Nova Dando, a stylist at the time who worked on shoots and music videos for the likes of Klaxons, Bloc Party and The Horrors. After enduring a pandemic that forced us into the confines of our homes, going "out" seems more tantalising than ever. And what better way to confront a recession and climate crisis than with a return to charity shop finds and DIY fashion? "It's easy to adopt this look from what you already have in your wardrobe or can borrow from your parents' wardrobe," says Dando, "as it's mostly retro vintage clothing paired with ripped tights, skinny jeans, oversized T-shirts and unwashed, backcombed hair."

"If I was wearing anything truly excellent or even clean," remembers Alison Mosshart of The Kills, "it had probably been given to me on a photo shoot or by Hedi Slimane [now the creative director of Celine]. I wore his gold boots for years straight. I wore them until all the gold was gone and all the boot was gone, and they'd become nothing more than flappy leather mud socks."

Having his boots trashed didn't stop Slimane from inviting The Kills to DJ for his autumn/winter 2023 collection at The Wiltern in Los Angeles alongside Iggy Pop, Interpol and The Strokes. His most recent Celine show is perhaps the strongest argument we have for the potential re-emergence of Indie Sleaze, one ingeniously smuggled into its title: *The Age of Indianness*.

"One of the most glaringly obvious indications that Indie Sleaze has returned," says Olivia, "is the fact that many of the era's great bands and artists released new albums or music in 2022. The Yeah Yeah Yeahs, MIA, Arctic Monkeys, Hot Chip, Uffie and Metric all put out new albums recently."

If it's coming back around again, I am more than happy to dry-clean my blazer, minidresses and ballet flats, because it's a uniform I have never strayed far from. So, dust off your trilby and lace up those brogues, the NME Tour may have ended but "It's Not Over Yet".