

GLAM ROCKS

BRING OUT THE GLITZ, THE GLITTER AND THE SPARKLE: TIME TO FINALISE CHRISTMAS OUTFITS, CRACK OPEN THE BUBBLY AND SEE THE NEW YEAR IN WITH A BANG

IT'S the most glamorous time of the year... No excuses for boring black this winter - Christmas and New Year parties have shimmer written all over them. From office dos and family shindigs to the big one - New Year's Eve - we've got a few ideas to help you shine.

Local stylist Nicola Cupples, founder of My Style Companion, gives us her top tips for choosing the perfect party dress.



1 Do some research online before you hit the shops! A great website is shopstyle.co.uk if you have something specific in mind e.g. 'red maxi dress' as it will find loads of options on the high street that fit the description.

2 Think about the dresses you have felt good in in the past. Did they have anything in common, such as length, fabric, colour, neckline? Maybe you've found a winning formula but you just haven't realised it. If you've ever worn

or bought a dress you think was a mistake, note what it was you didn't like about it and don't repeat the mistake this time. It sounds obvious, but I meet so many women who keep making the same fashion mistakes over and over and just aren't aware of it.

3 When you're in the changing rooms, trust your instincts. If you want to change the dress in any way, or if you instantly feel aware of any particular part of your body, this is not the dress for you. Even if the shop assistant tells you it's gorgeous - it won't be her who will have to wear it. With an amazing party dress, you should be able to chuck on a pair of heels and hit the dance floor. Yes, accessories, hair and make-up all work towards making it a fabulous outfit, but a good party dress should be able to speak for itself.

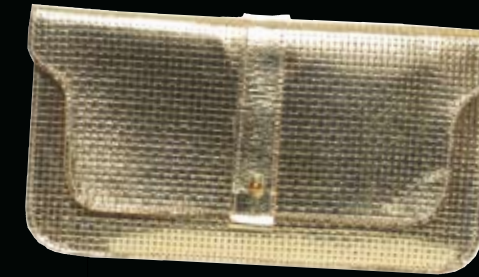
4 Don't be persuaded by 'bargains'. Just because there's 50% off the original price, it won't make it look or feel any better when you're wearing it (unless you would have paid full price for it... only then is it a true bargain!).

5 Try not to buy on the day of the party or event. This is where women often end up panic buying, and purchasing something that when they look back, just isn't 'them'. Give yourself some time to look for a dress that you will enjoy wearing. Shopping for things that make you feel great about yourself are an investment, as opposed to just buying 'something new to wear'.

My Style Companion provides stylists and personal shoppers for women who want a cost-effective, versatile and practical wardrobe. It also runs personal stylist courses in Manchester. Visit mystylecompanion.com to find out more.



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Oii



▶ **METALLIC PLEATED DRESS**
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bagsofsparkle.com



A REAL coup for Salford: the city played host to The Royal Variety Show at the Lowry Theatre, which was screened this week.

Cockney Micky Flanagan has last year's Royal Variety Show to thank for putting him on the comedy map. Over 10 years in the business, then a few minutes in front of royalty and the perception of his talent soared, so much so that his first DVD, Out Out, is now in the shops. (At this time of year, we tend to be knee deep in celebrities trying to persuade us to buy their Christmas offering.)

Behind the scenes at this year's Royal Variety Show, the press were out in force and the stars were warming up. Barry Manilow, Peter Kay, and the brilliant Las Vegas magicians Penn and Teller.

I finally managed to impress my 14 year-old son when I chatted to Nicole Sherzinger. He described her as a "straight ten" and I have to say, I can't disagree. Up close, she looks like a perfect doll. She was sipping a cold remedy and complained of being ill, but it certainly didn't affect her looks or her stand-out performance on the night. The gathered journalists were under the strictest instructions not to ask her about her private life. If we did, the interviews would be terminated.

No such instructions from Tony Bennett's people. Even the hardened hacks were bowled over by the charm and gentleness of the 85 year-old legend. His singing we all know about but he is also a renowned artist. He spoke about

his painting of a naked Lady Gaga, which is being auctioned off for charity, and the duet on his new CD with the late Amy Winehouse. He talked about



her talent with a quiet respect. I really did feel like I was in the presence of royalty. Finally, I wish you a Merry Christmas and a new year in which all your dreams come true. Mine will on December 31 at midnight, when New Year's Day dawns and, after a month off the booze, I can toast you with something a little stronger than a mocktail. You can see how I coped with my "Dry December" on Inside Out on BBC1 in January.

Listen to Becky Want's daily show on BBC Radio Manchester Monday to Friday 12noon-4pm and her Retail Therapy show every Saturday between 9am-11am.



HEART TO HEART



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