STYLE
THE SUNDAY TIMES
31 MARCH 2024



Shop with Style

A league of their own

Spring's preppy trend knocks it out of the park

Plus

'MUM AND I ARE LIKE SIBLINGS' AN INTIMATE AUDIENCE WITH DAMIAN HURLEY

CHEF'S KISS DOES RUTH ROGERS HAVE LONDON'S COOLEST WARDROBE?



Loro Piana

loropiana.com

The Barometer

Edited by **Priya Elan**

Fashion! Beauty! People! Things! Welcome to your weekly guide to the stuff everyone will be talking about. Do keep up



Going fast Car air fresheners, from top, Choice Blooms, £9 each, osmology.co; £24, labruket.com; £187, acquadiparma.com; £85, diptyqueparis.com

Getty Images, Alamy

Beep beep! Car air fresheners get posh

For decades the Magic Tree has dangled above dashboards everywhere. No more! The conifer-shaped air freshener has been usurped by a wave of chicer alternatives. New-style car smellies come from brands including the California-based Choice Blooms, which does toxin-free scents; or try a fragrance tag from L:A Bruket, the Swedish skincare firm with a cult following, whose fragrances include Hinoki, Tabac and Coriander. Not chichi enough? The Poltrona Frau x Acqua di Parma car diffuser sits smartly in a leather case that attaches to your vehicle's ventilation grille, while Diptyque's diffuser will emit scents such as Figuier. Top gear!

The devil now wears ... cerulean blue

Deep sky blue — or cerulean, as pop culture's most famous magazine editor, Miranda Priestley (*below*), might call it — was the hit of the season at the recent fashion shows. From knitted shorts and jumpers at JW Anderson to quilted capes at Jil Sander, head-to-toe blue will be autumn's hottest shade — and the street-style crew are already jumping on the trend (trousers, coats and polonecks in particular). Fancy dipping a toe in on the high street? The quilted cerulean minibag at Cos (£45) and the Whistles short quilted coat (£155, johnlewis.com) add an instant pop of colour. Still not convinced? In a meta twist, Anne Hathaway wore a cerulean dress when she reunited with Meryl Streep and Emily Blunt at last month's Sag awards. In the words of the great Priestley, that dress "is not just blue, it's not turquoise, it's not lapis, it's actually cerulean".





@theststyle

ON THE COVER EMMI FREEMAN **PHOTOGRAPH** GIAMPAOLO SGURA **STYLING** VERITY PARKER. HOODIE, £706, EXTREME CASHMERE. JACKET, £1,400, BELT, £485, AND SOCKS, £120, CELINE BY HEDI SLIMANE. TROUSERS, £319, POLO RALPH LAUREN. LOAFERS, £725, MANOLO BLAHNIK

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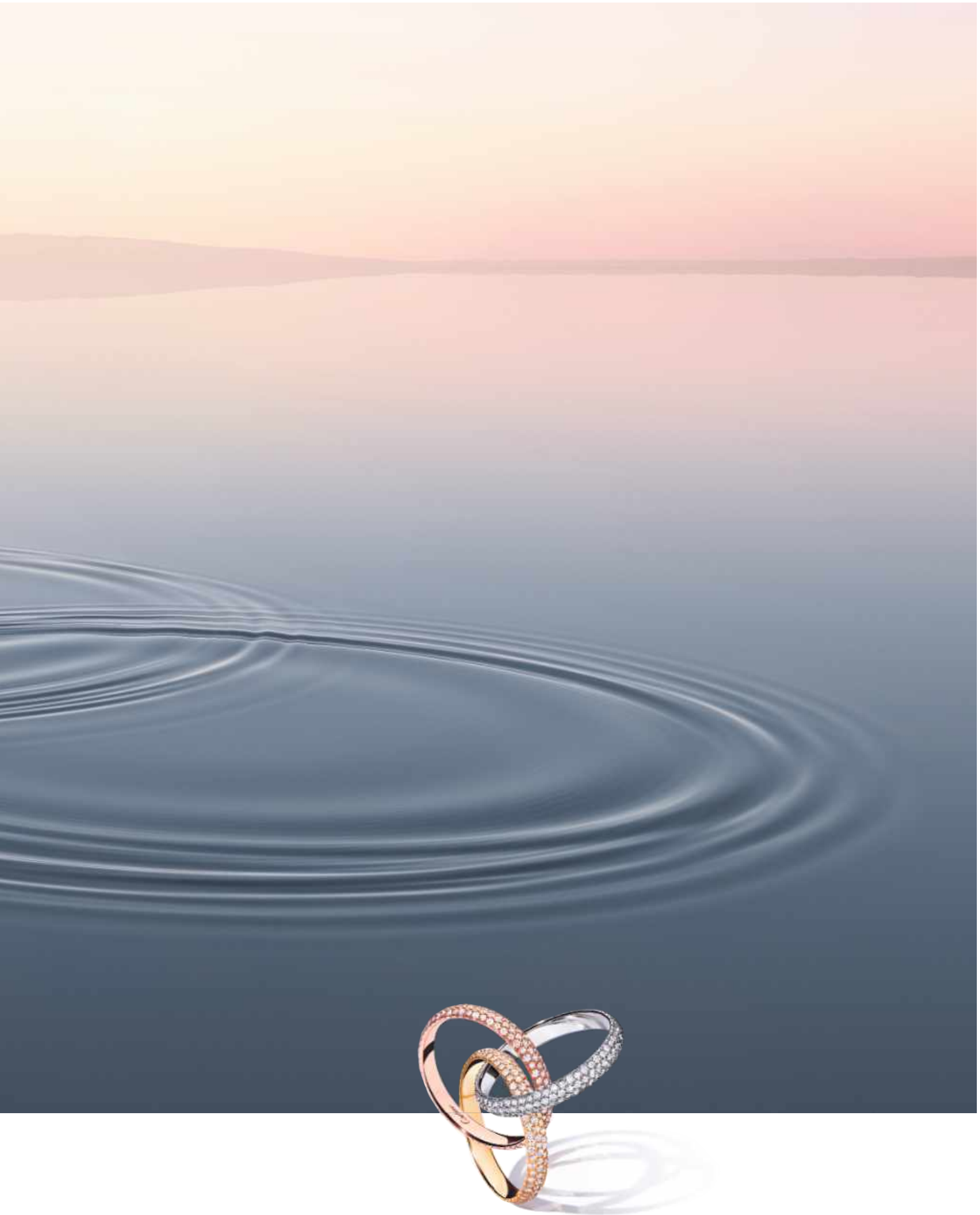
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TRINITY

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The Barometer

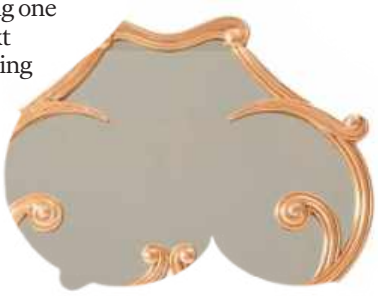




Shiva Flower Vase, £216, BD Barcelona Design, aram.co.uk. **Left** Faye Toogood. **Bottom** Liberty Mirror Woman, £140, Seletti, amara.com

Oo-er! Interiors go X-rated

What every smart home needs is ... a penis lamp, amiright? The model Adwoa Aboah, whose super-stylish home interiors were designed by Beata Heuman, received a magnificent bespoke example for her 30th birthday, commissioned by the make-up artist Celia Burton and made by the furniture designer Max McLintock. "I am obsessed with anything phallic," she explained. Likewise, Seletti's Liberty Mirror Woman (*below*), part of its Naked Truth collection, is the top looking glass for breast lovers, while Ettore Sottsass's Shiva Flower Vase (*above*) has become a design classic. Going one better, at Milan Design Week next month Faye Toogood will be holding a Rude Arts Club salon to showcase her two new collections. They include handmade rugs designed in collaboration with CC-Tapis that feature a fluffy, elongated male member. Rude is all the rage, sweedie.



Meet not-so cute? Welcome to the anti-rom-com

Thanks to the runaway success of Sydney Sweeney's *Anyone But You*, the rom-com is well and truly back. But because it's 2024 and not 1988, this time around the genre is not quite what you're expecting. Out this spring is Diablo "*Juno*" Cody's *I Love You Forever*, co-written by none other than Cazzie David (Larry David's daughter). It's a dark comedy based on an emotionally manipulative relationship. Then, boy meets girl but ... the boy is in a boy band? That's the plot of *The Idea of You*, released on Prime Video in May, starring Anne Hathaway and Nicholas Galitzine, who plays a Harry Stylesesque pop idol (and Hathaway's teenage daughter is a former fan). Finally, there's *Love Lies Bleeding*, also out in May, in which Kristen Stewart unexpectedly falls for a bodybuilder (Katy O'Brian). Just don't expect any happy endings.



I LOVE YOU FOREVER

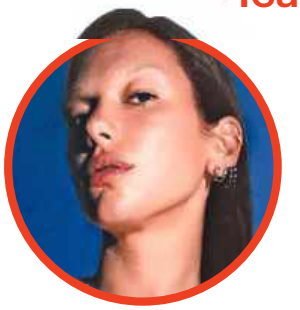


THE IDEA OF YOU



LOVE LIES BLEEDING

Heating up



▲ **TRACING-PAPER BROWS**
Kind of there and kind of not (but definitely super-chic)



▲ **AGEL AKOL**
Balenciaga, Fendi, Loewe, Marc Jacobs (to name but a few): the Canadian catwalk favourite is spring's top model

▲ **POTTING SHED CHIC**
The interiors crowd's new favourite flex: see Carole Bamford's for details



▲ **THE WITHNAIL & I COAT**
Dust off the Harris tweed — a new stage adaptation opens at the Birmingham Rep in May



Cooling down



▼ **SHOWER LAMPS**
Presumably for reading the boring bits on the shampoo bottle



▼ **SATIN SLIP-ONS**
What happens when it rains, babes?

▼ **CELEBRITIES AS 'CREATIVE DIRECTOR'**
Overseeing creative strategies are you? Really?



▼ **THE POSH GIRL PUDDLE**
When a group of toffs drunkenly drape themselves over each other for the camera. The new selfie





Everyone's talking about ... Sheridan Smith (again)

Forget a reservation at the hip restaurant of the moment — the newest social flex is getting a seat at the hottest show in town. Seen SJP in *Plaza Suite* already? Queued up for tickets to see Cara in *Cabaret*? Course you have. Next up, then, is *Opening Night*, directed by Ivo van Hove, who also directed last summer's theatre hit *A Little Life* (we're still traumatised, in a good way). Starring Sheridan Smith, it follows Myrtle, an actress who spirals when a fan dies after a performance of a play she's in. With music and lyrics by Rufus Wainwright and an immersive scene that has already gone viral — during the performance Smith "drunkenly" stumbles out of the Gielgud Theatre and into the Soho streets — expect to see the in-crowd in the stalls. *delfontmackintosh.co.uk*



Pilates, but make it extreme

How extreme is your Pilates class? We don't mean how long your instructor makes you hold a V-sit — that's beginners' stuff. Instead, do you know your Rowformer (a rowing machine/reformer mash-up) from your Cadillac (a reformer with additional vertical bars above)? Studio Fix has just opened a gym on Kensington High Street that is itted out with Lagree Megaformers — think reformers with a arriage and two platforms to use, plus extra pulley ropes to ramp up the intensity (Michelle Obama, Sofia Vergara and Jennifer niston are already fans). Or you could book into Re:Sculpt, a ew high-intensity Pilates studio in Manchester — guests are iven headphones to listen to motivational music while they ork out using dumbbells and transformers (souped-up, bigger reformers). Sign up at your peril.

Additional words: Victoria Brzezinski, Katrina Burroughs, Hannah Evans.
Photographs: Getty Images, Alamy, John William, Matt Crockett, @carolebamford





MINI
DOLCEVITA

LONGINES

LONGINES BOUTIQUE
411 Oxford Street • London



One more thing...

She points, she shoots, she scores! Chanel is poised to send fans into a spin with the latest version of its classic Camera bag. Taking design inspiration from a traditional film camera, the shoulder bag comes with a "viewfinder" and a zip-off lens cap. Talk about fashion clickbait.
Camera bag, £7,740, Chanel

Photograph **Marco Gazza** Styling **Flossie Saunders**

Set design: Amy Friend at Lalaland Artists


DOLCE & GABBANA

Round and round

Shop with Style

Time to circle back — the perfect pair of hoops is a forever fail-safe

Edit **Jessica Diamond**



Main picture Swirly gold-plated hoops, £125, mishodesigns.com. **1** Large seamless clicker hoop in 9ct yellow gold, £150 each, metierbytomfoolery.co.uk. **2** Diana chubby hoops in gold-plated silver with blue spinels and cubic zirconia, £94, vbylauravann.com. **3** Revolve earrings in leather and ruthenium-coated brass, £284, so-le-studio.com. **4** Wave gold-plated silver hoops with white sapphires, £290, deborahblyth.com. **5** Bead hoops in sterling silver with freshwater pearls, £70, pandora.net. **6** Swirl gold-plated silver hoops, £190, bonvojewelry.com. **7** Spiralis earrings in gold vermeil with cubic zirconia, £275, Camilla and Marc x Otiumberg, otiumberg.com. **8** Soe gold-plated hoops with sapphires, £230, Pacharee, net-a-porter.com. **9** Hoops in sterling silver with peridots, £365, angharadstudio.com. **10** Dainty diamond hoops in 18ct yellow gold, £460, aurumandgrey.com. **11** Large hoops in 9ct yellow gold, £845, 886.royalmint.com



MISSONI

HOLD UP

Sports socks pulled over leggings has become the weekend uniform of women the world over — this fashion editor included, says **Karen Dacre**

You know a trend has hit stratospheric levels when there is a thread dedicated to it on Mumsnet. "Everyone seems to be wearing sports socks pulled up over gym leggings now," writes one of its more observant keyboard warriors. "Should I stick to my short trainer socks and ignore this trend or is it here to stay?" The motivation behind this dilemma is the commonplace practice of wearing a pair of thick sports socks — usually branded with a couple of horizontal stripes — pulled up over leggings.

Adopted by everyone from Pilates girlies (among whom the combo is as essential as a Stanley travel cup) to Crocs-adoring Gen Zers, leggings plus sport socks sartorially defines a cohort who agree wholeheartedly with the suggestion that trainer socks (an early-Noughties hangover) might just be the unsexiest item of wardrobe paraphernalia on earth. Certainly the look is nearing a level of ubiquity other trends can only dream of, having made its way from the juice bar-lined streets of LA to the five-a-side pitches of East Lothian where, sources tell me, leggings with socks and a variation of the same black puffer coat is the football mum uniform of choice.

Unsurprisingly it's a staple look on Planet Famous too, with Hailey Bieber, Kaia Gerber Alessandra Ambrosio and Kendall Jenner regular adopters. Social media influencers — the sort who have mastered the art of Pilates reformer selfies — are also fans. As is the Princess of Wales, recently spotted outside a farm shop in Windsor with khaki socks pulled over her leggings. At the last count, #socksandleggings has been used 5,000 times on Instagram, while a search of TikTok brings to light endless videos of how to wear the trend: I watched four and they are every bit as riveting as they sound.

However, anyone who remembers Rosemary Conley and life before the inception of trainer socks will know that pulling your socks over your leggings is not a new concept but in fact one that has roots in the Eighties — think *Flashdance* and the era in which Pineapple Dance Studios became a fashion brand. For many (including me), the look will also conjure memories of a streetwear trend popularised in the late Nineties, which involved teenage boys wearing their sports socks pulled over their favourite pair of trackie bottoms (see also a baseball cap with the peak set at two o'clock).

> The trend has gone from LA's juice bar-lined streets to the five-a-side pitches of East Lothian

The staying power of athleisure, no longer considered a hangover from the Lycra-swathed Covid days but a category in its own right, means that leggings and their accoutrements have become cemented in our daily dressing repertoire. It's a phenomenon with legs too: it is estimated that UK demand will grow by 16.4 per cent between 2023 and 2027, by which time the industry will be worth almost £14 billion (that's a whole lot of leggings and sports socks). The many brands born as a result of this boom — Alo Yoga, Varley, Sporty & Rich, to name a few — are all over the aesthetic and capitalising on the moment by offering colourful or statement styles of sports sock, specifically designed to be shown off.

As a fashion editor who has been programmed to run a mile when a trend becomes too popular, I'm supposed to tell you to rip off your socks and leggings and start heading in the other direction. But here's the thing: I can't. Actually, I won't — because in the leggings-plus-sports-socks phenomenon I have found my happy place, with no plans to leave it any time soon.

For me, the joy of the look has everything to do with feeling and very little to do with fashion. Try pulling a pair of sports socks (I live in a pair of tie-dye pink ones from Nike) over your comfiest pair of black leggings — Sweaty Betty Power leggings for me — and I swear you'll never look back.

Is comfort a cliché? Whatever, I'm here for it. **@karendacre**



From left Alessandra Ambrosio and Kaia Gerber

Getty Images

‘I steal Mum’s leather trousers all the time’

Damian Hurley was papped as a toddler, has Elton as a godfather and now, aged 21, he’s directing his mother Elizabeth in, yes, an erotic thriller. Fame is just my normal, he tells **Laura Pullman**

Photographs **Daniel Sachon** Styling **Ronnie Hart**

Damian Hurley isn’t easily rattled. “I’ve never really been starstruck,” he says. “I’ve grown up around industry giants so I’m fairly unflappable.” Though Elizabeth Hurley’s son admits that he was minorly flapped when cast in a modelling campaign alongside Naomi Campbell. Thankfully the original Nineties super is an “old family friend” and offered advice. “She really taught me — this is very interesting — so you have to have two thoughts when you’re looking into the camera, either ‘f*** me’ or ‘f*** you’,” he says. “It’s completely true. When you look at every single model in the world, that is what they’re thinking.”

Can I see his “f*** me” expression versus his “f*** you”? “Oh, I beg you no,” he says, giggling.

Talking to Hurley is a hoot. It’s as if Elizabeth Hurley has swallowed a Gen Z Nicky Haslam. The 21-year-old tosses his long, chestnut mane and keeps trotting around the Los Angeles home of “Godfather Elton [John]” (which looks 50 shades of cream) trying to get a better internet connection. Speaking as if he has a plum in each cheek, he purrs things like, “Giancarlo and Valentino [the Italian designer and his business partner] are some of my mother’s best friends in the world. I go on their boat nearly every summer. I’ve been really, really spoilt, unfortunately.”

For Hurley it has been a life of red carpets and superyachts. Indeed, us mere mortals have long been fascinated by this showbiz princeling who has appeared in magazines since he was a baby but rarely gives proper interviews. We’ve watched him slowly morph into his mother — all pouts, low necklines and flowing locks — and idly wondered about their tell-each-other-everything relationship.

When we speak over Zoom he has just landed in Tinseltown in time for the Oscars bash thrown by Elton and the Vanity Fair afterparty. But business brings him to Hollywood too: he has written and directed his first feature film, *Strictly Confidential*, an erotic thriller that stars his mum as a woman who has a lusty affair with a woman decades her junior. “I’m bored of the one-dimensional way women are shown in cinema. It was so nice not to be a part of that,” says Hurley, who went straight from Wellington College, a boarding school in Berkshire, into the world of movie-making. “Of course, once I’d written this glamorous, glorious woman, I went, it’s got to be Mum.”

Hurley Jr directs Hurley Sr, 58, being snogged and pawed by her lover (played by Pear Chiravara, a twentysomething influencer). It’s all mega-cleavages, murder and mad plot twists. Plus, a starring role for Liz’s swimwear range. (“The most flattering bikinis in the world,” Hurley Jr says, loyally.) How was it to direct his mother in such steamy scenes? “I hate to say that it felt totally normal. I don’t know what that says about us,” he says, adding that he doesn’t understand the fuss over the fact that he takes some of his mum’s bikini photos for Instagram. “It’s business. We don’t think about it for any more than point, press, done, post.”



Hurley wonders if, perhaps, it’s just hard for normal folk to understand. “I was speaking to a lot of my friends who are also second generation of parents in the industry,” he says straight-faced. “They say exactly the same thing: that things to outsiders that may seem totally strange and extraordinary, for us we’ll just have grown up with in everyday life.” His pals include Iris Law (daughter of Jude), Lila Moss (daughter of Kate) and Brooklyn Beckham (well, you know). “I’ve managed to



This page Shirt, £550, and jacket, £3,820, Brunello Cucinelli. 517 jeans, £110, Levi's. Santos de Cartier white gold necklace, £8,700, Cartier. Belt, stylist's own

Opposite Elizabeth and Damian Hurley at the recent Vanity Fair Oscar party



‘I thought every single person was chased to school by men screaming in their face and flashing cameras’

Top, £110, and coat, £1,423, Ami. Trousers, £650, Loro Piana. Santos de Cartier white gold necklace, £8,700, and Tank Louis Cartier watch, £12,500, Cartier



escape a lot of the fire of the nepo-baby stuff because anyone who looks at me has gone, 'Oh, actually, hang on, you've been working exceptionally hard since you were 15 years old'," he says, referring to his past modelling career (he has been shot by Steven Meisel and Mert and Marcus).

There was no need for any intimacy co-ordinators on set — "everyone was very comfortable" — and Hurley seems chuffed that his mum, the star of *Bedazzled* and *Austin Powers*, took on such a raunchy role. "I don't think she has ever been cast in a sexier part at this point in her career," he says, grinning. "People are realising that rules don't really exist any more for ageing, growing up, acting responsibly."

The mother and son are intensely close. "We're like siblings. I think when it's just two of you, any farce of 'I'm the parent, you're the child, I'm going to tell you off' goes out the window," he says. "You start seeing each other as real humans way sooner than when there are two parents, two kids, and you're separated from the adults."

The pair share opinions, beauty products and clothes. "I steal leather trousers all the time when we're the same size," he confesses. "Jackets are always great. Any big, oversized blazers she steals in a heartbeat." He lights up while talking about that safety-pin dress Liz wore three decades ago as Hugh Grant's girlfriend at the *Four Weddings and a Funeral* premiere: "It put Versace on the map, it transformed my mother's life overnight, and it really changed the entire concept of celebrity, the entire concept of red-carpet moments."

Hurley was about five and living in London when he clocked that his life wasn't normal. "I'd just had a particularly gruelling [time] being chased by paparazzi on motorbikes on the way to school. I got in and I remember saying, 'Oh, don't you guys just hate those men?' And they were like, 'What?' I thought every single person was chased to school by men screaming in their face and flashing cameras," he says. "I had no idea."

Soon after, the pair escaped to live in Gloucestershire. He details how his mum still has PTSD from those pap-hounding days, while he's paranoid about lurking photographers and eavesdroppers. "It's a horrible way to live. You feel like you're in the Mob ... it's also the price of doing business," he says. "Unfortunately I'm in a career where your success is measured by how famous you are. I wish I could take the success and opt out of fame. That's sadly not possible."

One of the Hurley duo's mantras is to care about only what friends and family think and ignore the haters. He describes the "twin telepathy" he has with his mum and how they can "have complete conversations just nodding and shaking our heads". Their closeness has been especially crucial lately: "My mum has been a phenomenal constant for my entire life, but really in the past few years. I can't put it into words."

The past four years have been brutal. Hurley's biological father, Steve Bing, the wealthy American businessman with whom his mother had a brief relationship in 2001, took his own life in 2020. Bing, who also had a daughter a few years older than Hurley, had wrestled with depression and drug addiction. The tragedy came not long after Bing had started building a relationship with his son. Contrary to media reports, Hurley says that he had met his father, but avoids the details ("maybe I'll write a book one day"). Then, less than two years later, Shane Warne, the cricketer and former boyfriend of Elizabeth, suffered a fatal heart attack while on holiday in Thailand, aged 52.

"Shane was unequivocally a tragedy. There was no confusion or anger. It was just grief and horrific," says Hurley, who still thinks of Warne's three children as his





Getty Images

Top Damian with his mother at a premiere, 2011. **Above** The Hurleys in The Royals, 2018, in which Damian played the Crown Prince of Liechtenstein; Elizabeth stars in his directorial debut, the erotic thriller Strictly Confidential



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family. "When my biological father died there was immense grief, a lot of regret, anger, sadness. There was so much. It was a very different process." In 2021, on the first anniversary of Bing's suicide, Hurley published an Instagram post about how hard he'd found the year. "It's not weak to struggle," he wrote.

Today he squirms about such sincerity. "Did I say that? As artists and creators we're all meant to sit and talk about our emotions, but also as British people we're meant to pretend emotions don't exist. It's a strange dichotomy," he says. "If every single person in the world was open about when they find things tough, I think everyone would be much happier and feel much less alone."

The countless condolence messages that he received on social media gave him great comfort, though Hurley admits to not being that far along the grief process: "It's a horrific thing. I think it's something that you really want to give time. But, at the same time, I'm very aware it could explode tomorrow."

Strictly Confidential includes themes of death and a father found at the bottom of a cliff. He found making the movie, shot over 18 days in December 2022 in Saint Kitts and Nevis in the Caribbean, both cathartic and exhilarating. "I was so frantic that I could hardly breathe for the entire shoot," Hurley says, speaking a mile a minute. "Your body is sent totally through the wringer. I lost 20lb in ten days down to stress. When you're a perfectionist you don't do things by halves, it's impossible."

Elizabeth was there as a sounding board. "The power dynamic between an actor and director is challenging and complicated at the best of times. Even more when you're factoring in a child bossing around their parent," he says. "We're extraordinarily alike ... apart from having the same face, we are really, really in tune. It's like having an extension to your brain to double-check things."

Besides, the budding auteur has been directing his mum and his other A-list godfather, Hugh Grant, in the short films that he has been making since he was eight. The themes back then were "people having risky affairs and everyone getting each other pregnant". In Hurley's childhood debut film, Grant played a corrupt judge. "He was brilliant. I made him wear a bald cap," he recalls, adding that it was Godfather Hugh who advised him to start his career behind the camera. "He's right because even if you're the best actor in the entire world, if you have no creative control you're sitting by the phone waiting for someone to bring something to you." As a teen Hurley appeared alongside his mum in three episodes of *The Royals*, an American soapy drama, playing the Crown Prince of Liechtenstein.

He's already working on his next film. The plot? A woman in her forties has an affair with a "much, much younger man" and a "strange love triangle" ensues.

In real life Hurley has recently started seeing someone new. "I was single when lockdown started and it was quite freeing, but then I actually really missed having someone to bore about how my day had been," he says. The new, unidentified partner hasn't yet met his mum, but he seems relaxed: "If I like them she probably will too. God, I hope so."

I imagine Liz gave him the birds and the bees chat early? "I learnt about sex when I was ludicrously young," he says. "She was like, 'With sex, it's a beautiful, natural part of being human and of life.' Whereas when we were watching movies she banned me from seeing any violence at all."



Vintage coat, stylist's own

What an extraordinary life he has led. At age eight, Hurley was sent to an all-boys boarding school, which he professes to have loved: "We were in the countryside, so we were sprinting around fields behaving terribly." Back at home his mother was "very, very, very cautious" not to introduce him to any of her boyfriends unless they were serious. "My mum has taught me a lot about relationships in general. I've seen how relationships that the public get their hands on can be destroyed," he says. "With who she's seeing now, unless she's engaged, it's not going to go public. And I really think the same for me."

These days Hurley shudders at the idea of going "out-out". "I couldn't be paid to go and stand in a sweaty club," he says, adding that he "can't imagine" doing drugs. Three years ago he gave up drinking. "Friends of mine said, 'Obviously that's to do with your father dying and his addiction issues and all the above.' I don't know," he says, wearily. "It's just something that felt quite natural at the time." He describes himself as "married to my career", acknowledging that keeping so busy could be "terribly avoidant". Therapy, the one time he tried it, wasn't for him: "Perhaps I'll have time after I've directed my tenth movie."

In the future Hurley imagines getting back in front of the camera again. "Maybe I'll turn totally obnoxious and write, direct and star in something," he says. "It wouldn't be the first time." ■

Strictly Confidential is available to watch digitally from May 13

Hair: Anton Alexander at Streeters using Augustinus Bader. Make-up: Melissa Rogers at The Only Agency. Nails: Arlene Hinckson at The Only Agency. Local production: Daniel Cingari and Leon Derriey. Model: Damian Hurley at The Lions Management

My year of casual sex

When the writer Kitty Ruskin set out on a mission to have no-strings sex, she learnt a lot about herself — and even more about the state of modern dating, she tells **Roisin Kelly**



Kitty Ruskin
Photograph **Victoria Adamson**

There are few things that make me feel like a prude, but reading Kitty Ruskin's memoir, *Ten Men: A Year of Casual Sex*, on my busy train commute is one of them. Perhaps it's the bold title, or maybe the fear of someone reading the graphic descriptions of Ruskin's sexual escapades over my shoulder, but I find myself trying to conceal the cover.

"I'm nervous about the reaction," Ruskin admits when we meet. "I work in social media, so I can predict the hate that's going to come my way."

The book documents the now 30-year-old's dating life during 2019, when she set out on a year of no-strings-attached casual sex. "I had one goal," Ruskin writes in it, "to stop being so precious about who I had sex with. I decided to have sex with as many people as I wanted to."

The result is a no-holds-barred account of the highs and lows of being a single woman on the modern dating scene. Ruskin recounts her dates with ten different men, devoting a chapter to each. She meets almost all of them on apps and has sex with each of them, often on the first or second date. The encounters range from hilarious (the man who runs her a candlelit bath after their first date) to horrifying (the second date that ends up with Ruskin unknowingly participating in shibari, a Japanese style of bondage).

So how did she find herself here? What made her want to go from being a woman with relatively little experience to having as much sex as possible? In the book's opening chapter, Ruskin, who is originally from Dorset, describes a sexual assault she experienced when she was ten years old by a boy of the same age. She says it led her to build a "rigid attitude, rooted in guilt, anxiety and, above all, shame", and created a fear about sex and dating.

"All through secondary school and university, if guys showed interest I would completely freeze up," she says. "I didn't even want to kiss anybody, which made me feel a lot of shame because I was like, what's wrong with me — why don't I want to do that?"

It was only as an adult that she was able to come to terms with what had happened. She lost her virginity aged 22 in a one-off encounter with a trusted friend. She calls it "a revelation". Finally she felt like she could participate. "I wanted to make up for lost time," she says. "Everyone else my age was exploring their sexuality and I hadn't at all. I thought being a bit of a hedonist would be quite exciting."

Ruskin was binge-watching *Sex and the City* at the time and Samantha Jones, a character known for her unashamed love of sex, became her inspiration. "I really wanted to believe that you could be like Samantha and what she represented: this fun, liberated, sexually empowered version of a woman," Ruskin says. "I thought, wow, I would love to be like that and just have fun, at least for a period of time."

Ruskin estimates that she went on about 28 dates in 2019 and says she met many men who were funny and charming over texts but had "dry chat" when they met in real life. There was no time for slow burners. "I wasn't going into it looking for a relationship," she says. "I was looking for fun and that's a totally different ball game. For me it was whether I could have a laugh with them and if there was a bit of chemistry there."

'I had one goal: to stop being so precious — I would sleep with as many people as I wanted to'

Ruskin is keen to dispel the narrative that women cannot enjoy sex without building a meaningful connection. "That really wasn't my experience of it," she says. "I had really fantastic sex with people that I had absolutely no feelings for, before or after. I could say goodbye to them the next morning and I didn't care if I never heard from them again."

Among fun, flirtatious dates and drunken snogs, Ruskin does fall victim to some classic digital dating scenarios. After a brief stint of intoxicating, more-than-just-sex dates with a man called Leo, Ruskin is ghosted. "It's so cruel — it's like whiplash," she says. "Psychologically it's very hard to deal with because you go from excitement or intimacy to total silence and you have to fill in the blanks."

While Tinder, Hinge and Bumble were at their peak in 2019, more recent data shows that people are coming off dating apps. Ruskin thinks these apps are "hilarious" for "the absolute crap people put on their profiles", but says friends seem fatigued by them and have "gone back to trying to meet people in real life".

Some of the encounters she describes in the book are shocking: see the men who move without warning from gentle, affectionate kisses to full-throttle throat-grabbing. Ruskin believes this is a result of men educating themselves about sex via porn. "They've convinced themselves that this is what women want."

The book raises questions about consent and safety, and the darkest point comes in chapter three when, on a drunken night out with friends, Ruskin meets a younger man, whom she names Conor. It makes for extremely uncomfortable reading when Conor takes her back to her flat — not to ensure that she gets home safely but to rape her.

"I was in denial as to what had actually happened for a long time," she tells me. "I tried so hard to package it as a funny anecdote, omitting details like how I wasn't able to walk and I blacked out."

She never heard from Conor again and it was six months before she could accept what had really happened. In the time between she continued to go out and date in an attempt to prove to herself that sex could be carefree.

"That experience really reiterated to me what I had feared: that I can't have respectful, enjoyable sex," she says. "It made me feel like it would always



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be disempowering, dangerous or damaging in some way." Ruskin never reported the rape for fear that she wouldn't have a case — five in six women don't report rape to the police and only two in a hundred rapes recorded between October 2022 and September 2023 resulted in someone being charged, let alone convicted, that same year.

Ruskin is now in a healthy, committed relationship of three and a half years with a man she met on Hinge. She explains that her "need for temporary pleasure again gave way to a desire for something longer term".

How does her boyfriend feel about her releasing a book that so graphically details her sex life? "He's really excited and supportive," she says. "He thinks the book is very brave but hasn't finished it. He's finding it quite difficult to read."

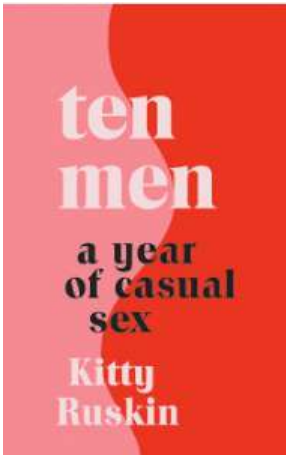
Ruskin says that the book is predominantly for women but that she would love for men to read it too. "If it opened their minds a bit to what it's like to have casual sex as a woman, then that would be amazing."

And does she ever miss being single? "Absolutely not." **@roisinkatekelly**

STYLE EXTRACT

'Leo seemed such a gentleman — so why was he being pushy about sex?'

After a few dodgy dates **Kitty Ruskin** was looking for someone kind and gentle. Could Leo be the one?



Leo's first Hinge message featured a sunflower emoji. Looking down at the little flower in my hand, I decided that it was whimsical, sensitive. Clicking through to his profile, I zoomed in on the first picture, his handsome, weather-beaten face creasing around a Colgate smile. In his early thirties, Leo had an illustrious career in photography and a head of short, auburn curls. I laughed at the selfie with a goat and matched.

Within the hour we were chatting. It was the sort of conversation that reduces you to a smirking teenager, lying flat on your bed, legs swinging behind you. Gently flirtatious, his messages seemed intelligent, considered and colourful.

A few nights later we met in Soho. He was even better-looking in person. "We should have booked somewhere," he grinned as I approached. Then he pulled me in for a hug, which felt surprisingly intimate. My face against his black shirt, I breathed in his aftershave: smoky and rugged but soft. Subtle.

Taking his hand, I followed Leo through the crowds. Eventually we settled in a restaurant, hassled waiters turboing past us. As Leo disappeared to the toilet, I took a moment to bask in my good luck. This man was unbelievably attractive, with his long legs and big hands and jewel-like eyes.

"So, how's your day been?" he opened.

"Yeah, pretty busy ... I'm glad it's the weekend."

God, our chat was awkward at first. And he kept looking at the candle by my elbow for some reason. Finally Leo reached around me, picked it up and set it down by the front door.

"Sorry, I'm just nervous. I didn't want you to catch fire. Heh."

Leo was nervous? My ego ballooning, I tried to put him at ease.

"Wouldn't be my worst first date."

"God — so the bar is low?"

You have no idea, I thought, sipping my cocktail.

"Well, anyway," Leo smiled, "I was worried it would be our last."

The sweetness of the sentiment had caught me off-guard. And the more I looked up at his frank, earnest face, the more I felt my shoulders sink. He was so handsome yet so gentlemanly. And so smitten, apparently.

We carried on talking for a few hours, eventually relocating to a pub, though we knew it didn't matter any more — every sentence presented itself like a bridge to a kiss. I watched his mouth open and close, his body inching nearer with each reply. My neck felt hot, my hands a little clammy. At last Leo said: "I love your funny face. I want to kiss it."

And he leant forward, our lips finally meeting. It was a deep, tender kiss. I held on to the countertop with one hand, my knees wobbling slightly.

Winding a blonde curl of mine around his finger, Leo suggested that we go back to my flat. Turning my head, I faltered, laughing awkwardly into the crook of his neck. Up until this point there had been something romantic and old-fashioned about Leo. Wanting to knock boots on the first date wasn't in keeping with this image ...

"Ha. Not tonight."

"Come on," he whispered into my ear conspiratorially. "Take me with you."

I paused, discomfort encroaching on my happiness. I didn't want to say no to Leo. Yes, I was only looking for something casual, but I wanted to see him more than once ... I didn't think much about how pushy he was being about sex. I couldn't because he was just so nice. So gentlemanly. I'd be insane, wouldn't I, to say no to Leo?

With my gentle nod he took my hand and pulled me down the street.

Extracted from Ten Men: A Year of Casual Sex by Kitty Ruskin (Icon Books £14.99), published on April 11. Buy from timesbookshop.co.uk or call 020 3176 2935. Discount for Times+ members

BOGGI MILANO

Shaping contemporary menswear through wide volumes and neutral nuances for the Spring/Summer 2024.



Spring things

Shop with Style

Souped-up slingbacks! The new two-piece! The picnic dress!
These are the sure-fire shopping hits of the season

Edit **Flossie Saunders** Words **Karen Dacre**

1



THE ALL-WEATHER BOOTS
With soggy commutes and grey afternoons still on the horizon, there is more to spring footwear than sandals. Thankfully, Joseph has perfected a white boot that works year-round. Wear with jeans or a silk slip skirt. £675, joseph-fashion.com

THE GO-ANYWHERE DRESS
For a high-stakes day at the office or a big Saturday night out, a dress that does it all is an essential. We love the easy-to-wear shape of this one from M&S — they do say leopard print is a neutral, after all. £49.50, marksandspencer.com

2





3

THE NEW SKIRT SUIT
Summer workwear means linen, but not in the way you think. Focus on skirts and jackets in bold, bright shades. Linen top and skirt set, £248, thereformation.com



4

THE RUGBY SHIRT
Posh girl summer is on its way but that doesn't mean reaching for a pashmina — a rugby shirt will do instead. Wear yours tucked into jeans with a pair of loafers. A slouchy cardie would also make a fine companion. £265, gant.co.uk

Shop with Style

5



THE DOUBLE TRIPLE DENIM

How much denim is too much denim? The fashion gods say that's a trick question, as denim layered over denim emerges as a must-have style. Try wearing a mannish jean jacket over a shirt in the same fabric. Mango has you covered. Shirt, £36, jacket, £36, and jeans, £36, mango.com



THE FAKESKIN HANDBAG

Wild accessories are the thing, as bags and shoes in snakeskin-inspired prints and textiles creep into our wardrobes. Whistles' mini tote — the perfect size for an everyday handbag — is the one to beat. £129, whistles.com

6



7

THE CELLOPHANE SKIRT

Brace, brace! The nearly naked trend has reached the high street — more shockingly, it has reached John Lewis, which has this transparent pencil skirt in store. For an office-friendly way to wear it, team with a T-shirt and blazer. £45, johnlewis.com

8

THE PICNIC DRESS

Ahh, spring ... time to dig out the alfresco dining apparatus and start eating mini scotch eggs again. The return of picnic season also demands the perfect dress, of course. We love this blouson style from Laura Jackson's collaboration with Barbour, which launches tomorrow. £119, barbour.com





9

THE SPRING SLINGS

The standout shoe of the season? It's all about the slingback. Certainly, if anything is going to tempt us back into heels it's patent leather. This pair from & Other Stories comes in four high-shine colours, including black and red. £110, stories.com



10

THE FOREVER TRENCH
There are ten-year trends and then there are trench coats: a staple that never goes out of style. Those in the market for an update will enjoy Arket's classic design — it's just the right amount of oversized. £189, arket.com



11

THE MUST-HAVE LOAFERS
The best kind of loafers fit neatly into your fashion repertoire without causing a fuss, which means that a timeless design is essential. Wear Russell & Bromley's red pair with socks in contrasting shades. £275, russellandbromley.co.uk



12

THE RED DRESS
Chris de Burgh saw it coming: a dress in pillar-box red is this season's hottest hit. While the options are plentiful, we love the easy shape of this one from Reiss. £238, reiss.com



13

THE COCKTAIL BOMBER
In soft silk and punchy green, this bomber jacket is the dinner party throw-on you never knew you needed. Wear with tailored black trousers and you're good to go. £310, The Frankie Shop, net-a-porter.com



14

THE PRECIOUS CARGO SKIRT
For those who lived in long denim skirts last summer, the mid-length cargo is your new best friend. Smart enough for the office without being too grown-up, it's an excellent match for pair of trainers and a blazer. £195, meandem.com



REISS

ATELIER SEASON_02



15

THE NEW TWO-PIECE
Gareth Southgate's sartorial influence continues to dominate, with his signature waistcoat set to stick around for another season as a fashion essential. Wear it with slacks in the same shade, and add a white T-shirt if you prefer a bit of arm coverage. Waistcoat, £90, and trousers, £100, massimodutti.com



17

THE 'OUTFIT IN THEMSELVES' EARRINGS
Some days, getting dressed up means shoving on a pair of statement earrings, and these clip-ons from H&M's Studio line are just the ticket. Wear with anything from jeans and a T-shirt to a black suit. £38, hm.com



16

Shop with Style

THE TAILORED TRACK STARS
Stretchy, comfy elasticated trousers that you can wear to the office without setting tongues wagging? Yes please! Tailored track pants are our hot tip for spring. Dress up this pair from Cos with a tailored blazer and gold hoops. £110, cos.com

18

THE OFFICE SANDALS
For work and beyond, a sandal that belongs anywhere but the beach is always a good buy. We love this pair by Dune — the perfect alternative to Birkenstocks. Try wearing them with socks during the early days of spring. £95, dunelondon.com





Dune
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dunelondon.com

Three little words...

Shop with Style

Overwhelmed by online shopping? Fashion expert **Alexandra Fullerton** explains how the three-word method will save you time — and money

Screen breaks didn't help. Blue-light glasses were not the answer. As I scrolled through the 1,000-plus new items on Net-a-Porter, 1,700 and counting on H&M and more than 1,300 on Asos that seemed to land every single week, I was exhausted. There had to be a way for online shopping to work better.

As a fashion stylist and writer, it's my job to edit new arrivals and find pieces worth noting from every retailer online (and IRL, although browsing an actual shop proves far less exhausting). Whether compiling trend reports or offering editorial ideas, my eye has been honed over a 20-year career. And while I admit I spend a disproportionate amount of time on shopping websites compared with my non-industry friends, they — and clients — echoed my findings. They were equally daunted by the paralysing array of options and often made the wrong decisions when buying online. I've also found that items hanging in wardrobes that are BNWT (brand new with tags) are almost always online purchases.

The ever-increasing scale of online shopping has turned something as simple as finding a cute top into a mission. However many filters I employed to search by item — hem length, sleeve shape, colour, fabric, occasion — I was still finding it impossible.

Then I discovered three little words.

It's a simple theory that could transform your shopping habits and streamline your wardrobe. Let me elaborate: you simply need to choose three words that define your style. To give you an idea of what I mean, my words are: Sixties, denim and tomboy. I'm quite petite, so miniskirts suit my shape rather than midi or maxi lengths, and I love a black poloneck. I'm most often found in jeans (denim) and I hate feeling prissy, hence tomboy.

To determine your words, head to your wardrobe. Start by thinking about what clothes make you feel happiest and the pieces that give you confidence. What garments make you feel like you? What do you turn to when you think you have nothing to wear? What gets you the most compliments? What do you wear most often? If it's tracksuits, you might choose "sporty" as one of your words. Trouser suits? Perhaps "tailored". Is your wardrobe full of rainbow or oat-milk latte shades?

Also, acknowledge your lifestyle: do you live in the country, spend hours desk-bound or head out-out most nights? Are there repeated silhouettes, fabrics or patterns? Common themes will appear that will allow you to work out your words.

Now, whenever you shop, you must only buy pieces that chime with your three words. If you are drawn to something that doesn't tick those words, put it back — you won't wear it. Just close the tab. Move on. Because when you have clothes that fit only your three words, getting dressed will be easy because everything goes together. You'll save money too, because you're not buying pieces that you'll never wear. "The less you have in your wardrobe, the easier it will be to grab the items you love," agrees Dilly Carter, a professional organiser and a presenter on the BBC1 programme *Sort Your Life Out*.

The three-word styling method isn't a new concept: I've been cheerleading the theory since 2018, when I included it in my book *How to Dress*. Since then, TikTok has popularised the trend (#3wordmethod has eight million views and counting). A couple of months ago, still frustrated with the online ordeal, I launched My3Words.co — a shopping website divided into edits of the most popular adjectives that British women use to describe their style. From canvassing on Instagram as well as speaking to friends and clients, I discovered that "comfortable" was one of the most requested words, along with "French" and "dopamine". "Classic", "feminine", "minimal", "tailored" and "rock chick" are popular choices too.

Note that these aren't words for life. As your body and lifestyle change, your words may morph and that's fine. Just continue to be honest with the words that serve you best — they won't fail you. ■



Getty Images



The Macy Dress, worn by Laura Jackson
www.barbour.com

Shop with Style

NEW YOUNG PONY CLUB

Looking for a fresh wardrobe staple? The power polo shirt is all you need, says **Karen Dacre**


THEORY


LOEWE




1


2


3


4


MIU MIU

Main pictures from top Navy polo shirt, £23, zara.com. Stripy polo shirt, £23, mango.com. White polo shirt, £200, and navy zip-up, £225, eric-bompard.com. **1** Grey polo shirt, £28, hm.com. **2** Black polo shirt, £36, mango.com. **3** Alpaca-mix polo shirt, £143, wearebraindead.com. **4** Pink polo shirt, £350, Victoria Beckham, harveynichols.com

Getty Images

If a polo shirt to you means grass-stained school uniforms and posh boys, it's time to readjust. The collared T-shirt has been reborn. Stolen from the wardrobe of preppy freshers and your dad's golfing get-up, the polo shirt is fashion's new plaything.

It helps that Miuccia Prada — the oracle when it comes to anointing old-time classics with new fashion reverence — has given it her blessing. Indeed, she has made an icon out of the sports-day staple, a transformation that occurred when she unveiled her Miu Miu collection last year. Hers were crafted from soft cashmere and silk, and, along with the Miu Miu logo, came detailed with sporty flourishes. Jonathan Anderson drew inspiration from the polo shirt too, including stripy versions in his spring/summer offering for Loewe.

And as spring beckons, a posh polo — think knitted, cashmere and a world away from your Guides uniform — could be your new workwear staple. Think of it as the fair-weather alternative to the rollneck you clung to all winter and you'll understand why. The grown-up way to wear your polo is under a blazer or layered over a white T-shirt and tucked into a pair of tailored trousers. To find the perfect one, look to knitwear brands — Extreme Cashmere and Lisa Yang have great options. The high street is also on top of this revival: try Mango for a long-sleeve, rugby shirt-inspired version in soft merino, while H&M has the short-sleeved polo shirt of dreams. ■ **@karendacre**


TOPS
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GLORY DAYS

From varsity jackets to rugby shirts worn with loafers, this season's fashion is in an (Ivy) league of its own

Photographs **Giampaolo Sgura**
Styling **Verity Parker**
Model **Emmi Freeman**





This page Top, £695, Dries Van Noten. Trainers, £189, Polo Ralph Lauren. Socks (throughout), £120, Celine by Hedi Slimane. **Opposite** T-shirt, £90, Sunspel. Shirt, £525, Dries Van Noten. Jacket, £840, Tod's. Knickers, £610, Miu Miu. Loafers, £725, Manolo Blahnik. Trainers (in bag), £189, Polo Ralph Lauren. Bag, £2,500, Connolly



This page Polo shirt, £245, Guest In Residence. Jumper, £499, and trousers, £319, Polo Ralph Lauren. Jacket, £260, Lacoste. Belt, £485, Celine by Hedi Slimane. **Opposite** Vintage jacket, courtesy of The Contemporary Wardrobe Collection. Games skirt, £240, Alex Eagle. Windbreaker (tied round waist), £3,190, The Row. Loafers, £850, Miu Miu





This page Cotton top, £79, towelling top, £189, and matching shorts, £139, Polo Ralph Lauren. Loafers, £725, Manolo Blahnik. **Opposite** Cropped rugby shirt, £89, Polo Ralph Lauren. Double-zip jumper, POA, Loewe. Knickers, POA, Victoria Beckham


KWIKGOAL



This page Shirt, £825, T-shirt, £585, suede jacket, £4,150, and knickers, £610, Miu Miu. **Opposite** Navy zip-up top, £456, Extreme Cashmere. Grey hoodie, £195, Sunspel. Jacket and shorts, POA, Prada. Loafers, £725, Manolo Blahnik. Tennis set, £3,250, Celine Maison



Hair Gianluca Mandelli at The Wall Group. **Make-up** Colleen Stone at Creative Management. **Model** Emmi Freeman at Women Management. **Extras** Tray Roscoe and Owen Lindberg at Next Miami; Bautista Ortega at Front. **Casting director** SimoBart Casting. **Local production** Dario Callegher

A question of taste

She says she's too busy thinking about the River Café to consider her clothes, but Ruth Rogers's wardrobe is considerably more chic than just chef's whites

Words **Karen Dacre**
Photographs **Kasia Bobula** Styling **Helen Atkin**



Jumper, James Perse. Skirt, Balenciaga. Shoes, Celine. All clothes throughout, Ruth's own

Ruth Rogers, chef, podcaster and founder of the most important "café" in British restaurant history, doesn't have much time to think about fashion. "I go to bed worried and I wake up worried," she says. "All day long I'm making a billion decisions: do we want to serve the mozzarella with the agretti? Do we want to have a new wood oven? Do we want to paint that oven pink? Do I want to do a new book that's called *The River Café Queen*?"

Her iPhone, housed in a fluorescent pink case to help her keep track of its whereabouts, is proof of this dynamism. During our meeting — which takes place within the breathtaking modernist masterpiece that is the Chelsea townhouse where she lives (the handiwork of her late husband, the acclaimed architect Lord Rogers of Riverside) — the pink phone flashes and vibrates almost continuously. In between filling the team's bellies with doorstop-sized slices of panettone ("fruit, not chocolate — it's a good one") and delivering great anecdotes, such as the time she turned down an invitation from Bob Dylan, Rogers takes numerous calls. Some are from her restaurant — "A concern about a veal chop" — others from the production team behind her hugely successful and star-studded podcast *Ruthie's Table 4*, which is now in its second season with an episode featuring Sarah Jessica Parker. A WhatsApp message sent by the actor Callum Turner may have also landed on the industrious phone. "He sends me his Wordle score every day," Rogers explains. "A sweet boy."

I don't doubt the 75-year-old when she says, "I think energy might be my superpower." With her restaurant, the River Café, where it's normal to see Clint Eastwood dining alongside Kate Moss, she has launched the careers of Jamie Oliver and Theo Randall, changing dining culture for a generation — and she shows no signs of slowing down any time soon. Today, however, we're here to talk about fashion, not food — at least that's the plan — but Rogers's mind is never far from tonight's menu. "I'm never not thinking about the restaurant or what's coming next. I suppose that's why I like being able to open my closet and reach for a uniform," she says, getting us back on message.

With the exception of the chef's whites she wears in the kitchen — guests at the Michelin-star restaurant can expect to find the owner on service at least once a week, if not more often — Rogers's default outfit is a denim skirt and a brown jumper. Her favourite skirt is by The Row (the US label founded by the twin sisters Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen), or at least it was until a recent mishap in America involving a missing suitcase and a taxi that went Awol. She









Shoes from The Row, Christian Louboutin and Celine. **Above** Pieces of Ruth's jewellery

Shirt, Valentino. Denim skirt, Celine. **Above** Coat, Phoebe Philo. Jacket, Prada



Hair and make-up: Carol Brown at Arlington Artists using Innersense and Tata Harper





Ruth in front of her favourite portrait of her and her husband, Richard. Jumper, The Row. Skirt, Prada. Necklace, Phoebe Philo.
Left More pieces from her jewellery collection



Jumper, Moncler. Skirt, Celine. Boots, Bottega Veneta.
Right Coat, Hermès



has since invested in a new skirt from Prada. "It's floor-length and fabulous," she says. "I wore it to an event at the American embassy last week. I love the idea that you can turn up at these things feeling like yourself."

If this all sounds wildly modern, it's because Rogers *is* modern. And never more so than when it comes to her taste in clothes. This is confirmed when she takes us to her bedroom — an attic room featuring the most aesthetically pleasing bed on the planet, sunshine yellow and lined with rows of drawers — and talks us through some of her most treasured items. Here's a woman with a razor-sharp perception of what suits her and a wardrobe stuffed with brilliant designs.

Marni, Oscar de la Renta and Yves Saint Laurent are just a few of the designers Rogers namechecks as she guides us through her organised rails of jumpers and long skirts. She's a big fan of Prada and counts the store on Rue de Grenelle in Paris among one of her all-time favourite places. "I wasn't raised as a shop-shop-shop person, but I do love to treat myself from time to time," she says. "I find it to be a great way to switch off at the end of a long day."

Rogers was an artist before happenstance led her to food — her friend Rose Gray started an Italian canteen for staff at the architectural practice of Rogers's husband — and there's a sense that it's clothes that come from accomplished creatives that earn a place in her wardrobe. She lists Bella Freud, Erdem Moralioglu ("a wonderful man") and Duro Olowu as some of her favourite British designers, saving extra praise for Phoebe Philo, whose designs for Celine, where she was previously creative director, and for her recently launched namesake label Rogers owns in abundance.

> 'I wasn't raised as a shop-shop-shop person but I do love to treat myself sometimes'

Indeed, it is in Rogers's bedroom that I have my first IRL encounter with the Mum necklace that sent the internet into meltdown when Philo unveiled her label last year. "Phoebe is a dear friend," Rogers says. "I find that I live in many of her clothes. The cut and the simplicity of what she does really appeal to me."

I'm not surprised to hear that Philo has a fan in Rogers. The two women, in their respective fields of fashion and food, bat for the same team where aesthetics are concerned, with the notion that simplicity, be that in roast tomato spaghetti or a cashmere coat, is the key to great taste. They also take a similar view on price point, with a meal at Rogers's restaurant as relatively affordable as one of Philo's coats.

Rogers has a down-to-earth quality that is vital to her success story. Much like her choice in fashion, her restaurant is famed for its informal, warm atmosphere. Rogers, whose Italian nonna-ness extends to her home, tells me how she hosted a group of actors that included Austin Butler and Carey Mulligan for supper for 39 consecutive Sundays following the loosening of lockdown rules. "Everyone was away from home and their families so they would come to me. They would help me cook and then we'd play cards. It became a sort of tradition."

Starry company or not, do not for one second think you need a famous face — or a Phoebe Philo coat — to get a table at the River Café. "We might be an expensive or glamorous destination, but we're also a place where people can come and be who they want to be," Rogers says. "Everyone is welcome, everyone has a story that has brought them to us for dinner. I remind our chefs of this as often as I can."

The relaxed vibe means there is no dress code. "I'd never dream of telling anyone what to wear," Rogers says. And there's a similarly uncomplicated uniform policy for waiting staff: "The rule is a block-coloured shirt and apron."

Rogers puts her preference for simplicity down to her rural upbringing in Woodstock, New York. Her mother was a librarian and her father a doctor, and she remembers a happy childhood away from the hustle and bustle of the city, most of which was spent shoeless. "I look back at pictures of me now and I seem to have my shoes off in all of them. I'm still like that now. I was at a fancy dinner in New York recently and a friend looked under the table at my bare feet and said, 'You can't take Woodstock out of the girl.'"

In the late Sixties, having finished boarding school in Colorado, Rogers brought her free-spirited nature to London and found that she fitted in perfectly in this place that was swinging at the time. "I hadn't lived in a city until I got here. There was so much energy in fashion and in politics. I was crazy about it all," she recalls. She enrolled at the London College of Printing so that her parents would let her stay.

Rogers met Richard, then an up-and-coming architect, soon after. She was wearing a romper suit from Biba that night; Richard was tieless ("He always found them completely exhausting"). The couple married in 1973 near her home in the US and the ceremony took place in someone's front room with only her parents and two siblings present. "I was having visa problems at the time and so we came directly from Paris completely unprepared. I wore a corduroy skirt from Yves Saint Laurent and a pair of boots from Maud Frizon."

When they returned to France — Richard was supervising the building of the Centre Pompidou in Paris — they lived above a market in Le Marais. Then it was off to Italy, where Rogers's love of Italian cooking would take hold. After moving back to the UK, in 1987 she and Rose Gray opened their café in a minimalist space designed by Richard in a building by the river in west London. In the Nineties, Richard would start work on his next project — the Millennium Dome.

Close to four decades on from its opening and with Rogers's founding partners no longer with us (Gray died from cancer in 2010, while Lord Rogers died in 2021), the River Café has rarely been busier. Rogers, who has a large extended family that includes her son, stepchildren and 13 grandchildren, is still very involved in the day-to-day running of the restaurant she describes as her "safe place".

With help from her close-knit team, she has expanded the River Café to a shop, which sells its adored olive oils and coffee. In 2021, grief propelling her forward, she launched *Ruthie's Table 4*, hosting guests including Paul McCartney, Linda Evangelista and David Beckham. "People often ask me why I don't just lie down and curl up in a ball, but I can't — I won't," she says.

Instead, recording the podcast has become a sort of therapy for Rogers, who produced the series with help from her stepson. "The thing about food is that it takes you back to where you began. So if you ask people about their favourite dishes, or the dishes that mean the most to them, it makes for a moving conversation. We get to the heart of things quite quickly."

You could say the same about fashion. ■

CONCRETE



The living area is full of vintage finds, including the sofa by the Italian architect Cesare Lacca, which was bought at auction. **Right** The bespoke bed, side tables and lamps are from the Bryan O'Sullivan Collection

EXAMPLE



Bryan O'Sullivan has worked on some of the world's swankiest hotels, but he took a more relaxed approach when it came to his family home in the Barbican

Words **Busola Evans**
Photographs **James McDonald**

The building in which Bryan O'Sullivan lives with his husband and their toddler son is not without irony. A glowering brutalist tower in the Barbican, it is the antithesis of the glamorous and irreverent style for which his interior design studio has become known. Colour, curves and comfort are very much O'Sullivan's signature, evident from his long list of prestigious projects, including the recent redesign of Claridge's Restaurant and the stylish Berkeley Bar & Terrace, with its splashes of coral. Those and more are the focus of O'Sullivan's first book, *A New Glamour*, which is published this week and charts the past ten years of his studio's impressive achievements.

Rather like his work, O'Sullivan is full of surprises. His love for the Barbican estate and its jagged-edged silhouette is one he has held since his architecture-student days. "I have always been obsessed with it," the Irishman says. "So when the opportunity came up to buy an apartment here I jumped at the chance. Although James took a little more convincing."

Thankfully, O'Sullivan's husband, James O'Neill, the commercial director of Bryan O'Sullivan Studio, was eventually sold on the flat's far-reaching views of some of London's most famous landmarks, including St Paul's Cathedral, Buckingham Palace and the London Eye.

Inside, the design pendulum swings to an uplifting palette of soft blue and blush pink, and layers that imbue







Above The guest bath is wrapped in cipollino marble and the fittings are by Waterworks. The bespoke sink is carved from grey onyx. **Right** The walls and ceiling in the snug are clad in oak burl. The vintage lamp is by the Belgian designer Jules Wabbes. **Below** Bryan, left, with his husband, James, and their son, Cosmo



texture and warmth. "Our goal was to counterbalance all the concrete," O'Sullivan says. O'Neill adds: "We wanted a place that was relaxed but glamorous. We didn't want it to feel formal because it is very much a family home."

The couple moved here in February 2020 and initially had the flat painted white to get a clearer impression of its proportions. "It was helpful to live in it like that for six months to finalise the layout," O'Sullivan says. The previous occupants had been the only owners and the apartment had been untouched for decades, besides the kitchen and bathroom being replaced. For O'Sullivan, usually keen to preserve heritage features, that came as a relief. "We would have felt obliged to keep them even though they are not good for modern life," he says.

Over nine months the three-bedroom layout was reconfigured to create a more spacious two-bedroom flat, incorporating an en suite and dressing room, a guest bathroom, a cosy TV snug and an open-plan living/dining space and kitchen. O'Sullivan took design cues from the Barbican's 1960s aesthetic without being bound by them. He went for what he calls a "glamorous interpretation".

The entry hall sets the tone, with a red onyx floor and walls clad in oak burl, which continues into the snug ("Our favourite room," O'Neill says). In the rest of the apartment the walls and ceilings are finished in marmorino plaster. O'Sullivan's love for marble is unapologetic — the dramatic kitchen worktop and splashback are made from Fantastico





‘We didn’t want it to feel formal because it is very much a family home’



The terrace has a view over London. **Above** The Macaroon dining chairs from the Bryan O’Sullivan Collection are upholstered in a fabric by Claire de Quénetain. The kitchen has bespoke oak cabinetry

Arni, an Italian stone, while the guest bathroom is wrapped in cipollino marble and has a bespoke pedestal sink carved from grey onyx. “Some find marble overpowering, but I absolutely love it,” he enthuses. “It’s beautiful and brings in an element of surprise.”

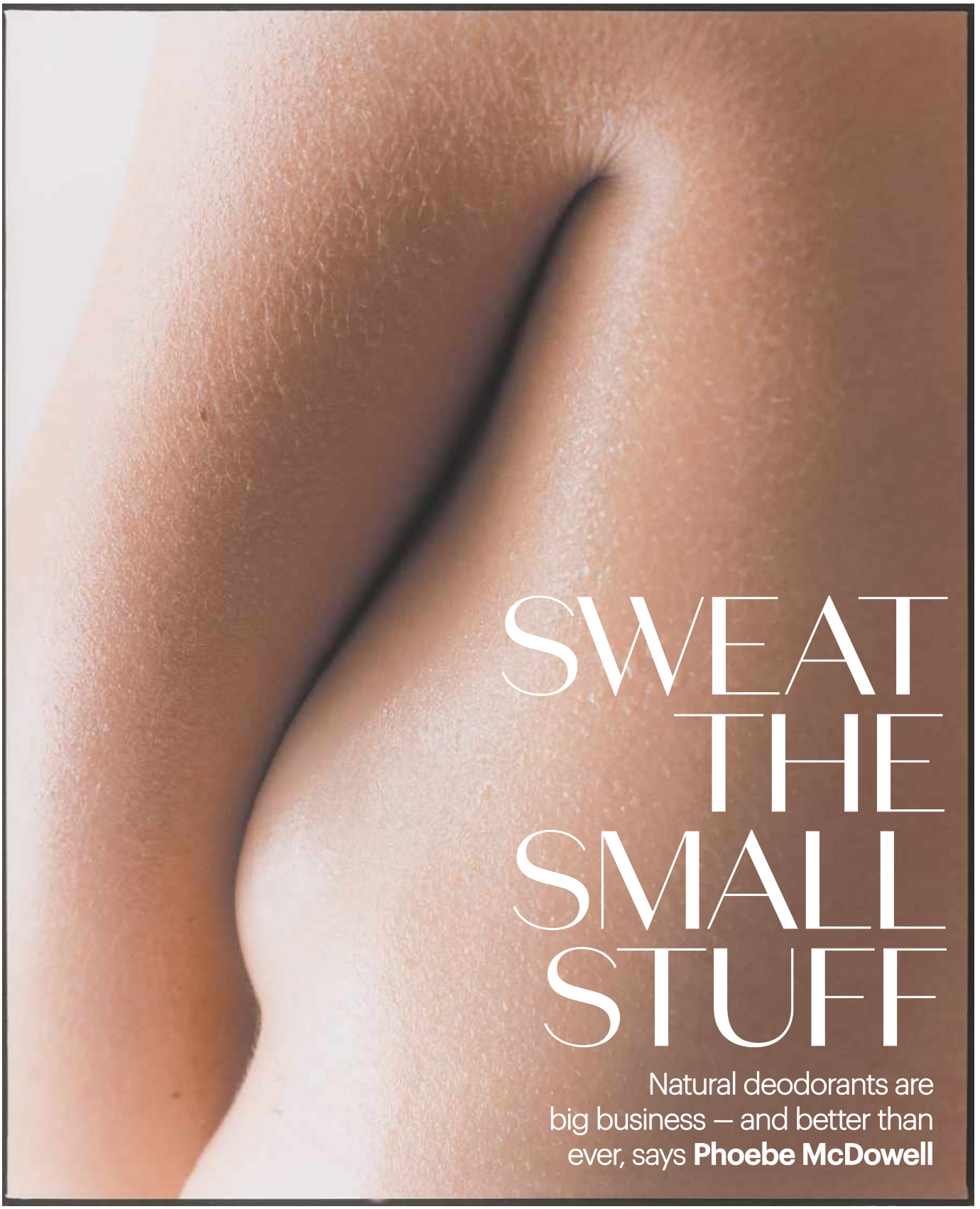
O’Sullivan initially struggled with designing his own home. “I spent so much time second-guessing myself,” he says. “It is almost like you need to develop a different type of confidence when designing for yourself.” Fortunately the couple share a similar taste in decor, with roots in craftsmanship and artistry. The furniture and lighting are an eclectic mix of vintage finds from Gio Ponti, Jean Royère and the like, as well as pieces from O’Sullivan’s collection.

He stresses that functionality is key, and with their inquisitive 13-month-old, Cosmo, in mind, the home is designed to be as child-friendly as possible. “There are very few sharp edges,” he says. “Everything can be easily cleaned. We have lots of friends with kids and have had ten at once running amok, so we can’t be precious.”

Textiles and art are important layers. Cosmo’s nursery is wrapped in matching fabric and wallpaper by the French designer Claire de Quénetain, while drawings of Disney characters by Sam Wood line the walls. Artworks are displayed salon-style throughout the apartment, with pieces from artists such as Marlene Dumas, TM Davy and the Irish painter Alan Raggett.

With plans to extend their family, O’Sullivan knows this may not be their “forever” home, but it has already fulfilled every expectation. “It’s the first time we have done a project for ourselves, and it is incredible to live here. We love it.” ■

A New Glamour by Bryan O’Sullivan (Rizzoli £50) is published on Tuesday. To order a copy go to timesbookshop.co.uk or call 020 3176 2935. Free UK standard P&P on online orders over £25. Special discount available for Times+ members



SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

Natural deodorants are big business — and better than ever, says **Phoebe McDowell**

It's the crack of dawn in a not-cheap gym in Islington, north London. People, post-Pilates and spin class, are slathering themselves in the Cowshed body lotion that is provided. That's after they've washed their hair with the brand's shampoo and conditioner and cleansed their face with the Garnier micellar water. The deodorant by a mass-market brand, however, remains untouched. It's not that it doesn't work, it's that (the horror!) it's not natural.

Yes, those who roll their eyes at hemp skincare in hessian pouches, who ply their faces with industrial-strength acids, actives and more, feel exactly the opposite



way about those two delicate and intimate stretches of skin: their underarms. And it's not just a north London thing — the natural deodorant market is booming, predicted to be worth about £225 million by 2028.

The popularity of such products has undoubtedly been bolstered by unfounded beliefs that antiperspirants can cause cancer. "The theory is that aluminium [a common ingredient in antiperspirant] is absorbed by the skin into the breast tissue and can have oestrogen-like effects, leading to the potential development of breast cancer," Dr Shireen Emad, a GP and family health doctor, says. "However, to date there is no evidence that supports this."

So what's the difference between natural deodorants and antiperspirants? "An antiperspirant uses aluminium to stop you from sweating altogether, whereas a deodorant neutralises odour-causing bacteria," Matt Kennedy, the founder of Fussy, says. Fussy's natural deodorants come in rainbow-bright refillable cases that look like pebbles (**1** case, £10, deodorant refills, £6 each). The odour, it's worth noting, doesn't come from sweat — it's caused by the mingling of sweat with the bacteria that hangs out in the depths of your underarms.

"I know natural isn't necessarily 'better' for me," says 33-year-old Marisa, who uses **AKT The Deodorant Balm** in SC.01 Orange Grove (**2** £21), for which the brand also sells a "squeezer key" (£11) that you attach to the top of the tube and twist to get out all of the balm (it's more like an industrial paste) and a gua sha-esque applicator (£26) that, AKT says, "encourages lymphatic drainage and micro-circulation around your underarms". On the question of why, then, she pays £21 instead of £2, Marisa says: "Well, it really works, it smells good and it makes something as mundane as applying deodorant a nice moment in my day." That's what shiny application accoutrements get you — a ritual.

> 'It really works, smells good and makes applying deodorant a nice moment in my day'

But the natural camp doesn't *always* come up smelling of roses. Although the products sometimes contain ingredients such as baking soda or mineral talc to help to absorb moisture, it takes time to get comfortable with sweating again. "It's quite perturbing at first," says Greg, a 37-year-old CrossFitter whose bone-dry pits used to belie the rigour of his workouts. Then there's the purging of your pores. "When you switch, the years of blockages need to be undone, and that can be a bit disgusting as it's all drawn out," Ed Currie, the co-founder of Marisa's go-to brand AKT, says. "I'd advise not wearing a white T-shirt for the first week or so."

Yellowing isn't reserved only for the transition. Will, 37, a stockbroker who works in Canary Wharf, found that the reaction of the aluminium in his antiperspirant to the bacteria in his pits meant that his Charvet shirts (about £500 a pop) were constantly being stained. "The underarms were foul," he says, quick to state how regularly he a) showers, and b) takes his clothes to the dry cleaner. He has switched to **Aesop Herbal Deodorant** (**3** £27), which, with ingredients including sage leaf and wasabi extract, sounds more like a canapé.

Not all natural deodorants are created equal, but the consensus is that they contain higher-quality ingredients than regular deodorants, such as coconut oil, sunflower seed wax and shea butter, to properly moisturise and smooth skin — much needed for those who shave. And the scents are more akin to fine fragrance. Think **Salt & Stone Bergamot & Hinoki Deodorant** (**4** £20) and **Malin + Goetz Eucalyptus Deodorant** (**5** £22), while **Sol de Janeiro Rio Deo** (**6** £16) has the same scent of pistachio, vanilla and salted caramel as the brand's cult Brazilian Bum Bum Cream. The eco-credentials aren't to be sniffed at either: Fussy's refillable cases have saved more than 150,000kg of single-use plastic, while Wild's are plastic-free, made from the very thing the brand avoids in its deodorant's formula: highly recyclable aluminium.

Then there's the simple fact that natural deodorants look good, which is to say that they look nothing like their bright white, plastic, often-polluting counterparts. They join tote bags, water bottles, phone cases, lip balms and caps in the realm of simple things that millennials want the very best of — even if it does mean sweating on the Central Line. ■ **@phoebejmcd**

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John Singer Sargent *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw (1864–1932)* 1892 (detail) National Galleries of Scotland. Purchased with the aid of the Cowan Smith Bequest Fund 1925

Sarah Jossel

What are the products I use to the last drop? These are the four beauty stars I turn to time and again



"Empties!" is a big movement on social media. TikTokkers and Instagrammers alike tip bottles upside down, wind up blunt lipstick bullets and — in extreme cases — hold beauty "funerals" for beloved products that have been used until the very last drop. No, really: Urban Decay superfans hold vigils for their precious used-up Naked eyeshadow palettes.

Fidelity is not my strong point when it comes to beauty products. I'm not the best at finishing anything because it's my job to review the latest. This wandering eye of mine means that when I do pledge allegiance to a specific product, it's because it's next-level brilliant. I'm talking standing-ovation, award-winning, Michelin-star excellent.

It's worth noting that there are two types of empties: the type that you finish and then go on to a different product because it was good but not irreplaceable, and the type where you become jittery towards the end; you're using kitchen scissors to slice open the top to scoop out any remnants that would otherwise go to waste. Today's products are all in the latter category. They have one thing in common: I give them full marks. If they were children in a classroom, they'd get teacher's pet gold stars.

First, a lash transformer. I used the new **Lisa Eldridge Kitten Lash Mascara** (**1** £29) once and fell for it hook, (lash) line and sinker. The lifted, separated finish was as though I'd painstakingly applied a fiddly lash curler, or maybe even sat through a lash perm. I should point out that I don't mean "in your face", Saturday-night shouty lashes. A few coats of this gives a sort of sultry Parisian volume. No smudging, no clumping, no fallout. Just fresh, neat, eye-opening lashes. A true mascara masterpiece that's perfect for everyday use.

Next, **Tatcha Hinoki Body Wash** (**2** £35). It's hard to be excited about a shower gel, but this one — a body cleanser and gentle exfoliator in one — is extraordinarily satisfying. I love massaging it in, head to toe — well, neck to toe, I guess. The skin finish is baby-bottom soft, like you've had one of those professional spa body scrubs — except you're at home and it took all of five minutes. It's infused with something called a "forest awakening essential oil blend", which is supposed to mimic the ritual of forest bathing. I feel relaxed just typing this ... I am that person who sliced open the end to salvage the last few drops. It is that good.

I'm jumping all over the place today. Mascara, shower gel and now a face glow-up. I'm avoiding the term "fake tan" because I know lots of you will drop off, and you really mustn't. Things are getting good and glowy right now. **Tan-Luxe Super Glow Hyaluronic Self-Tan Serum** (**3** £36) is part skin hydrator, part golden radiance imparter. Many associate the world of tanning with drying out the skin, but this boosts moisture levels and delivers glorious summer-holiday skin. I promise there will be no streaks and no telltale scent. Tan-o-phobes, apply here.

And finally, a frizz fighter. I believe that the hair industry has a bad habit of overpromising. Let's call a spade a spade: no bottle can completely eliminate fuzzy flyaways, but using **Living Proof Instant De-Frizzer** (**4** £28) is definitely the closest I've come to taming my unruly head of hair. Normally this category of product works like a dry shampoo and leaves hair sticky, stiff or dull, but this is altogether different. You spray it all over and something called a "high-refractive emollient" adds shine and gloss while smoothing your hair. I adored it so much, the love affair became more of an obsession. Before I knew it my darling de-frizzer was gone — but not forgotten. ■ **@sarahjossel**



Catherine Garcia



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India Knight

Forget skincare with super-strength ingredients — this gentle mask brightens your skin in just five minutes



One of my permanent, low-level complaints about modern skincare is that it is often just too much. I'm talking about anti-ageing skincare, which is largely purchased by people much too young for anti-ageing skincare. It promises — and is capable of delivering — pretty effective results, which is great if it is used by the people it is designed for. By all means use this skincare if you are older (note: 30 is not "older"), but I would advise caution if you are young. There were some horrifying "end of days" news stories recently about pre-teen children hassling their parents for high-end, highly active products that, obviously, are not made for children and can have severely detrimental consequences when applied to said children's skin. No one needs retinol or acids or a peel aged nine. Or 15, for that matter. Or 20.

There was an excellent article by Amelia Tait in the New Statesman about this — do look it up. Her basic argument is that we have forgotten what real skin looks like, which I think is correct. I sometimes wonder whether we are going backwards, to a contemporary version of the heavily made-up, super-artificial faces of the 1950s — masks, really, except now they look less mask-like. Which doesn't stop them being masks. I prefer the minimally made-up, natural faces of the 1970s, and when it comes to skincare I am sceptical about slapping on powerful formulations willy-nilly, which is what I mean about skincare being too much. While I'm on this topic: skincare can only do so much. The reason those women on social media look like they do involves needles in one form or another.

Having said all that, I'm not sitting here exfoliating with oats and moisturising with mashed avocado. There was a time when I liked heavy-duty exfoliating masks that left my face red and stinging for a while, and I think they have their place in an emergency. But since most of us exfoliate regularly these days, there is no need to freak out your skin every time you have a big event ahead of you or feel the urgent need for a bit of extra glow. For me, gentle products are where it's at, so I was pleased to try the newish **REN PHA Exfoliating Facial** (£34), which is so mild that it can be used on skin that has eczema. It has been designed specifically for sensitive skin: PHA stands for polyhydroxy acids, which are different from other acids because they have bigger molecules that aren't physically capable of going down deep and so work only on the surface of the skin. This makes this mask much gentler (it's fine to use if you're pregnant). If it also makes it sound weedy, it isn't. It's not going to slough off a layer of your face, but for me that's a plus. What it does do brilliantly, in less than five minutes, is brighten skin, add a bit of radiance and generally give the appearance of more even skin. Which is all most of us require. ■

INDIA LOVES

SHOP Vintage furniture from Merchant & Found. The man who set it up is a former buying director at Habitat and the Conran Shop, meaning this online store is brilliantly curated, with lots of categories including — hooray — outdoor furniture. It's as if someone has edited the best of eBay for you and then gone trawling round Europe with a good eye and a big van. *merchantandfound.com*



This isn't going to freak out your skin every time you feel the urgent need for a bit of extra glow

Catherine Garcia

Dear Dolly

Your love, life and friendship dilemmas answered by **Dolly Alderton**

I have been single for a number of years. To make myself feel better about my situation I have tried to find things that I enjoy as someone who is single that my friends in long-term relationships can't do on account of their relationship status. For example, doing things solo, such as going out for a meal, to the cinema or even on holiday, I believe should be the preserve of the single people! Can you imagine my horror when one of my best friends told me about her simply gorgeous solo date a few weeks ago, or when another friend with a boyfriend went on holiday on her own "just because". I'm ashamed to say that I was internally incensed. It seems that there are genuinely no benefits to being the only single person in your close circle, as I am. Please give me the shake I need.



Do you know what? I *can* imagine your horror. And I know many wouldn't be able to, but I so understand where you're coming from with this. It would have incensed me too. I understand what it is to find hard-earned ease in long-term solitude and singledom. And I know how frustrating it is when that isn't acknowledged by people who have never known what it is to move house on their own, go to weddings on their own, navigate the housing market as a solo renter, or go up against a difficult neighbour with no one to support them. Or even worse, when they try to equate their brief foray into voluntary solitude with your lived experiences. This is a clumsy way to put it, but I think what you're feeling anger about is that people with relationship "privilege" are "appropriating" your culture as a single person.

But here's something to think about: what if you have your own kind of privilege? A kind that cannot be tried on and taken off like a fancy-dress costume? Your friends in relationships may be able to replicate bits and pieces of your lifestyle, but they aren't able to access the very foundations that hold up that whole lifestyle. You enjoy a unique type of freedom — you don't have to synchronise your schedule to a partner, make joint decisions, consider the mood of someone who is living in your home. You can fill your fridge, room, weekends and holidays with things that only you have chosen to bring you maximum joy. You have bucket-loads of time to invest in your friendships and career — an investment that you'll feel the benefits of in years to come. Your life has a sense of The Unknown sprinkled over it like magic dust — who knows who you might meet or kiss or live with or marry? Who knows where life might take you in the meantime, when you have no serious commitments to anyone?

Don't think of being single as a sad state that you have to make the best of. Think of it as just another human state, with the same potential for happiness, sadness and learning that come with being in a relationship. I have been on both sides, and I promise you that they both have equal amounts of challenges in different ways. Your friends who are in relationships do not have automatically easy lives.

Try to find appreciation that your friends in relationships make an effort to retain their autonomy and have a life away from their partner. That's cool, and something that should inspire you for when you're next in a relationship. The fact that they've made room for their own interests and travel makes me think they probably also make room for their friendships too. You could be a single person surrounded by friends who are in co-dependent relationships and only prioritise their boyfriend. Now *that* would be terrible.

And just as they can ape elements of single life, you can take from what is traditionally associated with married life. Create rituals that make your house feel like a family home; surround yourself with a community that makes you feel safe and supported. You don't have to be in a relationship to feel loved. You can have eight people cramped around your dinner table for Sunday lunch and you can fill your kitchen with warmth and laughter. Then when they all drunkenly stagger off home at some point, you get to spend a peaceful Sunday evening on your own, tidying up, doing a hair mask and listening to a true crime podcast. How great is that?

When I was in a period of single lady hell in my early thirties, my very wise friend Elizabeth said something infuriatingly simple: "You will have another relationship. Because nearly everyone does." She's right, of course. The likelihood is, at some point in your life, you'll be with someone again. And it will be lovely at times and it will be hard at times. And when it's hard, do you know what you'll feel nostalgic for? The moment you're in right this very second. So stop overthinking it. Your singledom is not your entire identity. Be proud of your independence and be grateful that we live in a time when married women you love get to hold on to theirs too. No need to gatekeep female freedom. Enjoy it together. ■

Alexandra Cameron

To get your life dilemma answered by Dolly, email or send a voice note to **deardolly@sundaytimes.co.uk** or DM **@theststyle**



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