

Tamara
Abraham
Fashion editor

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JOHN
LEWIS

Tamara wears
Camisole, £69,
Ted Baker. Skirt,
£159, Reiss. Shoes,
£69, Carvela.
Bag, £65, Dune.
Earrings, £18.
All at John Lewis
& Partners
(johnlewis.com)

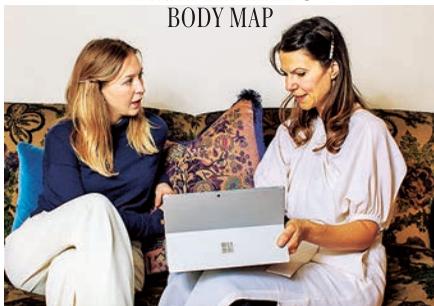


Can a styling service sort your party look?

You might think the Stella fashion team would have their festive outfits at the ready, but even pros can get stuck in a rut. We sent them to see if some personal styling could work Christmas miracles

Charlie Gowans-Eglinton
Senior fashion editor

ANNA BERKELEY'S
BODY MAP



Krissy Turner
Shopping editor

MATCHES
FASHION PRIVATE
SHOPPING
EXPERIENCE

Krissy wears
Jumpsuit, £380, Self-Portrait. Shoes, £615, Amina Muaddi. Bag, £630, Rosantica. Earrings, £300, Alessandra Rich. All at **Matches Fashion** (matchesfashion.com)

Photography
OWEN HARVEY

IT WAS ONCE a privilege limited to A-list stars and top models, but over the past few years, personal styling has gone mainstream. Nowadays offerings range from free sessions at high-street retailers right through to specialist wardrobe consultants who will overhaul your image.

It's thanks in part to the rise of e-commerce. 'We're looking for a more engaging experience, more of a human element when we go shopping,' says Fflur Roberts, global head of luxury goods at market researchers Euromonitor International. 'Personal styling is becoming more normal; it's becoming more democratised.'

It's better for the planet and our bank balances, too, as we're less likely to make expensive mistakes when shopping with the help of a stylist. 'It's not an impulse buy,' says Fflur. 'Thought has actually gone into it - it's right for you and it fits you.'

These fashion experts are never more in-demand than during the festive season, when



we're faced with too many parties – and not enough time. So, how would personal stylists handle our Christmas party dressing conundrums? *Stella's* fashion team puts three of the best to the test.

John Lewis & Partners

By *Tamara Abraham*

I really should know better. Every year, the work Christmas party rolls around and somehow the options in my wardrobe just don't suffice – they're either too big, too small, too boring or too dated. As a result, I end up trawling the high street for a last-minute outfit that will make me look appropriately festive without burning too big a hole in my bank balance.

This year, I was determined not to fall into that trap. As a fashion editor, I know how to put an outfit together, but my jam-packed evenings and weekends leave me little time to track down something original and chic for a special occasion.

I was curious to know whether a personal stylist could help expedite the process, so I made an appointment at John Lewis & Partners, which offers free two-hour sessions with no obligation to spend, though they

As I'm not a big dress wearer, I'd written off the brand, so wouldn't have found this jumpsuit myself

book up fast, especially at this time of year.

Those who book via the John Lewis website will fill out an online questionnaire; I book by phone, so, a couple of days before my appointment, I get a call from my stylist, Katherine, who tells me that a large part of her work is problem-solving customers' wardrobe dilemmas. 'Sometimes, we have

Tamara wears

Jacket, £225, and trousers, £135, both Jaeger. Cami, shoes and bag, as before. All at **John Lewis & Partners** (johnlewis.com)

Krissy wears

Jumpsuit, £1,095, Galvan. Shoes, £850, Jimmy Choo. Bag, £720, Rosantica. Earrings, £300, Alessandra Rich. All at **Matches Fashion** ([matchesfashion](http://matchesfashion.com))



customers looking for pieces that work with a trend they have spotted and want some advice on how to buy into it. Or they want to "upcycle" something they have at home but need advice on how to wear it and what to style it with – normally, they will bring it along and we work with them on it. Or, it can simply be a case of they don't know what they want,' she says.

She asks a few straightforward questions to get a sense of my style, such as what I usually wear (tailored separates and printed midi dresses), as well as my height (5ft 4in), dress size (10-12) and hair and eye colour (both brown). I request something that can take me fairly effortlessly from desk to dance floor as I know I won't have time for a full outfit change.

When we meet at John Lewis's Oxford Street style studio (there are 34 across the UK), Katherine has prepared a room with an array of looks in my size, displayed across a

wall to show how different pieces could be worn together. Already, it's an upgrade on the traditional changing-room experience, with plenty of space, a big mirror, a couple of chairs and a curtained-off area, so I can change in privacy without Katherine having to leave the room.

First up is a Whistles star-print jumpsuit, which Katherine styles with silver Carvela sandals, a Dune clutch and my own Dannijo silver hoop earrings. So far, so good. If I

walked out with that outfit, I'd be happy. But there is plenty more to try. The rust two-piece from Reiss is the wrong size, and in any case does nothing for me, but I do like a dark green Warehouse midi dress from John Lewis's 12 Days of Christmas party edit.

Katherine surprises me with the next look: a Reiss pleated skirt and Ted Baker camisole styled with gold Carvela sandals, a different Dune clutch and gold and resin earrings. I usually don't find pleated skirts very flattering, but I'm so glad I tried it on – the colours are really pretty and, with a knit over the top and a change of shoes, it meets the day-to-night brief perfectly.

The final look is the winner: a velvet Jaeger suit in a dark khaki, also from the 12 Days of Christmas collection, styled with the same cami and accessories from the previous look. It feels glamorous yet comfortable, and I love the tasselled belt, which Katherine ties at the back – a clever trick to create the illusion of tailoring.

The whole process takes little longer than a lunch break and I leave with something I know I'll want to wear next Christmas, too. I did miss choosing my own accessories, and would have liked a broader selection in the styling suite, but it's evidence that even fashion pros need help sometimes – and a little forward planning can really pay off.

MatchesFashion private shopping experience

By *Krissy Turner*

I don't ever like to look too 'done', nor am I big on dresses, so looking for a party outfit is tricky, to say the least. While ordinarily I'd shop online for an occasion, I'm keen to be taken out of my sequin-free comfort zone. Enter Matches Fashion. The luxury shopping destination has recently launched an exclusive private shopping experience, which takes place at its swanky Mayfair townhouse. I took a virtual tour via the

Matches Fashion site (it's unbelievably chic) and signed up in seconds.

Three days after a speedy back and forth on email about my preferences (obviously not a sequin in sight) and crucial insight into my sizing (I'm a 10 on top, 12 on the bottom, a size 5 in shoes and 5ft 8in tall), I arrive for my appointment. Aiodin – my new personal stylist – greets me at the door and leads me up to the third floor, where she has filled two rooms with more than 60 pieces that suit my shape and style, nearly all of which are within my budget.

In one room are three rails full of metallics, velvet, leather and chiffon, but it's a glass table full of lust-worthy sparkly accessories (think delicate Rosantica clutch bags and Alessandra Rich drop earrings) that stops me in my tracks. After

Anna talks me through what suits my body and what to avoid, from necklines, shapes and fabrics to hairstyles

cooing over a Paco Rabanne chainmail bag and a pair of fuchsia Miu Miu heels, I plump for some glamorous jumpsuits. I'd told Aiodin that they were my go-to for evenings and, as we sip champagne, she talks me through her reasons for picking each one and selects accessories that I could pair them with.

I fall for a burgundy velvet Galvan number, which is way above my budget – but that doesn't stop me trying it on in the plush changing area. A spotted wide-leg Self-Portrait version is a surprise entry – as I'm not a big dress wearer, I'd slightly written off the brand, so I definitely wouldn't have found this jumpsuit by myself. But I love it – proof that it's good to have someone shake you out of your label comfort zone.

My typical answer to my 'no sequins' rule is satin, but there are only one or two satin pieces in Aiodin's edit, so I'm forced to try something new. My first non-jumpsuit look is a metallic Bella Freud shirt and an embellished lace midi skirt by Christopher Kane. It has just the right amount of sparkle and doesn't send me running for the hills. Aiodin also gives me style tips on clashing textures like chiffon, lurex and lace.

I could have spent hours trying on slightly-over-my-budget separates and accessories (Aiodin has a selection of stunning strappy heels by The Row and Amina Muad-

di), but in all, I try on six outfits and it only takes around two hours. I'll happily do it again next party season.

Anna Berkeley's Body Map

By *Charlie Gowans-Eglinton*

As a fashion editor who has tried countless trends in the name of duty, I thought I had a good steer on what suited me. I expected stylist Anna Berkeley to confirm that high-



Charlie wears
Shirt, £140, Ganni.
Trousers, £540, Ann Demeulemeester. Both at Liberty (libertylondon.co.uk). LK Bennett shoes and Bibi Marini earrings, Charlie's own

where between a neat hourglass and a full hourglass, two of the universal eight body shapes) to my proportions – my legs are longer than my body, and I also have long arms and a short neck... which makes me sound a bit like Lurch, though I enjoy being told I have long legs, which is new to me.

She also maps my face shape, and head and frame size. These are nothing to do with weight, determined instead by bone size and assessed by measuring my jaw, wrists and ankles. According to Anna, they determine the scale of accessories that you should wear, from dainty jewellery to platform sandals. Mapping complete, Anna talks me through what suits my body and what to avoid, from necklines, shapes and fabrics to hairstyles, and also shares tips for evening out my proportions, like rolling up sleeves and jeans to shorten my long limbs.

Venturing out from Liberty's glamorous personal-shopping suite (I choose the department store as our meeting place as I love the edit there, but clients usually visit Anna's studio in south-west London to be mapped before a shopping trip), I watch while Anna flits between beautifully curated rails in Liberty. She selects pieces in soft, drapery fabrics (best for curvy figures) and colours to suit my honey-blond hair and fair skin.

I need versatility from my partywear, as I hate the idea of buying something only to wear it once, which is at best a waste of money, at worst feeding fashion's sustainability problem. With myriad festive dinners and parties (both business and pleasure) and hosting duties to dress for, I want pieces that I can restyle in multiple ways and get the most wear out of.

Anna's solution is slinky separates. After much trying-on, we find two outfits I love. The first is a bronze silk slip dress by Joseph, which I never would have picked myself, as a) I worry that bias cuts make my bum look enormous and b) I like dresses with sleeves. She adds a Nanushka pink satin shirt, which she knots to give me a waist. The second look is a black plissé Ganni shirt (a fabric I'd usually worry would maximise my boobs), to which Anna adds a silk tie belt, layered over Ann Demeulemeester burgundy satin trousers. The textures make each outfit feel special-occasion-worthy but not novelty, so they won't feel out of step post-Christmas, and I could dress down the slip or trousers with a chunky cardigan and trainers, and either of the shirts with jeans or trousers. So, a big tick for the versatility/cost-per-wear box, too.

As well as loving the outfits that Anna finds for me, I realise that I'm now looking at my wardrobe differently – and instead of shopping for the pieces that I *think* suit me, I'm paying attention to what *really* suits me. And, though I'm loath to admit it, I think she's right about the V-necks. ▀

Body Mapping, £285 for a two-and-a-half-hour session, annaberkeley.com