

about in style The must-have tops to wear to parties

In the right frothy number you'll sail through the New Year's Eve bash, says **Anna Murphy**



Jumper, £199, and trousers, £59, meandem.com

V neck, £119, polo neck, £49.95, massimodutti.com

clothes that would cut it in the workplace too. Power cosy indeed.

Two other brands I rate are Hush and Me+Em. The former's joggers have become a go-to for the more chic variety of couch potato — the *chaise pomme de terre*, if you will. The Amie comes in four plains plus two stripes (from £49.50, hush-uk.com). And that's just to start with; there are assorted other options. Its sweatshirts are also

“Sweaters are brighter and bigger (in a good way) than ever

winner, from the cerise on burgundy “C'est Si Bon” slogan example (£49) to the all-black floral embroidered iteration, which has a gorgeous cutwork flower on its front and is so suave as to redefine the very notion of a sweatshirt (£79).

Me+Em has trackpants galore too, but has conjured up a clever new category called “layering shirts”. These are soft crepe or jersey styles that are specifically designed to be worn under fine knits and have interest-endowing detail at the neck and/or wrist. Take

the blush lace trim collar style, or the pleated collar and fluted sleeve version, available in black or white (both £99, meandem.com). And Me+Em does the knits to go with, including a cashmere box hoodie, which comes in four colours (£199).

Let's not stop there with the layering. For me the game-changer piece is what happens next. The final, ahem, *feuille* might be a gilet, such as Me+Em's grey or black shearing one (£750), or Mint Velvet's grey faux-fur one (£79, johnlewis.com). Or it might be one of Toast's kantha quilted coats, which are made from recycled saris and make me want to start toasting marshmallows round the fire pronto (£225; a jacket version starts from £135; toast). And not forgetting Blue Marmalade's Audrey silk quilt kimono (£290, bluemarmaladelondon.com). Not so much power cosy as movie-star cosy. That's my kind of practical.



W hoops. You have forgotten to buy a party dress and there's that New Year's Eve shindig still to come. How about a party top? Much less hassle to shop for and to wear. The very thing that makes a dress great — its complete-look-ness; put it on, job done — is also its limitation.

Separates are more flexible and in that sense are likely to give you more bang for your buck. Which isn't just about value for money — although there most definitely is that — but about wardrobe space.

If the real estate you can dedicate to clothing is limited, you need to make sure everything hanging on your rail is worn as often as possible. A one or two-hit-a-year wonder is all very well for those who can keep it in the spare-spare bedroom. But back in the real world...

Which is why I give you this gorgeous piece of frothiness, this tulle-tasy from the boutique British brand Isabelle Fox (£255, available in cream and black, isabellefox.com). Wear it with a full skirt and you are Audrey Hepburn. (Coast's dip-hemmed Kiki skirt — blowsy white iris and tulip outlined against black — is molto chic, £129, coast-stores.com.) Wear it with black velvet trousers and you are Kristin Scott Thomas. (Reiss's satin Beth trousers are £135, the matching Vixen jacket £265, reiss.com.) Wear it with jeans and you are Kate Moss. (The London designer Emilia

Wickstead's first venture into denim has sent the fashion pack nuts. Her No Twenty Eight high-waisted straight-leg is reduced from £390 to £273 at matchesfashion.com.)

All these ensembles will endow you with maximum party wattage, whatever the nature of the knees-up. This is a top that will enable you to hold your own at a posh soirée with the spare-spare bedroom lot — just try not to accessorise with green eyes — and also to cut a swathe through cool sofa-surfing hipsters half your age. (At this point I could ask the question “Why?”, but I won't.)

What's more, layered under an office-appropriate jacket, it would cut the mustard Monday to Friday too. (I like Me+Em's mono check with red side-stripe, £299, with matching trews for £169, meandem.com.) Thankfully most of us aren't having to think about such matters at the moment. But we all know we will be back in the office in about six and a half minutes. This top might help us to survive the return.

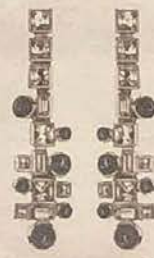


Bling for your ears

Can't even face buying a new top? You can think smaller when it comes to a party refresh. Earrings have always been my default one-stop way to change up a look for evening. So I thought I had all the best purveyors of ear bling down pat. Not so. Maggie Owen's small but stupendously sparkly London boutique has some of the most unusual and delicious pieces around. These beauts, Ella Blue by Simon Harrison, also come in a Monday morning-ready shorter version (£125 and £55 respectively, maggieowenlondon.com). You could wear them with a black knit, trousers and some plain black pumps and still be the belle of the ball. Check out Owen's website pronto: it promises decades of party joy.

You could add to the fun by putting Lipstick Queen's cult Hello Sailor lipstick in your bag, which looks to be in matchy-matchy berry, but actually gives a flattering berry stain to the lips (£22, spacenk.com).

Instagram: @annamurphy



Earrings, £125, maggieowenlondon.com. Top: tulle top, £255, isabellefox.com