

How to dress like Diana for £46

(That's if you really want to go out looking like you're wearing a nightie)

BY CAROLINE PHILLIPS
(She's the one on the right)

YOU know those horrible dreams where you're stuck in the middle of a street wearing only your nightdress? Relax, it need not be a nightmare any more. Princess Diana has again blazed a fashion trail, wowing a society ball in New York wearing what appeared to be a mere slip.

Actually, it was designed by John Galliano for Christian Dior and cost £10,000, but I can let you into a secret. The same look can be achieved for less than £50, providing you are bold enough.

Diana looked ravishingly unconventional at Monday's Costume Institute Ball, one of the most prestigious dates in Manhattan's social calendar. As always, she was the talking point, outshining the likes of Isabella Rossellini, supermodels Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, Iman and Bianca Jagger, who enthused: "The Princess looked beautiful and she had a wonderful time."

So would it work for me? I took up the challenge: to put on bedwear as evening wear, with the ultimate test being whether it ended up in bed again.

I hope you don't mind my name-dropping but the Princess and I share the same personal trainer, Doreen Whittaker, though the results haven't been quite so spectacular for me.

We don't, however, share the same hairdresser, Sam McKnight, who accompanied Diana in New York for her 24-hour flying visit. Still, we did our best.

Make-up expertise could make my cheekbones recede, but not my tummy. I was given enough mascara to make me feel as if a crow had landed on my eyelashes.

For the real test of recreating the sensational Diana look, I slipped into a midnight blue M&S nightie, with a camisole underneath.

I felt ready to go to the opera... and rather sexy, in a Stepford Wives sort of way. I could have walked out in this, but someone would probably have run after me with a broomstick.

We often yearn for a look that takes us from day to evening — well, this is a style that takes us from bleary-eyed bedtime to "come-to-bed" eyes seduction. A look that could turn out to be a dream date or a nightmarish disaster.

I wasn't ready to stop at the nightie. Was there anything else I could take from under my pillow and expose to the full glare of the public eye? Damn it, I thought I'd try.

My next outfit was Dorothy Perkins' pyjamas in super-vixen red satin, the sort of garment ladies of a certain style wear in hospital. The label warned me to keep away from fire — not a promising start considering the evening I hoped to have.

To give it some sort of street look, I slipped out of the slippers and pulled on strappy navy sandals with heels that gave me vertigo. Despite muscles that died at the turn of the century, I was trying to make my legs look like matchsticks.

I felt more vampy and I could imagine sparks flying. But that's because there was so much static in this ensemble that it crackled when I moved. If I had rubbed my leg seductively against a man's, I'd have suffered an electric shock.

These pyjamas conjured up an evening with a mug of Lemsip in front of the fire, cuddling this season's other hottest accessory, a hot-water bottle, rather than propping up a cocktail bar with a magnum of champagne.

NEXT was a Top Shop mini-slip in ecclesiastical purple and of gynaecological length. Bend over in this, and we would see the royal rear. If it had been any shorter, it would have been a bra. As it was, it doubled as a belt. It was an outfit in which to fan the flames of the great "does she have cellulite?" debate.

Then I put on the fuchsia sandals and the aubergine lacy tights and, suddenly, I felt ready to boogie. This was groovy; this could have worked.

Admittedly, though, I did feel a little vulnerable. Maybe Princess Diana should have worn it for her Panorama interview.

Hair and make-up: IAN McINTOSH at The Wox;
Stylist: LUCY GILLIS; Pictures: JONATHAN BUCKMASTER

And for something wilder...



BEDROOM TO DANCE FLOOR: Purple satin slip, £9.99, Top Shop, nationwide. Tights, £10.99, Jonathan Aston, dept stores nationwide. Gilt disc earrings, £146, Van Peterson, London SW1. Pearl choker, Fenwick, London W1



PAINT THE TOWN RED IN YOUR JIM-JAMS: Scarlet satin pyjamas, £27, Secrets at branches of Dorothy Perkins, nationwide. Pearl drop earrings, £39.95, and pearl choker, £29.95, from Fenwick, New Bond Street (0171-629 9161)



£10,000 FOR A DRESS? GIVE OVER, THIS IS THE LOOK FOR A 200TH OF THE PRICE: Blue satin nightie, £21, Marks & Spencer, with a blue lace-trimmed camisole underneath, £25, La Senza, branches nationwide. Black sheer tights, £14.99, Wolford, department stores nationwide. Pearl drop earrings, £125, and pearl choker, £360, both by Van Peterson, London SW1. Black high-heeled strappy shoes, Caroline's own. Result? Rather sexy, says Caroline, in a Stepford Wives sort of way, though she fears that someone would run after her with a broomstick...



THIS IS THE REAL THING: Princess Diana looked sensational when she attended New York's Party of the Year, the Costume Institute Ball, one of the most prestigious dates in Manhattan's social calendar, on Monday night. Mind you, most of it was in a £10,000 dress British designer John Galliano conjured up for Dior. Admittedly, it looks not so much a come-to-bed look as an-already-in-bed look. But if you catch on, however, do make sure you don't accidentally pick up your hot-water bottle instead of your handbag — and leave Teddy propped up on the pillow

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