

SIMPLE STYLE

THE PONCHO

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

very so often the poncho comes back into fashion, bringing with it its own sartorial challenges.

When popular in the Seventies, it was worn with flares and a floppy hat, creating a silhouette composed of a triangles, that was hard to carry off. This was revived in the 2000s and looked smashing on Sienna Miller who wore it with jeans, long boots and messy hair – what fashion mags call ‘boho chic’ – but had dangerous comical potential for the rest of us.

The poncho is back again, with shops selling all manner of variants, but the good news is that this time around it has entered a new realm of wearability. Made from cashmere or other soft wool and often with a hood or a fur trim, it is just the thing to pull on when things turn chilly, or you are gazing into the flames of a bonfire. Start thinking of it as an additional, useful layer and it stops being foolish or awkward and becomes practical instead. It is roomy enough to wear over a jumper and a jacket, and you can conceal all manner of things beneath it.

All this usefulness returns it to its roots – it started out as a

Clint Eastwood sports his ‘duel purpose’ poncho




“Clint’s poncho not only marked him out as an individual but hid his gun”

practical garment worn by the native people of South America from as early as 500BC.

Basically a blanket with a hole, it provided warmth and freedom of movement, which was handy for gauchos, for example, when mounted on a horse.

This was taken advantage of by Clint Eastwood’s character in various Sergio Leone Spaghetti Westerns. His poncho, not only marked him out as as individual (other cowboys wore boring duster coats), but provided a place to conceal his gun, revealed by flinging his poncho over one shoulder as he squinted inscrutably through a veil of cheroot smoke.

The US military also adopted the poncho in the 1850s and continue to use it today. Made from tough, waterproof fabric, it

not only keeps soldiers and their backpacks dry but it can be used as a ground sheet or lashed between trees for a makeshift shelter. (The usefulness of waterproof ponchos is also appreciated at festivals, where it has become a staple.) So, the trick this time round, is to think of the poncho as useful rather than trendy. No chance of any fashion faux pas, and you will be warm and snug (and possibly a bit smug). 

PHOTOGRAPHY: TOPFOTO

THE UPDATE



Hooded two-tone poncho | £110

Lengthy and a with a hood: just right for a spot of bonfire gazing.
jigsaw-online.com

THE CLASSIC



Penelope poncho | £59.95

With a pom-pom trim to add a little frou-frou flourish. Comes in other colours.
whitestuff.com

TWO GREAT TWISTS



Autumn RSVP faux fur poncho | £62

Extra long plus a furry collar – pull this over a poloneck and you will be as toasty as can be. frenchconnection.com