

# SIMPLE STYLE

## THE CHRISTMAS JUMPER

Words: CLARE GOGERTY

Truth be told, a Christmas jumper doesn't suit anyone. Who looks good in a baggy red sweater embellished with a reindeer and a battery-operated flashing nose? Not a soul. But then tastefulness is hardly the point of these festive garments. Their point is to jolly up office parties and family gatherings with a splash of good-humoured geniality.

It wasn't always thus. The Christmas jumper has swung in and out of cool like a Christmas bauble. Its origins are considered to be the Christmas Special TV programmes of the 1960s, when the likes of Val Doonican and Andy Williams wore cheery knits patterned with snowflakes and Christmas trees. There was nothing like a crooning tanned fellow with gleaming teeth and a fat snowman on his jumper to reassure the nation that Christmas had arrived.

Many a cue was taken from them and homespun versions knitted to bestow upon relatives on Christmas morning. Itchy, hot and ill-fitting they were worn with sufferance, then dumped in a drawer and forgotten. Mark Darcy famously repulsed Bridget Jones when he wore a polo neck with knitted reindeer head in the 2001 film *Bridget Jones's Diary* out of a sense of duty to his mother who had knitted it.

These days, Christmas jumpers stick to universal themes – penguins holding hands on an iceberg, dachschunds with jolly hats and Christmas trees with detachable baubles – but are rarely knitted. Instead they are manufactured in huge numbers as sweatshirts and one in four are worn once then thrown away or never worn again, which makes them one of the most disposable and, frankly, environmentally unfriendly items of clothing you can wear.

That doesn't mean you have to shun this cheering garment. There are plenty to buy from second-hand or vintage



Miranda et al don their gay apparel; Inset: Ingrid Bergman proving what we all knew: that the Swedes do Christmas jumpers best

*“Christmas jumpers swing in and out of cool like a bauble”*

shops, including the tasteful option: a Scandi or Fair Isle knit, which you could happily wear all winter long. Save the Children Fund, whose Christmas Jumper Day is on 13 December, suggest customising an old jumper: a few ribbons strung with baubles and stitched in place should do it. Then you can wear your Christmas jumper with pride and spread jolly seasonal vulgarity without fear of fashion-fail accusations.



PHOTOGRAPHY: BBC, GETTY IMAGES



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