

SIMPLE STYLE

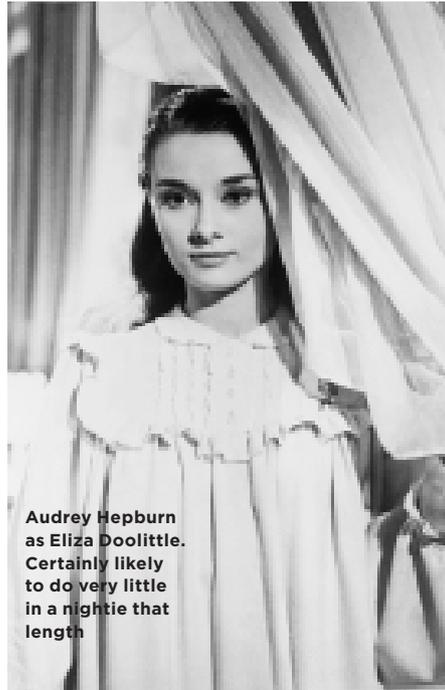
THE NIGHTIE

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

When nights get hot and sultry, minimum nightwear is required. No one needs to be bundled up in fabric when the temperature rises. This is the time to fold away pyjamas with a grateful pat for all the comfort they've brought and bring out a cotton nightie. Loose, crisp and prettily feminine, a nightie – preferably sleeveless and made of gossamer-thin cotton – wraps you gently in its cool embrace and says, 'sleep well and dream sweetly'.

Nighties have had a bit of a revival of late. No longer frumpy, sprigged with florals and made of polycotton or flannel, newer versions come in organic cotton and riff on Victorian styles with lace and embroidery details. These long, oversized garments are so flattering you can wander out into the garden, sniff a night-scented flower (channelling Jane Seymour in those old Le Jardin de Max Factor ads, still worth a google if you're too young to remember), then drift back indoors, modesty intact. Or tramp downstairs and turn off that light you left on, without having to pull on a dressing gown.

So becoming are the new nighties that certain celebrities (we're looking at you, Gwyneth Paltrow) have worn them out at



Audrey Hepburn as Eliza Doolittle. Certainly likely to do very little in a nightie that length

red carpet events. (These are not the grubby-looking babydoll* versions as sported by Courtney Love et al in the 90s – good in their own way, of course, but not what we're talking about here.)

The first nightgowns were not quite as lovely and ethereal. Worn by men to keep warm way before central-heating, these were made of thick material, accompanied by a long, pointed night cap. Early adopters were Wee Willie Winkie who ran "through the town" in his, and Ebenezer Scrooge.

Full-length nighties for women gained popularity in Victorian times. With long sleeves, high necks and many pintucks and embroidery elements, they covered the female form so thoroughly that sleeping inside one became a battle with folds of material. This style was revived in the 70s, thanks to Laura Ashley's preoccupation with prairie-style tiered and flouncy dresses. They were also worn by unwary females in vampire films who wandered wide-eyed in dark corridors accessorised with a guttering candelabra.

These days, they come in a variety of necklines, colours and lengths but all share that same essential quality: the ability to ease you into a comfy night's sleep on a summer's night. For which we are grateful. **S**

"Sleeping inside a nightie became a battle with folds of material"

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES

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*The 'babydoll' was created by American designer Sylvia Pedlar in 1942, in response to wartime fabric restrictions. She wasn't a fan of the name given to it, and its reinvention as an item of adult apparel'.