



COSMOPOLITAN

JUNE | JULY 2026

Olivia Rodrigo

is entering
her joy era

Your summer starts here

Beauty bundles,
beach holidays
and gig tickets

Win it all on p20

The fight isn't over!

What comes next
in the battle for
abortion rights

Are you throning?

The celebrity dating
technique taking
over your feed



Holly Humberstone

Chloe Qisha

Doja Cat

Vivian Wilson

Uma Jammeh

Debbie Harry

Main. Stage. Energy.

Festival fashion
that'll get you *all*
the compliments

The rise of cut-off culture

88% of you have gone
low contact with friends or
family... but at what cost?

COSMOPOLITAN JUNE | JULY 2026

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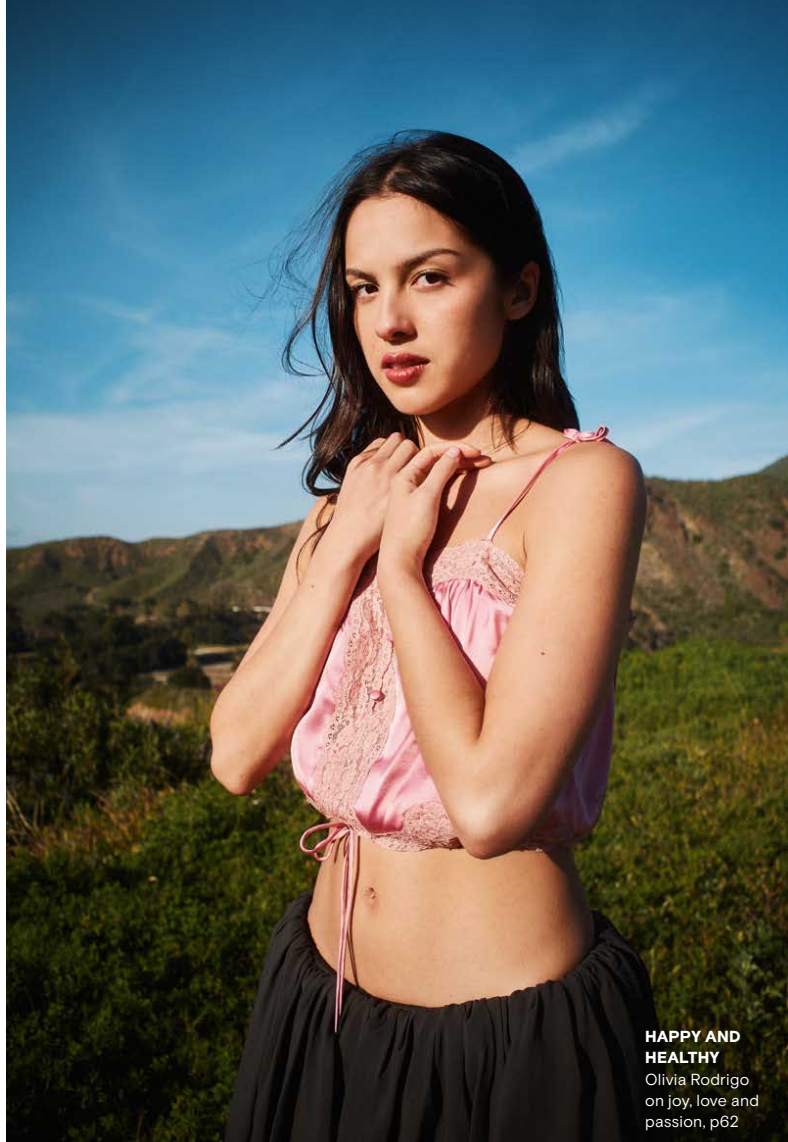


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issue that takes you
inside Grammys weekend



From the editor

They say to never meet your heroes, but if you become the editor of *Cosmo* and you don't try, what is the point, really? Raye, Sabrina Carpenter, Beabadoobee, Christine and the Queens... some of my favourite *Cosmo* covers have been musicians, so I literally did a fangirl squeal when we landed Olivia Rodrigo to front our summer issue.

Music shapes our lives. It soundtracks the highs, the lows, the happy tears and the heartbreaks. It has the power to lift your mood, make memories that last forever and to help you really just feel your feelings (shout-out to screaming *good 4 u* in the car). That's why, in honour of our cover star, we've dedicated this issue to music.

One of Olivia's closest pals, Madison Hu, interviews her about romance, friendship and making you *seem pretty sad for a girl so in love* (p62); Holly Humberstone takes the *Cosmo Quiz* on p10; we chat to Chloe Qisha about the need for horny music (p18); Doja Cat dishes her beauty secrets on p39; and on p9, we take a look back at Debbie Harry's iconic 1978 *Cosmo* cover. Plus, heading out for festival season this summer? We've got the biggest beauty trends, your ultimate leather jacket buying guide and a very important piece of investigative journalism on why festival food has got so bad lately (because, honestly...?).

But music can also impact real change. I've always admired how Olivia has used her platform to advocate for women's reproductive rights with her Fund 4 Good and work with Planned Parenthood. On p74, we reflect on our End 1861 campaign to decriminalise abortion in England and Wales one year on from the landmark vote, and what comes next. We're so ready for the fight.



Claire
✓✓

Claire Hodgson
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE SOUND OF NOW

From Olivia Dean and Lola Young to Sienna Spiro and Asha Banks, British women are taking over the music industry right now and *Cosmopolitan* hung out with them all at this year's Grammys. US editor-in-chief Willa Bennett takes us behind the scenes of Sir Lucian Grainge's *Music Is Universal* 2026 Artist Showcase and UMG's gifting suite, where these photographs were taken, as well as the awards ceremony and its afterparties, at the link. Just scan the QR code to see more.



ACCESS ALL AREAS

We've got a whole host of festival tickets up for grabs at Club Cosmo, our totally FREE membership. Plus beauty bundles, camping equipment, summer style essentials and more! See p20 to join.

COSMOPOLITAN

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Designer ALEXANDRA HURST

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Cosmopolitan Contributors

LOTTIE LUMSDEN (Group Entertainment Director), ALICIA LANSOM
(Entertainment Editor - Women's Lifestyle), NATALIE ZANNIKOS
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Readers' Choice Beauty Awards
The very best in beauty, as chosen by you

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY:
MORGAN MAHER

STYLING:
BRANDON TAN

Olivia wears (this page):
dress, McQueen.

On the cover: dress, Conner Ives. Shoes, Jude. Ring, Chanel Fine Jewellery

Contributors



Uma Jammeh

MODEL AND MEDIA
PERSONALITY
@umajammeh

HOMETOWN: Islington, London
STAR SIGN: Leo
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... *Got To Give It Up* by Marvin Gaye.
CONTRIBUTION: Giving you the only guide you need to Mallorca on p23.



Miki

MODEL, ACTOR
AND FILMMAKER
@ngohaimiki

HOMETOWN: Chicago
STAR SIGN: Gemini
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... *I Don't Dance* from *High School Musical 2*.
CONTRIBUTION: Modelling our ideal vacay wardrobe on p98.



Amber Bean Rawlings

WRITER
@amberawlings

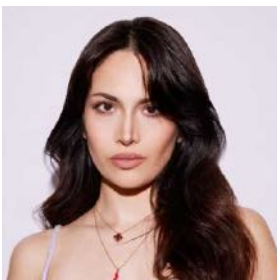
HOMETOWN: Tunbridge Wells
STAR SIGN: Scorpio
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... *Dance Wiv Me* by Dizzee Rascal.
CONTRIBUTION: Read about her clout-chasing escapades with minor celebs on p92.



Vivian Wilson

MODEL
@vivlainous

HOMETOWN: Los Angeles
STAR SIGN: Aries
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... *SexOnTheBeat* by Adéla.
CONTRIBUTION: Opens up about activism, and how power corrupts on p80.



Rebecca Alison

PHOTOGRAPHER
@rebeccaxalison

HOMETOWN: Milan, Italy
STAR SIGN: Pisces
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... *Losing You* by Solange.
CONTRIBUTION: Behind the camera for our Readers' Choice Beauty Awards, p110.



Saratoga Schaefer

AUTHOR
@saratogaishere

HOMETOWN: Brooklyn, NY
STAR SIGN: Pisces
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... *Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight)* by Abba.
CONTRIBUTION: Read an exclusive extract of her new Cosmo Reads release on p86.



Hiroshi Matsushita

HAIR STYLIST
@mr.hiroshi.matsushita

HOMETOWN: Kagawa, Japan
STAR SIGN: Aquarius
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... *Let No Man Put Asunder* by First Choice.
CONTRIBUTION: Styled Chloe Qisha's hair on p18.



Katherine O'Brien

HEAD OF CAMPAIGNS AND
COMMUNICATIONS AT BPAS
@bpas_1968

HOMETOWN: Penrith, Cumbria
STAR SIGN: Capricorn
THE SONG THAT ALWAYS GETS ME DANCING IS... Robyn's *Dancing On My Own*.
CONTRIBUTION: Worked closely with us on our End 1861 campaign, p74.

Debbie Harry, forever atomic

From day one, Blondie took feminist punk and injected it with a heady dose of sex appeal

WORDS: HARRIET HALL



ORIGINALLY PRINTED IN DECEMBER 1978.
PHOTOGRAPHY: LEWIS VORN

The peroxide shag, metallic eye makeup and cheekbones that could cut glass: Debbie Harry's look was the epitome of punk.

When she graced the cover of *Cosmo* in December 1978, she was at the height of her fame – boasting a fandom that remains stalwart almost 50 years on.

The Blondie frontwoman landed on the scene at the age of 31, penning and lending her voice to hits from *One Way Or Another* to *Call Me* and, of course, *Atomic*, all of which remain irresistible earworms to this day. But what really stood her apart was an insouciance that was the exemplar of cool. Not to mention a personal style that saw her fashion a zebra-print minidress out of a pillowcase and some duct tape, inspire Andy Warhol to commit her to canvas and pave the way for the likes of Madonna and Lady Gaga to experiment with their own stage personas. And who better to throw back to for festival season than a woman who has achieved a Glastonbury hat-trick?

The issue ran the gamut of progressive topics in a uniquely *Cosmo* way. Exploring how we reject bigotry ('*There's no dialogue with a fanatic*'), championing women in Hollywood; speaking to men about fatherhood, asking '*Is sex better than ever?*'; exploring narcissism (plus ça change...); and the Harry article is a reminder to our readers to be unapologetically themselves. Harry rebutted the sexism of the era, while being proudly sex positive on her own terms – after all, she famously wrote, 'I wish I had invented sex. Sex is everything. It's number one.' Speaking of fans who presume her to be one thing and 'find me not what they expected', Harry told *Cosmo*, 'So what? I can only be what I am. Big deal.'

Words that all *Cosmo* girls should strive to live by.



Holly Humberstone

While much of Holly Humberstone's summer will be filled with touring for her second album, *Cruel World*, there's always time for ramen and London beer gardens with friends

PHOTOGRAPHY: RONA LIANA AHDOUT

Nickname:

MY SISTERS CALL
ME HOL BOL



Star sign:

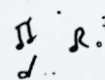
SAG SUN, ARIES MOON
AND SCORPIO RISING ...

Relationship status:

TAKEN, SORRY

How I want to spend my summer:

IN A BEER GARDEN IN
LONDON DRINKING PINTS
WITH MY FRIENDS



Win one of five signed copies of *Cruel World*. Sign up to Club Cosmo here!

The album I'd take on a desert island:

BLUE BY
JONI MITCHELL

Best food to order after a night out:

ALWAYS RAMEN
BECAUSE IT
FIXES EVERYTHING

App that takes up most
of my screen time:

VINTEO
BY FAR

Love is:

INHERENTLY PAINFUL AT
ITS CORE. IT CAN BE THE
BEST AND THE WORST
THING IN THE WORLD.
FEELING IT ALL IS
PART OF THE HUMAN ♡
EXPERIENCE AND YOU
JUST GOTTA RIDE IT OUT

The hardest part of writing music is:

OVERTHINKING
ALL THE TIME!!!

And the most rewarding is:

MAKING CONNECTIONS ♡
WITH TOTAL STRANGERS

What I tell myself before hitting the stage:

HOW LUCKY I AM TO
BE ABLE TO PLAY SHOWS
AND TO HAVE FUN!!!

It's not summer without...

ENDLESS
FESTIVALS

My three festival essentials are:

BIG BOOTS
SUN CREAM
+ A UTE FIT!

Favourite gig I've ever played:

GLASTO
HANDS DOWN

You'll never catch me
without this in my bag:

HAND CREAM.
I ALSO NEED BLUSH TO
TOP UP LIKE FIVE
TIMES A DAY

My south-London secret:

THE SOIL IS ACTUALLY
REALLY GOOD FOR
GROWING THINGS!

Cruel World is out now

Don't miss this...

Despite the sun coming out, we have plenty of reasons to stay inside with some of the best TV releases of the year, a new book from a beloved author and a star-studded movie

WORDS: LYDIA VENN



Cape Fear

Apple TV+, 5 June

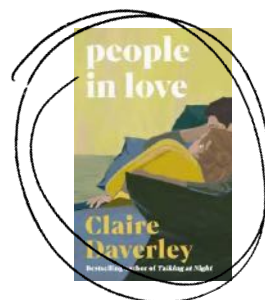
Patrick Wilson and Amy Adams star in this edge-of-your-seat thriller, inspired by the 1991 movie of the same name. The duo portray a happily married couple who discover their world is about to change when the notorious killer they put behind bars, played by Javier Bardem, has been released and is set on getting his revenge.



Disclosure Day

In cinemas 12 June

An Emily Blunt and Josh O'Connor crossover? We're seated. The pair star in Steven Spielberg's new sci-fi movie, which asks the intriguing question, if you found out we weren't alone – would that frighten you? They're joined by Colman Domingo, Colin Firth and Eve Hewson for a cinematic moment you will not want to miss.



People In Love

Out 4 June

The writer of *Talking At Night* returns with a love triangle story perfect for poolside reading. Nora and Robin have been together for a decade when Robin pops the question. Though they've always said they wouldn't tie the knot, Nora says yes. Why wouldn't she? Well, when Bren turns up at the door on the night of her engagement party, she starts to second-guess her answer.

Elle

Prime Video, 1 July

Some 25 years after we were first introduced to the iconic Elle Woods from *Legally Blonde*, she is returning to our screens, but this time in a prequel series, with Lexi Minetree playing the lawyer-to-be as she navigates high school. Oh, and the series has already been renewed for a second season. Get ready to bend and snap all over again!



The Witness

Netflix, 4 June

Be prepared for everyone to be talking about this series, as Netflix dramatises the truly heartbreaking story of Rachel Nickell's murder. In 1992, Rachel was killed while out on a walk, with her two-year-old son, Alex, the only witness to her death. The series will show the impact her death had on Alex and his father, André. Created with the real Alex and André's support, it's a story of trauma, healing and survival.

LEAVE THE HOUSE FOR...



FKA Twigs

10 JUNE

FKA Twigs will be performing at the O2 on 10 June, her only UK date on the Body High Tour. You don't want to miss this.



Taste Of London

17-21 JUNE

Where else can you try the city's best dishes? This foodie's dream in Regent's Park features more than 50 chefs and 36 restaurants.



Parklife

20-21 JUNE

Zara Larsson, Nia Archives, Skepta – need we go on? Manchester's iconic festival returns this year for an unforgettable weekend.



Kelburn Garden Party

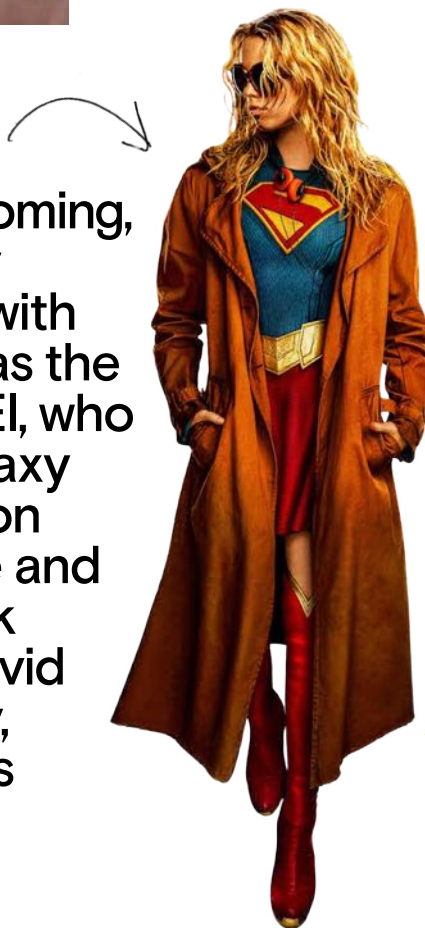
2-6 JULY

Experience one of Scotland's best festivals, with 12 stages and endless wellbeing activities.

Supergirl

In cinemas 26 June

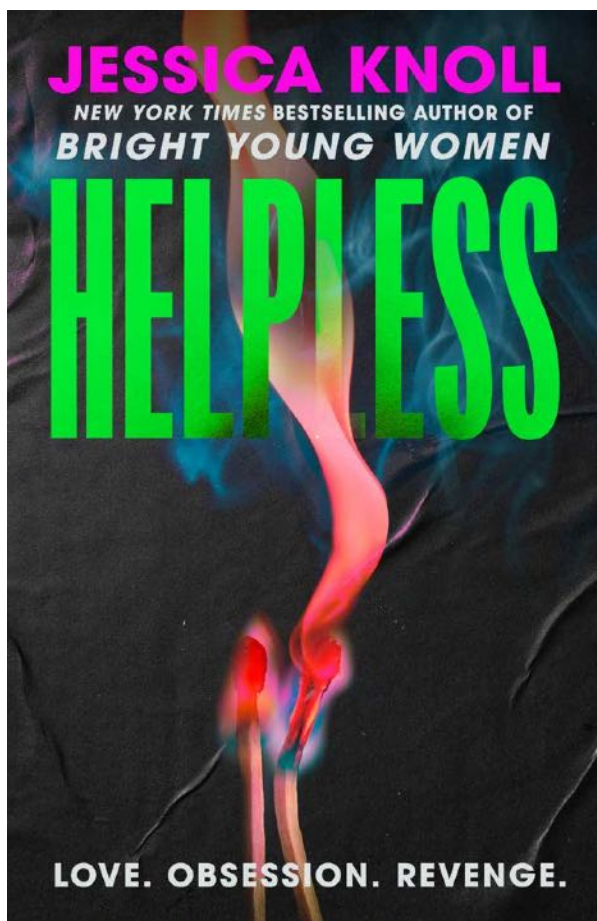
It's been a long time coming, but Supergirl is finally getting her own film, with Milly Alcock starring as the superhero Kara Zor-El, who travels across the galaxy with her dog, Krypto, on a quest of vengeance and justice. Joining Alcock are Jason Momoa, David Krumholtz, Eve Ridley, Matthias Schoenaerts and Emily Beecham.



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Want to win tickets to these festivals and more? Scan the QR code to enter our giveaway



The enigmatic power of fear

Former *Cosmopolitan* US senior editor Jessica Knoll became a bestselling author after her must-read debut novel, *Luckiest Girl Alive*, was published. Here, Jessica annotates an exclusive excerpt from her latest thriller, *Helpless* (out 7 July), and gets real about the power of giving into our darkest fantasies.

INTERVIEW: TAMARA FUENTES

What was the spark for this novel: plot, character or setting?

It was one of the characters, Henry. I wanted him to be a fantasy of a dominant, almost menacing, passionate ex-boyfriend. Then the idea that he brought Faye, our main character, back to her alma mater – not for revenge, but to protect her – came out in a much later draft. Once I landed on that, everything clicked into place.

Faye is open about her sexual desire for dominance, something we're seeing a lot more of in female book characters these days. Why was this important in this particular story?

I am fascinated by this moment in pop culture. You see the popularity of tradwives, and we now have a BDSM version of *Wuthering Heights*. Why do we – not all women, but enough – fantasise about being in peril? I read something very interesting by a psychiatrist who wondered if women might have these fantasies about sexual violence, not because they're weak and not because they're submissive, but because they're actually very sexually aggressive themselves. And because that's not a quality we associate with women, the only way we can proxy aggression is if the man is the aggressive one in our fantasies. I love the theory that women who fantasise about these things are the exact opposite of these sexless, helpless women.

In your annotation here, you highlight the line, 'Fear has taken me far.' How has it done so in your own life?

Writing *Luckiest Girl Alive* was a fear-based decision. I'd been wanting to write a book for a while and when *Cosmopolitan* US's editor-in-chief at the time announced her retirement, it was clear other staff changes would be made. I watched people lose their jobs and thought, 'I've got to have a plan B.' That's what motivated me to put pen to paper. Sometimes fear is very enlightening.

Helpless has moments of absurdity and comedy, but it's also a pretty dark thriller. How do you balance those things?

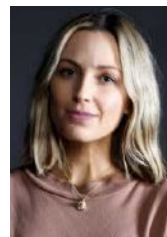
I've always kind of played in that playground. I guess that's the way I approach my life.

Have you ever received any critical feedback for that?

It never occurs to me that there's anything unusual about it until someone says, 'I'd love to read your book, but I'm such a scaredy-cat.' I'm like, 'That scares you? It's soothing to me, puts me to sleep.' It sounds strange, but it's what I'm comfortable and familiar with.

You're the first former *Cosmopolitan* editor we've featured in this column. How does that feel?

I was thinking a lot about full-circle moments writing this book, and it was ultimately why I decided to dedicate it to my writing professor who passed away a few years ago. Without him, I don't believe I would have the life that I have, because he was the one who helped me get an internship at a talent and literary agency, which is where I met my future literary agent, my future husband and my future best friend. It was from there that I went and worked at *Cosmopolitan* and got my start. I was only at the agency a year, but I knew that was the move I had to make.



This is my fourth novel, but I got my start as a writer at the very magazine you are reading right now.

To get to Geneva, New York, the remote place where I wrote some of this book, it took two flights and a rental car – 13 hours total.

Yes!!! Very!

Faye has no idea what she's stepping into here....

He did. Something big.

Where would the fun be in going to the police?

I believe this about my own life, too.

'I love LA,' Emma declares. She says it on an exhale, and I am in no mood for this brand of youthful whimsy. I want to be alone, to lick my wounds, to think my strange thoughts.

'It's a great place to live,' I say in a lackluster tone.

'I mean. I've only been there once. PT took us to visit Jonathan on set.'

I nod. I remember the year they came. The show was still going, but we were on a hiatus, and my husband and I had taken a trip to Hawaii that went poorly for us.

'It's not easy to get there,' Emma remarks. 'From here.'

There is some suspicion in how she says this. It is complete conjecture on my part, but my brain instantly leaps to a scenario where Emma knows that while of course I went to the trouble of returning to campus to honor PT, I was also hoping for a run-in with the ex who ruined me exactly the way I told him to. Paranoia is also an option here.

'I have a writing retreat planned for myself right after this.'

I feel ridiculous, explaining myself to Emma, like I am a teenager whose parent has detected alcohol on my breath.

'Professor Toner canceled all his classes the day before he died. Did you know that?'

This is a very abrupt thing to say, and I don't know how to react, so I only shake my head. No. I did not know that.

'Do you think that's weird?'

I frown. Consider it. 'Did he say why?'

'He didn't give a reason. Just sent out an email letting us know and gave us some reading to do.'

'Okay,' I say slowly, fitting this information in with what I know to be true. 'He had a massive heart attack. From what I understand, people don't feel very well in the days leading up to that.'

'He had Band-Aids. All over his hands,' Emma demonstrates, turning her hands front to back.

I stop walking. 'How do you know that?'

'I'm the one who found the body.' another one!

I stare at Emma, gobsmacked. She's lying. To my face. About finding the body of our professor. 'I thought it was the house cleaner.'

'I mean, technically, yes. But he had emailed me the night before and asked me to come over first thing in the morning. She was already there when I got there. She told me he was upstairs in the bathroom, and so I ran up to check on him. And he was lying there and he had at least, like, ten Band-Aids, all over his hands, and I mean, clearly he had something to tell me. And then he died before he could.'

Emma is wringing her hands, like she's nervous, but her eyes are also sheened with excitement. Maybe what she is saying is true, but from my vantage point, there is something unbelievable about her story.

'Did you tell the police this?'

(No) I left before they got there.

'Emma,' I say, firmly, 'if this is true, you need to be talking to the police, not me.'

'Come on,' Emma says with sudden, snotty force. And then she has the gall to roll her eyes at me.

'Come on what?' I repeat in a new, icy tone. Emma is displaying that overfamiliarity that I loathe in young people with dreams of becoming somebody. Fear is underrated. It's okay to show it, to certain people, in certain situations. Fear has taken me far.

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not after you.

I did return to my college campus when my screenwriting professor passed away.

I wrote so much of this novel on solo writing retreats!

I love moments like this in a thriller – a piece of information that makes you tilt your head and say, 'Huh?'

This is the first novel I've written where I no longer feel young, and no one is more surprised than me about how much I love that!

Also true :)

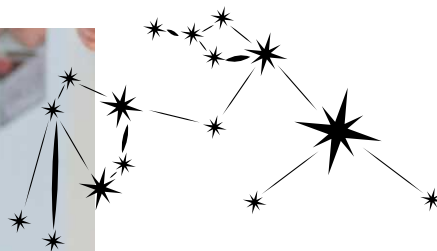
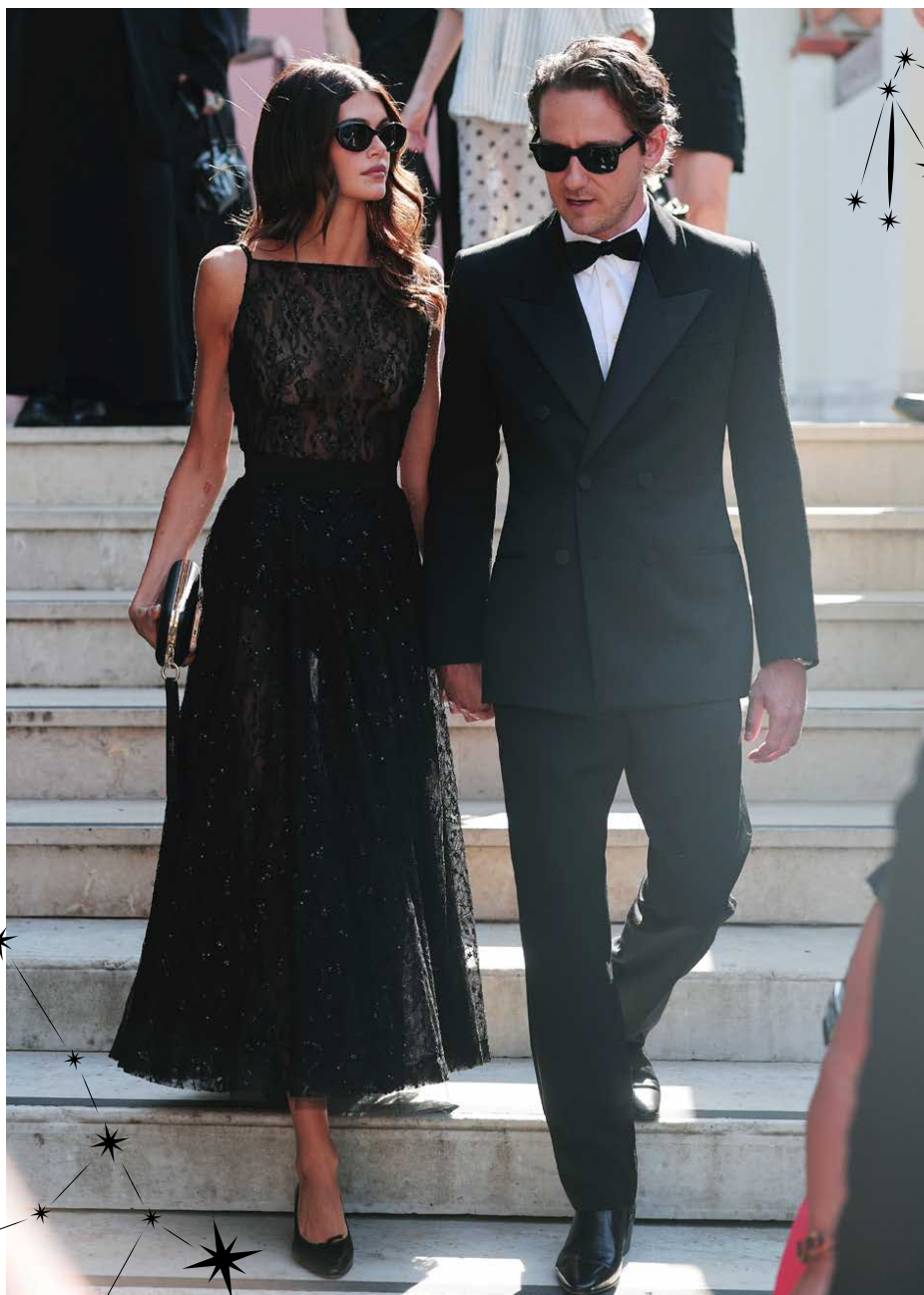


Scan here to win a copy of *Helpless*

The universe has decided

In every issue, we rank celebrity couples by the only critic that matters: the cosmos

WORDS: ANNABEL IWEGBUE



KAIA GERBER AND LEWIS PULLMAN

VIRGO • AQUARIUS

The connection between the couple's Moon and Mars placements – the things that determine inner emotions and instinct, passion and sexuality, respectively – is especially strong. When a pair shares these in the same element (theirs are both in water signs), it can signal instant physical chemistry and a sweet protector-protectee dynamic. And in this particular case, it's reciprocal: Kaia and Lewis take turns being each other's armour and advocate. His Venus in Pisces also aligns with her Moon in Pisces, meaning he naturally energises and affirms her dreamy, creative side. Taking this incredibly Piscean relationship even further is Lewis's Venus sign, which dictates how he expresses affection, in Kaia's 4th house of home and family in Pisces. It's a placement beneficial to any duo who is looking to build a life together. If they want to eventually explore the proverbial white picket fence family life, they've got the planets on their side.

ADDITIONAL TAROT READINGS: KERRY WARD AKA TAROT BELLA



SARAH NEW AND CAT BURNS

ARIES ♥ GEMINI

Cat and Sarah create a live-wire connection. Air and fire element combinations always lead to combustion, sparks, spontaneity and mutual inspiration. Geminis come up with the crazy ideas and Aries have the boldness to put them in motion. Together they create a dynamic where ideas turn quickly into action. Giving each other space to explore and do their own thing is vital. When they champion each other's individuality rather than competing for attention, the dynamic remains supportive. This relationship is full of adventure, passion and excitement.

RIHANNA AND A\$AP ROCKY

PISCES ♥ LIBRA

Fiery Aries energy dominates Rihanna's birth chart, evident in her quick wit (see: her iconic old Twitter posts) and relentless drive (see: her many business ventures). And while she's a Pisces Sun, it's that Aries spirit that's truly understood and motivated by A\$AP Rocky's placements. His Venus (the planet of love) in Leo and Mars (the planet of passion) in Aries create a powerful, mutually invigorating dynamic between the pair. Coupled with lighthearted Mercury placements in air signs and A\$AP's Venus falling in Rihanna's 5th house of creativity and children, you get a duo who expand each other's imagination – and view each other as ideal parents (see: the adorable brood they've welcomed over the years).



ODESSA A'ZION AND DREW STARKEY

GEMINI ♥ SCORPIO

There's a widely held assumption that intense Scorpios and stereotypically flighty Geminis can't click, but compatible chart placements can challenge that narrative. In rumoured couple Odessa and Drew's case, their shared Mars in water signs add emotional depth and passion to their relationship. They know how to let each other breathe and be flirtatious and free-spirited – without succumbing to jealousy or insecurity. They also have their planet of communication, Mercury, in compatible water signs (Drew's in Scorpio; Odessa's in Cancer), meaning they have similar thought processes and don't feel the need to censor themselves.



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY, UNIVERSAL PICTURES, DISNEY

★★★★★

Role-play!

What the universe has to say about your favourite fictional couples (according to our creative calculations)



TAGGIE AND RUPERT *Rivals*

Some of the best relationships thrive on contrast. Opposites do attract and can – when they have total respect for each other's differences – last. Rupert carries dominant energy, while Taggie's responsibility and sincerity soften his harder edges. Taggie's moral compass reminds him of what truly matters beyond status. The simmering tension between their very different life stages and characters makes for intrigue and drama – the key ingredients of romance.



PENELOPE AND ODYSSEUS

The Odyssey

Penelope is famously loyal and patient (if you recall, she waited 20 years for Odysseus to return home), which exemplifies strong Taurus energy. Her determined earth sign qualities pair well with the brave, disciplined Capricorn traits Odysseus displays. There may also be a Saturnian element at play – strong Saturn aspects often indicate both delayed gratification and relationships that withstand the test of time.

We've got a crush on Chloe Qisha

The emerging pop artist is
here to make your summer
playlist horny AF

WORDS: LYDIA VENN

PHOTOGRAPHY: EMILY WHITE

STYLING: REBECCA JANE HILL



Jacket; jeans,
both Sportmax.
Bra, Fruity Booty.
Crystal ear cuff
(part of a set),
Panconesi
at Koibird



Scan to win a pair
of VIP tickets to see
Chloe perform at
Isle of Wight Festival!

If you haven't heard her name yet, get ready. Chloe Qisha is about to become your new favourite pop girlie. After supporting Sabrina Carpenter at BST last year and being named one of BBC's Sound of 2026 artists, the 27-year-old is getting ready to take to the stage at Isle of Wight and Reading festivals. And if you're in her crowd, UK festival-goers, be prepared to get your flirt on. 'I do a lot of chatting and flirting in between the songs, and the US crowds will shout stuff at me and they'll flirt right back. I [love] that kind of energy.'

You were wearing different slogan tops each night on your US tour – were they hints of what's to come?

They are most definitely clues. I was really particular about the outfits for this tour. Fashion can be very divisive and used in a very good way, especially for budding artists. As a consumer of music, I want to be like, 'Oh, that's the girl' and I know the uniform of that person. When I think of Charli [XCX], I think of booty shorts with a tee and the sunglasses. So, for this [tour], I was like, 'I'm going to do a graphic baby tee and chaps.'

Do you think that there's still a stigma around pop music?

I don't think so as much now. Especially with The Powerpuff Girls [Sabrina Carpenter, Chappell Roan and Charli XCX] last year. They really made it into its own echelon of cool. But you will still get your annoying boy who loves 'insert your British indie band in the 90s here' kind of vibe. I always say you have to be a different breed of human to be a hater, because, a) who's got the time? And b) the industry is saturated with so many artists and so many different kinds of music that fit every shade of genre, that if it's not for you just move on.

Do you think women have to battle bigger, and often more critical, expectations when it comes to delivering a live show than their male counterparts?

They 1,000% do. The bar for pop girlies is unusually high. Especially with the virality of TikTok and how big someone can become overnight these days, there's no grace for growth. People expect Addison Rae to come out of the gate singing like Beyoncé, but then also dancing like Tate McRae and then also giving 20 years' worth of experience all packed into one. But then, I feel like a pop boy can go on stage with the same T-shirt and denim jeans they've been wearing all tour and just rock out with a guitar and we're like,

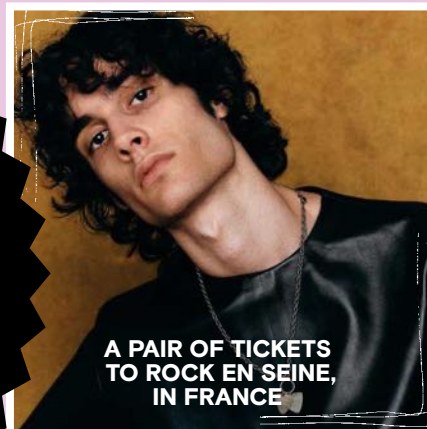
'You have to be a different breed of human to be a hater'

Jacket; tights, both Fiorucci. Belt, stylist's own. Shoes, Casadei. Earrings, Misho. Ear cuff, Alan Crocetti at Koibird



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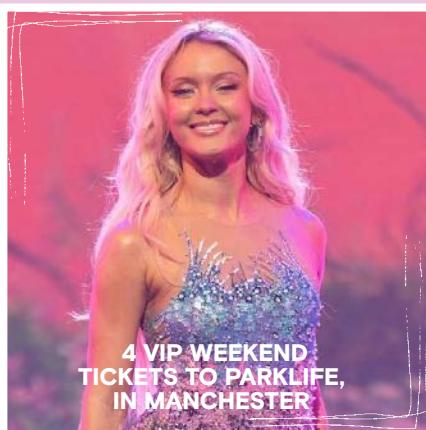


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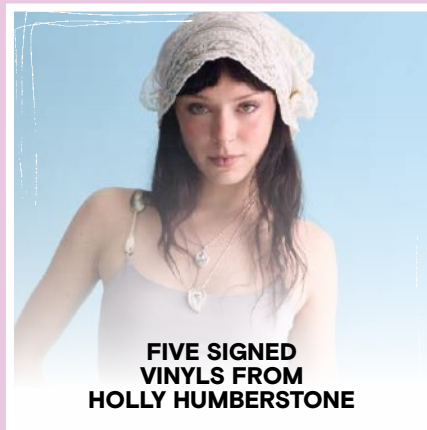
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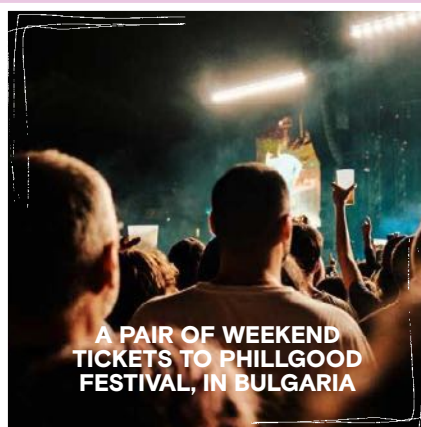


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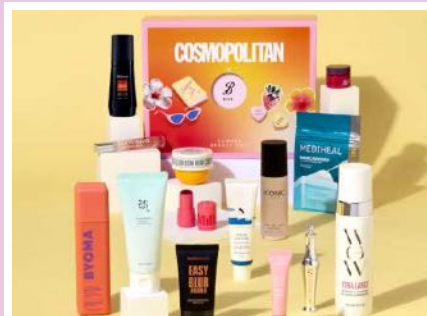


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'Yes, King, give me more.' It's the same with Chappell [Roan], she can't step a hair out of line. If a man set boundaries with the paparazzi, we'd be like, 'Yes.' But then she does it and suddenly, she's a diva.

Talk us through your most recent release, *Surprise, Surprise* – what's the story?

It's probably one of the truest songs I've written. It's about going back to a relationship you know isn't quite right for you and maybe sometimes makes you feel a bit shit about yourself. It's so easy to be in a bad relationship and be like, 'Oh, it's them,' but then there's a certain point where you're like, 'But is it me? Because I'm aware, but I keep going back, and that's a conscious decision I make.'

One of your songs is called *YDH*, aka young, dumb and horny. Do you think there is still a shame about women openly admitting sexual desire?

I think even the word 'horny', when we gave it to the team they were like, 'Wow, it's an amazing song,' but also, 'Oh, we're unsure about the word.' And I was like, 'But that's exactly why I want it in the song, because people think it's such a dirty word when really it's not.' Especially with women in that context, it's seen as something so taboo. *YDH* is the beginning of the journey of that initial feeling when you get a crush and there's no rhyme or reason or logic and you just want to jump someone's bones.

Do you have a current crush?

I have so many. I love a crush. I'm in a long-term committed relationship and have been for eight years, but I love that we're also at the stage where we can both crush on other people.

You've got a bit of downtime right now before festival season kicks in. How are you spending it?

I'm unfortunately a doomscroller. I'm just at a point where I have to embrace it.

Finally, you've released two EPs – is there an album coming?

I would love to call it that, but I just don't know. I'm trying to be more open to the different ways of doing music. I think there's merit in just putting stuff out and seeing where it lands. Ultimately, as long as the music feels authentic to me and I'm proud of it, I'm happy for songs to just keep coming out. Eventually, I hope that I will look up one day and be like, 'Ah, this is the collection of songs and this is what I'm going to call it.'

'The bar for pop girlies is so high – there's no grace for growth'

Top, Ksenia Schnaider.
Skirt; belt, both
Toga. Shoes, Stella
McCartney. Crystal
ear cuff, as before.
Bracelet, By Alona



Sun up to sun down, sorted

Ready for a long, hot summer escape? You're not the only one. Robyn Munson dreams up the perfect day in Mexico's Riviera Maya – and explains how TUI can bring it all to life

7am

The scent of sea salt and hibiscus hits me before I even open my eyes. From my bed at the adults-only TUI Blue El Dorado Seaside Palms hotel in Puerto Aventuras, the gentle lapping of the Caribbean Sea mingles with the chirp of a tropical mockingbird. I've just had one of the best sleeps of my life and the big decision of the day is whether to sip my coffee in bed or take a dip in one of the luxurious pools.

9am

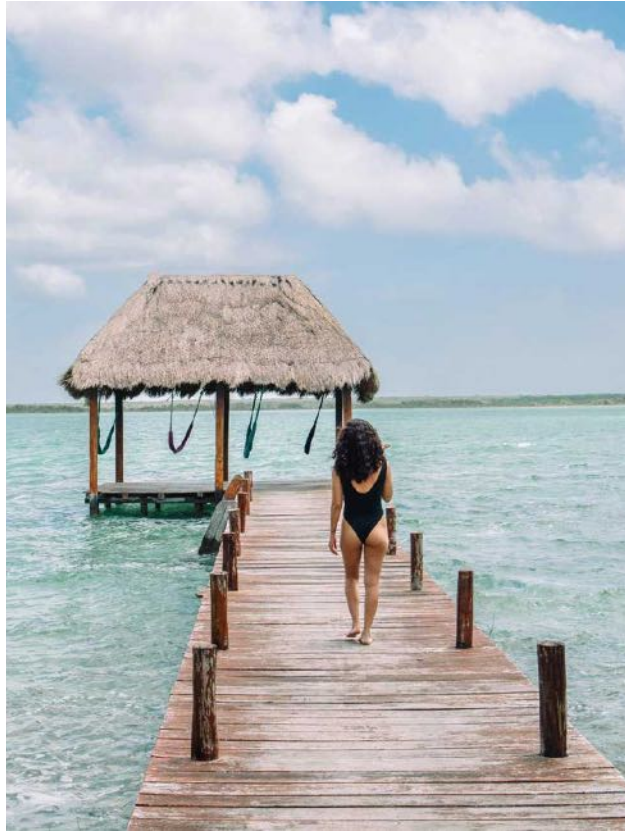
After yesterday's genuinely pain-free journey, thanks to TUI – flights, accommodation and transfers sorted in one go, with no lost luggage or travel chaos – real life already feels like a distant memory. A first morning in Mexico calls for breakfast tacos loaded with pico de gallo, followed by a relaxing hotel spa session.

12pm

Choosing between snorkelling with turtles and a horseback ride isn't a terrible problem to have. Today, I'm saddling up, lured by the promise of a mid-ride swim in crystal waters. Led by cowboys and with a stop at a rescue horse ranch, this TUI excursion showcases a different side of Mexico.

4pm

Back at the hotel pool, Paloma in hand, I spot a traditional Mayan cooking class for tomorrow and book



it through the TUI app in just a few taps. With TUI, the value isn't just in the price or the perks, it's the headspace you reclaim the minute you arrive. And the 24-hour support you'll enjoy while at your resort is the equivalent of having a personal assistant in your beach bag. Holiday mode: fully activated.

8pm

I've swapped my sun lounger for a flower-painted *trajinera* (traditional wooden boat)

and am floating along the candlelit canals at Xoximilco, Cancún's gloriously chaotic answer to a dinner cruise. Think mariachi bands drifting past on neighbouring boats, a feast of traditional Mexican dishes and an open bar that takes its job very seriously. As the canals fall quiet and the *trajinera* heads home, one thought floats to mind: I've barely scratched the surface of what this place has to offer. Good thing TUI's already sorted tomorrow.

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Your summer holiday plans, courtesy of Uma Jammeh

The former Love Islander shares her sun-filled guide to the Balearic island of Mallorca

INTERVIEW: LYDIA VENN



The most romantic destination on the island... Cap Rocat Sea Club is the restaurant [me and Wil] went to straight after we got engaged. It holds a special place in my heart because it's where we were when we posted the photos [of our engagement] on my Instagram. We went in the evening and it was lit up by torches, like a medieval castle. We had the salt-baked fish and I think it was probably the best thing I've ever eaten.

The dreamiest hotel to stay in... My favourite is Finca Ratxó. It's an eco-friendly hotel with a rustic vibe in the middle of nowhere, so we rented a Jeep Wrangler to get there. The terrain was terrifying, but once you're up there, the view is amazing. I thought I was a 'sea-view' girl, but this place changed my mind. You are surrounded by panoramic views of beautiful green trees and huge mountains.

The beach everyone should visit... There's one called Cala Petita. It's very picturesque. There are no beach bars, no sunbeds and just a small cove with shallow, calm water. It doesn't have the busyness of a tourist location.

And if you want a beach club that's perfect for partying... The sea at Mhares Beach Club is so blue. It has really good food, vibes and music. The cocktails come in giant glasses. What more could you ask for? I've only been there with Wil, but it would be perfect for a girls' day out.

When I'm in a sunny place, I always want to eat seafood... And Mirabona is the best. It's very high up, so it's got a really scenic view of Mallorca. The food is just absolutely unreal. They make a great fresh fish tartare.

Check out the viewpoint at... Mirador Es Pontàs. It has a huge rock arch that is right over the turquoise sea. You can go down to the water's edge, where you can get a kayak to explore it, or you can simply have a swim around there.

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We need to talk about festival food

A cremated toastie with no extras? That will be £17, please

WORDS: DUSTY BAXTER-WRIGHT



It all started with a duck wrap. It was Friday afternoon and we'd just arrived, filled with the unique mix of anticipation and excitement that only a weekend festival can inspire. Before even checking out the stages, we had one thing on our minds: food. But what should have been a comforting meal instead set the tone for a question we asked each other, repeatedly, over the course of the weekend. 'When did festival food get so expensive and... sad?'

The meat was greige and lukewarm, with a slightly sweaty middle. The lettuce was limp, and the tomato so watery it was almost translucent. And the cost? An incomprehensible £16.

Sadly, this isn't a unique experience: a Reddit thread titled 'Festival food prices are becoming absolutely insane in the UK' attracted more than 1,000 interactions, with people also lamenting the diminishing quality of the food. Research by Opinium, a strategic insights platform, shows that almost one in three (29%) people have cut back on buying food on-site at festivals as a result of price increases, while another study revealed food prices rose between 8% to 10% on average across festivals in 2025. Everyone I spoke to for this page seemed to have their own story of depressingly portioned chips, or rice-heavy burritos with no sauce, from a similar event in the past year.

So, what's happening exactly? Experts say it's a combination of things – from the rising cost of utilities to the overarching

companies who run the festivals increasing their cut. John Rostron, the CEO of the Association of Independent Festivals, tells us, 'The cost of everything has gone up, so traders are caught in a pinch. They've got to get their prices right, and also want to get their quality right, but what's going to happen to those margins? Something gets squeezed. All costs in festivals – except marketing – have gone up since the pandemic and Brexit.'

The owner of a burger joint, who wanted to remain anonymous for obvious reasons, added, 'It doesn't come from the greediness of traders. It comes from the amount of fees the festival organisers charge us. One of my non-negotiables was never to sell bad food, but it's a constant battle – I know of six or seven [vendors] who went bankrupt last summer, despite us working our asses off. There is just no profit to be made after you finish paying everyone – the cost of goods, staff, electricity. So many can't afford to operate.'

That said, she knows that corners do get cut. 'I will never forget one Sunday at Glastonbury, I bought a pork baguette and it tasted like it had been brought to the site a month before.'

As a result, people are having to find their own way to make things work; whether it's the return of the festival Pot Noodle or seeking out the reliable, brilliant stalls they know and love. 'If [the vendors] Goan Fish Curries are at a festival, I am definitely going to be eating there at least once or twice,' John adds. Sounds like you just need to know where to look, and it's not the duck-wrap van.

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Cottage cheese has re-entered the chat

Why everyone is suddenly dizzy for dairy

WORDS: DUSTY BAXTER-WRIGHT

On paper, it doesn't sound like much. A mild-flavoured mix of cheese curds and milk, slightly gloopy in texture and full of lumps. The type of thing you might discard as 'off' if you overthink it. Yet nothing has caused a supermarket frenzy in the same way as the current cottage cheese revival, with the ingredient properly re-entering the public lexicon for the first time since the 1980s. It's popping up in recipes all over our timelines and people take great care in finding which brand tastes best (Longley Farm, FYI). It's even causing shelf shortages and creating havoc with dairy supply chains. But why?

We all know the internet loves a food craze. In the depths of lockdown, it was dalgona coffee; instant granules whipped up to the soundtrack of Doja Cat's Say So and poured over a cup of milk. Then it was Dubai chocolate, the once-upon-a-time delicacy of toasted kataifi pastry, pistachio cream and thick chocolate that people scrambled to get their hands on. But neither have quite had the real-world impact of the cottage cheese obsession.

It's hard to pinpoint when it all started. TikTok data suggests cottage cheese recipes had already garnered half a billion views by 2024, while the ingredient was included in one of Google's top food-related search terms of 2025. Meanwhile, Tesco reported in January that demand had rocketed an 'unprecedented' 200% in the past two years, causing what it's calling a 'fully fledged culinary phenomenon'.

As its cottage cheese buyer (yes, it's apparently a thing – dream job?) Elizabeth Tomkins says, 'Cottage cheese became massively popular in the 1970s and 1980s as a tasty but low-fat filling for baked potatoes or avocados. Demand has been steady since then... but now, because it's become so popular with a younger audience, we're ordering in as much



'It adds richness without needing lots of extra ingredients'

as we can because we are seeing all-time record demand.'

And it's the same across the board. Ocado.com reported sales soaring 209% year on year, while Graham's The Family Dairy says it now makes more cottage cheese than milk. Chef and content creator Thomas Straker even expanded his product range to include All Things Cottage Cheese. Emily English, known as @EmTheNutritionist to her 2.2 million Instagram followers, frequently uses the ingredient in her recipes, such as her high-protein tuna melt, and puts the craze down to its nutritional value. 'It's one of the easiest ways to add protein and a lighter creamy richness to meals,

while still keeping dishes balanced and filling,' she says. 'If you don't like the texture, blending makes it completely smooth. It adds richness without needing lots of extra ingredients and the protein helps with fullness. I always say to build your meals around protein and fibre to make them more satisfying.'

Its versatility is also part of the appeal. Cottage cheese can be made savoury or sweet – whether you want pancakes or pasta; a pie or a pudding. Use it to bulk out yogurt bowls or creamy sauces, or to add a punch of protein to your everyday recipes. Healthy and delicious – surely a food trend we can all get behind (if you can find it in stock).

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Carry on the party

Name a better excuse for a holiday than these festivals

WORDS: LYDIA VENN

It's festival season, and with no Glastonbury this year, we're looking to travel further afield for the ultimate experience. From Bulgaria to Paris and Chicago – there are loads of incredible line-ups with the bonus of sun worth hopping on a plane or train for. And, as you're already away, you may as well extend your trip for a few days and turn the festival's location into a week-long holiday. Here are the best multi-day festivals that pair premium musical entertainment with incredible destinations for a spot of relaxation or exploration afterwards. No post-festival blues here!

PHILLGOOD

WHERE IS IT? Plovdiv, Bulgaria

WHEN IS IT? 17-19 July

THE LINE-UP: The Cure, Wolf Alice, Los Bitchos, Gorillaz

WHAT TO DO AFTER: The small city of Plovdiv is an underrated gem well worth exploring when the festival is over. Check into The Emporium and then head out to explore the historical city with visits to the Ancient Theatre of Philippopolis and Nebet Tepe. In the afternoons, wander around the arts district, which is filled with independent cafes, galleries and shops, and don't forget to visit Tsar Simeon's Garden, the perfect place to stroll and catch those evening rays.



LOLLAPALOOZA

WHERE IS IT? Chicago, US

WHEN IS IT? 30 July to 2 August

THE LINE-UP: Lorde, Charli XCX, Olivia Dean, Ethel Cain

WHAT TO DO AFTER: There's so much to do in Chicago. Make sure your trip includes an architectural boat tour that takes you right through the city as you discover the history behind the buildings. Visit Cloud Gate, aka 'The Bean' statue, in Millennium Park and go to a baseball game at the iconic Wrigley Field to support the Cubs. You can't leave Chicago without trying a deep dish pizza, and we'd recommend swinging by Gino's East and Lou Malnati's for a pie. Spend your evenings enjoying Chicago's jazz and blues scene, the perfect post-festival antidote, and go for drinks at Cindy's Rooftop and LondonHouse Rooftop for unreal views over Lake Michigan and the Chicago River.

WAY OUT WEST

WHERE IS IT?

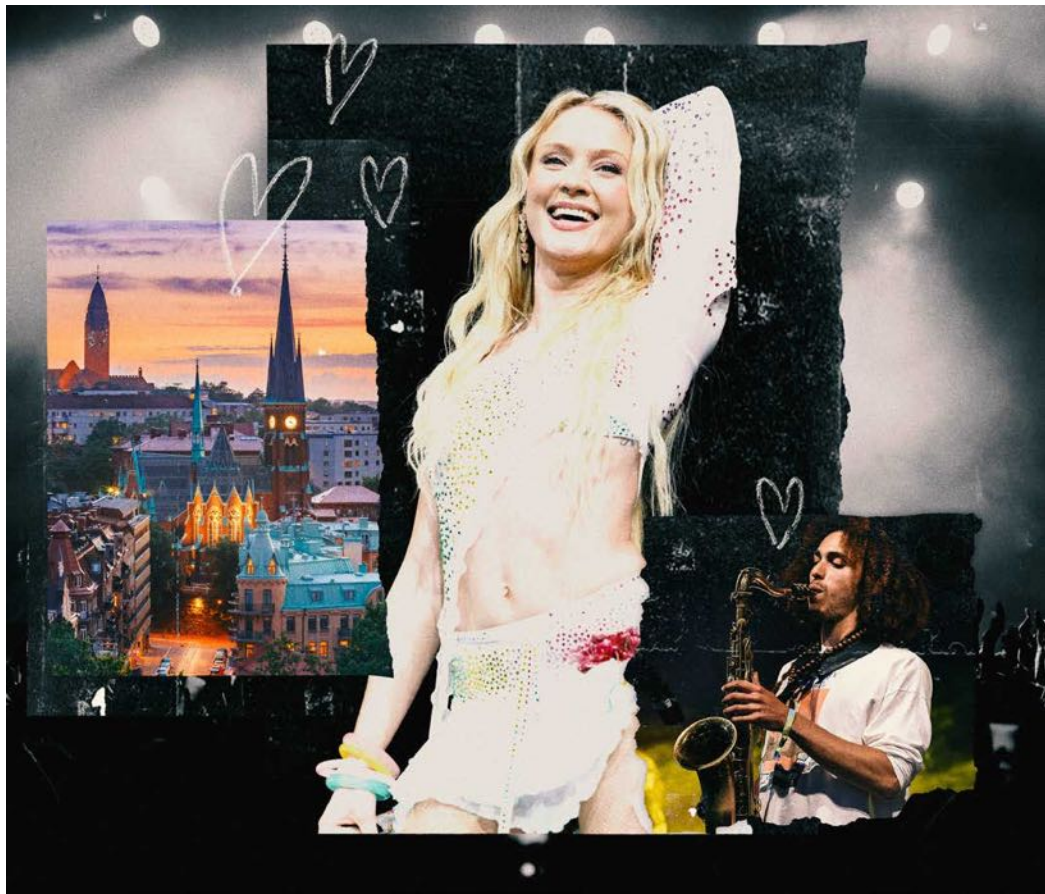
Gothenburg, Sweden

WHEN IS IT? 13-15 August

THE LINE-UP: Lily Allen, Ezra Collective, Zara Larsson, Lorde, The xx, Sombr

WHAT TO DO AFTER:

As the festival is non-camping, you'll likely explore some of Gothenburg while staying in the city for the festival, so when it's finished, rent a car and head out to one of the many lakes – Lake Siljan, Lake Mälaren, Lake Vättern – for a real change of pace. There you can rent a cabin or cottage (we'd get ours through Airbnb) and spend the next few days swimming, kayaking, cycling and hiking. Evenings will be spent by the fire and enjoying the very long daylight hours of a Swedish summer.



ROCK EN SEINE

WHERE IS IT? Paris, France

WHEN IS IT? 26-30 August

THE LINE-UP: Tyler, The Creator; Deftones; DJO; Amyl and The Sniffers

WHAT TO DO AFTER: Rock en Seine is set on the outskirts of Paris, so once it's over, position yourself closer to the centre and stay in Hôtel Suzie Blue in the Marais. It's the ideal location for cafe hopping, window shopping and glasses of wine as the sun goes down. The Marais is home to some of our favourite stores, including Vintage Désir, Revoir Vintage and Bobby. Also be sure to include visits to Chez Janou, Ma Bourgogne and Bistrot Des Tourelles for some classic French fare.

END OF THE ROAD

WHERE IS IT? Dorset, England

WHEN IS IT? 3-6 September

THE LINE-UP: Pulp, CMAT, Mac DeMarco

WHAT TO DO AFTER: After four days sleeping in a tent, we'd head straight to the New Forest, which is less than an hour's drive away from the festival, and hole up for a few days in New Park Manor. The hotel's spa features a sauna, steam room and the Somadome, a technology-enabled meditation pod. After some major relaxation, the hotel is perfectly situated for either walking or cycling on nearby nature trails. There's also Lepe Beach, the town of Lymington and the Beaulieu Estate all within easy reach to explore.



MIGHTY HOOPLA MALTA

WHERE IS IT? St Paul's Bay, Malta

WHEN IS IT? 24-27 September

THE LINE-UP: Sugababes, Beth Ditto, Jamelia, Agnes, Gottmik

WHAT TO DO AFTER: Malta's a small country, so you've got lots of options when it comes to exploring post-fest. If you want to carry on the party energy, head to St Julian's for the bars and clubs lining the streets. Or for a spot of cultural exploring, stay in Valletta, and make sure to end your day at one of the city's jazz bars – The Bridge Bar or Babel Bistro – where you can sit back and relax with a cocktail in hand. Or you can head inland and get some much-needed R&R at boutique hotel The Xara Palace.



Want to win tickets to one of these festivals? Scan the QR code here for Club Cosmo

Summer's juiciest lip combos

It's all about a pigmented base and a glossy topper. Here are our favourite duos to get the look

WORDS: COSMOPOLITAN BEAUTY TEAM
PHOTOGRAPHY: KIM SUN HYE



'An iconic nude combo that is so affordable. You can dial up or dial down the 90s vibe with how much of a hard outline you do with your liner, and the lip oil is the glossy cherry on top!'

KEEKS REID,
UK BEAUTY DIRECTOR

MAC Lip Pencil in Chestnut, £20. Essence Hydra Kiss Lip Oil in Mocha Glow 08, £2.79



'The stain's thin tip allows for precise application that doesn't budge, while the oil on top hydrates, plumps and adds pigment in one swipe.'

JASMINE HYMAN,
US ASSISTANT BEAUTY EDITOR

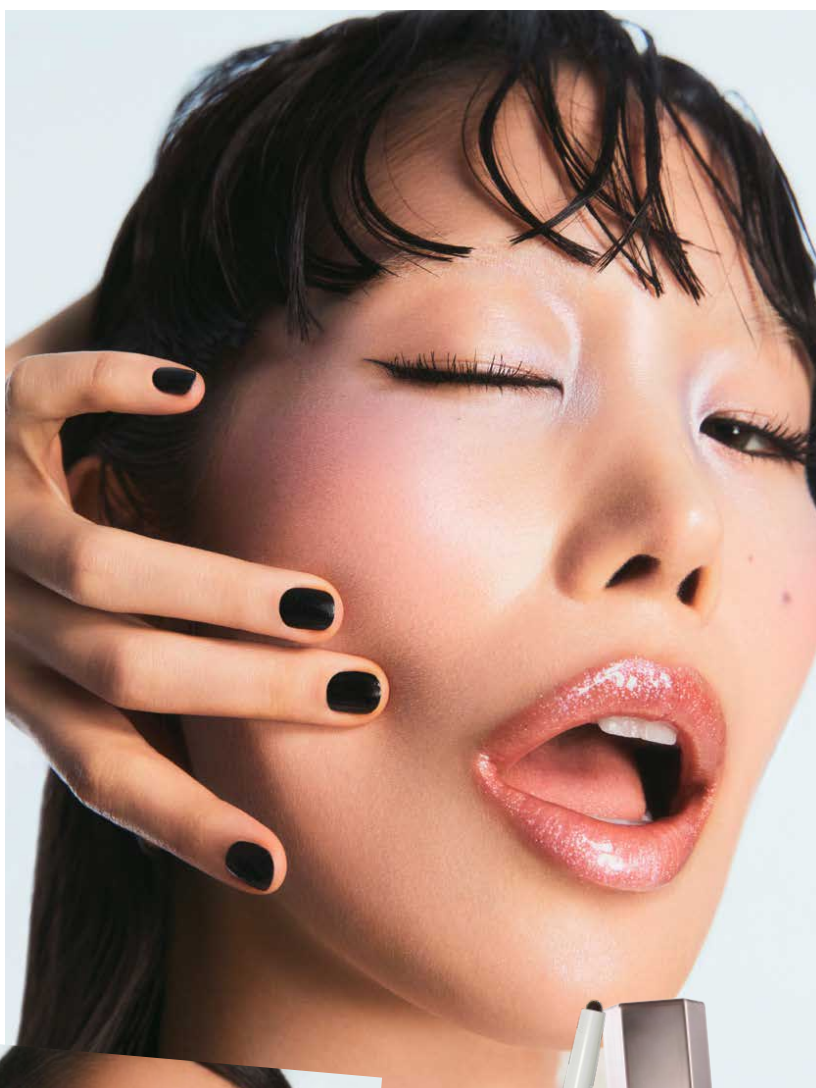
Summer Fridays Flushed Lip Stain in Plum, £22. YSL Loveshine Plumping Lip Oil Gloss in Strawberry Star, £38



'The Kulfi liner glides on without dragging and stays put all day, while Typology's oil has the pigment of a glossy lipstick but feels like a yummy balm.'

JULEE WILSON,
US BEAUTY EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Typology T40 Lip Oil in Black Cherry, £25.50. Kulfi Lassi Lips Staining Lip Liner in Swoon, £24



'Soft, velvety liner meets cooling, plumping gloss. And just like that, my lips aren't simply defined – they're juicy, kissable and every selfie's photogenic hero.'

LIA MAPPOURA,
UK BEAUTY WRITER

Morphe Signature Lip Pencil in Bubble Bath, £8. Too Faced Lip Injection Lip Gloss in Pretty Pony, £24



'Top a creamy, softly diffused liner with a shimmery, conditioning gloss, and the result is truly "your lips but better". Call this the queen of naturally juicy lip combos!'

URMI PANDIT,
UK BEAUTY ASSISTANT

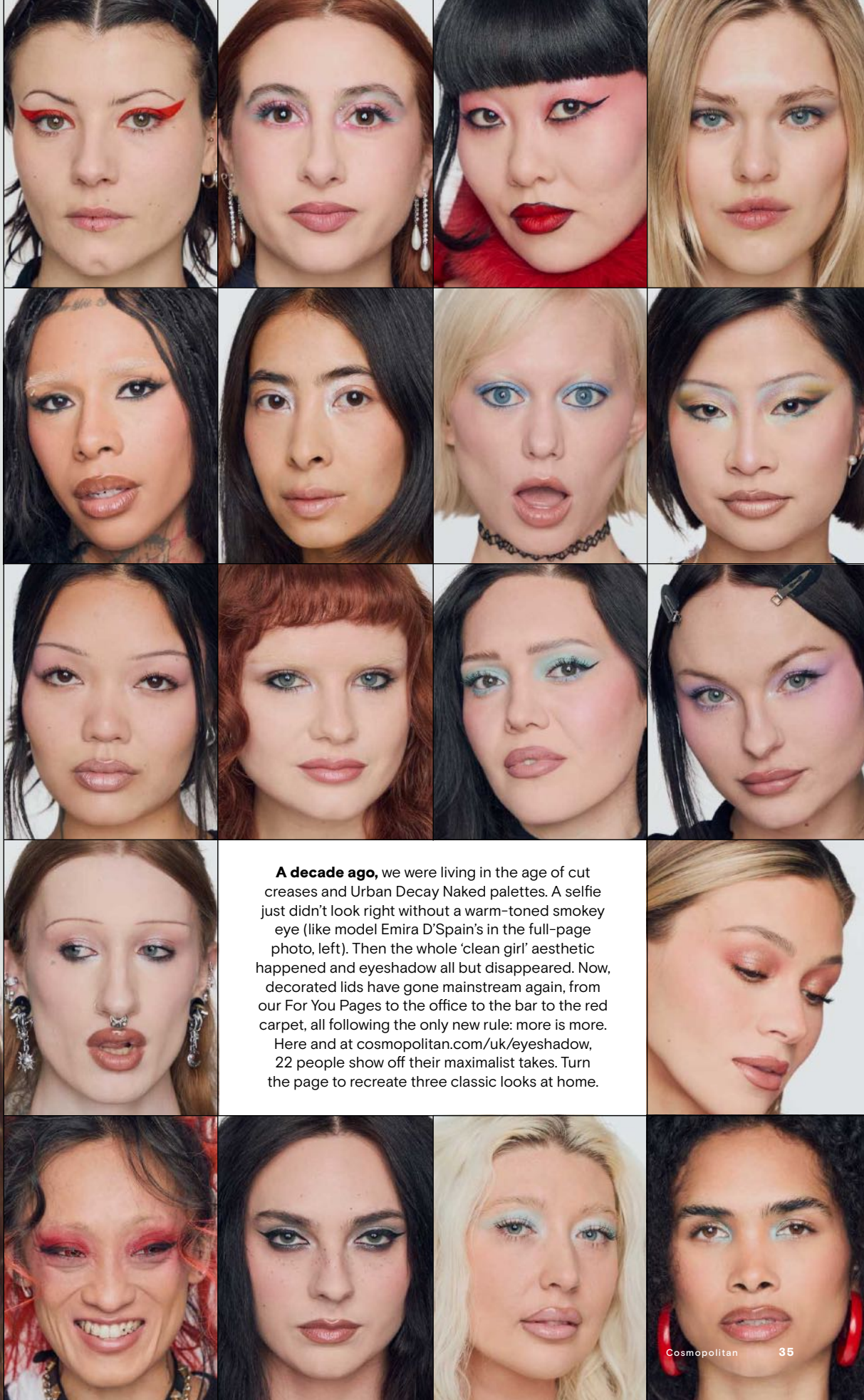
Refy Blur Liner in Sepia, £18. Fenty Beauty Gloss Bomb Universal Lip Luminizer in Fenty Glow, £20



Welcome back, eyeshadow

It's the makeup that's suddenly
everywhere again, and we are
here for the Noughties nostalgia

WORDS: BETH GILLETTE
PHOTOGRAPHY: RONA LIANA AHDOUT



A decade ago, we were living in the age of cut creases and Urban Decay Naked palettes. A selfie just didn't look right without a warm-toned smokey eye (like model Emira D'Spain's in the full-page photo, left). Then the whole 'clean girl' aesthetic happened and eyeshadow all but disappeared. Now, decorated lids have gone mainstream again, from our For You Pages to the office to the bar to the red carpet, all following the only new rule: more is more.

Here and at cosmopolitan.com/uk/eyeshadow, 22 people show off their maximalist takes. Turn the page to recreate three classic looks at home.

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How to recreate maximalist eye looks IRL

WORDS: URMİ PANDIT



The smokey cut crease

Prepping the lids with a primer will boost colour pay-off and limit fading. Using a fluffy brush and a mid-toned shadow, map out the curve just above your natural crease, before defining with a deeper shade. To diffuse the edges? Blend with a gentle hand in back-and-forth motions. Carve the crease with concealer and a dense brush for precision, then top with a shimmer.



From top: E.l.f. Bite-Size Mini Eyeshadow in Berry Bad, £5. Morphe M333 Large Rounded Blender Eyeshadow Brush, £10. Essence Jelly Grip Eyeshadow Primer, £2.99. Nars Soft Matte Complete Concealer, £29.50. Morphe M302 Medium Paddle Packer Eyeshadow Brush, £10

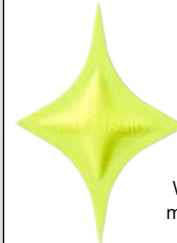


The graphic liner

A dramatic liner takes the spotlight here, so keep shadow nude and matte. Use an angled brush with a creamy gel formula for flexibility and longevity. Half Magic's hero stencil offers a range of wings; higher angles lift the eyes, while more horizontal lines elongate them. In case of mistakes, trace under your liner with concealer to sharpen the wing.



From top: Makeup By Mario Master Mattes Palette, £55. MAC Small Angle Brush, £16.50. Jones Road Gel Liner in Black, £30. Half Magic Wing Magician Reusable Silicone Stencil, £11



COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO



Win one of 10 Half Magic makeup bundles! Enter for FREE at Club Cosmo

The chrome accent

Concentrate reflective, metallic powders in the inner corners of the eyes and midway across the eyelids. For contrast, pair them with a burnt orange or warm terracotta base shade. Our pro tip? Use only the tips of your fingers for application. For the hazy effect, think small dabs of pigment, not controlled placement.



From top: Sephora Collection Special Effects Multichrome Foil in Lunar Flow, £11.99. Vieve Soul Shadows in Terra, £29. Kulfi Zari Eyes Eyeshadow in Disco Dreams, £30. About Face Holographic Eye Paints in Serendipity, £20





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Doja Cat's Little Black Beauty Book

The singer reveals her best beauty hacks and biggest makeup mishaps

INTERVIEW: KEEKS REID

Best beauty hack?

I think a lot of people know that you can use eyeshadows as anything. And, because I feel like there aren't many purple blushes – or at least, I don't know where to find them myself – I've been using a lot of really beautiful light lilac blushes, or light lilac eyeshadows, to kind of transition my blushes. It brightens the high points of your cheeks in a really interesting way.

Your makeup bag wouldn't be the same without...

A pencil sharpener. I mean, have you ever grabbed a knife from the kitchen to try to sharpen an eye pencil?

You're one of the faces of MAC's latest campaign, what's your must-have product?

The Extended Play Mascara in Gigablack. I use it every single time I do my makeup.

What was the first ever MAC product you bought?

It was MAC X Barbie! There's a gorgeous pink lipstick, with a green fleck inside of it, that I was just mesmerised by.

Biggest beauty splurge?

I don't think I splurge that much. I just use a lot of expired makeup from years ago. I have the same heap of products that I've been using forever. People recommend massages to me, but I don't do them unless I absolutely need them. I got a quick lymphatic facial massage from a makeup artist that I worked with recently on a music video, Sam Visser. And it was the best thing I've ever, ever done. It's how he preps the face. It was lovely.

How does skincare factor into your beauty routine?

I think it's important to prep your skin before your makeup. I got really big into skincare a while back. I love using essences. You know what? I wish I was doing more facials and treatments like that [but] actually I just try to drink water and take my makeup off every night.

Do you double cleanse?

Yeah, I love double cleansing! So I do an oil cleanser and then a regular cleanser.

Worst beauty mishap?

Oh, I've got 100,000. But when I was very naughty when I was younger, I would go to a friend's house – well, they weren't really friends, they were just party friends – and I would take my makeup off with just random stuff. I remember one time I took my makeup off – no – I took [the glue from] my wig off with Patrón tequila because there wasn't anything in the house. I remember I would always ask people if they had olive oil and I would just remove my makeup with that. And it actually works really well, but the Patrón tequila thing was a one-time occurrence. I think it did [work] to an extent, but it was, like, I can't be doing this...



For more tips and product recs, head to the Cosmo Black Beauty Hub, cosmopolitan.com/uk/black-beauty

Choose your festival fighter

There's nothing quite like festival season, especially where your wardrobe is concerned. Whether you have one aesthetic or mix and match to create your own unique vibe, consider this your guide to nailing your look

COMPILED BY: ALEXANDRIA DALE



Boho babe

FIND ME IN THE HEALING FIELD

From layers of lace to billowing bell sleeve blouses and suede-fringed jackets, 1970s nostalgia just feels right in a festival scenario. Stick to an easy-breezy, light colour palette – mud splatters be damned.

1. Shorts, £49.99, Mango 2. Belt, £139, Maje 3. Jacket, £120, Guess
4. Boots, £355, Bobbies 5. Bag, £495, Coach 6. Necklace, £135, Missoma
7. Shorts, £55, Anthropologie 8. Headscarf, £89, Maje 9. Top, £49, Ghospell
10. Skirt, £75, Damson Madder 11. Boots, £90, Schuh 12. Top, £140, Free People

Now you have the boho look, win tickets to State Fayre, a brand-new weekend camping festival, with Club Cosmo.

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Underdressed princess

FIND ME STILL ON MY FEET AT THE END OF THE NIGHT

Comfort is key and simple basics with a laid-back feel make the ultimate festival uniform. Think retro jackets, tank tops and shorts that are as functional as they are fashionable.

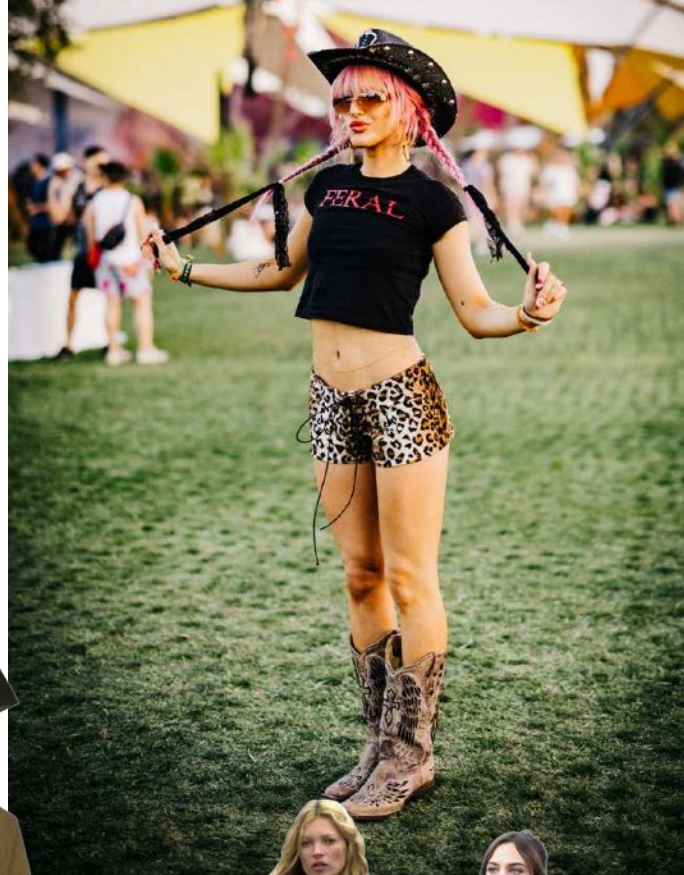


1. Top, £130, American Vintage
2. Shorts, £22, Asos
3. Bag, £14.90, Uniqlo
4. Bag, £59.95, Roka London
5. Jacket, £55, Very
6. Cap, £28, Damson Madder
7. Shorts, £120, Tekla
8. Loafers, £170, Alohas
9. Trousers, £60, Adidas
10. Micro bottle bag charm, £17.50, Hydro Flask
11. Top, £19.99, Zara
12. Rain jacket, £48, Next
13. Skort, £55, The Couture Club
14. Tank top, £110, Ganni
15. Shoes, £65, Vans at Schuh
16. Shorts, £69, Ro&Zo

Indie sleaze It Girl

FIND ME WATCHING FROM THE VIP AREA

Consider Kate Moss and Alexa Chung (aka the OG It Girls), strolling through Glastonbury circa the late 2000s, your ultimate style icons. Leather, studs, sunglasses and a *je ne sais quoi* attitude are all non-negotiable.



1. Sunglasses, £50, Le Specs
2. Top, £65, Levi's
3. Bag, £95, Baggy London
4. Dress, £29.99, New Look
5. Wellies, £180, Le Chameau
6. T-shirt, £55, Peachy Den
7. Top, £125, Kitri
8. Hat, £45, Albaray
9. Jacket, £249, Barbour
10. Shorts, £32, River Island
11. Ear cuff, £60, Astrid & Miyu
12. Shorts, £119, AllSaints
13. Belt, £30, Marks & Spencer

Love this for you



Disco raver

FIND ME DEEP IN THE DANCE TENT

Calling all maximalists! Nothing says rave-ready like punchy neon hues, liquid metallics and head-to-toe sparkle. After all, what's a festival without glitter? It's high-impact dressing that shines long after sunset – playful, unapologetically bold and made for the dancefloor.



1. Top, £44, Next
2. Sunglasses, £145, Oakley at Sunglass Hut
3. Top, £145, Marella
4. Bralette, £70, American Vintage
5. Trousers, £44.99, H&M
6. Shoes, £110, Ecco
7. Top, £45, Asos Design
8. Bloomers, £44, Free People
9. Bikini top, £18, Asos Design
10. Bag, £45, Sister Jane
11. Swimsuit, £220, Ganni
12. Bag, £175, Bimba Y Lola
13. Trousers, £39.95, Hollister
14. Trainers, £130, Puma x Ahluwalia

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Elaine Forster,
Cosmopolitan
subscriber



The only guide to leather jackets you'll ever need

Everything to know before investing in this icon of outerwear

WORDS: ALEXANDRIA DALE

When it comes to wardrobe staples, few pieces work harder than a leather jacket. Throw one over a floaty dress for a grungy edge, or team with jeans and a tee for easy, everyday wear. Equal parts practical and cool, it moves seamlessly from festival fields to weekend city breaks without missing a beat. Before you invest, there's more to consider than snapping up the first biker you see. The right jacket will elevate even the simplest outfit, lasting years in your wardrobe. Gayaneh Guiragossian, style and artistic director at Vestiaire Collective, shares everything to know...

CHOOSE YOUR STYLE

From classic bikers to tailored blazers, leather jackets span a range of silhouettes. The right choice depends on personal style, how you'll wear it, and whether you want something statement-making or versatile.

The biker: with an asymmetric zip and structured shape, it adds instant attitude.

The blazer: offering a more polished feel, it transitions easily from day to night.

The bomber: effortless and oversized, this is as laid-back as leather jackets come.

The aviator: often shearling-lined, it has a strong vintage aesthetic.

The cropped: hitting at the waist, it's best paired with high-waisted bottoms.



SAVE

Faux leather jacket, £65, Marks & Spencer



SPLURGE

Pre-loved leather jacket, £998, Acne Studios via Vestiaire Collective



SPEND

Real leather jacket, £319, AllSaints

KNOW YOUR LEATHER

Leather often looks better with age, developing a natural patina over time. Lambskin is soft and lightweight, while calfskin offers more structure and durability. Nappa refers to the finish, prized for its buttery feel and subtle sheen. If real leather isn't within budget, faux options have come a long way, with the high street offering convincing alternatives at more affordable price points.

Whether real or faux, look for a soft, supple texture – avoid anything overly stiff or plasticky.

GET THE RIGHT FIT

A leather jacket should feel snug but not restrictive, as real leather will relax over time. Shoulder seams should sit at the edge of your shoulders and sleeves should hit at the wrist bone.

BUY PRE-LOVED

Let someone else do the wearing in for you! Check stitching, lining, hardware and zips – these reveal a lot about the quality. Light wear can add character, but avoid heavy cracking, deep scratches or strong odours, which are harder to fix (although specialist cleaners can help).

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'It's not a phase, Mom!'

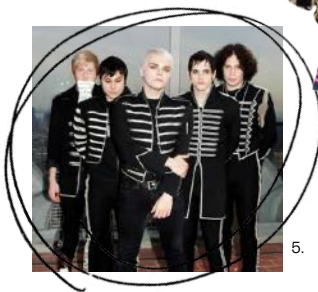
The emo revival is upon us, writes Rebecca Jane Hill

From endless movie reboots to throwback social media trends, as the future feels more uncertain, collectively we are revelling in the safety of the past. So it makes sense that emo poster boys My Chemical Romance are embarking on a world tour this summer to commemorate 20 years of *Welcome To The Black Parade*. If you aren't old enough to remember 2006 (lucky you!), allow me to set the scene. Frontman Gerard Way had already cemented his status as an alternative fashion icon, with a signature look of red eyeshadow, striped tie and greasy, jet-black hair. MySpace was how teenagers discovered music, fashion and trends, and you'd rush to the local suburban Tesco for the latest copy of *Kerrang!* magazine. To put it simply – you just had to be there.

In the wake of emo came the late 2000s 'indie sleaze' era, as it has now been christened. And with skinny jeans, Alexander McQueen skull scarves and even the infamous American Apparel purple hoodie all re-entering the zeitgeist, it's had fashion in a chokehold lately. But I predict change is coming, and I'm not the only one. Adam Rapchik, head of music partnerships at Viagogo, said, 'Dust off the black eyeliner, because the emo trend is officially back. Demand on Viagogo has surged, with My Chemical Romance searches jumping 22% after the Black Parade 2026 tour announcement and rising 185% around the *Three Cheers* anniversary release.' Metal band Deftones, who are headlining Outbreak Fest in London this August, are seeing the same momentum, says Rapchik. Searches are up 90% in the past three months. Nostalgia is hitting hard and fans are ready to relive the era live.'

So what does emo look like in 2026? For some of us, it never left – I have the stretched earlobes, tattoos and facial piercing scars to prove it. But for something less permanent, allow me to point you in the direction of Chopova Lowena's S/S 26 collection, which borrows heavily from the aforementioned MySpace aesthetic. Think clip-in glitter fringes, pink and black hoodies and giant belt buckles. Frogged military jackets, which have become iconography of 'The Black Parade' era, are an absolute must – they featured throughout Keburia's S/S 26 show. I also spotted a ribcage jumper and headphone-printed T-shirt at Vaquera, both reminiscent of Camden Market's heyday. And finally, nothing says moody youth like a skull and crossbones, emblazoned on beanies, cardigans and knee-high socks at Ashley Williams. So get ready to embrace the dark side. I'll meet you in the mosh pit.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY



Top: Chopova Lowena S/S 26
1. Chopova Lowena S/S 26
2. Keburia S/S 26
3. Ashley Williams S/S 26
4. Vaquera S/S 26
5. My Chemical Romance

String together

This nostalgic jewellery trend is all grown up

COMPILED BY: SOPHIE LEEN

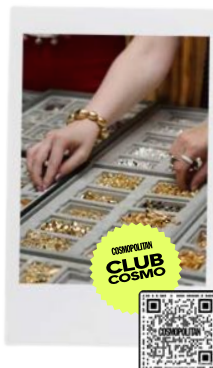
Beaded necklace,
£109, Briwok

Blending DIY charm and maximalist holiday vibes, beaded jewellery is the feelgood accessory that's back in a big way for 2026. Layering strings of beads in clashing, vibrant colour combinations is the ultimate finishing touch to pared-back summer 'fits, whether they're interspersed with your daily silver and gold chains or you replace them completely.



Necklace,
£176, Cajal

1. Necklace, £69, Ottoman Hands
2. Necklace, £24.99, Pilgrim
3. Bracelet, £90, Carrie Elizabeth
4. Necklace, £142, Maya Brenner
5. Necklace, £145, Rixo
6. Necklace, £195, Completedworks
7. Necklace, £140, By Alona
8. Necklace, £84, A Strand of Stories
9. Necklace, £130, Anni Lu
10. Necklace, £125, Cajal
11. Bracelet, £109, Missoma
12. Necklace, £22.99, Zara
13. Necklace, £135, Sandralexandra
14. Bracelet, £84, Venessa Arizaga at Koibird



Looking to upgrade your jewellery box with one-of-a-kind designs? Win a trip to TikTok's viral charm bar, Accessories of Old, for you and five friends to create your own custom pieces! Enter for FREE at Club Cosmo



Did the non-monogamy 'experiment' fail?

Once deemed the coolest way to do relationships, non-monogamy has now officially entered its era of bad press. What gives?

WORDS: BRIT DAWSON

The first condition was to tell each other who they were dating. The second was to share *when* they were dating someone else. And the third – the most sacrosanct – was that no date would cross the threshold into their shared home. Despite these stringent outlines, it took just a couple of months into their relationship for Bailey*, 23, to discover that his partner, Morgan*, had broken every single one.

Even though, by its very nature, an open relationship signifies a significant degree of liberty, Morgan admitted to intentionally disregarding boundaries 'so they could feel like they had more freedom to do what they wanted'. Though the couple remains together – now in a monogamous relationship – the experience soured Bailey's opinion on non-monogamy. 'I've come to believe that non-monogamy attracts avoidant personalities, the relationships are rife with



ARTWORK: NATALIE DOURADO. PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY, ADOBE STOCK

jealousy and there's a lot of dishonesty,' asserts Bailey. 'It's far too easy to use the idea of non-monogamy as a cover for what is actually cheating.'

In recent years, ethical non-monogamy (ENM) has become the topic *du jour* in culture, online discourse and, of course, in dating, with once-fringe apps – such as Feeld, which caters to non-traditional relationships – now considered mainstream. According to 2026 Tinder data shared exclusively with *Cosmopolitan* UK, 27% of UK singles aged 18 to 25 say they've considered ENM, while a further 34% haven't considered it but say they're open to learning more.

And yet, non-monogamy still appears to be widely misunderstood – and sometimes, it seems, purposefully so. Anecdotally, more people like Bailey are reporting run-ins with daters who weaponise ENM, using it as a get-out-of-jail-free card for bad behaviour. This was most famously exemplified last year via Lily Allen's explosive divorce album,

West End Girl, based on Allen's account of her open marriage to *Stranger Things*' David Harbour – which she claims was marred by relentless cheating and lies.

Since then, a more vocal backlash to non-monogamy has been growing, notably among young people, who've typically been more open to non-traditional relationship structures than older generations. On Reddit, scores of people in their late teens, 20s and 30s are sharing ENM horror stories in the r/monogamy subreddit, while others look for reassurance about their anti-ENM perspective in the r/GenZ subreddit, with some even declaring themselves 'polyphobic' (itself a controversial term, as some reject the suggestion that criticism of non-monogamy is bigotry akin to homophobia, asserting instead that it's a lifestyle choice rather than an identity).

'Some people are cut out for it, others aren't'

So, after years of booming popularity, are we entering a new era of anti-non-monogamy? And, is this proof that the non-monogamy 'experiment' has failed, or does it tell us something deeper about how we approach relationships in the first place?

Three's a crowd

Master communicator, boundaried professional, conflict resolution expert and skilled timekeeper. If non-monogamy had a job description, these would be the required skills. Some people are cut out for it, others aren't. It may work for you in one relationship, but not in another. It will probably bring up emotions that you don't expect and that you might not know how to handle. In short: it's no walk in the park, explains relationship therapist Catherine Topham Sly. This might be why, despite being prevalent in conversation, non-monogamy is still less common in action. As per 2026 YouGov data, just 4% of Brits have been in open relationships and 2% in polyamorous ones.

'Even in non-monogamy, we still need to feel chosen in some meaningful way – valued, prioritised and emotionally safe,' says Topham Sly. 'Exclusivity can offer an in-built sense of security. When that isn't part of the structure, consistency, reliability and trust become even more important.'

Topham Sly explains that key personality traits of those who find happiness in ENM are 'a strong sense of self and an ability to tolerate insecurity, as well as moments of comparison'. Non-monogamy is best

entered into when one has reached a sense of balance in their life, so that, she says, 'your sense of identity, fulfilment and self-worth aren't tied to your partner, and they aren't your only source of emotional support'. When these elements aren't present? That's when things go wrong.

In 2024, 28-year-old Bea* came out of a decade-long relationship, eight years of which were non-monogamous. Having got together when they were 16, at the age of 19, Bea's then-partner, Niamh*, asked if they could be polyamorous. It was good for a while: Bea never found it hard to get dates and have one-night stands. But things soon started to unravel. 'I realised that I was using sexual validation as a way to avoid dealing with my low self-esteem,' she says. 'The fact that I had a lot of sex was proof to me that I must be worth something. In truth, I had never felt lonelier. I think on some level, I continued because I unconsciously wanted

'It's still taboo to date multiple people at once'

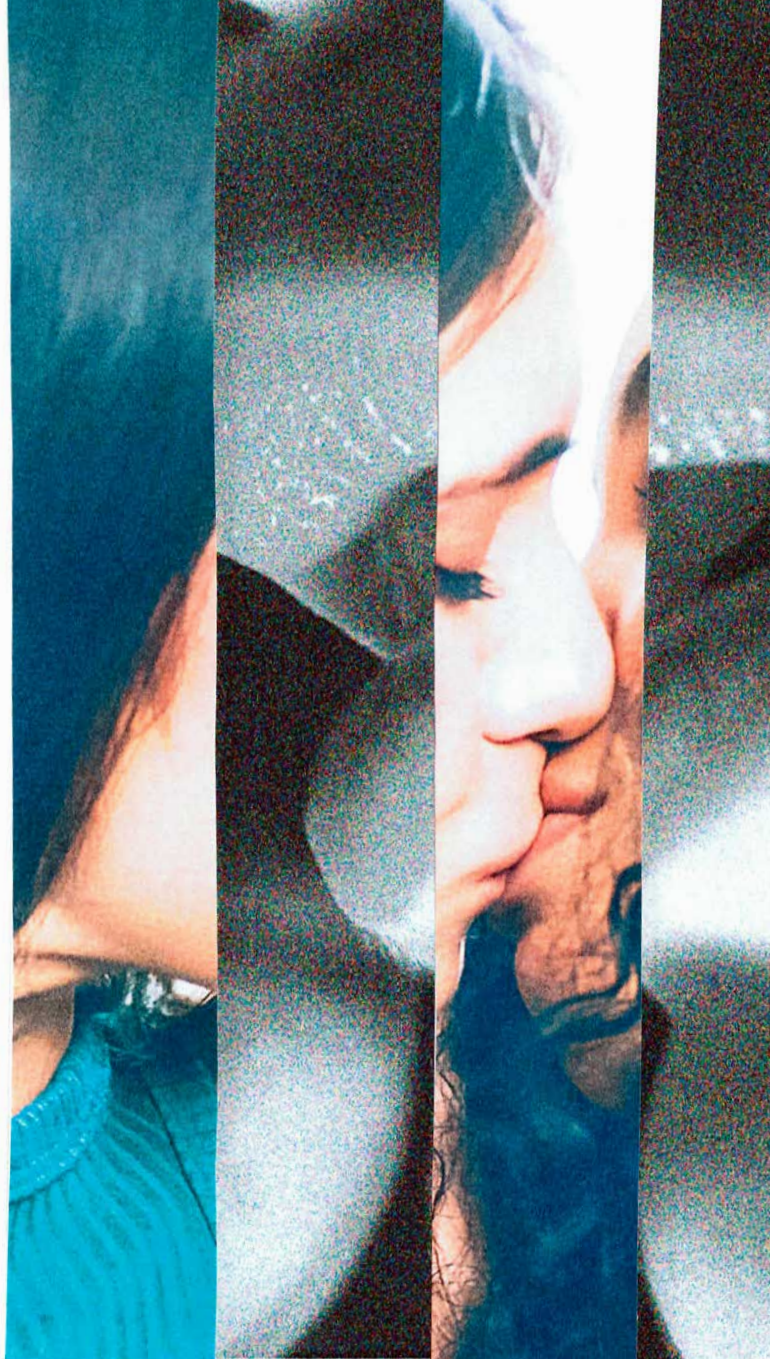
one of these flings to fall in love with me and save me from my decaying relationship.'

In hindsight, Bea can see that things weren't great in the relationship, and that opening things up may have been Niamh's way of 'taking some of the pressure off' a 'co-dependent' situation. But when Bea became chronically ill, Niamh wasn't there for her – she was too busy dating while Bea was at home sick. Instead of supporting her, the couple's poly friends commended Niamh for 'living her truth' during a time of stress.

'There's definitely a culture in the community where people are made to feel like they can't even expect the bare minimum [from their partners],' says Bea. 'Being housebound in my 20s and having my girlfriend tell me to practise compassion, want less of her and prioritise her happiness felt like the biggest "f*ck you".'

This seems to be a common complaint among many formerly non-monogamous people. Some told *Cosmopolitan* UK stories of partners neglecting them once they had, as one 33-year-old woman put it, 'shiny new toys to play with'; others talked about being gaslit, including a 37-year-old woman, who says her feelings were regularly dismissed by poly friends who told her to move past 'suspicion and fear', before she eventually discovered her primary partner was lying and sneaking around.

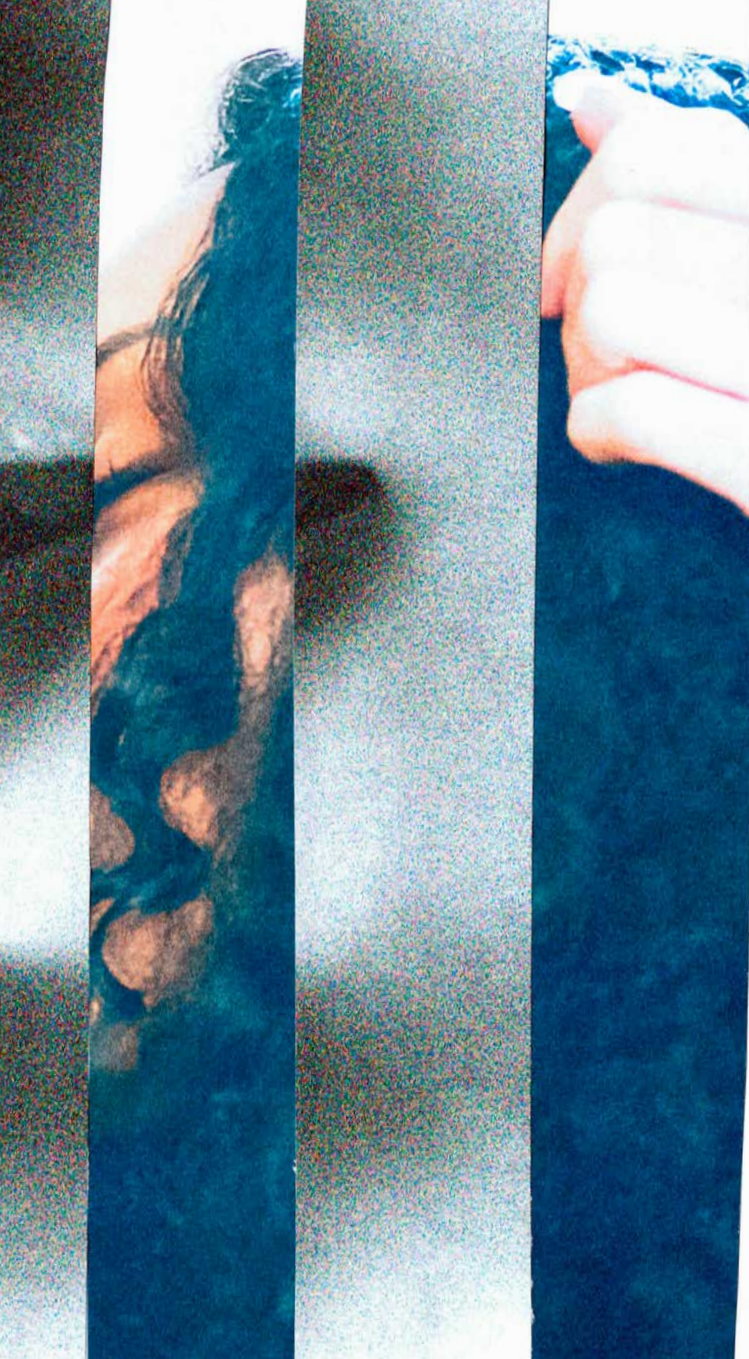
In these instances, the communication and empathy that's meant to define ENM appears to have been thrown out of the window in favour of secrecy, selfishness and a pressure to repress feelings. 'It's the enshittification of relationships. The idea that you should f*ck more people and want less from them,' says Bea. 'It's hook-up culture cloaked in therapy



speech. There's a lot of pressure on people, especially women in monogamous relationships, to erase their boundaries to make their partner happy.'

Community guidelines

Therein lies the key to non-monogamy: if both partners don't enter the arrangement willingly, even with equal enthusiasm, it's likely not going to work. And yet, many feel they *should* embrace the opportunity if it arises, either to appease their partners or wider communities. In LGBTQ+ circles especially, monogamy can be viewed as a patriarchal ideal, one that preaches marriage, picket fences and 2.4 kids. Queer culture's historical rejection by the status quo makes a conventional relationship with monogrammed pillowcases extremely unappealing. But, says Bailey, the flip side is that



it 'paints those who engage with monogamy as lesser-than, uneducated or complicit – and that can easily sway someone into feeling guilty for their own dating preferences'.

For many, whether they're LGBTQ+ or not, this pressure to buck convention is incongruous with what they're craving. In fact, Bumble's 2025 Dating Report shows that the majority of women (59%) are increasingly yearning for stability, safety and emotional security in their romantic lives. And while non-monogamy can, of course, provide all these things, it's not always as straightforward. 'The liberation non-monogamy offers to some can feel outweighed by the emotional risk it involves,' says Topham Sly. 'There's a strong cultural narrative that non-monogamy is inherently more evolved or progressive, but many who try it discover that the very human challenges of jealousy and attachment insecurity persist. In

a world that feels overwhelming, the backlash might reflect a craving for simplicity and emotional safety.'

In the UK, monogamy – a social construct upheld by Christianity – remains the norm. And, amid a cultural shift towards conservatism and the return of 'traditional values' (which may be partly to blame for the non-monogamy backlash), there is more pressure to be exclusive than polyamorous. What's more, it's still significantly more taboo to date multiple people at once; so much so that many keep their ENM relationships a secret for fear of judgement. Non-monogamy, then, has long been stigmatised in small-c conservative circles, and yet this negativity appears to be seeping into more people's understanding of it. As per Tinder's data, 'complex' (28%) and 'messy' (26%) were the qualities most associated with ENM among 18- to 25-year-old UK singles. The same data shows that the most common things young people have heard about ENM are that it's a form of cheating (18%) and that couples only pursue it because they're bored or unhappy within their relationship (17%).

But for many couples, it does work – and far better than any attempts at monogamy have served them in the past. Leanne Yau, a polyamory educator known as Poly Philia, who's been non-monogamous for 10 years, credits her relationship structure with giving her 'flexibility and freedom, independence to explore [her] own desires, and emotional awareness'. Yau believes the backlash largely stems from 'the internet loving to sensationalise everything'. 'I think non-monogamous people are being scapegoated for a lot of dating frustrations,' something she believes 'contributes to an existing narrative that polyamorous people are irresponsible cheaters who can't control themselves and will take advantage of you, which is not the case'. For Yau, being non-monogamous 'makes [her] a better person and partner'.

For Bea, it's a case of start as you mean to go on. 'A lot of the messiness between the pro- and anti-crowd comes from people using non-monogamy to soft-launch a break-up, or to not lose access to their emotional safety blanket while they f*ck hotter people,' she says, advising, 'Don't get into a monogamous relationship and ask to open it up; likewise, don't ask a poly person for exclusivity.'

There's no doubt that some people are abusing the idea of non-monogamy – and its cultural cachet in certain circles – to get away with bad behaviour. There's also likely a lack of individual research into and understanding of non-monogamy, particularly among younger people who are experimenting in fledgling relationships, which can see them enter into agreements without being fully prepared for the reality of them. Of course, similar flaws and abuses exist in monogamous relationships, too. There's no clear-cut way to avoid bad feelings and manipulation; we all have a responsibility to treat one another well and with respect. If someone is determined not to do that, they'll find a way no matter the relationship structure.

COSMOPOLITAN x Lovehoney

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Bathe in the afterglow

The science behind your post-orgasm zen and how to bask in it a little while longer

WORDS: LOIS SHEARING

Picture this: it's Friday night and you're home alone. Your work is done, and you decide the housework can wait till tomorrow. You light some candles, put on *Heated Rivalry* and break out your clit sucker.

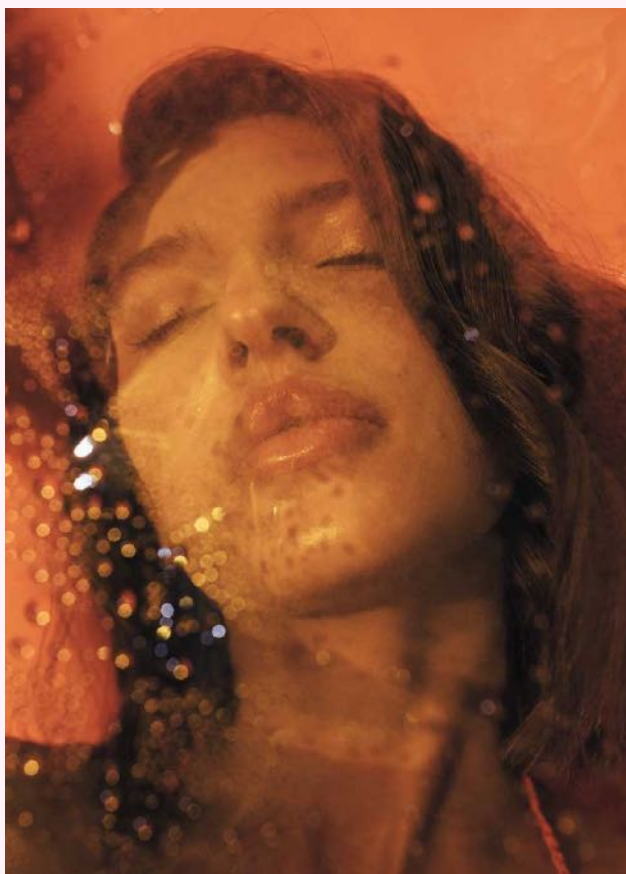
But then... it's over. You start thinking that you should just get on with folding the washing, or simply grab your phone. Within seconds, you've gone from the ultimate zen to spiking your cortisol.

Fireworks vs party poppers

Few things compare to a great orgasm, for good reason. 'An orgasm is like a firework display in your brain,' says neuroscientist Nicole Vignola. 'It's the only activity that activates every part of the brain all together.'

Not all are created equal, though. For a NYE-level display, it's about the build-up: lots of touch, emotional safety and time. For that orgasm to be sustained, the same needs to be true for what happens afterwards. Otherwise, Vignola suggests, you risk turning that epic firework display into a mere party popper.

When you have an orgasm, your brain releases the feelgood hormones oxytocin and dopamine. It also temporarily switches off the orbitofrontal cortex, the part of the brain that looks after decision-making. So if you end the show early by reading a stressful email, not only are you at risk of making some less-than-stellar decisions, but you blunt the stress-relieving hormones you've worked so hard to release.



'An orgasm is a firework display in your brain'

Plus, a warning: 'The brain is a predictive machine, so once you start to merge associations, the brain might anticipate that response regardless,' says Vignola. Meaning, if you regularly feel something post-wank that spikes your cortisol (such as shame or stress), your brain might start to think that's what should always happen.

Elongating pleasure

Jordan Jaziri, a psychosexual psychotherapist, points out, 'Much of what passes for sex in busy lives can be going through the motions, reaching for a known outcome, performing rather than sensing. A body in that mode can struggle to settle into a luxurious afterglow. It can tip into comedown and look for an exit.'

Simply: you may not be giving yourself enough time and mental space to be present for pleasure. 'Sexual response can deepen when attention stays with sensation rather than drifting into thought or performance,' says Jaziri. 'When you notice the urge to move on, pause, slow your exhale and locate three physical sensations.'

You can also boost your afterglow by edging – bringing yourself to the peak, easing off stimulation right before climax and then re-engaging. Sex and relationships educator Courtney Boyer explains that this activates your brain's reward circuits, as dopamine rises as you approach climax and drops off when you back off, heightening focus and building anticipation. 'That cycle can intensify sensitivity and awareness in your body, often leading to a stronger, more controlled release when you finally let go.'

These couples teach you how to split costs



Because if money talks, then the way partnered-up people manage theirs speaks volumes

WORDS: VERONICA LOPEZ

There are plenty of high-stakes conversations couples should be having before they get serious.

But perhaps the most important one you can have is about money.

As in, full disclosure on salaries, credit scores, spending habits and more. In a world where student loan debt has never been higher and life in general has never felt more expensive, financial communication is key. Plus, 86% of men and 74% of women in long-term romantic relationships believe in dividing fiscal responsibilities fairly, according to OkCupid data.

Of course, that can mean completely different things to different couples. Keep reading to steal some tips for making the money work in your own relationship.



‘Now that we have two kids, have established careers, and purchased two homes together, we view money more as “ours”. It’s hard to keep things separate and we almost don’t think about it any more. We have joint accounts and access to each other’s personal ones, but for the most part, we put everything on our joint credit card. I typically use that card for anything kid-related, too – unless it’s something absurd like a designer baby jacket or something, which I wouldn’t get, but if I did, I’d buy it with my own personal card.’

– RACHEL, 33, IN A RELATIONSHIP FOR 12 YEARS

‘We had the same views from the start. Both sets of our parents fully combined finances when they got married, and both sets of our parents are still together. It’s what we’ve always known, and seen to be successful. So once we got engaged, we began combining accounts. By the time we were married, our finances were fully merged. At first, I felt a little weird dropping £100 on a facial or buying new clothing because it wasn’t just “my” money any more, but we trust each other to make smart financial decisions and we’ll run more expensive purchases by each other first.’

– ALEXIS, 31, IN A RELATIONSHIP FOR 11 YEARS



‘We each contribute 33% of our income to rent. We don’t have a shared bank account – one of my partners has a direct deposit set up to our landlord. One of us earns the most by a long way, so they pay for more expensive bills such as electricity. I cover most of our food bills and my other partner pays for things like Netflix. We don’t keep a running ledger – we all trust each other to contribute relative to what we can afford.’

– ABBY, 36, IN A THREE-PERSON RELATIONSHIP FOR SIX YEARS

‘We have separate accounts and pay about the same percentage of our respective incomes in rent and utilities, which feels fair because those costs total about one biweekly pay cheque for each of us. Before moving in together, my girlfriend would cook or I’d get delivery. So it feels natural that she now pays for the food shop and I still cover takeaways. Household supplies are more of a gut check.’

– LYDIA, 29, IN A RELATIONSHIP FOR FOUR YEARS

‘We made a spreadsheet with our monthly salaries and subtracted what we each pay in student loans, car payments and health insurance. Of our combined take-home pay, I earn 56% and my wife earns 44%. We use that split to determine what percentage of fixed monthly expenses (utilities, rent, groceries) we’ll both pay, and we direct deposit that money into a shared account. The rest of our earnings go into individual accounts for personal spending.’

– CASEY, 33, IN A RELATIONSHIP FOR 11 YEARS



‘My fiancé is doing a doctorate that he’s financing with loans and scholarships, so I’m contributing more towards our expenses until he graduates and starts earning a full salary. I pay two-thirds of the rent, he covers the remainder plus utilities and everything for our dog. I don’t help with his studying bills because I have student debt, too. We split household stuff like our cleaner and groceries but handle personal items on our own – I’m into luxury handbags that he can’t fathom spending money on.’

– CINDY, 32, IN A RELATIONSHIP FOR FOUR YEARS

Block, delete, goodbye: are we cutting people off too quickly?

The internet loves a clean break. But as more of us sever ties in the name of 'protecting our peace', how do we know if we're setting healthy boundaries or curating our relationships a little too ruthlessly?

WORDS: JENNIFER SAVIN



When Skye* saw the WhatsApp message flash up from her younger sister, Ruby*, her hands gripped the steering wheel

tightly. Her heart thumped in her chest and her breath caught in her throat. She pulled over to compose herself, realising it was time to cut Ruby off for good.

'We've always been polar opposites as people,' says Skye, 27, of her and her sister who is four years her junior. According to Skye, Ruby increasingly stoked drama as a teenager until 'it reached a point where it was hard to spend time with [her] parents if Ruby was around'. In a bid to avoid conflict, Skye reduced her visits home.

It wasn't just that Ruby and Skye didn't get on. It felt to Skye that her sister was surrounded by drama, often self-inflicted. 'She'd exaggerate situations for attention, or she would drink excessively and say vile things about family members. She was erratic and grinding me down, so I slowly tried to lessen contact,' says Skye. 'Only then she'd fire off angry messages about how I wasn't supportive enough.'

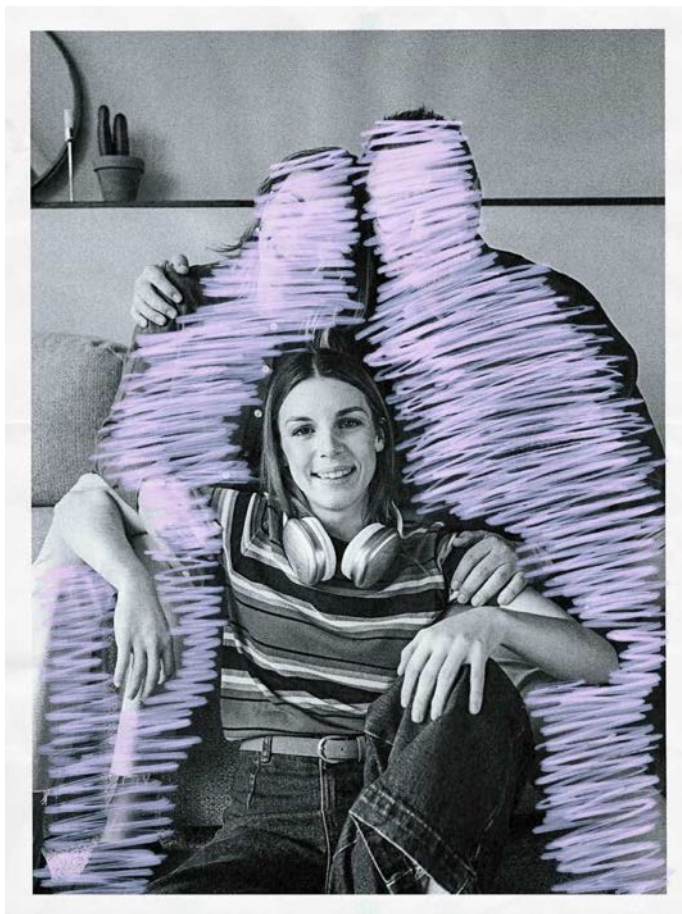
But when Skye realised the physical impact her sister was having on her health, and after speaking with a friend who knew them both, she realised any positives of having Ruby in her life were not outweighing the negatives. It's been challenging, Skye caveats, especially as her mother still tries to put her in situations, such as family gatherings, where Ruby will also be in attendance without letting her know. But, for Skye, there's no going back.

Skye's position isn't unique. According to *Cosmopolitan* UK data, sourced from more than 2,000 respondents, 58% of you have been cut off by a friend or family member, while 88% have cut someone off themselves. When we asked why, answers ranged from 'moving away from negative energy' to 'it doesn't matter how long I've known you, if you're rude or our values don't align, then it's goodbye! It doesn't have to be nasty'. Others view cutting people off as the 'ultimate form of self-care'. 'Storytimes' about breaking free from 'toxic' relationships abound on social media, and culling loved ones is positioned as an 'empowering' way of implementing boundaries. In the recent news cycle, we've seen Brooklyn Peltz Beckham amass headlines for his decision to sever ties with his parents, while the Prince William vs Prince Harry saga rolls on and on (and on).

There's no doubt implementing personal boundaries and expecting to be treated with a modicum of respect should be the bare minimum in any relationship, but cutting a family member, or even a friend, out of your life is a huge decision, one with far-reaching implications and a knock-on impact on your wider circle. So, what has happened that so many of us are increasingly entering into it with such ease? Have we reached the point when the so-called village has been replaced by total individualism; a survival mode in which we've realised we can no longer afford to stay in contact with toxic people out of obligation? Or are we at risk of falling for a social media trend that sees armchair therapists reduce relationships to transactional exchanges rather than nuanced, evolving connections that depend on mutual tolerance?

To cull or not to cull

There's been a shift in how we talk about conflict. That's how Subecca Sheikh – a family lawyer who regularly deals with conflicts and relationship breakdowns – sees it. 'Everything is therapy talk. *Everything*,' she says. 'It always comes down to, "I just need to do this for my mental health, for my sanity." The word "narcissist" is used so much, it's like everyone's become a psychologist.' While Sheikh is clear no one should stay in an



abusive or genuinely harmful situation, she believes there is now less tolerance for the strain that all close relationships bring. 'Sometimes you do need to be uncomfortable for it to get better,' she adds. 'Working hard at something, including a relationship, can lead to something really beautiful.'

It was a resistance to this discomfort that led Rosie* to cut off her former best friend and housemate, Jasmine*, – and come to regret it four years on. The 31-year-old author describes their friendship as 'intense at first, almost like when you're in the early stages of dating', and recalls how they bonded over their shared experience of being single in London. 'We used to have the most fun. We'd spend entire weekends together going to yoga, then brunch, then on a night out.' When a room in Rosie's flatshare became available, she

couldn't message Jasmine fast enough. 'That's when things started to go wrong,' Rosie reflects.

Shortly after signing up to move in, Jasmine lost her job and struggled with her mental health, returning to her hometown, miles away, to live with her parents. 'Things started to get tense as Jasmine would send the rent over in dribs and drabs and was generally not communicating with me or our flatmates at all,' Rosie says. 'Messages went unanswered; she really isolated herself. I tried to help Jasmine, sending her links to jobs and asking around my network, but she was in a bad place. My mental health was also pretty low at the time, after a bereavement.'

Things came to a head when the pair decided to go on a weekend break with another mutual pal, but Rosie drank too much and started a fight in a club – Jasmine was horrified. 'When I woke up,

I felt disgusted. I ran straight to the airport to get an early flight home,' Rosie admits. 'After that, I told Jasmine our friendship was done, that things just didn't feel the same. Looking back, I feel that maybe I jumped the gun and said that out of shame. I was overloaded by life and didn't know how to deal with this one additional thing stressing me out, so I cut off the friendship hoping it would make me feel better. Ultimately, I'm not sure it did. Some of the happiest times of my life were spent hanging out with Jasmine.' Now, as Rosie gears up to get married, she's been reflecting on Jasmine not being there. 'I would love to hear about her life, how she is, but I'm too scared to ask.'

Dr Joy Conlon, psychotherapist at Coyne Medical, worries that social media has pushed a cultural narrative that positions cutting someone off as the 'default form of self-care', and that sometimes we risk doing so prematurely. 'Relationships inevitably involve misunderstanding and tension, and learning how to navigate those moments is an important life skill,' explains Dr Conlon. 'A healthy boundary is therefore less about removing people at the first sign of discomfort and more about thoughtfully deciding whether a relationship can be repaired, or whether distance is genuinely necessary.' Despite these concerns, she says she often sees individuals try many approaches before cutting someone off entirely, such as explaining how they feel or creating rules such as only meeting them in a group setting – as Skye tried before going no-contact with Ruby.

'Creating distance from someone can be a healthy boundary when a relationship repeatedly undermines a person's psychological safety, dignity or sense of agency. In those cases, stepping back may be an act of self-

protection rather than avoidance,' says Dr Conlon. 'Most people do not arrive at that decision quickly.' But she warns against falling into the trap of a 'curated emotional life', and an expectation that relationships are always smooth sailing. 'When that expectation takes hold,' she says, 'normal imperfections can start to feel unacceptable.' And while social media can help us to articulate difficult feelings, it can also oversimplify an experience into an easily digestible piece of content.

When to say goodbye

To be on the other side of a cutting off can be deeply painful, says Natalie*, 34, whose best friend of 20 years, Hannah*, began phasing her out and ultimately ghosted her entirely after Natalie missed her birthday party due to a holiday. 'I spent months wondering what else I could have done wrong, but my messages went unanswered,' she recalls. 'It was worse than being ditched by a guy. It's made me really analyse all of my other friendships.' Reflecting on the situation some years on, Natalie adds, 'Hannah was constantly cycling through new "best friends". I thought I was safe as I'd "outlived them all" and we had so much shared history. I guess it was just my time on the chopping block, for reasons unknown.'

So, how can we be sure that cutting someone out of our lives for good is the right approach? Dr Conlon says to take time over the decision and try to pattern spot. 'In genuinely harmful relationships there is usually a repeated behaviour that consistently undermines a person's sense of safety or dignity,' she explains. 'The individual may feel chronically anxious, dismissed or confused, and attempts to address the issue tend to be ignored or met with blame.' But, she emphasises, 'even healthy relationships experience

'I told her our friendship was done. Looking back, I feel I jumped the gun'





difficult periods. Stress, illness, work pressure or life changes can temporarily affect how people show up for each other. The important difference is that both people remain capable of reflection and repair. When concerns are raised, there is space for listening, accountability and change, even if the process is not perfect'.

This, the psychologist says, can future-proof how you feel about a cutting-off decision later on, too – acting hastily can hurt more as time goes on. Equally, even the right decision can be painful and bring about a sense of grief, as well as relief – and it's important to allow yourself to feel all of those emotions. If 'relationships are repeatedly abandoned at the first sign of difficulty, people's social worlds can gradually become smaller', says Dr Conlon (so it might be worth pattern-spotting the wider picture of your decisions, too).

Through Sheikh's work, she has noticed a value-based mindset take hold of relationships between those in their late 20s or early 30s. 'If they felt like there wasn't productivity coming out of a relationship or marriage, they would just be like, "We're done."' It's a striking choice of language – as though some relationships are now judged not just on love or loyalty, but on output.

For those torn, Dr Conlon recommends asking yourself three questions: is this a repeated pattern or a one-off situation? Have I clearly communicated how I feel and what I need? And what outcome am I hoping for by stepping away from the relationship? 'Reflecting on these questions can help someone distinguish between a moment of emotional intensity and a deeper pattern that truly requires distance.' Finally, Dr Conlon says to keep in mind not every person can meet every emotional need, so adjusting expectations realistically can help with maintaining a connection without repeat disappointment. 'In many cases, small changes in boundaries or expectations can lead to healthier dynamics without requiring a complete break.'

In a world that encourages us to curate everything from our feeds to our feelings, the hardest thing may no longer be walking away, but learning the difference between a relationship that truly harms us and one that is simply imperfect.



Olivia Rodrigo Rises

To everyone else, she is the queen of heartbreak.
I've always known better

INTERVIEW: MADISON HU ■ PHOTOGRAPHY: MORGAN MAHER ■ STYLING: BRANDON TAN



Dress, Ann
Demeulemeester.
Underwear, Pretties.
Pendant, For Future
Reference Vintage.
Shoes, Bode



When *Cosmopolitan*¹ asked me to write this cover story about my best friend Olivia Rodrigo, my first question for her was, 'Can you bring a pack of cards?' Most of the time, Olivia and I² are faced with the quandary of never being in the same place at the same time³. It's usually, *I'll see you in two months when you're in town. When is your next break from touring? How far is Vancouver from Los Angeles, really?* But the stars have aligned for this February morning in New York City, where we sit together in a hotel room, me in pyjamas and Olivia in a trench coat and flare jeans, pre-gaming this interview with our favourite game, Nertz.

It's a contentious match and, in the end, I win. I bask in my triumph while, as per her usual, Olivia is busy taking life lessons from a round of cards. 'See, now this is why patience is key,' she self-soothes. 'Nertz is my greatest teacher.' She's joking, of course, but I know she's also not entirely kidding.

Part of early adulthood is realising you have more questions than answers, that everything you thought you'd have figured out by now remains a mystery. It's an intimidating revelation but one Olivia leans into as she holds steadfast to a desire to learn from anything. I can attest that, just as she does in her music, she spends a lot of time in real life asking those questions – both the smaller, everyday ones and the unwieldy, daunting ones – driven by the same innate curiosity that bonded us more than a decade ago⁴.

Olivia's willingness to admit to uncertainty, to the angst that comes with discovering who you are, is also what's made her a voice of our generation. It started with 2021's single *drivers license*, which she wrote during a pandemic heartbreak at 17, and continued on the emotionally raw, record-breaking album *SOUR*. Her second album, 2023's *GUTS*, debuted at number one on the Billboard 200 and gave her tens of millions of fans exactly what they needed: a place to sit with growing pains and earnestly unravel their complexities through songs that felt at once universally true and deeply personal.

Two sold-out world tours, three Grammys, plenty of music festivals and many global brand campaigns later, Olivia is now releasing a third studio album, *you seem pretty sad for a girl so in love*⁵. If *SOUR* came pouring out of teenage heartbreak and *GUTS* was produced in a pressure cooker of expectation, this one, out 12 June,

was slower, a product of constant revisions. 'We really edited the hell out of this album,' she says about the body of work I've been lucky enough to listen to in all its many stages. There's a new sense of levity in both her lyrics and her voice, echoing how she's been feeling in real life. 'There was so much more joy in the songwriting,' she explains. 'There are some songs that are plain old sad, but also some songs that are just plain old fun.'

The album's first single is one of the latter, fizzy and bright and full of optimism⁶, an almost visceral embodiment of her famous 'happy and healthy' lyrics, only this time earnest and for her and her fans. It's a track that couldn't have happened five years ago – nor could any of the album's songs, really. They're a different type of interrogation, although not necessarily full of answers to those life questions. That's because, these days, Olivia is less concerned about arriving at conclusions. Instead, she's exploring patience (thank you, Nertz) and romantic attachment, freedom and joy through music that feels true to where she is right now.

1. A few weeks after this interview, Olivia Rodrigo spent an afternoon manifesting the year ahead with *Cosmopolitan US* editor-in-chief Willa Bennett and shared that her dream headline for this story would be 'Olivia Rodrigo Does It All And She Looks Really Cool Doing It.' Watch them vision-board together at cosmopolitan.com/olivia-rodrigo-2026.

2. The 'I' in this case is Olivia's best friend, actor and Columbia University creative writing graduate Madison Hu. Of doing this story with her, Olivia later told *Cosmopolitan*: 'I feel like I didn't give her very eloquent answers, but she can decode my madness. She's a million times smarter than I will ever be.'

3. Olivia spent much of the past year selling out nearly 100 live shows and recording a new album. Madison, at this point one of the only people in the world to have heard said album in its entirety, has been busy starring in the film *Sparks* and alongside Steve Carell in the HBO comedy *Rooster*.

4. Olivia and Madison first connected at 12 years old when they auditioned for the Disney show *Best Friends Whenever*. They would later be booked on the same project, *Bizaardvark*, and go on a two-week Disney Cruise Line trip together. 'We were like Beyoncé and Jay-Z on that boat,' laughs Olivia. Their friendship, which Olivia frequently documents on Instagram, is a fan favourite. Posts of them together regularly get more than 3m likes.

5. When Olivia pictures her fans experiencing the new album, it's in a very specific way, she later told *Cosmopolitan*: 'When I was younger and an album that my friends and I were really excited about would come out, we would go to the drive-through, get Taco Bell and sit in the parking lot and listen. If people listen to my album top to bottom in a car with their friends drinking a Baja Blast, that's the dream.'

6. Olivia told *Cosmopolitan* she wrote the song after a really great first date. 'I just wanted to capture that first interaction you have with someone, like, *This could be the best thing ever; I'm going to tell all my friends*. It reminds me of running around a city, feeling young and free. I felt that a lot while writing the album.'

All clothing,
Saint Laurent by
Anthony Vaccarello.
Socks, Lovett and
Calzedonia





'I want to make love
songs you can cry to'



Top, Marc Jacobs.
Shorts, No. 21



Top, Balenciaga

You recently turned 23, and you were telling me the other day that it feels different from being 22.

I just feel a lot less afraid, in a good way. The year is off to a great start⁷, although there was a crow in my backyard on my 23rd birthday⁸, which...

Sometimes there's just a bird in your backyard. What was it that you said yesterday while we were playing cards?

I was looking at your cards and I lost. I was like, 'It's such a metaphor for life. If you're too busy looking at someone else's cards, you're not going to look at your own.'

I swear you can take a lesson from anything. What was on your mind while making your new album?

I was really excited to write about joy, love and passion in a way that I had never really done. Most of my big songs are about being sad, angry, heartbroken.

Do you find it harder to write about happiness?

It's not hard to do when I'm sitting there by myself in my room, but it was never the stuff that I put out. Sometimes I listen back to it and I cringe.

Is it cringier to be happy or sad?

It's cringier to be happy. I cringe, but I'm free. All of my favourite love songs have an element of sadness, and that's what makes them so beautiful. A great love song has so much emotion behind it that it could go either way. I want to make love songs that you can cry to⁹.

I remember after *drivers license*, you felt this pressure to follow it up again and again and again. How has your songwriting process changed?

We didn't have time for revisions on *SOUR*. The whole world was watching. I wrote and we just f***ing recorded and put it out. Then with *GUTS*, I was under so much pressure, like, 'Oh my god, I'm never going to be able to make another good song.' It wasn't even making music to make music. It was making music to please people or prove something.

What about this new album?

With this album, I actually was like, 'I'm done with the sophomore one. Now I can have fun again.' I was writing songs the way I did when I was 16, purely for fun. There were some beautiful moments, like, 'Whoa, it's flowing out,' which feels like catching a butterfly¹⁰ in a net.

And how have you changed from the person who made *SOUR* five years ago?

I was so young then and felt like the world was on my shoulders and that I had to have everything together. I was motivated, but there was fear. Now I feel a lot more self-assured. My passion and work ethic come from a place of positivity rather than a scared mindset.

What's allowed you to be in this new place?

For five years, I got to travel the world, perform on awards shows that had always been dreams of mine¹¹. It was trial by fire – *if I can get through this really high-pressure situation, I can get through anything*. But knowing I had people around me like you, I could go up on stage and miss a note and still be loved.

Do you think that you've got better at coping with anxiety?

I'm serving anxious forever. I was really nervous the first 10 shows of the *GUTS* tour. It was hard to be away from home and not have any sense of normalcy. I was freaking out; my nervous system was crashing out. I still get anxious. It's just different than when I was younger.

You have a tactic for when you're nervous during a performance. Care to share it with the class?

I always pick out a person and just sing to them; everyone else is just on the side. Your mom came to my show at The Forum in LA, and I did the whole show just to your mom. In my head, I was like, *Jennifer will love this*.

What did the *GUTS* tour teach you about yourself?

This sounds so cheesy, but the power of music. I had never been to the Philippines¹² in my life, and being able to go there and play in an arena of 55,000 people is so crazy¹³. I loved watching the young girls in the crowd sing songs like *traitor*¹⁴.

7. 'Awesome things keep happening to me,' Olivia later told *Cosmopolitan* about life at 23. 'I'm Lucky Girl Syndrome-ing over here.'

8. Fans speculated that Olivia used her 23rd birthday party vibes – crowns, light-pink hues – to tease her new music. She also wore light pink to the Grammys and a Chloé show at Paris Fashion Week. While vision-boarding with *Cosmopolitan*, Olivia mentioned the colour multiple times.

9. Two of Olivia and Madison's favourite love songs to cry to are Bright Eyes' *First Day Of My Life* and Nick Cave's *Into My Arms*.

10. Butterflies are a motif that Olivia used throughout the promotion of her first two albums, and her updated site logo also hints at a butterfly, making fans speculate whether the insect would be a big part of *you seem pretty sad for a girl so in love*'s imagery, too.

11. Some of these include her performance of *drivers license* at the 2021 Brit Awards, *traitor* at the 2021 American Music Awards, *drivers license* at the 2022 Grammys, and *vampire* and *get him back!* at the 2023 MTV Video Music Awards. She's also appeared twice on *Saturday Night Live*.

12. Olivia is Filipino American, and while on set for her global *Cosmopolitan* cover shoot, she went out of her way to make a point to speak directly to her fans in the Philippines, sharing her favourite karaoke song (*Bohemian Rhapsody*) and saying, 'Whenever I do karaoke, I think, *Hell yeah, I'm Filipino!*'

13. This sold-out concert at the Philippine Arena near Manila was one of the biggest of her career. Her actual biggest may have been at last year's Lollapalooza Argentina, where she performed in front of an estimated crowd of 150,000.

14. Livies remember where they were when *traitor* dropped on 21 October 2021. Its lyrics call out a past lover able to move on after only two weeks. Five years later, with 2bn Spotify streams, it's still *Cosmopolitan* HQ's favourite song to cry to.

They're 12 and they're like, 'You betrayed me.'

Whenever I talk to a 12-year-old girl, they tell me their story. They come up to me and they're like, 'My friend at school dropped me.' When you're young, you take things so personally. You're like, 'It must be my fault!' When you're older, it's different.

What's a boundary you're really proud of setting recently?

I always thought a boundary was like, 'Don't do this.' But actually, a boundary is like, 'If you do this, this is how I will react and protect myself.' It's not about controlling other people, it's about how you will respond. *If someone does this, I will be okay because I have this plan in place for what I'm going to do.* It gives you so much more confidence and self-assuredness. And honestly, setting boundaries with yourself is really important, too. Saying you're going to do something and actually doing it. For me, the phone stuff has got to go. Otherwise, I'm a brain-rot person¹⁵.

Fill in the blank: If I do _____ in the next year, I'll consider the year a success.

Even if my album flops and no one likes it, if I feel like this is real, this is me, I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be¹⁶, then it'll feel like success. But personally, I'd love to be surrounded by people I love.

What phase of love are you in right now?

Oh my god. I'm in the most important phase, the friendship love that I'm sitting right across from. Best friend, community love. Dating is just the cherry on top¹⁷.

What have you learned about love lately that you wish you'd known sooner?

Patience. Things happen the way that they're supposed to happen. It's not supposed to be white-knuckle. But also, Madison, you're the longest love of my life besides my parents. It's like that book that I'm obsessed with, the Dolly Alderton book, *Everything I Know About Love*, I do for my female friends¹⁸.

When did you realise our friendship was going to be a forever thing?

The first time we got drunk together. We must have been 15 and we snuck alcohol from someone's parents' liquor cabinet. We put it in a water bottle.

We took 'shots' out of the water bottle cap.

We were bonded forever after that moment.

I think of the way that we grew up, where we didn't have a lot of people around us who weren't praising us at every moment. So we

do really appreciate being harder on each other.

You know me inside and out and still love me anyway, and you call me on my sh*t. That's a true friend. Sometimes you're hard on me when it comes to my music.

Look, what sounds good to me sounds good to me.

I wrote a song the other day that everyone else loved and you go, 'That's so cheesy. Why would you write that?'

I didn't say it in that manner. I said, 'This is my honest listening experience. I loved this, but I was hung up on this one line because it felt cheesy to me.' Do you think we're also hard on each other when it comes to the people we're dating?

It's not us judging each other. And the partner is neither here nor there. It's us like, *Who is my friend in this relationship? How does this person make her feel about herself? Is she happy?*

And is my best friend showing up as her authentic self with this person? Do you think our relationship has informed the way you've gone into romantic relationships?

No. We probably should integrate it, to be honest. Although, you're a Gemini¹⁹ and three of the five guys I've dated in my life have been Gemini²⁰.

We really value humour with each other. We laugh like no one's business.

That is one of my stipulations if I want to date someone: *would they be okay sitting and hanging and playing cards with me and Madison?*

15. This perhaps explains why Olivia follows zero people on Instagram despite having more than 39M followers. Although she has hinted at various times that she does have a finsta.

16. These words are lyrics from the stone-cold classic *This Is Me* by Demi Lovato and Joe Jonas, featured in the Disney Channel film *Camp Rock*.

17. Olivia won't officially comment on her relationship status. She was most recently linked to actor Louis Partridge, who she called out as a 'boy from London' she was 'really, really crushing on' during her 2025 Glastonbury Festival performance. While reflecting on that time later to *Cosmopolitan*, Olivia called it one of the best days of her life. 18. Those friends, Olivia later told us, are all about group chat input: 'If something is going on and we need to make a decision about a boy or something, we text the chat and go "Jury Duty" and the jury commences and decides.'

19. Olivia famously calls herself a spicy Pisces – it's one of the few consistent pieces of branding from *SOUR* to *GUTS* to *OR3*. But you shouldn't rely on her to embody that sign's trademark discretion. 'I have such a big mouth,' she told *Cosmopolitan*. 'It's one of my worst qualities. I always forget things are supposed to be a secret. Don't tell me anything.'

20. Olivia owns up to this pattern in *drop dead*: 'Pisces and a Gemini, but I think we might go really nice together / If you let me stay the night, well, I think I might just have to stay forever.'



All clothing, Colleen Allen

'It's Cri
h

Dress, McQueen

Hair by Rena Calhoun
for Sisley Paris.
Makeup by Melissa
Hernandez for
Lancôme. Manicure by
Yoko Sakakura for OPI.
Set design by Colin
Phelan. Produced
by Alexey Galetsky
Productions. Shot
on location at Sable
Movie Ranch, provided
by Métier Maison



Angier to be
happy, but
I'm free'

If they can't hang with that, then they can't hang with me. Your partners have not been similar to me at all.

Not in any way. But I will say I'm looking for the feeling of comfort that I feel with you. And the amount of fun that I have with you, I want to have with my partner as well.

But no guy has ever made me laugh as hard as you've made me laugh. Not even a quarter.

What is a goal you have for yourself that has nothing to do with what we've talked about so far?

Since I was really young, I've been grinding. I want to have more hobbies, other things that bring me passion²¹. I have my friends²² and I have my work, but I feel like there's a third other space that I can tap into.

Which hobby is first on the list?

I am literally obsessed with yoga. I try to make you go with me all the time²³.

You're really good at it. You're doing handstands.

With songwriting, I want to get better at it always, but there's not really a clear trajectory. In yoga, it's like, *Oh, wow, I can touch my hands on the floor*. It's nice to have a binary: X amount of work equals Y amount of progress.

If you could go back to the day we met²⁴, what would you tell that Olivia? The Olivia in the yellow sweater that looked like it had mops on it.

I would tell her not to wear some of the outfits that she did. And there's probably a boy or two that I'd be like, 'Girl, you could have saved yourself the trouble.'

And what do you want this next phase of your life to feel like?

I want to feel empowered, in control of my own life, calling the shots. I want to feel really creative. I've been getting so much joy from just being around people who are smart and cool. You are the number one person in that category. So more of that. ■

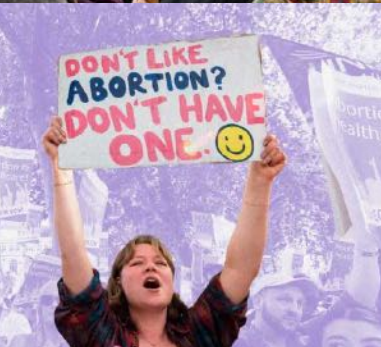
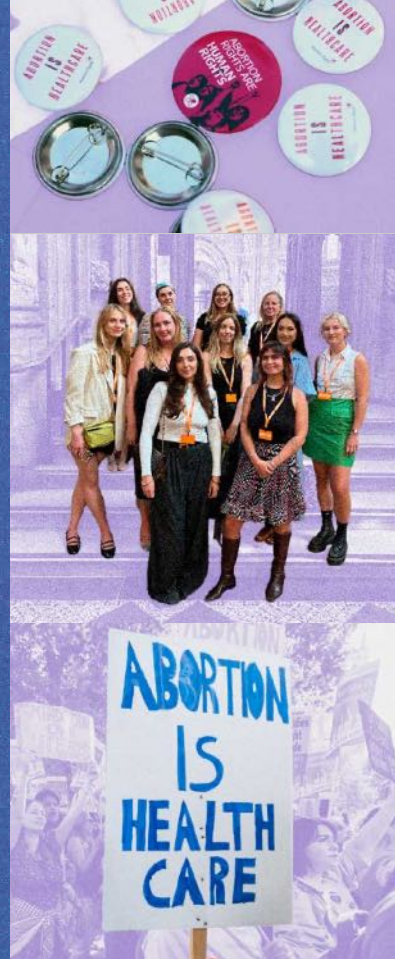
21. A few other things that Madison and Olivia currently obsess over: Wolf Alice, *Pen15* and *Heated Rivalry* (they were in the audience when actor Connor Storr hosted *Saturday Night Live*). About *Heated Rivalry*, Olivia later told *Cosmopolitan*, 'It was inspiring as a creative person. These people took a big swing – they didn't compromise and I think that's so rad – and it paid off.'

22. Along with Madison and Chappell Roan, Olivia is close with Iris Apatow and Conan Gray – photos on social media show them picnicking or drinking cosmos together, as well as vision-boarding, which was the inspiration for her *Cosmopolitan* video with Willa Bennett.

23. In terms of other potential hobbies, Olivia told *Cosmopolitan*, 'I don't know how to cook. I'm just eating a yoghurt from the fridge, microwaving some Trader Joe's stuff. That's the next step of my adulthood: learning to feed myself like a real human being.'

24. Olivia's first thought on seeing Madison way back when at that Disney audition: 'Oh my god, that girl looks so stressed. And Maddie's first impression of me was, 'This girl is so afraid.'

HOW TO FIGHT FOR YOUR RIGHTS...



AND WIN

Last year, as part of our End 1861 campaign, our abortion rights were ring-fenced... but powerful forces are still at play. What comes next?

WORDS: CATRIONA INNES
ADDITIONAL REPORTING:
JENNIFER SAVIN

It was the sort of summer's day where the heat turns on you, becoming unpleasant. Sunshine bounced off the tarmac, sweat gathered between our thighs. Yet here we were – all 40-something of us – standing, in a shade-free queue, outside the Houses of Parliament, waiting for security to let us in. Why? We were there to speak to our MPs; to tell them how vital it was that they vote in favour of Tonia Antoniazzi's NC1 amendment to the Crime and Policing bill, which would see abortion decriminalised for women in England and Wales.

We were on the final stretch of our End 1861 campaign, which saw *Cosmopolitan* UK add our voice – and yours – to the 50-plus other organisations that supported the amendment. To us, this critical step forwards felt essential. Yet, even after weeks of raising awareness, thousands of you writing to your MPs and that day's in-person mass lobby, truthfully, we had no idea how the vote would go.

We needed change to happen, as abortion was a criminal offence in England and Wales, governed by a law from 1861, before women even had the right to vote. The law had remained largely dormant and unused, but a worrying trend had begun to emerge around 2020 – women were suddenly being investigated, in brutal and distressing ways, for ending their pregnancies. These were either women who had experienced late-stage miscarriages and, for whatever reason, had been flagged as suspicious by the medical staff caring for them or, in the rare cases that they had ended their pregnancies outside of the Abortion Act's set criteria, it was in circumstances almost always involving abuse and violence, or other significantly extenuating (and traumatic) circumstances, requiring care and compassion, not legal action.

Meanwhile, most of the general public were blissfully unaware that any of this was going on. When we told people about our campaign, the first thing we would hear was, 'Wait, isn't abortion legal in the UK?' And it is: safe and legal abortions are available for most in the UK (under certain criteria, thanks to the 1967 Abortion Act) – and roughly one in three women will have one in their lifetime. But this archaic law's resurgence was extremely troubling, not just for the incredibly vulnerable women being targeted but because, since the overturn of *Roe v Wade* in the US, anti-abortion lobbyists had been funnelling a lot of cash into tactics over here. Their aim? To roll back our rights, bit by bit, until they get what they ultimately want: for abortion to be made illegal in all circumstances (in the US, 13 states have total bans, with no exceptions, even for rape or incest).

These people are not the majority, but they are loud and they are organised. And, as we made our separate ways home from Westminster on that June day last summer, we could only hope our campaign had been louder. Convening on our End 1861 WhatsApp group, we each nervously tuned into parliamentlive.tv, desperately trying to make sense of proceedings as arguments were made and votes were cast. 'Wait... is that it? Did we do it?' We shouted into the group chat. 'I don't know. I think so...?!' And we had. MPs had overwhelmingly voted in favour of the amendment.

In March this year, the amendment passed through the House of Lords. On the week we sent this issue to press, it was enshrined in law. We won! But anti-abortion activists have tried to thwart it at every step. They even used the opportunity to try to get the House of Lords to scrap pills-by-post – telemedicine that allows access to early medical abortion in the comfort of someone's own home. This is even more vital for those who live in rural areas, stopping the need to travel to a clinic. Despite a coordinated campaign to strip away this access, they didn't succeed, but it was a stark reminder that, for every move forwards we make, they come at us harder, desperate to drag us back to the draconian laws of an ancient time.

So while this is a huge victory, the fight is not over. We can't rest when powerful (and very wealthy) forces are at play. We can celebrate wins, while also getting back to work. Here's everything you need to know about what happened – and what comes next.

I saw in the news that this means that ‘abortion up to birth’ was made legal. Is this true?

This is misinformation. Anti-abortion groups want you to think that being pro-choice is an extreme position. If they paint abortion in this way, it sends the message that rights need to be rolled back. The only thing that’s changed is that women have been *removed* from the law. The framework surrounding abortion remains: there is a 24-week limit and you need the approval of two doctors. Early medical abortions (up to nine weeks and six days) can be carried out at home via telemedicine (often called pills-by-post). If you’re further along than this, you need to go to a clinic. Doctors and assistants who perform abortions out of these limits still face criminal charges.

Why are women now removed from the law?

In the past few years, more than 100 women and girls have been investigated and six have appeared in court charged with ending, or attempting to end, their own pregnancy outside of abortion law. The majority of abortions take place before 10 weeks, only around 1% happen after 20 weeks and 0.01% take place after 24 weeks. These are often down to maternal health issues; however, there are also rare and complex cases such as women in domestic abuse situations (say, someone who has

had their every move tracked by their partner so are unable to contact a clinic) or those who genuinely thought that they were under the 24-week limit (up to one in four women will experience bleeding or spotting during their pregnancy, and this can be mistaken for a period).

Then there are those who have miscarried, due to natural causes, but who have been suspected of having an illegal abortion. They have found themselves facing years-long investigations, being quizzed in their hospital beds, having their phones and laptops seized and having their children taken away from them. One woman, who had a miscarriage at 17 weeks, was arrested in the bereavement room of the labour ward. Removing women from the law stops this barbaric treatment, giving those who are grieving the space to do so in peace and not have their homes ransacked by the police. It also allows those in extreme situations to be able to seek the help they urgently need, without fear of life-imprisonment.

Who does this help?

Those who’ve been impacted by this archaic law are often too traumatised to relive what has happened, so to answer this, we spoke to Shila Keshvari, a criminal lawyer at Edward Fail, Bradshaw & Waterson, who works pro-bono with women facing abortion-related charges. ‘I can’t begin to tell you the horror stories that I’ve heard. Women calling me saying, “I’ve been the victim of domestic violence, I’ve been raped,” she says. ‘If you’re the victim of any sort of abuse, the access you have to your phone is quite limited. I made myself available 24 hours a day.’

She represented one woman who was prosecuted and had her children placed into foster care for 12 weeks while the investigation took place. The case was, eventually, dropped. ‘She still lives with the trauma. She’d had to move out of her house and the way the police treated her was appalling,’ says Keshvari. ‘Then there’s how that period impacted her children.’ The youngest woman she helped was 15 years old. Now that this law has passed, cases like this – and the women deeply harmed by them – will no longer be able to happen.





I can't begin to tell you the horror stories that I've heard

How is the situation in Northern Ireland now?

For decades, Northern Ireland had some of the most restrictive reproductive rights laws in the western world. Abortions were only allowed if a woman's life was at risk and pro-choice activists' homes would be raided for illegal abortion pills. None of this stopped abortion, instead thousands of women would travel each year, or they would get pills illegally online. Decriminalisation was introduced in late 2019. It was a landmark moment, followed by the implementation of Safe Access Zones in September 2023, becoming the first UK region to introduce them (England, Scotland and Wales have since followed suit). These new zones prohibit protest, recording and harassment around abortion services.

While both are, undoubtedly, a victory, it 'isn't just a case of the legislation being over the lines, so job done,' explains Danielle Roberts, co-convenor of Alliance For Choice, Belfast, a non-profit that campaigns for abortion rights in Northern Ireland. A number of issues remain, which restrict access to abortion – the most recent figures showed that, in 2023, 145 women still had to travel to England or Wales for an abortion. 'There's a lack of trained doctors,' explains Roberts. 'We also don't have telemedicine here, so people have to go for an appointment in person. Services are very limited – particularly access for people who are marginalised. It's not a one-size-fits-all system.'

Some people are saying it's not full decriminalisation, is this true?

Remember how we said that doctors, and those who assist abortions, outside of the framework are still subject to criminal charges? That's what makes this only part decriminalisation of abortion. 'Full decrim means the complete removal of any criminalisation for women, pregnant people and the healthcare providers,' explains human rights professor Fiona de Londras, who was a prominent advocate for abortion law reform in Ireland.

Campaigners say that England and Wales need to catch up with Northern Ireland, where up to 12 weeks abortion is available on request (without the need for two doctors). From 12 to 24 weeks, it is then permitted under certain criteria (if continuing the pregnancy poses a risk to physical or mental health). Doctors, nurses and midwives can all perform abortion services and they, alongside the women, are not penalised if an abortion takes place outside of the framework.

'Even if there's no offence for women under the criminal law [when providers are still criminalised] that can mean, especially if you get close to a gestational cut-off point, that your ability to access abortion hinges on the judgement of the healthcare professional,' adds Professor de Londras. '[Their] judgement will be coloured by their apprehension of criminal liability, and not on the preferences of the pregnant person.'

Why didn't we campaign for full decriminalisation?

Timing and an awareness of the current political climate. 'We've been advocating and in support of full decriminalisation in countries around the world,' explains Louise McCudden, head of external affairs at MSI Reproductive Choices UK. 'But [here] we've got to build up political support before we ask MPs to vote on full decriminalisation. As we can see with the scale of the backlash in response to this very moderate amendment, if parliament was presented with full decrim before they were ready, then they could have voted against it, which could be really harmful for future campaigns.'

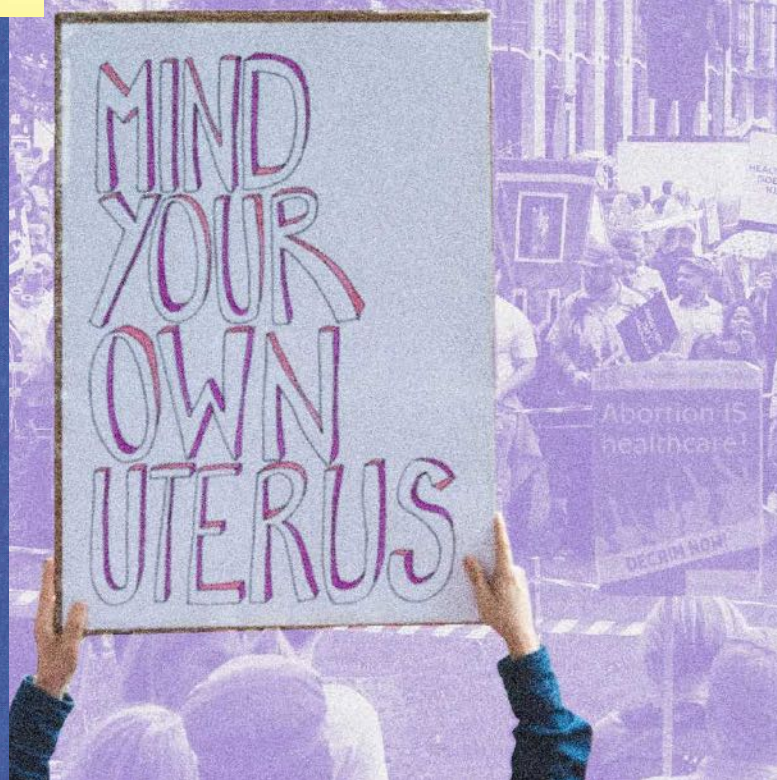
And how about in Scotland?

Scotland, while still being a part of the UK, has some devolved powers, with decisions made by the Scottish government. Abortion is one of them. They are currently looking into casting a new law, rather than following England and Wales. In November last year, they put together a panel of 13 experts to review the current law and give recommendations as to how it should be changed. Professor Anna Glasier was the chair of the group, as the government's appointed Women's Health Champion. 'Abortion should be treated legally, first and foremost, like any other healthcare matter,' the professor explains. 'We want abortion to be decriminalised, but we want it to go further.'

The group deemed current laws 'not fit for purpose' and made recommendations for reform, including completely decriminalising abortion for the woman, as in England and Wales, but also to remove the need for two doctors to sign it off, up to 24 weeks. Beyond that point, they want abortion to be available from two healthcare providers who, in good faith, think that an abortion is appropriate. 'Despite what the media says, we're not talking about abortions at 39 and a half weeks,' she says, but 'to allow a few abortions, in select cases. For example, a 14-year-old girl who has been thrown out of her house, has an unintended pregnancy and is just over the 24-weeks limit. Most people do not understand the harsh reality of some women's lives'. There will also be (if the new law is passed) a criminal offence for providers that act outside the law. However, as with all changes to the law, it's a long process. At the time of writing, Scotland was gearing up for a new election, and we have to wait until then before (hopefully) this can be brought forwards.

Are there any abortion limitations that have nothing to do with law?

'There are lots of challenges that are not just about the law,' says Rachael Clarke, head of advocacy at the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). 'We're working



on those, in some places we're making good progress and in others, maybe less so.' For example, she tells us that Wales is the worst place in the UK, currently, to get an abortion. If you're in the first 10 weeks, abortion is accessible, but after that, it's a postcode lottery. 'You might only have access to a late medical abortion far from where you live.'

The stigma surrounding abortion can also result in abortion providers struggling to find spaces for their work. 'Landlords worry that there will be protesters, or may have a moral objection,' she adds. Telemedicine has made a huge impact, but if, for whatever reason, you need a late-stage abortion, it becomes trickier. Women in Scotland are still having to travel to England for them, due to various access issues.

You mentioned anti-abortion activists earlier, how powerful are they?

Everyone we spoke to for this feature agreed: the anti-abortion lobby has a lot of money and, with that, comes power. 'We're particularly concerned about the expanding reach of Alliance Defending Freedom, an American group that campaigned to overturn Roe v Wade in the US,' says Chiara Capraro, gender justice programme director at Amnesty International UK. 'ADF's expenditure in the UK has increased by a staggering 187% between 2019 and 2023,' and is said to have reached £3.9m, according to Amnesty. ADF UK have provided legal support to four anti-abortion protesters who've been charged with encroaching on buffer zones, utilising arguments surrounding free speech. (To be clear: no one is stopping protest against abortion, it is just banned in areas where it could cause distress to those seeking them.) An ADF



It must be an alarm bell to everyone that anti-abortion organisations are investing more money in the UK

abortion to breast cancer and fertility issues. There is no evidence to support these claims. Amnesty found that nine such centres' spending rose by 46% to £6.4m, between 2019 and 2023.

What can I do?

There's a common pattern that's happened throughout history – whenever great progress is made, there's a swing backwards. There are structures and groups that benefit, financially, from having control over women's bodies and lives, and yes, they have proven themselves to be incredibly powerful. But, while it's vital to be aware of what their plans are, that's not because they are going to succeed. It's simply a case of knowing our enemy's route, so that we can thwart it. So, what we can do is use our voice to break down and challenge the stigma and misinformation surrounding abortion. 'A lot of money is coming in through the US, but our political and legal landscape is very different from there,' explains Capraro. 'We must not be complacent, but we also need to be cautious not to raise alarms unnecessarily.' The plan, she believes, is for them to slowly change public perception – using misinformation to make it look like those who are pro-choice are the ones that have the extreme views, and *their* views are reasonable. 'We need to oppose any normalisation of anti-choice discourse.'

And while there is more work to be done to break down the stigma surrounding abortion, improve access and push for the law to go further in protecting abortion rights, this latest step is a big one. Incredibly vulnerable women are now protected and can seek the help they need. It also goes to show the power of our voices and what happens when we come together and shout about what we believe in. 'Sometimes when we talk about the roll-back on abortion rights, it's said as if it's almost inevitable,' notes McCudden. 'This shows it's not. You can make progress, you can make change, even if there are people with a lot of money trying to make it difficult. This shows it's worth fighting for.' ■

spokesperson told the BBC that their work is privately funded and that they comply with regulatory rules in all the countries they are based in.

'It must be an alarm bell to everyone that these organisations are investing increasing amounts of money in the UK,' adds Capraro. 'Anti-abortion organisations play the long game – they chip away at rights bit by bit. It took 49 years to overturn *Roe v Wade* in the US, a change that is now literally costing women their lives.'

The rise in support for the political party Reform UK is also a concern. 'There's an anti-abortion constituency forming inside Reform. Nigel Farage has appointed James Orr as top adviser who is against abortion in any circumstance,' says Capraro. (*Cosmopolitan* UK contacted Reform UK for comment but hadn't received a response at the time of press.)

I've not seen much of this anti-abortion sentiment, so is it really that big?

Anti-abortion activists used to have a very visible presence – you'd see them outside abortion clinics holding graphic posters, silently praying and sometimes even accosting and shouting at women going into the clinics. This, thankfully, is now no longer allowed thanks to Safe Access Zones. This means they've had to become more tactical with their efforts.

One example is the rise of so-called 'crisis pregnancy centres' – which look, to the untrained eye, to offer impartial advice surrounding pregnancy. In fact, they actively discourage abortion and spread misinformation and stigma. A BBC *Panorama* investigation found that they have even gone as far as falsely linking





Dress; wings,
both stylist's
own. Bra,
Savage X
Fenty

Listen up! Vivian Wilson is talking

The model and queen of clapbacks on Threads (whose estranged father just so happens to be the world's richest man) is only just getting started...

WORDS: JENNIFER SAVIN ■ PHOTOGRAPHY: NATALIE TAUGER

Vivian Wilson is not your average 22-year-old.

Not merely content with walking for Gucci at Milan Fashion Week this year – which she prepped for by strutting the garden path of the LA home she shares with three friends – Wilson is also a rising cultural commentator, transgender activist and has her own line of tongue-in-cheek merch. She also happens to be the estranged daughter of the world's richest man: Elon Musk.

For the unacquainted, Musk (owner of Tesla, SpaceX and X) proves money cannot make you funny or likeable – but Wilson, in contrast, is both of those things.

On a rainy Tuesday night for me in Essex, a sunny LA morning for Wilson, she appears on our video call wearing a pale pink tracksuit, coughing, after missing our previously scheduled call due to sickness. She declines my offer to reschedule again and, initially, I'm concerned about her muted answers. 'I'm going to go get another coffee, if you don't mind. I just woke up,' she explains. 'My brain is not turned on yet. I can't, like, activate the neurons or whatever.'

She disappears, leaving me making pleasant-awkward small talk with her agent. Moments later, she reappears with a mug. The caffeine hits. Vivian Wilson is in the room.

The viral lore

To understand Wilson's rise, we have to look back at 2022. Turning 18, she filed to legally change her name and gender, stating that she no longer wished to be related to her biological father 'in any way, shape or form'. The private documents leaked. 'Then, two years later, this guy [Musk] on a podcast called me dead and I was not having it,' she explains. 'So I made a response on Threads [Meta's rival to X – which, understandably, Wilson is boycotting] and it went mega viral. Everything took off from there.'

The podcast in question was the right-wing former professor Jordan Peterson's. After Musk told Peterson he was 'tricked' into signing transition documents, claiming his child was 'killed by the woke mind virus', Wilson also responded via TikTok, letting the world know she 'looks pretty good for a dead bitch'.

Cue hair flip

Wilson has previously claimed Musk was unsupportive and rarely present during her childhood. Coming out as trans to her mother, author Justine Wilson, was vastly different – she pretended to be surprised before simply saying, 'Yeah, honey. Okay.'

Before a January 2025 *Teen Vogue* cover catapulted her into further visibility, Wilson studied at Japan's Komazawa



University, intending to teach. 'I slept on a futon because the bed seemed hard to set up and [I thought] I'm not going to be here forever. For a while, I was this niche H-list micro celebrity, just on Threads posting about politics and trans stuff. That [cover] absolutely changed my life.'

Now, her degree has been paused. 'I started getting modelling opportunities, which I'm very grateful for, and that's how I pay my rent.'

Walking her own path

Fashion Week is a brutal new frontier. 'It's an endurance test of your capabilities,' Wilson muses. 'I was practising in shoes that were too small and fucked up one of my toes. Not fun. But I don't think anyone leaves Fashion Week with toes fully intact.'

Off the runway, her style is unpretentious. 'Consumerism is getting out of hand – most of my clothes I've had for a long-ass time,' she looks around her bedroom. 'God, I need to do my laundry – but yeah, I don't buy a lot of clothes.'



Far left: top, Issey Miyake. Swimsuit, Dead Lotus Couture. Middle: dress, Acne Studios. Skirt; bra; bracelet, all stylist's own. Right: dress; earrings, both Chloé. Skirt, stylist's own



'I kind of dress like a goblin,' she laughs, crowning her aesthetic as a 'wine-drunk aunt who has exactly two cats and a parakeet [...] I wear the same shirt constantly, to the point where my publicist brings it up all the goddamn time! [But] I'll amp it up for the cameras or if I'm doing drag, which is my favourite thing.'

Last year, she made her 'Vivillainous' drag debut as an 'oil spill' in a toxic relationship with a petrol CEO, for a migrant fundraiser. But this confidence has been hard-won. 'I was made

'I was a very modest person, I wouldn't like to show my body'

fun of for my weight as a kid, [but] looking back on photos now... I was not even chubby. I was just born in Los Angeles.'

'That never really leaves you,' Wilson continues. 'It has very much affected me. I was a very modest person, I wouldn't like to show my body off at all and I always got super uncomfortable at the thought.'

An inclusive underwear campaign, a form of (literal) exposure therapy, changed everything. 'TomboyX came along and said, "We're doing an underwear shoot, we will pay you this amount of money," and I was like, "I love this company, I want to further my modelling career, this is the step I should take," and I kind of ate that up.'

When I ask how she's navigated the vulnerability of opening her body up to public comment through this work, Wilson admits, 'There were a few things that got to me. It's the internet's favourite hobby to comment on women's bodies. Especially trans women's bodies, depending on how feminine or masculine or AFAB [assigned female at birth] or DFAB

Dress, Sandy Liang.
Hair clips (worn
on dress), Beata
Rydbacken



‘It’s the internet’s favourite hobby to comment on women’s bodies’

[designated female at birth] or whatever the fuck it is. Which... I’m over it.’ So much so, she has also shot for Rihanna’s Savage X Fenty lingerie brand (and again, ate).

Still, while Wilson carves her own path, the internet stubbornly drags her past into the present. Is it hard consistently being referenced as ‘Elon’s kid’? ‘There’s not much I can do about it, so who cares? It’s part of my story, but it’s not the future of my story.’

She pauses, laughing. ‘The media training is finally [working]... [My team] were like, “Girl, we need to get you media trained!” and I was like, “No, I don’t want to!” They were like, “You should not answer this question.”’

Asked how she processes negative Musk-related comments, she answers honestly: ‘I don’t. Which is probably not the morally or politically correct answer. But [to quote Kourtney Kardashian’s response to her sister’s extreme response to losing an earring] it’s very “Kim, there’s people that are dying!”’

Fighting the good fight

This perspective – that greater injustices are at play and should be the focal point – is shaped by the extreme wealth Wilson was born into, and her choice to reject it. ‘It was a very strange experience, very isolating... the upper class have their own private schools, social circles and whatever.’



Styling: Natalie
Tauger. Hair:
Ginger Leigh Ryan
for R+Co. Makeup:
Chloe Grae for
MAC Cosmetics

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: SAMANTHA ADLER, SENIOR
ENTERTAINMENT DIRECTOR: MAXWELL LOSGAR, VISUAL
DIRECTOR: SCOTT LACEY, SENIOR VISUAL EDITOR: EMILY
ADAR, ASSOCIATE VISUAL EDITOR: ALY ZELTSER

She initially attended Ad Astra, a secretive school on the SpaceX campus, before transferring to Crossroads, a traditional hub for LA's elite.

'I have unlearned a huge amount, but even as a child I was like, "This is a bit gauche," she reflects. 'I remember being very young and seeing homelessness and feeling sick to my stomach. People would get on me for being like a dramatic little child. But no, I was right to be a dramatic little shit about that.'

Wilson also recalls observing a 'level of detachment from reality itself, in favour of wealth and this illusion that you *deserve* it while people are sleeping on the

streets. Oh, and also Santa Claus is real'. But, she adds with self-awareness, 'I also know that, like, I was a rich kid, I should not be lecturing anyone on materialism.'

Has immense wealth warped people around her? 'Absolutely yes. I have seen that shit firsthand, it will change you, and the desire for power corrupts people from within. It is cartoonish. Achieving that and wanting more is a never-ending cycle of greed and gluttony, where nothing is enough and you kind of go insane. It turns you into someone different. Which is honestly one of my biggest fears.'

When I point out that humour seems to be a primary defence mechanism when it comes to more difficult subjects, Wilson's eyes mock-widen. 'That is so rude for you to completely clock my entire shit like that on a Tuesday morning at 11.09am,' she laughs, before becoming semi-serious. 'Is it a response to talking about harder subjects? Yes, obviously. Cat's out of the bag with that one.'

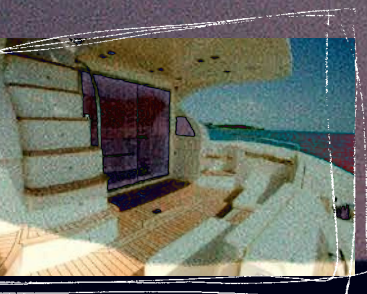
She credits queer culture and Discord servers for her impeccable comedic timing. 'I am not the best at talking about certain subjects, especially uncomfortable ones. It's both unconscious and conscious. I do this all the time, especially in my personal life,' she says, before caveating she has no mental health advice to share beyond 'therapy is good' and muses that she should probably pick it up again. 'Life is more bearable when you don't take anything seriously. The world is a circus, just become a clown. That makes no sense. Whatever.'

Behind the scenes, she remains fiercely private. 'I'm pretty introverted and chronically online. I don't think people would guess that. [On a typical day I'm] probably playing video games, sketching, doomscrolling. I like languages, so maybe watching something in French.' Romance is similarly off the table. 'I'm not on any dating apps, I made sure to delete that when I got famous. Y'all are never catching me slipping,' she says. 'I don't want romance, it's scary. I would like to grow more before getting into another relationship.'

But publicly, she is ready for a fight. As the appetite for elite accountability surges, Wilson – the ultimate insider-turned-outsider – hasn't held back, calling out bigotry, corruption and abuses of power at every opportunity. The idea of a trans woman tearing down the tech overlords dynasty she was born into feels like blockbuster fiction. But how does the imagined hero at the centre of it all picture that playing out? 'Bringing down the oligarchy would be tea, but I don't know if that's feasible for a [20-something]-year-old. I'm just living my life and speaking out on issues that are important to me.'

As her own influence and wealth now creeps up through her own making, Wilson hovers to reflect on the irony. 'I don't really want power, I wanted to be a teacher,' she pauses. 'I guess I am gaining power... It'll be a testament to my character as to what I do with it.' As our call wraps, I leave with the impression she'll use it wisely. ■

Cosmopolitan and Sourcebooks have partnered up on an exciting book imprint: Cosmo Reads. Get ready to discover all your new favourite books at CosmoReads.com



Saratoga Schaefer

Saratoga Schaefer's debut psychological thriller, *Serial Killer Support Group*, was a twisted, can't-put-it-down experience. The author's upcoming Cosmo Reads release, *The Last Time We Drowned*, doubles down on the mind games and mystery as it follows protagonist Charlie Engles, who seems to win the chance of a lifetime: a spot on the *Empress*, an influencer-only yacht that just a special few get invited to experience. With dark secrets chasing her, Charlie sees this as the perfect escape. But not even being at sea can keep her safe...



Exclusive extract



Where

The Last Time We Drowned

A Cosmo Reads book
by SARATOGA SCHAEFER



he heat is so wet and oppressive I can taste it on my lips. It's the flavour of mildew and damp bathing suits. Beads of moisture line the back of my neck and the inside of my waistband.

Even my earlobes are damp.

The plastic cup that holds my iced coffee is warped and soft, as if it, too, is melting. Condensation glitters on its surface. I can relate. I'm not even moving and I'm sweating. There's heat in my lungs, my rib cage, and the lining of my stomach, a heavy presence that settles like the spray from fumigation. It's the kind of soggy, uncomfortable humidity that reminds me of a damp towel.

I spent two hours carefully picking out an outfit, trying to do my makeup, and attempting to style my pixie cut so that it didn't look flat, only for it all to be ruined by the muggy air fifteen seconds after I got off the bus. Coming from Wisconsin in November, I thought the Florida temperatures would be a relief, but this is worse than the cold. It's so swampy here that by the time I pulled my bag out from underneath the bus, my short-sleeved button-up top was already showing pit stains, and strands of hair were sticking to my forehead.

I walked thirty-five minutes from the bus depot to get to

the café, sweat running in rivulets down my back. My duffle bag dug into my shoulder, leaving a welt on my skin. By the time I slunk through the door of the café, I was sure I had destroyed any dignity I had left. I grabbed a high-top table, ordered an iced coffee the colour of sand, and thought about bailing on the interview entirely.

But I came all this way. Besides, I don't want to move. I'm pretty sure if I walk back outside now, there will be nothing left of me except a sweat slick on the sidewalk.

I run a finger down the side of the cup, swiping away condensation droplets, enjoying the brief chill.

The café where I'm supposed to meet Vivienne Rockland isn't air-conditioned, but it has an astounding view of the undulating turquoise waves of the Florida Bay.

The smell of the ocean pours in from the open windows, suppressing the musk of coffee beans. Salt overpowers the air as I sip my drink.

Florida is the worst, I think as I stare at my six-dollar coffee, trying not to ruminate on the fact that between the flight from Milwaukee to Miami and the bus ticket from Miami to the Keys, my bank account is only a few dollars above double digits.

'Oh!' An involuntary gasp comes from a young woman two tables away. Her face is buried in a book,



and as my eyes snag on the familiar shiny blue cover, my stomach cramps.

A different kind of sweat collects along my temples and between my breasts; it's cold and clammy. I can't see the entire cover from this angle, but I don't need to. I know it. It's seared in my brain for all of eternity – the metallic cerulean scales, the elegant typeface of the title. The name stamped at the bottom, big and proud.

The woman reading draws the book even closer to her face, and her cheeks grow pinker and pinker. She must have gotten to the sex scene everyone on TikTok keeps talking about. Before *A Song of Scales and Salt* was published, everyone wondered about the mechanics of the promised steamy romance – how do mermaids fuck anyway? Fish sex isn't very hot; it's mostly the female expelling eggs into the water so the male can fertilise them. But the biggest new romantasy delivered. People couldn't shut up about it. And I couldn't escape it.

I get up, adjusting my seat so the woman and the book are no longer in my sight line.

Pulling out a compact mirror, I try to adjust my hair so it looks less wet as I wait for my heart rate to go down.

Don't think about it. Everything is fine. Concentrate on the matter at hand.

At least my mascara isn't running. I usually wear minimal makeup, but I've seen the girl I'm supposed to meet – she's always in full glam, so I painted my face a little more than usual today.

I check the time. I got here early, but at this point, Vivienne Rockland is very late.

As I unlock my phone, a notification pops up: 'You have a new memory!' It's a selection of photos from last year. Sage and I with our faces pressed together, sticking our tongues out for the camera. A portrait of Sage on her boat, hair whipping in the wind, Lake Michigan glimmering in the background. Her laptop resting on her knees. One final shot of our notebooks side by side on a coffee table, pens askew next to them. It was one of our final writing sessions, during which I jotted down haphazard quotes and Sage scribbled furiously, refusing to show me her work, saying it wasn't ready yet.

My stomach churns as my hands get hot. Why does it seem like our phones are programmed to show us the most painful memories in our camera roll?

I want to delete the photos of Sage, but I am torn. They're all I have left of her. And the memories won't be deleted. I know – I've tried.

Stop this. I tear myself away from the photos, hastily dabbing at my lower eyelids in case I messed up my makeup.

Where's Vivienne Rockland?

I tap through my phone, overanalysing her last email to

me with the location and time of our interview, trying to psych myself up to send her a check-in, when the air in the café changes. The spark of lightning before a storm.

When I look up, there she is.

Vivienne Rockland is shorter than I expected, and her face is rounder than it appears in all her photos, but otherwise she looks the same as she does on her social media: shiny black hair, heavily made-up face, perfectly drawn-on eyebrows, and a pert little nose.

Spotting me right away, Vivienne rushes over to my table, ignoring the double takes from the other café guests as she moves through the space like she owns it. It's not that she's a recognisable influencer with well over a million followers; it's not the immaculate plastic surgery that accentuates her chest and ass; it's not the neon-orange athleisure set she's wearing – it's her energy. It radiates off her in waves.

'Oh my God, hi! I'm so embarrassed!' she says as she

slides into the chair opposite me, eyes flickering as she takes in my muddled appearance, shabby duffle bag, and half-drunk coffee.

'I'm never late. Our usual captain got sick, so the ride from Ligia to Islamorada was super delayed.

I hope you weren't waiting long.'

Her voice is pitchy and breathless, but I know from watching her videos that her cadence isn't from rushing – this is how she talks.

'No worries! I haven't been waiting long,' I lie, trying to match

her energy, infusing sunbeams into my voice. 'It's nice to meet you!'

How is she so dry? She doesn't seem to be affected by the heat or humidity at all. Her makeup is perfect, her hair is floaty and thick. The stares of other customers, especially the men, waft around her. Vivienne flips a curtain of hair back from her face and giggles. I inhale a wave of flowery perfume from her hair products as her locks fall back down on her shoulders.

'It's so amazing to meet you, Charlie! Or should I call you @ChaptersWithCharlie?' She winks.

Please don't, I want to say. Instead, I smile and say, 'Charlie is fine. Do you want a drink or something?'

'I'm okay for now,' Vivienne says, crossing her arms and leaning over the high-top table so that her cleavage presses together.

I get the sense she knows people are watching her. There's something about her that is...performative. But I don't care. I don't care if she strips naked and does cartwheels; this is my only viable option. I need this job, as nontraditional as it might be.

'Well, I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity, Vivienne. It really means a lot.'

'Oh my God, please, call me Viv. And it's no problem. Don't even think of this as a formal job interview. We're gonna chat, get to know each other, 'kay?'

'I get the sense she knows people are watching her. There's something about her that is... performative'

Bullshit. This is the Big One, the most important interview of my life.

As if she can read my thoughts, Viv says, 'I won't waste any more of your time, so let's get started! First off, why do you want this position? I know we chatted a little on our Zoom call about you wanting to expand your audience and reach new demographics, but c'mon. Give me the real reason.' She waggles her brows at me and leans forward.

'Well, I feel like what all of you are doing on *Empress* is a unique opportunity to leverage my personal brand and get to the next level,' I say, reciting the carefully scripted answer I drafted on the plane ride to Florida. 'I mean, it's brilliant too. A yacht full of influencers with various niches living together, promoting their brands? It's like reality TV, except it has the potential to be beneficial. I think my focus on literature and helping people prioritise reading could be beneficial to us both.'

You used the word 'beneficial' twice, you moron, I chastise myself. This is why you're not a writer.

Viv grins and then opens her mouth wide, pretending to yawn. She splays her perfectly manicured hands on the high-top and licks the corner of her lip. 'Firstly, *Empress* isn't just a yacht. It's more like a...mansion on the water. That can sometimes move. But seriously, come on, Char. That's a canned answer if I've ever heard one. You're my last interview. And I'll be honest, you're the only book influencer we're looking at, and that makes you interesting to me. But something I value is honesty. That's a rule for the girls on *Empress*; we live authentically and share our authentic lives with our followers.'

I work hard to keep my face under control as I listen. Forcing someone to be honest doesn't sound too authentic to me, but there is something captivating about Viv that I can't deny. I find myself leaning toward her when she talks, holding my breath so my exhales don't mute any of her words.

'Come on, give it to me. The truth.' She reaches out, and, before I can stop her, her slender tanned fingers are wrapped around my right hand. Her index finger traces a little circle on the inside of my wrist, sending a shiver up my spine. 'Tell me the truth.' For a moment, her voice changes. It becomes deeper, more commanding.

There's something intoxicating about her. Something powerful. And I'm desperate. Hearing her mention other interviews, other influencers, ones who probably have more followers and more experience than me, has triggered a flood of panic. This opportunity could be slipping away like the beads of sweat that are racing down my shoulders toward the floor.

'I need the money,' I blurt out.

'Go on.' Viv's finger stills, but she keeps hold of my wrist, nodding for me to continue.

'My student loans. Bills. Everything. My roommate...' I swallow, forcing away thoughts of Sage. 'I don't have a roommate anymore, and I'm having trouble finding someone to replace her, so I'm paying for the whole apartment myself. It's way out of my budget.'

Everything is out of my budget, including this trip. I wonder if I'll be compensated for the flight and bus ride. I didn't think to ask Viv before now. I wanted to look like a team player, but maybe that was a mistake. My mother taught my sister and I the value of a hard-earned dollar. Despite being a single mum, she worked her ass

off, saving up enough money as an anesthesiologist that when she died, her assets split between Emily and me, half of my college tuition was covered. My mother's cancer didn't let her see me graduate, but she got me there nonetheless. Yet school and simply existing these days is expensive, and I ran out of funds.

'I need this, honestly,' I admit, thinking of my remaining student loans, the pile of bills on my kitchen table. My outbox chock-full of hundreds of job applications with no response.

Viv releases my wrist so suddenly that I'm off-balance, as if her weight

on my body was an anchor keeping me steady. 'And your current job? Does it not pay enough?'

'I was working two jobs to make ends meet. I lost them both when...' I can't help the crack that interjects itself into the middle of my voice. I try again: 'My roommate died. It was...it was sudden. We were friends. I couldn't... function, after.'

Viv's face softens. Her lips twist sympathetically, and she coos, 'Oh, baby, I'm sorry. Listen, I know how it feels to lose someone you love. It's okay, Char.'

I try not to bristle. I can't bring myself to ask Viv to not call me that. Only Sage ever called me Char. But if Viv gives me this job, she can call me whatever she wants.

'It's been hard.'

'Of course. I had no idea.' Viv's face creases in pity, but her makeup is too thick to show her full expression. Her empathy is muted by Botox and foundation. 'I'm sorry.' She reaches out and grabs my hand again, patting it. 'You know, besides the luxury and the generous pay and the increase in followers, there's something else *Empress* can provide you with.'

'What?'

She smiles. 'Family. The girls on *Empress* are all close. We're each other's best friends. Whatever you're going through, whatever trauma you have inside, they will be there for you.'

I pause. A circle of women I could be friends with. That's appealing. Almost as much as the money. Sage and I were

**'A circle of women
I could be friends
with. That's
appealing.
Almost as much
as the money'**



close, but after everything went down, I was left alone. I tend to have a single focused, intense friendship instead of fifty casual acquaintances. It was Sage who was the social, connected one. Without her, I was adrift. First, we stopped being friends, then she died. And spending the past three months holed up in my apartment beset by anxiety hasn't exactly been conducive to meeting new people.

Sometimes you don't recognise how lonely you are until it's explicitly pointed out.

Viv leans back, crossing her arms, appraising me. 'I like you, Char. I think this would work.'

I meet her eye, unable to hide my surprise. 'Wait, really?'

'Yeah. You were honest. I told you—that's important to me. And I've already vetted you. I know your analytics are solid. You clearly didn't buy a bunch of bots. Our other girls have way more engagement and sponsorships, but truthfully, 50K followers for a book influencer isn't bad. Especially on Instagram, which is struggling to keep up with the newer apps. And we can help you level up. In return, you bring a...diversity I think our group needs.'

I pull back slightly. 'Diversity? I'm white.'

'But not straight,' Viv says bluntly. 'And your look.' She gestures to my short hair, the black and grey botanical sleeve tattoos that cover both my arms. 'It's something we're lacking. I want people to take us seriously. Not think we're a bunch of Insta thots

partying all day long. Your vibe would help with that.'

I can't decide if this is a backhanded compliment or not. 'Uh, okay.'

'So, do you want to join us?'

I gape. 'Really? You're offering me the job? Right now?'

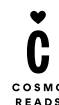
A paid position living on a luxury yacht docked off a private island in the Keys with a group of other influencers. Was this happening? I hoped, of course, but I hadn't let myself think it was actually possible. The last time I did that, my lifelong dream was crushed like a flower petal under a combat boot.

As if summoned, the gilded, embossed title of *A Song of Scales and Salt* glints in my peripheral vision. The woman who was reading it earlier has left her table, the book tucked against her chest as she moves to the door. There's a dreamy expression on her face.

My abdomen clenches.

The woman's forearm doesn't quite cover the author's name, and I stare as it passes me by, standing out against the blue scales: SAGE TARTNET.

'I think you'd be a great fit,' Viv says, pulling my attention back to her smiling face. The woman holding the book disappears out the door behind her. 'I don't like wasting time. You're here, your shit is here, my boat is in the harbour. Ligia Island is forty minutes away. You said you need the money. Why wait? You in, or what?' ■



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THE RISE OF dating *for clout*

While most people are scrolling the apps looking for love, some are turning to IMDb – and, as Amber Rawlings discovered, it's really not that hard to snag a date with a (D-list) celeb

'm lying in his bed, post-coital, watching him stalk back to the kitchen for a few more slices of the pizza we ordered. He shoves it down while surveying his kingdom from the window. He's stark naked.

I'd met let's-call-him-Felix*, an actor, earlier that evening for a date of sorts. As we walked down an east London canal – Felix explaining how easy he finds it to lose weight for roles, me clocking his dirty coat and unkempt hair – I considered making my excuses to leave. Maybe shagging someone 'famous' wasn't worth it after all.

But over drinks later, Felix delivered. He told me how he'd requested that his boner be taped down during a sex scene with a prominent actress. How he'd just booked the kind of leading role that was sure to make him blow up.

Whether or not he became just a notch on the bedpost, I now had material that sweetened the deal.

Fine, I'll stay.

After more pints, he suggests dinner – at his, obviously. I pick at the pizza, worried my mouth contorts in an ugly way with each bite, while he wolfs it down. Next thing I know, he's picked me up, placed me on the sofa, and is on top of me.

I leave while Felix is still sprawled in bed. He mumbles something about hoping to see me again. It's raining outside. My hair is dishevelled. The phrase 'walk of shame' comes to mind, but I have a smirk on my face. 'What you don't know,' I think to myself as I pass people on the street, 'is that I've just slept with an actor who's been in *Harry Potter*.'

The next time I see Felix, it's on a billboard. 'I shagged him,' I say, nudging my friend.

The Instagram method

My brief rendezvous with Felix happened while I was in the midst of what I'd later dub 'the Instagram method'. The main aim? To go on dates and/or have sex with as many famous people as possible. During the course of just over six months, I managed nine (and attempted many others). I cycled through actors, buzzy chefs and minor celebrities, each conquest feeding into the next. If they weren't famous, or at least in the realm of fame, I wasn't interested.

The more I spoke about my mission, the more I learned I'm not the only one practising the Instagram method. There's even a dating buzzword for it: 'throning'. Across major cities – London, New York, LA (after all, we do have to be where the celebrities are for this to work) – there are hordes of women and men who date only for clout.

But while we're paying homage to the groupies and wannabe WAGs that came before us, our mission is a little different. Groupies sleep with musicians for the love of the music, almost as if they're shagging the songs themselves. WAG wannabes are often there for the lifestyle. Their



hunt is for a specific genre of celebrity and what that brings. For us, it's less about who they are, and more about the story that they can bring. It's about being able to point at billboards and say, 'I shagged them.' Being able to see them pop up in a film and know what their bedroom looks like. Those moments can be better than the sex itself.

After speaking to others who've done the same, I wanted to understand: can a relationship with a famous person ever feel real? What happens when we date 'for the plot' instead of for connection? And what does the Instagram method reveal about modern dating culture?

Sowing the seeds

Growing up, I'd watch *E! News* with my mum. I'd flick through her celebrity gossip mags. Then there were the four years I studied film at university. All of this is to say: I'm most definitely tapped into the rich and famous. My brain functions a bit like IMDb. Still, I didn't expect to find myself, a writer living in London, dating 'celebrities' almost exclusively.

It began incidentally. I'd just come out of a three-year relationship and was dipping into my dating archives as a means to soothe the pain. There, after a lengthy scroll through my DMs, was Theo*.

When I followed Theo, an actor and comedian, I hadn't expected him to reciprocate the favour. I'd watched a film he starred in and fancied him in passing. It was an idle crush. But when I got dumped, I immediately arranged a date.



‘I managed nine – actors, chefs and minor celebs’

We got drinks at my local pub. Filled with esoteric knick-knacks and flanked by good-looking bar staff, it was trendy without being too trendy. The date didn’t lead anywhere. We never even had sex – I was glad about that when he later appeared in a deeply embarrassing advert. Something shifted in me, though. Armed with the knowledge that I could pull someone like Theo, I wondered who else was in the realm of possibility.

So, off I went. If I saw someone I fancied on my TV, I’d track down their Instagram, give them a follow, then like a few choice pictures – preferably the shirtless ones, to signal what I was after. What started as performance became something of a habit, and over six months I reached out to maybe 30 semi-famous men. Around half responded. Some were so eager that it was almost comical. Others I’d convert to text, only to struggle getting them over the final hurdle of actually

meeting up. Nine materialised into actual dates or hook-ups. It was a surprisingly high conversion rate considering that, at points, I was DMing just about anyone. I even had a pop at JFK kin Jack Schlossberg – it probably needn’t be said, but he didn’t reply.

Like Theo, Sam* was someone who had lingered in my DMs pre-Instagram method. Emboldened by my first brush with fame, I arranged some drinks. Sam was a business owner. Part of the allure wasn’t just those in his periphery (London socialites who’d throw the kind of weddings covered by *Vogue*), but his huge house. One morning he left for work and I pottered around, envisaging a life between its tastefully painted walls.

There was something more tangible between Sam and me. Hypothetical invites to destination weddings were certainly a factor, but it felt like more than just a shag. When he suddenly upped sticks and left the country to ‘find himself’, I was left in the dust. Two months gone in the blink of an eye. I sought revenge by turning the Instagram method on a chef-stroke-content-creator he knew.

It was with the chef, let’s-call-him-James*, that I realised how easy this was. I would say I’m conventionally attractive. At the very least, I have a ‘good Instagram’: a mix of hot photos and work-related posts that made me the perfect bait.

Quick follow, a few likes, then a message appeared: ‘Are we doing Instagram flirting?’ We went for drinks at a fancy wine bar. James reeled off the upcoming trips in which he’d been paid to gallivant about making aesthetically pleasing Instagram videos. I didn’t fancy him. I actually thought his tongue was a bit too big for his mouth. Still, as a fixture in London’s ‘hot chef’ scene, he was worth pursuing. I mean, he had a cookbook in the works.

James invited me back to his – he had some mussels that needed cooking. While the pasta was boiling, after I feigned enough interest in how quickly he could chop garlic, he started kissing me.

I recounted everything to my colleagues the next day. A few weeks later, one of them told me that James did the exact same thing with another girl – the mussels were his schtick.

Was I using them, or were they using me? It largely felt like a mutually beneficial set-up. One where they, clearly eager for a quick no-strings-attached fling, seemed more than happy to indulge my not-so-subtle advances without the need for context or questions. It was a mutual ego-boost. Or so I thought.

By the time it came to Matthew*, I was being increasingly strategic. IMDb had made a list of up-and-coming British actors and I attempted to work my way through them, starting with him. I’d intended Matthew to be just a ‘f*ck and chuck’, but I was lulled into thinking we had something more. He took me to nice restaurants and the theatre, which felt like gestures of intent – like he was happy to be seen with me. We’d be hand-in-hand on a step-and-repeat in a few months...

But somewhere between the cancelled dates and me making a desperate five-hour journey down to Stratford-upon-Avon (he was doing his first Shakespeare play), it became clear that we weren’t on equal footing. We spent a bittersweet morning at Soho Farmhouse, then I was back in London, on the phone to my mum in tears. I picked apart what now felt like a pity invite. Matthew had mentioned a famous former fling: by virtue of her profile, she was a better match. I was filler. Perhaps I should have learned from it, but I didn’t. It was simply on to the next.

I'm particularly proud of Jack*. At the time, I'd been working for a magazine and we had been pulling together its next issue. When an actress was on set, shooting her cover story, she'd recounted her recent break-up to the crew. The news got to me under the guise of mere gossip, but I lodged it in a different part of my brain. He was ripe for the picking.

Jack followed me back just hours later. I held up my phone screen to a huddle of colleagues down the pub. There was a collective gasp. Fast-forward a few weeks and we were snogging on the streets of Soho. It didn't last. Our second date ended with Jack walking me to a Tube station – a pointed way of showing we'd be going our separate ways, while I'd thought we were heading back to his. The message saying we were 'romantically incompatible' came during the journey home.

As time wore on, the promise of a good story no longer felt enough. What started out feeling like a power move had slowly morphed into something else. I was just a shag (albeit sometimes a repeated shag). It was a recipe for disaster. And when, despite my best efforts, nothing ever came of my rendezvous with these men, my self-esteem was bruised rather than boosted. Why did I keep going back for more?

The madness behind the method

'Hinge is really shit, so I'll just take people from prime time TV,' 28-year-old Ciara* tells me of her own version of the Instagram method. Ciara is an old friend of mine. We met at university – even then, her 'thing' was being somewhat outrageous. With an Instagram profile full of hot pictures that place a particular emphasis on her bum, it's not surprising that Ciara was able to reel them in.

Ciara would spy someone she fancied (in this case, a TV presenter), reach out via Instagram, and, more often than not, they went on a date. The TV presenter was a 'conquest', she says. It was less about attraction and more about the sheer fact that she could. 'I was like, "Oh my god, he was on my TV and now we're having a glass of wine in a posh hotel in Notting Hill."' Ciara never took it that seriously. 'I couldn't imagine myself being like, "I'm going to marry him,"' she explains.

Let's be honest – dating is the pits. Whether it's 'ghosting' or 'breadcrumbing', women so often find themselves in the passive role. But the idea of dating for clout turns that on its head. The power dynamic is balanced. The woman might even be in control. It's a 'prosthesis of identity,' explains clinical psychologist Arianna Masotti, where 'the famous partner can become an extension of the self'. She adds that 'being with them can temporarily boost self-worth. It's less about the person and more about what they represent. Plus, if everyone in the world wants this person, but they choose you, you must be great, right?' It also allows us to sidestep the romantic risks that come with 'normal' dating. If you're just in it for the plot, you can't get hurt. That's the theory, anyway.

'I felt like I was in *Almost Famous*,' explains 25-year-old Abbie*, who I met while working at a magazine. I'd had her pegged as someone who only did serious relationships, but it turned out she'd had a fleeting romance with a musician she'd

fancied since being a teenager. It's not that it was cinematic. On their first date, Jim* had turned up to the pub with a 'plastic bag full of his sweaty gym clothes'. When Abbie went round to his, she recalls not being able to see the floor for the mess. 'I was gonna go outside for a cigarette and he was like, "Just have one here." I asked if there was an ashtray. He was like, "No, but here's a can." It was just a can of Coke.'

Abbie was 21, Jim was in his 30s. If it were anyone else, she tells me, the whole thing would have been 'disgusting'. 'But because it was him,' Abbie continues, 'I was like, that's amazing. Everything was just another little detail that I couldn't wait to tell my friends.'

When things ended – he invited her to his gig only to be caught with another girl – Abbie decided that the lifestyle wasn't for her. It *had* been an 'ego boost', though.

Years down the line, Abbie reconnected with Jim. But whatever she'd felt at 21 had all but dissipated. 'As soon as I sat down next to him, I realised that the allure was gone,' she explains. 'This affair I was once very proud of was now something I felt really ashamed of.'

It was a similar story for 24-year-old Sarah*, a London-based photographer, who met Connor* while shooting his band. What began as something that made her 'feel a bit more confident' quickly gave way to a power imbalance. 'I think he really loved making me feel "less than,"' she tells me. Connor would flit between being cruel and jarringly affectionate. One moment he'd be berating Sarah for eating too much, the next he'd be asking for forgiveness, imploring that she 'forget all this just happened'. I ask whether she thinks Connor respected her. 'Um, no,' she replies.

Sarah wasn't dating 'for the plot', so to speak. She really liked Connor. But for dating expert Persia Lawson, getting caught up in the narrative often means 'you stop asking the boring but essential questions, such as, "Do I feel safe?", "Am I respected?", "Can I relax here?"' You're low on discernment. Looking back, Sarah recognises that Connor 'clearly wanted this rockstar life. For me, it was like, okay, it's cute to have a rockstar life, but not a rockstar relationship.'

When I speak to Maddie*, 27, I'm brought back to the question of who was using who when I set out on my Instagram method. As a polyamorous woman who makes content about sexuality on Instagram, semi-famous men feel emboldened to slide into Maddie's DMs. When she slept with Daniel*, an actor from a well-loved sitcom, she refused a specific sexual request. 'Because he didn't get that thing from me, he ended it,' she explains. I tell Maddie that Daniel had tried it on with me, too. I explain that, because of his character in the sitcom, I'd thought he'd be really sweet. 'He's sweet,' she replies. 'But he's prolific.'

Would I have obliged whatever it was Daniel wanted? I think back to necking off with Jack in public. Felix's penis in my mouth, no questions asked. It's not a promising hypothetical.

Nothing detrimental happened to Maddie, but she was left with the feeling that she'd been 'lowering [her] standards'. It begged an obvious question with an even more obvious answer: would I have gone for these men if they weren't famous? No. 'In the end, I was like, I really didn't need to do that,' Maddie explains. 'What's the point?'

In terms of actual romantic potential, I guess there was no point. It was that very pointlessness that made it so easy, and so appealing. But forgoing 'real' romance for something that's intrinsically shallow? It's easier said than done. Selling myself a certain narrative didn't make the rejection sting any less.



‘Everything was another detail I couldn’t wait to tell my friends’

*NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED

Sure, I got stories. I curated experiences that I’ll put in my memoir one day. How long can you ride that high, though? I was buzzing after sleeping with the guy from *Harry Potter*, still giddy when I phoned my friends the next morning. But that quickly faded. Sitting on my living room floor with the beginnings of a UTI, I already felt slightly hollow.

A trophy life

I’m aware I sound borderline sociopathic. It’s not as if I’m plucking my nihilistic approach from thin air, though. As Dr Masotti explains, ‘We’re living in a Deliveroo era of dating: endless options delivered to our doorstep, which paradoxically makes commitment harder.’ She adds: ‘At the first defect, there’s always someone fitter, hotter, or seemingly better.’ Or someone who had a small role in *Industry*.

The Instagram method is just the logical end point – the final boss of treating people as commodities. It’s the toxic trap of our contemporary dating culture. But there’s a niggling, unspoken part: even when we think we’re resistant to the messaging around us, it seeps through. Women are so often told that our value lies in two things – what we look like and who we date. Dating someone famous is the ultimate validation on both fronts. Eventually, I realised I didn’t want to be a trophy seen only through someone else’s eyes. I wanted success defined by more than just being in someone else’s orbit. I wanted validation that came from within.

Nearly two years down the line, remnants of the Instagram method still haunt me. My friend Robbie jokes that whenever he searches for a hot young actor on Instagram, he’ll find I’ve been there first, a trail of thirsty likes in my wake. The madness even extended beyond my usual targets – after binge-watching *Nighty Night*, I set my sights on Angus Deayton. At 70, unsurprisingly he doesn’t have Instagram, so I settled for following his son instead. Needless to say, he didn’t take the bait. Watching what the Deayton family were up to for Christmas last year, I wanted to give myself a retrospective slap.

As for where I ended up? Funnily enough, I’m in a relationship with Theo. We worked through the cringe advert thing – I actually think it was a vital career move. Next week’s premiere should be good. I’m manifesting a ‘red carpet hard launch’ moment.

Nah, only joking. My boyfriend, Ed, is decidedly non-famous, and I like it that way. He respects me, treats me as an equal, and I won’t be sitting through a modern retelling of *Pericles* any time soon.

Old habits die hard, though. I found Ed on Instagram. ■



Make a splash

All aboard, next stop paradise! Stuck on what to pack in your carry-on? We've got the answers...

PHOTOGRAPHY: LINDSAY ELLARY ■ STYLING: REBECCA JANE HILL



Summer sunshine is the perfect excuse to inject colour, pattern and texture into your wardrobe – all at once.

MIKI (left) wears: top; shorts, both Paolina Russo. Sunglasses, Oakley. Necklace, Briwok. Shoes, New Balance. CALLIE (right) wears: top; shorts, both Diane von Furstenberg. Sunglasses, Valentino. Earrings, Atri

Retro is in – think old-school trucker caps, running shorts and slim sneaker silhouettes.

Top, Paolina Russo. Shorts, Mother. Socks, model's own. Hat, Aujord. Bracelet, Isabel Marant. Necklace, Hera. Shoes, Converse. Pareo (used as towel), Alémais



The secret to staying cool in the heat? Cut-out jeans and asymmetric tees.

Top, Di Petsa. Jeans, Leslie Amon at Koibird. Hat, Zara. Earrings; rings, both Missoma. Necklace, Sandralexandra. Bracelets, Maya Brenner. Shoes, Dear Frances

Swimwear that's stylish enough to wear to the bar? Count us in.

CALLIE (left) wears:
Swimsuit, Alémais. Earrings,
Missoma. Bracelet (worn
as anklet), Anni Lu. Shoes,
Ancient Greek Sandals.
MIKI (right) wears:
Bikini, Missoni. Shorts,
Timna Weber. Necklace,
Lazy Goose Studio.
Shoes, Lili Curia



Practical doesn't have
to be boring – stay
safe in the sun with
a zip-through wetsuit.

T-shirt, Coach.
Wetsuit, Finisterre.
Bikini, Paramidonna.
Earrings, Atri



COSMOPOLITAN
**CLUB
COSMO**



Win this Finisterre wetsuit,
worth £140, in your size! Enter
for FREE through Club Cosmo

Go full-on 1990s
with tie-dye tees,
board shorts and
shell jewellery.

CALLIE (left) wears:
Top, vintage Jacquemus
at eBay. Bikini top,
Hunkemoller. Shorts,
Hollister. Necklace, Anni
Lu. MIKI (right) wears:
T-shirt, Ashish. Bikini, Triangl.
Sunglasses, Ray-Ban.
Bracelet, Anni Lu. Shoes,
Ancient Greek Sandals







Cutesy, pastel prints were made for sunny afternoons.

Headscarf; bikini top; dress, all Sandy Liang

Have your screen siren moment – life is more fun in a pair of belted bikini bottoms!

Bikini top, Lido. Bikini bottoms, Kikki-G. Earrings; bracelet, all Missoma



Dress up your
knitwear with
statement jewellery.

Dress, Stefan Cooke.
Shorts, Johanna Parv.
Earrings, Ottoman Hands.
Necklace, Blumarine



Throw on a hooded dress post-swim for major surfer babe energy.

Dress, Lueder. Necklace, Hera

Models: Callie Dixon at Elite and Miki at Freedom Models. Makeup: Deanna Melluso at Forward Artists using Supergoop! Hair: Erin Piper Herschleb at Tracey Mattingly using Oribe. Global Editorial & Brand Director: Chloe O'Brien. Bookings Director: Sophie Leen. Fashion Assistant: Angel Cordova-Todd. Photo Assistants: Lexi Wimberly; Shamar Marcus. Location: Windjammer Landing Resort & Residences, Saint Lucia. @windjammerlanding. With thanks to Saint Lucia Tourism Authority and Timeless Tours @timelesstoursslu.

MY GO
SUPER
MARKET

NOW OPEN

GROCERIES

FISHING

COLD DRINKS

PERSONAL CARE





Dress, Leslie Amon
at Koibird. Earrings,
Tyger by the Tail.
Necklace, By Alona



Cosmopolitan Readers' Choice Beauty Awards 2026

For the second year running, you turned up for your favourite brands to decide who deserves the ultimate prize... These are the top 50 most voted-for products by YOU!

WORDS: KEEKS REID AND LIA MAPPOURA
PHOTOGRAPHY: REBECCA ALISON
STYLING: ANGEL CORDOVA-TODD

Skin

For that post-facial glow, minus
the dent in your bank account

Bodysuit, David
Koma. Earrings,
Tyger by the
Tail. Ring, Pond
in the Fish



EVERYDAY CLEANSER
Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, £11.50

Sensitive skin? This dermatologist-loved classic gently removes dirt, oil and makeup. Ideal for everyday use.



RICH CREAM
Weleda Skin Food, £9.50

This ultra-rich and intensely nourishing cream is not only a Cosmo readers' fave but a celeb fave, too. Hailey Bieber, we're looking @ you!



PORE EXTRACTOR
Shark FacialPro Glow Boosting At-Home Facial System, £299.99

De-gunks pores and smooths, using suction and glow-boosting tech for salon-worthy results.



NECK CREAM
Trinny London The Elevator Serum, £69

Peptides and actives help improve skin's elasticity, reduces fine lines and restores definition for a sculpted, youthful look.



HYDRATING FACE MASK
Summer Fridays Jet Lag Mask, £26

Infused with glycerin and niacinamide to revive tired skin. The perfect pick-me-up, this is a cult fave for good reason!



TONER
Laneige Cream Skin Cerapeptide Toner and Moisturiser, £29.50

Dewy and sumptuous-looking skin, this way! As one voter puts it, 'This is glass skin in a bottle.'



Win a hamper packed with Readers' Choice Award winners with picks from skin, hair, makeup and body! Enter for FREE when you join Club Cosmo



FOAMING CLEANSER
CeraVe Foaming Cleanser, £12.50

'Love everything CeraVe,' one voter says, and we couldn't agree more. This product is a standout as it keeps skin balanced and clear.



CERAMIDE SERUM
Elizabeth Arden Advanced Ceramide Capsules, £97

These potent single-dose capsules deliver concentrated ceramides for firmer, smoother skin and a resilient complexion.



HYALURONIC ACID SERUM
Vichy Minéral 89, £28

An oldie but a goodie, this is a hydration powerhouse, combining hyaluronic acid and mineral-rich Vichy water to plump and strengthen skin.



OIL CLEANSER
Haruharu Wonder Black Rice Moisture Cleansing Oil, £17

Proving that Korean skincare reigns supreme, your best-voted oil cleanser dissolves makeup effortlessly.



MICELLAR WATER
Garnier Micellar Cleansing Water, £8.99

Loved worldwide for its gentle cleansing power, this needs no intro. Removes makeup in a swipe for fresh, residue-free skin.

Scan to see the full winners and shop the products



LIGHTWEIGHT MOISTURISER
Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel, £13.99

Oily skin still needs hydration and this fast-absorbing gel quenches thirsty skin and smooths with a weightless finish.



BLEMISH TREATMENT
La Roche-Posay Effaclar Duo+M, £21.50

Say bye-bye to breakouts with a treatment that boasts salicylic acid and niacinamide. As one voter says, 'It works so well!'



FACE OIL
Byoma Hydrating Recovery Oil, £13.99

This nourishing face oil locks in moisture, strengthens the skin barrier and restores a hydrated yet never greasy glow.



HIGH-STREET FOUNDATION
Rimmel London Lasting Finish
35HR Foundation, £10.99

A high-street hero with long-lasting full coverage? Yes, please! This evens skin tone, blurs imperfections and keeps shine at bay for a flawless, natural-looking finish.



SKIN TINT
Sculpted By Aimee HydraTint, £24
 Category is: your skin, but better! This skin tint is sheer but buildable, blending seamlessly to enhance natural radiance. And it feels super lightweight, making it perfect for everyday wear.



LIP LINER
MAC Lip Pencil, £20
 Smooth, precise and long-lasting, this lip pencil defines and shapes lips flawlessly. Its creamy texture glides on effortlessly, locks in colour, prevents feathering and pairs perfectly with lipstick or gloss. Mwah!



FAUX LASHES
Eylure Fluttery Light 008 False Lashes, £6.25

Warning: these lashes may cause excessive fluttering. Subtle yet flirty, they lift and flick with every blink, making your eyes the main event – because who doesn't love a little lash drama?



GEL NAIL SYSTEM
The GelBottle Inc
 If you're after a manicure that's highly pigmented, chip-resistant and offers extremely long-lasting shine, look no further. Available in professional salons, it's highly considered in the UK for good reason!



POWDER BLUSH
Milani Baked Blush, £11.75
 Swipe this silky blush on to your cheeks and you'll look alive and effortlessly radiant. The satin and shimmer shades add soft pigment and subtle highlight for a natural glow – no filters required.



HIGH-END MASCARA
Too Faced Better Than Sex Mascara, £28

Sex is great, but have you seen these lashes? Bold, voluminous, fluttery and long-lasting, this mascara steals the show – and possibly a few hearts – without leaving a flake behind.



COLOUR CORRECTOR
Dr.Jart+ Cicapair Soothing Color Correcting Treatment, £19.50
 'This is my holy-grail product. It blends like a typical moisturiser but provides light coverage and reduces redness. It sits over my skincare like a dream!' says one voter.



CREAM BRONZER
Chanel Les Beiges Healthy Glow Bronzing Cream, £50
 If your bronzer reads 'orange alert', meet your new BFF. Creamy and blendable, it gives a day-two-of-beach-holiday glow – subtle and sun-kissed.



LONG-WEAR FOUNDATION
Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Foundation, £39
 Introducing the full coverage foundation that blurs imperfections, evens skin tone and leaves you flawlessly airbrushed and radiant without needing a single touch-up.



VOLUMISING MASCARA
Vieve Icon Mascara, £27
 Big drama, zero clumps. This mascara lifts and volumises with every blink, creating lashes so bold, they practically demand a standing ovation – because your eyes deserve their own fan club... literally.



LIP OIL
Gisou Honey Infused Lip Oil, £24
 Winning by a landslide, Gisou proves once again why its lip oil is a bestseller. Enriched with the brand's signature farm-grown honey, the formula hydrates, plumps and adds shine in just a few swipes.

Dress, PH5.
Earcuff,
Otiumberg.
Earrings,
Tyger by the
Tail. Necklace,
Vintage
Givenchy at
4Element

Makeup

From gel nails to nourishing lip oils, these
are your makeup non-negotiables

Body

This list just confirms
that we have the softest,
best-smelling readers...

Dress, TG
Botanical at
Koibird.
Bracelets; rings
(left hand), Tyger
by the Tail. Rings
(right hand),
Swarovski



BODY MIST
Sol De Janeiro Cheirosa
62 Perfume Mist, £24

Viral, iconic, revolutionary – all fitting descriptions for this SDJ spray, but we prefer ‘Cosmo Readers’ fave body mist’. Like sunny vanilla meets creamy salted caramel.



BODY LOTION
Nivea Rich Nourishing Body
Lotion for Dry Skin, £9.99

Our love for Nivea runs deep and this body lotion is a true beauty staple for many of us. It contains hyaluron and almond oil for deep nourishment and hydration.



DEODORANT SPRAY
Dove Original Anti-Perspirant
Deodorant Spray, £4.95

Many newfangled sprays have come and gone, but Dove has stuck by us through our sweatiest times... And you have rewarded it with back-to-back wins!



RAZOR
Gillette Venus Deluxe Smooth
Sensitive Rosegold Razor, £15.99

It's basically guaranteed smooth sailing with a trusty Venus razor. No matter where you're shaving, you can trust that you'll get the closest, smoothest finish.



COLLAGEN SUPPLEMENT
Revive Collagen Enhanced Plus Drink
Supplement, £44.99 for 14 sachets

Not all collagen supplements taste nice and work well, but with Revive you get both. Retinol, hydrolysed keratin and vitamins B6, B12, C and D make for a top beauty potion.



ELECTRIC RAZOR
Braun Silk-épil Lady
Shaver Series 5, £49.99

From exfoliation to trimming, whether wet or dry, this handy razor does it all. The curved head helps to work around all your curves for the closest shave.



MUSK PERFUME
Le Labo Santal 33
Eau De Parfum, £170 for 50ml

Okay, so none of us have escaped the grip that Santal 33 has had on us for the past 15 years since its launch. It still smells just as alluring and cool as the first spritz.



CITRUS PERFUME
Phlur Tangerine Boy
Eau De Parfum, £99 for 50ml

Zingy and fresh, yes, but the dry down of this scent is so enticing beyond the orange peel. Apple and jasmine mix with amber for a warm and floral vibe that lasts.



HIGH-STREET PERFUME
Marks & Spencer Discover Pink Pepper
Eau De Toilette, £8 for 30ml

It's their number-one selling scent and shows no signs of budging. With jasmine and pink pepper (obvs), plus vanilla and amber musks, this is the perfect mix of fresh and floral.



BUBBLE BATH
Neom Perfect Night's Sleep Bath Foam, £29
 Struggle with consistent sleep? An evening unwinding with this bath-time treat is just what the doctor ordered. It's brimming with the scent of fresh-cut lavender to help you drift off into a peaceful slumber.



BODY SERUM
Nécessaire The Body Serum, £45
 In need of something lightweight as the temp spikes? This serum is quick drying and hydrating thanks to its high concentration of hyaluronic acid – buh-bye crepey skin...



DEODORANT STICK
Salt & Stone Deodorant Stick, £20
 We're kinda obsessed with the idea of fragrance layering from our deos. And with a choice of scents such as santal and vetiver and neroli and basil, you'll have to forgive us for sniffing our pits; they just smell so good.



SHAMPOO FOR COLOURED HAIR
Color Wow Color Security Shampoo, £21.50

For the second year in a row, you crowned this your fave way to cleanse coloured hair without losing shine. It creates a gorgeous rich lather sans sulphates, which can dry out coloured hair.



HEAT PROTECTOR
Tresemmé Heat Defence Care & Protect Spray, £5.99

It's hard to find a top product for under a tenner, but here's proof that great hair doesn't have to break the bank. Protects hair up to 230°C and keeps it frizzle-free!



BROW SERUM
UKLash UKBrow Eyebrow Serum, £39

When it comes to hair growth, you really love and trust UKLash. This serum is proven to promote brow growth in just 12 weeks, so we'll have Brooke Shields' brows in no time!



MULTI-STYLER TOOL
Dyson Airwrap, £579.99

We totally understand why you're obsessed with this tool, aka your favourite multi-styler for the second year running. Thanks to its innovative attachments that work on all hair types, it's basically got GOAT status now.



HAIR DETANGLER BRUSH
Tangle Teezer Original, £15

No tangle is safe when it comes to this brush. Many detanglers have been launched in the wake of its success, but none have such loyal stans as Tangle Teezer!



PERMANENT HAIR COLOUR
Garnier Good Permanent Hair Dye, £12.99

Whether you are enamoured with Olivia Attwood's Spicy Blonde Garnier Good hue or are using it for elite grey coverage, this formula has dreamy application and a true-to-tone fade.



COLOUR TREATMENT
Glaze Supergloss Clear Conditioning Gloss, £16

Getting salon-level shine at home has never been easier since we met Glaze. And you agree, voting it your fave colour treatment yet again. So easy to use and a treat for dull hair.



EDGE CONTROL
Fenty Hair The Controlling Type Hair-thickening Edge Control Gel, £22

From finger coils to clean-girl buns, no hair is stepping outta line with this gel. Not only that, but its formula actually works to strengthen weaker hair, too.



BLOW-DRY STYLER
Revlon Salon One-Step Hair Dryer And Volumiser, £50

Get that just-stepped-out-of-the-salon look in literally one move thanks to this viral styler. With its ionic technology, it gives bundles of volume and tames any frizz.



DRY SHAMPOO
Batiste Original Dry Shampoo, £3.40

A true OG, your love for this dry shampoo knows no bounds (second win, secured). With its uplifting scent and chalk-free finish, it's a classic for good reason.



TEXTURISING SPRAY
Oribe Dry Texturizing Spray, £47

Luxe, model off-duty hair in just one spritz is what got your vote here. Not only does this product smell incredible (think jasmine and sandalwood), it leaves you with touchable, tousled hair, too.



SHAMPOO FOR CURLY HAIR
Only Curls All Curl Cleanser, £18

We love when a brand just gets it when it comes to textured hair – and Only Curls certainly does. With avocado oil and kukui nur oil, it cleanses as it hydrates and softens thirsty curls.

Dress, Roberta
Einer. Earrings,
Hugo Kreit
at Koibird

Hair

These products make wash-day
always a pleasure, never a chore

Model: Grace Kenthill at
IMM agency. Makeup: Brooke
Simons at Caren using Rhode.
Hair stylist: Liam Russell
using Oribe Hair Care & Wahl
Professional. Nails: Cherrie Snow
at Snow Creatives using Chanel
Le Vernis in Phénix and Chanel
La Crème Main. Bookings
director: Sophie Leen. Photo
assistant: Ore Omoboriowo

STYLE EDIT

Look your best



FASHION DESIGNED FOR FULLER BUST WOMEN (D-I CUP)

For women with a fuller bust, shopping often means compromise — gaping buttons, stretched seams, and styles that simply weren't designed for their shape. After years of frustration in fitting rooms, founder and designer Heidi created **Heidi's Collection** — a fashion label engineered specifically for fuller bust women without sacrificing elegance or confidence. Using unique bust-adjusted tailoring, each piece contours beautifully through the bust while maintaining clean lines through the waist and hips. From polished workwear to elegant evening pieces, the collection offers bust sizing L-XXL (approx. D-I cup) and optional 3D body-scan sizing.

Scan to explore the collection and find your best fit.
heidiscollection.com.au



REVIVED CLOTHING & DESIGNS.

In a world of fast-fashion, "Revived Clothing & Designs" has one mantra..."one man's trash is another man's treasure". Their objective is to make recycling apparel and accessories fashionable by "reviving" each piece with their unique, "Street Chic" aesthetic to give true fashion-lovers exclusive,

one-of-a-kind pieces that they can truly make their own. Based in Toronto, Canada, the brand was born and officially soft-launched in the Spring of 2017. Fashion Stylist, Chaendra V. Gittens, is now sole Owner and Creative Director of the brand, recognized with multiple award nominations and has shown collections at: New York Fashion Week (2024) among others and been featured in various global publications. Revived Clothing & Designs recently made their Paris Fashion Week debut in March 2026, and continues to celebrate individuality one design at a time.



FLARE STREET

Playful, bold and made to stand out, Flare Street is your go-to for feel good fashion with a retro twist. Born in Australia and proudly made in Melbourne, Flare Street champions creative, artist-led prints and flattering flares designed for every body—from xxs to 3xl. Think vibrant patterns, vintage-inspired energy and conscious production, with small-batch manufacturing that reduces waste and keeps things sustainable. Designed to be worn, loved and danced in, Flare Street celebrates individuality with pieces that are as expressive as you are. Ready for your pair of Flare Street flares? Discover your perfect flare at [@flarestreet](https://www.flarestreet.com) and shop now at www.flarestreet.com.



COLBY JOHN BRIDAL

Colby John Bridal is a Minneapolis based bridal company that specializes in couture and custom bridal gowns. His passion for innovation and understanding that every bride is unique is why every bridal gown is fully customizable. The Colby John bridal lines including ATELIER, CANVAS, and our newest line NOVEL, can be found in stores across the U.S., UK, Australia, Canada, Italy, Barbados, and Dubai.

The ATELIER collection promises couture construction, fashion forward details, laces from around the world, and a boundless array of accessories to style your look precisely to your vision. The direction taken for this collection was to reflect back on classic, yet bold elegance, while sprinkling hints of modernity.

The CANVAS collection is a journey back to the heart of clean, chic, and timeless bridal. The goal for Canvas 2026 was to return to the basics of classic construction and to use timeless and luxurious fabrics.

NOVEL is the latest addition to the Colby John brand. NOVEL is a play on words between what is new and the role we play in sharing the story of you,



our bride, through the most important dress of your life and celebrating this next chapter in your life.

www.colbyjohnbridal.com |

@colbyjohnbridal



MAISON TANGERINE

Made for heat.

Meant to be noticed.

Ibiza sun on skin. Saint-Tropez afternoons that linger. Mykonos after dark. Maison Tangerine captures that energy in every piece.

Their 100% premium linen is specially treated for an ultra-soft touch and designed to hold its shape, even after machine washing, moving with you effortlessly. Available in a wide range of over 30 colours, our linen shirts are made to suit every mood and moment.

Men's swimwear features bold, custom prints, while women's velvet swimwear offers a rich, tactile finish that catches every glance.

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At All Things Dressy, style isn't defined by age, it's defined by confidence.

For many women in their 30s and 40s, navigating trends like mini skirts or shorter hemlines can feel uncertain, often shaped by expectations around what is considered "appropriate." This collection challenges that narrative, showing that these styles can be both elegant and effortlessly alluring when worn with confidence.

Blending timeless shapes with modern silhouettes, each piece is designed to move with you, flattering where it matters and empowering you to express your personal style without hesitation. Because sophistication isn't about restriction, it's about embracing what makes you feel poised, confident, and executing it with class and decorum.

Discover looks that celebrate every chapter at allthingsdressy.com.



STYLE EDIT

Look your best



JEWELLERY BY DESIGN NZ

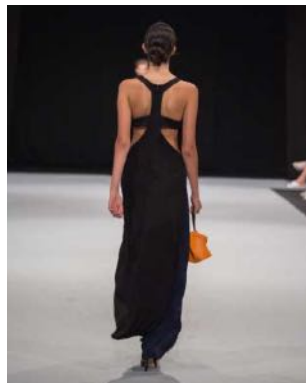
Jewellery By Design NZ is a boutique, New Zealand-based jewellery studio specialising in bespoke engagement rings, wedding jewellery, and one-of-a-kind fine pieces crafted to mark life's most meaningful moments. Founded and run by jeweller Charlie Lattimore, the studio blends traditional craftsmanship with modern design to create jewellery that is deeply personal, enduring, and truly unique. Every piece begins with a story. Whether designing an engagement ring, re-imagining an heirloom, or creating a collector-grade gemstone piece, we work closely with each client through a private commission process. From sourcing rare and ethically selected gemstones to refining every detail in CAD and by hand at the bench, each design is made to reflect the individuality of the wearer and the significance of the occasion.

We are known for our expertise in coloured gemstones, precision setting, and timeless design that balances beauty with durability. No replicas. No mass production. Each piece is crafted exclusively for its owner, with an emphasis on quality, longevity, and emotional meaning.

At Jewellery By Design NZ, we believe fine jewellery should be more than beautiful — it should become part of your story, your legacy, and the moments that matter most. www.jewellerybydesignnz.com | owner@jewellerybydesignnz.com

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Discover ikaizen, the Spanish sustainable fashion brand redefining unique style. We create exquisite, one-of-a-kind dresses using the art of moulage (sculpting fabric directly on the body for a flawless, custom fit). Committed to eco-design, every piece is ethically made-to-order in Spain using only premium organic fabrics. You can also choose our rental service for a special occasion. By producing only what is needed, we eliminate excess stock. Click www.ikaizen.es and [@ikaizen.official](https://www.instagram.com/ikaizen.official) for a precious, exclusive garment that respects both you and the planet!

THE ELAR LABEL

THE ELAR LABEL emerges as a new contemporary fashion brand. Still in its formation, it has released one collection with another underway. The designs introduce silhouettes that feel effortless, elevated,



and quietly luxurious.

The pieces are developed by refined tailoring and draped fluid forms to enhance feminine curves. THE ELAR LABEL delivers high-end evening wear centred in sustainability, with its previous collection being made entirely from deadstock fabrics. Shop the collection at www.theelarlabel.com and follow [@the.elar.label](https://www.instagram.com/the.elar.label) (IG/TIKTOK). Get 15% off with code **COSMO15** (valid until 31/7/26).

15 YEARS OF KIAVA: DESIGNED FOR STRENGTH, BUILT FOR REAL LIFE

Fifteen years ago, KIAVA began with a sketch—and a belief that women deserved better from their activewear. Long before it became a recognized name, KIAVA lived in the margins of Olivia's college notebooks. Training for marathons while completing her third year, she sketched designs for athletic wear that was supportive, functional, and beautiful. Olivia brought her sketches to life with a few samples. On her first run wearing the newly designed sports bra, multiple women asked where they could get one. She and her husband then made the bold decision to leave college and invest their life savings into producing what would become the iconic Endurance Bra. Designed to deliver high-impact support without sacrificing comfort or style, it sold out in just three weeks, laying the foundation for KIAVA's growth into an internationally recognized brand. KIAVA's story is rooted even deeper. Olivia's grandmother was a seamstress in Cuba who immigrated to the United States

in search of a better life. That legacy—of craftsmanship, resilience, and opportunity—lives on in every piece KIAVA creates. Now a mother of four, Olivia designs from lived experience. From high-impact training to postpartum realities, KIAVA pieces support women through every stage of life.

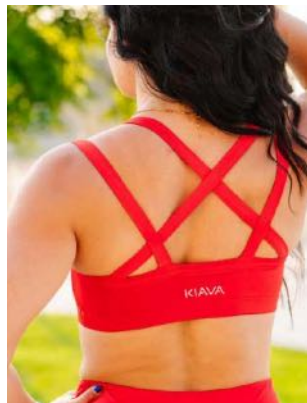
In 2019, KIAVA expanded into swimwear with its signature “gym-to-swim” concept—pieces designed to move seamlessly from workouts to water. Since then, the brand has continued to evolve, creating athleticwear for athletes, mothers, beginners, and every woman in between.

With over 12,000 five-star reviews, KIAVA has built a loyal community of women who value both performance and confidence. Every piece is tested on real bodies, and the brand stands apart by never retouching or editing women's bodies in its imagery. Fifteen years in, KIAVA remains committed to its original mission: empowering women to feel strong and confident throughout their health and fitness journey. Olivia continues to create swim and athletic wear that meets women where they are—and moves with them every step of the way.

Shop now and get 20% off with code COSMO | kiavaclothing.com/discount/COSMO

Let's connect on instagram: @kiavaclothing | tiktok: @kiavaclothing | facebook: @kiavaclothing |

pinterest: @kiavaclothing



ESSENTIALS EDIT

This month's top tips

GLOW FROM WITHIN: MEET THRSTY, YOUR EVERYDAY HYDRATION UPGRADE

Looking after yourself shouldn't feel complicated, and staying hydrated is one of the simplest ways to feel your best. THRSTY is a next-generation hydration brand designed for women who want more from their daily routine: steady energy, better focus, and feel-good balance, without sugar, caffeine, or artificial ingredients. Unlike traditional sports drinks, THRSTY takes a lighter, smarter approach. Its balanced electrolyte system supports both extracellular and intracellular hydration, helping your body absorb and retain fluids more effectively. With bioavailable minerals, including often-overlooked phosphorus, it delivers hydration that feels clean, refreshing, and easy to enjoy every day. Whether you're heading to a workout, managing a busy schedule, or simply prioritising your wellbeing, THRSTY fits effortlessly into your lifestyle. No heaviness, no bloating, just smooth, consistent hydration that helps you stay energised and focused from morning to night. Think of it as your daily reset, simple, effective,



and designed to support you wherever life takes you. Ready to glow from the inside out? Scan the QR code or visit thrsty.com/products/hydrate to discover your new hydration essential.



YOUR MANICURE'S MISSING STEP

Nail Medicine is redefining nail care with a skincare-first approach to cuticles. Developed by a professional nail technician, this vegan, high-performance oil delivers visible results with signature seasonal scents that customers love. Infused with nourishing, restorative ingredients, the silky, fast-absorbing formula melts into skin, restoring softness and creating a glossy frame for healthier-looking nails. Designed to complement both bare nails and polished finishes. No grease. No residue. Just conditioned cuticles and longer-lasting manicures. Created for modern beauty lovers and nail technicians who expect more. Housed in a twist-and-click brush for effortless, on-the-go application. Available online at www.nailmedicine.co.uk



TIRED OF HARD WATER HAIR?



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INSPIRATION AWAITS

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SCENTÂME

Scentâme is a luxury fragrance brand dedicated to crafting bespoke perfumes tailored to you. Through an easy quiz and innovative scent technology, you can combine up to five fragrances to design a scent that reflects your personality. Each bottle is carefully hand-blended in London, giving it a personal and luxurious touch. You can also name your perfume and include a special message. With over 600,000 possible combinations, every fragrance feels truly unique. The perfumes come in various sizes, ranging from 15ml to 100ml. Discover and create your signature scent at www.scentame.com and follow @scentame on Instagram.



BEAUTY EDIT

Look good, feel great

FROM SUPERYACHTS TO THE ALGARVE: A NEW STANDARD IN LUXURY BEAUTY

Originally from Essex, my journey has taken me from earning a First Class Honours degree in International Business Management – including an Erasmus year in Alicante – to luxury spas, superyachts, and now entrepreneurship in the Algarve.

After university, I made the bold decision to retrain in beauty therapy, following a passion that quickly became my profession. I worked in day spas and country spa hotels in the New Forest before launching my own beauty room, and later stepping aboard superyachts cruising the Mediterranean. There, I delivered bespoke treatments to high-net-worth clients across Europe's most exclusive destinations, refining a signature style that is meticulous, discreet and effortlessly luxurious.

Today, that same standard defines Elle Treatment Lounge in Praia da Luz. Opened in April 2025,

our luxury space offers expertly delivered advanced facials, lash and brow treatments, manicures and medical grade pedicures, massage, waxing in a calm, considered setting designed for total relaxation. We proudly partner with premium brands including Elim and Million Dollar Facial, with new treatments soon to launch.

This is more than a salon – it's a destination for elevated beauty in the Algarve.

Discover more at elletreatmentlounge.com.



HULL'S HIDDEN GEM: WHERE WELLNESS MEETS COMPASSION

After 32 years working in overseas travel, I followed my passion and retrained as a beauty therapist in my 50s, creating Top Kat Wellness – a peaceful garden retreat in East Yorkshire. My approach is simple: everything I do has a purpose. I specialise in results-driven skincare, combining advanced treatments with a deeply personal touch. Inspired by my mum's dementia journey, I've created a dementia-friendly space where every client feels safe, valued, and cared for. Built on trust and referrals, my business is all about helping people feel their very best, inside and out. Begin your wellness journey today.

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REGENERATIVE AESTHETICS: THE NEXT EVOLUTION

For years, aesthetic medicine has followed a familiar rhythm: a wrinkle appears, Botox follows. But a quiet revolution is taking shape. At clinics such as Gower Skin Aesthetics, a different question is being asked: what if we've been focusing on the symptom, not the structure? Enter regenerative technology.

Nitrogen plasma is gaining attention as an alternative to jumping straight into injectables. Rather than relaxing muscle, it works within the skin itself, stimulating collagen and elastin production through controlled thermal activation. The result isn't immobility. It's integrity.

Why the shift? Because collagen decline begins years before deeper wrinkles form. Treating the surface without reinforcing the foundation is a short game. Injectables remain powerful tools. But increasingly, the future of aesthetics may lie not in restriction, but in regeneration.

Gower Skin Aesthetics Swansea | Harley Street, London
www.gowerskinaesthetics.com



BEAUTY EDIT

Look good, feel great



THE HAIR EXTENSIONS EXPERT

Lauren Mae Wilson is the founder of The Hair Extensions Expert™, a luxury hair brand redefining modern glam in the San Francisco Bay Area. Known for her seamless, undetectable installations and lived-in color transformations, Lauren has built a reputation as the go-to specialist for women who want volume, length, and confidence, without compromise. Based in Alamo, California, Lauren operates an upscale boutique salon experience that blends precision technique with elevated design. A master in K-tip extensions and high-impact blinding, she is recognized for cutting every bond by hand to create natural movement and lightweight wear. Her clients include busy entrepreneurs, executives, and modern mothers who want effortless beauty that fits into real life. Beyond the chair, Lauren is a savvy business owner and brand builder. She has successfully rebranded and relocated her salon, cultivated a highly engaged social presence, and built a waitlist-driven business rooted in trust and results. Her philosophy is simple: luxury should feel personal, not intimidating.

A devoted wife and mother, Lauren balances entrepreneurship



with family life, bringing authenticity and resilience into everything she creates. Whether she's transforming hair or mentoring other women in business, her mission remains the same; to help women feel powerful, polished, and unapologetically themselves.



WEDDING HAIR WOES?

For those of us with obvious ears, wedding hairdos can cause anxiety and fear, so feeling free to wear our hair up in any style we fancy can be life-changing!



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WHY YOUR HAIR STILL ISN'T WORKING - AND WHAT MOST SALONS NEVER TELL YOU

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Your summer horoscope awaits

A mixture of hard work and laid-back play awaits you this season – here's what's written in the stars

WORDS: KERRY WARD, AKA TAROTBELLA



ARIES

Big conversations, big plans and big confidence boosts gear you up for a high-energy summer. The 31 May Sagittarius Full Moon puts travel on the map and Mars, your ruling planet, joining Gemini in late June adds fuel to plans. The 15 June Gemini New Moon sparks alliances, contracts or eye-opening discussions.



TAURUS

Throughout June, Mercury resides in Cancer, which provokes supportive and soul-searching conversations that help bond and cement important relationships. As Cancer season begins, you feel so loved and appreciated. The July Neptune retrograde challenges you: 'How can you make these feelings last?'



GEMINI

Gemini season – your personal reset – arrives, meaning reinvention, rebirth and reinvigoration. Unfurl the new 2.0 version of you with the New Moon on 15 June. Mars enters Gemini in late June, which makes your ideas and pitches irresistible. This is the time to sow new seeds and make bold leaps that fulfil your potential.



CANCER

Mercury enters your sign on 1 June and folk are eager to hear what you think and feel. Speak up and make a difference with your intuitive wisdom. Both cancer season and the Solstice bring your powerful annual reset and the Neptune retrograde on 7 July helps you to release outdated identities or limiting beliefs.



LEO

The Sagittarius Full Moon on 31 May opens your eyes to what might be possible and it's all about exploration, new ideas and different landscapes. Cancer season supports rest and gives you time out, until Jupiter enters Leo on 30 June. This is your lucky era, where everything you touch turns to gold.



VIRGO

It's a summer of networking, socialising and getting where you want to go based on who, as well as what, you know. Mercury in Cancer improves teamwork. The Gemini New Moon boosts professional visibility. Although you want to enjoy a laid-back summer, you'll want to work hard and get what you desire and deserve in your career.



LIBRA

The Gemini New Moon expands your mental horizons and you start to analyse your position. The arrival of Cancer season on 21 June makes your ideas meaningful and emotive. This spurs you into action, as Mars also moves into curious, clever Gemini. Your best-laid plans can come to fruition if your head and heart are aligned.



SCORPIO

Your conversations deepen with Mercury in Cancer and the arrival of Cancer season mid-June. You learn a lot but also have to show vulnerability and let folk in. By the time Neptune retrogrades on 7 July, you have more self-awareness than ever and it's time to sit with it, reflect and decide what it is you're being called to do next.



SAGITTARIUS

The 31 May Full Moon in your sign marks a turning point in your future vision – you want more! Make bold, daring plans as your ruling planet, Jupiter, moves into Leo on 30 June, opening the portal to success. Be ready for all manner of major invitations, openings and opportunities.



CAPRICORN

Your sister sign's (Cancer) season spotlights relationships, loyalties, trust and security. Invest in your inner circle bonds – making memories, sharing life, helping one another along. Mars in Gemini on 28 June boosts your productivity and Jupiter in Leo on 30 June brings folk along to help you land your ideas.



AQUARIUS

Now's the time to launch that big idea, because cosmic forces are backing you. Gemini season and the New Moon on 15 June heighten your powers of invention, negotiation and adaptability. Relationships also blossom through loving Cancer season, especially when you just hang out with no plans or pressure.



PISCES

Gemini season and the New Moon will trigger change and new ideas. These improvements focus on your home and family and will make you feel safer, more supported and ready to invest more. Your ruling planet, Neptune, goes into retrograde on 7 July, which invites you to stop being busy and look deeper.

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