

Which summer look will get you a date?

What's a girl supposed to wear to get herself noticed this season? Should it be safari shorts or colourful kaftans, boho skirts or floaty tea dresses? Single girl Corrie Jackson road-tests this summer's hottest looks

Photos by Dean Belcher

GYPSY GIRL THE LOOK: BOHO

How I felt: Ever since Portobello princesses Kate Moss and Sienna Miller stepped out in tiered skirts, flip-flops and tousled locks, the female population has gone into imitation-overdrive. Roberto Cavalli, Jean Paul Gaultier and Giorgio Armani have all gone crazy for the look this season. Luckily for me, so has the high street. In my first bid to snag a man I was looking forward to reproducing this brand of shabby chic. Floaty clothes, however, aren't usually my thing – I like my fashion structured and

tailored. But I focused on Jude Law lookalikes and quickly got in the hippy mood. I loved how carefree and summery the skirt made me feel. Even better, although my hair was a mess and nothing matched, it didn't matter – I could just put it down to the artistic 'bohemian' look.
The reaction: I arrived at Soho bar Penthouse and almost at once, a young, blond boy made a move. He claimed to love the look, declaring loudly it was very 'now'. Hmmm. He looked so babyfaced, I wasn't even sure he'd get served, let alone know what was in fashion. Turning my attentions elsewhere, I positioned myself in the eye line of a group of attractive guys laughing in the corner. Nothing happened. Clearly my peasant-girl ensemble wasn't arresting enough to distract them. Eventually two of them approached and bought me a drink. After five minutes of stunted conversation I discovered everything I needed to know about men and boho. One thought my outfit was the result of an over-zealous dressing-up box; the other thought I looked like a vegan who didn't wash. I protested wildly that the mismatched colours and fabrics were deliberate. 'Whatever,' muttered one, 'forget boho, you look more like Little Bo Peep.'
The verdict: Felt great, but zero pulling potential – save it for daytime outings with your girlfriends.

ENGLISH ROSE THE LOOK: TEA DRESS

How I felt: Thanks to the likes of Burberry, Nicole Farhi and Stella McCartney, the tea dress is definitely the sexy signature item of the summer. Just what a single girl needs for perfect pulling potential. I hope. Slipping into this sheer summer fabric felt like stepping back in time to a bygone era where manners and muffins prevailed. I felt simultaneously demure and daring, as though two sides of my character had merged in one outfit. Sitting alone at a table, I noticed a bizarre



ENGLISH ROSE

Tea dress, £40, Boutique at New Look (0500 454 297). Wedge shoes, £20, New Look (as before)



GYPSY GIRL

'One guy said I looked like a vegan who didn't wash; another called me Little Bo Peep'

Vest, £3, Chooloo at Tesco (0800 505 535). Skirt, £65, Kookai (020 7434 1421). Bag, £25, Oasis (01865 881966). Belt, £16, Warehouse (0870 122 8813). Earrings, £12, bead necklace, £15, both Mood at Debenhams (0161 946 4400)

transformation. My posture had improved and, looking down, I spotted that my ankles were primly crossed. I worried that the dress looked frumpy rather than sexy – the line being so thin that an erroneous earring or unsuitable heel could throw the whole look off kilter – but fought the urge to hoist up my hemline. **The reaction:** I decided to try my luck in a bar on the King's Road, Chelsea, with my sister. I've never known a waiter be so attentive – within minutes he brought us a glass of champagne, which had been sent over by a dashing gentleman at the bar. I smiled coyly at him. So far, so successful. Then two men at the table next to us asked us to join them. I asked them what they thought of my dress. 'You look like Penelope Keith in *The Good Life* – I really fancied her,' declared one. The other assumed I'd spent all day at a garden party, fancying his chances because he thought I'd be sozzled. Both agreed that my dress was alluring enough to warrant an attempted chat-up. Apparently the girly fabric and show of leg were too hard to resist. **The verdict:** Surprisingly successful.

SEVENTIES SIREN THE LOOK: KAFTAN

How I felt: This is a look beloved of the A-list at the moment, so much so that Liz Hurley has just launched her own range of swimwear with kaftan cover-ups. Despite initial fears that I might end up looking more Demis Roussos than Demi Moore, I quickly fell in love with this trend. Much more forgiving than most outfits, a sheer kaftan hides imperfections but hints at the good bits that might lie beneath. I felt a million dollars as I stepped into London hotspot Chinawhite; the kaftan, which both covered and revealed my body, made me feel rather naughty and my hips were definitely swinging more than usual as I crossed the dance floor. A pair of absurdly large '70s-style earrings topped off the outfit and surprisingly added to the sense that I was turning heads. This time in a good way. I never wanted to take this outfit off. I felt confident enough to try a seductive smile at the groups of stylish men hovering around the bar.

The reaction: I was immediately chatted up by a PR executive who seemed utterly mesmerised by my chandelier earrings. He bought me a drink and tried to engage in witty banter, which failed because he wasn't witty. In my enthusiasm to get away I bumped straight into a tall, suave chap, leaning casually against the bar. He gave me the once-over and smiled, 'That is a cracking outfit. You looking f***ing amazing – will you let me take you to dinner one night?' Wow, my '70s attire was more effective than I thought. After some sexy



'That's a cracking outfit... The kaftan is virtually transparent. I can see your bra'

T-shirt, £4, Chelonia at Tace (0800 591055)
at Tace (0800 591055)
Shirts, £25, Topshop
(0945 121 4019)
Khaki jacket, £65
Wardrobe, £100, £120
8012, Singha, £16
Topshop (to bed)
Earrings, £1, £100
Debenhams (0161 944 4400)
Dress, Miss Selfridge
(0844 121 4177), £65
£20, Topshop, vintage £2
belong, Wedge sandals, £40, Faith (0161 946 4400)



"Why are you wearing shorts?" a rugged City-type asked. "You look like Just William." I explained it was more Katharine Hepburn'

small talk, I asked him what it was he loved about my outfit. He looked sheepish, 'Well, the kaftan is virtually transparent and I can see your bra.' Men are so simple. Nevertheless we exchanged numbers and I left with a huge smile on my face. **The verdict:** Yes, yes, yes – my new favourite look. (Plus I've got a date with the guy from the bar.)

AFRICAN QUEEN THE LOOK: SAFARI

How I felt: Everyone from Maxmara to Valentino to Versace sent models sashaying down the runway in safari suits this season. Now I like to think I could look at home big game spotting in the Masai Mara, but I freely admit that knee-length white shorts and a khaki jacket wouldn't normally feature in my dating wardrobe. I tried to conjure up evocative fashion-magazine images of Lauren Hutton striding down Fifth Avenue in late '70s sexy safari style, nipped in at the waist, but it didn't work. I felt ridiculous – the shorts made me feel like a schoolboy and no amount of accessorising with ethnic bangles and retro sunglasses made the slightest difference. This sort of outfit might look great on the catwalk, but it made me feel like an extra in *Born Free*. I planned to test it out at glam London restaurant, Cocoon. I know I should have arrived full of confidence swinging my metaphorical hunting rifle, but I felt more like I'd been mauled by a lion.

The reaction: Even I wasn't prepared for the unenthusiastic reception in store. Weaving my way through the tables, my confidence plummeted further. There were definite sniggers; one man even pointed – and not in a good way. I tried to position myself nonchalantly at the bar but, to my horror, a group of suited-and-booted bankers actually shuffled away. Eventually, after what seemed like a year, a rugged City type approached and bought me a drink. 'Why are you wearing shorts?' he asked bluntly. 'You look like Just William.' I explained that the trend was more 'Katharine Hepburn in *African Queen*' but he was unimpressed. 'If the shorts were shorter and the jacket was tighter it might look sexier,' he offered. I'd had enough. As I slipped quietly out of the bar, a male voice sang out, 'Don't forget your elephant!'

Verdict: Never ever again. ■