

# Absolutely fabulous!

**TIME OFF SPECIAL** In the week that sales of JL kaftans soar thanks to the release of *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie*, we hear from its stars Jennifer Saunders and Joanna Lumley, and examine the impact of pop culture on John Lewis womenswear

**Jennifer Saunders plays celebrity PR Edina Monsoon**  
**What has happened to Eddy since we last saw her?**

**JS:** Her PR business has gone downhill – she’s got, as ever, Lulu, Emma Bunton and Queen Noor [on her books], and they are not working that much. She doesn’t know what’s happening, she has to send all her Net-a-Porter back! She tries her best to get a book deal, and attempts to [sign up] Kate Moss because that would be her moneybag for the rest of her life, but I’m afraid that all sort of ends miserably.

**But she’s still the same old Eddy?**

**JS:** Yes. Edina is becoming more and more desperate and that’s exhibited in the fact that [her] house is now enormous beyond belief. She has drained every ex-husband and every penny dry. But it ends on a positive.

[Patsy and Eddy] have always been allowed to get away with it, and they’ve always got to have a new scheme.

**They go off to France...**

**JS:** There’s an incident at a party where Eddy pushes Kate Moss off a balcony. She’s accused of killing Kate Moss and the paparazzi [suddenly] appear. That’s something she’s wanted all her life, to be famous. And now they’re here, all she wants is to be anonymous. Whenever Patsy and Eddy were in trouble they’d always go: “One day we’ll join the jet-set. One day we’ll live the Martini advert. That’ll be us.” Going to the South of France is really about retreating into that dream of luxury. [Although when they get there] everything is heavy disco Euro-trash music and obscene money, and so everything they’re looking for doesn’t exist.

**Patsy and Eddy are very resilient – you must meet people like them all the time in your industry?**

**JS:** All the time! I keep thinking ‘surely there are other ways of doing PR’, but it’s still the same [20 years on]. Honestly, it’s quite extraordinary.

**Would you go on a night out with Edina and Patsy?**

**JS:** I think it would be ghastly! They think the world loves them when they’re drunk, and I think generally people see them coming and go, ‘oh no!’ But that’s as it should be!

**Joanna Lumley plays magazine fashion editor Patsy Stone**

**Patsy and Eddy must be in their element on the Croisette in Cannes?**

**JL:** They adore it. Life seems pretty peachy, and then it goes horribly wrong again.

**In your documentary on Elvis Presley, you said that Patsy’s laugh was based on the King...**

**JL:** Yes! [laughs]. Patsy adored Elvis, and so she always thought his laugh was really cool, with one lip up, sort of sneering. That’s why she has always laughed a bit like that.

**Is playing Patsy second nature to you now?**

**JL:** Yes – not many people have the chance to play the same character over so many years. We’ve gone back to Patsy being very young at school and we’ve gone forward to her and Eddy being very old, with sort of

intravenous vodka, so we know them from the cradle to the grave. Patsy [still] never has money of her own, and is glued like a kind of succubus to the edge of Edina, but they’re also best friends.

**Did you have any input into the outfits Patsy wears?**

**JL:** Patsy’s always beautifully dressed actually, until she falls apart with too much excess. She has beautiful clothes from Alexander McQueen and beautiful shoes. She looks stylish with those fabulous bits of jewellery and she [nearly] always has her hair up and wears red lipstick. She always smokes cigarettes and drinks Champagne. That’s Patsy and why people love imitating her – hair up, fag in, maybe sunglasses on!

**Do you still love playing Patsy?**

**JL:** Oh, I adore her because she’s so unlike me, yet I know her. She’s sort of the polar opposite of me, which makes me really happy to own her. Would I go on a night out with Patsy and Eddy? Oh, I would steer so clear of them!

Turn to page 12 for three absolutely fabulous JL Personal Stylist makeovers ☺



*Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie* (certificate 15) is in cinemas nationwide now



Sweetie, darling: Star power can often lead to fashion lines selling out

**THE ‘AB FAB EFFECT’ ON JOHN LEWIS’ FASHION SALES**

John Lewis is already feeling the *Absolutely Fabulous* effect: sales of kaftans have rocketed by 80% over the past week – a £125 printed kaftan by Ruby Yaya has even sold out. According to Ed Connolly (below), JL’s Buying Director, Fashion and Beauty, the impact of ‘celebrity’ style on consumer trends is often subliminal. “Consumers might have the film, and the trends it showcases, on their minds [when they are out shopping]. Something like *Absolutely Fabulous* has always included an eclectic mix of fashion and I think it will be the more outrageous trends that we see emerging as a result of this film.”

Popular culture has long been a

contributor to fashion, and designers often draw references for their collections from film, TV and music. Ed and his team attend London Fashion Week each season to help determine what customers will be looking to buy. Stock

is designed and bought from many brands well ahead of its arrival on the shop floor, but there’s always an opportunity to react quickly to unpredictable demand.

“If there’s a concession brand that suddenly sparks interest we can be agile and respond within a short lead time,” says Ed. “If, for example, Kate Middleton is photographed wearing our brands – which happens regularly – we will expect to see an immediate uplift in sales of that item, as well as a halo effect around the brand.”

So how does today’s JL fashion offer compare to its position in the market back in the Nineties, when *Absolutely Fabulous* first aired on TV? “We’ve become much more contemporary, with a great number of high-street, niche and emerging, and top-end brands,” says Ed. “Over time you can see our evolution to become a more distinguished and credible fashion retailer.”

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‘PATSY’S ALWAYS BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED, UNTIL SHE FALLS APART WITH TOO MUCH EXCESS!’

PHOTOS: 20TH CENTURY FOX; DAVID APPELBY; MARK MACKENZIE; LUKAS GOIDA