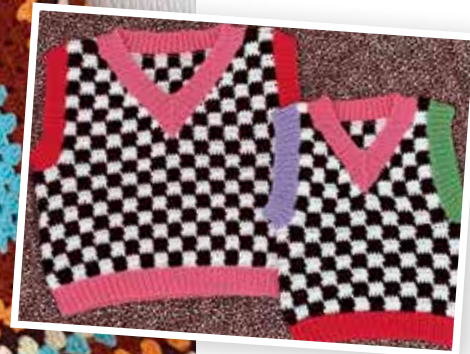


GOOD READ

HOOKED on FASHION

For the past two years, crochet has been popping up on runways, in boutiques and in the hottest street style photos, which has us wondering – is this stitchy trend here to stay?



Crochet garments and accessories by designer Haydn Taylor, aka HGT Designs, who has seen a rise in sales as crochet has become more and more popular

Main image: A crochet dress from the Chloe Spring Summer 2022 fashion show. Clockwise from top: Yuhan Wang crochet dress; street style in Dubai; street style at Coachella Valley; Paul & Joe crochet dress

Crochet is having a major style moment. Some of the most prestigious high-end designers have featured the craft in recent collections, and some of the world's most-popped celebrities have been spotted in crochet tops, hats, bags and even swimwear. With the help of a fashion stylist and two indie crochet designers, we delve a little deeper to discover whether this high-end crafty trend is going to stick around for good...

BACK IN BUSINESS

Crochet seems to have officially made its comeback. This season, the Fashion Week runways were filled with all sorts of creative craftsmanship, showing a re-emergence of styles popular in the 70s. Big-time designers as well as high street brands are approaching crochet in stylish new ways. From Gucci to Valentino, Stella McCartney to Kate Spade, Victoria Beckham to Miu Miu, the world's leading fashion houses have incorporated crochet elements into their collections.

Fashion stylist Joyce Gereige has been working in the fashion industry for many years and notes how the 70s as a whole has been having a major revival. "This isn't the first time we've seen designers finding inspiration from the past's trends, but this

year the 70s has heavily impacted the runway in a way we haven't seen before, with crochet being at the helm of it all," says Joyce. "Colourful hippy fashion has become a key trend from Bottega Veneta to Fendi and many fast-fashion brands. Thanks to the pandemic, we've seen a rise in handmade DIY fashion as well, bringing our love for crochet accessories back in full effect."

This catapulting of crochet into the mainstream has had a noticeable impact on demand when it comes to independent designers, too. German crochet designer Sophie Drewes of indie brand Sophie Dyed in the Wool agrees. "The demand is extremely high at the moment," Sophie tells us. "I feel like in the last few months, almost everyone wants a crocheted bag – it's crazy."

TODAY'S LOOK

So what does high-fashion crochet look like in 2022? "Brands are daring to use more colours and shapes," says Sophie. "I see many artists crocheting extremely great, crazy clothes freehand. I have a feeling that crochet has finally gotten rid of the stamp of being just a 'granny thing' and has made a breakthrough to be considered cool and fashionable."

And comfort has become a major factor in crochet's popularity. "High fashion, in general, has become more ready-to-wear and focused

heavily on comfort and practicality," explains Joyce. "Consumers, now more than ever, especially after the pandemic, want something easy, comfortable and practical, which is why we've seen an endless selection of comfortable crocheted ensembles, breathable dresses and playful garments versus the more constricted and limited options we've seen in the previous years."

MINDFUL SHOPPING

Haydn Taylor is another independent crochet designer who works under the name HGT Designs on Depop. Hayden has also seen a rise in sales due to the current trends but is hopeful that shoppers will continue to look to the independent shops as well as to big-name and high street retailers.

"The past couple of years have been challenging for the fashion industry. With supply chain disruption, factories closing down and retailers refusing to pay their suppliers, advocates took to social media with the #payup and #whomademyclothes campaigns," explains Haydn. "With millions more people spending more time on their phones than ever, these campaigns were reaching a much wider audience than before. This had a big impact on my buying habits and I believe this is the same for many others, focusing more on shopping sustainably and



Clockwise from top left: Designer Haydn working on a project; Fashion stylist Joyce Gereige says the popularity of 70s-style fashion, handicrafts and comfy clothing have contributed to crochet's rise in popularity; two of Sophie Drewes' extremely popular crochet bags

for life-long garments that can be passed down through generations. Many fibre artists like myself are designing, making and shooting their own products and our prices reflect the number of hours taken to carefully handmade each piece, so you know the workers are being paid a fair wage!"

Haydn continues: "It's great that crochet is more accessible through not only small brands, but high fashion brands too – but the knock-on effect of that can leave small business short." Bigger brands have a much faster turn around and have the advantage of having many designers readily able to create new pieces at the drop of a hat. "As I mentioned earlier, this is the darker side to crochet in the fashion industry that needs to be addressed," says Haydn. "But the love of the craft will keep fibre artists creating regardless – and I believe the crochet hype is only just beginning!"

CAPTURING IMAGINATIONS

Whether indie or mainstream, crochet fashion seems to have captured the public's imagination – Pinterest recently revealed that the words 'crochet tops' were mentioned in over 316,148 pins! Even fashion pro Joyce has

seen the resurgence of crochet affect her own style choices. "I've always been selective with the trends I try," she says. "I tend to pick and choose what works best with my personal style and make it my own, and crochet has become one of [those trends]. From crochet hats to colourful bags and chic two-piece sets, I've found myself loving the crochet vibe, and so have my clients."

Celebrities like Gigi Hadid, Tom Daley and Rihanna have all been spotted wearing crochet pieces over the last year, and many people starting picking up new skills – including crochet – during the pandemic. All this has contributed to the growing demand and respect for crochet pieces. "I've seen this through the popularity crochet has gained on platforms like Instagram and TikTok and the business that comes off the back end of those apps," says Haydn.

IN FASHION FOREVER?

So, the big question – is crochet going to go from being the hot new thing to being a bona fide wardrobe staple? "One hundred per cent," says Joyce. "Just like how florals are a staple in spring, crochet has quickly become one for the warmer seasons, and with

designers' endless inspiration on the runway, they have shown us how we can style our crochet pieces all year long, not just for the summer. Whether layered over top of a unique garment or worn on its own, the styling options are truly endless."

The combination of the current disco-era trends and the fact that people are buying more and more from small businesses means it's possible people will go for slow rather than fast fashion, too – a positive outcome for indie designers. "Although fast fashion is still so big, many people pay attention to consuming more consciously and support smaller companies and slow fashion," says Sophie. "I hope this way of thinking and consuming will continue in the future as it is so much better for the environment."

"You can never be sure, because the fashion world is extremely fast-moving. However, I hope that crochet remains as a steady component and the look of it is taken seriously," Sophie continues. "I'm totally excited about what crazy ideas are ahead of us, because you can really design anything with crochet – it's like you're a small 3D printer, just with wool!"

Written by Colette Earley