

BRILLIANT BALLGOWNS

Fairytale gowns are still huge news. We look at the latest trends and hear what the experts have to say



Abella Bride's E253 Christina is a romantic and playful style that offers a dreamy, ethereal aesthetic.



With its illusion lace bodice, sparkling tulle skirt and feminine cut, Reza by Modeca is perfect for romantic brides.



Pretty in pink, Monica Loretta Style 8248 is a romantic option with feminine floral detailing.

Over the years, we've seen bridal trends come and go. But, if there's one look that stands the test of time, it has to be the trusty ballgown. Like anything in fashion, demand changes every season and the designers continue to update their offering to match the desires of modern brides. So what is it about ballgowns that customers love, year after year?

"There's a sense of fun associated with larger-than-life wedding gowns," explains James McKenna of Rachel Allan. "Ballgowns epitomise whimsical escapism, where a bride can be transported into a real-life fairytale."

Monica Loretta's Katie Bevington agrees: "Who doesn't love a showstopper? Brides want to feel special on their wedding day and the flattering fit of a ballgown gives a great silhouette. These gowns also suit all personalities – tulle for playfulness, satin for elegance and glitter and crystals for confident brides."

Through the pandemic, buying habits changed drastically – in part due to restrictions, but also because couples began rethinking what they wanted from their special day. Intimate and micro weddings became more popular as a result...yet now, we're back to seeing a move towards bigger and bolder weddings.

"After two years of no parties and no chance to get dressed up, everyone is looking for an excuse to go bigger and better than before!" says Katie. "There's a

desire for extravagance – we are all appreciating our family and friends and realising that happiness is found in celebrating all together."

It's no surprise then that brides are choosing glamorous ballgowns to match. We're also seeing an upsurge in the number of weddings taking place, which Tim Dunbar at Allure Bridals suggests plays a part in the demand for showstoppers. "Brides want to stand out from other brides they have seen and this is leading them to explore different styles, perhaps considering massive sparkly ballgowns that they would previously have shied away from."

It seems that, regardless of the reasons, brides won't eschew fairytale gowns any time soon. So, what can we specifically expect or start looking out for in 2023? "Ballgowns will always be a staple of the bridal world and we will continue to see them every season with design elements that are currently trending," says Tim. "We are seeing so much diversity in the trends lately, from completely clean, luxe mikado to the most extravagantly beaded styles."

As is often the case, today's brides will certainly be spoilt for choice when it comes to finding a dress that epitomises their personal style. Across the latest collections, there's a beautiful array – so this is a look that can work no matter your store's target audience.

For Justin Alexander, options include gowns with romantic tulle skirts and delicate accents, as well as some more daring, sexy and statement details like



Style MB6095 from Rachel Allan is a modern take on 1950s styling. We love the structured Mikado and square neckline.



Bows are a big hit. Sincerity Style 44332 matches the trend perfectly with simple straps and a modern neckline.

floral brocade, low backs and exposed boning. Rachel Allan also offers glam looks with glitter and sequin skirts, oversized lace appliqué and options that deliver a unique aesthetic.

Likewise, choice is key for Dutch label Modeca, who have also seen the ballgown progress from a traditional to glitzier option: “In our collections, we have a lot of modern twists and you will see plenty of different styles, from big Mikado gowns to boho ballgowns and statement dresses with layered skirts.”

“Our Monica Loretta brides are split between full lace appliqué ballgowns, dazzling sparkle tulle and plain satin pocketed styles,” adds Katie. “More satin in the collection gives a dramatic look and we also use tulle and lace combinations for girls who want a slightly lighter and playful style.” In the latest collections, you can also expect dresses with 3D flowers, open lace backs and seductive splits in full skirts – all of which are perfect for adding wow-factor.

There will, of course, always be brides who prefer a traditional and romantic ballgown, but as statement attire rises in popularity, this presents an opportunity to stay ahead of the game. So, with designers taking their collections to the next level, look out for contemporary twists like oversized sleeves, bold

prints, unusual cuts and asymmetric detailing.

When it comes to styling, the ballgown is also a winner as it can be both toned down and dressed up for all-out glamour, depending on the bride. Yet, despite this versatility and its classic nature, not all retailers have ballgowns ready on their racks.

“Almost every bride needs to try on at least one ballgown during her gown-buying journey,” says Tim. “Even if she is fairly certain it is not the silhouette for her, it gives her the opportunity to rule it out or, potentially, to fall in love with it.”

As with any gown, you’ll want to consider your target customers when auditing or upping your offering. And, luckily, with the diverse selection of ballgowns available, you can deliver different shapes, necklines and

waistlines to suit every customer that visits your store. Better yet – this is a style that flatters most body shapes so it’s a great option to impress your buyers.

As a bridal favourite, ballgowns give you the chance to attract new customers – so if it’s not something you currently sell, think about how you can complement your current selection. Whether you go for sleek mikado, floaty tulle or glittering princess styles, there are sure to be gowns that you – and your brides – will fall in love with. ■

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