

the ultimate party dress for flattering curves ... the battle of xing frocks?



SHAPE

SHARON HUMPHRIES, 54, a volunteer at the Citizen's Advice Bureau, lives in Buckingham with her husband Mervyn, 58. They have four grown-up children. She says: 'I'm size eight to ten, but I work-out every week to keep trim. I haven't always been slim, especially after my children. I tend to go for classic, tailored styles rather than floaty numbers, which don't suit me.'



HOURGLASS

MICHELLE DUNCAN, 41, is a freelance PR from West Malling, Kent. Separated, she lives with her two sons under 12. She says: 'I used to be a size 12-14, but lost weight three years ago when my marriage broke down. I'm now a size ten with a EE bust. Despite this, I'm always wishing my stomach was flatter. I shop at Zara, M&S and Monsoon. I tend to go for fitted clothes. But it can be tricky to find things to fit around my bust.'



BOYISH FIGURE

ANNA PRICE, 37, a marketing consultant, lives in Leicestershire with her husband Andy, 40, and daughters, Scarlett, five, and Eloise, two. She says: 'I have a deceptive figure — I'm nearly 6ft, and a size 14, but my boyish shape gives the illusion I'm slimmer than I am. I'm a bit flat-chested but I love keeping up to date with trends.'



Gok: I'M JUST starting to embrace colours after spending years wearing neutrals, so the vibrant red was great. The material was thick and not very glamorous so I would wear this to work, rather than in the evening. The cut was generous — I wore a size 14 and had room to move. The dress skimmed over my hips and made a feature of my less-than-ample bosom. The length felt right, too. I think the dress was good value for money, comfortable and gave me curves where I don't have them.

M&S: THIS looked good on the hanger, but once it was on me I didn't like it at all. It was baggy and didn't do anything to flatter my bust. The shape of the dress wasn't flattering, either. It didn't give my body the right silhouette and didn't nip in at all the right places. It just hung there. And, again the material was thick and unappealing. It may have been the colour, but I didn't feel nearly as good in this dress as I did in Gok's one.



WINNER GOK

M&S: While not having a separate support lining, the shaping was sewn into the dress. The camel colouring with black panels also helped give the illusion of a better shape, as it almost draws an hourglass shape on you. And it had a more flattering neckline. I found it creased at the back and needed to be pulled down constantly. All in all, though, I felt this dress flattered my shape.

WINNER M&S

Gok: I loved the colour and style of this dress, especially the sexy zip detail which ran all the way up the back of the dress, and it came with a lovely separate red slip. But the shoulder pads seemed too big for both my frame and the dress. I didn't like the length either. Even though I am 5ft 7in, it was too long on me, so I felt quite frumpy. However, I liked the overall look once I had heels on and I did feel that it was flattering to my shape.

M&S: Although the beige colour didn't excite me, the style of this dress was much more to my taste. It was very comfortable to wear, the neckline was more flattering and the material was quite thick, so any lumps and bumps were quickly banished. The length was perfect for my height, too. If it was available in a different colour, I would definitely buy it. It's an affordable piece, but looks more expensive. And it really shows off my figure.

WINNER M&S

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Gok for Tu at Sainsbury's (0800 63 62 62)
Red dress, £45, sizes eight-to-22,
Stretch jersey: Lining;
Nylon elastane fabric
M&S (0845 3021234)
Camel dress, £49.50, sizes 8-20,

Stretch jersey: 67 per cent polyester; 31 per cent viscose, 2 per cent elastane. Upper-lining: 100 per cent polyester. Lower-lining: 58 per cent polyamide, 42 per cent elastane Lycra, stretch Lycra fabric.