

Your red carpet moment... for a fraction of the cost!

You might not have a ticket to the Oscars, but there are smart ways to hire a little extra style, even if it's only for the night. Claire Coleman shows you how it's done



Sparkle to feel starry

Not even the stars own all the bling they wear, so take a leaf out of their book and hire some. First stop is your local jewellers – small independent shops often hire out pieces for around 20 per cent of the retail value. Make sure your household insurance will cover it, as you're usually liable for it during the hire period. You'll probably have to make a deposit of the entire value on a credit card and the balance will be refunded when you return it.

www.dajewellery.com is based in Scotland, but hires diamonds, pearls and Swarovski crystals throughout the UK. A diamond and sapphire necklace costs £200 for three-day hire, but choose crystals and you'll pay as little as £50 for a necklace.

London-based www.susannahlovis.com has stunning antique jewellery, worth as much as £30,000, which you can hire for the weekend for £350 per piece. They will hire nationally and courier the pieces to you, as long as you can ensure that the jewellery is insured in transit. Their Victorian

diamond and pearl tiara is particularly popular.

If you're looking for something a bit more modern, Miss Adela, at www.missadela.co.uk has a number of chunky, Mexican-style pieces available for hire, made from silver and semi-precious stones. A sterling-silver cuff costs £22.50 for five-day hire, including free delivery throughout UK, although you'll have to pay the cost of returning it to them.



Help yourself to the right handbag

Whether you covet designer label bags like the Chloé Paddington, the Mulberry Roxanne and the Marc Jacobs Stam (around £800 each) or just want the perfect bag to match your dream dress, handbag hire could be the answer – you simply pay a monthly fee and can swap your bag as you please.

Aditi Chadha of www.fashionhire.co.uk, based in Manchester, is a bag addict who got her first Prada bag at the age of 18. She came across a handbag library scheme in the US and decided to try something similar in the UK.

"Our members range from students and housewives to professionals – all of them follow trends, know about bags and want to have access to them at a fraction of the cost.

Many desirable bags are produced in such small numbers that it's virtually impossible to get hold of them – that's where we come in."

Membership starts at £9.95 a month, with hire costs per bag on top. For bags like the Stam and the Paddington, you're looking at £85 for a month plus £9.99 courier fees.

www.handbaghirehq.co.uk costs £7.50 a month, and the Stam would cost you £90 a month or £35 for a week, including transport.

If you don't want to become a member, try www.handbagsfromheaven.co.uk. The site has a smaller collection, but you don't have to commit to membership. Hiring a Paddington for a month would cost £78, plus £9.99 for delivery and collection.

Arrange your own make-up artist

Ask friends, your hairdresser or beauty therapist for a personal recommendation or go to www.headtotobeauty.co.uk/makeupartists for a list of local make-up artists throughout the UK. Companies like Mobile Beauty, which covers the north east of England, offer special occasion make-up sessions from as little as £40.

www.facemakeup.co.uk is a nationwide network of make-up artists whose services start at £62.50 for a one hour "Beautiful Lady" session.

If you're in London, go to Mathew Alexander (www.mathewalexander.co.uk), who offers a 30-minute express make-up service for £75. It sounds expensive, but his work is flawless and he will make you feel like a million dollars!

Alternatively, spend £250 on a master class with celebrity make-up artists Ariane Pool (whose clients include Catherine Zeta-Jones and Liz Hurley) or Julia B (make-up artist to Camilla Parker Bowles). See www.teresafairminer.com.

Online, wedding portals are a good resource. Click on the suppliers link and then go to the hair and make-up section. www.hitched.co.uk has the edge over www.confetti.co.uk, as you can read testimonials from people who've used the services before.





Flaunt a dress to die for

Instead of splashing out on an expensive dress you'll only wear once or twice, why not hire a different one for every smart occasion? The number of dress hire shops with a good selection around the country is growing.

www.promdress.co.uk might sound as though it's only for your teenage daughter, but it gives a national directory of shops that hire out dresses, from long eveningwear to mother-of-the-bride wedding outfits. Just click on your county and it will direct you to shops in your area. Once you've identified your local shop, call first to explain what you're looking for and make an appointment. That way you'll get undivided attention and staff can prepare a selection of dresses in

your size. Many shops also have a selection of accessories for hire.

Charlotte James (**www.gownhire.com**) in Chester has dresses in sizes 8 to 24 from labels such as Tadashi and Mon Cheri, from £85.

Moonlight (**www.posh-eveningdresses.co.uk**) in Dorset offers gowns from suppliers including Milano Formals, Consortium and John Charles, with prices from £55 to £75.

If you're in London, head to One of a Kind (259 Portobello Road, W11; 020 7792 5853). Everyone from Kate Moss to Naomi Campbell flocks here for vintage designer wear, which can be hired for 20 per cent of the retail price. You'll also find vintage shoes (from around £20) and accessories (from £10).

Source a stylist

No self-respecting celebrity would get dressed without her stylist. Both John Lewis (**www.johnlewis.com**) and House of Fraser (**www.houseoffraser.co.uk**) offer personal shopping in a number of their stores throughout the UK and Ireland. They usually have a dedicated area with private changing rooms where you can discuss your needs with a personal shopper, enjoy a drink and try on a selection of outfits.

Nicky Hambleton-Jones (of *Ten Years Younger* fame) runs Tramp 2 Vamp (**www.tramp2vamp.com**), which will send a stylist to help you shop. A five-hour shopping trip costs £350 and they usually recommend central London for the variety and choice of stores. You can head elsewhere, but you may have to pay travel expenses for the stylist on top.

New York style guru Patrick Swan is stylist to the stars (including Madonna and Helen Baxendale). For a fee (starting at £250) he will make over your wardrobe, your make-up routine or your whole image by supervising a shopping trip. Visit **www.patrickswan.com** for details.

www.theglassslipper.co.uk offers a similar service in London, Brighton, Manchester and Leeds. A four-hour shopping trip with a stylist will set you back £300, while if you have the stamina for a seven-hour session, that will cost £450.

The stylists at Stylizers (**www.stylizers.co.uk**) will travel anywhere in the country and say they can work to any budget. For £220, they offer an 11am to 5pm shopping day, including a style and image consultation.

Whichever you pick, make sure when you call to book you discuss your budget. The stylists don't take commission, but they need to know if you're splashing £50 or £500, so they know to tailor your shopping trip accordingly. >>

