

Lookout



'Warm Bodies' puts a zombie twist on 'Romeo and Juliet' 24
Netflix goes big — but comes up short — with 'House of Cards' 26



GIRL WITH CURVES



GABI FRESH



Curve Appeal

Plus-sizes can find better fashion choices, but it's often still slim pickings

On a recent shopping trip with my curvy pal J., we spent a fruitless hour and a half in a Nordstrom dressing room hunting for a size 16 cocktail outfit. One lacy tunic flattered her bosom but wouldn't quite fasten in the back; a little black dress that looked OK on the hanger screamed Reform School Matron on. We eventually gave up and

left to get a glass of wine at the food court. But her frustration — and the cash she didn't drop — stuck with me.

After all, every chick (well, maybe not Fiona Apple or Demi Moore) struggles to find jeans that fit and bathing suits that give her confidence, not connoptions. But if you're among the estimated 67 percent of U.S. women who wear between size 14 and 34 — aka plus size — shopping for fashionable, flattering clothing can make you feel as lonely as a Tea Partier at a Democratic fundraiser.

"Women's" sections (the other,

GIRLWITHCURVES

.COM Bay Area blogger Tanesha Awasthi won't reveal her size, but her bombshell get-ups — slim jeans, peplum tops, dramatic jackets — prove that glamor isn't just for scrawny Eva Longoria clones.

GABIFRESH.COM

On her blog and in her monthly column for InStyle magazine, Chicago's Gabi Gregg plays against old big-girl rules by rocking crop tops, miniskirts and pin-up girlish two-piece bathing suits.

none-too-flattering moniker for plus) at department stores tend to be relegated to the Siberia of the highest floor. Big-name retailers (J. Crew, Banana Republic) only go up to size 16; some don't even do that (we give you the stink eye, skinny-loving Zara). And curvier models are conspicuously missing from major-label print ads, though Ralph Lauren recently earned props for using Aussie plus-size babe Robyn Lawley.

"Many designers are surrounded by waif-like models, and they just think of plus-size women as Honey Boo Boo's mom," says Arlington government contractor Alexis Benjamin, 31, a size 16. "It's like they think, 'I'll design a checked tent!'"

Indeed, many fashion megawatts (Diane von Furstenberg, Marc Jacobs) don't cut clothes for the zaftig set. And those with extended sizes — Michael Kors, Donna Karan — do little to

promote them. “Is it that they don’t want fat women associated with their brands?” asks Gabi Gregg of plus-size blog Gabifresh.com. “It’s harder to design and execute a line for curvier girls, but still.”

“The lack of good plus options can be frustrating for consumers,” says Oona McSweeney, vice president of retail and special markets for fashion forecasting firm Stylesight. “But there are realities. A plus-size line requires more fabric, and consumers often aren’t willing to pay higher prices for that. It can mean retailers don’t want to put their money into plus size.” And cutting a dress for a size 2 and a size 22 means rethinking the entire garment, something some brands aren’t interested in.

Still, in the past few years, a surge of far-beyond-skeletal celebrities willing to flaunt their figures (Adele, Rebel Wilson) and style blogs run by voluptuous fashionistas like Gregg do suggest that thin is no longer the only size that’s in. Online and on the street, heavier women are willing to take greater risks than in the past.

Gregg, a size 18, famously posted an image of herself in a striped “fatkini” last spring — deep cleavage, non-skinny

ONLINE OPTIONS

Major chains like Talbots and Macy’s do a good job catering to larger sizes. Here are some lesser-known sources of curvy chic.

Asos.com

The Brit cheap-cool brand gets high marks from bloggers for its “Curve” line, which caters to sizes 14-22 with trendy styles like peplum tops (\$35 and up), sexy cocktail dresses and a large stock of waist-whittling belts (\$10 and up).

Gwynniebee.com

Like a plus-size Rent the Runway, items in this for-hire “library” of dresses, tops and other pieces from names like Land’s End and DKNY start at \$35 a month.

Kiyonna.com

Known for quality, sleek knitwear in sizes 10-32, this California-based brand stars lace cocktail dresses (\$158), jewel-toned wrap tops (\$68) and other femme styles. A “Real Curves” section has customers modeling their purchases. J.B.

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— ALEXIS BENJAMIN, AN ARLINGTON GOVERNMENT CONTRACTOR WHO WEARS A SIZE 16

legs and all. Other bloggers such as the Bay Area’s Tanesha Awasthi of Girl with Curves (Girlwithcurves.com) are strutting outfits that once might have seemed off limits for anyone besides Kate Moss — peplum tops and skinny jeans, cropped tees and full skirts. “I think it’s about stepping outside your comfort zone and not thinking, ‘That’s not for me because I’m curvy,’” says Gregg.

Some brands and entrepreneurs take notice of the lack of plus options and tap into the market’s lucrative possibilities. The Limited launched a plus-size line, Eloquii, in 2011. Late last year, 109-year-old retailer Lane Bryant introduced Lane, an upscale division within its plus-size stores. Monifc.com sells luxury styles in size 18 to 24 at its e-boutique. “These customers don’t want smushy, shapeless knits,” says Jodi Arnold, vice president for design at Eloquii. “Plus-

size women want structure, neatness and boldness, too.”

But in larger sizes, there still seems to be a one stiletto-ed step forward, two frumpy Aerosole-d steps back situation.

At The Limited in the Fashion Center at Pentagon City, Eloquii’s Tory Burch-esque print tunics are prettily displayed across the store from similar “straight”-size styles. Yet on a recent shopping trip to Chevy Chase with J., we found that Saks Fifth Avenue has taken its plus-size Salon Z online only, and Neiman Marcus yielded nothing, though another customer suggested we try Chico’s up the street. Ouch!

It felt like a style defeat, but maybe soon, being plus won’t be a fashion minus. “Any savvy retailer is discussing how to get these consumers,” says McSweeney. “A groundswell is coming.”

JENNIFER BARGER (EXPRESS)



Lane’s cocktail frock (\$100) boasts glitter trim.

LANE
BRYANT



Pin-up bikini top (\$88) and bottom (\$70).

MONIF C.



Eloquii’s blouse (\$45) and skirt (\$65).

THE
LIMITED