

STYLE

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Prom queen

Dress like royalty for less than \$20



LISA HANNAM

It's all about your fashion mind's eye when it comes to thrift shopping, especially for prom.

While most stores template what a girl can wear from head to toe, shopping second-hand is about personal style and what you can do with the dress.

I held up each dress at Value Village and asked myself, "What can I do with this?"

A gingham Ben Sherman dress (yes, Ben Sherman) is meant to be a halter, which might not work for prom, but tie the straps around the back and under the arms to become a strapless dress. Pile on accessories and the day dress has been transformed to night.

I took the same approach with a high-neck backless LBD. Since teen fashion mags and websites push the one-shoulder trend, I rotated the dress about 45 degrees. Instead of tying at the neck, I tied it at the shoulder, paired it with a wide belt and wooden necklace to focus on the face. Why compete with beauty when you can compliment it, right?

"The key to finding stylish second-hand looks is to channel current trends and keep an open, creative mind," says

Kaitlin Goodall, Value Village spokesperson.

Some dresses are recently donated from proms and New Year's Eve parties.

A flirty kimono sleeveless slit dress begged a sash. A sprightly salesclerk (all of 15 years of age) pulled out a wine-coloured velvet scarf to tie around the waist. I didn't question, as teen girls do know what they want.

A dress with classic draping, likely a bridesmaid dress, instantly creates a goddess of its wearer. Slip on gladiator pumps, a necklaces and a woven belt for red carpet glamour.

"This prom season, top trends include everything from classic old Hollywood glamour to bold prints and ribbons and bows," says Goodall.

If I've learned anything from Gossip Girl, other than the fact that you can go off to Spain and get married even if you're younger than 18, it's that layering is key with jewellery. Long necklaces go with short. Gold pieces beckon silver. Mix up the beads.

And yes, the '80s are back. What I think is Dynasty, teenagers call Patricia Field or Marc Jacobs.

But the evening is about high schoolers (and perhaps some graduating grade eights). But then again what do I know? I'm really, really old.

For more prom inspiration, visit Value Village's Facebook or MySpace pages.

Lisa Hannam reports on fashion for The Hamilton Spectator. gostyle@thespec.com



Dress, \$10, is worn with braided belt, \$3, clutch, \$6, necklaces, \$6 and \$10, braided cuff, \$8, and earrings, \$6.



Dress, \$13, is worn with velvet sash, \$3, velvet scarf, \$3, satiny clutch, \$6, earrings, \$10, bangles, \$7 and \$5, and bracelet, \$4.



Dress, \$15, is worn with belt, \$6, clutch, \$6, wooden necklace, \$3, shell ring, \$6, and drop earrings, \$5.



Cotton dress, \$10, is worn with braided belt, \$4, woven clutch, \$3, multi-strand beads, \$7, and enamel earrings, \$6.

Photos by Cathie Coward, The Hamilton Spectator
Clothing and accessories from Value Village, 2340 Fairview St., Burlington, 905-631-6990
Model from Vogue Models & Talent (Burlington Toronto), 433 Brant St., Burlington, 905-633-8182
Hair by Kevin Sullivan of Kativa Salon & Spa, 115 Plains Rd. E., Burlington, 905-634-9508 ♦ Makeup by Natalie Sexton Suffoletta, aestheticsbynatalie.com

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