

# Snuggle up

Our writers become models, as they reveal how knitwear makes them feel

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hair and make-up *alice oliver*  
using *paul mitchell* and *laura mercier*

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KIM WEARS: Yellow scarf, £20, **Accessorize** Jumper, *Kim's own* BRE WEARS: Pink scarf, £20, **Accessorize** Black and white jumper, £150, *Amber Hards*





## “Learning to love knits”

words aimee-lee abraham

Seduced by the promise of big school and the knowledge waiting for a bookish kid like me, I waited for my big girl jumper to arrive with feverish excitement.

In the BHS catalogue, girls with skipping ropes hop-scotched and cartwheeled in pleated skirts. The jumper looked great on them, but when the real thing arrived it felt like sandpaper against my skin and turned my complexion to concrete. Tight in all the wrong places, inexplicably baggy in others, it made me feel wretchedly self-conscious in ways only a pre-teen can understand. My puppy fat rolls were already the focus of 20 per cent of my waking thoughts. The jumper revealed them to the world.

But the jumper had to be worn. There was no choice, and that was precisely what made wearing it feel so unjust. In a private act of rebellion, I did everything I could to bend the rules. I tied it around my waist in the playground, slung it over my shoulder whenever someone I liked walked down the corridor, ripped it like a bandaid as soon as the clock struck three. When I went to the even bigger big school, I experimented with personal style in a wholly predictable way and a pattern emerged. The more restricted or anxious I felt, the more impulsively and eccentrically I dressed and the more I steered clear of anything that could be deemed classic or safe.

I denied myself of jumpers, got pierced precisely because it was against the rules. Weeks before my prom day, buckling under the fear of what to do next, I shaved half of my head, and at 10pm on the night before a Very Important Exam, I decided it was a fine time to lock myself in the bathroom, lean over the tub, and bleach my hair platinum. The next day, I showed up at school with a burnt scalp hidden beneath a woolly dunce hat and a seed was planted. Slowly, I stopped using novelty as something I could hide behind. As I grew more comfortable in my own skin, I used my mouth and my mind to make statements, instead of relying on clothes to shout loudly about who I was and what I stood for. It was a quiet change, but it was revolutionary.

Now I’m grown, I’ve reconciled my relationship with knits, and I’m no longer attracted to things purely because they’re provocative. These days, the women who catch my eye as they cross the street are no longer the women draped in accessories. They’re the women buried in scarves, bundled up like precious jewels inside oyster shells. They’re the women in flats, running for the bus like gazelles. They’re the women who are comfortable and whole. Practical, dazzling women who know what matters. Women in jumpers. →



AIMEE-LEE WEARS,  
above: Yellow pleat  
jumper, £405, **Mandkhai**  
opposite: Scarf, £305,  
**Paul & Joe** Long gloves,  
£145, **Mandkhai**







## “Knitwear makes me feel British”

words tahmina begum

I’m currently sitting at home working. I’m wearing a camel-coloured thick knit, matching aptly to the sofa I’m cushioned in. It’s winter in Britain, I’m a writer, I like to be cosy. It’s as simple as that. Who doesn’t love peppermint tea near the fire while it’s raining outside? Especially when you’re inside what feels like a blanket.

I do wonder what 15-year-old me would think if she could see me now? There’s nothing that interesting about my outfit. I look snuggled into a protective knit – I look British.

Not ethnically, of course, and yes, naturally I’m going to be in a jumper of some kind, living in England when it’s December. But growing up I could fight off the heat in a million different layers – okay, five – different shirts on top of each other with a floral scarf, turban, grandad cardigan (actually, it was my nana’s) and a berry-coloured coat and make my own version of what a turtleneck would do.

When homes, tongues and thoughts are not founded in one place, they seem to intertwine in ways which tend to be unexplainable and fluid. Just like most teenagers, I was made to feel as though I had to choose who I wanted to be and stick to that version of me – nothing was allowed to be messy. Everything was to be black and white. But I enjoy colour. I am colour.

I used to think if I wore a simple cardie and jeans, it was too plain and I definitely did not look like a Jane – whatever she’s supposed to be. Though I didn’t have to walk around in a kameez, swirls on silk shirts and an avalanche of bracelets, it was an unconscious decision and a physical reminder of my decadent and gold-trimmed-on-anything-and-everything heritage.

But nearly a decade later, I’ve realised the beauty in both. In choosing and knowing I can have both. This jumper has twists and waves and turns, especially when I move my arms. My winter armour does not need to explain itself to anyone, when it’s with jingly earrings and obscenely gemmed trinkets or even when paired with pyjama bottoms, scraped back hair and emails. It fits into both worlds, both versions of me and the many in between. Because the woman beneath it all is dynamic and intricate, so there is no forceless need to be anything than what it’s supposed to be: comfort in this rain and heat, in anything in vain. It is an item that resembles and resonates with me right now. →



TAHMINA WEARS, left: Jumper, £100, **No Way Crochet** Jewels and jeans, *Tahmina’s own* Above: Purple jumper, £640, **Paul & Joe** Scarf on sofa, £135, **Amber Hards** Socks, *stylist’s own*



“To be wrapped up in something  
is one of the best feelings”



AIMEE-LEE WEARS, left:  
Plait detail jumper, £410,  
*Paul & Joe* Hat, £12,  
Accessorize Jeans and  
socks, *Aimee-lee's own*  
BRE WEARS, above  
and right: Cardigan,  
£690, *Paul & Joe*





## “Hugs can’t be sent by post”

words *bre graham*

To be wrapped up in something has to be one of the world’s best feelings, right? Whether it’s inside just washed sheets or in between a new lover’s legs, or even a woollen blanket on the sofa. It doesn’t matter what you’re entangled in, to be wrapped up is to be warm, safe and secure. The want to keep someone you love warm is so instinctual.

Years ago, when I was living through my first London winter, alone and away from my family, I got good at pretending that I wasn’t homesick for Sydney. Everything was great, except the distance between us. I was so excited to be living a version of my life that I didn’t think was possible that I never wanted to complain. To live on opposite ends of the earth from your family is a strange feeling. You exist in the limbo of time zones, airports and only talking via the telephone.

Nothing can be instant with a space like that in between. With 24 hours and two flights between us, when we need each other most we can do it, but for those days when you really just want a hug and a cup of tea, you remember that not even those can be sent by post.

Walking along the South Bank by myself after going to the theatre one January years ago, all I wanted was to be able to get on a bus or a train and go see my family. Instead, I called home.

“Hey Mum. Just walking along by the river. Yeah, it’s pretty, just under the fairy light bit. The play was good. I’m okay. Yeah I promise. No I’m not crying it’s just that the play was sad. I promise. How’s Dad? Dogs good too? What did the ocean look like today? I’m okay really. Just tired. I love you. Miss you too. Tell them I say hello. Love you. Bye,” I said biting my cheek to stop tears while looking out over the Thames.

The next afternoon while I was sitting at home working, my doorbell rang. I signed for the small black plastic pouch and ripped it open to find a scarf. Made from the softest cashmere I’ve ever felt and in the same shade of red my mum and I love to wear on our lips – it was stunning. The card read: “Wish I was there to give you a hug but I figured this was the next best thing. Wrap yourself up in it baby girl and it’ll keep you warm till winter is gone. You’re doing great and we’re so proud of you. Lots of love, Mum.”

While hugs from the people we love still can’t be sent by post, the feeling of one, the feeling of being wrapped up, loved and kept warm can be. →



TAHMINA WEARS,  
above: Mittens, £6.95,  
**Beyond Retro** Jumper,  
£240, **Guðrun & Guðrun**  
BRE WEARS, right:  
Jumper, £769, **Milo Maria**  
Hat, £125, **Paul & Joe**







## “Crocheting nurtured my self belief”

words kim robinson @nowaycrochet

There’s something incredibly soothing and satisfying about the motion of a hook and yarn – each stitch creates its own unique rhythm, pattern and texture. I only started knitting a few years ago, but I remained very persistent, as I craved that amazing feeling of creating something beautiful.

Teaching myself to crochet helped me through a very stressful time in my life, it was something to look forward to, something to give me purpose. Hearing and seeing other people’s reactions to my knitted creations was such a lovely feeling – I had never felt creative or ‘good’ at anything. Crocheting nurtured my self belief.

I conjured up beautiful ideas from the depths of my brain, using a ball of spun fibre and a small metal stick. The feeling of being able to gift a garment to someone is so rewarding. Knitwear is cared for and loved in a way so different to something shop bought. It’s more personal, it offers comfort and warmth and has been made using another’s hands.

I have a notebook full of ideas, once I have a picture in my mind, I sketch it out quickly, so I can go back to it. Ideas don’t always turn out how I imagined, but working out how to get things looking right is a huge learning process.

The finished product of a crocheted garment gives an amazing feeling, but the process is as equally rewarding – the excitement, impressing myself, having something tangible that first only existed as an abstract thought.

I love using bright colours, unusual textures and vintage yarn. I’m always searching in charity shops for interesting fibres, even old bits of crochet that have been lovingly crafted – evenings spent being made by a stranger – I can’t bear to leave bits behind, as I know, first hand, how much love and time has put into that item. →



KIM WEARS, opposite and above: Hand-knitted cardigan by Kim, £85, **No Way Crochet** T-shirt, **Kim’s own** Levi’s blue jeans, £30.95, **Beyond Retro** Belt, £12.95, **Beyond Retro**





*“I bought boots a size too big so that I could wear my chunky socks inside them”*

*words terri-jane dow*

No one was more surprised than I was when I announced that I was moving to Edinburgh. A notorious hot-weather fiend, I’ve always been the person still wearing a coat in August; downgrading to a floaty scarf rather than a woolly one, but wearing a scarf all summer nonetheless. I am always cold. I lived in Australia for a year and complained that it still wasn’t hot enough in the summer. Heliotropic, like a sunflower.

Friends who had been to Scotland before comforted me with the information that “Edinburgh is cold, but Glasgow is wetter,” which I’m not entirely sure is true. Regardless, I had decided on Edinburgh, and packed up my life and moved there – having visited at the height of summer on a fluke three-day stint of sunshine – three months later. It was cold.

In my suitcases, my mum had packed multiple pairs of cosy, woolly socks so that I would “at least have warm feet.” I bought boots a size too big so that I could wear my chunky socks inside them, on top of fleecy tights.

At Christmas, when work rotas meant I couldn’t fly home and back in time, mum sent me a big squishy parcel, which, when I opened it, was full of a huge fluffy dressing gown, and a few pairs of knitted woolly socks. I pulled them all on, and spent Christmas Day padding around my flat, watching bad ’80s movies with the snow falling outside the window.

Every time I came home, I returned to Edinburgh with at least one more pair of chunky socks, usually knitted by Auntie Jean, in various different colours. I had a bright red pair with fluffy pom-poms on them that I wore as slippers, and for a stretch between Christmas and the start of spring, I’d receive routine phone calls asking if I had colour requests.

When I moved back to London, I brought my assortment of cosy socks with me, although it’s barely cold enough to wear them here. Glasgow may be wetter, and Edinburgh in winter is freezing, but I did always at least have warm feet. ♦

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TERRI-JANE WEARS,  
opposite: Cotton top,  
**stylist’s own** Knitted  
trousers, £295, **Mandkhai**  
Socks, £20, **Gudrun**  
& **Gudrun**