



razzle dazzle

Nothing is over the top when it comes to dressing for New Year's Eve parties.

Liberace is the night's patron saint. Cher is its godmother. Just plain bling is boring. The night requires supercalifragilisticexpialbling.

"The more, the better," says Renate Feth, co-owner of Ambria's Gallery of Wearable Art, a headquarters for glimmering party wear in St. Petersburg.



SHARON FINK
Threads

"There are no rules," says Tashia Diaz, manager and co-owner of Georgette's, a South Tampa go-to spot for sparkle and shine.

So go ahead. Cover yourself from hair follicles to toenail tips with Stickum spray and roll around in a couple of pounds of sequins and beads.

For those of you with boundaries that won't let you go that far, Feth and Diaz have guidance to offer based on their decades of experience helping women reach sequined glory.

And don't think it's too late to do something fabulous for New Year's Eve. Diaz says most women don't start thinking about their outfit until after Christmas — "One holiday at a time," she says, laughing — and she expects her store to be very busy today and Sunday.

A STARTING POINT: Consider what kind of party (or parties) you're going to.

"If I am going to the Vinoy (resort in St. Petersburg)," Feth says, "I am dressing up to the hilt. If I'm going to something less formal, then I dress down a little bit, maybe even wear pants. But basically for New Year's Eve, I would just go for everything that's the best, from top to toe."

So the real starting point on this night is what you want. For example: "I want to look amazing."



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Dress, Sue Wong Nocturne, \$695, Ambria's Gallery of Wearable Art, 200 Beach Drive NE, St. Petersburg, (727) 895-8609, www.ambrias.com; necklace, R. J. Graziano, \$175, Nordstrom, International Plaza, Tampa; bracelet, Xhilaration, \$14.99, Target.

DEFINE "AMAZING": Diaz says the women she works with "want the entrance and the exit dress. They want the whole room talking about them from the moment they get to the party to the moment they leave. And let's hope they're talking about them at breakfast as well."

Finding that dress — or a top and skirt or pants that accomplish the same thing — doesn't start with sequins or beads, cut or color, but with deciding what your best attribute is. If you love your cleavage, get a plunging neckline. If you also love your arms, make it a halter. If you like your back, go backless. Have a long, elegant neck? You want a strapless top. Great



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Dress, Beyond Jovani, \$424, Georgette's, 1602 Snow Ave., Old Hyde Park Village, Tampa, (813) 254-1141; bracelet, Target limited edition, \$13.98 on sale; earrings, model's own. The red chairs in the photos are across the street from St. Petersburg City Hall, 175 Fifth St. N.

legs — go short with a dress or skirt. Big, bold personality — big, bold colors or a dress with sparkling ostrich trim covering every inch.

If you're at a loss about what part of you to play up, ask some friends whose style you admire, and then take them shopping with you. Think about what you've worn in the past that won you lots of compliments. Or go to a specialty store, where the salespeople can be in a better position than those in bigger establishments to give you one-on-one advice.

TRENDS OF THE MOMENT: Big, bold accessories are very popular, Feth and Diaz say. "The bigger, the better," Feth says. "I haven't sold anything small yet."

Evening bags also have been flying out of Ambria's, Feth says.

Red continues to be a hot color. It looks good on everyone, Diaz says, though redheads should be careful about the shade they pick. Even a touch of red, like shoes or a necklace, can add sparkle.

YOU'RE FEELING DIZZY. YOU'RE BREAKING OUT IN A COLD SWEAT . . . Because we're this far into the column and haven't mentioned the trusty black dress. And no matter what we say, that's what you're going to wear. It's classic. It's always right. It's safe.

Yes, it's all those things. And on New Year's Eve, it also can be boring. But if you must do black, be adventurous.

"Do something with a low back to it or something with a lot of sparkle and shine, something not typical," Diaz says. "Make sure that the accessories are amazing. Put on a great pair of red high-heeled shoes . . . and (accessorize) with red crystals, red sparkles.

"New Year's is special."

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