

Why breasts are back on the red carpet

As stars show off slashed-to-the-navel dresses, Celia Walden hears how to get the perfect décolleté



J-Lo, Jennifer Aniston and Kate Hudson are among the A-listers displaying low-cut dresses on the red carpet. But what does it take to pull it off? Photo: AFP/Getty/Rex Features

By Celia Walden

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Glancing nonchalantly down at co-presenter Jennifer Lopez’s impressive embonpoint at last month’s Golden Globes, actor Jeremy Renner quipped: “You’ve got the globes, too.” Salacious humour rarely goes down well in Hollywood (some nonsense about ‘objectification’) and the Internet reacted swiftly and mercilessly.

“Jeremy Renner wins best supporting creep,” sniped one. “Tacky and terrible!” blasted another. Renner’s comment was hardly razor sharp, but in his defense J-Lo’s ‘globes’ were hard to avoid, showcased as they were in a gold, caped Zuhair Murad gown slashed deep enough to rival the palm-print Versace number she wore to the Grammys 15 years ago.

J-Lo wasn't the only one forcing male guests' eyes stoically skywards at the first awards ceremony of the season. Kate Hudson's chest was barely covered by shreds of white Versace – complete with accordion style silver cutouts along the sides of her torso. Jessica Chastain opted for another slashed Versace halter-neck in bronze, while Sienna Miller (in Miu Miu) and Rosamund Pike (in a precarious looking Vera Wang dress) followed suit.



Kate Hudson is a fan of the slashed-to-the-navel look

The theme was held up as well as those A-list bosoms at last Sunday's SAG awards, where Jennifer Aniston, Lupita Nyong'o and Rashida Jones took necklines to a new low, forcing TV fashion commentators to predict that this year's Academy Awards were likely to be "the most boobtastic in history". "Breasts," announced industry bible, The Hollywood Reporter, "are officially back."

Now while it always comes as a relief to women to hear that "breasts", "bums", "backs" or "shoulders" are "back" (quite what you do with them when they're out of fashion, nobody knows), putting your best chest forward isn't as simple as it looks. Indeed the late, great Nora Ephron's 2006 memoir, *I Feel Bad About My Neck*, might have had a very different title if written now, when the area Hollywood women feel most self-conscious about runs a good 10 inches deeper.

"The plunge is not for everyone," cautions celebrity stylist Katja Cahill. "It may be the most relevant trend on the red carpet right now, but for anyone above a C cup, you risk tipping the scales from stylish to slutty. These gowns may have been let in and out millimetre by millimetre by the most sublime tailors right up until the big day, but when you're this over-exposed, anyone over the age of 25 will have to put in the ground work beforehand."

The rule, according to Beverly Hills dermatologist Harold Lancer, is simple: “The skin has to match from the dinner table up. Otherwise it’s a dead give-away.”

Thankfully, there’s a multitude of new ways to make sure you adhere to A-list 'boobiequette'. According to Beverly Hills aesthetician to the stars, Angela Nice, most celebrities start prepping their décolletés at least a month before awards season starts. “If you’re veering towards the non invasive, light microdermabrasion will help even out the skin tone and a series of Intense Pulsed Light treatments will eliminate any discolorations on the chest,” Nice tells me.

To help me in my own quest for décolleté perfection, she sends me off with a packet of triangular silicone infused pads, called Silc-Skin, to wear on my chest every night for 30 days. Within five days, they’ve made a visible difference, though my husband is confused as to why I’ve started “wearing a bib at night”.

Thankfully, the U-shaped head cradle or 'Beauty Bear pillow' prescribed to me by beauty expert Jamie Sherrill, has passed unnoticed. “One of the most damaging things you can do to that area, sunbathing aside, is side-sleeping,” Sherrill warns all her industry clients.

While sleep, water, salt intake and exercise all play a part in keeping the chest area youthful, deeper lines necessitate more aggressive measures, from chemical peels and micro-current “chest facials” (\$900 for three treatments) to the “photodynamic therapy” recommended by renowned dermatologist Dr Peter Kopelson. “First we apply a substance to the skin to make it more sensitive to laser or light treatment,” he explains. “After application, the pulsed dye laser or intense pulsed light machines are used to remove brown spots and tighten the crepe-like skin on the neck or chest.”



J-Lo favours plunging necklines and boasts a flawless décolleté

Kopelson also addresses the two pronounced cords in the neck – or “tree roots” as they’re unaffectionately known in LA – that start to appear in women over the age of 45. He treats them with Botox every two to three months (\$800-\$1200). “A common pitfall in skin rejuvenation is concentration on the face while ignoring the décolletage,” he says. “The proverbial bag not matching the shoes comes to mind. But with this comprehensive treatment, women can feel confident that their Louboutins will always match their Birkin.”

Anyone seriously concerned that they might be nominated for the wrong kind of ‘SAG’ award - actresses whose images will be scrutinised in forensic detail from the moment they step on to the red carpet on Oscar night - may also have paid a visit to Lawrence Koplin MD, who uses a woman’s own body fat and stem cells - extracted by liposuction – as an injectable to plump out fine chest lines. “I call it the Robin Hood procedure,” he tells me of the \$10,000 treatment.

“Because we’re taking fat from somewhere there may be too much of it, like the thighs, we are effectively stealing from the rich and giving to the poor.”

That fat is either injected into the hollows in between a woman’s breasts (“if she’s very bony there, I’ll put some fat in to make it smooth”) or, in smaller measures, alongside stem cells higher up. This is called micro-fatfilling – and because it’s your own body filler, it’s both permanent and good for you: the stem cells that are in the fat have reparative benefits to the skin. So it’s constructive, rather than destructive.

Only you might want to do it at least a month before a red carpet event, Koplin warns, “because the skin can look a little pebbly for a while, where the injections have been administered.”

On the day itself, even with Donatella personally overseeing those last wardrobe nips and tucks, no self-respecting stylist would send her clients into the paparazzi jungle without rolls of toupee tape holding her look together. “Topstick hairpiece adhesive is wardrobe gold,” says Cahill. “Because it’s medical grade, we all swear by it. It’s simply the only thing that can ensure clients avoid the dreaded wardrobe malfunction on the red carpet.”

The sad fact is that in a year when only one of the eight films nominated for Academy Awards has produced a best actress nominee (Felicity Jones in *The Theory of Everything*), those boasting the “best breasts” may be 2015’s biggest female winners of the night. But in defiantly baring almost all – as Renner found out to his cost – the slashed-to-the-navel brigade has at least confirmed one thing: that the primary biological function of breasts is to make men stupid.