

# Are you Spring Carnival ready?

By stylist & fashion journalist, *Rhiannon Bully*  
QCG Magazine

## *Fairest lady of them all...*

Inky images of gliding sculptures in waist-synching dresses and wide-brimmed hats—long-handled umbrellas at the ready—have ingrained themselves in the mind of every woman.

It is one of the most memorable movie scenes of all time: Audrey Hepburn at Ascot Racecourse in *My Fair Lady*. Outclassed and out of place, Hepburn transcended her 'humble' roots and left a long-lasting impression of what a true lady should be: happy in her own skin. But, while she was a princess in rags or riches, the 'Fair Lady' only felt like one when she had the outfit to match.

Australia's racecourses are about to come to life, as women take to the fields, unleash their inner goddesses, and revel in their natural beauty. Indeed, the woman herself should be the statement piece in every outfit. So, as you prepare for the Spring Carnival season, don't feel limited by the latest racewear trends; rather, select style items which suit your unique personality and shape, and flavour them with a little seasonal spirit.

This Spring Carnival season is all about exuberant embellishment. *Bows will be back, bigger than ever*, adorning everything from bags to back-aching dresses. Women's shoulders will be another key focus, with pagoda-style lines drawing the eye up and across, and one shoulder silhouettes dragging the eye down in form-flattering diagonals. Don't leave home without a strong, tailored jacket to empower the feminine frills, ruffles, and lace of spring dresses. Alternately, you can opt for a cape – yep, the 60s live to see another day!

Colours will be as fresh and tangy as summer fruit, with vivid palettes of orange and yellow taking centre stage. Dusty pinks, bright magentas, and purples in an equally mesmerising array of tones will also re-emerge as girlie favourites.

Silhouettes will be romanticised with womanly elegance, or empowered by sculpture-style pockets and shoulders, which are incredibly refined in the classic LBD. If you have big hips or shoulders, avoid the aforementioned trends respectively.

Subtle beading and a splash of sequins can add glamorous mystery to any outfit, while feathers and flowers will boast fragile femininity.

Of course, certain racewear traditions will always remain. Gloves and hosiery are a must, and lacy options are the hot pick of the season. However, if your gloves are lacy or your dress is exuberant, your stockings will need to be matte and vice versa.

Try not to leave home without a hat. If you do, your accessories should make up for the lack of drama. Oversized earrings in bold colours are a great alternative. However, hats are more transformative in nature and really are the icing on the cake. They transcend trends and seal a woman in inimitable character.

When Vogue was first launched in 1892 the catwalk did not exist. *Instead, the latest fashion was dictated by the French racecourses.*

Today, designers are still creating masterpieces for the races. Brisbane-based Juli Grbac has put together a collection of sweeping, one-shoulder dresses, which drop to the floor in floods of pastel silk.

Meanwhile, Gail Sorronda supplies stunning skirt and blouse options with feathers, beading, and ruffles bedecking us in exotic elegance.

The ingenious George Wu offers the one-shoulder dress in cocktail-style options. Inspired by humans' primitive yearning to be admired and desired, his latest collection, Primeval Machiavelli, is one to be coveted. Wu also offers several inspiring ways to enhance an ordinary dress with the simple addition of a bow, sash, or collar. His silk slip-top in the seasonal colour

choice of magenta can be draped casually over one's shoulders to spice up elegant monotones. A long strand of intricate pleating can be turned into an embellished shoulder, waist belt, or collar. A top complete with an oversized bow can be worn as an eye-popping belt.

Spring Carnival is an opportunity for every woman to dress up and stand out. The perfect look is everything in moderation: a big hat means a small bag; a long dress means simple shoes and accessories; bright-coloured garments should be paired with simplistic embellishments. But, at the end of the day, the most important rules are the ones you make to suit yourself. Find an outfit that makes you feel alive on the inside and your exterior will reflect it.

*"Fashion is an art of personification, and style only happens when it is done with a little confidence and a lot of honesty."*

So, take a feather out of Hepburn's hat, jump on the trendsetting racetrack, and let your outfit speak louder than your words. Audrey certainly did, even when they formed the uncouth chant,

*"Move your bloomin' ass!"*





Gail Sorronda  
www.gailsorronda.com

## Insights from Queensland icons...

### Karen Wilson

For the races, elegant-chic daywear is the order of the day. It is important for people to distinguish between cocktail dresses, which are more suitable for evening events, and racewear, which involves a slightly different dress code.

A little black dress (LBD), cleverly accessorised with a vintage hat and gloves as well as an exquisite piece of costume jewellery, is an ideal choice for the races. This timeless garment transcends the vagaries of seasonal trends – it's always in fashion. The LBD is something you buy now and use forever, especially if it's a classic, pared down style. Its chameleon-like abilities are also incredibly charming – no other garment can transform as well. You can take one LBD from work to evening cocktails (and beyond) via a surreptitious switch of shoes and accessories.

To wear your LBD to maximum advantage it is integral that you select the right shoes and accessories. Little black dresses come in a myriad of styles, and each design is suited to specific additions. You can soften the severity of a smart shift dress with a little knit jacket and a string of pearls, while an embellished LBD might be better served with restraint – simply add a smart clutch and classic black pumps.

It is easy for women to borrow a little wisdom from style icons Audrey Hepburn and Coco Chanel. Instead of buying into all of the latest trends, have a wardrobe full of classic pieces and add the odd seasonal item. When it comes to modern fashion, simple elegance should not be forgotten.

*The Little Black Dress Shop offers an array of labels, including European brands, ideal for the Spring Carnival season.*

*Paule Ka is a favourite, presenting classic styles with a clever 1950s twist. Apart from the ever classic LBD, Paule Ka's snappy black-and-white jackets, chic taupe coats, and sorbet-shaded dresses are also worth a look (www.pauleka.com).*

### The Little Black Dress Shop

Ph: (07) 3367-8808

www.thelittleblackdressshop.com.au



### Jean Brown

Contrary to what you may see out on the field, race days are not about skin and sparkle. Conjure a more demure and sophisticated style with tailored daywear accessorised with beautiful headpieces, shoes, and bags.

Stay away from plunging necklines, over-exposed décolletages, and strapless frocks – they are not appropriate. Find a headpiece that suits your face shape and adds to, rather than overwhelms, the rest of your racewear ensemble.

Key trends for this season will be a return to the full-brimmed hat in asymmetrical shapes (such as those by Philip Treacy) and petite handbags with chain straps. Do not bring your everyday work carryall, even if it just so happens to match the colour of your outfit. Race day is your opportunity to dress elegantly. Avoid costume-like get-ups that involve matchy-matchy colour combinations and contrived looks. It's not a circus.

Legwear is a key aspect of your look, so avoid bare legs at all costs. If you prefer understated styles, try Wolford lightweight denier in nude. For a more dramatic, in vogue look, opt for an oversized fishnet pattern in a subtle anthracite or beige.

Another important trend that can be tricky to translate at the races is the statement earring. The important thing to remember is: it's all about size and shape, not the sparkle. Oversized earrings can be fabulously attired with a simple knee-length shift and very few other accessories. Our current favourite is the retro 80s clip-on from renowned New York costume jewellery designer Kenneth Jay Lane.

When it comes to racewear in general, find a key selection of labels that work for your aesthetic and body shape, and continue to go back to those labels. Finding the right style through cut, fabrication, and aesthetic is vital to the longevity of your wardrobe.

**Kenneth Jay Lane** coral oval earring in coral  
- Price: AUD \$75.00

**Philip Treacy** trilby with spiral twists in white and black - Price: AUD \$581.00



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### Jean Brown Gallery

Ph: (07) 3257-2888

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Julie Grbac  
[www.juligrbac.com.au](http://www.juligrbac.com.au)

## Spring Carnival ready...

### Julie Tengdahl

The 'Tengdahl woman' is a nurturer. Not only is she fun, energetic, and active; she is also intelligent, seductive, and alluring. 'Lady Tengdahl' is comfortable in her own skin, and uses personal style to represent her individuality.

The Tengdahl spring-summer collection merges a miasma of sheer fabrics with the structure and glamour of duchess silk and lightweight woven fabrics. The designs feature a strong feminine feel, and play with proportion and composition.

The collection is a tribute to Chanel: structure and femininity mixed with power and elegance. The colours are inspired by the rainbow and the concept that vibrancy, growth, and new life follow the rain. Beautiful things are born from cloudy, grey moments in nature, as in life.

The quintessential 'spring racing dress' can mean many things to many women. Whether it is flamboyant colours and strong lines, or understated elegance and feminine details, there is a dress in the Tengdahl collection for every woman, as well as some glamorous and versatile cropped jackets. As always, there is an emphasis on womanliness, sensuality, and elegance. The layering of different textures to create versatility, wearability and intrigue also feature.

Floral accessories, when done properly, are a timely and colourful way to add spring excitement to an outfit. Our Liberty Flora Couture collection of handmade flowers is gorgeous, and can be used to add intricacy to a hairstyle, update a pair of shoes, or elevate the impact of any garment.

The best investment you can make this spring racing season is a garment with a purpose; in form (individuality) and function (wearability, comfort, and durability). The foundation of a fabulous look is one that is worn with grace, elegance, and confidence.

Julie Tengdahl  
 Tengdahl  
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Liberty silk plunge dress with Sophie Hallette detailing

*Wendi Nutt, of Philadelphia Philpot Millinery, is the hat's greatest ambassador. In her perspective, no racewear outfit is complete without the allure, style, and eye-catching confidence of a beautiful hat. It would seem the women of Australia agree, as Wendi's one-off designs are in high demand. Appearing regularly in Fashions on the Field, her hats stem from a vivid imagination and passion for colour, sculpting, vintage trims, feathers, and style. After nearly two decades in the millinery business, Wendi shares her styling advice with QCG's readers to help them dominate the racing fields this spring.*

bright pinks, turquoise, and shades of lemon. If you don't suit any of these options, select a design which compliments your hair and skin tone, and ensure the trim is in one of this season's colours. While a quality, black hat is always worth having in your wardrobe, it can make you look pale and drained. If you do not suit dark tones, consider using black trim and choosing a hero colour which suits your face.

**On price & quality...**

There is nothing worse than a well-dressed woman in a

# Words from the milliner...



## hats

cheap or borrowed hat. She might as well plonk sneakers on her head! A good hat should be made well, with the trims and feathers sewn on – not glued.

**On past & present...**

The golden era for hats was the 50s, a period which gave birth to Hepburn-style designs and embodied the essence of *My Fair Lady*. Hats seemed to die out in the 60s, when the beehive hairstyle came into fashion, and didn't experience a true resurgence until Princess Diana entered and inspired the fashion scene in the 80s. While hats continue to be in vogue, fascinators have well-and-truly had their day. Small, stylish designs are always wonderful to see, as they encapsulate the elegant art of wearing a great hat.

If you invest in two quality, handmade hats (one for summer and one for winter), you can continuously take them back to your milliner and have them re-styled and re-trimmed to match your new outfits. Most good hats can be re-blocked if they are out of shape or look a bit dated.

**On position & processes...**

A hat should always be worn forward and slightly tilted to the side, unless it is a 60s pillbox (which sits on the back of the head).

**Off the racetrack...**

Hats are not limited to racewear. Every woman should have a good sunhat in her wardrobe – one which can be worn to a smart-casual barbeque or function.

Generally, women should choose their outfit first, hat second, and accessories (shoes, handbag, and jewellery) last. While your hat should tie-in with your outfit, it must match your shoes and handbag.

Hats made from stiff straw tend to last longer, while those with wire structures are more likely to retain their shape. There are also a number of stylish, quality fabric hats on the market at the moment. Make sure you keep your good hats in boxes, as they will lose their shape if you hang them on hooks.

**On hats vs. headpieces...**

A headpiece is usually a few feathers and a flower glued on a comb. A hat is spectacular!

**Philadelphia Philpot Millinery**  
Ph: (02) 9810-1126  
[www.philadelphiaphilpot.com](http://www.philadelphiaphilpot.com)

**On personal styling...**

To create the elusion of tallness, petite women should avoid large-brimmed hats and wear small, perky pieces with a bit of height or trim. Conversely, larger-framed women should avoid small hats and opt for large-brimmed pieces which balance out their shoulders and hips. Women who wear glasses should not wear downturned brims, as their faces will appear cluttered.

**On spring vs. autumn...**

During Spring Carnival, women wear straw hats (not gardening ones). They can be wide-brimmed, flamboyantly stylish, or feminine and delicate. For the Autumn Carnival season, women should wear felts. They can be petite and playful, worn perched towards the front of the head, or wide-brimmed and bold.

**On Spring Carnival 2009...**

This spring, I am designing small, interesting, elegant hats. The colours sharing the limelight this season are

