

TV & Radio *PLUS*

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Joanna's tips of the trade

AS A former model, Joanna Lumley knows more than most about the fashion world and is well qualified to play a fashion magazine editor in the outrageous new sit-com *Absolutely Fabulous*.

But the dishy actress with the beautiful legs and perfect skin now thinks the fashion business is anything but fabulous.

In fact, the woman whose looks drive men crazy and whose high chic still inspires women to look gorgeous, positively sneers at an industry which gave her such a terrific start to her career and which she in turn has supported generously over the years.

She once paid, for example, £100 for what she accepts was a "grotesque, revolting, silver helmet" a knitted bathing cap with silver sequins on it from James Wedge.

"That, believe it or not, was in 1965. The equivalent price today would probably be £1000.

"My boyfriend at the time said that he wouldn't be seen out with me if I wore it. So I took it back the next day."

The best she has to say for trendy fashions and all the trimmings that go with them like make-up and body care is that it's "good fun."

But she herself rarely buys expensive clothes any more and turns up her nose at the thought of costly



LAST NIGHT'S

VIEW

by Sarah Fitzgerald

Breaking the diet cycle

APPARENTLY, women think about food more than they think about sex. Some people (ie men) find that hard to believe, I don't. Women's obsession with food was explored in *OPEN SPACE: DIET-BREAKERS* (BBC2, 7.40pm). For women, food is a weapon. Food is guilt, indulgence, luxury, sin.

Nearly all women diet at least once in their lives. Some women never stop. Adopting the doctrine *Be Thin To Win*, they starve themselves in order to shed those few pounds they know will make such a difference.

Mary Evans Young was one such dieter who decided that she would have her cake and eat it. An extra large portion with cream. She formed *Diet-breakers*, now a national network of organisations set up to free women from the tyranny of food and dieting.

Dieting, these women have come to believe, is an expression of self-doubt. It springs from hating yourself and assuming that everyone else will hate you if you don't look a certain way.

Society and the slimming industry are continually putting women - even slim

up with silver sequins on it from James Wedel. "That, believe it or not, was in 1965. The equivalent price today would probably be £1000.

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The best she has to say for trendy fashions and all the trimmings that go with them like make-up and body care is that it's "good fun."

But she herself rarely buys expensive clothes any more and turns up her pert little nose at the thought of costly cosmetics.

"If I'm doing a guest appearance on TV or attending some glitzy premiere, you will probably see me in some exaggeratedly beautiful dress. But I am very lucky.

"I have lots of friends in the business and they loan them to me, or I hire them. Either that, or I will wear something so anonymous that no-one will remember it.

"Even if you could afford to own lots of fabulous dresses, where's the sense in spending all that money on clothes? It's ridiculous."

She's on good swapping terms with Oxfam.

"If I have something that I've been seen in too many times or if I'm bored with it and some of my clothes are 12-18 years old I take it to the Oxfam shop. And I buy a lot of clothes from Oxfam, too.

"We have this odd attitude to money in Britain. I drive an old car and yet people think I earn enough to be able to drive a Rolls-Royce. And if I don't earn that much they want to know why..."

These days the 45-year-old actress refuses to waste money on anything, particularly when it comes to maintaining that glamorous image.

"Once you've been in the business long enough, you know that most face creams are basically the same," she says. "So buy a cheap cream for your face.

"And if you are going to have a facial, you might as well do it yourself, with a soft toothbrush.

"Anyone who has ever made pastry knows how good your hands feel after they've been in flour and water so, mix up some oatmeal and smother it on your face. When you take it off, your face is smoother.

And she has more cost-cutting beauty tips:

"You see pictures of gorgeous girls with a tiny little brush in their hands, rubbing their thighs...as if that's going to do any good. The best thing to do is to sit in a bath with some baby oil in it and scrub yourself all over with a scrubbing brush. It does exactly the same job as those unbelievably expensive hydrotherapy treatments. "And if you want to get thin, stop eating.



By Showbiz editor **NEIL BONNER**



Joanna Lumley as Patsy and Jennifer Saunders as Edina in *Absolutely Fabulous*

"It's all so simplistic. But, of course, there's no glamour in that. No money so you don't make the front covers."

But Joanna says she's not really knocking the fashion industry.

"It's good fun and people feel better when they splash out on something like a lipstick with a new name, for instance."

She says she had such fun making *Absolutely Fabulous*, which was written by and co-stars her old friend Jennifer Saunders.

The idea for the series stemmed directly from a sketch with Joanna in French and Saunders.

Joanna plays boozy, pill-popping

magazine editor Patsy, while Jennifer is her best friend trendy, neurotic single mother fashion PR Edina.

Former Avengers star Joanna is able to draw on some of her own fashion industry experience for the part, though she says that in her modelling days she worked at a "much lower" level.

"I was more Woman's Own than Vogue front cover," she says. "So I was never directly involved in the screaming, bitching, back-biting world but I do know it a bit and Jennifer's version of it seems to me to be very accurate ... and very funny."

MOVIE CHOICE

VIVA MAX (1969) Peter Ustinov stars in this cringing farce about a blundering Mexican general invading the Alamo. The film was banned in Mexico - probably recognising a duff film when they saw one. (BBC2, 6.00pm)

RATING ★

THE GOLDEN YEARS (1992) Atzec adventure in this made-for-TV movie premiere based on one of Arthur Miller's lesser known plays about the Spanish conquest of Mexico. Stars Robert Powell and Ronald Pickup. (C4, 10.00pm).

RATING ★★★

LA PETOMANE (1979) A short film about the bizarre real-life tale of a 19th century Parisian who entertained audiences by breaking wind to music. Starring Leonard Rossiter. (C4, 11.50pm).

RATING ★

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Society and the slimming industry are continually putting women - even slim women - under pressure to be thinner, claims Mary Evans Young. And it's not surprising. The slimming industry is big business.

Dietbreakers argue that the reason for this is that most diets just don't work. So women switch to another brand of diet, then another. And the manufacturers rake in the cash.

All this at the expense of the slimmer's self-confidence. Because they didn't lose weight on a particular diet, they assume it's because they were too weak or lazy. Then the guilt starts again. It's a vicious circle.

An agony aunt from a teen magazine revealed that she gets letters from girls who think they are overweight all the time - some as young as 10 or 11 years old. Dietbreakers say it's time to change attitudes towards food but when eating patterns are so inbred, that's not going to be easy.

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